Female Representation and Development

A case study of the gender-sensitive developmental outcomes of female representation in the Rwandan parliament

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the relation between women’s representation and gender-sensitive development, or women-friendly issues. This is done through a case study of Rwanda, a country that has faced rapid development and increase in women representatives in parliament which makes the country unique and useful for this study. The thesis focuses on two things, establishing a correlation between female representation and gender-sensitive development, and examining the causality between the two as well as investigating other possible factors that may have contributed to the development in Rwanda. While previous research on Rwanda focuses more on the relation between female representation and democracy this thesis will focus on female representation and development. The thesis finds that there is a correlation in time between the increase in women in parliament in Rwanda and gender-sensitive development. It also establishes that the progress in Rwanda is unique in relation to other countries in the region with lower numbers of female representation. Furthermore, the thesis finds that despite arguments of gender equality being used as a disguise for authoritarianism in Rwanda, gender equality may still lead to development even if it does not lead to democracy. The thesis comes to the conclusion that two factors in particular have contributed to the progress on gender-sensitive development. First, the specific situation in post-genocide Rwanda where the population consisted of 70 percent women and the fact that women took on traditionally male roles in politics and economics. They also created the Forum of Women Parliamentarians [Forum des Femmes Rwandaises Parlementaires] (FFRP) which focused on mainstreaming gender equality into Rwandan politics and promoting women’s rights. Second, the determination of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and President Paul Kagame to include women and promote women’s rights. These factors both play a part in the great progress Rwanda has faced when it comes to gender-sensitive development. While the thesis suggest that the political process and inclusion of women in the Rwandan parliament is an important part in this progress it does not fully isolate the causality nor ignore that other factors might also have affected the outcomes. Hence, further research would have to be made to identify the mechanisms which has had the most effect for the development in Rwanda.

Key words: female representation, representation, Rwanda, gender, gender equality, development, gender-sensitive development.
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction, Purpose and Research Question 5  
   1.1 Introduction 5  
   1.2 Purpose and Research Question 6  

2. Previous Research, Theoretical Framework and Method 7  
   2.1 Previous Research 7  
   2.2 Theoretical Framework 9  
   2.3 Method 11  
      2.3.1 The comparative study 11  
      2.3.2 The case study 13  
      2.3.3 Limitations 13  

3. Results and Analysis 14  
   3.1 Background 15  
   3.2 Comparative analysis of gender-sensitive development over time 16  
      3.2.1 Presentation of statistical results 16  
      3.2.2 The relativity of female and male development in Rwanda 20  
      3.2.3 Summary of the statistical analysis 22  
   3.3 The case of Rwanda: factors of gender-sensitive development 22  
      3.3.1 The causality between female representation and development 23  
      3.3.2 Female representation and authoritarianism 27  
      3.3.3 A unique political process or general development? 29  

4. Concluding Remarks 31  
   4.1 Further Research 32  

List of References 33
List of figures

Figure 1: Percentage of women in parliament 17
Figure 2: Infant Mortality 17
Figure 3: Maternal mortality 18
Figure 4: Expected years of schooling, females 18
Figure 5: Female life expectancy 19
Figure 6: Life expectancy, Rwanda 21
Figure 7: Human Development Index (HDI), Rwanda 21
1. Introduction, Purpose and Research Question

1.1 Introduction

Amartya Sen (1999) claimed that gender equality should be strived for because of two reasons. Firstly, gender equality has an objective value as a human right, it is a core value in itself and a developmental goal. Second, it should be strived for as it is an instrument for development. Sen claims that empowerment of women leads to development and therefore has an instrumental value (ibid:198ff).

For several decades the Nordic countries have showed off a level of female representation in parliament unmatched by any other region. However, since 2003 Rwanda has become the country in the world with the highest female representation as women hold 56.3 percent of the seats in the lower house of parliament (Palmieri, 2011:9). Empowering women, Sen claims, is about giving them agency which means to make them active agents of change rather than passive recipients of welfare-enhancing help (Sen, 1999:189ff). The World Bank argues in accordance with Sen and claims that women’s agency matters in three ways. First, there is an intrinsic value for women’s individual well-being. Second, there is instrumental value for actions to improve the well-being of women and their families. Third, women’s agency is required if women are to play an active role in shaping institutions, social norms, and the well-being of their communities (World Bank, 2011:151f). In order to accomplish the third point institutions need to formalize laws in order to promote women’s rights and provide a framework that allows women to exercise their agency (ibid: 157).

The instrumental value of gender equality has been proven repeatedly by researchers. Delvin and Elgie (2008:237) suggests that women have a different approach or ‘style’ when it comes to politics. This means that greater numbers of female representatives in parliament can change the nature, or culture, of the parliament itself. Their influence may be seen in actual change of policy priorities and legislation. The World Bank has stated that due to improved gender equality women have made gains in rights, education, health, property ownership, inheritance, and marriage (World Bank, 2011:2).

The suggested correlation between female representation and development will be examined in this thesis through a case study of Rwanda. Rwanda is a small landlocked country in East Africa with
some unique and relevant features for this study. Rwanda might mostly be known for its horrible genocide in 1994 where about 800,000 people, mostly Tutsi Rwandans, were murdered. Despite that horrible event, which put development on hold for the country, Rwanda managed to recover fast. Today Rwanda experiences economic growth and low corruption (Debusscher and Ansoms, 2013:1112). As mentioned, they also have the highest number of women representatives in parliament (Palmieri, 2011:9). Between 1990 and 2015 Rwanda increased its human development index (HDI) from 0.224 to 0.498 (UNDP HDI Reports, 2015). The high numbers of female representation and the rapid development are two reasons why Rwanda is both interesting and useful to study in relation to female representation and development. Gender equality, however, is often associated with freedom and democracy but despite its high numbers of female representatives in parliament Rwanda is described as a ‘highly authoritarian’ country and is ranked ‘Not Free’ by Freedom House. The actual significance of female representation in Rwanda has hence been questioned (Debusscher and Ansoms, 2013:1112). Consequently, this thesis will also investigate the role of authoritarianism in the relationship between female representation and development.

This thesis will try to establish the supposed correlation between female representation in parliament and increased development and further investigate if any causality can be argued for. In order to analyze the effects of women’s empowerment on development this thesis will focus on female representation in parliament and indicators of gender-sensitive development. The women-friendly developmental outcomes are based on so called gender-sensitive indicators which are supposed to be more likely improved where female representation is high.

1.2 Purpose and Research Question

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the relation between women’s political representation and women-related development by analyzing gender-sensitive indicators of development in the specific case of Rwanda. The thesis examines the theories regarding the correlation between female representation and development and problematizes different factors that may have an effect on the developmental outcomes. In order to reach the purpose of the thesis the following research question will be answered: Does female representation in parliament lead to improved development in relation to women-related issues, so called gender-sensitive developmental outcomes?
2. Previous Research, Theoretical Framework and Method

2.1 Previous Research

There is a great deal of research that has been done regarding the effects of female representation. There are many western cases but also some cases focusing on Africa and the results are quite mixed. Some studies focus on how women’s presence in parliament changes the culture of the parliament itself and the indirect effects while other focus on the more direct effects.

Sainsbury’s (2004) research on Scandinavia concludes that the presence of women in parliament has two primary effects related to women’s issues. First, the women deputes of the Swedish parliament reconceptualized ‘women’s issues’ as a broader issue of ‘gender equality’. Secondly, they transformed the demand of female representatives into a demand for a more complete democracy. Wängnerud (2000) who has also analyzed Scandinavian cases argues in line with Sainsbury and claims that women representatives are more likely to represent ‘women’s interests’ which means that female representation creates greater attention for gender equality, family policy and social policy in the parliament.

Bauer and Britton (2006) focuses on African cases and concludes that women in parliaments have made many changes. For example in South Africa women changed parliamentary hours and calendars to fit women better and created institutions for feminist change. Furthermore, they introduced gender into debates and legislation. Bauer and Britton also argues that women in African parliaments have made changes different from women in the western contexts, claiming that their goals are broader and apply to a larger area than just legislative platforms. Issues that women in African contexts have addressed are, amongst other, land rights, poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS, sexual freedom and violence against women.

Previous research also suggests that a quota system controlled by a political party usually makes the women in parliament on a quota system prone to be loyal towards their parties, restricting their ability to promote gender-sensitive issues. It is also questioned how much a quota system can actually make a difference in an authoritarian political environment, such as the Rwandan case (Delvin and Elgie, 2008:240). Delvin and Elgie’s final point is that the increased number of women in Rwanda is uninfluential in comparison with a committed government determined to develop legislative measures that protect and promote women’s rights. Another factor that creates a more
open environment for female representation is the long process of normalization that stems from the increased numbers of women in parliament. The increased number of women has led to a change in culture that makes women more influential, something the authors claim could not have been forced by governmental top-down approaches (ibid 2008:252).

Alexander Stroh (2010) who has studied the effects of gender based proportional representation in Rwanda comes to the conclusion that the quota system in itself is more of a disguise for legitimizing an authoritarian regime than a part of a democratization process. However, he does not address the indirect effects of women’s presence in parliament, such as the possibility to change the culture of the parliament itself or influence others. Jennie E. Burnet (2008) partly comes to the same conclusion as Stroh in her study of the meaning of women in governance in Rwanda. However, she also states that even though the women may not have power to directly affect policy outcomes, as Delvin and Elgie also argues, her conclusion is that the women are still influential by other means as they can influence other members of parliament that are more powerful.

Pearson (2008), Palmieri (2011), and Abbott and Malunda (2015) have focused more on the legislative and policy outcomes of female representation in Rwanda, rather than on its relation with democracy. They conclude that the women of the Rwandan parliament have engaged in legislative action through cross-party women caucuses and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) which introduced the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) bill. Furthermore, they conclude that women have contributed to improvements when it comes to health and well-being but also by making the parliament more gender-sensitive, having all areas of government taking gender impacts into consideration.

In summary, previous research tells us that empowerment of women and women’s representation in parliament has several effects and that the conclusions among researchers are varying. While some studies claim that women in the parliament of the authoritarian state Rwanda does not have any direct effect on policy outcomes, others claim that they have in fact contributed to direct changes. However, women in authoritarian regimes are still described as influential, in some studies, through other more indirect means such as change of culture. Previous research also concludes that it is important to create a process of normalization in order to create a political environment where women are allowed to take place and participate actively. Lastly, while previous research on
Rwanda focuses more on the relation between female representation and democracy this thesis will focus on female representation and development.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical starting point of this thesis lies in the assumption that gender equality, or empowerment of women, leads to development and that women representatives are better at addressing women-related issues. It aims to investigate that theory and examine other possible factors of development in the specific case of Rwanda. The women-related issues are called gender-sensitive developmental indicators in this thesis and refers to certain developmental factors that are assumed to be increasing more where there are higher numbers of women representatives. In other words, these indicators will show better results in context where there is higher female representation and inferior results in contexts lacking female representation.

The development debate first took place in the UN during the 1960s and emphasized the importance of economic growth as a mean of development. During the 1970s women’s concerns were first spoken of and by the end of the 1970s gender relations had been integrated in the debate about development. In the 1980s and 1990s research presented results of gender relations meditating the process of development. The concerns of gender in relation to development has empowered women worldwide and the equality of men and women has become fundamental to societies everywhere (Parpart et. al, 2000:vf). Amartya Sen won a Nobel Prize in Economics for his book Development as Freedom (1999) where he states that the empowerment of women has instrumental value for development. Due to improved gender equality women have made gains in rights, education, health, property ownership, inheritance and marriage according to the 2012 World Bank report on Gender Equality and Development (World Bank 2011:2). Gender equality can enhance economic efficiency and improve developmental outcomes in three ways. Firstly, by removing barriers that prevent women from having the same access to education, economic opportunities and productive inputs. Secondly, by improving women’s absolute and relative status, and thirdly, by leveling the play field, meaning women and men have more equal chances to become socially and politically active and make decisions and shape solutions that leads to developmental gains for both sexes (World Bank, 2011).
Lack of development can most easily be measured by health indicators. However, in order to analyze health one cannot simply compare men and women as they face biological differences and are biologically susceptible to different diseases (such as breast or prostate cancer) (World Bank, 2011). Differences, however, should not be confused with inequalities which are created and sustained systematically through social arrangements. Gender inequality can be recognized through premature deaths, ill health, lack of education, poverty, exclusion and lack of power, and opportunities to change one’s own life (Abbott and Malunda, 2015:11). In order to analyze women’s development gender-sensitive factors can hence be analyzed, as stated.

Pearson (2008:12f) claims that women’s political behaviour is shaped by their life experiences, social roles, and expectations. There is a structural difference between men’s and women’s lives which may result in men and women taking different paths when it comes to politics as their engagement is motivated by different things. Pearson states that research on female politicians’ attitudes suggests that women tend to view political engagement as a mean of getting involved on an issue of personal concern whereas men more often see it career-wise and as a way of achieving power and status. As a consequence of these structural differences women are more likely to base their engagement in formal politics on their experiences in their private life, especially their experiences as mothers. This further strengthens the argument by the World Bank, that women change the culture and the areas of priority when they engage in politics.

A relevant theory for this thesis is the “Critical Mass” Theory which examines how high female representation has to be in order to be effective. According to the theory women’s effectiveness in decision-making groups is limited by the fact that they are a minority. It is argued that women as a minority are simply symbolic which affects their behaviour and capability (Pearson, 2008:12). The theory therefore states a minority needs to compose at least 30 percent of a group in order be able to form coalitions, craft alliances, and affect culture and decision making. The theory claims that 30 percent is the “critical mass”, or threshold, for when women politicians are capable of changing culture and priorities in contexts mainly dominated by men (ibid). The theory was adopted by advocates and endorsed in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, stating that women should occupy 30 percent of all decision-making positions. This was also written into the Rwandan constitution which is part of the reason that Rwanda has such high numbers of women representatives. The theory, however, have been criticized, mainly for simply being based on a numerical threshold and not taking the complexity of different contexts into consideration. Pearson states that Dahlerup
herself, one of the creators of the theory, called attention to the fact that the theory was created on studies of Scandinavian contexts and therefore one should be careful when applying it to for example Sub-Saharan African contexts with very different conditions. While Pearson claims that more research needs to be done in order to understand how to use the theory in these contexts she also claims Rwanda is a useful case to study this due to their high levels of female representation.

While Rwanda has a quota system for 30 percent of the seats in parliament they also have an unofficial policy for gender balance which suggests that where there is one male committee chair, for example, there is usually a female deputy chair, and vice-versa. This pattern is seen in two of the four standing committees and in 10 of the 12 Chamber of Deputies standing committees (Palmieri, 2011:21).

The theories that will be examined are hence the instrumental values of women’s representation in parliament. The instrumental value will be examined in relation to gender-sensitive developmental outcomes which are claimed to be related to women’s representation. The analysis will also include an investigation of other factors that arguably might have affected the developmental outcomes in Rwanda.

2.3 Method

In order to examine the correlation between female representation in parliament and gender-sensitive development the analysis will be undertaken in two steps that will be used in particular for two different parts of the study. The methods will be explained here separately followed with a part about the limitations of the thesis.

2.3.1 The comparative study

The first part of the study is a comparative study of Rwanda and its neighboring countries. It focuses solely on the statistics of the gender-sensitive developmental indicators. The purpose of this comparative analysis is to establish that the progress found in Rwanda is not typical for all countries of the region with lower figures of representation. In other words, the comparison aims to determine that the development in Rwanda is specific for the country and not a general development for a larger region.
In order to analyze the effect of women’s representation and development specific developmental indicators have been chosen that are supposed to be connected to female representation in particular. The indicators that have been chosen to measure gender-sensitive development have been chosen on the grounds of previous research claiming that these developmental indicators are results of women’s empowerment and female representation. Health indicators are the ones which are most widely used when examining the effects of women’s empowerment. This is due to their overall significance for the health of a populations and women’s access to health care, as well as the health care systems’ ability to provide adequate care. Even though the risks are largely preventable, maternal and infant deaths are the main cause of death for women and children in developing countries (Chung et. al, 2013). Therefore, they are also good indicators of development related to women’s empowerment. Further, it is claimed that female representatives will prioritize improving women’s rights, one indicator that is used for women’s rights is girls’ access to education, therefore expected years of schooling is also a good indicator of successful promotion of women’s rights. Equal education for all is also stated as one part of accomplishing sustainable development by the UN (UN Sustainable Development Goals).

Four indicators of gender-sensitive development has been chosen to carry out this study. The statistics have been retrieved from the UNDP development reports and they have been analyzed by identifying changes more dramatic than the general progress. The developmental indicators have been matched in time with the increase of female representation in the parliament of Rwanda in order to determine a time order of the events or improvements.

The gender-sensitive developmental indicators that will be measured in this thesis are the following:

• Infant mortality
• Maternal deaths
• Expected years of schooling, females
• Female life expectancy

These indicators have been chosen due to the arguments above but also because they are factors widely measured by the UNDP and presented in their Human Development Index (HDI) Reports. The quality and quantity of the UNDP’s statistics is a reason in itself to analyze their data. The UNDP is a respected organization with sufficient resources to carry out these kinds of studies and present adequate statistics. The fact that they are providing the data continuously during the years of
interest for this study is also a reason to chose their data as a base for the statistical part of the analysis.

2.3.2 The case study

For the second part of the analysis a case study of Rwanda will be made. After the genocide in 1994 Rwanda was left with a population of approximately 70 percent women which led to many women taking on ‘traditionally’ male roles in economics and politics (Delvin and Elgie, 2008:241f). Previous research in post-conflict context show that women usually relinquish these roles (Handrahan, 2004) but that was not the case in Rwanda. In fact, women’s interest in politics grew during the post-conflict period (Delvin and Elgie, 2008:241f). This makes Rwanda a relevant case for studying female representation even though they are an authoritarian state ranked as ‘Not Free’ by Freedom House. Another reason that makes Rwanda a useful case of examining the effect of female representation is the fact of how rapidly the number of women in parliament increased. Rwanda has a female representation in parliament of 56,3 percent which is unique for a developing country. For the second part of the analysis only Rwanda will be in focus and secondary literature will be used both on the more general correlation between female representation and development as well as to analyze Rwanda in particular.

The case study aims to investigate the correlation found in the comparative study deeper. The purpose is to investigate the different factors that may have an effect on the development in order to determine which factors that are relevant for the Rwandan case.

2.3.3 Limitations

In order to carry out this study a few limitations had to be made. First, the time period examined has been limited in regard to the available statistics from the UNDP HDI Data Base. The gender-sensitive developmental indicators as well as female representation in Rwanda and its neighboring countries have been analyzed from 1990 or 1995 until 2015. The indicators have been chosen primarily based on previous research but the choice of indicators have also been limited by available data. There are obviously several more indicators that could be interesting to analyze, in relation to previous research on women’s representation, such as gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, and ownership laws. However, sufficient data is not available for these indicators. Furthermore, there is value in retrieving all the data from the same place as the statistics are then
more easily compared due to the time period of when data has been retrieved and how it has been retrieved.

The comparative analysis will also be limited to a general comparison between Rwanda and a few of its neighboring countries. The countries have been chosen on the simple reason of being a neighboring country to Rwanda and a country in East Africa. That is why the countries east of Rwanda, as Kenya and Tanzania, has been chosen and not the countries west of Rwanda, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is also a more conflicted context in comparison to the other countries which arguably has an effect on the development of the country which is another reason not to use the country to compare with. Regarding possible abnormalities in the developmental curves of the other countries in the analysis no further research will be made, the comparative analysis will be strictly general in that sense. This is because the aim of the thesis is not to investigate abnormalities in development in other countries than Rwanda but to analyze the difference in stability of the curves for Rwanda in relation to the other countries.

The UNDP has some missing years in its statistics, for example when it comes to percentage of seats in parliament by women there is no statistics for Tanzania for the years 2000 and 2010. This, however, has not been regarded as a problem for the analysis.

The case study that depends on secondary literature will naturally be limited by the available literature. Furthermore, conscious limitations have been made, mostly by selecting the literature focusing more on the Rwandan context in particular rather than general research on the relation between female representation and development. Furthermore, limitations have been made in regard of choice of previous research and feminist theories have been left out. The thesis has its starting point further ahead in time where gender equality is already recognized as a developmental goal among most countries and intergovernmental organizations, therefore it will not examine feminist theories.

3. Results and Analysis

The following part will include a presentation of the empirical results as well as an analysis in relation to previous findings about the outcomes of female representation in Rwanda. The analysis
of the thesis is divided into two parts, the first part is a presentation of the comparative study that focuses on the statistics of Rwanda and its neighboring countries. The second part is a case study of Rwanda, this part focuses solely on Rwanda and the possible factors which may affect the developmental outcomes in the country.

3.1 Background

Rwanda is a small landlocked country in the Great Lakes Region of Eastern Africa. A genocide took place in the country in 1994 and about 800,000 people, mainly Tutsi Rwandans, were murdered. The genocide ended in July 1994 when largely Tutsi forces, from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took the capital, Kigali. In November the same year parliamentary politics started to take place for the first time after the genocide when the transitional government, called The Government of National Unity, met and the country entered a period of recovery. The recovery and transition period lasted until 2003 when the first elections were held and the RPF won. Despite the elections Rwanda was described as ‘highly authoritarian’ and was ranked as ‘Not Free’ by Freedom House (Delvin and Elgie, 2008:241f). Today, the RPF still holds power and Rwanda is still ranked as ‘Not Free’ (Freedom House, 2018). One intriguing consequence of the genocide is that even though women became victims of murder, rape, sexual torture and assault it was mainly men and boys who were the primary targets. When the genocide ended the country was hence left with a population estimated at approximately 70 percent females. This led to women taking on roles in economics and politics which were ‘traditionally’ appointed to males (Delvin and Elgie, 2008:241f). In the direct aftermath of the genocide many women become heads of the households and economic providers which made them important actors in society at large (Abbott and Malunda, 2015:17). The first elections were held in 2003, with the elections the government also approved a new constitution that included a quota system for women at all levels of government. The same year, the amount of women in the lower house of parliament increased from 23 percent to 49 percent (HKS Publications, 2014). In 2010 the number increased to 50,9 percent and in 2013 to 57,5 percent (UNDP HDI Reports, 2015).

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was made up of Rwandan exiles in Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and Zaïre (now Democratic Republic of Congo), and Rwandans from inside the country that had left to join the RPF. According to Burnet, the core leadership of the RPF was established in Ugandan refugee camps and their origins from Uganda deeply affected their leadership after taking
power in Rwanda. Their core values included promoting women’s rights and inclusion. The reason they were determined to include women partly stems from that President Paul Kagame and other members of the RPF had previously been officers in Museveni’s National Resistance Movement (NRM) in Uganda. The NRM stood up for women’s rights in two ways. They appointed women important roles in both politics and the army and normalized it, and, they reserved seats for women in the legislature. These values influenced the RPF and is part of why President Kagame and his party put a lot of effort into including women in politics in post-conflict Rwanda (Burnet, 2008:367).

In conclusion, one can easily argue that the genocide and its consequences, such as females accepting roles that were normally appointed to males, and President Kagame’s and the RPF’s values influenced by the NRM are all important features to the background of how Rwanda came to have great development and becoming the country with the world’s highest numbers’s of female representation. The coming analysis will focus on the effects the high female representation have had and the possible other factors which may have affected the developmental outcomes.

3.2 Comparative analysis of gender-sensitive development over time

For the first part of the analysis a comparative study has been made including Rwanda and four of its neighboring countries. This has been made in order to identify the uniqueness of Rwanda’s developmental curves. The purposes is to make sure that the development is specific to the Rwandan case and is not general for the region. By identifying a difference in the Rwandan case the aim is to argue for a correlation between increased female representation and development at a specific period of time.

3.2.1 Presentation of statistical results

In 1995, Rwanda had 17,1 percent women in parliament, by 2000 they had 25,7 percent. The quota system was established and implemented in 2003 and in 2005 there were 45,3 percent women in parliament (UNDP HDI Report). Figure 1 shows that the largest increase in women in the Rwandan parliament happened between 2000 and 2005, as suggested. It also shows that Rwanda has a lot more women in parliament compared to its neighboring countries.
All figures, 1 to 7, are created with data retrieved from the UNDP Human Development Reports (UNDP HDI Data).

The following figures (2, 3, 4 and 5) presents the results from Rwanda and its neighboring countries when it comes to the gender-sensitive indicators.

Figure 1: Percentage of women in parliament

Figure 2: Infant Mortality
Figure 3: Maternal mortality

Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rwanda</th>
<th>Kenya</th>
<th>Uganda</th>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
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Figure 4: Expected years of schooling, females

Expected years of schooling, females

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rwanda</th>
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<th>Uganda</th>
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Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 show that the most drastic improvement in development happened between 2000 and 2005 for all indicators except for ‘female life expectancy’. For this indicator the most dramatic change happened between 1995 and 2000. It is reasoned that this is related to the end of the genocide in 1994, an event which in itself ought to increase the life expectancy of all citizens significantly. However, life expectancy still makes a significant increase between 2000 and 2005, from about 54 years to about 60 years.

What is striking when analyzing the numbers is how Rwanda starts off as one of the least developed countries in all indicators in 1990 or 1995, but is one of the most developed countries in all indicators by 2015.

The statistics identify a clear correlation in time between increased female representation in Rwanda and improved development on all indicators. Female representation in Rwanda started to increase directly after the genocide in 1994 and increased further between 2000 and 2005 due to the implementation of the quota system in 2003. Between the same years one can also see a significant improvement in development of the gender-sensitive indicators.

In relation to Rwanda’s neighboring countries one can identify a general positive change for all countries when comparing the years of 1990 and 1995 with 2015. There is some variety on the
stability of their development as some countries show sudden decreases in development, Tanzania even shows a stable negative change in expected years of schooling for females between 2010 and 2015. In general though, the curves are less drastic in the other countries and more dramatic in Rwanda. One can then state that the neighboring countries of Rwanda that has been analyzed do not follow the same pattern as Rwanda does. The comparison hence establishes that Rwanda is different both in X (female representation) and Y (gender-sensitive developmental outcomes). Rwanda has the highest female representation and the best developmental results overall.

This indicates that something in particular created the more drastic improvement in Rwanda. To sum up, the comparison shows that Rwandas development is different in relation to its neighbours’ in regard to two factors. First, Rwanda starts off as one of the least developed countries in these indicators in 1990 or 1995 and ends like one of the most developed countries in 2015. Rwanda has experienced the largest change during this period of time. And, second, Rwanda has the largest increase in female representation and this increase correlates in time with the improved development.

The statistics and the correlation in time with the increased female representation show that the development can be correspondent to the increased female representation, however, it is impossible to isolate the causality on the basis of these statistical results. Even though the numbers point us in that direction, and theory supports it, further research would have to be made in order to fully isolate the causality and identify the important mechanisms.

3.2.2 The relativity of female and male development in Rwanda

The observant reader might think that the development related to females has to be compared to the development related to males in order to determine any improvement. In other words, if the female development does not increase as much as the development for males the difference between them has increased and one can argue that there is indeed no improvement in development for women. The relative ‘female development’ has not increased as much in relation to the ‘male development’. In order to examine if that is the case two indicators have been analyzed between men and women in Rwanda. The first indicator is ‘Life expectancy’ and the second one is ‘Human Development Index (HDI)’. The purpose is to see if the relative difference between the sexes changes over time and by that determine if the development amongst women is ‘real’ or not.
The statistics in Figure 6 and 7 are based on data from the UNDP Human Development Reports (UNDP HDI Data).

Figure 6: Life expectancy, Rwanda

![Life expectancy, Rwanda](image)

Life expectancy in general, worldwide, is higher amongst women than men, therefore this is also expected to be the case in Rwanda. Figure 6 shows that life expectancy has increased for both women and men in Rwanda and the relative difference is pretty much unchangeable. In Figure 7 we
can see that the improvement in HDI has also been very similar between men and women. These results help determine that the development of women in Rwanda is ‘real’ because the relative difference between men and women have not increased.

### 3.2.3 Summary of the statistical analysis

The statistics from the UNDP HDI Report establishes three things. First, there is a correlation in time between increased number of women in the parliament of Rwanda and increased development. Second, the development in Rwanda is specific to the Rwandan case and cannot be seen as significantly in any of the other cases. Furthermore, Rwanda’s development is rapid as the country goes from being one of the least developed countries, on these indicators, in comparison with its neighboring countries, to become one of the most developed countries during the analyzed years. Third, the development for women in Rwanda is real. In other words, the relative difference between men and women has not increased during the measured years. In conclusion, while one can with confident argue for a correlation it is impossible to isolate any causality between increased female representation and gender-sensitive development. The next part of the analysis, the case study, will not aim to isolate the causality, however, other possible factors will be examined in order to hopefully be able to say something more about the outcomes of female representation in Rwanda.

### 3.3 The case of Rwanda: factors of gender-sensitive development

This second part of the analysis will focus solely on Rwanda, not on its neighboring countries. The case study aims to examine theories regarding female representation and development and relate them to the case of Rwanda.

So far this thesis has presented results that show that Rwanda has uniquely high numbers of women in parliament, especially for being a developing country, and has also experienced rapid development in the post-conflict period. The increase in women in parliament and the improved gender-sensitive development correlate in time. However, gender equality is generally talked about in relation to freedom and democracy, it is a feature strived for in democratic context and a apart of what defines a good democracy. Rwanda, however, is an authoritarian state ranked as ‘Not Free’ by Freedom House. This leaves us with two questions to examine. First, can the gender-sensitive development in Rwanda be connected to the increased female representation in the parliament?
Second, does the fact that Rwanda is an authoritarian state affect the effectiveness of female representation?

Furthermore, this part of the analysis will also investigate in other possible factors responsible for the development in Rwanda, albeit a bit more briefly.

3.3.1 The causality between female representation and development

Burnet (2008:366ff) explains that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), with President Paul Kagame in the front, was made up of Rwandan exiles in refugee camps in Uganda. Due to this they were deeply influenced by their Ugandan origins in the Ugandan National Resistance Movement (NRM) which put a lot of focus on promoting women’s rights and inclusion. The RPF has, since taking power, publicly showed their commitment to expand rights and representation for women and in the post-genocide period they took several steps in order to increase female political participation. These efforts have lead to a lot of credit being given to President Paul Kagame and the RPF. In January 2007 President Kagame was given the African Gender Award. He was especially appreciated for his efforts to integrate women in the reconstruction process, to fight gender-based violence, to protect equal rights of education, economic development and ownership of property.

The question however, in order to analyze the relation between female representation and development, is what the parliament, and the women in the parliament in particular, has accomplished, not the regime.

*Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FFRP)*

Pearson’s (2008) study of the demonstrated legislative leadership in Rwanda with focus on the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) bill shows findings of how female parliamentarians have engaged in legislative action. The most important actor in this is the Forum of Women Parliamentarians *[Forum des Femmes Rwandaises Parlementaires]* (FFRP). The FFRP was formed by the women parliamentarians in Rwanda in 1996 and is a multi-party and multi-ethnic forum that is formally recognized by the parliament. All females from both houses of parliament are members and the FFRP has become a foundation for cross-party cooperation. The members work jointly on issues that are important to women and their main purpose is to ensure gender-sensitivity in the parliament, in legislation and in the government overall (Palmieri, 2011:46).
The FFRP has made many changes internally in the parliament regarding procedures and legislation, however, it has only provided one legislative contribution in the years after the first election in 2003 which is the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) bill of August 2006. It is the only legislation introduced by members of parliament rather than by the executive regime (Pearson, 2008:6). The policy-making process of the GBV bill was supported by the male parliamentarians and government officials but was initiated and led by the FFRP. They conducted a method of law-making which was highly participatory, the women parliamentarians created a process for gathering information, acquiring input and feedback, and sensitizing citizens and lawmakers to the problem of gender-based violence. Hence, the GBV bill is a result of a strong relationship between women legislators and constituents. Furthermore, the female parliamentarians focused on leadership through close relationships with civil society and included their male colleagues in the fight against gender-based violence. Pearson’s study suggest that the women’s model of leadership and law-making contributed to notably improving the governance in Rwanda. They especially improved the dialogue between grassroots and national levels, enhanced collaboration between civil society and the government, and demonstrated legislative leadership on the issue as well as advocated human rights. The inclusion of male colleagues also demonstrated that gender-based violence is not only a women’s issue (ibid).

These statements argue for that the women of the Rwandan parliament do in fact have legislative power and capabilities to directly affect policy outcomes, in contrary to the arguments by Stroh (2010) and Burnet (2008) who claim that the female parliamentarians do not have power to do so. However, one has to keep in mind that this is the only legislative reform introduced by the parliament rather then the regime.

The gender-sensitivity of the Rwandan parliament

Palmieri’s (2011) research on gender-sensitive parliaments analyses the areas in which gender-sensitivity is taken into consideration. A gender-sensitive parliament is “a parliament that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and in its work. Gender-sensitive parliaments remove the barriers to women’s full participation and offer a positive example or model to society at large.” (Palmieri, 2011:6). Palmieri finds that in the Rwandan Senate gender issues are normally categorized as issues concerning Social Affairs, Human Rights, and Petitions Committee. There are four standing committees in the Senate and all consist of both men and women. Senators have pushed for efforts to take gender into account more broadly,
for example, all committees are supposed to consider gender implications of legislation and business related to them (Palmieri 2011:45).

“Gender issues get taken more seriously. They [male Senators] used to laugh when we would talk about women, but now it is regularly on the agenda, and there are fewer jokes.”

(Female senator in Rwanda as cited in Palmieri 2011:45)

Furthermore, in the Rwandan Chamber of Deputies, there is one committee, the Gender and Family Promotion Committee, responsible for gender issues. They are, however, often asked to review legislation referred to other committees as well, for example a land reform bill does concerns both men and women and therefore it needs to be gender-sensitive. The Gender and Family Promotion Committee functions, in addition to their main areas, as a backup for women in other committees when they do not have the time or ability to speak up (Palmieri, 2011:46).

Palmieri’s (2011) research also looks into how the gender equality committees and women’s parliamentary caucuses have helped the parliament to include a gender perspective in their work. She claims that some committees have been able to affect policies which address education, healthcare and employment, amongst other. Women’s parliamentary caucuses in which women parliamentarians participate on a voluntary basis have brought women together, crossed party lines and given them a structure on how to engage civil society and private sector partners. These groups have been successful in raising issues relevant to women and gender equality and stressed the importance for legislation regarding these issues. They have in particular promoted legislation for domestic violence, non-discrimination, women’s rights and health care.

The Rwandan parliament also includes the principle of gender equality in policies and strategies, aiming to include it in all of them. This includes a long-term development framework called ‘Vision 2020’ and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). Furthermore, Rwanda has a National Gender Policy which includes specific branches for girls’ education, women in agriculture, gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health. Since 2003 the country has also had Gender-Sensitive Budgeting, however, it was not until 2011/2012 that all ministries were formally expected to produce Gender-Sensitive Budgets. As a lot is being done and intentions
are ambitious there are still concerns about the capacity of central and local government to deliver the policies. There is also concern regarding how well employees understand gender equality and are capable of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of gender-sensitive policies (Abbott and Malunda, 2015:20ff).

Abbott and Malunda (2015:24ff) also concludes that when it comes to health and well-being Rwanda has been successful and made great progress, especially when it comes to the improvement for women and girls. As also shown in the statistical analysis in this thesis maternal and infant mortality has decreased dramatically. Abbot and Malunda’s study also show that Rwandan has a much higher percentage of women delivered by a qualified health care worker in comparison to the average number among countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Another factor of development is the gap between urban and rural areas where Rwanda has a relatively low gap when it comes to women delivered by a qualified health worker in comparison to other Sub-Saharan African countries. The authors claim that these improvements doubtlessly are related, at least partly, to the great volunteer community of health workers which consists of two thirds of women (ibid).

Another feature of the Rwandan parliament, Palmieri (2011:46) claims, is the sense of pride when it comes to the fight for gender equality. Likewise countries like Sweden, with such high numbers of female representation, it would be a loss of national pride to ignore gender equality concerns. However, Palmieri claims that it is not really about the amount of women involved but about the sensitivity to and awareness of gender in the parliaments and its policies (Palmieri 2011:46).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion one may, with these arguments, claim that the women of the Rwandan parliament are indeed capable of promoting gender-sensitive development. Research show that the Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) in Rwanda have actually accomplished legislative outcomes through the gender-based violence (GBV) bill. Palmieri’s (2011) research show that the Rwandan parliament is gender-sensitive to a great extent by taking gender into account in all legislation and business. The fact that there are both men and women in all standing committees better ensures that these issues are not left out. Furthermore, the Gender and Family promotion Committee does not only focus on their areas but functions as a backup for other committees. Previous research also show that the women of the Rwanda parliament has especially promoted health care issues,
reproductive health, women’s rights, and girls’ education which suggest that they do have impact on the gender-sensitive developmental outcomes analyzed in this thesis.

The ‘critical mass’ theory suggests women are limited to having a symbolic value unless they exceed 30 percent of the decision making group. However, the theory was not formed out of studies of Sub-Saharan African contexts but from studying Scandinavian contexts. The arguments presented above show that the women in the Rwandan parliament do not only have a symbolic value to for example show off a democratization process which might not be there (Stroh 2010, Burnet 2008). Previous research show that the Rwandan women parliamentarians are effective in several ways, both because of their great number, well over the critical threshold of 30 percent, and due to their engagement and mobilization through different forums and groups using various strategies to engage civil society and their male colleagues in the fight for gender equality.

Previous literature also mentions challenges in the form of limited resources for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, however, one could argue that is natural for a country still ‘developing’. However, it is still not possible, in this thesis, to identify the specific mechanisms and isolate the causality even if previous research indicates that the high number of female representation have in fact been effective in relation to the gender-sensitive development.

### 3.3.2 Female representation and authoritarianism

As mentioned, previous research mainly focus on the relationship between female representation in Rwanda and democracy while this thesis examines the relationship between female representation and development. This part will investigate the developmental outcomes of female representation in the authoritarian state of Rwanda.

As stated earlier in this thesis women’s rights need to be promoted in order to give women agency to contribute to change, development and well-being. The World Bank (2012:157) states that in order for this to happen formal institutions have to create an environment where women can exercise agency. In the case of Rwanda women have been included in all levels of government, this part of the thesis will examine whether the women in the Rwandan parliament are provided with a framework that allows them to exercise agency or if the authoritarian characteristics of the state limits their actual impact on developmental outcomes.
Alexander Stroh (2010:1) argues that gender based proportional representation can actually foster undemocratic outcomes and claims that the ‘gender equality’ in the Rwandan case is just a system to facilitate the maintenance of authoritarian power. He states that the electoral system in Rwanda seems to be exploiting the positive connotations of gender based proportional representation in order to increase the legitimacy of the authoritarian power (ibid:11). However, his study does not address the possibility for Rwandan female deputies to improve development. In other words, female representation might not lead to democracy but it might as well lead to development as stated in the previous section of this thesis.

“Women look out for their interests and those of their children; they have a vested interest in peace... we will gradually begin to get more national opportunities. And if we’re there, it will make a difference- a big difference.”

Rwandan Lieutenant Rose Kabuye, 2004, as cited in Hogg (2009:35)

Jennie E. Burnet (2008:386) suggests that, while Rwandan women were given seats in the parliament, their possibility to affect policies decreased. She also calls the act of introducing gender based proportional representation as a disguise for authoritarianism and a way of showing a democratization process which is not actually happening, just like Stroh also argued. However, her conclusions are that as a whole, the governmental top-down gender initiatives have had a positive impact on gender equality. The effects can be seen in three ways. Firstly, in the long-term, the transformation in political subjectivity that comes as a result of political participation of women can prepare the path for the Rwandan governments’ participation in a genuine democracy. Secondly, even if Rwanda is an authoritarian state, policy can be influenced by interest groups, e.g. women, who have access to decision makers and possesses knowledge of the political environment and hence can “operate in the hidden” and influence policies indirectly. Thirdly, top-down gender initiatives by the government can lead to transformations in political identities, subjectivities, and agencies even when implemented by authoritarian regimes. These transformations may pave the way for effective engagement in more democratic governance if that emerges.

The RPF and President Paul Kagame’s role is an important part in the empowerment of women and in improving development. However, their values in relation to women’s rights suggest a
determination in including women but there is not evident research claiming they would want to ‘control’ them. In other words, while President Kagame and his regime can be seen as, at least partly, or mainly, responsible for the inclusion of women, research does not suggest that the women are his “marionettes” due to the regime being authoritarian. While it is not possible to determine it for sure, one could argue that the President Kagame’s regime created opportunities for women by including them, whether the regime or the women themselves are the factor of the improved development is harder to say. Previous research suggests that a party-controlled quota system usually makes the women deputies prone to be loyal towards their party which limits their possibilities to promote gender equality. This also raises questions of the effectivity of a quota system in an authoritarian state (Delvin and Elgie, 2008:240). Furthermore, research on post-conflict context suggests that women usually take a step back after a conflict and do not take upon roles they normally did not take on before the conflict (Handrahan, 2004). However, in the Rwandan case women did not relinquish from taking on ‘traditionally’ male roles in politics and economics, on the contrary, their interest increased and they become more engaged in politics and economics in the post-conflict period than before (Delvin and Elgie, 2008:240ff). This suggests that the women in the Rwandan parliament, even if included due to President Kagame's determination to do so, might also have had agency of their own. In conclusion, with support in previous research, one could argue that it is possible that the women in Rwanda were influential despite being on a quota system in an authoritarian state.

3.3.3 A unique political process or general development?

It has been claimed, repeatedly, throughout this thesis that Rwanda has experienced great and rapid development since the end of the genocide in 1994. One might therefore claim that the progress within gender-sensitive development is just a part of the more general, overall, development of the country. It therefore seems relevant to address that argument individually. As shown by previous research and presented in the case study one can argue for a political process in Rwanda that has had developmental outcomes. As Pearson’s (2008) study show the The Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) have been effective in creating the gender-based violence (GBV) bill and also more generally included men in the gender agenda which puts women’s issues on the agenda of all, men and women. Furthermore, Palmieri (2011) argues that women in all levels of government have found respect and made women’s issue part of the mainstream agenda. Furthermore, Abbott and Malunda (2015) argues that Rwanda has been successful in promoting development for women and girls in particular.
Previous research show both a correlation between increased female representation in Rwanda and a progress in gender-sensitive development. Secondary literature also suggest that women in parliaments in general are capable of change and women in the Rwandan parliament in particular have promoted women’s rights and changed the culture. However, it is still difficult to find the mechanism that leads to progress on the specific gender-sensitive indicators. Life expectancy is the most difficult indicator to establish the correlation to which this thesis recognizes as a flaw. The literature on women’s rights suggest a relation to lower levels of child and maternal mortality as well as to better education, but the connection to life expectancy is a bit more vague even if one could argue that better health in general should also lead to longer life expectancy. Decreased maternal deaths should also, logically, lead to better life expectancy for women in general.

While it is impossible to know how the gender-sensitive development in Rwanda would look like if there had not been such high numbers of female representatives in the parliament research still suggests that Rwanda has had a unique political process which most likely has had en effect on the gender-sensitive developmental outcomes.

Furthermore, what makes it difficult to identify the specific mechanisms that lead to development is the fact that several factors affect each other, making it challenging to know which one that is ’the most’ affective factor. The World Bank (2012) argues that laws need to be changed and adjusted in order to give women agency and create a framework where women can exercise agency. Examples of laws that promote women’s rights, which further promotes women’s agency, are laws for compulsory education which leads to that girls marry and bear children later. This promotes agency by increasing women’s educational achievements and hence also earnings in their adult life. Laws that improve women’s position in the household, by for example controlling incomes and assets, leads to improvement in girls’ and women’s legal status. Improving the legal status of women, in other words their ’value', can further lead to more investments in girls’ education, which, as stated, may lead to delayed marriage and childbearing.

These examples show that promoting women’s rights can lead to development in the gender-sensitive indicators analyzed in the first part of the analysis in this thesis. The examples above show that promoting women’s rights can lead to longer schooling of girls which further leads to improved agency for women. Furthermore, there are several connections between women’s rights and the
different gender-sensitive development indicators analyzed in this thesis. Musafili et. al’s (2015) health survey on child mortality in Rwanda presents results that show higher child mortality amongst children of women with no education. Thus, they suggest that longer schooling of girls may lead to decreasing rates of child mortality. Promoting women’s rights can both directly and indirectly, through education, improve child mortality rates. Hence it is difficult to determine if the promotion of women’s rights, weather by women in the parliament or by the regime, has directly affected the gender-sensitive developmental indicators, or for example improved women’s agency which has created the needed pre-conditions for women to promote gender-sensitive development. The conclusion is that all these factors affect each other and in order to find the specific mechanisms, if one wishes to do so, more research would have to be done.

4. Concluding Remarks

This thesis has discussed the relation between female representation in parliament and gender-sensitive developmental outcomes. The research question was asked in relation to two parts, first a comparative study focusing on statistics and, second, a case study based on secondary literature on the subject and the case of Rwanda. The statistics in the comparative study clearly shows a correlation in time between increased female representation and gender-sensitive development in Rwanda. It also establishes that Rwanda is different from its neighboring countries when it comes to both female representation and development indicating that the situation in Rwanda is unique in comparison with its neighboring countries. The tricky part, however, has been to isolate the causality. The case study has presented research which claims that women i post-conflict Rwanda were uniquely engaged politically and economically. Studies also show that the presence of women in parliament can both change the culture and influence policy makers even if the women deputies have limited direct effect on policy outcomes. Furthermore, it has been stated that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and President Paul Kagame has been an important part in including women in politics and promoting both women’s rights and development. While some previous research, mainly the studies focusing on gender equality and democracy in Rwanda, claim that women parliamentarians in the country do not have direct power over policy outcomes, others, such as Palmieri (2011) and Pearson (2008) claim that the precinct of women has resulted in direct changes. The most direct outcome might be the gender-based violence (GBV) bill which was initiated and carried out by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FFRP).
It is clear that a change occurred at the end of the genocide and created a tipping point for forces to promote gender equality. The horrific event somehow gave Rwanda the needed pre-conditions for women to step up, take on roles in politics and economics that had previously been ‘reserved’ for men. That, together with the strong governmental top-down pressure for gender equality, inclusion of women and promotion of women’s rights, by the RPF and President Paul Kagame, pushed Rwanda towards the great numbers of female representation seen today and a parliament which in many ways is so called ‘gender-sensitive’.

In conclusion, while it is impossible to isolate the causality of gender-sensitive development in Rwanda one can argue that several factors contributed to the progress where some of them are directly connected to the high number of women in the Rwandan parliament.

4.1 Further Research

In order to isolate the causality between female representation and gender-sensitive development more qualitative research needs to be made. Qualitative methods, like interviews and close up observations, would be needed in order to identify the causality and the specific features of how women affect policies regarding women-related issues in Rwanda. More research would also be needed to examine the role of the RPF and President Paul Kagame, to establish whether they are the direct reason for the developmental outcomes or a underlying factor that has established a precondition for gender-sensitive development by including women in politics.

This thesis has also presented previous research that claim women change the culture of the parliament which, indirectly, can lead to policy outcomes that promote women’s rights. However, it has not examined this deeper and can therefore not say much about the effects of this. One argument could be that changing the culture inside the parliament and normalizing the presence of women in parliament, as equal representatives, could break stereotypes which further empowers women in all areas contributing to improved gender-sensitive development. However, further research would have to be made to establish this.
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