

Strengthening the Human Rights-Based Approach in Civil Society Organisations

We work with civil society organisations to promote human rights

The challenge

In the preamble of the Rwandan Constitution, Rwanda commits to following the principles of human rights. Accordingly, Rwanda has signed and ratified most human rights treaties. Policies, programmes, and guidelines that are in place clearly show that the Government of Rwanda is committed to furthering human rights as a contribution to the sustainable development of the country. The role of civil society in the implementation of its mandate to strengthen the rights of vulnerable people and represent their interests remains expandable.

Our approach

The strategic design was developed in close cooperation between GIZ and Rwandan civil society organisations. Using the rights-based approach (RBA), they 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 to. This combination contributes to sustainable development for all.

Objective: Civil society organisations effectively fulfil their mandate to strengthen the rights of vulnerable groups in Rwanda and to represent their interests.

Currently, the project cooperates with various partners that work on human rights topics such as social and economic rights (e.g., access to health care), civil and political rights, disability rights, as well as LGBTIQ+ rights. Project partners include the National Commission for Human Rights as the Rwandan national human rights institution. The partners receive support from the project's technical team in the areas of organizational development, monitoring and evaluation, as well as in project cycle management. The project also funds partner activities fostering the rights-based

approach and subsidises salaries of local experts working with some of the partners. Advisors further offer trainings in human rights, gender sensitive programming, the Do No Harm approach, and strategic planning. Additionally, these trainings support networking and collaboration among partners. The aim is to encourage the partners to collaborate through covering specific human rights topics in a holistic way and thus to become a stronger voice for vulnerable groups.

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The collective learning environment and applying the human rights-based approach strengthen various 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 international, regional, and national legal frameworks.

The benefits

30 self-advocacy groups, including 12 associations of LGBTI persons, 11 associations of female sex workers and 7 associations of youth living with HIV were supported on access to human rights through capacity development and discussions on human rights in general and the right to non-discrimination and the right to healthcare.



Left to right:

- 27 July 2023 in Musanze: Group work during the training on the Rights-Based Approach for the Board of Directors and District representatives of the Rwanda Network of People Living with HIV (RRP+)
- 9 July 2024 in Kigali: Group photo during the high-level roundtable organised by Initiatives for Peace and Human Rights (iPeace) in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Services and Labour (MIFOTRA) to discuss the domestication process of the International Labor Organization's convention 190 on violence and harassment at the workplace

9 October 2024 in Kigali: Panellists from different regions of Africa discuss “Leveraging Pan-African LGBTIQ+ Organising: Experiences, Milestones, Possibilities, Opportunities and Bottlenecks” during the Pride Africa Conference organised by Feminist Action Development Ambition (FADA)



Additionally, 10,781 individuals benefited from advisory and information services, including 2,726 on LGBTIQ+-related topics. These services, provided by project partners, covered legal support, human rights awareness, and healthcare guidance.

5 recommendations of civil society organisations (CSOs) on the consideration of SDGs 3, 5 or 16 were taken up by the relevant government authorities in the design and/or implementation of laws or policies

3 partner organisations introduced or further developed low-threshold digital and/or ICT solutions for networking with or advising their target groups. For example, one of the organisations put in a toll-free line and distributed smart phones to 100 people with visual impairment.

The project has organized a three-day conference with 85 participants from 16 countries across all regions of Africa. This conference brought together organizations and individuals advocating LGBTIQ+ rights. Among others, the conference urged public and private institutions across Africa to consider the enjoyment of the right to non-discrimination by the LGBTIQ+ community. It also exhorted the LGBTIQ+ community to join their efforts to advocate for the legal recognition of their rights within their respective national legal frameworks.

Success factors

Joint work

The Strengthening the Human Rights-Based Approach in Civil Society Organisations project and its partner organisations collaborate in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, ensuring

a seamless progression toward achieving the project’s goals. The joint planning between the project and its partners fosters a common understanding of the project as well as opportunities for the partners to identify possible avenues for synergy, all of which guide the choice of interventions.

Development advisors and local experts

Input from development advisors and local experts make a difference in the implementation of the project. Development advisors, as international experts, facilitate capacity development for partner organisations through training and coaching their staff. Currently, two development advisors support partner organisations in different areas, including organisational development, monitoring and evaluation, and resource mobilisation. They advise the partners on the focus of the activities for attainment of the project’s objectives.

Local experts, staff members of partner organisations, participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the projects that are funded with local subsidies. They are the counterparts of the development advisors and instrumental for project implementation and field work.

Local subsidies

Local subsidies (small grants) support partner organisations in learning through project implementation. They therefore play an important role in applying and internalising what has been learnt in capacity development sessions.

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