

RCSPNEWSLETTER

Second edition | January - March 2024



The Fourth Edition of the Rwanda Civil Society Barometer Unveiled



The IBUKA General Assembly discussed the preparation of the 30th Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi.

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"Many CSOs are in social protection yet only a small population has moved out of poverty. Development is about alleviating poverty, not managing it. Partnerships are key in ensuring sustainable change."

Dr. Usta Kaitesi CEO of RGB



Ms. Varsha Redkar-Palepu, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. underscored the significance of RCSB 2023 in providing valuable insights into the sector's progress.

The findings indicate that the Impact and Effectiveness domain received the highest score at 84.24%, followed by Participation and Inclusiveness at 78.76%, Governance and Values in CSOs at 73.09%, with CSO Environment ranking as the lowest-performing domain at 73.08%.





























January - March 2024 | Issue 2

CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT



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

I am pleased to present to you the second issue of our quarterly newsletter, highlighting the key events and activities that took place within the Rwanda Civil Society Platform during January and March 2024.

During this period, we had the privilege of unveiling The Fourth Edition of the Rwanda Civil Society Barometer. This comprehensive report sheds light on various aspects of our society and provides valuable insights for our future initiatives.

Additionally, we organized Districts Consultative Dialogues on crucial topics such as access to finance, teenage pregnancy, and poor civic engagement. These dialogues served as platforms for meaningful discussions and collaborative efforts toward addressing these pressing issues in our communities.

Furthermore, we took great pride in sharing our dedicated members' remarkable contributions and accomplishments. Their hard work, passion, and commitment have been instrumental in driving positive change and making a tangible impact on the lives of the people we serve.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the Rwanda Civil Society Platform.

Dr. Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza
Chairperson, Rwanda Civil Society Platform

FOREWORD OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

With immense pleasure, the Rwanda Civil Society Platform presents the second issue of our newsletter, marking another milestone in our journey. We are excited to continue our collaboration with all our esteemed partners and members.

This newsletter serves as a vital platform for sharing updates on our activities, showcasing news and events within the civil society community in Rwanda, and offering insights on critical sectoral issues. Your unwavering support and dedication mean the world to us, and we eagerly anticipate deepening our partnership to propel the civil society sector in Rwanda forward.

Your continued commitment is truly appreciated, and I am enthusiastic about embarking on this collaborative journey of growth and progress with each and every one of you.



Angelique Kabeza

Executive Secretary, Rwanda Civil Society Platform

SPOTLIGHT

RCSP participated in the pre-annual CSW68 consultative meeting in Rwanda

RCSP participated in the pre-annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) consultative meeting organized by the Ministry of Gender and Family Planning in collaboration with UN Women Rwanda. Participants of the CSW68 were encouraged to represent Rwanda as a unified voice, regardless of their institutional affiliations.



The Fourth Edition of the Rwanda Civil Society Barometer Unveiled

In February 2024, the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) revealed the Rwanda Civil Society Barometer (RCSB) 2023, providing an in-depth assessment of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Rwanda. This edition follows the successful 2012, 2015, and 2018 editions, developed in collaboration with Civil Society partners.



Dr. Ryarasa Joseph Nkurunziza, Chairperson of RCSP

Dr. Usta Kaitesi, CEO of RGB, commended civil society's pivotal role in enhancing citizens' welfare. She urged NGOs to prioritize projects that empower individuals to overcome poverty sustainably, emphasizing the long-term benefits of self-sufficiency.

The report includes recommendations to enhance CSOs' performance in fulfilling their mandates.

These recommendations encompass improving compliance with legal requirements governing NGOs, strengthening partnerships between Civil Society and the private sector, ensuring National NGOs adhere to their statutes and enhance their financial and human resource management systems, implementing measures to combat money laundering and terrorist financing within CSOs, and reinforcing efforts to combat corruption within CSOs.



Dr. Ryarasa Joseph Nkurunziza, Chairperson of the Rwanda Civil Society Organization, emphasized the RCSB's role as a compass for fostering an inclusive society. He called on CSOs to engage in citizen-centered initiatives, highlighting the transformative potential of collective action in promoting equity and empowerment.

In her keynote address, Ms. Varsha Redkar-Palepu, UNDP Resident Representative Ad Interim, underscored the significance of RCSB 2023 in providing valuable insights into the sector's progress, challenges, and opportunities. The report illuminates CSOs' contributions to national development and identifies areas necessitating additional support and collaboration.

RCSB 2023 is structured around four core domains: Participation and Inclusiveness, CSO environment, Governance and Values in CSOs, and the Impact and Effectiveness of CSOs. The findings indicate that the Impact and Effectiveness domain received the highest score at 84.24%, followed by Participation and Inclusiveness at 78.76%, Governance and Values in CSOs at 73.09%, with CSO Environment ranking as the lowest-performing domain at 73.08%.



The findings indicate that the Impact and Effectiveness domain received the highest score at 84.24%

IBUKA General Assembly discussed the preparation of the 30th Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi

In February 2024, the IBUKA Umbrella Organization convened its General Assembly, presided over by Dr. Philbert Gakwenzire, the President of IBUKA.

Dr. Gakwenzire expressed gratitude to the participants for their engagement during the 2-day assembly and urged them to sustain their collaborative efforts in advancing diverse initiatives that benefit Rwandans, particularly the 30th Commemoration of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi (#Kwibuka30).





Discussions at the assembly centered on reviewing resolutions from the previous General Assembly held just two days prior, and evaluating the progress made towards fulfilling the commitments of #Kwibuka30.

IBUKA leaders provided a detailed account of the organization's activities and achievements nationwide, with a focus on their support for Genocide survivors and all Rwandans. This support extends across various sectors including justice, the economy, healthcare, and social welfare.

IBUKA's mission is to primarily provide advocacy with the survivors and monitor all the activities engaged in problem-solving of the challenges faced by survivors.

Districts Consultative Dialogues: Access to finance, teenage pregnancy, and Poor civic

The Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP), in collaboration with local partner civil society organizations from eight districts, has conducted District Consultative Dialogues to address key barriers such as access to finance, teenage pregnancy, and poor civic engagement. These dialogues are part of a larger initiative aimed at enhancing the participation and engagement of non-state actors for more accountable and responsive governance in Rwanda, supported by the UNDP.

Held in March 2024 in the districts of Gatsibo, Nyagatare, Nyanza, Nyaruguru, Nyamagabe, Gisagara, Ngororero, and Rutsiro, the dialogues were facilitated by local civil society organizations working in partnership with RCSP. Through training workshops conducted by RCSP, youth representatives from these districts were equipped with the knowledge and skills to advocate for themselves on issues affecting their development, including access to finance, teenage pregnancies, and poor civic participation.

Following the workshops on Evidence-Based Advocacy, local CSOs prepared policy papers, engaged with district authorities, and organized dialogues where youth and leaders discussed challenges and proposed solutions. The outcomes of these dialogues will inform policy papers to be submitted to policy-making institutions for advocacy and lasting solutions.

The dialogues also promoted collaboration by providing a platform for youth to engage with local leaders, propose solutions, and discuss issues hindering community development. Participants actively participated, asking questions and providing suggestions for actions to be taken by leaders. For example, discussions on teenage pregnancy highlighted the importance of streamlining Sexual Reproductive Health education and ensuring the enforcement of related policies.

On the issue of access to finance, participants discussed the role of the Business Development Fund (BDF) in supporting youth entrepreneurship and identified challenges in accessing financial support. District leaders are committed to addressing these challenges and supporting youth in preparing project proposals for funding. Additionally, strategies to address teenage pregnancy included strengthening SRHR clubs and distributing affordable condoms in schools and communities.

Overall, the dialogues emphasized the need for continued advocacy, engagement, and collaboration between youth and local leaders to address the identified challenges and promote community development.



RCSP Collaborates with GMO to Strengthen Gender Budgeting in Districts

In the first quarter of 2024, the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) partnered with the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) to conduct a series of district tours aimed at monitoring, coaching, and supporting local authorities in the development and implementation of Gender Budget Statements (GBS). This initiative also involved analyzing the relevance and quality of GBS for the fiscal year 2024 – 2025.



RCSP and GMO collaborated to improve the quality and relevance of districts' 2024/2025 GBS

The Gender Responsive Budgeting Program (GBR), launched by the Government of Rwanda in 2003, seeks to promote financing for gender equality by allocating and spending budgets across districts and sectors to fulfill gender commitments at national, regional, and international levels.

The recent enactment of Organic Law 002/2022.0L of 12/12/2022 on Public Finances and Management underscores the government's commitment to the GBR program and enhances gender accountability through improved reporting on gender budget statements. Article 34 of the law outlines the requirements for the preparation and presentation of the Budget Framework Paper (BFP), which must include a GBS, a vital tool for implementing Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB).

As part of its mandate, RCSP collaborates with the Gender Monitoring Office to conduct an annual assessment of how various budget agencies plan, execute, and report on gender budget statements. This monitoring process provides community-based evidence to guide further improvements in the design and implementation of the GRB Program.

During the first quarter of 2024, RCSP and GMO joined forces to assist different districts in enhancing the quality and relevance of their 2024/2025 GBS. This initiative provided coaching and practical support to all districts in the Southern Province, as well as selected districts in other provinces and the City of Kigali. The development of gender budget statements is expected to play a significant role in addressing gender inequalities within these districts.

Empowering Members for Data Protection Law Compliance

The Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) and TROCAIRE organized a two-day workshop to enhance member organizations' understanding and adherence to Rwanda's new personal data protection and privacy legislation.

Held during the first quarter of 2024 Data Protection Week, the workshop equipped participants with essential skills to navigate data protection intricacies and comply with Law No 058/2021. RCSP's commitment to safeguarding public interest and promoting sustainable development was reinforced through awareness-raising activities during Data Protection Week.



With the theme "Take Control of Your Data," this year's Data Privacy Week highlighted the proactive role individuals and organizations can play in securing personal information.

Participants learned safe data handling practices and response protocols for data breaches. Testimonials from attendees like Normand Safi and Liliane Umurerwa underscored the workshop's impact understanding data privacy and safeguarding personal data.



As a result of the workshop, organizations pledged to prioritize data protection and developed tailored data protection policies to ensure secure and compliant management of sensitive information.

"In this training, we have acquired the knowledge necessary to safeguard our data by implementing robust passwords for our email and social media accounts, refraining from connecting our devices to public Wi-Fi, avoiding unmonitored connections of external devices to our devices, and establishing backups for our data." - Liliane Umunyana, participant from Coalition Umwana ku Isonga.

Participants committed to place data protection among key priorities in their organizations. As a practical exercise of this workshop, each organization has crafted its data protection policy, ensuring a secure and compliant approach to handling sensitive information.

Capacity on Cyber Security and use of Social Media for Advocacy flows enhanced

Members of the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP), members and staff of the Nation Commission for Human Rights, and some journalists from "Association Rwandaise des Journalistes" have been trained on cyber security and use of social media for advocacy flows to enhance their capacity by equipping them with practical knowledge on cyber security and human rights and use of social media for advocacy.

The training was organized under the project entitled "Contributing to Strengthening the capacities of the National Commission for Human Rights and Civil Society Organizations in Rwanda".

Cyber security is inevitably linked to human security, which is a fundamental human right, and one of the challenges in need of urgent resolution in the digital age is how to protect human rights and freedoms on the Internet

The internet and other digital technologies have become essential tools for exercising many human rights and cybersecurity is necessary to protect these rights from online threats. Social media also plays a crucial role in raising awareness of human rights and reporting on human rights abuses and violations.

The use of digital technologies and social media carries very significant risks and harms for human dignity, autonomy and privacy, and the exercise of human rights in general, if applied without effective safeguards. Hence, trainings have been organized to improve the trainees' skills and knowledge in cybersecurity and human rights specifically promoting and protecting human rights on the internet and using social media and digital technologies for advocacy and effective service delivery.



NUDOR and USAID Hanga Akazi launched a bee-keeping project to change the lives of youth with disabilities

NUDOR and USAID Hanga Akazi have collaborated to launch a modern beekeeping project aimed at transforming the lives of youth with disabilities in Rwamagana District. The project, initiated on March 14, 2024, seeks to empower young individuals with disabilities through income-generation opportunities.

"NUDOR reiterated that this project is not new for them and that has produced results where it has been implemented"

Emile Vuningabo, the Head of Programmes at NUDOR, emphasized the ease of engaging in modern beekeeping for persons with disabilities, highlighting the potential for both increased income generation and meeting the local demand for quality honey.



To ensure the success and sustainability of the beekeeping project, NUDOR plans to organize campaigns for planting forests and fruit trees that attract bees. Addressing concerns about the impact of pesticides on bee populations, NUDOR aims to collaborate with the Rwanda Association for Development Promotion (ARDI) to mitigate any potential risks. The project is currently in its pilot phase, with plans for expansion to other districts contingent on its initial success and productivity after a year of implementation.

The project launch was officiated by Jeanne Umutoni, the Vice Mayor for social affairs in Rwamagana district, who commended NUDOR and USAID Hanga Akazi for their efforts in creating an avenue for youth with disabilities to enhance their livelihoods. The initiative is part of a broader strategy by USAID to generate employment opportunities for various demographic groups, including women, youth, and individuals with disabilities. Marry Maina, a representative of USAID Hanga Akazi, emphasized the project's collaborative nature, viewing persons with disabilities as capable partners rather than mere recipients of aid.



RRP+ continues to place young people at the centre of its HIV response

RRP+ continues to prioritize young people in its HIV response efforts, underscoring the importance of empowering this demographic in combating the spread of HIV. Recently, 32 Ambassadors underwent a comprehensive 5-day training program supported by the Global Fund, aimed at enhancing their proficiency in utilizing social media platforms to amplify HIV prevention and response messaging.



The training also equipped the Ambassadors with the skills necessary to create engaging and informative content on YouTube, with a focus on health topics that can attract a wide viewership and contribute to the discourse on HIV awareness. The training covered a diverse range of topics, including presentation techniques across various media platforms such as radio, TV, and social media, basic camera operation skills, storyline development, and content scripting.

Additionally, the Ambassadors received education on digital safety, HIV prevention strategies, care and treatment protocols, life skills, and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), addressing critical aspects of HIV advocacy and combating stigma and discrimination associated with the virus. This holistic approach aimed to equip the Ambassadors with the necessary tools to navigate the complex landscape of HIV awareness and response, while also fostering resilience in the face of potential psychological challenges arising from their online engagements and interactions with their audience.

In Rwanda, the prevalence of HIV among the general population has been stable at 3% over the past decade, with specific rates of 3.7% in women and 2.0% in men aged 15-64 years. Despite these figures, challenges such as stigma persist among young people living with HIV, highlighting the crucial role of organizations like RRP+ and supportive stakeholders in providing encouragement and fostering a sense of community among individuals affected by the virus. The Ambassadors' testimonies reflect a narrative of resilience and determination, emphasizing the transformative impact of support systems in empowering them to advocate for HIV awareness and health promotion within their communities.

Media urged to report cautiously about HIV/AIDS and strive to combat stigma

Media outlets have been urged to exercise utmost caution in reporting on HIV/AIDS and combat the pervasive stigma associated with the condition. Spearheaded by the Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV (RRP+) in conjunction with the network of Rwandan journalists in the fight against HIV/AIDS (ABASIRWA), UNAIDS, RBC, and other stakeholders, this call to action emerged during a three-day awareness campaign against stigma and discrimination held in Musanze District.



Sylvie Muneza, Chairperson of RRP+, emphasized the pivotal role of the media in shaping public perception, urging journalists to report factually and sensitively on HIV/AIDS-related issues. Muneza underscored the detrimental impact of stigmatizing language and narratives, stressing the need for responsible journalism to foster inclusivity and dispel misconceptions surrounding HIV/AIDS.

The timing of the awareness campaign, coinciding with Rwanda's participation in the 10th Anniversary of Zero Discrimination Day on March 1, 2024, underscores its significance in the broader global context. Through initiatives like these, efforts are made to raise awareness about the harmful effects of discrimination while advocating for inclusive policies. Moreover, such campaigns serve to strengthen collaboration between media professionals and HIV/AIDS advocacy groups, facilitating a concerted effort to combat stigma and discrimination. Divine Uwanyirigira, a Youth Ambassador for RRP+, shared her personal experiences with the media, highlighting the challenges faced by individuals living with HIV and the importance of raising awareness to challenge stigma.

As part of the awareness campaign, media representatives had the opportunity to engage directly with members of RRP+ cooperatives, gaining insight into their experiences and resilience in overcoming stigma and discrimination. Visiting cooperatives like Girubuzima, where members cultivate crops for both sustenance and income, provided a firsthand look at how collective efforts empower individuals living with HIV. By sharing their stories and achievements, cooperative members demonstrated the transformative impact of solidarity and self-empowerment in the face of adversity.

Such initiatives not only foster understanding but also inspire meaningful action, as evidenced by the reflections of ABASIRWA members who recognized the importance of continuous education and advocacy in shaping responsible media practices. Through collaborative endeavors, stakeholders are working towards a future where stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS are eradicated, paving the way for a more compassionate and inclusive society.

Citizen participation in Imihigo planning process and the competition

The Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base (CCOAIB) embarked on a journey across the districts of Rusizi, Karongi, Nyamagabe, Nyamasheke, and Rusizi. Their mission was to engage with local officials, advisors, and vice mayors, introducing themselves and laying the groundwork for their future work in these districts.



A key focus of their discussions was the Imihigo planning process, a unique approach that encourages citizen participation in shaping their community's future. They also introduced a competition designed to foster a deeper understanding of Imihigo planning in a fun and engaging way.

Upon entering each new district, their priority was to build relationships and understand the local community. They shared a mission and listened to the residents' aspirations for their future. The warm welcome and eagerness to connect that they received from everyone was truly inspiring.

They firmly believe in the power of community participation in decision-making processes. Hence, they engaged in meaningful dialogues with local leaders about enhancing citizen involvement in shaping their surroundings. These discussions were a valuable exchange of ideas and learning experiences, bringing them closer to their goal of inclusive planning.



To add an element of enjoyment to the learning process about Imihigo planning, they initiated a competition. This platform allows individuals to express their creativity and talents through various mediums such as art, poetry, and other activities. It's an opportunity for everyone to learn, have fun, and grow together.

Their experiences in these districts have underscored the importance of collaboration and mutual respect. They are excited about the future and the myriad possibilities it holds. By working together, they can build a brighter future for everyone.

Civil Society Barometer highlighted significant achievements within CSOs

The Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) organized a consultative meeting on 22 January 2024 to evaluate the findings presented in the Rwanda Civil Society Barometer (RCSB), a comprehensive report released by the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB).

The discussions provided valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the civil society sector, offering a holistic perspective on the current landscape.



The RCSB highlighted significant achievements within Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), with 90% actively contributing to decentralization efforts and an impressive 92.5% aligning their activities with national priorities, demonstrating a strong dedication to national development goals. The report also noted a near gender balance in leadership roles within CSOs, with men holding 55% of leadership positions, indicating progress towards more inclusive representation.

While showcasing the high level of trust citizens have in civil society at 87%, the barometer also identified areas of concern, particularly the limited collaboration between CSOs and the private sector.

Members emphasized the importance of a strategic approach to engage the private sector, proposing initiatives such as increasing the visibility of private sector interventions, providing direct support to CSOs, and encouraging corporate social responsibility practices to enhance collaboration and social impact.

Additionally, efforts to address compliance issues, especially among newer CSOs, were discussed, with suggestions for mentorship programs and the establishment of a civil society academy to equip youth with essential skills for effective organizational management and fundraising.



Amplifying Voices: Radio Talk Shows on Governance and Health Challenges

The RCSP, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organized two impactful radio talk shows under the project "Enhancing the Participation and Engagement of Non-State Actors for Responsive Governance in Rwanda."

The first talk show delved into the opportunities and challenges within Business Development Fund (BDF) services, featuring insights from Mr. Vincent Munyeshyaka, the CEO of BDF, and Ms. Musiime Fred, the Executive Director of Citizens Rights and Development (CRD). Mr. Munyeshyaka addressed gaps in information and financing for youth, while Ms. Musiime highlighted the unclear BDF selection criteria and applicant challenges.



The second talk show tackled the evident challenges in services provided by health posts nationwide, following an assessment by IDA Rwanda with RCSP support in Nyaruguru district. Dr. Corneille Ntihabose, Head of Clinical Services in the Ministry of Health, and Ms. Alliance Ishimwe, the outreach officer of Health Development Initiative (HDI), shed light on the functionality issues in health posts and the importance of improving health worker capacity.

These talk shows served as critical platforms to address key issues and enhance the visibility of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The audience actively engaged by posing questions through social media and text messages, underscoring the shows' effectiveness in involving the public in vital discussions on governance and health-related matters.

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PICTORIAL



RCSP participated in the pre-annual CSW68 consultative meeting in Rwanda



RCSP empowers its members to comply with Data Protection law

PICTORIAL



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DID YOU KNOW?



DID YOU KNOW?

RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM (RCSP)

Mission & Vision

RCSP is an apex body of Rwandan CSOs with 14 members, established in July, 2004.

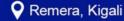
The mission of RCSP is to act as a framework of coordination, knowledge exchange, promoting synergy among its members and strengthening their capacity to be impactful at national, regional and international levels.

The vision of RCSP is to be an effective platform for safeguarding public interest and sustainable development.



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E-IHURIRO

This is the CSO Digital Hub which aims to strengthen the capacities of civil society actors and enhance networking, cooperation and partnership building among key stakeholders of the civil society in Rwanda. In addition, it is dedicated to promoting accessible information about civil society, while allowing users to explore jobs, announcements and funding opportunities in Rwanda.

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

To register on the platform, Open the 'E-IHURIRO CSO' Tab on our Website www.rcsprwanda.org



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THANK YOU!

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



















Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

We look forward to sharing with you again the next edition.













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