

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN



**OPERATIONAL AUDIT REPORT OF THE
NATIONAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL**

Kigali, August 2009

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Acronyms

CNLS	: Commission Nationale de Lutte contre le SIDA
NWC	: National Women's Council
DFID	: Department For International Development
EDPRS	: Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
Frw	: Francs rwandais
NGO	: Non Governmental Organisation
PNUD	: Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement
UNIFEM	: United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNFPA	: United Nations Population Fund
SMART	: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely
SWOT	: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
%	: Percentage

Executive Summary

To accomplish its responsibilities of advising public and private institutions as to improving the quality of services delivered to the population and of preventing and fighting injustice, corruption and other related offences in public and private administration, the Office of the Ombudsman of Rwanda evaluated the functioning of the National Women's Council.

The National Women's Council is an institution created by the Law n° 27/2003 of 18/08/2003 as a social forum where girls and women put together their views in order to solve their own problems and to participate in and have a say in the development of the country. It has three main organs: General Assembly, Executive Committee and Permanent Secretariat.

During the evaluation it was found out that the National Women's Council is trying to achieve its objectives by empowering women through trainings and sensitizations. It has employees and budget helping in that achievement. It prepares an action plan every year and has a strategic plan of five years but at the time of visit it was under finalising.

It was noticed that the National Women's Council has some weaknesses and threats which are considered as obstacle in its functioning; the Executive Committee does not meet regularly as it is provided for by the law, some cases of non-compliance with public tendering procedures which may lead to lack of accountability, transparency, efficiency and fairness in management and tendering documents are not appropriately filed.

The National Women's Council does not have all employees as it is provided for by the organizational structure and offices are not sufficient. Due to the absence of survey on impact of trainings given by the NWC to the women in particular and to the society in general, it is not easy to measure the improvement of its performance.

In order to perform well, some recommendations are given to the National Women's Council; the NWC should recruit employees as soon as possible and look for sufficient offices, it should also carry out surveys especially a survey on impact of sensitizations and trainings on society in general and on women in particular, which will help in planning its activities.

I. Context of operational audit

This part will deal with the mission of the Office of the Ombudsman, presentation of institution visited and the methodology used in the operational audit.

I. 1. Mission of the Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman is a public institution which was established in 2003 by the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 4th June 2003 in its article 182. Its organization and functioning were established by Law n° 25/2003 of 15th August 2003 which was modified and complemented by Law n° 17/2005 of 18th August 2005.

Article 7 of the Law establishing the Office provides various attributions and some of them include the following:

- acting as a link between citizen , public and private institutions;
- preventing and fighting injustice, corruption and other related offences in public and private administration;
- advising cabinet and other concerned institutions as regards strengthening and improving their policy of preventing, fighting and punishing corruption and other related offences;
- advising public and private institutions as to improving the quality of services delivered to the population.

In order to carry out the above assigned attributions, the Office of the Ombudsman, based on its action plan, evaluated the functioning of the National Women's Council from 20th to 27th April 2009.

I. 2. Presentation of the National Women's Council

The National Women's Council is a social forum where girls and women put together their views in order to solve their own problems and to participate in and have a say in the development of the country.

It was created by the Law n° 27/2003 of 18/08/2003 determining the organization, attributions and functioning of the National Women's Council.

The National Women's Council has a legal personality and enjoys financial and administrative autonomy; it is supervised by the Minister having gender promotion in her or his attributions.

The main tasks of the National Women's Council are the following:

- to put together views of all Rwandan women without discrimination;
- to train women to analyse and solve their own problems together;
- to encourage women to participate in the development of the country;
- to sensitise women on the culture of patriotism and working for the country;
- to enhance their ability to carry out their own activities;
- to represent women in the governance of the country to enable them to participate in government programs;
- to encourage them in the fight for equality and complementarity between men and women.

The National Women's Council is headed by the President of the Executive Committee at the National level. The daily activities of the Council are managed by the Permanent Secretary.

I. 3. Methodology

In carrying out the operational audit, the methodology used is based on the following elements:

- the terms of reference;
- a questionnaire guide;
- timetable;
- interview with staff;
- consultation of some documents including laws, organic structure, budget, reports of activities, strategic plan as well as action plan.

Besides the context and the executive summary seen above, this report is composed of findings, SWOT analysis, recommendations and conclusion.

II. Findings

The National Women's Council was established in 2003 with the mission of empowering all women in order to solve their own problems.

This part of report analyses how the Council carries out its attributions, using its means to achieve its objectives both efficiently and effectively.

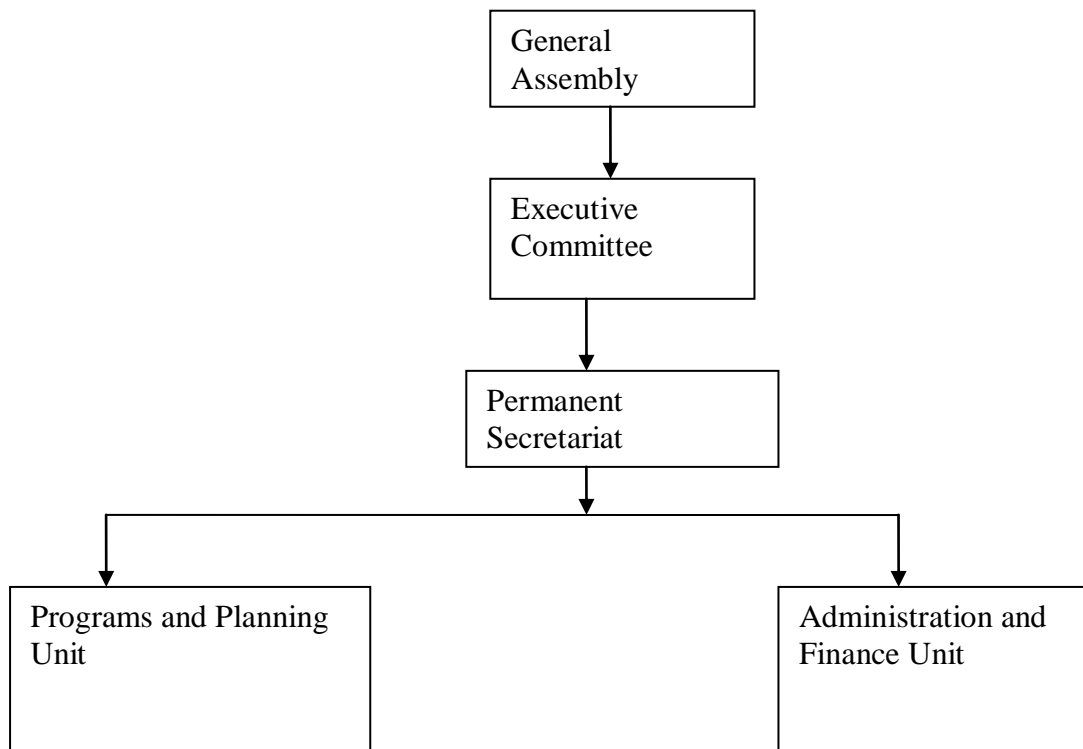
II. 1. Efficiency

This part will mainly focus on organisational structure, strategic and action plans, management system, assets management, budget execution and efficiency assessment.

II. 1. 1. Organisational structure

As it is shown in the organizational chart below, the National Women's Council comprises of the following organs:

- General Assembly;
- Executive Committee;
- Permanent Secretariat.



Daily activities of the Council are carried out through two units:

- Programs and planning, which is a technical unit;
- Administration and Finance, which is a support unit.

As it is provided for by the organizational structure, the programs and planning unit must have seven staff but it was found out that this was not respected; it is composed of three employees.

All staff has the precised qualifications required by the organic structure.

II. 1. 2. Management system

As mentioned above, the National Women's Council is headed by the General Assembly which must hold at least once a year in the ordinary session and it has an Executive Committee which must meet once a month. The General Assembly at national level meets regularly; it holds the ordinary session at least once a year.

According to the article 27 of the Law n°27/2003 of 18/08/2003 determining the organization, attributions and functioning of the National Women's Council, the Executive Committee must sit once a month but it was found out that Executive Committee does not meet regularly; in 2008 it held only seven meetings.

The Permanent Secretary holds management meetings once a week with all the staff.

Up to 2008, all the staff of the Council did not take their annual leaves because of few employees at the time but in 2009 every employee has to go for annual leave.

The quarterly and annually activities reports as well as financial reports are produced.

II. 1. 3. Assets management

The National Women's Council has office materials helping it in its daily activities. It was noted that there is no proper storing of those materials; they are stored in the office of accountant and budget manager which may lead to mismanagement or misappropriation.

The National Women's Council has seventeen houses located in different provinces. In 2008, the National Women's Council has worked out a document on current situation of those houses aiming to elaborate the policy of management and profitability of them.

II. 1. 4. Strategic and action plans

The National Women Council prepares annual action plans which list activities, results expected, budget and calendar but they do not mention measures, indicators and responsible of each activity.

From its establishment up to 2009, the National Women's Council has elaborated two strategic plans: the first was for three years 2005-2007 and the second for five years 2009-2013 but under finalizing at the time of visit. Those strategic plans are well established. but the problem is about the execution of the first; due to the lack of sufficient employees, some activities provided in that strategic plan were not implemented. The activities achieved are only estimated at 80%.

II. 1. 5. Budget

National Women's Council prepares a budget each year which is supported by the Government of Rwanda; sometimes the donors may give the development budget as it was done in 2008.

The budget granted and the amount spent over the last two years are listed in table below.

Table n° 1: The budget granted and its execution in 2007, 2008 and provision in 2009

Year	Budget granted	Budget executed
2007	127 940 000	72 337 617
2008	336 687 147	288 297 980
2009	217 804 020	-

As it is shown above, the budget given has increased in the three years.

NB: - In 2008, the budget was very high because beside the budget granted by the government which was 148 919 320 frw, there is also the development budget of 100 000 000 frw, amount of 56 611 159 given by donors and 31 156 688 transferred by other institutions;
- in 2009, that budget is for six months (mini budget).

The table above shows that most of the years, the granted budget has not been entirely spent.

The annual budget of the National Women's Council is executed through different activities such as employees' salaries and purchasing of furniture and services.

Those furniture and services are purchased through the procurement process.

The National Women's Council has an internal tender committee and an employee in charge of procurement. It was found out that, the procurement documents are not well filed, and sometimes there is no respect of law and regulations on public tendering procedures as exemplified below:

- the procurement of purchasing goods with a value of 7 955 000 was attributed using proforma invoice which is in contradiction with the Ministerial Order n° 001/08/10/MIN of 15/01/2008 establishing regulations on public procurement and

standard bidding documents, article 17 providing that the proforma invoice can be used for the purchase of goods if their cost is below 1,000, 000 frw. The explanation given is that, the activity was urgent due to earthquake;

- no notification of procurement to all the short listed consultant (bidders not attributed the tender) which is against the article 67 of the law n°12/2007 of 29/03/2007 on public procurement .

For buying some items with small value or paying amount not exceeding 20,000 frw, the National Women's Council uses petty cash. As required by the Financial Management Procedures Manual for Central Administration, the National Women's Council replenishes petty cash with 100,000 frw and the amount to be withdrawn can not exceed 20,000 frw for transaction one.

II. 1. 6. Efficiency assessment

This table sets out an assessment of indicators for the National Women's Council.

These indicators developed to measure efficiency should serve as a baseline to assess institutional progress and performance.

Table n° 2: Efficiency assessment

Areas of assessment	Indicators	Findings
Strategic plan	Does the agency have strategic plan?	The National Women's Council has a strategic plan for five years but it is under finalizing
	Does strategic plan extend beyond 2009? If not, when will a new one be prepared?	Yes its strategic plan is from 2009 to 2013
	Is it based on relevant studies and national statistics?	The strategic plan contains references to statistics and national policy papers e.g. Vision 2020 and EDPRS
	Are the objectives of that strategic plan SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely)?	Every objective has indicators and the time to be achieved
	Do indicators exist? Are they output or outcome level?	The indicators are outcome

Action Plan	Is it properly linked to the strategy?	The action plan incorporates objectives from the Strategic plan.
	Does it include indicators? Are they output or outcomes level?	It does not include indicators
	Does it include clear lines of responsibility?	Activities are listed but it does not mention either the unit or the individual responsible
	Is it budgeted? Is it realistic?	Activities are budgeted
	What % of activities are carried out? How is this assessed?	It is not clear, for instance from an annual report, what percentage of activities are carried out; that element is not mentioned. The reports are not detailed.
Management System	Frequency of individual unit progress reports.	The reports are produced quarterly
	Quality of individual unit progress reports (do they set targets)?	The reports are not detailed.
	Frequency of team meetings?	Every week the agency holds meeting with all staff; report of meetings are produced and filed
	Quality of team meetings (are actions identified, documented and reviewed)?	Minutes are produced and filed
	Does the organizational structure clearly identify the core business of the agency?	Yes it is very clear but many posts provided in programmes unit were vacant at the moment of the visit
	How widely used are modern resources (computers, networks etc.)?	Staff has electronic documents readily available All members of staff have computers, printers but at the time of visiting all photocopier machines were out of service.

Shown in the table above, the National Women's Council has an under finalising strategic plan for 2009-2013, but it has not yet carried out a study on its impact which should inspire in elaboration. It has also an action plan which has not indicated the responsible of every activity. Every week the National Women's Council holds the management meeting and minutes are produced and filed. As mentioned there were many vacant posts in technical unit.

II. 2. Effectiveness

Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which an institution achieves its objectives as well as the manner in which it interacts and works with others in achieving them.

This part concerns the performance, collaboration, service delivery and effectiveness assessment.

II. 2. 1. Performance

The National Women's Council carries out its responsibilities through two units which are separate in the organisational chart. The technical function is accomplished by the Unit of programmes and planning.

The main activities of the National Women's Council are carried out through sensitisations and trainings. The main objectives are:

- to encourage women to participate in the development of the country by creating cooperatives;
- to sensitise women on the culture of patriotism and working for the country; this is usually done during the election period; it has lead to a considerable number of women in decision makers institutions;
- to enhance women ability to carry out their own activities through trainings on projects management;

There is no way to measure the extent to which the institution performs well because neither any survey nor evaluation on impact of those sensitisations has been done.

In every district there has been established a fund for women empowerment and financial assistance. Women are given loans but based on rules and regulations of offering them but as a consequence of emerging Districts in the moment of reform some women did not refund the loan given. The National Women Council in collaboration with districts have started the recovery of debts.

As a constraint to performance, the National Women's Council faces a lack of permanent staff at district level and of insufficiency of staff in permanent secretariat.

II. 2. 2. Collaboration

With exception of the Permanent Secretariat that exists only at national level, the other two organs exist at the national, provincial and the City of Kigali, district, sector and cell levels. Those organs collaborate well.

The Council plays a central role in both collaborating and working directly with women to solve their problems and in training them in different economic areas.

It collaborates also with donors like CARE, UNFPA, CNLS, UNFEM and districts.

II. 2. 3. Service delivery

The mandate and functions of the National Women's Council are designed to support the government policies in promoting gender equality.

In its functions, the National Women's Council receives a great number of population especially women and gives them a good service.

The Permanent Secretariat office is supposed to have a secretary in charge of receiving and guiding visitors but that post is still vacant. That task is done by the assistant of the permanent secretary.

Due to the lack of sufficient offices, there is no hall reserved for reception.

II. 2. 4. Effectiveness assessment

The table below sets out an effectiveness assessment of indicators for the National Women's Council which should serve as a baseline to assess the improvement of performance of the Council.

Table n° 3: Effectiveness assessment

Areas of assessment	Questions	Comment
Improvement in performance	What improvement in performance has there been in recent years (in core results)?	This information is not easily available because there is no statistics on women trained and lack of survey on impact of activities of National Women's Council on society.
	What improvements have there been (e.g. improvements in training, adoption of new working methods, adoption of modern tools such as software)?	Training and motivation are not given and there are no sufficient offices.
collaboration	To what extent does the NWC work closely with customers?	It works very closely with women and encourages them to play an important role in economy development of the country through trainings and sensitisations.
	To what extent does the NWC work closely with stakeholders?	It works closely with donors and other stakeholders.
	Are strategies or plans based on needs of different groups (e.g. age and gender?)	Activities in strategic plan reflect different needs of women
	Is there any mention or evidence of accountability and transparency	Good service delivery is at the core of the NWC priorities in helping women to solve their own problem. It comes through in annual reports It produces also financial reports every month.

It is not easy to measure the improvement of performance whenever there is no survey on impact of trainings given by the WNC to the women in particular and to the society in general. The employees are not given trainings needed in order to perform well and the offices are not sufficient.

The National Women's Council is empowering women through different trainings and sensitisations.

III. SWOT Analysis

SWOT is measured on internal and external environment and in consideration of social-economic situation of women. It is about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in regard of NWC.

III. 1. Strengths

The following points are some forces which help Women's Council in achieving its mission:

- clear mission: NWC is a framework of meeting of the rural women with the women of the cities allowing them to gain mutual confidence;
- efficient structure of NWC: it exists at all levels, from village to national level;
- Relevant services;
- Good position of NWC to influence integration of gender and the respect of the practical needs and strategic interests for the women in all policies and programs

III. 2. Weaknesses

In its functioning, the National Women's Council faces weaknesses in the following areas:

- Executive Committee meetings are not regular;
- non-compliance with public tendering procedure in some bids which may lead to lack of accountability, transparency, efficiency and fairness in management;
- lack of appropriate filing of tendering documents;
- weak operationality of the decentralized structures of NWC caused by an insufficiency of time on behalf of certain voluntary members of the executive committees;
- a weak mobilisation of resources to make their houses profitable.

III. 3. Opportunities

There are so many opportunities, some of them are following:

- political will to improve the economic power of women as it is provided as a national priority of reducing poverty in general;
- active participation of women in national economic activities with 62,7%;
- social and political integration of women;
- existence of forums supporting women promotion;
- national and international solidarity towards women (international day of women and days of activities against women's violence);
- the actors and donors (PNUD, DFID) attracted by the mission of NWC.

III. 4. Threats

- insufficiency of employees despite the request made;
- insufficiency of offices;
- lack of appropriate furniture store;
- violation of women rights;
- the weak access of women to lucrative jobs.

IV. Recommendations

It is noticed that the National Women's Council is trying to achieve its objectives although some weaknesses were observed, some recommendations are provided in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

For more efficiency

- it is necessary to recruit employees for vacant posts;
- the Executive Committee should meet regularly;
- National Women's Council should comply with laws and regulations concerning public procurement procedures;
- it should also file procurement documents properly;
- in order to prevent the embezzlement of the public assets the National Women's Council should arrange the place for the stock.

For more effectiveness

- it would be advisable that the National Women's Council should have a permanent staff at the district level;
- the National Women's Council should identify studies needed for satisfactory performance;
- the National Women's Council should have sufficient offices.

V. Conclusion

National Women's Council is trying to achieve its mission through trainings and sensitisations even if there are some weaknesses and threats. In order to perform well, some improvements are requested as quick staff recruitment, sufficient offices, etc. To assess its performance, the National Women Council should carry out surveys especially a survey on impact of sensitisations and trainings on society in general and on women in particular, which will help in planning its activities.