



2022

# ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Kigali/RWANDA

01/20/2023

## FOREWORD



With great pleasure, Réseau des Femmes Oeuvrant pour le Développement Rural, is presenting the annual report of the year 2022. The completion of this annual report does not mean the end of our duties. In fact, this report is a first step towards consistently studying what we have reviewed and written here.

Particularly, we focused on important aspects including education and economic empowerment of rural women and girls; gender based violence, sexual and reproductive health and right and

Advocacy on women issues were among program that we worked on. Interventions of Réseau des Femmes envisioned a society where women and men have equal rights and efficiently contribute to the sustainable development of their families and the development of Rwanda.

On behalf of the National Coordination Committee, members of Réseau des Femmes and staff, I wish to thank and appreciate all of our partners who facilitated us to achieve what we are celebrating today. We look forward to continuing the work of empowering rural women and girls in the coming years.

I wish to you all a joyous and prosperous new year 2022.

*May God bless Rwanda and Rwandans.*

**UWIMANA Xaverine, NATIONAL COORDINATOR  
And the Legal Representative**

## BACKGROUND

Réseau des Femmes Ouvrant pour le Développement Rural (Réseau des Femmes) is a Rwandan, not-for-profit organization founded in 1986 by educated and professional women from all over Rwanda to promote the status of rural women.

The establishment of Réseau des Femmes was in a context of limited gender sensitive policies, a period of prevailing extreme poverty among rural Rwandan women, limited access to education, lack of participation in decision making processes/organs, limited access to financial resources and means among others.

## VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

Réseau des Femmes envisions a society where women and men have equal rights and efficiently contribute to the sustainable development. To contribute to the fulfilment of this vision, Réseau des Femmes has the mission of empowering rural women so that they are fully involved in the transformation of their lives, and become actors and vectors of a positive change towards durable development.

This mission is accomplished in line with the following core values.

**Empowerment:** Equipping women with the tools that they need to increase their knowledge and skills, access to opportunities and networks, control over resources including natural resources and participate in decision making for their socio-economic and environmental friendly development.

**Equality:** We strive for promoting social inclusion and gender justice.

**Solidarity:** We are women from different backgrounds working together to lift up each other.

**Accountability:** We ensure transparent mechanisms for managing resources and hold ourselves accountable to our right-holders, donors, government stakeholders.

**Ownership:** We value our stakeholders' participation and contributions to guarantee sustainability of our results.

**Innovation and creativity:** We believe in evidence-informed innovations for solving problems and advocating for change.

**Partnerships:** We believe in collaboration and synergies with other stakeholders to serve more efficiently and comprehensively.

## ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2022

Réseau des Femmes achieved valuable changes in the community through the implementation of different projects in collaboration with partners (Donors) such us:

- Kvinna till Kvinna in URI NYAMPINGA Project which support teen mothers, teen girls and their parents in Burera and Rwamagana Districts;
- International Research Center Canada (IDRC) in the Project “evaluating the Impact of Holistic Participatory Programs on Reducing and Redistributing Unpaid Care, environment protection among 1100 couples in **Rwamagana, Musanze, Burera, Nyabihu and Gicumbi Districts.**
- CECI/Canada, Programme de Coopération Volontaires (PCV)/ Economic reinforcement of 180 teen mothers in Burera and Rwamagana. Districts,
- RGB in the project of enhancement of teen mothers small business in cosmetics production through gender action learning systems in Burera District.
- GIZ in the project “ABATWARAMAHORO” trade safely, the project supports 60 women in informal cross border trade at Rusizi ( Rwanda) and Ruzizi ( Democratic Republic of Congo)
- UNWOMEN in the project “Empower & Include” in Nyarugenge and Gasabo Districts.

During the year of 2022, Réseau des Femmes worked with partners in 8 districts which are Rwamagana, Burera, Musanze, Gicumbi, Nyabihu, Rusizi, Gasabo and Nyarugenge of Eastern province, Northern Province, Western province and City of Kigali respectively.

## 1.1. WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROMOTION

### 1.1.1. Social Reintegration

Due to teenage pregnancies, many of parents have rejected their daughter's, others used to harass and discriminate them which led to drop out school. In this regard Réseau des femmes has put in place a safe space for dialogue to peacefully reunite teen mothers to their parents and community in general. Families were sensitized on go back to school for teen mothers and teen girls who dropped out school. They were also trained on child rights for a better reintegration of teen mothers' babies. As result, parents accepted to open doors for their daughters and facilitate them to go back to school and take care of the babies while teen mothers are in school.



Teen mothers and Teen girls learned that they are still young to continue their studies for them to have a great future! Parents also agreed to facilitate their daughters to reintegrate schools and help them to regain confidence and hope for a better life.

This has been done under the URI NYAMPINGA Project»” You are a Woman of Value” funded by Kvinna till Kvinna which targets two hundred and forty (240) teen mothers and 60 teen girls in Burera and Rwamagana Districts. The project focuses on fighting against GBV and teenage pregnancies with the aim of improving the socio-economic conditions of teen mothers, teen girls and their families. Education is the greatest support Réseau des Femmes focused on where in 2022 twelve teen mothers have graduated from high school and 50 teen mothers were trained on tailoring and are working as cooperative with their toolkits. While 50 teen mothers/teen girls are still studying.

Their return to school have brought positive changes into their families such as regain of confidence (to Teen mothers and Teen girls), decrease of stereotypes and stigma around early teen pregnancy as well as plan of visionary future to these young women. Among 12 graduates, 3 of them are registered to start University.

#### **a) Psychosocial support for teen mothers and women cross border traders and carriers**

Teen mothers and women peace careers were facilitated at safe spaces where have sessions of counseling and healing as a way of therapy.





Réseau des Femmes facilitated 60 vulnerable women cross border traders and porters (ABATWARAMAHORO) by creating space to share their testimonies about common problems they face as a form of healing and therapy. Réseau des Femmes has also facilitated teen mothers and their parents to safely access the space of dialogue on their injuries from teenage pregnancy issues they faced. Right holders received psychosocial support from project staffs at safe spaces.

### **b) Psychosocial support for staff**

Réseau des Femmes organization believes in the wellbeing of its staff, either physical, mental and spiritual. Mental health has been a concern to different Human rights' organs where they encourage Institutions to not only consider staff's performance but also their mental health safety, it is in that regard that Réseau des Femmes has planned a staff debrief so that they can move out of the office to relax, socialize and even have a personal therapy with an expert if needed who can also provide individual counselling.



Through Different games and exercises performed during the debrief, different results were brought individually and Réseau des Femmes' Staff in general:

From counselling session and games played, Réseau des Femmes team created a strong, bonded team and learned of having an amazing working environment through practicing effective communications

and active listening. The staff also gained skills on leadership, and conflict management (internal and external)

### 1.1.2. Prevention of Gender Based Violence and Promotion of gender equality

After being trained, Facilitators and staff went to train the community through dialogues on gender equality, positive masculinity and recognition, reduction and redistribution of domestic unpaid care work sharing where 100 teen mothers and their 100 brothers, 700 couples benefited that knowledge.

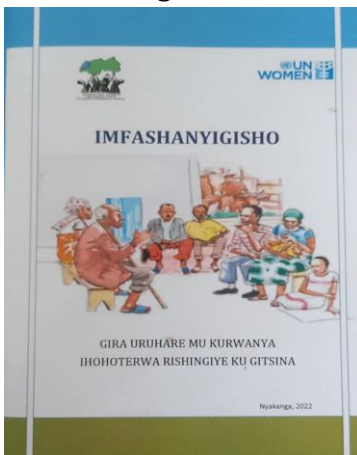


*Dialogue of brothers and sisters & dialogue of couples on positive masculinity and sharing unpaid care works.*



*Photos: couples in training on Gender equality (positive masculinity).*

In partnership with UN WOMEN, Réseau des Femmes has prepared a summarized module for dialogue and training facilitation on GBV and gender equality.



*Module prepared as summary of GBV content.*



*Training of DASSO and community policing at kinyinya sector 2022*

The Training and Modules on GBV both helped the trainees (Agents of Change) to increase the capacity and knowledge to prevent and respond to GBV cases in their daily work.





The community members reached in UMUGOROKA W'UMURYANGO increased their awareness and understanding of GBV prevention and response including their role in the fight against GBV at community level and timely reporting of case once they happened, and law against GBV.



*Photo: Broadcasting through Radio talk show on RBA (Rwanda Broadcasting Agency) fighting and prevention of GBV.*

Radio talk shows and TV spots helped to raise awareness about women's rights and their protection to a large audience around the community. Those Radio talk shows allowed community to talk and interact on issues of GBV, women rights and peace building in Rwandan families.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsB16rvU5bI&authuser=0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6fJzXpmZRw&authuser=0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Og6iPUmGYoI&authuser=0>



*Photo: Broadcasting through Radio talk show FLASH Radio and ISANGO STAR Radio*



### 1.1.3. Access to Justice for GBV Victims

**Organize 1 session between 60 new teen mothers and Legal officers (RIB, Police, DASSO, MAJ) to undertake GBV cases against teen mothers for orientation and legal support in each District. Achieved results:** 29/60 GBV cases fulfill the requirements to be investigated, 24 are still in court of law (DNA) 5 have convicted. Ongoing GBV cases are in courts and right holders are doing self-follow up and self-advocacy supported by their parents. Right holders were trained on GBV laws, laws regarding cross border trade.



### 1.1.4. SRHR (Maputo protocol & training)

Assessment of implementation status of the article 14 of Maputo protocol in Rwanda and preparation of alternative report on article 14 (Shadow Report) submission and follow-up.

120 teen mothers and teen girls were trained on SRHR and decision making on their bodies.

25 Anti-GBV Clubs were also initiated for prevention of teenage pregnancy in schools by teaching each other the Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights.



### 1.1.5. Women economic empowerment

#### 1.1.5.1. Trainings

Staff was trained on Financial Education and entrepreneurship (training of trainers) in October, 2022.

Trained staff facilitated also the 600 women right holders training in 5 districts (Rwamagana, Musanze, Burera, Nyabihu, Gicumbi) funded by IDRC in Grow Project.

60 teen mothers and their brothers were trained on Planning by using GALS Approach (Gender Action Learning System), trained on Digital skills for better marketing of their products.



#### 1.1.5.2. *Income Generating Activities*

In partnership with **CECI** (Centre for International Studies and Cooperation), Réseau des Femmes purchased a Bar soap making machine for teen mothers owning a business of cosmetic production in Burera District, Rugarama Sector. In addition, **RGB (Rwanda Governance Board)** funded another project to Réseau des Femmes where a liquid soap making machine (Multi-purpose soap, shampoo, hand wash) has been purchased and provided to teen mothers. The use of this machine in processing liquid soap increased quality and quantity and trust of cosmetics produced.

They created their own Facebook account to market their products online; they have learned the process of payment using IREMBO or Mobile Banking; created their Brand name “**ABAKESHA**”, they have also created group WhatsApp to share information about market and coordination of their activities even to advert through their status.

This business helped the teen mothers in being financially independent which means being able to buy health insurance, food, clothes, and other things without having to ask for financial support from their parents or elsewhere. It helped the community to the availability and accessibility of hygienic equipment at the local level and at low prices especially during COVID 19.



A group of teen mothers in cosmetics production has obtained the certificate of cooperative at district level. They are also in the process of **ZAMUKANA UBUZIRANENGE** for standardization of their products at Rwanda Standard Bureau.

### 1.1.6. Leadership and Decision making

- Providing technical guidance to women to campaign and participate in Local leaders election (Joint activity done by Réseau des Femmes, Haguruka and Rwanda Women Network).
- Organize 2 sessions on Coaching and mentoring with 60 teen mothers/teen girls on SRHR including managing relationship, power within, decision making and leadership in Rwamagana and Burera. As a result, it was great seeing the participants share their thoughts confidently and identify some of the ways they will use their strength and set goals to bring change in their lives and community on their own. Some of them are leaders of Anti-GBV clubs at their school.



### 1.1.7. Women and Environment and Climate Change

Réseau des Femmes has developed a Gender-Environment and Climate Change Strategy for 5 years. In collaboration with Rwanda Bureau of Standards, Réseau des Femmes trained teen mothers in **cosmetics production business** on waste management. Its purpose is to provide hygienic, efficient and economic solid waste storage, collection, transportation and treatment or disposal of waste without polluting the atmosphere, soil or water system of Environment protection. Réseau des Femmes also supported teen mothers to enter



in agriculture extension where teen mothers are farming mushrooms on small scale of land as the one way of soil management too.



***Photo: Validation Meeting of Gender and ECC- 5 years' strategic plan of Réseau des Femmes at Gland Legacy Hotel***



***Photo: Training of teen mothers in Cosmetics on waste management in Burera District.***



## 1.1.8. Advocacy and Public relation

Under URI NYAMPINGA Project, Réseau des Femmes organized a sharing and learning meeting with Stakeholders to share end of year project evaluation Funding's that focused on the impact of the project. The meeting was a space to advocate for persisting GBV and agreed on new strategies to achieve Zero tolerance to GBV, Child defilement and teenage pregnancy in our country.



**Partnership: VISITORS RECEIVED AT RESEAU DES FEMMES:** In 2022, Réseau des Femmes received different visitors especially those who came for study tours others for experience sharing and partnership purpose. All visitors appreciated the service delivered by Réseau des Femmes.

N0	Date	Names	Address
1	27/6/22	Lenc Pettersou	Sweden
2	8/7/22	Catherine Dawank	CECI Montreal Canada
3	27/7/22	Delegation of 12 people	BURUNDI
4	16/8/22	Athanase RWAMO	Consultant AMIE-CANADA
5	27/7/22	Christella KANKINDI	Legal Aid service
6	27/7/22	Pamela Abbot	Partner on GrOW Project
7	27/7/22	Ismael BYARUHANGA	IPAR- Rwanda
8	16/8/22	Jean Claude MUHIRE	Global Affairs Canada
9	5/9/22	Olive UWIMANA	PRO-FEMME/TWESE HAMWE
10	7/9/22	Denise MUTARAMBIRWA	AMIE /CANADA
11	8/11/22	Delegation of 2 people	ACORD RWANDA
12	8/11/22	Delegation of 3 people	CCFD-Terre solidaire
13	8/11/22	Luap KAREL	Gender and climate change Advisor
14	5/12/22	Richard MAKUZA	Menonnitte Central committee

### ***1.1.9. Capacity Building of staff and Réseau des Femmes' members***

**The financial education training, Training on men engage and positive masculinity** allowed the staff and member to know the process by which investors improve their knowledge of financial products, concepts and risks by means of objective information, teaching or advice necessary to:

- become more sensitive on financial risks and opportunities,
- make reasonable choices, in full knowledge of the facts,
- know where to find financial assistance and support,

### **1.1.10. MEETING OF NATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE & GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF RESEAU DES FEMMES' MEMBERS.**





The National Coordination Committee is made of 9 members whose 4 are at National level which are the National Coordinator, the Vice Coordinator, the Treasury, the Secretary. There are also 5 coordinators of Provinces and Kigali City. The National Coordination Committee's meeting is organized one a quarterly basis. It plays the role of giving orientations of entire organization and implementation of available projects and Réseau des Femmes' Strategic plan.

During 2022 year, Réseau des Femmes General Assembly was also done. It aimed at appreciating and celebrating the achievements and successes of organization with all members and friends of the organization. They have also elected the new Board and Conflict resolutions committee.



**Reseau des Femmes with other partners has participated in Celebrating the International Rural Women's Day that held in HUYE District 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022.**



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Although Réseau des Femmes has achieved a lot in the year of 2022, there are still persisting challenges for women's empowerment including GBV issue, teen pregnancy, limited access to SRHR, low number of women in leadership at community level, climate change and discriminatory gender norms.

Reseau des Femmes shall think about project targeting women in climate change and protection of environment. As long as women are not aware of their role in the protection of environment, to reduce air pollution and climate change as are many on earth especially in Rwanda, the impact of climate change will continue to affect them negatively while they have key solutions in their hands.

## ANNEXES: SUCCESS STORIES

### **1.WITH TYPICAL DIALOGUES AND COUNSELING, CONFLICTS ENDED IN FAMILIES**



Family of NDUWAYEZU Frederick and MUJAWIMANA Seraphine are parents from one of URI NYAMPINGA Project right holders UWIMPUHWE Egidia (a teen girl) in Burera District, Kinyababa sector, Bugamba cell, Gacaca village. They have 8 children and Egidia is the 6<sup>th</sup>. The family was chosen in the prevention

method where the project engaged teen girls from families that live in conflicts which can lead teen girl to early pregnancies and other form of GBV.

The family joined the project in 2021, they lived in conflicts where they couldn't even spend one week without the woman going back to her family for being beaten by the husband.” **Being beaten was like a diary, as every time my husband came home instead of greeting him, I used to run for escaping his anger”** Said Seraphine

The couple with others was trained on conflicts management, how to live in harmony, Distribution of unpaid care work and GBV. At the beginning they couldn't even sit together, and they even left home separately while coming to the same place! **“We were even ashamed as we were known even at the sector level for living in conflicts, I always saw my wife as an incapable full of mistakes, who deserved nothing but to be beaten regularly”** said Nduwayezu.

After several sessions on GBV the family decided to change and live in harmony to work hands in hands for their family's well-being.



Their children also benefited as they rejoined schools as before parents couldn't pay for them as the father used to spend the money in beers and the mother couldn't feed them and afford also school fees.



**"I now feel like am a newly married woman as my husband is now my friend and helper in everything, we now talk and take decisions together, he no longer spend time in bars but at home helping me in different chores and even taking care of our children." Said Seraphine**

As they have changed they are now agent of change in their community and contribute to neighbors conflicts resolution. The mother also was chosen among GBV Mentors at cell level. The family now has three cows and the wife sell vegetables on the local market.

**"I highly regret the time I wasted not being at my home and support my beautiful wife, I am now a living testimony that conflicts lead nowhere but at family destruction. Since I decided to change our family has economically improved and our children are the happiest. Said Nduwayezu**

***"A Family in Harmony Will Prosper in Everything"***

## **2.Despite her family conflicts and divorce, Go back to school and endurance helped her to reach success with distinction.**

Emmanueline DUSHIMIMANA is a Teen mother from Rwamagana District, Muhazi Sector, the cell of Karambi, in a village of Binunga. Emmanueline is a young girl in her early-twenties and life hasn't been easy for her since the day that she gave birth to her child.

Emmanueline got pregnant at the age of 17, to give birth at 18 years only. she immediately dropped out of the school to take care of herself and her kid for one year.

"It was in 2018 where Réseau des Femmes in partnership with Local leaders came with Uri Nyampinga project that aimed at supporting teen mothers in Rwamagana District when I was sampled and be a right holder of Réseau des Femmes. I met with other teen mothers in the project and feel not alone and profit the project interventions including social integration, counseling especially recovering self-confidence". Said Emmanueline.

Emmanueline told us her background life story: ***"During my pregnancy till the birth of my baby, I lived with my parents. So when I got pregnant my father and my mother were not on good terms which actually lead them to divorce. Living in a family full of conflicts and in a process of divorce was not easy because by that time my father kept telling me that I am a useless child, I will never be able to produce anything since I am a mother now. On the other side, my mother was kind of understanding but I***

*could see that I was not treated the same" said Emmanueline.*

*"Therefore, URI NYAMPINGA project on the fund of Kvinna till Kvinna implemented by Réseau des Femmes trained us on GBV, Child rights, Sexual and reproductive health aiming at helping us to make decision on family planning, to prevent unwanted pregnancy as well as preventing sexual transmitted diseases. Personal counseling helped me a lot to cure the injuries caused by my family in the first year of this project. The second year of the project, I was encouraged by other trainings offered to teen mothers that encouraged them to go back to school, others to create small jobs through Financial education and entrepreneurship skills. From here, I profited and choose to go back to school." she continued saying. "It was not an easy decision since I started going back to school as a mother of four months, the reintegration and finding friends that will treat me the same as before was something that I was not sure about but reaching at*

*school I found myself being supported by the School Director and other teachers who knew my story. From there, I regained confidence and starting teaching other students about Sexual reproductive health and conducts through my testimony"*

Despite the family conflicts ended to divorce, Emmanueline kept studying even during the pandemic but making sure that here child kept been taken care of and now she has graduated the former high school with one of the highest distinction, which was 59/60. *"this kind of grade made me so proud of myself and now I am happy that I didn't gave up on my life. But I remember that this was not only because of me but also due to Réseau des Femmes and Kvinna till Kvinna. There are a lot of girls out here who could love to be in my place but what they miss is a second chance or someone to encourage, counsel and comfort them. Now I am a proof that women can't only do it but women actually DO IT!"*

### **3.SUCSESS STORY: "LIVING A CHANGED LIFE" - GrOW PROJECT**

Theogene NSENGIMANA and Anicelatha NZAMUTURIMANA is a middle aged couple with 4 children and they are living in the Eastern Province of Rwanda specifically in Musanze District, Rwaza Sector. At the arrival of GrOW project in Musanze, Theogene NSENGIMANA mentioned on the first day of training on Positive masculinity, Gender Based Violence and Unpaid Care work, that "I don't have to do anything at home, I can't wash my clothes when my wife is here! What would be the point of marrying her? I think a real man should be able to provide for the kids and the wife and that's it! all I need is to share a bottle of beer with my friends and come home to a warm and clean bed, that's all a real man should be dealing with"

While on that same day of the training, his wife, Anicelatha NZAMUTURIMANA, clearly said that "My husband doesn't allow me to save money for our kids, he is more into spending money with his friends than for his family. I can firmly assure you that he doesn't help me with the kids, he is never there for me when I am tired or sick and when I try to mention it to him, he starts to get angry. So instead of having a fight with him in front of the kids, I prefer doing all the work alone"

Therefore, during the training, the trainer gave some exercises to the couples present, the exercises consisted of listing unpaid care work that women do for their families without the help or support of their husbands, and man to also list their daily tasks for them to compare what women go through and what men go through on their daily bases. After a brief session of exchanges on unpaid care work and how it can impact the wellbeing and social-economic development of a family, there was a slit change in the couple's view on gender roles and stereotypes.



*Figure 1\_ Nsegimana & Nzamuturimana giving their testimony*

On the second day of the training, Theogene NSENGIMANA came with a different vision of life for him and his family. After few months in the distribution of water tanks to the couples they gave a testimony in front of other couple and Theogene NSENGIMANA said ""Now I can cook, clean and take care of the kids because after been trained on unpaid care work I could see how my wife suffered and I was really ashamed of that and all men should be if they were once like me! We have started to save money for the education of our kids and our health insurance. We are able to communicate our ideas without any disagreements or fight because we understand each other better now. So I can proudly say that my family and I are living a changed life ".



