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CASE OFFERING

Strengthening democratic organisations to enhance **good governance**



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*Cover image: Journalists interview a local at Kitabi outdoor market as part of a training workshop supported by UNDP.
Photo: Alice Kayibanda/UNDP Rwanda*

*Above: Journalists play an important role in ensuring good governance.
Photo: Adobestock, Anna Stills*

Summary

Effective, inclusive and accountable institutions at all levels are key to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation-1. Rwanda's governance model is underpinned by accountability, transparency, and efficiency in deploying resources. Encouragingly, the seventh edition of the Rwanda Governance Scorecard (RGS) 2020, saw fighting corruption, transparency and accountability rank third out of eight pillars with a rating of 86.28 percent, and inclusiveness and participation record the highest improvement of 8.96 percent year-on-year.

However, despite the pivotal role of non-state actors (Civil Society Organisations and the media) in ensuring accountability and empowering citizens to play an active role in the democratic process, participation, impact and capacity of these institutions are sub-optimal. In fact, non-state actors remain the lowest indicator when assessing inclusiveness, with themes such as state-civil society relations and impact/effectiveness of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) lagging targets significantly. Further, women, youth, persons with disabilities and other historically disadvantaged groups still face hurdles in fully participating in governance processes.

Several challenges persist, not least of which include 1) limited journalist and institutional capacity within the media sector, 2) one-way engagement and marginalisation of vulnerable groups in local governance forums, 3) limited data collection, reporting and monitoring and evaluation systems and, 4) capacity limitations within CSOs.

This calls for interventions focused on enhancing citizen engagement and strengthening the media and CSOs for increased accountability through 1) enhancing data collection mechanisms to effectively capture diverse citizen needs, 2) strengthening the ability of CSOs to effectively advocate for citizens and implement community-based interventions, 3) strengthening community-based media providers to expand access to and quality of information, and 4) empowering vulnerable groups to participate in governance forums.

Rwanda's governance model is based on accountability, transparency and efficient deployment of resources. However, civil society organisations and the media could play a more active role in the democratic process.

Rwanda's progress towards good governance

Rwanda's efficient and effective governance structures have been noted as playing a leading role in the country's socio-economic transformation. The Government of Rwanda (GoR) is ranked as the 7th most responsive to change, and 5th in terms of long-term vision globally¹. Rwanda ranks 4th in terms of the least corrupt countries in Africa², credited in large part to GoR efforts to uproot institutional corruption at all levels. Rwanda is also a pioneer for inclusive leadership on the continent, with over 61 percent female representation in parliament leadership positions.³ Rwanda's decentralized government system, streamlined through the "Imihigo" (goal-setting) framework, fosters local leadership participation and accountability. The results of targeted interventions and efficient delivery are evident. Rwanda has sustained an average GDP growth of 8 percent in the past decade. Over the past 20 years, life expectancy increased from 48 to 69 years and over 84 percent of Rwandans now have access to health insurance.⁴ Over the same period, GDP per capita has more than tripled from US\$225 to \$819 and extreme poverty levels have dropped from 60.4 percent to 38.2 percent.⁵

Rwanda further prioritises good and accountable governance as a pillar for achieving its Vision 2050. In the National Strategy for Transformation-1 (2018-2024), Rwanda committed to consolidating good governance and justice as building blocks for equitable and sustainable national development. In response, various interventions and initiatives have been put in place. Rwanda's "The governance we want" programme aims at promoting good governance principles (i.e., transparency, improved service delivery, fighting corruption and all forms of injustice, and citizen participation in policy and decision-making).⁶ This is done through engagement activities including broad-based awareness campaigns, workshops and complaint receiving platforms.

The GoR also introduced the Peer Learning - Peer review programme (PL-PR)⁷, through which peer audits and inspections are conducted at the district level, to enhance accountability in local government entities. In addition, monitoring and evaluation through the Rwanda Governance Scorecard (a national index published every year to consistently assess the state of governance in Rwanda) provides a framework for continued leadership reform to achieve desired results.

The GoR has also made substantial progress in developing inclusive governance strategies and policies, targeting the most vulnerable groups of persons with disabilities (PWD), women and youth. As such, a new national policy of PWD was approved in 2021, which reiterates the government's commitment to empower, support and promote the inclusion of PWD in all sectors to attain the transformational development targets of NST-1 and Vision 2050. Additionally, through the National Youth Policy (revised and published in 2015) by the Ministry of Youth and ICT, the GoR has put much focus on youth economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, civic engagement, social transformation, and the overall inclusion of youth in all relevant sectors. The Government has also positioned gender equality and women's empowerment as a central pillar of development, including through the National Gender Policy, National Policy against Gender-Based Violence, National Family Promotion and Protection Policy. These have been developed and approved by the Government to ensure that the principle of gender equality is mainstreamed.

However, despite all such legislative and programmatic initiatives, substantive gaps and challenges remain in ensuring the full inclusion of women, youth and PWD in the national development agenda and increasing their participation in governance and decision-making mechanisms.

1 World Economic Forum, 2019 Global Competitive Report
2 Corruption Perceptions Index 2019
3 GoR, Rwanda Parliament statistics, 2020
4 MINECOFIN statistics, 2020
5 World Bank Indicators
6 Rwanda Governance Board
7 Ibid

Pressing challenges

To achieve the goal of full citizen participation in governance, several key actions are needed: improving the use of data to drive local decisions, strengthening the effectiveness and capacity of CSOs and the media, and increasing the inclusivity of citizen forums for women, youth and PWD.

Data-driven decision making

While the GoR has put in place various channels to collect citizen voices to inform decision making, gaps persist. As noted in Rwanda's Decentralization Policy, local monitoring and evaluation capabilities are limited. As a result, local government plans (including District Development Plans and Imihigo) are sometimes compiled without sound consideration of citizen voices and feedback⁸. In fact, in a study to assess local leaders' capacity needs in participatory governance, over 84.5 percent of local leaders expressed that they have low or medium knowledge of citizen participatory methods in planning and implementation of development plans. This reflects a shortcoming in the collection and incorporation of citizen views.⁹

Further, low levels of participation in citizen forums limit the depth and breadth of data these forums collect. In one survey conducted by Never Again Rwanda to assess citizen participation in governance, only 31 percent of citizens reported regular participation in village forums to define district Imihigo (development goal) priorities and only 19 percent regularly participated in Imihigo evaluation meetings¹⁰.

Participation and capacity of CSOs and the media

Media and CSOs play a critical role in information sharing, citizen advocacy, and ensuring transparency in governance decision-making. However, despite their pivotal role, the participation, impact and capacity of these institutions are sub-optimal.

Rwanda's media organisations have critical capacity gaps. Currently, there are over 800 journalists plying their trade across 34 radio stations, 14 TV stations, 46 newspapers and 88 registered news websites. Despite growth, professionalisation and effectiveness in the media sector remains suboptimal. Rwandan media professionals have limited access to appropriate



Women in media
Photo: Alice Kayibanda/UNDP Rwanda

training, receiving a score of 53.3 percent in a recent media barometer.¹¹ Incidences of corruption among journalists and media stakeholders are also reported to be high, with 76 percent of media practitioners acknowledging involvement in corruption (as either perpetrators or victims).¹² The Rwanda Media Commission (the public regulatory body for media development) is relatively young and community-level media organisations lack critical skills in management. They also face technical and financial barriers for engaging with citizens.

The most remote and poor communities remain largely excluded because of infrastructural barriers and low device penetration. Out of Rwanda's 34 radio stations, only the Rwanda Broadcasting Agency has 98 percent coverage around the country, while less than 10 stations have more than 70 percent area coverage.¹³ Moreover, with challenges around access to electricity, and 26 percent internet penetration in Rwanda in 2020, large sections of society, particularly in rural areas, have limited access to broadcast or on-line news sources.¹⁴

8 MINALOC, Rwanda Decentralization Policy, 2018

9 Never Again Rwanda, Assessing Local Leaders Capacity Needs in Participatory Governance, 2020

10 Never Again Rwanda, Enhancing and Reinforcing Rwandan Citizen Participation in Existing Local Government Consultation Processes and Platforms, 2020

11 Rwanda Media Barometer

12 Transparency International Rwanda: Survey on corruption in media in Rwanda, 2015.

13 RURA, Report on FMs operating in Rwanda, 2020

14 World Bank Indicators: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=RW&view=chart>



UNDP partnerships support everything from strengthening local governance to improving livelihoods. Photo: UNDP Rwanda

While the number of CSOs in Rwanda has grown exponentially with ~2000 NGOs and 700 faith-based organisations¹⁵, their efficacy in partnering with government entities and performing citizen advocacy is suboptimal. Key challenges include lack of streamlined systems to collaborate with local governments and capacity gaps in data collection and sharing to strengthen their advocacy work. CSOs in Rwanda primarily focus on service-delivery interventions and are largely effective in this area. Only a few CSOs are effectively involved in advocacy, voicing the concerns of the voiceless and shaping public policies.¹⁶ In fact, non-state actors, including CSOs, remain the lowest indicator with regards to assessing inclusiveness, with targets such as state-civil society relations and impact/effectiveness lagging significantly.

Despite the existence of the Rwanda Civil Society Platform, collaboration among CSOs is limited, slowing reach and impact. Further, technical and financial capacity limitations within CSOs affect their capacity for citizen advocacy and engagement in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring on the national level. The over-dependence on external funding and limited technical capacities in advocacy and communications hamper the ability of CSOs to establish permanent and fruitful dialogues with policy- and decision-makers and to advocate for increased citizen participation. Given the status quo, they can do little more than carry out their basic service missions.

Inclusivity of local governance models

Inclusive citizen participation is a critical component of good, accountable governance structures, yet vulnerable groups such as women, youth and PWD are disproportionately excluded. Across all citizen-participatory forums, women have a lower participation rate compared to men. For example, only 29 percent and 17 percent of women participated in village citizen Imihigo planning and evaluation meetings respectively (compared to 32 percent and 20 percent of men).¹⁷

While youth make up the largest proportion of the population, their participation in democratic processes and leadership is also low. In a survey to assess local leaders' capacity in participatory governance, only 18 percent of participants were youth. Further, PWD face structural barriers that hinder them from participating in governance processes. Reasons for low participation of organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD) in policy-making processes include their limited technical capacity, and limited consultations with PWD by government. In addition, limited availability of data on PWD inhibits the ability of government to target interventions. The new national policy for PWD highlights that person with disabilities face challenges holding institutions accountable to complying with laws and regulations, and calls for proper disability mainstreaming in policies and implementation.¹⁸ The slow implementation of disability-inclusion principles often culminates in critical gaps in access to essential services among PWD.

¹⁵ Rwanda Governance Board website, Accessed August 2021

¹⁶ Never Again Rwanda and Interpeace, *The Role of Civil Society in Enhancing Citizen Participation in the Governance and Development Processes of Post-Genocide Rwanda*, 2019

¹⁷ Never Again Rwanda, *Enhancing and Reinforcing Rwandan Citizen Participation in Existing Local Government Consultation Processes and Platforms*, 2020

¹⁸ MINALOC, *National Policy on persons with disabilities and four years strategic plan 2021-2024*, 2021

Looking ahead

Given the existing challenges, opportunities for intervention include 1) enhancing existing data collection mechanisms to effectively capture diverse citizen voices, 2) strengthening community-based media providers to expand access to

information, 3) building the capacity of CSOs and local governments for effective advocacy and accountability and 4) empowering vulnerable groups to participate in governance.



1

Enhancing data collection, monitoring and evaluation systems

Review of mechanisms to collect and interpret data from citizens and feedback on governance and leadership is needed. Consequently, building better systems and platforms through which citizens can effectively hold their leaders accountable and provide their feedback will be crucial.

Key activities will include:

1. **Enhance existing data collection models** such as the Citizen Report Card and the Rwanda Governance Scorecard to understand primary and secondary effects of government and CSO activities on citizens lives and livelihoods
2. **Train staff within CSOs** and local/state governments to maintain these models through regular testing, and ongoing revisions to ensure models remain efficient, robust and fit for purpose
3. **Train CSO and state government staff** to analyse, interpret and use such models in their policy development and other operational activities
4. **Improve the capacity of CSOs** to collect meaningful model data through effective survey design, digitally enabled primary data collection and integration of secondary data collected by service providers (e.g., banks, hospitals, clinics, schools, etc.)
5. **Build the capacity of CSOs** in policy formulation and advocacy through training with experienced policy formulation and advocacy teams



Key outcomes:

Strengthened data collection and analysis to promote evidence-based decision making. By tracking and understanding impact, CSO and state actors will be better equipped to make data-informed decisions on scaling, refining and adapting interventions.



*Unlocking key insights from citizen forums and data collection.
Photo: Adobestock/Dragon Images*

2



Training of media personnel and strengthening community-based media houses

Given skills gaps and limited professionalisation (only 50 percent of media personnel have at least a bachelor-level degree¹⁹), a training programme to enhance skills amongst journalists and other media personnel (e.g., producers, station managers etc.) is needed. The training programmes should focus on providing relevant skills, such as communication, data collection (including objectively capturing views and realities of citizens), audience targeting, effective outreach through various mediums (e.g., print, radio, and newer digital channels appropriate for different audiences), and engagement with policy makers and decision makers.

Beyond individual media personnel, community radio stations (key channels for information gathering and dissemination) require equipment, systems, and effective management training to capture citizen voices, and to report domestic, regional, and international affairs and provide informative content and platforms.

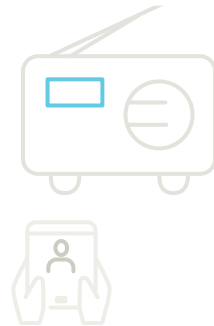
Key activities will include:

1. **Map and select** media professionals and key community media actors with strong community reach
2. **Assess key skills** gaps amongst Rwanda's media professionals and media actors
3. **Design and implement a hands-on training programme** for media professionals and community media that addresses these critical gaps, and others identified through partner reviews of this sector. Training topics will likely include citizen engagement, advocacy mechanisms and governance accountability
4. **Develop dedicated capacity-building programmes** and fund key community media organisations. This includes provision of equipment and technical training on programme and financial management
5. **Develop capacity** media capacity for collection and analysis of data from enhanced models



Key outcomes:

Media professionals and community-based media houses contribute more effectively to increased governance accountability and expand the public's access to information.



Training is key to enhancing professional skills amongst journalists in community-based media houses.

Photo: Adobestock/Vystek Images



3

Institutional capacity building of CSOs and local governments

Given the key role of CSOs in citizen advocacy and holding government accountable, interventions to build their capacity are needed to realize their full potential as local governance partners. This work should focus on solving their critical organisational gaps and enabling them to implement effective community-based interventions. Initially, rural and poor districts should be prioritised given more pronounced disparities in these regions.

Key activities include:

1. **Identification of CSOs** with good traction in the different communities
2. **Organisational capacity building** of identified CSOs and local government structures, including training personnel on financial management and resource mobilisation, data collection and advocacy, and accountability mechanisms
3. **Organisation of ongoing citizen forums and policy dialogues** among citizens, CSOs and local government entities for effective collaboration and implementation of community-based interventions
4. **Developing the capacity of CSOs** and local governments to use enhanced data collection models to increase the voice of CSOs and their ability to hold government more accountable while also strengthening a range of mechanisms for more participation, advocacy and accountability



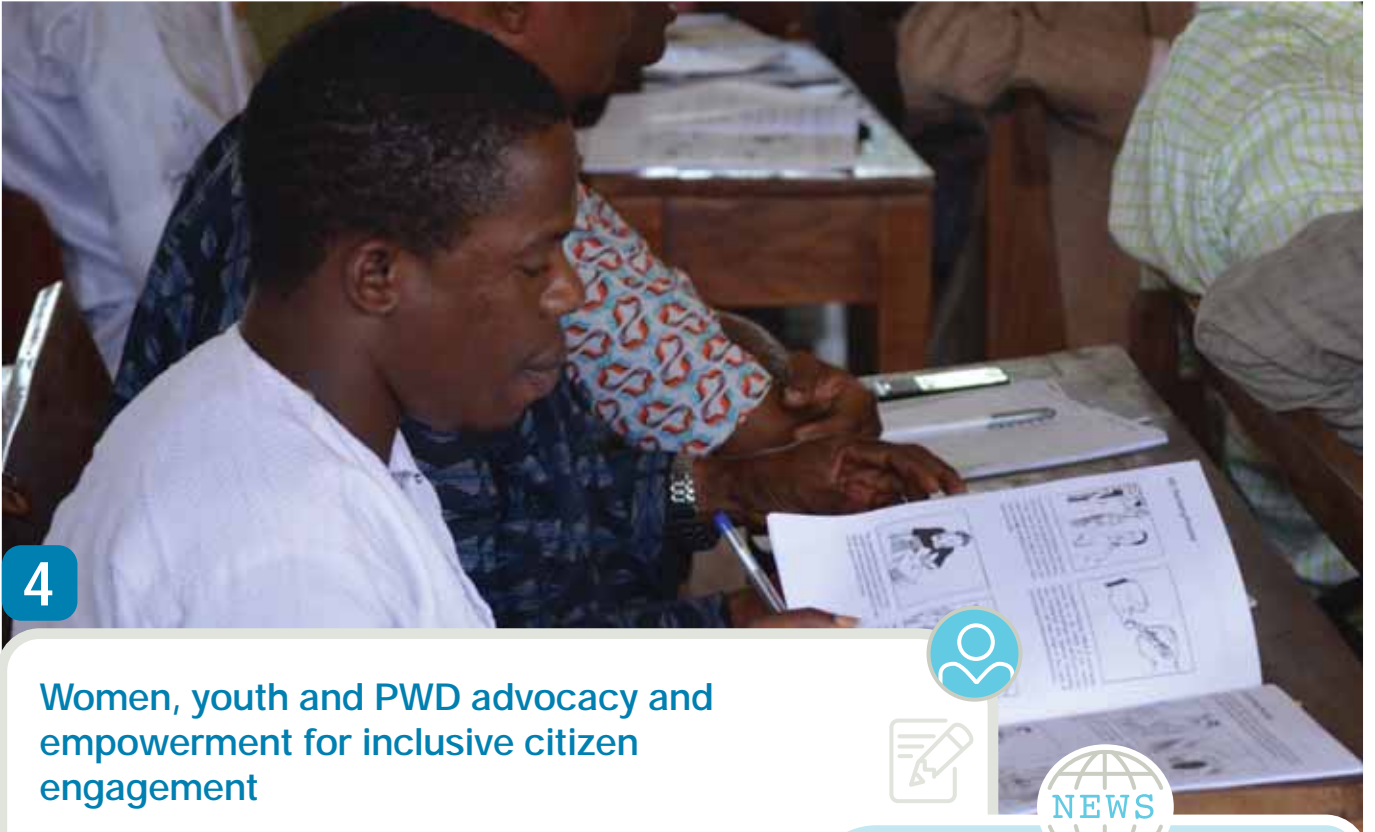
Key outcomes:

Strong institutional capacity of CSOs to effectively collaborate with local governance structures.



Capacity building efforts will strengthen civil society organisations such as this agricultural cooperative.

Photo: Alice Kayibanda/UNDP Rwanda



4

Women, youth and PWD advocacy and empowerment for inclusive citizen engagement

At a societal level, it is important to address barriers that prevent the empowerment of vulnerable groups and their effective engagement in public dialogue.

Key activities will include:

- 1) **Campaigning for greater representation** of women, youth and PWD in local governance structures
- 2) **Developing and rolling out awareness, sensitivity and best practice trainings** for local leaders to strengthen their abilities to recognise and encourage participation of marginalised groups
- 3) **Developing and implementing a capacity-building plan** for women, youth and PWD to enhance their knowledge and skills in inclusive government participation
- 4) **Developing media campaigns** to bring the challenges and realities of youth, women and PWD to the forefront of public and government awareness



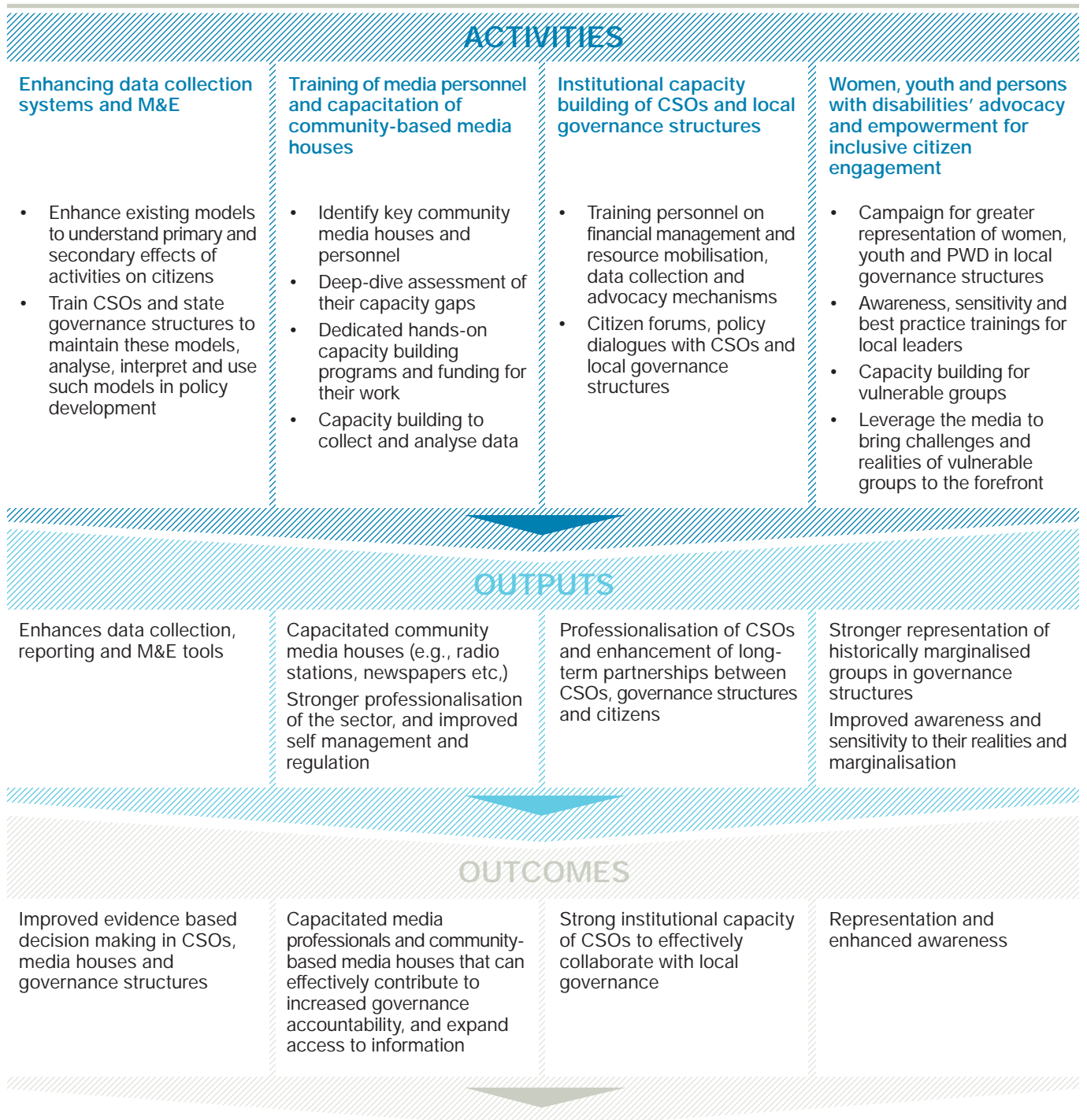
Key outcome:

More engaged and inclusive local governance structures and increased citizen engagement and accountability.



*Young Rwandans undergo training as Voting Station volunteers.
Photo: Creative Commons/USAID*

Theory of Change



Evidence based decision making and accountability in governance

Key implementation partners

Key actors have been identified across the various workstreams. As conversations are conducted, revisions will be made accordingly. The table below outlines an initial list of key partners.

Category	Key implementation partners
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry of Local Government• Rwanda Governance Board
Civil Society and Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rwanda Civil Society Platform• CSOs• Rwanda Media Commission• Rwanda Female Journalists Association• Rwanda Journalists Association• Women in Media Platform• Women Owners of Media
Development Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The World Bank• USAID• European Union• SDC• UK-FCDO



Two-year budget




Implementation of this programme is forecast to cost US\$2.4 million

INTERVENTION	ACTIVITIES	BUDGET (US\$)
Enhancing data collection, analysis, monitoring and evaluation (\$600,000)	• Enhance data collection models at local and district levels to understand primary and secondary effects of government and CSO activities on citizens' lives and livelihoods	\$300,000
	• Train staff within CSOs and state governments to maintain these models through regular testing and ongoing revisions to ensure models remain efficient, robust and fit for purpose	\$100,000
	• Train CSO and state governments to analyse, interpret and use such models in their policy development and other operational activities	\$100,000
	• Build the capacity of CSOs in policy formulation and advocacy	\$100,000
Training of media personnel and strengthening of media houses (\$700,000)	• Review and assess key skills gaps amongst Rwanda's media professionals	\$30,000
	• Design and implement hands-on training programme that addresses critical gaps for 100 media practitioners	\$300,000
	• Provide concessional funding for media houses including for equipment and technical training on programme and business management	\$370,000
Institutional capacity building of CSOs and local governance structures (\$600,000)	• Organisational capacity building of 50 CSOs and local government entities, including training personnel on financial management, sustainability, data collection and advocacy efficacy	\$450,000
	• Support targeted financial resource mobilisation by CSOs (for development of plans and pitch documents, and introductions to potential funders)	\$100,000
	• Organise citizen forums, and policy dialogues among citizens, CSOs and local governance structures for effective collaboration and implementation of community-based interventions through ongoing direct engagement	\$50,000
Women, youth and PWD advocacy and empowerment for inclusive citizen engagement (\$300,000)	• Campaign for greater representation of women, youth and PWD in local governance structures	\$50,000
	• Advocate for explicit targets regarding women, youth and PWD participation when evaluating local governance inclusivity	
	• Develop and roll out awareness, sensitivity and best practice trainings for local leaders to improve their abilities to recognise and encourage participation of women, youth, PWD and other vulnerable groups	\$250,000
	• Leverage the media to bring challenges and realities of youth, women and People with Disability (PWD) to the forefront through awareness campaigns	
Project management and oversight (\$200,000)	• Provide quality assurance to project implementation including Direct Project Costing	\$200,000
	• Conduct project monitoring and evaluation	
	• Conduct audits and spot-checks	
TOTAL		\$2,400,000



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