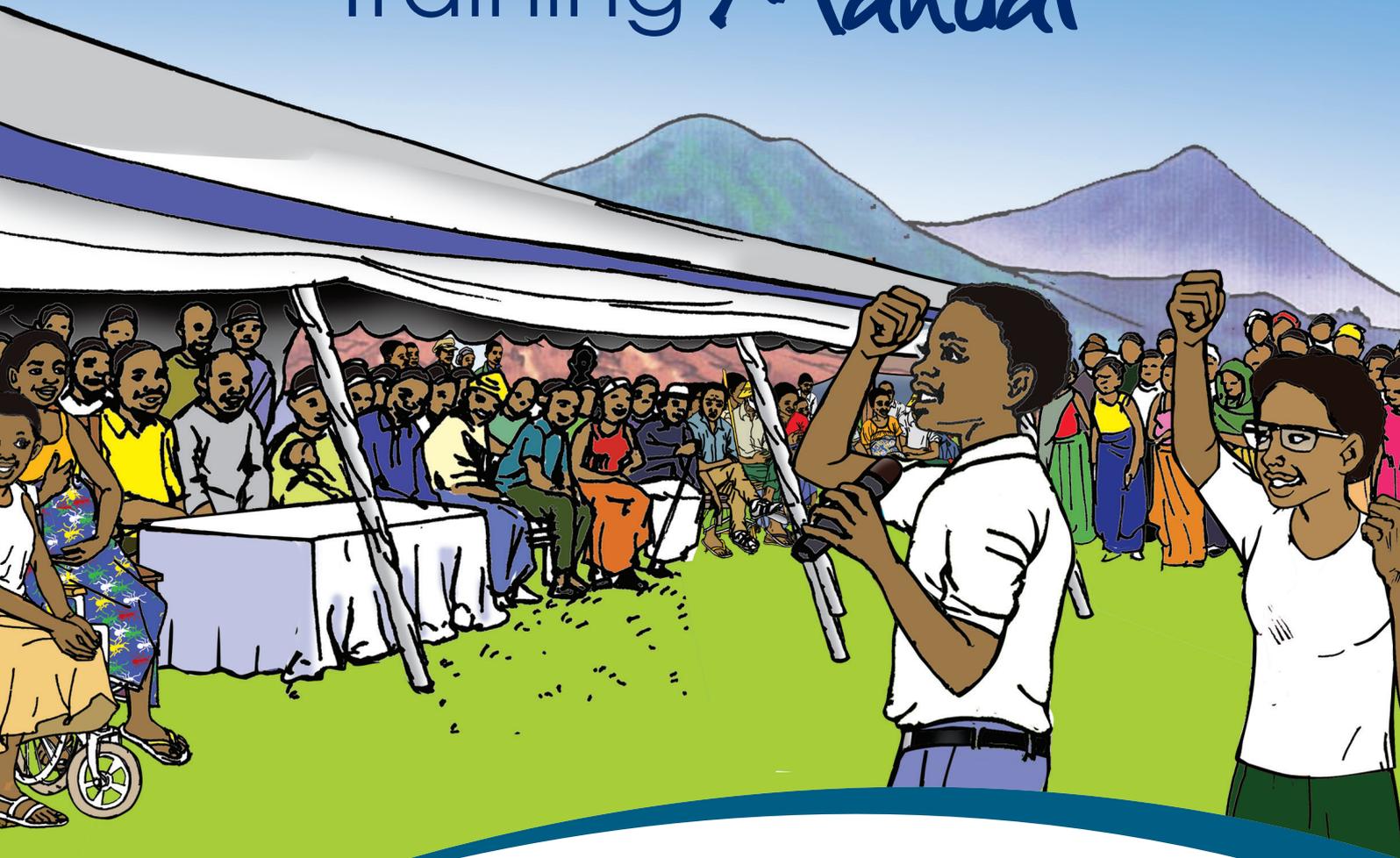


*never*  
again

– Rwanda –

# ENGAGING YOUTH IN BUILDING AN EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

## Training Manual



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

A publication of Never Again Rwanda with the support of USAID  
Published under "Inzira Nziza Activity" 2019

## FOREWORD

Twenty-five years after the genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda has made remarkable progress in many sectors of national development. Young people in Rwanda have played an immense role in the reconstruction struggle and social changes that have accompanied this development. As a result of these contributions and efforts, a strong foundation for youth participation was developed. Still, despite their efforts and past involvement in public life, today Rwandan youth struggle to influence policymakers and have access to opportunities to participate in decision-making.

This is in part due to the limited role that Rwandan youth play in Rwandan society, little progress has been made in the way of youth involvement in Rwanda's public decision-making. But today our youth can provide new perspectives on the direction of Rwanda. Although they are sometimes swept up in the rhetoric of ethnic division, they are more than often open to the idea of equality and promoting policies that would promote this idea. Therefore, it is pertinent that we listen to what they have to say and allow them to have a prominent voice in determining what is best for the future of Rwanda.

Through the Inzira Nziza Project, Never Again Rwanda is empowering young people to become active citizens and responsible leaders of their communities. Never Again Rwanda believes youth are future leaders who will be able to use their new skills in leading change and making a positive contribution. This manual is to inspire youth to embrace democratic values, peaceful dialogue and work together towards positive change.

NAR's long-term experience in working with youth reveals that many young men and women join NAR programs with little confidence, feeling disempowered and isolated. That's why by the end of this project NAR wish to see youth that have grown in confidence and are fully engaged in working together to make their ideas a reality.

Effective participation of young people in policymaking processes and in the implementation of national development programs can only be possible through the active participation of youth alongside the leadership skills they need to develop.

To analyse the importance of young people's participation in a democratic society, one has to understand several key points:

- why youth often do not develop a greater sense of responsibility;
- understanding that participation is a responsibility;
- how policy can ensure the participation of youth;
- how young people should engage constructively in the governance processes;
- what kind of skills are required of young people when communicating with policymakers; and
- How the right to participation should be better addressed among youth.

It is not likely, nor should it be expected, that every young person will be interested in politics. Even so, the degree of disengagement among youth from political processes can be viewed as negatively high, particularly in Rwanda due to its bitter historical background of the role, the youth played during the genocide, even in instances where political processes directly affect their lives.

We hope that this manual will be useful to all leaders and civil society organizations to train youth leaders who will work with young men and women in an effort to change their mind-set by strengthening

their capacities, improve their confidence and tackling the root causes of their non-participation in politics; and support them to develop sustainable and joint mechanisms that offer opportunities for participating in dialogues on rights, principles and democratic issues. This manual also provides tips and insights on how power holders can engage youth in decision-making processes.

Importantly, we hope the content of this manual will help in addressing youth capacity issues such as dialogue, research, mentorship, accompaniment and social media to boost their skills and confidence and will strengthen the capacities of local leaders to boost youth civic engagement and be responsive to youth needs and responsibilities and jointly create avenues as well as initiatives that would address the youth challenges.

Dr Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza  
Executive Director, Never Again Rwanda

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This manual evolved from “Inzira Nziza” which is a three year project funded by USAID Rwanda, implemented by Never Again Rwanda in 5 Districts of Rwanda. The overarching project goal is to contribute to the promotion of peaceful dialogue and democratic values through human rights based approaches and influence their understanding on the rights of the most vulnerable groups in Rwanda.

The specific objective of the project is to support youth to express and debate their views on democratic values, take leadership roles in political participation as they effectively promote and protect human rights and celebrate their diversities. This project targets 5 districts: Nyamagabe, Gisagara and Huye from Southern province, Nyabihu and Ngororero from the Western Province.

Never Again Rwanda sincerely appreciates the financial and technical support of USAID Rwanda. This has enabled us to develop and publish this manual which will be used in the training of youth champions and local decision-makers.

*Never Again Rwanda*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	4
CONTENTS	5
INTRODUCTION	6
TRAINING OBJECTIVES	7
EXPECTED OUTCOMES FROM THE TRAININGS	7
TRAINING METHODOLOGY	7
MODULE I: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	8
BENEFICIARIES	8
ENGAGING YOUTH IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES	9
YOUTH ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION	14
DECLINING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS	15
ISSUE-BASED ENGAGEMENT: "REINVENTING POLITICAL ACTIVISM"	16
MODULE II: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY	19
THE RIGHT TO LIFE	20
DISABILITY RIGHTS	21
ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP	24
SOCIAL JUSTICE	24
ADULT VIEWS AS THE CHALLENGE TO YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	25
FIVE KEY STEPS TO ENHANCE YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	25
ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT	30
MITIGATING THE IMPACT: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES	31
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT	32
TRANSITIONS IN POWER: THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE	34
MODULE III: PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALISM	35
CONCLUSION	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	42

## INTRODUCTION

Inzira Nziza is a three years project funded by USAID Rwanda, implemented by Never Again Rwanda in 5 districts (Nyamagabe, Gisagara and Huye from Southern province, Nyabihu and Ngororero from the Western Province).

The overarching project goal is to contribute to the promotion of peaceful dialogue and democratic values through human rights based approaches and influence their understanding on the rights of the most vulnerable groups in Rwanda. The specific objective is to support youth to express and debate their views on democratic values, take leadership roles in political participation as they effectively promote and protect human rights and celebrate their diversities.

The 2006 National Youth Policy as revised and published in September 2015 by the Ministry of Youth and ICT changed the definition of Youth in terms of age. It was brought from 14–35 years to 16–30 years. Through this policy of the Government of Rwanda (GoR) much focus is put on youth economic empowerment by addressing issues related to unemployment and underemployment, limited skills, low rate of access to finance and markets, mismatch of current education curriculum vis a vis skills required on both local and global labour market, high population growth in relation to economic growth, poor monitoring of the vast sector, among others.

The other acute issue is about teen pregnancies that are robbing Rwandan youth of their dreams. While young girls mainly bear the brunt, teen pregnancy has become a social evil that affects the boys, parents and entire communities at large. Without clear plan to contain unwanted pregnancies, they will keep hindering their socio-economic transformation.

In Rwanda, youth constitute 61.5% of the active population and are therefore a significant force to be recognized. During the Genocide against the Tutsis, the youth were manipulated by the politicians to commit heinous crimes. This was partly possible because the youth did not have critical thinking skills and did not participate in decision-making processes.

Some of the factors hindering youth civic engagement are limited economic and job opportunities, inadequate access to social and political rights, lack of proper mentorship, poor quality of education and critical thinking, interlinked problems of social isolation and low engagement in their communities, lack of self-esteem and a lack of linkage between the youth and local leaders.

The President of Rwanda H.E Paul Kagame believes in building an inclusive society. He demonstrated this when he was in Huye district on 25 February 2019 addressing leaders from the Southern Province and said:

*“Addressing poverty is not a favour you are doing for our citizens. When the well-being of our citizens is affected then we are all affected. People who misuse public resources think they will be better off, but you cannot be better off if our citizens are not. If you open a shop, you want citizens to be able to afford what you sell. If everyone is living in poverty, who will you sell to? You want a viable market. Where will it come from if you have left everyone impoverished? You will end up being just as poor”.*

President Kagame also emphasized that building the country would not mean physical infrastructure, but building the ability of citizens, enabling them to improve their own life.

This message sets a paradigm shift for young people who, in past, used to think that politics correlates to corruption, inflexible bureaucracy, and their limited power to change the environment around them. Rarely do young people see a place for themselves in the political processes of their country; this, in turn, seriously undermines the possibility of young people developing a real sense of responsibility. Considering the positive development in Rwanda's political arena, it is high time for youth to explore all possible opportunities for their civic engagement. Youth engagement is an

integral part of democratic societies, but without a sense of responsibility, the social integration of youth and their cohesion in society is impossible.

Young people prefer not to get involved in political processes because they feel that the system has failed and will continue to fail them. Faced with the lack of educational and employment opportunities, risks of disease, genocide and armed conflicts, the majority of young people in the developing world worry about how to survive instead of working to solve the problems of their society as a whole.

This manual is intended for a training that aims at increasing meaningful youth engagement in building an equal and inclusive society.

## **TRAINING OBJECTIVES**

The overall objective is to contribute to the strengthening of accountability through promoting and enhancing meaningful engagement of young people and youth leaders in the democratic process. More specifically, this training seeks:

To enhance the awareness and knowledge of youth and decision-makers by equipping them with the knowledge and skills on human rights, governance processes, accountable and responsive leadership and the working of multi-party democracy.

Build the confidence of the youth and boost their meaningful engagement, educate youth and local leaders about Human Rights and explore the different issues facing youth in their communities; understand the link between Human Rights and democracy; enhance skills for youth engagement in economic, political and community life and deepen participants' understanding on building an equal and inclusive society.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES FROM THE TRAININGS**

The key outcomes of the training will include but is not limited to:

Awareness being raised amongst the youth on issues of democratic process, rights and governance;

Trained youth are able to confidently engage in economic, political and community life and participate in the development and formulation of youth-related policies;

Awareness being raised on issues facing youth to create collaboration opportunities between youth and local leaders in addressing those issues as they foster democratic governance;

Youth actively engage in advocacy and necessary engagements for their democratic and human rights;

Youth are empowered to be able and willing to actively engage in processes that address social, economic and political issues in the communities.

Local leaders with increased awareness and readiness to support youth civic engagement in building an equal and inclusive society.

## **TRAINING METHODOLOGY**

The training for which this manual has been designed is expected to take 3 days. The training methodology relies on a participatory approach with the trainer acting as a facilitator. The facilitator should stimulate learning using adult learning principles, drawing from realistic local case studies and allowing participants to share their experiences in order to ensure there is a fruitful interaction between the user of this manual (the trainer) and the participants (trainees).

The training will be delivered through a participatory approach which offers the possibility to expand

the ability of participants to become shapers of their communities by analysing issues that have historically hindered their options.

By using the participatory approach of the training, emphasis is placed on the practical tips and follow up activities which the youth champions should engage into in order to increase their meaningful participation as key actors in the governance and development processes. Although this is a training manual, it can also be used as reference material for youth leaders who may or may not have undertaken the training.

## TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

Overall, 600 people will be trained which means 120 people in each of the above-mentioned 5 Districts. Here's the breakdown of the participants:

- 80 youth leaders (National Youth Council on the cell level, prominent youth association members and youth volunteers)
- 5 representatives of people with disabilities from sector and district levels
- 5 church leaders
- 10 school representatives/ Focal point for student clubs in Secondary schools
- 20 local leaders (District youth officer, District National Youth Coordinator, Director of Good Governance, Itorero leader (Umutahira), Sector advisory council, Sector officer in charge of social affairs, Sector National Youth Council coordinator and National Women Council Coordinator).

## GROUND RULES AND NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR

*"The best leaders understand the need to 'walk the talk' — that, their behaviour and day-to-day actions have to match the aspirations they have for the 'world'."* (Bill Taylor)

*"Become the change you wish to see in the world and, it will happen."* (Mahatma Gandhi)

*Training Philosophy (University of California, San Diego)*

You have an important role when you become a trainer. It is important to take this role seriously and professionally. It is your job to create a safe and supportive climate for learning in which you treat learners like partners in the learning process. "Walk what you talk" and be aware of your role as a model!

### Professional ethics and standards

Parking lot or Storage

When learners come up with ideas that you'd like to address later, or which you'd like to protect and honour, but don't have time to deal with in depth at the moment, have a sheet of flipchart or

- Appreciate diversity
- Be prepared and professional
- Create a supportive learning environment
- Give appropriate credit to the work of others
- Evaluate learners' performance, not their personalities
- Know and stay abreast on issues around your subject area
- Maintain confidentiality
- Obtain permission to use the work of others
- Treat all learners with respect

butcher paper on the wall and label it “Parking Lot.” It can be useful just to have a place to display concerns, and to return to it at a later time to address issues as appropriate.

Storytelling or recap from the day before

A powerful story can reinforce learning like few other techniques. If you tell a story, there is a good chance that that is what the learners will remember at the end of the day. You can also ask learners to tell stories. The “voice of experience” or “my human rights” story is just an example. Learners can also tell stories together alongside the guidance from the day before. For example (rights, involvement, responsibility) two or three people can create a story to recap events from the day before.

## MODULE I: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### BENEFICIARIES

Though this session is designed for human rights trainers, the ultimate beneficiaries of this session will be the Rwandan youth including but not limited to youth leaders, youth associations, youth clubs and cooperatives.



Therefore targeting the younger generation is the entry point and since young people are potential agents of change the intended activities would have far-reaching implications for their respect of diversity and difference.

### Instructions to the user of this Manual:

**Before providing a definition of human rights, the trainer shall ask the participants to define “Human Rights” and the trainer will write on a flipchart, key elements provided by the participants and then compare them with the definition he/she will provide.**

## Definition of Human Rights

### **Exercise 1:** Understanding the Concept of Rights

Purpose: The purpose of the session is to understand the concept of Rights and Human Rights

Materials: Flip Chart, Marker

Time: 20 Minutes

Procedure:

1. Write the word "Rights" and "Responsibilities" on a flip chart
2. Ask the participants what they think Rights and Responsibilities are.
3. Keep on getting responses until you get the definition of 'rights' from the participants
4. Sum up the responses of the participants and tell them the definition of Human Rights

### **Exercise 2:** Characteristics of Human Rights

Purpose: To introduce participants to the characteristics of Human Rights

Materials: Flip Chart, Marker

*"Imagine that you have discovered a new country, where no-one has lived before, and where there are no laws and no rules. You and the other members of your group will be the settlers in this new land. You do not know what status you will have in this new land."*

Individually, each participant should write a list of three rights which they think should be guaranteed for everyone in this new country. Ask the pupils to share and discuss their lists within their group. The group should then agree on a list of 10 rights which it thinks are important. The group should then invent a name for the country and write it on a large piece of paper together with the list of rights.

Each group presents its list to the rest of the class. As they do this, make a note of each 'right' on a class list; if 'rights' are repeated, put a cross next to them. Once all the groups have made their presentations, ask the class to identify rights which overlap or contradict each other:

Questions could then be asked on the following topics:

Did your ideas about which rights were most important change during the activity?

Are there any rights which you would now want to add to the list?

Are human rights universal?

What are human rights?: Human Rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion or language. We are all equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

Human Rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, national laws, general principles and other sources of international law.

Categories of human rights

### **Instructions to the user of this Manual :**

**The trainer should ask the participants if they believe some human rights are more important than others, to name those rights and the reasons why they should be more important.**

The three generations of human rights are identified as civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; and collective rights of peoples.

- Civil and political rights: The enjoyment of these rights does not require resources from the Government. Example: the right to create a family and, freedom of religion
- Economic, social and cultural rights: The realization of these rights requires the availability of resources. Examples: the right to food and, the right to education
- Collective rights of people: rights that the individual person enjoys not purely as an individual, but as a member of a community. Included in this category are rights to peace; the right to natural resources and wealth of the country; the right to a clean and satisfactory environment and related rights.

The categorization or classification of generations of human rights does not necessarily mean or imply that each successive generation is replaced by the one preceding it.

Characteristics of Human Rights

**Instructions to the user of this Manual:**

**The trainer could ask the participants to discuss the characteristics of human rights (Universal, inherent, interdependent, indivisible and interrelated) and give examples.**

**After writing down the characteristics provided by the participants, the trainer would compare them with the points numbered below.**

At the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, World Conference on Human Rights, 1993, the following were confirmed to be the characteristics of Human Rights:

**1. Inalienable**

Human rights are inalienable. Human rights are absolute. They should not be taken away, except in specific situations and according to due process (for example: imprisonment).

**2. Universal**

Human rights are universal. This means that they are applicable to ALL human beings.

**3. Indivisible**

Human rights are indivisible. There should be no classification as to which rights are more important than others, or must come first before other rights.

**4. Interdependent**

Human Rights are interdependent. This means that the violation of a given right can compromise the enjoyment of another right.

**5. Inherent**

Human Rights are inherent. This means that rights do not have to be given, bought, earned or inherited by people. The rights are inherent because a person is born with them.

Fundamental principles of human rights

There are three fundamental principles of human rights, as agreed by Human Rights scholars, namely freedom from discrimination, equality before the law and equal protection of the law.

- Discrimination means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference which is based on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political, national or social origin, property, birth,

and which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by all persons, on an equal footing, of all rights and freedoms.

- Freedom from discrimination is guaranteed under the Constitution of Rwanda as well as international and regional human rights instruments ratified by the Government of Rwanda.
- The Right to equal protection: right of all persons to have the same access to the law and courts, and to be treated equally by the law and courts, both in procedures and in the substance of the law. This right is guaranteed under the Constitution of Rwanda and other Conventions and Treaties ratified by the Government of Rwanda.

Source of Human Rights

#### **Instructions to the user of this Manual:**

**The trainer could ask the participants where are human rights found and write down their answers and then compare / complement them with the information in the bullet format.**

- The Constitution of Rwanda;
- Other laws (examples: The law on the rights of people with disability, the law on the rights and protection of Child , the Labour Code with some articles protecting the rights of employees / workers)
- International conventions/treaties (example: The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights);
- Regional conventions/treaties (The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights).

#### *Rights and Obligations*

Human rights entail both rights and obligations. States assume obligations and duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. The obligation to respect means that States must refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights. The obligation to protect requires States to protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses. The obligation to fulfil means that States must take positive action to facilitate the enjoyment of basic human rights. At the individual level, while we are entitled to human rights, we should also respect the human rights of others.

Human Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003 Revised in 2015

#### **Instructions to the user of this Manual:**

**The trainer should ask the participants if they know of any rights that are contained in the Rwandan Constitution.**

Human Rights are guaranteed by the Constitution of Rwanda in Chapter IV: Section One: Rights and Freedoms: Article 12 - Article 43.

Some of the Human Rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Rwanda are:

- Article 12: Right to life: Everyone has the right to life. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of life.
- Article 13: Inviolability of a human being: A human being is sacred and inviolable. The State has an obligation to respect, protect and defend the human being.
- Article 15: Equality before the law: All persons are equal before the law. They are entitled to equal protection of the law.

- Article 16: Protection from discrimination: All Rwandans are born and remain equal in rights and freedoms. Discrimination of any kind or its propaganda based on, inter alia, ethnic origin, family or ancestry, clan, skin colour or race, sex, region, economic categories, religion or faith, opinion, fortune, cultural differences, language, economic status, physical or mental disability or any other form of discrimination are prohibited and punishable by law.
- Article 20: Right to education: Every Rwandan has the right to education. Freedom of learning and teaching is guaranteed in accordance with conditions determined by law. Primary education is compulsory and free in public schools. Conditions for free primary education in schools subsidized by the Government are determined by law. A law also determines the organization of education.
- Article 21: Right to good health: All Rwandans have the right to good health.
- Article 27: Right to participate in Government and public services: All Rwandans have the right to participate in the Government of the country, either directly or through their freely chosen representatives, in accordance with the law. All Rwandans have the right of equal access to the public service in accordance with their competence and abilities.
- Article 34: Right to private property: Everyone has the right to private property, whether individually or collectively owned. Private property, whether owned individually or collectively, is inviolable. The right to property shall not be encroached upon except in public interest and in accordance with the provisions of the law.
- Article 38: Freedom of press, of expression and of access to information: Freedom of press, of expression and of access to information are recognized and guaranteed by the State. Freedom of expression and freedom of access to information shall not prejudice public order, good morals, the protection of the youth and children, the right of every citizen to honor and dignity and protection of personal and family privacy. Conditions for exercising and respect for these freedoms are determined by law.
- Article 39: Right to freedom of association: The right to freedom of association is guaranteed and does not require prior authorization. This right is exercised under conditions determined by law.
- Article 40: Right to freedom of assembly: The right to freedom of peaceful and unarmed assembly is guaranteed. This right is exercised in accordance with the law. This right does not require prior authorization, except when provided for by the law.
- Article 42: Promotion of human rights: The promotion of human rights is a responsibility of the State. This responsibility is particularly exercised by the National Commission for Human Rights. This Commission is independent.
- Article 43: Protection of rights and freedoms: The Judiciary is the guardian of human rights and freedoms. This duty is exercised in accordance with this Constitution and other laws.

While Rwanda's constitution stipulates that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of life in Article 12: Right to life: Everyone has the right to life and highlights the right to be protected against all forms of discrimination. Rising inequalities across the world have become one of the defining challenges of our time, putting sustainable development at risk, stirring social unrest, undermining social process, threatening economic and political stability, and undercutting human rights.

The challenge of building an equal and inclusive society is daunting. Inequalities of wealth and income have reached historic proportions and inequalities in opportunities and outcomes relating to education, health, food security, employment, housing, health services and economic resources are having equally devastating effects in various parts of Africa as well as in other parts of the world. These inequalities disproportionately affect particular groups on the basis of race, sex, language, religion, age, ethnicity, disability, migrant or economic status, and so on. And gender-based discrimination remains one of the most prevalent forms of discrimination across the globe.

In recognition of this, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is, in large measure, an agenda for equality. It recognizes 'rising inequalities within and among countries', 'enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power', and persistent 'gender inequality' as 'immense challenges' confronting the world today. So central is the imperative of combatting inequalities and discrimination that the new Agenda includes two goals explicitly focused on this issue: Goals 5 (gender equality) and 10 (inequality within and among countries). In addition, all other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for more equitable development and universal access to the constituent elements of development for all people.

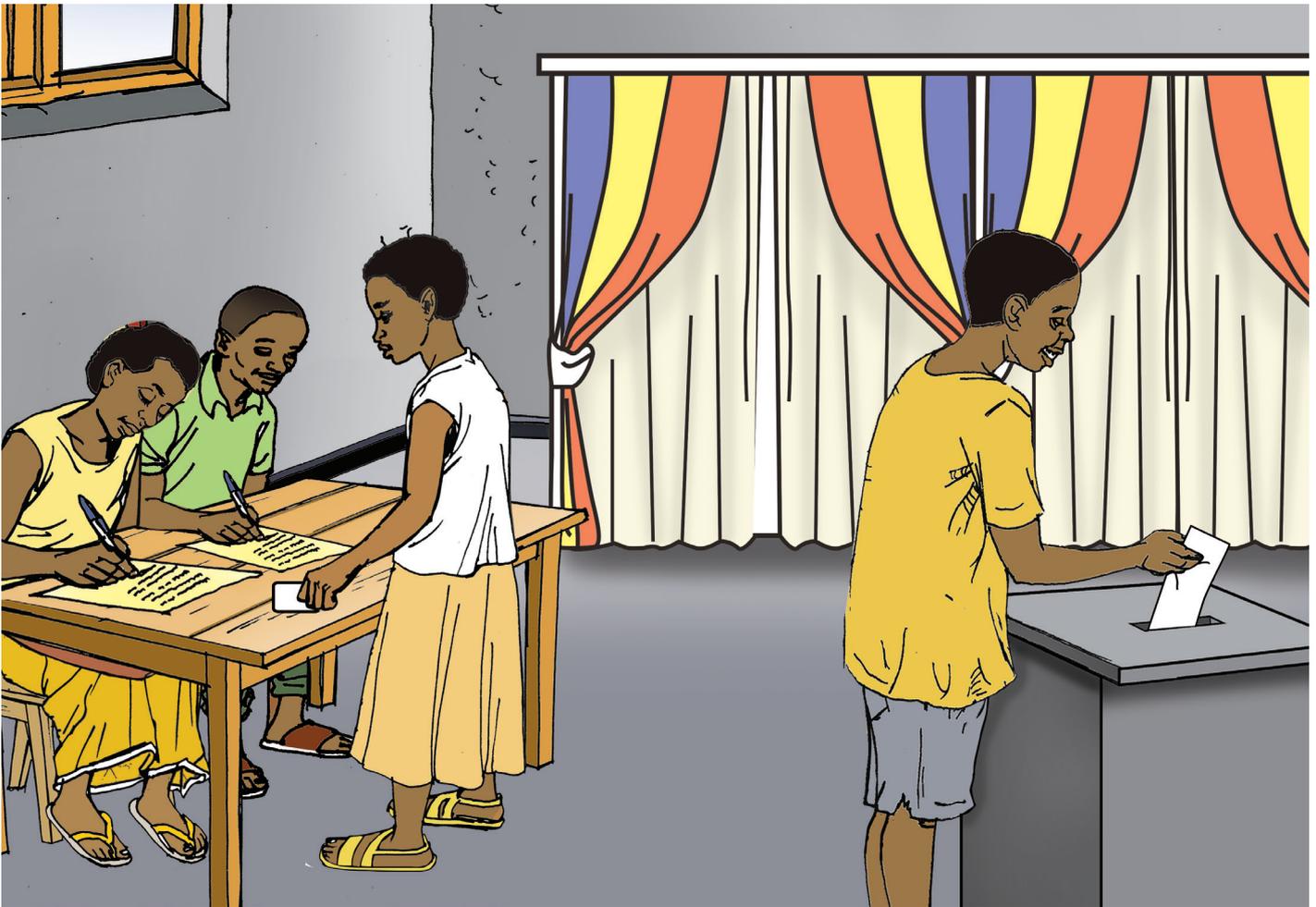
The 2030 Agenda covers seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting a significant broadening of the scope of the previous eight MDGs. Half of them address various aspects of environmental sustainability, indicating a shift to a more comprehensive development paradigm, while SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies and justice adds a new dimension to the 2030 Agenda. The references to human rights and non-discrimination, both in the preamble and declaration, and to the concepts of universality, substantive equality for women and girls define strong principles for implementation. "Leaving no one behind" means that no goal will be met unless it is met for everyone, which emphasizes the need to reach out to the most disadvantaged groups and to pay attention to inequalities in attainment and discriminatory laws and practices

## ENGAGING YOUTH IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES



The meaningful participation of young people in decision-making and implementation of the post-2015 agenda is also crucial. For the effective implementation of the SDGs, young people and adolescents need to have the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to realizing the SDGs in the region. They need to be part and parcel of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and strategies that concern and affect their lives. Only through meaningful youth participation and specific attention to young people in the implementation of the SDGs, the risk of leaving them behind can be turned into an opportunity: a catalyst for change. Governments in the region must seek out the meaningful participation of young people in decision making and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## YOUTH ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION



Democratic societies need to provide opportunities for each new generation of young people to express political opinions and to represent younger citizens' interests in policymaking processes. Across the world today, many young people feel disillusioned with mainstream politics and disadvantaged by public policy. Young people are interested in "politics" in the broader sense, however, and participate in a wide array of political activities—at the ballot box, in the streets, on the Internet, within political parties, as members of student associations and environmental groups, and in rallies and demonstrations. The problem, then, is not an all-encompassing political apathy, but rather a disconnection between youth politics and electoral politics.

### DECLINING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

In recent decades, academics and policymakers have become increasingly concerned about declining levels of youth participation in electoral politics. In many parts of the world, the past several decades have been marked by declining levels of youth participation in electoral processes. Voter turnout tends to be significantly lower among youth than among the older population, and young people are less likely to become members of political parties. Exacerbating the situation is the fact that in many of these structures, young people are not visible; typically, for example, individuals under the age of 35 are minimally represented in top political leadership positions.

The lingering impact of the global financial and economic crisis—in particular high unemployment and its disproportionate effect on youth—has intensified the feeling among many young people that traditional institutions of governance and electoral participation provide ineffective tools for meaningful political engagement. This feeling of disconnection has led to disengagement from

institutionalized processes and widespread apathy among young voters, with the result that many have turned to alternative methods of political participation.

Many have viewed this decline as representative of a crisis in citizenship. Others have argued that political participation has evolved rather than declined. Disillusionment with electoral politics is certainly not confined to younger citizens. In most established democracies, declining voter turnout is a long-term trend, as each generation of young people becomes less likely to vote than the last. What is known is that voter turnout has decreased in almost all democracies since the 1980s, and that this “turnout decline is concentrated in the youth”.

## ISSUE-BASED ENGAGEMENT: “REINVENTING POLITICAL ACTIVISM”



Over the past few decades, the world has witnessed a shift in focus from politics to policy—from engagement in institutionalized electoral processes to greater involvement in cause-oriented activism.

As a consequence, young people's repertoires of participation have expanded to include many alternative forms of political engagement such as e-petitions, fair trade “boycotts”, poetry slams and flash mobs. Young people engage in politics on a case-by-case basis, embracing personally meaningful causes or issues that are often manifested through peer networks supported by new communication technologies.

Young people are clearly interested in politics but are often disillusioned with, alienated from, or even intimidated by electoral politics.

National economic issues are the predominant concern for older generations and therefore define their political engagement. In recent times, citizens' values and interests have become more diverse, and the geographical boundaries that once

## Electoral Laws

Electoral law is the legal instrument used to develop the majority of electoral topics that are relevant for a nation (especially in the case of those nations following the so-called civil law tradition). Electoral laws are enacted by ordinary legislators (legislative branches of government, chambers, congresses, assemblies, parliaments) in order to develop the general principles established by the Constitution.

Often, since electoral systems have to be legitimate, strong and permanent electoral laws have to be enacted by at least a two-thirds majority of congressional members.

There is neither a model to follow in order to enact electoral laws, nor a recipe to follow regarding their contents and structure. In some countries, for instance, electoral laws are contained in a single piece of legislation (code or statute), while in others, many codes or statutes contain electoral rules in a specific way (in such cases, there are specific codes to regulate electoral authorities, political parties, systems of appeals, and so on).

Whatever the intent to create a single election law, in great likelihood, *“An election law neither can nor should contain all regulations relevant to the election process. The election process will require involvement of institutions and procedures that are based on other parts of the national legal system.”*

Among other matters, related legislation may be expected to include statutes providing for mass communication media, non-governmental organizations, the civil service, refugees and displaced persons, citizenship, military, use of state resource, access to information and civil and criminal codes and procedures.

Under the Constitution, electoral laws can regulate electoral topics including the following:

- The nature of representative offices, including seat allocation and term of office
- Individual rights to vote, to be voted, to associate freely with others and to affiliate to political parties
- Characteristics of the voting system
- Conditions that must be addressed by candidates to be elected
- Legal requirements for political parties (such as the requirements that they have to fulfil to be registered, members' rights and duties, funding, coalitions, and so on)
- Electoral authorities' main features (such as their structure, organization and powers)
- Geography and elections
- Registry of voters
- Voter education
- Electoral process (campaigning, election day, counting, and electoral results)
- Electoral planning
- Elections and the media
- Electoral integrity
- Disciplinary measures; system of appeals
- Electoral courts
- Electoral laws and citizen participation

Voting provides a mechanism that connects individuals with democracy. Whenever a voter casts her ballot, she consciously links herself with the political system. For those who view voting as a civic duty, they realize the voting is an indispensable right in modern democracy. Attending to the voting booth shows their support for democracy. For those who utilize their ballots as an instrument to hold electoral officials accountable for their policy outcomes, they are also capable of clarifying the responsibility in order to punish or reward the incumbent.

In advanced democratic countries, free, fair and competitive elections are regularly held in order to elect legislators and to shape the executive branch. The jurisdiction, functions, and political power of political institutions are generally designated by laws and regulations in order to protect people from government infringement of life, liberty and property. Last, but not least, in modern democracy, laws are legislated by directly elected legislators.

### **Gender equality**

Effective implementation of the SDGs for women and girls requires strengthening the enabling environment for gender equality. The persistence of discriminatory laws, social norms and practices and the inequalities experienced by the most marginalized groups of women and girls lead to de facto gender inequality. Critical issues such as violence against women, inequalities in the division of unpaid care work, women's limited access to assets, violations of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights, and their unequal participation in private and public decision-making beyond national parliaments, remain unaddressed. Tackling these questions and furthering the progress of the 2030 Agenda requires identifying and acting on the root causes of gender inequality. This must include strong political will to create gender-responsive institutions, strong governance and accountability systems, macro-economic policies that are aligned with human rights standards, and full implementation of CEDAW and all of its obligations and commitments. Robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms are also required to ensure progress

### **Human rights and rights-based policy approaches**

Human rights and rights-based policy approaches based on the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment, sustainability and respect for the rule of law must take centre stage if 15 Growth and Poverty Eradication: Why Addressing Inequality Matters. Post-2015 Policy Brief, no. 02, November 2013, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2013), New York and Geneva, (available at [http://unctad.org/en/publicationslibrary/presspb2013d4\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/publicationslibrary/presspb2013d4_en.pdf)) 8 the prevalence of all inequalities, including gender, in the region is to be addressed. A human rights-based approach to implementing the SDGs, normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed towards promoting and protecting human rights, will seek to redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress. The promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies and provision of effective institutions at all levels is crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### **Governance**

Across all levels of policymaking and cooperation, efforts in pursuit of sustainable development require good governance including measures to increase accountability, transparency and participation. However, weak public institutions, authoritarian attitudes and policy processes that seek to dampen, extinguish or side-line civic debate too often weaken the quality of governance in the region. The percentage of women and minorities who participate in decision-making positions across the executive, judicial and legislative branches varies widely across the region and in most cases is not demographically representative. Vested interests and power dynamics, including nepotism and corruption, can be key barriers to equal participation in decision-making processes. Corruption, including siphoning off resources that should be used for public services and public goods, insufficient access to and quality of basic services, together with the less-than-full implementation of human rights obligations are among the concrete manifestations of the region's unfinished business in terms of achieving effective and responsive governance.

## MODULE II: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY



### *Part 1: The right to equality and non-discrimination*

The general principle of equality and non-discrimination is a fundamental element of international human rights law. A useful definition of non-discrimination is contained in Article 1(1) ILO 111, which provides that discrimination includes: 'Any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in the employment or occupation [?].' Thus, the right to equal treatment requires that all persons be treated equally before the law, without discrimination. The principle of equality and non-discrimination guarantees that those in equal circumstances are dealt with equally in law and practice. However, it is important to stress that not every distinction or difference in treatment will amount to discrimination. In general international law, a violation of the principle of non-discrimination arises if: a) equal cases are treated in a different manner; b) a difference in treatment does not have an objective and reasonable justification; or c) if there is no proportionality between the aim sought and the means employed.

The right to equality and non-discrimination is recognised in Article 2 UDHR and is a cross-cutting issue of concern in different UN human rights instruments, such as Articles 2 and 26 ICCPR, Article 2(2) ICESCR, Article 2 CRC, Article 7 CMW and Article 5 CRPD . In addition, two of the major UN human rights treaties are established explicitly to prohibit discrimination, CERD on the ground of race and CEDAW on the ground of gender.

The principle of non-discrimination and equal treatment is also contained in regional instruments, such as Article 2 American Declaration, Article 24 ACHR and Articles 2 and 3 ACHPR. Despite the fact that the principle of non-discrimination is contained in all human rights instruments, only a few instruments expressly provide a definition of non-discrimination: Article 1(1) CERD, Article 1 CEDAW, Article 2 CRPD, Article 1(1) ILO 111 and Article 1(1) Convention against Discrimination in Education.

Human rights instruments prohibit discrimination on several grounds. Article 2 UDHR prohibits discrimination on the following 10 grounds: race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth and other status. The same prohibited grounds are included in Article 2 ICESCR and Article 2 ICCPR. It is important to note that the grounds enumerated in these provisions are merely illustrative and not exhaustive. The term 'other status' has an open-

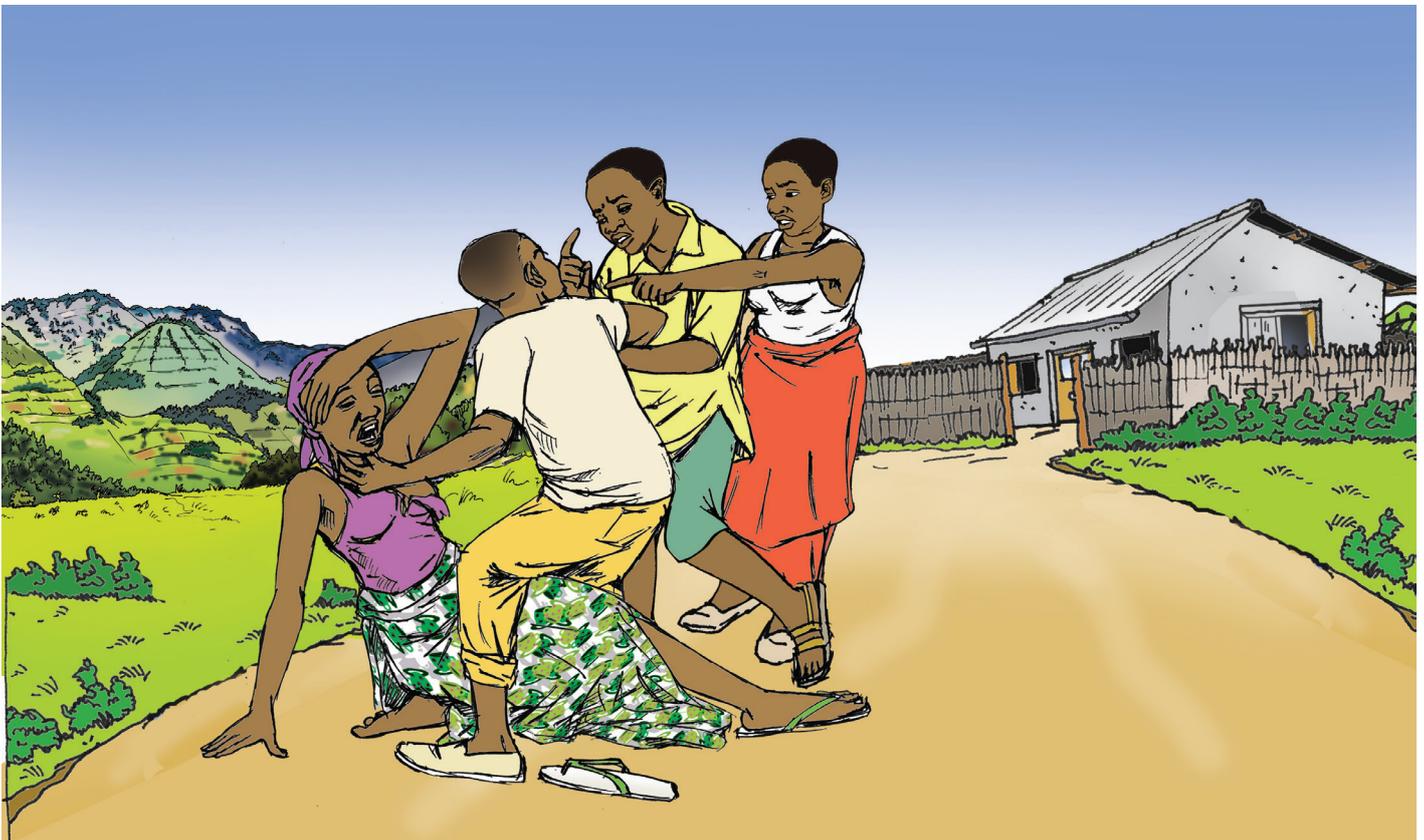
ended meaning; some grounds not explicitly mentioned, such as age, gender, disability, nationality and sexual orientation could also be considered prohibited grounds.

The general non-discrimination clauses of each Covenant are complemented by provisions prohibiting discrimination on specific grounds. For example, Article 7(a) (i) ICESCR guarantees equal conditions of work between men and women and requires equal remuneration for work of equal value; Article 7(c) ICESCR guarantees equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his/her employment; Article 10(3) prohibits any discrimination in the protection and assistance for all children and young persons; and Article 13(2)(c) guarantees equal accessibility in higher education. In the same vein, Article 23(4) ICCPR requires states to take adequate steps to ensure equality of rights and responsibilities of spouses as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution; and Article 24 ICCPR prohibits any discrimination against children based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property or birth.

Sometimes the prohibition of discrimination included in human rights instruments provides for the protection that is not limited to the rights set forth in the instruments. For example, Article 26 ICCPR, Article 3 ACHPR, Article 24 ACHR and Protocol No. 12 ECHR establish free-standing rights to equality; their application is not confined to the rights contained in the Conventions.

At the African level, it is notable that the non-discrimination provision contained in Article 2 ACHPR is the first substantive right listed, appearing before life. The ACHPR lists the same prohibited grounds as the ICCPR, although instead of 'property' the ACHPR prohibits discrimination on the ground of 'fortune'. Like in the ICCPR and ICESCR, the list of prohibited grounds is not exhaustive. Article 2 ACHPR is complemented by Article 3 that provides a general requirement stating: '1) every individual shall be equal before the law. 2) Every individual shall be entitled to equal protection of the law.' Furthermore, Article 12(5) prohibits discrimination in the expulsion of non-nationals; Article 18(3) prohibits discrimination against women and children; Article 18(4) prescribes special measures of protection for the elderly and the disabled; and Article 13 requires equal access of all persons to public property and services.

## THE RIGHT TO LIFE





Across the world, more than one billion people – or 15% of the world's population – live with disabilities. They face significant barriers to realizing their human rights, including discrimination in education, employment, housing and transport; denial of the right to vote; and being stripped of the right to make decisions about their own lives, including their reproductive choices. Individuals with physical, sensory, intellectual and mental disabilities often face increased violence, yet they remain invisible in their communities. Governments fail to protect their rights, and make access to redress difficult.

In Rwanda, a census carried out in 2012 by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) revealed the number of Persons with Disabilities is 446,453 in which males are 221,150 and females are 225,303. Legal Framework:

The Rwanda Constitution of June the 3rd, 2003 as amended in 2015

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol

The law N° 01/2007 dated 20/01/2007 relating to the protection of persons with disabilities in general

The law No 02/2007 of the 20th January 2007 relating to the protection of former war combatants guarantees the various specific rights to disabled ex-combatants

The law No 03/2011 of the 10th February 2011 determines the responsibilities, organization and functioning of the NCPD

The law N° 01/2007 dated 20/01/2007 relating to the protection of persons with disabilities in general;

The law No 02/2007 of the 20th January 2007 relating to the protection of former war combatants;

The law No 03/2011 of the 10th February 2011 determines the responsibilities, organization and functioning of the NCPD;

Prime Minister's Order n° 226/03 of 27/12/2013 modifying and complementing the prime minister's order n° 2/03 of 11/02/2011 determining the responsibilities, organisation and functioning of the organs of the NCPD

Policy Framework

Policy on Persons with Disabilities of 2018 under revision

Special Needs Education Policy of 2018 under revision

National Employment Policy of 2018 under revision

Social Protection Strategy of 2011 revised in 2015;

National Health Sector Policy of 2005;

Health Sector Policy of 2014

East African Policy in PWDs of 2012

Girl Education Policy of 2014

ECD Policy 2015

Deficiencies in democracy and weak institutions are among the main challenges to the effective realization of human rights. There is an apparent link between undemocratic structures and human rights violations. Yet, even functioning democracies sometimes condone the denial of human rights. As opposed to a violation, or specific breach of rights, the denial of human rights is societal and systematic. This often includes the denial of genuine inclusion and pluralism. For example, even in many advanced democracies, the full inclusion of women or minority populations in circles of power and spheres of influence continues to be denied.

The worldwide implementation of democracy depends on each and every individual being able to make use of one's right to vote, to express opinions, and to participate in political life and decision-making. This requires first and foremost, that individuals understand their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and are aware of the mechanisms to support the protection of these rights under their nation's laws. The importance of human rights education is therefore tantamount to the effective realization of human rights and the promotion of democratic governance.

## Part 2: Youth Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is not a neutral concept, but rather encompasses a variety of forms and perspectives surrounding relationships between the individual, the community and broader society. Various discourses and viewpoints carry particular messages and reflect differences in understanding with regard to the purpose and nature of youth as citizens. To fully understand the significance of civic engagement to youth and society, it is necessary to examine how particular forms of civic engagement relate to the experiences and social positioning of young people and what the objectives are.

Throughout the research and literature on youth civic engagement, five key discourses present youth civic engagement/action as desirable activity in their analyses and underlying assumptions about youth and the purpose of their engagement. While these discourses are not mutually exclusive, they each contain dominant strands demonstrating their distinctiveness.

An overview of the five discourses is provided in table below:

DISCOURSES INFORMING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT			
DISCOURSE	KEY AIM	CONCERN	DESIRED OUTCOME
Engaged citizenship	Participation	Recognition; voice; human rights	Engaged in decisions and influence
Positive youth development	Idealized adulthood	Adaptation; behavioural/ cognitive/ moral adaptability; acquisition of life skills	Becoming more socially adapted individuals for future adulthood; social conformity; less risky behaviours
Belonging	Cultivation of affective social inclusion	Increasing attachments to place and others; building social capital (trust, networks, norms); finding spaces for a sense of inclusion	Stronger connectedness; better interactions; stronger youth-adult interdependencies
Care	Strong social support and resilience	Building strengths in adversity; preventing escalation of problems; increasing protective factors	Supportive/more effective networks; relevant programs
Justice	Understanding and addressing injustice	Acknowledging root causes of structural inequality	Social justice

## ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP

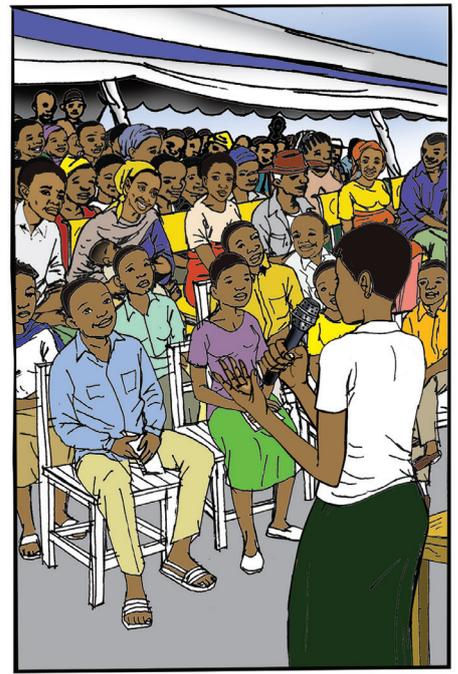
### Decent jobs



### Quality education



### Youth representative



The discourse on engaged, democratic citizenship views citizenship primarily in terms of how political and civic identities are activated through engagement and influence in the public sphere. The literature on engaged citizenship therefore revolves largely around opportunities for youth to demonstrate their capacities to participate as political and social actors in society. It suggests that civic engagement begun in adolescence is more likely to continue throughout the life course. Because of this, it is argued that civic attitudes, beliefs and skills should be nurtured among young people.

With engaged citizenship, civic education and civic skills development, focused both on the exercise of rights and responsibilities, are seen as the basis for active engagement among youth in policy processes. Schools play an important role in this approach as the primary venue for developing the skills, values and behaviours needed to participate in public life. This is achieved both through formal civic education and through extracurricular and community-related after-school activities. It is also argued that schools may serve as a learning ground for understanding and practicing participation and social responsibility and for exercising rights. While this traditional framework offers the fundamentals, it is generally acknowledged that the potential of civic education and civic skills development has not been fully tapped in either the formal or the informal education and learning system as a means of engaging youth in developing more responsive policies and services.

A more direct mechanism for linking young people to community needs and developing the sensitivities required for greater political participation can be found in programs that involve participants in projects incorporating elements of deliberation, decision-making, and political advocacy.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

The social justice approach is distinct from other forms of youth development in that it calls for explicit acknowledgement of the seriousness of the socioeconomic challenges facing young people. It

includes elements of youth development frameworks such as emotional and social support as well as positive adult relationships, yet it also encompasses a socio-political element linked to a critical understanding of the root causes of social and community problems.

The social justice approach derives from the proposition that youth can be active agents of social and political change in their own environment once they are equipped with the socio-political competencies necessary to articulate social and community problems and propose solutions.

Social justice youth development includes practices and programs that foster a positive sense of self through exploration of historical background; increase social awareness through the acquisition of knowledge about social issues; and strengthen skills that promote inquiry, analysis and problem solving. More succinctly, this approach can be used not only to identify problems, but also to activate mechanisms through which adversities can be addressed in real and tangible ways.

## **ADULT VIEWS AS THE CHALLENGE TO YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Adults tend to have low and often negative expectations of young people, focusing on their risky behaviour, destructive peer influences and resistance to adult authority; few see youth as individuals with the positive motivation and skills to contribute to their communities. A body of research highlights how young people sense that their participation is not valued in society, which makes them less likely to engage in collective activity in the first place. The extent to which young people feel they can influence their local school and community experiences reveals much adults tend to have low and often negative expectations social actors. It has been argued that young people, especially those from low-income backgrounds, are conditioned to believe that nothing they do will make a positive difference in society.

Another obstacle to the civic engagement of young people is “adultism”, or the tendency of adults to control the nature and content of youth civic engagement. Typically, civic engagement among young people replicates the structure of adult democratic institutions and tends to be based on adult notions of what constitutes appropriate forms of participation for youth. As a result, marginalized youth and other young people lacking the “necessary” qualifications and resources are less likely to volunteer.

Studies have found that some young people see “volunteering” as something imposed upon them by adults rather than as something they really want to do. There is ample evidence from research indicating that while young people are capable of developing projects that can bring significant positive change to society, they are not encouraged to do so because these projects may challenge existing institutions. Hence, prevailing forms of civic engagement often focus on the maintenance of these institutions rather than promoting action for change. This may contribute to the apparent reluctance, or even unwillingness, of youth to engage in the existing civic and political framework.

## **FIVE KEY STEPS TO ENHANCE YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

It is worth noting that it is widely acknowledged that organized efforts are required to promote youth civic engagement. Research suggests that young people are more likely to become civically engaged when they are in setting such as schools, workplaces and community organizations where they are asked to take part because their friends are, or because they learn about issues that concern them (Flanagan and Levine, 2010).

The following strategies are set out for the development of policy and youth civic engagement programs, practices and interventions.

They can be adapted to the community, national and regional levels. These steps should be included in any, and all, youth programs where a legitimate desire for youth involvement exists. Regardless of whether these are designed at the local, regional, or national level, and are deemed as promising or proven in terms of evaluation and renown, a youth voice and representation is essential.

However to maximize effectiveness programs should be implemented locally. These local efforts can utilize consistent curriculum/methods designed at extra-local levels (Universities, Governments, NGOs), but it is essential that youth in the context of their environments help decide how these are delivered and implemented based on their unique needs.

This approach benefits localities that embrace youth in such a manner. Examples where this approach has effectively worked include Youth as Researchers (where groups of youth raise issues, answer these through rigorous research, and communicate the results to a wider audience, and add to body of knowledge), Leadership for Life (where local youth defining problems and how to develop plans to address these problems).

### ***Be explicit regarding the degree of youth participation.***

Some studies have emphasized the importance of involving youth in all aspects of program design planning, development and execution, which can provide them with opportunities to practice their leadership skills, determine the responsiveness of the program to the needs of all its beneficiaries, pursue social justice, and understand methods for effective implementation. All allow for increased youth ownership of the process and the long term commitment of young people to such efforts. It is argued that a youth-driven or youth-led model will yield the most tangible results in terms of youth development and youth empowerment.

A youth-driven model may not necessarily be run by youth, but the adults administering the program can ensure that many aspects are shaped by youth and that there is a significant level of youth ownership.

It is important that civic engagement initiatives explicitly define the degree of youth ownership and the decision-making authority young people have with regard to program activities. Successful civic engagement program, as widely recognized best practice, include youth involvement in monitoring and evaluation. This should be included as a norm in all youth engagement efforts.

### ***Be relevant to young people's own interests and lived experience.***

Young people are more likely to be engaged by and passionate about issues that are relevant to their own culture and lived experience. This does not suggest that youth should be driven to action by carefully selected information given to them by adults. It is about youth being more likely to be committed to something that directly impacts their well-being and individual passions. The knowledge youth possess must be valued, and young people need an enabling environment that allows them to develop a certain level of expertise on the issues that influence their lives. This approach is consistent with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms the right of children to express their views freely and to have those views taken into account in all matters that affect them.

### ***Be action-oriented.***

Research has shown that young people are committed to social justice but often do not consider themselves responsible for the injustices they see, nor do they believe they are in a position to do anything about them.

Therefore, it is important that the ideals of civic engagement programs are grounded in action and in the establishment of processes for ensuring action. Organizations and agencies working with youth on civic engagement initiatives should clearly specify the civic goals they wish to achieve and provide real opportunities for young people to engage in action directed towards meeting those objectives.

They must also ensure that youth engagement is real, substantial, and significant. If engagement is "tokenistic" it will not propel further involvement.

Similarly when assessing the success of engagement efforts it is important to understand that the success of establishing a process for engaging youth in long-term activities matters. Establishing the process, framework, and methods is the measure success.

This allows for long-term capacity building and sustained engagement, not just one of activities that are abandoned after a single success or failure.

### **Value and foster analysis and reflection.**

While action is essential in developing civic skills and experience, the importance of reflecting on civic activity is also emphasized in the literature. For example, young people may be trained and engaged in designing, implementing and evaluating research, conducting surveys and interviews of their peers, and presenting findings and solutions in public forums.

### **Provide opportunities for youth- adult partnership.**

While youth ownership of civic action is important, this does not mean adults should not play a role. Youth leadership emerges out of a complex set of skills, behaviours, actions and attitudes that are best developed through apprenticeships and other experiential processes requiring close partnerships between youth and adults.

Adults often play a key role as mentors and motivators in youth leadership programs.

### **Key Ideas on youth engagement**

- **Create an outreach strategy that connects with existing organizations and be intentional about asking young people to get involved.**
- **Plan a strategy that ensures diversity among youth involved in the program.**
- **Be intentional about creating a “revolving door” of youth leaders to ensure continuity.**
- **Balance the need for continuity in terms of issues with the integration of new young people who bring new ideas.**

## *Part 3: Different Forms of Civic Engagement*

### **1. Community Engagement**

Over the past few decades, greater attention has been given to youth engagement at all levels within the development agenda. There has been increased recognition of the value of young people’s participation as it pertains to both youth and wider development, as well as formal acknowledgement of the need to actively address the many challenges facing a growing youth population, including unemployment and underemployment, poverty, inequality, political unrest, and social exclusion.

Involving youth—as collaborators, team members, leaders and decision makers—in addressing the day to-day issues that affect them offers a broad range of benefits to both young people and the community, from greater community connectedness and social awareness of the individual to enhanced participatory decision-making and democratic governance in community institutions. Such involvement also sends youth the message that their participation has intrinsic value.

Although the extent of their participation has varied, young people have always been actively engaged at the community level through volunteerism, peacebuilding efforts and sporting activities. Young people engage for a number of reasons ranging from self-actualization and peer recognition to the desire to solve problems, make changes or fight injustice through social or political activism. Young people are often more motivated by the immediate and short-term outcomes of engagement, while for adults community involvement tends to be more focused on the long-term impact.

Engagement at the community level often provides young people with their first experience of active participation in a cause or activity, serving as a gateway to further and broader engagement throughout life as well as opportunities for leadership building. Young people are increasingly motivated to engage with issues, causes or movements that are meaningful to them and the communities in which they live. Over the past few decades, young people have been gradually moving away from engagement in institutionalized structures (such as electoral activities and political parties) towards greater involvement in cause-oriented political activism. At the same time, the rise of social media and advance of new ICTs and mobile technology has provided young people with greater opportunity to engage within in their communities in new and innovative ways.

Youth-focused and youth-led organizations often provide the first experience of intentional engagement for young people at the community level. Organizations such as the Scouts can draw together children and youth at an early age, teaching them valuable life skills through focused voluntary activity. Integrating intentional learning and education in youth engagement at the community level can contribute significantly to youth development. Activities such as volunteering, peacebuilding and sport not only engage youth in the activity itself, but also offer the possibility for young people to develop specialized skills and knowledge in the areas of leadership, teamwork, communication, peer-to-peer mentorship, problem solving, decision-making, negotiation and mediation, and intercultural understanding. Furthermore, evidence suggests that involving youth at the community level in grass-roots causes, groups and activities increases the likelihood that they will engage in political processes.

At this level, the changing trends and concepts surrounding engagement at the community level are explored in the contexts of volunteerism, peacebuilding and sport for development.

### **Volunteerism**

The nature and practice of voluntary activity are wide ranging and have been subject to change. Volunteering has traditionally been viewed as an altruistic endeavour carried out by an individual for the purpose of providing charity, support or assistance to a specific community and/or project in order to promote the well-being of a specific group or society as a whole.

The notion of volunteering can be quite fluid and broadly encompasses many forms of civic engagement. For example, according to the most recent State of the World's Volunteerism Report, the terms "volunteering" and "social activism" are not mutually exclusive. "Volunteering and social action converges and overlaps around creating opportunities for participation: social activism starts at exactly the same premise as volunteering—people giving time who want to make a change in their community".

At its most basic, volunteerism often works to fill gaps in service provision for those living in poverty, and while volunteering is often perceived as those "with" helping those "without", volunteers are themselves diverse in nature. Indeed, in Africa, "much volunteering is done by the poor for the poor".

Expanding the participation of young people in local groups inspires greater electoral and political participation. Volunteer activities in the community can give youth greater confidence in their ability to influence broader issues and take action in the political realm.

In recent decades, the practice of volunteering and voluntary service has increasingly been viewed as a give-and-get proposition, whereby individuals offer their time and effort to a cause but expect, in return, to develop skills and gain experience. In some cases, voluntary activity is used as a means of obtaining experience in a specific area to bolster a young person's curriculum vitae (CV) or résumé as he or she searches for employment. Volunteerism is seen to have added value among recent graduates who are potentially facing long periods of unemployment or underemployment as a result of the global economic crisis.

The period of “waithood”—a time of stagnation in the transition from youth to adulthood—is becoming longer for many young people worldwide. Facing delays in the progression from school to work, marriage and family formation, youth often see voluntary activity as a way to fill the gap. However, the potential exists for young people to become long-term volunteers rather than transitioning to the labour market, which can have a significant impact on youth development. Added to this is the fact that the skills and experience gained throughout voluntary activity are still not recognized in many sectors, leading some employers to ignore the value and benefits of voluntary activity among prospective employees.

The upsurge in “volunteerism”—where a person travels abroad to volunteer on a community project for a specified short-term period—has also had implications for volunteerism and brings into question the sustainability of such endeavours for the receiving communities.

With the development of relevant ICT platforms, online voluntary service has become increasingly popular among young people, providing them with a means to work with a community and/or project anywhere in the world from their own home. Young people are able to quickly mobilize others via social media sites and campaigns; this less formal but enormously effective form of mass volunteerism is challenging historic notions and definitions of volunteerism.

### ***Benefits of Youth Engagement for the Individual***

Young people who are involved in their communities feel that they are valued and taken seriously by other community members. They often receive recognition for their contributions and tend to have relatively high self-esteem. Helping others can bring great satisfaction, contribute to happiness, and make young people feel part of something bigger than themselves. Assuming some form of responsibility or leadership can engender feelings of efficacy and being able to make a difference. Young volunteers often have a sense of contributing to shared norms or values so that they feel “at home rather than out of place” in their communities. Flanagan and Levine point out that engaging with peers singularly and in groups helps young people form social networks, build social capital and connect to opportunities. Young people may enjoy increased independence and altruistic capacity, enabling them to shift their focus from their own problems to the needs of others. Youth also benefit from more and better social support from others, which has a proven connection to better mental health and well-being.

### ***Benefits of Youth Engagement for the Community***

Youth civic engagement benefits not only the individuals involved but also their communities and wider society. Supportive groups, organizations and communities can provide opportunities for young people to connect with others, participate in meaningful activities, develop skills, and feel safe, secure and valued. Crucially, by engaging in civic activities, young people can help create the types of communities that are needed for positive youth development. According to Brennan, the contributions of young people to community development have often been overlooked or underestimated, even though it is known that community and resiliency (the capacity to cope under stress) contribute significantly to the well-being of youth. More simply, strong communities are needed to promote youth resiliency and vice versa. Communities can benefit from youth participation in the identification of problems and solutions relevant to young people and the community as a whole. Collaborative civic action creates connectedness between community members and highlights the importance of young people as civic actors. Research has shown that youth civic engagement can help young people develop the capacity to serve in organizations and eventually transition into community leaders who contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of community development efforts. Furthermore, youth civic engagement can enhance the democratic process by bringing new energy, ideas and perspectives into the community.

Exercise of what youth benefit from volunteerism in their communities (for individuals and communities)

## **ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT**

The transition to the world of work marks a crucial stage in young people's lives. It extends the possibility of independence, the application of academic learning, and social and economic productivity, and it sets the stage for defining an individual's potential in terms of earning capacity, job options and possibilities for advancement. When and how young people enter the labour force can have lifelong implications for their employment experiences and can impact the well-being of those individuals as well as their relationships with family, friends, the community and society.

Young people typically experience the greatest difficulty finding work. Youth are three times more likely than older adults to be unemployed. Their relative lack of skills and experience puts them at a disadvantage, but it is also often the case that in times of economic hardship it becomes easier for employers to retain existing older staff than to hire new, often younger, workers.

### ***Youth Unemployment and Underemployment***

Young people have been disproportionately affected by unemployment, underemployment, vulnerable employment and working poverty. Even during periods of robust economic growth, the labor market is often unable to assimilate large numbers of youth. In recent years, the situation has been exacerbated by the lingering effects of the global financial and economic crisis, with declining numbers of youth able to find decent work.

Recent estimates indicate that 73 million youth, or 13 per cent of all young people worldwide, were unemployed in 2014. While joblessness is a concern almost everywhere, in low- and middle-income countries it is underemployment in the informal sector rather than unemployment in the formal sector that constitutes the primary employment-related challenge faced by youth.

### ***Unemployment in Rwanda***

Differently from other countries, unemployment in Rwanda is overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon, as most Youth in rural areas are employed in the agriculture Sector that accounts for 90% of the labour force.

Unemployment is highest amongst the youth aged 16-24 years; it is twice as high as that of the 35-44 year age group. The majority of the Youth do not have the required competencies to be absorbed on the labour market. They often lack access to labour market services and their ability to secure decent and productive work is often undermined. Youth unemployment is increasing and exacerbated by growth in population. Its causes are increased rural-urban migration, mismanagement of scarce available resources, corruption, severe drought, family conflicts leading to acts of violence and denial of fundamental human rights in some parts of the country.

### ***Youth delinquency***

Another big challenge is Youth delinquency in Rwanda. It may be attributed to rapid population growth, urbanization, conflict in families, lack of skills, migration, limited parental guidance, poverty, limited access to housing and resources, unemployment and underemployment.

Delinquency is usually seen as a social problem and it begins with families. Studies have indicated that families contribute to the development of delinquent and criminal patterns of life. Usually adolescents who end up into delinquency behaviour turn out to be social negative liabilities to communities and national at large. These factors normally lead to Youth engaging into unwanted behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse.

### ***Human Trafficking***

Although human trafficking affects a wide section of people, the false opportunities offered by traffickers can be very attractive to the many youth who are underemployed and living below the

poverty line. The offer of a job in another country can seem to be a solution to many problems, but often can instead lead to forced labour and prostitution.

The findings from different assessments show evidence of internal and cross-border trafficking of girls and women, as well as cross-border movement of children for commercial sexual exploitation as well as other types of exploitative reasons.

The prevalence of human trafficking in all its forms is on the rise. Police statistics reveal 153 cases of human trafficking registered between 2009 and 2013, with the majority of the victims being young females below the age of 35. Africa as a whole has seen an increase in the number of identified victims of trafficking from 7,799 in 2008 to 10,096 in 2013. These numbers are believed to be only a fraction of the actual number of trafficked humans, because the covert nature of the problem means that most victims go unidentified.

### **Training and Skills Development: Passing the Cost-Benefit Test**

When equipped with relevant skills and education, young people become better positioned to secure decent work. Investment in skills training and development is an increasingly popular programmatic and policy response to tackling the youth unemployment challenge. However, the costs of developing skills training programs versus the benefits gained, particularly in times of long-term and persistent youth unemployment, are a consideration.

For example, a delayed transition from school to work can lead to the erosion of skills, resulting in decreased benefits from skills development schemes. The International Labour Organization notes that over-education and over-skilling coexist with under-education and under-skilling, in that so far as long-term unemployment is the norm for young people, their skills and education gradually become obsolete. Ensuring that skills and training programs are linked to job placement is therefore a facet of successful skills programs, and this may balance the cost-benefit equation as well as ensure that the skills mismatch is reduced.

It is therefore a must that the young people should acquire skills which will enable them to survive and sustain their survival. In addition, they have to be actively involved so as to participate in the knowledge that the future belongs to them. They need to be at the forefront of the entire national building process within Africa, as the most involved class. Youth participation in a growing economy is an essential key to national development. The world's biggest power is the youth therefore meaningful efforts must be established to help empower them to contribute sufficiently and competently towards the socio-economic and sustainable development of the country. *"We cannot always build the future for our youths but we can build our youths for the future,"* Samuel Ullman.

### **MITIGATING THE IMPACT: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES**

Persistent unemployment among young people can have a lasting impact on society. Relatively high levels of youth unemployment are linked to reduced economic growth and in many places have led to civil unrest and the disruption of traditional power structures.

However, the costs of joblessness go beyond macroeconomic considerations and interference with the status quo. Long-term unemployment and underemployment can also adversely affect young people's health, well-being and self-esteem and can diminish their future earning potential and employment prospects.

Investing in skills development and training, establishing internships, and promoting entrepreneurship have been identified as key tools in addressing the crisis.

Although legitimate efforts are being made to mitigate the effects of the crisis through the types of targeted programs and schemes mentioned above, many young people still fall through the cracks and are left to navigate the employment landscape themselves.

*Key steps to enhance economic engagement of youth:*

### **Challenge political apathy and empower young workers to guide legislative change.**

The democratic self-governance and participatory structure of labour unions offers an ideal environment for challenging political apathy among youth. Unions are a democratic vehicle for young workers' participation in economic decision-making in the workplace and in society as a whole. For young workers, unions provide the space and resources to organize on workplace, political and policy issues that are important for young people.

Governments must consult with young workers and unionized youth and empower them to contribute to improving labour legislation so that the priorities attached to youth employment are reflected in minimum workplace standards. The priorities of older workers and legislators may not be the same as those of young workers or new entrants to the labour force, and fair legislation is designed to meet the basic needs of all workers. It is also important to create mechanisms for political inclusion to ensure that young people themselves are represented in the democratic structures of government at all levels, effectively empowering them as decision makers.

### **Create decent jobs for youth**

Governments have a responsibility to ensure that the rights and potential of youth are taken into account in the development of national education and labour policies, including policies on internships, apprenticeships and vocational training. Policies aimed at creating jobs for youth and matching skilled workers with available employment need to be a priority for the government at all levels as global unemployment rates worsen. These policies must incorporate provisions recognizing the labour rights of youth and the rights and roles of trade unions in both traditional and more precarious settings. That initiative identifies the input and support needed from trade unions and workers' organizations, must be developed to increase young workers' awareness of their labour rights and to ensure that those rights are respected in the workplace.

## **POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT**

Globally, Youth participation and representation in institutional political processes and policy-making is relatively low. As a group, young people are not adequately represented within formal political structures, as evidenced by the low rates of parliamentary involvement, political party participation and electoral activity among youth worldwide. One aspect of the problem is the lack of regulatory mechanisms facilitating youth participation; in many countries, for example, only individuals aged 25 years or above are eligible to run for parliament.

With the global youth population standing at 1.2 billion, the exclusion of young people from formal political processes threatens the legitimacy of political systems and structures, as a huge cohort remains unrepresented or underrepresented—which in many cases leads young people to find alternative means of political engagement.

In Rwanda, although, despite a youth- friendly legal framework, there are very few substantial activities targeting political participation of young people. Among those, itorerero and urugerero are the commonly known. The most recent Youth Connekt Africa Summit is another initiative that unites young entrepreneurs and youth opinion leaders to impact on Africa's development. The summit aims at patching employment gaps, improving education and skills, reducing gender inequality, and empowering technological innovation.

The summit attracts every year “more than 1,500 participants from government, business and

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.modernghana.com/news/801109/the-youth-and-national-development-the-role-of-the-governme.html>

investor communities, multinationals, and start-ups shaping Africa's technology ecosystem." YouthConnekt is a Rwandan home-grown solution launched in 2012 during the National Dialogue. Its overall mission is to leverage technology to connect youth to their role models and opportunities for civic engagement, social and economic empowerment. The YouthConnekt Initiative won the UN Innovation Award, which led other countries to express interest in scaling up the initiative to their respective home countries. So far, eight countries have adopted YouthConnekt including Liberia, Republic of Congo, DRC, Sierra Leone, Uganda, The Gambia, Zambia and Cape Verde. The first YouthConnekt Africa Summit was held in Kigali in July 2017.

Another initiative is the Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum which plays a critical advocacy role for its members and facilitates the inclusion of youth in the Rwanda's economic and social transformation. When it comes to Youth participation in decision-making; youth are represented in various decision-making organs right from cell level to higher levels like the district councils, parliament, East African Legislative Assembly (EALA). The National Youth Council also provides an active advocacy platform for Youth issues; however the National Youth Council Structures do not spread all the way down to the village level, and even where they exist, the level of efficiency and delivery is still poor. Youth participation in national decision and planning processes continues to be limited due to limited capacity and lack of information in regards to existing opportunities regionally and globally.

Regarding youth participation and outreach (Political and Civic participation), the law establishing the National Youth Council (NYC) Committee structures states that Youth representation is from National Level to Cell level. This structure ought to be revised to include representation until the Village level. Elected representatives need to be well empowered in order to effectively participate in decision-making and planning processes at all levels.

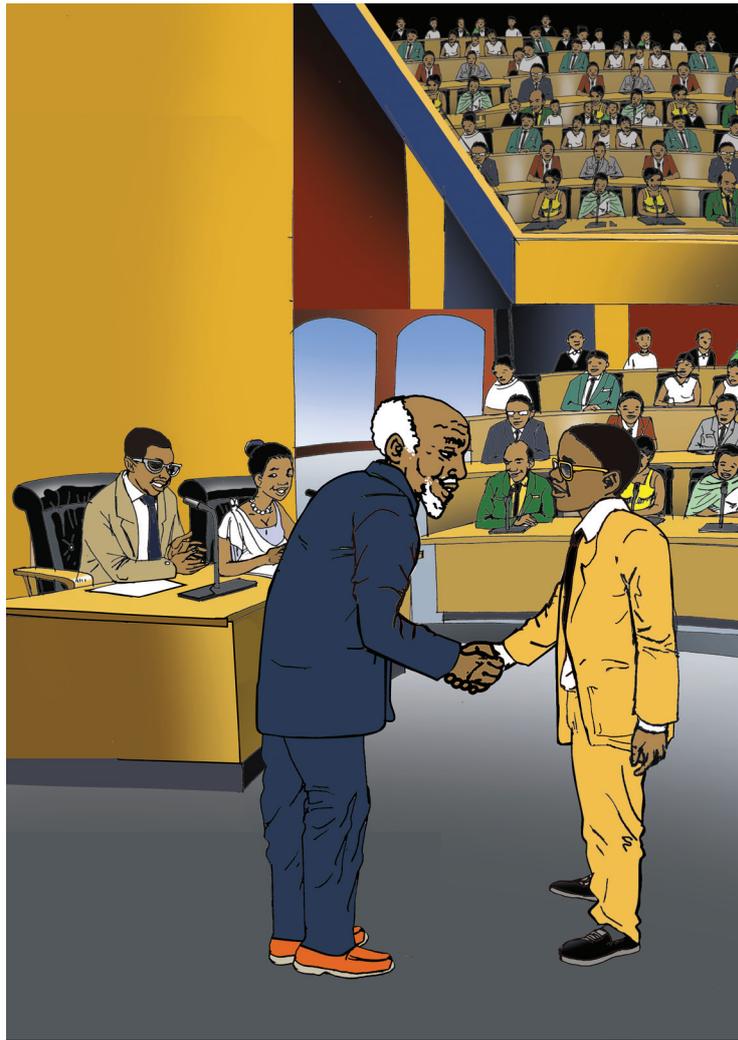
The operation capacity of NYC structures need to be also strengthened, a portion of budget for their function need to be allocated at all levels. It is worth noting that under the same policy Priority Area V: Youth mobilization, participation and outreach, the policy chose only to encourage youth to look out for opportunities to be able to compete for representation in the Region and globally and remain silent on participation in national decision-making processes.

Whether it should be attributed to that policy silence or not, experiences on field taught Never Again Rwanda that young people are often excluded or overlooked as political actors. Politics is still regarded as a space for politically experienced men, and while women are often disadvantaged in accumulating experience to run for office, young people are systematically marginalized because of their young age, limited opportunities, and projected lack of experience. However, Rwanda is globally ranked as a country where women are highly involved in politics. As the increased political participation of women benefits society as a whole, the presence of young people in decision-making positions undeniably benefits all citizens and not just youth.

The National Youth Policy should therefore provide clear articulations of human rights through norms and standards, all relevant to promoting and sustaining human dignity in order for young men and women of Rwanda to live in dignity with the other in respect and trust to become a creative, positive agent of change.

That is said because, as the National Youth Policy, the Strategic Plan of the National Commission for Human Rights (2018 - 2024) and the Ministry of Justice's National Human Rights Action Plan of Rwanda: 2017-2020, they both lack a comprehensive framework for youth participation. However, in regard to participation and inclusion, The National Human Rights policy blatantly states: All Rwandans are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in contribution to and enjoyment of civil, economic, social, cultural and political development of the country in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized.

## TRANSITIONS IN POWER: THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE



Although youth have played a visible and prominent role in demonstrations and protests and have often been instrumental in bringing about changes in governance, the position of young people following political transition remains largely undefined. In part due to the complexities involved in democracy and institution building, there is often no mechanism for the meaningful inclusion of young people in the new and emerging political landscape. As such youth are often still not fully involved, represented or regularly consulted.

One important reason for their lack of political integration is that while youth are instrumental in breaking down existing structures, the same blocks and foundations are being used to rebuild those structures. What is needed in many cases is a whole new framework for political participation and governance that can bring about the type of political structures and processes that are genuinely responsive to and inclusive of young people.

Even the passive exclusion of young people from governance structures is not without consequences. There is evidence that failing to purposefully and meaningfully include youth in the building of new political processes and institutions can lead to increased frustration and resentment among young political actors, destabilizing democratization and accelerating conflict dynamics.

Finding a way to facilitate youth engagement through institutionalized processes while also integrating less traditional forms of political engagement is an emerging challenge for various Governments and policymakers—one which, if left unresolved, may threaten the stability and security of countries.

## ONLINE ACTIVISM: SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH AUDIENCES

The availability of ever-growing numbers of online and social media outlets and other web-based tools has played a huge role in bolstering young people's activism and participation, providing a vehicle for young people to learn about, participate in, and mobilize around political and social issues.

Through the power of social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook and other sharing platforms, information on protests and demonstrations beginning in one country can now spread quickly, triggering mass activism and similar demonstrations elsewhere.

The reach of young people's online presence and activity is broad and extensive. The ability of youth to develop and utilize online tools and forums to create spaces and respond to needs in the local and global community has allowed them to engage in a multitude of ways and on a variety of topics at any given time. Widespread Internet connectivity and web access have changed the game in the most fundamental way.

For those who are connected, it has become easier to engage in a variety of causes and campaigns from local to global level. However, the extent to which cyber activism translates into sustained political engagement over one's lifetime is unclear owing to its nascence and to the dearth of research on the long-term outcomes of participation in online media and web-based engagement. Ongoing research is needed to determine the impact of ICT on political participation, with particular attention given to the extent and long term sustainability of such engagement.

## MODULE III: PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALISM



## *Understanding violent extremism and radicalism*

As forms of negative youth engagement, Radicalism and extremism are largely perceived as youth phenomena. Indeed, historically, certain youth demographics have been drawn disproportionately to these sorts of activities and movements, and exceptionally large youth cohorts, or “youth bulges”, often make countries more susceptible to political violence. It is also possible to identify violent groups that not only target youth audiences, but whose very existence canters around a youth identity. For example, the Red Guards in China were a violent paramilitary youth social movement mobilized from universities by Chairman Mao during the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, the very name of the group may sometimes reflect a youth demographic; the name al-Shabaab in Somalia literally means “the Youth” in Arabic, and the name of the Taliban in Afghanistan stems from the Pashto word for “students”. Most strikingly today, jihadism, in the guise of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, is almost exclusively associated with young men under the age of 25 and originates in regions experiencing a substantial youth bulge.

While extremism predominantly draws young men to its fold, women are not entirely immune. Indeed, not only have women been drawn to political radicalism and extremism throughout history, but they have also played crucial leadership roles in movements associated with women’s rights, universal suffrage, civil rights, and animal and environmental rights. In the 1970s, when extreme left-wing radicalism was prevalent throughout much of Europe, women were sometimes considered far more ideologically extreme than even their male counterparts.

However, this perception of women as ideologically extreme has been the exception rather than the rule. Women involved in radical or extremist groups have generally been depicted using biological, psychological or sexualized stereotypes linked to assumptions about what is “appropriate” female behaviour, thereby divesting them of political and personal agency. Even today, at a time when women are increasingly drawn to radical movements, this characterization still appears to hold. For example, young women who have attempted to join the Islamic State, in contrast to their male counterparts, have been labelled sensationally by the media as “jihadi sex brides”, with terms such as “vulnerable” and “sexually groomed” used to account for their actions.

Online platforms, in particular Internet-based social media and web 2.0 platforms, have collectively become the principal arena for youth political and social engagement over the past decade. This is largely a positive development, as these platforms are ostensibly conducive to the “levelling” of hierarchies of knowledge and power and have reinforced the democratizing and egalitarian nature of the new media environment. However, the appropriation of these technologies has also contributed significantly to the rise and increased visibility of youth radicalism and extremism.

There are a number of reasons that might account for the intersection of youth, technology and radicalism. Principally, this nexus is a function of young people being “digital natives” rather than “digital immigrants”. The former are defined as native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. Conversely, those who were not born into the digital world but have at some point adopted various aspects of the new technology are considered digital immigrants. For young people today, there is little that is new about the new media environment; rather, it is the only media environment with which they are familiar. For this younger generation of political actors, social interaction and other everyday activities take place largely within this media environment, whether it be social networking, shopping, dating, playing video games, watching movies, reading news, listening to music, or learning. In fact, most activities in the “real” world now have virtual counterparts that may appear to be more appealing to a certain age cohort (digital natives), so it is not surprising that their political activism or radical escapism should similarly take place within this arena. Radicalism or extremism involves at least one of the following drivers:

1. The acceptance or espousal of beliefs, ideas and attitudes that clearly contradict or fall outside the range of acceptable or mainstream views within that particular society; an example would be the racist and intolerant attitudes of neo-Nazi groups in contemporary Europe.

2. The employment of illegitimate methods or strategies to actualize ideas and beliefs, irrespective of the legitimacy and mainstream acceptability of those ideas. For example, while most people would accept that animals have rights and should be protected from unnecessary harm, violent attacks on people and research facilities that carry out testing on animals would be considered illegal and an example of radical or extreme activity.

Radicalism and extremism operate on or outside the periphery of mainstream society and are characterized by the espousal of beliefs and ideas or the use of methods and strategies that are not considered acceptable within a particular societal context.

### ***Preventing violent extremism and radicalism: Youth Engagement in Peacebuilding***

With close to 600 million young people living in conflict-affected or fragile contexts, youth have a significant role to play in peacebuilding efforts.

Although young people have always been involved in peacebuilding, activities and programmes focused on the specific role of youth in peacebuilding are relatively new.

Just as youth are not homogeneous, the roles of young people in conflict and post-conflict settings are diverse, ranging from activist to dissident and from peacemaker to conflict aggravator. The perpetuation of the view of young people as instigators of violence rather than as peacebuilders is unfair, as the majority of young people worldwide espouse the ideals of peace and security.

Indeed, large numbers of youth are engaged in community-based activities at the grass-roots level and are most often on the front lines of peacebuilding efforts. With the right opportunities and targeted activities that build on their special skills and capacities, young people can be effective agents of change within the community.

However, whether or not this happens can depend greatly on the approach applied to peacebuilding in its specific context. As Professor Alan Smith, Ulster University, explains young people can be viewed as either positive stakeholders who are sought out to be actively involved in the peacebuilding process or they can be perceived as threats and excluded from the process altogether.

### ***What is peacebuilding?***

Peacebuilding is a process that encompasses a wide range of activities ranging from formal mediation and reconciliation efforts to security sector reform and intergenerational dialogue. It involves many different actors including Governments and civil society, the media, artists, athletes and everyday citizens. Peacebuilding activities can take place at the community, regional, national and/or international levels, with all involved working towards a common goal. The Alliance for Peacebuilding notes that “peacebuilding ultimately supports human security—where people have freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from humiliation”.<sup>247</sup> Peacebuilding is generally recognized as a process that involves many entities addressing the root causes of conflict, but it is important to understand that young people are affected by different forms of violence that may not relate directly to armed conflict itself. Johan Galtung (1969) identified three distinct forms of violence—structural, cultural, and direct. In expanding peacebuilding work, it is important to understand and transform these types of violence. An effective conflict transformation model, proposed here, builds on this premise towards a practical application to programming in conflict and fragile situations. Essentially, change can be viewed at three levels:

1. Changing the perception of self. Conflicts inevitably mould the self-identity of young people. A successful transformation can only take place when people's identities are consistent with the desired result. The types of change desired might include a fearful refugee becoming a reintegrated member of society or a perpetrator of violence evolving into a peacebuilder and bridge builder.
2. Changing the perception of “the other”. A characteristic of conflict or violence is that communication between conflicting parties breaks down, the parties become isolated, and their

perceptions of one another diverge. Transformation requires that all parties work to understand each other and acknowledge the essential humanity of everyone involved.

3. Changing the perception of the issues. Conflicts emerge from disagreements over specific issues, and the situation often deteriorates very quickly, with opposing parties focusing more on blaming or accusing each other than on solving the problems at hand. One of the requirements of peacebuilding should therefore be to help parties focus on reconciling the issues that constitute the source of the conflict collegially and without blame. If steps are taken to increase people's knowledge and understanding of the issues, to articulate the many different perspectives that exist and, when necessary, to identify and explore any "unspoken" issues, it may be possible to better assist people in making decisions in a safe space, based on their interests rather than on fear.

### **Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding**

Young women and young men play a multitude of roles in pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict settings, serving as activists, dissidents and vigilantes but also as negotiators, mediators and peacemakers. The notion that youth "are at the frontlines of peace building" is one that has been affirmed by many practitioners and scholars<sup>254</sup> and by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.<sup>255</sup> On 9 December 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2250, which encourages increased representation of young women and young men in preventing and resolving conflicts and their participation in peace processes and dispute resolution mechanisms.<sup>256</sup>

From this and related studies, a salient finding was that young people's participation in peacebuilding at an early age had a lasting, positive impact on their involvement in school, family life and the community, helping them develop as individuals and become responsible young adults.

### **Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Rwanda: Development of the national action plan**

Best practice has shown that preventing and countering violent extremism requires the collaboration of government agencies, security forces, civil society, and local traditional and religious leaders to be effective. As the Rwandan Government moves forward to fulfil the AU commitment of developing a National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, there is an opportunity to learn from the successes and mistakes of others to incorporate what works and improve on what has not.

The Government of Rwanda and key stakeholder groups have come together toward the end of 2018 to develop a comprehensive Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) National Action Plan and strategies through technical assistance, best practices and lessons learned from region. Violent extremism is the product of historical, political, economic and social circumstances, including the impact of regional and global power politics. Growing inequalities are one of the consistently cited drivers of violent extremism but unemployment or poverty alone is not the only push factor inciting violence and extremism: perceptions of injustice, human-rights violations, social-political exclusion, widespread corruption or sustained mistreatment of certain groups, are also considered important push factors. When all these inequalities come together for a particular group, radical movements and violence are more likely to erupt.

A State's failure to provide basic rights, services and security not only contributes to growing inequality, it also creates a vacuum that allows non-state actors to take control over State sovereignty and territory. There is a risk that failed political transitions, with weak institutions, law enforcement and checks and balances provide a fertile ground for violent extremism.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/norway/undp-ogc/documents/Discussion%20Paper%20-%20Preventing%20Violent%20Extremism%20by%20Promoting%20Inclusive%20%20Development.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Rachel Briggs and Sebastian Feve, "Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism."

They suggest that there are three types of counter-messages: government strategic communications, alternative narratives, and counter-narratives. Government strategic communications exist to present government policy and strategy in a positive light; this may take the form of a public awareness campaign. Alternative narratives, which are undertaken by either government or civil society, aim to present a new narrative, rather than engaging on the same terms as the extremist content. This may include stories relating to diversity, or tolerance, or social values. Finally, counter-narratives, which are best used by civil society, directly tackle an extremist narrative in an attempt to discredit violent extremists' messages.

In Rwanda, due to the history with the Genocide Against the Tutsi in 1994, the government with the assistance of civil society, have been working together to create a narrative where violent extremism can no longer take place. This has been done through the development of the country, the strengthening of the Rwandan identity and creating a common purpose.

Rwanda in countering violent extremism has done the following:

**Promoting the rule of law;**

Enhancing the fight against corruption by establishing nationwide campaigns and the office of the ombudsman;

Enhancing participatory decision-making and increasing civic space at national and local levels through establishing spaces such as akagoroba k'ababyeyi;

Providing effective socio-economic programs such as mutuelle de santé;

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment shown through Rwanda having the highest number of female MPs in the World;

Engaging youth in building social cohesion, Rwanda where the majority of people are youth is encouraging youth to participate in the political sphere;

Integration of former extremists (Forces of the ex genocidaire government) back into communities in order to promote social cohesion;

Home-grown solutions such as the Gacaca process which not only provided justice but played a key role in reconciliation and peacebuilding.

These counter-narratives have been effective and Rwanda is considered one of the safest countries in the World.

Push and Pull Factors of violent extremism

Push Factors in violent extremism	Pull Factors in violent extremism
Unemployment Injustice Poverty Interest in migration Lacking a sense of belonging Family conflict Poor governance Violations of human rights	Radicalization in prisons Misinterpretation of religious dogma Social media Identification with collective grievances Lack of identity Lack of quality education

The team that developed the National Action Plan shared their ideas for improving Rwanda's current approach to terrorism and violent extremism. The ideas discussed included:

- Extending the work of the National Police and Muslim community to include other religious groups
- Finding ways to encourage more Muslim participation in government/politics
- Monitoring NGOs to ensure objectivity
- Harmonizing justice sector actors through trainings and experience sharing to ensure a common understanding of violent extremism and how to handle it
- Continuing to support those who have been imprisoned and de-radicalized throughout their reintegration
- Educating students to be critical thinkers and to challenge what they are told
- Encouraging patriotism so that youth feel they belong and have a stake in their country's future
- Working with community leaders to ensure attendance at government programs, particularly from youth
- Partnering with media to share information about violent extremism
- Monitoring social media to detect radical teachings
- Collaborating with social media platforms on cybersecurity
- Establishing programs on national and private media to target prevention of violent extremism
- Creating content on the internet to prevent violent extremism

It is generally accepted that youth civic participation and political engagement are essential components of a healthy and functioning society. Youth engagement is vital to political socialization and participation; young people represent future electorates and publics, and initial experiences of democratic engagement are likely to resonate into adulthood. However, it is also crucial in helping to build human and social capital, and at the most fundamental level, it strengthens young people's understanding of their own roles as citizens and the attendant rights and responsibilities.

There is a common aspiration for a new political culture, which above all is about accountability. Youth see themselves as a counterbalance to power and during the uprisings spent much energy on trying to expand political and civic space. They have utilized social media and crowdsourcing platforms to develop more innovative ways of engaging with challenges, finding solutions and fostering new citizen-based structures. For many, their legitimacy is grounded in a politics that exists beyond the structures of the State.

It is important, however, that civic engagement and political engagement, as well as the relationship between citizen and State, be reconciled and better integrated. Many youth recognize that informal political activism cannot be a substitute for the institutionalized politics of parties, elections and Governments.

The lessons learned and best practices observed through implementation of Inzira Nziza Activity as well as outcomes from various dialogues with youth champions and local leaders can inform the development of effective strategies for enhancing youth participation in governance through both formal and informal channels. When young people think of politics, they might think of corruption, inflexible bureaucracy, and the little power they have to change something around them. Rarely do young people see a place for themselves in the political processes of their country; this, in turn, seriously undermines the possibility of young people developing a real sense of responsibility. Youth participation is an integral part of democratic societies, but without a sense of responsibility, the social integration of youth and their cohesion in society would be impossible.

## CONCLUSION

It is highly important to ensure that mechanisms exist for direct interaction between government officials and young people. Policy and decision-makers should decentralize power by giving all youth access to the political process and the opportunity to have their voices heard. For example, the activity of bringing together youth groups in a meeting with Members of Parliament and other key decision-makers made it possible for local leaders to change their perceptions towards young people's participation in decision-making processes. However, concerted efforts should be increased to make policymakers have a zeal to consult with young people on the issues that concern them most, including education and unemployment.

In this context, the participation of young people means that they have a strong commitment to and understanding of human rights and democracy and are willing and able to work to ensure both. The civic engagement of youth would have no effect as just a principle written in policy documents, if young people do not take the lead and actively participate in development endeavours. This being the case, engagement is very important in building an equal and inclusive society.

The Government of Rwanda needs to take into consideration the contributions of young people in all phases of national policies and plans that affect youth, starting from policy and program design all the way up through implementation and evaluation.

The proper infrastructure for effective youth engagement has to be put in place in order for young people to become a decisive force for social change. If the energy of youth is harnessed the right way, they can indeed be a strong and reliable backbone of positive social transformation and democratic governance. Governments should allow and promote the work of youth associations through financial, educational, moral, and technical support. Moreover, the government needs to take the needs of the youth into consideration by supporting changes in the processes that exist to enable young people's voices to be heard and considered in the decision-making processes.

NAR Human Rights and Democracy Handbook.pdf

"Rankings, Global gender gap report 2015". World Economic Forum. 2015. Retrieved 7 July 2017.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (1 August 2015). "Women in national parliaments". Retrieved 10 July 2017.

<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/Gender&democracy.pdf>

<http://freeofviolence.org/legislation/politicalpart.htm>

<http://lawanddemocracy.org/pdf/files/amazing.prin..pdf>

<http://paulkagame.com/index.php/news/1850-president-kagame-chosen-as-rpf-flag-bearer>

<https://www.thebalance.com/how-to-walk-your-talk-1916726>

<http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/what-are-human-rights/universal-declaration-of-human-rights/articles-1-15.html>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/secondary-education-resources/lesson-plan-ideas/lesson-8-what-are-human-rights>

<https://hbr.org/2014/08/the-best-leaders-talk-the-walk>

[http://www.umdcipe.org/conferences/Moscow/papers/Citizen\\_Participation\\_in\\_the\\_Local\\_Public\\_Service\\_Provision\\_and\\_Quality\\_Improvement.pdf](http://www.umdcipe.org/conferences/Moscow/papers/Citizen_Participation_in_the_Local_Public_Service_Provision_and_Quality_Improvement.pdf)

<http://reliefweb.int/report/rwanda/missing-mark-participation-prsp-process-rwanda>

[http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/fileadmin/templates/documents/sector\\_strategic\\_plan/Youth\\_Sub\\_Sector\\_SSP.pdf](http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/fileadmin/templates/documents/sector_strategic_plan/Youth_Sub_Sector_SSP.pdf)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making." United Nations Youth. United Nations Development Program, n.d. Web. 7 July 2017.

Engaging Youth in Decision-Making: A Path toward Active Youth Citizenship in Eritrea, Rahel Weldeab, The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), January 15, 2010

Never Again Rwanda & Interpeace, 2015, Governing with and for Citizens :Lessons from a Post-Genocide Rwanda, Kigali: NAR

British Council Uganda & Uganda Youth Network, 2013, Training manual on improving youth participation in governance and development in Uganda, Kampala: British Council Uganda

Commonwealth, 2014, Human Rights Training for Youth Trainers, London: Commonwealth Secretariat

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women

The African Youth Charter

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015: Scaling Up Investments in Decent Jobs for Youth (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2015). Available from [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_412015.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_412015.pdf)

Karen J. Pittman and Marlene Wright, "Bridging the gap: a rationale for enhancing the role of community organizations in promoting youth development", Commissioned Paper #1 (Washington, D.C., Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, February

The Broadband Commission for Digital Development: International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Core Principles for Engaging: Young People in Community Change, Forum for Youth Investment, [http://www.forumfyi.org/files/FINALYouth\\_Engagment\\_8.15pdf.pdf](http://www.forumfyi.org/files/FINALYouth_Engagment_8.15pdf.pdf)

James Youniss and others, "Youth civic engagement in the twenty-first century", Journal of Research on Adolescence, vol. 12, No. 1 (March 2002), pp. 121-148.

Edelman, A., Gill, P., Comerford, K., Larson, M., & Hare, R. (2004, June). Youth development and youth leadership: A background paper. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth.

Ferber, T., Pittman, K., & Marshall, T. (2002). State youth policy: Helping all youth to grow up fully prepared and fully engaged. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment.

Nishioka, V., & Bullis, M. (2002). Job-related social skills training. Vocational and Nurturing Youth Leadership in The Global South: A Mapping Of Strategies, Approaches, Challenges And Opportunities. (n.d.). Restless Development. <http://restlessdevelopment.org/file/resdev-youth-leadership-mapping-pdf>

Wehmeyer, M. L., Agran, M., & Hughes, C. (1998). Teaching self-determination to students with disabilities: Basic skills for successful transition. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.



- Rwanda -

A publication of Never Again Rwanda with the support of USAID  
Published under "Inzira Nziza Activity"



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE