



# RCSP

## NEWSLETTER

September - December 2023



NUDOR conducted a training on Disability Rights, Mainstreaming, and Inclusion

## Rwanda Civil Society Platform Launches 5-Year Strategic Plan, Aims for Sustainable Impact



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**Dr. Edward Kalisa**  
Secretary General of RGB



**Coalition Umwana ku Isonga conducted a training session aimed at strengthening the understanding of civic space and promoting child rights.**

RCSP's goals over the next five years: prioritizing capacity strengthening, coordination, representation and partnership, advocacy, and policy influence. This launch marks a significant milestone, signaling a promising future for Rwanda's civil society and its potential to create a meaningful impact within the society.



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# CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT



Dear Members and Esteemed Partners of the Rwanda Civil Society Platform,

It is with great pleasure that I address you in this inaugural newsletter covering the period between September and December 2023. As the Chairperson of the RCSP, I am proud to witness the impactful work and dedication of our members in advancing the rights and well-being of the Rwandan people.

During this period, our platform has continued to advocate for social justice, civic engagement, and sustainable development. Our collective efforts have resulted in meaningful progress, but there is still much work to be done. As we move forward, I urge all members to remain committed to our shared vision of a just and equitable society for all Rwandans.

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success of our initiatives and projects. Your dedication and passion are truly inspiring, and I look forward to our continued collaboration in the coming year.

Let us remain steadfast in our commitment to building a better future for Rwanda.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024!

**Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza**

**Chairperson, Rwanda Civil Society Platform**

# FOREWORD OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to you for the debut edition of our newsletter.

Through this newsletter, we aim to provide you with regular updates on our activities, as well as news and events from the wider civil society community in Rwanda. We will also be sharing insights and analysis on key issues affecting our sector, as well as opportunities for engagement and collaboration.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners and members for their continued support and commitment to our shared vision. We look forward to continuing to work with you all to build a stronger, more vibrant civil society in Rwanda.

**Angelique Kabeza**

**Executive Secretary, Rwanda Civil Society Platform**



## FEATURED STORIES

### RCSP Launches 5-Year Strategic Plan

On December 12, 2023, RCSP launched its 5-year strategic plan at the Kigali Convention Centre. The event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including donors, partners, and key figures from the civil society and NGOs sector, showcasing a strong commitment to sustainable development in Rwanda.

### Empowering Youth for Inclusive Governance

In a remarkable stride towards fostering active citizenship and participatory democracy, the Rwanda Civil Society Platform, in partnership with 8 Civil Society Organizations and the District National Youth Councils, orchestrated a transformative two-day training event.



# Rwanda Civil Society Platform Launches 5-Year Strategic Plan, Aims for Sustainable Impact

On December 12, 2023, the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) launched its 5-year strategic plan at the Kigali Convention Centre. The event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including donors, partners, and key figures from the civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sector, showcasing a strong commitment to sustainable development in Rwanda.



**Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza, Chairperson of RCSP**

The strategic plan provides a clear roadmap for RCSP's goals over the next five years, prioritizing capacity strengthening, coordination, representation and partnership, advocacy, and policy influence. This launch marks a significant milestone, signaling a promising future for Rwanda's civil society and its potential to create a meaningful impact within the society.

During the launch, Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza, Chairperson of the Rwanda Civil Society Platform, emphasized the significance of the strategic plan as a guiding force for RCSP's objectives. He highlighted key priorities, strategies, and actions aimed at addressing future challenges and opportunities, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of civil society organizations.

The Country Director of Trócaire in Rwanda, Marleen Masclee, emphasized the importance of strategic planning and the necessity of making trade-offs. Stated, "When you go through an exercise of strategic planning, the most difficult aspect is often making trade-offs. Ambitions that you want to pursue may have to be sacrificed due to resources or other constraints. However, these trade-offs are not a sign of weakness or lack of capacity, but rather a reflection of the serious thinking behind the plan."



**The Country Director of Trócaire in Rwanda, Marleen Masclee**

Marleen further emphasized the value of long-standing partnerships, citing Trócaire's support for RCSP since its inception in 2004. Marleen highlighted that true partnerships persevere through challenges, and Trócaire is committed to maintaining such enduring collaborations.



# Rwanda Civil Society Platform Launches 5-Year Strategic Plan, Aims for Sustainable Impact



The UNDP Resident Representative in Rwanda, Maxwell Gomera, emphasized the critical role of civil society and NGOs in driving development in Africa. Stressed the need for civil society to transform the perception of Africa, enabling global investment to flow into the continent and bolster African economies. This is essential as current perceptions of risk hinder capital from reaching Africa as an investment destination.

## UNDP Resident Representative in Rwanda, Maxwell Gomera

The guest of honor was the Secretary General of Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), Dr. Edward Kalisa commended the transformative work of RCSP and its member organizations, expressing a commitment to partnering with RCSP in the implementation of the new strategic plan to empower its members to deliver on Rwanda's Vision 2050 aspirations and sustainable development goals.

Dr. Kalisa noted "We commend the Rwanda Civil Society Platform for its impactful work over the years. The visible transformation brought about by your organization and your member organizations in the lives of those you serve is truly commendable. You should be proud of your achievements."



## Secretary General of RGB, Dr. Edward Kalisa



The launch of RCSP's 5-year strategic plan was a momentous occasion, signaling a collective commitment to driving positive change and sustainable impact in Rwanda. The event was a celebration of the hard work and dedication of RCSP and its member organizations, as well as a recognition of the critical role that civil society and NGOs play in driving development in Rwanda.

Added "I also want to express appreciation to the Government of Rwanda for its support in strengthening not only the Rwanda Civil Society Platform but also its member organizations. I extend my gratitude to those who supported RCSP in developing this strategy. We congratulate RCSP for reaching this significant milestone, and we look forward to partnering with you in the implementation of your new strategic plan to empower your members to deliver on our vision 2050 aspirations and sustainable development goals."



# RCSP Members Convene for Annual General Assembly

The Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) and its member organizations gathered for the annual general assembly, marking a pivotal moment for the organization. The assembly, held on November 29, 2023, served as a platform for evaluating the progress made in achieving the platform's objectives and setting new projections for the upcoming years.

At the forefront of the agenda was the validation and approval of RCSP's new 5-year strategic plan, which will guide the platform from 2024 to 2028. During the assembly, RCSP presented a draft of the strategic plan to members for input, aiming to create a comprehensive document outlining the platform's goals over the next five years.

The general assembly also provided an opportunity for self-assessment, showcasing the progress made in implementing RCSP's action plan over the past 14 months, from September 2022 to November 2023. Members received an insightful presentation of the progress report, highlighting achievements across the platform's core mandates.



In terms of capacity strengthening, RCSP reported that 607 individuals, including 298 females, 309 males, and 28 persons with disabilities, received various trainings from member organizations and their affiliates during the 14 months. Additionally, RCSP conducted monitoring visits to member organizations and engaged with two umbrella organizations interested in joining the platform.

RCSP's influence and advocacy efforts were evident through policy dialogues, consultative meetings, and workshops, addressing critical issues such as taxation laws, paternity leave, gender-based violence, SDG5, user engagement, and education policy.

The platform also emphasized its commitment to partnership building, participating in various events and activities to strengthen relationships with local and international partners. Additionally, RCSP engaged in fundraising activities to support its initiatives.

Members also had the opportunity to review RCSP's financial report as of November 2023, ensuring transparency and proper management of partners' grants and members' contributions.



# Coalition Umwana ku Isonga conducted a training to strengthen civic space and child rights

Coalition Umwana ku Isonga conducted a training session aimed at strengthening the understanding of civic space and promoting child rights. This initiative highlights the importance of empowering members and stakeholders to contribute to a more inclusive and rights-based society.

The training program equipped participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to advocate for and protect civic space and promote child rights. By bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds, Umwana ku Isonga and RCSP fostered a collaborative environment where participants could exchange ideas, share best practices, and work towards a common goal of ensuring the well-being and rights of children in the community.

During the training, participants engaged in discussions on the significance of civic space in promoting democratic values, human rights, and social justice. They also explored strategies for creating synergy in advocating for child rights, emphasizing the need for a coordinated and unified effort to address the challenges and barriers that children may face.

The training collaboration serves as a testament to the commitment to create positive change and build a more equitable and rights-respecting society. It also highlights the value of partnerships in driving meaningful progress and fostering a culture of active citizenship and child-centered advocacy.

Umwana ku Isonga's training initiative is a commendable effort that underscores the importance of promoting civic space and building synergy in advancing child rights. By empowering individuals and fostering collaboration, this endeavor has the potential to contribute to a more inclusive, rights-based, and child-friendly society.





# RCSP holistic needs assessment reveals challenges and recommendations for Youth civic participation

In a recent comprehensive survey conducted by the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP), key insights into the state of youth civic participation in eight districts were revealed. Recognizing citizen participation, especially among the youth, as crucial for sustainable development and peace, the study aimed to assess the implementation of constitutional rights and international commitments.

Despite the Government of Rwanda's commendable efforts to establish legal frameworks and initiatives promoting citizen participation, the survey indicated persistent challenges. The study, conducted in 2023, focused on the 8 poorest districts, addressing issues raised in the Thematic Report on Non-monetary Poverty by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda.

The youth, constituting 27.1% of Rwanda's population, were found to have limited awareness of their civic rights and faced barriers such as inadequate access to information. While Umuganda and Inteko z'Abaturage recognized local civic engagement mechanisms, the study highlighted a significant portion of the youth who had never attended these events.



Factors limiting youth participation included limited knowledge of national policies, lack of access to information, and the influence of social media addiction. Additionally, discrimination against persons with disabilities was identified as an obstacle to their involvement in governance processes.

Recommendations from the assessment emphasized the need to intensify awareness, enhance civic education, and provide targeted training on engagement skills. Strengthening the capacities of local leaders and fostering intergenerational dialogues were proposed to bridge the gap between the youth and adults in civic participation.

The RCSP expressed gratitude to the UNDP - Rwanda Country Office for supporting the assessment, and acknowledging the valuable contributions of youth, local leaders, and civil society organizations. The report serves as a call to action to empower Rwandan youth, ensuring their active and meaningful participation in national development.





# RCSP Empowers Local CSOs in Evidence-Based Advocacy and Policy Analysis

Effective advocacy within Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) relies on evidence, policy analysis, and policy briefs to influence policy development. In line with this, the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) recently conducted a training workshop for local CSOs on Evidence-Based Advocacy and Policy Analysis. The workshop, which took place from November 8 to 10, 2023, benefited 8 CSOs operating in 8 districts across Rwanda.

This initiative is part of the project "Enhancing the Participation and Engagement of Non-State Actors for Responsive Governance in Rwanda," implemented by RCSP in collaboration with UNDP Rwanda. The training aimed to equip identified CSOs with the necessary capacities to effectively engage in Public Policy Analysis (PPA) and advocacy, aligning with their mission to address citizens' needs and collaborate with government and development partners to tackle development challenges.

During the workshop, participants gained skills in policy analysis and strategies to identify and capitalize on advocacy opportunities, influencing the policy process. They were also trained to generate evidence through research, engage with policymakers, and collaborate with stakeholders in the policy cycle. Additionally, they learned about the process and criteria for effective Public Policy Analysis, ethics, stakeholder mapping, and the development of policy briefs.

Participants expressed optimism about the impact of the training on their advocacy efforts within their respective communities. Tuyisenge Joseph, a representative from IDA – Rwanda, highlighted the value of gaining skills in evidence-based advocacy and policy brief development, emphasizing the importance of these tools in achieving effective advocacy.

Maurice Ndayambaje, a representative from CRD, noted the significance of the training in providing a structured approach to advocacy and lobbying, expressing gratitude for the knowledge gained and its potential to enhance their advocacy work.

RCSP continues to monitor the outcomes of the training through practical sessions with beneficiaries, focusing on the development of policy briefs and papers. The platform expressed appreciation to UNDP Rwanda for their support and commended the commitment of CSO members to improve their advocacy practices.

The training represents a significant step towards enhancing the capacity of local CSOs to engage in evidence-based advocacy and policy analysis, ultimately contributing to more effective advocacy efforts and positive change within Rwandan communities.

# UNDP Administrator Engages with Rwanda Civil Society for Sustainable Development Dialogue

On December 7, 2023, UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner held a productive and insightful discussion with representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Rwanda, aimed at exploring collaborative opportunities to advance sustainable development in the country.



The dialogue focused on fostering partnerships and initiatives to promote sustainable development across various sectors in Rwanda, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between UNDP and Rwanda to address critical development challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The meeting underscored the significance of inclusive and sustainable development, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts to drive positive change and progress in Rwanda. Additionally, discussions highlighted the importance of empowering CSOs to actively participate in the country's development agenda, ensuring diverse voices and perspectives are represented in decision-making processes.



Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, expressed his satisfaction with the engagement with Civil Society Organizations in Rwanda, stating, "I am pleased to engage with Civil Society Organizations in Rwanda on collaborative action for sustainable development. Together, we explored avenues to accelerate the #GlobalGoals. I reaffirmed UNDP's commitment to support CSOs to fulfill their mandate."

RCSP extended its gratitude to UNDP and Administrator Achim Steiner, saying, "Thank you UNDP and Administrator Steiner for the enriching and productive conversation. We are eager to delve into dynamic collaborations to advance sustainable development in Rwanda. Grateful for UNDP Rwanda's unwavering support in empowering CSOs in our country."





# RCSP pushes for ratification of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights

RCSP has called on the government, CSOs, International institutions, and NGOs to advocate for the ratification of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights to Social Protection and Social Security. RCSP is committed to advancing this protocol through coalition Umwana Ku Isonga and CLADHO, which aims to promote social protection and social security for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities.



From L: Dr. Tavengwa Nhongo from Africa Platform for Social Protection; Mrs. Angelique Kabeza, RCSP Executive Secretary and Cyrilla Heyi from Child Rights Governance at APSP

The call was made on October 4, 2023, during a High-Level Consultative Meeting hosted by RCSP and Africa Platform for Social Protection (APSP) in Kigali.

During the meeting, Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza, the Chairperson of RCSP, highlighted the importance of the protocol, particularly in Rwanda. He emphasized that social protection can provide direct support to people living in extreme poverty and who are unable to access microcredits. RCSP and APSP organized the meeting to create awareness and request the Government of Rwanda to discuss government guidelines for the ratification of International Protocols and Rwandan legal frameworks on social protection and social security.

According to Angelique Kabeza, the Executive Secretary of RCSP, civil society plays a pivotal role in pushing for the ratification of the protocol. Their efforts, in collaboration with APSP and other stakeholders, signify Rwanda's commitment to realizing the principles enshrined in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights to Social Protection and Social Security. Rwanda's potential to become the first African nation to ratify the protocol stands as a testament to its dedication to the well-being and rights of its citizens.



The African Charter on Human and People's Rights to Social Protection and Social Security protocol was adopted by the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government in February 2022. With 39 articles at its core, this protocol recognizes that social protection and social security are inherent rights of every citizen. However, it currently awaits ratification, having been signed by only two countries: Niger and Sao Tome and Principe.

APSP, a network of organizations operating at national and regional levels, is dedicated to promoting and strengthening the social contract between states and citizens.

Their mission aligns with the broader goal of securing social protection and security for all. On the home front, the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP), comprising 12 member organizations, has been tirelessly advocating for the ratification of the protocol.

# NUDOR conducted a training on Disability Rights, Mainstreaming, and Inclusion

The National Union for Disability Organization in Rwanda (NUDOR) organized a two-day training on Disability Rights, Mainstreaming, and Inclusion. The training, which took place from 30 November to 1 December 2023 at the Splendid Hotel in Muhanga District, aimed to enhance awareness and promote inclusivity within the organization and its affiliated members.

The training brought together 30 participants from the 12 RCSP umbrellas and their affiliates. The sessions covered a variety of topics, including the definition of disability, types of disability, inclusive practices, mainstreaming strategies, and the role of civil society organizations.

Participants engaged in practical sessions focused on integrating inclusive practices into daily operations, emphasizing accessible communication and physical accommodations. They also explored strategies for mainstreaming disability considerations into existing policies, programs, and initiatives for a more inclusive organizational culture.

The training emphasized that inclusion is not a program but a mindset. It is the way we treat others and the way they treat us. The trainer encouraged active engagement with the local community to understand specific needs and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities.

After the training, participants gained a deeper understanding of disability rights, dispelling myths and stereotypes surrounding disabilities. They identified key areas where there are still gaps in integrating disability conditions and recommended that the period of training sessions be increased to cover all possible content regarding disability.

NUDOR's training initiative serves as a commendable effort to promote inclusivity and enhance awareness of disability rights. By empowering individuals and fostering collaboration, this endeavor has the potential to contribute to a more inclusive, rights-based, and disability-friendly society.





# Rwanda Civil Society Platform Engages Local Leaders in Harnessing Census Data for Development

In a bid to harness the potential of data collected from the recent Rwanda Housing and Population Census for informed decision-making and community development, the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) organized a series of workshops in Karongi, Nyamagabe, and Musanze districts. The workshops aimed to engage local government officials and explore strategies for utilizing census data effectively.

In collaboration with the Office for National Statistics UK, Sustainable Development Solutions Network's Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics (SDSN TRenDS), and the National Institute of Statistics Rwanda (NISR), the workshops brought together a diverse group, including Sector level Executive Secretaries, representatives of people with disabilities, and district statisticians.

The theme, "Localizing User Engagement and Data Utilization Post Census," guided the discussions, focusing on innovative ways to leverage census data to address unique community challenges.

The workshops featured insightful presentations and group discussions, emphasizing user engagement and data localization. Local government officials shared strategies to ensure that census data translates into meaningful action at the local level, underlining the importance of collaboration between government agencies and civil society to achieve impactful results.

Discussions delved into how district-specific and census data could address challenges related to women, youth, employment, and social development. Participants also explored ways to enhance census data for better decision-making across various domains and how organizations and local government administration currently leverage census data for advocacy purposes.

During the workshops, the Executive Secretary of Karongi District, James Karangwa, stressed the importance of leveraging data for effective program execution, particularly in the education and health sectors. The representative from NISR emphasized the pivotal role of census data in shaping the future and highlighted the need to bridge the gap between data and community engagement.



# Stakeholders Advocate for Joint Efforts to Enhance Decent Work for Women and Girls

Profemmes Twese Hamwe (PFTH) and other stakeholders have highlighted the challenges faced by women and girls in accessing decision-making positions and decent work, despite their significant contributions to economic and social development.

This call to action was made during the National Policy Dialogue on Wednesday, September 27, 2023, in Kigali, following a recent analysis conducted by PFTH in the Southern Province of Rwanda. The analysis revealed various barriers to women's participation in decision-making positions and decent work, among other issues.



Dr. Liberatha Gahongayire, the Chairperson of Profemmes Twese Hamwe (PFTH), emphasized that women and girls spend a significant amount of time dealing with unpaid care work compared to men and boys. She stressed the need for concerted efforts to promote women in decision-making positions, especially at decentralized levels in Rwanda.

The evidence indicates that women's representation in decision-making positions at the local government level is still below the minimum constitutional requirement of 30 percent of posts in decision-making organs. For instance, according to the EICV 5, only 16 percent of Director Generals in ministries are women, and in the districts, only 14.8 percent of vice mayors in charge of economic affairs are women versus 85.2 percent men.

Angelique Kabeza, Executive Secretary of the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP), called for increased roles for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to empower women and girls and mentor them to participate in decision-making positions and decent work.

Some of the recommendations drawn from the findings of the critical analysis report focus on engaging the private sector to implement Rwanda's labor laws to benefit women and girls participating in the labor force, engaging men and boys in changing mindsets and enforcing laws and policies. Furthermore, employers, especially in the private sector, are urged to ensure equality in employment benefits, including wages, annual leave, and social security benefits.





# DID YOU KNOW?



## RCSP MANDATE

Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) was established in 2004 as a non-profit coordinating framework of civil society umbrella organizations. It was set up as a platform for information sharing & consultation between CSOs & their partners.

The Platform is composed of 12 national umbrellas of NGOs & it has a total number of almost 368 member organizations.

## E-IHURIRO

### E-ihuriro CSO Digital Hub



The CSO Digital Hub is dedicated to enhancing the capacities of civil society actors and fostering networking, cooperation, and partnership-building among key stakeholders in Rwanda. It also serves as a platform for promoting accessible information about civil society, including job opportunities, announcements, and funding opportunities in the country.

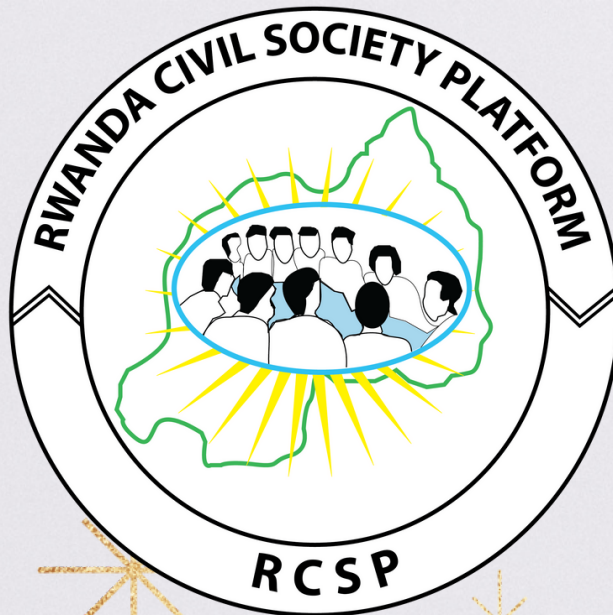
By registering on the CSO Digital Hub, your organization gains the opportunity to connect with other civil society actors through the Forum of Discussions and access a wealth of information in the Resource Center.

# THANK YOU!

We extend our sincere gratitude to all our partners for their generous support towards our programs and activities. We look forward to continuing our fruitful collaboration.







# HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024



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