

THE MINUTES OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT SUB-CLUSTER MEETING

Venue: Lemigo Hotel, Kigali.
Date: June 28th, 2018
Chaired by: Mrs Jackline KAMANZI; Executive Secretary, NWC
Co-Chaired by: Mrs Bena MUSEMBI; Country Director, CARE International

The meeting Agenda

- Welcome & Opening Remarks;
- Overview of NGFC guidelines;
- Presentation of NGFC Strategic plan outlook and progress;
- Presentation on CEDAW recommendations;
- Closing Remarks and Ways Forward.

The meeting background

The Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Sub-Cluster (GEWE) Meeting was held at Lemigo Hotel on June 28th, 2018. This meeting brought together government institutions, development partners, the civil society organizations; faith based organizations, the private sector, and media representatives that intervene in Gender Equality and Women Empowerment domain in Rwanda. The GEWE sub-cluster is chaired by National Women's Council and Co-chaired by Care International.

The main objective of the meeting was to strengthen the National Gender and Family Cluster (NGFC) and gather stakeholders' interventions as it is an important coordination mechanism among Gender and Women stakeholders, to share information on key policy and planning processes.

Opening of meeting

Acting for the co-chair, Sidonie Uwimpuhwe, Coordinator of the Vulnerable Women Program of CARE International Rwanda, emphasized on the importance of having such a space and manifested gratitude to the government to have created it and continuous involvement of development partners in shaping, implementing and monitoring the work of advancing gender equality and women empowerment. She called upon partners to reiterate efforts to empower women in all spheres of development, and wishes all the partners present a fruitful meeting of knowledge sharing and cooperation.

In her opening remarks, Mrs Jackline KAMANZI, Executive Secretary of the National Women's Council (NWC) thanked and welcomed participants to the meeting. She mentioned the meeting as important coordination mechanism of Gender Equality and Women empowerment (GEWE) stakeholders.

She said that this GEWE sub-cluster is meant to exist as the platform where all stakeholders share information on key policies, planning processes, and other information in order to agree on priorities and issue that could be collectively pushed forward for positive and sustainable impact on women and men's lives. While the work we do is for all Rwandans, she reminded that special attention is paid on women and girls because they represent the majority of the most vulnerable part of the population.

She then urged partners to contribute and work together in order to achieve the national goals set by NST1. She further elaborated on what it means to have moved from the EDPRS to NST1, where she said that we no longer looked projects that simply fit the structure of result based planning, but that we now most move forward and engage in activities that allow and produce transformation. She then said that this is something that we should remember in planning our future work together, and that we identify programs and actions that not only fix existing problems, but allow the Rwandan nation to transform and be its own agent of change. She pointed out to the importance of measuring the changes that our work is bringing in terms of transformation, hence calling up expertise to work together and consolidate efforts towards that.

With those words, she once again thanked all those present for their participation and officially opened the meeting.

The meeting proceeded with the presentations and plenary discussions.

The presentation on the NGFC guidelines

The first presentation on the guidelines of National Gender and Family Cluster (NGFC) was delivered by the Nadja Piironen, Bilateral Associate Expert, MIGEPROF. She introduced the NGFC, its structure, and how its different part will work and cooperate separately and with each other. She also introduced the structure of the NGFC Strategic plan and explained its role as a key document, outlining the work of the NGFC. She then spoke briefly about the current efforts to develop the first of such a strategic plans. After the presentation the participants were allowed to discuss the guidelines and present questions. Most questions were on the issue of membership. The ES of NWC, Jackline Kamanzi, assured the participants that a part of the future work would be to set more clear rules regarding NGFC membership, as well as setting up obligations of what is expected of those who are members.

The presentation on the NGFC Strategic Plan Inception Report

Immaculee Habiyambere, a consultant hired to develop a National Gender and Family Cluster (NGFC) Strategic Plan, was then given the opportunity to present the main findings from the recent NGFC Strategic plan inception report. She started by introducing herself, and mentioned that while she was there alone that day, she had been working together with her colleague, Innocent Iyakaremye.

She then explained that she had been asked to take participants through the NGFC strategic plan outlook and progress. To introduce the subject, Habiyambere started by stating that this strategic plan is necessary for the purposes of enabling effective high level policy coordination, effective resource utilization, joint sector prioritization, action coordination, and knowledge sharing.

She presented the method to develop the strategic plan, where she placed the context of Gender Equality and Family Promotion in Rwanda within the Harvard Analytical Framework. Based on identified practical and strategic needs, and based on the existing country status, identified gaps, and an analysis on what can realistically be achieved in 5 years, the strategy will present concrete targets for gender equality and women's empowerment, family promotion and GBV-prevention, Child protection, and Early Childhood development.

She further noted that all goals should be based on identified baselines, and that they should not be in conflict with existing national strategies but rather a

compliment them, by allowing for concretization and measurability to enable implementation & domestication. Most importantly, to avoid duplication and increase the effectiveness of scarce resources, these goals are meant to be joint goals for all actors in the country intervening in Gender equality or Family Promotion, giving everyone a common way forward to work towards together.

Habiyambere further noted that the strategic plan will draw & align with existing national and sector policies, international frameworks, strategies, programs and commitments such as NST1, Vision 2050, UNSCR 1325, SDGs, CEDAW) & Beijing Platform for Action, and others.

She then presented the how the project was expected to move forward from the current inception phase. Here she argued that the work should start through a peer review among the current cluster stakeholders, to guide the consultants with a strategic orientation report. This would be followed by the data collection, a process that would include gathering a country status with identified gaps on Gender Equality, Family Promotion, GBV, Family Planning, CP, and ECD, as well as a mapping of all stakeholders, and the identification of joint cluster priorities. The following step would be the actual strategy draft formulation and the draft M&E framework. After an internal and external validation process, the final document would be presented together with a separate document with the consultant notes.

Habiyambere then said that she hoped that the sub-cluster would support the work through integrated cooperation, where they would provide both technical support and insights, and to integrate the work, as seen as a future framework for the internal institution work. She also hoped that partners would give access to their high level contacts, to ensure executive buy in.

She then explained that all meeting participants had been given institutionally relevant questionnaires to facilitate the consultancy work. As such she said she hoped all participants could turn in the questionnaires the same day, but that she understood that some institutions required more information from their offices before they could turn the questionnaire in, and as such asked all participants to turn in the questionnaires as soon as possible. Habiyambere also urged all participants to mobilize the heads of their institutions to be part of the journey, as it is a high level guiding document to guide our work nationally, and therefore it is important to keep strategic levels in the loop.

The participants were then able to present questions. A participant wanted to know the timeline of the assignment. Habiyambere replied that while there at

the moment was not a set starting day, all the infrastructure had been set up, so that as soon as the project got a green light to move forward they would be able to start, and that the members of the NGFC would then be informed of it. Many questions were raised on the issues on women empowerment, WID and complementarity. Habiyaambere explained how she intended to use these concepts in the data collection tools, and urged partners to use these approaches to classify their own work as a part of the data collection. There was also a discussion whether the strategy should only focus on high level actions to be transformative, or also engage in currently still existing more practical needs. The issue was settled by agreeing to follow the recommendations of the country status report.

The presentation on the CEDAW report recommendations

The legal Advisor of MIGEPROF, Jean d'Amour Bizimana followed to present on the CEDAW recommendations which including observations on the combined 7th to 9th periodic report of Rwanda on CEDAW.

As an introduction he explained that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 and entered into force on 3rd September 1981. Rwanda ratified this Convention in 1980 by the Presidential Decree No. 431/16 of 10 November 1980. He then said that countries do yearly initial reports as well as periodical reports every four years. In 2014 Rwanda submitted its combined 7th to 9th periodic report on CEDAW. The report was considered in February 2017 and the concluding observations thereof released in March 2017. The next and 10th periodic report will be due in March 2021.

In the observations released in March 2017 Rwanda was recommended to promote the integration of women into the labor force and to adopt a gender-sensitive and an adequately resourced employment policy. It was further recommended that such a policy should include temporary special measures to promote women's employment, in particular in the formal sector and in traditionally male-dominated fields of employment, as well as to intensify women's technical and vocational training in those fields.

The Government was also recommended to facilitate women's access to financial credit, in particular for women who are not able to provide the necessary guarantees for commercial lenders. To implement this, the GoR could establish a state fund for small credits and microcredits available to women without guarantees or collateral. Another highlighted recommendation

was to strengthen initiatives aimed at encouraging the sustainable economic empowerment of women.

Participants were then able to comment on the presentation. Many participants thought the recommendations to be valid but wondered on the way forward. One financial institution representative asked what they could practically do to move forward on the implementation. A MIGEPROF representative replied that as the banks are the physical lenders, and as the central bank plays a central role in the country's financial policies and planning, the banks have a great power to implement the CEDAW recommendations on access to finance.

Other wanted to know what other steps the government would take to implement the recommendations, to this the MIGEPROF legal advisor answered that while it is not decided, it is likely MIGEPROF will initiate an implementation plan, and that some of the recommendations could surely be integrated in the NGFC Strategic Plan.

The closing of the meeting

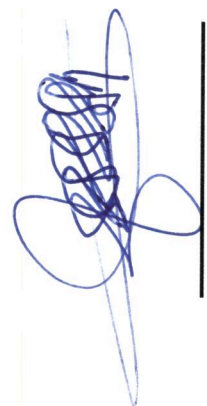
After the presentation and the following discussion, the Executive Secretary of the NWC, Jackline Kamanzi, asked for a few words before the closing of the meeting. She once again wanted to thank everyone present for their attendance and for their enthusiasm for the road ahead. She said that the NGFC is only starting its work, but that she believed it could truly strengthen the work we do. She further emphasized that while it is true that we sometimes have to work with scarce resources, we shouldn't let that immobilize us, but that this meeting is a great reminder that we can truly do more with less when we work together, which she said is something she really believes. She then reminded the participants of their key role in making the NGFC functional, that it could never be more than the sum of its members work. And from the reactions in today's meeting she was encouraged and felt that this is an endeavor that can allow us all to take the big leaps ahead of us together.

The word was then given to Bena MUSEMBI, Country Director of CARE International, who also thanked everyone for participating, and summarized some key messages to take away from the meeting. She urged them to deliver as one while we collectively push forward to have a positive and sustainable impact on the lives of women and men in general but with special attention on women and girls. After once again thanking all partners for their attendance and enthusiasm the meeting was officially closed.

Key Resolutions from the meeting:

1. High level policy dialogue is recommended to ensure leadership ownership;
2. The NGFC strategic plan should be a guiding document rather than a mapping document;
3. The questionnaire should be filled by all participants to facilitate the consultants to develop the Strategic Plan. A follow up action need to be taken to ensure that all questions are filled out and returned to MIGEPROF
4. High level representative from partner institutions will be contacted to give their contribution to the NGFC Strategic Plan to facilitate the consultants while collecting information for the strategy development;
5. Organize a workshop to develop the implementation plan for the CEDAW report recommendations;
6. MIGEPROF shall share presentations and questionnaires with all meeting participants;

Minutes taken by:



**Emmanuel
NTAGOZERA**

Acting Director of
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MIGEPROF

Approved by Co- Chair:



Bena MUSEMBI

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Jackline KAMANZI

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