

## **Making Gender and Building the Nation in Post-genocide Rural Rwanda: Women Leaders and Public Speeches**

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The National Council for Women (established in 1996) boasts of organized structures from the grassroots up to the national level, and provides for women's participation in local governance at all administrative levels. Every month all over the country women of each cell (the small administrative unit in Rwanda) gather together to solve problems and be sensitized on issues like development and reconciliation.

These assemblies are a new space of shaping the new post-1994 Rwandan Nation through the building of a trans-ethnic conception of female gender: women are meant to be active actor both in reconciliation and development process. The new female leaders embody this interconnection between gender and nation as they concretely perform it at the discourse level during the assemblies, where they appropriate the masculine power of the public speech, from which they have been traditionally excluded. But the complex dynamic between what it can be said and what it cannot, who can speak and who cannot, reveal the persistence of the hutu/tutsi ethnic division as well as the creation of a new rural élite.