



THE

SHINNING LIGHT

RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM NEWSLETTER



Quartely Newsletter

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Nº 002

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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I. CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS

I.1. Development Effectiveness Meeting

There was a consultative meeting that took place on 6th June 2010 at Alpha Palace. The main objective of the consultative meeting on the development Aid Effectiveness was to establish a strategy for a common engagement for policy and aid effectiveness which, if defined and managed by the CSOs, will ensure effective and relevant support from donors. This will lead to a vibrant and empowered civil society to allow monitoring of policy and aid effectiveness achievements; follow up of aid flows and policy guidelines.

The meeting outlined global processes within the framework of the debate on aid effectiveness.

The specific objectives of the meeting were:

- To ensure that the roles of CSOs as development actors and as part of the international aid architecture are well understood by all stake holders.
- To ensure that there is Good practice related to civil society and aid effectiveness by CSOs, donors and by other stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- To increase awareness within CSOs around the country on policy and aid effectiveness and to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to address this effectiveness;

Participants coming from diverse working backgrounds were able to reach consensus in regard to the various issues that were raised in terms of principles and enabling environment. This came out as shared concerns and the direction to take was largely agreed upon. Participants agreed about the need to engage with governments for an enabling environment. CSOs in Rwanda need to develop their operating principles with minimum operating standards.

The consultative meeting acted as an encouragement for the Rwanda Civil Society Platform to fundraise and to deepen the consultation process. The participants felt that CSOs should be involved in the National budget formulation process. They agreed that the key issues that are affecting the CSOs development effectiveness are: Donor driven agendas, Conflicting donor standards, lack of sustainability(resources), NGO Legislation(Ambiguous, Restrictive), Political

interference, self promotion by CSOs, Lack of clear focus by CSOs, and Need for Government contribution to CSOs work.

The Rwanda Civil Society organisations will engage with and raise awareness of their programs and with their partners, the community and all stakeholders. CSOs will commit to an annual self evaluation using all necessary tools, and especially the Civil Society Sustainability Index.



Participants

I.2. Meeting with the National Electoral Commission

In preparation of this year's presidential elections, the Rwandan Civil Society Platform, NGOs and the Media High Council met on 8th June 2010 with the National Electoral Commission(NEC) to examine their role in the process.

Mr Eugene Rwibasira; the RCSP Spokes person; talked about the role of the CSOs in development. The Rwandan Civil Society has 3 roles: to monitor governance and civic rights,

advocates for rights and priorities of citizens, and mobilizing grassroots communities and the poor or the marginalised people. He explained about: the Civil Society Election Observation Mission expectations from the NEC, the institutional capacity of NEC should be enhanced to enable them to deliver credible election results, elections to be conducted in a more transparent manner and more detailed electoral procedures.

Prof. Dr Karangwa Chrysologue, Chairman of the National Electoral Commission also added that the campaign is a fundamental factor as far as the forthcoming presidential elections were concerned. The electoral Commission needs to ensure transparent balloting process including tallying votes and independent election observers.

The participants agreed that the electoral codes need to be known and presented to all Rwandans. Finally, the Ministry of local government was called to support free and fair presidential elections.



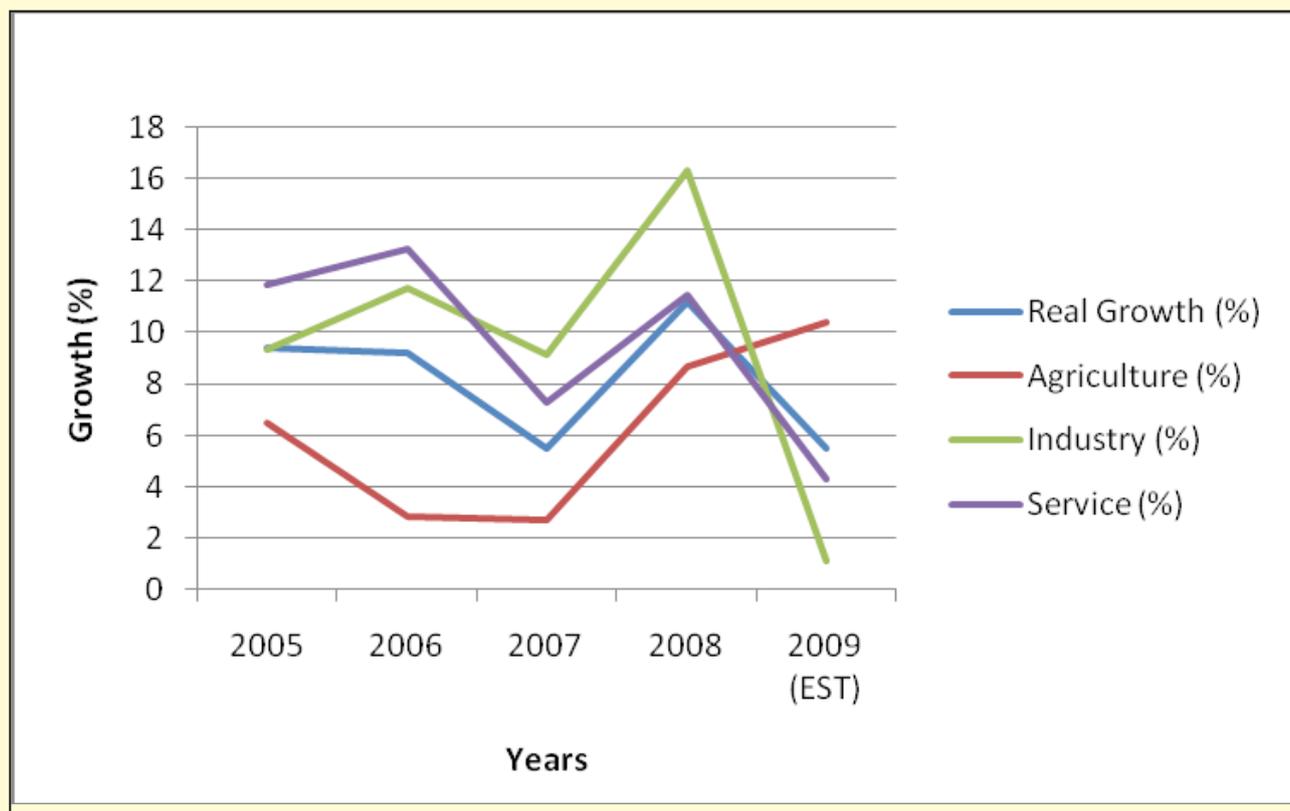
Electoral sensitisation process

II. BUDGET ANALYSIS

Rwanda's national budget for the financial year 2010/11 was presented at a time when the country is recovering from the adverse effects of the global financial crisis and against the backdrop of a domestic liquidity crunch prompted largely by uncontrolled heavy withdrawals by large deposit holders during fiscal years 2008-2009. Evidence also shows that the country is facing the challenge of widening inequalities across social categories, regions and gender. Indeed Rwanda's economic blueprint, Vision 2020 and the medium term development plan, the Economic Development and

Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), 2008 - 2012 identified growing income inequalities as key challenges. Given the government's objective to promote export, the Finance and Economic Planning Minister chose the theme 'Removing Obstacles to Export of goods and Services for this year's budget. It is against this background that a representative group of Rwandan civil society organizations, under the leadership of CLADHO, PRO Femme and the Rwanda Civil Society Platform seeks to assess whether 2010/11 national budget proposals will help the country towards attaining not only higher but also shared growth for all Rwandan citizens.

Figure 1: GDP Growth by Sectors, 2005 - 2009



Source: MINECOFIN, 2009

Civil Society appreciates the efforts that the government has undertaken to keep inflation under control and to contain inflation (CPI) at single digit levels in 2009. **Civil Society however notes that the country will be under pressure from the other East African Community (EAC) member states to harmonize tariffs on essential goods and services as per the EAC Tax Protocol. Removal of subsidies on certain sensitive products, such as, imported petroleum products however may expose Rwanda's economy to hyperinflation.** Rwanda is still a fragile economy, vulnerable to sudden inflationary shocks arising from unpredictable international prices of oil. Further, any failures in crop harvests could make the situation even worse. Civil Society **recommends that Rwanda should negotiate for concessions from the EAC to subsidize oil imports for a transition period until the economy is mature enough to allow prices to be**

determined by market forces without triggering inflation that could hurt domestic production and consumption.

Civil society commends the government for producing a specific gender budget statement, allocating specific funds for specific gender activities within 4 sectors, namely, education, health, agriculture and infrastructure. The proposal to provide sanitary rooms for girls in primary and secondary schools is highly commended and will be monitored to see its impact on increasing girl school attendance.

Finally civil society commends the government on a budget that seems to capture the spirit and needs of the nation. Civil society will continue to monitor and inform the execution of this and coming budgets and public expenditures to ensure greater alignment with peoples priorities, efficient and better targeted spending.