

HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST RWANDA
ASSOCIATION ACTIVITY REPORT
2011



I. Introduction

Today marks five years of our existence during this period we embarked on an initiative to redefine our role as a provider of legal aid services and a defender of civil liberties and human rights. We are at a stage today where Human Rights First Rwanda Association is involved in a number of human rights, civil liberties and legal aid initiatives. We monitor developments in human rights and actively defend human rights, through the work of our dedicated staff and volunteers. We are engaged in law reform initiatives. We promote legal education. And, importantly, we provide legal aid services to vulnerable groups, through the goodwill and commitment of our members.

In many respects, we have been successful. On a daily basis, we provide legal assistance to many people who would otherwise be unable to speak with a lawyer, in areas such as land matters, probate and administration, labour disputes, HIV/AIDS, women and children's rights.

Last year we conducted a Legal Aid Day in five districts, where individuals and children in conflict with the law were provided with legal aid and advice. We are hosting another Legal Aid Day in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and The legal Aid Forum early next year.

However, we remain constrained by our limited financial capacity and there are still many individuals who remain without effective access to justice. To put numbers on the demand for legal aid services, consider that in 2010; about 9000 individuals were provided with legal aid by our field offices; this year, that number has risen to over 16,000. In our view, these numbers underscore the fact that there is a very real demand in this country for legal aid.

It is against this background we urge our members and donors to continue supporting our legal empowerment initiatives so that those without means especially the poor in our rural communities can access justice.

I am happy to present to you the activity report for 2011

Ms Abera Fridah

President

II. Background of the organization

Human Rights First Rwanda Association is registered in accordance with laws governing non-profit making organizations in Rwanda under law no 20/2000 of 26/7/2000, MINISTERIAL ORDER No 91/11/ of 15th June 2009. It is non partisan association and has an open membership
Its main objectives are

- (a) To promote human rights education and provide legal assistance to poor and vulnerable groups in the Rwandan community at Large.
- (b) To empower individuals and groups to campaign peaceful for their own rights and the human rights of others.

Vision

Human Rights First Rwanda Association envisages a just and equitable society.

Mission Statement

Striving to empower as well as promote, reinforce and safeguard human rights and rule of law in Rwanda

Background

Human Rights first Rwanda Association was started by a group of visionary lawyers and University professors who saw the need to contribute meaningful to the Rwanda torn society after the Genocide to promote and protect the Human Rights of Vulnerable groups more especially those of women, children and marginalized groups .

Our activities are centered as illustrated in the diagram below



Achievements

since its inception in late 2005 it has carried out a number of activities thus including organizing a workshop on the need of a legal aid forum in Rwanda in partnership with the Leading women's rights activist group Haguruka, Danish Institute of Human Rights and other Civil society organizations.

This led to the formation of the Rwanda Legal Aid Forum which comprises of 36 organizations both local and international intervening in Justice and Human Rights in Rwanda.

Through its initiatives of regional networking the organization is among the founding members of the East African Civil Society Forum (EACSOF) and a current member of the Governing council. The forum brings together over 100 Non Governmental organizations from Kenya, Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda.

Through EACSOF it has been part of the wider campaign of denouncing illegitimate governments that take power through undemocratic means an example is the case of Zimbabwe and the Kenyan election crisis where we issued communiqués and press releases.

Through its advocacy campaigns it is involved in the campaign to allow civil society lawyers to represent their clients in courts of laws in Rwanda. The organization spearheaded the drafting of a position paper and an announcement to members of parliament from 20 civil society organizations highlighting the needs and plight of indigent, poor and vulnerable groups who have no means and have been denied access to justice.

Human Rights First is partnering with the International Commission of Jurist-kenyan section on the program of Eastern Africa International Criminal Justice Initiative to advocate against the culture of impunity in the Region

The organization has been involved in a number of civic education programs; it has trained communities on electoral laws and constitutional protected rights of individuals in the electoral process during the parliamentary elections.

It provides legal aid and human rights education programs through community clinical legal aid project that assist poor, indigent and vulnerable persons more especially women in rural districts. The clinic has an outreach to schools, prisons and community at large using university law students .

The organization has been conducting debating programs in Schools so as to awaken young citizens to be more proactive in analyzing and discussing issues that affect its society openly.

It has trained over 23 organizations of mainly women who are HIV positive as a result of sexual violence during the genocide on various laws that protect them and Human rights issues in partnership with Women to Access to Care and Treatment (WE Act). As

a result it assisted in the formation of the first network of people living with HIV/AIDS that fights discrimination. Rwanda Community Law Anti-Discrimination Network/Dufatanye.

The organization is among the lead organizations that advocated for the abolition of the death penalty.

It partnered with AJPRODO a youth association to sensitize youth on gender based violence and its consequences.

The organization commissioned a research on public interest litigation in partnership with the Legal Aid Forum Rwanda whose main aims were to assess ways and means of bringing PIL test cases.

It was part of the taskforce that was charged with developing a standard paralegal manual for NGO paralegals in Rwanda.

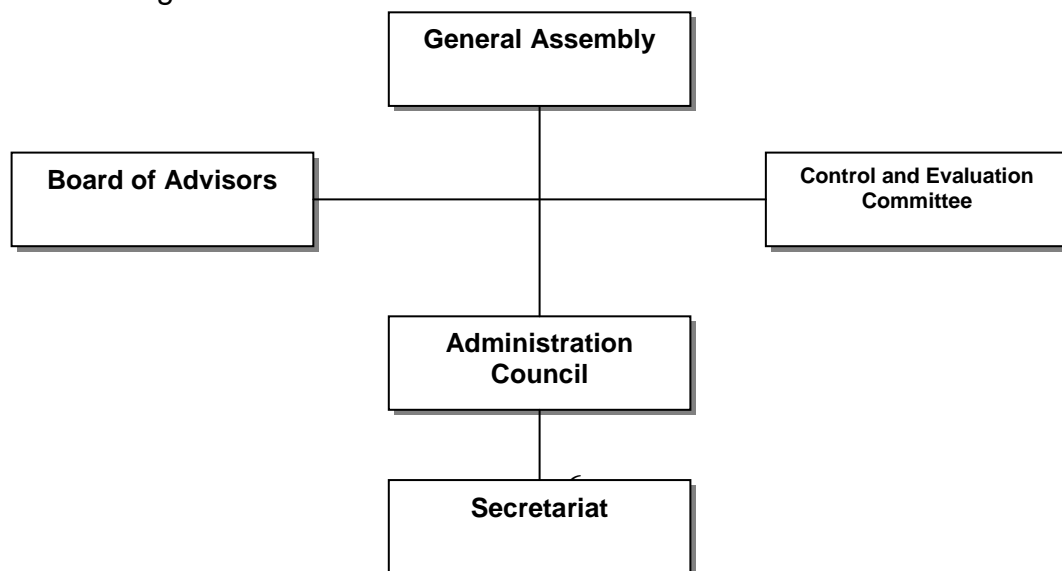
In partnership with the Ministry of Justice, Danish Institute of Human Rights, and three other NGOs, the organization conducted a baseline survey on legal aid in Rwanda. The survey was aimed at identifying various gaps in access to justice in the country and come up with various recommendations.

HRFRA spearheaded the campaign to decriminalize LGBTs in the Draft Rwanda penal code.

It was part of a taskforce that wrote a position paper that was presented to parliament that led to the dropping of article 217 which had proposed that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-gender and Intersexual groups be criminalised along with any initiative aimed at improving their situation.

HRFRA also participated actively in making recommendations, position paper and advocacy on drafting of the New Rwandan penal code more especially on issues pertaining to tabling recommendations to the right of women to have a safe abortion.

The Human Rights First Rwanda Association is structured as follows:



III. Brief recaps of the Activities undertaken in 2011

We have been involved but not limited to the following activities:

-Providing Legal Aid to poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged segments in our community through our mobile community law Clinics that covers the southern and Northern Province.

- Training of local mediators (Abunzi) and local officials on human rights issues

-Training and Advocacy on HIV/AIDS and Domestic Violence to community resource persons.

- Training paralegals who will act as resource persons in matters of land, constitutional Protected rights,

- Training over 23 organizations of mainly women who are HIV positive as a result of sexual violence during the genocide on various laws that protect them and Human rights issues in partnership with Women to Access to Care and Treatment (WE Act). As a result we assisted in the formation of the first network of people living with Hiv/Aids that fights discrimination. Rwanda Community Law Anti-Discrimination Network/Dufatanye

Over 30 workshops and seminars targeting communities were undertaken in the following field's: Legal aid, Domestic violence, Sexual Gender Based Violence, Family, property and succession laws, child and women's rights awareness, various laws that are frequently used in Rwanda, HIV and Aids, Bringing human rights in our homes.

We organized training for Rwandan judges on issues pertaining to the International criminal court and ending impunity within the region over 60 Judges benefited.

We organized a workshop with the other members of the civil society to showcase the plight of sexual minorities and the pending penalties on sex workers and prostitutes.

In partnership with the coalition for the International criminal Court we organized a three day workshop with media houses to introduce them to the workings of the International Criminal court.

Through our continuous campaigns and advocacy to allow women to have safe abortions we organized several workshops and meeting with various stake holders to put forward the plight of this women and young girls. A position paper was prepared in partnership with the coalition of Health and Human rights.

We continued to have trial monitoring in our areas of operation to asses expedition of cases more especially on indigent and vulnerable groups.

The organization was involved in a number of regional activities including a presentation of a paper to the East African legislative assembly by the executive director Mr. Nzovu Job Ruzage on Scrutiny, monitoring and oversight of states implementation of human Rights obligations. The role of civil society in supporting East African Legislative and National Assemblies undertake this role.

The table below highlights some of the workshops undertaken.

Period	Activities Undertaken	Realized activities
January 2011 to December 2011	<p>Organized community members to bring them to participate actively in the activities to reduce domestic violence</p> <p>Established networks of Violence against women organizations and services providers in Rusizi and Rulindo district</p> <p>Collaborated with the district police gender desk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 violence against women activists workshops were conducted to discuss experiences, share data collected and plan activities to reduce Domestic violence • 100 problem couples visited by HRFRA focal points and discussed how to end domestic violence • 4 community dialogue conducted to discuss domestic violence issues (2 in Rusizi , 2 in Rulindo) • 4 initiation meetings were held to establish Domestic violence networks • 8 network meetings (4 in Rusizi, 4 in Rulindo) of Domestic violence actors • Lobby and advocacy on 16 serious Domestic violence cases (6 in Rusizi, 10 in Rulindo) • Creation of a Medical Care fund in Rusizi and Rulindo districts for sexual gender based violence – Monitoring system developed

<p>January 2011- June 2011</p>	<p>Trained members of community on Children and women rights issues In Southern province</p> <p>Capacity building in Sexual Violence rapid response and handling of cases.</p> <p>Support to human right clubs</p>	<p>– 4524 people were sensitised by paralegals about children’s rights succession law and family law in 10 series workshops</p> <p>– over 200 members from prosecutors office, Police, the Court of First Instance, Assistance, local mediators, Civil Society Organizations and the Executive Secretaries at the sector level in Huye, Gisagara and Nyanza districts benefited from the trainings in 5 series workshops and seminars</p> <p>– Sensitising and trained over 100 members of human rights clubs in the communities on various related human rights issues and monitoring techniques in 5 series workshops</p>
<p>July 2011 – December 2011</p>	<p>Trained Local Government officials on various used laws in Rwanda In 5 series workshops</p> <p>Trained Local mediators and members of the community on The law regarding property, matrimonial regimes and its importance in solving succession and divorce problems in southern province</p>	<p>- Over 240 officials benefited.</p> <p>- Over 5000 community members benefited In 10 series workshops</p>

**CASES RECEIVED BY HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST RWANDA ASSOCIATION
in 2011**

Case category	Received cases	Finalised cases	Pending cases	No. of women assisted out of the Finalised cases
1. Property	7 800	5 400	2400	4,600
2 Succession	6 500	4200	2300	3,950
3. Illegal detention	910	792	118	310
4.Domestic violence	210	190	20	178
5. Genocide	140	96	44	30
6.Assault (Physical)	130	110	20	80
7. Accidents	92	75	17	26
8. Sexual Gender based Violence	147	140	7	137
9. Child custody	58	50	8	45
10. labour	160	110	50	70
11. Pension	59	36	23	7
Total :	16, 206	11,199	5,007	9,433

