

Feminist Research in Rwanda: Challenges and Importance

Anita Clair Fellman

Abstract

The building of a feminist scholarly tradition, never easy, is especially challenging in a traumatised, post-conflict nation like Rwanda with under-resourced young universities. So much about Rwandan women's lives, past and present, has still to be learned, but pressing needs for economic development and poverty alleviation help determine research topics, as does the government's distrust of alternative narratives of recent history. Many of the Centre's students were already responsible for implementing gender policies in both government and NGOs, so it was essential to help them acquire skills of gender analysis and knowledge of feminist scholarship to facilitate coherent policymaking.

No doubt there is truth in the adage 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing'. At times though, it is that 'little knowledge' that permits us to take on tasks that wiser heads shy away from.

When I went to Rwanda as a Fulbright Specialist in 2011, I had a fairly good knowledge of the existing scholarship on women and gender in Rwanda but had been to the country just once before for 10 days and had done no research there. I had perceived from the scholarly literature that there were many aspects of Rwandan women's history and current lives that had not been studied and

How to cite this book chapter:

Fellman, A.C. 2021. Feminist Research in Rwanda: Challenges and Importance. In: Randell, S., Yerbury, H. and Escrig-Pinol, A. (eds.) *Gender and Learning in Rwanda*. Pp. 27–42. Sydney: UTS ePRESS. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5130/aag.c>. License: CC BY-NC-ND.

certainly not from a feminist perspective. Since I was to be associated with the new Centre for Gender, Culture and Development (CGCD) at the Kigali Institute of Education (KIE), which hoped to become a central locus of feminist research in Rwanda, it made sense to me to take on as my Fulbright project the organising (with the aid of the staff at the Centre and the administration of KIE, as well as the financial and strategic support by the Provost of Old Dominion University (ODU) and the Chair of its Women's Studies Department) of what would be the first interdisciplinary conference on gender research in Rwanda, to both highlight and encourage a wider range of research projects.

'Focus on Rwanda: A conference on gender research and activism', which took place on 11–12 March 2011 in Kigali, included presentations, not only by those doing traditional scholarly research, but also by people who were working 'on the ground' on gender issues, whether in government ministries, civil society groups or nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). The hope was that the two camps would feed each other, providing observations and data for researchers on the one hand and on the other, inspiration for the gender activists to think about systematising their data gathering in future so as to produce formal research. Another somewhat unorthodox inclusion was a plenary session devoted to encouraging creative writing: how to free the writer within and find both support and publication outlets. Members of the inaugural class of students in the Master of Social Science (Gender and Development) program based at CGCD made a substantial contribution to the conference as presenters, moderators and volunteers. Enthusiasm was high by the end of 'Focus on Rwanda' (Fellman & Randell, 2012). We anticipated that the students would build on this experience to participate in other conferences as published feminist scholars, and that the conference itself could serve as a model for an ongoing series of such events, emanating from CGCD.

Now, eight years later, it does not seem that these hopes have been fulfilled to any marked degree in Rwanda. Under current leadership the renamed Centre for Gender Studies no longer has a strong research profile and no other entity in the country seems equipped to spearhead feminist research colloquia.¹ Trying to figure out why this is so, beyond an acknowledgment of my naivety and my implicit North American assumptions, leads us onto the complicated terrain of the challenges to doing feminist scholarship in Rwanda—and to its necessity.

Coming from a North American academic setting, I had blithely assumed that a gender studies centre would be feminist in perspective. Professor Shirley Randell, the founding director, as well as the faculty she brought in to design and teach the modules comprising the curriculum, were all feminists, but almost certainly KIE had another model in mind: that of development studies. Even in a centre for gender and development in a nation whose leaders had shown a strong commitment to gender equality, such a course of study does not necessarily signal a feminist perspective to those supporting its establishment or to those applying for admission. Indeed, at the beginning of their studies in

2011, very few of the master's students identified themselves as feminists and some in the class believed feminism to be unRwandan, a common perception. (S. Randell, 2018, personal communication, 22 Nov; Warner, 2018).

Education has been accorded an important role in Rwanda. Vision 2020, the development plan of the Government of Rwanda (GoR) launched in 2000, proposed to propel the country from poverty to a knowledge-based middle-income country in twenty years. The government is forthright in its determination to 'transform the Rwandan citizens into skilled human capital for the socio-economic development of the country' (Republic of Rwanda, 2016, p. 1). That clearly requires a rapid increase in general literacy and a larger body of university educated citizens. Toward that end, the government has eliminated tuition fees for schooling up to the level of upper secondary (save for the 'hidden' expenses of school uniforms and school supplies) and has succeeded in seeing the enrolment of girls surpass that of boys at all levels from primary to upper secondary. President Paul Kagame has proved to be an enthusiastic proponent as well of investment in tertiary education, albeit especially in science and technology. University attendance in Rwanda has had especially large gaps to overcome; by the mid 1980s, the National University had graduated only 2000 students (Mellow & Katopes, 2009, p. 55). In 2016, total enrolment in tertiary education in the nation was 90,803, divided between public universities (39,208) and private degree and diploma granting schools (51,595) (Republic of Rwanda, 2016, Table 7.1, p. 54).

Almost certainly from the government's perspective, the MSocSciGD, fits right into the plans to use an educated citizenry to help propel the nation's economic growth. Given the considerable gender policy apparatus that had been established in Rwanda by 2010, a program to train the administrators of those government ministries, agencies and organisations in gender analysis must have seemed timely. Unlike the outcomes in primary and secondary schooling—substantial drop-off rates so that 64 per cent of 15–24 year-olds have not completed primary education—(Rwanda National Education Profile 2014 Update), and university education—assessment of student learning showing disappointing levels of critical thinking abilities—(Schendel, 2015, 2016; Niyibizi et al., 2018), the government may be getting more than it had hoped for with this master's degree. Although no one had requested that the master's students be taught feminist analysis and research methods by means of feminist pedagogy, nonetheless that is what characterised this cohort's graduate education at CGCD. Is the government (or the global banks or NGOs) prepared to use any critiques of development policies the graduates may have evolved as well as their expertise in implementing them?

One might ask, so what if the government is indifferent at best to the feminist education of this cohort? Look at what has been accomplished for women and by women in Rwanda without a feminist orientation but with gender equality as a cross-cutting theme in Rwanda's long-and medium term

strategies. Why then is such a perspective needed? Is this not imposing Western assumptions on African contexts? Not according to African feminists who bristle at the idea that they have had to be tutored to perceive patriarchal institutions and policies and to fight against them. (Ali, 2018; Tripp, 2017; African Feminism (AF)). The Nigerian-British feminist scholar, Amina Mama (2003, p. 105) has written and spoken often about the necessity of gender activism to be embedded in:

gender-competent theory, research, and analysis that are fully cognizant of African realities, extend across the disciplines, and offer resources for addressing the challenge of supporting the pursuit of equitable development, from the micro-politics of individual identities to the macro-politics of global economic policies and strategic interests.

To which she adds, ‘We women are in no position to deprive ourselves of the intellectual tools that can assist us in pursuit of gender justice. The arena of the intellect has been used to suppress us’ (2001, p. 63). Ten years later she revisited this topic with a sobering assessment of the challenges facing feminist research in African contexts. She identifies the systemic challenges, most especially the neoliberal discourses that dominate global policy, privileging the role of the market in development, and notes the challenges to academic freedom from unstable or undemocratic regimes, describing ‘sustained climates of intimidation and threat that lead many scholars to censor themselves.’ Gender and women’s studies’ units she characterises as isolated and under-resourced: ‘The occasional international grants come in, with well-intentioned expatriate experts attached’. (Mama, 2011, pp. e4–6; Barnes, 2007). Ouch! So is there any purpose then in burdening students emerging from one of these centres with an intellectual perspective that is likely to be viewed with scepticism in the actual settings in which most of them work? I would argue, emphatically yes.

Mama’s reference to development policies, most often based on free-market, neoliberal premises, is key here in regard to the importance of feminist perspectives. These policies, imposed by lending organisations and donors upon virtually all developing economies and adopted by many wealthy countries as well, have nowhere succeeded in bringing entire populations out of poverty, and in fact, have contributed to growing disparities of wealth within countries and between men and women—an ever-growing feminisation of poverty. In some countries the decimation of public health and education systems, a resurgence of child poverty and the removal of social and environmental protections have been its by-products and have affected women disproportionately. (Chepyator-Thomson, 2005).

It has been postcolonial feminist activists and scholars, paying close attention to how women have fared under development policies, including those intended to bring women into legal adulthood and full economic participation,

who have served among its most trenchant analysts and critics (Kelleher, 2017). They have concluded that ‘legal rights alone are insufficient to fundamentally transform gendered power systems’ (Berry, 2015, p. 4) and that women’s power ‘cannot be defined by access to resources or rights; instead it is a question of control over these things’ (Mason, 1986; Malhotra & Mather, 1997, quoted in Berry, 2015, p. 5). Many feminists in the Global South, in countries heavily dependent on development assistance, suggest that the prevailing policies have goals exactly reversed; instead of chasing economic growth on the presumption that people in poor nations will ultimately benefit, the policy should be to put resources into human development, and only then will sustainable economic growth follow (Aguinaga et al., 2013).

Some of the same negative development outcomes for women are present in Rwanda too, regardless of the ‘strong political will to promote gender equality’, which co-exists with a strong dependence (albeit state influenced) on private sector-led growth (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013, p. 1117; Thomas, 2018, p. 56). Wealth inequality, made possible by robust economic growth, has markedly increased in recent years, but wealth concentrated within a very small segment of the population, with limited trickle-down potential, does not bode well for sustained development (Sindayigaya, 2012; Ansoms & Rostagno, 2012). Marie E Berry (2015, p. 2-3) describes, in regard to ‘ordinary’ Rwandan women:

a depressing paradox: despite the world’s highest percentage of women in parliament, some of the strongest state-led efforts to promote women, and an entire government apparatus designed with gender equality in mind, profound impediments to women’s equality are deeply entrenched and appear unlikely to dissipate any time soon.

These impediments include strongly embedded patriarchal family structures, with women’s worth, social adulthood and legal rights dependent upon marriage (not always easy with women 50.9 per cent of the population and men often too poor to marry), troubling levels of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence (among all social classes) despite laws against it and mechanisms for reporting it (Abari, 2017), and conventional gender-instilling ideas in the schooling that increasing numbers of girls are accessing. Women dependent on male earnings cannot afford to report beatings at the hands of their partners (Berry, 2015). Their recently won legal right to inherit land means little when the holdings increasingly are too small to provide a living or when customary land rights favouring male land tenure persist. Giving a cow to poor women in the ‘one cow per family’ program offers scant help to a woman on her own in a community in which milking cows is culturally coded as a male activity (Kubai & Ahlberg, 2013).²

What accounts for these ‘depressing paradoxes’? Feminist scholars of Rwanda, most often those living and writing outside the country, have

pointed out that GoR attention to gender equality is instrumental rather than foundational, and as Debusscher and Ansoms put it, ‘when gender equality concerns compete with economic development and societal modernisation objectives, as framed by the government, priority is given to the latter’ (2013, p. 1120). As one example, they contrast the government’s ‘efforts to create a business-friendly environment and to attract large-scale capital-intensive projects’ with their discouragement of ‘small-scale, often rural-based informal sector initiatives’, where women would have a better chance of participating and from which they would likely benefit more (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013, p. 1120; Bigler et al., 2017; Ochieng, Ouma & Birachi, 2014). In its efforts to market itself to international lending agencies, donors and investors, the GoR portrays the nation as the upcoming ‘Singapore of East Africa’ with clean streets and tidily dressed citizens in modern garb. The prohibition of informal work—dirty, hard to monitor and control—is part of this picture. However, facing a serious lack of formal jobs outside the dominant agricultural sector, from necessity women gravitate to the informal sector, hawking small amounts of merchandise, doing casual domestic work or laundry or sex work, all prohibited and subject to strictly enforced restrictions resulting in arrests and jail time, thereby assuring that such women remain mired in poverty. As it happens, the low-skill industries in which men cluster, driving the ubiquitous moto taxis, selling phone credit, doing construction work, etc. are less often deemed illegal (Berry, 2015, pp. 18–19).

If we care about Rwanda’s future and are to gain a clear-headed understanding of what is happening there, then we need to pay attention to those who are willing to probe behind the usual emphasis on economic development plans, societal modernisation and the impressive statistics on women in governance, and to look at the condition of the vast majority of Rwandan women so as to understand the rising levels of economic inequality and potential discontent. It is these scholars who have drawn our attention to the GoR’s neglect of ‘invisible labour’ performed by women in subsistence agriculture and care work. Their traditional responsibility for producing staple crops, combined with labour-intensive reproductive work, puts women at a disadvantage to men who are more able to participate in government-promoted agricultural modernisation and marketisation ventures, seen as one of the engines of growth. Similarly, these multiple responsibilities make them more vulnerable to exploitation as casual on-field agricultural workers in wealthier farmers’ fields (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013, p. 1122; Bigler et al., p. 25; Mutandwa & Wibabara, 2016).

Care work (household tasks and care for family and community) is similarly allowed to remain invisible. The work of maintaining a rural household in Rwanda is formidable. Only 10 per cent of households nationwide have running water, and in rural areas 55 per cent of households require travel of 30 minutes or longer to obtain water. Household electricity, while spreading in urban areas, is only to be found in 23 per cent of households overall and in only

12 per cent of rural households. Virtually no one uses electricity for cooking. Wood is the most common cooking fuel, especially in rural households (77 per cent), with another 14 per cent using some combination of straw/shrubs/grass. The labour of either women or children is required to provide these materials (NISR, 2015, pp. 21, 23–4, 25). The substantial number of women with male relatives in prison or labour camps have yet additional burdens; not only have they lost male labour, ‘but have the added responsibility of trekking to prisons, bringing their husbands, brothers or fathers food and other basic necessities’ (Purdeková, 2011, p. 491). Debusscher and Ansoms (2013, p. 1122) conclude that ‘the Rwandan government does not question the unequal division of care work in Rwandan society, nor is care work explicitly valued. Although unpaid and informal care workers are subsidising the economy, this contribution is excluded from the definition of work in national accounts and its implications for inequality are not discussed’. When asked about including domestic labour in the GDP, one of their interviewees (2011g), a male member of Parliament, responded that the idea was “discussed”, but that it is too complicated” (2013, p. 1122).

The unpaid appropriation of care work extends to civil society groups as well. In common with less progressive countries elsewhere in the Global South, the Rwandan government has allowed civil society groups—often but not exclusively composed of women volunteers—to provide basic care services for the elderly, bedridden and for victims of rape, domestic violence, etc. without any recognition or support. This puts the groups in a bind: ‘although service delivery is critically needed in a country with so many people lacking basic services, this practice is taking civil society’s energy and attention away from its research and advocacy role’ (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013, p. 1126). The government’s tolerance for the continued existence of these groups sometimes depends upon the alignment of their goals with government programs, thereby discouraging autonomous actions (Ryan, 2011). This may be one of the reasons that a feminist social movement has not arisen. Women are encouraged to think about the service they can provide their country, rather than their own rights.

There are also other challenges to creating a homogeneous women’s movement in a nation still struggling with forgiveness and reconciliation. In the years immediately following the genocide of 1994, Tutsi and Hutu women came together to do the basic work of cleaning up a devastated country without a functioning government. In those years ‘women’s organisations were some of the only cross-ethnic entities in the country, and they took the lead caring for orphans, rebuilding communities, and creating care groups for psycho-social support’ (Burnet, 2012, quoted in Berry, 2017, p. 839).³ At the same time, however, organisations created to provide support and care for victims were often specific in their categorisation, and since only Tutsi were considered officially to be victims, this allowed the groups to become ethnically homogenous. Tutsi-led organisations were better able to access international

funds and to create lasting structures, accomplishments much harder for Hutu women, given the lack of funding and distrust of Hutu organising in public spaces. (Pottier, 1996, quoted in Berry, 2017). Berry, inferring from her interview subjects their ethnicity (now illegal to discuss in Rwanda), concluded that the dozens of Hutu women she interviewed ‘had little social space in which to mobilize around their interests’ (Berry, 2017, p. 838). Berry also draws attention to another difficult-to-discuss divide between women: that between Tutsi ‘survivors’ (present during the genocide) and ‘returnees’ (those who grew up in exile and returned to the country after 1994), with the returnees better positioned to flourish from the policies of an administration led by returnees. When combined, she concludes, ‘with the regime’s tight control over civil society, these hierarchies have limited women’s ability to sustain cross-ethnic and cross-class collective action around shared interests, such as access to financial capital or protection against gender-based violence’ (Berry, 2017, p. 839). This is in contrast to the situation elsewhere in the Global South where ‘feminist praxis lays emphasis on developing counter-publics or the space of civil society. Women’s groups have emerged as vital counterforces to free market programs’, whether as formal organisations or spontaneously formed groups (Simon-Kumar, 2004, p. 498).

Many women’s and human rights groups across the world submitted critiques of the UN’s proposed 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) that were to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set to expire in 2015. One major global women’s coalition argued that the report establishing the framework for the new goals did not go far enough in ‘identifying how women and girls face unequal and unfair burdens in sustaining the well-being of their societies and economies in both the wage and the care economy’ or their ‘deeper experiences of poverty, deprivation and social marginalization’ (AWID, 2013; Abelenda, 2015). Rwandan women’s voices are missing from critiques like these, which resulted in some changes to the SDG’s final form.⁴

Linked to the constrained role for independent civil society groups in Rwanda is the very limited scope for ordinary women to participate in creating gender policy (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013, p. 1128). Not only control but even information flows downward more often than it moves up from the grassroots. Mechanisms of accountability, such as *imihigo* (public pledges of performance) are used to extract compliance with government policies at all levels rather than to offer officials realistic appraisals of the population’s needs and responses (Purdeková). This means that even well-meaning government policy may not be understood or accepted by the majority of the population who live in rural settings. It also means that rural people’s concerns and dissatisfactions (potentially regime-destabilising), not to mention their possibly helpful observations and ideas, are not solicited.

The most easily accessible far-reaching critiques of the current administration in regard to the disconnect between formal gender policies and the actual situations of poor and marginalised women, have come from feminist scholars living and writing outside the country. Even with the scholarly domination of Western feminists, not all such researchers are able to get research permits. This is partly because the GoR is rightly determined that outsiders should not build their careers on Rwandan data with no benefits to the nation, and instead encourages Western scholars to find Rwandan research partners and co-author publications with them, thereby helping Rwandans get regional and international exposure (Motlafi, 2018, pp. 15–16). At other times, if a proposed topic has the potential to contradict the government's dominant narrative about Rwanda, the foreigner may be refused a research permit or have it withdrawn midway through the research project. (Motlafi, 2018, pp. 17–18; Thomson, 2010).

Might this happen to Rwandan researchers too? It is hard to know whether scholars in Rwanda self-censor themselves in response to an authoritarian regime that prefers to set its own parameters for permitted criticism. It is no secret that there is intolerance of dissent within the country (and even from Rwandans in diaspora) as well as a curtailing of civil liberties. Regardless, the domination of feminist scholarship on Rwanda by Westerners is not healthy or desirable. Clearly, Rwandan ownership of scholarly discourses would be preferable, both because of the ethical and practical problems of 'speaking for others' and because wide-ranging and free-wheeling research by Rwandans on all aspects of their society and history could lead to better policy and to bringing the marginalised out of the shadows. There is still so much to learn about Rwandan society, past and present, from feminist perspectives; the research should not be left solely to the handful of Western scholars able to attain research permits.

Let's return now to those graduates from that inaugural cohort of master's students. Might they be the ones to spearhead a robust tradition of feminist scholarship on Rwanda? To be of the most use to their country, shouldn't they be allowed to turn their feminist gazes upon it? Just one of them has become a university lecturer or full-time researcher thus far, but at least one other of that first cohort will have completed a PhD by the time this book is published, and others are either enrolled in PhD programs or hope to be shortly. Many of the group, while not employed in academic settings, are fully engaged in feminist praxis in Rwanda, throughout Africa and beyond. By their own reckoning, they have been marked by what they learned about the social construction of gender in the Gender and Development curriculum, as well as by the gender analysis frameworks, the transitional justice module, as well as the feminist research and ethnographic methodologies, especially the art of respectful and ethical listening to their subjects. A few of the graduates sought the master's degree for credentialing purposes, having discerned from work that they had

done for international NGOs, that gender was a criterion of interest to these organisations. More, however, entered the program because they already had a passion for human rights work and for correcting gender inequities that they had experienced or observed. Some had lived through the genocide of 1994 and others had been spared that only to experience the violence of 1996 in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Almost all of them have lived or worked outside Rwanda at some point in their lives, thus have had access to broader perspectives. Their master's theses, virtually all focusing on development issues, reflect what they learned in the program and what interested them, modified, of course, by what was possible to do given time and mobility constraints. These show them to be well-attuned to the poverty experienced by their countrywomen, since almost a quarter of the students chose to write on some aspect of poverty or on women's self-help efforts. Another quarter of them focused on gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS or sexuality concerns. Others focused on schooling, reproductive health, and on male socialisation and male-female household dynamics, among other topics.

These concerns are reflected in their work lives too, as described in their essays in this book. Some of them are frank in acknowledging that the few in Rwanda have been helped while the poorest are neglected, or that in order for development to be sustainable, it must include vulnerable children and single mothers, or that civil society in Rwanda needs to grow and strengthen. Many of the program's first graduates have been working persistently to deal as best they can with various facets of the gender inequities and human rights violations they see. These efforts are taking place, not only in Rwanda, but more broadly around Africa. There are some from the cohort who work or have worked for the government, but many more have taken the NGO or INGO path, either as employees or consultants, moving from organisation to organisation, sometimes elsewhere in Africa in senior positions with many people working under them. They have faced daunting situations, dealing with refugees in conflict areas or combatting Female Genital Mutilation in male dominant societies or working with traumatised survivors of atrocities. Often their self-described mode of leadership is participative and empowering—one might even say feminist.

Some have made presentations based on their work at international meetings. A few of the cohort have started their own NGOs and some of the deeply transformative projects in which these organisations have been involved have led to scholarly publications for class members (Doyle et al., 2014; 2018). Many of the gender practitioners among the cohort have fallen in love with research, seeing it as the essential complement to the practical focus of gender organisations and as a powerful tool of effective advocacy. Just one of the class—a male—has expressed a desire to be an academic. That more of them do not seem interested, at least at this time, is understandable. The women may be aware of the special challenges for female academics as highlighted in a recent article on the University of Rwanda website (UR, 2018). Perhaps they all have

some inkling of how hard it is to do research as overworked lecturers in African universities starved for research funds.⁵ Most of the cohort are married and they all have children. It is hard to imagine their giving up their relatively well-paid jobs as gender administrators, consultants and trainers for the poorer pay of academia.

In fact, whether or not more of them go on to study for their PhDs, if they are able to build probing feminist research into their lives as gender practitioners, then they will become what Rwanda needs most: scholar-activists.⁶

Notes

- ¹ In November 2017, the International Monetary Fund, the Rwandan Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, UN Women and the Uogonzi Institute convened a peer-learning event, 'Gender equality from theory to practice', in Kigali. This was not devoted to feminist scholarship but to 'spreading best practices in promoting gender equality beyond the dissemination of theoretical approaches'. (IMF, 2017).
- ² Mann and Berry characterise programs such as the 'one cow per family', rural land reform, free primary education and the Mutuelles de Sante health care system as 'wealth sharing mechanisms' designed to defuse dissatisfaction and unrest among a peasantry that is otherwise not benefiting from development policies under which the urban elites have prospered (Mann & Berry, 2016).
- ³ It should also be pointed out that the women's movement, however broadly or narrowly based, strongly advocated for the pioneering gender legislation in Rwanda: 'the 'inheritance law' of 1999, the ratification of the new constitution in 2003, the land policy of 2004, followed by the organic land law of 2005, and the proposal on gender-based violence (GBV) which became law in 2009'. (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013, 1115).
- ⁴ There appears to be nothing written in Rwanda comparable to the South African Master's thesis, 'A Postcolonial Feminist Critique of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A South African Application'. (Struckmann, 2017), which is reprinted in an issue of the South African journal *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*, devoted to feminist examinations of the SDGs. At least one Rwandan feminist, Dinah Musindarwezo, actively participated as a critic of the proposed SDGs and published an essay in that same issue of *Agenda*. At the time she was Director of FEMNET (the African Women's Development and Communication Network) and was living in Kenya. (Musindarwezo, 2018).
- ⁵ It has been estimated recently that 'sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 13.5% of the global population but less than 1% of global research output' (Fonn et al., 2018, p. 1163).

- ⁶ With the GoR's recent policy shift to promotion of a domestic manufacturing sector, the controversial imposition of tariffs on imported second-hand clothing and the courting of Chinese garment factories to set up shop in a Special Economic Zone, yet another fruitful area for feminist research has opened up (Behuria, 2017; Lyu, 2018).

References

- Abari, N 2017, 'Rwanda's path to gender equity', *Berkeley Political Review*, 18 Oct. Available at: <https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2017/10/18/rwandas-path-to-gender-equity/> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Abelenda, A 2015, 'Make watered-down SDGs work', *Alliance*, vol.20, no.4. Available at: <https://www.alliancemagazine.org/feature/make-watered%E2%80%91down-%E2%80%A8sdgs-work/> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- African feminism (AF) Available at <https://africanfeminism.com> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Aguinaga, M, Lang, M, Mokrani, D and Santillana, A 2013, 'Development critiques and alternatives: a feminist perspective', in Langand, M and Mokrani, D (eds) *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions from Latin America*, Transnational Institute, Amsterdam, pp. 41–59.
- Ali, A 2018, 'We're African women and we're feminists', *Open Democracy* 50.50, 23 Jan. Available at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/aisha-ali/african-women-african-feminists>. [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Ansoms, A and Rostagno, D 2012, 'Rwanda's Vision 2020 halfway through: what the eye does not see', *Review of African Political Economy*, vol.39, no. 133, pp. 427–450. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2012.710836>. [Accessed 03/27/20].
- AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development) 2013, *Some reactions to the HLP Report on the Post-2015 Agenda from a women's rights perspective*. Available at: <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/some-reactions-hlp-report-post-2015-agenda-womens-rights-perspective> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Barnes, T 2007, 'Politics of the mind and body: gender and institutional culture in African universities', *Feminist Africa*, vol. 8, pp. 8–25. Available at: http://www.agi.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/429/feminist_africa_journals/archive/08/fa_8_feature_article1_0.pdf [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Behuria, P 2017, 'The tentative developmental state in Rwanda: from anti-manufacturing to recapturing the domestic market', *International Development LSE Blog*. Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/international-development/2017/02/17/the-tentative-developmental-state-in-rwanda-from-anti-manufacturing-to-recapturing-the-domestic-market-2/> [Accessed 03/27/20].

- Berry, ME 2015, 'When 'bright futures' fade: paradoxes of women's empowerment in Rwanda', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 41, no.1, pp. 1–27. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1086/681899>. [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Berry, ME 2017, 'Barriers to women's progress after atrocity: evidence from Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Gender and Society*, vol.31, no.6, pp. 830–853. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243217737060>. [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Bigler, C, Amacker, M, Ingabire, C and Birachi, E 2017, 'Rwanda's gendered agricultural transformation: A mixed-method study on the rural labour market, wage gap and care penalty', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 64, pp. 17–27. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2017.08.004>. [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Chepyator-Thomson, JR (ed.) 2005, *African Women and Globalization*, Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ.
- Debusscher, P and Ansoms A 2013, 'Gender equality policies in Rwanda: public relations or real transformations?' *Development and Change*, vol. 44, no. 5, pp. 1111–1134. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12052>. [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Doyle, K, Kato-Wallace, J, Kazimbaya, S and Barker, G 2014, 'Transforming gender roles in domestic and caregiving work: preliminary findings from engaging fathers in maternal, newborn, and child health in Rwanda', *Gender & Development*, vol.22, no. 3, pp. 515–531. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2014.963326> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Doyle, K, Levtov, RG, Barker, G, Bastian, GG, Bingenheimer, JB, Kazimbaya, S, Nzabonimpa, A, Pulerwitz, J, Sayinzoga, F, Sharma, V and Shattuck, D 2018, 'Gender-transformative Bandebereho couples' intervention to promote male engagement in reproductive and maternal health and violence prevention in Rwanda: Findings from a randomized controlled trial', *PLOS ONE*, 4 April. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0192756> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Fellman, A and Randell, S (eds) 2012, *Focus on Rwanda: A Conference on Gender Research and Activism: Proceedings*, 11–12 March 2011, SRIA Rwanda Ltd, Kigali, Rwanda. Available at: http://www.millennia2015.org/files/files/Publications/Conference_Rwanda_Research_and_Activism_EntireProceedings_final_for_printing_2012.pdf [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Fonn, S, Laban, P, Cotton, P, Habib, A, Mulwa, P, Mbithi, F, Mtenje, A, Nawangwe, B, Ogunbodede, E, Olayinka, I, Golooba-Mutebi, F and Ezeh, A.2018, 'Repositioning Africa in global knowledge production', *The Lancet*, vol.392, no.10153, pp. 1163–1166. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31068-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31068-7) [Accessed 03/27/20].
- International Monetary Fund 2017, *Gender Equality from Theory to Practice: A Peer Learning Experience*. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/>

- Seminars/Conferences/2017/10/30/peer-learning-conference-on-gender-equality [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Kelleher, F 2017, 'Disrupting orthodoxies in economic development—An African feminist perspective', *Feminist Africa*, vol. 22, pp. 128–38. Available at: https://www.agi.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/429/feminist_africa_journals/archive/22/fa22_critical_reflection_3.pdf [Accessed 09/25/18].
- Kubai, A and Ahlberg, BM 2013, 'Making and unmaking ethnicities in the Rwandan context: implications for gender-based violence, health, and wellbeing of women', *Ethnicity & Health*, vol. 18, no. 5, pp. 469–482. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2013.832012> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Lyu, T 2018, 'Chinese garment firm helps promote “made in Rwanda”', *New China*, 2 May 2018. Available at: www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/01/c_137149281.htm [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Mama, A 2003, 'Restore, reform but do not transform: the gender politics of higher education in Africa', *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 101–125. Available at: <https://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article561&lang=en> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Mama, A 2011, 'What does it mean to do feminist research in African contexts?', *Feminist Review Conference Proceedings*, e4–20. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2011.22>.
- Mann, L and Berry, M 2016, 'Understanding the political motivations that shape Rwanda's emergent developmental state', *New Political Economy*, vol.21, no. 1, pp. 119–144. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1041484> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Mellow, GO and Katopes, P 2009, 'A prescription for the emerging world', *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, vol. 41, no. 5, pp. 55–59. Available at <https://doi.org/10.3200/CHNG.41.5.55-61> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Motlafi, N 2018, 'The coloniality of the gaze on sexual violence: a stalled attempt at a South Africa-Rwanda dialogue?', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 9–23. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1358908>. [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Musindarwezo, D 2018, 'The 2030 Agenda from a feminist perspective: No meaningful gains without greater accountability for Africa's women', *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 25–35. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2018.1427693> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Mutandwa, E and Wibabara, S 2016, 'Natural resources and household incomes among rural women: Analysis of communities domiciled near national parks in Rwanda', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 79–90. Available at: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol17/iss4/6> [Accessed 03/27/20].

- National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) [Rwanda], Ministry of Health (MOH) [Rwanda], and ICF International 2015, *Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey 2014-15*, NISR, MOH, and ICF International, Rockville, Maryland. Available at: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR316/FR316.pdf> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Niyibizi, E, Sibomana, E, Niyomugabo, C, Yanzigiye, B, Ngabonziza, A, Jean de Dieu, A and Perumal, J 2018, 'Assessment in a Rwandan higher education institution: a quest for aligned assessment to promote socio-economic transformation', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol. 43, no. 7, pp. 1166–1182. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1436688> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Ochieng, J, Ouma, E and Birachi, E 2014, 'Gender participation and decision making in crop management in Great Lakes region of Central Africa', *Gender, Technology and Development*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 321–362. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971852414544007> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Purdeková, A 2011, "Even if I am not here, there are so many eyes": surveillance and state reach in Rwanda', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 475–497. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X11000292>. [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Republic of Rwanda 2016, *2016 Education Statistical Yearbook*, Ministry of Education, Kigali. Available at: http://mineduc.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf_files/2016_Education_Statistical_Yearbook.pdf [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Ryan, S 2011, 'The dilemmas of post-identity organizing: unmaking feminist ties in southern Rwanda', *Women & Language*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 61–78.
- Schendel, R 2015, 'Critical thinking at Rwanda's public universities: Emerging evidence of a crucial development priority', *International Journal of Educational Development*, vol. 42, pp. 96–105. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.04.003> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Schendel, R 2016, 'Adapting, not adopting: Barriers affecting teaching for critical thinking at two Rwandan universities', *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 60, no. 3, pp. 549–570. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1086/687035> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Simon-Kumar, R 2004, 'Negotiating emancipation: the public sphere and gender critiques of neo-liberal development', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 485–506. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674042000235627> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Sindayigaya, A 2012, 'Rwanda: Wealth inequality, an impediment to sustainable human development', *Insightful Quotient*, Available at: <http://insightfulquotient.com/rwanda-wealth-inequality-an-impediment-to-sustainable-human-development/> [Accessed 24 Nov 2018].

- Struckmann, C 2017, A postcolonial feminist critique of the 2020 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A South African application. Master of Arts Thesis, Stellenbosch University. Stellenbosch, South Africa.
- Thomas, P 2018, 'Whose Vision 2020? The World Bank's development and educational discourse in Rwanda', *Development Studies Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 50–58. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/21665095.2018.1469422> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Thomson, S 2010, 'Getting close to Rwandans since the genocide: Studying everyday life in highly politicized research settings', *African Studies Review*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 19–34. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0002020600005655> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Tripp, AM 2017, 'How African feminism changed the world', *African Arguments*, 8 March, Available at: <https://africanarguments.org/2017/03/08/how-african-feminism-changed-the-world/> [Accessed 03/27/20].
- University of Rwanda 2018, *UR female academics meet to reflect on challenges preventing them to thrive*. Available at: webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:qRVUE_5kIRAJ:https://ursweden.ur.ac.rw/?q%3Dnode/536&hl=en&gl=au&strip=1&vwsr=0 [Accessed 03/27/20].
- Warner, G 2018, 'Rwanda ranks in the top 5 for gender equity. Do its teens agree?' *National Public Radio*, 10 Jan. Available at: www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/01/10/577018509/rwanda-ranks-in-the-top-5-for-gender-equity-do-its-teen-girls-agree. [Accessed 03/27/20].

Contributor Biography

Anita Clair Fellman is Professor Emerita of Women's Studies and former Chair of the Women's Studies Department at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. Her most recent book is *Little House, Long Shadow: Laura Ingalls Wilder's Impact on American Culture* (2008, paperback. 2016). In 2011 she was a Fulbright Specialist at the Kigali Institute of Education where she worked with staff members at the Centre for Gender, Culture and Development to organise 'Focus on Rwanda: A Conference on Gender Research and Activism'.