ISSUE Nº 2

SEPTEMBER 2026

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL Rwanda

PARTNERSHIP FOR TRANSPARENCY EUROPE

APESA PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Alliances and Partnerships for Evidence-led Environmental and Social Safeguarding Accountability (APESA) Project – Ijwi ryanjye mu Iterambere Rirambye (INTERA)



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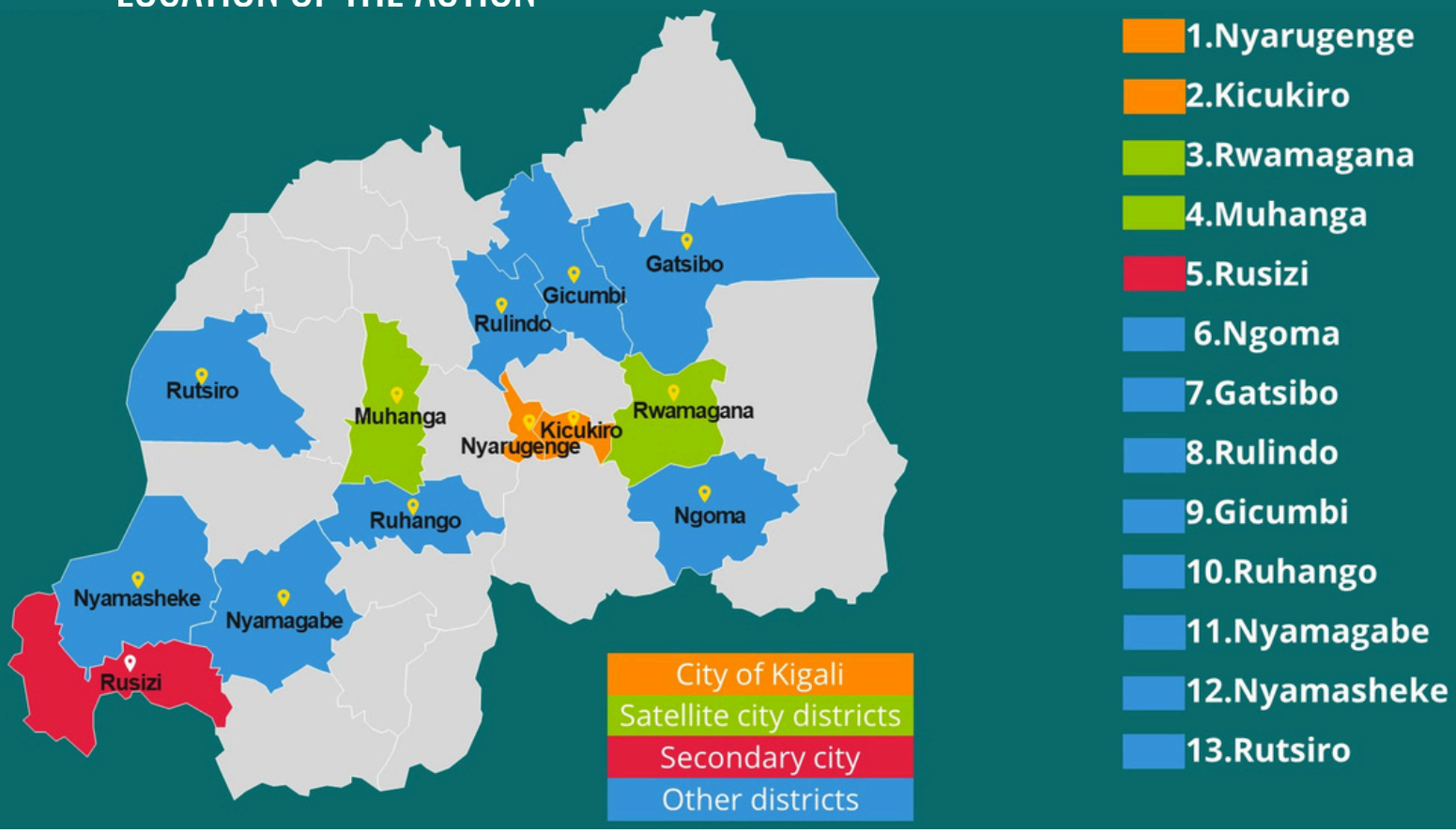
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LOCATION OF THE ACTION



EDITORIAL

The Alliances and Partnerships for Evidence-led Environmental and Social Safeguarding Accountability (APESA) Project - known locally as 'Ijwi Ryanjye multerambere Rirambye' (INTERA) has been underway since May 2025 with European Union (EU) funding. The project is managed by Transparency International Rwanda (TI-RW) and PTF Europe. It is a 36-month initiative seeks to promote accountability and compliance with environmental and social safeguarding standards in government-funded infrastructure projects in 13 districts across Rwanda – in other words, to ensure that people's rights are respected when infrastructure projects are being done in the country. The project covers 4 infrastructure sectors including buildings, electricity, roads, and water supply and sanitation.

With Year 1 of the project now complete, this newsletter issue covers an overview of the rationale behind the project and how it seeks to address the key issues it has identified relating to infrastructure development; the different ways it is raising awareness of this issues, including through participation in radio shows and podcasts; how it is strengthening citizen participation at the local level through its establishment and training of Citizen Concern Committees (CCCs) at the cell and sector level; and finally how other African countries are learning from the strategies undertaken by the APESA Project in Rwanda.

Given the APESA project is a partnership of a national and international CSO, the project's activities reflect the use of best practices at both the national and international levels. These articles demonstrate how the project is using innovative methods to address issues which affect citizens throughout the continent, and doing so in a way which strengthens citizen trust and improves the positive impact and social benefits of infrastructure projects.

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CITIZENS AT THE HEART OF SAFEGUARDING: TI-RWANDA VOLUNTEERS COMMIT TO AMPLIFYING CITIZENS' VOICES

In an era when sustainable development demands both accountability and inclusiveness, the Alliances and Partnerships for Evidence-led Environmental and Social Safeguarding Accountability (APESA) Project is demonstrating how citizen engagement can transform infrastructure governance. In May 2026, Transparency International Rwanda (TI-Rwanda) conducted induction training for its volunteers (locally known as Citizen Concerned Committees - CCCs) across 13 districts, including Gatsibo, Rwamagana, Ngoma, Rusizi, Nyamasheke, Rutsiro, Nyamagabe, Muhanga, Ruhango, Rulindo, Kicukiro, Nyarugenge, and Gicumbi. The training aimed to strengthen the capacity of CCC members to monitor environmental and social safeguard compliance in infrastructure projects while empowering citizens to understand and exercise their rights.

A key strength of the initiative was its commitment to inclusiveness. Among the 402 participants who attended the training, 46% were women and 4% were persons with disabilities (PWDs), with an overall attendance rate of 97%. Their participation reflects the project's recognition that effective safeguarding requires the voices of all community members, particularly those who are often most affected by environmental and social risks but are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making processes.



Induction Training for Citizen Concerned Committees/Rusizi District

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The training focused on three main areas: environmental and social safeguards in infrastructure development, citizen rights and relevant legal frameworks, and the roles and responsibilities of CCC members. Through interactive methodologies such as group discussions, case studies, and participant-led presentations, members gained practical knowledge and strengthened their capacity to carry out their oversight mandate. Pre- and post-training assessments confirmed significant improvements in participants' understanding of safeguard principles and accountability mechanisms.

The inclusion of women and persons with disabilities adds significant value to the work of CCCs. Women contribute important perspectives on issues such as access to natural resources, land use, and household welfare, while persons with disabilities help ensure that concerns related to accessibility, safety, and equitable service delivery are not overlooked. By incorporating these diverse experiences into monitoring and advocacy efforts, CCCs are better positioned to identify risks, promote inclusive solutions, and ensure that infrastructure projects benefit all members of the community.



Induction Training for Citizen Concerned Committees/Nyamagabe District



Induction Training for Citizen Concerned Committees/Kigali city



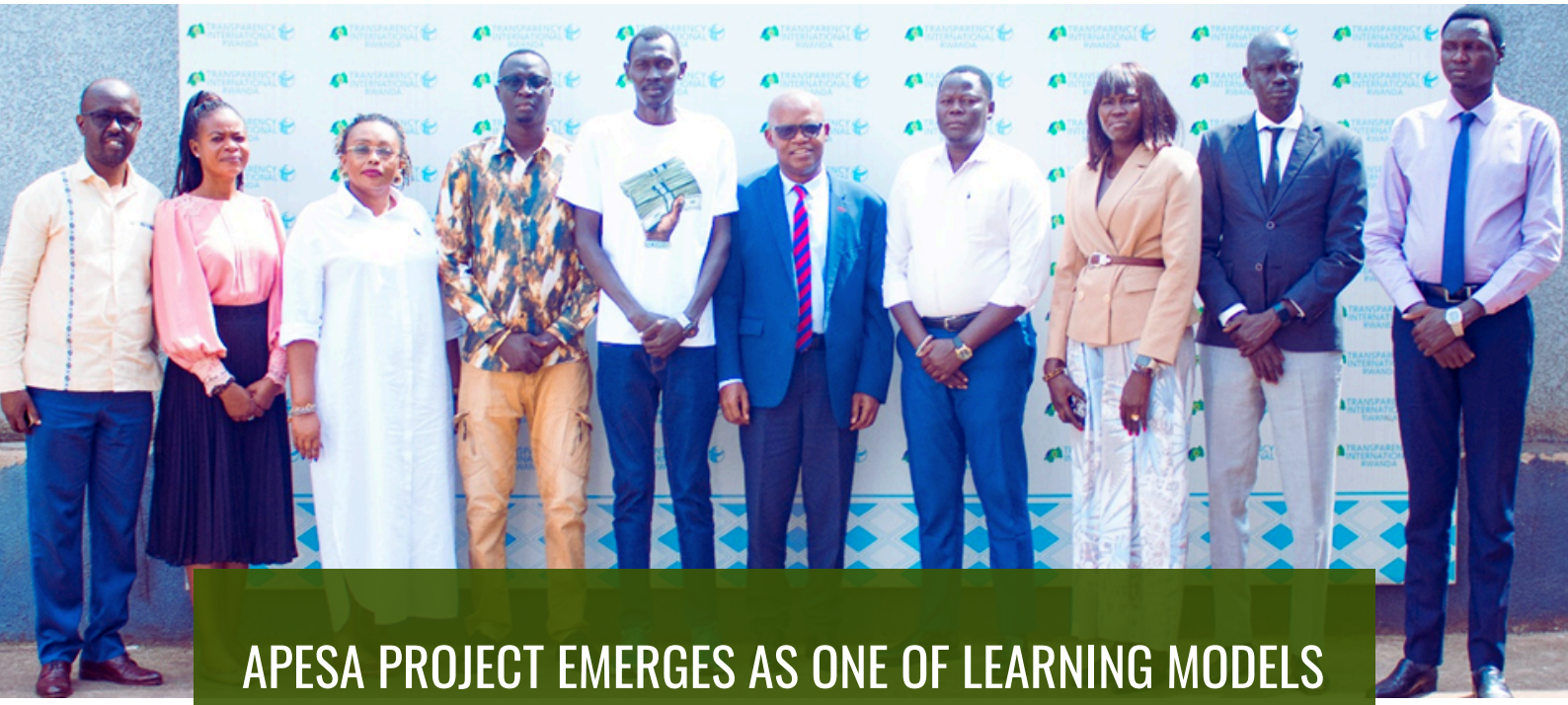
Induction Training for Citizen Concerned Committees/Muhanga District

The active participation of district leaders in the training further highlighted the importance of collaboration between citizens and local authorities in advancing transparency and accountability. This partnership strengthens community trust and supports the effective implementation of environmental and social safeguards.

During the training, CCCs committed to continuing to raise citizens' awareness through community forums such as Inteko z'Abaturage, monitor infrastructure projects, and provide evidence-based information to support advocacy efforts. Guided by values of integrity, accountability, and inclusiveness, they are expected to play a critical role in ensuring that development projects are implemented responsibly and sustainably.

The APESA project demonstrates that inclusive citizen engagement is not only a principle of good governance but also a practical tool for improving environmental and social safeguarding. By empowering women, persons with disabilities, and other community members to participate actively in oversight processes, the initiative contributes to more equitable, accountable, and sustainable development outcomes across Rwanda.

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APESA PROJECT EMERGES AS ONE OF LEARNING MODELS FOR AFRICAN DELEGATIONS VISITING RWANDA

From a Rwanda-based accountability initiative to a reference point for South–South learning, the APESA Project is increasingly attracting interest from government delegations seeking practical approaches to strengthening accountability, citizen participation and responsible development.

When international delegations visit Rwanda to learn from the country's development and governance experience, their programmes typically include engagements with government institutions, development agencies and major infrastructure projects. Increasingly, however, the Alliances and Partnerships for Evidence-led Environmental and Social Safeguarding Accountability (APESA) Project, locally known as Ijwi Ryanjye mu Iterambere Rirambye (INTERA) is becoming part of that learning journey as a civil society-led initiative aiming at promoting accountability and compliance with environmental and social safeguarding standards.

The growing interest was particularly evident through two study visits facilitated by Rwanda Cooperation. In December 2025, a delegation from Liberia's Ministry of Finance and Development Planning visited TI-Rwanda to learn from APESA/INTERA. The delegation's programme included visits to MINECOFIN, the Rwanda Development Board, the EU Delegation, Rwanda Governance Board, Kigali City and selected infrastructure projects before concluding with a dedicated session on APESA.



TI-Rwanda received a delegation from the Ministry of Finance and Planning of the Republic of South Sudan (July 15, 2026)

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Through this visit, Liberia's delegation specifically identified APESA as an opportunity to learn about civil society approaches to promote government accountability, social accountability, budget monitoring and human rights.

The interest was repeated in July 2026, when a seven-member delegation from the Ministry of Finance and Planning of South Sudan visited Rwanda. The delegation engaged with institutions including MINECOFIN, Rwanda Governance Board, the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda and the Ministry of Local Government, as well as visiting development projects. On 15 July, the delegation visited APESA/INTERA to exchange experience on strengthening government accountability, with a focus on social accountability, budget monitoring and human rights.

Notably, the South Sudan delegation's programme was primarily focused on learning from Rwanda's systems for aid coordination and public financial management. Its inclusion of APESA offered a complementary perspective: how civil society can contribute to accountability around development programmes and infrastructure beyond formal government systems. The delegation's brief specifically identified APESA as a learning engagement on social accountability, budget monitoring and human rights.



The attention comes as APESA moves from establishing its foundations to generating evidence and strengthening community-level accountability. The 36-month project works across 13 districts and key infrastructure sectors, including buildings, electricity, roads, and water supply and sanitation. It combines evidence generation, environmental and social safeguarding, citizen participation and capacity building to promote more accountable and sustainable infrastructure development.

The interest from Liberia and South Sudan represents more than recognition of an individual project. It demonstrates the growing relevance of home-grown, civil society-led accountability approaches in South–South knowledge exchange. APESA is therefore not only about monitoring development in Rwanda; it is increasingly becoming part of the conversation on how African countries can learn from one another to make development more accountable, inclusive and responsive to citizens.



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STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE: TI-RWANDA PODCASTS EXPLORE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN RWANDA

Rwanda has earned international recognition for its remarkable progress in infrastructure development. Investments in roads, public buildings, water supply systems, electricity networks, and urban expansion have contributed significantly to economic growth, improved service delivery, and enhanced living standards. These developments are essential for achieving Rwanda's Vision 2050 and building a resilient, middle-income economy.

However, as infrastructure development accelerates, concerns are increasingly being raised about the extent to which social and environmental standards are being respected during planning and implementation processes. Recent discussions in public forums, including podcasts focusing on the future of Rwandan cities, have highlighted the growing challenges associated with inadequate infrastructure planning, particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas such as Kigali.

The two podcasts were moderated by Alafati Mugabo, a journalist committed to promoting human rights and social protection, and featured Transparency International Rwanda, represented by Dr. Abias Maniragaba, the APESA Project Coordinator in the period of 22 Mar 2026 and 23 May 2026.

The discussions focused on environmental and social challenges associated with infrastructure development, highlighting the severe consequences of poorly planned road infrastructure and urban expansion. Particular attention was given to the impacts of inadequate environmental planning, especially insufficient stormwater drainage systems, which have exacerbated flooding during periods of heavy rainfall.

The podcasts cited the case of Nyarurama/Bisambu Cell in Gatenga Sector, Kicukiro District, where recurrent flooding has resulted in loss of life, destruction of homes, and the displacement of families.

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They also examined the situation in Mataba Cell, Masaka Sector, Kicukiro District, where road construction projects were implemented without adequate consideration of drainage requirements, leading to significant damage to community settlements and livelihoods. These examples underscored the importance of integrating environmental and social safeguards into infrastructure planning, design, and implementation to enhance community resilience and promote sustainable development.

Similarly, the conversion of agricultural land and agroecosystems into built-up areas threatens food security, rural livelihoods, and ecosystem stability as it is happening in the sub-urban of Kigali especially in Gasabo district. Urban green spaces, which contribute to air quality improvement and climate regulation, are also shrinking in some areas due to competing development priorities.



Constructed Lavine in Gahanga sector after involvement of TI-Rwanda advocacy

Weak enforcement of land use plans, unauthorized developments, and inadequate integration of environmental considerations into urban development have created long-term vulnerabilities. When natural drainage systems are disrupted, environmentally sensitive areas, communities become increasingly exposed to floods, landslides, and other climate-related disasters.

Key solutions resulting from the discussions

The future of Rwanda's cities depends on the ability to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability and social justice. Infrastructure development should not come at the expense of human lives, ecosystem integrity, or the well-being of future generations.

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As Rwanda continues its development journey, policymakers, planners, investors, and citizens must work together to promote integrated urban planning, strengthen environmental governance, and ensure that development projects respect the right of both people and nature.

Sustainable infrastructure is not merely about building roads, bridges, and buildings; it is about creating safe, inclusive, resilient, and environmentally responsible communities where both people and ecosystems can thrive.

There is a mismatch between Rwandan population increase and available land for settlement, agriculture, and infrastructure development, to address this issue there is need to address this by reducing individual home building by looking into collective apartments alternative which accommodate a bigger number of people on small land size as the case of Cyahafi, Mpazi, Nyabisindu, Busanza to mention a few.

The two published podcasts: the first one on 22 March 2026, the second on 17 May 2026, were highly appreciated by the audience, with 17,000 views so far. The comments focused on mentioning other environmental injustices caused by the lack of climate resilience in infrastructure development like the Mugendo - Rushubi – Nyarurenzi road as well as the lack of local community inclusion in planning who ends up not benefiting from the proposed plan.

In effect, the podcast participation strengthened the understanding of Transparency International Rwanda's role in promoting environmental justice as one of the components of its mandates: "Fighting against corruption and promoting good governance through enhancing integrity in the Rwanda society".



A view of Mpazi Rehousing Model Village

Photo Credit: The New Times

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Informal Settlement Rehousing Project in Nyabisindu, Gasabo District

An artistic impression by the City of Kigali Kigali









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ENHANCING CITIZENS PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDING THROUGH DEEPENING AWARENESS RAISING VIA RADIO TALK SHOWS

In the framework of deepening awareness raising to the public on environmental protection and social safeguarding in the construction of infrastructural development, TI-Rwanda organized five (5) radio talk shows under the theme: "Citizen Voice and Accountability in Infrastructure Development." Radio talk shows were broadcasted on Rusizi community Radio , Salus Radio, Izuba Radio, Ishingiro Radio and Radio 10 respectively.

Subsequently, these radio talk shows served as a tool to deepen awareness raising to general public on the APESA project, citizen's rights and obligations as far as social safeguarding compliance and accountability is concerned, and enabled citizen interaction with TI-Rwanda staff on matters that neededclarifications while laying avenue for reporting cases/issues regarding environmental and social safeguarding that affect citizens during the construction of infrastructure projects notably

- lack of work contracts for employees involved,
- Limited support for workers who face accidents while engaging in the construction of infrastructure,
- Personal protective equipment's (PPE) that are deducted from workers' salaries during construction, and
- Delayed compensation during expropriation process. All these were recorded by TI-Rwanda for further follow-up and advocacy.



TI-Rwanda staff delivering radio talk shows at Radio Izuba Radio

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Radio talk show increased understanding of citizens on their rights and obligations and available reporting channels hence expanding reporting base in the framework of holding duty bearers accountable. As observed by citizen from Gicumbi bwisige sector *"We used to experience issues related to environment and social safeguarding such as delayed compensation, negative legacy of those infrastructures to surrounding community but did not know where to report those issues for remedy. The fact that we have been told various means of reporting to TI-Rwanda, it will be easy for us to share information on issues affecting us".*

Another citizen from Rusizi said *"It is my first time to hear about compensation standard days and right to appeal and timeframe if not satisfied with value they have given your properties during expropriation process. More so, through these presenters, I have understood my obligation which include registration of land so that I can be able to be compensated in case".*

It is important to mention that, after the radio talk shows 13 citizens called TI-RW on toll-free to submit their cases of injustice related to delayed compensation having constructed electricity, roads and water on their plots. TI-RW started advocacy to 9 cases to relevant institutions while 4 people were oriented on procedures to be undertaken.
As a result of advocacy here is a story of how radio talk show helped Nsabyeneza Alex to regain his rights after 4 years:

According to the article 36 of the law N° 32/2015 of 11/06/2015 regarding expropriation in the public interest, the citizen was supposed to have been given compensation within 120 days only, but contrary he spent 4 years without being compensated. That case represents many similar cases being followed by TI-Rwanda, which demonstrates the relevance for APESA Project in general and the role of awareness raising on citizens rights and obligation in particular in empowering citizens to access justice

Success story

NSABYENEZA Alexis a resident from Gisagara district, Kansi Sector encountered 4 years of injustice resulting from two water tanks built by WASAC in his plot in 2022 without compensation. Having followed his issues from sector to province level, He followed TI-RW radio talk show broadcasted at Radio Izuba on 07/05/2026 and the following day on 08/05/2026, He called TI-Rwanda toll-free 2641 and submitted his case for redress. TI-Rwanda lawyers started advocacy through engaging Gisagara district authorities and the authorities committed to follow up the case. The advocacy continued by linking Alex with district and sector authorities and consequently his case was successfully addressed and he paid a compensation worth nine hundred thirty-five thousand, eight hundred thirteen **(935.813 frw).**

Rightholder's feedback

In his words after getting compensation, Alex said that "I listened to presentation of TI-Rwanda staff on radio, and found that issues the project address are linked with the issue I have experienced for the past 4 years. The staff welcomed citizens with issues and encouraged to report on given toll-free, I used that chance to submit the issue and it was followed and resolved swiftly. Had it not been enlightened by TI-Rwanda Radio talk show, I wouldn't have been able to get justice. I deeply appreciate the responsiveness of TI-Rwanda.

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ENSURING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS RESPECT CITIZENS' RIGHTS IN RWANDA

This is the aim of Transparency International Rwanda (TI-RW) and PTF Europe as they implement the EU-funded APESA project in Rwanda.

But what does it mean for citizens' rights to be respected when infrastructure projects are designed and implemented? In some cases, it can mean that land will not be taken or houses destroyed without the owners being consulted and given adequate compensation. In others, it can mean ensuring that livelihoods will not be negatively impacted by the construction process or by the infrastructure itself. Whatever the specifics, ensuring that their rights are respected requires that citizens play a central role throughout the infrastructure cycle, through consultations and incorporating feedback in the design, construction, and operational phases of projects.

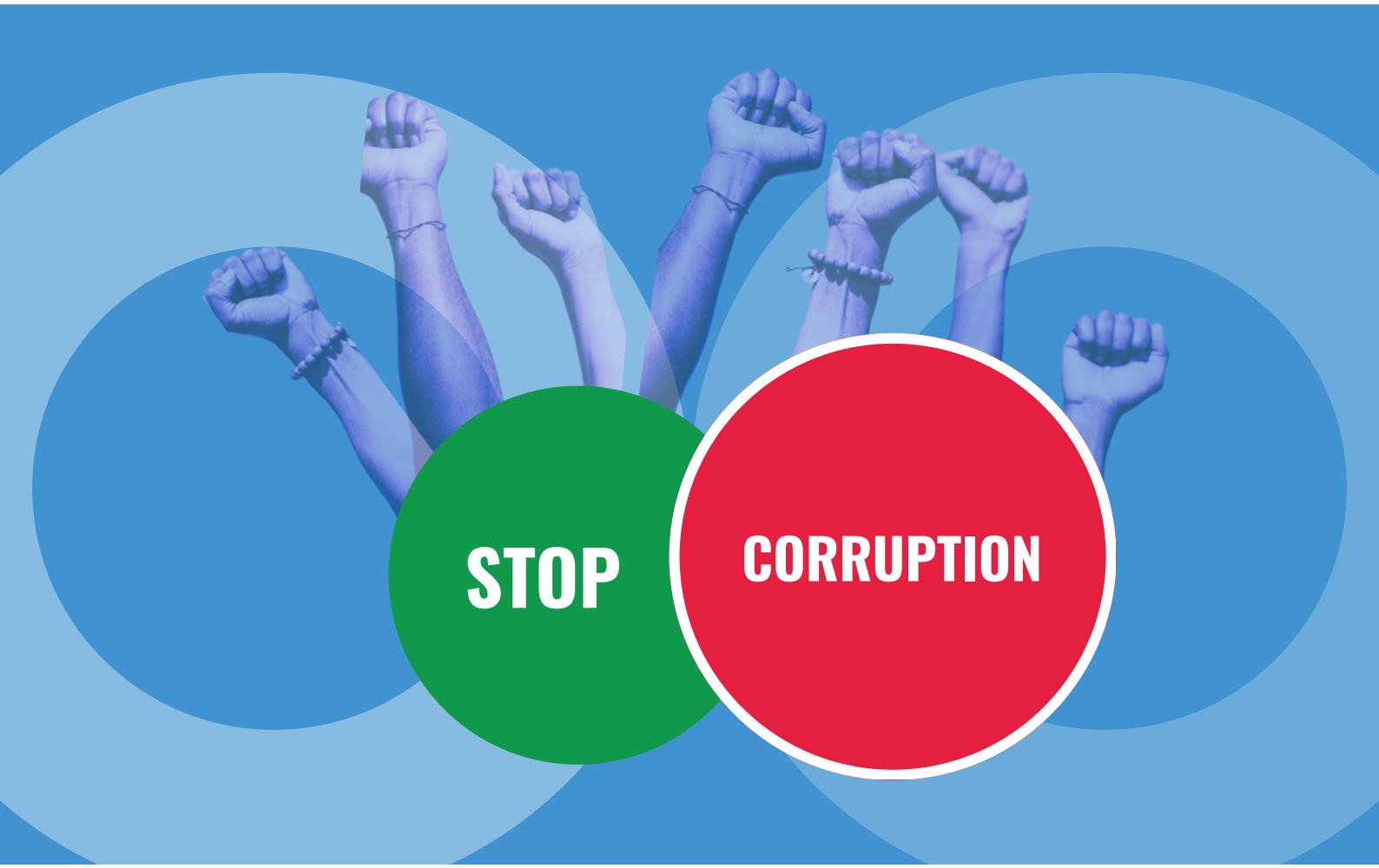
Rwanda is one of the least corrupt countries in Africa and has one of the fastest-growing economies. Infrastructure development is a priority of the government's growth strategy and is key to improving public services. Although Rwanda has good legislation and regulations relating to environmental and social standards which cover infrastructure development, awareness and enforcement remain an issue. The resulting gap between existing requirements and actual practice undermines their utility. For example, in one survey, over 67 percent of project-affected people, 79 percent of workers, and 76 percent of citizens living nearby reported that they did not have opportunities to influence project decisions despite consultations.

The 3-year APESA project aims to improve awareness, compliance, and reporting with regard to environmental and social safeguards, and strengthen citizen trust.

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It is operating in 13 districts, working with government officials, project developers, and communities to bridge gaps, encourage collaboration, and ensure citizen issues and grievances are addressed. These efforts are supported by Citizen Concern Committees (CCC), local community watchdogs that can get feedback from communities and take up issues with local officials. Through APESA, 336 new CCC members have been recruited in 42 sectors and 11 districts. These CCCs, along with community-based organizations (CBOs) currently being recruited in the project's 13 districts, will monitor public infrastructure projects that are starting or currently underway. They will assess the extent to which the projects respect existing legislation and citizens' rights, and follow up with relevant local and national agencies if this is not the case.

The APESA project reflects strategies that TI-RW implements in Rwanda and PTF uses in projects around the world – facilitating cooperation between civil society and government entities; building the capacity of local civil society to participate in and monitor public processes; ensuring public money is spent in a transparent and accountable manner; safeguarding citizens' rights; and strengthening civic trust. By so doing, it will help to ensure that infrastructure projects meet the needs of local communities while also contributing to enhancing sustainable development at the national level.



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