



# eNews *January 2024*

“Karibu sana” to our January 2024 update!

In this eNews issue we introduce you to two thriving movements committed to strengthening transformative practices among leaders and organizations within African civil society. Please see the map depicting an ecosystem of development practitioners refining their approaches through enhanced interactions with the EASUN Learning Centre. A sister Ecosystem of practitioners nurtured by UZIKWASA is demonstrating the innovative potential coming from the adaptation of reflective learning approaches. UZIKWASA is a long-term partner of EASUN. For those familiar with EASUN’s FOLD training, reflective approaches are recognized for their profound impact when applied in learning settings.

The upcoming cycles of FOLD training are set to commence in May 2024 for Kenya and Tanzania, followed by June 2024 for Uganda. We encourage you to reach out to us at [info@easuncentre.org](mailto:info@easuncentre.org) and express your interest in joining these emerging communities of practice within African civil society—an inspiring source and model for ethical leadership practices.

1. Thriving new movements in African civil society refining capacities for transformative learning, ethical leadership, and democratic governance.

2. In 2023, EASUN highlights its commitment to facilitating progress rooted in insights from organizational development practices.

## **Unveiling the Dynamic Evolution of a Transformative Community of Practice**

EASUN is thrilled to introduce you to an emerging ecosystem of practitioners committed to fostering transformative change in individuals, organizations, and communities. The eco-map below is a visual representation of the ongoing transformation of different actors within the community of practice, anchored in their relationship with EASUN Learning Centre.

At the heart of the map lies EASUN, strategically positioned to reflect the pivotal role it continues to play in cultivating transformative facilitation and leadership skills, particularly within Civil Society organizations (CSOs) in East Africa. As a Resource Centre for civil society development, EASUN has already successfully trained over 1,000 CSO leaders. The leaders trained by EASUN are generally seeking to improve the governance and development of their organizations through transformative organizational learning processes, sustainable networking, and effective identity construction and management.

The eco-map encapsulates the depth of our collective efforts, showcasing the dynamic connections and interdependencies that characterize our transformative work. --- further insights into the intricacies of our

community's structure, as depicted in the attached eco-map, shedding light on the nuanced approach to practice development through the EASUN Learning Centre.

### Practice Development and Strategic Capacitation



**Ecosystem for Practice Development  
Community of Practice for Transformative Change**

The band immediately surrounding the core of the map refers to individuals receiving intensive practice development support from EASUN. For instance, apprentices undergo a learning journey over a span of 2 years, while Interns engage in a year-long program. Associates, on the other hand, are individuals whose demonstrated proficiency in transformative facilitation or other skills position them as valuable contributors. EASUN strategically involves Associates in its work and outreach activities. This approach is pivotal in expanding EASUN's capacity to respond to the evolving needs of civil society development.

EASUN pays particular attention to Associates, with a series of practice strengthening workshops and other knowledge exchange mechanisms. This underscores their significance in shaping the narrative of our community.

### Strategic Partnerships

Civil society organizations themselves play a vital role in the development of the ecosystem. Highlighted in the third band are trained CSOs who have maintained an active relationship with EASUN. Some are spearheading initiatives to amplify the skills and practices acquired from EASUN. Their intensified collaborative interaction with EASUN is marked by mutual exchange of knowledge and support. Within the eco-map, these are recognized as strategic partners. They are a critical layer of our ecosystem, fostering collaborative synergy.

### CSO Leaders as Drivers of Continuous Learning

Another integral feature of the ecosystem are CSO leaders who, after receiving paradigm-shifting training are actively addressing their emerging questions. These leaders continue to receive follow-up coaching from EASUN as they work with their questions, thus forming a wellspring of significant learnings for EASUN. Their lived experiences serve as invaluable feedback loops, guiding us towards reshaping our training content and approaches.

### The Collective Vision of the Civil Society Sector

The comprehensive role played by the entire civil society sector in the ecosystem provides insights into the overarching vision encapsulated within our community of practice. In our collective pursuit of transformative change, the civil society sector, through exemplary actions and passionate advocacy, stands as the potential source of ethical leadership principles that will reshape governance and foster enhanced democratic practices in East Africa.

### Mapping the dynamics

The eco-map presents the entire civil society sector on the outermost band. The map is emphasizing the interconnectedness between the various actors toward the ultimate goal of transforming governance practices in East Africa. The proximity of these entities to the core signifies the intensity of relationships and interactions with

EASUN, in the context of the evolution of the community of practice. Each actor's position, however, holds equal importance, emphasizing the concept of complex interdependence within this ecosystem.

## **Breaking New Horizons: UZIKWASA's Second Partners Learning Forum Unveils New Frontiers in civil society collaboration**

In December 2023, members of EASUN staff were privileged to participate in UZIKWASA's Partners Annual Sharing and Learning Forum, held in Pangani District, Tanga Region. A total of 32 CSO leaders attended, representing 10 organizations. This forum serves as a nexus for collaborative initiatives and knowledge exchange, specifically focusing on reflective approaches—a set of organizational, leadership and community facilitation practices actively promoted by UZIKWASA for widespread adoption among CSOs in Tanzania.

### **Navigating Transformative Pathways**

By December 2023, UZIKWASA had introduced reflective process management techniques to 30 CSOs across 5 regions of Tanzania. UZIKWASA is working jointly with EASUN in this effort, with a shared commitment to both scaling up and scaling deep, geared toward successful culture change that will allow the new practices to take root. The overarching aim is to build a community of practice centered on reflective approaches and innovative integration of new learning into organizational strategies.

The three-day event was characterized by dynamic discussions, interactive sessions, and collaborative activities, all aimed at harnessing collective experiences. Participants delved into various topics ranging from best practices in organizational development (OD) to strategies for effective facilitation of community. It was noted that exploring reflective approaches provides CSOs with a rare opportunity to cultivate adaptive and resilient approaches to addressing complex societal challenges. In this context, the concept of a community of practice emerges as a powerful vehicle for driving transformative change.



The UZIKWASA partners forum has created a space for meaningful dialogue and collaboration, where participating CSOs can harness shared learning to tackle entrenched issues and catalyze positive social impact. Moreover, by documenting and disseminating best practices and success stories, the network can amplify their impact. Participants in the UZIKWASA meeting displayed much enthusiasm, which was expressed through their vibrant contributions during both group discussions and plenary sessions. The positive atmosphere was, in part, fueled by the celebration of the splendid meeting venue, situated atop the meticulously designed UZIKWASA building and crowned with a magnificent Makuti roof.

### **Cultivating a New Era: UZIKWASA and EASUN's Ongoing Journey in facilitating change**

The CSO partners collaborating with UZIKWASA operate across diverse spheres of intervention, actively contributing to transformative change and community development initiatives. More than 90% are deeply engaged in activities that promote gender justice, with a specific emphasis on addressing the challenges of Gender-Based

Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Children (VAC) at the grassroots level. Notably, there is a growing contingent of partners committed to raising awareness about environmental issues and climate change.

UZIKWASA itself is now paying much attention in the area of climate change, investing more of its efforts in building capacities of CSOs to apply generative reflective tools and processes that leverage both awareness and commitment of community members to act in ways that protect the environment. This strategic progression underscores UZIKWASA's dedication to fostering a holistic and sustainable approach to community development.

Through nurturing this dynamic community of practice, the ongoing collaboration between UZIKWASA and EASUN is charting a course towards a culture shift that will cultivate the development of communities that are not only resilient and proactive, but also inclusive, equitable, innovative, and sustainable.

## **EASUN's Annual Reflections 2023: Celebrating Successes and Charting the Path Forward**

On finalizing the year 2023 EASUN team went through a three-day process of looking back at its work over the past year, contextualizing it within the larger 3 decades of EASUN history. All EASUN staff and Board members participating celebrated numerous successes experienced, and brainstorming to map out the way ahead. After a particularly busy year where EASUN had to catch up with its planned work following the pandemic of 2021-2012, this reflective period served as a valuable opportunity to recharge and prepare for the promising endeavors that lie ahead.

The retreat took place at Bahari Pori Resort in Pangani, Tanga. This location not only offered a relaxing setting for reflection but also provided an opportunity for all EASUN staff to visit UZIKWASA, a longstanding partner organization situated in the renowned historic town of Pangani.

### **What emerged**

Among many things that emerged from our reflections, two things particularly stand out for us.

- The impact we have achieved in facilitating civil society development in East Africa is asking us to do more.
- We are convinced that it is possible to manage organizations differently without succumbing to the top-down, bureaucratized control model that is predominantly perceived as the one best way of maximizing productivity.

### **Our commitment**

In its collaboration with civil society organizations, EASUN remains committed to advancing a progressive understanding, rooted in insights from organizational development practices. We will seize and celebrate every opportunity to introduce and strengthen organizational learning, along with other collaborative practices that foster the growth and development of both organizations and communities.

We are looking forward to working and growing with you.

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