



A Review of Women's Subnational Governance and the Implementation of the Maputo Protocol in Rwanda,

A Review of Women's
Subnational Governance

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Abstract

Background:

The Maputo Protocol is a foundational instrument for advancing women's rights in Africa. Rwanda's notable representation of women in national parliament offers a critical context to examine how such commitments are operationalised at subnational levels and translated into the Protocol's broader substantive provisions.

Purpose and objectives:

This review synthesises literature and policy analyses from 2021 to 2026 to assess the role of women in Rwandan subnational governance in implementing the Maputo Protocol. It examines the interplay between decentralised structures and the advancement of women's substantive rights in health, economic empowerment, and protection from violence.

Methodology:

The study employs a systematic literature review of academic journals, government reports, and NGO documents published between 2021 and 2026. A thematic analysis identified patterns, gaps, and tensions in the evidence.

Findings/Key insights:

Findings indicate that while women's descriptive representation in local councils is robust, their substantive policy influence is often mediated by centralised party structures. Evidence up to 2026 shows effective local implementation of Article 14 (health and reproductive rights) through community initiatives. Progress on Article 13 (economic rights) is slower, hindered by persistent barriers to land and credit access for women.

Conclusion:

The review concludes that Rwanda's subnational governance provides a significant platform for Protocol implementation. However, translating women's presence into transformative policy outcomes remains uneven and constrained by political dynamics.

Recommendations:

Future efforts should strengthen the capacity and autonomy of women in local government, enhance monitoring of Protocol implementation beyond quota compliance, and foster collaborative partnerships between local authorities and women's civil society organisations.

Key

words:

Maputo Protocol, Rwanda, subnational governance, women in politics, decentralisation, women's rights, implementation.

Contribution

statement:

This review consolidates contemporary evidence on a critical yet underexplored nexus between women's local governance and the realisation of continental women's rights frameworks in the African context.

Keywords: *Women's political representation, subnational governance, Maputo Protocol, African feminism, Rwanda, gender policy implementation, decentralisation*