

## The potential of endogenous learning approaches to gender and development studies in Rwanda

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### Abstract

*This paper argues for a middle-inclusive ground within multiple feminist perspectives from which the potential for the endogenous learning approach to gender and development studies can be grounded. There is a challenge of developing context-specific approaches to learn from Rwanda's achievements in gender and women empowerment. The study used secondary data sources to explore how endogenous learning is relevant for gender and development studies. We discuss global gender and development issues, the African and Western feminist discourses, while building a case for an endogenous feminist analysis that is rooted within an endogenous development paradigm. An analysis of gender inclusive law making in Rwanda's parliament and RWAMREC's MenEngage approach illustrate how Rwanda is using endogenous approaches to address gender-based violence. The study recommends the decolonizing of gender studies, building Community-University-Public Partnerships, and endogenous knowledge research through field-based learning at grass root communities.*

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**Key Words:** *Endogenous approaches, African Feminisms, Learning for Development, Gender Studies, Rwanda*

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### Introduction

This study explores the potential of an endogenous approach to learning from Rwanda's development efforts in inclusive law making in Rwanda's parliament and the men-engage approach used by Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC)<sup>5</sup> to address gender-based violence. Despite Rwanda's achievements in gender and women empowerment, including 64% (2013) women parliamentary representation, which is the highest in the world, there is still a challenge of developing context-specific learning approaches within higher education institutions, among other research organizations.

In the first part of this paper, we acknowledge that both globally and in Africa the social construction of men's and women's roles continue to have a major impact on the life cycle of individuals, as gender translates into inequalities within human capital, economic opportunities, citizenship, and political participation. Global gender issues also continue to be shaped and influenced by feminine and masculine categories. We acknowledge that while there have global achievements in gender and women empowerment, there are still challenges to reducing gender inequalities and women empowerment, such as, gender-based violence, high maternal mortality rates, HIV/AIDS, and conflicts which continue to displace women and children, among others.

In the second part of the paper, the African feminist discourse is analysed together with the Western feminist discourses, in order to understand the discourses that have informed and shaped global gender and development studies. Feminism in Africa is to speak of feminisms in the plural within Africa, between Africa and other continents in recognition of the multiplicity of perspectives (Nnaemeka, 2005). Therefore, in Africa, a western feminist discourse did not exist prior to its colonial imposition of a dichotomous model of sexual

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<sup>5</sup> RWAMREC is a non-governmental organization whose vision is to, "Create a society where women and men share roles and responsibilities for raising families and governing society in equality and respect for human rights". RWAMREC'S aims are to mobilize Rwandan men to: support women's leadership; contribute to the eradication of men's violence against women; and serve as role models for the promotion of positive masculine behaviours.

differences, thus rendering women subordinate, residual and inferior to men (Oyewumi, 1997). African feminism resists the exclusion of men from women's issues; on the contrary, it invites men as parties in problem solving and social change (Nnaemeka, 2005). The African feminist theory places value on a sense of communalism and cooperation, revealing the kind of survival strategies that women have developed over time, which inspires values of self reliance, self-determinations and empowerment approaches.

In the third part, we discuss the concept of endogenous learning in the context of gender and development studies. The endogenous learning approach in this study is viewed as culturally-based learning from local gender institutions, using both local and external knowledge as the base from which lessons can be drawn to apply an endogenous analytical framework that is rooted within an endogenous development paradigm. The Endogenous development paradigm is mainly based on local strategies, values, institutions and resources. In this context, the study analyses the potential of an endogenous learning approach that builds on Rwandan people's own criteria, taking into account their material, social and economic wellbeing. The local culture is a critical starting point and central framework for social progress and cross-cultural exchanges.

The fourth part of the paper shows how Rwanda has used a high women's parliamentary representation at 64% (2013), to engender on inclusive law making in the creation of anti-violence movement that includes men. While the international community has lagged behind in implementing the Gender in Development (GAD) approach to include both men and women, the co-sponsorship of a draft bill by four men and four women in Rwanda's parliament, demonstrates that men can be involved in the institutionalisation of gender equality both at national and village level. At the societal level, RWAMREC has empowered local government officials and opinion leaders to engage in gender-based violence prevention activities in their respective communities. RWAMREC has also facilitated local communities to form community groups called "*umugoroba w'ababyeyi*" or parent's evening dialogues as community forums to discuss strategies of ending gender-based violence within their homes.

This study builds on the above debates to explore the potential of endogenous approach to learning from strengthening Rwanda's efforts to reduce gender-based violence. The endogenous learning approach is relevant for consolidating the achievements and addressing the challenges of gender and women empowerment in Rwanda and beyond. This provides a moment of reflexive learning to generate alternative models for promoting gender equality and women empowerment in the 2015 post-MDG development framework.

### **Global Gender and Development Issues: An Overview**

The nature of global gender issues that affect men and women and the specific attributes of masculinity and femininity vary across cultures, races, classes and even age groups. Thus Arthur Brittan argues that by denying the social construction of gender, masculinism serves to justify and "naturalize" (depoliticize) male domination because, "it takes for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and public spheres" (Brittan, 1989:4).

Peterson et al. (1993) argue that feminism is a complicated and contested term, which can be given a unique definition: because several forms of feminism exist. However, the common thread among feminisms is an orientation valuing women's diverse experiences and taking seriously women's interests in and capacities for bringing about social and political change. What feminists seek is an end to social constructions of gender inequality, not a simplistic role reversal in which women gain power over men. It ought to be recognized that masculine or feminine perspectives can be held by either men or women because those perspectives are politically determined, not biologically grounded. As Nnaemeka (2005) extends this argument to show that feminism in Africa is to speak of feminisms in the plural with in Africa, between Africa and other continents in recognition of the multiplicity of perspectives.

According to the *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, "gender" is referred to as the socially, [culturally] constructed and learned male and female roles, behaviors and expectations. All cultures interpret and translate the biological differences between men and women into beliefs about what behaviors and activities are appropriate for each gender as well as their rights, resources and power (World Bank, 2011). For instance, most African communities assign the responsibility of child rearing to women and girls, and hunting, manual labour, military services and security to men (although there has been swapping of roles in certain contexts). Gender is a cultural construction that shapes one's life opportunities, chances and roles at the individual, family, community, national, and global levels.

Gender lenses are used to determine the way households allocate resources to sons and daughters, through decisions about boys' or girls' education or about where they should work, with sons typically working on the farm and in other market related activities while daughters should focus on the home and care-giving activities. By the time girls and boys become adults and form households, women typically have fewer years of education than men (although this is changing), work longer hours but fewer in the labor force, earn lower wages, and have less say in their communities and societies (World Bank, 2011: 46).

The global gender discourse in development can be traced back to the 1970s, when the negative effects of development on women and their significant but unrecognized role in economic production were first documented in 1970 (Boserup, 1970). This and other complaints that women had been excluded from development, occurred in the midst of a new wave of feminism which swept across the USA and Europe at that time. What was being demanded by then was equal rights – equal opportunities, equal pay, the right to be regarded as fully 'human' and the right to be heard in public (Simmons, 1997). This has not changed the global processes yet, as the gender inequalities continue to retard community development.

In the past quarter century there has been a rise in global prosperity that has had an unprecedented impact on many education and health outcomes, as well as labour opportunities. More women are attending universities across the world, and women now make up over 40 percent of the world's labour force (World Bank, 2011). However, there are still global gender inequalities within political, social and economic spheres. What is at stake at this critical juncture is to examine the post-2015 development models, amidst the 2008 global financial

and economic crisis, coupled with a food, and environmental crisis. We believe the discussion on this grim global development situation cannot neglect the role of gender hierarchies.

In order to address global gender inequalities, most of the United Nations have ratified and adhered to a number of global agreements, charters and declarations, including, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Rabber and Scampini (2012) argue, that all the discussions on the development agenda, are yet to be firmly grounded in the range of these international human rights obligations/agreements. However, on the African continent there are progressive initiatives in countries like Rwanda, known for having the world's highest percentage of female parliamentarians, occupying 64% of the seats in the Lower Chamber, but also known for its progressive policies in advocating for women across all social and economic sectors. While such and more progress has been made to enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women, they are still affected by high maternal mortality rates, high at 640 deaths per 100,000 live births (WHO 2012). Women are most infected with HIV/AIDS, violence against women, which affects one in four women in some countries, despite the existing laws. Conflicts are displacing women and children and making them vulnerable to abuse as they seek safety. Access to justice in these circumstances is minimal. A recent joint study of the UN Economic Commission for Africa and UN Women has found that violence against women, particularly intimate partner violence, is costing our governments 1-3% of GDP (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2014).

### **African Endogenous Feminist Thought**

As Nnaemeka (1997) asserts, it is more accurate to argue not in terms of a monolith (African feminism) but rather in the context of a pluralism (African feminisms) that capture the fluidity and dynamism of the different cultural imperatives, historical forces, and localized realities conditioning women's activism/movements in Africa-from the indigenous variants to the state-sponsored configurations in the postcolonial era. Nnaemeka (2005) shows, the language of feminist engagement in Africa is about collaborating, negotiating and compromising, while the language of western feminist scholarship and engagement is disruptive, challenging, to deconstruct and to blow apart. African feminism challenges through negotiation and compromise. Steady (1989) shows how African feminism is an epistemology that enables African women to theorize their gendered status in society. African feminisms combine racial, sexual, class, and cultural dimensions of oppression to produce a more inclusive brand of feminism through which women are viewed first and foremost as human beings rather than sexual beings. This body of knowledge encompasses freedom from oppression based on political, economic, social and cultural manifestations of racial, cultural, sexual, and class biases. Therefore, as Nnaemeka (2005) argues, to speak of feminism in Africa is to speak of feminisms in the plural within Africa, between Africa and other continents in recognition of the multiplicity of perspectives (Nnaemeka, 2005). Nnameaka (1997) also views this as an ideology that evokes the power of African women and their identities amid obstacles that confront them.

Oyewumi (1997) asserts that the Western feminist discourse did not exist prior to the colonial imposition of a dichotomous model of sexual differences that rendered women subordinate, residual and inferior to men. For example, Western Christianity was and is still instrumental in denying women positions of leadership and power simply because they are women. The western economic system that puts emphasis on employment and money has undermined the importance of economic activities in which women are engaged and which sustain families and lives (Kanyandogo,2008). Therefore, the African continent is also still rooted in cultures that are patriarchal, where the rule of men over women and young children take precedence in not only religious, economic systems, but also political systems.

As a result there areas of disagreement and resistance to the universalisation of Western notions and concepts; these include perceptions on what African feminism is not in the spheres of, radical feminism, motherhood, language, sexuality, priorities (gender) separatism and universalism. Such resistances and disagreements have contributed to defining African feminism. However, what is crucial is how the definitions and explanations are contextualized. To meaningfully explain African feminism, it should respond to what is happening in the African environment, not to Western feminism. African feminism is not reactive; it is proactive. It has a life of its own, and it is rooted in the African environment. Its uniqueness emanates from the cultural and philosophical specificity of its provenance (Nnaemeka, 2005).

Therefore, the challenge is to devise endogenous learning ways from the multiplicity of feminist perspectives, other than viewing the world through the western feminist discourses. African gender studies ought to utilize the opportunity for learning from both exogenous feminist discourses (such as the Western) and the African indigenous feminist discourses. In this context, an African endogenous feminist analysis is necessary for understanding the socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic contexts for gender and women empowerment, which can inform the teaching, research agendas of women and gender studies in teaching and learning in higher education, among other research institutions.

An African endogenous feminist thought recognises that feminism did not develop in an academic setting, but in the villages where the inclusion of women was evident in the social, economic, ritual, and political spheres (Steady, 1989:5-8). The nature of African village life was one of collectivity not autonomy. By virtue of the collectivity, African feminism emerged as a unified collective thought. Struggling against oppression was not a singularly individualistic task; rather, these women utilized their collective framework for support. In the struggle to overcome different oppressions, African women were the original feminists who sought to emancipate themselves from the bonds of servitude, inequality, and racial discrimination (Steady, 1989: 20-21). To extend this argument, Wane et al. (2002) shows that African feminism is about how African women see the world from their perspective and those ideas also encapsulate issues that affect men and also women themselves. African feminism is not about women issues, but societal issues.

It was during colonialism, that African societies and in particular African women's lives, changed drastically. Traditional systems were disrupted, while those reinforcing inequalities were cultivated. For instance

in Algeria, the colonial administration felt that to destroy “the structure of Algerian society and its capacity for resistance, [they had] first of all to conquer the women...go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in house where men keep them out of sight” (Fanon, 1963). Algerian women, like other African women who were colonised, fought side by side with men during liberation wars, not only from colonial governments, but also from the gender inequalities that were reinforced by colonialism. While the colonialists presented themselves as the liberator of women from Islamic patriarchy, they were actually the first source of oppression of the whole society. I concur with Pereira (1973) that African women are ‘fighting against two colonialisms’, that is, the internally induced patriarchal structures and externally engineered imperialistic contexts.

As gender entered the development discourse in the 1970s, with governments adopting it in policy and practice, the African women’s movement continued to be shaped and influenced by activism against colonial rule and independence. After independence few women were accorded politically relevant positions in the new governments. In the 1980s, African women understood that they were paying the highest price for the political and economic stability in their countries (Wane, 2010). In the aftermath of the UN decade for women, many Women in Development (WID)<sup>6</sup> organizations were founded with both national and regional divisions. These organizations were challenged by a lot of resistance from their national governments (Maerten, 2004). As Anyidoho and Manuh, (2010) indicate in their analysis of the discourse of women’s rights and empowerment in selected Ghanaian institutions, the concern with gender may be due to either one or a combination of the following factors: the ideological positioning of African countries, the demands by their donors and development partners, and demands by organized local groups and NGOs.

In addition to the issue of the ideological positioning, we have to mention also the difficulties related to implementation, despite the enormous financial resources spent on development, the results have not been satisfactory. The problems of gender equality are not related to project preparation, but to attitudes, power relations, and working relationships between project stakeholders in gender institutions in Africa. Challenges remain in learning from the contexts, in order to appropriate local meanings and resistances in the development discourses and policy environments. This had greatly affected community-driven development, a bottom approach that draws on community participation through promotion of gender and women empowerment. The challenge remains in bridging the gap between the macro and micro levels, i.e. the policy level and the grassroots level.

Different states in sub-Saharan Africa have had reasons behind their acceptance of the gender discourses in development, as well as the balance of power and the political will to initiate change, for reducing or stagnating gender inequalities. Gender equality is enshrined in many African constitutions and countries such as South Africa, Uganda, Rwanda, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria and Kenya but the extent to

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<sup>6</sup> The Women in Development Approach (WID) can be generally taken to have originated from Boserup’s (1970) works that adhered to the economic approach of modernisation. WID attempted to right the wrongs of the marginalization and exclusion, arguing that women should be treated equally with men, as the “equity” approach gained much popularity in the 1970s.

which the constitutional provisions are adhered to vary. After at least thirty years since the uptake of gender in development and poverty reduction agendas, some progress has been made in sub-Saharan Africa (Mansah, 2013). Thus, there is a need for exploring the potential of endogenous learning for gender and development studies, on how the concept of gender has been contextually adopted in the development policy and practice, and how achievements can be consolidated for replication in other sub-Saharan African countries through an endogenous learning approach.

### **Endogenous Learning for Gender and Development**

The critical recognition and incorporation of the gender discourse in main stream global development debates in the 1970s can be interpreted to have benefited from an endogenous feminist approach. This argument is extended by (Nnaemeka, 2005) who argues for pluralism of feminisms within Africa, between Africa and other continents in the multiplicity of gender perspectives. Therefore, this study explores Rwanda's effort to integrate endogenous learning in gender and development studies in Rwanda's effort to define their socio-cultural, economic, political being. Archie Mafeje also affirms the importance of endogeneity in African scholarship. The relevance of Mafeje's study to several generations of African social scientists, including those active in the domain of gender and women studies, is a resolute affirmation of endogeneity — a scholarship grounded in and driven by the affirmation of African experiences and ontological accounting for the self. Mafeje's works highlight a twinned project of relentless combating of alterity and extroversion and the affirmation and pursuit of endogeneity (Adesina, 2008). The principle of endogeneity, according to (Kanyandago, 2008), suggests that, for normal development or growth to take place, one has to respect the principle of endogeneity which posits that growth is only possible if takes place building on what one (individual, society, group) already has at hi/her/its disposal. Endogeneity is not compromised by the borrowing provided, given that the one borrowing does it on one's terms.

Endogeneity can therefore be used to develop an endogenous approach, building on (Adesina, 2008), who shows how endogeneity refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in the African conditions; a centring of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one's intellectual work. Endogeneity drives intellectual works of the 'endogeny'. "To evolve lasting meanings" Mafeje (2000:66) noted "we must be 'rooted' in something." Central to endogeneity is averting what Hountondji (1990) referred to as 'extroversion'. Those who exercise undue anxiety about being 'cosmopolitan' or universalist fail to grasp that this is true even about what is erroneously considered as the dominant strands of Western 'theories'. All knowledge is first local; 'universal knowledge' can only exist in contradiction" (Mafeje, 2000: 67). It is precisely because Max Weber spoke distinctly to the European context of his time, as Michel Foucault did for his, which guaranteed the efficacy of their discourses. "If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed" (ibidem).

Endogenous learning, based on the principle of endogeneity is relevant for adopting an endogenous learning approach, using the African feminist discourses, but build on the local knowledge and development action that informs African feminist discourses. The foundation of an endogenous approach to learning for

gender and development studies is the endogenous development paradigm that is based on local peoples' own criteria of development and takes into account the material, social and spiritual well-being of peoples. It takes local cultures as a critical starting point and posits those cultures as a central framework for social progress and cross-cultural exchanges (Hountondji, 1998). Endogenous development draws from and harnesses local resources to mitigate development. It builds on and excites local actions for change to occur from within the existing system. By its very definition, endogenous development works towards sustainable, functional and people-centred development (Boonzaaijer; Apusigah, 2008). In this case, endogenous learning can be adopted as an approach to promote gender and development studies in Africa and beyond. As Drucker (1990: 135-136) argues, to make development endogenous, it should be linked to the context in which it is conducted bearing in mind the socio-cultural specificities, and being able to identify the structural components of the local traditions, history and culture.

Therefore endogeneity can be taken to be a principle that underlines the learning for gender and development studies in Rwanda using an endogenous feminist analytical framework. Such as a learning approach for development, should focus on everyday learning that takes place through development action, which may be intentional or structures, as well as, informal and an outcome of different forms of engagement. The social dynamics of learning are important for individuals, for development organizations and for building coherent policies and action (Johnson; Wilson, 2009). In the next section, we explore gender and development policy and action in Rwanda, in order to contextualize an endogenous learning approach.

### **Lessons from Rwanda's Endogenous Approaches to Gender and Development**

Rwanda is among the states in sub-Saharan African that have gender equity as a target in its national planning frameworks. Rwanda has made achievements on various gender indicators, with notably the highest women parliamentary representation in the whole world at 64% (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014). Considering the country's recent traumatic historic experience of the 1994 genocide, Rwanda's efforts in gender mainstreaming are significant. Rwanda's post conflict has had changes social relations, including gender, due to her unique historical context of distorted social relations that worsened the already existing gender imbalances and inequalities, but have also opened new spaces for gender roles. It is reported that 35% of the households in Rwanda are headed by women, where women are performing non-traditional roles such as decision making, managing financial resources, constructing houses, among others, have characterized the post-genocide social environment (The East African Community Secretariat, 2009).

The government of Rwanda, in 2004 designed a National Gender policy framework which has provided an enabling environment to respond the above social-economic dynamics created by the 1994 genocide. As a result women have gained respect, access to social services, implementation of the gender quotas, as well as new perspectives coming from more women in leadership positions (Burnet, 2011; Burnet, 2008). Rwanda's gender policy was developed from the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action, and has undertaken strategic actions, following the ratifying of a number of international and regional conventions, characters and declarations,



including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and COMESA. (The East African Community, 2009). What is significant about Rwanda's achievements in gender and women empowerment is not the ratifying to the above international conventions and agreements, but the political will to implement a national gender policy based on homegrown solutions that have addressed the unique gender and women empowerment challenges in Rwanda's post 1994 genocide.

One of the critical gaps that Rwanda has addressed is not only consecrating on women, but also engaging men through interesting models that are based on "*ubulinganire*" (equality) and "*ubwuzanywe*" (complementarity). While the international development community shifted to a Gender and Development (GAD)<sup>7</sup> paradigm, that emphasizes relations between men and women, rather than focusing on women alone, GADs programs in Rwanda have designed projects that to include men in reducing gender inequalities and empowering women. As an endogenous approach to learning for development action, Rwandan men and women have worked together on a bill to reduce the gender-based violence (GBV), which was known as, "Draft Law on the Prevention, Protection and Punishment of Any Gender Gender-based Violence". The Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) had strategic reasons for including men in a sensitive GBV bill, considering that the Rwandan society still considers gender-based violence a private matter. The FFRP wanted to gain potential legislative allies, attract votes for the bill, and increased the effectiveness of the law's eventual implementation. As a result the GBV bill was co-sponsored by four men and women (Powley; Pearson, 2007; Randell and Carlson, 2013). This process led to the law on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-based Violence, as a result of involving men in the institutionalization of gender equality both at the national and village level, and the tactics used in the process of dialogue at the grass root. In this regard, Rwandan women parliamentarians' succeeded in creating an anti-violence movement that includes men.

Building on the above case in inclusive law making in Rwanda's parliament, RWAMREC has also had significant influence on the strategy for the implementation of the law on reducing GBV, and in the development of the national gender policy, which has involved the role of men. Through MenEngage interventions, joint programs have been initiated to end domestic violence (EDV) through the implementation of projects using male engagement approaches in 13 Rwandan districts, by a civil society consortium of seven organizations, including RWAMREC. Focusing their activities in the four districts (Bugesera, Rulindo, Gakenke and Kamonyi), RWAMREC projects are empowering local government officials and opinion leaders to engage in gender-based violence prevention activities in their respective communities. The local leaders, who are empowered, are involved in the creation of clubs to fight against gender-based violence. In total, 242 community leaders were trained and are now actively involved in community mobilization and activities for gender-based violence

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<sup>7</sup> Gender and Development (GAD) is one of the most popular approaches in gender work today. One definition that summarizes the focus of GAD initiatives is: to integrate women into development and to look for the potential in development initiatives to transform unequal social relations between men and women.

prevention. Through Community Mobilisation in Rwamagana District, 1,993 local leaders from 11 sectors and cooperative leaders were trained so that they can initiate community campaigns to end gender-based violence. As a result, there has been the formation of community groups called “*umugoroba w’ababyeyi*” or parent’s evening dialogues as a community forum to discuss strategies of ending gender-based violence within their homes. Currently more than 1,200 community groups are functional (RWAMREC, 2013).

These cases from Rwanda’s efforts to address their specific challenges speak to the theoretical arguments through the lenses of an endogenous feminist analysis used in this study. As Nnaemeka (1997) asserts, it is more accurate to argue not in terms of a monolith (African feminism) but rather in the context of a pluralism (African feminisms) that capture the fluidity and dynamism of the different cultural imperatives, historical forces, and localized realities. The above Rwandan cases, illustrate this through inclusive law making, as well as, turning the women’s activism/movements into men/women movements. Rwanda’s involvement of men, through the work of RWAMREC in community mobilization to prevent gender-based violence, alludes to African feminist concept of “complementarity” of masculinity and femininity. RWAMREC’s MenEngage approached have used interesting models that are based on “*ubulinganire*” (equality) and “*ubwuzuzanye*” (complementarity). These development actions in Rwanda can reinforced by Nnaemeka’s (2005), argument that African feminisms resist the exclusion of men from women’s issues, on the contrary, it invites men as partners in problem solving and social change.

This endogenous approach of engaging men in gender equality dialogues and community mobilization, from the grassroots up to the level of national government, has the potential to raise the status of women in any given society and to ultimately contribute to the elimination of GBV. It can be observed that some of the progress made in Rwanda so far can be attributed to the rate in women’s political representation, which is the highest in the world. Despite this progress in Rwanda, challenges in achieving gender equality are prevalent according to a national study (RWAMREC, 2010). We note that through the interventions of inclusive law making and work of RWAMREC, Rwanda had applied the GAD approach, thus resolving the crucial challenge of contextualizing and applying gender concepts. Rwanda has moved a step to show that African feminism is not Western feminism, but rather an organic process rooted and proactive based on the Rwandan environment, much as it can borrow appropriate elements from Western feminism. As Nnameka, (2005), asserts, of an African feminism with its own life, the Rwanda gender interventions exhibit a uniqueness that is rooted in a needs assessment that considers the cultural and local conditions that create gender inequalities. Rwanda’s endogenous approaches can be case studies in learning for African development. The endogenous feminist analytical framework can be used as a tool to understand holistically, the lives of African women and men’s past, present and future since Rwanda still faces the challenges of reducing gender inequalities and empowering women.

## **Recommendations**

Firstly, there is need to decolonize gender studies, by developing endogenous feminist analytical frameworks that embrace multiple perceptions and discourses, while generating context specific plans to reduce gender

inequalities and empower women. Great emphasis should be on the renewal of local cultural knowledge of the past and present so as to create a future that is desired. This requires a community gender analysis that is rooted in cultural knowledge building and sharing. In public, private and civil society organisations, there is need for a transformative learning for development action that rethinks and interrogates the gender stereotypes rooted in traditional cultural knowledge. We argue therefore, based on the above, that if Rwanda and Africa are to gain a more relevant position in world's knowledge and cultural system, then, the African endogenous feminist thought would become a vehicle for enabling endogenous learning in gender and development studies. For instance, this provides a moment of reflection on alternative models for reducing gender inequalities in the post MDG development framework.

The role of universities and other research organizations as knowledge sites is crucial through the creation of Community-University-Public-Private Sector Partnerships (CUPPSPs) for knowledge management of the gender theory, research and practice. In the organizational context of the University, CUPPSPs can be operationalised through University Community Outreach Programs (UCOPs) that engage grass root communities, through civil society and the private sector. This can enhance the capacity and effectiveness of service delivery partnerships, as well as promoting timely, efficient policy design and implementation to address gender and development challenges facing Rwanda. A typical example is an initiative of the Centre for Gender Studies, College of Arts and Social Sciences, at the University of Rwanda, to engage community organizations such as RWAMREC and Rwanda Women's Network, together with the government's Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion through Community-University Public partnerships for gender policy formulation, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation and documentation about Rwanda's journey to reducing gender inequalities and women empowerment. Basic and evaluation research, public debates and dialogues will be fundamental to the endogenous learning approach, not just in academic circles, workshops and conferences, but also in through grass root dialogues with the rural man and woman. We also believe that the structure and content of the endogenous learning approach is not only for the field professional. Rather, it should be present constantly in all areas of the daily life of all people: in their worldviews, their feelings, their thoughts and their presence in the world around them.

## **Conclusion**

Rwanda's endogenous approach to gender and development policy and practice demonstrates that the principle of endogeneity can be taken as a principle that underlines gender and development studies. Since there is no single African feminism, but African feminisms, a middle-inclusive ground of multiple feminist perspectives should be adopted, from which the potential for the endogenous learning approach to gender and development studies can be grounded. Rwanda has applied her own endogenous knowledge system, which has evolved and developed over time, taking into account the recent history, and socio-cultural contexts. Rwanda has demonstrated a unique response to their gender questions, reexamined communal beliefs, values, and indigenous sciences. We observe such Rwandan system is not closed, as resources from without are being used and borrowed but such resources have been transformed and appropriated so that they become endogenised,

lest they remain foreign and irrelevant. The Rwandan experience informs African gender and development scholarship, to devise ways that speak distinctly to the African context of their times, so as to guarantee the efficacy of their discourses.

The Rwandan context through an endogenous learning approach can potentially provide ground from which theories of masculinities and femininities can be developed to facilitate the decolonization of gender and development studies in Africa. This will require a significant investment in Research and Development projects that thematically design innovative projects. Gender and development scholarship should adopt intellectual standpoints that are derived from a rootedness in the Rwandan conditions; a centering of Rwandan ontological discourses and experiences. The role of university as a knowledge site will be crucial through Community-University-Public-Private Partnerships (CUPPSPs) for knowledge management of the gender theory, research and practice. Rwandan Universities and research organizations must be in the vanguard of putting seed capital in CUPPSPs and lobbying for government and donor support, so as to generate African-predicament motivated paradigms.

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