



RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM

A HOLISTIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT ON YOUTH CIVIC PARTICIPATION

(Gisagara, Nyanza, Rutsiro, Nyamagabe, Ngororero, Nyaruguru, Gatsibo, and Nyagatare)

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS



October, 2023

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I. INTRODUCTION

About Rwanda Civil Society Platform

Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) is an apex body of Rwandan civil society organizations, established in 2004 with a vision of contributing to building a society where all people can peacefully enjoy and claim their human development rights, and a mission to represent its members in the processes of facilitating citizen's participation in sustainable development efforts through constructive dialogue, debate and advocacy at the national and the international levels.

In collaboration with members and their constituencies, RCSP fosters the partnership, inclusion, and amplifies voices in Rwandan society to enhance and facilitate citizen participation in a sustainable development.

Also, RCSP as the premier body in the country's civil society sector has been partnering with International NGOs, Development Partners, and Government institutions to raise voice in national policy, ensuring that the needs and aspirations of Rwandans are advocated for to duty bearers.

DISCLAIMER

This assessment was conducted with the financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – Rwanda Country Office. The content of this report does not necessarily represent the views or positions of UNDP.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP), A Holistic Needs Assessment on Youth Civic Participation in 8 Districts, 2023, Kigali-Rwanda.

II. FORWARD

Citizen participation, including the youth, is both a right and a necessity for the nation's sustainable development and peace. The right to participate is recognized and guaranteed by both the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, other national laws and the international legal and regional instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR).

The concept of citizen participation relates to all aspects of public affairs and national development, including planning, budgeting, implementation, evaluation of national governance and development processes, programs and initiatives as well as the formulation, implementation and review of policy at national and local levels.

As per the spirit of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda and the international and regional instruments to which Rwanda is a party, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) has put in place the legal and institutional frameworks and adopted several initiatives to enable and promote citizen participation both at the national and local levels. Some specific platforms and initiatives were also put in place to promote youth civic participation. These reforms and initiatives testify to the political will and commitment, particularly at the highest level of the GoR, to enable citizens to participate in public affairs and national development.

Despite the commendable efforts of the GoR, evidence from different studies and assessments indicate that there is still low citizen participation especially in the planning (including budgeting) and evaluation of development programs as well as formulation and review of policies.

The current report provides the status of youth civic participation in the 8 districts of Rwanda: Gisagara, Nyanza, Rutsiro, Nyamagabe, Ngororero, Nyaruguru, Gatsibo, and Nyagatare. It describes the challenges limiting effective youth civic participation in the mentioned 8 districts. The report provides recommendations to improve youth civic participation.

As a platform that amplifies voices to enhance and facilitate citizen participation in a sustainable development, RCSP and its members will use the findings of the assessment to develop targeted strategies to engage and empower the youth for their meaningful civic participation. We also believe that the findings and recommendations of this assessment will inform decision-makers on the policy actions and interventions needed to improve youth civic participation and unleash their full potential in determining choices for their communities and the country at large and to effectively contribute to national development.

Ms. KABEZA Angelique
Executive Secretary, Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP)

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling method and sample size

For the quantitative assessment, and considering that our population size was known, Slovin’s Formula was adopted: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$, where (n) is the sample size, (N) is the given population size and (e) is a margin of error.

The population size for this assessment was 87,9942 people/youth (432,781 male, representing 49%, and 447,161 female, representing 51%). The figures are derived from the 5th Population and Housing Census, Rwanda (2022). See the detailed table of the figures of youth population per the targeted district of the assessment.

Therefore,
$$n = \frac{87,9942}{1+87,9942(0.05)^2} = 399.8 \text{ (400 people)}$$

The sample size was 400 individuals/youth, but the assessment reached 403 individuals, from the 8 targeted districts. The reason behind exceeding the sample size was the availability, in the late stages of the assessment, of the youth with disabilities in Gatsibo district and in order to get as much inputs as we could from the youth with disabilities, we decided to interview them though the total number of youth to be interviewed in that district had reached.

For the qualitative assessment, the assessment used purposive sampling, where participants were selected based on their knowledge on the research topic and/or the formal responsibilities they have related to youth representation.

Data collection, cleaning and analysis

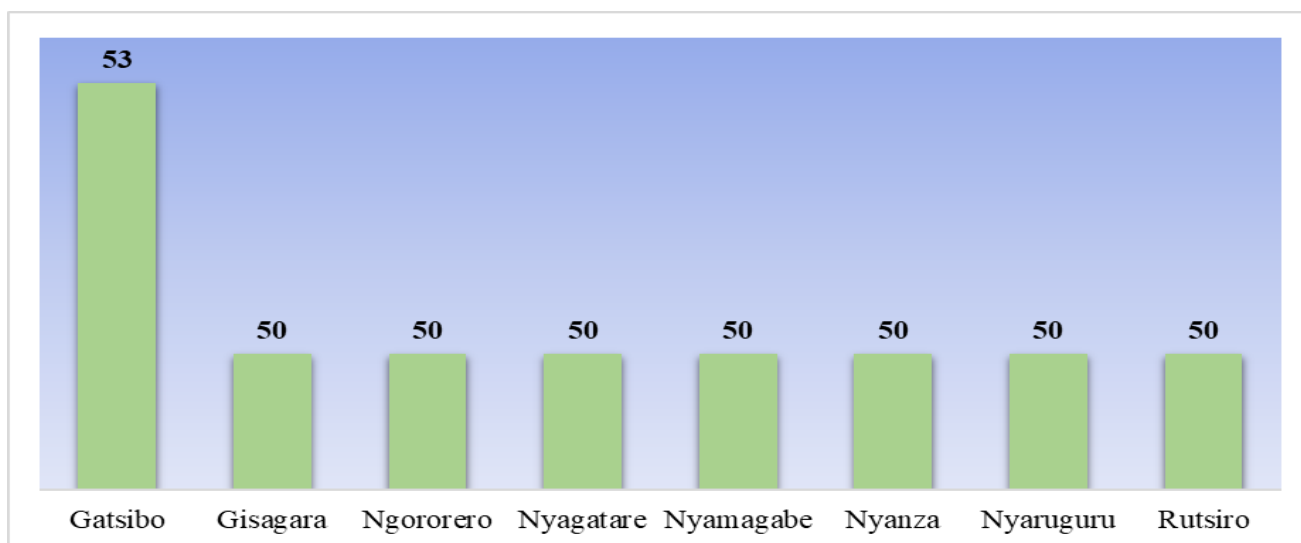
As part of the data triangulation to ensure there is validity in the information that has been collected, different data collection methods and tools have been used. The methods used were: structured interviews with the youth, Key Informants Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the youth, and secondary data review (desk review). In this regard, a tablet-based questionnaire was used to gather information from the youth, and interview guides were developed and used for the KIIs and FGDs.

Structured interviews

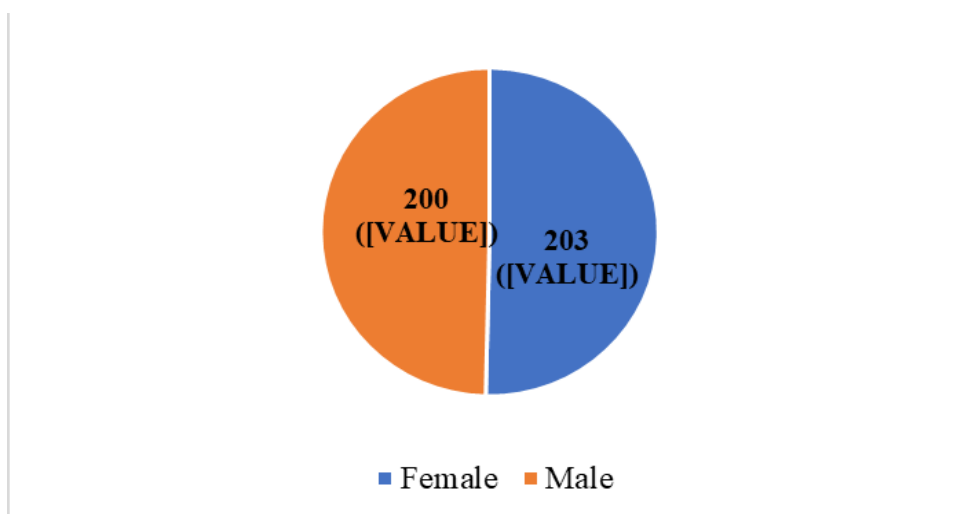
Structured interviews were conducted with 403 youth (200 female, representing 49.63%, and 203 males, representing 50.37%), randomly selected. Interviews were conducted with the youth from two sectors of each district. The sectors were selected using both purposive and random sampling methods. On the purposive sampling, the assessment targeted the “urban” sector of the district – each district has a designated “urban” sector (Umurenge w’umujyi). The rural sectors were randomly selected using the Index Function in Excel to extract the specific Sectors from the list based on random numbers generated and assigned to each Sector from the list.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

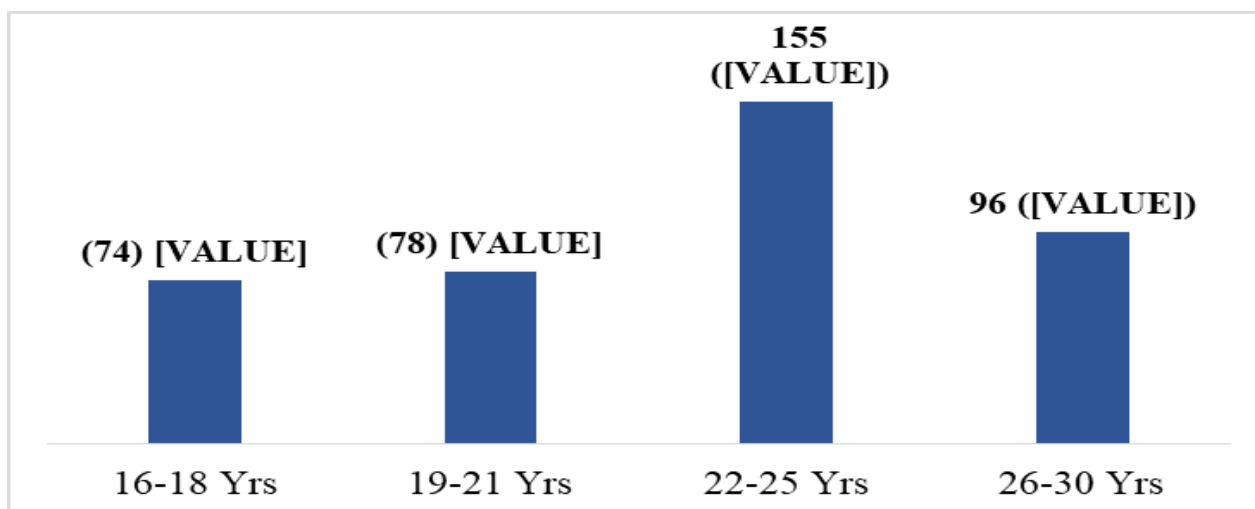
Total number of respondents per district



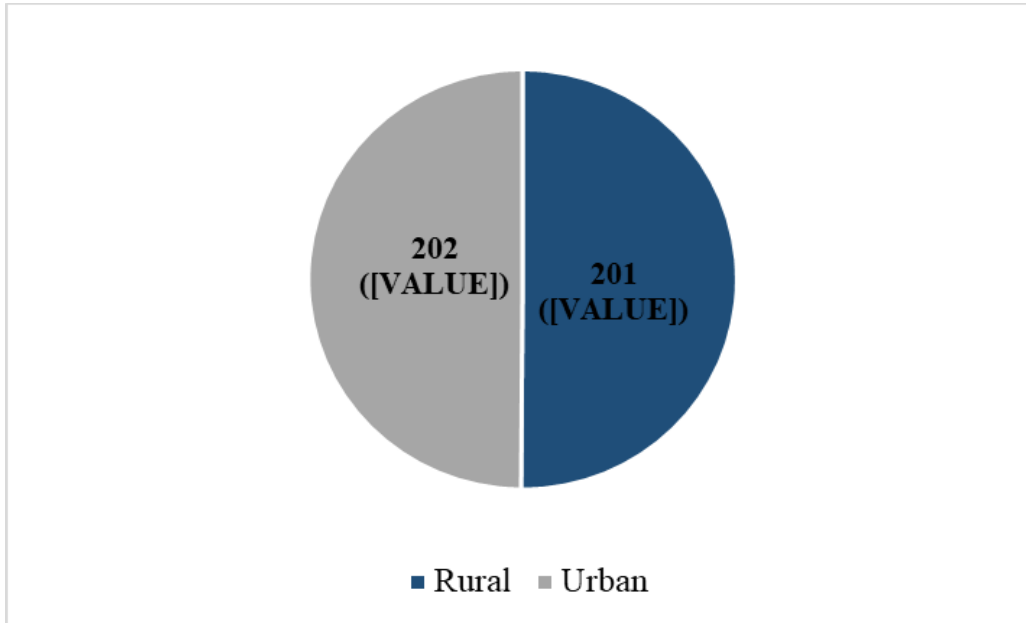
Total number of respondents by sex



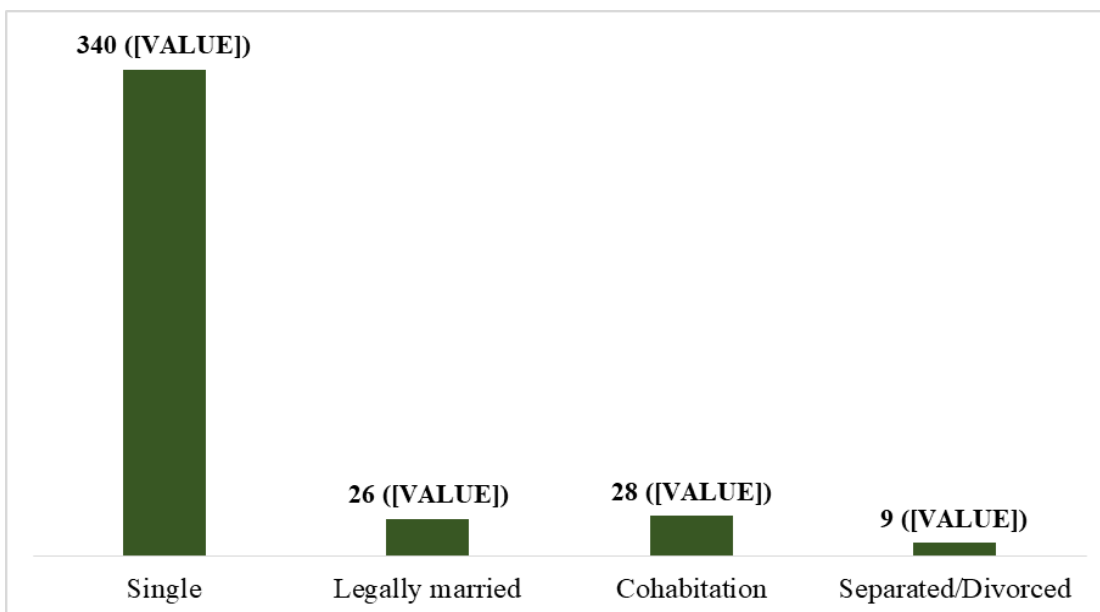
Total number of respondents per age group



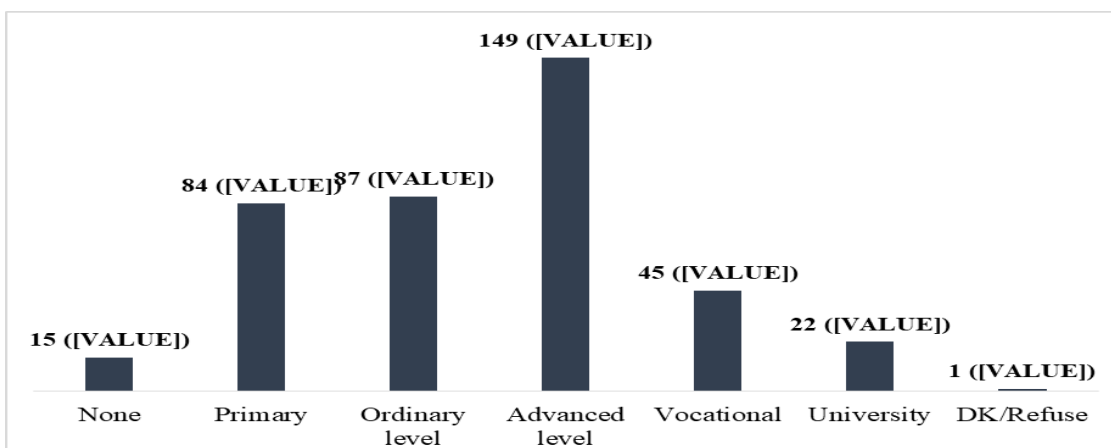
Total number of respondents per location



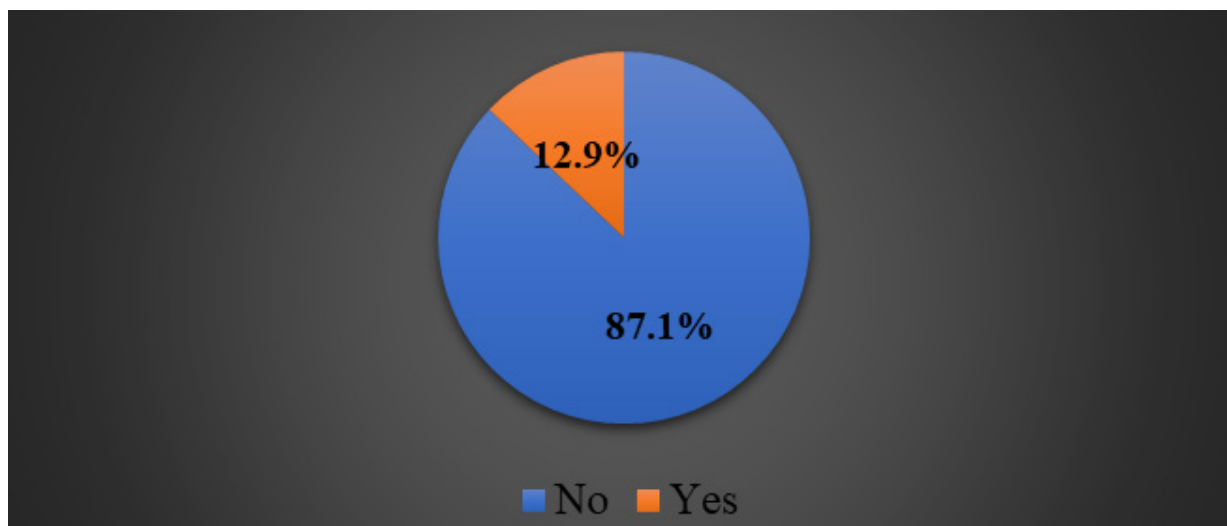
Total number of respondents per marital status



Total number of respondents per education level



Persons with disabilities among the total number of respondents

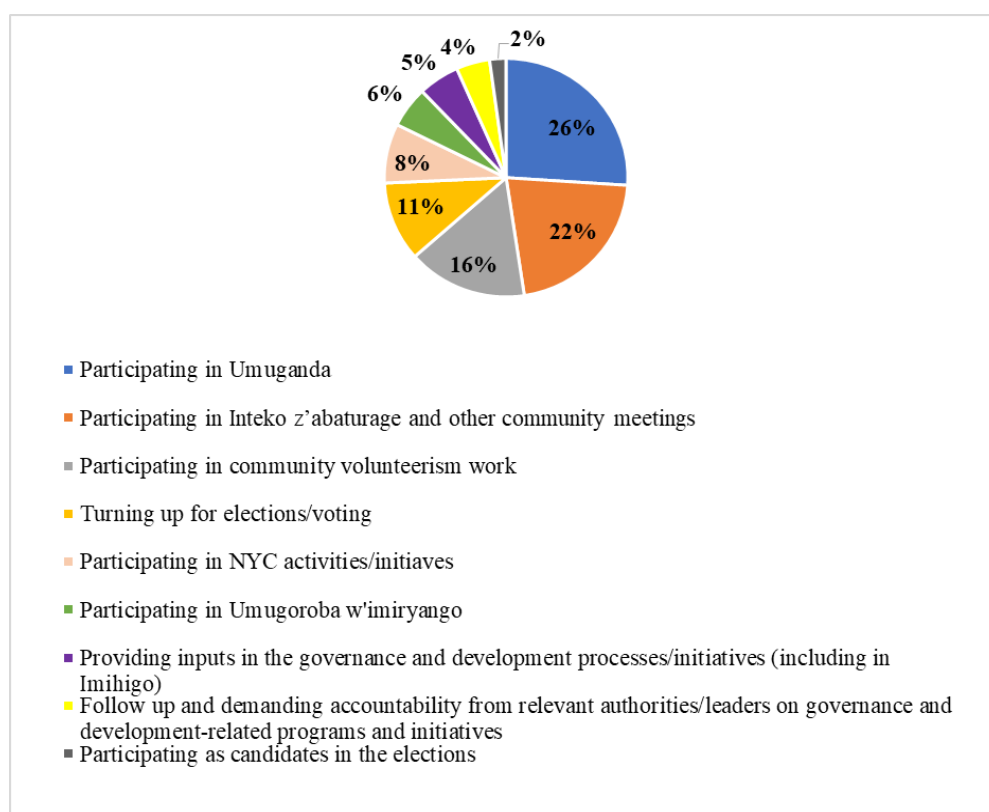


V. FINDINGS OF THE ASSESSMENT

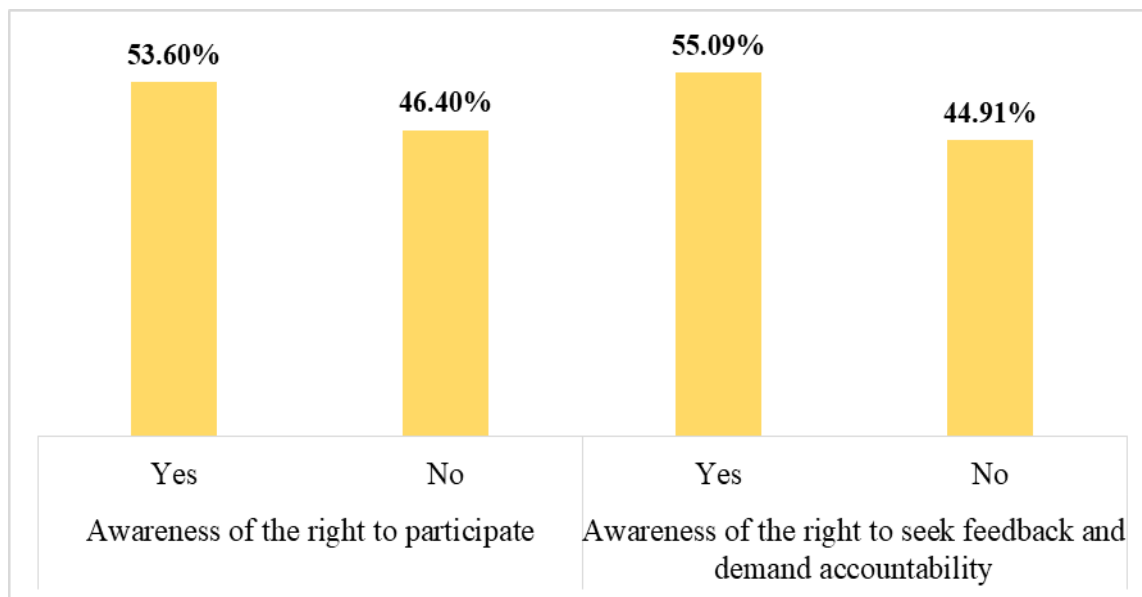
1. Understanding of civic participation and awareness on the right to participate

This subsection presents the findings on the understanding of civic participation by the surveyed youth and the awareness of their right to participate, seek feedback and demand accountability from the duty bearers.

Respondents' understanding of civic participation

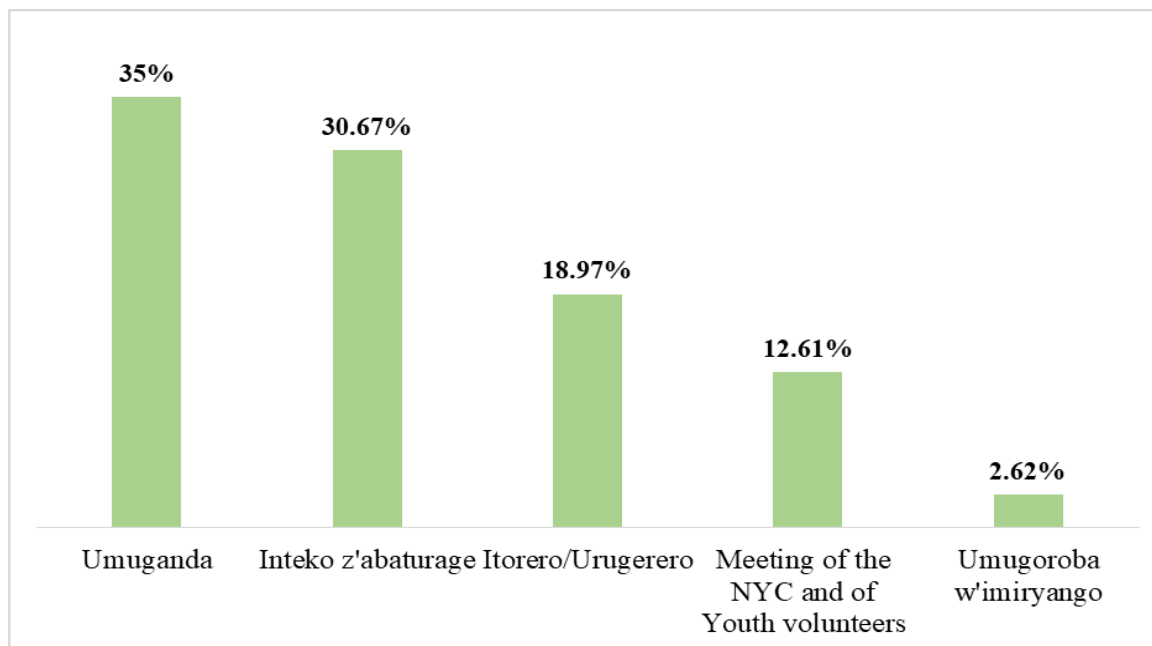


Awareness of the right to participate, seek feedback and demand accountability from local leaders



2. Civic engagement mechanisms at the local level and their effectiveness

This subsection describes the awareness levels of the existing local level civic engagement mechanisms or platforms by the youth, equality in accessing these mechanisms, the youth’s attendance levels to these mechanisms, and the youth’s perception of the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

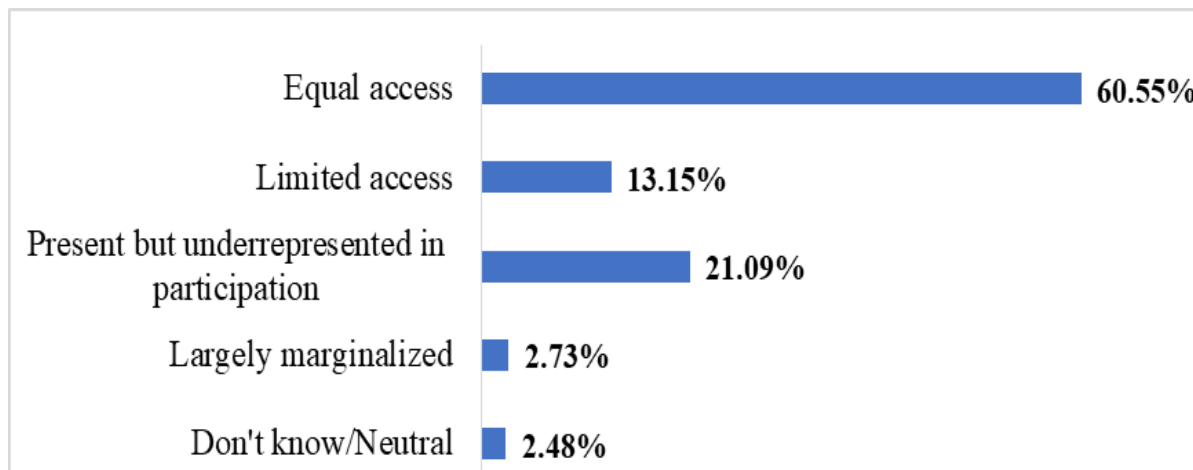


Umuganda was the most popular local level civic engagement mechanism among the surveyed youth with 35%, followed by Inteko z'abaturatione (30.67%). It is worth-noting, however, that only 2.62% of the youth participants to the survey knew or considered Umugoroba w'imiryango as a civic engagement mechanism for the youth as well.

Equality in accessing civic mechanisms

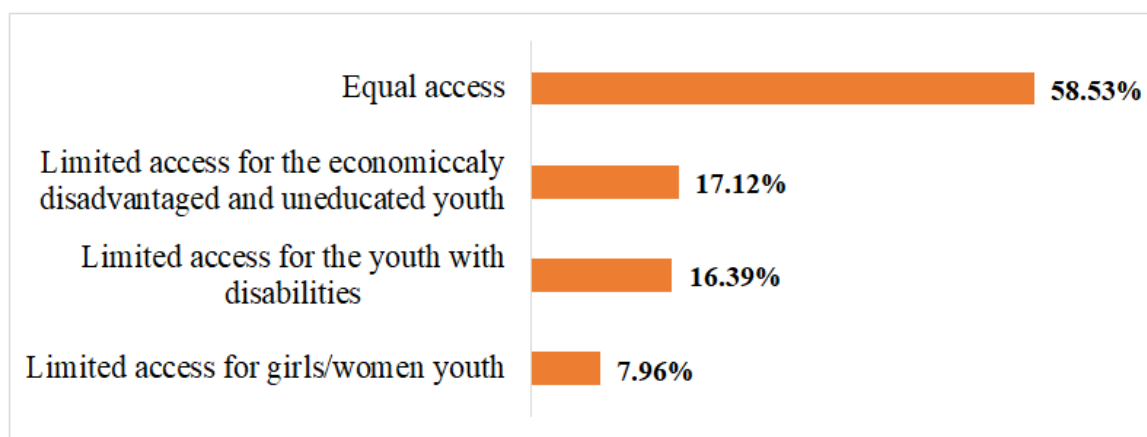
The assessment also sought to understand the accessibility to civic engagement spaces between the youth and adults as well as among the different categories of the youth, as elaborated below.

Equality in accessing civic engagement spaces/platforms between the youth and adults



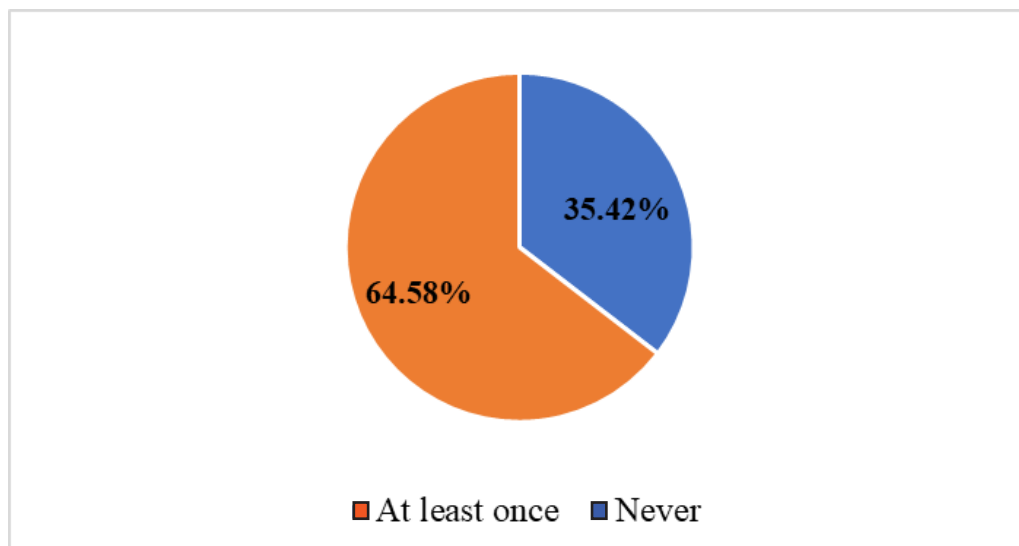
Majority of the surveyed youths confirmed that there is equal access to civic engagement spaces between the youth and adults. They elaborated that formally, there are no restrictions to the youth to attend and/or participate in civic spaces. The issue is on how these civic engagement events and spaces are managed, referring again to the adult-dominance of these spaces.

Equality in accessing civic engagement spaces/platforms among the different categories of the youth.



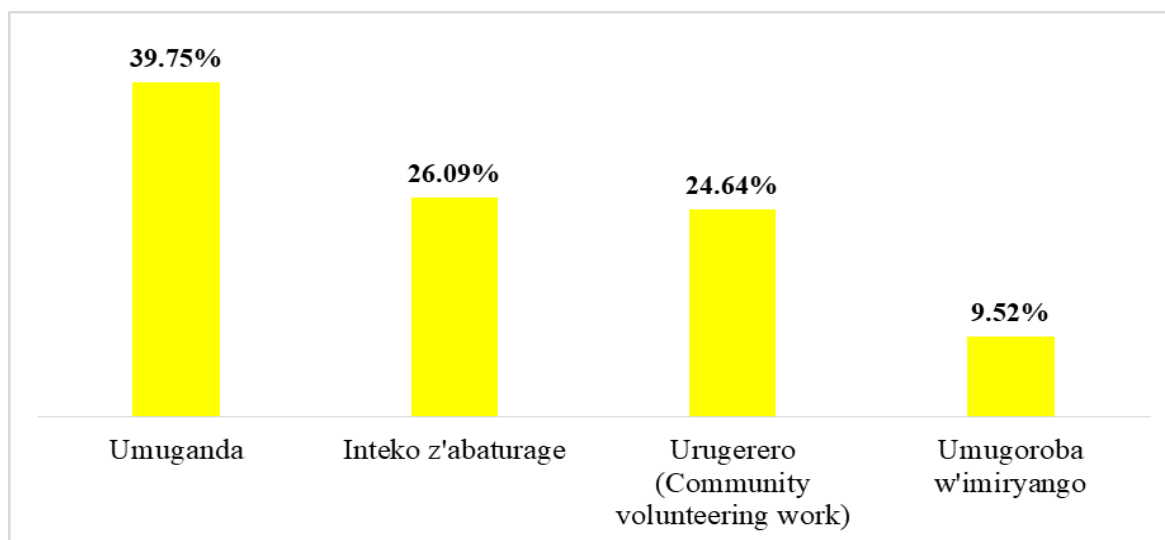
With regard to equality in accessing civic engagement spaces among the different categories of the youth, 58.53% the surveyed youth believe that there is equal access to civic spaces among all the categories of the youth. However, 17.12% of the surveyed youth indicated that there is limited access to civic spaces by the economically disadvantaged and uneducated youth.

Attendance to local level civic engagement mechanisms/platforms by the youth



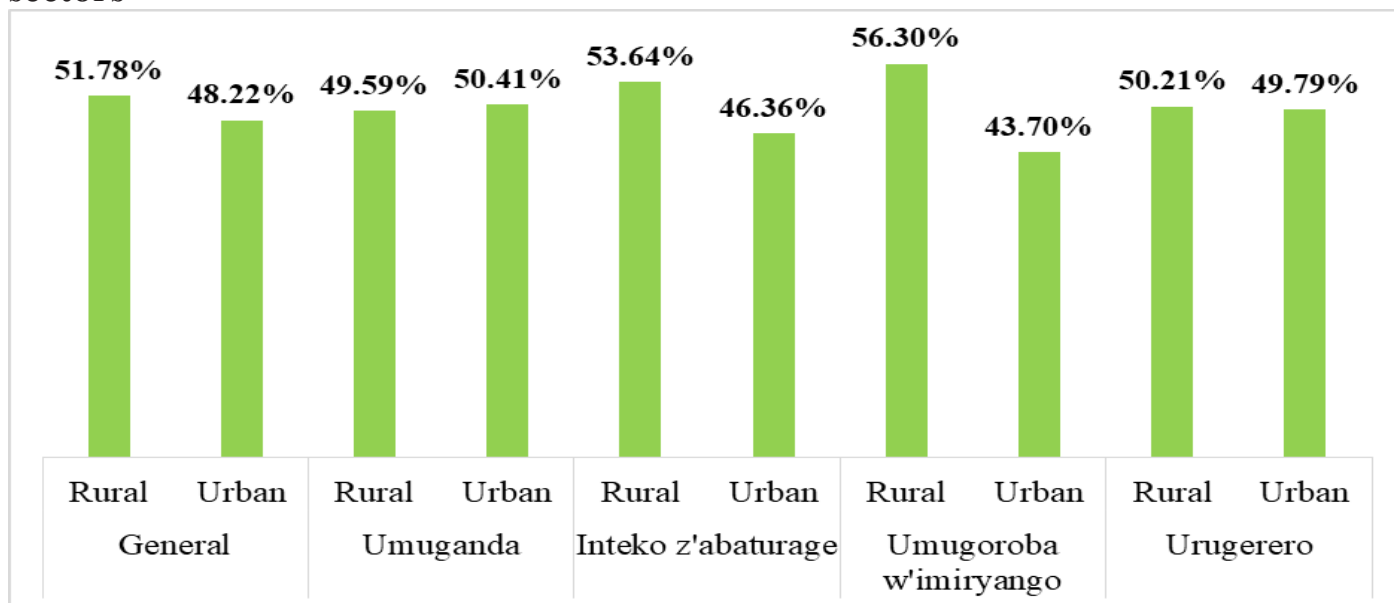
Asked whether they have ever attended any meeting of and/or participated in any event related to Umuganda, Inteko z'abaturage, Umugoroba w'imiryango and/or Urugerero, 64.58% of the surveyed youth indicated that they have attended (or participated in an event) at least once whereas 35.42% said they have never.

Attendance of the youth per the civic engagement mechanism

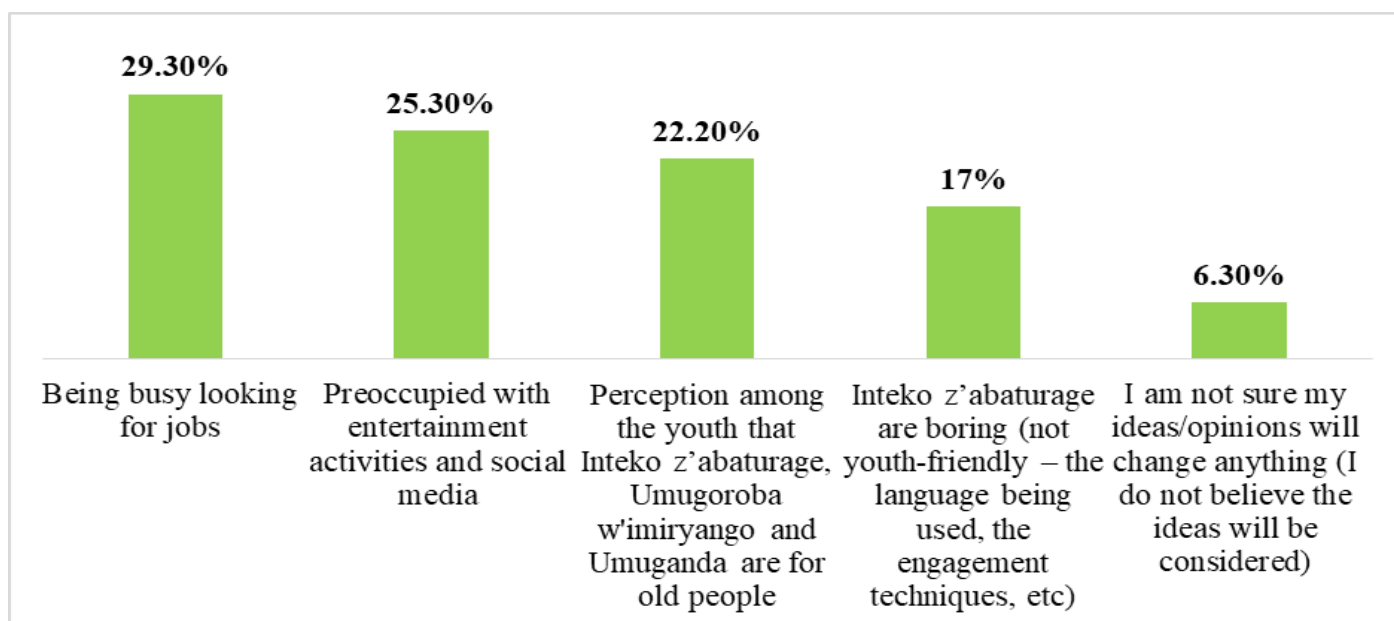


Umuganda came out to be the local level civic engagement mechanism that the surveyed youth often attend/participate in (39.75%), followed by Inteko z'abaturage at 26.09%. The analysis of findings showed not a significant difference in the attendance level between the youth in rural and urban sectors, whereby the youth from rural sectors attended at a rate of 51.78% whereas those in urban sectors attended at a rate of 48.22%.

Attendance to civic engagement mechanisms by the youth from rural and urban sectors



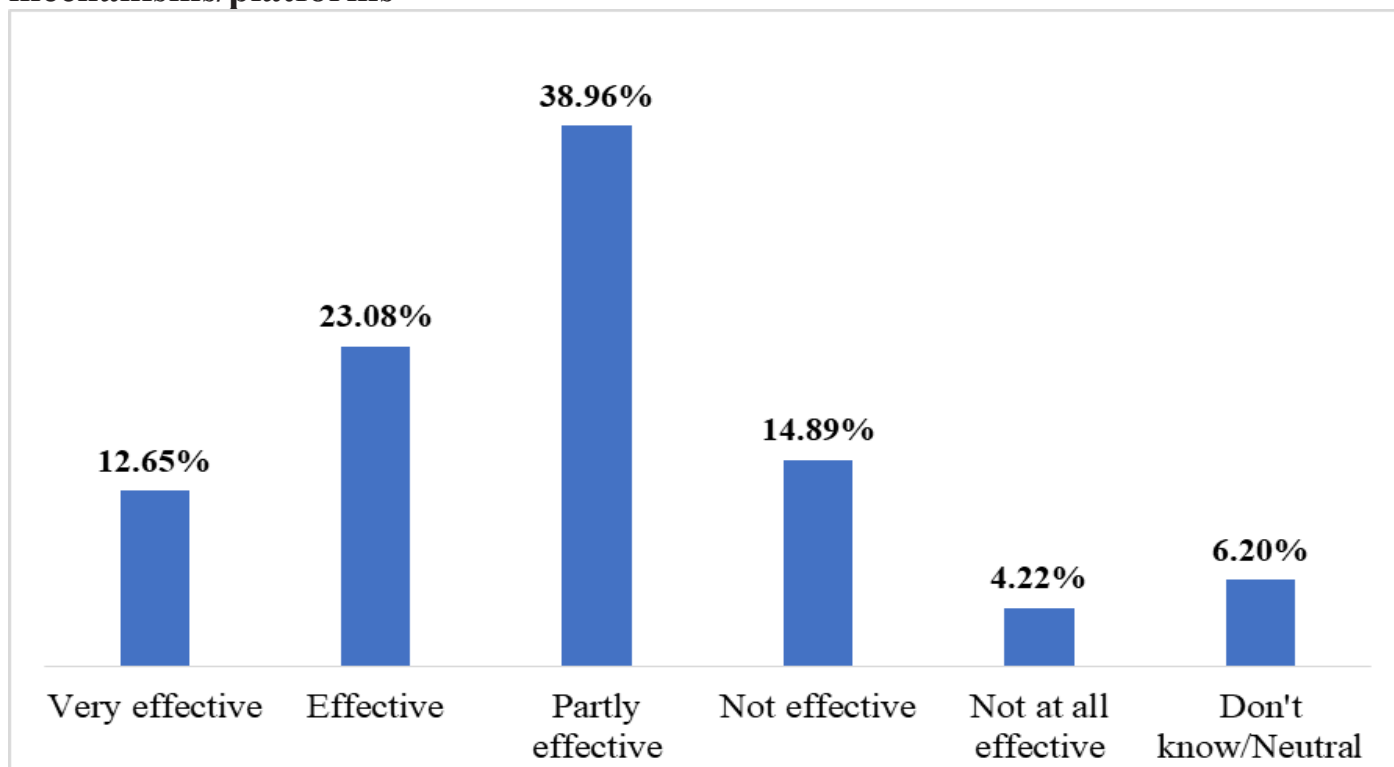
Reasons limiting attendance by the youth to the existing local level civic engagement mechanisms



Effectiveness of the existing local level civic engagement mechanisms/platforms

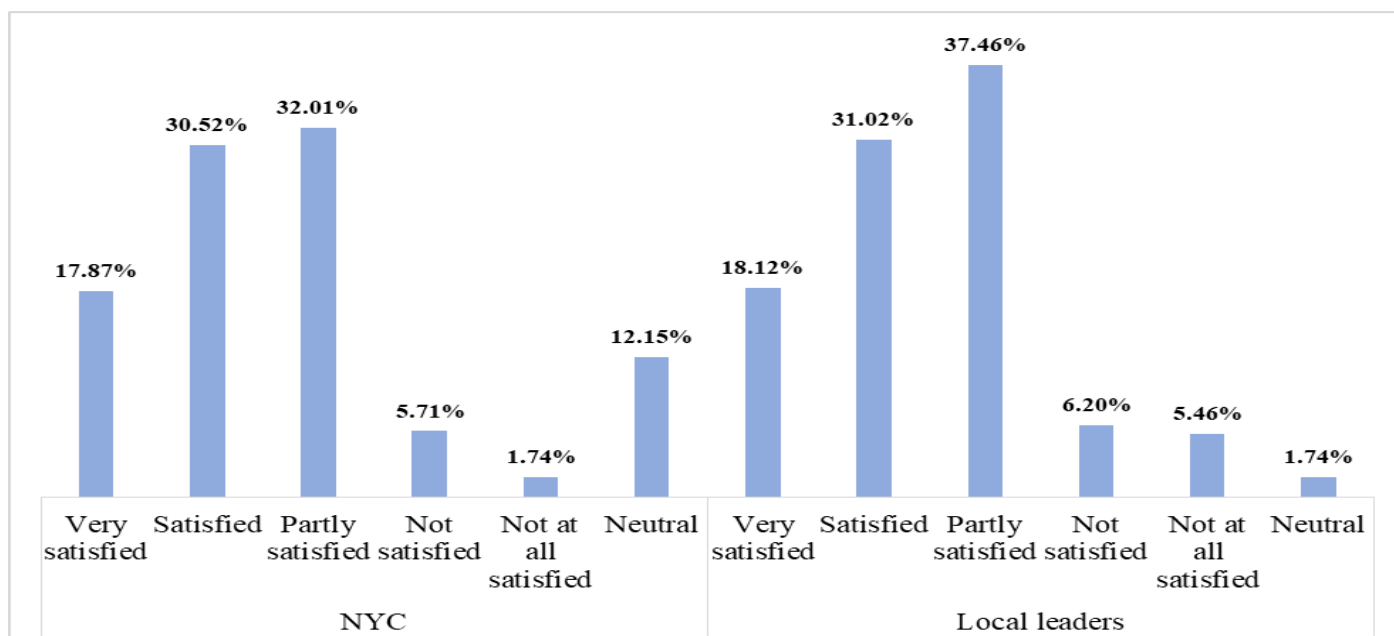
The surveyed youth were asked about their perception of the effectiveness of the existing local level civic engagement mechanisms.

Perception about the effectiveness of the existing local level civic engagement mechanisms/platforms



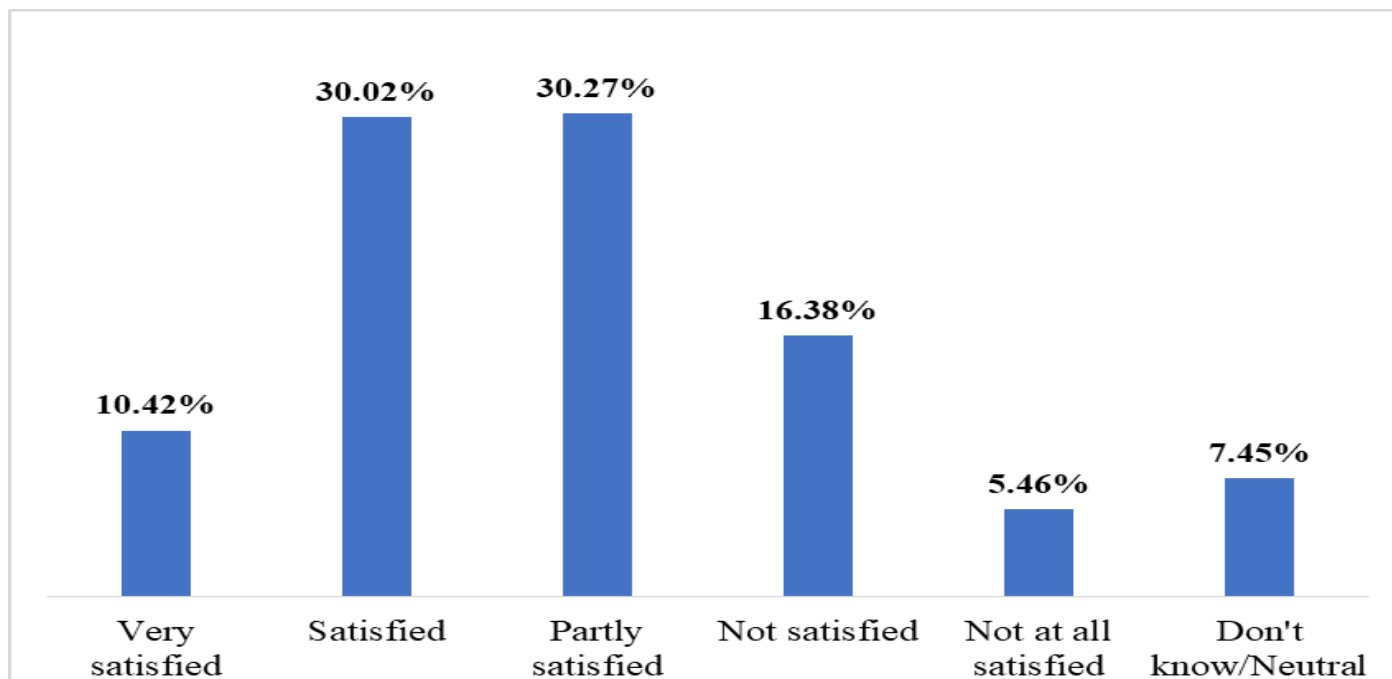
Majority of the surveyed youth see civic engagement mechanisms as partly effective (38.96%) compared to 35.73% who consider them as effective.

Satisfaction levels with the engagement of the youth by the NYC and the local leaders



The assessment findings show that majority of the youth are partly satisfied with the performance of the NYC and the local leaders in terms of engaging them in civic activities. They specifically complained about the lack of information from these authorities/representatives on the different national and local level programs, initiatives and opportunities, the fact that these authorities rarely meet the youth to hear and understand their issues and the challenges they are facing, among other complaints.

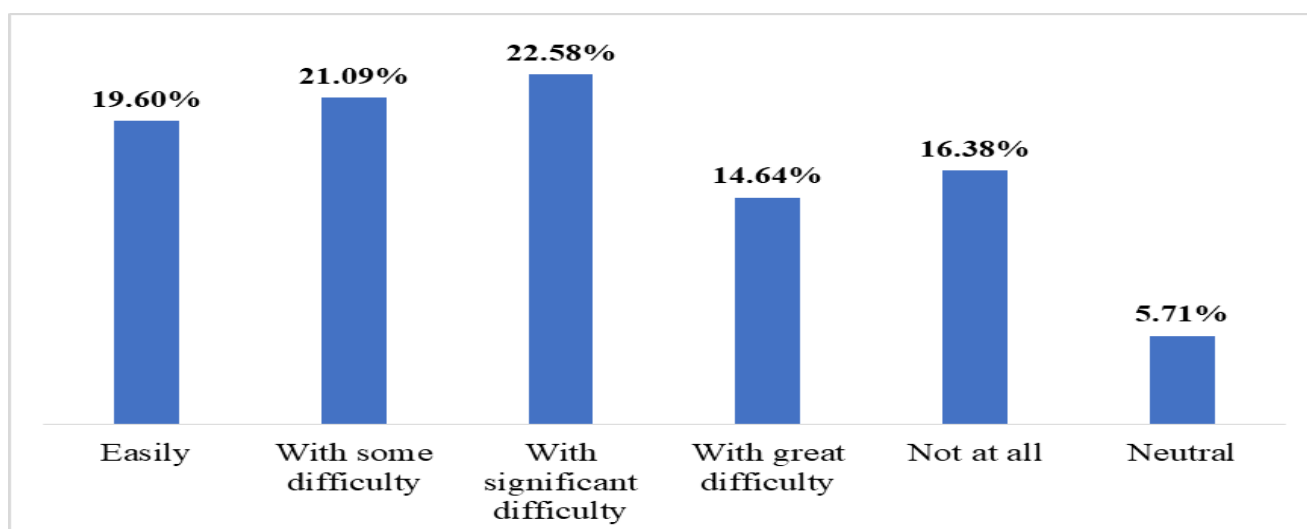
Satisfaction levels with the consideration of inputs from the youth



3. Capacity to engage and meaningfully participate

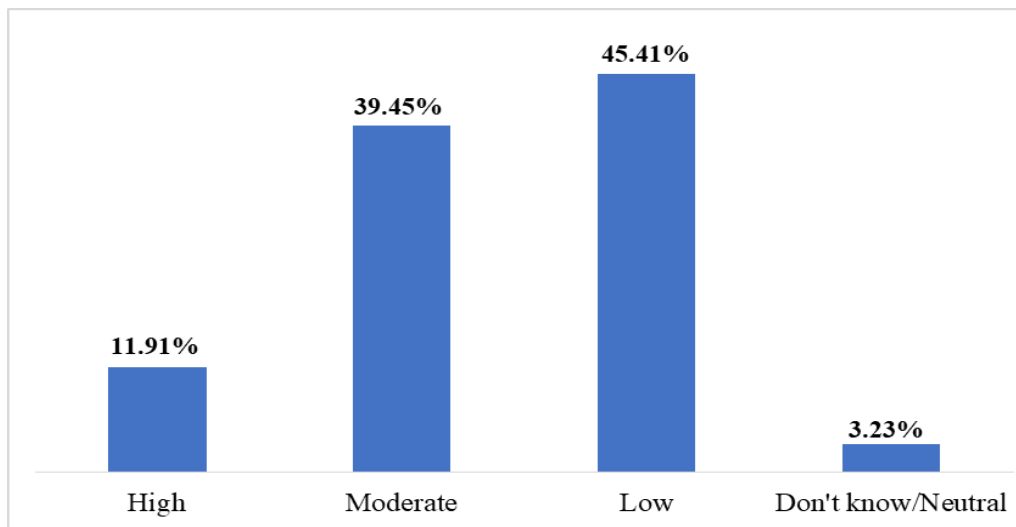
This subsection evaluates the youth's capacity to organize and/or lead public assemblies/events their knowledge on key national policies, development strategies, laws, programs and initiatives, as well as ability and urgency to influence decisions.

Capacity to organize and/or lead public assemblies/events by the surveyed youth



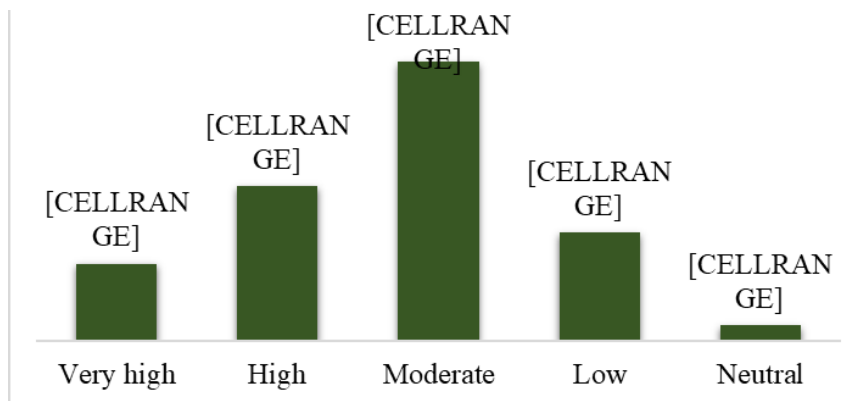
The findings indicate that 58.31% do not trust their capacity to organize and/or lead a public assembly, where they stated that it would be difficult for them to manage doing it, with only 19.60% stating that it would be easy for them to organize and/or lead a public assembly, while 16.38% feels they completely cannot manage to organize and/or lead a public assembly.

Respondents’ knowledge on key national policies, strategic development visions, laws, programs and initiatives.



Asked about how they would rate their knowledge on key national policies, strategic development visions, laws, programs and initiatives, 45.41% of the surveyed youth rated their knowledge low, with only 11.91% considering their knowledge as high.

Perception of the local leaders on the capacity of the youth to meaningfully participate



Asked about their assessment of the capacity of the youth, in their area, to meaningfully participate in civic matters, majority of the local leaders (43.90%) rated the capacity of the youth as moderate, with 24.39% considering it as high and 12.20% as very high.

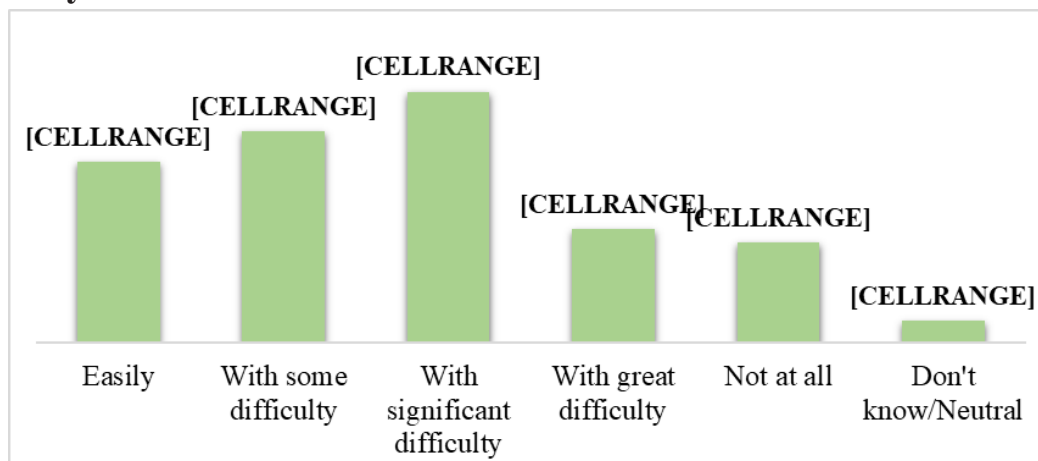
Ability and urgency to influence decisions

The assessment also examined the youth’s ability and urgency to influence decisions in their communities. The charts below show the assessment outcomes.

Ability to influence decisions

As per the chart below, 65.51% of the surveyed youth indicated that it is difficult for them to influence decisions of the local government. It is also notable that 11.41% of the surveyed youth believe that they cannot influence local government decisions at all.

Ability of the youth to influence decisions

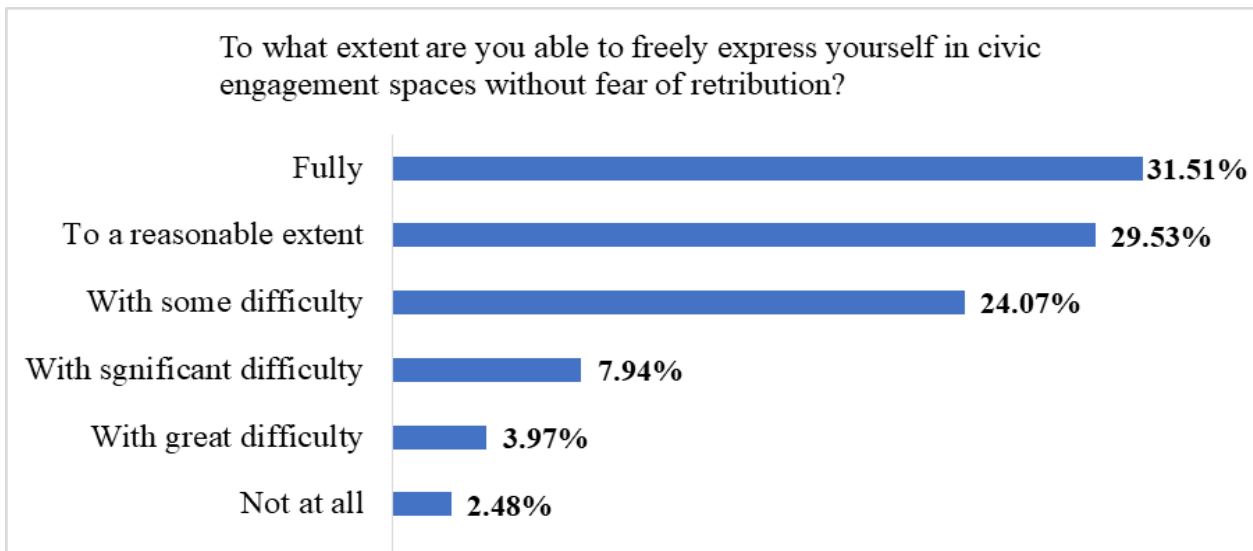


Some of the cited reasons which make it difficult for the youth to influence local government decisions include the lack of or limited space to participate (not being given the opportunity or adequate time to express themselves and be listened to) and limited knowledge and skills on how to do it.

Another reason mentioned is the attitude and leadership style of some leaders who dominant the meeting and consider community members/participants to the meeting to just be information consumers.

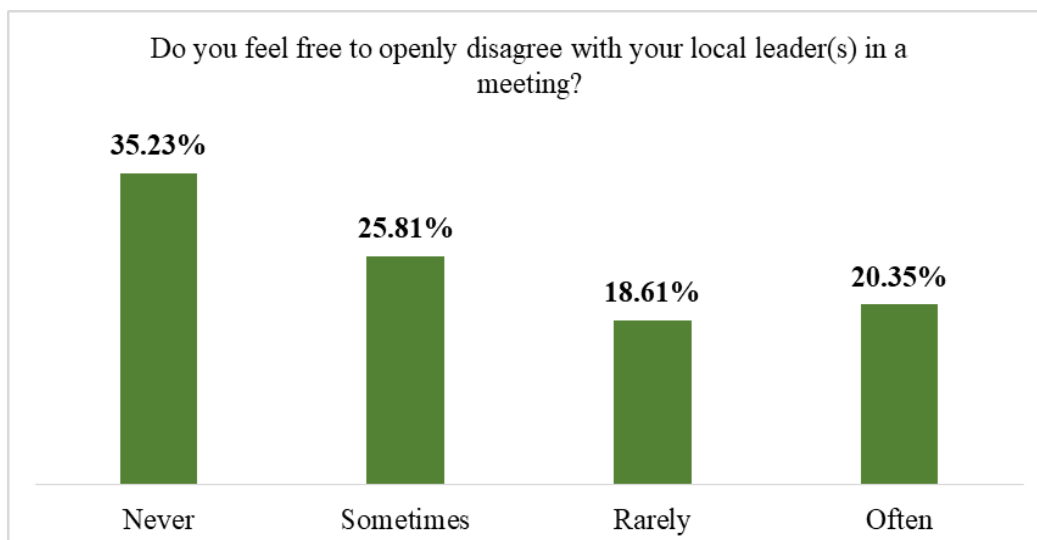
This attitude of dominating the discussions is also, for some leaders, coupled with another bad attitude of not tolerating a challenge.

The unhealthy attitude of some leaders, as highlighted above, could probably be one of the reasons why 38.46% of the surveyed youth indicated that they would not be free to express themselves in civic engagement spaces without fear of any retribution, as indicated in the table below:



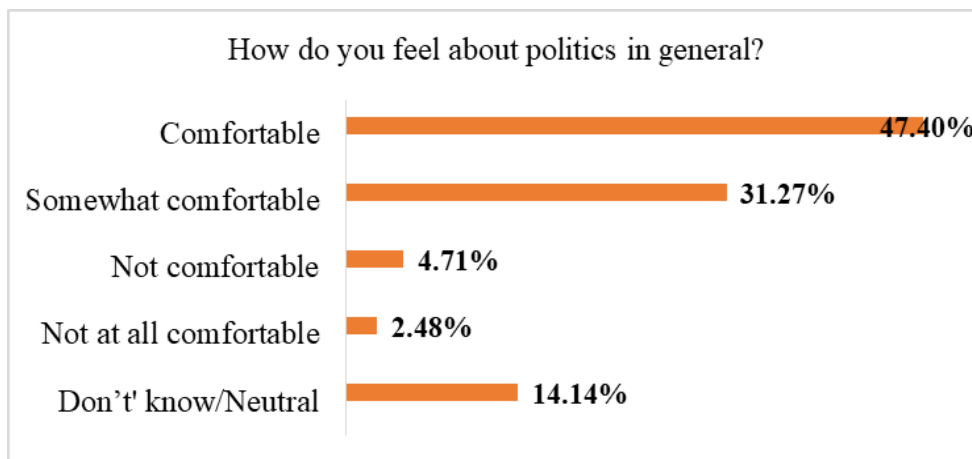
Whether this fear is imaginary or actual, the figures call for some action, including the use of friendly approaches and language in the civic engagement spaces and raising awareness on the rights and legal protections of the citizens to participate in all matters of national life, to ensure that people are free or feel free to express themselves in civic spaces and participate in the national governance and development processes, programs and initiatives.

Similar sentiments were also echoed by the surveyed youth when asked whether they feel free to openly disagree with or challenge their local leaders during a meeting, whereby 35.23% of the surveyed youth indicated that they would never feel free to do so, as per the chart below.

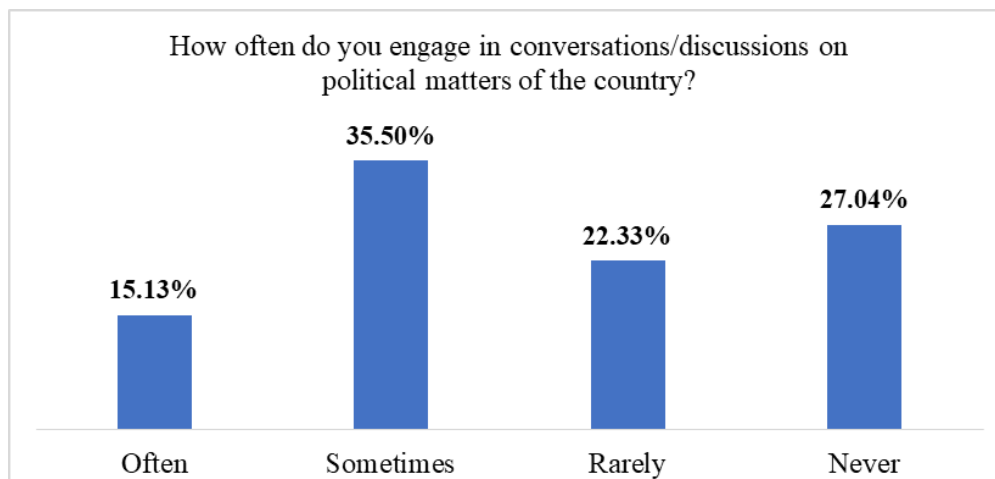


The issue of the youth not being free to express themselves to local leaders was also highlighted by some other reports. This could be related to a number of factors including the non-tolerant behaviour of some local leaders, as discussed above, the lack of confidence by some youth to articulate issues and/or the culture of blind or too much obedience cultivated (sometimes unconsciously) among the children in most of the Rwandan families (and hence grow up with this mindset).

On the subject matters, and considering the sensitivities some people have on politics as a result of Rwanda’s tragic history that culminated into the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis, the assessment sought to assess how the youth feel about politics and how comfortable they are to engage into conversations/discussions related to political matters of the country. The findings indicate that 47.40% surveyed youth feel comfortable about politics, 31.2% somehow comfortable, with only 7.11% not feeling comfortable (not comfortable and not at all comfortable).



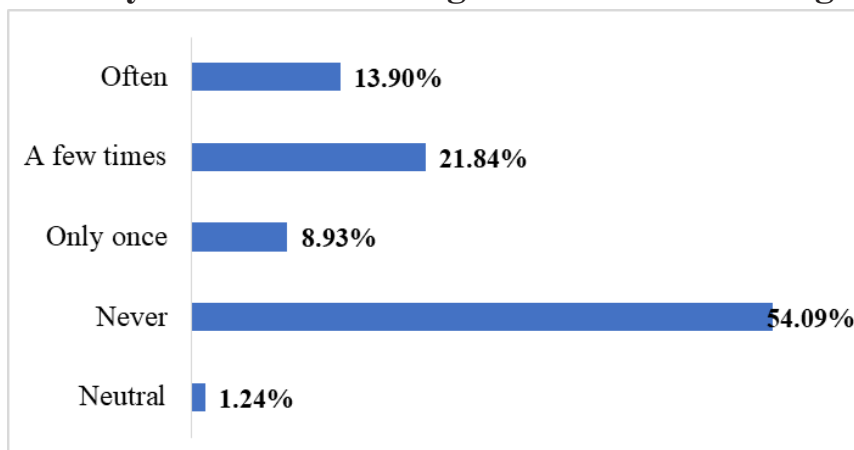
Related to the above question, the youth were also asked how often they engage in a conversation/discussion related to political matters of the country.



Urgency of the youth

Assessing the agency of the youth in influencing decisions and tabling their concerns and needs, the surveyed youth were asked how often, during the past two years, they contacted a local government official or youth representatives (from the NYC or those elected to other different organs/structures) to give them their views about the issues facing the community and the youth in particular. As per the chart below, 54.09% had never tried to contact any authorities, with only 13.90% indicating that they do it often.

Urgency of the youth in influencing decisions and tabling their concerns/needs.

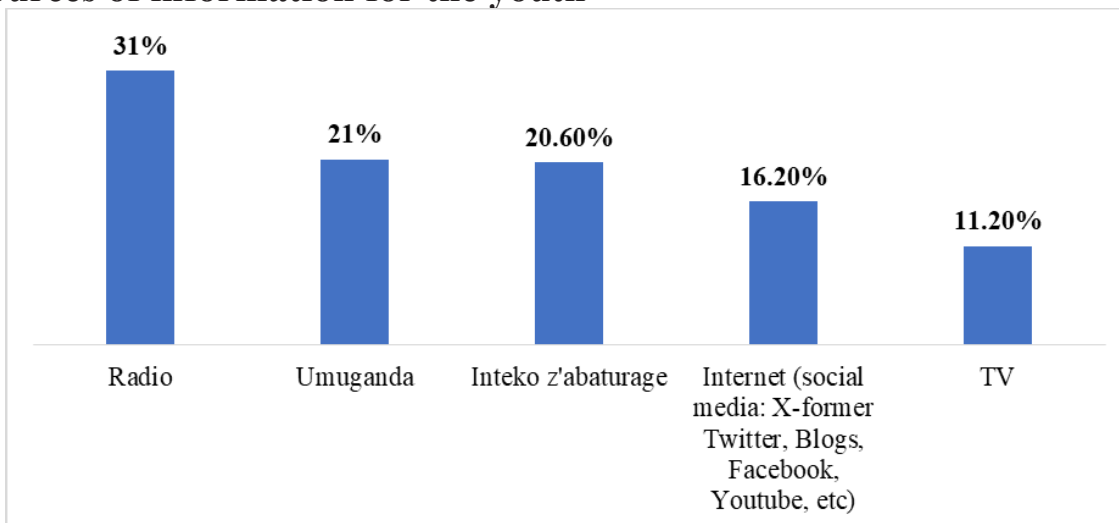


4. Access to information and dissemination of views by the youth.

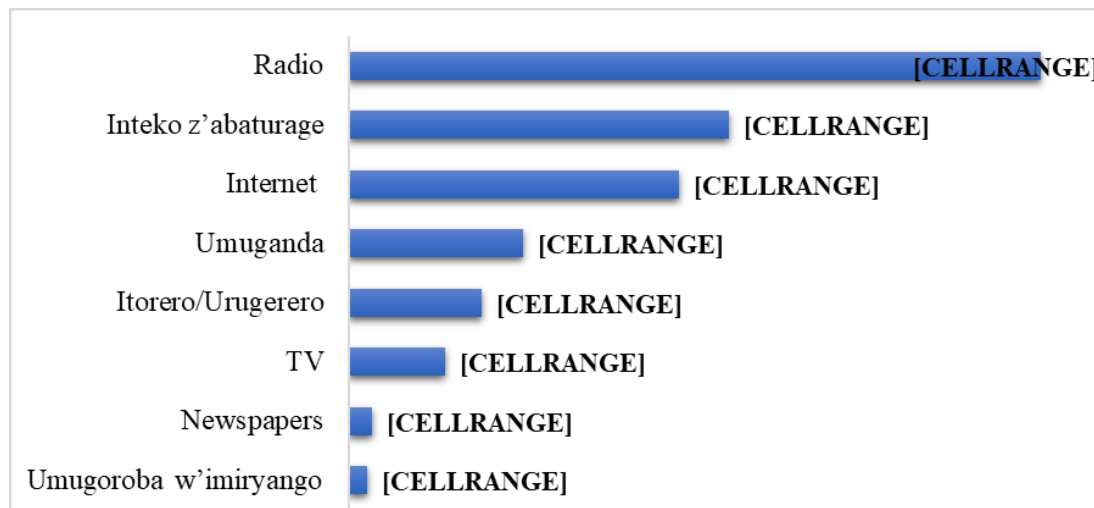
Sources of information for the youth

The survey respondents were asked to list the 5 main sources of information for them on governance and development matters.

Main sources of information for the youth



Influence levels of the different sources of information on the opinion of the youth

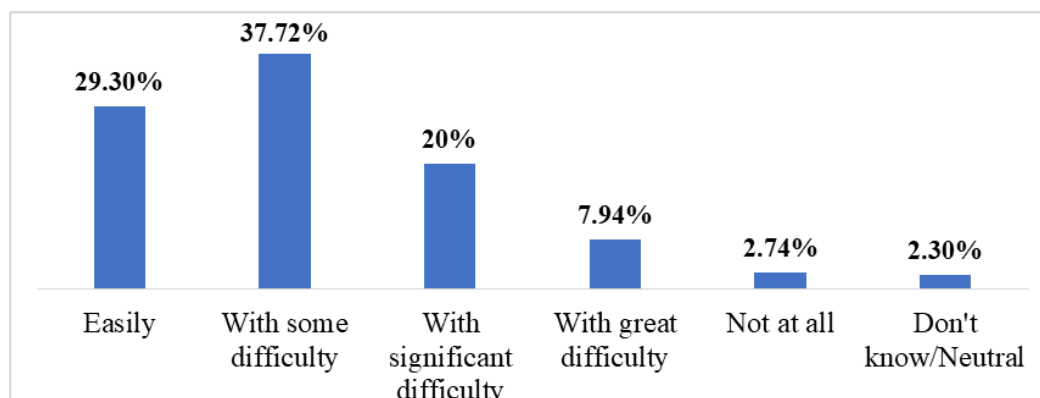


Asked about which media channel or information source would influence them the most on important social, economic and political issues, the youth indicated radio (at 37.47%), followed by Inteko z'abaturage (at 20.60%), internet (at 17.86%) and Umuganda (at 9.43%). From these two above charts (on the sources of information and on the information sources that would influence the youth's opinion the most) it is clear that the youth, though rarely attend, recognize that Inteko z'abaturage and Umuganda are important sources of information and key channels for influencing citizens opinions, including those of the youth. What stakeholders need to do is to find more attractive ways to increase youth turn up to these mechanisms and incentivizing approaches to empower and enable them to effectively participate in these mechanisms. The radio having come first among the information channels that influence the youth's opinion, correlates directly with findings from other related studies such as the 2021 Rwanda Media Barometer produced by RGB where on the citizens' trust of media channels, radio was ranked first at 70.2%, followed by television (TV) at 24.7% .

Ease of accessing information

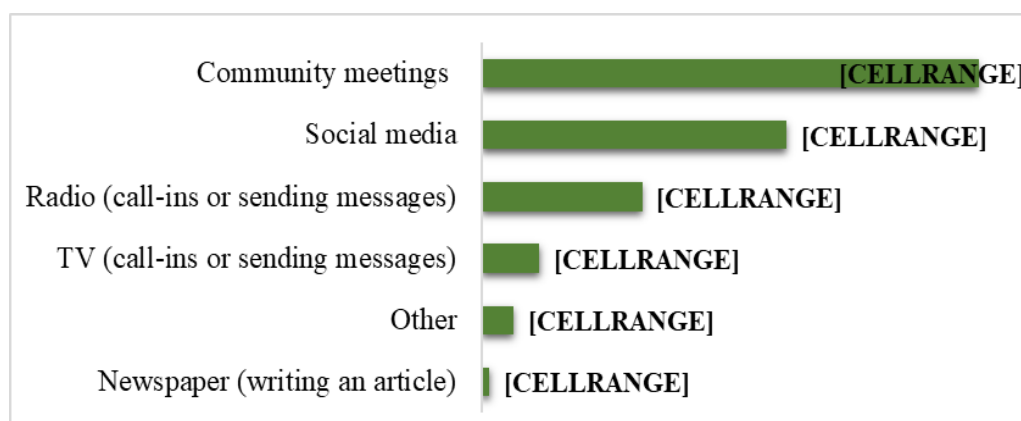
Despite commendable government and stakeholders' efforts, it should generally be reminded that, citizens' access to information in Rwanda is still a challenge and more needs to be done. The RGB 2021 Media Barometer indicates that only 54% of the surveyed population are satisfied with access to sources of information whereas only 55% are satisfied with access to information . This also relates to the findings from the current assessment, where 65.66% of the surveyed youth indicated it is difficult for them to access information as highlighted in the chart below:

Ease of access to information by the youth



Dissemination of views by the youth The youth surveyed were asked which communication channel or platform/forum they would be more comfortable with to voice their opinions. 46.89% of the respondents said that they would be comfortable to voice their opinions and views in the community meetings, followed by social media at 28.78%.

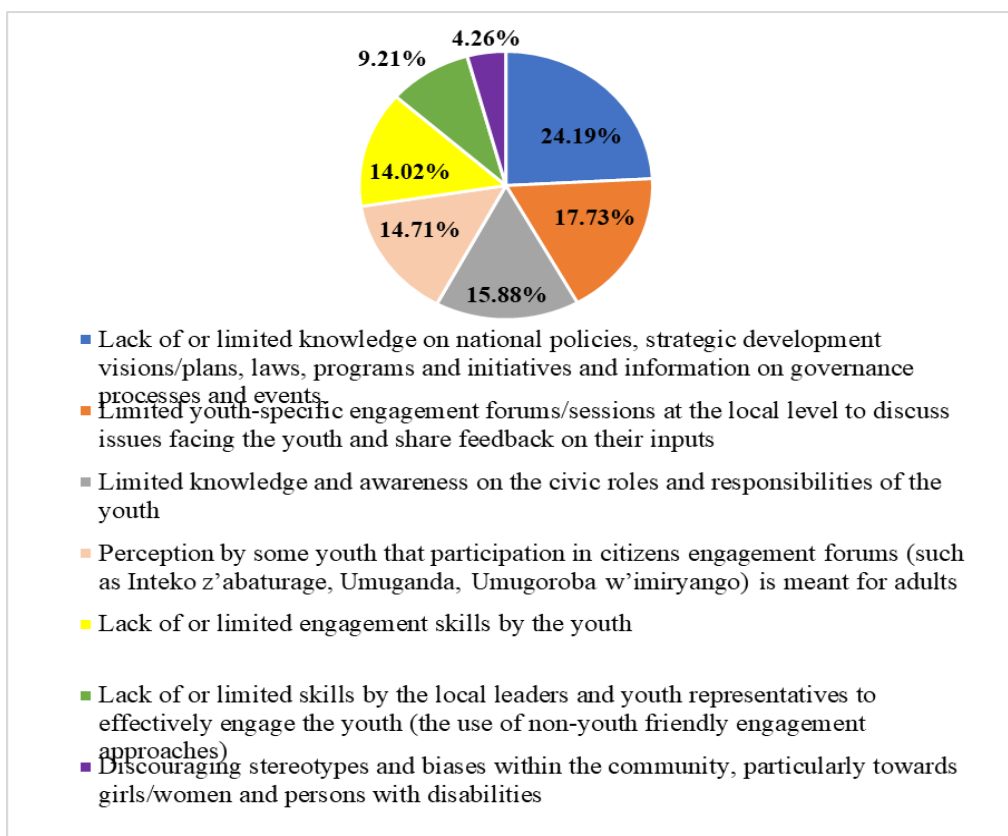
Main channels of dissemination of views by the youth



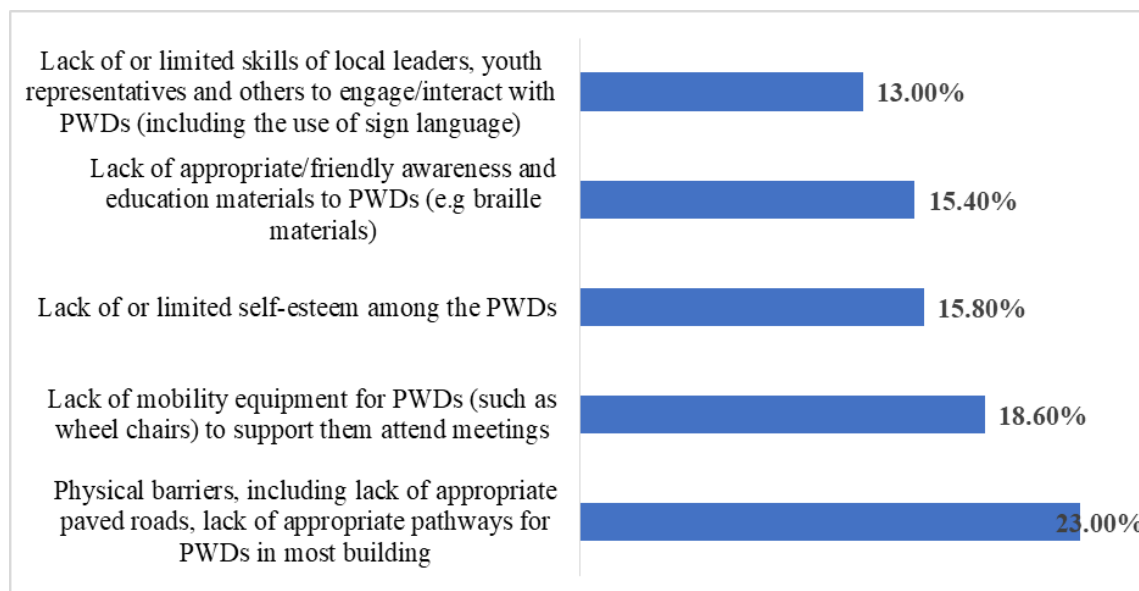
5. Factors limiting youth civic participation

This subsection discusses the factors limiting youth civic participation – starting with the general factors related to all the youth and then specific factors limiting the effective participation of the youth with disabilities and female youth.

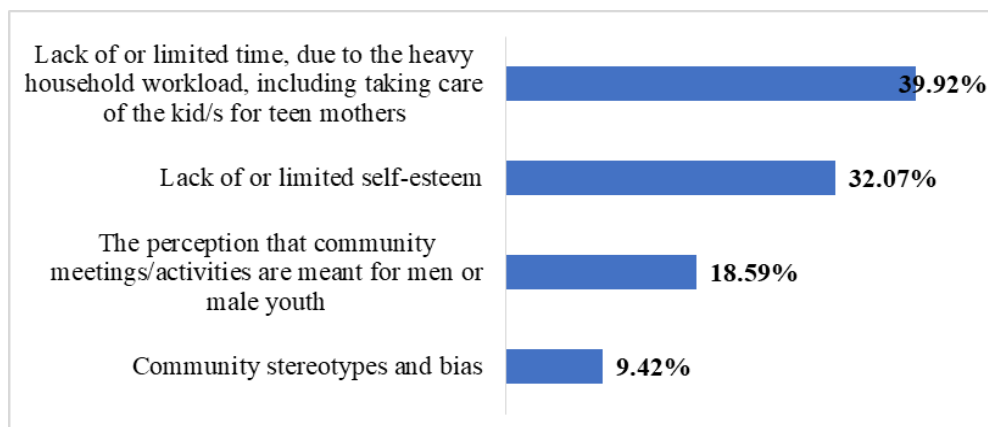
Factors limiting youth civic participation in gener



Factors limiting civic participation for the youth with disabilities



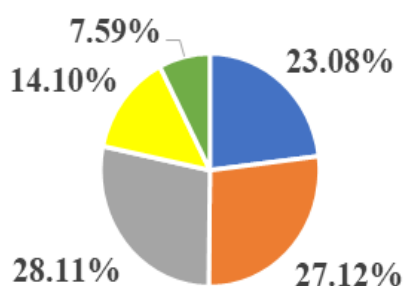
Factors limiting civic participation for the female youth



6. Needs of the youth to effectively participate in civic matters

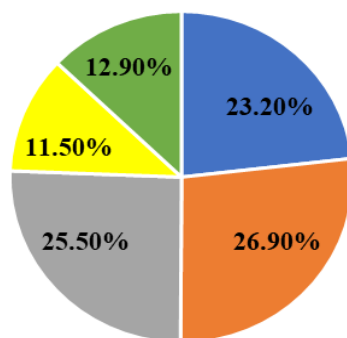
To effectively and meaningfully participate in civic matters, the youth highlighted the support they need from different actors. The charts below indicate the support the youth need from the NYC, from local leaders and from CSOs working in their communities.

Key areas in which the youth need the support of the NYC



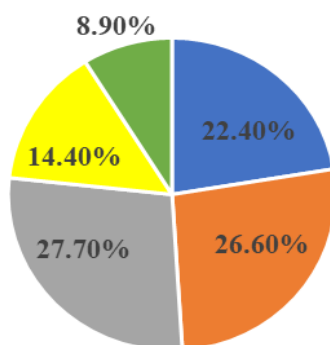
- Provision of (timely) information to the youth on the governance and development processes and related events
- Continuous awareness raising for the youth on their civic roles and responsibilities, on governance and development processes and on key national policies, strategic development visions, laws, programs and initiatives
- Continuous training on civic engagement skills and on legal rights
- Organize feedback sessions with the youth on the consideration/integration of the views provided by the youth in planning and budgeting processes of Imihigo and/or other development plans
- Organize or facilitate exchange and learning sessions between the youth of different areas/communities

Key areas in which the youth need the support of local authorities



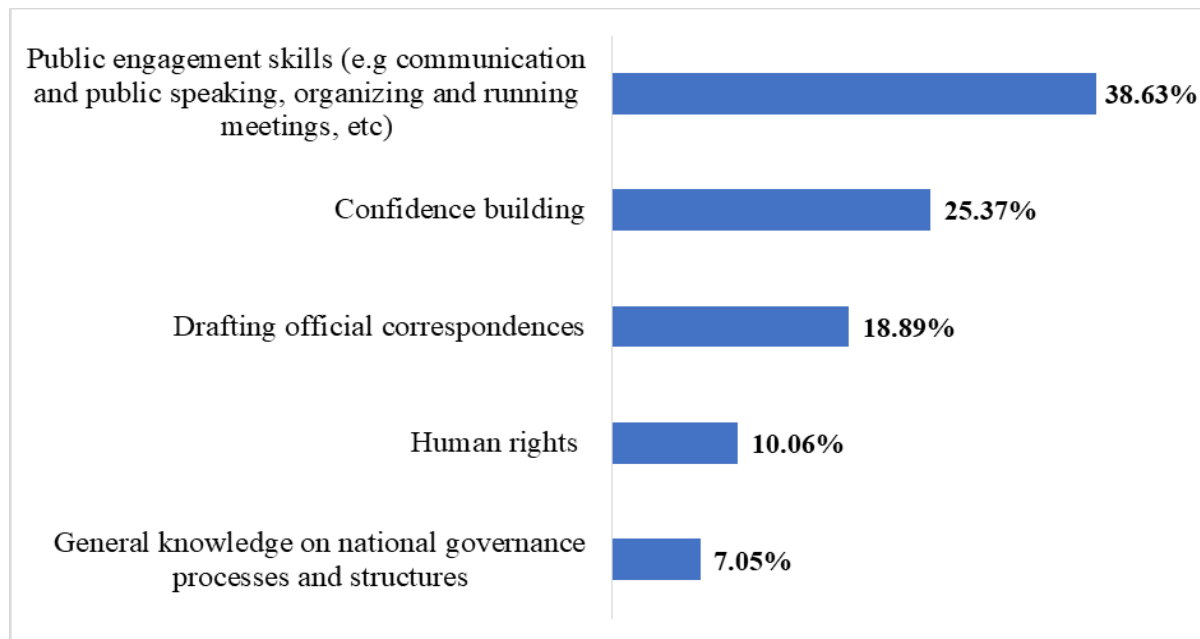
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- Continuous training on civic engagement skills and on legal rights
- Organize specific feedback sessions with the youth on the consideration of the views provided by the youth in planning and budgeting processes of Imihigo and/or other development plans
- Adopt youth-friendly approach/techniques of engaging the youth e.g using entertainment activities

Key areas in which the youth need the support of CSOs

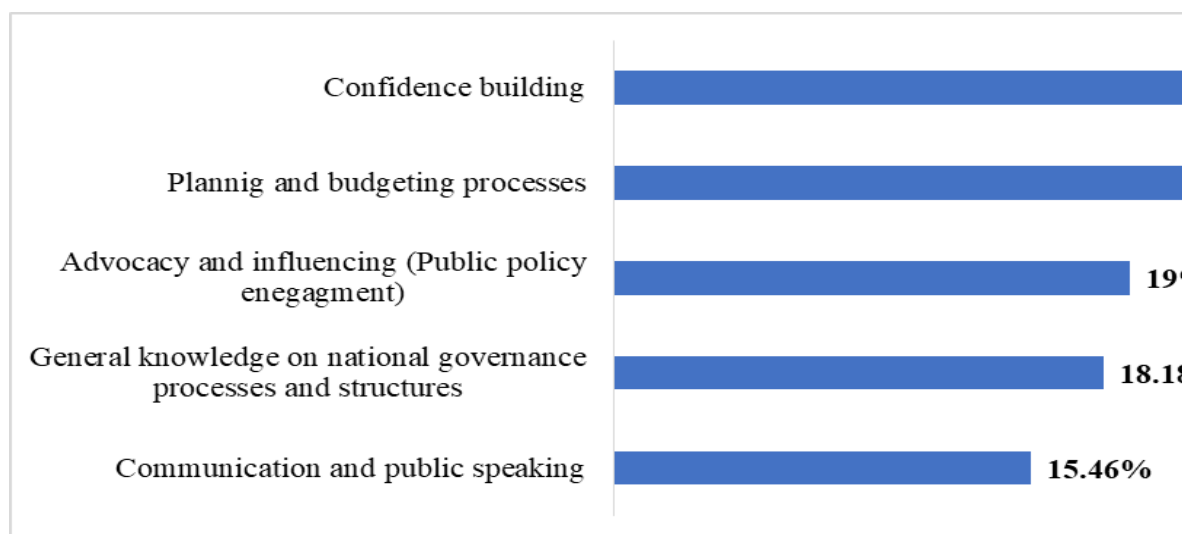


- Provision of (timely) information to the youth on the governance and development processes and related events
- Continuous awareness raising for the youth on their civic roles and responsibilities, on governance and development processes and on key national policies, strategic development visions, laws, programs and initiatives
- Continuous training on civic engagement skills and on legal rights
- Organize feedback sessions with the youth on the consideration/integration of the views provided by the youth in planning and budgeting processes of Imihigo and/or other development plans
- Organize or facilitate exchange and learning sessions between the youth of different areas/communities

Main topics on which the youth need capacity building.

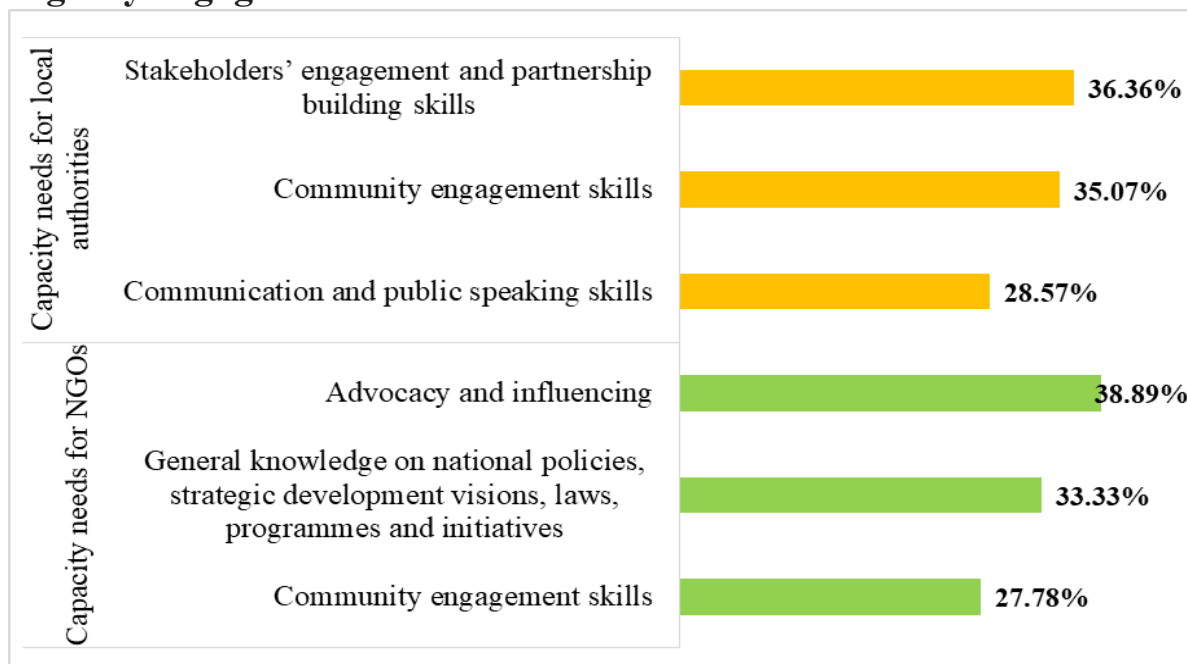


Asked about the 5 main areas in which the youth in their jurisdiction need capacity building on to be able to effectively engage in civic matters, the local leaders ranked “confidence building” and “planning and budgeting processes” as the number one area in which the youth need capacity building, followed by “advocacy and influencing”.

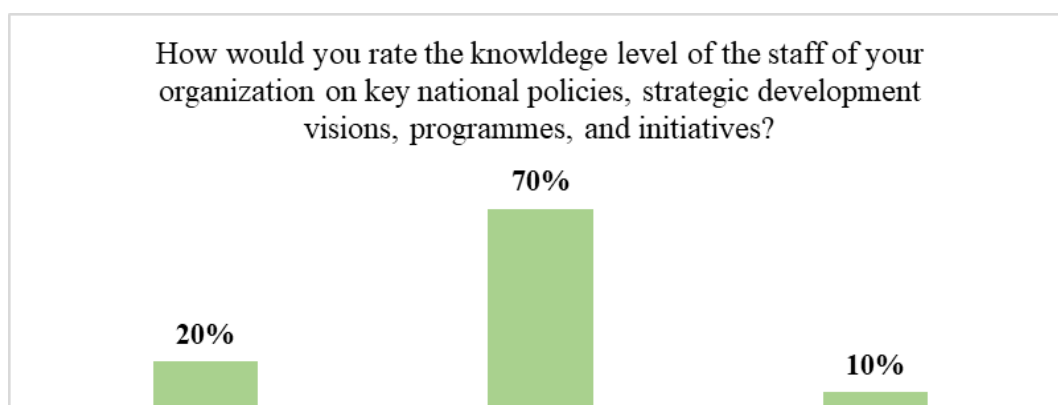


However, the surveyed youth and the KIs also identified some other topics such as: 1) Democracy and good governance; 2) Conducting an effective elections campaign; 3) Developing an issues-based program; 4) Rwanda’s history; and 5) Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability.

Capacity needs for local authorities and NGOs to effectively support the youth to meaningfully engage in civic matters.



Related to the above findings on the capacity needs of NGOs, it should be mentioned that, while assessing the knowledge levels organization's staff on key national policies, strategic development visions, laws, programs and initiatives, 70% of the interviewed representatives of the organizations reported the knowledge and skills of their staff and team members to be moderate, and hence the need for strengthening.



7. General challenges facing the youth.

During the FGDs, the youth from the 8 targeted districts were asked to list the 5 main issues facing the youth in their district. Unemployment, drug abuse, unwanted (teen) pregnancies and family conflicts came out to be the most pressing issues affecting the youth across the 8 districts in which the assessment was conducted.

8. Best practices

The assessment identified best practices and initiatives in promoting and ensuring youth civic participation by the different stakeholders. Below is the elaboration of some of these best practices.

. **Never Again Rwanda (NAR):** Confidence building sessions and project-based civic engagement.

. **AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA:** Sports and youth saving and credit schemes as drivers for youth civic engagement.

. **Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme au Rwanda (CLADHO):** Organizing local level children and youth forums to strengthen their participation in decision-making.

. **Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle (VJN):** Intergenerational dialogues.

. **The Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP):** Arts-based approaches to promote youth civic engagement.

Interpeace: The Youthlab initiative and the regional youth summit.

9. Recommendations

To the local authorities (from the district through the village), CSOs, NYC, NWC, NCDP and the Media

. Enhance awareness raising for the youth on key policies, strategic development visions, laws, programs and initiatives.

. Develop brief and user-friendly documents on key policies, strategic development visions, laws, programs and initiatives for the youth.

. Partner with the media for awareness raising.

. Organize training for the youth to strengthen their civic engagement skills and knowledge on key topics.

. Create and support mentorship programs for the youth.

. Employ innovative approaches in engaging and empowering the youth.

- . Organize intergenerational dialogues.
- . Intensify advocacy efforts on issues facing the youth.
- . Engage parents, members of the children committees and teachers for the effective nurturing of children and the youth.

To the local authorities, with the support of stakeholders and partners

- . Increase and equip youth centers.
- . Create new and rehabilitate existing poor sports, arts and entertainment infrastructures for the youth.
- . Create new and rehabilitate existing poor sports, arts and entertainment infrastructures for the youth.

To the NYC, the Youth volunteers and Local authorities

- . Streamline the coordination between the NYC and the structure of Youth volunteers.
- . Increase engagement events with the youth to understand the issues they face.
- . Introduce specific youth engagement forums at the local level.

To MINALOC, MINICYOUTH and CSOs

- . Strengthen the capacities of local leaders for effective engagement of the youth.
- . Strengthen the capacity of the representatives of NYC, NWC and NCDP as well as members of other local level structures.

To RCSP and CSOs, with the support of stakeholders and partners

- . Strengthen the technical capacity of civil society actors.
- . Organize peer learning sessions for non-governmental organizations working with the youth.

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