



– Rwanda –

POLICY BRIEF

LIMITED ENGAGEMENT OF PRIVATE SECTOR, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS FOR STRENGTHENING WORKPLACE LEARNING (WPL) IN RWANDA

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1. Context and Rationale

The Workplace Learning Policy (2015) underscores that effective WPL implementation depends on “strong, coordinated partnerships with employers, civil society, and local community mechanisms,” assigning the private sector a central role in hosting trainees, shaping demand-driven skills, and participating in sector coordination platforms, while positioning CSOs and community structures as key actors for mobilization, inclusion, and learner support.

This policy direction is reinforced by the National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS 2024-2029), which identifies multi-stakeholder collaboration, private-sector leadership, and community-driven outreach as essential accelerators of equitable skills development. Similarly, NST2 (2024-2029) calls for deeper public–private partnerships to ensure labour-market relevance, stronger engagement of non-state actors, and decentralized community participation in skills delivery. Under NST2, the government places high priority on private-sector led economic transformation, skills development, and job creation, with a commitment to partner with all stakeholders, including private firms, civil society, and development partners¹.

Collectively, these policies recognize that private sector actors, CSOs, and community structures are not peripheral but integral to a high-performing WPL system yet current participation remains limited, creating a critical implementation gap the present policy brief aims to address.

To operationalize these engagements, the WPL sets out institutional arrangements: national coordination led by MIFOTRA with partner roles for MINEDUC, RTB, the Private Sector Federation (PSF), Sector Skills Councils and other actors. The policy and its implementation guidelines recommend MoUs, joint planning, and sector platforms to link employers, training institutions and community/CSO actors in the WPL governance and delivery architecture².

The policy stresses three levers to increase private and CSO engagement: (a) clear quality standards and guidance for hosting trainees (so firms know what to do), (b) incentives/recognition to offset perceived costs to employers, and (c) funding or targeted support to CSOs/community actors for mobilization and inclusion services. These measures are proposed to move participation from ad-hoc, project-dependent engagement toward predictable, sustainable partnerships³.

Despite strong policy commitments, the implementation of Work Place Learning continues to face considerable limitations due to the weak engagement of private enterprises, CSOs, and community actors:

- **Ad-hoc and project-based CSO participation** - Many CSOs only engage when external donors fund their activities, resulting in limited continuity, weak institutional memory, and inconsistent support to learners.⁴
- **Limited support systems for vulnerable learners** - Women, rural youth, and persons with disabilities face significant barriers such as transport costs, inaccessible workplaces,

¹ primature.gov.rw+2rtb.gov.rw+2

² rwandatrade.rw+1

³ rwandatrade.rw+1

⁴ Assessing Progress on CSO Enabling Environment in Rwanda. <https://e-ihuriro.rcsprwanda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06>.

and lack of mentoring.⁵ Without CSO or community support, many cannot enroll or remain in WPL programs.

- **Unclear mechanisms for private sector involvement** - Private companies especially SMEs lack clear guidance on how to host trainees, what standards to follow, and what benefits they receive from participation.⁶
- **Weak incentives for employer participation** - Employers often perceive WPL as costly or administratively heavy. Without recognition, subsidies, or tax incentives, participation remains limited.⁷
- **Low community involvement in mobilization and follow-up** - Community structures have strong local networks but are rarely assigned formal roles, limiting outreach especially to rural or vulnerable populations.⁸

2. Policy Problem Statement

The limited engagement of private sector actors, civil society organizations (CSOs), and community structures in Work-Based Learning (WPL) stems largely from structural gaps, weak coordination, and a lack of incentives. This insufficient involvement undermines Rwanda's skills ecosystem and slows progress toward inclusive employment. The private sector, though the country's largest employer, remains only partially integrated into the WPL system particularly small and medium enterprises which contributes to a persistent mismatch between training programs and labour-market needs.⁹

CSOs, which play a vital role in mobilizing marginalized groups, preparing learners for workplace environments, and providing follow-up support, are often underutilized, leaving vulnerable learners at risk of exclusion. At the community level, local actors are critical for last-mile engagement, ensuring that learners in remote areas can access available opportunities.

Without strong participation from all these actors, WPL cannot effectively support Rwanda's national goals for competitiveness, equity, and productivity.¹⁰

3. Purpose of the Policy Brief

This policy brief aims to guide policymakers by clearly outlining the underlying causes of weak stakeholder engagement in WPL and proposing practical, evidence-based solutions. It seeks to demonstrate why private sector firms, CSOs, and community structures are indispensable actors for achieving Rwanda's human capital ambitions, and how their strengthened participation will improve access, relevance, and sustainability of workplace learning across all districts¹¹.

⁵ Disability-Inclusive Education and Employment: Understanding the Experiences of Young Men and Women with Disabilities – RWANDA. <https://mastercardfdn.org/>

⁶ Workplace Learning Policy (2015)

⁷ A Path to More Apprentice and Intern Opportunities in Rwanda. <https://www.ideas42.org/project/a-path-to-more-apprentice-and-intern-opportunities-in-rwanda/>

⁸ Workplace Learning Policy (2015)

⁹ rtb.gov.rw+2prima

¹⁰ rtb.gov.rw+2prima

¹¹ the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP 2024–2029)

4. Policy Implications and Actionable Recommendations

The integration of private sector actors and civil society organizations (CSOs) into district-level WPL coordination mechanisms is essential for strengthening collaboration and ensuring effective implementation.

Formalizing the representation of institutions such as the Private Sector Federation (PSF), CSOs, and sector associations creates predictable engagement, improves information flow, and enables joint decision-making. Developing shared WPL work plans between employers, TVET institutions, and CSOs further ensures that training programs are aligned with industry needs while remaining accessible to vulnerable groups.

In addition, funding community-based mobilization and mentorship programs is critical. Targeted financing for CSOs allows them to conduct outreach, deliver workplace readiness training, and provide sustained mentorship, while trained community mentors help reduce dropout rates, particularly among rural youth, girls, and persons with disabilities. Introducing stipends and inclusion support for vulnerable learners by covering transport, meals, and assistive devices to help in removing economic barriers to participation, complemented by specialized mentorship initiatives tailored to girls and youth with disabilities. Community mentorship networks, often anchored by CSOs, also provide psychosocial support and peer learning.

Establishing structured public-private partnerships (PPPs) through Memoranda of Understanding with PSF, chambers, and CSOs clarifies roles and expectations, fostering long-term collaboration beyond short-term projects¹². Sector skills platforms further promote ongoing dialogue, curriculum alignment, and identification of emerging workforce needs. Lastly, recognition and incentive systems at both national and district levels encourage active participation by employers and CSOs. Awards and visibility for committed actors, alongside incentives for mentoring and outreach, help strengthen motivation and reinforce the sustainability of WPL engagement across all sectors¹³.

5. Expected Impact

The expected impact of these interventions includes greater inclusiveness in WPL access, particularly for women, vulnerable youth, and persons with disabilities. Strengthened community ownership is anticipated to increase participation in rural areas, while deeper private sector involvement will enhance the labour-market relevance of training programs.

Mentorship and follow-up systems are expected to support higher placement and retention rates, contributing to more sustainable outcomes for learners.

Overall, these measures will foster more predictable and coherent partnerships that align effectively with NESS and NST2 targets.

6. Target and Responsible Institutions

¹² NST2 (2024–2029) calls for deeper public-private partnerships to ensure labour-market relevance, stronger engagement of non-state actors, and decentralized community participation in skills delivery.

¹³ the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP 2024-2029)

a) Lead Institutions:

- a. MIFOTRA - Provide policy oversight and coordination of the implementation of the Work Place Learning.
- b. MINEDUC - Lead the effort to integrate the WPL into Rwanda education system with special focus on TVET.

b) Co-Leads:

- PSF – This institution should mobilize employers, oversee the sector coordination and PPP facilitation
- MINALOC - Support with community engagement and decentralized implementation of the WPL policy.
- RTB - Provide technical lead while ensuring curriculum alignment and quality assurance.

c) Supporting Actors:

- a. District Authorities - Provide local coordination, monitoring and galvanize community mobilization.
- b. CSOs,
- c. CSOs, - lead and coordinate outreach, learner support, mentorship, and advocate for inclusive learning.
- d. Development Partners - provide financial and technical assistance for capacity building and incentive schemes.

7. Conclusion

Strengthening the engagement of private sector actors, CSOs, and community structures in workplace learning is essential for building an inclusive, demand-driven, and sustainable skills development system in Rwanda. Through coordinated mechanisms, targeted incentives, structured partnerships, and community-based support, WPL can effectively reach vulnerable populations and align better with labour market needs. Implementing the recommendations in this policy brief will advance national goals for human capital development, productivity, and equitable economic growth.

8. References

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