

***Itegeko Rirusha Ibuye Kuremera<sup>1</sup>: A Critical Analysis of the Challenges the Public/Private Divide  
Poses to Rwandan Labour Law Through The Figure of the Domestic Worker***

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HRTS W3996 Human Rights Thesis Seminar - Spring 2023

Institute for the Study of Human Rights

Columbia University in the City of New York

**Keywords:** Rwanda, Women, Gender, Domestic Workers, Human Rights, African Feminism, Informal  
Work

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<sup>1</sup>Kinyarwanda proverb which can be translated to "The law is heavier than the rock," meaning that as the law moves forward, justice is established.

## ABSTRACT

*Itegeko Rirusha Ibuye Kuremera: A Critical Analysis of the Challenges the Public/Private Divide Poses to Rwandan Labour Law Through The Figure of the Domestic Worker*

Malaika Tayi

On the global stage, Rwanda is broadly known for two phenomena: The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and the outstanding efforts taken towards gender equality, more specifically, the representation of women in parliament.<sup>2</sup> This symbolic representation has not been reflected in the day-to-day lives of many women in Rwanda who work in positions of informal employment with limited legal and social protection. By nature, domestic work takes place in the privacy of the home, rendering it challenging to regulate and monitor through legislation and public policy. Characterized by low pay, long hours, and poor working conditions, domestic work continues to hamper Rwanda's efforts to achieve gender equality. This study aims to describe and analyze the ways in which the public/private divide emphasizes the challenges faced by female domestic workers in Kigali. By employing a qualitative descriptive study design, I have looked at national policy documents and conducted interviews to understand how the law is created and implemented for domestic workers. Information derived from published policy documents and information obtained through interviews were triangulated.

By drawing on the critical perspective of African Feminism, this paper argues that the public/private divide is not a neutral concept but rather reinforces existing power dynamics and social hierarchies of gender and class if not adequately considered when creating and enforcing

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<sup>2</sup> "Women Representation." PARLIAMENT. Accessed April 19, 2023. <https://www.parliament.gov.rw/women-representation>.

legislation. Thus, this paper contributes significantly to understanding the challenges and opportunities of addressing the public/private divide in the context of domestic work in Kigali, Rwanda. It offers critical insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners working towards the realization of human rights for all.

## **Table of Contents:**

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
Research Problem	7
Significance	9
<b>II. Human Rights and Domestic Workers</b>	<b>11</b>
International Regulation of Domestic Work	11
Labour Law Pertaining to Domestic Workers in Rwanda	12
Exploring the Link between the Public/Private Divide, Law and Gender Relations	15
<b>III. Study Design and Methodology</b>	<b>18</b>
Theoretical Framework	18
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>19</b>
Limitations	20
<b>IV. Findings</b>	<b>22</b>
Effect of the Intimacy of Domestic Work: Lack of Identification as “Workers”	22
Invisibility of Women’s Plight: Analysis of The Nexus of Gender, Rural-Urban Migration, and Class	25
The “Informal Worker” and Resulting Legal Gaps	28
Traditional Norms and Legislative Power in the Home	30
<b>V. Discussion</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>VI. Conclusion</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>VII. Bibliography</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Interviews</b>	<b>50</b>
Appendix 1.1: List of Interviewees and Positions	50
Appendix 1.2: Interview Selection Process	51
Appendix 1.3: Interview Guide for NGO Representatives	53
Appendix 1.4: Interview Guide for Policymakers	54
<b>Appendix 2: Key Concepts of the Study</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Government Agencies Implicated in Gender Equality</b>	<b>57</b>

## Acknowledgments

I want to first and foremost thank my parents, Gregory and Liliose Tayi, for their unfaltering love and support. My brothers, Kevin and Noah Tayi, whose dreams for me are often bigger than my own. *Nshima Imana yanjye iteka uko mbibutse.* [Abafilipi 1:3]

I also want to express my deepest gratitude to the Institute of Human Rights at Columbia University – the critical skills that I have acquired these past two years have been invaluable. I would not have been able to even conceive of pursuing such research without the support that I have received from the Institute. I am especially grateful to my thesis advisor, Professor Holland, for her guidance, patience, and feedback throughout the research process. Her expertise and commitment to human rights have been inspirational and instrumental in shaping my research and academic pursuits.

Lastly, I want to thank the participants who generously gave their time to be interviewed for this research. Their insights and expertise have been crucial to this study and without their contributions, this research would not have been possible. In particular, Ms. Chantal Munanayire, who was the starting point of this research and whose willingness to share and refer me to experts has been deeply appreciated.

## List of Abbreviations

ADBEF	Association pour la défense des droits, de développement durable et du bien-être familial <sup>3</sup>
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CESTRAR	Rwanda Workers' Trade Union Confederation
CLADHO	Collectif des ligues et associations de défense des droits de l'homme au Rwanda <sup>4</sup>
GMO	Gender Monitoring Office
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ILO	International Labor Organization
MIFOTRA	Ministry of Labour and Public Service
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Administration, Information and Social Affairs
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
NCDA	National Child Development Agency
NWC	National Women's Council
RDB	Rwanda Development Board
SYTRIECI	Syndicat des travailleurs indépendants de l'économie informelle <sup>5</sup>
W4W	Women for Women

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<sup>3</sup> Translation: Association for the Defence of the Human Rights, Sustainable Development and Family Well-Being

<sup>4</sup> Translation: Collective of Human Rights Defense Leagues and Associations in Rwanda

<sup>5</sup> Translation: Trade Union for Domestic and Independent Workers in the Informal Economy

## I. Introduction

Between September 29, 2003, and October 2, 2003, Rwanda held the first parliamentary elections since before the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi. Nearly 50% of parliament seats went to women following a new Constitutional amendment that declared that at least 24 of the 80 Deputies in the Chamber of Deputies would be women for proportional representation.<sup>6</sup> Today, Rwanda boasts the highest proportion of female representation in any parliament worldwide, with an impressive 61.3% of seats occupied by women. The significant legislative changes that were enacted by the post-Genocide government highlight both Rwanda's commitment to gender inclusivity and a recognition of women's role in attaining sustainable peace and development.

However, it is important to closely consider *which* women are seen and heard and, thus, counted as worthy of representation, empowerment, and equality. The problem of class intersects with symbolic representation to give way to a group of women who are not represented nor advocated for.<sup>7</sup> Those who have been silenced as a result of their position at the intersection of class, gender, and the informal economy have been rendered invisible to the government and its policies. This thesis analyzes this contradiction through the figure of the female domestic worker.

The ILO defines the domestic worker as “any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship.”<sup>8</sup> I aim to foreground the ways in which domestic workers – and particularly, female domestic workers – in Rwanda have been left at the periphery of a national agenda towards gender equality. In doing this, I question why do domestic workers appear to be more vulnerable to human rights abuses, and more profoundly excluded from government

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<sup>6</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, Article 75 (2003). Amended in 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Jane Cooper-Knock, “Gender, Politics, and Parliament in Rwanda,” openDemocracy, February 26, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/gender-politics-and-parliament-in-rwanda/>.

<sup>8</sup> Riefoli, Antonio. “ILO Convention 189 Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).” *International and European Labour Law*, 2018, 916–34. <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845266190-932>.

protection than workers in other unskilled industries? Additionally, what is it about the specific practice of care work that sees very little historical progress being made in this sphere? Finally, why is Rwanda, with its political and legal commitment to promoting women, failing to respond adequately to the needs of this group of workers?

In responding to the above questions, it is imperative to establish a concept that clarifies the intricacies presented by domestic work: the public/private divide. This divide can be understood as a conceptual division between the domestic or familial sphere of life, which is traditionally seen as private and outside the jurisdiction of the state, and the public or civic sphere of life, which is seen as the proper domain of the state and subject to its regulation.<sup>9</sup> By establishing certain aspects of social and economic life as private, and therefore outside the purview of the law, feminist political scientists have shown how women are limited in the ways they can engage with the state which renders them depoliticized subjects.<sup>10</sup>

The public/private divide, therefore, poses a significant challenge to the global human rights framework as human rights operates primarily through laws and policies. Consequently, if members of society exist and work in a space where the law has no power, they cannot be protected by it. As such, we find that the public/private divide exposes some of the limitations of the current human rights system.

## *Research Problem*

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<sup>9</sup> Boyd, Susan B.. "1. Challenging the Public/Private Divide: An Overview" In *Challenging the Public/Private Divide: Feminism, Law, and Public Policy* edited by Susan B. Boyd, 3-34. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442672819-003>

<sup>10</sup> García-Del Moral, Paulina. "The Murders of Indigenous Women in Canada as Femicides: Toward a Decolonial Intersectional Reconceptualization of Femicide." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 4 (2018): 929–54. <https://doi.org/10.1086/696692>.



For these reasons, this study seeks to demonstrate how the public/private divide actively shapes the law and the unique challenges it creates for domestic workers in Kigali, Rwanda. In doing so, I will specifically consider how the concept of the public/private divide permeates the social, economic, political, and legal discourse(s) regulating domestic work in Rwanda and as a result, the divide renders workers – and more specifically, women – vulnerable and invisible. I chose to limit my study to Kigali as this is the capital city and the financial hub where, I believe the tensions within the gender equality program Rwanda has taken on, are made most apparent.

Additionally, by considering the public/private divide critically, I aim to show that the labor laws that are meant to protect women are all the more challenged by the privacy of the home and the fact that there is no clear legislation over the home. The law, by not taking into account the complexities presented by this divide, fails to adequately address the vulnerabilities of domestic workers. Through this lens, we can more clearly see the contradiction in Rwanda's endeavor to fundamentally change the position and power of women in the country. Berry (2015) emphasizes this by referring to a "paradox" that sees the rapid accumulation of wealth and power by a certain class of women, whereas ordinary citizens are still facing structural and significant impediments to equality that will not disappear without an active effort from the government.

Through this investigation, the paper aims to answer the crucial question: **To what extent does the public/private divide affect the effective creation and enforcement of labor laws for domestic workers in Kigali?**

As I will further elucidate, the question of domestic work in an economy is not solely a matter of advocating for rights but is also deeply rooted in structural inequalities. These include historical traditions, gender considerations, the need to reevaluate the value of traditionally

gendered work, and the imperative to include a diverse set of women in the political (public) sphere and into the contemporary socio-economic and cultural landscape (private).

## *Significance*

There are several reasons why it is important to carry out human rights research on domestic workers through the lens of the public/private divide in Rwanda:

1. *To effectively address the influence of the public/private divide in law:* With the increasingly blurred lines between what is political (public) and what is personal (private), it is imperative to find solutions for human rights abuses that hinge on these blurred lines. Boyd (1996) points to the ways in which this gap is what gives way to perceived divisions between state regulation and family relations, and between work and family. She emphasizes that these perceptions seem to allow for power hierarchies to be reified. By focusing on the language and applicability of the law, this study will shed light on how the law impedes itself from effectively eradicating violence in the private sphere.
2. *To promote labor rights for domestic workers in Rwanda:* Domestic work is often informal and undocumented, making it difficult to track the number of domestic workers, their working conditions, and their experiences of exploitation and abuse. According to the ILO (2018), globally, 61.2% of employed people work informally, and in certain regions of the world, such as Africa, this figure jumps to 85.8%, making informal employment a significant part of the workforce that cannot be ignored. Given that women make up 88% of the domestic sector in Rwanda, research can help to identify the gender-specific challenges that they face, such as discrimination, harassment, and violence. (ILO, 2021) Additionally, by exploring the ways in

which cultural attitudes and beliefs about domestic work and women's roles in society intersect with legal and policy frameworks, this study highlights how Rwanda can fulfill its mission to promote gender equality and empowerment for *all* women. Finally, by understanding the importance of domestic work and its impact on society and the economy, this project can contribute to a broader understanding of the value of care work and the need for legal reform in the fight for the protection of informal workers.

## II. Human Rights and Domestic Workers

### *International Regulation of Domestic Work*

The first international treaty that specifically addresses the rights of domestic workers is the ILO Convention 189. This treaty was born out of the Amsterdam Conference titled “Respect and Rights: protection for Domestic/Household Workers!” held in November 2006. This was a significant milestone in the movement to protect and promote the rights of domestic workers around the world.<sup>11</sup> According to De Toit (2012), the momentum garnered from this conference led to the adoption of Convention 189 in June 2011, with 396 delegates voting in favor of the Convention to 8 against, with 42 abstentions. The most important outcome is that this Convention stipulates that all domestic workers are, de facto, workers, if they work in an employment relationship and if their work is carried out as a way of making a living. (Pape, 2016)

De Toit (2012) suggests that there are several reasons to account for the widespread support that C-189 received. Firstly, the work undertaken by domestic workers has always been highly individualized and “non-standard” in nature, which results in difficulty in organizing and regulating this sector.<sup>12</sup> Employers often resist legal regulations for domestic work, arguing that it falls under private family arrangements rather than formal employment. As I will expand, this has been a significant factor in hampering the push for implementing labor laws for domestic workers in Rwanda.

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<sup>11</sup> IDWFED, *Respect and Rights: Protection for domestic/household workers!*, August 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Taking this phrase from Darcy Le Toit who explains: The term ‘non-standard’ is used in its conventional sense as referring to workers who are not in full-time, indefinite employment and/or not employed in formal workplaces – including part-time, temporary and agency workers. ‘Non-standard’ workers are also referred to as ‘atypical’, ‘precarious’ or ‘vulnerable’, depending on the context.

As a result, domestic work is known for high levels of exploitation and abuse, which has led to a growing demand for intervention and legal protection. Moreover, this demand has been fueled not only by the need to regulate informal and non-standard work but also by the fact that domestic workers, who are predominantly female, face discrimination based on gender, class, nationality, or race.

Additionally, domestic work has become a significant part of the global labor market, particularly in the care of children and the elderly, making it too important to be left entirely to the discretion of individual employers. Thus, the adoption of Convention 189 by the ILO was an important breakthrough as it settled the debate on whether domestic work should be considered as 'work' and made it part of the ILO's 'decent work' agenda, which has transformed the development of a regulatory framework for this sector from an aspiration to a practical task, even though its ratification and implementation by most ILO member states still lies in the future.

Rwandan organizations participated in contributing to the preparation of the report, which demonstrated the country's efforts to improve the conditions of domestic workers. However, Rwanda is yet to ratify the Convention. Therefore, Rwanda is one of many countries that are yet to set specific regulations on domestic work in their labor legislation. This means that the law sees domestic workers be the same as any other category of worker.

### *Labour Law Pertaining to Domestic Workers in Rwanda*

Labor law is fundamental in creating and maintaining employee relations, high productivity, and a conducive work environment. Rwanda repealed the labor law in 2018 to align it to international best practices and as a result, *Labour Law No. 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 Law Regulating Labour in Rwanda* repealed and replaced *Law No. 13/2009 of 27/05/2009 Regulating*

*Labour in Rwanda.* The new labor law took effect when it was published in the Official Gazette number Special of 06/09/2018. The law regulates all employment matters for employees in the private sector, contractual staff in the public sector, interns, apprenticeships, and self-employed persons. This recent law was enacted to align it to International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions which Rwanda has signed and also to address concerns and gaps which stakeholders had noted in the repealed law, for example where it tended to disadvantage one party to the employment contract and where sanctions for labor offenses were not stipulated.<sup>13</sup> Mwangi (2019) argues that there is a need to disseminate the requirements of the law published in 2018 to enhance compliance and avoid unnecessary labor disputes and costs. The new labor law of Rwanda (2018) addresses the concerns that the employers and employees had with respect to the repealed law (2009) and aligns with the requirements of the International Labour Organization. It has clarified and expanded the rights as well as obligations of both employers and employees.

While the labor code does not have specific provisions for domestic workers, it does provide a legal framework that applies to all workers, and therefore is relevant to discussions about the working conditions and employment rights of domestic workers in Rwanda. This research is mostly concerned with Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of the Rwandan Labour Code. These chapters outline fundamental rights of workers, as well as the different provisions that are made for different categories of workers.

Firstly, Chapter 2 of the Rwandan Labour Code N° 66/2018 outlines the general framework for employment relationships in Rwanda, including the rights and obligations of employers and employees. The key provisions of this section include

- A definition of employment contracts, which must be in writing and signed by both the employer and employee.
- Requirements for the content of employment contracts, which must include information such as the job title, wages, working hours, and notice period for termination.
- Provisions for the protection of workers' rights, including the right to equal treatment, the right to a safe working environment, and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.
- Requirements for the payment of wages and benefits, which must be paid in accordance with the terms of the employment contract and cannot be withheld or reduced without a legal basis.
- Provisions for the termination of employment contracts, which can only be done in accordance with the terms of the contract or with just cause.

Furthermore, Chapter 3 of the Rwandan Labour Code N° 66/2018 focuses on the employment contract between employers and employees. This chapter provides guidelines and requirements for drafting and executing employment contracts, which are legal agreements between the employer and employee that outline the terms and conditions of employment.

- Section 1 of Chapter 3 outlines the general provisions of the employment contract, including the required information that must be included in the contract such as the name and address of the employer and employee, the job description, the duration of the contract, the place of work, the salary and benefits, and the hours of work. The section also emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the employment contract is in compliance with the Rwandan Labor Code and other applicable laws and regulations.

- Section 2 focuses on the duration of the employment contract, which can be for a fixed or indefinite term. The section outlines the conditions for each type of contract and the procedures for renewing or terminating the contract.
- Section 3 discusses the termination of the employment contract, including the grounds for termination, the procedures for notice of termination, and the rights and obligations of both the employer and employee in case of termination.
- Section 4 outlines the procedures for modifying the employment contract, including the requirements for obtaining the consent of both the employer and employee and the necessary documentation that must be filed with the relevant authorities.

Overall, Chapter 3 of the Rwandan Labour Code N° 66/2018 is an important section that provides guidelines for employers and employees on how to establish and maintain employment contracts that comply with Rwandan labor laws and regulations.

### *Exploring the Link between the Public/Private Divide, Law and Gender Relations*

An important concept for this paper is the public/private divide which appears at many levels both in international human rights law and national law. I'm interested in analyzing it in the context of national law. The first level is the question of what should come under the purview of the state (public) and what should be left to individuals (private). Radačić (2007) argues that the gendered nature of this divide continues to exclude women from the public arena, thereby enforcing their status as a second-class group. This also emphasizes women's



role in the domestic world through the ways in which the law does not protect the private sphere.

Pomeroy (2004) argues that the mantra of second-wave feminism, "the personal is political," signifies the first attempt to break down the gendered division between the private sphere attributed to women and the public sphere of men. The expectation that child care will be done 'for free' by the mother in the home is connected to the lack of publicly funded daycare that would enable women to work outside the home as well as the underpaid nature of child care labor. In the same vein, the devaluation of child care and the work of nurturing also serve to undervalue the work performed by women in the labor force. With women moving out of the house and into the labor market, the traditional model is challenged. To compensate for this, the division between private and public is being refined.

In addition, the public/private paradigm highlights that there is a gendered meaning of work in labor law which ensures that economic value is not attached to domestic work in the home. This has prompted Finley (1989) to observe that "law will be present through direct regulation, through non-intervention when intervention is needed and through helping to keep something invisible when visibility and validation are needed." Feminists argue that unless more women's experiences, perspectives, and voices are incorporated into law, in order to empower and legitimize their experiences, male-dominated law will continue to reflect and shape prevailing social and individual understandings of its role, resulting in the silencing and discrediting of women. (Fagbonge, 2010) This is especially relevant when discussing care work and the ways in which this work is discredited and silenced in favor of positions that are more public and more directly related to the production of capital.

This can also be seen through an understanding of the dichotomy between “formal” and “informal” economies. The industries and workers that are protected under formal work see the labor law extended to them; whereas, this law becomes eroded, because of its nature, when looking at informal employees. Most workers in the world, including domestic workers, have never experienced the protection of labor law to any meaningful extent because of the lack of inclusion and participation in labor laws. (De Toit, 17) Boyd (1996) warns, however, that “in trying to reframe strategies related to law, it is necessary to avoid dichotomizing the public and private spheres. As we have seen, the two are interconnected in a complex manner. It is not possible to advocate only a shifting of the "solution" to the public sphere, for example, as this sphere too is infected by familial ideology and by privatization. Nor can women in the "private" sphere be abandoned to seemingly progressive gender-neutral strategies in legal realms such as custody law before gendered relations in the private sphere are shifted.”

In conclusion, the literature reviewed above highlights the complexities that further pose challenges in addressing the public/private divide in the context of domestic workers in Rwanda. The analysis that follows closely analyzes this literature in relation to labor law in Rwanda to further understand the undervaluation and marginalization of domestic workers in Kigali. Through the use of African Feminist tools, I will closely consider the historical and structural factors that contribute to the public/private divide and address the exclusion of domestic workers.

### III. Study Design and Methodology

#### *Theoretical Framework*

As I delve into this study, I put forward the critical framework that is African Feminism that will provide a lens through which I can make sense of my findings. Mama (2019) characterizes African Feminism as a “radical proposition”; one that combines racial, sexual, class, and cultural dimensions of oppression to more accurately represent the experiences of African women. As a result, African Feminism is a lens through which we can explore what freedom looks like for women who are under multiple oppressions. (Steady, 1987) Central to this theory, is an understanding of intersectionality that recognizes the unique experiences of African women; however, beyond just intersectionality, African Feminism centralizes the experience of colonialism as one that actively shaped current expressions of violence against women. As Mama (2019) argues, understanding any form of violence against African women requires a genealogically grounded account because colonialism “was both a violent and a gendered process.” We, therefore, find that colonial configurations informed and enabled current gender-based violence practices. For this reason, I employ African Feminism as a theory to dissect the colonial histories that shaped the public/private divide and consequently gave rise to the current conditions of domestic workers.

In this regard, an approach grounded in African feminism seriously considers the intersectionality of gender, class, ethnicity, race, and other components of identity that lead to the marginalization and oppression of women while seeking fuller participation of different women in the development of law. In addition to this, there is an importance attributed to structural

implications of colonial history, traditional customs and norms, and – most notably – the role of gender as a condition of possibility for national development.

## *Methodology*

A qualitative descriptive study design was conducted to understand the extent to which the public/private divide affects the effectiveness of labor laws in Kigali, Rwanda. This choice was made because of the complex social dynamics and experiences that I was seeking to explore and the need to deeply contextualize the social phenomena within border social, cultural, and political contexts. Whilst I include some quantitative data to provide a more holistic and complete understanding of the current situation, my main data sources remain policy documents and interviews.

Literature pertaining to the public/private divide, women's rights, domestic work, and the global domestic sector was sourced to compare this research and Rwanda's context to existing policies and contextualize it with global factors. I paid particular attention to published reviews on the implementation of ILO recommendations in other *developing countries*. Two official video releases were also utilized given that they were referred to by the director of ADBEF, Lyhotely Ndagijimina, and seemed very relevant. The data extracted from the literature and published documents were triangulated with the information obtained from the interviews. A thematic analysis<sup>14</sup> was used to evaluate the content of the literature, interviews, and published policy papers. I first familiarized myself with the literature by reading through it multiple times to get a general idea of the concepts being evoked, I then created labels across the different

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<sup>14</sup> A thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to analyze data that involves identifying patterns or themes within the data. The goal of this process is to identify and interpret patterns of meaning across different data sources with the aim of developing insights on a particular topic.

sources of data and searched for common themes. I continued by reviewing and refining these themes to then be able to name them and produce the final report highlighted in my findings.

To supplement the literature review and analysis as well as provide context for policies, I carried out eight individual in-depth interviews with informants from December 2022 to April 2023. The informants – who were both male and female – worked primarily with institutions that cut across governmental and non-governmental lines. I specifically looked for experts with experience working with mechanisms of the African human rights regime and its domestic application. However, some of the interviews also explored the working conditions of domestic workers. An interview guide was developed to maintain consistency across different interviews and questions were added to contextualize the information provided. These interviews were conducted in person with two conducted virtually. Most of my interviewees were uncomfortable with being recorded so I took detailed notes of our conversations. They were on average an hour and conducted in Kinyarwanda and English.

All literature and documents that have been analyzed for this paper were publicly accessible. Interviewees gave verbal informed consent for interviews, and interview notes were stored electronically and secured in a password-encrypted laptop. Interview approval was obtained from Columbia University IRB Committee.

### *Limitations*

My research objective was to clearly understand the ways in which the public/private divide impedes on the effective implementation of law in domestic work. Although I was able to capture a sufficient understanding of the legal aspect of this question, I did not interview domestic workers and therefore did not get a clear understanding of what the current working

conditions are for this group. I chose not to interview domestic workers in this paper for two reasons; one, I wanted to focus more precisely on the ways in which the framing and content of the law impose a hindrance for employers to respect the law and abide by it. Secondly, the time limitation of this study made it difficult to narrow down which domestic workers to interview and produce methods to analyze these interviews. I have attempted to remedy this by touching on testimonies shared by workers with NGOs, where needed.

## IV. Findings

In this section, I will provide the key findings related to the public/private divide, and its effects on the legal policy concerning domestic workers in Kigali. These findings include the issues that emerge when looking at the nature of domestic work, the invisibility created by women's intersecting identities, the form and language of labor laws, and the socio-cultural norms that prevent the full implementation of the law.

### *Effect of the Intimacy of Domestic Work: Lack of Identification as “Workers”*

One of the most significant difficulties to overcome when it comes to regulating domestic work is the question of regulating matters that take place within the intimacy and confines of the home. My research brought to light how this intimacy hinders the effective implementation of the law as the work undertaken is intimate – such as child care – which creates emotional bonds between the worker and family. Therefore, my first finding establishes how these bonds – which are sometimes real family bonds and, other times, emotional bonds – allow domestic workers and their employers to not see themselves as workers, leading them to believe they are not subject to labor laws.

Bayane (2019) and Namuggala (2016) touch on the intricacies that come forth when considering the role of kin networks within domestic work. Namuggala (2016) shows that domestic work is a necessity for many who find themselves too unskilled to enter the formal labor market and too poor to continue their education whilst still having the responsibility to provide for their family members. In addition to Namuggala's work, one of my interviewees,

who has created an NGO to help vulnerable women, explained that in the process of finding employment, it is not at all uncommon to find domestic workers themselves or their family members reaching out to extended members of their family or network to ask if they need someone to help them around the house.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the search for domestic work is often facilitated through social or kin networks, with workers or their family members reaching out to others to find employment opportunities.

Additionally, Bayane (2019) explains that complexities arise when looking at the fact that there is an exchange of care between the domestic worker and their employer; more specifically, the domestic worker provides care for their employer by taking care of children or the home, while the employer provides care by giving them the opportunity to work and secure financial stability for the domestic worker's family. As a result, emotional bonds are created through reciprocal care that creates a family dynamic. Bayane (2019) argues that in both cases, where the workers are actual family members and in those where they grow to see themselves as part of the family, the law faces the challenge of mediating a relationship that is close to familial. Ms. Munanayire discussed how, due to this, in cases where conflict arises between family members employed as domestic workers, it is highly unlikely that they would take the matter to the law due to the nature of their relationship and societal values. As such, they will either stay silent or try to negotiate a solution with their employer. Bayane (2019) further clarifies this by stating, "The intersectionality of familial and employer-employee relations leads to working conditions negotiated in a family context. This is reflected by undocumented employment of [domestic workers] and the non-signing of contracts, because of working for relatives... Familial domestic workers adopt silence as a coping mechanism and it enables them to deal with the challenges of

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<sup>15</sup>Munanayire, Chantal (Founder and CEO of The Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women). Personal Interview. 27 December 2022.



working for their [employers]. This helps [domestic workers] to protect their jobs and prevent the complication of family relations between them and their [employers].”

However, it is essential to note that because the domestic worker sees themselves first as family before a worker, they do not necessarily consider that the law applies to them. The public/private divide provides us with a critical lens through which we can analyze this complicated status of the worker. In this sector, employment, a public sphere regulated by public bodies, becomes imbricated with familial relationships, a sphere legislated by familial and private norms. The law, as Boyd (1996) explains, sees these spheres as wholly separate and is therefore unable to regulate the employment of those who find themselves at the intersection of both these spheres. This understanding, in tandem with an African feminist analysis, emphasizes that this challenge of the law will disproportionately affect women, which we can see through the figure of the domestic worker.

Therefore, the first issue with the labor law that should be emphasized is that it sets out to ensure that workers' rights are protected on a general level without account of the specificities of different industries. The legal system in Rwanda aims to protect employees' rights and promote decent work conditions; however, the domestic work industry poses several unique challenges that require tailored solutions. The intimate nature of the work blurs the line between employee and employer, and the familial ties make it difficult for workers to demand legal rights. Boyd (1996) argues that this is not necessarily an issue with the law but its implementation. She calls for CSOs to train domestic workers in understanding that they are workers, and as a result, they have employee rights that they should strive to maintain.

*Invisibility of Women's Plight: Analysis of The Nexus of Gender, Rural-Urban Migration, and Class*

My second finding concerns the degree to which the public/private divide allows for the invisibility of those who sit at the intersection of gender, migration, and class. By applying an African feminist lens, it becomes evident that the history of colonialism that gives rise to the current situation of female domestic workers has not been explicitly taken into account in the process of drafting and implementing the law.

There is ample literature pointing to the disproportionate responsibility of care work in postcolonial societies. According to ILO (2013), Africa has an estimated 5.2 million domestic workers with a 70% female composition; in a region where “almost everyone has a domestic worker,” this estimate is arguably on the lower end. Generally, in Eastern Africa, there has been a mass movement of people from the countryside to urban centers in search of employment. In Rwanda, this labour force growth in urban areas accompanied post-Genocide reconstruction as there were minimal employment opportunities in rural areas as well as a high level of poverty. (Uwimbabazi, 2011) Many of these migrants are young women who, due to a lack of education and capital and accessibility, take up jobs as domestic workers. One of my interviewees, who undertook a national project on the organization and unionization of domestic workers, mentioned that many women in the rural areas of Rwanda essentially have two options when they drop out of school because of the high levels of poverty: “they are either going into prostitution or domestic work.”<sup>16</sup> Like many other developing countries, Rwanda lacks adequate child-caring services in the cities. This gap gives way to a high demand for female domestic workers, who are perceived as having been socialized and trained to take care of children. The

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<sup>16</sup> Olivier Ngororabanga, interview with author, 10 January 2023.

value attributed to their reproductive labor and nature also explains why there are few men employed in the sector (Namuggala, 2015)

Additionally, Uwimbabazi (2011) claims that the lack of consideration of policymakers is on account of the fact that domestic workers do not fit into a vision of an “urbanized life” they have in mind, and this is what explains their “relative blindness to the interests of invisible laborers.” To use the language of the African feminist, this is a clear example of the intersections of class differences with gender inequalities that ultimately reproduce colonial ideals of modernity governed by a knowledge-based society (Uwimbabazi, 2011). The perspectives and ambitions prioritized are those of elite women and men. This is clearly a colonial continuity, as Hunt (1990) demonstrates how the logic of an “urban model of femininity” underpinned institutions designed to educate women. Most notably, the *foyers sociaux*<sup>17</sup> were utilized as instruments through which the Belgians could create the aforementioned model under the guise of women’s empowerment. It is all the more interesting to find that there is a hierarchy within these colonial institutions: some women were specifically chosen to be trained to become better and more suitable partners for the chosen male elite, whilst the rest were trained to be good workers for the women elite (Buscaglia, 2012). According to a 1951 report sent by Belgium to the UN<sup>18</sup>, it is written:

“[W]hat we call social assistance must not be seen in a general sense, but in the strict meaning of domestic and familiar education of the indigenous woman...[to

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<sup>17</sup> French for *social homes*: Belgian domestic training institutions for African women, founded for married women living in colonial urban centers. Some women were learning to cook, mend, iron, and wash clothes, and how to wean their infants and decorate their homes, and a select few were being trained to work (for pay) as auxiliary aids or monitors in the classroom. It is worth noting that in addition to the racial inequalities that saw European women as those who were meant to ensure that Rwandan women were doing the work well, there were class inequalities too. For more information: Hunt, Nancy Rose. “Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura’s Foyer Social, 1946-1960.” *Signs* 15, no. 3 (1990): 447–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174423>.

<sup>18</sup> Every year, Belgium had to send a complete report to the UN, in which all details about the condition of the colony had to be given. Report had thoroughly the same structure every year: they listed answers to approximately 250 questions, organizing chapters on geography, economy, social affairs, education, hygiene and public health. See: Buscaglia, Ilaria, and Shirley Randell. “Legacy of Colonialism in the Empowerment of Women in Rwanda.” *Other Journal Article, JOUR. Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4, no. 1 (2012): 69–85.

be] able to keep the house clean, to make the interior pleasant and to offer a cleaned table, an appetizing meal, and washed linen to their husbands when they come from work” (Ministre des Colonies, 1952)

This passage highlights the efforts taken by the Belgian colonial powers to ensure that women understood the value of domestic work through the lens of producing work that is satisfying to the man of the house. As a result, Hunt (1990) claims that the foyer social worked to “establish, maintain and enhance hierarchies among women, among Africans, between men and women, and between white colonials and Africans.” It is crucial to consider the hierarchies created among women as structures emphasized through colonial processes and contributed to creating a clear demarcation between elite and non-elite women.

Ansoms and Debusshcer (2013) expand on this by examining the class divisions apparent in care work in Rwanda. They consider the fact that the families with the most number of domestic workers are of the upper and middle classes and often hire very young and uneducated workers. This is, therefore, indicative of colonial attitudes that emphasized that only a specific class of women can have the privilege of having domestic workers. In this same vein, Tickner (2005) argues that domestic work should not be treated as “a personal, private issue or one to be understood solely in terms of relations between employers and their servants, but one that serves the state’s goal of providing the good life for certain class[es] of citizens through oppressing others.” Herein, there is an emphasis on the tension at the heart of this study: Rwanda’s endeavor to promote women has led to the empowerment of a certain type of woman at the expense of others.

Therefore, we can assert that Belgian colonial rule emphasized women’s economic and social roles as roles that could solely be done in the private sphere of the home and to the service of an elite class of both men and women. Understood from these historical perspectives, the

public/private divide allows the law to invisibilize many women's experiences further, women who represent a large part of the Rwandan population and workforce. These class and gender hierarchies, often implicit and hidden, are reproduced by laws and policies that do not actively set out to deconstruct these processes. Thus, the law's lack of consideration for the complexities of women and the identities they bring to their labor highlights another challenge in the creation and application of the law.

### *The “Informal Worker” and Resulting Legal Gaps*

The next finding concerns the language and scope of labor law. The categorization of domestic workers under informal labor limits the applicability of the law that passively marginalizes domestic workers. In disregarding the specificities inherent in this sector, the law disregards the layers of oppression women in this sector face and therefore, fails to live up to its objective of protecting workers. (Art. 2) As has been previously mentioned, Rwanda has established a labor code that is regularly updated to protect workers from unfair employment practices with regard to wages, time off, and other work-related questions.

According to Rwanda Labour Law No. 66/208 of 30/08/2018, the most recent iteration of the labor law, domestic workers fall under the category of informal workers. According to Article 1.22, an informal worker is:

“An employee working for an enterprise or an individual for an employment that is not registered in the registered companies or with a public authority.” (Art. 1.22)

Additionally, Article 2 states that the scope of the law only applies to informal workers in matters concerning occupational health and safety, the right to form trade unions and employers' associations, the right to salary, the minimum wage, the right to leave, social security, protection

against workplace discrimination, protection from forced labor, prohibited forms of work for the child, pregnant or breastfeeding woman. (Rwandan Labour Law, Art. 2) The creation and legal inscription of such broad legal categories and mechanisms are especially dangerous for domestic workers who are exposed to many vulnerabilities.

Many interviewees highlighted the current lack of government pressure in enforcing employment contracts within the domestic sector. The law, as highlighted above, provides an apparent reason for this: informal workers are not concerned with this policy. Although there are provisions for other rights, one of the most critical aspects of an employment relationship is not weighed. This might make sense for other informal workers, such as self-employed workers; however, it needs to apply to domestic workers adequately. There is overwhelming evidence pointing to the use of labor contracts as mechanisms to ensure and protect domestic workers' rights. (Uwimbabazi, 2011) Ultimately, the vulnerability that emanates from the precarity of being an informal worker is [re]produced by the absence of employment security and adequate social protection.

As aforementioned, it is interesting to understand domestic work from an African feminist standpoint that considers its inherent colonial continuities. In this context, this female-dominated sector is automatically considered informal work despite the essential economic additions it makes. Narayan (2005) highlights that in the Third World, women are often relegated to the informal sector because of colonial legacies. They explain that the unequal division of labor relegates women to vulnerable forms of entry into the economy. These roles, which are often not directly related to the production of capital, are considered informal and given less importance to more public and profit-making activities that men dominate. However, this argument is void when we consider the position that domestic workers are in and the ways in

which they contribute to the country's growth. As aforementioned, many households in Rwanda utilize domestic workers in their homes because of the lack of adequate childcare services or more broadly, because women have generally taken up more productive labor roles that they do not have the time to undertake domestic chores. Therefore, in an indirect way, domestic workers contribute to the economy in ensuring that women at the head of a household are able to pursue careers without having to worry about the state of their children or home.

Nevertheless, by classifying the domestic sector as informal, the government regards the sector as one that deserves less regulation or provision of care than the formal sector. As Boyd (1996) emphasizes, this is a representation of the ways through which the public/private divide reproduces hierarchies. By administering more social protections to those in formal labor -- a category dominated by men, the government reproduces gender hierarchies. The challenge of legislating for the informal economy, therefore, provides the government with a unique opportunity to look for ways to rethink its current labor laws and look beyond traditional forms of regulation. This is work that requires the combined efforts of different governmental institutions and CSOs to ensure domestic workers are also part of the process of enacting and implementing policy that concerns them and addresses their specific needs.

### *Traditional Norms and Legislative Power in the Home*

Lastly, another finding that stemmed from this research concerns Rwandan culture and the ways in which the power and value attributed to cultural norms and traditions often undermine the law, especially in the private sphere. In this context, the public/private divide intersects with cultural norms to further propagate violent gender hierarchies. Given that the law governs interactions and relationships that are more public, those that are private are handled

under the legislation of culture. More generally, this argument is reminiscent of more prominent human rights debates that question the place of local cultures when discussing notions of the universality of human rights.

Firstly, given that women's issues and oppression are primarily situated in the private context, they are negotiated in the context of practices and traditions of the society and home where they are. Msuya (2019) argues that this argument is most oppressive for women because, historically, they have been tasked with the responsibility of upholding and transmitting culture. Gashaw (2020) claims that, as a result, African women are denied equal enjoyment of their human rights because of the pressure to uphold deeply patriarchal traditions and customs. In this way, women are not seen as the individual that human rights propose that all autonomous subjects are, but instead, they live in communities wherein they have cultural obligations. These cultural obligations are heavily influenced by both pre-colonial ideals and colonial ones, which are often patriarchal. Jessee (2020) discusses gender norms in Rwanda and highlights that the introduction of catholicism through colonial powers shifted gender norms and emphasized women's roles as child-bearers. Therefore, the burden of instilling cultural values in their children fell on them.

Brems (1997) also argues that the difference in cultural norms and legal ones is a colonial one where the colonizer introduced distinctions between the public and private sphere, imposing their laws on the public sphere and leaving the private one largely under the governance of indigenous laws and rules. This is especially flagrant for Rwanda under Belgian rule, where, according to one of the participants at the Congrès Colonial National, the aim of promoting women was to "raise women to their traditional role reserved to them in the Christian family,



central in our culture and whose importance goes even beyond our laws” (Congrès Colonial National, 1956)

As it relates to the domestic worker, it is important to consider the ways in which culture affects the application of law and the implications of this. Culturally, the low social status and undervaluation of domestic work is deeply rooted in various historical, socio-economic and institutional factors that create barriers for domestic workers. This can lead to a lack of respect and recognition for their work. One interviewee highlights this in the language that is used to refer to domestic workers and their conditions, he highlighted the fact that many DWs who work for relatively wealthy households are relegated to boys’ quarters<sup>19</sup> – spaces that are removed from public view and are of significantly lower quality than the main house.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, he insisted on the fact that the cultural shift needs to happen first in the language that is used. He says that the government should push for a linguistic shift, where we would stop calling domestic workers “*abakozi*” and instead refer to them as “*abafashimirimo*.”<sup>21</sup>

This further highlights the tension that is central to this research: despite the government’s efforts to promote women politically, there is still a significant amount of work to be done socially so as to elevate women to positions of power culturally too. Consequently, Gashaw (2020) argues that the question of culture and law, as it pertains to women’s rights, should not be considered as an either/or question but one that looks at the ways in which all these different tools can be leveraged to ensure that important cultural tenets are upheld without an oppressive and exploitative culture. Although international and regional human rights law –

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<sup>19</sup> Term used to refer to where domestic workers live. Interesting to note that it is taken from British colonialism where they had created sequestered spaces in which servants were forced to live.

<sup>20</sup> Olivier Ngororabanga, interview with author, 10 January 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Changing the language from *those who work for someone* to *those who help with work*.

including the CEDAW<sup>22</sup>, ACHPR<sup>23</sup>, and the Maputo protocol<sup>24</sup> – urge for the transformation of customary and traditional practices that violate women’s rights, it is so deeply embedded in the everyday culture, as is exemplified in the language, that this too demands a joint effort by all stakeholders.

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<sup>22</sup> UN General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 18 December 1979, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1249, p. 13, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the Draft African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, O.A.U. Doc. CM/1149 (XXXVII) at 2 (1981)

<sup>24</sup> Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol Text). African Union; 2003

## V. Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the invisibilities of domestic workers within labor law in Rwanda through the lens of the public/private divide. The above results suggest that while labor law is in place and exists to protect domestic workers' rights, there are structural gaps that could be remedied – both in the policies written and their implementation. In this next section, I critically analyze and interpret my findings to discuss broader implications and their significance.

One key theme that emerged in my research is the fact that domestic workers often do not identify themselves as workers and therefore do not feel as though they should be subjected or protected by labor laws. During my conversation with SYTRIECI<sup>25</sup>, it was brought to light that this is what many CSOs have been working to remedy – to organize and sensitize domestic workers to the oppressions and abuses they are undergoing. Mr. Habimana mentioned how domestic workers are not allowed to meet across households and therefore, it was important for SYTRIECI to be able to go from house to house speaking to them or find a central place for their meetings. This also arose in my conversation with Ms. Munanyire who emphasized that the language used for domestic workers is very familial and that it increases the phenomenon of domestic workers who do not see themselves as workers but instead as family. As such, this familiarity has grave repercussions in the negotiation that takes place between the two parties. Most notably, the financial exploitation that domestic workers undergo, with some earning as little as \$10 a month, can be traced to the lack of an employment relationship that the worker has cultivated with the employer which results in unclear terms and conditions of employment.<sup>26</sup> While the labor code does not have specific provisions for domestic workers, it does provide a

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<sup>25</sup> Habimana, Robert. Personal Interview. 16 March 2023.

<sup>26</sup> Munanyire, Chantal. Personal Interview. 27 December 2022

legal framework that applies to all workers, and therefore is relevant to discussions about the working conditions and employment rights of domestic workers in Rwanda. Therefore, while exploitation can be experienced regardless of proximity to the family, these exploitations – and specifically, financial exploitation – seem to be amplified when the domestic worker does not clearly define themselves first as a worker before any other status. Whilst some of my interviewees claim that domestic workers do not need a lot of income given that they are housed and fed at their employers, it leaves very little room to account for medical expenses, and other non-work related expenses.

A potential solution for this issue is for a program that also emphasizes the need to raise awareness with employers that the abuses they are committing are essentially illegal and they may have grave repercussions. The lack of enforcement mechanisms has created a very lax environment for employers who have assurance that there will not be legal recourse by the domestic workers. I believe this would be a more efficient method than to go through the domestic workers, who, as aforementioned, are often not even allowed to meet outside the homes and whose responsibility isn't to ensure that their employer abides by the law. Moreover, some of the domestic workers would be reluctant to meet and understand themselves as workers whereas employers are a more efficient method to raise awareness pertaining to the rights of their employees. This would assist in ensuring direct accountability without further burdening the domestic worker. Given the authority that needs to be deployed for these laws to be respected, I believe the body that would need to structure such a program would need to be a government-related body, so as to both further the government's commitment to protecting women but also ensuring that individuals respect the program.

Another theme that emerged in my research is that the general labor law, which applies to domestic workers under the heading of informal workers, sets out to ensure that workers' rights are protected on a general level without the account of the specificities of different industries. There is a presupposition that the workplace includes enough workers to bargain for their rights and to collectively stand up to the employer. This is almost impossible in a household given the vulnerability of the employee and could likely lead to unintended consequences that sees the worker in a worse position than they started in. It is all the more important to address this, given that almost every household in Kigali owns some type of domestic worker.<sup>27</sup> As a solution to this issue, I propose that the government – notably, MIFOTRA in collaboration with MIGEPROF – establish an independent body to collect data on domestic workers and further understand their conditions to provide key policy recommendations that would be effective and promote change in this sector. There is a fundamental lack of numbers to show data on domestic workers which, arguably, does not encourage change as it's hard to capture the extent of the issue. In all my research, the data that I was able to gather pertaining to domestic workers was data published by civil society organizations, which was mostly incomplete and not fully representative of the entire country's position as it concerns domestic workers. (CLADHO, 2015) This further emphasized the challenges that appear in the law – where there is disaggregated data, the law will not reflect the reality. As such, there is a need to gather enough numbers to get a real understanding of on-the-ground realities for many domestic workers.

Moreover, an important aspect in the discourse surrounding domestic workers is the rural-urban migration that is caused by extreme poverty and unemployment. . Through my conversation with W4W, Mr. Ezekiel highlighted three factors that have contributed to the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

current conditions of domestic work in Rwanda.<sup>28</sup> These are high unemployment rates, difficulties in regulating and managing the domestic sector, and extremely low education levels. These factors are interrelated, with the domestic sector providing economic value for the uneducated and being accessible to people in varying socioeconomic statuses, making it challenging to regulate and standardize laws for all employers. Mr. Ezekiel's observation that domestic work is normalized in Rwanda is supported by ample literature that points to how poverty drives many women to enter occupations that entrench their poverty further.

One strategy that would be worth considering is transforming the economic conditions of the poorer households. The government needs to devise policies for expansion of employment in the rural sector to prevent distress driven or push migration that has been occurring in Kigali. However, diversification can be advantageous only with emphasis on education and skill development. This can remove entry barriers to more remunerative non-farm activities that will help towards achieving sustainable livelihood.

My conversation with Mr. Kananga<sup>29</sup> showed that the government is very committed to ensuring that children are removed from these spaces which can be seen in their ratification of multiple treaties against child labour.<sup>30</sup> He said that there are labor inspections carried regularly, according to Article 3(1) of ILO Convention 81.<sup>31</sup> Inspectors are taught to carefully look for children and ask neighbors if they have noticed children working in the area as DWs. Given the fact that the government does not have legislation over the private home, it can be difficult to

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<sup>28</sup> Rukema, Ezekiel. Personal Interview. 5 January 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Kananga, Patrick. Personal Interview. 15 March 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Rwanda has ratified The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention of the ILO C-182 and the Minimum Age Convention of the ILO C-138. As aforementioned, Rwanda has also adopted national legislation to combat child labor, including the Law N° 71/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining the organization and functioning of labor inspectors and the Regulation N° 012/2017 of 23/05/2017 determining the minimum ages for admission to employment and work.

<sup>31</sup> ILO, Convention 81, Art. 3(1) sets out three main functions of a labor inspectorate; one of which is to inform and advise employers and workers about the most effective means of complying with legal requirements.

monitor household employers using children for labor. However, reports indicate that the number of labor inspectors does not meet the ILO's technical standards and advice for the size of Rwanda's workforce.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, MIFOTRA has also established the *Child Labour National Committees* that will hire different members of the community to act as "whistle blowers" and report whether their neighbors or other members of their communities are using children. This is to ensure that they are covering the spaces that may have been missed by labor inspectors. Beyond this, the government has also expanded the Isange One Stop Centers'<sup>33</sup> mandate to include victims of child abuse and human trafficking and established a hotline<sup>34</sup> for children to call and/or write a message to the police. Given the success of these programs<sup>35</sup>, this multifaceted approach that involves the community in finding against child labour could be expanded to preventing women's abuse. However, the government needs to continue to push for CSOs to encourage women to speak up when they're undergoing abuse.

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/rwanda>

<sup>33</sup> "One Stop" Centers are structures for a comprehensive response to address gender-based violence and to complement the nation-wide efforts by the Ministry of Health, the National Police and the Ministry of Justice. These centers were named Isange Centre, which means "Feel free/Feel welcome", communicating a message of security and openness for the survivors. By establishing Isange Centres countrywide the National Police, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice aim at improving the linkages of different ministries, referrals and care of gender-based violence victims/survivors at centralized and decentralized levels. Read more: <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/africa/rwanda/2009/isange#:~:text=In%20Rwanda%2C%20the%20first%20%22One,and%20openess%20for%20the%20survivors.>

<sup>34</sup> The hotline is 166 and the USSD code is \*520#

<sup>35</sup> See UN Women Evaluation of Isange One Stop Centre: Bernath, Tania, and Liberata Gahongayire. Rep. *Final Evaluation of Rwandan Government And ONE UN ISANGE One Stop Centre*, 2013. [https://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en/~/\\_documents/2013/11/20/13/33/final%20evaluation%20of%20rwandan%20government%20and%20one%20un%20isange%20one%20stop%20centre](https://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en/~/_documents/2013/11/20/13/33/final%20evaluation%20of%20rwandan%20government%20and%20one%20un%20isange%20one%20stop%20centre)

## VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study utilizes the public/private divide to critically analyze the invisibilities of domestic workers within labor law in Rwanda and the structural gaps that exist in policies and their implementation. At the heart of this research is the tension that has been observed with Rwanda's symbolic representation of women in parliament that is not reflective of many women on-the-ground.

By applying an African Feminist lens to this discussion, we find that the intimacy of work that is carried out in the privacy of the home often leads to domestic workers who do not identify themselves as workers and, therefore, do not feel protected by labor laws. The study recommends that the government and civil society organizations raise awareness with employers to ensure direct accountability without further burdening the domestic worker. Additionally, the study suggests that the government should establish an independent body to collect data on domestic workers to provide key policy recommendations that would be effective and promote change in this sector given the rural-urban migration that drives this sector and the different intersections that emanate from this.

The study also highlights the interrelated factors of high unemployment rates, difficulties in regulating and managing the domestic sectors and extremely low education levels that contribute to the current conditions of domestic work in Rwanda. Finally, the study recommends strategies such as the expansion of labor inspectorates and the Isange One Stop Centres to ensure women working in this sector and their well-being are being closely considered and have a safe space to discuss the abuses they're undergoing. Through a joint effort between the Government of Rwanda and other civil society organizations working on gender issues, informal work, and human rights, the protection of domestic workers is an achievable goal.



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## Appendix 1: Interviews

### *Appendix 1.1: List of Interviewees and Positions*

<b>Name of Interviewee</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Mireille Batamuliza	Secretary	MIGEPROF	March 18, 2023
Robert Habimana	Programs Officer	SYTRIECI	March 16, 2023
Patrick Kananga	Chief Labour and Decent Work Administrator	MIFOTRA	March 15, 2023
Chantal Munanayire	Founder and CEO	IEEW	December 27, 2023
Lyhotely Ndagijimana	Founder and Executive Director	ADBEF	March 20, 2023
Olivier Ngororabanga	Former Program Project Manager	RDB	January 10, 2023
Ezekiel Rukema	Head of Economic Department	W4W	January 5, 2023

## *Appendix 1.2: Interview Selection Process*

I initially reached out to HAGURUKA as I interned for the organization during the summer of 2020. They offered limited information and instead referred to CLADHO and ADBEF. After speaking to their program officers, I was referred to CESTRAR. Additionally, I spoke to the program officer at Women for Women who referred me to the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) regarding the projects that they have undertaken regarding domestic workers. Although I did not formally reach out to RDB, I was put in touch with a program manager who used to work there and had a project concerning DWs. I conducted an interview with him which provided a lot of insight into the processes through which the government implements projects and policies.

As for the members of the government, I emailed the Ministries I deemed relevant for this research; namely, the Ministry of Labour (MIFOTRA), Ministry of Gender and Female Promotion (MIGEPROF), Ministry of Justice (MINIJUST), and National Agency for Children's Development (NACD). In the end, I was only able to get in touch with MIGEPROF, MIFOTRA, and the Rwanda Governing Board. Additionally, I participated in the 67th Commission on the Status of Women at the UN HQ where I got to meet the Rwandan delegation and got in touch with the Deputy Director General of the National Institute of Statistics and Research of Rwanda. This was done in order to gather the information that could help me understand the context and process through which national policy is developed and implemented. These informants include members of key government departments identified to be involved in domestic labor and women's rights such as MIFOTRA, MIGEPROF, MINIJUST, and NACD. Additionally, NGO representatives from CLADHO, Haguruka, SYTRIECI, Women for Women, and ADBEF were also part of this study. By interviewing a range of stakeholders, I was able to gain a more

comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for creating and implementing labor laws in Rwanda, as well as perspectives on potential solutions to improve compliance with labor regulations.

Overall, these interviews provided me with the necessary knowledge for formulating pertinent and concrete recommendations on women's rights as they relate to DWs. These interviews have been integrated throughout this thesis, concealing some of the informants' identities at their request. Thematic content analysis has been employed to analyze the collected data and the findings of the research are presented in themes drawn from the interviews.

### *Appendix 1.3: Interview Guide for NGO Representatives*

1. How did [name of organization] start? What is your position in this organization?
2. How does your organization engage with domestic workers? Why do you think it is important to fight for domestic workers?
3. How has your organization been able to influence policies and legislation?
4. What are the different projects that your organization has undertaken that have helped promote domestic workers' rights?
5. Why do you think domestic workers are an invisible group in Rwanda?
6. During your time in this organization, what have been the improvements made for domestic workers?
7. Do you feel supported by the government and/or civil society organizations in the work that you do?
8. What have been the challenges you have faced whilst advocating for domestic workers?
9. What is the future you envision for domestic workers in Rwanda? Who are the actors most present and active in this future?

### *Appendix 1.4: Interview Guide for Policymakers*

1. In broad terms and your own language, what is the work that [government entity] does?
2. What are the processes that lead to the creation of new laws through [government entity]?
3. To what extent would you say there is a gender analysis in the work that you carry out?
4. In what ways do you consider domestic workers in the work that you do? More generally, how do you consider those that are part of the informal economy?
5. What projects has [government entity] carried out to ensure the protection of informal workers and particularly, women?

#### ***Additional Questions For the Ministry of Labour and Public Service (MIFOTRA):***

6. What is the process of ensuring laws are applied and implemented in different economic sectors? Who (governmental entity or other) is in charge of this implementation?
7. What is the main issue faced by MIFOTRA currently regarding the position of domestic workers in our economy? More specifically, how do they pose challenges for the creation and implementation of labor laws?
8. What solutions and programs are currently underway to address these issues?
9. How does MIFOTRA work with NGOs or other civil society organizations to ensure the laws being enacted are responding to the needs of employees and employers?

## Appendix 2: Key Concepts of the Study

Term	Definition
<b>Domestic Worker</b>	Refers to an individual employed within a private space or home of an employer to fulfill duties such as cleaning, cooking, ironing, and taking care of children or the elderly in exchange for remuneration (ILO, 2011). The concept domestic worker refers to an individual that is formally recognised by labor laws.
<b>Public/Private Divide</b>	A conceptual division between the domestic or familial sphere of life, which is traditionally seen as private and outside the jurisdiction of the state, and the public or civic sphere of life, which is seen as the proper domain of the state and subject to its regulation. (Fineman, 1994)
<b>Informal Employee</b>	An employee working for an enterprise or an individual for an employment that is not registered in the registered companies or with a public authority. (Rwanda Labour Law, Art. 1. 22)
<b>Rwanda Labour Law</b>	Refers to the Rwandan Official Gazette no. Special of 06/09/2018 which can be found here:



	<p><a href="https://www.gmo.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/laws%20and%20policies/New_Labour_Law_2018.pdf">https://www.gmo.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/laws%20and%20policies/New_Labour_Law_2018.pdf</a></p>
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## Appendix 3: Government Agencies Implicated in Gender Equality

Agency	Role
<b>Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA)</b>	<p>Enforces labour laws, including laws on child labour, in coordination with other government entities at the national and district level. (27) In partnership with the Ministry of Education, reintegrates children withdrawn from child labor with their families and enrolls them in school. Mobilizes other ministries and agencies providing social services, including the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the National Child Development Agency, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Local Government, to take an active role in child labour law enforcement.</p>
<b>Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF)</b>	<p>The MIGEPROF works to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all sectors, including the labor market. It provides legal aid and counseling services to women workers who have experienced labor law violations.</p>
<b>National Women’s Council (NWC)</b>	<p>The NWC provides support for female workers, including training on labor rights and legal aid for victims of labor law violations. The NWC works with (formal) employers to promote equal pay for work and ensure women have access to</p>

	job opportunities
<b>Gender Monitoring Office (GMO)</b>	The GMO is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Rwanda's gender policies and programs, including those related to labor rights. They work with other government agencies to raise awareness about labor rights.
<b>Rwanda National Police (RNP)</b>	The Rwanda National Police has a Gender Dest that is responsible for addressing GBV and other forms of gender-based discrimination. The Gender Desk works with other law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute cases of labor law violations. The police also provide support to victims of labor law violation, including female workers.
<b>Ministry of Justice (MINIJUST)</b>	The MINIJUST is responsible for overseeing the judicial system in Rwanda. It works to ensure that labor laws are being enforced and that perpetrators of labor law violations are held accountable. MINIJUST works alongside the RNP and NPPA to investigate and prosecute cases of labor law violations.
<b>National Public Prosecution Authority (NPPA)</b>	Prosecutes violations of labor laws, including laws on discrimination. Through its Anti-Gender-Based Violence unit, dedicates 12 prosecutors to work with an additional 60 prosecutors trained in handling relevant cases at the district level.)

<b>Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB)</b>	Conducts investigations into criminal matters, including GBV  In the case of the Directorate for Anti-Gender-Based Violence, assists victims through anti-gender-based violence officers at each of the country's 78 police stations.
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