



STRIVING FOR AN EDUCATED SOCIETY

# FIYO

## MAGAZINE

Special Edition on PIMMA PLUS Project

February 2016

**Improving universal and quality education  
in Rwanda through policy monitoring  
and advocacy**



Supported by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

# Improving universal and quality education in Rwanda through policy monitoring and advocacy

## Succes stories and lessons learnt



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## WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear esteemed reader, welcome to FIYO's project magazine for the project entitled: Improving universal and quality education in Rwanda through Policy monitoring and advocacy. The project was implemented with the generous support from Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), under PPIMA Plus project.

This Magazine attempts to provide an overview of the project's objectives and activities as well as success stories of the project. FIYO is committed to build on the momentum created by the project in order to scale up its interventions in promoting quality education in Rwanda.

During the first phase of the project implementation (May – December 2015), great results have been achieved so far. FIYO was able to position itself as a leading civil society organization in the education sector through various evidence based advocacy initiatives. The project enabled FIYO to conduct a comprehensive research on the performance of Parents Teachers Committees (PTCs) in enhancing quality education. The Study highlighted several recommendations to different stakeholders aimed at revamping the mandate and operationalisation of PTCs as well as Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs). A capacity building session for PTCs in Bugesera District was conducted as a pilot and FIYO is ready to scale-up such trainings in other Districts of its operation.

Besides, several advocacy campaigns were undertaken on different issues namely; on the ownership and use of cell phones by students while at school, ban on boarding sections for nursery and primary schools, the quality of education under the 12 years basic education program. During the project implementation period, FIYO enjoyed extensive media coverage of its activities which earned the organization great visibility.

Let me take the opportunity to thank NPA as well different civil society partners active in the education sector. And above all, the Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Education Board for the smooth collaboration. Together, let us promote quality education for sustainable development.

GAHIGI Moses.  
Executive Director.



## ABOUT FIYO

Fight Illiteracy Youth Organization (FIYO) is an education-focused organization which pursues a rights based approach in achieving its mission. The organization was founded in 2003. It is registered as a Rwandan Non Governmental Organization through Ministerial Order No. 146/08.11 of 25th November 2009 that was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda no. 12 of 22 March 2010.

Fight Illiteracy Youth Organization (FIYO) implements three core programs namely; Education, Policy Research and Advocacy as well as Economic Empowerment. Besides, Peace Building, Gender, HIV&AIDS as well as Environmental Conservation are cross cutting issues

*FIYO's core Mission is to promote formal and informal education as pillars of a prosperous society*



## PROJECT SUMMARY OVERVIEW:

The improving universal and quality education in Rwanda through policy monitoring and advocacy project's purpose is: FIYO and citizens influence the existing education policies and programs in Bugesera District. The project was conceived to contribute towards improving quality education specifically targeting 12 Years Basic Education (YBE) program initiated by the Government of Rwanda.

The project had 4 outcomes namely;

- i) Fight Illiteracy Youth Organization (FIYO) organize and commission intensive research on performance of parents teacher's association in ensuring quality education
- ii) Fight Illiteracy Youth Organization (FIYO) sensitize citizens about education policies and programs to engage with local and central government
- iii) Fight Illiteracy Youth organization (FIYO) build the capacity of Parent Teacher's Associations with knowledge and skills on education policies and programs to engage teachers and local leaders at decentralized level
- iv) Fight Illiteracy Youth Organization (FIYO) organizes and conducts debates/ dialogues with citizens and decision – makers on emerging issues related to education policies and programs

The project is premised on the fact that despite several dividends of the Government of Rwanda policies, programs and innovations in the education sector, there still exists several gaps which need to be bridged before maximising quality education especially under the universal 12 YBE initiative.

In terms of approach, the project combined both a programmatic approach as well as advocacy and influencing components to deliver the project outcomes. Programmatically, the project includes activities aimed at raising awareness on rights and duties for both citizens (parents) and students and capacity building trainings for School General Assembly Committees (SGACs)/Parents Teachers Committess (PTCs) and well as School General Assemblies (SGAs/Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs).

On the other hand, the project had a strong component of research on key issues affecting quality education and advocacy interventions inter-twined together to achieve impactful change specifically in terms of assessing the performance of SGACs/PTCs and well as SGAs/PTAs in ensuring quality education in Rwanda.

## SUCCESS STORIES.

### **BARRIERS TOWARDS UNLOCKING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF PTCs IN ENHANCING QUALITY EDUCATION WERE MAPPED OUT.**

A ground breaking national level survey was successful conducted on the performance of PTCs in enhancing quality education. The study was validated and officially launched at national level. The study concluded that PTCs were generally operational country wide. However, their effectiveness was very low.

The study identified the following barriers hindering the effectiveness of PTCs:

**Passivity of committee members and those of SGAs who leave responsibility to the chairpersons and head teachers; Limited or lack of knowledge about their responsibilities whereby in most schools SGACs/PTCs responsibilities are limited to building classes and encouraging parents to pay school fees,**

**Poor participation of parents in school activities especially private schools as regards attending of SGAs/PTAs meetings where they are supposed to give their views and make decisions. The study went further to map out the causes of poor participation of parents as follows; parents' underestimation of their abilities to be involved in decision making, insufficient information and guidance from the school about the rights and responsibilities of the committee members, reluctance of some schools to involve parents; domineering of a few committee members together with head teachers, and being overshadowed by the school management committee as the final decision maker particularly in private school.**

The study drew pertinent recommendations to different stakeholders; MINEDUC/REB, Partners in the Education sector, school owners/head teachers and parents aimed at improving the performance of SGACs/PTCs as well as SGA/PTAs. Key recommendations include; conduct awareness campaign to inform PTCs, PTAs about their responsibilities and the law and policies governing the organization and functioning of schools, Some provisions of the Law No. 23/2012 of 15/06/2012 governing the organization and functioning of SGAs and SGACs do not necessarily apply to private schools necessitating for specific guidelines regarding the application of the law in private schools. The structure of SGACs and SGAs should be in line with Law No. 23/2012, specifically to include children, teachers, and at least 30% gender quota among others.



## SUCCESS STORIES.

### BARRIERS TOWARDS UNLOCKING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF PTCs IN ENHANCING QUALITY EDUCATION WERE MAPPED OUT.

The findings of the study were shared amongst key stakeholder's representative of the Rwanda Parliament, development partners, partners in education/civil society and parents. The uptake of the recommendations at the validation workshop was excellent especially from MPs and CSOs. The findings of the study made headlines on different media outlets such as Igihe.com, The Newtimes, makuruki.com, flash fm, Isango Star, Radio10 and TV10.

*Below: Hon. Mporanyi Theobald, making a key note address during the official Launch of the Survey Report. On his left is Julius Kwizera, NPA Program officer. On his left, is Hon. Balikana Eugene and Gahigi Moses, the Executive Director of FIYO.*





## SUCCESS STORIES.

### DEMANDING CLARITY ON THE ISSUE OF OWNERSHIP AND USE OF CELL PHONES BY STUDENTS AT SCHOOL ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN.



The advocacy campaign was triggered by the issuing of a controversial press statement by the Hon. Minister in charge of Primary and Secondary Education on 15 August 2015 on the ownership and use of cell phones by student while at school. The Minister's statement raised more ambiguity than it aimed to clarify as regards the Government's official position on whether the use and ownership of cell phones should be legalized in schools. In order to demand clarity, FIYO after consultations with different civil society organizations issued a declaration demanding the following from the Hon. State Minister of Education:

Issue a statement directed to School Directors and the general public clearly stating that the current status quo on the ban and punishment of students who own and use cell phones while at school must be maintained and enforced in accordance with article 32 of Ministerial Order no.6 issued in 2004.

Initiate a broader and deeper consultation process with all stakeholders; school directors, teachers, parents, students, education experts, health experts and the civil society with an aim of assessing if at all, the use of cell phones by students is necessary in enhancing education and how their negative effects can be mitigated.

The declaration was officially published during a press conference and it dominated headlines in different media outlets such as Igihe.com, Radio Rwanda, Rwanda Television, makuruki.com, BBC, The East African, The New Times, Izuba rirashe, Umuseke.com.

Several meetings took place between FIYO and MINEDUC to clarify the issue. A consensus was reached that the legalization of use of cell phones by students while at school will require national level consultations and that FIYO will be part of the process. Currently, a civil society taskforce is in place to explore the pros and cons of legalizing the use of cell phones by students and is actively engaging the Ministry of education on this issue. Meanwhile, a quick survey conducted in selected schools show that the status quo on the ban and punishment of students who own and use cell phones while at school is still in force.

**After this advocacy campaign  
REB has clearly indicated that cell  
phones are not allowed in schools**

## AGENDA SETTING BY PTCs IN BUGESERA DISTRICT

As part of the project activities, and as rightly pointed by survey findings on the performance of PTCs, strengthening the capacities of PTC members was identified as crucial in improving their performance. The training of PTCs in Bugesera District was conducted as pilot phase. FIYO plans to scale up PTC trainings in other districts of its operation. Consequently, a three days workshop bringing together 40 members of the PTCs was conducted, of whom 18 were women. The meeting was convened on 14th November 2015. The training was focused on rights and duties of SGAC/PTC members. Each participant was issued with a training manual as well as a summarized version of Law No. 23/2012 of 15/06/2012 governing the organization and functioning of SGAs and SGACs.

At the end of the workshop, an action plan was made and commitments endorsed to revamp the structure and performance of SGACs. Implementation of the action points will be monitored during the first academic trimester in 2016. Some of the key recommendations include:

- To ensure that PTCs are legally and dully constituted. Specifically ensure that 30% of its members are female and that they are 10 in number including two representatives of children/students.
- Ensure that PTC meetings regularly convene to take key decisions
- Ensure that each school has a plan of action.
- Sensitise parents to attend PTA meeting and provide them with an official invitation including the agenda before date of the meeting.



- Ensure more transparency in terms of managing school funds and assets. Different PTC members testified positively about the success of the training.

This training has been an eye opener for me in terms of understanding my duties and responsibilities as PTC member. I am going to work tirelessly as an active member come academic year 2016 testified Marie Theresa, MUKESHIMANA PTC member, ES Nyarugenge after the training.

And one Head teacher who preferred to remain anonymous, had this to say after the training: "I was not very conversant with the stipulations of the law No. no. Law No. 23/2012 of 15/06/2012 governing the organization and functioning of SGAs and SGACs especially as regards the composition of members of the PTCs. It is now my duty to strictly re-constitute the composition of the PTC committee members in accordance with the law by especially ensuring that 30% gender quota is achieved, why not even make even 50%? . I will also ensure that children are also represented in the PTC of my school".

## STIMULATING PUBLIC DEBATES ON DIFFERENT EDUCATION POLICIES THROUGH RADIO DEBATES.

- During the project implementation period, FIYO was actively engaged the public on different issues affecting the quality of education. The debates were powered by radio talk shows. In total, 4 live radio debates (talk shows) were conducted; 3 on radio 10 FM and 1 on Radio Isango FM. Each radio talk show as well as proceedings of the workshops is documented and above all, the key recommendations shared with different key stakeholders. The following debates were initiated by FIYO:
- Public debate on the closure of boarding nursery and primary schools. A specific radio talk show too session was organized on radio 10 to provide a forum for public dialogue on the subject matter. There was general consensus among the public in favour of closing boarding arrangements at the level of nursery and primary level education with effect from 2017. Above 80% of the callers agreed with the Government's decision to ban Boarding section of nursery and primary schools in the year 2017 in order to promote the best interest of the child development.
- The quality of education challenges in relation to the 12 Years Basic Education (YBE). Through the radio talk show the general public while appreciating the positive strides the GoR has taken in implementing the 12YBE Program, aired out what they consider as key challenges namely; high students to teacher ratio, lack of enough scholastic materials and resources such as libraries, text books, limited capacities of teachers to conduct teaching instructions in English as a medium of communication, inconsistent curriculum administered in 12 YBE which is regularly changed among others. Issues raised were documented and shared with various stakeholders.
- Access and use to cell phones by students while at school campaign. The debate was triggered by "ambiguous" statements by the Hon. State Minister in charge of primary and secondary education allowing the use and ownership of cell phones by students while at school. FIYO organized a radio talk show on radio 10. 95% of callers were against allowing access and use of cell phones by students at school. A follow-up on the campaign indicated that currently, the status quo banning the use of cell phones was maintained by schools pending national-wide consultations on the issue.
- The effectiveness of Parents Teachers Committees. The radio talk show took place following the Validation workshop and official launch of the study on the performance of PTCs in improving quality education. It took place on Radio Isango FM. 90% of the callers echoed the same observations as the study. Indeed the public reiterated the fact that PTCs are more of "ghosts" alluding to the fact that they are not effective. an official invitation including the agenda before date of the meeting.



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## MAGAZINE

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**CONTACT ADDRESS:**  
Airport Avenue, KK 53 ST  
P.O BOX 2201, KIGALI RWANDA  
Tel. (office): +250 280 368 723  
E: info@fiyorwanda.rw  
fiyorwanda@gmail.com  
www.fiyorwanda.rw

**Contact Person:**  
GAHIGI MOSES  
Executive Director.  
Mobile: +250 788 305 118  
E: gahigimoses@gmail.com

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