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**United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, now part of UN Women  
United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America/ Subregional  
Headquarters for the Caribbean**

**Expert Group Meeting on good practices in national action plans  
on violence against women**

**United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America/ Subregional  
Headquarters for the Caribbean**

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*\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations*

## **I. Introduction**

### **I.1 Background**

The Government of Rwanda (GOR) recognizes the varieties of GBV and the physical, biological, psychological, and social consequences for women and girls, as well as their families and communities. The Government of Rwanda admits therefore that ensuring the rights of women, who lead more than half of the general population and a third of Rwanda's households, is essential to national stability

This strong political will that characterises the Rwanda Government and its commitment to eradicate GBV has allowed development of national key instruments including but not limited to National Constitution, Vision 2020, EDPRS, Policies, gender sensitive laws, strategies and plans, and establishment of mechanisms and all of which have contributed to great achievements as registered across the country.

As part of the UN's coordinated effort in assistance to States against violence against women Task force to end Violence Against Women (VAW) was developed and 10 pilot countries, including Rwanda, chosen to develop an assessment VAW and encouraged to develop a multi-stakeholder joint programme to end all forms of VAW. Before initiating the process of developing this joint programme a nationwide mapping on interventions and interveners in the area of GBV was conducted by the National Institute of Statistics with the support of UNFPA. The country assessment of VAW was based on the Gender Based Violence (GBV) mapping and other status reports on VAW.

The joint programme to end GBV in Rwanda was essentially based on national priorities to promote Gender equality, and hence to the implementation of the CEDAW, Beijing Declaration, 1325 UN Resolution, 1820, and ICGLR Declaration.

It has been developed on the fundamental principles of national ownership and sustainability and hence has been elaborated through a broad consultative process: workshops and consultative meetings the findings from the GBV mapping and the country assessment on VAW were presented to a multi-stakeholder forum (partners from central and decentralized government partners, UN, civil society, faith based organisation, international and local NGOs). These initiated a participatory process of identifying gaps in intervention, and agree upon priority target areas for a joint programme to end GBV. Women are by and large the victims of GBV in Rwanda and hence will be the main beneficiaries of this programme. However, in order to build on existing commitment to fight GBV. Participants came to the consensus not to limit the programme to VAW but include the overarching concept of GBV.

The application of a multi-sector approach of prevention and response through integrating health services, legal services, public awareness and creating safe environment for victims in all groups and levels of society has been the ideal guiding the process.

### **GBV definition**

Gender based violence is defined as any act that results in a bodily, psychological, sexual and economic harm to somebody just because they are female or male. Such act results in the deprivation of freedom and negative consequences. This violence may be exercised within or outside households them.

#### **(i) Guiding principles**

#### **The overall goal of the National Action Plan**

The NAP will contribute in awareness raising about the gravity of gender-based violence, to enhance the prevention and protection efforts as well as services to be provided. By involving men and women at all levels of planning and implementation and by coordinating efforts of all interveners.

#### **2.1 Expected outcome(s)**

In order to reach the set goal, the following outcomes and outputs have been established:

#### **Outcome1: Reduction in GBV due to increased awareness**

Output 1.1: Local leaders and community organizations awareness on GBV prevention and response improved

Output 1.2: Number of women active in income generating activities increased

Output 1.3: Men are actively involved in addressing GBV

Output 1.4: GBV related issues integrated in the education system

Output 1.5: Research on GBV conducted

#### **Outcome2: Improved access to quality services for GBV victims (medical, psychological, legal, protection)**

Output 2.1: Legal services response to GBV improved

Output 2.2: GBV victims access to quality psychosocial care improved

Output 2.3: GBV victims access to quality medical response services improved

Output 2.4: Security and protection services for GBV victims improved

#### **Outcome3: Coordination , monitoring and evaluation on GBV improved**

Output3.1: GBV database on status of GBV in Rwanda and progress made

available

Output 3.2: Results oriented and transparent monitoring and evaluation system established

Output 3.3: Coordination mechanism on GBV intervention established.

### **3. The values and principles outlined in the NAP.**

In order to be effective and efficient in the GBV eradication process, the following principles have to be taken into consideration:

- Engage the interveners fully.
- Ensure men's and boys' involvement in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programs;
- Ensure coordinated, multi-sector action by all actors;
- Ensure sustainability of actions taken;
- Ensure accountability at all levels.
- Ensure the physical safety of the survivor (s);
- Guarantee confidentiality;
- Respect the wishes, the rights, and the dignity of the survivor(s) and consider the best interests of the child, when making any decision on the most appropriate course of action to prevent or respond to an incident of sexual and gender-based violence;
- Ensure non-discrimination.
- Respect the wishes, the rights, and the dignity of the survivor(s) and consider the best interests of the child, when making any decision on the most appropriate course of action to prevent or respond to an incident of sexual and gender-based violence;
- Ensure non-discrimination.

The NAP was elaborated on the basis of the Gender National Policy and its strategic plan which incorporates the international conventions that Rwanda has ratified, CEDAW and Beijing Platform of Action among others

The NAP is for three years and covers GBV prevention and response activities. Many of these activities are conducted through National Gender Machinery (eg: the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, The National Women's Council, the Gender Monitoring Office...), and others through other concerned institutions namely: the Ministry of Justice, The Ministry of Health, the ombudsman office, National Police, Human Right commission, and others.

Findings revealed that the most economically vulnerable women are the ones who are victims of GBV. This stimulated a strategy of increasing the financial capacity of women.

## **Forms of violence against women**

The forms of Violence Against Women that are covered in the NAP of Rwanda are the following:

### **1. Physical violence**

is defined as the intentional use of physical force with the potential to cause death, disability, injury or harm. Physical violence includes, but is not limited to: scratching, pushing, throwing, grabbing, biting, choking, shaking, hair-pulling, hitting, burning, use of a weapon (gun, knife or other object). Physical violence also includes coercing other people to commit any of the above acts.

### **2. Sexual violence,**

is defined as the act of forcing another individual, through violence, threats, deception, cultural expectations, weapons, or economic circumstances, to engage in sexual behaviour against her or his will. In circumstances of sexual violence a person has no choice to refuse or pursue other options without severe social, physical, or psychological consequences.

Many forms of sexual violence do not fall under the classic concept of rape (vaginal penetration by a penis), such as insertion of objects into genital openings, oral and anal coitus, attempted rape, stripping someone naked, using sexually abusive language, and other sexually abusive acts such as use or threat of force in order to have sexual acts performed by a third person.

Hence, the term sexual violence can be used to cover all forms of sexual threat, assault, interference and exploitation including statutory rape and molestation without physical harm or penetration.

### **3. Economic violence**

occurs when the abuser has complete control over the victim's money and other economic resources. Usually, this involves putting the victim on a strict "allowance," withholding money at will and forcing the victim to beg for the money until the abuser gives them some money. It is common for the victim to receive less money as the abuse continues. This also includes (but is not limited to) preventing the victim from finishing education or obtaining employment, or intentionally squandering or misusing communal resources.

### **4. Psychological violence**

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Trauma to the victim caused by acts, threats of acts, coercive tactics when there has also been prior physical or sexual violence, or prior threat of physical or sexual violence.

Psychological/emotional abuse can include but is not limited to: humiliating a person; controlling what the person can and cannot do; withholding information from the person; getting annoyed if the person disagrees; deliberately doing something to make the person feel diminished (e.g. less smart, less attractive); deliberately doing something to make the person feel embarrassed; isolating the person from friends and family; prohibiting access to transportation or telephone; denying access to money and other resources; threatening loss of custody of children; and, smashing objects or destroying property.

## **(ii) Development and adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs) on violence against women (VAW)**

Before the elaboration of the NAP, a country assessment on Violence against women and GBV mapping survey was conducted so as to assess the magnitude of GBV and interventions available in different districts.

In order to reach women at the grassroots, some funding were provided to support the creation of gender clubs in schools and their projects and to support the creation of GBV committees from the Umudugudu to the District level

The planning was based on the national survey on GBV mapping which provided information on the situation on GBV and the kind of interventions in every district. The elaboration of the action plan took 3 months with the financial support from UNFPA. The ministry of Gender and Family promotion was the leader. The civil society, the local NGOs and Religious institutions were represented.

## **Good practices in the development and adoption of naps**

There was a synergy in planning through the Joint Programming on GBV involving the public, private and civil society, and by so doing reducing costs and avoiding duplication of efforts.

## **(iii) Legislation**

In addition to the Fundamental Law (indissolubly consisting of the Constitution of 4 June 2003 (O.G. special of 04/06/2003), the Rwandese legislation is composed of laws including provisions related to women's rights Among these laws, the following should be mentioned:

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- Law N° 22/99 of 12/11/1999 to supplement Book one of the Civil Code and to institute Part Five regarding matrimonial regimes, liberalities and successions (O.G. N° 22 of 15/11/1999);
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- Law N° 08/2005 of 14/07/2005 determining the use and management of land in Rwanda (O.G N° 18 of 15/09/2005);
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- Law N° 59/2008 of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008 provides legal sanctions against gender-based violence perpetrators have facilitated in the promotion of women's rights and gender equality.
- The Organic Law N° 29/2004 of 03/12/2004 modifying the Law of 28 September 1963 establishing Rwandan nationality Code(O.G. n° 1 of 01/01/2005);
- The Law N° 42/2000 of 15 December 2000 Instituting the Organization of Elections of Leaders at Grass-roots Levels in Rwanda as modified (O.G. n° Special of 19/12/2000

### ***GOOD PRACTICES***

At present women can inherit from their parents' properties, which was not the case before. Likewise, women have the same powers with their husband on the family's properties under the regime of common property. Under the land law, no single piece of the land can be sold by the husband without the consent of the wife. The GBV law has made it possible for the populations to understand that violating a woman is a crime. It is against this background that legalisation of traditional marriages has been massively done, which gave more access to and control over family resources and social security to women.

At least 30% of women are respected in all organ from grass- roots levels

#### **(iv) Criminal justice system**

The discriminatory laws have been revised and others are in the process for revision.

The NAP includes training activities for medical staff in identification of GBV violence, appropriate response, and counseling, supply medical treatment for GBV victims, Support supply of medical materials including NDA test equipment and PEP Kits to health facilities,

Facilitating the legal representation of the victims is one of the activities in the NAP. to build 'Safe Houses for GBV victims?', equip them and make them operational.

Training polices ,prosecutors, judges and others layers on GBV and related laws.

Conduct studies on how gender related laws are applied in courts

#### *Prosecution*

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In the Rwandan Law, Gender Based Violence, especially sexual violence is sentenced by the maximum penalty (life imprisonment) but the issue of evidence is still a challenge .

### **(v)Prevention**

Special trainings on Gender and VAW are provided for journalists, men's associations police ,military, medical personnel ,religious leaders and GBV comities from Umudugudu to Districts level.

#### *Empowerment of women*

Some measures are planned to empower women: Putting women together in cooperatives, teach them how to manage income generating activities and fund their projects.

VUP programme, HIMO, Basket weaving, Women guarantee fund , gender budgeting program

#### *Involvement of youth, men and boys*

Campaigns are conducted to sensitize men to address GB, to create men's associations and GBV Clubs in schools and fund their activities to address GBV  
Establishment of RWAMREC (Rwanda Men Resource Center)

### ***OTHER/GOOD PRACTICES***

#### **Gender desk in National Police and Army**

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) desks have been established in both the national Police and Army to address GBV issues facing the populations. Free hotlines have been put in place in both institutions to facilitate GBV survivors' access to needed services. The spirit of fighting GBV has accompanied the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and the National Police members to their peace keeping mission. This has translated into establishment of energy saving stoves in Darfur which has saved thousands of women who were exposed to rape while collecting firewood.

A multi-service centre commonly known under the name of **Isange One Stop Centre** was created in 2009 to receive and assist GBV survivors with all the relevant services needed. The centre is hosted within the National Police Hospital and despite its young age, it has received not only a very significant number of women but also of men who normally have proved to be reluctant in terms of reporting cases of gender-based violence



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subjected to them. The Centre is addressing GBV issues medically, with guidance for legal assistance, psychologically and socially

**(vi) Protection, support, and assistance to victims/survivors**

The National Action Plan has got the following activities as regards to Protection, support and assistance to victims:

- **GBV victims access to quality medical response services**
- Support supply of medical materials including NDA test equipment and PEP Kits to health facilities
- Build and equip "Safe houses" for GBV victims
- Legal Representation

**(vii) Training and capacity-building**

The national action plan has got the following activities regarding training and capacity building:

- Train medical staff in identification of GBV violence, appropriate response, and counseling
- Develop GBV modules to be integrated in all nursing and medical schools
- Train men's associations on GBV
- Train community leaders, local journalist, religious leaders and community organization on GBV Organize local and national Sensitization campaigns (through plays, songs, messages, beauty queen competition, competitions, documentary, movies, TV and radio programmes)

**(viii) Collection of statistical data, research and analysis**

Statistics are provided by different institutions in their different interventions: The National Police provide monthly the situation of GBV cases, The National Prosecution Authority provides the situation of GBV cases given to them by the National police those brought to courts and the ones that are left out because they did not find enough evidence. Courts on their round, present the tried cases, ongoing cases and remaining ones on the yearly basis. The Ombudsman office shows the cases of injustice resolved, whose majority is those related to gender (Land, succession and liberalities).

**(ix) Implementation**

The implementation of the GBV NAP is implemented by different agencies and institutions coordinated by the ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. The Gender

Monitoring Office is the one in charge of monitoring the quality and effectiveness of GBV interventions.

#### *Coordination*

The NAP was proposing the supporting unit which would assure coordination and supervision of its implementation. As this Unit it is not yet established, The Gender Cluster under the ministry of Gender and Family Promotion is the entity in charge of coordination of different interventions.

#### *Budget*

Some activities in the NAP are supported by UN agencies namely UNIFEM, UNFPA and UNICEF. This is the case of Isange One Stop Center where all services are provided to victims for free. Other activities are carried out by different government institutions, especially Gender machinery.

#### *Specific institutional mechanism to monitor implementation*

The Gender Monitoring Office is in charge of assessing activities undertaken for the implementation of NAP in all institutions.

#### *Good practices*

Apart from those mentioned above, Rwanda has got other good practices in the implementation of the NAP which can be drawn from different actors through the multi actor approach :

#### **HIMO Programme**

The high intensive labour (HIMO) Programs are promoting women's participation in development programs at the rate of 50% as compared to men. In addition to salaries obtained from this employment, women and men are trained on family planning, economic saving, sending all children to school without any form of discrimination, and common management of household income. This resulted into reduction of economic dependence of women to men and increased participation of women in control over family resources and women's involvement in traditionally male reserved roles and activities among others.

#### **Women Guarantee Fund**

The guarantee fund was created specifically for women to help them reduce poverty. In case an individual needs a loan, she is provided guarantee up to 50% of the total amount of the guarantee; as for associations, they get 75% of the total value of the guarantee. In that system, a woman can get a loan of 5,000,000 Rwandan francs (USD 8,772.00) and an association can get 20,000,000 Rwandan francs (USD 35,000).

**Creation of women's bank**

A bank has been created under the Union des Banques Populaires du Rwanda (Rwanda People's Banks) to provide credits to women investing in small and medium sized enterprises. This has positively impacted not only on individual women's lives but also on that of their households and community.

**A Cow Per Poor Household-HEIFER**

In the traditional Rwandan society, a cow belonged to man. Giving a cow to a woman was already a big step towards social transformation because not only the cow facilitated income generation for the women but also it allowed her to play a role of breadwinner for her family. Also she participated in the management of resources generated by the cow and this served as an entry point for the management of other household resources. This has led to increased economic power of women which not only reduced poverty among poor women beneficiaries but also promoted gender equality both at household and community levels.

**Constitutional "at least" 30% women's representation in decision making.**

The translation of the constitutional provision of "at least" 30% women's representation in decision making into actions has led to 56.25% women's representation in the Chamber of Deputies and 30% in the Senate.

The women's deputies' representation is the highest in the world, which ranked Rwanda as the first country with the highest rate of women's participation in the legislature.

**Creation of the National Women's Council (NWC)**

The National Women's Council (NWC) has been serving as forum for women to address specific women's issues including but not limited to economic and political issues. NWC has been instrumental in sensitizing women for their active participation in decision making, which materialized in the visible women's representation at central and decentralized levels. This has reduced gender inequalities both in economic and political sectors, which impacted positively on relations between men and women. Men and women have the same say in decision-making processes.

**Health Advisers**

Health advisers were appointed as voluntary workers to sensitize their neighbours on issues of prevention and response for various diseases. They contributed to significant involvement of men in pre-natal consultations. This had a positive impact especially on pregnant women with assisted delivery rate, which moved from 39% in 2005 to 52% in 2008. Also, health advisers contributed to massive use of mosquito bed nets by pregnant women and thus they have contributed to decrease of cases of malaria from 730,270 in

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2005 to 464,823 in 2008. This contributed to the decrease of maternal mortality rate from 1071/100,000 in 2005 to 750/100,000 in 2006.

**Community Health Insurance**

With this medical scheme poor families have been able to cover medical costs, which have a positive impact on both men and women but especially on pregnant women and on issues of reproductive health services in general. This has brought a remedy to the issue of human rights in relation with access to health services, especially for women due to their specific reproductive health problems.

**GBV committees** from Umudugu level, Gender Clubs in schools and universities are prevention channels

**A Gender desk** at the National Police with a free hotline is a valuable response to GBV Cases

**'Imihigo'** system which are performance contracts that District Mayors signs with the President of the Republic is a very useful tool as far as monitoring and evaluation is concerned as the evaluation is conducted quarterly.