

## **Women in Diplomacy: The Case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi**

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### **Abstract**

This research was conducted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi. The establishment of the Ministry, which deals with Burundi's relations with other countries and international organizations, dates back to 1962s. The main purpose of this paper is to examine Burundian women's participation in Diplomatic Services. This is backed by specific objectives that seek to encourage Burundian women participation in diplomacy, to find out the factors hindering the participation of Burundian women in diplomacy, to examine the positions that Burundian women hold in diplomacy, the opportunities they are given, the challenges they encounter and their aspirations to advance their career and occupy higher positions in diplomacy. A qualitative method was used and both primary and secondary data were used. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight women working in qualified positions. The Lack of the required educational qualification and low self-esteem of the women themselves are some of the challenges cited by the female employees interviewed for this article. Cultural misconceptions about women's ability and gender-stereotyped roles in the workplace were also obstacles hindering women from joining the diplomacy. Burundi Government can use the findings of the paper to develop policies that can tackle the problem of gender disparity in diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs can also

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use the findings of this investigation to attract more women to diplomatic assignments.

**Keywords:** Burundi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and development cooperation, Diplomacy, International Relations, Burundian women in diplomacy.

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## **Introduction**

In all societies of the world, women are the product of stereotypes, prejudices, in short, of a certain socially constructed image. This representation varies from group to group and from time to time. Any object is therefore a bearer of meaning according to the societies and the periods.

Burundian society has always considered women as an inferior being in a perpetual state of guardianship. The Burundian woman also suffered a kind of alienation which ended up depriving her of her right of expression, and that by the so-called upper class. Even more, there are even some who went far so far as to reduce the woman to a status inferior to that of the child to show that there is no authority for the woman; the role of the woman did not, therefore, appear in key areas of life and its rights were still violated. This article has thought of analyzing the way in which the Burundian woman faces cultural and sometimes institutional constraints in order to conquer a more considerable social place and to invest more in roles which, yesterday, belonged to her as refused. It is at this level that several questions arise: Is the absence of Burundian women on the diplomatic scene linked to tradition? Is housework preventing women from participating in diplomatic affairs? How do women and men imagine "gender" equality?

In many countries, the political arena and the field of international relations /diplomacy are exclusively held or largely dominated by men, even if the right to participate in the management of public affairs is one of the main components of democracy. In a study undertaken on women scholars in the field of International Relations in 2007, Maliniak et al (2007) state that women may be underrepresented in the profession and are behind their male colleagues because they see the world differently as a result of their minority status within this field. Feminist scholars explain that gender subordination is a major reason why women see the world differently. Furthermore, the 2007 study

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asserts that to some extent, women are still "second-class citizens" within the international relations professionals and that their research and teaching are different from their male counterparts (Maliniak, 2007).

Several decisions and declarations were adopted by international organizations, namely the United Nations in order to redress this inequality between women and men in power-sharing and decision-making. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his/her country. Women's participation in decision-making is not only a right but it is also a necessary condition to incorporate women's interests and perspectives into decisions. This will in turn ensure equality, development, and peace within that society (UN, 1995).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, in its Article 8 on equality in political and public life at the international level says: *"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations"* (UN, 1994, p. 15).

Like in other parts of the world, women in Burundi have a low status in society. The Republic of Burundi has ratified various international conventions and formulated several laws and policies to promote gender equality in the country. The Constitution (Article 129) stipulates a minimum quota of 30 percent of women in government and the National Assembly (Article 164). Article 143 provides for a public administration representative of the population, including women<sup>1</sup>. Gender equality is one of the main intervention pillars under the Peace Consolidation Strategic Framework, the second generation Poverty

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<sup>1</sup> National Constitution of Burundi, 2005

Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II), Burundi Vision 2025, and efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), among others. The National Gender Policy (2011-2025) is also expected to contribute to reducing gender disparities. The same is also expected of the National Programme for Public Administration Reform<sup>2</sup>.

The August 2000 Arusha Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation for Burundi suggested that women be truly integrated into the decision-making process and rehabilitation programs. Article 13 of the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi (2005) accordingly states:

*“All Burundians are born equal in merit and dignity. All citizens enjoy the same rights and are entitled to the same protection by the Law. No Burundian shall be excluded from the social, economic, or political life of the nation by reason of race, language, religion, sex, or ethnic origin<sup>3</sup>”.*

The 2005 Constitution also established a 30 percent quota to ensure women’s participation in decision-making bodies such as the National Assembly and government (Articles 129 and 164). This important outcome was obtained through advocacy by the leaders of women’s associations at the time of the Arusha Agreement. As the table below shows, there is a clear increase in women’s participation in the relevant organizations following this major national legislative support for gender equality.

Institution	Year	Total	Men	Women	Percentage Of Women
National Assembly	2001	186	149	37	19,9%
	2005	118	81	37	31,35%

<sup>2</sup> Programme National de Réforme de l’Administration Publique (PNRA).

<sup>3</sup> National Constitution of Burundi, 2005, Article 13.

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National Assembly	2002	53	43	10	18,8%
	2005	49	32	17	34,6%

Source: Evaluation of Gender Expertise and Support Institutions for the Promotion of Gender in Burundi, Interim Report, CAFOD, December 2009.

However, this quota was not extended to all positions especially in diplomacy.

#### **I. Brief History of the Situation of Women in Burundi**

Burundian society is patriarchal. The husband is the head of the house and the whole family. Traditionally, the authority over the wife allowed the husband to beat his wife when she would not obey him, and when the wife would commit a fault of nature to outrage the husband. The woman is a partner, a pillar of the household. The wife plays an important role but discreet, she avoids contradicting her husband in public but asks for her husband's opinion in private. However, even though the Burundian woman remains the pillar of society, her access to decision-making in Burundi leaves something to be desired. From immemorial time to the present day, Burundian woman has been discarded in the management of the community.

In the Burundian royal setting, under the monarchical rule, the Burundian woman played the symbolic role of designating the future king. Indeed, in Burundian tradition, the King born with seeds. It was therefore the women who, after giving birth, put in the hands of the child a few grains of sorghum, which conferred on him an inviolable right to succeed his father. Another role, no less symbolic, allocated to women during that period, was to keep the royal drum, a symbol of power. Thus, "Mukakaryenda" (wife of Karyenda) was chosen by the king himself to maintain "Karyenda", the drum. In only one circumstance, the woman could exercise full power. When a king died,

the mother of the future successor ensured the regency<sup>4</sup> while awaiting the maturity of the latter. Thus, for example, between 1908 and 1915, Queen Ririkumutima ruled after the death of King Mwezi Gisabo pending the maturity of Mutaga Mbikije.

During the monarchy period, Burundi was a state with a consolidated administrative organization. The customary chiefs of the different provinces of the country helped the King, the supreme sovereign of the country. The woman was not absent from this throne since the queen's mother was already the first counselor of the King, her son. She assumed, alongside her son, all the administrative responsibilities. The queen's mother participated in the administration especially when the King was very young or incapacitated. As a result, some women have distinguished themselves by playing a vital role in court decision-making<sup>5</sup>.

During the colonial period, the Burundian woman had no place in the administration before the courts as created by the colonizers. The arrival of the missionaries, while causing some changes in mentality, perpetuated political discrimination against women. Schools were first created for boys only, and religion condemned rather than encouraged

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<sup>4</sup> The Régence was the period in French history between 1715 and 1723, when King Louis XV was a minor and the country was governed by Philippe d'Orléans, a nephew of Louis XIV of France, as prince regent. Even in monarchical Burundi, when the king was still a minor, there was another person who ensured his education, the regent.

<sup>5</sup> Under the Burundian monarchy, there was a historical woman figure "Inamujandi". That woman is known for the revolt she unleashed in the Nkiko-Mugamba region. The revolt, which is taking place in the Ndora region, west of the Baranyanka chiefdom and on the eastern border of Bujumbura, lasts two months from September. According to Emile Mworoha, a specialist in the history of Burundi, the region was annexed in 1928 to the Baranyanka chiefdom. Inamujandi came to announce the advent of a new king with legendary power. Prepared in the greatest secrecy, the revolt broke out violently, during which more than 300 huts and 10 chapels and schools were pillaged and set on fire by the leaders and their gangs in only 3 or 4 days. To put an end to this sedition, the colonial administration had to order a military operation on October 26th. On October 3rd, 1934, the troops occupied the camp and put it to the rebels Inamujandi and his family who were imprisoned in Ruyigi

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women's participation in politics. The aspect to be taken into account on the reinforcement of the inequalities of education is that, in Burundi, the Catholic Church created the high schools; they were all managed by priests or Religious brothers and excluded categorically the presence of women. A little later, there were opened house schools whose purpose was to promote the role of women. They are a home school, social homes, family schools, and social schools.

At independence, the role of women in Burundian politics has been absent. In the early years of independence, the women were mostly oriented towards the training streams that the country needed. Burundi seems determined to improve the relationship between men and women in the political arena since 1993. Sylvie Kinigi was appointed prime minister in 1993. It was the first time in the history of the Burundi government. Thus, with this government, Melchior Ndadaye had just set the tone. After, the 2005 constitution for example sets at least 30% women's representation in the National Assembly and the Senate. Policies that are developed take into account the desire to improve a lot of women. These include the National Gender Policy (2012-2025), the Gender Integration Guide in the National Program of Public Administration Reform ), the creation of the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender, gender mainstreaming as a conditionality of country partners for their development assistance, etc. The results of the 2010 elections devoted 32% of women to the National Assembly, 46% to the Senate, and 32% to municipal councils. Despite this progress, these efforts are not yet visible in the diplomatic field.

The Burundian society has taboos <sup>6</sup> which, by analyzing them, put the woman on the lower side of the man. However, some of these taboos are common between men and women and tend to be outdated in our day.

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<sup>6</sup> Getting pregnant before the wedding, Flirt Whistling, Jump the enclosure so-called "urugo", Speak directly to your father, Spit in public, Speaking while eating, Speaking in public when the husband is still alive, Getting married without paying dowry, Sit apart legs

## **II. Introducing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi**

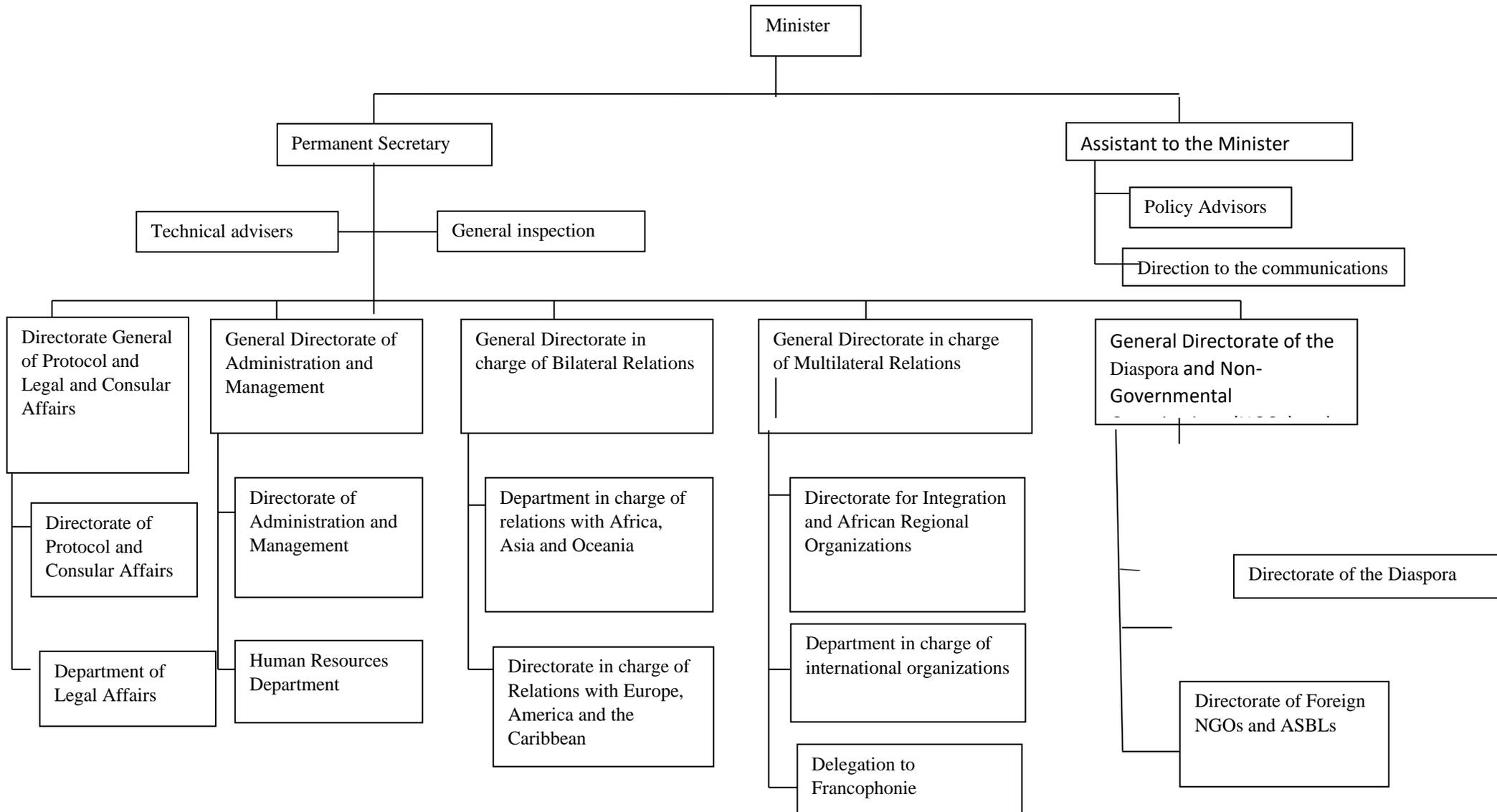
Burundi has a long history of communication with many different countries. This communication with the outside world was done through missionaries and envoys. In the aftermath of Burundi's independence, July 1, 1962, the new State needed to register its identity in the concert of Nations to make its voice heard, to open up politically and economically, to assert itself, and to forge itself diplomacy without colonial referents with a view to ensuring peace, security and harmonious development for its people. This is evidenced by its adhesion to the United Nations (UN), its participation in the negotiations for the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), of the Yaoundé I Convention which created the association of the African States and Malagasy with the European Economic Community. In this perspective, Prince Louis Rwagasore decided to assign a representative of Burundi in Europe in the person of Charles Baranyanka, in a full season of struggle for the liberation of Africa from the colonial yoke, it was in October 1961. In addition, the beginning of the political participation of the woman in Burundi is formally marked by her first participation in the vote in 1961. The first municipal elections are organized in Burundi in 1960 and only the people of the male gender take part in the ballot, women only started voting a year later. The woman did not enter a political institution for the first time until 1965 with the second legislative elections, after which only one woman entered the National Assembly. In the government, the first female entry is marked by Mrs. Pascasie Minani in 1982. Since then, we never saw more than 2 women there before 2005. With the use of the quota (2005), the female representation in the government has improved.

The Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi currently has a Minister, twenty different directions, and twenty-nine Diplomatic Missions abroad. The Ministry has 218

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executives and agents except for the Ambassadors, Minister, permanent secretary, and Assistant of which 178 under the statute, 40 under contract (133 executives, 45 collaboration executives, and 40 executives of execution. The Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi has a total of 120 men and 98 women (Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi, June, 2020)



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### III. Female Employees at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi

Several women, though their numbers could not be remotely compared with men, have been appointed as Ambassadors, administrative and technical staff Ministry of foreign affairs, and the development cooperation of Burundi. The existing data on the 30 June 2020 show that, Burundi has known twenty-nine Ministers of Foreign Affairs and one has been a woman Annociatte Batumubwira (2005-2009). The same data show that there are currently 4 women ambassadors serving in diplomatic missions abroad out of a total of 29 positions. (Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi (June 2020).

#### List of diplomatic, administrative and technical staff of the Foreign Service as of June 24, 2020

N°	Position	Men	Women
1	Ambassador	22	4
2	Advisers	27	11
3	Secretary	13	36
4	Governess	-	11
5	Orderly	13	1
6	Gardener	5	2
7	Security attachment	16	-
8	Watchman	5	-
10	Sentry	5	-
11	Car driver	58	-

12	Maid	-	1
14	Legal attaché	-	1
15	Consul		
16	Hotel master	15	-
17	Cleaning agent	1	1
18	Accounting	1	-
19	Concierge	1	1
Total		169	69

**Source:** Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi (June, 2020)

Results reveal that the number of women working in diplomatic, administrative, and technical staff of the Foreign Service was low compared to that of men. It was noted that the number of women was more likely to more at lower levels of management compared with the higher management levels. The number of Burundian Women working in diplomacy is very low compared with that of men, especially in low and high-level management. Note that the population of Burundi is estimated at 8,575,200,000 inhabitants. Women outnumber men in the population, with 4,088,668 women against 3,964,906 men. Women represent more than 51 percent of the total population, that is, a sex ratio of 103 women for 100 men<sup>7</sup>. Data from the National Statistics and Economics Institute of Burundi (ISTEEBU) show that the literacy ratio was 0.356<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Population and Housing Census, August 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Data from ISTEEBU (National Statistics and Economics Institute of Burundi).

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### **III.1. Current situation at the Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi and discussion.**

The data with which we are working come from the list of personnel of the Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi drawn up on June 30, 2020, with reference to article 4 of decree no 100/160 of November 5, 2018, on Mission and organization of the Ministry of foreign affairs.

According to this inventory of personnel from the Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi, out of the 20 directions at the Ministry, 3 of these Directors have women Directors. These numbers show that the number of women at higher levels barely fills 1/3 of the positions. In addition, out of the 98 female employees, no woman is in the diplomatic line of work, which is the "core business" of the Ministry. The women employed at the Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi are found in support giving positions with the highest number, 94 performing secretarial duties ( secretary). The other women occupying a position of counselors.

### **III.2. Analyzing Gender Equality at the Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi Women and Men at Leading Positions**

<b>N°</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Number</b>
1	Political advisor	4
2	Secretary	23
3	Planton	5
4	Technical advisor	1
5	Executive secretary	16
6	Inspectors	2
7	Director	4
8	Advise	40

9	Head of Service	3
	Total	98

Source: Ministry of foreign affairs and the development cooperation of Burundi (June, 2020)

The findings show that 51.5% of the respondents recorded that the number of women at top management is low compared to that of men. At the middle-level management, results showed that the majority (52.9%) of the respondents indicated that women are moderate compared to men. Further, results also showed that the majority (54.5%) of the respondents recorded that the number of women working in diplomacy was moderate in the lower level of management. This is an indicator that the number of women compared to that of men working in diplomacy increase with a decrease in the level of management.

#### **IV. Socio-Cultural, Political and Economic Determinants of Women's Participation in Diplomacy in Women in Diplomacy in The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi**

Historically, the number of female diplomats has remained modest. Even though there has been an increase in the number of women in some countries and organizations, in Burundi, women are still underrepresented, especially in the diplomatic field.

With the early years to the mid-twentieth century, the most important contribution of women to diplomacy was that of the wives of diplomatic and consular agents. As such, they supported their husbands by leading large diplomatic families presiding as hostesses, establishing their own range of contacts to complement the work of the embassy official, and, in many cases, distinguishing themselves

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through the work of local volunteers and the community. What is the situation of women in diplomacy within Burundi?

There is a purse for women's campaigns that highlights the advancement of women in domestic politics, such as campaigns for women's suffrage and quotas to improve women's political participation. Current efforts to increase the number of women in diplomacy have their origins in decades of United Nations efforts to empower women. This is seen through the different occasions of the United Nations world conferences on women.

Virtually all international organizations, including the United Nations and the Council of Europe, affirm that gender equality is of the utmost importance to them and aspire to 50/50 gender representation in their various committees and other organs.

It should be noted that during the appointment process, women were discriminated against and treated unfairly because of their gender. It is argued that it will be a misleading notion to say that no woman with the appropriate skills and qualifications can be appointed to lead diplomacy in in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development cooperation of Burundi.

The article was able to highlight the problem of limited participation of women and gender inequality in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi diplomacy. In this regard, it has shown that women are less represented in the field of diplomacy.

It can be deduced that women have a valuable contribution to make to diplomacy, they nevertheless remain less represented. The reasons thereof, are summed up in the question this study sought to address. Consequently, this article has sought to reveal the factors that explain the limited participation of women in diplomacy.

In this regard, an analysis of the reasons for the low participation of women in diplomacy has been undertaken to take into account existing cultural norms and trends that are practiced within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi. In addition, any loophole embodied by women candidates which would make them unsuitable for the work to be done in the field of training, capacity building, and the experience was taken into account.

The previous researches figures indicate only a few percent of women's participation in diplomacy globally, points out that clearly there are substantial impediments blocking this reality from happening. Interrogation of the reasons behind the continued exclusion of women in diplomacy leadership revealed that there are possible areas said to be limiting women's participation in diplomacy

### **1. Barriers to entry**

The limited participation of women in diplomatic positions reflects the same challenges faced by women in the political, civil, private or judicial sectors. The main challenges for women in diplomacy are making "tough choices between family life and their careers", because of discriminatory laws and persistent institutionalized patriarchy that manifest in a diversity of prejudices. Regardless of the interventions that have been made, women are still struggling to make it through in the diplomatic arena. In one area where it seems likely that women could shine, there have been curiously few women in history engaged in it on a formal, international scale, diplomacy (Keohane et al, 2010: 9). A number of structural barriers still exist in gender equality and gender-based discrimination persists in labour markets worldwide. The challenges impose greater constraints on women than on men in balancing work and family responsibilities and these structural barriers need to be eliminated for women to be able to participate fully in society and equally in politics and in particular, in international diplomacy.

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Women diplomats face a myriad of barriers to entry and advancement in their careers. It is obvious that women are currently under-represented in high-ranking positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi. Many factors prevent women from exercising their diplomatic rights across Burundi.

The social construction of the sexes and socialization practices contribute to keeping women apart from the spheres of power and the political decision-making process, limiting their involvement in civic and social life.

Societal stereotypes according to McGlen and Sarkees (1993) are among the most difficult exclusion variables to identify in a concrete way and they consist of societal values and mainly the legacy of these. Societal factor example is the notion that men have special attributes, attributes that are considered to be more attractive in relation to leadership positions. Man is seen to possess certain traits, and even if an increased amount of women has entered into leadership positions, the more attractive traits are still considered to be man. Frames, which specifically emphasize the collective view from the society, as women as main responsible for the family, will be taken into consideration here if causes like these will be found. This form of a cause often articulates difficulties for the individual woman herself to find a way to combine her marriage and family life with a high-powered career (McGlen and Sarkees, 1993: 42).

For a long time, women had to prove that their labor life would not have a negative influence on their families. Berkovitch (1990) shows the prevailing image is that paid employment might jeopardize the women's commitment to her domestic and maternal responsibilities, which are thought to be her primary ones (Berkovitch, 1990: 3).

Factors on difficulties for women to combine their family-role with a career are going to be sorted under societal cause, the motivation for this is that it illustrates how society views the power-relation in the family. The societal factors are difficult to explicitly explain. However, here a frame will be sorted as a societal one if it mentions that society has a view on different traits for men/women and that men's traits are superior to women's, concerning foreign policymaking. Despite the implementation of certain measures in favor of increased representation of women within Burundian institutions, these remain largely absent from the spheres of decision-making and have not developed diplomatic socialization for the advancement of gender and most women do not yet have a diplomatic culture that can allow them to have a meaningful interest in diplomacy.

## **2. Weak implementation of laws**

in traditional burundi, everything related to the status of women was governed by customary law and customary law was defined and controlled by men. Burundian society has always regarded women as inferior to men, and their rights and roles are dependent on Burundian customary law. Note that on her own, the woman had no meaning as an individual, she was not just a link in the chain of social reproduction under the responsibility of the man, the head of the family. Even though she was married, the woman only began to be truly integrated into her new family and well regarded through her childbearing. In traditional Burundian society, women had no rights. Rather, she had homework that she needed to do. She did not know that there are rights that protected her because women were not informed, informed or sensitized about their rights. You could even say that this is the reason why they always felt inferior and incapable of many things, even though they had the same intellectual capacity as men.

What was observed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi is that this limited participation of women at the level of appointment of Ambassadors takes place

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against the backdrop of an extensive legal framework, advocating for gender mainstreaming at all levels of participation including the diplomacy sector. However, implementation was found lacking, as such there is no improvement in the participation of women in diplomacy in Burundi.

### **3. Lack of experience and training**

Many Burundians believe that girls need not be educated, as they are supposed to stay at home and deal with household work, as illustrated by the expression, “Nta mashure y’umukobwa” (There is no point in educating a girl)<sup>9</sup>. According to data from the National Statistics and Economics Institute of Burundi (ISTEEBU), the literacy rate of adult females was 0.349 in 2007, against 0.572 for adult males. There are thus many more illiterate women than men. This poses a long-term problem, as women’s unequal access to education means that there will not be enough adequately qualified women to enter and advance in diplomacy. The government’s policy of free primary education since 2005 has had positive impact and the gender parity index in primary education is now 0.99.27 28 29 All those interviewed stated that things are beginning to change. Nevertheless, women emphasized that the legal and socio-economic environment hamper gender equality. Women interviewed confirmed the problems caused by the lack of laws governing inheritance and matrimonial property regimes.

At the political level, the woman did not appear in the public square where she had nothing to say in the form of a proposition or suggestion, because the Burundian society forbade her to do so. in general, everything that was done outside his home did not appeal to him. indeed, some women who are not used to speaking aloud and in public

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of National Defense and Ex-Combatants, Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, April 2011.

do not find it interesting and do not even bother to take an interest in diplomatic or foreign affairs.

Education and training of women may be a right and an important element for the complete enjoyment of all other social, economic, cultural, political, and diplomatic rights. The Millennium development goals (2000), and therefore the Beijing Platform have consistently placed emphasis on the importance of education in promoting gender equality and therefore the advancement of women. McCall (1991) reported that educational experiences were the foremost frequently cited events in one's life that helped contribute to successful leadership development. As far as Spivak (1999) is concerned, if micro-credits were remitted to women without structural investments like education and health systems for the poor, the exploitation of women will only increase.

Due to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in all spheres, women have or are likely to have, less-developed skills required for diplomacy than when compared to men within this sphere. This will, in turn, lead to women being less suitable for holding a decision making position, since this has led to them lacking these required skills. And when women are not being equally represented in other leadership positions, they will not have the same opportunity as men to develop these skills in leadership or negotiation techniques, which contributes to an organizational culture dominated by men. The societal factors, in turn, create further barriers for women to enter into these organizations positions. If the woman's main responsibility lays in childcare and household duties, women will not have enough time to develop these needed skills.

What was conspicuously apparent in Burundi is that Burundians women have never been appointed to lead any diplomacy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi. Moreover, only one woman in Burundi has been able to

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occupy the post of head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation. They are not selected because they are argued to lack experience and skills.

All Burundian Diplomats at all levels remain in need of continuous training in diplomacy and practical experience in diplomacy is also of necessity for capacity and confidence building. Umpteen women are going to school and living longer, healthier lives than 30 or even 10 years ago. But this has not translated into broader gains. Many women still lack basic freedoms and opportunities and face huge inequalities in the Workplace (World Bank, 2014).

By having spent the most time on these things, women get less time to make, or hold, a career and are thus limited in their possibility to advance to a high-power position. Apparently, there is a connection between the lack of women in leadership positions in general and the lack of women in diplomacy. By looking at all of these cases one can see that they are correlating in the way they represent the absence of women in diplomacy. Women are hindered to seek higher office labor due to unequal power relations within the family sphere. Since women traditionally have more responsibilities than men in household duties, women are limited due to lack of time to develop skills required for a career within decision-making. The result of this is that women are likely to spend more time on household duties instead of pursuing a career and advance to diplomacy. The norms of society contribute to the exclusion of women. Family institutions where the woman is seen as the primary caretaker of children and household leads to that women do not have time to educate themselves enough to be able to reach a high-power career or enough time to keep time-consuming careers. Here could partly be represented as an individual cause since the women, as individuals are not qualified enough for the diplomatic positions. However, since the reasons for these individuals not being educated enough is due to society's norms.

Burundian law recognizes the same rights for girls and boys in matters of education. However, the traditional roles attributed to women did not allow her to easily access school like a boy. Thus, the current level of education, orientation in studies, participation in political or diplomatic life, the right to expression in public or family bodies remain dependent on tradition so that many times, consciously or unconsciously, the woman is somehow discriminated against.

#### **4. Working overtime and balancing family and work**

In traditional Burundian society, the woman was entirely at the service of her family. Her main concern was essentially to reproduce and produce. The woman must therefore work tirelessly for the good of her family and hence for the interest of the nation. This confinement of Burundian women to the home constituted a great obstacle to the opening of their minds.

Madeleine Albright once said: “... it used to be that the sole way a lady could truly make her policy views felt was by marrying a diplomat then pouring tea on an offending ambassador’s lap” (Bloch, 2004: 93). Women’s Policy Group Study (WFPG) undertook a study in 1998 of 589 women, including in-depth interviews with 43 women, to find out more about the private, professional, and environmental factors that had shaped women’s careers within the diplomatic corps (Bloch, 2004: 95). The study found, among other things, that women in diplomacy found it hard to balance family life with frequent travels overseas, long office hours, and therefore they got to attend conferences and other events.

#### **5. Childcare responsibilities**

Childcare responsibilities are the remit of women in most African cultures. However, career women in Africa often benefit from support from extended family members or affordable domestic support workers when they have to leave their young children at home to go back to work after childbirth. African countries have different policies and laws

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in relation to allowances or childcare benefits. In most cases, government officials make their own arrangements for childcare. Many young women African diplomats with young children experience challenges accessing childcare services.

Working abroad poses challenges with regard to maintaining marital relationships and child-rearing. Whereas most women are willing to accompany their husbands abroad if they are posted as diplomats, the same sacrifice is sometimes difficult for men who have to leave their careers to accompany their wives who have been appointed as diplomats. Most African cultures consider it normal for a woman to accompany her husband to missions abroad, but it is not the same if a husband accompanies his wife, especially if they have independent careers. The issue of multitasking becomes a reality for most women diplomats who have to combine their role of motherhood with the responsibilities of their office. A diplomat is expected to protect the interests and image of her/his country in the host country as well as build networks that are geared towards exploring opportunities that a host country offers. As a result, the work schedule of a diplomat can be very demanding and this includes attending commonplace events like breakfast meetings, lunches, elaborate dinner parties, receptions, and functions. Besides being the face of one's country, family commitments, especially in a new country, require a mother's undivided attention. Young mothers with children must balance their work-life with their family commitments. This can test parents even under normal circumstances. The requirements of being a diplomat can be more challenging for single women, or in cases where a woman does not have adequate support from family or friends.

### **6. Cultural barriers**

Some African cultural practices promote women as inferior. In some cultures, from day one, women face a political, cultural, and

social environment that inhibits their development into well-equipped women leaders.

It is the culture of a society that gives a framework within which its members must operate and therefore the standard to which they need to explain values and beliefs that form much of the content during which the socialization process shapes occupational and social life. Depending on their class, race, and sex, specific sorts of the work are encouraged, tolerated, or prohibited. Despite the incidental evidence of women's leadership growth within the developed countries, biases toward women in decision-making positions persist.

Traditional cultural practices and beliefs are cited by Agbalajobi (2010), as deterrents to women's participation in diplomacy. The fact that women's participation culturally inappropriate undermines initiatives in calling for gender quotas and for other decision-making processes to incorporate women's perspectives.

This notion is therefore carried through to diplomacy where high-level male mediators are culturally accepted in their role while women could also be looked upon with scepticism in accordance with congruency theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002). The cultural phenomenon could also be what is informing the African Union in appointing its special envoys who are mostly men.

Burundi features a patriarchal history, and culture has reduced the status of a woman thereto of a diminutive. Pogoson (2012) acknowledged that patriarch explains how societies control women, who constantly had to fight for his or her rights and sometimes struggle just to survive without being threatened by the facility and domination of men. Even so far, only a few organizations have women as chief executive officers or within the top hierarchy of their organizational structures (Pogoson, 2012: p.103). Patriarchal customs and traditions that encourage discriminatory practices against women are a serious obstacle to female diplomatic participation.

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Cultural values play a fundamental role in the balance of social and power relations between men and women. Sex roles are indeed defined and shaped by the culture within the broad sense, from which gender inequalities and social norms are built. The social construction of gender is a fundamental issue in the access (or lack of access) of women to the diplomatic sphere.

Most organizations approach the implementation of gender mainstreaming from the patriarchal cultural approach; whereby organizations choose on behalf of girls on what the women's needs are. Within the patriarchal culture of most countries in Africa, women receive little support to become business leaders during a society that believes women belong within the home.

The Burundian population remains very influenced by the traditions and cultural values inherited from local customs. However, the majority of them do not recognize any political role for women. Among the customs or practices that help limit or prevent the involvement of women's participation in diplomacy within Burundi, first of all, there are the rules that govern relationships within the domestic sphere. Women are generally excluded from controlling household income even though they contribute to their economy through the implementation of various production activities. Another example of discriminatory practice against women is that of prohibiting them from speaking in public or participating in decision-making processes in the political sphere.

The cultural adjustment was effected mainly by making men and women aware of loss to society discrimination on the ground of sex because of savaged cultures. Despite the international human rights law guaranteeing all people equal rights irrespective of their sex, race, and caste, in many societies due to culture, women are denied equal rights with men to land property, promotion, mobility, education, employment opportunities, shelter, and control and care for the health

of their own bodies and their reproductive functions. One of the most common reasons presented in the literature for the under-representation of women in decision making is the negative perception of women's leadership suggests that the culture of sex-role stereotyping which privileges the male is a fundamental barrier to women's opportunities in management. It does this by creating occupational sex-typing which associates management with being male.

The culture encourages early marriages where women are given to marriage even before they complete even primary schools making them incompetent of any formal employment. This cultural obstacle particularly complicates the choice of married women between diplomacy as a career and the preservation of family life. Feminists and gender critics, such as Kristeva, criticize patriarchal cultures for excluding the maternal and the feminine from dominating political affairs.

Nevertheless, despite the varied obstacles they face, "many women in several countries across the planet have demonstrated the capacity of the feminine folk in delivering on performance by reaching great political heights and attaining remarkable successes" (Duke, 2010: 85). In Africa, Rwanda has the very best representation of women in parliament within the world. Women also are well represented at other levels of governance and Rwanda has pursued a robust gender equity political agenda. This opened opportunities for a little number of women to enter elite positions. However, the bulk of Rwandan women remain very poor, and patriarchal attitudes are entrenched. The difficulty of women in Rwanda achieved worldwide acclaim in 2003 when women were elected as 48.75 percent of the representatives to the Rwandan lower house of parliament, making it the parliament with the very best proportion of women deputies within the world.

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Some women (who have attained top leadership positions) still reproduce patriarchal systems as they have been socialized into these ideologies. Additionally, women have been included however their opinions, interests, and mandates are treated as secondary compared to those of men. These challenges are embedded within these institutions of influence and decision making. Henceforth this challenge of structure, ideologies, and the reproduction of inequality are still embedded within the Burundian society, its members, and the continent as a whole.

Beyond the extensive legal framework advocating for gender parity in its Gender Agenda, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi has done very little to create an enabling environment conducive for the advancement of women in the area of diplomacy.

The policies of Burundi for Gender are in principle aimed at promoting women's rights and gender equality. Observation of the behavior of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi decision-makers shows that the question of the representation of women in the diplomatic sphere is not the subject of a program initiated at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi policymakers. In addition, the political measures implemented in favor of greater gender equality, often based on foreign models, sometimes do not take account of the African context, which prevents their appropriation by the populations of Burundi.

When it pertains to the selection processes and the appointment of Ambassadors in Burundi, there seems to be fluidity. There seems to be no particular selection criterion that informs who should be appointed as an Ambassador and what informs that appointment, including what characteristics or attributes to be considered. In this

regard, it has been deduced that the selection process of Burundi is perpetuating the appointment of men and is lacking in inclusivity.

There are numerous reasons brought forward as impediments to the deployment of women as diplomats and counter-arguments have been tabled to contradict the notion of some of them being total barriers to the inclusion of women. Some of these reasons were external factors such as perceptions and cultural inclinations which the African Union may take several decades to remedy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Development Cooperation of Burundi may not be in a position to fix everything at once given the limited resources but should prioritize making systemic changes as an enabler for inclusivity and all other related changes will emanate therefrom.

The paper was able to point out that while Burundi has made an attempt to address gender parity in its operations and some notable success has been achieved in some areas, in the area of diplomacy there has been limited progress due to the reasons brought forward.

## **Conclusion**

I agree with Rahman-Figueroa who wrote in her article "Celebrating the rise of women in diplomacy", that classifying women as weak, vulnerable, and submissive are old stereotypes that are no longer acceptable as grounds for misemployment. Rather, the inclusion of women in senior ambassadorial positions and decision-making positions in the field of international relations illustrates a progressive and modernized diplomatic society that takes into account the opinions and perspectives of women.

To conclude in the words of Rahman-Figueroa, "diplomacy is not symbolic of men's status and views of world affairs but is reflective of a whole society. With respect to this, the diplomacy of the 21st

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century must be represented equally by men and women of equivalent merit and standing. Women's equal participation in diplomacy plays a crucial role in the general process of the advancement of women in any field. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development, and peace cannot be achieved.

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