



THE SHINNING LIGHT

RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM NEWSLETTER

Quartely Newsletter

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Mission

The Constitution of the Platform defines the mission of the Platform as follows:

“Contribute to the well-being of the population by:

Acting as framework for dialogue, reflection, exchange of information and mutual support

Lobbying and advocating on national, regional and international issues on behalf of all members of the Rwandan civil society and citizens

Be a strong interlocutor of the civil society”

MAIN OBJECTIVES

The Constitution of the Platform also includes the main objectives of the Platform, which are to:

Promote solidarity and harmonious relations between the members of the Civil Society

Analyze the major challenges faced by the Rwandan population, and adopt common positions and strategies to address these challenges

Set up and maintain an information system to enable the Civil Society to achieve its mission, acting in close collaboration with all Partners

Develop an effective partnerships at national, regional and international level

Provide strong representation and advocacy for its members.

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CIVIL SOCIETY

STRENGTHENING PROJECT

The millennium challenge corporation (MCC) held a half-day stakeholders planning meeting to give key stakeholders the opportunity to make inputs into its annual work plan.

The civil society strengthening project is funded by the millennium challenge corporation (MCC) and implemented by USAID/Rwanda, in partnership with the government of Rwanda. The goal of the project is to positively impact the Rwanda's MCC ruling justly indicators, especially political rights, civil liberties ,voice and accountability. This will be a two years project.

The project objectives are:

Increased citizen participation in local government decision making and problem solving. Citizen interest and participation in local government remains weak, despite the recent moves towards decentralization. Taking into account the upcoming elections, MCC proposes to strengthen CSOs with institutional support and carry out a civic education campaign.



A greater awareness of civic education issues will result in increased direct citizen involvement with local government and increased opportunities for CSOs to better represent their constituencies.

Mobilizing popular participation through the development of a supportive environment for civil society through increasing interaction between the state and civil society.

Through community-level civic education, local government will have developed stronger links with provincial and district CSOs, thus helping to develop mutual understanding. Citizens will also be able to participate in the town hall meetings and to see how CSOs can represent their interests. These activities will be covered by the mass media, so that larger parts of the population will learn about, how state and civil society can interact more effectively.

This two-year project will work to increase operational, advocacy, and outreach capacity for national level civil society organizations in order to make them more effective in contributing to national public policy formulation and implementation. The program will also work with national CSOs to strengthen their working relationships with the government of Rwanda.

Expected results are:

- 50% increase in citizens' knowledge of democratic processes and behaviors
- 30% increase in citizens' awareness of national government issues and activities
- increased use of CSOs services
- increased indirect contact between national, provincial and local government officials and their constituencies.
- increase in number of successful activities taken by citizens trained in civic education or in local government affairs

This project supports civil society groups that aim to increase citizen participation in local decision making. By mobilizing citizen participation around local problems; engaging with community development committees, women and youth councils, and other elected officials, CSOs will encourage citizens to overcome their traditional passivity and, at the same time, will invite local government to begin to demonstrate its commitment to respond to citizen demands. The CSOs will increase contact with grassroots organizations and communities, that they claim to represent, and more opportunities to represent these communities during discussions and negotiations with other CSOs and government representatives.



CIVIL SOCIETY ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

The Civil Society Election Observation Mission (CSEOM) launched its National Election Observation Mission for the second Presidential Elections since the enactment of the constitution of the Republic of Rwanda. The elections were held on 9th August 2010.

Millions of Rwandans headed to the polls and decided overwhelmingly their President, who will lead them in the next seven years mandate. Four candidates were in the contest.

The Presidential campaigns came at a time when the Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) had matured in observing and

monitoring both local and national elections. It is in this context that the Rwandan Civil Society Platform established an Election Observation Mission for the upcoming Presidential Elections.

Mission that observed the presidential elections that took place on August 9. Addressing the press at CSEOM offices in Kacyiru, the Chief Observer, Eugene Rwibasira, said “This presidential campaign has come at a time when the Rwanda Civil Society Platform has the capacity to observe and monitor both local and national elections. “It’s in this context that we established an election observation mission for the upcoming presidential elections” he added.



Rwibasira said that the observer mission had deployed a core team of 15 observers, 30 long term observers and 500 short term observers who assessed the presidential elections countrywide. He added that all the observers were accredited. The mission worked hand in hand with the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and other relevant authorities.

The purpose of the CSEOM was to collect factual information concerning this election process, guided by the elements of the constitution and the electoral law. This enabled the Mission to produce strategic analysis and reporting on the electoral processes and provided inputs for electoral reform as well as confidence-enhancing processes, during and after the elections.

Through this mission, the CSEOM worked in solidarity with the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and other relevant authorities. The CSEOM identified the strengths and weaknesses of the electoral process in order to recommend possible improvements in the future electoral processes.

The CSEOM used a comprehensive methodology to benchmark, procedures and practices against international electoral standards.

Few days after the elections, the CSEOM made a preliminary statement on its findings and made a comprehensive final report now available in booklet format and has been distributed widely to our working partners.



Journalists participating in the press conference