



Greetings from Kampala, Uganda.

What does trusting people with a camera lead to? A photobomb experience!

This is a fair warning that this month's bulletin is full of pictures! Which is a really good thing from our end. It not only shows that our visibility is growing, but also that we look very great in banners, travel mugs and t-shirts. Most importantly, it is a very good showcase of how powerful we are as a consortium, and how widespread we cover the region.

In this edition, we will check in with the mission by the coordination team to Rwanda. We focus on the partnership between Citizens Rights Development (CRD) and CIVICUS, and its ripple effect which has changed the course of the civil society in Rwanda, especially the narrative of governance in the country.

Another interesting highlight is the roundtable talk by FOJO and Journalists from media houses across Rwanda on the impact of the Anti Sexual Harassment Policy and its role in curbing sexual violence and upholding the integrity of the women journalists in the country.

Further afield, we shall visit Benin, where our partners CIVICUS and RFLD held a regional consultative meeting on Civic Space and Capacity Strengthening for Advocacy initiatives. The meeting had a special focus on the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and other Special Mechanisms and led to remarkably interesting outcomes.

Let us not spill the beans, lest you get tempted not to continue scrolling.

Enjoy your read.

The Coordination team.



Our collaboration with CIVICUS has birthed initiatives that have allowed citizens to understand the power they have, including the right to question their leaders and to demand for good governance in spaces where they do not feel satisfied with how the leadership is treating them,"

Fred Muiisimwe -ED Citizens Rights and Democracy (CRD)

THE BIRTH OF A REVOLUTION: How CIVICUS/ CRD are changing the Rwandan Civic Society.

Citizen Rights and Democracy (CRD) and CIVICUS partnered in 2020, in bid to expand the country civic space and to break down the Universal Peer Review (UPR) process to Rwandan citizens.

Their work was centered around three main areas: Human Rights awareness and education, promoting fundamental freedoms, and the popularization of the UPR recommendations that were adopted by Rwanda under the UPR outcome report 2021.

Four years later, the teams celebrate the fruits of the union, including the formation of a national coalition on UPR process, execution of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Rwanda Ministry of Justice (MINIJUST), a strong partnership with the National Human Rights Commission and an opportunity for every citizen to enjoy their rights.

“Our concern was popularizing the UPR, making sure that citizens, including government officials from the district levels to the topmost leader, are aware of these rights and took responsibility in the promotion and upholding them,” CRD Executive Director Fred Musiime.

Among the achievements is the coalitions’ ability to use mass media to create awareness of the UPR process. The coalition, which is composed of journalists and CSOs, have a perfect barter: media houses provide free airtime for the coalition members while the CSOs provide expertise through their platforms to educate the masses.



CHARM and CRD team, pose for a photo with William Ndengeyinka, Rwanda Senior State Attorney in Charge of International Justice, and Judicial Cooperation (third left) during our visit to Kigali, Rwanda. MINIJUST has worked for the last three years with CRD in popularizing the UPR process.



Only three organizations in Rwanda have an MOU with the Ministry of Justice in relation to the UPR process, and CRD is one of them?



The coalition has also provided inputs on the UPR roadmap to MINIJUST thereby enhancing the voice of CSOs in Rwanda governance structure. This not only gives legitimacy to their work as a civil society, but has enabled them to speak as one voice when it comes to issues pertaining the UPR process. Mr Musiimwe points out that having this formal networks (MOU) also backs up their work and it protects them against interference by State agencies. Another big advantage is the provision of a mechanism of appeal in case anything goes wrong with the CSOs operations.

Another significant win is the partnership with The National Commission of Human Rights (NCHR), an independent institution that promotes human rights awareness and education. Through the Commission, CRD has tabled reports in the Rwandan parliament which document abuses in different spaces in the country, including prisons.

CRD has also supported the Commissions' mandate on upholding the rights of the minorities, historically marginalized persons, and the LGBTQ+ community.

"Initially some of the LGBTQI+ communities were facing serious challenges when it came to registration due to some of the registrars' personal views about their sexual orientation. We stepped forward and worked with them in getting the required papers and pushed for them to be registered as legal entities," he added.

He points out that speaking as a collective voice has enabled them to get a listening ear from the government. Hence, whenever they are submitting any policy brief, their voice is now viewed as credible.



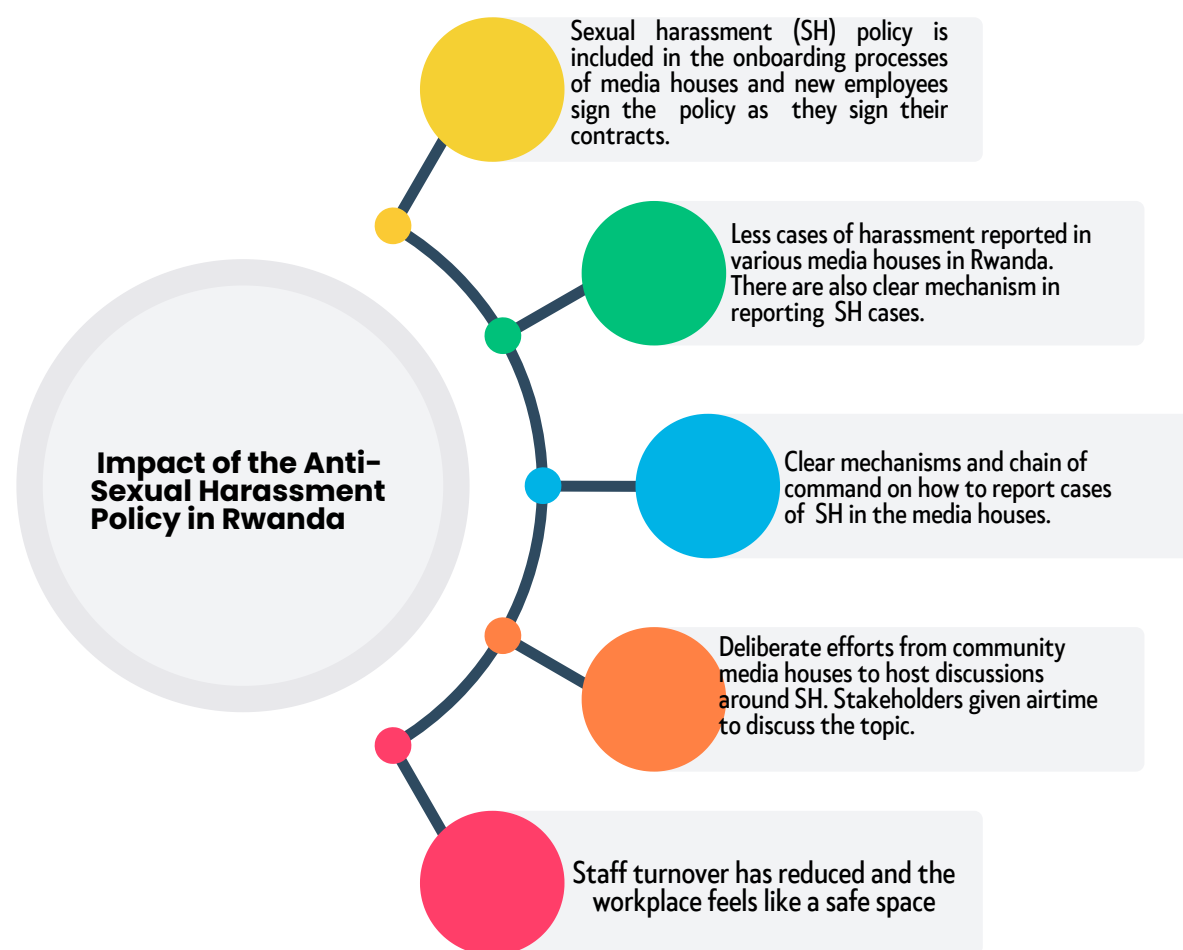
Some of the coalition members who attended the open dialogue organized by CHARM and CRD in Kigali, Rwanda.

"We now speak with one voice. And this is very important for a strong civic society."

Fred Muiisimwe
Executive Director, Citizens Rights and Development

The Impact of the Anti- Sexual Harassment Policy in Rwanda

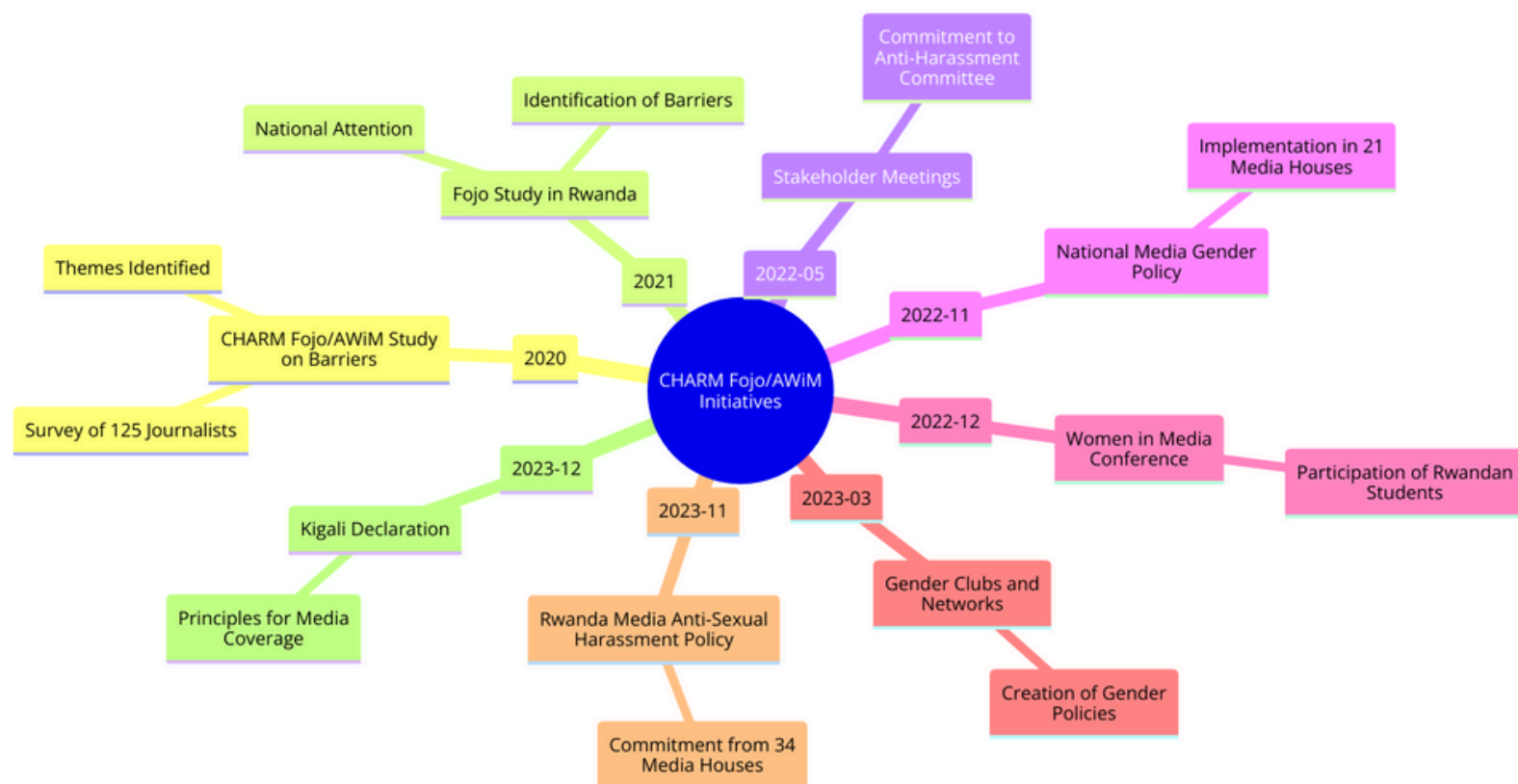
One of the key engagements during our Rwanda visit was taking stock of the updates of the implementation of their Anti -Sexual Harassment Policy. The policy was born from a study conducted by Fojo Media and the African Women in Media (AWIM) in 2020 which identified several barriers faced by women in journalism, including pay disparities and workplace sexual harassment, among others. The Policy is now endorsed by 34 media houses. Additionally, a committee of 19 members from these media houses oversees the policy's implementation.



Some of the stakeholders who attended the roundtable discussion on sexual harassment in Rwanda.



The path taken: How the Rwandan Anti- Sexual Harassment Bill was achieved



Art work Courtesy of Patrick Dowan: CHARM M&E officer



RFLD & CIVICUS stakeholder meeting in Benin

Still in April, the Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD) and CIVICUS brought together representatives from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), UN Human Rights experts, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) among other stakeholders in Porto Novo, Benin. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and explore ways to enhance civic space and strengthen advocacy initiatives in Africa.

It was an amazing platform for experiences sharing, comparing the challenges, and discussing best practices in promoting civic space and human rights in Africa. Among some of the takeaways were:

The need for collaboration and capacity building to address issues faced by HRDs, a statement that was emphasized by ACHPR Chairperson Hon. Remy Ngoy Lumbu.

The importance of a conducive environment for civil society organizations to operate effectively was key in ensuring that human rights are upheld, according to Dr Paul Mulindwa, the Advocacy and Campaigns Officer with CIVICUS. He called for increased support and protection for human rights defenders.

Mrs. Gloria Dossi Agueh, the President of the (RFLD), emphasized the need for gender-sensitive policies and the promotion of women's rights in Africa.

At the end of the four days, there was an urge for stakeholders to work together to promote and protect civic space and human rights. There was also a clarion call on the need for increased support and protection for human rights defenders, gender-sensitive policies, and youth-inclusive decision-making processes.



Participants at the RFLD/CIVICUS conference in Benin



Save the date

The Annual Africa Investigative Journalism Conference (AIJC) will take place at Wits Journalism in Johannesburg, South Africa from October 30th to Nov 1st 2024. Be sure to join us this year for the biggest journalism event in the continent.

See the poster for more details



In the spirit of announcing Annual Events, this year, the African Women In Media conference will take place in Dakar, Senegal. The meeting, which draws women experts from government agencies, academia, broadcasters, influencers and analyst, is a key event in the CHARM calendar. More than 240 delegates attended last year. Book your space now. For more information please see the attached poster.





About CHARM

CONSORTIUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND MEDIA IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (CHARM) aims to promote and protect human rights, civic space and media freedoms in Sub-Saharan Africa.

CHARM is a partnership of CIVICUS, Civil Rights Defenders, DefendDefenders, Fojo Media Institute, The Wits Centre for Journalism, Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement, and Magamba Network.

The partnership acknowledges the role that a free and active media and civil society have in the protection of robust democracies and the promotion of national development.

CHARM is funded by:



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