

POWER **in** PEOPLE

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RWANDA

NEWSletter

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EMPOWERING **WOMEN**

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News letter

Quarter 1, 2024

“Empowering Women”

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Foreword

Message of the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we stride into the first quarter of 2024, it gives me immense pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all our readers, partners, and supporters. The beginning of this year marks a significant moment as we celebrate the spirit, resilience, and achievements of women across Rwanda. At ActionAid Rwanda, we are particularly delighted to commemorate International Women's Day 2024 under the theme "**Empowering Women.**"

In this edition of our quarterly newsletter, we are proud to share with you the remarkable initiatives and projects undertaken by ActionAid Rwanda during January to March 2024. One of the flagship endeavors during this period is the launch of the IFS-KUNGAHARA Project, aimed at empowering women smallholder farmers and bolstering food security in our communities. This project underscores our commitment to gender equality and sustainable development.

Furthermore, we highlight our proactive approach to ending sexual and gender-based violence through various interventions. We firmly believe in preventive measures and are dedicated to creating safe spaces where women and girls can thrive without fear.

Empowering women lies at the core of our mission, and we are excited to showcase our efforts in this regard. Through training and capacity building initiatives, we equip women with the skills and knowledge necessary to unlock their full potential. By doing so, we contribute to building more inclusive and equitable societies.

In addition to our focus on women's empowerment, we continue to champion community development through our projects addressing essential infrastructure and water access. We recognize the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work borne by women and are committed to alleviating this through our interventions.

Moreover, our commitment to youth empowerment remains unwavering. Through the implementation of the "Strengthening Youth-Led Organizations to advocate for enhanced Budget Accountability in Rwanda" project, we empower young leaders to drive positive change in their communities.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the invaluable support of our partners, volunteers, and dedicated staff. We extend our deepest gratitude to each one of you for your unwavering commitment and collaboration.

As we navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, let us continue to work together towards a future where every individual, regardless of gender or background, can live a life of dignity and opportunity.

Thank you for your continued support.

Warm regards,

Ines MWANGAVU
Interim Executive Director
ActionAid Rwanda



Women from Ngera Sector celebrated their achievements during the IWD (Photo AAR)

At the Southern Province level, ActionAid Rwanda participated to the celebration in Ngera sector, by representing other CSOs operating in the province. The celebration was an opportunity for women to demonstrate different sustainable achievements realized during the past 30years, in the terms of promoting women rights and women empowerment.

By integrating this ethos into its Local Rights Programs alongside its Rights Holders, AAR not only demonstrated its commitment to gender equality but also catalysed meaningful dialogue and action within its community. This concerted effort not only honoured the invaluable contributions of women but also fostered an environment conducive to their continued progress and empowerment, aligning AAR with the global movement towards gender parity and social justice.

Celebrating International Women's Day 2024 Across Rwanda.

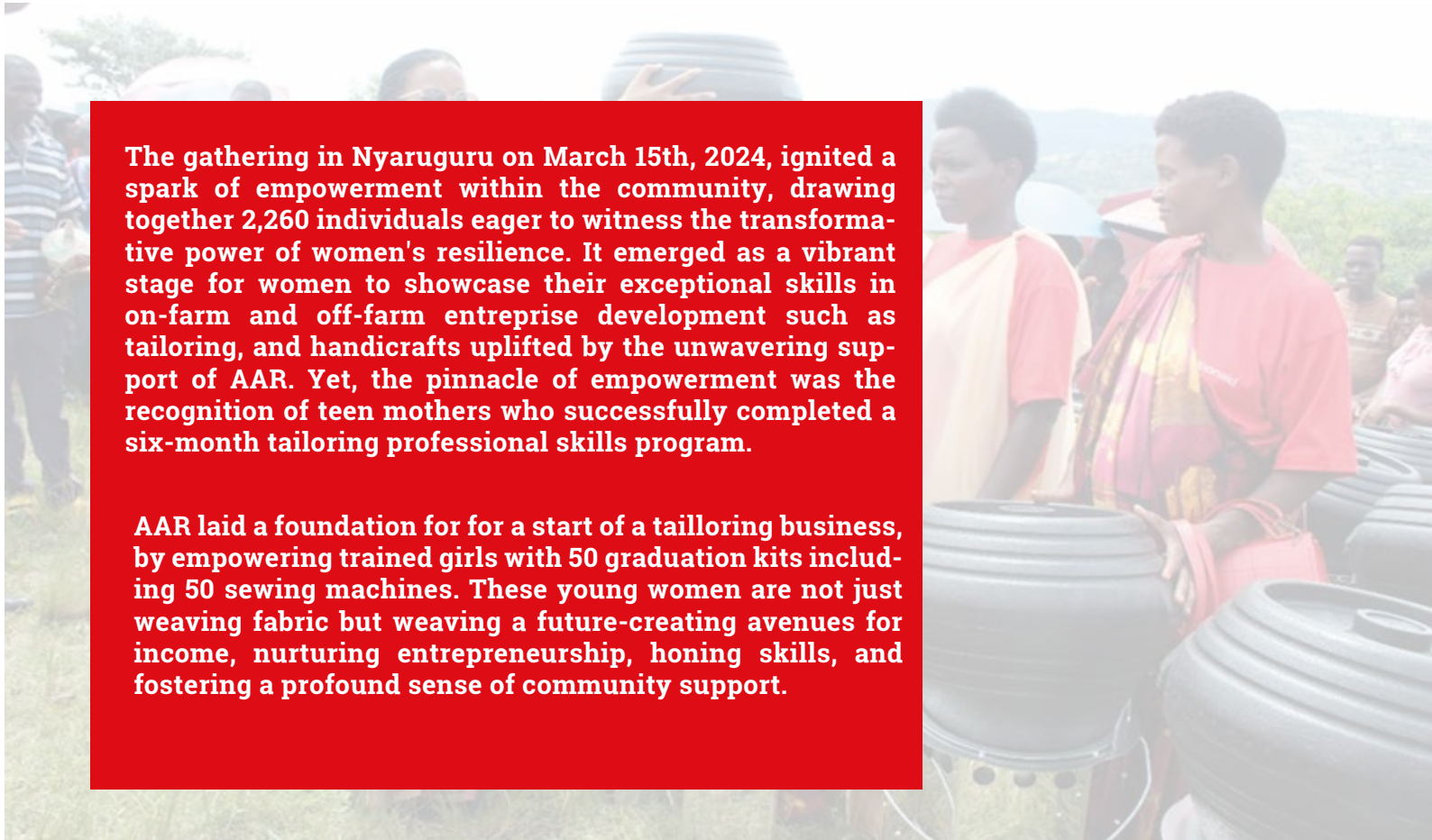
In addition to participating and supporting the celebration of the IDW at national level, in the week of 8th March 2024, ActionAid Rwanda celebrated the International Women's Day with around 10,014 community members from all seven LRPS with presence of different stakeholders and personalities including the Governor of Southern Province, Senators, the Mayors and different Vice-Mayors from different districts, the Sector Executive Secretaries and Community Leaders.



AAR tackles the burdens of UCW through facilitating women access wood saving cooking stoves (Photo AAR)

The IWD was an opportunity to advance the advocacy on recognizing, reducing and redistributing the burdens, of unpaid care work, an opportunity to showcase the benefits of agroecology practices and climate change adaptation practices,

AAR supporting women from 74 families with energy-saving cooking stoves. These stoves not only save time and reduce physical burden but also offer economic benefits, mitigate environmental impact, and contribute to empowerment and gender equality by enabling women to engage in other productive activities.



The gathering in Nyaruguru on March 15th, 2024, ignited a spark of empowerment within the community, drawing together 2,260 individuals eager to witness the transformative power of women's resilience. It emerged as a vibrant stage for women to showcase their exceptional skills in on-farm and off-farm enterprise development such as tailoring, and handicrafts uplifted by the unwavering support of AAR. Yet, the pinnacle of empowerment was the recognition of teen mothers who successfully completed a six-month tailoring professional skills program.

AAR laid a foundation for for a start of a tailloring business, by empowering trained girls with 50 graduation kits including 50 sewing machines. These young women are not just weaving fabric but weaving a future-creating avenues for income, nurturing entrepreneurship, honing skills, and fostering a profound sense of community support.

In Nyanza Local Rights Programme, the March 2024 International Women's Day witnessed a profound impact, marked by the active participation of 3,400 individuals. A noteworthy facet of this event was the pivotal role played by AAR in extending support to families grappling with poverty, facilitating their access to essentials like iron sheets. This initiative, aimed at actualizing their fundamental rights to shelter, not only reinforced their safety and resilience to disasters but also enhanced their dignity and overall security. By addressing these fundamental needs, the programme not only underscored the significance of inclusive community engagement but also praised a tangible step towards equitable societal development.

Advocacy for couples to formalize their marriages; this initiative is crucial as it not only promotes legal marriage but also enhance its broader societal benefits. By advocating for legal recognition, AAR enables women to access various rights, including those related to family assets and land ownership, while also enhancing their social standing and reducing gender disparities. Moreover, legal marriage fosters family stability, encourages economic participation, and contributes to the overall well-being of communities and reduces family conflicts and Gender Based Violences.,



Celebration of IWD in Musanze District (Photo AAR)

In Muko and Shingiro Local Rights programmes, the event was attended by 1,700 people. AAR supported community members to access food, livestock, and agricultural tools. Most importantly, AAR supported women with additional capital for women-owned small businesses. This support not only enhances financial inclusion and business expansion but also empowers women, promotes autonomy, and challenges gender stereotypes in the business world.

AAR Launches IFS-KUNGAHARA Project to Empower Women Smallholder Farmers and Enhance Food Security



Stakeholders participating to the National Launch of IFS-KUNGAHARA Project funded by the European Union (Photo AAR)

On the 9th of February 2024, at Lebanon Hotel in Kigali, ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) launched the IFS-KUNGAHARA Project. This project aims to increase food production, enhancing food security, and increasing farm income for women smallholder farmers.

The grant project, funded by the European Union, titled "Improving Food Security and Boosting Farm Income for Women Smallholder Farmers in Rwanda" (IFS). Implemented by AAR jointly with TUBIBE AMAHORU, the project will span across Nyaruguru, Gisagara, Nyanza, Musanze, and Karongi Districts, where it will work closely with women cooperatives to provide support and facilitate transformative change.



“

We are very much grateful to the European Union for generously funding this Project for the next three years, from November 2023 to October 2026, for a total budget of 770.000EUR. With this support, we are significantly contributing to improving food security in Rwanda.

”

Mme. Ines MWANGAVU
Interim Executive Director
ActionAid Rwanda

At its core, the IFS-KUNGAHARA Project seeks to address several critical issues plaguing Rwandan agriculture. With approximately 70% of the population engaged in agriculture, many rely on subsistence farming, leaving them vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, global crises, and economic instability.

In response to these pressing concerns, the IFS-KUNGAHARA Project aims to tackle three main issues: Low food production and income among female farmers, high levels of food insecurity and under-nutrition, the impacts of global crises on local markets.

Mr. Jean Damascene MUVUNYI, the project Coordinator explained that the Project Overall Objective is “To contribute to the increased food availability, improved nutrition and boosting farm income in Rwanda”. The Project outcome: “to strengthen resilient food production systems by local women smallholder farmers’ cooperatives reducing post-harvest losses and boosting farm incomes through better access to profitable local markets”

He also added that the project aims to produce the following three outputs:

Output 1:

Women smallholder farmers have expanded and improved their skills on agroecology and nutrition sensitive agricultural practices with increased access to agri-inputs which increases their agricultural yields and diversifies food products.

Output 2:

Women smallholder farmers’ cooperatives have access to better ecological tools and technologies to allow them reduce post-harvest losses.

Output 3:

Agricultural food production is boosted allowing food security and farm incomes to be enhanced by selling food surpluses to local food markets and by participating in food supply to school-feeding programme within districts.

By supporting women-led cooperatives and promoting sustainable agriculture, the project aims to improve food availability, affordability, and accessibility. Through initiatives such as training sessions, learning tours, and engagement with local authorities, women farmers will gain essential knowledge and skills in climate-resilient agriculture, post-harvest handling techniques, and market access. Moreover, the project aligns with Rwanda's national development plans and contributes to policies aimed at enhancing food security. Leveraging the National School Feeding Policy, it seeks to boost food production and income for women farmers while advocating for gender-responsive planning at the district level.



Mme. Chantal DG. Planning in MINAGRI officially declaring Kungahara Project Launched (Photo AAR)

As the project unfolds, it will focus on building the technical, economic, social, and policy foundations necessary for long-term sustainability. Through capacity building, advocacy, and partnerships, the IFS-KUNGAHARA Project aspires to create a resilient and prosperous agricultural sector, ensuring a brighter future for Rwanda and its people.

In all, the launch of the IFS-KUNGAHARA Project marks a significant milestone in AAR's journey towards empowering women smallholder farmers and enhancing food security in Rwanda. With determination, collaboration, and innovation, we embark on this transformative endeavor, driven by the belief that together, we can create lasting change and build a more sustainable and equitable future for all. Stay tuned for updates on our journey as we work towards a brighter tomorrow.

AAR's Preventive Approach to End Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) continues to lead the charge in the fight against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) with a proactive and preventive approach. On January 26th, 2024, AAR organized an Advocacy Workshop aimed at empowering young people in Rwanda to prevent and combat SGBV effectively. The event brought together various stakeholders from the public, private, and civil sectors to address the critical issue of SGBV and advocate for enhanced access to GBV and Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services.

The workshop marked a significant milestone in AAR's ongoing efforts to address SGBV at its roots. Through the "Empowering Young People to Prevent and Fight SGBV in Rwanda" project, funded by the European Union and in collaboration with Faith Victory Association, AAR has been instrumental in establishing Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) clubs for young people in and out of schools in Karongi and Gasabo Districts.

These clubs serve as platforms for educating youth on sexual health, preventing SGBV, and dispelling misinformation surrounding these issues.

The engagement of youth representatives, CSOs, and duty bearers in these workshops served multiple purposes:

Firstly, it empowered young people by providing them with a platform to articulate their concerns and ideas, thereby enhancing their sense of agency and ownership over the solutions proposed.

Secondly, it facilitated meaningful partnerships and collaborations between different stakeholders, enabling the pooling of resources, expertise, and networks to address the identified challenges more effectively. Moreover, the participation of duty bearers, including representatives from various ministries and governmental bodies, underscored the commitment of the authorities to engage with and respond to the needs of young people.

Six primary challenges were identified and brought to advocacy at national level including:

● **Unfriendly services delivered at youth corners;**

Youth corners are the rooms that are located at a long distances for youth to access the services in due time and all youth corners from the Gasabo and Karongi are used for other community services with making them unfriendly for youth, A few number of Yego centres (1 centre per district) do not facilitate youth access the services on time.

- **Discrimination and harassment of teen mothers and their children by the family relatives,**
- **Hight rate of family conflicts,**
- **Divorce cases**
- **Lack of instant communication between parent and their children,**
- **Lack of training manual to be used during umugoroba w'umuryango and lack of skilled facilitators to lead discussion during umugoroba w'umuryango sessions.**



Youth-Led Organizations engaging national duty bearers to end Sexual and Gender based Violence (Photo AAR)

Jean Paul Nsabimana, the Coordinator of Isange One Stop Center at RIB, echoed AAR's sentiments, emphasizing the importance of prevention over response measures. He stressed the need for proactive measures to protect adolescents from abuse and called for increased collaboration between teachers and parents to educate and monitor children effectively.

Ines Mwangavu, the Executive Director of ActionAid Rwanda, reaffirmed AAR's commitment to ending SGBV in Rwandan society. She highlighted the project's success in raising awareness of sexual reproductive health among young people and empowering them to take their voices to decision-makers.

AAR Empowers Women Through Training and Capacity Building Initiatives

■ Training on value addition and post-harvest handling:

ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) continues its commitment to empowering women through a series of training and capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing their skills and knowledge in various fields. From combating soil erosion to improving post-harvest handling and financial literacy, AAR's programs are designed to uplift and support women farmers across Rwanda.

In Shingiro LRP, AAR recently conducted community-based training sessions focusing on value addition and post-harvest handling. Led by seasoned sector agronomists, these sessions provided invaluable insights aimed at augmenting agricultural productivity and sustainability. With 25 women farmer cooperative leaders in attendance, the emphasis was on equipping participants with the skills needed to optimize post-harvest processes, thereby bolstering food security and economic resilience within communities..



AAR empowers women small holder Farmer's to acquire skills on post harvest handling (Photo AAR)

In Shingiro LRP, AAR is facilitating a community-based training session on value addition and post-harvest handling. 25 women farmer cooperative leaders are being trained by sector agronomists, focusing on topics such as the importance of value addition for increased income, market trends, processing, packaging, proper harvest handling, post-harvest losses prevention strategies, and developing business plans. This approach, commended by local leaders, ensures active participation and practical learning, ultimately empowering women with valuable skills for agricultural success.



AAR conducted Farmers' demonstration on proper Post harvest handling. (Photo AAR)

■ Conflict Prevention and Management Training:



The Vice Mayor in charge of Social Affairs of Gisagara district closing the training on conflict prevention and management (Photo AAR)

AAR organized a three-day training session for 30 families living in conflict-affected areas in Muganza, Gishubi, and Kibirizi sectors. Participants were trained in conflict prevention and management strategies, equipping them with skills to prevent and resolve conflicts within their communities.

■ Financial Literacy and VSL Methodology Training:

AAR concluded a two-day training program on financial literacy and Village Savings and Loan (VSL) methodology for 60 representatives of groups located in Gisagara. This initiative aimed to enhance participants' financial management skills and promote economic empowerment through the establishment of VSL groups.

Through these diverse training initiatives, AAR reaffirms its commitment to empowering women, strengthening communities, and promoting sustainable development across Rwanda. By equipping women with valuable skills and knowledge, AAR continues to drive positive change and foster a brighter future for all.

ActionAid Rwanda Supports Communities with Essential Infrastructure and Water Access to Address Unpaid Care Work

In a bid to uplift communities and address Unpaid Care Work (UCW), ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) has been actively involved in increasing community access to vital infrastructure and improving access to clean water across various regions. Through these initiatives, AAR aims to create conducive environments for education, reduce the burden of UCW on women, and promote sustainable development.

■ Promoting Access to Clean Water



Recognizing the importance of clean water in reducing UCW and promoting community health, AAR embarked on the construction of three water kiosks in Munanira Cell, Gitesi LRP. The quarter 1 of 2024, the AAR conducted a clean water campaign in collaboration with community members, focusing on raising awareness about the significance of using clean water, implementing UCW 5Rs (Recognise, Reduce, Redistribute, Reward, Represent), and proper water management practices. Community members expressed satisfaction with the provided water kiosks and recognized reduced distances to fetch water and related violences to women, reduced incidences of water born diseases. They also pledged their commitment to ensuring the maintenance and sustainability of the water kiosks.

AAR Increased access to clean water for Gitesi community. (Photo AAR)

■ Enhancing Early Childhood Development (ECD) Facilities

The quarter marked a significant milestone as AAR, in collaboration with local authorities and school representatives, completed the handover of three ECD classrooms, restrooms, kitchens, toilets, and a metallic fence at Nyamurimirwa School in Shingiro Sector. The project aims to improve the quality of education and create a conducive learning environment for young children. Both sector and school representatives expressed gratitude to AAR for their support in enhancing educational infrastructure.

Implementation of “Strengthening Youth-Led Organizations to advocate for enhanced Budget Accountability in Rwanda” project

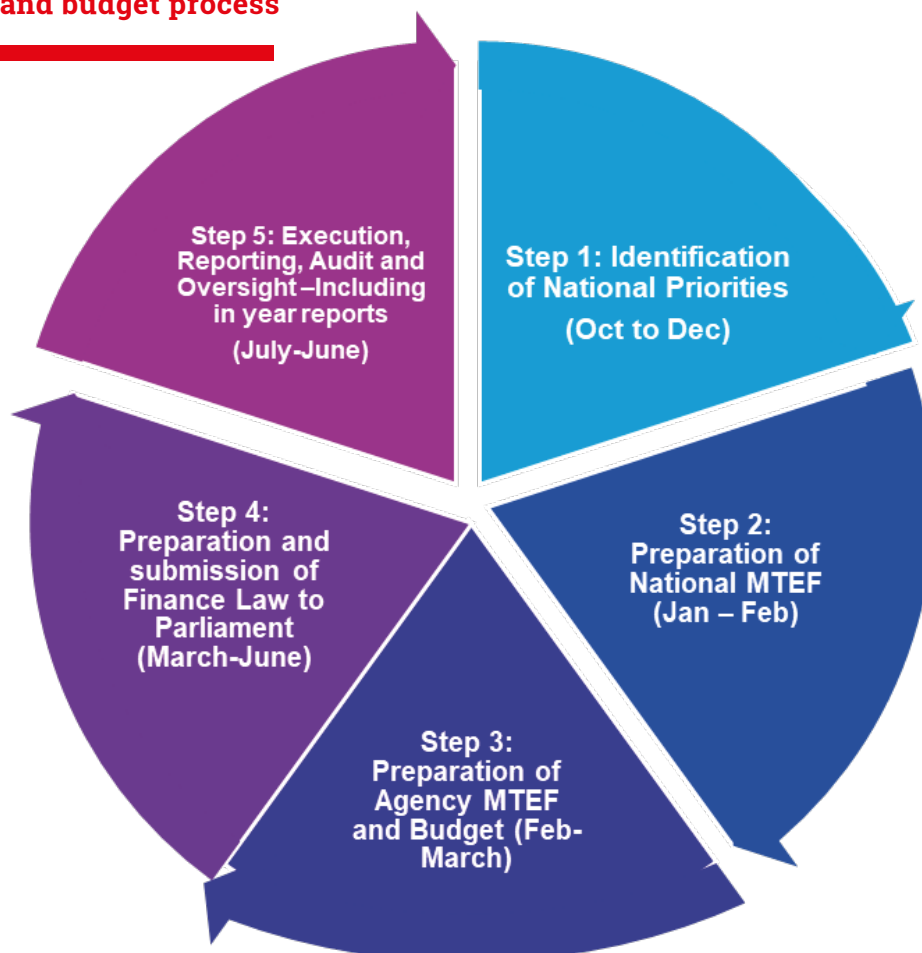


AAR Involved youth led organisations in the national budget management processes ((Photo CLADO)

CLADHO and ActionAid Rwanda are involving youth in national planning and budget process through a project entitled “Strengthening Youth-Led Organizations to advocate for enhanced Budget Accountability in Rwanda”.

This project is generously supported by the European Union and implemented across all districts of Rwanda. The Overall Objective of the project is to Promote budget transparency and accountability through strengthening youth-led organisations and platforms to participate in the public finance management policies in Rwanda.

Rwanda's planning and budget process



Developing staff skills to deliver program objectives

■ Staff Training on Management Information Systems (MIS):



Recognizing the importance of effective information management, AAR conducted a training session for 23 staff members on MIS at Lebanon Hotel. In today's digital era, proficiency in MIS is essential for organizational success. The training aimed to equip team members with the necessary skills to leverage MIS for optimized performance and efficiency in their roles.

AAR developed skills of its staff members on the use of a new MIS (Photo AAR)

■ EU Grant Management Workshop



AAR developed skills of its members on EU Grants Compliance and management (Photo AAR)

From January 16-18, AAR hosted an inception workshop focusing on EU grant management and compliance requirements. The workshop aimed to strengthen the skills of AAR staff members involved in managing EU-funded projects, ensuring adherence to grant regulations and maximizing project effectiveness.

Policy advocacy efforts on Unpaid Care Work



AAR participated to The 11th Annual research conference conducted by IPAR Rwanda (Photo IPAR)

At the conference, Mr. Alexandre Nzeyimana, the Interim Programmes Lead at ActionAid Rwanda, elucidated the concept of Unpaid care work as encompassing a myriad of tasks undertaken primarily by women within households and communities. These activities, crucial for the well-being of family members and society at large, are neither acknowledged nor financially compensated. They span various responsibilities including childcare, eldercare, cooking, cleaning, fetching water, and other domestic chores, alongside emotional support and nurturing duties.



AAR explained the role of CSOS in tackling the unpaid care work in Rwanda (Photo IPAR)

“Civil Society Organizations play a pivotal role in tackling the issues of unpaid care work in Rwanda. Particularly, CSOs contribute to advocating for policies and programs that recognize, reduce, and redistribute the burdens of unpaid Care work.” Highlighted Mr. Alexandre Nzeyimana, the Interim Programmes Lead at ActionAid Rwanda.

Mr. Alexandre Nzeyimana,
the Interim Programmes Lead
at ActionAid Rwanda

Among the various contributions of CSOs to addressing the issue of unpaid care work, Mr. Alexandre emphasized the importance of "Advocacy and Awareness raising, Policy Development and Implementation, Capacity Building and Training, Service Provision, Research and Data Collection, Community sensitization, and Monitoring and Evaluation."

Partnership efforts

■ Strategic engagement with EU

The collaborative meeting between Mme. Ines Mwangavu, the Interim Executive Director of ActionAid Rwanda, Judith Seda, the EU Business Development Advisor (INTPA), and Yoseph Le Mat, the EU Grants & Compliance Coordinator from ActionAid International Global Secretariat, alongside Mme. Amparo Gonzalez, Head of Agriculture section, and Mme. Mugeni, in charge of gender, from the EU delegation in Rwanda on January 16th, 2024, marks a significant milestone in fostering mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships.

The meeting served as a platform to recognize and commend the ongoing fruitful collaboration between the EU and ActionAid Federation, particularly in Rwanda.

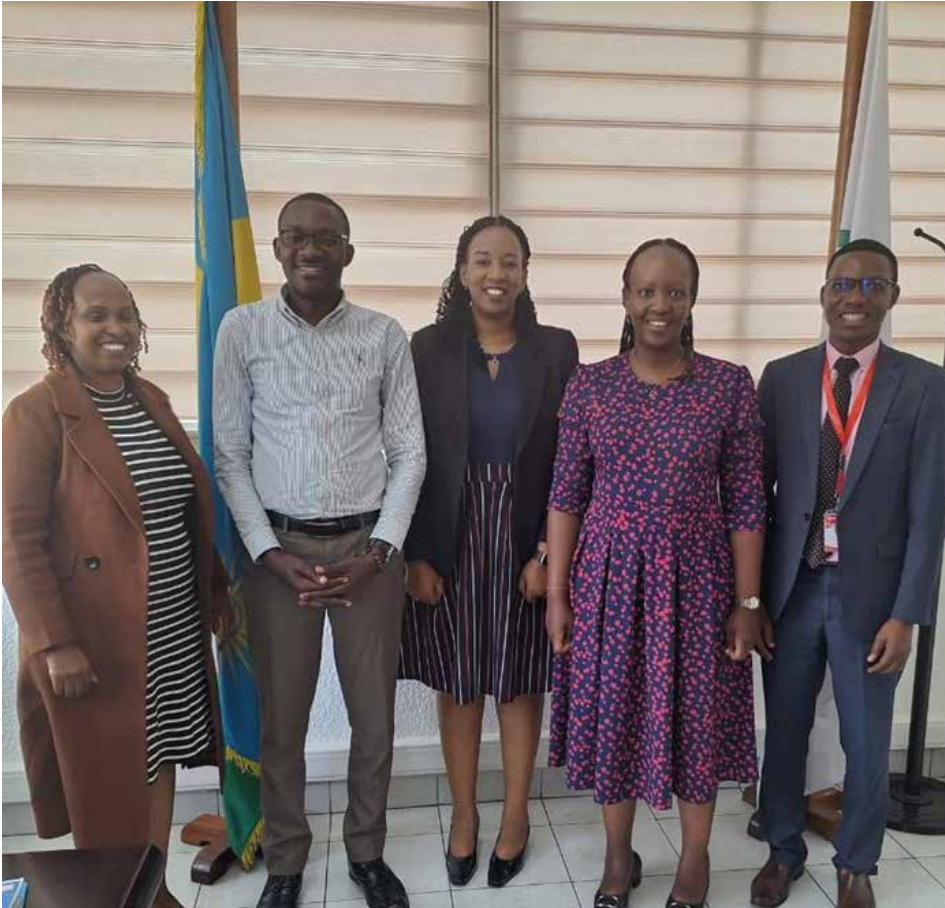
Acknowledging the accomplishments achieved through this collaboration, the participants engaged in constructive dialogue to align priorities for the next four years. By exploring potential areas for further partnership, grounded in shared focus areas, both parties affirmed their commitment to advancing sustainable development goals and fostering positive societal change.

This meeting underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing critical challenges and uplifted the shared vision for a more equitable and prosperous future.



AAR conducted a Collaborative meeting between the European Union Rwanda (Photo EU)

■ AAR strengthened ties with GMO



AAR strengthening partnership with the Gender Monitoring Office of Rwanda (Photo GMO)

With funding from the British High Commission Kigali, ActionAid Rwanda (AAR) is spearheading a transformative project targeting the vital issue of Unpaid Care Work (UCW) Recognition, Reduction, and Redistribution in the Care Economy across Musanze, Karongi, Gisagara, Nyagatare, and Gasabo districts of Rwanda. This initiative aligns with Rwanda's policy commitments outlined in NST2, District Development Strategies, annual Performance Contracts (IMIHI-GO), and Gender Budget Statements.

By fostering collaboration with like-minded organizations and government entities, AAR aims to amplify its advocacy efforts, strengthening its policy influence. In a pivotal move towards this goal, on 6th February 2024, ActionAid Rwanda engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Gender Monitoring Office of Rwanda, presenting the current project progress and exploring avenues for utilizing forthcoming research findings to drive policy change.

This strategic engagement uplifted AAR's commitment to catalysing tangible advancements in recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work, thereby contributing to broader societal transformation and gender equality in Rwanda.

■ A visit of 29 delegates from the University of Manchester

ActionAid Rwanda sharing our contribution towards supporting women's rights on land ownership and global justice



AAR sharing best practices with students from the University of Manchester in women empowerment (Photo AAR)

The Rwanda Cooperation Initiative, a public company mulld about four years ago to manage (marketing and commercialization) the country's home grown solutions. Based on mutual collaboration between AAR and the Rwanda Cooperation Initiative, on March 21st, 2024, a delegation of 25 students and 4 staff from the university of Manchester visited the office of ActionAid Rwanda.

The visit was in line with the United Kingdom, politics governance, and development policy pathway and it benchmarked on the role of ActionAid Rwanda in supporting women's rights on land ownership; global justice; gender equality, and poverty eradication as well as its support to women's rights on land ownership. During the visit the delegation gained a nuanced understanding of ActionAid Rwanda's impactful strategies and initiatives, especially in empowering women through land ownership and advancing their rights.

As feedback from experience sharing, the delegation indicated that the knowledge gained will lead to ongoing partnerships in research, advocacy, and education, as well as inspire innovative approaches to social justice and sustainable development both within the UK and internationally.



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