

Pro-femmes/Twese Hamwe, an umbrella of civil society organizations (CSOs) aimed at advancing the status of women in Rwanda, has recently issued an implementation plan to accelerate a project that focuses on supporting a policy action that can ladder up the enhancement of women's economic opportunities.

The project, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), aims to ensure that Rwanda's investment policy is gender responsive and provides equal opportunities to women and men at all levels of the investment sector.

The road for women's increased participation in politics in Rwanda was paved by the 2003 Constitution, which set aside a quota of 30 percent of women in all decision-making organs, showing commitment to gender equality, empowerment of women, and promoting women's rights.

However, some experts observe that the above impressive numbers did not translate directly into an end to the woes of women in different sectors of the economy as this social category still lags, mainly because it is under-represented in the investment sector.

Emmanuel Ntagozera, Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist at Pro-femmes/ Twese Hamwe points out that the new project intends to support and coordinate CSOs working on gender equality and women empowerment to contribute to the investment policy revision process.



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"We are looking to raise awareness among different stakeholders, including women-led businesses, on the investment policy for them to use it as a tool for accessing investment opportunities," he said.

In 2013, Rwanda's parliamentary elections grabbed international headlines with a record-breaking women's majority in parliament at 64 percent; also, considering women in the executive, it placed the country proportionally with more women in power than any other.

However, given that social-cultural factors like gender norms or roles have had a dissuading impact on women's participation in areas like entrepreneurship and

investments, advocating for increased investment is described by experts as a critical driver for effective gender mainstreaming and accountability within the investment sector.

Traditionally, in Rwanda, women were assigned domestic duties such as cleaning the home, raising children or caring for “high-need” older adults. Still, the new initiative seeks to fill these gaps by supporting the establishment of female-led ventures.

It said that the first investment policy had huge gaps, like failure to include any gender institution among the implementing partners; it didn’t indicate any gender barriers within its analysis of the sector and ways to overcome them.



Workshop on the progress and update of the project by Pro-femmes on supporting policy action on enhancing women economic opportunities.

Project lifecycle

In April 2023, the government of Rwanda released a revised National Investment Policy to serve as a framework for effective and efficient public investment management. The policy aims to strengthen general investment planning and management and to guide how to promote public-private investments in the quest for sustainable development of the country.

This new policy has, therefore, been revised with an inclusive and fair development towards gender in mind. It supports inclusive development by promoting gender equality and creating equal opportunities for all, including women, youth, and people living with disabilities.

The policy provides guidelines to help further reduce inequality and promote gender transformative and socially inclusive development in Rwanda.

Currently, Profemme Twese Hamwe, in collaboration with Action Aid Rwanda, is supporting the policy action to boost women’s economic opportunities by engaging all stakeholders to build a coalition for advocacy.

Ntagozera explains that the project seeks to lead policy influencing processes and has so far conducted a workshop to look at the development of gender

mainstreaming strategy and how to train policy actors that will help achieve the understated goals.

Profemmes Twese/ Hamwe met with different policymakers to ensure that gender sensitivity is considered at all investment sector levels.

While undertaking this project, stakeholders emphasized the need to simplify the investment policy after its review for easy understanding and broader reach. There are also plans to translate it into a Kinyarwanda, a language many beneficiaries use.

Through collaboration, Action Aid Rwanda will support some of these activities by organizing quarterly review meetings and helping disseminate the policy.

The ultimate goal here is to use collaborative opportunities, bringing into the fold the gender machinery, particularly the one dealing with women's economic empowerment through the policy processes.

Although the National Investment Policy dates back to 2017, few gender institutions, advocates, and experts knew about its existence, which now calls for its dissemination at all levels.

The investment policy review was influenced to include all related gender issues that were fully considered. The current investment policy is gender-responsive and inclusive, providing equal opportunities to men and women.

Gender experts say civil society organizations need to keep an eye on the policy processes to ensure that they cater to the needs of their interest groups. There is also a need to collect ideas to improve the investment policy and gender mainstreaming strategy.