

# Inter-Governmental Organizations and women's rights in Rwanda: A case of UN women in Nyarugenge District

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## Abstract

Inter-governmental organizations have raised their voices on women's rights awareness and this has shaped the evolution of culture in Africa. The papersought to find out the contribution of Inter-Governmental organizations on women's rights awareness in Nyarugenge district in Rwanda. The relationship between inter-governmental organizations and women's rights awareness produced by Pearson correlation coefficient was  $r=0.522$ . Each of these elements significantly promotes women's rights awareness when they are improved. There is a need to establish women's centers in various universities for contribution to legalized gender equality and women rights, the knowledge increase actions, effort to break down outdated centralistic organization of the local entities, poverty reduction, women empowerment, administration, energy and environment and technological devices with regards to gender equality and women's rights.

Keywords: *UN Women support, women's rights promotion*

## 1. Introduction

The battle for emancipation of woman rights was never so hot throughout the human history until the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. UNHR (United Nations Human Rights) reports that it is only as recently as 1967 when United Nations Member States, approved what is known as Declaration on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Yet, a woman, a mother, a sister, a wife, a daughter and a friend all her life, has had to live a life subjected to all manners of discrimination and abuse by those she look up to (Tuyizere, 2012). Collingwood (2016) reiterates that women were dominated, discriminated against, despised and viewed as inferior to men.

They experienced feelings of frustration and treated as sex-objects in the male dominated society.

Many African communities think the only vocation for a woman is to marry and produce children. A woman's duty is said to bring children to adulthood. When a couple is childless, it is the woman considered sterile; since men's sterility was considered a biological impossibility. If a woman produced female children, the marriage is in peril. When women are divorced, they take away nothing even when they have contributed to the acquisition of their husband's property (Tuyizere, 2012). The Economic Policy Research Centre (2010) asserts that Universal declaration of human rights pinpoints fundamental agreement on human rights of all people in relation to such issues as security of persons, slavery, torture, protection of law, freedom of movement and speech, religion, assembly and rights to social security, employment, education, health, culture and citizenship.

Previous studies focused on policies adopted to stimulate women's high political representation (Randell and McCloskey, 2014), or economic women's empowerment (Burnet, 2011). But they did not tackle the crucial women's issues. The greatest impediment to women's rights is the lack of training, advocacy, collaboration with other agencies and direct support. Empirical investigations in this regards, are thus worth undertaking in Rwanda.

The objectives of the paper are:

- (i) To examine UN Women strategies adopted in promoting women's rights in Nyarugenge District-Rwanda
- (ii) To assess the level of women's rights promotion to beneficiaries of UN women support in Nyarugenge District-Rwanda.
- (iii) To establish the relationship between UN Women support and women's rights promotion in Nyarugenge District-Rwanda.

## 2. Review of Literature

Inter-Government Organizations are prominent actors within international politics arena with power in mediation, dispute resolution, peace keeping, the application of sections and others. They assist in working in various key areas of global concern from international health policy to monetary policies around world (Edwards, 2009). An inter-governmental organization refers to an organizational agreement between members of international system in order to achieve their objectives, reflecting qualitative, aspirations and concerns and its members (Barkin&Cronin, 2009).

Alvi (2016) asserts that the world conference on human rights held in Vienna in 1993 sought to assess the existing status of human rights machinery in place at the time. Women’s rights activists were mobilized to safeguard women’s rights. Barkin and Cronin (2009), articulate that women’s movement were established for claiming women issues. The advancement of international women rights was helpful for adopting policies and strategies which intend to mainstream women’s position. Women are the real pillars of a society upon which present as well as the future generation of a nation builds (Shih *et al.*, 2009). The role of women is no doubt meaningful in the reproduction of human races, but patriarchy and conventional society have reached women to a position of triviality.

According to Abbott (2015), CEDAW needs countries to put more effort for women’s equality in individual as well as community setting with special reference to households. CEDAW’s preamble recognized that the efforts of UN to promote human rights did not eliminate effectively domestic violence and other human rights abuse against women. UN declared moreover that discriminating women is a violation of equality of rights and human dignity (Asiabaka, 2008).

## 2.2 Critical review and research gap identification

Previous studies carried out on the contribution of IGO’s in empowering women’s rights in different countries. Kebede (2014), Kouvo (2008), Patel (2008) and Stone (2009) stressed on how women should handle themselves in order to be accepted in societies and how they were subject to exploitation and unpaid grudges. In Rwanda, related studies focused their attention on how women should be submissive and how they were seen within the society but did not show how women’s rights should be promoted and enforced within the society based on the international conventions.

## 3. Materials and Methods

The study population consists of women supported by UN Women in Nyarugenge District-Rwanda. According to National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda [NISR] (2017), the district comprises of 136,429 women and 148,132 men, but UN Women only 2180 women in that District. Using Slovene’s formula a sample size of respondents were.

Eq (1):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e)^2}$$

The study used both probability (simple random) and non-probability (purposive) sampling techniques to choose sampled respondents. Primary data was gathered using questionnaires and interview guide.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Demographic characteristics

#### 4.1.1 Length of years that the respondents have been benefiting from the program

The length in benefiting from the program is an important variable as it helped the researcher to assess how long the beneficiary has been benefiting from UN Women program to get credible information that is vital in this research.

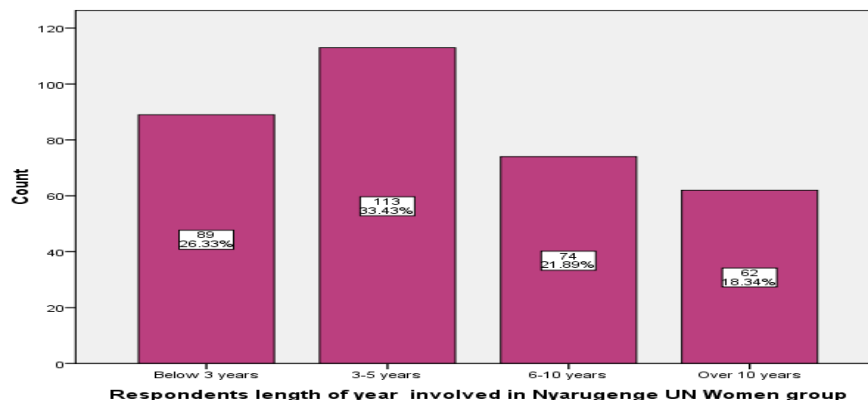


Figure 4.1 Length of years that the respondents have been benefiting from the program

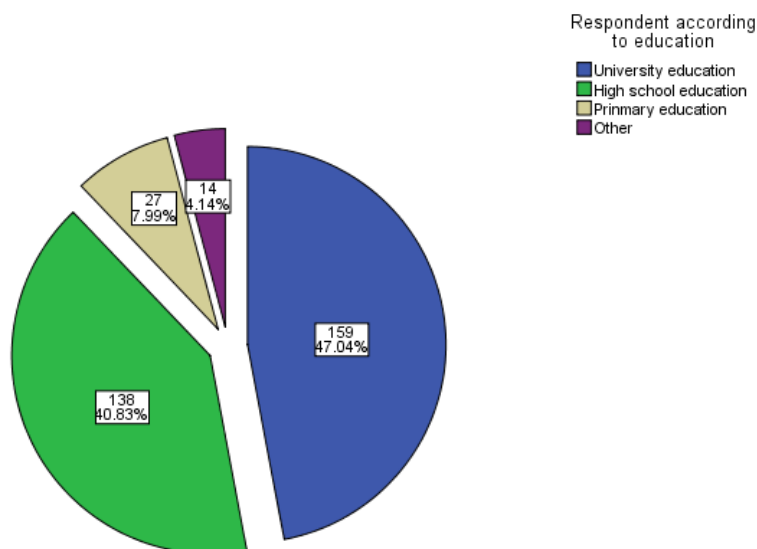
Source: Primary data.

The study findings evidenced that 26.33% of respondents were below 3years, 33.43% were between 3 and 5 years, 21.89% arebetween 6 and 10 years while 18.34% spent over ten years benefiting.

**4.1.2 Level of education**

Data findings in terms of education level show that most women beneficiaries can effectively benefit

assistance from UNWomen agency program. Some female beneficiaries also benefit from the program in terms of direct support where they get scholastic materials and advocacy. Female students from Lycee Notre Damme were interviewed, unfortunately, some women did not go to school but are benefiting from the program because, some of the beneficiaries were denied chance to go to school due to cultural beliefs unfavorable tov girls ‘education



**Figure 4.2 Level of education of the respondents**

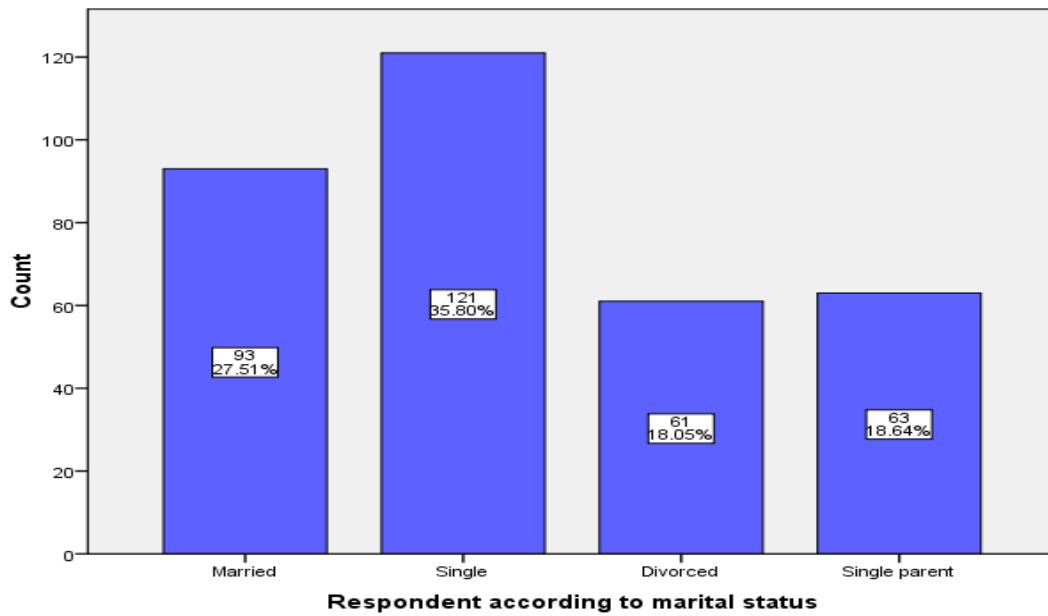
**Source: Primary data.**

Figure 4.2 shows that 47.04% of respondents obtained advanced level certificates and were trained in vocational trainings, and obtained diploma certificates, 40.83%) of beneficiaries have attended secondary schools and these include scholastic materials. In addition, 7.99% of have attended primary school and were trained in skills like tailoring and basket weaving, 4.14% are illiterate and feeling isolated and left out in the male dominated society. Some of them attended vocational trainings in collaboration with other agencies like Gender monitoring office (GMO) and Women for women. Among the vocational trainings

the beneficiaries got, were the trainings on basket weaving, tailoring, designing and home management courses. Girls who have dropped school due to poor parents who wouldn’t afford to pay school fees for all children leading to girls sacrificing for boys to attend schools.

**4.1.3 Respondent according to marital status**

The study sought to find out if the marital status of sampled women is based on selection process.



**Figure4.3: Distribution of women by their marital status.**  
**Source: Primary Data.**

Results in Figure 4.3 reveal that 27.51% of respondents are married. These women claimed to shoulder the bulky family needs, 35.80% is comprised of abandoned mothers who dropped out of school at an early age, who live alone in vulnerable families. However, they benefit from the program in terms of trainings and direct support like securing sewing machines. Additionally, 18.05% of respondents are divorced due to their husbands' negligence and issues associated with polygamous

acts. Finally, 18.64% gave birth while living alone because their husbands refused to legalize marriage.

**4.2 Relationship between activities of UN-Women the promotion of women's rights.**

The relationship between UN women and women human's right awareness; all activities that promote women rights awareness may have significance impact on UN women mission

**Table 4.1: Correlations between each UN-Women activities and women's rights awareness in Nyarugenge District-Rwanda**

		Training	Advocacy	Collaboration with other agencies	Direct support	Women's rights promotion
Training	Pearson Correlation	1	1	.431**	2.219**	.431**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	338	338	338	338	338
Advocacy	Pearson Correlation	1	1	.328	.289**	.308**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	338	338	338	338	338
Collaboration with other agencies	Pearson Correlation	.326**	.328**	1	3.19**	.430**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	338	338	338	338	338
Direct support s	Pearson Correlation	.208**	.308**	.430**	.272**	.423
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	338	338	338	338	338

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Primary data (2020)

As reflected in Table 4.1, the correlation between activities undertaken by UN Women and women's rights promotion generated by Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = 0.431$  and  $p$  value  $0.000$  between training and women's rights promotion was  $0.308$ ,  $p$  value  $=0.000$  and between advocacy was  $0.308$ ,  $p$  value  $0.000$ . Furthermore, the correlation between collaboration with other agencies and women rights promotion as generated by Pearson correlation coefficient is  $r = 0.430^{**}$  and  $p$  value  $p = 0.000$ . Therefore, the correlation between activities

undertaken by UN women and women rights promotion demonstrated coefficient  $r = 0.423$  and  $p$  value  $=0.000$  between direct support and women rights promotion. The above information evidences that a correlation was statistically significant.

The relationship between UN women and women human right promotion activities that may promote women rights may have significance impact on UN women mission

**Table 4.2: Correlation between UN Women activities and women rights promotion in Nyarugenge District**

Correlation		UN Women Activities	Women's rights promotion
UN activities	Women Pearson correlation	1	.738**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
	N	338	338
Women's rights promotion	Pearson correlation	.738	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	
	N	338	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data (2020)

Reconsidering, results reflected in Table 4.2 UN Women activities had a relationship with the promotion of women rights in Nyarugenge District. The interaction of the coefficient between them  $r = 0.738$  as it has been generated with a  $p$  value of two tailed.

### 4.3 Discussion

Another group of respondents, 14(4.14%) had no educational profile including reading and writing which makes them feel so isolated and left out in the male dominated society. This was due to the fact that, some females were left at home to help their parents look after their siblings and do other house hold chores, while their brothers were sent to school.

Some of them attended vocational trainings in collaboration with other agencies like Gender monitoring office (GMO) and Women for women. Beneficiaries were trained on basket weaving, tailoring, and designing and home management courses. Consequently, girls who have dropped out of the school due to poor parents who wouldn't afford to pay school fees for all children leading to girls sacrificing for boys to attend schools. This denied them their full rights to education. The findings imply that, even though all respondents didn't go to school, they at least benefited from the program activities which brought a positive impact to their lives and they can be able to read and write.

A report published by UNDP (2010) on the enhancement of human development indicators for women in Africa evidenced that women who have primary education and vocational education out number that one of those who have secondary certificate and diploma or bachelor's degree. This is a clear indication that, a big number of girls were denied rights to education which is a clear indicator of increasing inequality between men and women.

The rest of respondents, 65 (18.64%) gave birth while living alone because their husbands refused to legalize marriage vows as the Rwandan law requires the couples to be considered married, leaving them alone with their children. The findings concluded that, the service providers did not consider the marital status of the beneficiaries but instead, based on the most vulnerable beneficiaries

All those activities undertaken by UN Women enhance women rights promotion. Findings did not contradict the results of the research carried out by Gilson *et al.*, (2014). The interaction matrix table also demonstrated the relationship coefficient between pairs of variables. This finding is in line with the study of Grant-makers (2010) who found that the use of training or women capacity building is very important in enabling women access to social justice and to job opportunities. Results indicate that the relationship between UN Women activities and women rights promotion is positively significant. In this regards, the figure expresses that every

improvement or change in activities stimulate change in women's rights awareness. Results did not contradict previous observation from empirical studies carried out by Kebede (2014) on gender politics in global governance.

### 5. Conclusions

The correlation between activities undertaken by UN Women and women's rights promotion generated by Pearson correlation coefficient  $r=0.431$  and  $p$  value 0.000 between training and women's rights promotion was 0.308,  $p$  value =0.000 and between advocacy was 0.308,  $p$  value 0.000. Furthermore, the correlation between collaboration with other agencies and women rights promotion as generated by Pearson correlation coefficient is  $r=0.430^{**}$  and  $p$  value  $p=0.000$ . Therefore, the correlation between activities undertaken by UN women and women rights promotion demonstrated coefficient  $r=0.423$  and  $p$  value =0.000 between direct support and women rights promotion. The above information evidences that a correlation was statistically significant. All those activities undertaken by UN Women enhance women rights promotion. Each of these elements significantly promotes women's rights awareness when they are improved.

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