POWER INPEOPLE

Newsletter November - December 2023



The Launch of the Project "Empowering Youth-Led Organizations for Improved Budget Accountability in Rwanda".

"Promoting financial accountability and transparency, facilitating meaningful participation in budget review processes, and enabling youth organizations to monitor PFM policies while engaging in Sectoral Working Groups (SWGs)".

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Power In People

Published by:

ActionAid Rwanda

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Foreword

Dear Partners,

Welcome to the November-December 2023 Newsletter from ActionAid Rwanda. We are pleased to share our accomplishments and the positive impact on the lives of those we serve as we continue our commitment to sustainability and human dignity.

During this period, we actively participated in various initiatives, with a special emphasis on the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to raise awareness and combat gender-based violence (GBV). We also advocated for human rights and fostered multi-sectoral partnerships by joining forces with stakeholders to address all forms of gender-based violence.

In addition, AAR launched the "Strengthening Youth-Led Organizations for Enhanced Budget Accountability" project to empower the youth. This initiative aims to foster active youth involvement in national and local policymaking, promoting financial accountability and transparency. Our goal is to instill a culture of fiscal responsibility among youth to ensure transparent public finance management, among other objectives.

We invite you to explore the contents of this newsletter and immerse yourself in the stories of positive change and progress. Thank you for your continued support.

Enjoy your reading!

Ines MWANGAVU

Interim Executive Director

Empowering Youth-Led Organizations for Improved Budget Accountability in Rwanda



AAR launched the 'Strengthening Youth-Led Organizations for Enhanced Budget Accountability in Rwanda project at Lebanon Hotel, Kigali

On the 17th of November 2023, the Lebanon Hotel, ActionAid Rwanda launched the 'Strengthening Youth-Led Organizations for Enhanced Budget Accountability in Rwanda project. This initiative, funded by the European Union, marked a significant step towards empowering the youth, with a special focus on girls, in national and local policymaking.

The project's primary objective is to empower the youth by fostering their active involvement in national and local policymaking. Through collaborative efforts with families, support structures, and the entire community, including men and boys, ActionAid Rwanda aims to champion youth participation in Public Financial Management (PFM) policies.

Recognizing the existing deficit in youth engagement in budget reviews, the project strategically targets areas of insufficient understanding of Public Financial Management policies and limited participation in priority-setting forums. The core focus lies in promoting financial accountability and transparency, facilitating meaningful participation in budget review processes, and enabling youth organizations to monitor PFM policies while engaging in Sectoral Working Groups (SWGs).

The desired outcome of this project is a more empowered cohort of youth and youth networks, actively engaged in public finance management. This engagement is expected to lead to enhanced transparency and accountability in budgetary processes, ultimately contributing to the overall development of Rwanda.

The project launch was attended by diverse stakeholders and partners from the public, private, and civil sectors. These individuals and organizations commended the initiative, recognizing it as a testament to ActionAid Rwanda's unwavering commitment to empowering youth and fostering inclusive governance.

The Strengthening Youth-Led Organizations for Enhanced Budget Accountability in Rwanda project represents a bold step towards a future where the youth play a pivotal role in shaping the fiscal landscape of the nation. ActionAid Rwanda's commitment to fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance is poised to leave a lasting impact on the leaders of tomorrow.

2. AAR marked the 16 Days of Activism 2023





AAR marked the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence in all Local Rights Programs (LRPs)

ActionAid Rwanda marked the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence from November 25th to December 10th, dedicating its efforts across all Local Rights Programs (LRPs). The campaign aimed not only to raise awareness but also to actively combat gender-based violence (GBV) and advocate for human rights. The overarching goal was to foster a multi-sectoral partnership, joining forces with stakeholders to combat all forms of gender-based violence.

During this campaign, AAR aimed to achieve objectives such as strengthening community-based interventions, raising awareness about gender-based violence, educating Rights Holders on timely reporting and evidence preservation, and providing support to GBV victims.

AAR employed various strategies to achieve these objectives. Awareness was raised through community engagement and radio broadcasts. GBV clinics were established in collaboration with health centers, Isange One-Stop Center, the police, and local leadership. Mass mobilization, particularly targeting the youth, was carried out through a football match.

Aligned with the theme "UNITE! Invest to prevent Violence against women and girls," key messages emphasized GBV prevention, awareness, grassroots efforts, and advocacy. The support extended to strengthening community-based interventions, educating on the causes and consequences of GBV, and offering timely support to victims.

The campaign yielded significant achievements, including strengthened community-based interventions through collaboration with Inshuti z'umuryango (IZU). Community education on GBV involved Isange One-Stop Center, the police, and local leadership. GBV mobile clinics successfully provided support to survivors in the communities.

Testimonies from families, such as Manani Hamuza and Mukankusi Jeannette, highlighted how families were rebuilt after training on family conflicts management. Active involvement of community members, especially the youth, played a crucial role in the campaign's success. Collaborative partnerships with service providers and local leadership were also instrumental in achieving campaign goals.

Additionally, AAR actively participated in the Car-Free Day Sports event, collaborating with other stakeholders in a campaign to combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The commitment to community mobilization and addressing GBV will persist, with continuous support for survivors and ongoing efforts to strengthen community-based interventions. The success of this initiative underscores the importance of collective action and sustained community engagement in the fight against gender-based violence. The journey continues towards building safer, more resilient communities.

The 16 Days Community Engagement extended to 2200 in Muko and Shingiro, 1710 in Nyanza LRP, 460 in Gitesi and Murundi, 1560 in Gisagara, and 2070 in Nyaruguru.

3. AAR Staff Retreat 2023: Nurturing Success, Reflection, and Forward Planning



In the spirit of celebration, reflection, and forward-thinking, AAR gathered for a transformative staff retreat in Rubavu District from the 20th to the 22nd of December 2023. This retreat was more than a mere break from routine; it was a strategic initiative to analyze challenges and lay the groundwork for a purposeful 2024. The retreat also served as a cornerstone for team bonding, rejuvenation, and goal alignment, ensuring a seamless transition into the promising new year.

The journey commenced with a scenic trip from Kigali to Musanze, where the team took the opportunity to visit the Helen Degeneres Campus. This visit not only offered a refreshing break but also provided valuable insights into the life and conservation of Rwanda's iconic Mountain gorillas.

During the retreat, the Executive Director (ED) expressed gratitude for the collective achievements of 2023. The ED's thoughtful reflection on AAR's mission, vision, and values set the stage for meaningful discussions among staff, encouraging them to explore the practical implementation of these guiding principles.

A significant portion of the day was dedicated to delving into Feminist Leadership Principles (FLP). The ED led the team through a reflective journey on these principles, underlining the positive and inclusive uses of power. The aim was to shape AAR into an organization capable of catalyzing positive change globally.

A session acknowledging key achievements and activities of 2023 allowed the team to take pride in their collective efforts and recognize the impact of their work on the community.

A pivotal moment during the retreat was the voting for the Employee of the Year. Moise Nkurunziza, the EU Project Coordinator, emerged as the deserving recipient of this honor.

Recognized for his dedication, supportiveness, positive relations with colleagues, social engagement, punctuality, flexibility, humility, and at least one year of service, Moise received a well-deserved cheque of 100k Frw.

In closing the retreat, the ED delivered closing remarks, acknowledging the indispensable contributions of every team member and spotlighting successes across various areas. Looking ahead to 2024, the focus includes strategic planning, the implementation of CSP III, efforts to increase income, and addressing the crucial concern of increasing salaries. The ED concluded by extending warm wishes for a Happy New Year and Merry Christmas.

The afternoon was a blend of relaxation and team-building exercises. The team engaged in activities such as football at Kivu beach, swimming, and a delightful boat tour on Lake Kivu, fostering a sense of camaraderie and teamwork.

The final day featured team-building sessions, adapted to accommodate space constraints at the hotel. Opting for an enjoyable visit to amashyuza by boat, team members indulged in various services, including bathing in amashyuza and soothing body and foot massages. The day concluded with a shared lunch, heartfelt birthday celebrations for December babies, and a return journey to Kigali.

The AAR staff retreat was not merely a moment of reflection; it was a pivotal step toward fostering team cohesion, embracing innovative strategies, and gearing up for the challenges and successes that the upcoming year holds. As AAR looks forward, the spirit of this retreat will undoubtedly serve as a guiding force, propelling the organization toward even greater heights in its mission for adolescent reproductive health advocac





EU - AAR Partnership and Signature Event

On November 24th, 2023 happened the "EU - AAR Signature Event: Empowerment through Partnership" which stood as a testament to the transformative impact that can be achieved through collective efforts.

This event was a commemoration of the collaborative endeavors between the European Union (EU) Delegation and esteemed Civil Society Organizations, particularly highlighting the partnership with Advocacy for Adolescent Reproductive Health (AAR). Together, they celebrated the profound strength and potential that lies within partnerships dedicated to positive change.

As we reflect on this significant day, it became evident that the journey towards empowerment has never been more inspiring. The collaborative effort between the EU and AAR exemplifies the positive change that can be realized when organizations come together for a common cause. It highlights the shared commitment to creating a better future for communities and individuals alike.

The "Signature Event" unfolded as a platform for acknowledging and celebrating the achievements of the partnership. It showcased the various initiatives and projects that have been undertaken to empower and uplift communities in Rwanda. From advocating for adolescent reproductive health to combatting gender-based violence, the collaborative efforts have made a tangible difference in the lives of many.

The spirit of collaboration showcased at this event was not only commendable but serves as a beacon of progress and unity. In a world where challenges are numerous and complex, the coming together of diverse stakeholders demonstrates the strength that lies in unity. The EU and AAR have set an example of how organizations with different expertise and backgrounds can complement each other, creating a synergy that fosters meaningful change.

As we celebrate this milestone, it is crucial to carry the spirit of collaboration forward. The "Empowerment through Partnership" event is not just a one-time celebration; it is a call to action for continued cooperation and joint efforts. The challenges we face, whether they be in the realms of reproductive health, gender equality, or community development, require collective solutions.

The positive outcomes achieved through the EU - AAR partnership serve as a source of inspiration for others. They showcased the tangible impact that can be realized when organizations and institutions align their goals and work together. The ripple effect of such collaborations extends far beyond the immediate beneficiaries, benefiting communities and societies at large.

Here's to continued empowerment and partnerships that shape a brighter future! The EU - AAR Signature Event has set a precedent for effective collaboration, and it is an invitation for others to join hands in the pursuit of common goals. Together, we can create lasting change and build a world where empowerment is not just a vision but a reality for all.

5. Graduation at Daniela ECD Sponsored by ActionAid Rwanda



Graduation at Daniela ECD in Nyanza Sponsored by ActionAid Rwanda

On November 30, 2023, a momentous event unfolded as the Kibinja Community gathered to celebrate the graduation of children from Daniela Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Kibinja, Nyanza. The establishment of this ECD was sponsored by ActionAid Rwanda.

This event marked the transition of these young learners to primary school, showcasing the successful culmination of a three-year journey filled with growth and learning.

AAR facilitated the children Journey for Growth and Learning as over the past three years, 77 children have thrived under the nurturing environment of Daniela ECD. Their graduation serves as a powerful testament to the unwavering dedication of ActionAid Rwanda in supporting education, along with the collaborative efforts of teachers, parents, and, most importantly, the children themselves.

The establishment of Daniela ECD played a pivotal role in addressing a significant community challenge. Many women in Kibinja were constrained by Unpaid Care Work (UCW), as they had to stay at home to manage household chores, particularly taking care of their children. Recognizing this issue, ActionAid stepped in to support the Kibinja Community in Nyanza by establishing Daniela ECD.

This initiative provided a safe place for women to leave their children while engaging in more productive work, effectively reducing the burden of UCW. As a result, many women who enrolled their children in the ECD can now actively participate in paid and productive activities, contributing not only to their individual empowerment but also to the overall economic development of the community.

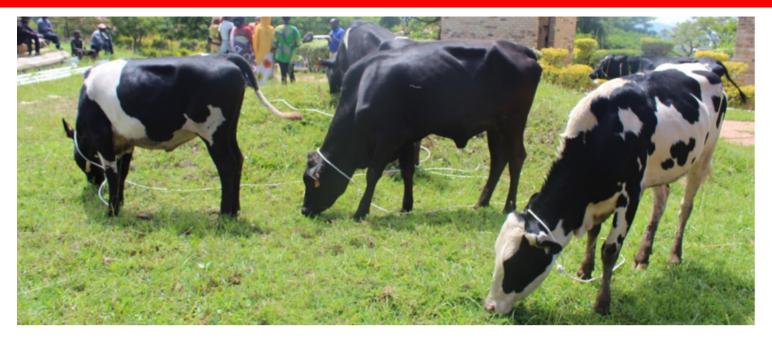
During the graduation ceremony, parents seized the opportunity to express their heartfelt gratitude. They acknowledged ActionAid for its unwavering support in establishing Daniela ECD and organizing the graduation event for their children. Special appreciation was extended to Dario, whose funding through ActionAid Rwanda played a crucial role in making Daniela ECD a reality.

At the heart of the event, each graduating child was presented with a dozen books and three pens, symbolizing the completion of the early childhood program. The atmosphere resonated with smiles, applause, and tears of joy as parents witnessed not only their children's academic achievements but also the development of crucial social skills.

As we celebrated this graduation milestone, it reaffirms the commitment of ActionAid Rwanda to creating opportunities for education, fostering community development, and empowering women. The impact of Daniela ECD extends beyond the classroom, contributing to a more vibrant and resilient community in Kibinja in Nyanza District.

In the spirit of this achievement, ActionAid Rwanda looks forward to continuing its journey alongside these children, supporting their ongoing education and paving the way for a future filled with possibilities. The Daniela ECD graduation marks not just an end but a new beginning, symbolizing hope, empowerment, and the transformative power of education in shaping the lives of these young learners and their community.

6. AAR supported 15 families living in poverty with cows to promote agricultural resilience



AAR supported 15 families living in poverty with cows to promote agricultural resilience

Agriculture stands as the backbone of Rwanda's economy, Improved Agro-ecology Techniques: Through the program, However, accessing productive resources has been a align with sustainable agricultural methods. challenge for women, compounded by the escalating impact of climate change on agricultural productivity over the last Increased Income: The cows, through enhanced food Agroecology practices has become imperative, particularly income for the beneficiary families. in the form of making compost for organic manure.

significant step by supporting 15 women smallholder positive cycle of sustainable farming practices. farmers in Busasamana, Rwabicuma, and Mukingo Sectors. Access to organic manure is identified as a critical factor in needs, and generate sustainable income for these the environment and the lives of the people. communities.

Strategic Plan 2 (CSP2), specifically targeting Priority 2 -The focus area, "Secure climate justice through commitment to ensuring women smallholder farmers have access to markets, credit facilities, and increased agricultural production for enhanced food security.

Under the Girinka Program, a flagship homegrown initiative in Rwanda, 5 families each inccess to Organic Manure: The cows will contribute to the availability of organic manure, a vital component in improving soil fertility. Rwabicuma, Busasamana, and Mukingo were recipients of pregnant cows (4 months and above). The support package included basic medicines and one-year animal insurance, designed to provide the following benefits:

with rural women playing a pivotal role in this sector. farmers will be equipped with knowledge and practices that

five years. In response to these challenges, the adoption of production and the sale of milk, offer a pathway to increased

Boosted Agriculture Production: The use of organic manure Recognizing the need for sustainable solutions, AAR took a will contribute to high agricultural production, creating a

The primary objectives were to enhance agricultural augmenting production while ensuring the quality of produce production, empower families to meet their nutritional without the use of chemical fertilizers that may impact both

In collaboration with local leadership, AAR emphasized the This initiative aligns seamlessly with AAR's Comprehensive importance of continuous monitoring of the cows. This ensures that the intended outcomes, such as improved Strengthen resilient livelihoods and secure climate justice. livelihoods and sustainable farming practices, are achieved. Moreover, this approach guarantees that subsequent families Agroecology & sustainable environment," reflects AAR's in line benefit from the Girinka program, fostering a sense of community and shared prosperity.

> Beyond poverty reduction, this initiative actively contributes to the fight against malnutrition, providing a sustainable solution for the participating families. The success of this activity marks a significant stride towards building resilient livelihoods and advancing climate justice through Agroecology and sustainable environmental practices.

> As AAR continues its commitment to impactful interventions, this initiative stands as a beacon of positive change in the lives of these communities.

7. Empowering Women Leaders Through Project Management Training





AAR Empowered Women Leaders in Murundi with Project Management Skills

In a bid to uplift and empower women cooperative leaders, Murundi TSS recently conducted a three-day training program aimed at enhancing project management skills and fostering financial independence. The training, a collaboration with ActionAid Rwanda (AAR), proved to be a pivotal moment for 45 women cooperative leaders who were the target participants.

The primary objectives of the training were to equip trainees to draft and run small projects, making them competitive in securing funding from financial institutions to increase knowledge of project proposal development and management skills among trainees.

The target was met impressively, with all 45 women cooperative leaders participating actively.

The training focused on cooperative management, project proposal development, and connecting participants with financial institutions. Covering topics such as cooperative management, government laws on management and governance, and engaging discussions on project proposals, etc. All these aimed to equip leaders with the skills needed to draft successful proposals.

The 45 cooperative leaders from six different cooperatives that work with AAR gained valuable insights into cooperative management and project proposal development. Armed with this newfound knowledge, they are now capable of disseminating these skills among other members of their respective Saving Groups.

Importantly, this activity increased the pool of individuals equipped with project management skills, encouraging the conceptualization of non-agricultural projects and seeking funds from neighboring financial institutions.

One notable lesson learned from the training was the concentration of all cooperatives on agriculture, primarily due to the infertile soil in Murundi, leading to low harvests and income. The training emphasized the importance of diversifying into combined activities to enhance overall economic prospects.

Murundi TSS's initiative has not only equipped women cooperative leaders with vital skills but has also opened avenues for them to explore diverse economic activities. The ripple effect of this training is expected to foster growth, self-sufficiency, and financial independence among the participating cooperatives, ultimately contributing to the economic upliftment of the Murundi community.

8. AAR empowered 100 community leaders to tackle GBV and family conflicts



Training on fighting GBV and ending family conflicts

In response to the global issues of gender-based violence (GBV) and family conflicts, AAR organized a Training of Trainers (ToT) program to equip participants with the expertise needed to address these challenges at the grassroots level. The impactful training involved 100 community leaders from Busasamana sector, Nyanza district, fostering positive transformations within the community.

The ToT program set out to achieve the following objectives including to build capacity in GBV prevention strategies, enhance conflict resolution skills, promote gender-sensitive approaches and foster a Train-the-trainer approach.

The training adopted a dynamic and participatory methodology, incorporating various interactive elements like interactive workshops, role-playing exercises, expert lectures, group discussions, case-based learning, learning resources, etc.

The raining resulted in a renewed commitment among leaders to champion these issues within their communities, showcasing tangible impacts on both professional and personal perspectives.

The program has been transformative, achieving its objectives and receiving positive feedback. Trained leaders are now recognized as change agents, creating a ripple effect beyond the training sessions.

The ongoing commitment required to effect lasting change is emphasized. Trained leaders now bear the responsibility of disseminating knowledge and fostering positive transformations within their communities.

Collaboration with stakeholders and the establishment of supportive networks will be instrumental in sustaining the impact of the program.

The Training of Trainers program stands as a beacon of empowerment, embodying the belief that informed individuals can catalyze meaningful change. The journey continues, fueled by the collective dedication of leaders, organizers, and stakeholders to create safer, more harmonious communities.

9. Empowering Women Through Financial Literacy: A Path to Independency



Empowering women Women Through Financial Literacy training in Nyanza

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) are more than just financial groups; they represent a powerful tool for community empowerment. In line with Rwandan cultural norms of saving for the future, ActionAid organized a comprehensive training for 36 representatives of new women groups in Busasamana, Rwabicuma, and Mukingo sectors of Nyanza district. This report delves into the impact, successes, and future plans of this empowering initiative.

The overarching objective was to provide ActionAid women groups with a secure space for saving and borrowing, imparting skills to invest their money productively, and strengthening social cohesion through mutual trust-building and collaborative work. Specific objectives included introducing and capacitating new women groups on VSLAs, familiarizing women with the concept and benefits, equipping them with necessary skills, enhancing financial literacy, and creating a platform for networking and mutual support.

The training covered essential aspects, including the principles and benefits of VSLAs, building cohesive and sustainable groups, financial literacy, credit and loan management, and broader community impact.

The training yielded tangible results as Participants gained knowledge on VSLAs' principles and benefits, acquired the skills to initiate and manage VSLAs effectively and onnections were established between new and existing women groups, fostering ongoing support and collaboration.

VSLAs play a pivotal role in community development, promoting savings, providing access to credit, and fostering economic independence among community members.

As a follow up action, the implementation of VSL activities will be closely monitored and documented, ensuring continuous support and learning.

This training not only equipped women with financial and entrepreneurial skills but also created a network of empowered individuals ready to contribute to the economic growth of their communities. The journey towards economic independence continues, driven by the collective commitment to building resilient and self-sufficient communities.

10. Fun Event 2023: A Vibrant Gathering for Children's Empowerment





Fun Event 2023 in Gisagara and Ruheru for Children's Empowerment

The Fun Event 2023, organized by ActionAid Rwanda in all Local Rights Programs, drew a spirited attendance of 15800 children. This lively gathering served multiple objectives, aiming to sensitize communities, create a space for enjoyable activities, acknowledge sponsored children, and deliver crucial messages on combating gender-based violence and other forms of violence.

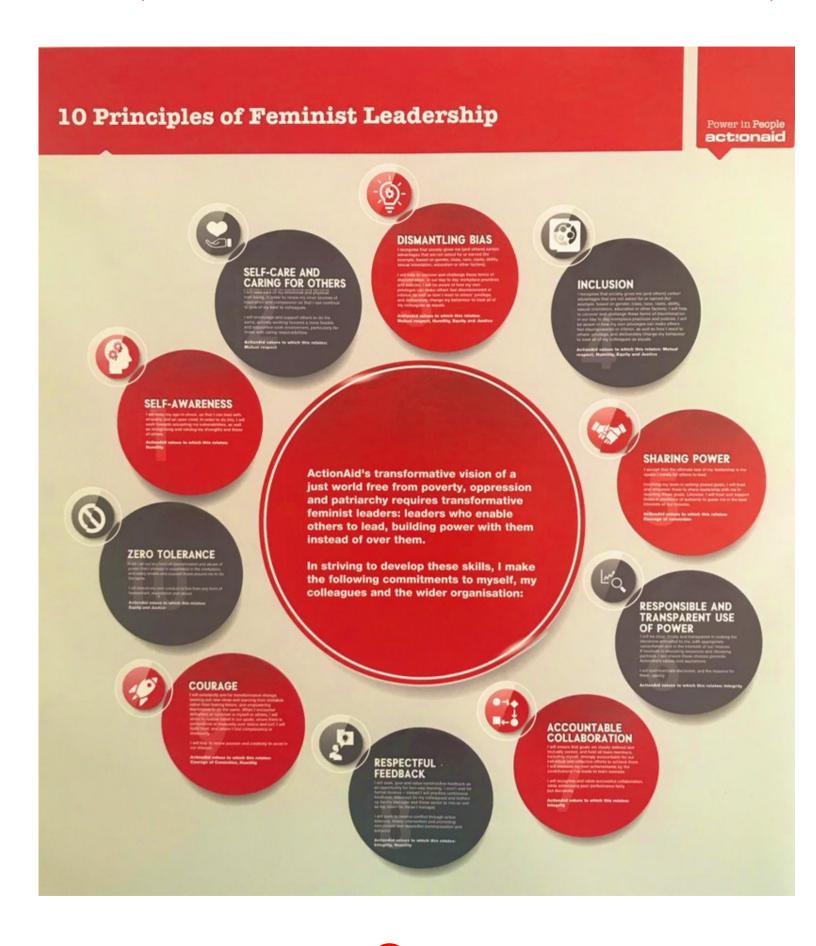
The objectives of this event were to sensitize communities, especially parents and children, about ActionAid and the Sponsorship Scheme, create an inclusive space for fun, uniting both sponsored and non-sponsored children, recognize sponsored children for their role in raising awareness through message correction and photo-taking, deliver messages on the imperative fight against gender-based violence and other forms of violence.

The Fun Event featured talent development competitions encompassing poems, drawings, songs, games, and activities related to raising awareness on children's rights and pertinent issues affecting them in the community. ActionAid Rwanda consistently integrates Children's Fun Events into its plans, providing a platform for children to enhance their talents. Outstanding performers were duly rewarded, fostering a sense of accomplishment and motivation.

In 2023, the chosen theme centered around the collaborative effort to combat gender-based violence among women and girls. The children's performances, including poems and sketches, resonated deeply with the audience, evoking a change in mindset and heightened awareness regarding gender-based violence.

The event illuminated a crucial lesson: Sensitization messages are not exclusive to leaders and adults; children possess the ability to sensitize and effect change within their communities. The impactful messages conveyed by the children touched the hearts of many attendees, demonstrating the profound impact that young voices can have in fostering awareness and inspiring positive change.

The Fun Event 2023 served not only as a celebration of children's talents and creativity but also as a powerful platform for instigating positive social change, breaking down age barriers, and reinforcing the idea that everyone, regardless of age, has a role to play in building a more inclusive and informed society.





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