

**THE IMPACT OF INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES ON WOMEN ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT IN RWANDA
A CASE STUDY OF ASSOCIATION OF GENOCIDE WIDOWS (AVEGA/AGAHOZO)
IN NYARUGENGE DISTRICT, KIGALI-RWANDA**

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ABSTRACT

Rwandan society is characterized by a patriarchal social structure that underlies the unequal social power relations between men and women, boys and girls. This has translated into men's dominance and women's subordination. Gender inequalities have not been seen as unjust, but as respected social normality.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of income generating activities on women economic empowerment, specifically to assess how women involvement in income generating activities has increased the economic status of the Association of the Genocide Widows (AVEGA) members, to describe how women involvement in income generating activities leads to increase in their decision making capacity as well as to examine the extent to which women involvement in income generating activities has influenced the welfare of their families.

Policy makers and implementers should take advantage of the changing dynamics in women's participation in decision making at the household and community levels in AVEGA to formulate and implement policies that will facilitate and sustain income generating activities.

The findings of this study will help gender practitioners to revise their gender strategies and policies in relation to women empowerment. The findings of this study will also help AVEGA and Rwanda Government to pay more attention on the importance of women income generating activities. As a result, AVEGA will have a document on which to refer when designing strategies on women empowerment. The study will also contribute to existing literature on women empowerment and will be used for reference purposes for future researchers who may be interested in fields related to women empowerment and income generating activities.

This study used both quantitative and qualitative method where questionnaire and interview guide were used as instruments to collect primary data. The study was carried out in the form of a case study - the case of AVEGA. A total of 50 questionnaires were hand-delivered to respondents and all were returned completed. The structured face to face interviews were conducted with AVEGA income generating activities officer and AVEGA members. The results were analyzed in terms of descriptive statistics.

The results indicated that before involvement in income generating activities, the members of AVEGA could not make decisions that involve money, they always waited for aid from AVEGA or Assistance Fund for Genocide Survivors (FARG), but after being involved in income generating activities they solve their problems which involve money without waiting for donors.

Women increased capacity to make decisions, especially financial decisions at the household and personal levels. This was reported as leading to increased appreciation from their families and the community. Women having increased self-esteem and confidence due to the skills they obtained through training and their increased ability to contribute to household income.

The life of women from AVEGA before involvement in income generating activities was not good in general and after their involvement in income generating activities there is a big positive change in their life.