

Ralga Newsletter

The Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities



FEMALE FRESH UNIVERSITY GRADUATES COMPLETE PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIPS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Note from the Secretary General



Dear readers

RALGA is once again pleased to bring you this Newsletter, Issue May 2023.

This Newsletter is produced to share information from and with our members, partners and stakeholders who deserve to be informed about the activities of

the Association but also the state of Local Government in Rwanda. This is the time for us to commend our members for their role in national development, which is our pride. In fact, RALGA would be nothing without its members.

During this month, Local Governments in Rwanda experienced one of the worst challenge ever since the adoption of the decentralization policy. The climate change induced disasters, due to floods and landslides, killed more than 130 human lives, washed away infrastructures, buildings and facilities, properties and assets. In response, the Government of Rwanda established Internally Displace Camps in some Districts and provided relief to affected communities, until the end of the month.

All was not bad during this period. Success stories continued. Our members continued the journey of transformation. RALGA closed the third edition of the professional internships in local government for female fresh university graduates, supported by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the Ministry of Local Government and the UNWOMEN. Localization of Sustainable Development Goals calls to local action.

In Public Finance Management, for the first time, some Districts obtained clean audit report opinion from the Auditor General of State Finances. This was a result of concerted efforts, and reflected a commitment to transparency and accountability while ensuring value for money. It is a call to consistence in delivery.

Additionally, during this month, the local government started rethinking revenues and taxes collection strategies following the Government of Rwanda's recent tax reforms, aiming at increasing tax base and revenue collection by easing the burden to taxpayers. Services delivered by Local Governments shall be delivered free of charge, translating into action the concept of citizen centered governance.

Finally, RALGA conducted engagement meetings at both local and international levels, by effectively and efficiently representing Rwandan Local Governments. All is about delivery, peer learning, capacity building, advocacy and member representation.

Stay with us, we shall not disappoint.

NGENDAHIMANA Ladislas



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FEMALE FRESH UNIVERSITY GRADUATES COMPLETE INTERSHIPS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



officials and interns in a group photo at the closing ceremony

Female fresh university graduates who completed their internships in local government have expressed enthusiasm and greater aspiration to serve in local governments, so that they can play a role in Rwanda's transformation journey.

The closing ceremony of the third edition of this program took place on 31 May 2023 at Gasabo District Offices in the City of Kigali, in a colorful event that brought together all the interns with the Secretary General of RALGA, Mr Ladislav Ngendahimana. The Minister of Gender and Family Promotion, Prof Bayisenge Jeannette, graced the event as Guest of Honor.

The cohort comprised 150 interns who were deployed in different districts across the country and in the City of Kigali where they carried out their six-month professional internships in different departments related to their areas of studies.

This phase was implemented by RALGA in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the Ministry of Local Government and UNWOMEN Rwanda. These two strategic partners have been supporting this program since 2021. The maiden intake was financially supported by GIZ in 2020.

Girls and women who completed the internship hailed it as an enabler for their career development, as the aim is to mentor women in local government leadership.

"The internship helped us to put in practice what we had learnt in theory. Before the internship started, we didn't know much about the local government,

and some of us feared the local government matters, perceiving them as reserved for men. We learned about the working environment in local government and how a woman could become a leader in those structures, at all levels", said Parfine URWIBUTSO, who spoke on the behalf of her fellow graduates.

The beneficiaries of the previous editions of the program also testified that it has been their starting point to join the labor market.

"I did civil engineering at the University of Rwanda. I had never thought about working for local government, I just thought I could work for companies involved in building infrastructures. I was selected in the first edition of this program and did my internship in District services related to land and infrastructures. This nurtured my interest to serve for local government and I started applying for different posts, until I got hired in Gasabo district", testified Tuyizere Anick who is currently employed by the City of Kigali at Gasabo One-Stop-Center.

The professional internships in local government for female fresh university graduates was launched in 2020 with the objectives of empowering women for them to be able to serve in local governments, both in leadership and technical positions as well as bridging the existing gender equality gap in Local governments.

RALGA and the Government of Rwanda appreciate the achievements so far registered and reaffirm their commitment to the program.

"We have realized tangible results since we introduced

this program. Some of its beneficiaries have competed during the 2021 local government elections and were elected in different leadership positions at different local government levels. We also have others who competed at various technical positions and now are serving in different areas from district to Cell levels. We are therefore proud of the outcome of this program”, said Ngendahimana Ladislas, the Secretary General of RALGA.

The Government of Rwanda also affirms that internships in local government for female graduates is one of strategic actions that help to reach the objectives and targets of Rwanda’s policies and strategies meant for

gender equality promotion and women empowerment.

“The Governance of Rwanda prioritizes offering equal chance and opportunities to both men and women in all government programs. Yet, there are still gender gaps across sectors and particularly in local government. We are therefore very supportive to this program meant to attract the interests of women to serve for local governments as one of the solutions in bridging the existing gender gap”, said Prof Jeannette Bayisenge, the Minister of Gender and Family Promotion.

Within the three years since the introduction of this program, 380 females have completed professional internships in different Districts and the City of Kigali.



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**NGENDAHIMANA Ladislas
SG/RALGA**

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**Prof. BAYISENGE Jeannette
Minister/MIGEPROF**

IN PICTURE: CLOSING OF 3RD EDITION OF INTERNSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR FEMALE UNIVERSITY GRADUATES



Beneficiaries of internships were awarded with certificates of completion



Jovithe Ishimwe studied Finance, completed her internship in the Second Edition. Thereafter, she worked for a while for Plan International Rwanda before she start her own business as private tax adviser



Tuyizere Anick studied Civil Engineering. She was in the first edition's cohort. After completing intership in local government, she is now employed by the City of Kigali at Gasabo District One-Stop-Center



Graduates cheers with Minister of Gender and Family promotion

DECENTRALIZED TAXES AND FEES REFORMS TO SPUR JOB CREATION AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Government of Rwanda has, recently, resolved to reform decentralized taxes and fees in order to respond to the impacts of COVID19 and different global crises, compound by the effects of climate change in Rwanda.

The Cabinet has approved, in April 2023, comprehensive tax reforms which brought significant reduction of tax rates. According to the Government, the reforms are intended to broaden the tax base, improve tax compliance and curb tax evasion while ensuring tax revenues increase as a result of Gross domestic product increase.

Particularly, the reforms targeted the existing taxes and fees being directly paid by citizens to decentralized administrative entities. This move reduced some decentralized revenues collections reduced while some service fees were totally waived.

The intervention that triggered the reforms was partially in form of relief and recovery for the affected people, particularly the vulnerable. The reforms aim also at increasing domestic and foreign investments, which shall contribute to local economic development.

The key reforms that directly affects local governments include the reduction of property and land taxes rates. With the new tax regime, land tax has been set between Frw 0 to 80 Frw per square meter from Frw 0 to Frw 300 currently. With regard to buildings, a second residential house will be taxed at 0.5% of the combined market value of the house and land, down from 1%.

The tax rate for commercial buildings was reduced from 0.5 % to 0.3% of its market value on both building and land. Tax charges on commercial buildings are capped at Frw 30 billion. Additionally, tax rates were

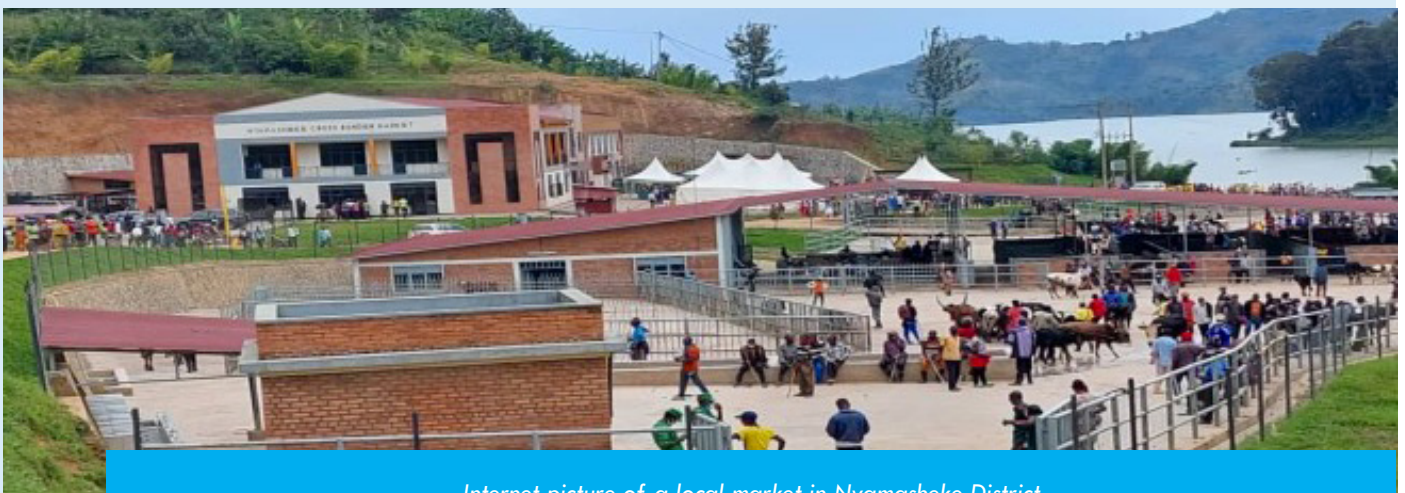
also revised in relation to selling properties whereby a levy will be applied at 2% of the property value for registered taxpayers and 2.5% on non-registered taxpayers while the first five million of the sale of every immovable property will be tax exempt.

In these reforms, businesses and traders will pay a single trading license tax, that combines market and public cleaning fees. Businesses with more than one branch will pay only one license per district.

The recent reforms also waived various fees usually collected by decentralized entities for several services such as certificates of land ownership and land registration; the authorization for rehabilitation of a building, the authorization for construction of a fence around a building, the certificate of life and death, license for forest harvesting, license of producing wood charcoal, clay bricks and tiles burning, a building permit in rural villages and any other document issued by decentralized entities.

It is expected that these reforms shall affect local governments in a way or another since property taxes and fees collections constitute the major source of income for decentralized entities. As per experience, reforms related to land and property taxes have direct effect on targets for revenue collections in local governments.

The available reports indicate that, Local Government taxes and fees collections for 2020/21 fiscal year was Frw 77.8 billion representing 94.3% of the Frw 82.5 billion projected. This report stated that the main reasons for such a shortfall included the revision of land tax rates downward among others. The recent reforms in land taxes and waiving of fees for services offered by decentralized entities may have similar



Internet picture of a local market in Nyamasheke District

adverse effects.

The Government sees the recent comprehensive tax reforms as a strategic move to not only attract foreign investment but also promote local businesses and investments.

Though new tax reforms may negatively affect local governments revenues and fees collections for the ongoing fiscal year, RALGA observes that, in a long term, the reforms will significantly contribute to increasing local economic development.

“As intended by the Government, the recent tax reforms were conducted to, among others, increase tax base, attract foreign investors and promote local investments. It is about citizen centered governance. The Government has balanced the opportunity cost. It is obviously clear that the effective implementation of these reforms will benefit local governments in long term as the citizens shall benefit directly and recover from the effects of COVID19 and

other global crises. This shall result into increased local economic development through infrastructure development, circulation of money and job creation”; said Ngendahimana Ladislas, the Secretary General of RALGA.

The Secretary General of RALGA affirmed that in relation to its mandate, RALGA shall support local governments to leverage new tax reforms to increase local economic development and improving the welfare of citizens.

“RALGA will build necessary capacities and do required advocacy for local governments to increase their tax base, maximize revenue potential and attain a high rate of tax compliance”; he added.

RWANDA: DECENTRALIZED ENTITIES IMPROVED IN PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT



Courtesy photo/Nyaruguru District Office

The Auditor General of State Finances in Rwanda has published the audit report for the financial year 2021/2022 that ended on 30 June 2022. The report, which commended decentralized administrative entities for significant improvement and good performance, was presented to the plenary of both chambers of Parliament on 2 May 2023, following the audit exercise covering all the Districts and the City of Kigali whereby eleven entities obtained the “unqualified or clean audit opinion for financial management”.

The Districts that obtained clean audit statements on

financial management are: Bugesera, Burera, Gatsibo, Huye, Kayonza, Musanze, Ngororero, Nyamasheke, Nyaruguru, Rusizi and Rwamagana.

Moreover, six Districts acquired clean audit statements on compliance with laws and regulations, namely: Gisagara, Karongi, Musanze, Nyamasheke, Nyaruguru and Rubavu.

The previous financial year, neither district had got clean audit statement on financial management while only one District, Rusizi, had acquired clean statement on compliance with laws and regulations.

In the framework of decentralization, local governments are responsible for the implementation of all Government programs and policies, provided the subsidiarity principle. This responsibility goes with complex challenges, particularly pertaining to scarce resources, increasing demands and emerging priorities. Such a complex working environment remains one major factor hindering decentralized entities from achieving clean audit statements.

Local Governments welcomed the auditor general's opinions. The performance is mainly due to sectoral collaboration and synergy of different institutions involved in local public financial management.

"It was a very good news to us as chief budget managers. Such an unprecedented performance recorded by eleven decentralized entities in one financial year Auditor General's Report is a strong motivation to all districts staff who consider this as a result of their efforts", said Henri Kakooza, Chief Budget Manager (CBM) in Rwamagana District, who doubles as Dean of Local Government CBMs.

Kakooza admitted that; collaboration of different institutions particularly the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), Rwanda Revenue Authority, the Office of the Auditor General and RALGA, has been the key factor behind this achievement.

"We have had several advocacy engagements organized by RALGA, bringing together all concerned stakeholders to discuss the issues that had hampered districts financial management for so long. During those engagements, we exposed the challenges and described roles and responsibilities of every institution

and we set a clear roadmap to address them. The Auditor General himself attended those sessions and realized the challenges facing the local government in managing public funds", he added.

However, there are still issues especially regarding compliance with laws and regulations and value for money. Districts shall continue working hard to achieve clean audit statements on these aspects.

"It requires hard work. We shall maintain this performance on condition that we remain vigilant. We also need more technical engagement sessions to discuss outstanding issues and to allow peer-learning among ourselves," Kakooza said.

RALGA congratulates its members for such an impressive performance in public finance management, and reaffirms its commitment to provide required support and do necessary advocacy to enhance efficiency in local public finance management.

"Sustainable development is a result of many factors, including sound public finance management. Achieving clean audit means that; public funds allocated to districts were diligently utilized in the interest of the citizens. Moreover, it is a sign of multilevel collaboration, considering various players in the decentralized governance. RALGA dedicates this achievement to its members, the Government at large and development partners. We shall keep supporting our members towards excellence. Also, we shall continue the advocacy work and build necessary capacities at local level in order to overcome the prevailing challenges. We remain confident and hopeful that it is possible", said Ngendahimana Ladislav, Secretary General of RALGA.



Internet photo/Kinigi Model Village/Musanze District

GOVERNMENT STEPS UP EFFORTS TO HELP COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY DISASTERS



During the night of 2-3 May 2023, severe floods and landslides caused by heavy rain hit different parts of Western, Northern, and Southern Provinces, causing significant damages and losses of lives. The disasters claimed the lives of 131 people, injured several others, and damaged public infrastructure.

The most affected districts by the disasters include Rubavu, Ngororero, Nyabihu, Rutsiro, Karongi, Gakenke, Burera, Musanze, and Nyamagabe.

The Government of Rwanda responded quickly in a coordinated manner to carry out rescue operations and provide emergency relief to the victims. The survivors of the disasters were relocated from high risk zones to safer places for their security and prevention of similar calamities. The Government also organized the funerals for the victims, covered funeral costs and provided all the basic needs for relief to the survivors.

Multilevel collaboration delivered in rescue and relief to the affected communities, thanks to the operational disaster management committees at different administrative structures. Disasters were quickly addressed as a national security threat,

calling for stakeholder interventions.

President Kagame thanked all those who came together for rescue and relief.

“Let me thank our security and armed forces together with civil and other institutions notably among them religious ones for the incredible work they have been doing all around the clock to help manage the disastrous weather effects yesterday and continuing!! United always we shall prevail”, President Kagame said

President Paul Kagame, on May 12, 2023, visited disaster affected residents of Rubavu District and pledged continued support in recovery. He met at least 2,500 people at a temporary site at College Inyemeramihigo in Rugerero Sector, Rubavu district.

The Head of State assured the residents of a close follow up by the government on their situation and continued support for them to recover from the calamity.

“We think of you and we are doing everything possible to help you in these tough times and very soon, you will go back to your usual life routine and



HE Paul Kagame visited different sites affected by disasters and met the survivors in Rubavu District

responsibilities,” he said.

President Kagame added that there will be continuous efforts to correct and fill gaps in disaster response mechanisms as local leaders conduct regular monitoring of the situation in the camps.

The Government put in place a coordinated mechanism including bank accounts and mobile money transfer, for individual, organisations, both public, private and civil society to provide their support through the Ministry in charge of Emergency

Management.

The Government established temporary internally displaced persons’ camps in most affected districts, proceeded with budget reallocations and innovative resources mobilization strategies, to provide relief and recovery support to the affected communities.

The reconstruction efforts shall be costly, as more than four hundred million US dollar are needed for the reconstruction phase.



The government provided food and non-food items as emergency relief to the disaster victims



A model village with the capacity to host over 100 families relocated from high risks zones being constructed in Rubavu District is closer to completion.

RALGA AND ITS PARTNERS HAILED THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE AND LOCAL SOLIDARITY IN RESCUING THE AFFECTED FAMILIES

As Rwanda was hit by disasters, with local governments and local communities being the most affected because of their proximity, RALGA and its partners came together to condole the Rwandan Local Government Family.

The Secretary General of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, Mr Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, sent a message of solidarity as follows:

“On behalf of the Presidency and the entire membership of the UCLG Africa, I wish to convey our deepest sympathies on the untimely death of more than 100 people due to floods occasioned by torrential rain in some parts of Rwanda. It is such a sad calamity to hit the country, which has enjoyed appreciable peace and prosperity in recent years. We pray that this setback will not affect the momentum of social and economic development, which has made Rwanda a shining example of what Africa is able to do for its people.

Please accept, Madam President our sincerest condolences and be assured that we are with you in spirit and prayer and through you, the grieving families and the nation at large as the country gets to grips with the effects of this natural disaster”.

Secretary General of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Lucy Slack, sent the message of solidarity as follows:

“I am writing on behalf of our Chairperson, Board, and staff of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) to send our sincere condolences regarding the terrible flooding and mudslides that have recently taken place in the northern and western provinces in Rwanda.

We wanted to share our solidarity with you and the communities affected, and of course to recognise the important role that local government is playing in the recovery efforts. We put ourselves at your disposal for any assistance our organisation and our members can provide.

Please accept our thoughts and support to your country and the affected families at this difficult time.”

The Secretary General of RALGA, Mr Ladislas Ngendahimana, condoled the affected families and hailed collaboration between various stakeholders, to assist the vulnerable and the victims of the disasters. “RALGA commiserates with our members in the Western, Northern and Southern Provinces, for floods and landslides that killed human lives and damaged crops, livestock, houses, infrastructures and facilities. Our heartfelt condolences go to the bereaved families. We thank the Government of Rwanda for solidarity and response”, he said.

RALGA in a globalized Local Government Family



Represented by the Secretary General of RALGA Mr Ladislav NGENDAHIMANA, RALGA attended the Mayors' Forum that took place in Morocco, Rabat from 23 to 25 May 2023. At this occasion, he met the Secretary General of UCLG Africa Mr Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi and the Ambassador of Rwanda to the Kingdom of Morocco, H.E Zaina Nyiramatama. During the forum, the Manifesto for the Renewal of African & Afro-descendant Culture was adopted, putting local authorities at the center of sustainable development and emphasizing culture as an inseparable component of African identity. The UCLG Africa intends to celebrate the African Capital of Culture in Kigali later this year. African Capitals of Culture are Rabat, Nouakchott, Maputo, Kigali Lagos. RALGA is a member of the UCLGA Executive Committee.

Members' Insights

CELLS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES GET TRANSPORT FACILITATION

In different Districts, Cells Executive Secretaries have been donated motorbikes as transport facilitation to enable them discharge their responsibilities.

The Cell is the closest decentralized entities that offers basic services to citizens. It follows the Village which is mainly responsible for community mobilization and education.

The Cell's core responsibilities are to provide the basic services to citizens; to collect numerical data; and to encourage the population to contribute to and participate in sustainable development activities.

The initiative to give transport facilitation to Cells' Executive Secretaries countrywide is implemented in the framework of empowering grassroots entities to enable them offer quality and timely service to citizens.



Cells Executive Secretaries in Nyamasheke receiving motorbikes



An Executive Secretary of one Cell in Huye District gives a ride to the Governor of Southern Province, after receiving his motorbike

RULINDO DISTRICT CONDUCTS GOVERNANCE MONTH TO ADDRESS CITIZENS ISSUES

Members' Insights



Rulindo District Mayor interacting with citizens during the Governance Month

The Governance Month in Rulindo District was carried out for the whole month of May under the theme "fighting all forms of injustice and promoting citizen-centered governance". The campaign consisted of different activities including awareness and education of citizens on different government programs, putting more emphasis on addressing citizens' queries. During this period, District leaders with other organs operating at district level toured all Sectors of the district to meet citizens, interact with them and solve their problems



The turn up of citizens was high during this Governance Month

RUHANGO COUNCILORS' MONTH TO FOSTER CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

In May 2023, Ruhango District conducted the Councilor's Month. It is an activity carried out every two years during which district councilors approach citizens to educate them on the functioning of decentralized councils and raise their awareness on district priorities as a means of fostering citizen participation.

During this month, councilors also collect views of citizens they represent to serve as basis for councilors decisions and instructions, and inform the planning of the district. The councilors also, during this period, collaborate with other organs to solve the citizens'

Members' Insights





Who we are:

RALGA is a membership organization that brings together local government entities in Rwanda.

Mission:

To assist local Government entities in achieving their mission, complying with principles of good governance and decentralization.

Vision

To have efficient local Government entities where people and stakeholders are involved in development.

Responsibilities

To represent local Government entities, carrying out their advocacy and capacity building in the following sectors :

- Decentralization
- Increasing finances of local Government entities
- Local economic development
- Increasing the social welfare.

To strengthen collaboration between Rwanda local Government entities among themselves and with foreign local Government entities.

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