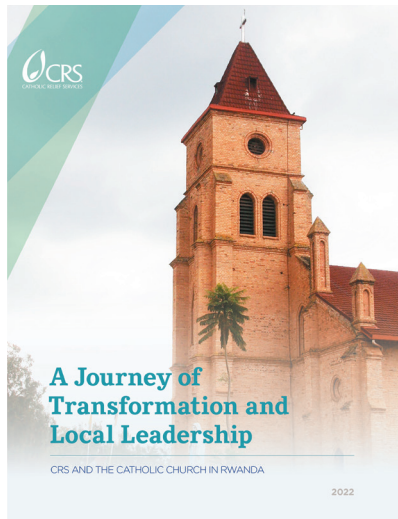




A Journey of Transformation and Local Leadership

CRS AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN RWANDA

2022



Cover: Church at Muhanga, Kabgayi Diocese, Rwanda.
Photo by Helen Blakesley for CRS

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. CRS saves, protects and transforms lives in more than 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality. Our relief and development work is accomplished through programs of emergency response, HIV, health, agriculture, education, microfinance and peacebuilding.

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Acronyms

A2A	Assessment to Action Planning
CEPR	<i>Conférence Episcopale du Rwanda</i> (Rwanda Episcopal Conference)
CIMO	Caritas Internationalis member organization
CIMS	Caritas Internationalis Management Standards
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CS	Capacity strengthening
CSO	Civil society organization
HOCAI	Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument
HR	Human resources
IHD	Integral Human Development
IGA	Income-generating activity
KPI	Key performance indicator
MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
RRA	Rwanda Revenue Authority
RSSB	Rwanda Social Security Board
RWF	Rwandan franc
SRFMP	Sub-Recipient Financial Management Policy

Executive Summary

“The diocese of Kibungo is grateful to the Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project, which helped the diocese to rise from the ashes of the 2009 deficit. Now the diocese can see the sunrise!”

—Bishop Antoine Kambanda (now Cardinal), annual review and planning meeting, November 23, 2018

This case study documents the deep-rooted and long-shared experiences of Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Church in Rwanda.

Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Church in Rwanda have developed a unique partnership to strengthen the capacity of Church leaders and structures. The first phase of the Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project ran from 2004 to 2010. The second phase, from 2010 to 2020—renamed the Rwanda Church Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project for this phase—centered on professionalizing management systems and strengthening accountability structures across multiple levels of the Church. CRS’ investment was \$2.2 million, while the Rwanda Church contributed an estimated \$6.6 million in terms of cash, level of effort and in-kind resources. This case study documents the deep-rooted and long-shared experiences of the Catholic Church in Rwanda and CRS. It evaluates the project’s evolving roles, impact, sustainability, replicability and adaptability. Coauthored by the partners, it captures insights of the Rwandan Church’s senior management and CRS colleagues. It demonstrates the growth and evolution of this enduring relationship, showcasing the multi-year transformation from traditional development partners to bonded allies and peers in promoting local leadership.

Catholic Church in Rwanda



9 dioceses



220 parishes
989 sub-parishes



33,672
basic ecclesial
communities

Currently, the Catholic Church in Rwanda has nine dioceses, 220 parishes comprised of 989 sub-parishes, and about 33,672 basic ecclesial communities, which represent exponential growth since 2010. The partnership between CRS and the Church in Rwanda includes all nine dioceses, to varying degrees, depending on the level of engagement and priorities, beginning with two pioneering dioceses—Cyangugu and Kibungo (phase 1, 2004-2010) and expanding to Gikongoro, Butare, Byumba and Ruhengeri (phase 2, 2010-2020). More recently, Kabgayi, Nyundo and Kigali dioceses also joined to varying degrees, using their own resources and learning from peer dioceses. According to the *CRS Rwanda Church Institutional Program Final Report 2020*, the Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project has benefitted 139,200 direct participants and 2,692,458 indirect participants, including those working in the targeted dioceses, parishes and congregations. From 2010 to 2020, CRS Rwanda provided support to the Catholic Church in Rwanda and assessed, built upon and strengthened capacity within the Church. The alliance also nurtured mutual trust and respect between partners. By illustrating key elements of the relationship’s impact and sustainability, this document further reflects on the evolution of this special relationship and acknowledges the layers of complexity and challenges faced by the Church. The foundational components of trust and respect aided the project’s success, serving as essential determinants to continue the capacity strengthening (CS) process in the future.

By sharing this partnership and capacity strengthening story, we intend to inspire further conversations about CRS' local leadership approaches as an expression of the core principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. This case study is not a blueprint, but rather offers learnings to be applied and adapted to new and existing partnerships outside of Rwanda. The primary audience includes:

- Episcopal conferences in other nations and regions committed to similar transformational change.
- CRS country programs interested in launching or improving similar capacity strengthening projects.



The Bishops of Rwanda celebrate the silver anniversary of Bishop Philippe Rukamba in his Diocese of Butare.

Photo by Fr Evariste Nshimuremyi for CRS

This document complements a [case study conducted in 2012](#) that addressed the complex history of the Church in Rwanda and summarized the first phase of the Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project (2004-2010), which included technical assistance, accompaniment and modest funding for capacity strengthening. The earlier study offered tangible evidence of both partners' efforts to improve project performance. As with this document, the earlier case study examined the Church's path to self-reliance.

This report seeks to understand the expressed mutual values and priorities of the partners in pursuit of improved programmatic and operational functionality and accountability. This endline reflection has three main objectives:

- To assess the long-term impact and sustainability of this capacity strengthening project.
- To determine the factors of success and lessons learned, recommendations and considerations for wider adaptability to promote replication by other CRS country programs and episcopal conferences.
- To systematically document the project's approach, including the learning and tools it yielded, to inform future initiatives.

This case study examines how the successful partnership between the Catholic Church in Rwanda and CRS contributed to meaningful change. Partners reported strengthened financial and human resources management, planning and reporting, buttressed by credibility, transparency and accountability. Results showed a decreased reliance on dioceses for funding parish work and other sub-diocesan initiatives; improved effectiveness of the Church's pastoral mission through participation of laypersons; improved tax and regulatory compliance; and strengthened program quality, all of which contribute to the Church's work in improving people's well-being in Rwanda. These successes highlight CRS' technical and operational expertise, and its ongoing commitment to coaching and accompaniment.

Background

Besides its precarious financial situation, the Church's workforce functioned haphazardly, further threatening its survival.

CRS began operations in Rwanda in 1960 by providing humanitarian and development assistance with local, national and international Catholic institutions and structures, as well as other organizations, to assist people based on need alone. Since the 1980s, the agency has promoted self-help initiatives by introducing projects that encourage local communities to identify and resolve their development problems. CRS was directly involved in emergency programs after the outbreak of the 1990 civil conflict in Rwanda. This conflict later resulted in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. Directly after the genocide, the Church's central mission was one of healing and reconciliation. It concentrated its efforts on faith and forgiveness through evangelization; however, its financial struggles continued. During this challenging period, the Church strove for relevance and survival as parishioners' confidence and faith in the Church had been eroded. In addition to strain from an overwhelming number of social services requests, the Church's social safety net frayed, and its financial situation fell into a deeper state of disarray. Some dioceses operated on little funding while others faced crushing debt and the prospect of bankruptcy. Besides its precarious financial situation, the Church's workforce functioned haphazardly, further threatening its survival.

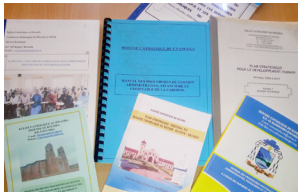
Since the genocide against the Tutsi, CRS has focused its interventions in Rwanda on agriculture, HIV, nutrition, livelihoods, microfinance, reconciliation and peacebuilding programs. The primary goal of CRS programming in Rwanda is to ensure vulnerable households achieve full, integral human development.



A parish in the Diocese of Cyangugu. The collaboration between CRS and the Church in Rwanda began with the Diocese of Cyangugu and soon expanded to include other dioceses.

Photo by Fr Paulin, Diocese of Cyangugu

In the early 2000s, the Church in Rwanda found itself struggling to recover from dwindling external support and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, and to respond to the overwhelming need for services among those left vulnerable by the social upheaval. Key leaders with exposure to management principles were among those who sparked reflections within the Church and reached out to CRS for support. In 2004, CRS and the Catholic Church in Rwanda began a unique collaboration. CRS began providing technical assistance, accompaniment and modest funding for capacity strengthening. The work began with the Diocese of Cyangugu and soon expanded to include the episcopal conference and five other dioceses to varying degrees. The interventions evolved into what CRS came to call the Church Strategic Support Portfolio. The Church Strategic Support Portfolio started small and grew organically, becoming more systematized as the episcopal conference and the Diocese of Cyangugu implemented strategic plans that helped guide the capacity strengthening. The Portfolio yielded—and continues to yield—tangible institutional changes that are clear precursors of sustainability that help the Church to better realize its mission.



All dioceses are equipped with a package of management tools.

Photo by Pascasie Musabyemungu

In targeted parishes and dioceses, these achievements include:

- Awareness-raising, development, and implementation of **strategic plans** for the episcopal conference and the Diocese of Cyangugu.
- Development, adaptation, validation, rollout and monitoring of **management tools** specific to Church needs and context.
- Recruitment, training and accompaniment of—and provision of relevant equipment for—**skilled accountants**.
- Implementation of consistent and comprehensive financial and programmatic **management and reporting procedures and systems**.
- Dramatic **shifts in mindset** among stakeholders who have grown to recognize and appreciate the value of management principles in pursuit of the Church's practical and spiritual missions.
- Creation of **income-generating activities**.

The Catholic Church in Rwanda has embraced capacity strengthening and changed dramatically in less than 10 years. The remarkable change was possible in part because of four factors of success as identified by stakeholders representing CRS Rwanda and the Catholic Church in Rwanda. While they are consistent with accepted theories of organizational development and capacity strengthening, CRS does not regard them as prerequisites. They are as follows:



An external environment that supports—and even requires—change.



Leadership and commitment from all partners at all levels within their organizations.



Equitable negotiation by partners to navigate change and uncertainty together.



Meaningful relationships and trust among partners.

The Church in Rwanda is continuing on its path to sustainability and self-sufficiency. With CRS Rwanda as a committed Church partner, the way forward continues to develop as funding sources change and evolve. To institutionalize the ownership and sustainability of the efforts—and in keeping with CRS' commitment to subsidiarity—this expansion will rely largely on the peer-to-peer training and accompaniment model that uses technical experts within the Church and reduces CRS' role to one of discrete and specialized technical assistance.

The methodology adopted in this study combined the analysis of both quantitative data (i.e., financial statements, MEAL and project reports, etc.) and qualitative insights obtained during nearly 50 in-depth conversations and focus group discussions with stakeholders from various Church entities and CRS colleagues that have contributed to the process of institutional strengthening in the past decade.

The Church in Rwanda has come to recognize the equal value and importance of its religious outreach and institutional sustainability.



Fr Jean Nolasque Mazimpaka during a CRS regional meeting in Kigali in 2017.

The in-person visit to Rwanda by an HQ-based CRS colleague facilitated a process of analysis and documentation for replication that was co-led by both Church and CRS stakeholders. While the circumstances are particular to this context, CRS and Church colleagues believe that the Rwanda experiences can be relevant to other partnership and capacity strengthening efforts with both Church and non-Church partners.

As this report demonstrates, the Church in Rwanda has come to recognize the equal value and importance of its religious outreach and institutional sustainability. Among the critical drivers of change is the active engagement of Church leaders and laypersons, who embraced genuine and meaningful change toward financial independence, paving a path to self-sufficiency. This report outlines and reflects on the changes experienced and the evolving roles of both the Church in Rwanda and CRS, which reflect an increased level of leadership, sustainability and agency embraced by the Church. The document also analyzes the investments made to reach the returns and changes achieved. Lastly, it offers a reflection on lessons learned on the sustainability of these institutional improvements, and their possible adaptation for replicability in other contexts.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

CRS regards capacity strengthening as essential to any organization's health. It includes capacity building, which focuses on individuals or teams, enhancing or developing new knowledge, skills and attitudes in order for people or teams to function better; institutional strengthening, focusing on an organization enhancing or developing its systems and structures to function more effectively, work toward sustainability, and achieve goals; and accompaniment, consistent coaching and mentoring that allow new skills to be mastered and new organizational systems to become standard operating procedures.

Useful resources:

- [Partnership approaches](#)
- [Capacity strengthening approaches](#)



Evolving Roles to Advance Local Leadership

This chapter explores key competency areas and fundamental institutional changes that are foundational for Church growth.

In reflecting on the profound shifts in ingrained practices, attitudes and behaviors seen in the Church in Rwanda, this chapter examines factors of significant change and the perceived impact of both partners (CRS and the Church in Rwanda). This chapter explores key competency areas and fundamental institutional changes that are foundational for Church growth. This chapter also highlights aspects of CRS' capacity strengthening initiative and its promotion of local leadership. Internal challenges and progress within CRS are also analyzed.

Historically, CRS and the Church regarded one another as trusted and respected long-term partners. Credibility, transparency and accountability underscore this relationship. Because of this solid foundation, CRS was the natural partner to facilitate efforts to strengthen capacity within the Church in Rwanda. Those interviewed in this study regularly emphasized a relationship based on open communication, ongoing dialogue, mutual respect and equity.

During the process of becoming a local leadership organization and providing effective capacity strengthening, CRS addressed a series of internal barriers and underwent a variety of transformations.

It took time for CRS senior managers to realize the importance of engaging with the entire Church structure—i.e., dioceses and the episcopal conference with related national and sub-national commissions—rather than focusing solely on the national Caritas, which had been the approach since CRS entered the country. Internal reflection meetings within CRS, and with the Church, helped to harmonize and integrate this comprehensive and innovative approach.

CRS also increased the frequency with which it sought communications with the Church. This intentional change ensured ongoing reflection and adjustments of the implementation of the initiative. Further, CRS learned to rely on and engage existing internal human resources rather than outsourcing technical assistance provision, as was the practice in the very early phase of the initiative. This is an important aspect in CRS' journey toward becoming an organization that intentionally and effectively supports the leadership and agency of local partners. Engaging CRS colleagues and resources in local capacity strengthening, leadership projects and initiatives offers the competitive advantage of effectively leveraging on-the-ground knowledge and expertise, while adhering to our guiding principles of solidarity and subsidiarity.

Accordingly, CRS colleagues were required to reinforce their partnership and capacity strengthening core competencies by taking in-person and online learning courses to align their competencies with current needs. Procurement, human resources, financial management and grant compliance, and IT staff, among others, all benefited from these learning materials. CRS formed and deployed multidisciplinary teams to provide adequate capacity strengthening offerings to the Church. CRS leadership committed to support mutual learning (by CRS, i.e., about Church structure, hierarchy and protocols, and by the Church, i.e., about CRS structure, policies and procedures and management standards for working more efficiently) by investing in this effort. Finally, formal biannual partnership reflection meetings with the Church—held during the Bishops' plenary, where each diocese shared experiences and learning jointly with CRS—as well as the use of a partnership scorecard, helped assess the quality of the relationship and prioritize investments for the following year.

As with any process where change is the goal, CRS encountered challenges while working with the Church in Rwanda.

The first two challenges were **strong financial dependence due to a significant reduction in external subsidies** and **weak management systems and a lack of management tools**.

The third major challenge involved **a lack of systematic data** to document and monitor progress. For example, not all partners (with whom CRS conducted direct capacity-strengthening work) were on Gateway, CRS' internal partners relationship management platform. Thus, assessments and contributions to key performance indicators (KPI) (i.e., documented examples where local partner capacity was strengthened as a result of significant CRS support and the total value of resources secured by local partners as a result of significant CRS support) were not reflected upon. Further, there was a lack of general monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) support for this initiative.

A fourth challenge was the **high rate of staff turnover** in both institutions. Non-competitive salaries, the reassignment of staff to different roles (and the new assignees having to learn their tasks from scratch), and the time-bound nature of assignments were not helpful in retaining employees. Staff turnover will continue to be a chronic challenge in development and humanitarian work as program staff are offered salaries linked to project lifetimes and securing funding for permanent, non-project salaried positions is a challenge for all actors.

When more dioceses became interested in joining halfway through the initiative, there were not enough resources to support this. CRS has been unable to mobilize supplemental resources to move beyond what is currently being supported. Despite the results achieved during this second phase, a fifth challenge was that **more than half of Church resources in Rwanda were unused or underused**. Lay people make up a valuable human resource that has also been underutilized by the church. This indicates the need for a more comprehensive feasibility study and analysis of the growth and sustainability potential to inform the next phase of this partnership.

Challenges



Financial dependence



Weak management systems and tools



High staff turnover

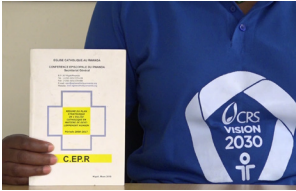


Church resources unused or underused



Lack of data

Through the strategic planning process, a new Church practice brought about by this initiative, the Church in Rwanda identified four primary factors in need of capacity strengthening:



Through a strategic planning process, the Church identified key areas for capacity building. Photo by Innocent Nzabagerageza for the Church

- **Financial independence:** External subsidies are in decline.
- **Human resources systems and structures:** These entities are poorly managed, and there is low accountability within the Church’s workforce. Minimal involvement of laypersons and non-compliance with new national labor laws, rules and regulations are also of concern.
- **Financial systems and structures:** These are marked by poor adaptation to new tax legislation and weak administration of income-generating activities.
- **Use of existing land resources and infrastructure:** Land is a primary asset for income generation, sustainability and community engagement; as such, this resource should be used to its full extent.

CRS shared internal know-how to reflect upon, assess and strengthen capacity to improve the multi-sectoral management systems within the dioceses in Rwanda. Restructuring Church operations involved developing and adapting evidence-proven financial and human resources management tools and providing regular training, mentorship, accompaniment, monitoring visits and check-in meetings. Central to this standardized approach was the design, adaptation and application of context-specific tools to address financial and human resources gaps. CRS facilitated the development of nearly 100 management tools to enhance procedures, policies and systems around finances, human resources and material assets, including tools for:

- Human resources and financial instruments
- Support materials, inventory and logistics
- Programming and reporting
- Communication
- Administration

Also, CRS conducted over 100 technical visits during the initiative to strengthen the capabilities of Church partners and maximize the application of learning via accompaniment and mentorship.

In the latter part of the second phase of Church capacity strengthening, CRS shifted its role to building systems, processes and staff development skills. This enabled the Church and local actors to assume roles and responsibilities as crucial decision-makers and resource managers according to their visions and needs. As such, the Church has expanded its sphere of influence. By deliberately working to decrease the Church’s reliance on CRS, the agency has assumed a more secondary role of accompaniment. The Church itself has moved to the forefront for continuity and sustainability. The final 2020 report for the initiative noted a “strong interest in having officials lead the management reform processes in the other dioceses in the future—a slower, but much more sustainable and feasible process than having CRS lead in all dioceses.”

Impact Within the Church

“ It was a critical time for the Church to reinvent itself [after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi].

Pascalie Musabyemungu
Partnership and Capacity
Strengthening Coordinator,
CRS Rwanda

After the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, the Church faced disrupted social support systems and widespread economic uncertainty. In an environment of increasing need and decreasing funding across all nine dioceses, it recognized the need for profound change to achieve self-sufficiency. In partnership with CRS, the Church reflected on its values, priorities and local resources, resulting in a significant shift in its mindset and internal organizational culture.

Based on inadequate workforce management, a weak understanding of taxes, the underutilization of diocese-owned physical assets, and the insufficient involvement of laypersons, the Church cited four significant goals:

- Development, adaptation, validation and deployment of resources, tools and practices to support resource management and management tools, which resulted in nearly 100 processes (i.e., consistent and comprehensive procedures, manuals and systems for human, financial, material and programmatic resource management and reporting) reflective of the needs and context of the Church in Rwanda.
- Restructuring, competency development and accompaniment of qualified staff and senior Church leaders to sustain this process of change.
- Mobilization, awareness and training of lay people and priests to better contribute to the sustainability of their parishes.
- Valorization of local opportunities through the creation of income-generating activities to finance the shortfall due to the significant reduction in external subsidies.

As a result, the Church reported more than \$19 million in gains—mostly in the form of prevented losses—attributable to implementing effective management systems across Rwanda over the 10-year lifespan of the initiative. That amount was then invested in revamping offices in the diocesan curias and parishes, and for the positions created by the new management system (i.e., salaries for new employees recruited at the level of parishes and dioceses, and income-generating activities). The new roles include financial directors, chief accountants, receptionists and secretaries, human resources managers, central stock managers, supply managers, logisticians, central cashiers, doormen, parish accountants and parish cashiers. Training costs for clergy and employees in dioceses other than Cyangugu (the initial pilot) and Kibungo are also included in the amount. Most of the proceeds were credited to the management of parishes by laypersons, a reliable human resources system, and new financial procedures.

This capacity strengthening initiative reached 139,200 individuals as direct participants across 21 Episcopal commissions, 97 congregations and religious orders operating in the nine dioceses, 2,970 schools (including kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, colleges and institutes of higher education), 118 health facilities, and 200 profitable businesses.

The Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project has seen multiple results. The diocese of Cyangugu provided guidance and inspiration to other dioceses and other Church entities as it sought professionalized management systems and strengthened accountability. After the commitment by all bishops in 2015 to follow and adapt the Cyangugu pilot, operations and management improvements within all dioceses, the Episcopal Conference, and the respective commissions accelerated and led to the following outcomes:



“ Many of the problems that have led to crises in the Church are due to archaic structures without a system of control.

Bishop Philippe Rukamba
of Butare Diocese

- Increased adherence to the government’s overhauled tax codes and other legal and regulatory requirements substantially reduced, and in some cases eliminated, penalties and fees.
- Tax compliance generated new funding sources for the investment of income-generating activities (IGAs) that benefited the Church and local communities. The impact of various capacity building approaches unlocked the potential, including the role of the Church as a credible social actor, transforming it into an influential leader among civil society organizations.
- The dioceses reported a decrease in litigation and bankruptcy, strengthened collaboration with key stakeholders, transparency in creating project reports for public consumption, and pride in compliance with the government’s legal and regulatory requirements.
- An improved understanding of and technical proficiency in the 2016 and 2020 local labor laws and 2018 national legislation governing nonprofit organizations led to decreased risk and litigation. For instance, the Catholic Church in Rwanda paid 53 million Rwandan francs (RWF) (about \$50,000) in fines for non-declaration and nonpayment of workforce-related taxes in 2010. By 2020, 25 major risks (i.e., debts due to working without planning, budgeting and reporting; annual fines and penalties due to non-compliance with labor regulations; annual fines and penalties due to non-compliance with tax income laws; court litigation with employees due to poor staff management procedures; loss of assets due to lack of recording, inventory procedures, maintenance and handovers, etc.) were reduced by 98% in 100 parishes across six dioceses. The government recognized several dioceses with four “Best Performance” awards to acknowledge proper and timely tax payments.
- Standardized formats for tax-related financial statements and prompt reporting improved compliance with 12 types of mandatory taxes in 2020, up from four in 2010. This resulted in 150 billion RWF (about \$145 million) in payments to the Rwanda government, a 1,100% increase on 2010.
- The number of effectively managed IGAs rose to 62 medium-to-large and 138 small profitable projects in 2020, up from 13 projects operating at a deficit in 2010.

1,100%

INCREASE IN TAX
PAID TO THE RWANDA
GOVERNMENT
(2010-2020).



Bishop Celestin Hakizimana continues to lead capacity building through the Bureau Technique under the economic and strategic planning episcopal commission.

Photo by CRS Congo staff

TRAININGS AND WORKING VISITS

CRS, with the technical team at the Church level, organized week-long trainings on the management of IGAs. Working visits to learn from well-managed projects in the country were also organized. Those that were poorly managed or poorly studied were restructured. A board of directors and management committees was put in place and supported daily by qualified managers and personnel. IGAs were registered according to the country's requirements. The Church invested more in hotels, canteens, carpentry workshops, garages and agro-businesses. These income-generating units are managed by the board of directors (as a decision-making organization) and a director (usually a priest or a religious leader) supported by a qualified manager. These production units contribute to the Church budget and support the maintenance of newly created religious positions. These positions are not remunerated by the project.

- There was a 90% reduction in land-related disputes and court cases between 2010 and 2020.

DISPUTE REDUCTION

At the beginning of the project, certain land was not registered. There were disputes between the Church and community members over the limits of the Church's land and land grabbed by the rest of the population and the state. With the government land registration process, ownership of disputed land has been pursued. CRS advised the Church to dedicate a department for the management of fixed assets (land and buildings) in each diocese. This department helped to considerably reduce disputes by making an inventory of ownership based on evidence. Meanwhile, some land losses continued due a handover system not being in place prior to this project.

- There were 35 new service units (i.e., human resources recruitment panel, land assets officers, etc.) established across nine dioceses and more than 200 new profitable businesses. Moreover, 1,137 new staff were added in six targeted dioceses: 700 staff in 100 parishes and 437 service-level staff.
- The creation of 35 million RWF (about \$32,500) per year in solidarity funds by parishes assisted the very poor, as well as new parishes, and enabled vehicle renewal.

\$32,500

IN SOLIDARITY FUNDS FROM PARISHES ASSISTED NEW PARISHES AND THE VERY POOR.

SOLIDARITY FUNDS

In Cyangugu, 40% of Sunday collections are set aside for the poor via Caritas. The solidarity funds are paid by the parishes from their own income. The funds are used for vehicle renewal and to finance the IGAs of newly created parishes. A committee at the diocesan level manages the funds, handles requests from parishes, and analyzes requests for follow-up. Before the project, parishes had to wait for donations of vehicles. Today, each parish in Cyangugu has a functioning vehicle to facilitate local pastoral work.

While some diocesan bishops initially deemed accounting or employment policies and practices unimportant or an unnecessary distraction from their pastoral duties, most demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the capacity building process, providing support to parish priests. Positive changes observed within the diocese are summarized below:



Bishop Vincent Harolimana of Ruhengeri Diocese, one of the Church leaders who engaged his entire team in designing a series of management tools.

Photo by Pascalie Musabyemungu for CRS

- **Standardization of internal planning, monitoring and control:** Each diocese holds quarterly gatherings with the bishop for monitoring and learning purposes. Each ministry or service presents achievements, responds to questions in plenary, and explores the potential for services integration.
- **Exchange visits between dioceses** offered shared expertise and experiences. Thirty MEAL visits by the capacity strengthening team were made to parishes, health centers and schools for on-the-job training of newly recruited accountants and cashiers. These served to mobilize the laity to become involved in parish management and improve self-sufficiency against the continual decline of aid. The visits were planned by a capacity building and/or audit team initiated at the diocesan level. They continued to be organized at the diocesan level even after the project closed. Today, collaboration and planning have improved because weekly visits are organized and consolidated between departments to save resources and promote synergy. Furthermore, dioceses collaborate to learn from each other on the restructuring of services and staffing, the application of software accountancy tools and systems, agri-business projects, and hotel facilities management.
- **Lessons learned and stories of success** served to persuade those who were resistant to novel approaches and contributed to the inclusion of four further dioceses (i.e., Butare, Gikongoro, Byumba and Ruhengeri).
- **Jobs were created** to oversee the more than 200 new profitable businesses across all dioceses.
- **Diocesan budgets rose.** For example, in Cyangugu diocese, due to numerous factors including increased layperson participation and contributions, the budget rose from 337.4 million RWF in 2010 (about \$325,000) to 823.5 million RWF in 2019 (about \$795,000). One diocese reported a 144.1% increase from worship donations and tithes.

Initially, some parish priests feared the initiative's changes would bring a reduction of power and loss of autonomy in decision-making. With guidance from bishops, priests became empowered to lead and manage work teams with qualified accountants and cashiers who received training in finance and asset management. In time, parish priests identified and unlocked resources around land ownership. Highlights include the following:

- About 900 priests received management training focused on resource management, such as IGAs. Since 2021, major seminaries have integrated management courses into their curricula.
- Dioceses hired more than 3,000 staff to support IGAs. The activities provide income to finance pastoral activities and new churches to host expanding numbers of participating Catholics.
- The number of parishes rose. Since 2010, parish numbers have risen from 153 to 220. The dioceses no longer need to subsidize parishes as they did before 2010. Parishes are better at managing their resources, thus enabling the dioceses to invest in other initiatives.

COMMITTEE TO CONTROL IGAs

In Cyangugu, one parish established a management committee for control of the parish's IGAs. The committee then reported to the financial commission each trimester. After five years, profit quadrupled, contributing 10 million RWF annually to the parish.

“ Priests now understand that without the commitment of the laity, pastoral and economic activities will be difficult, just as lay people now understand that their role in the pastoral and economic activities of the Church is irreplaceable.

Father Abbé Placide
Manirakiza
Nkombo Parish, Cyanguu

“ Having been born, baptized, confirmed, and regularly receiving the sacraments in the parish, lay people understand that the parish belongs to them rather than to the priests who serve by rotation.

Innocent Nzabagerageza
Church Capacity Building
Coordinator and Director of
the Bureau Technique

PRIESTS MORE ACCOUNTABLE

“There has been a change in the mentality among priests and personnel ... they are ready to be accountable and follow reporting procedures. They know that they can be disciplined, which was very difficult at first.” —Monsignor Smaragde, Bishop of Kabgayi Diocese


KEY CHANGES IN PARISH LIFE

Father Abbé Placide noted several key changes. Staff now have employee contracts and taxes are kept up to date. “Now we hire the workers who are needed and we follow what they do.” Cashiers and accountants document the use of bank funds, and assets are tracked closely: “It is often necessary to make an inventory of the assets we keep, because it belongs to us (and) it belongs to our successors.” A veterinarian now oversees the parish’s farm and pigsty. Father Placide said: “We need to collaborate, to share experiences and knowledge, because no one can know everything.”

Both priests and laypersons have recognized their shared obligation to the financial well-being of their parishes and Church structures. Previously, laypersons believed parish management was exclusively the role of the parish priest. Parishioners now offer resources and ideas, such as expertise in resource management, and work closely with priests to plan annual budgets. What was witnessed in the course of this Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project is a form of an early synodal process in preparation for the upcoming 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023 on the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.”

Newly created financial councils, composed of laypersons and skilled accountants, and auditors, manage the resources of the parish. The councils, for example, require two signatures on bank accounts to avoid fraud, and view bank credit as an opportunity to expand the parish. Tools, such as accounting software to generate consistent reporting at the diocesan level, have contributed to greater confidence among parishioners. Other changes are summarized below:

- **Parishes gained greater knowledge and skills** by tapping existing resources and opportunities. Laypersons cocreated budgets, built financial reserves, built churches and collected funds to buy vehicles for priests’ transportation to carry out their pastoral duties. Importantly, this level of capacity development has led to a reduced financial reliance on the dioceses to subsidize Church finances.
- **Growing lay participation.** The percentage of laity involved in parish management (particularly parish council members) rose to 70% from 30% (2012-2020), based on more transparent comanagement.
- **Innovated employment of accountants and cashiers.** Before 2010, there were no accountants and cashiers at the parish level. As of 2020, 205 accountants and 205 cashiers with a clear separation of duties were employed at the parish level.



“ We don’t look at the diocese to help us; we know how to manage our situation and how to search for resources and financial support.

Fr Paulin Habimana
Muyange parish priest,
Cyangugu Diocese

- **Budget deficits erased.** Due to CRS-provided technical assistance on multi-level management systems, practices and tools, deficits and debts have been addressed. For example, in the Kibungo diocese:
 - After the resignation of the bishop in 2010 due to significant financial irregularities, the entire 1 billion RWF (about \$963,000) debt (penalties due to non-compliance with labor regulations and tax laws along with hefty unpaid interest and bank loans) was completely repaid.
 - Also, a new sub-parish was established in Kigina in 2016, reaching a budget of 17.5 million RWF in 2017 (about \$16,800). The annual budget then rose again to 30 million RWF in 2020 (about \$29,000). This was thanks to the training and involvement of the faithful in the management of the parish’s funds.



INVESTMENTS AND RETURNS

External investments

Rwanda Church Institutional
Strengthening Project

Church-led investments

\$2.2 m

CRS private funds
2012-2020

\$72.5K

Trocaire
2009-2010



\$3.2 m

Church actors in Rwanda
2015-2020

\$200 m

Loans secured
2015-2020

Return on investment examples

\$21.4 m

Due to management systems and tools applied in all dioceses, an estimated \$21.4 million in gains were realized over the past 10 years.



Establishment of
Bureau Technique
(2020)

\$73,600

Annual cost

\$21,400

Annual revenue

29%

sustainable, i.e., the
percentage of operating
expenditure covered by the
fee-for-service model



Income-Generating
Activities
(2010-2020)

1,438%

increase in number of IGAs
(13 small and medium in
2010; 62 medium and large,
and 138 small in 2020)

3,250%

increase in turnover,
from \$1.5 million in 2010
to \$53.6 million in 2020

1,106%

increase in staff,
from 260 in 2010 to
3,137 in 2020



Parishes
(2010-2020)

44%

increase in number of
parishes, from 153 in 2014 to
220 in 2020

1,472%

increase in lay staff and
management councils, from
561 in 2010 to 8,823 in 2020



Schools
(2010-2020)

\$3 million

Increase in savings,
from \$0 in 2010 to
\$3 million in 2020

3,000

Increase in staff from
0 cashiers in 2010
to 3,000 cashiers in 2020

80%

decrease in litigation



Health facilities
(2010-2020)

\$750,000

Increase in savings
from \$0 in 2010 to
\$750,000 in 2020

118

Increase in staff from
0 cashiers in 2010 to
118 cashiers in 2020

80%

decrease in litigation

SUMMARY OF INVESTMENTS AND CHANGES

More than 80% is financed by donors and 20% is from diocesan contributions

	2010	2015	2020/22
Episcopal Conference	1	1	1
Episcopal commissions	11	11	21
Program value (financial indicator)	\$840k	\$1.7m	\$2.97m
Staff	87	141	168
Diocese			
Program value	\$2.3m	\$2.6m	\$2.9m
Staff	405	477	630
Priests	733	1,020	1,263
Diocesan commissions	11	11	19
Participants	0	1,485	2,565
Staff and volunteers	4,500	7,000	21,000
Parishes	153	189	220
Program value	\$3m	\$5.1m	\$7.4m
	In 2010, dioceses subsidized parishes at 85% of their program value.		In 2021, parishes financed their budget at 100% and contributed to diocesan operating costs.
Staff	561	1,720	8,823
Total population	10.4m	11.37m	12.66m
Parishioners	4.3m	4.8m	4.9m

	2010	2015	2020/22
Income-generating activities	13 small and medium	-	62 medium and large and 138 small
Participants in CS initiatives	260 staff	882 (priests, managers and staff) trained in IGAs	3,137 staff
Program value	\$1.5m	\$14m	\$53.6m
Staff	260	532	3,137
Schools (all types)	2,115	2,570	2,970
Participants in CS initiatives	80	270	1,450
Students	1.2 million	1.3 million	1.5 million
Program value	\$83.8m	\$117.4m	\$171.6m
Staff	23,878	25,083	30,083
<p>Most participants are headmasters and bursars of Catholic private schools, or priests in charge of education at the parish and diocese level.</p>		<p>The number of schools, students and staff represents 40% of the country.</p>	
Health facilities	106	111	118
Participants in CS initiatives	Nil	200	500
Patients	2.5 million	3.1 million	3.5 million
Program value	\$9.9m	\$19.1m	\$16.3m
Staff	15,370	22,200	19,240
<p>30% of total patients.</p>		<p>Managers and accountants of health centers.</p>	

In 2015, a CS effort was conducted on how to establish and manage IGAs

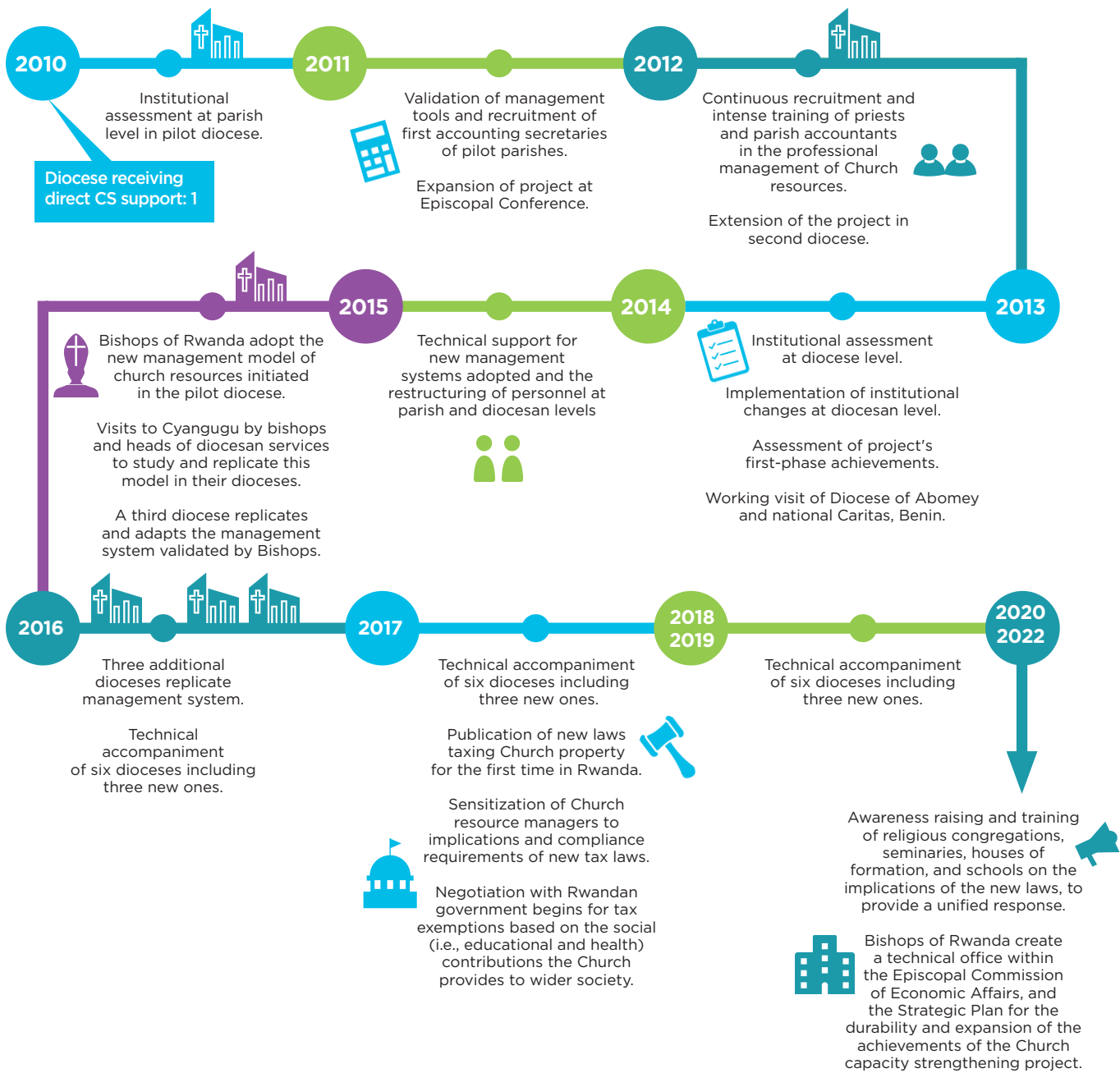
Congregations, communities and members*	2010	2015	2020/2022
Staff	1,610	1,720	4,100
Congregations (consecrated women) total	66	75	80
Congregation communities (consecrated women) total	222	249	255
Congregation members (consecrated women) total	1,557	1,824	1,923
Congregations (consecrated men) total	13	15	15
Congregation communities (consecrated men) total	41	45	54
Congregation members (consecrated men) total	198	276	516
Congregation communities (consecrated women) Number participating in CS initiative	Nil	Nil	65
Congregation communities (consecrated men) Number participating in CS initiative	Nil	Nil	15
Novitiates and formations houses (consecrated women and men) receiving direct CS support	Nil	Nil	28

* Religious orders and congregations (e.g., Franciscan friars, Jesuit priests, Salesians, Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, Ursuline sisters) that are not part of the hierarchical Church but complementary to it.

The capacity strengthening initiative focused mostly on the Episcopal Conference and diocesan structures until the new tax reform and laws presented challenges and opportunities for all faith-based organizations and other civil society organizations. This external factor prompted an expansion of the CS work conducted by the institutional Church/Bureau Technique to include the congregations and religious orders embedded in the diocese.

Investments	2010				2015				2020/2022			
CRS	225K	225K	225K	225K	225K	225K	225K	225K	225K	225K	225K	
Trocaire	72K											
Loans and/or investments	250K	280K	305K	448K	448K	520K	600K	600K	600K	600K	100K	Churches built, cars and motorcycles bought for pastoral mission following the involvement of lay people in the management of their parishes.
Local fundraising/ contributions	5K	5K	5K	34K	34K	122K	522K	522K	590K	625K		Salaries for new posts (i.e., parish accountants and cashiers, HR managers, logisticians) offices, cars and fuel for parishes, schools and health centers.
Expenses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	80K	
Revenue (annual contribution + contracts)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17K	

MAIN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVENTS



Sustainability, Replicability and Adaptability

Sustainability means that long-term perspectives are applied to all actions and functions that concern the organization and its programs.

Creating sustainable institutions is at the heart of organizational development and institutional strengthening initiatives. Sustainability means that long-term perspectives are applied to all actions and functions that concern the organization and its programs. This chapter addresses four facets of sustainability as a direct key outcome of this institutional strengthening process aimed at maximizing the sustainability of the changes achieved. Based on the Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument (**HOCAI**) developed by CRS and its partners over decades, we learned that there are four key dimensions to sustainability: **1. Organizational** (i.e., related to the competency of the organization to manage itself adequately in all its functions, from governance and management to finances); **2. Political** (i.e., related to the ability of the organization to maintain constructive and engaging working relations with all stakeholders to guarantee its relevance in the ecosystem in which it exists and operates); **3. Financial** (i.e., related to the capacity of the organization to guarantee a steady and growing stream of diversified resources to support the implementation of its mission); and **4. Programmatic** (i.e., generated from the two main objectives of professional management and self-reliance).



Religious congregations attended training on the new taxation system.

Photo by Innocent Nzabagerageza for the Church

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

From 2010 to 2020 there has been a decrease in financial reliance on dioceses, improved efficiency of the Church's workforce, a heightened focus on the Church's pastoral mission, and the purposeful pursuit of compliance with tax rules and regulations. Centralizing diocesan commissions and services under one coordinated leadership approach has created more effective levels of collaboration, cooperation, transparency and accountability (i.e., double signatures on checks; joint weekly and monthly planning, as well as quarterly and annual reports; consolidated procurement and vehicle management). Restructuring and consolidating previously independently operating departments (i.e., separate and isolated human resources or financial management functions serving individual commissions) within the Church has reduced fragmentation within dioceses, resulting in substantial cost savings across multiple levels of the Church.

At the local and national level, the Church has transformed its relationship with the government into one of bi-directional accountability. The Church in its entirety (i.e., parishes, schools, health centers, dioceses, diocesan and national commissions, and the Episcopal conference) has evolved beyond its fiduciary duty of protecting and expanding its assets to organically increase—based on increasing capacity and confidence—its advocacy for the country's civil society organizations, resulting in the government acknowledging the Church as a fully engaged and influential stakeholder. For instance, the Church provides input to the government as new tax laws are rolled out. Accordingly, the Church has gained standing among civil society organizations. By realizing its potential, the Church has emerged as a well-respected, prominent change-maker and influential partner.


The restructuring of the workforce and human resources (HR) systems has resulted in standard practices for employee recruitment, hiring, compensation, promotion and dismissal. The Church codeveloped procedure manuals and organizational charts with detailed job descriptions; created fair pay scales to retain staff; created positions for HR roles; hired skilled paid workers for administrative functions to replace volunteers; developed guidelines for the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable persons; created recruitment panels; and established performance plans and a code of conduct and ethics for staff. As a result, the Church's improved understanding of labor codes incurred fewer social security penalties. These changes represent a considerable expansion of earlier efforts to develop job descriptions and employee contracts.

Strengthened management structures and systems, and enhanced financial practices, have led to an increase in material assets and a 90% fall in litigation; nearly all Church land surveyed with accurate titles; recorded sales and purchase of IGAs for precise tax reporting; budgeted funds for building and infrastructure maintenance; a willingness to accept bank loans; in-kind construction of chapels and churches; donation of land and other equipment; and information sharing on Church ownership of landholdings. These critical changes in the availability of material assets contributed to better serving and investing in the community, and can be observed in the number of worship, school and health facilities rehabilitated, expanded and constructed in every diocese, and in the greater number of vulnerable people now served by the Caritas commissions.

From the start of the initiative, strengthening local leadership had been the overriding goal.

From the start of the initiative, strengthening local leadership had been the overriding goal. The Church, through the Diocese of Cyangugu, working side-by-side with CRS, progressively owned all stages of the change process, including assessment, strategic planning, tool development and operationalization. Diocesan staff, who received regular accompaniment from CEPR staff and technical support from CRS technical advisors, jointly conducted 128 technical support visits across dioceses per year. From training on tools development and on-the-job training of nearly 6,000 people, the Church considered structured approaches and implemented collaboratively within dioceses and parishes. Sharing experiences within dioceses inspired the adoption of cohesive practices and standardized systems and methods, yielding profound organizational change and priming the church to broaden its impact. A key difference between the initiative's pilot stages and the most recent phase was the reduced necessity for awareness raising. By 2020, the need to encourage buy-in decreased as a growing number of Church actors embraced the rationale behind capacity strengthening.

Before 2010, there was no organizational chart defining administrative roles and responsibilities and no manual for procedures and tools (e.g., procedures for managing mail). Also, there were no strategic plans, action plans, operational plans or activity reports. Now all dioceses have strategic plans developed jointly with the parties involved in design, implementation and evaluation. Guided by pastoral and financial councils, each parish lists revenue sources before setting an annual budget. From 2012 to 2022, the Church has developed general organizational charts for services, commissions and parishes; consolidated business planning and budgets; restructured and centralized services (i.e., secretariat, accounting, logistics, HR management); institutionalized annual reports; and systemized handover processes.



In 2020, management and leadership courses were integrated into the curricula of major seminaries. A growing number of priests study resources management, contributing to a hub of expertise in church management. As of 2020, 250 were priests enrolled in management, law and education trainings. In 2021, six priests enrolled in Villanova University's nine-month Church Management Certification Program.

Thirty exchange visits between dioceses in-country and learning visits between the Church of Rwanda and the Churches of Benin (2013 and 2014) and Togo (2018) supported peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge and insights. Learning exchanges served as sources of inspiration for dioceses who initially perceived capacity strengthening as overwhelming and undoable.

POLITICAL SUSTAINABILITY

Significant changes to the country's tax code from 2018 to 2022 have required a new dimension of fiscal accountability regarding the Church's resources. The Church has faced significant challenges in responding to the new laws and is concerned about potential future penalties and the loss of assets and property, particularly Church-owned land and buildings. Specifically, three rules have strongly affected the operations of the Church and other civil society organizations (CSOs):

- A new system of income tax paid by the Church and other CSOs when revenue exceeds expenses.
- Taxed sources of income and assets across the country (i.e., Church land, presbyteries, convents, hospitals, health centers and schools).
- More stringent labor regulations.

Bureau technique (technical office). In September 2020, at the request of the bishops, CRS and the Church in Rwanda transitioned the Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project (the second phase of which is the subject of this study) to the Rwanda Episcopal Conference's Commission for Economic Affairs. To assist in the transition, CRS established a technical team to continue supporting the Church to adapt to the changing tax environment. The bishop-led, three-member technical team implements and monitors the continuing initiatives. However, due to the decentralized nature of the Church in Rwanda, each Episcopal Commission and its specialized services develop its own strategic plans.

Compliance with tax payments is primary to the teams' work. Across all levels, prioritizing continuous improvement and alignment with new tax laws and land-use strategies is important. The Church proudly contributes to civil society by serving as a critical changemaker in Rwanda. Externally, for instance, the bureau technique reviews draft tax laws to alert bishops of potential negotiable elements. Internally, it systematically implements audits before filing financial statements with the government to minimize potential fiscal risks. Framed by the principle of *tugendere hamwe*, or "walking together," the office assesses the management of resources across the Church to harmonize practices, systems, procedures and tools.

Significant changes to the country's tax code have required a new dimension of fiscal accountability regarding the Church's resources.



During the capacity building journey, dioceses reorganized their record-keeping, as in this archive in Ruhengeri Diocese. Photo by Pascalie Musabyemungu for CRS

Dioceses have paid all fines and repaid 80% of \$1.4 million in debt.



CRS and Church partners during training on asset management in Kabgayi in 2013. Photo by Frederick Kayijuka, Church Capacity Building staff

The team also provides technical support to all levels of diocesan structures. The group expanded and replicated its support to include Kigali, Kabgayi and Nyundo dioceses, as well as their congregations and private Catholic schools. Capacity strengthening began with pilots in Cyangugu and Kibungo, and later expanded to Gikongoro, Butare, Byumba and Ruhengeri. The technical team also conducts diocesan staff training and accompaniment on technological changes. It analyzes the profitability of Church investments—with the bishops' advice—while staying on the lookout for potential income-generating opportunities. Over the 10-year life of the initiative, the Church yielded multiple improvements credited to the capacity strengthening measures. Numerous sources consider these improvements foundational to sustained change.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Church was ill-equipped to pay taxes under the country's reformed tax code, triggering hefty financial penalties for non-compliance. For example, in 2006, the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) imposed penalties of 113 million RWF (about \$109,000) on the Church and, separately, the Rwanda Social Security Board (RSSB) imposed penalties of 25 million RWF (about \$25,000). The Church faced the potential loss of diocesan buildings and land. Further, the improper administration of IGAs, such as imprecise inventories of Church assets, resulted in a considerable loss of funds. In turn, parishes grew dependent on diocesan funds. Inadequate accounting systems with few internal controls resulted in significant income loss (i.e., misappropriation of funds from falsified documents, and theft of goods and money). Missed income opportunities included a reluctance to partner with banks to secure credit, the low participation of laypersons in the financial development of parishes, and the absence of management training for priests.

DIOCESE OF KIBUNGO

Since then, the dioceses have paid all fines and repaid 80% of 1.5 billion RWF (about \$1.4 million) in debt. Since 2014, the dioceses have prospered, with seven new parishes; an extension was built to expand the Cathedral Church; and a variety of other profitable income-generating activities were established.

The Church cited several measures that promise long-term gains:

- Solid initial and ongoing learning and training: training staff and clergy on human resources, finance and asset management.
- Establishing financial councils with the involvement of laypersons in management.
- Creating manuals and tools to guide the adoption and sustained use of financial and accounting procedures and management; budgets voted on at the beginning of the year; centralized finance service with qualified diocese-level staff; regularly recorded flow of funds; recruited accountants and cashiers; new accounting software; harmonized annual reporting frameworks; requiring two signatures on bank withdrawals; authorization for outflows of funds; and separation of procedures to reduce tax penalties.

- Application and use of relevant operational management systems and daily internal controls (e.g., the use of financial and operational software; qualified teams of accountants and cashiers led by financial managers).
- Consolidated methods, tools and supporting systems for programmatic planning and reporting.
- Ongoing efforts to diversify funding streams, and resource mobilization to increase financial sustainability.
- Increasing and strengthening IGAs at all levels to finance pastoral activity; profitability studies of businesses; studies on repayment capacity; and investment in bank-backed projects.

The Bureau Technique's mission is to ensure the sustainability of project achievements within all Catholic institutions in Rwanda.

PROGRAMMATIC SUSTAINABILITY

This dimension of sustainability is inclusive of the pastoral and ministerial work that the Church carries out within and through all its entities. The data on this pastoral aspect is not available for this study and will be the focus of future reflections; however, some of the economic activities listed below can offer a view of the programmatic relevance and effectiveness of the work the Church engages in that is not strictly ministerial.

Also, it is important to know that pastoral planning is conducted by dedicated diocesan and national commissions, and is captured in multi-year strategies and work plans. Such plans are also inclusive of complementing social, health, educational and other economic activities, showing the Church's holistic approach in all its dioceses.

The Bureau Technique was launched by the bishops of Rwanda after the funding for the capacity strengthening project ended in October 2020. Its mission is to ensure the sustainability of project achievements within all Catholic institutions in Rwanda. Its general duties include:

- Ensuring harmonization of resource management practices within all Church institutions to comply with management standards.
- Facilitating the continuous development of bursars and accountants, managers of human and material resources, religious congregations, schools, health centers and hospitals, seminaries, and the technical services of the Episcopal Conference of Rwanda.
- Monitoring and studying draft laws to alert bishops to possible negotiable and/or problematic elements. Facilitating negotiations with the government on Church tax exemptions and related financial matters.
- Supporting audit processes for Church institutions and religious congregations, including conducting internal audit reviews.
- Organizing fora and analyses on the consequences of tax laws on the mission of the Church.
- Promoting practices to advance the self-reliance and sustainability of Church institutions and religious congregations at all levels.

Despite delays resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, a year after its creation, the Bureau Technique noted these achievements:

- Negotiated to obtain a corporate income tax exemption and submitted the final negotiation document to the government. The core point of negotiation argued in favor of tax-exempt status based on the social nature of Church's work. The articulation of such benefits and contributions to society persuaded the government to agree on tax exemption and allow the Church to reinvest equivalent proceeds in additional pastoral and social work.
- Signed three technical assistance contracts with religious congregations to support their capacity to manage increased liability in their work and projects.

Income-generating activities (IGAs): The Rwanda Episcopal Conference explored the profitable use of agricultural land owned by the Church through its proposal entitled *Good Harvest for Food Security in Rwanda*. This poverty-reducing project aims to support land-use planning for sustainable, market-oriented agriculture; long-term income generation through agriculture and livestock; and integrating women, youth and disadvantaged persons through agro-business, as increasing incomes helps outreach to congregants via job creation, revenue increase and charity. Seventy-three percent of the labor market is dominated by agriculture, with 82% of women and 63% of men employed in it. Land resources are the country's critical socioeconomic development asset. The national land policy plays a significant role in the promotion of peace, equity, unity and reconciliation of the Rwandan people, scarred by the genocide of 1994.

According to the *CEPR Land Support Project 2014-2019* report, production on the Church's agricultural land is designed to meet the parish's daily needs. Some parishes lease land to farmers for an annual payment. Internally, the Church recognizes the need to improve its capacity to monitor and evaluate land use. Externally, there are issues with modern farming techniques and support for community development. The lack of expertise and funding are also significant challenges. The report identifies potential areas for development, such as pig farming, dairy cow breeding, honey production, pineapple plantations for juice and wine, and production of cassava, bananas, soybeans and maize. CEPR called for the profitable use of Church land throughout the country to promote the food security and resilience of more than 11 million Rwandans through the profitability of arable land and support of the charitable and pastoral action of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. Examples of activities from each of the nine dioceses vary widely, including the following:

DIOCESE OF BUTARE

Construction of an apartment building at the Catholic University to house students and staff in response to a severe housing shortage.

DIOCESE OF KABGAYI

Purchase of textbook manufacturing machine for the Kabgayi printing plan to produce school textbooks and notebooks. Currently, no printing press produces school notebooks in Rwanda. Instead, local traders order school notebooks from Uganda and Kenya.



DIOCESE OF RUHENGERI

The diocese's trade school project supported poor children by constructing a two-storey building with classrooms, a dormitory and refectory to increase the number of children who study trades, such as sewing and carpentry. To increase its income and expand its pastoral mission, the diocese uses more than 800 hectares of land profitably and serves about 13,000 individuals to advance their socioeconomic status. Using modern agricultural practices, participants grow Irish potatoes, soybeans, maize, wheat and avocados on both diocesan and privately owned land to increase production and sales.

DIOCESE OF KIBUNGO

In response to the growing demand for pig products, the project aims to construct a slaughterhouse for pig breeding in the Ngoma district. Other dioceses have invested in hotel services and other successful businesses.

Barriers and contributions to sustained impact

This coauthored study reflects on the barriers to sustained change and on how such gaps could be addressed. A core challenge is the competency, commitment and availability of human resources:

- The development of priests and consecrated women and men needs continual investment both from a pastoral and managerial perspective.
- Regular follow-up and support are required to counter complacency, and funding is necessary to retrain those familiar with the project and those newly hired. Learning visits create opportunities for peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing, insights and skills-building within and across dioceses.
- There are insufficient staff to cover all needs within each diocese.

On this local leadership journey, the Church and CRS organized internal reflection, partnership meetings and consultations with dioceses to foster a shared understanding on this and other issues, and to reach a degree of consensus across the Church to advance a solution. Joint assessments prioritized action plans, and partners raised awareness of parish members and priests. CRS facilitated the HOCAI reflection at different stages of the journey—in 2010, 2017 and 2020—to support the Church by identifying strengths and gaps. Partners jointly developed an action plan with clearly defined strategies, tasks and timelines. CRS supported ongoing capacity strengthening through frequent reflections, meetings, trainings, workshops, coaching and mentoring of diocesan priests and staff. The Church, investing its own time and resources, contributed strategies to mobilize and diversify resources, support learning visits between dioceses, conduct bishop-led quarterly meetings, and continue pastoral and strategic reflections. Many priests and bishops have approached CRS multiple times to seek advice on human resources and financial management issues.

Conclusion

The journey of growth, institutional agency and leadership has revealed the assets and fragilities of both CRS and the Church in Rwanda, and the trusting, long-term partnership has allowed these to be exposed, leveraged and addressed.



Cardinal Antoine Kambanda speaks to CRS and Caritas visitors at the Archdiocese of Kigali offices. The visit was part of a 2022 Journey of Hope delegation of CRS board members and donors to learn more about CRS' work in Rwanda.

Photo by Laura Elizabeth Pohl/CRS

The Institutional Capacity Strengthening Project (2010-2020) has been a transformational experience for both the Church and CRS in Rwanda. The journey of growth, institutional agency and leadership has revealed the assets and fragilities of both parties, and the trusting, long-term partnership has allowed these to be exposed, leveraged and addressed. The Church in Rwanda has achieved remarkable results from an institutional strengthening, sustainability and growth standpoint. This trajectory is sustainable and continues. CRS has also evolved its practices, allowing for increased proficiency and efficiency in supporting the leadership and agency of local partners.

Emerging from this collaborative reflection between the Church in Rwanda and CRS, the following factors were confirmed as overarching contributors to success:

- **A supportive external environment** that protected and, in some instances, required the institutional changes that were achieved.
- **Leadership and commitment** showed by both parties. Besides support provided by senior-level leadership (which required continual renewal and nurturing due to high turnover), it was essential to invest in mid-level competent leads to guarantee the initiative's stability and continuity.
- **Meaningful relationships and trust** allowed the partnership between the Church and CRS to grow and continue to evolve, in their respective roles and expectations. This level of transparency has allowed for equitable negotiations and genuine accompaniment in all areas.
- **Equitable negotiation by partners** to navigate change and uncertainty together.

These factors are not prerequisites, and this account of the experience of the Church and CRS in Rwanda is not meant to be a template, but other Episcopal Conference and CRS country programs may wish to reflect on this study when engaging in their institutional strengthening for local leadership work.

When viewing possible emerging scenarios of partnership and work between the Church and CRS in Rwanda, the following areas garner most attention:

- **Sustain ongoing development.** There is a need to consolidate and expand competency areas (i.e., strategic planning, human resources, finance and asset management) with current staff, new hires and new Church entities (i.e., especially religious orders and congregations).
- **Design and implement a periodic face-to-face capacity development offering** for Church actors, beginning with competency areas such as opening capacity development offerings beyond Rwanda (starting with other members of the regional Episcopal Conference); forming sponsorship or advisory committees from key Church stakeholders (e.g., regional Episcopal Conferences, Caritas Africa, regional Associations of Religious Congregations, Catholic University of Rwanda) and others; and expanding capacity development to new competency areas, and to the Church in other countries to better respond in solidarity.

It is our hope that this reflection contributes to the body of work informing capacity strengthening and the shift in development to solutions and interventions that are truly created, led and owned by the Church and other local actors.

- **Conduct a feasibility study** on the untapped potential of Church actors. There is a consistent perception that less than 50% of assets are actively used, and thus it would be beneficial to leverage these assets to advance pastoral work (e.g., in agriculture, to prepare and employ youth and vulnerable groups).
- **Explore the feasibility of establishing national networks** that can efficiently coordinate the work conducted by Church and other faith-based actors beginning with a Catholic Health Network as a unified interlocutor with the government.
- **Invest in advocacy and influence** to scale up competencies to support the advancement of both pastoral and programmatic outcomes.

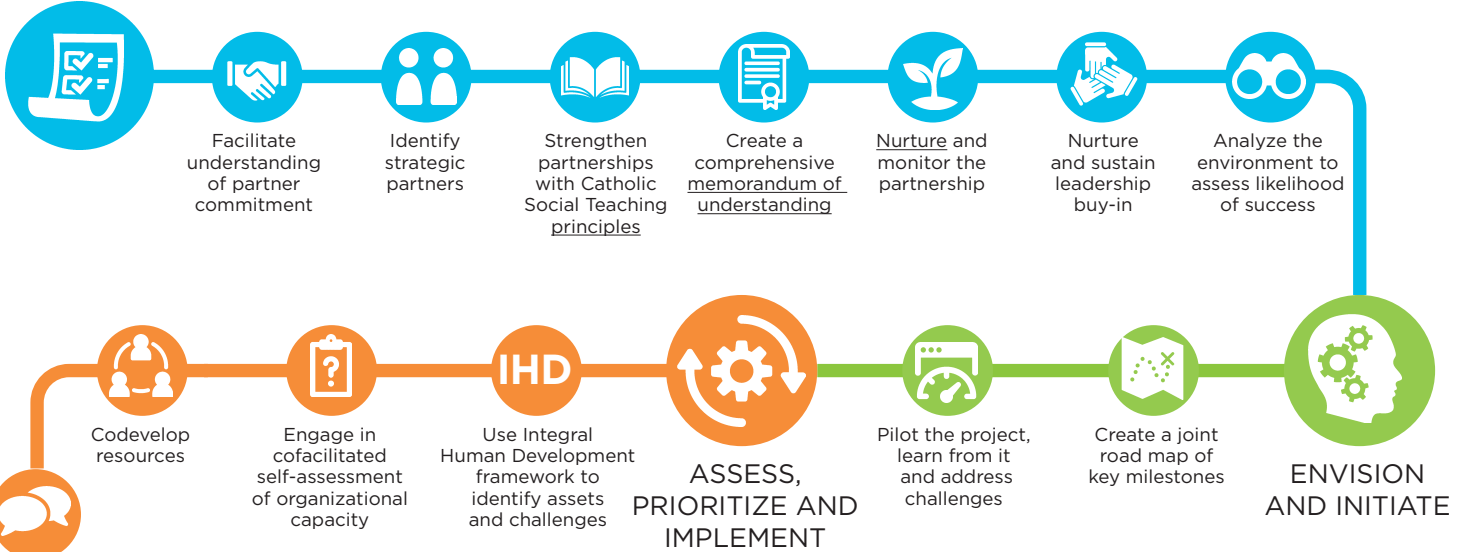
It is our hope that this reflection contributes in a meaningful way to the body of work informing capacity strengthening and the shift in development to solutions and interventions that are truly created, led and owned by the Church and other local actors. This report is accompanied by a structured series of resources for replication, available on the [Institute for Capacity Strengthening](#) (ICS) website.



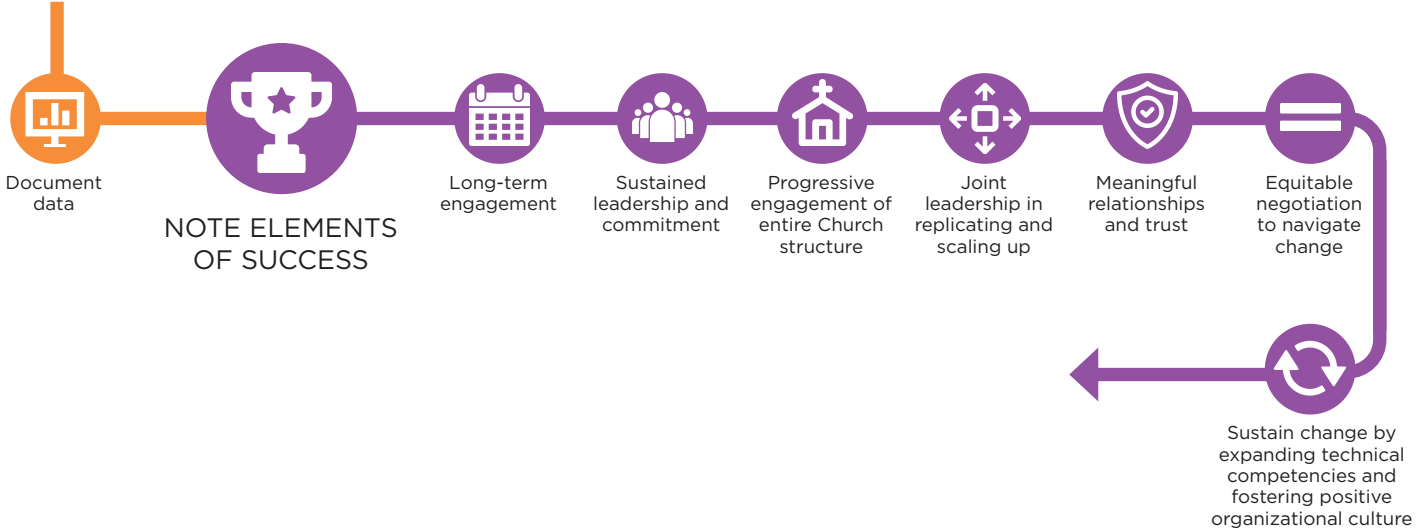
Members of Congo-Brazzaville and Rwandan dioceses at a knowledge-sharing event on Church management. Photos by CRS Congo staff

GENERAL TIPS FOR REPLICATING AND ADAPTING INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING APPROACHES

PREPARE



COMMUNICATE AND ENGAGE





GENERAL TIPS FOR REPLICATING AND ADAPTING INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING APPROACHES

Capacity strengthening initiatives are dependent on context. Even within the context of Rwanda, there were different adaptations of the original pilot to respond to specific diocesan contexts. One of the major strengths of this joint capacity strengthening initiative was its ability to adapt. The following are essential elements for replicating and adapting to environments when implementing capacity strengthening projects.

PREPARE

- **Facilitate a preliminary understanding of each partner's interest, readiness and commitment** to join the partnership, to engage in capacity strengthening and local leadership-sharing, and to clearly express their goals for the partnership.
- **Identify strategic partners** for a multi-year journey.
- **Inform or strengthen the partnership** using [principles](#) derived from Catholic Social Teaching.
- **Formulate a comprehensive memorandum of understanding (MOU)**, which could incorporate a multiparty relationship with other Caritas Internationalis member organizations (CIMO) participating in the partnership, capacity strengthening and local leadership journey.
- **Nurture and monitor the partnership** to improve, evolve and maximize local Church leadership.
- **Facilitate and sustain leadership buy-in** on all sides for a joint multi-year partnership, capacity strengthening, and local leadership journey aimed at serving the mission of each partner involved.

KEY REFLECTION

Ensure continuity and stability of engagement among key qualified personnel on all sides, even when senior leadership changes.

- **Analyze the environment** to help assess the likelihood of success. Consider using the USAID [Country Roadmap Indicators](#) (example from [Rwanda](#)). The Country Roadmaps are USAID's flagship analytical tool for assessing country development progress based on a curated set of 17 publicly available, third-party metrics, organized along two mutually reinforcing dimensions:
 - **Commitment:** The degree to which a country's laws, policies, actions and informal governance mechanisms support progress toward sustainable development.
 - **Capacity:** A country's capacity to plan, finance and manage its own political, social and economic development, including its ability to work across these sectors.

On their own, each of the roadmap metrics helps clarify a country's relative strengths and challenges. When aggregated, the Commitment and Capacity scores provide a higher-level snapshot of a country's overall progress, which allows USAID to ensure that the programs implemented are better tailored to each individual country's unique development needs.

Also, the **Secondary Metrics Compendium** is a curated set of quantitative metrics and qualitative analytical resources that offer deeper, more expansive views into development trends in each country. This resource helps users dig deeper into issues represented in the Country Roadmap's primary metrics and explore new issues relevant to their unique context. Updated regularly and organized around the Roadmap framework, the Compendium comprises 300+ publicly available, third-party metrics that represent the leading contextual data resources available to measure commitment and capacity trends across low- and middle-income countries worldwide.

ENVISION AND INITIATE

Create a joint road map that articulates a preliminary set of:

- Milestones for improved stewardship.
- Milestones for improved organizational performance and professionalism.
- Stages for increased communication and sharing of learning.

KEY REFLECTIONS

- The Church will remain the universal ministry to proclaim the Gospel. The Church is called upon to be a good steward in safeguarding the entire congregation and assets to sustain its mission over time.
- CRS is part of the Church. As such, there is a mandate to execute this role by (co-) facilitating and supporting the partnership with capacity strengthening and local leadership of the Church.

- **Pilot the project**, learn from it, and address the challenges.

KEY REFLECTION

Consider piloting the capacity strengthening initiative with a Church actor (i.e., a diocese, a diocesan or national commission, etc.); however, keep in mind that optimal results are more likely if the entire Church is considered in this process (i.e., the hierarchical Church, the related commissions, and the embedded congregations and religious orders).

ASSESS, PRIORITIZE, AND IMPLEMENT

- **Use the Integral Human Development (IHD) framework** to identify the assets and challenges in the context in which the partnership will operate.

KEY REFLECTION

The Church, as a community of the faithful, has immense human resources and talent. Capitalizing on these will increase engagement and maximize commitment and results.

- **Engage in a cofacilitated self-assessment of organizational capacity** and competencies. Use existing institutional assessments:
 - Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument ([HOCAI](#)) and the Assessment to Action Planning resources ([A2A](#)).
 - Caritas Internationalis Management Standards ([CIMS](#)) tool for national Caritas entities.
 - Sub-Recipient Financial Management Policy ([SRFMP](#), additional [resource](#)).
- **Inform the capacity strengthening journey** toward local leadership using know-how and [resources](#) codevelopment with partner organizations.

COMMUNICATE AND ENGAGE

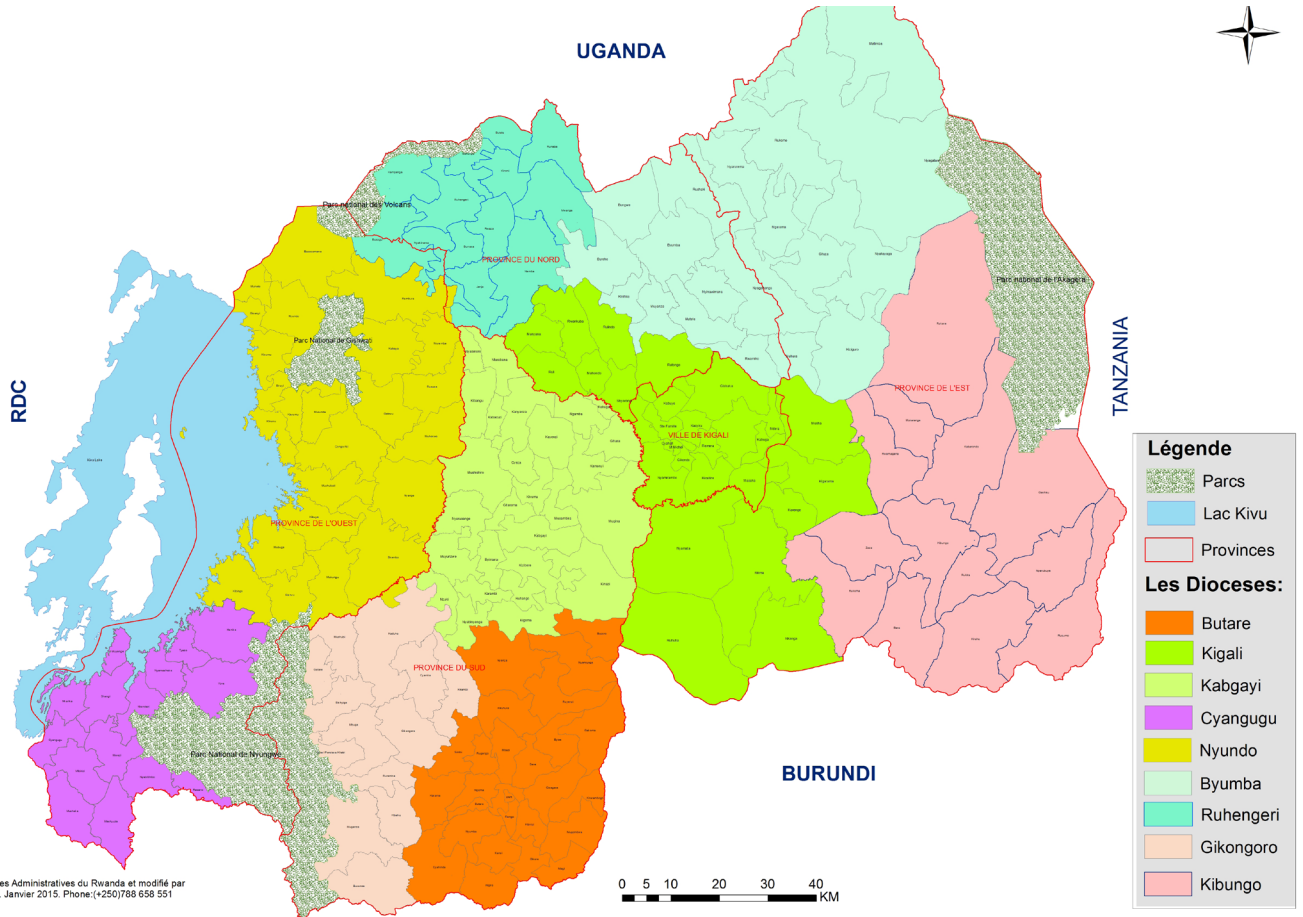
- **Ensure constant communication** and sharing of learning with all stakeholders (including external ones—i.e., secular organizations, government and private sector entities) and partners to sustain engagement and address any form of resistance to the process.
- **Document data** on progress and learning, and use existing platforms and processes to ensure access.

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

- **Long-term engagement** (Phase 1, 2004-2010; Phase 2, 2010-2020).
- **Sustained leadership and commitment from both sides** and at key levels within their organizations. Within this overarching commitment, a continuity of engagement was guaranteed over the years by the presence of the same individuals from both parties even when leadership changed or fluctuated in its commitment.
- **Progressive engagement of the entire Church** structure in the country.
- **Joint leadership in replicating and scaling up** the initial pilot to all dioceses in the country, including shared workforce and monetary investments.
- **Meaningful relationships and trust** among partners. Cultivate smooth partnership relationships, constant dialogue, subsidiarity, patience, humility, modesty, passion, negotiation and determination.
- **Equitable negotiation** by partners to navigate change and uncertainty together:
 - Promote solidarity. Engage with the laity to increase trust and fraternity.
 - Provide consistent and constant sensitization and accompaniment.
 - Take inspiration from the Holy Scriptures, the Magisterium, and the Catholic Social Teaching body of knowledge to harmonize the pastoral mission with the organizational development and performance imperatives.
- **Unshakable conviction that change can be sustained.** There is a need to foster the ongoing development of staff in the Church and CRS. This includes two domains:
 - Upkeep and expansion of technical competencies.
 - Fostering of an organizational culture that reinforces: **For CRS**, transparency, mutuality, humility, nimbleness and effectiveness in providing capacity strengthening technical assistance. **For the Church**, a synodal approach to inclusion and participation in the various aspects of the life of the Church.

Right: Members of an income-generating activity meet.

ADMINISTRATIVE MAP OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN RWANDA





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