

Women clean  
the House...and  
the Senate

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Gender and corruption in Rwanda By Megan McRae

Over the past few decades, women's movements and women's activism have begun to take hold internationally as women across the globe have become more aware of the male-dominated cultural and political structures that dictate their lives (Nelson and Chowdhury 1994, 8-9). Although in most countries, women do not even come close to making up a majority of policymakers, there is great support across genders for more women in political office (Davis 1997, 21). Why is this? People may think that by involving more women in political decision-making, the political outcomes will change. When such a huge portion of the citizenry is excluded from the political process, it stands to reason that by including them, policymaking and even the government itself would undergo some transformations.

It has been argued that more women in government lead to less corruption, and that is the measurement that this paper examines. Looking specifically at the case of Rwanda, this paper looks to see if there is a causal relationship between the number of women in government and the level of corruption. The exceptionally high levels of corruption in Rwanda and its surrounding countries coupled with the massive jump in female representation in Rwanda's parliament makes Rwanda a particularly interesting case because the variables are so extreme.

*What happens when we let women in?*

There are many expectations about what will happen as more women gain political power. In addition to lower levels of corruption, other issues regarding the quality of democracy include less political conflict, and higher public government satisfaction. In regards to policy changes as a result of women's representation, people expect women to write and support more legislation on issues involving women and children. By taking these expected outcomes and comparing them to the actual outcomes, one should be able to determine whether the effects of women in political office are actually what the public thinks they are.

One of the basic hypotheses about gender differences and its impact on politics is that women are generally more socially-orientated and selfless than men. Research finds women to be more economically generous, more likely to vote based on social issues and to exhibit 'helping' behavior, score higher on 'integrity tests,' and take stronger ethical stances (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001, 423). This suggests that women are more likely to consider the communal effects of their decisions, not just how it will affect them personally. They also propose that politically, women would be less likely to act opportunistically or to take advantage of someone else's position in order to ensure their own personal gain.

Women's perceptions of power differ greatly from men's, and this plays a huge role in diminishing political conflict. While men see power as a zero-sum game, women are more likely to avoid zero-sum games and instead make decisions that are more cooperative rather than competitive (Thomas 1994, 110). There are many instances from various countries in which women politicians have put aside ideological differences and reached across party lines to band together on gender-related issues, therefore why could that spirit of compromise not also transfer to non-gender-related issues (Davis 1997, 25)? The current U.S. Congress has a shockingly low number of women representatives compared to other parliaments around the world; it also has a reputation for being uncompromising. Populations like to see that their government is working together for the betterment of the entire country, and negotiation and compromising is a big part of that.

As far as policymaking is concerned, it is commonly believed that women dominate traditionally female policy areas and give higher priority than men to legislation on health care and the welfare of families and children (Carroll 2001, 17). An interesting example of this is the United States' Equal Pay Act, which was not passed by Congress until 1963 even though Gallup

polls have shown both men and women have supported equal pay for equal work since 1942. This demonstrates that while a majority of the citizenry supported the act, because it was legislation focusing on women in a predominantly male Congress, it was not given priority (Carroll 1984, 308). Just the presence of women in the legislature can influence their male colleagues to sponsor to legislation concerning legal, economic, and social position of women (Davis 1997, 26). By studying Norway's Storting (parliament), Skard finds that as the representation of women in parliament increased, the proportion of issues discussed relating to the legal, economic, and social position of women did as well. Ninety percent of these discussions were initiated by the female parliamentarians (Davis 1997, 24).

Carroll also finds that both men and women legislators perceive women as heavily impacting expenditure priorities (Carroll 2001, 17). Women are assumed to be more effective in dealing with issues such as child care, poverty, education, health care, women's issues and the environment, while men are viewed to have the advantage in areas like national security, foreign policy, taxes, agriculture and crime (Dolan 2013, 6). However, Carroll finds that no matter what the issue, "foreign aid, the budget, or the environment, women are more likely than men to consider the possible impact of the policy on the lives of women and children" (Davis 1997, 24). Economist Ester Duflo says, "When women command greater power, child health and nutrition improves" (Kristof and WuDunn 2009, 194) While this observation was made at the household level, many development experts hope that more women will enter politics and government and produce these same results on a national scale (Kristof and WuDunn 2009, 196). Because of these findings, it could be assumed that when women gain political power, more money is delegated to programs affecting women and children, including education, and less on those related to foreign policy or the military.

Dollar, Fisman and Gatti (2001) find there to be a negative relationship between female legislature participation and perceived corruption levels, reinforcing the idea that women act in concern for the common good. Esarey and Chirillo (2013) find female involvement in government fights corruption in countries ruled by democratic regimes. This is because corruption and bribery is less acceptable in democratic governments, whereas it is standard in many autocratic countries. Women are aware that their jobs rely more heavily on public opinion because of systematic gender discrimination and therefore do not want to do anything to encourage the public against them (Esarey and Chirillo 2013, 365). Women are also more averse to taking risks, so they may be more likely to see the potential punishment of taking a bribe as too high a cost (Esarey and Chirillo 2013, 366). Esarey and Chirillo cite two instances, one in Mexico City and one in Lima, Peru, in which the cities employed more women in their police forces and saw corruption decline (Esarey and Chirillo 2013, 363).

All the previously mentioned results of female representation point to one thing: public government satisfaction. In democracies, public satisfaction with government is one of the most highly valued assets an administration can have. Above all else, politicians want to be re-elected, and to do that they have to keep their voting constituents satisfied. The Nordic populations are consistently some of the happiest people in the world. These countries also prioritize education, health care and women's issues in policymaking, and have low levels of corruption. The knowledge of corruption scandals reduces the public's trust in government; therefore a lack of corruption is essential to public government satisfaction. If female governance can be linked positively and causally to the issues previously discussed, then it would stand to reason that more women in government cause greater government satisfaction and happier populations.

*Women "cleaning the house"*

One Russian political scientist argued that “women bring enriching values [to government]” and that “the presence of women in the higher echelons of the hierarchical structures exercises an extremely positive influence on the behavior of their male colleagues by restraining, disciplining and elevating the latter’s behavior” (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001). This is one of the many arguments presented as to why women should be given a voice in their government. Three common justifications set forth by Anne Phillips include: a) Women bring different values, experiences, and expertises than men, b) In order to represent women’s interests, women must be a visible force in public life, and c) it is a simple matter of justice that women be included in the political realm (Phillips 1991). Another argument in favor of women’s involvement in politics, and the one this paper will focus on, is that female representation in government decreases national levels of corruption. As has already been discussed, gender stereotypes dictate women as more ethical, honest, and trustworthy and generally more concerned with people’s welfare than their male counterparts (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014). Swamy et al. (2001) finds that a higher percentage of women believe that illegal or dishonest behavior, including accepting bribes, is never justifiable, and therefore concludes that women are more trustworthy and public-spirited than men.

*H1: More women in positions of power result in lower levels of corruption.*

As a result, there has been a recent policy emphasis on bringing women into politics as a tool to promote good governance. A 2001 World Bank study finds a strong correlation between female involvement in public life and low levels of government corruption, and concludes that women “could be an effective force for good government and business trust” (World Bank 2001). Historically, philosophers claimed that women were incapable of abstract thought and lacked the ability to grasp notions of justice and ethical reasoning, making them incapable of

governing. The traits that excluded women from politics for years – family values, nurturing, compromise, pacifism – are now their assets (Goetz 2007).

Dollar et al. (2001), using *perceptions of corruption* as their measure, find that the number of women in parliament has a large, highly significant influence on corruption. They conclude that “women may have higher standards of ethical behavior and be more concerned with the common good” (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001, 427). Swamy et al. (2001) question whether women’s representation in government was enough on its own to decrease corruption; they find that an increase in women in the workforce was also needed to reduce overall corruption. As discussed by Esarey and Chirillo (2013), women are often reluctant to participate in bribery and other forms of corruption not because of personal qualms but because of the perceived social consequences (Stolberg 2011). Goetz (2007) discusses corruption in the bureaucracy. Even in the lower levels of government, many countries have adopted the elitist attitude and male superiority that contributes to the corruption in the higher levels of government. Goetz interviewed lower-level government staff, and found that women have less access to networks for illicit behavior and patronage. Women are restricted in promotions because they cannot gain favor with male colleagues because it will be misinterpreted, and in addition to not taking bribes, they also cannot offer them. Women accused of fraudulent behavior always had sexual impropriety added to their crimes, while men did not. In both all levels of government, women are restricted by cultural norms and political structures that do not allow them to take part in the illicit behavior in which their male counterparts engage (Goetz 2007). “When voters find out men have ethics and honesty issues, they say, ‘Well, I expected that,’” says Celinda Lake, a Democratic strategist. “When they find out it’s a woman, they say, ‘I thought she was better than that’” (Stolberg 2011).

A study conducted by Barnes and Beaulieu in 2014 explores the effects of these socially-reinforced stereotypes on voters' perceptions of election fraud, a form of corruption. All voters are influenced by these gender stereotypes, impressed on them through their upbringing, the media, and society at large. There is a large body of research suggesting that all of the gender stereotypes previously discussed are employed by voters when evaluating female candidates. Women are viewed as the ultimate "political outsiders", so voters may be tempted to vote for women when they want to "clean the House". Women are also preferred in low-information elections. This means that, when evaluating their candidates, voters have so little information that they resort to their most basic way to distinguish two people – gender. Barnes and Beaulieu ultimately find that not the election of women representatives, but simply their inclusion on the ballot, may increase the public's confidence in elections, and therefore trust in the government in general. They conclude that women may have an electoral advantage in elections occurring in a politically competitive district after a corruption scandal has occurred and that these victories may help recruit more female candidates. All of these conclusions depend on the salience of fraud and corruption in the election (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014).

The idea of opportunism discussed earlier also plays into corruption. Because women do not take risks, such as taking bribes, whereas men are more prone to risk-taking, less illicit behavior occurs. Women also do not view politics as a zero-sum game, but as an agreement between two parties in which both can benefit, and therefore are less likely to act in their own interest. This means more compromise in politics, again using traditionally feminine and negative traits in a positive way. "Women have stabilized politics in a way because they tend not to be so opportunistic...They are not so reckless like men" (Simmons and Wright 2000). This



aversion to risk-taking means women are less likely to engage in risky underhanded government dealings and other corruption-related activities.

### *Research Design*

To further investigate the relationship between women in government and levels of corruption I will look at the case of Rwanda. Rwanda is an interesting case to examine for two main reasons: it has a high percentage of women in parliament, and it has a history of corrupt governance. Rwanda has the highest percentage of women in parliament not only in Africa but in the world. In 2015, Rwanda women make up 63.8 percent of the lower house and 28.5 percent of the upper house (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2015). This compares to the world averages of 22.4 percent and 20.4 percent, respectively. Within its region of sub-Saharan Africa, Rwanda ranks well above the averages as well. Rwanda is one of only two countries in which women make up a majority of the parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2015). It stands to reason that this high percentage of women in policymaking positions would influence most facets of the country's government.

Just the sheer number of women who are in positions of political power makes Rwanda a unique case study. However, its contrast to the other countries in its region in terms of corruption makes it even more unusual. Africa is widely considered to be among the world's most corrupt places; Botswana scored highest with a 64, while Somalia, with a score of 8, is the most corrupt not just in Africa but out of all 177 countries and territories ranked (Transparency International 2013).<sup>1</sup> In fact, in 2013, 90 percent of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa scored below a 50. The combination of abundant natural resources, a history of autocratic governments without

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<sup>1</sup> Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index scores and ranks countries based on how corrupt its public sector is perceived to be using a combination of surveys and assessments of corruptions (Transparency International 2015). The countries are scored individually on a 0-100 scale where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

public accountability, and the presence of conflict and crisis have all contributed to the challenge of corruption control in the region (Transparency International n.d.). Even foreign aid money can fall prey to the greed of the ruling class.

The institutions in place to deal with corruption in the system are usually under-resourced and lack independence. In the middle of and in spite of all this, has the unprecedented number of women in Rwanda's parliament contributed to reducing corruption as the literature predicts? Corruption is difficult to define, but as definitions become more developed and methods of data collection become more accurate, future research on women's impact on corruption will potentially be able to provide more definite results. The literature thus far has been supportive of the role of women in shaping countries' governance for the better, and continuing research on the positive effects of female representation will hopefully cause more countries to reexamine the role of women in their political systems and lead to more representative governments in the future.

### *Methodology*

The Rwanda case is a single comparative case study. The advantage of doing a single case study is that the case can be intensely studied in depth with only a few resources (Lijphart 1971, 691). Single cases analyses within the framework of an established generalization can be either theory-confirming or theory-infirming (Lijphart 1971, 692). In this case, the established generalization is that an increase in female representation in Parliament will lower the national level of corruption. The case then tests this proposition, and either confirms or infirms it. A theory-confirming case will strengthen the generalization, while a theory-infirming case will weaken it. Looking at Rwanda, if the drastic shift toward female representation in government is found to have a strong negative causal relationship with the level of corruption then it will be

considered a theory-confirming case. If the relationship is positive or negligible, the hypothesis will not be supported. One case on its own is not persuasive on the overall theory being tested, but if the case turns out to be extreme on one of the variables then it is labeled a “crucial experiment” and could have enhanced theoretical value (Lijphart 1971). The drastic change in the composition of the Rwandan government that occurred after the genocide and continued with the implementation of a new constitution makes Rwanda an ideal theory-confirming case for studying the effects of female representation in political leadership positions. If a relationship is not found in this case, when the two factors are so extreme, it is hardly likely it would be confirmed by another less robust case.

Of the two variables being examined, gender representation is the easiest to quantify. Each year, the Inter-Parliamentary Union publishes a list of 190 countries classified in descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House. It also gives statistics for the Upper House or Senate (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2015). The World Bank then aggregates this data so it can be looked at over the course of time in one country or by comparing countries to each other (World Bank 2015). While there are women in positions of power throughout the structure, from the household level to local bureaucracies, women in parliament is the most easily quantifiable and exerts the most direct power over the direct governance of the country.

Corruption is a little trickier because, as I mentioned earlier, it is often hard to define. Is corruption simply when public resources are stolen for private profit, or does it include actions such as cheating in elections that do not involve money? Corruption is also typically a two-person crime in which neither confesses, making it hard to measure (Goetz 2007). Corrupt

behavior could be classified as anything from a police officer taking a bribe to the President letting business interests govern his or her policymaking decisions.

In an attempt to reconcile these difficulties, the World Bank created Control of Corruption as a measure included in its Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). Control of corruption captures *perceptions* of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption and instances of the influence of the state by elites and private interests. These data sources are exclusively perceptions-based because in the area of control of corruption there is little else to rely on. By definition, corruption leaves almost no paper trail and therefore cannot be captured by purely objective measures.

All six governance measures are composite indicators based on 32 underlying data sources, including survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms (World Bank 2014). While a cross-country household survey might provide individuals' perceptions or experiences with corruption, a NGO would provide its own assessment based off its resources (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi 2010). For example, the data used as part of this aggregate measure that go farthest back in time are from 1996 and were collected by Global Insight Business Conditions and Risk Indicators. This measure is called WMO, and it assess the intrusiveness of the country's bureaucracy, including the amount of red tape likely to be countered and the likelihood of encountering corrupt officials and other groups (World Bank 2014). All variables have been rescaled from zero to one, with higher values indicating better outcomes (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi 2010). While year-to-year data does not provide an accurate perception of change, over longer periods of time such as a decade, WGI data show significant trends in governance (World Bank 2014).

*Case Study: Rwanda*

While in the late 1980s and early 1990s strong women in Rwandan politics were portrayed negatively and viewed as undermining the country's traditions, after the genocide it became necessary for women to become involved in the government system. The Rwandan genocide was perpetrated by the Hutu against the Tutsi, the majority and minority tribes of the country, respectively. The tribes had always recognized the differences between them, but this separation was heightened and reinforced through ethnic segregation and prejudice when Rwanda came under Belgian rule in 1916 (Our Africa n.d.). Belgian rule favored the Tutsi minority, and this caused resentment among the Hutu majority; so, when Rwanda gained its independence in 1962 and control was in the hands of the Hutu, the power dynamic reversed (Hunt 2014). During this transition, women were fully enfranchised and granted the right to stand for election, and the first parliamentarian was elected to office, but Rwandan women never held more than 18 percent of the seats until after the genocide (Powley 2008).

The Rwandan genocide, one of the worst in modern history, took place from April to July 1994, and killed an estimated one million Rwandan men, women, and children. This heinous act was a massive shock to the society and politics of Rwanda. The entire demographics of the country had been altered, and the population had to rebuild its institutions from the ground up, including the governmental structure. Because the genocide killed disproportionately more men than women, this resulted in a window of opportunity for women to become involved in the governing of their country in new and significant ways. (Hunt 2014).

In the aftermath of the genocide, the population was 70 percent female (women and girls) (Powley 2008, 158). These are women that were subjected to sexual assault and torture during the genocide, who lost their families, livelihoods and property. These women had to rebuild, immediately assuming roles as heads of household, community leaders and financial providers

(Powley 2008). They became the majority constituency and the most productive segment of the population (Powley 2004). They acquired skills they might not have otherwise, and they began to see themselves and women's role in society differently (Powley 2008).

Women's civil society also flourished after the genocide, rebuilding their associations from past experience and assessing the needs of their members. The women NGOs came together under an organization called Pro-Femmes, which has been particularly effective in organizing women's activities, advising the government on issues of women's political participation, and promoting reconciliation (Powley 2008). These organizations lobbied for protection of women's inheritance and marital property rights, the most pressing legal matter facing Rwandan women at the time, and succeeded (Bauer and Burnet 2013). In 1992 Pro-Femmes coordinated the activities of 13 women's NGOs, a number which had grown to 40 in 2008 (Powley 2008, 157). A 2002 report by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) concluded that women's NGOs are the 'most vibrant sector' of civil society in Rwanda (Powley 2008).

When it came time to draft a new constitution in 2000, the vital role of women in the country's reconstruction could not be ignored. Three members of the 12-member constitutional commission were women, and they pushed for increased constitutional protection of women's rights and the inclusion of gender quotas in the new constitution (Powley 2008, Bauer and Burnet 2013). In addition, the participatory nature of the drafting of the constitution allowed for significant input by women and women's organizations, ensuring that the segment making up more than half of the population would no longer be excluded from the political process (Powley 2008).

The RPF's exposure to gender equality issues and the idea of reserved Parliament seats for women while in exile in Uganda, as well as their familiarity with the contributions and successes of women in South Africa's African National Congress, contributed to the inclusion of the constitutional mandate requiring a minimum of 30 percent of women "in all decision-making bodies" in the government (Powley 2008, Bauer and Burnet 2013, 105). John Mutamba, an official at the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, explains: "Men who grew up in exile know the experience of discrimination ... Gender is now part of our political thinking. We appreciate all components of our population across all the social divides, because our country ... [has] seen what it means to exclude a group" (Powley 2008, 159).

In addition to 30 percent of Senate seats allotted, the new constitution requires that 24 of the 80 seats in lower house of the Rwandan Parliament, the *Chambre des Deputes*, be reserved for women who are contesting in women-only elections, meaning only women stand for election and only women can vote. However, women are permitted to compete in for the remaining seats as well, and in the 2003 election, an additional 15 women were elected in the openly competed seats, resulting in women making up 48.8 percent of the new parliament. This number grew to 56 percent in 2008, and 64 percent after 2013 (Powley 2008, Hunt 2014).

Women Members of Parliament (MPs) in Rwanda have reached across party lines to form a caucus, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, with the goal of working together on issues specific to women. The Forum reviews existing laws and introduces amendments to discriminatory legislation, examines proposed laws with an eye to gender sensitivity, liaises with the women's movement, and conducts meeting and training with women's organizations to sensitize the population to and give advice about legal issues (Powley 2008).

*Consequences of Rwanda's Gender Shift*

The increased representation of women in government has positively manifested itself in Rwandan society in a variety of ways. It has changed ordinary Rwandan's perceptions of women as political leaders, and women in leadership now garner the same respect as their male counterparts. Women have the confidence to speak out more often in public meetings, and their ideas are no longer dismissed simply based on the gender of the speaker. Rwandan women now enjoy increased autonomy and involvement in domestic decision-making. Inside the government, on the national level, women are opening the discussion of women's issues that have not been on the agenda before, and introducing legislation that enhances protections of women's rights (Bauer and Burnet 2013).

It is clear that female representation has had a substantial impact on many facets of the Rwandan community and government, but how has Rwanda fared in the corruption sector since its transition to a more representative parliament? According to the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), in 1996, while Rwanda was still rebuilding its government from the devastating genocide only two years earlier, the country ranked in the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile for control of corruption. However, after the adoption of gender quotas with the new constitution in 2004 and ignoring the slight dip in 2005, the control of corruption in Rwanda has climbed steadily, hovering just above the 72<sup>nd</sup> percentile in 2012 and 2013 (World Bank 2014). In other words, in the years following the genocide, and especially in the years following the implementation of gender quotas through the new constitution, government corruption has significantly decreased in Rwanda.

In fact, controlling corruption has often been quoted as one of the key reasons for Rwanda's success. In a study compiled by the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) in 2013, on a scale of 0-100, with high corruption on the low side and the higher numbers representing a less



corrupt society, Rwanda scored a 53; only 30 percent of the 177 countries measured scored above 50 percent. Rwanda ranks as the fourth least corrupt country on the African continent; in contrast, other countries in the region ranked as some of the most corrupt in the world, with neighbors Burundi with a score of 21, Democratic Republic of the Congo at 22, and Uganda at 26. One of the three lowest countries, tied with a score of 8, is Somalia, also located in sub-Saharan Africa (Transparency International 2013). This regional corruption, instilled by decades of kleptocracy and patrimonialism, is just another testament to the obstacles the Rwandan government had to overcome in its fight to eradicate corruption in its leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Another study conducted by Transparency International on perceived corruption, the Rwanda bribery index (RBI), indicates that the people of Rwanda are optimistic about the future of government corruption in their country. More than 71 percent believed that corruption would decrease in the following year, and the vast majority of respondents, 88 percent, were pleased with the way their government was combating corruption (Transparency International 2013). These positive trends in controlling corruption and decreasing perception of corruption coincide with the increasing number of women in parliament in Rwanda, supporting the hypothesis that more women in positions of power results in lower levels of corruption.

### *Conclusion*

This conclusion has impacts not just for the representation of women, but for the future of Rwanda's government in general. Gender representation is usually a mark of a democracy; however, Rwanda functions under a less than democratic government. Control of corruption, however, is another essential part of democracy. Hopefully, as gender representation works to

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<sup>2</sup> Another study conducted by Transparency International on perceived corruption, the Rwanda bribery index (RBI), reinforces the data from the CPI. The RBI found that from 2012 to 2013, perceived corruption decreased from 30.5 percent to 16.2 percent, and in 2013 the majority of the Rwandan population has access to services without being asked to pay a bribe.

curb government corruption, the country will continue to move toward true democracy. In addition to decreasing corruption, Bauer and Burnet (2013) make it clear that the symbolic representation of women in Rwanda's parliament has impacted the perception of women in leadership roles far outside the national legislature (Bauer and Burnet 2013). This has allowed women to move into leadership roles that were traditionally restricted to men, where they can then represent the interests of women within their sphere of influence.

While this study shows that there is a positive correlation between more women in government and better control of corruption, it does not explore other issues that could influence the level of corruption in a society. Another factor that has major impacts on the way government is run is the installation of a new constitution. It is difficult to disentangle the independent effect of women in parliament from the constitutional redesign; especially since women in Rwanda has such a hand in shaping the constitution. As shown from the WGI data, control of corruption seemed to be leveling off before 2003, when the constitution was implemented, and then climbing again (World Bank 2014). Rwanda's constitution completely restructured its country, in addition to placing a new regime in power. Gender quotas were one of the many new policies set forth in the constitution that could influence the control of corruption in the country.

However, even if representation is improving and corruption is in decline, the health of Rwanda's democracy is still at risk. As Bozzini (2014) points out, petty corruption in Rwanda has been reduced by a top-down approach, but he sees grand corruption remains a major problem in the country. This grand corruption manifests in company favoritism within the government, little political opposition, lack of public debate, conflict of interest and undue influence (Bozzini 2014). While these observations may be correct, this does not necessarily negate the influence of

women representation in reduction of corruption. As mentioned earlier, women representation in parliament has empowered women at the community and grassroots levels, which would influence what Bozzini calls “petty corruption”. While it may take something more than women’s representation to change the system of favoritism at the national level that has governed the country for decades, national women’s representation’s impact on women’s leadership at lower levels of government has indirectly influenced the “petty” acts of corruption that take place at these levels, and because the biggest improvements in gender empowerment and corruption are taking place at the local level, it gives hope that true democracy in Rwanda can also spread from the grassroots up.

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