Rwanda, celebrated for its strides in gender equality, is now experiencing a pivotal moment. Supported by Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, a new gender-responsive investment policy is set to reshape the investment landscape.

This policy revision, approved in 2023, tackles longstanding deficiencies, notably the absence of gender considerations in Rwanda's investment framework. Before this change, women encountered barriers to securing finance, accessing business opportunities, and finding employment within the investment sector.

The disproportionate burden of unpaid work on women further compounded these challenges, hindering their full participation.

Mediatrice Urwabyeyi, Deputy Executive Director of Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, underscores this disparity: "We identified a gap in the investment policy; it lacked a gender lens. This imbalance hindered women's involvement in the investment sector, particularly due to the burden of unpaid work."

Marie Mediatrice Urwabyeyi, Deputy Executive Director of Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, sheds light on how gender-related gaps within the new investment policy pose obstacles for women in investment.

Their relentless efforts resulted in a policy that promotes gender equality and creates a level playing field for all.

This new policy goes beyond mere words. It is a roadmap for inclusive development, fostering gender transformative and socially sustainable progress. By providing clear guidelines, the policy empowers local authorities to bridge the gender gap within their districts.

The impact of this initiative extends far beyond policy documents. Pro-Femmes/ Twese Hamwe recently conducted training workshops across Rwanda, equipping local government business planners with the necessary skills to implement the policy.

Female participants engage in discussions on overcoming barriers encountered by women in the business realm during a training session.

These workshops covered crucial aspects like gender mainstreaming and budgeting, gender analysis methodologies, and strategies to bridge gender gaps through financial planning.

The training participants, including directors of planning, business development, and employment, as well as representatives of civil society and the private sector, are now empowered to integrate gender considerations into every stage of the investment process.

This newfound knowledge will enable them to identify and address gender disparities within their jurisdictions. Equating resources equitably and ensuring programs benefit women and men can unlock Rwanda's full economic potential.

The road to achieving gender-responsive investment is not without its challenges. Unequal distribution of unpaid work and harmful cultural norms continue to pose hurdles. However, Rwanda's commitment to gender equality and initiatives like this new policy and targeted training programs signifies a decisive step in the right direction.

By equipping local authorities with the necessary tools and knowledge, Rwanda is paving the way for a future where women and men can participate equally in the country's economic growth and prosperity.

"The journey on gender mainstreaming has to continue," says Edgar Rudasingwa, director of the planning unit in Gatsibo District, Eastern Rwanda.

In a training workshop, certain groups were exclusively designated for men to explore challenges within collaborative settings.

"We learned the importance of gender analysis to identify gaps and make informed decisions so that nobody is left behind," Chantal Mukamutana, a gender specialist from Duterembere, a local NGO, echoes this sentiment: "To achieve our goals, we need to analyze the gender challenges, especially when it comes to unpaid care work by women."

Emmanuel Ntagozera, Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist at Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, also emphasized the importance of translating plans into action: "If you fail to plan, you're likely to encounter challenges during the budgeting process.

“After these trainings, participants are expected not only to comprehend the policy but also to effectively link it with available opportunities as they become the implementors on the ground.”

Rwanda’s dedication to closing the gender gap in investment is a model for other nations striving for a more equitable and inclusive economy.

Pro-Femmes/ Twese Hamwe, an Umbrella of Rwandan Civil Society Organizations aiming to advance women’s status, is implementing this project funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The project aims to support and coordinate CSOs working on gender equality and women’s empowerment to contribute to the investment policy revision process.