The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction and the Realisation of Millennium Development Goals in Rwanda

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Abbreviations

ACCOSCA: African Confederation Cooperative Savings and Credit Cooperative
APPEAR: Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education & Research for Development
CBOs: Community-Based Organisations
CUR: Catholic University of Rwanda
DHS: Demographic and Health Survey
EDPRS: Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
EICV: Enquête Intégrale sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages (Households Living Conditions Survey)
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
GoR: Government of Rwanda
HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IASSW: International Association of Schools of Social Work
ICT: Information and Communication Technology
IFSW: International Federation of Social Workers
IPB: Institut Polytechnique de Byumba
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
MIGEPROF: Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINECOFIN: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MSW: Masters of Social Work
NASW: National Association of Social Workers
NCCR: National Confederation of Cooperatives in Rwanda
NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations
NISR: National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NUR: National University of Rwanda
OSSREA: Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
PhD: Doctor of Philosophy
PLWHA: People Living with HIV/AIDS
PROSOWO: Promotion of Social Work towards Social Development and Poverty Reduction in East Africa
RCA: Rwanda Cooperative Alliance
RGB: Rwanda Governance Board
RWA-NASW: Rwanda National Association of Social Workers
RWA-SWAG: Rwanda Social Work Advisory Group
SACCO: Savings and Credit Co-Operative
SW: Social Work
TCSW: Terminology Committee of Social Workers
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
USA: United States of America
Acknowledgments

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Research Team
Rwanda has been facing unimaginable social problems including the 1994 genocide perpetrated against Tutsi that culminated all atrocities with 1,074,017 victims\(^1\) and in-depth destruction of the social fabric. The government of Rwanda is determined to handle the consequences of this genocide and combat the trickiest social problems including particularly poverty; its first concern is to uplift the living conditions of the population by promoting social development through the realisation of MDGs.

For this to happen, various policies, programmes, projects and strategies were put in place: administrative decentralisation; Vision 2020; EDPRS; performance contracts or *imihigo*\(^2\); *ubudehe*\(^3\) and cooperatives promotion; one cow per poor family or *girinka*\(^4\); and so on. To embrace the national orientation of advancing as quickly as possible the socioeconomic development, the role of various development actors (government, NGOs, CBOs as well as private agencies) in conjunction with different professionals, including social

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\(^1\) From the Report of the Ministry of Local Government, and Social Affairs in 2004 [Ministère de l’Administration Locale et des Affaires Sociales (Avril 2004). *Dénombrement des victimes du genocide*, Rapport final, Version révisée. Kigali, Rwanda]. In this study, the victims of genocide against Tutsi are mainly Tutsi but also any person assimilated to Tutsi on the basis of different criteria such as friendship, marriage linkages, etc. as specified in the Law N° 08/96.

\(^2\) *Imihigo* stands for a reciprocal performance contract between different entities designed to stimulate the involvement of community members in local development and to enable them to hold their leaders accountable for socioeconomic progress.

\(^3\) *Ubudehe* refers to the long-standing Rwandan practice and culture of collective action and mutual support to solve problems within a community. It is currently used in gathering community members in the perspective of planning and implementing anti-poverty measures in their respective communities.

\(^4\) *Girinka* is a programme meant to provide poor families with cattle with the intention of reducing poverty and malnutrition (through manure and milk production) among the most vulnerable and poor families.
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workers, is to involve the population – considered as the main country’s asset – in the process. In all cases, the most vulnerable, particularly those in abject poverty (abatindi nyakujya), the very poor (abatindi) and the poor (abakene) are targeted.

The present research sought to analyse the role of social work in poverty reduction and the realisation of the MDGs in Rwanda. This was translated into the following specific objectives:

a. To assess the social workers’ profile and the domains of their intervention;

b. To identify the most suitable approaches and methods for social work practice;

c. To examine the extent of social work contribution to poverty reduction and the realisation of MDGs;

d. To examine the alignment between social work education and practice in responding to clients’ needs;

e. To identify socio-political and cultural factors favouring and/or inhibiting social work practice in Rwanda;

f. To explore potential and indigenous ways to combat poverty and advance social development; and

g. To explore the challenges and opportunities for strengthening social work education and practice in Rwanda.

In terms of methodology, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was chosen in the perspective of gathering more comprehensive data. The literature and the empirical investigation were used as key methods to realise the objectives above. In the field, a triangulation of data gathering techniques was used. Respondents were selected among social work practitioners (103), social work employers (27 for quantitative investigation and 17 interviewees), social work educators (10 for quantitative investigation and 8 interviewees), and social work students (114) but also focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with social work clients (40) and key informants (6). The main findings emerging from the study are summarised below.
A great number of social work professionals are composed of women who play a great role in advancing social development and have completed their studies within the country. Thus, among 103 Social work practitioners who participated in the study, 67% were females; 83.5% had a bachelor’s degree and 93.2% obtained their degree from a national public institution. Among 27 employers, 59.3% were females; 25.9% had a bachelor’s degree in social work and 74% obtained their degree from a national public institution; while among 114 students, 60.5% were females against 39.5% males.

Social workers are intervening in various domains and at the forefront they are playing the roles of educators/trainers, community development organisers and programme administrators. In their daily work, social workers in Rwanda are first and foremost targeting changes in clients’ lives for long-term improvement.

The remedial and developmental social work approaches are similarly referred to by social workers throughout their intervention with a percentage of 32.6% in each case; these are followed by generalist practice at a level of 26.1%. Group work, community organisation and social development are the methods used most in practice and account for 53% in total as expressed by social work practitioners. Thus, it was shown by 34.7% of respondents that even though case work has been mostly used so far, there is a manifest shift from remedial/clinical to developmental social work and this is due to the government’s socio-political orientation.

It emerged from the findings that social workers, in their respective organisations, are handling well problems related to poverty (This was confirmed by all the 27 employers.) In the first instance, it was stated that social workers intervention focuses mostly on the domains of cooperatives, income-generating projects and community development. Second, the domains of empowerment, education and gender promotion were largely pointed out and lastly, social workers stated that they participate in different activities targeting behaviour,
social change, awareness-raising, in terms of poverty reduction and social development. Overall, it was shown that social work practitioners fulfil their activities through mobilisation and sensitisation campaigns; advocacy; planning, monitoring and evaluation of development projects; counselling, education and training in various domains targeted by the MDGs.

Social work training at undergraduate level was initiated in 1999 at National University of Rwanda. The programme was introduced to address the consequences of 1994 genocide against Tutsi. Indeed in the aftermath of this genocide the number of vulnerable people increased drastically; this was shown by a big number of orphans, child-headed households and widows. Many other different problems such as displacements (both internal and external), infection of HIV/AIDS among the genocide survivors due to rape and poverty worsened by the destruction of economic and development infrastructures were also targeted.

Currently, there are only three higher learning institutions in Rwanda that train social workers at undergraduate level; two of them use generalist approach while one has two specialisations (Child and family welfare and social development and social welfare). In all these three social work training institutions, there is lack of highly qualified social work educators.

In addition to the above-mentioned problem, there is lack of policy and legal framework to regulate social work training and practice in Rwanda. This framework would help to ensure the quality and standards of social work education and practice. Regarding social work global standards, the majority of social work educators (60%) are of the view that these [standards] are partly integrated in social work curriculum, 20% are not aware of them, while 10% indicated that nothing is referred to so far; this should create in a longer term a serious barrier to the accreditation of the programmes and the recognition of the profession. Field training is carried out in all the
three institutions and this was confirmed by 83.5% of the social work practitioners and 59.6% of students who revealed that they do most of their fieldwork in areas of community development.

The research revealed that most of materials used to train social workers are imported from Europe, USA and other parts of the world. This was pointed out by 70% of social work educators and 79.8% of the students who participated in the study.

In reference to poverty, social development and the UN MDGs, most of social work educators (90%) revealed that MDG number one related to poverty reduction is fully integrated in social work training. On the side of social work students, 51.7% of them felt competent to contribute to poverty reduction; 95% showed that issues of poverty and poverty reduction are adequately covered in the social work curriculum; while 71.90% specified that they are well aware of the MDGs.

Most of the surveyed employers from different agencies indicated that the models used within the services delivered are both locally and Western-oriented. Throughout the research, it was noted that, in addition to the use of the Western approaches, social workers have been referring to traditional mechanisms in facing specific social problems they are dealing with in their day-to-day activities. These are mainly *ubudehe* (citizen’s participation through collective action); *ibimina* (self-help groups); *Gacaca* (traditional courts revived to prosecute every individual genocide suspect but also to promote reconciliation between survivors and perpetrators); and *imihigo* (performance contracts).

Overall, the research findings showed that social work is of great importance for reducing poverty and advancing social development in Rwanda but for more success there is still a lot to do. Therefore, different challenges were raised by participants in the study including the legacies of the past linked particularly with the genocide against the Tutsi and other inextricable socioeconomic problems that cause
increasing harm to people (poverty; domestic violence; HIV/AIDS; land conflicts; gender disparities; and so on).

To tackle those problems, specific recommendations were given. The main one is to revitalise the social fabric and to strengthen people-driven development by integrating modern and local approaches. In this endeavour, social work professionals have a key role to play and thus they may act as real social change agents. Thus, they need to be both skilful and knowledgeable in order to accomplish satisfactorily their ultimate mission to ‘help people help themselves’. It was demonstrated throughout this piece of work that Rwanda has been setting up adequate working environment especially in terms of social development policies and strategies. This constitutes a good avenue for social workers to intervene extraordinarily well and thus to contribute to the empowerment of all categories of people, particularly within the perspective of lessening the plight of vulnerable people at grassroots levels.

More concretely, the following recommendations for better social work intervention were given:

a. The government of Rwanda should acknowledge the creation of social work organisations and provide a comprehensive social welfare policy to help social workers organise more adequately their interventions.

b. All concerned stakeholders; particularly the government, NGOs and civil society organisations in general should strengthen their partnership and agree on the modalities for recruitment and employment of professional social workers.

c. The above-mentioned stakeholders should ensure that social work professionals benefit from required facilities and are heard when advocating for the improvement of the lives of the vulnerable people.
d. Educational institutions should think of the refinement of the social work curriculum in reference to the international standards, with main focus on the developmental perspectives and privilege to the integrated approaches encompassing both modern and indigenous realities. They should do all the best and link social work education and training with practice in specific contexts.

e. The social work professionals should provide clients with the most effective interventions possible and confirm their important role of releasing people from tricky and interconnected social problems including particularly poverty; HIV/AIDS; gender issues; family violence and socioeconomic conflicts. They should always document their intervention process using reliable and valid methods.
Chapter One

Introduction

Background and orientation of the study

Rwanda is a small country located in central/eastern Africa, and is bordered by the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west, Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east, and Burundi to the south. It is a landlocked country with few natural resources, and it is among countries that register a high population growth rate. With a total resident population of 10,537,222 people compared to the enumerated population in the 2002 Census of 8,128,553 people, this implies an increase of about 29.6% and an average annual growth rate of 2.6% – with 416 persons per sq km against 321 in 2002. Since July 1994, the government has been dealing with the consequences of the genocide. The 1994 genocide shredded the social fabric of Rwandan society, decimated families and greatly reduced the capacity of communities to meet their needs. There is no doubt that the genocide reversed the country’s progress towards revitalising its performance to improve most of its social and economic development indicators.

First and foremost, the main preoccupation in the aftermath of the genocide was the assistance to the large number of vulnerable people, the stabilisation of the country, the integration of returnees, and re-building of structures. For about five years, focus was put on humanitarian assistance but at the same time, the government, in conjunction with different organisations, devised various strategies in order to find sustainable solutions to the consequences of the genocide.

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5 These figures are given by the NISR and derive from the provisional results of the 4th Population and Housing Census as of “Census night”, August 15th 2012.
Thus, numerous programmes and structures were established in order to uplift the living conditions of the citizens and to move into the sustainable development phase. In this regard, crucial policies for pro-poor growth have been put in place.

In terms of its development indicators that were dramatically reversed during the 1994 genocide, there have been impressive realisations to date and Rwanda presents a special case in socioeconomic development that has defied the odds.

Throughout this reconstruction process, social work approaches have been deployed and the contribution of the social work profession has been paramount especially in the domain of relieving and empowering people at different levels of the social strata. Unfortunately, this contribution has not been manifestly perceived or recognised except by a limited section of the population. Instead, credit has often been claimed by other professions and such a situation tends to persist. This is partly because social work as a profession remains quite new in Rwanda and, therefore, deserves some marketing in order to increase recognition of its uniqueness in handling social problems.

It is important to acknowledge the efforts made by the Rwandan government in attempting to align the country to the rest of the world and return it to the path of social development so as to realise the MDGs despite all the mentioned impediments. However, it is important to note that much remains to be done in an endeavour to build a real caring society. The country still faces the challenges of poverty, human misery and disease, and still has to grapple with issues of reinforcement of national unity and reconciliation, good governance, macroeconomic stability and human resource development.

Considering the complexity of the situation and the challenges Rwanda is still faced with, it is important to ask if Rwanda will be capable of addressing these challenges, restructure the social fabric and relieve vulnerable community members from their desperate
circumstances. It is necessary to know how different socioeconomic development actors, with focus on social work professionals, could – in accordance with indigenous values – engage in reflexive practice in order to constantly improve the social well-being of the people at all levels.

As little is known about the importance of social work in humanising and shaping people’s social functioning, the NUR Department of Social Sciences found that it was crucial to undertake scientific research on this subject. The Department benefitted from the opportunity to participate in the research initiative led by the PROSOWO project on “The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction and Realisation of Millennium Development Goals in East Africa: the case of Rwanda”. The rationale for this topic was strengthened by the desire to explore the contribution of the social work profession to the reconstruction and development of Rwanda since its academic inception in 1999. More particularly, it was considered essential to examine the links between social work education and practice in the Rwandan context where authorities have declared their commitment to revive traditional values in order to find home-grown solutions to social problems without ignoring global responses.

**Brief background on the PROSOWO project**

In a workshop that gathered partnering universities held in Nairobi in 2010, a proposal was developed to promote professional social work towards social development and poverty reduction in East Africa, under the auspices of the Austrian Partnership Programme for Higher Education and Research (APPEAR). Partner institutions include Carinthia University of Applied Sciences (Austria), Makerere University (Uganda), University of Nairobi (Kenya), Institute of Social Work (Tanzania) and National University of Rwanda (Rwanda). The project addresses a number of objectives namely:
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a. To strengthen the capacity of higher social work education institutions in the region through research, curriculum development and joint publications;

b. To develop sustainable academic partnerships and networks in Africa and Austria in social work training and research;

c. To conduct research on the role of social work in poverty reduction and the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals;

d. To develop a more relevant social work curriculum in alignment with national poverty reduction plans and social development strategies; and

e. To facilitate the process of drafting a discussion paper on regulating the social work profession in the respective countries.

Key research questions and objectives

The overall goal of this research is to analyse the role of social work in poverty reduction and the realisation of the MDGs in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

The following questions were considered for data collection and guided the researchers throughout their analyses.

a. What is the contribution of social work to poverty alleviation and advancement of social development?

b. What is the relevance of the existing curriculum in preparing students to their career?

c. What are the suitable approaches for social work practice in Rwanda?

d. What are the favouring and/or inhibiting factors in the social work practice processes?

e. Is social work indigenisation possible and realisable in the Rwandan context?

f. What are the challenges and perspectives for effective social work education and practice in Rwanda?
The specific objectives in relation with the previous questions were:

a. To assess the social workers’ profile and the domains of their intervention;

b. To identify the most suitable approaches and methods for social work practice;

c. To examine the extent of social work contribution to poverty reduction and realisation of MDGs;

d. To examine the alignment between social work education and practice in responding to clients’ needs;

e. To identify socio-political and cultural factors favouring and/or inhibiting social work practice in Rwanda;

f. To explore potential and indigenous ways to combat poverty and advance social development; and

g. To explore the challenges and opportunities for strengthening social work education and practice in Rwanda.

Conceptual Framework

Under this section, it is of great importance to define and discuss specific concepts that are considered as fundamental for common understanding of the content of this document. The selected key concepts are: poverty, social development, MDGs, gender, professional social work and indigenisation.

Poverty

According to the World Bank, poverty can be conceptualised in three contexts as follows:

a. Pronounced deprivation in well-being: Well-being is referred to if people have a greater command over resources. Thus the main focus is on whether households or individuals have enough resources to meet their needs. In this sense the poor are those who do not have enough income or consumption to put them

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6 http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPA/Resources/429966-
above some adequate minimum threshold. This view sees poverty largely in monetary terms.

b. Poverty may also be tied to a specific type of consumption. For example, people could be house poor, food poor, or health poor.

c. By far the most comprehensive context relates to the capability approach to well-being articulated by Amartya Sen. According to this approach, poverty is linked with the capability of the individuals to function properly within the society, namely, poor people often lack key capabilities; they may have inadequate income or education, or be in poor health, feel powerless, or lack political freedoms. In this perspective, the Terminology Committee for Social Work “TCSW” (2002, p. 46), states that poverty is a “condition of a person who lacks the material means of providing for the BASIC NEEDS”.

Social development
According to the TCSW (2002, p.58), social development can be understood as:
An investment of a SOCIETY in the health, well-being and education of its members to promote the learning of attitudes and behaviour as well as the establishment of relationships that will enable them to function as full members of society.

Or
A process of planned institutional or structural change to maintain a balance between human NEEDS and social policies and programmes.

Overall, social development may be understood as a process through which people are empowered to realise their social, economic and political potential to the full, and to be able to function positively in these spheres. According to Midgley (1995, p. 25) – and this is the preferred definition used throughout this work – social development is “a process of planned social change to promote people’s welfare in conjunction with a comprehensive process of economic development”.
Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals summarise the development goals agreed on at international conferences and world summits during the 1990s. At the end of the decade, world leaders distilled the key goals and targets in the Millennium Declaration (September 2000). The Millennium Development Goals, to be achieved between 2000 and 2015, include:

- Goal 1: Halving extreme poverty and hunger;
- Goal 2: Achieving universal primary education;
- Goal 3: Promoting gender equality;
- Goal 4: Reducing under-five mortality by two-thirds;
- Goal 5: Reducing maternal mortality by three-quarters;
- Goal 6: Reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS, malaria and TB;
- Goal 7: Ensuring environmental sustainability; and
- Goal 8: Developing a global partnership for development, with targets for aid, trade and debt relief.

In Rwanda, MDGs are milestones towards Vision 2020 and Medium Term Socioeconomic Plan (EDPRS). MDGs have been adapted to the sectoral priorities of Rwanda and Monitoring and Evaluation of MDGs is also integrated to the national M&E system.

Gender equality

Gender may be understood as culturally and socially constructed roles, responsibilities, privileges, relations and expectations of women, men, boys and girls. In this perspective, gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities
of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men.

**Professional social work**

The IFSW and IASSW (2004, p. 2) cite the 2001 international social work definition specifying that:

> The social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

In Rwanda, the social work profession is understood as a “practice that applies specialised skills and knowledge to raise awareness on social problems and ensure that social services as well as interventions provided are self-strengthened, oriented and integrate the ethical values and social cohesion in order to achieve sustainable social well-being of the population” (RWA-SWAG, 2011).

**Indigenisation**

When talking about the change process in Africa, Maloka and Le Roux (2001, p. 19) argue that:

> The socioeconomic transformation in Africa cannot be advanced effectively unless those involved in this process take seriously the realities of African societies as they are and not as they ought to be. This implies that sustainable socioeconomic development can only be realised if it is based on the indigenous. The indigenous is not necessarily what is traditional but whatever the African masses regard to be an authentic expression of themselves.

According to Osei-Hwedie (2002, p. 314), indigenisation has been used to refer to the idea that the theories, values, and philosophies
that underlie practice must be influenced by local factors. It is to lead to developing practices based on the needs of a particular group of people. This means that professional social work must be relevant to the needs of different societies and so has a locality dimension. Thus, any imported knowledge must fit the local context. In view of this, indigenous knowledge is defined as local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society, based on its members’ common stock of experience.

**Organisation of the report**

This report is organised in seven chapters. Chapter one gives the study background, orientation of the study and the study conceptual framework.

Chapter Two gives realities of poverty and social development in Rwanda and highlights major contributors towards poverty reduction and social development. Chapter Three provides characteristics of study participants, roles played by social workers in their respective organisations regarding poverty reduction and social development as well as challenges faced by social work professionals towards poverty reduction and achieving social development.

Chapter Four deals with social work education and training. It also discusses the challenges faced by social work training and suggests the way forward on how those challenges could be solved. Chapter Five indicates the social work client’s perceptions on social work profession. It also presents the challenges faced by social work clients and their coping strategies; and finally highlights the client’s desired social change.

Chapter Six deals with gender as a critical dimension of social development, it relates also the particular role of social work professionals in handling gender-based issues and influencing behaviour change through their intervention in different settings.
Chapter Seven highlights the key emerging issues from the study. It helps capture the priority areas for social work intervention and explores key recommendations in relation with poverty reduction and social development toward the realisation of the MDGs.

The report ends with a methodology appendix indicating the study design, sampling procedures and sample size and categories of study participants and the study data collection techniques.
Combating poverty and advancing social development: the role of social work

Poverty is one of the critical problems that continue to hinder the improvement of the well-being of the people throughout the world. It has been preoccupying governments, NGOs, and other development actors in an effort to devise strategies and solutions to address it. The most commonly perceived form of poverty is income poverty as stated in the literature: “A person is poor if, and only if, her income level is below the defined poverty line…” (UNDP in Cox and Pawar, 2006, p. 186). However, there is increasing recognition that the phenomenon of poverty encompasses various dimensions. In fact, poor people are often faced with different interconnected problems and as expressed by Cox and Pawar (2006, p. 186):

They often lack adequate food and shelter, education and health, deprivations that keep them from leading the kind of life that everyone values. They also face extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, and natural disasters. And they are often exposed to ill treatment by institutions of the state and society and are powerless to influence key decisions affecting their lives.
In an endeavour to fight this social ill, the UN recommended to its member nations to prioritise poverty alleviation and to use all possible means in order to reduce or eradicate it. Thus, halving poverty was identified as the first goal of the MDGs.

Rwanda, as an active member of the world community, has well embraced the MDGs with the firm determination to improve its population’s life. Despite the impediments caused by the 1994 genocide, the Rwandan government embarked on the hard and long process of reconstruction going through the emergency phase (1994-1997); rehabilitation phase (1998-2000); development phase (2000-2005); leading to the sustainable development phase (2005 to date). In this endeavour, Rwanda had to struggle hard to overcome complex social problems and primarily “...to stabilise the country through unity and reconciliation, reintegration of the survivors and returnee refugees, and rebuilding the socioeconomic structures” (from http://www.unrwanda.org/undp/mdg.htm visited on 14/1/2012).

While the country was recovering progressively from these upheavals, it became opportune to concentrate systematically on the remaining challenges to development in Rwanda – poverty being the first and foremost. To combat it adequately, the philosophy was that “poverty is not only a physical phenomenon, but that it has economic, emotional and psychological dimensions” (Greeff in Strydom and Tlhojane, 2008, p. 34). On the other hand, the fight may be conducted by different stakeholders and by the population itself considered as the main country’s asset.

The non-physical or non-material aspects require special intervention. The population needs to play a significant role throughout the social development process; and there is a need for significant empowerment. In this respect, social work became important and contributed a lot in responding to emerging needs in the after-genocide
Rwanda. Indeed since its inception at the National University of
Rwanda in 1998-1999 academic year, social work training has become
a crucial input in the process of handling social problems such as
mental and psychosocial effects of witnessing violence or death of
survivors of the genocide; lack of trust between different groups in
the community; the increased threat of poverty and the breakdown
of many family and social structures. Social workers have so far
been playing the roles of enablers, advocates, mediators, negotiators,
teachers, empowerers, coordinators and researchers in this process.

Dimensions/manifestations of poverty in Rwanda

Categorisation of the poor in Rwanda

In Rwanda, a categorisation of poor people has been made in order
to orient the progressive and systematic fight against this complex
problem. Thus, the following table gives specific categories and
characteristics of Rwandan households and helps to highlight
particularly four main groups of the poor.
Table 2.1: Characteristics of households in Rwanda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of household</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Umutindi nyakuyiya</em> (those in abject poverty)</td>
<td>Those who need to beg to survive. They have no land or livestock and lack shelter, adequate clothing and food. They fall sick often and have no access to medical care. Their children are malnourished and they cannot afford to send them to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Umutindi</em> (the very poor)</td>
<td>The main difference between <em>umutindi</em> and <em>umutindi nyakuyiya</em> is that this group is physically capable of working on land owned by others, although they themselves have either no land or very small landholdings, and no livestock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Umukene</em> (the poor)</td>
<td>These households have some land and housing. They live on their own labour and produce, and although they have no savings, they can eat, even if the food is not very nutritious. However, they do not have a surplus to sell in the market, their children do not always go to school and they often have no access to health care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Umukene wifashije</em> (the resourceful poor)</td>
<td>This group shares many of the characteristics of the <em>umukene</em> but, in addition, they have small ruminants and their children go to primary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Umukungu</em> (the food rich)</td>
<td>This group has larger landholdings with fertile soil and enough to eat. They have livestock, often have paid jobs, and can access health care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Umukire</em> (the money rich)</td>
<td>This group has land and livestock, and often has salaried jobs. They have good housing, often own a vehicle, and have enough money to lend and to get credit from the bank. Many migrate to urban centres.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Howe and McKay (2005, p. 7)
The last decade has been marked by extreme changes in terms of poverty reduction and this is due to the efforts made by the government and the population on the whole. According to the NISR (February, 2012, p.11), the poverty status by Province appears as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>2000/01</th>
<th>2005/6</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>% Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kigali City</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Province</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Province</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Province</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Province</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Poverty in Rwanda dropped by 11.8% between 2006 and 2011, this is at a rate of six times faster than the country achieved between 2000 and 2006, according to the third Household Living Conditions Survey. Forty-five per cent of the population lived below the poverty line in 2011 compared to 57% in 2006. The main reasons for improvement in poverty reduction are:
- Improved agricultural production;
- Agribusiness;
- Farm wage employment;
- Increase in non-farm wages;
- Income transfers (from family and friends);
- Slowing population growth; and
- Improvements in infrastructure (roads, electricity, markets…).
The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction

Realities on the ground

One of the questions administered to social work practitioners referred to the meaning of poverty. Overall, they emphasised the fact that poverty may be understood as the lack of money and other material facilities that could help people to respond to their fundamental needs. The following selected ideas given either in English, French or Kinyarwanda summarise the feelings of the respondents and relate their considerations on absolute poverty.

Poverty is:

A low level of living where people cannot satisfy their primary needs
Living with less than a dollar per day and not having enough food, possibility to get medical insurance,...

Lack of access to resources, lack of knowledge, inequalities between people

A situation suffered by people who do not have the money to buy food and satisfy other basic material needs

It is being in status of lack of essential things in life, lack of food, shelter, etc...

The condition in which a person doesn’t satisfy the basic needs

An undesirable condition in which individuals cannot be able to afford the necessities of life Lack of means to satisfy your needs (intellectual, moral, material needs)

A situation in which people are unable to satisfy their basic needs in a proper way (e.g. to get food)

Lack of intellectual and economic capacities to satisfy the basic human economic and social needs

Incapacity to satisfy the basic needs

*La pauvreté est définie comme le manque de moyens pour répondre aux besoins physiologiques ou fondamentaux dont manque de quoi manger, manque de médicaments, minerval...* Poetry is defined as
the lack of possibilities to respond to physiological needs such as food, medicines, school fees, etc.

La pauvreté se caractérise par la malnutrition, pas de mutuelle de santé, pas de logement / Poverty is characterised by malnutrition, lack of health insurance, lack of shelter.

Ubukene ni uburyo umuntu atabona icyo yifuza nk’ibijyanye n’imirire, kwivuza, aho kuba n’ibindi.../ Poverty is the lack of what you need fundamentally such as things relating to food, health care, housing, etc.

In terms of appreciation of the gravity and magnitude of poverty, information from the field showed that it is really one of the key problems raised by the clients and it was considered by 35.4% of the respondents as moderate while 47.5% mentioned that it is at high level amongst the targeted population.

Table 2.3: Poverty as key problem of the clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Table 2.4: Estimate of poverty magnitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data
Generally speaking, it is clear that poverty is a serious but not extremely alarming problem. Considering that the fight against poverty is taken as the first priority today in Rwanda, things will probably evolve in the inverse clockwise direction, and thus the very high as well as the high poverty situation will improve moving towards the moderate or low levels.

Social work practitioners were asked to indicate three major problems presented to them by their clients and in the first instance, poverty emerged 49 times out of 103 (48%). This shows that among around 20 different problems mentioned, poverty is the most raised. Poverty was named at the second or third level respectively only 10 and 7 times. When asked to specify the priority area for intervention, poverty appeared 37 times (36%) among more than 25 different problems listed including the educational problem expressed in terms of lack of school fees, ignorance, capacity-building and illiteracy the educational problem comes after poverty at the level of 10%.
Key poverty reduction/social development programmes

In order to combat poverty and to ensure the realisation of MDGs on the whole, the government of Rwanda supports agriculture productivity through crop intensification programme and prevention of soil erosion and irrigation, and addressing vulnerability through Vision 2020 Umurenge programme and ubudehe - one cow per family programme\(^7\) (Nkuranga, 2011). Most of these programmes are implemented through farmers’ cooperatives and Savings and Credit Co-operatives (SACCOs). The comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis and nutrition survey conducted in 2009 shows that extreme poverty is declining with higher growth rates in agriculture.

As far as MDG3 on promoting gender equality is concerned, in 2003, the new national constitution provided for affirmative action for women by providing for at least 30% of seats to women and all laws discriminating against women have been abolished. Cooperatives promote participation of women and women are forming and joining co-operatives such as Agaseke weaving co-operatives in masses.

On the 7\(^{th}\) October 2010, President Kagame told cabinet ministers and other leaders that by lifting the people out of poverty, the country would become less reliant on aid, and would, therefore, be treated with the value it deserves. The same argument is reinforced by the Prime Minister and during his visits throughout the country, he emphasises the fact that fighting poverty is a priority if Rwanda has to move forward towards sustainable development. During the last five years, more than one million people tremendously improved their living standards and this is believed to be due to the determination of the

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\(^7\) These are traditional mechanisms promoted in order to stimulate collective action especially through self-help services such as construction of houses for vulnerable people and rotating provision of cows in the perspective of getting manure, milk and increasing family revenues. In terms of VISION 2020 Umurenge particularly, it consists of an integrated local development programme to accelerate the rate of poverty eradication, rural growth and social protection; it is expected to offer solutions adapted to the most vulnerable people.
government that put in place specific policies and social development programmes but also the participation of the population has been invaluable (NISR, 2012).

**Major actors in poverty reduction/ Social development**

**Highlights from the literature**

Different development actors are often involved in programmes to fight poverty. There are several public and private, national as well as international agents supposed to play an important role for social development: these are the state, local government, civil society, community-based organisations (CBOs) and the private sector.

**The state**

The state is universally considered as a basic agent of development, at least “in the sense of an institutional source of action to promote well-being” (Allen and Thomas, 2000, p. 215). The state undertakes and promotes initiatives regarding development and can normally provide an enabling structure for development by other agencies. However, it can also be a structural obstacle to development especially when it proceeds by dictating its will to subordinate levels.

As stated by De Beer and Swanepoel (2000, pp. 86-87), successful development needs a firm government commitment that is expressed in significant inputs: national policy support, administrative support and national planning and programming. It is important to indicate that the main functions of the state should remain enabling and supportive while the participation of ordinary people progressively attains a peak. Unfortunately, this situation is rarely achieved in most Third World countries and not at all in Africa. Indeed, as stipulated by De Beer and Swanepoel (2000, p. 94):

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*Ideas taken from Kalinganire (2002, pp. 26-29)*
Development policies and the implementation of those policies are in a shambles. To rectify this situation, it will be necessary to re-evaluate the state’s position vis-à-vis the international order and vis-à-vis its own constituency. Participatory development is not only a populist cry. It is imperative that ordinary people should be empowered to play their full role in their own development. Government has a very specific and important task in this regard.

**Local government**

Local government can be understood as the lowest level of administration, very close to communities and intended to work together with the local citizens and other partners in the development process. Unfortunately – and this is true – local governments have not really been playing their role independently in several instances. In this regard, De Beer and Swanepoel (2000, p. 99) argue:

> In some countries, but especially in developing African and socialist-inclined societies, local authorities have usually been weak, powerless, and normally sapped of initiative. In post-colonial Africa, particularly after gaining independence, central government was strengthened and local government weakened. The local authorities usually slavishly executed the policies of the central government.

Nowadays, it has become evident that no improvement or development can be effected without activating local governments and without offering sufficient responsibility to these authorities. In short, local governments are supposed to constitute the pillar of social development, especially by coordinating all kinds of activities undertaken for the promotion of social welfare conditions in general.

Local governments must become integrally involved in the lives and the fate of the communities they serve; they may focus on enhancing the quality of life of these communities. It should be clear that local governments should not only remain service providers; they
should also become important catalysts in promoting the growth and development of local communities. They must not be permitted to shirk their responsibilities due to lack of money. In brief, they should devote much of their time and energy to the uplifting of local communities and for this to happen, they could adopt some specific strategies such as capitalising on physical surroundings, providing appropriate infrastructure, creating conducive entrepreneurial conditions, building capacity, and consulting experts.

Civil society

The term “civil society” has attracted considerable debate about its meaning and limits. In the African context, and especially since the 1990s, views from different international agencies have focused on the quality of civil society as the unit that “constitutes the whole range of intermediate associations, from kinship organisations to social-service-oriented NGOs” (Carothers in Hearn, 1999, p. 3).

According to the Ministry for Welfare and Population Development, South Africa (1997, p. 8), civil society includes the formal welfare sector, which is state-subsidised, religious organisations delivering welfare services, non-governmental organisations, the business sector, and informal social support systems and community networks. In general, civil society denotes the sphere of institutions, organisations and individuals in which people associate voluntarily to advance autonomously common interests.

It is becoming more and more evident that, when suitably linked with the communities in need, different organs of civil society can intervene appreciably in the social change process, particularly by promoting the real empowerment of community members. Indeed, such organs are supposed to serve as useful agents in making people aware of their situation, defending their rights and helping them to grasp the opportunity for their direct involvement in the social development process.
Finally, it is important to specify that community-based organisations, which are themselves components of civil society, are the most suited for the promotion of social development.

[They] have the important task of acting as channels for government and non-government attempts at development. It is the community-based organisation that must link with outside organisations to enable the flow of input and must mobilise the local people so that they can play their proper role in community development. (Obaidullah Khan quoted by De Beer and Swanepoel, 1998, p. 41).

**The private sector**

The term “private sector” refers to all organisations or activities run by private individuals and which are completely independent of the government. Beyond the economic benefits they normally provide, individuals, agencies or companies acting in such a manner can take initiatives to set up or to finance non-profit organisations that ultimately benefit sustainable social development. Such are the “private social welfare services” functioning variously in different countries under the auspices of private individuals. These services are said to be more competent and efficient and accordingly, they are more welcome in countries where a good part of the population remains vulnerable to a range of social problems.

**Realities on the ground**

In order to know who the players in the domain of poverty reduction and social development are, specific questions were asked to social work practitioners as well as to employers throughout the field investigation. The responses are summarised below.
### Focus of intervention of different categories of actors

**Table 2.5:** Focus of the organisation bulk work* agency category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of the organisations bulk work</th>
<th>Agency category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Department</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct service delivery</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within focus of the organisations bulk work</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy development</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within focus of the organisations bulk work</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within focus of the organisations bulk work</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social welfare administration</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within focus of the organisations bulk work</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within focus of the organisations bulk work</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within focus of the organisations bulk work</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field data*
The social work practitioners who responded to the question asking to indicate the focus of bulk of their respective organisations’ work declared that the government concentrates in decreasing order on the policy formulation, direct service delivery and social welfare administration while NGOs orientate their activities in advocacy, social welfare administration and direct service delivery. It is evident that these two categories of actors play a great role in the mentioned domains and they are on the forefront in the process of social development as demonstrated previously.

**Target group and agency category**

**Table 2.6:** Major target group by agency category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major target group</th>
<th>Agency category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government Department</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Count 7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within agency category 17.1%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Count 15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within agency category 36.6%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Count 13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within agency category 31.7%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly People</td>
<td>Count 6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within agency category 14.6%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count 41</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within agency category 100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field data
Overall, it appears that all categories of actors work first and foremost with adult people and the youth. Children are targeted in the third instance except for NGOs where this group comes at the second level after the adults. This shows that active people are primarily targeted in the perspective of involving them in the production and service delivery process and thus helping them to address poverty and to promote social development on the whole.

**Key sector of the agency intervention**

Table 2.7: Key sector of intervention by agency category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key sector</th>
<th>Agency category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>agency category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>agency category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>agency category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>agency category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Protection</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>agency category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>agency category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>agency category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field data
Table 2.8: Key sector of intervention by agency category according to employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key sector</th>
<th>Agency category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Agency category</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Agency category</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community development</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Agency category</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Agency category</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Agency category</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Agency category</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field data*
When asked to indicate the sector of intervention in their respective organisations, the respondents (both practitioners and employers) showed that health, education and community development are particularly focused on more than other areas. This orientation is in line with the national policies emphasising the fact that capacity-building and health care of the population constitute the condition *sine qua non* for their relevant participation in the development process.

**Programme linkages to the Millennium Development Goals**

The social workers practitioners as well as employers surveyed were asked to indicate the contribution of their respective organisations to the MDGs. Their ideas are presented in the two tables below.

**Table 9:** Level of contribution to MDGs by different agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDGs</th>
<th>Level of Contribution in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty reduction and hunger</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership for development</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field data*
Table 10: Level of contribution to MDGs by different agencies according to employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDGs</th>
<th>Level of Contribution in %</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High extent</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty reduction and hunger</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership for development</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Overall, the respondents (either social work practitioners or employers) revealed mostly that their working agencies contribute to both MDGs partly. It appears that the proportions of intervention in the domains of health, education, gender and poverty are quite substantial. This is in line with the government’s determination to speed the attainment of the MDGs by adopting appropriate policies and devising particular development strategies and programmes as shown in the following section.

The self-reliant people-based development: Political rhetoric or reality?

The ultimate ambition of the GoR is that all government policies should help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the policies on eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; the implementation of primary education for all; the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment; the reduction of infant mortality; improvement of maternal health, HIV/AIDS control; malaria and other diseases, as well as environment protection.
Since July 1994, there has been a conviction that conducive political
environment supplemented by clear development programmes owned
by empowered and united people constitutes a condition *sine qua non*
for the speedy socioeconomic recovery from the sufferings of all kinds
caused by the 1994 genocide. It was thus decided to engage in the
process by adopting original ways of reconstruction.

It is important to note that the adoption of Vision 2020 and its
launch in 2000 remains the landmark in the process of the Rwanda
reconstruction and sustainable development. Vision 2020 intends to
address the following main questions: “How do Rwandans envisage
their future? What kind of society do they want to become? How can
they construct a united and inclusive Rwandan identity? What are the
transformations needed to emerge from a deeply unsatisfactory social
and economic situation?” (RR, 2000: 3) Vision 2020 is built on the six
pillars below:

a. Reconstruction of the nation and its social capital anchored on
good governance, underpinned by a capable state;

b. Transformation of agriculture into a productive, high value,
market-oriented sector, with forward linkages to other sectors;

c. Development of an efficient private sector spearheaded by
competitiveness and entrepreneurship;

d. Comprehensive human resources development, encompassing
education, health, and ICT skills aimed at public sector, private
sector and civil society to be integrated with demographic, health
and gender issues;

e. Infrastructural development, entailing improved transport links,
energy and water supplies and ICT networks;

f. Promotion of regional economic integration and cooperation.
At all times, it is expected that these pillars may be affected by a number of cross-cutting issues including gender equality and sustainable environmental and natural resource management. Furthermore, Vision 2020 is to be achieved in a spirit of social cohesion and equity, underpinned by a capable state. On the whole, it is considered that Rwanda’s ongoing development is based on the Nation’s principal asset – its people. These people have been made aware of their first responsibility in handling their problems and they are progressively convinced that they may master their destinies. Self-reliance is thus put at the centre of their actions and they are constantly encouraged to rely on their potentialities and resources before considering external assistance.

In the perspective of the Vision 2020 and by recovering progressively from the 1994 genocide that completely destroyed the social fabric and reversed the MDGs, Rwanda has been putting in place specific policies – sometimes considered as ambitious by some people – that helped it tremendously to achieve impressive progress despite the multiple impediments described several times in this document. To relate this uniqueness, UNDP wrote in 2005 that:

… the determination of Rwandans and the sound policies that have been adopted are laying the foundation for sustainable and reliable justice, democracy, and economic growth as preconditions for attaining many of the MDGs.\(^9\)

Overall, Rwanda made great strides in different arenas and more than ever, it is committed to:

… reduce poverty and its many manifestations: hunger, disease, gender inequality, lack of education and access to basic infrastructure, and environmental degradation (UN, 2007: 5).

\(^9\) From http://www.unrwanda.org/undp/mdg.htm retrieved on 14/1/2012
To concretise this end, one can refer to Minister of Finance Rwangombwa (February, 2012) who declared:

While it has been the shared dream of all Rwandans, few could have foreseen the speed with which our country is moving from widespread poverty to development and prosperity. We are determined to redouble our efforts so that this great progress continues unabated… Beyond poverty reduction, Rwanda is exceeding targets across the board when it comes to the Millennium Development Goals – including literacy, maternal health and child nutrition – but there is no doubt that the key precursor to success in these areas is the reduction, and eventual eradication, of economic deprivation.

If Vision 2020 and relating policies are turned into reality, this is due to the political will of the high-ranked leaders of the country who have been promoting the bottom-up development approach and devising most of the time home-grown solutions including:


The success – and this may serve as a good lesson for social work practitioners – comes also from the mobilisation of the people and the inculcation in their minds of specific fundamental values such as patriotism, bravery, self-esteem, solidarity, integrity, dignity and above all, self-reliance.

In concluding this sub-section, it is important to note that even though there is still much to do particularly in terms of empowering the population for its adequate involvement in the development process, an invaluable step has been made. Indeed Rwandans are well embracing the national policies favouring the revitalisation of traditional ways of solving socioeconomic problems built on the
philosophy of self-reliance. Results deriving from this goodwill such as self-help or auto-assistance are appreciable. Thus, it is evident that by working with committed people it is easier to involve them in the development process and to uplift their well-being. Definitely what remains for the improvement of their situation is to strengthen their capacities and this is the role of dedicated intervening actors including social work professionals.
Chapter Three

Social Work Practice

Introduction

In reference to the information gathered from social work practitioners who participated in the study, the current chapter explores the status of the profession and its contribution to poverty reduction and social development as well as to the realisation of the MDGs.

Social work is a very young profession in Rwanda that was academically initiated at the National University of Rwanda in 1999 from which the trainees obtain a Bachelors degree and are released to the workplace in different settings. Before this development, social work activities were formally executed by “Assistant social workers” holding a diploma offered by secondary social work schools after either five or seven years of training; these schools were established by the government in 1956. The importance and uniqueness of social work are significantly felt in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, especially with the presence of different humanitarian organisations and research institutions that have been introducing social work approaches while assisting the country throughout the reconstruction process.

When asked to define a social worker in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, the agents working in social welfare domain who were benefiting from special training to upgrade their knowledge and to acquire specific skills in order to intervene adequately towards vulnerable groups with particular focus on children declared that:
A social worker is:

*Umujyanama w’imibereho myiza y’abaturage:* Counsellors in social affairs

*Umuhuza:* Co-ordinator

*Umukangurambaga:* Animator of the community

*Umufasha w’abatishoboye:* Helper of vulnerable groups

*Umuhohoza:* Someone who gives consolation

*Umusosiyali:* Someone who deals with social problems

*Ruburirabose:* Someone who informs the community about all possible problems.

Overall, a social worker is considered as *umuvugururamibereho,* that is, “someone who is expected to help promote the well-being of the people” using appropriate methods and techniques with specific knowledge and skills (understanding that has been developed progressively at NUR by social work lecturers and students).

Today, qualified social workers are growing in numbers and they are advocating for their recognition even if there is a tendency to equate their status with that of sociologists. Social workers are progressively playing key roles at different levels for the socioeconomic development of the country and they are well appreciated in different spheres of life. Before presenting systematically the findings, it is opportune to relate the characteristics of the participants in the study in order to get an idea on the level of participation of social work professionals.
Characteristics of participants in the study and status of social work practice

Characteristics of social work practitioners

Table 3.1: Characteristics of social work practitioners who participated in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-50 years</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 30 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 50 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest qualification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree in social work</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma in social work</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate in social work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where highest qualification was obtained</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National public institution</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National private institution</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution outside Africa</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution in another African country</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It emerges from the table that the majority of respondents in the category of social work practitioners were females (67%). In terms of age, most of the respondents were between 30 and 50 years (78.6%) and it is obvious that a great number of them completed their Bachelor degree in national public institution; the completion of their studies mostly took place either between 2000 -2009 (72.8%) or after 2009 (17.5%).

**Characteristics of employers**

**Table 3.2:** Characteristics of Employers by sex and qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Qualification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma in social work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree in social work</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of the employers who participated in the study were females (59.3%). A small number of respondents had social work background; the majority of them had at least a Bachelor’s degree in different human sciences fields especially in sociology, psychology or economics obtained mainly from the national public institution.

Characteristics of social work students

Table 3.3: Characteristics of Social work students by sex in the three institutions surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of institution</th>
<th>CUR</th>
<th>IPB</th>
<th>NUR</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within sex</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within sex</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within sex</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data
All social work students in the highest level of study from CUR (2nd year social work), IPB (4th year social work) and 60% of the 4th year NUR social work students participated in the study. With the exception of IPB where the proportion of female to male was relatively the same, the number of female students was higher as was the case for the previous categories of respondents.

**Number of years spent in the agency for social work practitioners and employers**

Table 3.4: Years in the agency for social work practitioners and employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Social work practitioners</th>
<th>Employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>103</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field data*

It emerges from this table that 79% (52% between 1-3 years and 27% between 4-6 years, respectively) of social work practitioners had spent between one and six years in their respective agencies while 15% had spent more than seven years in the agency. On the side of the employers, 78% (41% between 1-3 years and 37% between 4-6 years, respectively) indicated that they had been in the agency for between one and six years while 14% had spent more than seven years. Overall, this shows that social work practitioners and employers surveyed have
a good experience in the social work domain and are expected to offer appreciable services with dedication.

**Designation of social work practitioners and number of years in current position**

Overall, the majority of social work practitioners (48 out of 86) who responded to the question, that is, 56% indicated at the time they were providing information that they had the position of either programme officer/manager or project coordinator; 35% (30 out of 86) were intervening as generalist social workers; 6% were acting fully in administration and 3% were employed outside of their professional domain that is, serving in non-social work positions.

In terms of the number of years in their current position, the findings showed that 82% (77 out of 94) respondents had been occupying their responsibility for between one and six years – 66% between 1-3 years and 16% between 4-6 years. From these results one could say that social workers were really exercising their carrier and they were performing well considering the time spent in their positions.

**Table 3.5: Years in current position**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field data*
Estimate of qualified social workers employed in surveyed agencies

When asked to give the rough estimate (in percentage) of qualified social workers amongst their staff, majority of employers (26 out of 27) to mean 92.6% indicated that social work professionals are concentrated in the range of 1 – 20% in their respective agencies. The number is manifestly still low and this is understandable considering the time when the profession was introduced in the country as specified earlier. This is probably due to the fact that social work is still equated with other professions such as sociology, psychology and clinical psychology and thus, various positions are occupied by professionals other than social workers. The figure below illustrates the situation.

Figure 3.1: Rough estimates of qualified social workers amongst the staff

Source: Field data
Capacities and role played by social workers

Major role within the organisation

Table 3.6: Role played by the social work professionals according to social work practitioners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy development and planning</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of programmes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development/organiser</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator/trainer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broker</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling/case work</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social work research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Social workers are intervening in various domains and at the forefront; they are playing the roles of educators/trainers, community development organisers and programme administrators. In the second instance, social workers are playing the roles of counsellors, advocates and they exercise a certain influence in policy development and planning. On their side, the employers mentioned counselling/casework and community development as the main domains of intervention of their social work staff.
Table 3.7: Role played by the social work professionals according to employers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casework</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social service administration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Settings for intervention and the day-to-day work

Figure 3.2: Level of operation of organisation’s current programmes, views of practitioners

Source: Field data
Even though employers stated that social workers offer mainly services at individual/family and community levels in their respective agencies, social work practitioners affirm that their intervention was focusing on community and national needs at the time of the survey. This probably translates the current government’s priorities to privilege collective action that may be embraced by all stakeholders. In fact, the improvement of people’s living conditions in the long-term is considered important and thus the social workers’ day-to-day work is orientated in this perspective as shown by the data in the table below.
Table 3.8: The social work’s day-to-day work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addressing the immediate needs of clients</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing clients from falling into undesirable situations</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making changes in clients’ lives for long-term improvement</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

In their daily work, social workers in Rwanda are first and foremost targeting changes in clients’ lives for long-term improvement, preventing clients from falling into undesirable situations and addressing the immediate needs of clients. This shows that, as embedded in the national policies, the population may be empowered and made aware of the necessity of handling problems before they occur.

Approaches and methods applied in social work intervention

Social work practitioners were requested to indicate the general approach they use throughout their service intervention and the type of social work methods they use. Their responses are expressed in the tables below.
The remedial and developmental social work approaches are similarly used by social workers throughout their intervention with a percentage of 32.6% in each case; these are followed by generalist practice at the level of (26.1%). This shows that there is no prevailing approach so far but according to the current political orientation there will be probably more shift to collective and participatory change perspectives. Apparently, the individual case work method is predominating but the fact that group work, community organisation and social development
combined as methods used in practice for social change account for 53% in total as expressed by the social work practitioners can help understand the probable progressive shift from individual intervention in general. In fact, these methods mark a shift from the social relief approach and promote the inclusion or involvement of the people in the problem-solving process. These methods are the ones recommended by development actors. The chart below, related to the table above, shows more clearly the situation and how the three mentioned methods are relatively interconnected.

**Figure 3.4:** Social work methods used in practice

![Social work methods used in practice](image)

**Source:** *Field data*

**Collaboration with other professionals**

All the 27 employers specified that social workers employed at their respective organisations work in a multidisciplinary team alongside other professions. They mentioned that social work practitioners collaborate particularly with sociologists, psychologists, lawyers and agricultural engineers in the process of handling psychosocial, human rights and development problems of their clients.
Roles of social work in poverty reduction and social development

Social workers intervention towards poverty challenges

All the 27 employers affirmed that the social workers at their respective organisations are capable of handling problems related to poverty. They specified that their education equipped them with necessary skills and knowledge to practise in fields related to poverty alleviation.

The training equipped them with the necessary knowledge to practise and they are experienced in handling poverty-related cases. They have, for instance, been helping in the integration of genocide survivors at different levels. Using the confidence and skills they acquired through social work training, they have been assisting people in identifying their problems and finding solutions.

Specific roles played by social workers in addressing poverty

Social workers who participated in this study were asked to specify the roles they were playing in addressing poverty amongst their client population. In this respect, it was shown that their intervention focused mostly on the domains of cooperatives, income-generating projects and community development. The domains of empowerment, education and gender promotion were also largely pointed out. In the third instance, social workers stated that they participated in different activities targeting behaviour social change, awareness-raising in terms of poverty reduction and social development.

Activities making the most contribution to poverty reduction amongst the clientele

At individual level

Overall, social work practitioners indicated that in their daily activities, they are involved in brokering and advocacy activities through which they linked individuals to specific NGOs, microfinance institutions, and socioeconomic local authorities. In this perspective,
they encouraged their clients to work with these actors in order to get loans or any other assistance that could help them to initiate small income-generating activities. Furthermore, social workers executed educational and counselling activities with the main objective to help clients, especially women, to become aware of their rights and to progressively adhere to cooperatives or local self-help groups. This way, the clients would be able to unite efforts with other community members and thus respond easily to their development needs.

**At family level**

At family level, the main activities mentioned by social work practitioners were related to the mobilisation and organisation of families to embrace socioeconomic development policies and poverty reduction strategies such as the possession of a kitchen garden (small garden of vegetables at home that could help prepare balanced diet), land consolidation, adhesion to cooperatives and especially the local Saving, Credit Cooperatives commonly called “umurenge SACCOs” and vision 2020 umurenge. They emphasised that they were also concerned with management of family conflicts, addressing family or gender-based violence, and the promotion of family planning.

**At community level**

Activities covering education/training, community development and cooperatives appeared as the very most contributing to poverty reduction amongst the social workers’ clientele at community level. Community interventions were considered by respondents as a very important method in the sense that it helped to serve different persons collectively but also individually.
Level of skills use and practice

Table 3.11: Specific skills referred to and used by social workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowering population at skill level</th>
<th>Empowering population at practice level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educating/training target population skill level</th>
<th>Practice level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitating change at skill level</th>
<th>Practice level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brokering at skill level</th>
<th>Practice level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>10 11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>34 39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>43 49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy development at skill level</th>
<th>Practice level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>7 8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>36 42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>42 49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

The surveyed social workers confirmed what had been declared by their employers that they acquired enough skills which help them to intervene at various levels as competent professionals. From the table above, it emerges that they were satisfied with what they were doing in optimising clients’ well-being by inculcating in them specific abilities so that they could cope with their multiple complex needs. Above all, social work practitioners declared that the change in clients was manifested through their involvement in problem-solving process and their collective adherence to development programmes relying on their own strengths and resources before resorting to external support. In this perspective, one social worker stated:
We are making a difference on the ground through the roles we are playing at micro, mezzo and macro levels. Our interventions are well appreciated by our clients who are manifestly convinced that solving problems is the first responsibility of concerned people; what is important as they say is to build strong and sincere relationships among co-actors, to promote a self-support spirit among them, to collectively explore potential responses to their needs and to seek advice from leaders and professionals nearer to them, including, particularly social workers. We are sincerely happy of our achievements even though we may multiply efforts in order to transform more the minds of our clients so that they could effectively exercise their rights and participate in decision-making affecting their well-being. (Social worker in Nyarugenge, 2011)

Overall, social work practitioners who participated in the study showed that they were fulfilling their duties with confidence, professionalism and they were offering client-centred services. They applied the social, economic and sustainable development model to which the specific roles of the empowerer, coach, facilitator, mediator, negotiator, trainer and bridge-builder were linked.

**Level of contribution to poverty reduction and social development**

**Table 3.12:** Level of social workers’ contribution to poverty reduction and social development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current work has direct focus on poverty reduction</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Developmental approach in service interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>7.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Service offered has impact on broader society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>3.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Service integrates both social and economic development

### Goals of the population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>5.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Promoting and/or protecting social and individual rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>3.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a slight extent</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To a great extent</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It emerges from this table that overall, social workers contributed greatly to poverty reduction and their actions were oriented towards sustainable development. The developmental approaches were favoured throughout their endeavours and it is well shown that the services they offered impacted on the broader society. On the other hand, it is expressed that they engage in research and they mainstream gender issues. These findings corroborate what has been demonstrated above. It is evident that the agencies visited in the current study embrace the community-based development national policies and programmes.
Orientation of the models used within the service delivery

Table 1.13: Orientation of the models used in surveyed agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are the models used in service delivery Western-oriented or indigenous?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainly locally based</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mixture of both</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Most of the surveyed employers from different agencies indicated that the models used for service delivery are both indigenous and Western-oriented. This corroborates very well the developmental orientation favoured by different stakeholders in Rwanda today and particularly by the government of Rwanda which is promoting the home-grown solutions and recommending the educational institutions to readjust their curricula in the interest of combining the positive approaches from local realities and the fundamental principles, theories and methods from outside.

Professional social work and realisation of Millennium Development Goals

Awareness of the MDGs

Almost a half of the social work practitioners (49%) and majority of the employers (77.8%) declared that they were aware of the MDGs. On the other hand, 31.4% of practitioners indicated that they knew them in detail against 18.5% of the employers. This means that the respondents are familiar with the issues targeted by the UN MDGs and more particularly the social work practitioners are the most concerned by the day-to-day management of these issues.
Table 3.14: Level of practitioners and employers’ awareness of the MDGs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioners aware of UN MDGs</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Employers aware of UN MDGs</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly aware of them</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of them</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know them in detail</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Familiarity with the programmes undertaken towards the achievement of the MDGs

In terms of programmes undertaken towards the achievement of the MDGs, 87.4% of practitioners and all employers (100%) affirmed that they are familiar with these. This presupposes that the two categories of respondents, well familiar with the ongoing programmes are capable to orientate the problem solving processes by involving adequately the beneficiaries; particularly the vulnerable groups and can execute or influence social policies to achieve effective social change.

Ways of contribution to the achievement of the MDGs

Overall, it was shown that social work practitioners fulfil their activities through mobilisation and sensitisation campaigns; advocacy; planning, monitoring and evaluation of development projects; counselling, education and trainings in various domains targeted by the MDGs.
Fitness between social work training and needs on the ground

The majority of social work practitioners stated that the training they attended had helped them to adequately address the issues related to MDGs and this is well highlighted in the table below.

**Table 3.15:** Role of social work training in helping practitioners to address issues related to MDGs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social work training equips adequately to address issues related to MDGs</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field data*

Social workers as “change agents” – what needs to be done from a professional point of view?

We know very well that the focus of social work is on the improvement of the social functioning of people in interaction with their environment. It is not just about meeting people’s material needs, such as food, shelter, health care, but it is also about helping people to develop to their full potential as human beings. It aims to improve the life condition of the community in general and vulnerable people in particular.

Social work aims to bring about positive social change by working with individuals and communities to solve social problems. It is a process of helping people to cope better with problem situations in their lives. In this way, social workers empower people to help themselves; they are expected to sow good seeds in the society and
to influence different stakeholders with the aim of uplifting the living conditions of the community members: they are thus considered as social change agents.

In terms of skills use and the levels of intervention, it is advisable that social workers in Rwanda continue to increase their capacities and to defend their profession not by doing extraordinary things but by acting extraordinarily well. For this to happen, they may – in respect of the people-centred development philosophy and community-based approaches – focus on empowerment, inclusiveness and participation of the beneficiaries of their services in the perspective of promoting integrated and self-development. Self-development refers to the development formulated with the participation of people where they themselves define their needs as felt and perceived by them. A major premise of this conception of development rests on the fundamental belief that people have the basic capabilities to improve their quality of life and that the problems confronting them can be overcome through their own efforts with the assistance and support of different professionals working in a multidisciplinary manner. It is based on the notion that the strength of a community lies not in the amount of assistance poured into it, but in cultivating the capabilities and potential of the people living in it for their own development.

**Challenges facing the social work profession**

**Issues social work practitioners are confronted with (cultural, political and contextual)**

**Cultural issues**

In terms of cultural challenges, the social work practitioners raised the problem of gender discrimination and violence manifested in different ways. They argued that despite multiple efforts made, women are still enduring many problems such as domestic violence, rape, wage labour and more particularly, gender imbalances based on access to resources. It appeared that there is a dilemma in terms of gender promotion
because what is officially admitted is not always put in practice. Thus, there is a need for change towards an effective implementation of all kinds of legal instruments in favour of women’s promotion in respect of various mechanisms established in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide.

On the other hand, respondents pointed out the problem of PLWHA who are discriminated against on the basis of the belief that it is a punishment for their immoral behaviour. Religious or moral beliefs lead some people to believe that being infected with HIV is the result of moral fault (such as promiscuity or deviant sex) that deserves to be punished.

Considering some of the respondents’ words as related below, it becomes clear that there are specific attitudes, opinions, behaviours or mentalities that hinder in one way or another social workers’ activities and that needs to be overcome for effective social change to happen. The main cultural issues social work practitioners are confronted with are:

**Gender related issues:**
- Gender-based violence
  - Cultural belief about gender equality (culturally women have to be subordinated to men)
  - Male dominance in the Management of family properties

**Some other specific issues:**
- Discrimination against HIV positive people
  - Food related taboos; e.g. refusing to eat some nutritious foods, for example, goat’s milk, Chicken etc
  - Resistance to change in general, particularly in rural areas

**Socio-political issues**

On the whole, the social work practitioners raised the issues of the consequences of the 1994 genocide, linked with the legacies of the
colonial period during which Rwandans were divided on the basis of three so-called ethnic groups (Tutsi, Hutu and Batwa). They highly appreciated the government’s political will of unifying the people and involving them in the development process in reference to well-defined policies in different areas. However, they deplored the lack of an integrated social welfare policy that could help to orient and comprehensively handle social problems.

**Contextual issues**

The majority of social work practitioners raised the issue of financial and human resources. In the latter case, they specified that there is a crucial problem of inadequate trained social work professionals while the field of practice is wide and complex. They indicated also that social work is underestimated and sometimes social workers are not necessarily given priority when social welfare agencies carry out recruitments. Another issue the respondents pointed out relates to the population growth that entails the increase of the family size and the risk of aggravating the poverty situation at this level. Last but not least, they highlighted the effects of the 1994 genocide with great attention to the specific vulnerable groups of widows and orphans.

**Common dilemmas and their effect on the social work practitioners’ day-to-day activities towards social change**

Respondents referred to the problem of implementing the recommended policies while the clients are still attached to specific customs and beliefs (for example promotion of family planning using condoms not agreed because men are not favourable to this practice). This presupposes the contradiction between patriarchy and women’s emancipation which entails some resistance to change. Serving poor people becomes so challenging because they expect to get direct material support instead of envisaging mid- or longer-term development. Modern medical treatment is sometimes not immediately welcomed and traditional healers are thus given priority even when they might be incapable of
providing the cure. In such cases, it is quite difficult to adequately help clients with fixated beliefs particularly in the domain of mental health or HIV/AIDS.

Another issue raised is the problem of subsistence-based economy versus the introduction of modern techniques. It was reported that it is often difficult to convince people to take loans from microfinance funds and to run small businesses.

Overall social work practitioners showed that Rwanda is developing so quickly and thus, there is need to change the negative traditional mentalities and to adapt carefully to the new world’s rhythm of life. (40%) of the respondents (34 respondents out of 85 who expressed their feelings) mentioned that they are moderately faced with these dilemmas in their day-to-day activities and 20% (17 respondents out of 85) declared that they were faced with these dilemmas at high level. It is important, therefore, to correct what has been wrong and to keep values as well as beliefs fitting the programmes devised for the promotion of the living conditions of the population.

Compatibility between the models of social work practice with local cultural values and traditions

Most of the social work practitioners who participated in the study (70%) indicated that the models of social work practice fit very well the cultural values and traditions in Rwanda. This presupposes that the institutions visited have integrated specific local approaches to development into their programmes as recommended by the GoR and policy makers. The implementation of this is undoubtedly facilitated by the fact that the majority of the practitioners conducted and completed their studies within the country and thus they are capable of relating to cultural values and norms and marry them with Western and indigenous social work models.
Ability to deliver culturally sensitive and appropriate social work practice

42% of social work practitioners who participated in the study indicated that they were professionally equipped and able to deliver culturally sensitive social work at high level; 12% said that they were able at very high level; against 40% at moderate level while 6% declared that they could not say anything specifically. On this basis, it is understandable that they can easily promote local approaches to poverty reduction and integrate these with Western models in an endeavour to find solutions to social development problems. Considering this situation, it is important to build upon experiences from elsewhere and to help develop the social work profession in Rwanda. Could social work professionals be at the forefront and approach different stakeholders including the policy makers in order to set up the national social work bodies and to consolidate the uniqueness of the profession?

Professional identity: Membership to professional bodies, perceptions about social work

Social work practitioners were asked to express their points of view or their feelings towards the professional identity. Overall, they showed that social work is not known broadly and is somehow misconceived. However, most of social workers who participated in the study and responded effectively to the question (88 out of 92 interviewees: 95.7% against 4.3%) indicated readiness to join a professional association. This presupposes commitment to promote the profession and thus, there is a hope that the role of social workers will be strengthened and visible at different levels throughout the country if more social workers are part of the professional bodies that govern the profession. Those who did not express their position argued that their decision would depend on the recognition and functioning of the association. The tables in the following section highlight the situation at different levels.
Existence and membership to the national social work association

Table 3.16: Awareness of and membership to the national social work association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aware of social work association in country</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member of national social work association</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

The number of social work practitioners who stated being aware of the national social work bodies (51.5%) is slightly higher than the number of those who were completely unaware (48.5%). On the other hand, a small number (25.3%) declared being members of the national body (RWA-NASW) legally operating at District level (only Huye District) and represented by Rwanda Social Work Advisory Group (RWA-SWAG)\(^{10}\). This means that the body is known mostly

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\(^{10}\) RWA-SWAG was created during a three-day workshop (21-23 March 2011) for professional social workers organised by Tulane University – School of Social Work (New Orleans-USA) in collaboration with National University of Rwanda (NUR). It was given the mission to lead and organise activities aiming at promoting the profession countrywide and to help the social work existing frameworks operating legally at lower level, particularly (RWA-NASW) to develop, to gain strength and to be recognised by authorities concerned. With the help of RWA-SWAG, some progress has been made and RWA-NASW is waiting to get the authorisation from RGB (Rwanda Governance Board) to operate legally at national level.
by the initiators and there is thus great need to speed its recognition and to mobilise social work professionals who are willing to join the association.

**Perceptions toward the recognition of social work profession**

Table 3.17: Recognition of the social work profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View about public recognition of social work profession</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SW is not recognised at all</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW is fairly underestimated</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW is adequately recognised</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW is highly appreciated</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Field data*

It is shown in the table that respondents believed that social work is generally poorly recognised and appreciated. This is understandable because as stipulated earlier, it is not given enough space for specific marketing. There is, therefore, a lot more to do to strengthen the social work profession rating in order to motivate those who are devoted to serve the country and society in general as social workers.

**Social work practitioners self-evaluation**

Social work practitioners were asked to evaluate themselves in terms of their professional identity and their devotion to social work. Their feelings are expressed in the table below.
Table 3.18: Feelings in terms of professional identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you evaluate yourself as a professional social worker?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proud to be a social worker</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to contribute to country’s development</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain personal satisfaction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy with my job, although</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment is not adequate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

The findings in the table show that, more than a half (52.5%) of social work practitioners were proud to be social workers while 34.5% felt capable enough to fulfill their duties in an effort to develop their country. This is an indicator of practitioners’ determination and thus an assurance that they will be at the forefront in the process of strengthening the profession and advocating its recognition.
Chapter Four

Reflections on Social Work Education and Training

Introduction
The main focus of this chapter is the regulation and legalisation of social work education and practice training in Rwanda. The chapter also discusses matters related to how social work curricula are designed in different social work teaching institutions to contribute to social development, poverty reduction and the achievement of MDGs. The information in this chapter relates mainly to perceptions of social work educators, social work students and social work practitioners with a focus on social work curriculum and field practice which is a major component in social work training. The chapter also analyses the social work educators’ participation in policy development and research.

Policy and legal environment for social work education and practice in Rwanda
There is lack of a policy and legal framework to regulate social work training and practice in Rwanda. This framework would help to ensure the quality and standards of education and practice in the country. The Rwandan national qualifications framework for higher education institutions provides only general guidelines to all high learning institutions but not specifying what would be the quality and standards for each field of education.
Basing on the above realities, there is a direct need to establish a legal framework for social work education and practice in Rwanda to guarantee quality and standards of training and services if the profession is to effect any change in the country. Like in many countries, the introduction of standards in social work education would define the guiding principles underpinning vision and the transferable skills which social work students have to get.

Such a framework would set out the benchmarks that each programme of social work education in the country must meet. Standards in social work education would also set out the knowledge and skills set that students need as well as the competences they must have when they complete their training.

In turn, this would give self-confidence to social work educators, students and different institutions that employ social workers. This would also serve as a restraint to those institutions that tend to emerge and provide poor quality training to social workers. In this research, social work educators recommended the formation of a committee that would bring all social work training institutions together to advocate the introduction of social work training and practice regulation in collaboration with Rwanda National Association of Social Work.

As shown in the above chapters, many social work practitioners contribute meaningfully to national development regardless of the little or no recognition of social work training in the national legal frameworks. Regulating social work practice would enable social work practitioners to practice with confidence and thus pure social work positions would not be occupied by non-social workers. It is expected that the National Association of Social Workers, which is progressively strengthened, will help to hasten the process.
Social work training in Rwanda

Social work training at undergraduate level was introduced in 1999 at National University of Rwanda. The programme was introduced to address the consequences of 1994 genocide. Indeed, in the aftermath of this genocide, the number of vulnerable people increased drastically – this was shown by a big number of orphans, child-headed households and widows. To this may be added the big number of suspects of genocide perpetrators in prisons waiting for justice; families and individuals affected by HIV/AIDS due to rape; the displaced (three million Rwandans had migrated internally or externally.); and poverty – as various economic and development infrastructures were completely destroyed. It is also important to mention that post-genocide trauma was too high and still persists more especially during the genocide commemoration period.

In 2006, another generalist social work programme was introduced at Institut Polytechnique de Byumba (IPB); and in 2010, a full faculty of social work was introduced at the Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) with two specialisations (Social Welfare and Social Development and Child and Family Welfare).

To make social work strong, the social work curriculum has gone through different reviews at NUR since its genesis in 1999. At the beginning, the curriculum was almost similar to that of sociology due to the lack of qualified social work educators to give the programme a proper orientation. After five years of its implementation, the programme was revised to improve its standard – the last review took place in 2011. Although different reviews and improvements have taken place, there is still a need for bringing social work programmes in all institutions to the global standards for education and training of the social work profession.
The role of social work in poverty reduction

The scope of social work training
Social work training at various institutions in Rwanda does not have the same orientation because each training institution has been giving particular orientation to its programme even though the key reference remains so far the National University of Rwanda (NUR). As social work emerged formally in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, a great focus is put on psychosocial aspects, human rights and development perspectives in order to prepare professionals capable of participating in the reconstruction of the country. It is important to bear in mind that issues to be solved at both local and international levels are incorporated in the curricula but in most cases no prior needs assessments are done to inform the programmes.

Social development approach
In this study, the researchers were interested in knowing the understanding of students and social work educators on the approaches and orientation of social work training in Rwanda. The bar chart below presents the findings from students.

Figure 4.1: Bulk of social work programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical/therapeutic</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>22.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social welfare</td>
<td>33.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalist social work</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social development</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Views from social works students

Source: Field data
A good number of social work students (37.7%) viewed the bulk of the social work programmes undertaken as social welfare administration-oriented; while 33.3% and 22.8% of the respondents reported that their social work programmes focused mainly on the generalist and the community development approaches, respectively. Only 2.6% indicated that the programmes were social development-oriented.

**Figure 4.2:** The orientation of the current social work curriculum

On the part of social work educators, 70% reported that social work programmes are generalist in nature while 30% indicated that they are social development-based, this is true because one of social work training institute has two specialisations that include social welfare and social development as mention above. Considering the two categories of respondents, it emerges that there is a shared views in a certain sense particularly in terms of reference made to the generalist approach. Educators who have developed the social work programme believed that the content of this programme is generalist in nature – as it was also expressed by 33.30% students; so there is little difference between students and educators’ perceptions on the orientation of
social work curriculum. What emerges from these findings is that some discussion on the programme with the participation of different stakeholders including students is of great necessity in order to generate some common understanding of it.

A question was asked to social work educators to know how social development is taught and their responses are presented through the pie chart below.

**Figure 4.3:** How social development is taught

![Pie chart showing how social development is taught](chart.png)

- 40% as a separate module
- 30% as a course unit in given subjects
- 30% as a cross-cutting approach throughout curriculum

**Source:** Field data

Most of social work educators (40%) consider that social development is taught as a cross-cutting approach throughout the social work curriculum and 30% indicated that it is a course unit in a given subjects while the other 30% see it as a separate module taught on its own. Although the social work curriculum is generalist in nature, much emphasis is put on the developmental perspectives – except at the CUR where a certain specialisation has been undertaken as already indicated – and this is probably due to the fact that its elaboration is based on the GoR’s policies that are social development-oriented.
Social work training and gender

All social work educators from different institutions agreed that gender issues are fully covered in the social work curricula; indeed gender is given as a full component in some modules and it is cross-cutting in some others. The views of social work students on whether gender issues were covered throughout their training are shown through the pie figure below.

**Figure 4.5:** Students’ views on the integration of gender in the social work curricula

[Diagram showing pie chart with percentages: Not sure (1.7%), Agree (41%), Strongly agree (57%), Not sure (1.7%), Agree (41%), Strongly agree (57%).]

**Source:** Field data

The majority of students (57%) strongly agreed that gender issues were fully integrated in social work curricula against 41% who only agreed. This was also confirmed by 34% of social work practitioners who said that gender was very well covered in their social work training and 31% who said that it was much covered; 19.40% specified that gender was little covered in their training against 3.90% who said very little while 6.80% mentioned that it was not covered at all as indicated by the figure below.
As already mentioned, gender aspects are specifically referred to in respect of the recommendation from the GoR stressing the importance of gender equality for effective community/social development.

Social work curriculum and MDGs

While responding to the question related to MDGs that receive priority in the training programmes and are particularly relevant for social work intervention, poverty was mentioned by 90% of social work educators. In 2010, the President of Rwanda pointed out that by lifting the people out of poverty; the country would become less reliant on foreign aid, and would, therefore, be treated with the value it deserves.¹¹

¹¹ This was stated by the Journalist Edwin Musoni referring to the President’s remarks during the swearing-in ceremony of the Cabinet in 2010 at the Parliamentary Buildings in Kimihurura, Kigali.
Students were also asked about their knowledge about the MDGs. First and foremost, the majority of respondents (71.90 %) reported that they are well aware of them. Secondly, they also mentioned that they feel competent to contribute mostly (51.7%) to poverty reduction; in the same sense 19.3% specified they were competent to contribute to maternal and child health care, against 17.5% who pointed gender equality and women empowerment. These views are shown in the figure below.
The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction

Figure 4.8: Educators’ prioritization of MDGs

![Bar Chart]

Source: Field data

Basing on the results from the figure above, it appears that there is convergence of views between social work educators and students about the realisation of MDGs even though a particular focus is put on some particular goals. It is expected that in the coming curriculum review, a certain refinement should be made taking into consideration the importance of each of these UN goals and this should be done in reference to the national policies and on the basis of these specific research findings.

Social work training and global standards

As indicated earlier, social work is quite a new education field in Rwanda but the ambition of its initiators is to strengthen it to match the global standards. In this perspective, educators were asked to indicate whether the current curriculum fits the global standards of social work education and training. The responses showed that these standards are partly integrated in the curriculum. Overall, it appears that most of educators are aware of the standards in question as shown in the following figure. Thus there is a hope that students are taught in a corresponding manner.
Material and methods used in teaching social work

The researchers were interested in knowing the source of materials used in teaching social work. Both students and educators showed that most of the materials used come from outside the country – either from the USA, Europe or other developed countries – as expressed by the students – or, to a certain extent, from other African countries – according to social work educators.

Table 4.1: Sources of materials used in teaching of social work according to students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of materials used</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local publications</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks from other African countries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks from Europe and other developed countries</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>114</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Figure 4.9: Suitability of the curriculum to the global standards

Source: Field data
It is important to note, however, that a good number of social work educators (60%) indicated that they refer moderately to some locally produced materials and publications. These are mainly made of reports, strategic plans, policies and other manuscripts providing diverse information on the country. 10.5% of students indicated other sources composed mainly of materials downloaded from internet as it is used widely by both educators and students.

Table 4.2: Source of materials used in teaching of social work according to educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of materials used in teaching social work</th>
<th>Level of use</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country-specific materials and publications</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials from other African countries</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials produced outside of Africa</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Social work research and policy development

A big number of social work educators surveyed (80%) specified that their respective institutions conduct research with regard to social work and social development issues while 20% did not. During the interview with social work educators, many of them confirmed that they are engaged in research although they are faced with some specific challenges as expressed by one educator from NUR:

"It is not so easy to participate in research while one is overloaded with heavy teaching workload; apart from this, there is also a crucial problem of availability or access to research funds. There is a need..."
to rethink the research activities and to see how to assist more adequately the staff as research findings would help to enrich and concretise our teaching materials.12

Figure 4.10: School /department participation in social work and social development research

![Pie chart showing school/department participation in social work and social development research. 80% of respondents answered Yes, 20% answered No.]

Source: Field data

Students were also asked to indicate whether they undertook a research course/unit as part of their social work curriculum requirements and to describe the orientation of their research problems. The majority of students declared that they do research in a form of a dissertation in their fourth year as a requirement to complete their undergraduate studies. But different research-related module components are taught at different levels starting from level one which mainly aims at helping students be able to do their course works which are also part of Familiarizing them to do research. On the question regarding the focus of their research, 42.1% of the respondents said that their research topics are based on community development against 22.8% who declared that they pay more attention to problems of specific vulnerable groups as well as policy and planning issues. It is not suprising that many students carry out their researches in areas of

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12 Interview of a lecturer at NUR, November 2011.
development because, as indicated before, this is guided by the national policies emphasising development perspectives.

In terms of participation in the country’s development and social planning, 50% of social work educators declared that they intervene to a slight extent; 40% indicated that they participate to a moderate extent; while 10% do not play any role. This shows that their involvement in the policy development process is not strong enough and this is due to the limited occasions through which they could influence concerned organs. So far, they do mainly participate through researches, consultancies and the workshops they attend. As specified by a lecturer from the CUR:

It is quite important to strengthen the university staff researches and above all to be in close contact with policy makers for sharing of the findings that are manifestly useful for a good orientation of development policies.  

*Figure 4.11:* Level of participation of social work educators in policy development

*Source:* Field data

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13 Interview of a lecturer from CUR, November 2011.
Expected skills and competences of social work graduates

On the basis of their appraisal of social work curriculum, educators and students revealed their perceptions on the skills and competences acquired by graduates for relevant intervention in social development and poverty reduction domain. These are summarised in the tables below.

Table 4.3: Perceptions of educators on the skills and competences acquired during their training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our curriculum explicitly refers to national poverty reduction and development strategies.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our graduates are adequately equipped to address issues of poverty amongst their target population.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our graduates have adequate skills and competences in integrating social and economic development goals.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction

Our social work curriculum adequately prepares graduates to contribute to the achievement of the UN MDGs alongside other professionals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The theories and models that we teach in the current social work curriculum enable our graduates to work in diverse cultural settings and engage in culturally relevant practices.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflections on Social Work Education and Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our graduates are adequately equipped with knowledge and skills to handle the challenges and needs of rural areas.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our institution is involved in academic discourses and collaborations with other schools for the mutual exchange of staff, students and literature.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

It emerges from the table above that the majority of social work educators (90%) of both who agreed and strongly agreed appreciated their curriculum and reported that it refers to national poverty reduction and development strategies. Again, 90% confirmed that social work curriculum prepares adequately graduates in their respective institutions to contribute to the achievement of the UN MDGs. Lastly, they indicated that theories and models that they teach in the current social work curriculum enable their graduates to work in diverse cultural settings and to engage in culturally relevant practices. Apart from what is presented above there is a general appreciation of social work educators towards the current social work curriculum in their institutions.
Table 4.4: Perceptions of students on the skills and competences acquired during their training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues of poverty and poverty reduction were adequately covered in the social work curriculum.</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>74.60%</td>
<td>21.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have acquired adequate knowledge, skills and competences in integrating social and economic development goals through my social work training.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>45.60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The social work training has equipped me with adequate knowledge about the MDGs.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28.90%</td>
<td>68.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The social work training has adequately prepared me to contribute to the realisation of MDGs alongside other professionals.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>48.20%</td>
<td>47.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of the key issues that were effectively integrated in the curriculum was the protection and promotion of individual and social rights.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>40.40%</td>
<td>52.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender issues were integrated in my social work curriculum.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>41.20%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been adequately equipped with knowledge and skills of integrating gender issues at all levels of practice.</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>62.30%</td>
<td>27.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the theories and models that I learnt in social work are relevant to addressing local problems and needs in my country.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>40.40%</td>
<td>58.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The social work education/training has made me more culturally aware and I can effectively work in diverse cultural settings.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>7.90%</td>
<td>35.10%</td>
<td>55.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the curriculum content leaned towards remedial/therapeutic/individual social work methods and models</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>67.50%</td>
<td>23.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the curriculum content leaned towards developmental issues such as poverty reduction.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>30.70%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way in which fieldwork was organised during the course helped me to gain a deeper understanding of development needs in my community.</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>38.60%</td>
<td>54.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way in which fieldwork was organised during the course helped me to gain knowledge and skills on how to address individual problems of my clients.</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>25.40%</td>
<td>66.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field data

The overall majority (95%) of social work students indicated that issues of poverty and poverty reduction were adequately covered in the social work curriculum. Similarly, they said that they acquired adequate knowledge, skills and competences relevant to social and economic development.

**Field practice as part of the social work curriculum**

**Views from social work educators**

When asked whether fieldwork is part of social work curriculum, all educators who participated in the study responded positively. Relating to the way field practice is structured, different views were given. In all social work training institutions field work practice starts from level two and students are sent on the field where they gather experience in various settings this helps them to prepare their first professional practice in level three. They indicated that systematic practical activities start from year three while a final internship and the last professional practice is organised and carried out in the fourth year.
Some social work educators emphasised that what is being done is promising as expressed by one of them:

It is understandable that social work students are well prepared for their career and even though there is still a need to strengthen the profession, we can be proud of the level attained so far and things will undoubtedly continue to improve especially with the collaboration between the three social work training institutions.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Placement of students and challenges}

Organising field practice entails doing good planning and being in close collaboration with social agencies. All the three institutions have specific guidelines prescribing the duties of the faculty coordinator and supervisors, the field instructor as well as of the students. Before the effective placement of the students, preliminary contacts with the agencies – generally in the surroundings of the university – are organised and the intervention areas are determined in principle.

Overall social work educators and students appreciate the field practice because they revealed that it serves as a good opportunity to confront theories learned in class and the realities on the ground. In this perspective, a student at NUR stated:

During my practice, I realised that intervention towards street children was effective by taking into consideration the theories of human development combined with the person-in-environment perspective but also by assessing different social systems he/she is involved in.\textsuperscript{15}

Often, students are placed in various agency settings near the university and it is quite difficult to go far because of the problems of facilities, more especially financial support. It is important to note that many other issues were raised by the respondents and these are summarised below:

\textsuperscript{14} Interview of a social work educator at NUR, November 2011.

\textsuperscript{15} Interview of a social work student at NUR, November 2011.
a. Non-possession of field manual guiding all the parties involved in the practice process (Faculty supervisors, field instructors and students);

b. Limited number of agencies/institutions offering social work services in the neighbourhood of the universities and consequently, the problem of placement of many students in the same services;

c. Field instructors who are not always qualified social workers;

d. Impossibility for faculty supervisors to follow regularly the students because of limited means as specified above; and

e. Inaccessibility of some areas.

Views from social work practitioners

In this research, social work practitioners were considered as very important resource persons. Thus, they were asked to provide information on social work field practice whilst they were still studying but also considering the situation today in their respective agencies. The responses they provided on a series of specific questions asked are summarised in the following table:

Table 4.5: Social work practitioners’ views about field practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions and filters</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Did you undertake field placements/internship whilst studying social work? | Yes = 83.5%  
No = 6.8% |
| How many placements did you undertake in the course of your social work training? | 1 = 16.5%  
2 = 43.7%  
3 = 15.5%  
4 = 3.9%  
5 = 1.0%  
Missing = 17.5% |
| How many of these placements were undertaken in a rural setting? | 1 = 22.3%  
2 = 26.2%  
3 = 3.9%  
4 = 2.9%  
5 = 1.0%  
Non = 1.0% |
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### Questions and filters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions and filters</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many of the placements were undertaken in a developmental social welfare setting (i.e. excluding probation and welfare, rehabilitation centres, counselling, medical and psychiatric practice)?</td>
<td>1 = 25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = 25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 = 9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 = 1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non = 1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your organisation offer internship training to social work students?</td>
<td>Yes = 57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing = 6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, are you involved in their supervision?</td>
<td>Yes = 40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing = 34.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field data

It emerges from the table above that the majority of social work practitioners (83%) carried out field practice as part of their social work training. For those who did not formally undertake the field placement, it was due to the fact that the curriculum was still equated to sociology and they were used only to conduct observations leading to organised seminars and for the rest to rely on the final applied research for the elaboration of a 20-credit dissertation.

43.7% of the respondents indicated that they benefited from two placements. In terms of the settings they were placed in, they specified that they were sent twice (26.2%) and once (22.3%) to rural areas. When asked to indicate how many times the placements were undertaken in a developmental social welfare setting, 43.7% of them said twice; 16.5% mentioned once; and 15.5% mentioned three times. It is evident that the field placements are not sufficient and the students do not benefit from enough opportunities to practice in the settings where they deal in-depth with critical social problems, including poverty.
To the question whether their respective organisations offer internship training to social work students, 57.3% of the respondents answered \textit{yes} while 35.9% said they did not. Among those who said \textit{yes}, 40.8% declared that they are involved in the supervision of students while 25.4% said \textit{no}. In fact, in some institutions students are supervised by the managers assisted by social workers and this shows that sometimes field supervision/instruction is taken as an administrative instead of a technical matter. In such a situation, one can say that there is a need to strengthen the collaboration between the social services agencies and social work faculties/departments within the concerned universities in order to set up an agreement on how to conduct field practice.

In parallel, similar questions were asked to the fourth year social work students (2011-2012 academic years) and considering their answers, things have been evolving positively. All of them confirmed that they undertook fieldwork as part of their training. As shown in the following table, the majority of them (59.6%) indicated that they performed their practice in the community organisation domain.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Service orientation where most of field placements were done} & \textbf{Frequency} & \textbf{Percentage} \\
\hline
Remedial, individualised services e.g. probation services & 10 & 8.8 \\
\hline
Group work & 12 & 10.5 \\
\hline
Community organisation & 68 & 59.6 \\
\hline
Advocacy services & 23 & 20.2 \\
\hline
Other & 1 & 0.9 \\
\hline
\textbf{Total} & \textbf{114} & \textbf{100} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Service orientation where most of field placements were done}
\end{table}

\textit{Source: Field data}

They showed also that most of the time, NGOs readily offered fieldwork placements and this is understandable because NGOs
are more experienced in and aware of the social work profession. Information on this point appears in the following table:

Table 4.7: Types of agencies that offered fieldwork placement to students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of institution</th>
<th>Type of agencies that offered fieldwork</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government department</td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUR</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPB</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

On a positive side, social work practitioners reported that once on the job, they do benefit from the strong theoretical knowledge they acquired and apply it to various realities on the ground. This is very often facilitated by on-job training through various venues such as workshops, seminars, conferences, and also sharing of experiences in different ways (online discussions, readings, meetings, and so on).

Relating to the locality where they did their fieldwork, the majority (69.3%) indicated that they were placed in rural areas. It is, however, important to note that some of the organisations have offices in urban centres but actually operate in rural areas. They do not open offices in rural areas due to lack of infrastructures and services such as electricity, water and security.
Table 4.12: Locality where fieldwork was done

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of institution</th>
<th>Rural setting</th>
<th>Urban setting</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CUR</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>97.3%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPB</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUR</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Indigenisation of social work education and training

Contribution to the indigenisation of social work in Africa

This research was interested in knowing whether social work educators contribute to social work indigenisation in Africa. Most of the respondents (70%) said they contributed to social work indigenisation while 20% said they did not. The research further wanted to find out in which ways do those who answered yes contribute. Some educators said that although they use materials produced outside Africa, they try to put some theories into the local context and give similar local examples that are familiar to students to ease their understanding. Other educators said they contribute through exchange visits with other universities and participation in research based on local realities and conferences where they are able to share their views regarding social work indigenisation. Finally one participant argued that he contributes “by acting locally even if he is thinking globally”¹⁶. The general impression here is that it is difficult to understand the real contribution of

¹⁶ Interview of a social work educator at NUR, November 2011
social work educators’ contribution towards social work indigenisation in Africa as different participants gave different views.

However, educators also highlighted issues that hinder social work indigenisation and these included: almost all the materials used to train social workers are produced outside Africa; little commitment amongst authorities of universities concerned to facilitate local research activities that would respond to lack of locally generated materials; inadequate sponsorship for social work-based research; lack of local literature on cultural/traditional approaches that would help in the process of social work indigenisation; research outputs in the field of social work by Africans are not enough; and predominant use of materials produced in Europe, USA and other parts of the world in social work training. Rwanda and other African social work training institutions should give priority to social work local materials production by using the little resources they have, this would solve the problem of over depending on materials produced from outside that are used to train social workers who are required to practice in local contexts.

In addition to the above, social work practitioners gave their views on their professional abilities to deliver culturally sensitive and appropriate practice.

**Figure 4.12:** Abilities to deliver culturally sensitive practice

![Bar chart showing percentages of abilities to deliver culturally sensitive practice](chart)

**Source:** Field data
More than one-third (36.9%) of the social work practitioners reported that they were able to deliver culturally highly sensitive practice, while 35% said to a moderate extent. Only 10.7% rated their ability as very high. On cultural knowledge that can inform social work practice to be relevant in addressing different issues social workers are dealing with in their daily practice, practitioners gave different views which included: *ubudehe* (a traditional programme for poverty reduction), *girinka munyarwanda* (one cow per poor family programme), local-based approaches to poverty reduction, *umuganura* and *ubusabane* (celebrating and sharing the yield from the first harvest where each community member was supposed to contribute little from their harvest so that it can be put together and organise for the celebration), *abunzi* (conflict mediators), *umuganda* (community work) used to solve big problems one person or a small group of persons cannot solve alone but which need community intervention, *itorero* (Youth retreat) this is where the young people go to learn cultural dances and theatres, cultural norms, values and taboos as they are taken to be the engine of development of any society. No society that can develop without basing on its cultural knowledge and realities. The GoR is currently using the above mentioned traditional approach that was used in the past to help in solving current problems effecting Rwandans including poverty.

**Areas for improvement in the social work curriculum**

Basing on the analysis of the findings, researchers proposed some recommendations that would be of great importance regarding the improvement of social work training in Rwanda:

- Ministry of Public Services and Labour should ensure that social work jobs are occupied by professional social workers, as they understand the models and professional ethics and they can be held accountable for professional misconduct by professional organisations.
The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction

- Social work training institutions and professional organisations like RWA-NASW in this case should ensure that social work training and practice base on international standards provided by IASSW and IFSW.

- Universities and other social work training institutions in Rwanda should put in more efforts to search for opportunities to help social work educators specialise in social work than other disciplines. This would increase the number of social work highly qualified academic staff who would in turn develop the programme by introducing an MSW and PhD programs in social work.

- Training institutions and educators should ensure that, social work supervised fieldworks are increased and well supervised to meet the international requirements. Educators should increase the support given to students during their field practice and this should be done through regular supervision while on the field.

- Rwanda high education council and training institutions should make sure that Social work curriculum are designed to solve local needs of clients, and should be adapted to Rwandan traditions and culture.

- The three training institutions training social workers should facilitate local and international networks with educators and students to facilitate sharing of materials, experiences and knowledge in social work.

- Rwanda National Association of Social Workers (RWA-NASW) should struggle for the professional visibility and recognition in the country. This should be achieved through maximum use of all available media channels in the country, use promotional materials and participation in voluntary activities where their visibility would be increased to the public.

- Training institutions with their little available resource should increase social work-related materials like textbooks, journal articles VCDs and DVDs to help in social work training.
Universities and institutes that train social workers should train social work educators in areas of curriculum development and social work related pedagogical approaches, and this would be achieved through study visits and teaching exchange programmes.

Rwanda high Education Council in collaboration with social work training institutions should value carrying out assessment that would inform changes, improvement or developing new curricula. This would give a chance to social work partners and stakeholders suggest curricula that would help in addressing societal issues.

**Conclusion**

There is a general positive appreciation from different categories of respondents that social work training prepares social workers to make an intervention in different areas of professional practice. On the orientation of social work training, generalist approaches take the lead as these are the ones being used by two of the three higher learning institutions that train social workers in Rwanda.

Most of the social work training materials are produced outside Africa and this has an implication in the sense that social work training takes on a western bearing although trained social workers are required to solve issues in a local context.

Social development has been seen as cross-cutting to many modules taught rather than being a module on its own. Areas of improvement have been also given in order to strengthen social work training and practice as highlighted in the recommendations given above.
Chapter Five

Status and Perspectives of Social Work in Rwanda

Introduction

This chapter focuses on different issues social workers deal with in their daily interaction with clients. It further discusses the appreciation of social work clients towards social work service delivery; and discusses the challenges faced by social work clients and their desired changes.

Challenges faced by social work clients and their coping strategies

The research findings, from social work practitioners, show a number of issues faced by clients. The majority of the respondents mentioned poverty as a major challenge to their clients, noting further that poverty was identified as the cause of many other problems that clients face. One respondent was quoted saying:

When you solve the problem of poverty you also eliminate a big number of other social problems we are facing.17

Another big problem mentioned was HIV and AIDS, which was also considered to cause a lot of other social problems to clients, such as increasing the number of widows and widowers, a big number of

17 Interview with a social work practitioner carried out in Rwamagana District, October 2011.
orphans, discrimination of people living with HIV and AIDS and other psychosocial problems.

Other challenges mentioned included: gender-based violence and inequalities between men and women, child abuse, family and community conflicts, post-genocide problems that would be categorised into psychosocial and economic issues, as well as ignorance and illiteracy which in turn affect production activities such as agriculture. To emphasise the above point, one social work practitioner said:

As a social worker I consider ignorance as a priority area of our intervention, because local communities need to be empowered and to increase their capabilities in different domains more especially in agriculture that earn livelihood to many of our clients.\(^\text{18}\)

In rural communities, most of FGD participants pointed out land shortage and land-related conflicts as the biggest challenges their communities face. Land is a resource where almost 85% of most Rwandan population earn their living. Given the small size of the country and its first growing population, land remains a critical issue, especially in the face of a big number of the youth.

Further related to the lack of land is the fact that in some areas, the available land is not suitable for agriculture. This results in lack of food in some parts of the country. Agricultural inputs were also mentioned as a challenge to many social work clients. Some agricultural inputs are very expensive and not available in many rural communities where most of social work clients who participated in the research live. In order to get agricultural inputs they have to travel long distances to towns to buy them. Clients also reported lack of agriculture-related training that would help them improve farming. Related to training, one FGD participant in Simbi sector, Huye District had this to say:

\(^{18}\) Interview with a social work practitioner working with Matyazo Health Centre located in Huye District, November 2011
How would local leaders expect us to implement government policies, programmes and strategies we do not understand? We need to be trained if we are expected to contribute meaningfully to those strategies and programmes, rather than telling us to implement something we do not understand or we do not know.19

Social work clients further pointed out challenges related to education and these include: parents failing to raise school fees for their children and other school-related materials, school dropout, lack of school infrastructures in some areas – some students have to walk more than 7 kilometres going to school – and lack of motivation to teachers which in turn affect the quality of education.

In the area of health, social work clients mentioned problems such as the lack of money to buy health insurance, the lack of health facilities and infrastructures, a limited number of health personnel in community health centres, unwanted pregnancies, more especially, among the youth and other sexual and reproductive health-related issues, including family planning. Prevalence of diseases was also reported to be a problem as when people fall sick, they have to spend a lot of money and time hence decreasing their production.

Other problems reported include: unemployment due to lack of capital caused by limited access to financial institutions that require security which many community members do not have; issues related to inheritance caused by limited knowledge about laws governing inheritance; shelter-related problems whereby some people live in poor housing where in some families children share rooms with domestic animals (like goats, sheep, rabbits, and so on). Other challenges identified included: poor service delivery at local administrative systems, the lack of clean water, limited access to information as some parts of rural communities are hard to reach, and lack of community

19 Said by one of the social work clients FGD carried out Simbi Sector, Huye District, November 2011.
members participation in decision-making. On this last point, one of the respondents in the FGD in Simbi sector said:

We do not participate in many decisions taken. We are just told what to do by our local leaders; they do not involve us in decision-making. We only participate at the Umudugudu level (village level) where we give our opinions while at other levels, decisions are taken without our participation, and they just tell us to comply with what they have already decided.20

**Desired social changes in society: areas of intervention for social workers**

Social work clients raised the need of advocacy for agriculture transformation and they stressed that there should be shifting from traditional to modern approaches to farming in order to increase agricultural production. On this note, one of the participants in Simbi gave an example of maize and rice:

Here we grow maize but we do not have graining machines, we have to take our maize to Butare town to be ground and it is very expensive for us. Even when you buy maize flower it is very expensive for many people yet we sell our maize at a very cheaper price. The same applies to rice. We do not have machines to process rice to the finished state. This makes us buy rice at a very expensive price for eating, we would benefit if we processed the maize and rice and sale the final products. Definitely we would gain a lot than selling them in a row material form.

They also emphasised training to community members as a preventive measure to end gender-based and domestic violence.

Regarding poverty reduction clients in FGDs suggested encouraging community members to join cooperatives to increase

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20 Said by one of social work clients during FGD in Simbi Sector, Huye District, November 2011
their bargaining power and increase their financial capacities, they also suggested that community members should start small businesses for income generation, and recommended banking institutions to ease loan acquisition. Self-help groups (ibimina) were also seen as one way through which people could boost their financial status as self-help groups play key roles in community development.

Social work clients recommended that their leaders should understand issues of welfare and try to solve them. Others urged for good governance that can bring positive change through better access to education, health, support to the poor and vulnerable groups, as well as finding shelter for the homeless, access to clean water, support to street children and helping other vulnerable children to join schools. Social work clients want to see greater participation where everyone participates in decision-making, and where all people concerned would feel involved in taking decisions that will affect their lives. In this regard, they wish to see the use of bottom-up approaches to their problems, rather than imposing decisions on them.

They recommended the introduction of vocational training, more specifically for women, such as handicrafts, training on cooperative formation and management, community information centres, support for renovation and improvement of roads to ease transport problems, training local authorities on how to deliver services better, training on how to manage small income-generating activities, to help them live gather in community groupings (imidugudu) so that they can gain access to land for agriculture. They also said government should support self-help groups as such groups have in the past helped very many community members to improve their income status.

**Experience of social work by clients**

Many social work clients did not know who social workers are. In fact, some clients only answered the question after probing and giving many examples. This is not surprising because even some
educated people in Rwanda still confuse social work with sociology. This is partly caused by the fact that you find individuals who call themselves social workers without being qualified in this field. To show appreciation reserved to social work professionals, one of the FGD participants in Cyahinda Sector, Nyaruguru District, November 2011, said that she knew social workers and also described how they helped her in the following words:

Social workers help vulnerable patients coming far away from the hospital. Social workers once helped me when my son was admitted at University Teaching Hospital in Butare. That day, I left my home at around 2.00 a.m. I woke up very early because I had no money for transport so I had to leave my place to Butare, because the other alternative was to walk around 35 km carrying my son on the back because he was too young to walk and very sick. When I reached at the hospital, health professionals had to diagnose my son and find out the problem. I spent the whole day and night there with only one litre of milk because I had no money to buy food for my son and for myself and knew nobody in Butare to help. When I was still there wandering what was going to happen to me, a good person came to me after observing how I was suffering and took me to a social worker immediately. The social worker gave me food and milk powder for making porridge for my son as we had spent a night on an empty stomach. They provided what I needed for the moment and showed me where I would collect food for dinner. They gave me enough food to the extent that I was also able to give other vulnerable people with whom we were at the hospital. Social workers are good people.21

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21 Social work client FGD in Cyahinda sector Nyaruguru District, November 2011
Another social work client who participated in the FGD in Cyahinda Sector said:

Social workers help malnourished people and underweight children at health centres. They provide proper diet to them. They also help people with poor health.

This is true because nutrition departments in different health centres are headed by social workers.

Another FGD participant in Simbi Sector expressed her feelings about social workers as follows:

Social workers train us in family planning, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS, in health centres. They do advocacy, and they also provide training and education that promote empowerment and capacity-building.

**Conclusion**

Findings show that the social work profession in Rwanda is not yet well known by clients regardless of its contribution to solving their problems. Social work clients face numerous problems that need to be particularly tackled if sustainable social development is to be achieved. It is thus important to bear in mind that social work is of great necessity for advantageously promoting people’s participation to effect social change by fighting comprehensively the crucial problems raised above, including gender inequality and poverty.
Chapter Six

Perspectives on Gender, Poverty and Social Development

Gender issues in social work education and training

The Government of Rwanda has made women’s empowerment and inclusion a hallmark of recovery and reconstruction. This approach has been widely hailed as novel in both intent and scope. In May 2003, Rwanda adopted one of the world’s most progressive constitutions in terms of its commitment to equal rights for all, gender equality and women’s representation. With 64% female representation in parliament today, Rwanda has far exceeded the 30% constitutional requirement and has now become the first country in the world with the highest female representation in decision-making institutions.

Despite these efforts and impressive political will in favour of gender promotion, it appears that the implementation of the policies initiated remains questionable. Indeed, and this has been shown throughout the report, gender imbalances still exist; people are still holding on to cultural beliefs and continue to underestimate and marginalise women – arguing that they must remain submissive to men as it was with their mothers.

There is no doubt that one of the solutions to this issue resides in having enough knowledgeable and skilful professionals who should work intensively at various levels and particularly at community level in order to ‘sow well selected seeds’ through well planned training,
advocacy, and mobilisation of influential people, particularly women leaders. In this perspective, strengthening social work education and practice is of great importance and a review of the existing curricula to integrate specific theories on gender and well thought practical gender-sensitive activities is necessary.

**Gender inequality and poverty**

Gender inequality is a lack of equality in roles between men and women or existence of imbalances between the opportunities open to men and those open to women. Correlatively, gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women’s issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

Clearly, the conditions described above are not fulfilled on the ground and that is why persisting gender inequality is observed particularly in Rwandan rural areas. Women are suffering the most from this situation and are faced with disproportionate levels of poverty, considered today as the greatest challenge impacting negatively on social development in Rwanda. Indeed, women have been experiencing difficulties of all kinds in the aftermath of the genocide such as heading households because of the situation of widowhood or divorce, polygamy or absence of the husband:
These women face challenges of life alone, sink into extreme poverty and experience uncertainty about the future. Efforts aimed at helping them to improve their living conditions and overcome difficulties have to be everyone’s concern, or otherwise these isolated women run the risk of sinking into anguish, which can have serious consequences for the whole of Rwandan society. (MIGEPROF, 2005: 8)

Different other inequalities that lead to poverty and hinder the country’s development include: job segregation, unequal distribution of domestic chores, gender-based violence, unequal job opportunities, unequal distribution of household money, and unequal participation in decision-making processes. In order to avoid these situations and to ensure that men and women participate equally in the development of the country, there is a need to improve gender sensitivity. Gender sensitivity refers to the ability to recognise gender differences, inequities and to integrate these considerations in strategies and activities.

**Integrating gender issues in social work practice**

In Social work practice, “Constituents served by social workers benefit from all levels of practice because their concerns and problems are often complex, and involve micro, mezzo, and macro issues” (Hepworth, D. et al., 2006, p. 416).

If it is commonly agreed that gender issues refer to problems that arise from one’s being a man or a woman and that hinder the attainment of a full and satisfying life, it becomes evident that social work – as a human profession founded on social justice – stands for rehabilitating the victims.
Gender encompasses various aspects and to comprehend these requires taking into consideration all its dimensions, be they at individual, family, social, economic, legal or political levels. Thus, it is clear that dealing with related issues requires social work practitioners to focus not only on women’s promotion but also on:

... the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and needs. Gender relations affect household security, family well-being, planning, production and many other aspects of life. (Bravo-Baumann, 2000)²²

As highlighted earlier, it is crucial to act in a manner that people are not marginalised, ignored, stigmatised or discriminated against because of their gender. For this to happen, social work students and practitioners need guidance and preparation in order to develop their understanding of gender differences and needs. It is very important that in their daily activities, social workers pay particular attention to gender issues whatever their domain of intervention may be. Furthermore, they are required to frame these issues within the context of the communities concerned. The figure below shows how different aspects of life are linked with gender and why men and women’s problems may be addressed with equity – taking into consideration the realities of local communities.

Some of gender issues that should be dealt with by social work professionals at different levels indicated in the figure are listed below:

**Individual:**
- Lack of gender awareness
- Passivity/resistance to change
- Lack of awareness on reproductive rights
- Low self-worth

**Family:**
- Incest
- Domestic violence
- Multiple burdens
- Family abandonment by male bread winner
- Financial abuse
- Household chores assigned to women

**Figure 6.1:** Framing gender issues within the community for good social work practice
The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction

**Health and Nutrition:**
- Lack of information on family planning/reproductive health
- Low level of male participation in health concerns
- Lack of health facilities with women-friendly services
- Vulnerability of women to infectious diseases
- Lack of social services
- Low nutritional level of women
- Responsibility of birth control (lying on women)

**Sociocultural:**
- Women considered as sex objects
- Stereotyping in media, educational system and other spheres
- Rape
- Sexual harassment/abuse
- Cultural subjugation
- Poor education for women
- Women viewed as the weaker sex
- Poor social life for women

**Economic:**
- Unemployment/limited opportunities for women
- Child labour
- Employment preferences for women
- Child trafficking/slavery
- Lack of access to credit programmes for women
- Women not given managerial positions
- Increased burden on women due to poverty
- Lack of recognition for women’s work
- Insufficient funds and other resources
- Inequality of fund allocation

**Legal/Administration/Government:**
- Ignorance of laws affecting women
- Lack of trained personnel to handle rape, incest, etc.
- Justice system changing slowly in favour of women
Lack of focal persons in some services for gender promotion
Lack of gender planning

Political:
Subordination from politicians/ authorities
Lack of or insufficiency awareness/participation of women in decision-making
Limited participation of women in electoral process

**Perceptions on gender in a social work context**

The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women’s issue. They are the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society. Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all peoples.

(UN/ Department of Public Information, 1996: 33)

It is commonly known that gender refers to culturally and socially constructed roles, responsibilities, privileges, relations and expectations of women, men, boys and girls. It is important to bear in mind that gender is not only a women’s matter but both men and women, boys as well as girls are concerned. In the same sense, they are expected to unite efforts and to participate fully in their own social development. However, we cannot ignore the sociocultural and historical realities that instruct us about the disparities between men and women – the latter being variously placed in roles and positions that deny them certain rights, the former being privileged at different levels.

Although much has been done throughout the world in combating discrimination against women, the situation is still wanting and social indicators for poverty, violence, sexual assault and maternal mortality show that women are still excluded from full and equal participation.
The role of social work is of great importance in this context and it may commit itself “to eliminating all forms of discrimination and oppression…” (DiNitto and McNeece, 2008, p. 118). To handle gender-based issues and to help people of different genders engage in the social development processes, social work professionals have the duty to intervene in different settings – considering the clients in their respective environments – in which women’s needs are put at the forefront. Here we can refer to DiNitto and McNeece:

... Women’s advocacy organisations, women’s shelters, rape crisis centers, women’s health centers, women’s fitness centers, and family service agencies. Social workers in these settings provide a variety of services, including counselling, therapy, education, advocacy, and case management, to meet women’s needs and maximize their strengths. It should not be surprising that social work, a profession made up of so many women, is committed to gender equality. (DiNitto and McNeece, 2008, p. 99)

Participants in this study indicated that women’s rights in Rwanda have been improving in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide due to the enactment of different laws as indicated previously and different other supporting initiatives from the GoR. However, they specified that different challenges are still observable (for example, cultural beliefs; poverty; ignorance) and suggested that empowering activities to assist women themselves to take the lead in fighting gender inequalities and playing greater role in social development should be strengthened. Indeed they are convinced that the role of women in social development will be effective once the criteria of: “… participation in planning, decision-making and implementation; groups, organisations and networks; learning, training and the acquiring of knowledge and innovation” are referred to throughout their involvement in different spheres of life (Green, 2003, p. 166).
It is ultimately advisable to social work professionals to go beyond the welfare, equity, anti-poverty and efficiency approaches, and to emphasise the empowerment approach in order to help women improve their position, become self-reliant and exercise full control over decisions that affect their lives. These efforts will be effective if they positively influence behavioural change among men and women, as indeed both women and men, hand in hand, have to change the gears and to act together to correct what has been wrong.
Chapter Seven

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion
Social work in Rwanda is a new profession whose contribution to the promotion of people’s well-being is appreciable. It has been demonstrated in this study that since its inception, social work in Rwanda has been playing and continues to play a big role in the social development process. In this perspective and in the line with the national policies, social workers have been concentrating efforts on problems derived from the 1994 genocide, intervening thus in favour of various vulnerable groups including orphans, widows, victims of HIV/AIDS – most of these being survivors of the genocide.

Throughout this endeavour, social work professionals have been mostly drawing from the micro-mezzo approaches. When the country shifted from the emergency and rehabilitation periods into the development phase since 2000 to date, social workers have been applying the macro practice in order to deal particularly with problems relating to poverty alleviation, education, health, unity and reconciliation, gender equity as well as problems affecting individuals, families and the community on the whole.

In this regard, it has been noted that social workers need to be well prepared and to have a range of skills and knowledge if they are to serve the people – keeping in mind that the latter are themselves the masters of their own destiny, and hence must be helped to initiate and manage their own development. Furthermore, social workers are
expected to remain conscious of what they do and should respect their clients. Accordingly, there is no doubt that the outcomes in the social development domain will be tremendous.

**Recommendations**

It is important to mention that several recommendations, suggestions or comments have been given by participants in the research and it is opportune to summarise them here. From these and also from the analysis of the findings of the study, general recommendations emerged and the researchers found it useful to highlight the main ones under specific headings. The recommendations below are thus twofold: recommendations from participants and overall recommendations emerging from the study.

**Recommendations from participants**

The recommendations provided by respondents at different levels are summarised as follows:

To combat the culture of poverty;

To promote the bottom-up decision-making philosophy;

To reinforce general education for all and at all levels;

To strengthen economic capacity in communities so communities can support their vulnerable people;

To promote income-generating activities;

To strengthen the capacity of families and family social networks;

To target more men in the process of gender mainstreaming training instead of continuing to consider gender as a women’s matter;

To reinforce women as well as men’s training at grass-root level;

To prevent family as well as social conflicts and domestic violence, in particular;

To multiply efforts in combating children’s illnesses and particularly fighting malnutrition by promoting *Girinka* Programme;

To strengthen the self-help programmes in the domain of community health insurance and micro-enterprise schemes;
To ensure youth-inclusive community development strategies;
To promote empowering activities targeting, first and foremost, vulnerable groups such as HIV/AIDS victims, child-headed households, widows and the elderly;
To promote collective activities relying on traditional solidarity philosophy;
To unify and coordinate efforts of all stakeholders particularly at lower levels;
To develop more appropriate mechanisms for ensuring the meaningful involvement of different sections of the community;
To manage carefully the people’s behavioural change starting by the family and neighbour contexts;
To fight against ignorance and illiteracy; and
To reinforce the traditional mechanisms of Umuganda, Ubudehe, Imihigo, etc. that help people feel committed and work in unity for their self development.

**Overall recommendations of the study**

In light of the findings of the current study, the researchers found it useful to make overall recommendations that are threefold: institutional, professional and policy-related.

**Institutional related recommendations**

There is a need to strengthen the mezzo-macro levels but not neglecting the micro level. Here, different actors should intervene including particularly the government, social welfare organisations and social work professionals. The role of the government should be essentially policy-making, enabling, supporting and mobilising major institutions of the society to act for the promotion of social development. On their side, the social welfare organisations employing social workers should adhere scrupulously to the principles of the developmental perspectives and emphasise community-based social service programmes. Last but not least, the social work professionals, as knowledgeable and skilful
practitioners, should be at the forefront in promoting the grassroots participation and empowering all groups in the perspective of helping community members become masters of their destiny.

Education and training institutions should think of strong curriculum so that the future practitioners will be well equipped with a core base or foundation of knowledge and skills upon which specialised forms of social work practice can be built. In this perspective it is advised to cover some specific and quite universal subjects including the following as indicated by DiNitto and McNeece (2008, p. 15):

a. Social work values and ethics;
b. Human diversity;
c. Social and economic justice;
d. Populations at risk;
e. Human behaviour and the social environment;
f. Social welfare policies and services;
g. Social work practice;
h. Research; and
i. Field education.

On the other side, these institutions should think of the introduction of specialities in the SW programme such as child and family welfare, youth studies, gerontology, community health care, social development and gender studies. They should do all the best and link social work education and training with practice in specific contexts. It is crucial to concentrate on programmes that privilege integrated approaches encompassing both modern and indigenous realities. Furthermore, it is important that the social work departments elaborate a suited field manual in collaboration with field instructors on the basis of a specific research in terms of the transformation of social work education and training since 1999. Educational institutions, with great responsibility of the social work departments, should also develop synergies with
Conclusion and Recommendations

public as well as private sectors and this is possible through well organised field placements of the students during their practical activities and internships.

To handle more effectively academic problems relating to the curriculum development but also to any matter linked with the recognition of the social work profession in Rwanda, the three existing high education institutions hosting the social work programme should play an invaluable role. Thus it is of great necessity that they set up a joint committee with the main mission of advising university organs, especially in the domain of teaching, research and practice.

Professional related recommendations

Strengthening the social work profession in Rwanda requires the existence of specific bodies that could help in the process of promoting synergies with social welfare agencies, administrative institutions and local communities as well as international organisations such as IFSW, IASSW and ASSWA (Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa). Thus, it is opportune that professional social workers hasten the legal recognition of the RWA-NASW (Rwanda National association of social workers); they are thus required to negotiate the authorisation of working as an independent organisation from the RGB (Rwanda Governance Board). The RWA-NASW is in place, it will combat attitudes denigrating social workers and publicise the social work profession.

It is important to recognise the role of social work in social development and especially in poverty alleviation. In this perspective, the government, the private sector and civil society groups especially religious organisations, NGOs and community-based organisations should unite hands and create conducive environment for effective social workers intervention. Concretely, they should create incentives for social work practice in different settings, especially in rural areas where poverty issues are prevailing. This will undoubtedly help combat
the low morale among professionals whose realisations are sometimes usurped by other professionals. More particularly, the government and all development actors should stimulate women who constitute a great number of social work professionals to maintain the struggle against gender imbalances and to play a great role in strengthening social work and advancing social development.

If community-driven development is the favoured model for social work practice in Rwanda, social work professionals should switch clearly from residual approaches to developmental perspective and act as perfect managers of communities. This requires them to be updated and to build constantly their capacities. Thus, employers in social welfare agencies, in partnership with line ministries and educational institutions, should be aware of the necessity to promote the continuing education and training of social workers in order to help them adapt to the changing world and handle the new relating problems. In the same perspective, it is also of great importance for them to think of in-service training of paraprofessionals, auxiliary social workers and volunteers who play a great role in the social development process, particularly at grassroots level. Community members or service users in general, on their turn, should be supportive, open and constantly tell social workers what they expect from them.

Policy-related recommendations
Well-thought policies, good governance, committed and capable citizens constitute key conditions sine qua non for effective social development and the betterment of the people. In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, the government of Rwanda has been doing its best and set up various policies that helped to orientate the socioeconomic reconstruction of the country. The GoR emphasised the decentralisation approaches and promoted the involvement of all categories of the population in the development process. Many achievements have been registered in terms of social development
and poverty alleviation but much remains to be done, especially in the domain of social welfare policies and their implementation with the ultimate objective to achieve prosperity for all, particularly for vulnerable people. There is particularly need of a comprehensive social welfare policy, a “government policy that is in harmony with our [social workers] deepest professional beliefs of social justice and equity” as expressed by McKendrick (2001, p. 105). In this endeavour, the input of the government in collaboration with various stakeholders including social workers is eagerly awaited.

The government should press ahead and refine the social welfare policies; it should particularly set up a comprehensive one by developing a unified set of policies, procedures and amalgamated system. It should also acknowledge the creation of social work organisations and provide them with required guidelines for adequate implementation of these policies. Above all, it should reinforce the people’s participation in the policy-making process, especially at the following levels: policy-formulation, dialogue, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as the needs and sentiments of the people must be reflected.

Throughout the process, the role of social workers should be to adhere to and promote the political will to develop a more humanised society. They should, by working closely with colleagues, other professionals and state or agency workers, inform the people and particularly the vulnerable, about their rights and about the existing or forthcoming social welfare policies. They should empower service users so that the latter become progressively masters of their own development. More than ever, professional social workers should unite efforts, set up and defend strong organisations/associations that could be at the forefront for the promotion of social work education and practice. The vision of these organisations should be to build on unity and people-centred development.
Action-research and evidence-based practice

Research is an essential tool for social workers and helps them deliver their practice agenda. Indeed, “As a social worker, or social work student, you will want to know whether your interventions are making a difference, either positively or negatively” (McLaughlin, 2012, p. 1). In the context of Rwanda, there is room to explore various domains in reference to specific interventions that have been taking place since its inception. There is no doubt that with relevant research results, different stakeholders – everyone in his/her domain of intervention – will see the areas where their contribution is most needed and thus possible strategies for addressing social problems and improving the well-being of the people will be set up. Furthermore, there is great need to inform regularly the leaders at different levels and all social development actors about the appropriate interventions in the welfare domain, taking into consideration well defined outcomes for different categories of people with specific problems.

In this endeavour, educational institutions and more particularly social work professionals seem to be the most concerned role players and thus, they should multiply efforts and work with whoever concerned for the consolidation, legitimacy and effectiveness of social work as a helping profession. The crucial role of the former should be to gather objective information through action-research in the perspective of refining the curricula that may help prepare skilful and knowledgeable social workers. The latter should be trained in a manner that they are capable to intervene at all institutional levels (Micro, Mezzo and Macro practice) as caseworkers, community organisers, planners and administrators; to act as advocates for vulnerable groups facing complex challenges including poverty, family violence, HIV/AIDS, trauma and so on; empower clients at different levels to adapt to the fast changing world and promote sustainable human development. Educational institutions should also promote the partnership community-social welfare organisations-university.
The role of social work professionals, on the other side, should be to provide clients with the most effective interventions possible. For this, they should use evidence to help people change; put emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the research and refer constantly to learn-by-doing approaches. By placing clients’ benefits first, they may have a critical thinking and act as scientific practitioners. 23 In the Rwandese context today, professional social workers may confirm their important role of releasing people from tricky and interconnected social problems including particularly poverty; HIV/AIDS; gender issues; family violence and socioeconomic conflicts.

Overall, it is opportune to specify that in order to contribute adequately and effectively to social development and poverty alleviation, the professional social worker of tomorrow in Rwanda should always document his/her intervention process using reliable and valid methods. By relying every time on the principles of the use of critical thinking, reference to the best available evidence, monitoring of client progress, building of own practice models on personal experience and the experience of others, he/she will be capable to show what works best and to demonstrate that what he/she does is useful to beneficiaries. 24

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23 According to Fischer (2009, p.454), a scientific practitioner may be understood as “a person who is strongly concerned with humane helping that is provided in the most effective manner possible”. In this sense, the scientific, the ethical, and the practice elements that would be observed absolutely by the social worker clarify and reinforce each other; none can be minimised in favour of the other without detriment to the whole.

24 Those principles were conceived under the inspiration of DeGennaro and Fogel (2010, p. xiii)
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Appendix

Appendix A

Methodology

Introduction
The aim of this research was to examine the role of social work in poverty alleviation and the realisation of MDGs in the Rwandan context. Rigorous methods were used both to examine the level of involvement of social workers in advancing social development and to get an in-depth understanding of the perceptions, values and attitudes of people in terms of social work education and practice.

A combination of different approaches was adopted and triangulation of both techniques and data sources was used to enhance the quality and breadth of the data collected. The methods used consisted of a literature study and an empirical survey.

Overall research design
A mixed research design combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques was adopted for this study. The study used a cross-sectional design, whereby data was collected at a single point in time.

To get relevant and complete information, the use of different data collection techniques was applied with the ultimate objective of benefiting from the fact that they complement each other while analysing and interpreting the results. Thus, documentation, interviews with different categories of persons and FGD were used.
Study population, sample and selection procedures

The study population consisted of social work practitioners (103), social work employers (27 in quantitative investigation and 17 interviewees), social work educators (10 in quantitative investigation and 8 interviewees), social work students (114) and social work clients (40) from various settings. In addition, carefully chosen key informants (6) were interviewed and these were comprised of particularly leaders from the central and local governments as well as representatives from civil society.

The study was carried out in areas purposively selected representing rural and urban contexts from three provinces and Kigali City. Agencies, public and/or private organisations were targeted based mainly on the fact that they employ social workers. All the three districts of Kigali City, Gasabo, Kicukiro, and Nyarugengen were selected, in the Eastern Province Districts of Kayonza, Rwamagana and Bugesera were visited; as well as Northern Province, Districts of Gicumbi, Gakenke and Musanze and finally in Southern Province, Districts of Huye and Nyaruguru were selected. In terms of social work educators and students, all the three higher education institutions hosting social work programmes were covered. These were: National University of Rwanda (NUR), Catholic University of Rwanda (CUR) in the Southern Province and Polytechnic Institute of Byumba (IPB) in the Northern Province.

As the aim of the study was not to generate a representative picture or conduct a census of the situation of social workers in the country but rather to describe the variety of experiences from different sides and to examine the realisations towards the MDGs, a convenient sample was fixed at a minimum of 100 social work practitioners. This sample size was taken as adequate considering the fact that “a minimum size for adequate statistical analysis would be 30, although many texts suggest your sample should be at least 100 or 120” (Alston and Bowles, 2003, p. 91) and keeping in mind that ‘in general, the larger the sample the
more accurate will be the findings’. The same principle was applied for social work students. For the employers, it was decided that the head of the agency or organisation visited might be interviewed whatever the number of social workers present there. On the side of social work educators, all those who were available and willing to provide information were recruited to participate in the study. Participants in FGD were selected considering their position as beneficiaries from the social work services or on recommendation after discussing with key informants (social workers; social development programmes, NGOs or projects’ representatives in the respective areas). The categories of the respondents were distributed as shown in the table below.

Table A.1: Categories of participants in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection method</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employers/questionnaire</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Social work employers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social work clients/ FGD</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key informants/policy makers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

As it can be seen in quantitative study, the great number of participants consisted of students followed by practitioners. These are the people who are expected to be much aware of the importance and the role of
social work and their input was the most essential in thinking about the future of the profession in Rwanda.

**Selected characteristics of study participants**

As already stipulated and for the reasons of representativeness, data was collected from different categories of people throughout the indicated provinces. Considering the purpose of the study, particular attention was put on social work qualified people or those considered to be relatively well informed in the domain of the social work profession. The former included female and male respondents who had completed social work studies and were exercising their career or those who were still in the training process while the latter were either those holding social affairs responsibilities at different levels or interacting with social work professionals in various ways. In terms of qualification of the social work practitioners, the holders of BASW were numerous as it is shown in Chapter Three.

**Data collection: methods, tools and techniques**

The study was carried out between August 2011 and April 2012. As mentioned earlier, the literature and empirical investigation approach was used and triangulation of data gathering techniques was undertaken. Data collection tools were developed under the auspices of the PROSOWO coordinating team which enhanced harmonisation of the content and aimed to facilitate comparison of findings between the four targeted countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) based on the findings from each of these countries.

Questionnaires were administered to social work practitioners, social work employers, social work educators and students. The use of questionnaires helped to get quantitative results from which it was easy to estimate the level of involvement of social work professionals in the social development processes but also to examine the correlation between different independent and dependent variables. On the other hand, in-depth interviews were conducted with educators, employers
and other selected key informants from parliament and the local governments. In addition, four FGDs with an average of 9 people in each were organised with the aim of brainstorming on the different options, opinions, situations and perspectives to promote social work in Rwanda and to realise the MDGs.

**Data management, analysis and reporting**

A team of three tutorial assistants was involved in data collection and its compilation. Throughout the research, information was shared and opinions exchanged with the principal investigator and in this way, the quality of the data collection and recording processes was ensured.

Relating to analysis, the raw data was coded around key issues or recurring themes. The analytical framework incorporated both quantitative and qualitative aspects in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the issues. Quantitative data was analysed by use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was coded and variables and their relationships were generated.

Guided by the simple rule to ‘keep the analysis simple’, the use of frequency and percentage frequency distributions was found very helpful to understand the meaning of various descriptions or comparisons made.

To analyse the data from in-depth interviews and particularly from FGDs and key informants, use was made of summaries, quotes and content analyses. In this way, the information gathered was carefully organised and supplemented very well the quantitative information at different levels.

**Research clearance and other ethical issues**

This research proposal was reviewed and approved by the NUR Research Commission Ethics Committee before its implementation. In this perspective, the following aspects were considered:
Informed consent

In this study the issue of informed consent was regarded as important, and consent from the respondents was crucial before proceeding with the survey. The consent form written in English and Kinyarwanda was read in the language of preference by the respondent. All respondents were informed that the data collected would be held in strict confidence. Respondents were made aware that they were free to terminate the interview at any point or to skip any questions. After being read the consent form, the potential respondent manifested his/her agreement to participate in the interview by making his/her mark on the consent form. A signed copy was given to the participant.

Voluntary participation

The participants were strictly regarded as volunteers. They were informed that they had to participate freely with the right to cease at any stage, without any problem.

Confidentiality

The issue of confidentiality was also considered with the intention of protecting the privacy of the respondents. Respondents were assured of the condition of anonymity in order to enable them to feel comfortable and to provide honest and complete information. The identification particulars were optional.

Harm to respondents

Strydom (in Strydom and Tlhojane, 2008, p. 37) states that the researcher must, within reasonable limits, protect subjects against any form of discomfort which may emerge from the research undertaken. Thus, it was deemed important to inform the respondents in advance about the purpose and nature of the research in order to ensure them that the risk to feel uncomfortable because of any of the investigation questions was minimised.
Study obstacles and limitations

Even though there was willingness and general cooperation from the key leaders to allow the research to take place in the respective locations, administrative formalities and delays in fixing appointments often posed challenges. While the objectives of the research were well welcomed by the informants, cooperation was not automatic. In fact, various reasons were given and among these was particularly the fact that questionnaires were too long while the respondents claimed to be very busy. Sometimes, they suggested to keep the questionnaires and fixed themselves a period during which they would complete them but unfortunately, the appointments were not always respected. This often led the research team to wait for a long time before getting the filled questionnaires. It was found out that in some cases, there were questions that were not answered by the respondents and that led undoubtedly to a certain gap in the information collected.
Appendix B

Authors

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