

Strengthening a rights-based approach in civil society organisations in Rwanda

We empower civil society actors to claim citizens' rights

Challenge

In the preamble of the Rwandan Constitution, Rwanda commits itself to follow the principles of human rights. Accordingly, Rwanda has signed and ratified most human rights treaties. Policies, programs, and guidelines that are in place show clearly that the Government of Rwanda is committed to furthering human rights as a contribution to the sustainable development of the country.

Since 2013, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation has been commissioning GIZ Rwanda to support civil society partners through its studies and expert fund.

Approach

The strategic design was developed in close cooperation between GIZ and Rwandan civil society organisations. Using the rights-based approach (RBA), they have worked together to identify joint interests and needs in line with the development agenda of the Government of Rwanda. Among others, the RBA empowers people to know and claim their rights and enables them to advocate for the government to fulfil the obligations which it has committed itself to. This combination contributes to sustainable development for all.

Objective: The role of civil society organisations in promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, in particular in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 5 and 16, is strengthened.

Currently, the project cooperates with four partner organisations working on human rights topics such as social and economic rights (e.g., access to health care), gender equality, civil and

political rights, disability rights, as well as LGBTI rights. The partner organisations receive support from three Development Advisors in the areas of organizational development, communication, monitoring and evaluation. The project also provides funding for activities fostering the rights-based approach and subsidises salaries of experts working in partner organisations. The development advisors further offer trainings on human rights, gender sensitive programming, the Do No Harm approach, and fundraising. Additionally, these trainings support networking and collaboration among partner organisations. Here, the aim is to encourage civil society organisations to cooperate with each other to cover specific human rights topics in a holistic way and to become a stronger voice for vulnerable groups.

Project name	Rights-based Program (RBP)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Rwanda
Lead executing agency	GIZ
Duration	11/2021 – 10/2024

The collective learning environment and use of the rights-based approach strengthen actors of Rwandan civil society. This renders their human rights work more effective and promotes the incorporation of internationally recognized norms. Applying the rights-based approach also means that people in the most vulnerable situations benefit from a constructive dialogue between civil society and government institutions, a dialogue that is guided by the international, regional, and national legal framework.



Photos, from left to right:

- The staff of RRP+ during the celebration of World AIDS Day and launch of a three-day campaign against AIDS on 10 December, 2021
- Religious leaders and the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, Gender Monitoring Office, Rwanda Investigation Bureau, and Isange One Stop Centres in a meeting in Gicumbi District on prevention of GBV on 9 December, 2021

Impact

Rwandan civil society organisations have expanded their knowledge about human rights. Former and current partners apply the rights-based approach and consider human rights during each step of their programming. They have also used the acquired skills to raise awareness on human rights amongst other stakeholders. In a range of workshops, they have sensitized duty-bearers, such as local authorities, but also journalists, young people, and health care providers, on issues like stigmatisation of people living with HIV/AIDS or the causes and effects of gender-based violence.

The integration and application of the rights-based approach has enabled partner organizations to launch very effective and successful advocacy campaigns. One joint project of five of our partners, for example, addressed various aspects of preventing teenage pregnancies in Rwanda. During the project, 145 teenage mothers received legal aid, while 50 teachers and 89 local officials received training on child rights as well as sexual and reproductive

health and rights. Most importantly, more than 650 children born by teenage mothers obtained civil registration. Advocacy by our partners further emphasized the need for access to health services for young people. Further, successful advocacy informed changes in the penal code that now enable girls and women to have easier access to safe abortions. Additionally, victims of gender-based violence gained access to counselling services.

Outlook

The thematic focus of the current project phase is on “Leave No One Behind”. Strategic references include the Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 5 and 16, as well as the Rwandan National Strategy for Transformation (2017-2024) and the New national development strategy “Vision2050”.

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