

# **Decentralisation, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Rwanda**

**by**

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## Executive Summary

In 2001, the Rwandan government began the phased introduction of a decentralisation programme throughout the country. The new programme aimed at countering citizens' social, economic and political marginalisation which was widely viewed as constituting one of the principal drivers of the horrific genocide in 1994 in which almost one million Rwandans were brutally massacred. This research aims at analysing the extent to which Rwanda's decentralisation process is meeting these aims.

Employing a framework which differentiates between procedural participation (electoral participation); substantive participation (ongoing active participation in local decision making); and participation as cost-sharing (ongoing participation through financial contributions and voluntary labour), four main findings are discussed.

First, although there is much talk among officials and commentators about bottom-up planning processes emanating from local village meetings (formerly *ubudehe* and now *umuganda*), and while such an ethos underpins the original *Decentralisation Policy* formulated in 2001, the accompanying legislation is somewhat scant in its references to such a form of participation as well as to mechanisms whereby this might take place. Instead, a focus on community mobilisation in participation as cost-sharing is more apparent.

Second, a shift in emphasis within the decentralisation programme over time is evident. The current national strategy of fast-track economic development as a route out of poverty has been superimposed on the original goal of reconciliation and community building with an attendant emphasis on results over process. This is evident in the 2013 revisions to the *Decentralisation Policy* as well as in the shift, during the second phase, from political decentralisation toward administrative decentralisation evidenced in the introduction of public management frameworks such as the *imihigo* and the emphasis on the administrative capacity of local leaders. It is also evident in the demise of the local planning function of *ubudehe* which is now a social categorisation mechanism with final categories being decided by cell leaders. This has necessitated a shift in emphasis from substantive participation to participation as cost-sharing.

Third, the findings from a) the comparison of local official and community priorities, and b) citizens' knowledge and use of local structures reveal no evidence of representation or accountability at district level where plans and policies appear heavily influenced by national prerogatives and where senior political figures are, paradoxically, both elected through the official system and strategically selected at national level. These same findings reveal some evidence of responsiveness at sector and cell level however, where communications and contact with communities are more frequent. Although more aware of community priority issues and needs, local officials are constrained in their capacity to address these however, due to pressures to meet the ambitious targets set out in their *imihigos* which draw from higher level plans and targets.

And fourth, of the three forms of participation examined, participation as cost-sharing emerges as the most common, with increasing emphasis placed on this in recent years as local entities are encouraged to move toward fiscal autonomy and self-reliance. The heavy emphasis on this form of participation is viewed as problematic in a number of respects.

Reflecting on these findings in the context of ongoing debates on the efficacy of supports to the process, three broad questions are posed. First, given the parallels in international views of Rwanda

pre-1994 and Rwanda today, how “*good enough*” does “*good enough governance*” need to be? Second, is “*fast-track development*” compatible with other peace-building objectives aimed at transforming the political space resulting in equity, social cohesion and local political legitimacy when the pressures of such a fast-track approach are dependent on high levels of cost-sharing by citizens? And third, when placing capacity and capacity building at the heart of supports to the process, what and whose capacity do we mean? Is it the capacity of communities to substantively interact with detailed administrative policy and budgetary mechanisms within a complex system or is it the capacity of the system to engage with community members as equals, valuing their knowledge and analysis, and developing the capacity, skills and tools to translate this into the necessary policy and budgetary frameworks?

The report concludes with a reminder that decentralisation was not just the key mechanism through which communities were physically mobilised during the genocide, it was also (together with the aid industry more broadly), for decades running up to the genocide, one of the key mechanisms through which the conditions of structural violence (marginalisation, alienation, humiliation) that preceded and underpinned the genocide were disseminated and consolidated. Decentralisation, like participation, is not, on its own, necessarily a good thing. It depends on the underlying aims, ambitions and motivations of its adherents and supporters. While it can certainly oppress, subjugate and alienate communities, leading to frustration, anger and physical revolt, it can also engage communities by opening up new political spaces and renewing the social contract between citizens and their leaders while building social cohesion and stability. The important thing is to learn from and not replicate history.

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## Abbreviations & Glossary

ADB	African Development Bank
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCU	Dublin City University
DDP / PDD	District Development Plan / Plan du Developpement du District
DG	Directorate General
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
EICV	Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey
EU	European Union
FG	Focus Group
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GNP	Gross National Product
HDR	Human Development Report
ICT	Information Communication Technology
<i>Imihigo</i>	Target based performance contracts signed with superior authorities
JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MIGEPROF	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government and Social Affairs
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Economics and Finance
<i>Mutuelle</i>	<i>Mutuelle de santé</i> – national public health insurance programme
NISR	National Institute for Statistical Research (Rwanda)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RCSP	Rwandan Civil Society Platform
RGB	Rwanda Governance Board
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
RoR	Republic of Rwanda
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front (ruling party)
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<i>Ubudehe</i>	Social categorisation process
UK	United Kingdom
<i>Umudugudu</i>	Village / agglomeration and/or national villagisation programme
<i>Umuganda</i>	Village meeting and/or communal labour
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
VUP	Vision 2020 <i>Umurenge</i> [Sector] Programme

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I would also like to thank Dublin City University, the Royal Irish Academy and Trócaire-Rwanda for their financial support for this research.

These contributions notwithstanding, the usual disclaimer applies and the views, analysis and opinions expressed in this report are my own and in no way represent the views of Trócaire, its partners, nor any of the agencies, officials or individuals participating in the research.



## **1. Introduction**

In 2001, the Rwandan government began the phased introduction of a decentralisation programme throughout the country. The new programme aimed at countering citizens' social, economic and political marginalisation which was widely viewed as constituting one of the principal drivers of the horrific genocide in 1994 in which almost one million Rwandans were brutally massacred. This research, which forms part of a broader research project on Local Governance and Peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region, aims at analysing the extent to which Rwanda's decentralisation process is meeting these aims.<sup>2</sup>

### ***1.1 Research context***

The strong link between poverty, political, economic and social marginalisation and conflict is now well-established. While much international intervention and research in the areas of conflict, peacebuilding and governance to date has focused on national elites and institutions, recent research is now emphasising the importance of local tensions in fuelling violence in most conflict and post-conflict situations. Two factors are of particular importance in this regard – the level of state legitimacy, authority and control at local levels, and equality of access to resources, services and basic necessities between and across different groups. These two factors highlight the importance of local governance mechanisms – either formal or informal – in opening a political space for heretofore marginalised groups to actively participate in and share ownership of local developmental decision-making and prioritisation. While such mechanisms are often presumed to open up such spaces, depending how they are understood, mobilised and supported, they can also reproduce and reinforce existing economic, social and political inequalities, exacerbating conflict. The extent to which these mechanisms transform and/or constrain political space within Rwanda is the focus of the present research.

### ***1.2 Research aims***

Within this context the specific aims of this research are as follows:

1. To assess the opportunities for and challenges to political engagement of citizens within governance structures at local levels across a select number of sites in Rwanda;
2. To assess if particular groups experience particular barriers to engagement;
3. To assess how engagement may affect political relations/tensions at local level;
4. To examine how, if at all, this engagement might feed upward to higher political levels.

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<sup>2</sup> The overall project examines local governance and peacebuilding in Burundi, DRC and Rwanda and is supported by the researcher's own institution, Dublin City University (DCU), the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) and by Trócaire. The research reports are available at [http://doras.dcu.ie/view/people/Gaynor\\_Niamh.html](http://doras.dcu.ie/view/people/Gaynor_Niamh.html).

### ***1.3 Report Structure***

The report is divided into four main sections. Following this introductory section, Section 2 outlines the design and methodology employed in gathering, coding and analysing the data. The principal findings from documentary and field research are set out in Section 3. Within this section, Section 3.1 contextualises the decentralisation process through an examination of contrasting debates on the nature of the current Rwandan state; the different forms and understandings of participation and its link to peacebuilding; and the role of decentralisation in this regard. Section 3.2 draws from relevant background literature, legislation and policy documentation to map out the principle structures and opportunities for participation within the current process. Section 3.3 then examines how decentralisation works in practice through an analysis of the effectiveness and responsiveness of local structures to citizens' priorities; an analysis of the three different forms of participation within the process; and a discussion of the links between decentralisation and peacebuilding within this context. The key issues emerging from the study are discussed in the final concluding section.

## **2. Research design and methodology**

### ***2.1 Research design***

Research for the study employs a mixed method approach drawing from relevant policy material, focus groups (FGs), interviews and a structured observation of an *umuganda* discussion. In addition to an analysis of relevant texts on decentralisation (see Section 3.2.2 in particular), the research draws heavily on the views and perspectives of different actors, most particularly a random sample of approximately 135 ‘ordinary’ men and women across six diverse sites in Rwanda’s Northern and Southern provinces.

The steps taken in carrying out this research are set out below.

### ***2.2 Secondary research***

A review of relevant secondary materials and literature was carried out from August-December 2012. This research focussed on Rwanda’s broad political, economic and social contexts together with key lessons and learning from existing studies of local governance and peacebuilding more specifically. The relevant legislative and policy texts, where available, were also examined at this time.

Drawing from this review, a framework of analysis fleshing out the broad research aims set out above was developed. This was used to develop the semi-structured interview schedules (for different interview categories), FG guides, and the structured observation framework used in the fieldwork phase.

### ***2.3 Primary data collection: Field research***

Primary data collection took place over the months February to March, 2013. The researcher spent one week in Kigali meeting with relevant national level actors and collecting relevant documentation. This was followed by three weeks in six rural sites across five districts conducting interviews and with a random selection of citizens together with local elected and appointed officials as set out in Table 2.3a below. The sites were selected by Trócaire following criteria set out by the researcher and agreed in advance with Trócaire<sup>3</sup>. Data were collected in all of these sites by the researcher with the assistance of a freelance translator. Two-three days were spent conducting field research in each site.

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<sup>3</sup> Criteria included geographic and socio-economic diversity as well as, to avoid bias, sites where Trócaire partners do not intervene. Trócaire did, however, include one site where partners do intervene (Site A) at the last minute. This introduced some bias into FGs but not into individual interviews as Trócaire partners were unknown to randomly selected individual interviewees.

**Table 2.3a: Research sites<sup>4</sup>**

Province	District	Sector	Site
Northern	Gakenke	Mataba	A
Northern	Rulindo	Bushoki	B
Southern	Nyamagabe	Cyanika	C
Southern	Nyaruguru	Ngoma	D
Southern	Gisagara	Kansi	E
Southern	Gisagara	Kigembe	F

Overall, 59 individual citizen interviews, four FGs (of approximately 8-12 citizens depending on availability and willingness to participate) and 23 interviews with local leaders (appointed and elected) were conducted across the six sites. Together with national level interviews this brings the total number of research participants to approximately 135. In addition, a structured observation of an *Umuganda* meeting in Kigali was carried out. Focus groups and individual interviews with citizens were conducted separately with women and men. Participants for individual interviews were selected randomly on transect walks through sites and no prior notice was given before arriving on site. Participants for FGs were identified by local civil society leaders following criteria set out by the researcher<sup>5</sup>. A breakdown of research participants is provided in Table 2.3b below:

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<sup>4</sup> The Cell and Village / Agglomeration within each site was also recorded but there are omitted here to maintain anonymity.

<sup>5</sup> These local civil society leaders are Trócaire's local partners. As noted in Section 2.5, FGs did not prove very effective and so were abandoned after one week's trial.

**Table 2.3b: Research participants**

<b>National level</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Focus groups</b> (comprising 8-12 people)
International agencies based in Kigali	<b>8</b>	
National agencies based in Kigali	<b>3</b> (IRDP; RALGA; RCSP)	
Ministry personnel and government agencies based in Kigali	<b>2</b> (NDIS; RGB)	
<b>District level</b>		
Elected councillors	<b>4</b> (1 mayor; 3 vice-mayors)	
Appointed officials	<b>5</b> (1 Executive Secretary; 2 Budget Officers; 1 Good Governance Officer; 1 Permanent Secretary of JADF)	
<b>Sector level</b>		
Elected councillors	<b>3</b> (2 Presidents and 1 member of sector councils)	
Appointed officials	<b>5</b> (all Executive Secretaries)	
<b>Cell level</b>		
Elected councillors	<b>1</b> (President Council)	
Appointed officials	<b>5</b> (all Executive Secretaries)	
<b>Village level</b>		
Rwandan citizens – random sample	<b>59</b> (30 female and 29 male)	<b>4</b> (2 female and 2 male)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>4</b> (approx. 40 people)

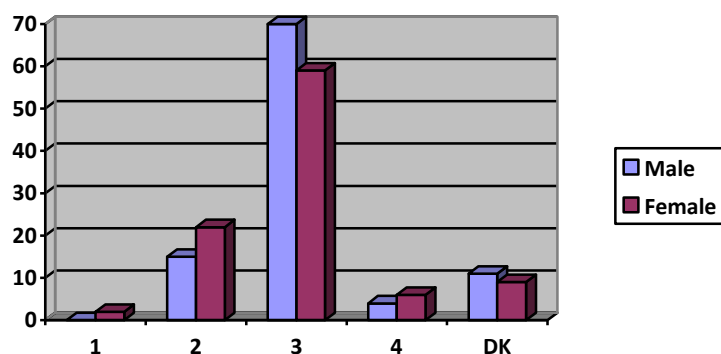
Interviews in Kigali sought to explore actors' views on and strategies around the formal decentralisation process over time. Relevant legislative and policy materials were also sourced. Interviews with local authorities explored their understandings of their roles; the priority development issues in their jurisdictions; and their understandings of the concepts of representation and participation. Interviews and FGs with randomly selected citizens explored a wide range of issues including changes over time in the region; development priorities for them; their awareness and use of local governance structures; and their attitudes towards politics and political leaders more broadly.

The 30 women and 29 men interviewed individually are aged between 21 and 68 and their average age is 39. 68% are married, 15% are single, 7% are widowed and 10% are divorced or separated<sup>6</sup>. By far the most common occupation among individual interviewees is farming (80% - 85% female; 75% male) with over half (51% - 53% female; 48% male) farming at a subsistence level just to feed their family and 29% (31% female; 26% male) also growing some produce to sell at certain times of

<sup>6</sup> During the course of conversation, in a number of instances it emerged that people who characterised themselves as 'married' at the outset are now either divorced or their spouses were killed or have fled. Therefore it is probable that the actual percentage of married people is lower and that of divorced / separated / single higher than those recorded here.

the year. 8.5% of interviewees (6% female; 11% male) work as state agents (principally teachers and/or health workers), 5% (6% female; 5% male) are labourers for others; 3% (all male) work in street trading / ‘*petit commerce*’, and 3% (2% female; 4% male) are self-employed. The *ubudehe*<sup>7</sup> categories of interviewees are set out in Figure 2.3 below.

**Figure 2.3: *Ubudehe* categories (as % of total) of individual interviewees**



As Figure 2.3 outlines, 2% of individual interviewees (all women) are in *ubudehe* category 1; 19% (22% female; 15% male) are in category 2; 64% (59% female; 70% male) are in category 3 and 5% (6% female; 4% male) are in category 4. 10% of interviewees (9% female; 11% male) did not know what *ubudehe* category they are in.

## 2.4 Coding, analysis and documentation

Individual interviews with all research participants were conducted using open-ended questionnaires. Interviews in Kigali and with local authorities in each of the six research sites were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. Interviews with randomly selected individual citizens employed a structured open-ended questionnaire. FGs were conducted using a FG guide covering the same themes as the structured open-ended questionnaire.

Data from the 59 individual citizen interviews were coded after the fact and input by the researcher to the computer package SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to allow for some descriptive statistical analysis. Cross-tabulation tables were generated through SPSS to provide a gender disaggregation. The findings were also analysed to see if significant differences existed between different sites. Gender disaggregated findings from these interviews are provided throughout the report and site disaggregated findings are reported where significant differences exist.

All FGs and semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed in full by the researcher. These transcribed texts were then coded and the data collated. Combined with the data from the individual interviews and structured observation, the resultant data forms the basis for this report.

<sup>7</sup> See Section 3.3.4 for more on *ubudehe*.

## 2.5 Research limitations

All research designs have their limitations and this research project is no exception. The very particular socio-political context in which the research was conducted (see Section 3.1) gives rise to three principle limitations in this case. First, the qualitative nature of the study, employing a relatively small sample size, does not allow for statistically significant generalisation. That said, the relatively high level of similarity in findings across all sites does suggest that these findings are reflective of wider trends. While the quantitative survey-based methods favoured by Rwanda's National Institute for Statistical Research (NISR) and various other Rwandan agencies allow for more confidence in such generalisations, qualitative approaches such as those employed here allow for a deeper exploration of the issues raised as well as leaving scope for participants to raise additional issues they deem important. This is important in a context where, as a number of research participants noted, citizens have, through practice, learned the 'correct' answer to familiar questions posed through EICV<sup>8</sup> surveys, citizen scorecards and other commonly used survey instruments.

A second allied limitation is the culture of caution and fear which permeates social and political life in Rwanda. As one research participant notes:

*Everyone has a need to talk about what is problematic for them. But if somebody comes in from outside and starts asking questions they are afraid of what is going to happen. Because it could happen.*<sup>9</sup>

This is understandable given the authorities' ardent efforts to control the story of Rwanda and data around this (as discussed further in Section 3.1). For this reason, the initial research design for this project relied more heavily on structured observations of both *umuganda* and *ubudehe* discussions. However, field research revealed that these *ubudehe* processes are much less frequent in practice and *umuganda* works often take place without the associated community meetings (see Section 3.3.4). Thus opportunities for such observations were very limited. Initial FG discussions were also limited in effectiveness as a) participants appeared to be strategically selected rather than chosen following the agreed criteria; and b) their wariness (of each other) hampered discussion and exchange between them which is central to the FG method. Consequently FGs were abandoned after a week in favour of more lengthy, in-depth interviews with randomly selected individuals. With confidentiality and anonymity assured, research participants appeared more relaxed and open to discussing and sharing their views on pertinent issues on an individual basis.

This caution extends to national and district level actors and a third limitation was a difficulty in securing interviews with officials at these levels. Repeated requests for an interview with the Ministry for Local Government (MINALOC) were ignored, international agencies were wary, and district level Mayors and Executive Secretaries also proved elusive. For these reasons of sensitivity and caution, the anonymity of all research participants has been assured. Interviewees are only referred to by category (international agency representative; cell leader etc.) rather than by name, and the specific (cell, village) research locations are omitted.

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<sup>8</sup> Integrated National Household Living Conditions Survey

<sup>9</sup> Interviewee Kigali, 12/02/2013

### 3. Research findings and analysis

This section presents and discusses the principal findings from the research. Section 3.1 below historicises debates and research on the nature and function of the Rwandan state and, drawing on participation theory more broadly, identifies three forms of participation which are employed as a framework for this study. Findings from documentary research are presented in Section 3.2 where some more background on the origins and development of the current process are provided together with an analysis of the relevant policy and legislative materials and structures. Section 3.3 then uses findings from the field research to analyse the effectiveness and responsiveness of local structures and the three different forms of participation and their distributional implications respectively.

#### 3.1 *Background to the Study: Participation, decentralisation and conflict*

The following section draws on broader literature and research to provide a context to the study and an overall framework for the research. The very particular and vigorously contested nature of the Rwandan state is discussed in Section 3.1.1. The historical salience of these contemporary debates are discussed in Section 3.1.2 where the links between particular conceptions of participation and structural violence are highlighted. The third section reviews the main empirical studies on Rwanda's current decentralisation process and presents a framework for this study.

##### 3.1.1 **Debating Rwanda: Developmental state or dictatorship?**

The level of debate and literature on Rwanda's development since the aftermath of the 1994 genocide is noteworthy for both its volume and its intensely polarised nature. On the one hand, commentators and scholars celebrate the remarkable developmental achievements of this small, landlocked, resource-poor state recovering from the trauma of a horrific genocide. On the other, critics are sharply critical of the authoritarian, top-down style of governance which, they argue, employs a discourse of national unity and reconciliation to silence political opposition and dissent.

Among many commentators, and particularly among the international development community, Rwanda has been hailed as a remarkable success-story and a showcase for post-conflict reconstruction. Well-known journalists such as Kinzer (2008), Gourevitch (2009), Zakira (2009) and Crisafulli and Redmond (2012) have been glowing in their praise, documenting the rapid economic transformation and highlighting, in particular, the role of President Paul Kagame in this regard. Kagame has been heralded as a 'visionary leader' by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. In 2009, he was presented with the Clinton Global Citizen Award by former US President Bill Clinton<sup>10</sup> and, that same year, both *Time* magazine<sup>11</sup> and the *Financial Times*<sup>12</sup> named him as one of the 50 most influential people of the new millennium. Several scholars have also highlighted the remarkable achievements of the Kagame regime (Golooba-Mutedi, 2008; Ensign and Bertrand, 2009; Stansell, 2009; and Clark, 2010). There is much substance to these claims. In the 10 year period between 1994 and 2004, Rwanda registered average growth rates of 10% and has sustained

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<sup>10</sup>[http://www.clintonglobalinitiative.org/Newsmedia/newsmedia\\_pressreleases\\_92309c.asp?Section=NewsMedia](http://www.clintonglobalinitiative.org/Newsmedia/newsmedia_pressreleases_92309c.asp?Section=NewsMedia).

<sup>11</sup> "The 2009 Time 100: Paul Kagame", *Time*, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> "Fifty Faces That Shaped the Decade", *Financial Times*, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009.



rates of approximately 5% since then. The country is on track to meet most of its Millennium Development Goal by 2015 and, at 56.3%<sup>13</sup>, is now ranked world number one for the proportion of female parliamentarians in the national assembly. It is known as the “*Singapore of Africa*” for its rapid modernisation and diversification of its economy, together with its civil service which is reported to be largely free of corruption (Zorbas, 2011). Booth and Golooba-Mutebi (2012) differentiate Rwanda from the more pejorative neo-patrimonial characterisations of other African regimes characterising it as a “*developmental-patrimonial*” state aimed at long-term development rather than short-term personal gain.

These overwhelmingly positive accounts notwithstanding, a growing number of critics highlight some more negative and darker undertones to this transformation. Possibly the most well-known are the widespread allegations of ongoing political interference and looting in Eastern Congo (Reyntjens, 2009; Prunier, 2011; UNSC 2012) – allegations which the government continues to deny but which led to the suspension of international aid late last year. Closer to home critics highlight a) the intimidation and intolerance of political opposition using charges of divisionism and “*genocidal ideology*” (Reyntjens, 2004; 2010; Straus, 2006); b) the failure of a range of government policies including *Gacaca* (Waldorf, 2011); *Umuganda* - the controversial villagisation programme (Newbury, 2011); and the government’s attempted social engineering in rural areas (Ansoms, 2008, 2009); c) the top-down, authoritarian nature of governance (Ansoms, 2011; Desrosiers and Thomson, 2011; Purdeková, 2011); and d) excessive control of the media, information and narratives on the Rwandan story more broadly (Poettier, 2002; Beswick, 2010; Frère et al, 2010; Ingelaere, 2010; and Reyntjens, 2010). Perhaps the subject of less scrutiny, but linked to the last point, are growing questions around the correlations between the high growth rates and levels of poverty and inequality throughout the country. While many sources such as the IMF draw on MINECOFIN data to report significant reductions in both poverty (from 57% in 2006 to 45% in 2011) and inequality over the last 5 years (a declining Gini coefficient from 0.52 in 2006 to 0.49 in 2011) (IMF, 2012: 5), UNDP data suggest otherwise citing a Gini coefficient of 0.53 in its most recent report making Rwanda the fifth most unequal society in Africa<sup>14</sup> (UNDP, 2013: 154). While these contrasting figures might well be simply reflective of differing data collation methods and time-series analyses, robust official criticism of independently sourced data more generally suggests a more strategic effort to control emerging data and narratives on the country’s trajectory.<sup>15</sup>

So where do international aid agencies stand with regard to these criticisms? While concerns about Rwanda’s alleged interference in Eastern Congo have recently resurfaced, with donor agencies

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> It is surpassed only by Angola, the Central African Republic, the Comoros islands, and Zambia.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Ingelaere (2011) notes that, in 2007 Finance Minister Musoni, having signed off on a UNDP report which was sharply critical of the government’s limited achievements in poverty reduction, went on to publicly disavow the report and that, in 2009, the government halted a World Bank study into rural livelihoods. Last year the RGB challenged Rwanda’s ranking in the Mo Ibrahim governance index, criticising the index as being Western-dominated (despite the fact that the index draws from, *inter alia* ADB and Ghana’s Centre for Democratic Development data) and failing to take into account data produced by Rwanda’s own institutions (“Mo Ibrahim Index Challenged”, *The New Times*, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012). A number of international agencies who have commissioned independent studies report that their findings, where differing from official findings, have not been accepted by national authorities (interviews Kigali). Finally, last year, the government introduced an authorisation system whereby a ‘research visa’ must be obtained through the NISR to carry out research in Rwanda. Obtaining this visa for this research proved quite difficult with the request initially turned down for the following reason, “*As similar research have [sic] been undertaken this could lead to some contradiction of with [sic] the existing findings*” (email communication, François Kambogo, NISR, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012).

cutting their aid in late 2012, aid agencies have, in general, remained less critical of internal governance issues. Hayman argues that this is because donors are more concerned with developmental outcomes and meeting the MDGs than with governance *per se* (2011: 126), and in echoes of Grindle's (2004) influential exhortation towards "*good enough governance*", she argues that "*good enough democracy*" proves sufficient for donors at present in Rwanda. Zorbas (2011) attributes donor's ongoing support to four factors – genocidal guilt; the Rwandan government's increasing donor-friendly language and positioning; the desire for African 'success stories'; and the lack of domestic opposition to the RPF regime in the main bilateral donor countries of the US and the UK. This general apparent lack of concern regarding internal governance issues appears to be changing with developments in recent months however. For example, while the EU has said it will continue with existing aid projects, direct budgetary support of up to €70m (£56m) over six years has effectively been suspended while other donors have reinstated suspended aid on a sectoral and not on a budget support basis as previously<sup>16</sup>.

So what is the relevance of these debates to Rwanda's current decentralisation process? Their relevance lies in their historical salience – most notably in relation to historical legacies of decentralisation, citizen participation and development in Rwanda – legacies which, as we will see below, resonate strongly with contemporary developments.

### 3.1.2 Structural violence, decentralisation and participation

In his provocative and highly influential book on the 1994 genocide and the role of the aid community within this, *Aiding Violence*, Peter Uvin argues that violence in Rwanda pre-1994 was a structural process characterised by longstanding dynamics of exclusion, marginalisation, inequality, frustration, humiliation and racism (1998: 7). These dynamics, he argues, were promoted by national and local state and aid officials alike. Focusing on the critical question of why ordinary people opted to actively participate in brutal violence against their neighbours, Uvin argues that the anomie and frustration caused by this long-standing condition of structural violence coupled with the state's intrusion into all aspects of social life constituted an important factor in motivating civil violence.

Four aspects of Uvin's comprehensive and compelling analysis of this critical period in Rwanda's history are worth highlighting here in respect to current trends and developments. First, Rwanda was widely perceived, especially within the development community, as a developmental success story. As Uvin (2008: 42) notes "*The image of Rwanda created by the development community was an idyllic one. In brief, it was the image of a country of subsistence farmers faced with daunting economic and demographic challenges but endowed with a government that followed the right policies, the fruits of which the hardworking population enjoyed.*" Indeed, the data emerging at the time bore this out. Economic growth was high, industrial production, services, domestic investment, exports, paved roads, telephone lines, electricity consumption were all growing fast and Rwanda, in 1990-1993, was placed among the three most advanced countries in sub-Saharan Africa (1998: 47-48). Second, although World Bank reports at the time asserted that poverty and inequality were not serious problems, Uvin's own analysis - combining data on food expenditures and under-nutrition with local land and income inequality studies of the 1980s – demonstrates acute and rising inequality

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<sup>16</sup> "Suspended aid could return to Rwanda but on different terms", Michel Arrion, Head of the EU Delegation to Rwanda, *The East African*, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013. See also "Donors restore aid to Rwanda", *The Independent*, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.

during this time. Third, he argues that this inequality was due to the functioning of a socio-political system based on multiple exclusions and disempowerments. Included within these were processes of humiliation and disempowerment embedded within the interactions between the state/aid system and the large majority of poor Rwandans typified by top-down extension services and authorities (1998: 118-126). For Uvin, prejudice existed in pre-genocide Rwanda in not just one (the official Hutu racist ideology), but in two forms. The second was the prejudice of the *evolués* – the urban, educated, modern, ‘developed’ people among state and aid officials alike – toward their rural, illiterate, ‘underdeveloped’ brothers. “*Through that prejudice, which is widespread in Africa and the rest of the Third World, the poor were considered backward, ignorant, and passive – almost subhuman – and were treated in a condescending, paternalistic, and humiliating manner.*” (1998: 128). And fourth, one of the principal vehicles for this exclusion, manipulation, disempowerment and humiliation was the country’s decentralisation process which, although designed to promote local-level, participatory development planning and project implementation at commune level, in reality served to promote centralised interests and plans. Thus, as Uvin (1998: 24-25) recalls

*One of the first acts of the new Habyarimana regime in 1974 was the pronouncement by its president of a programme that attributed to Rwanda’s 143 communes the role of ‘motor of development’. From now on, the communes would be the basic unit of development – forums for local-level, participatory development planning and project implementation... However, from the beginning, the structure and functioning of the commune ran counter to this development discourse...*

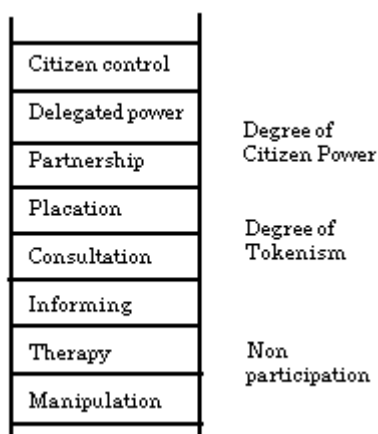
*Thus, foremost among their [commune’s] hierarchy of tasks are the maintenance of public order and the resolution of disputes; the implementation of decrees, circulars, decisions, and instructions from the Ministry of the Interior; the collection of taxes of all kinds; the relaying of political messages from the central party to the community (‘political mobilisation’); and the organisation of obligatory community labour.*

Thus, according to Uvin’s extensively researched account, while Rwanda at the time was widely perceived as a development success story – rapidly modernising with efficient decentralised structures throughout the country maintaining public order and mobilising the masses into quiet, industrious labour, unpinning this veneer was growing popular frustration and discontent with growing horizontal inequalities, political and social marginalisation and routine humiliation. While the governance system provided for, and indeed depended on, citizen participation, it remained participation as dictated by the upper echelons of society – be they state or aid agencies – and its benefits were not always readily apparent to citizens. In this context, it is worth thinking a little more deeply about what participation means – to whom, and for what purpose.

While ubiquitous in development discourse and practice, participation means very different things to different people. It can also be invoked and used to achieve very different outcomes. Discussion and debate on its many meanings, in a range of different contexts, has been ongoing for many decades. The useful typologies or ladders of participation produced by, among others, Arnstein (1969), Pretty (1995) and White (1996) highlight these multiple contested meanings and draw attention to the consequent range of outcomes possible. For example, Arnstein’s famous “*ladder of participation*” as depicted in Figure 3.1.2 below outlines nine forms of participation ranging from - at one end of the spectrum - simple manipulation of citizens to - at the other end - transformative, emancipatory outcomes where citizens deliberate and decide on policy outcomes themselves. These contributions help illustrate that while, for some, participation may serve a purely instrumental function, making projects and activities more cost effective by drawing on community’s own

resources, for others it may aim at empowerment – strengthening communities’ confidence and abilities to take decisions, hold political leaders to account and ultimately control their own destinies.

**Figure 3.1.2: Arnstein’s ladder of participation**



The lesson from these contributions is that citizen participation, in and of itself, is not necessarily a good thing. It all depends on what is understood by it, how it is employed, and who gains and who loses when it is invoked. Uvin’s research has demonstrated that the form of participation promoted by government and aid officials pre-1994 coupled with the social and economic marginalisation of large swathes of the country’s rural population led to frustration, resentment and anger which ultimately and brutally surfaced in the 1994 genocide. It is therefore pertinent to focus on the form(s) of participation promoted within the current decentralisation process, as well as examining its effectiveness and performance more broadly. A good starting point in this is a brief review of studies on the process to date.

### 3.1.3 Findings from previous studies on Rwanda’s decentralisation process

There are few in-depth empirical studies to date on political decentralisation within Rwanda and fewer still which go beyond a documentary analysis to examine its application on the ground. That said, a number of studies have been conducted in recent years which are useful and relevant. Both van Tilberg (2008) and MINALOC (2013a), drawing primarily from documentary sources, highlight the significant political reforms enshrined within the current process and both remain cautiously optimistic. Van Tilberg (2008: 228) concludes that “...the process of decentralisation and the accompanying attempts towards good governance have contributed towards a more legitimate political order, i.e. a more stable political context that before 1994” but sounds a warning note that is still early days and, with citizen participation not yet firmly embedded with these structures, “stability cannot yet be guaranteed”.

MINALOC (2013a) stresses the robust legislative framework underpinning the process which places participation at its core.

*...citizen participation in decision making is one of [the] key elements of [the] national decentralization policy adopted in 2000 and revised in 2013. By law local government*

*authorities are required to conform to participatory process[es] in planning and budgeting as well as other processes in their area of jurisdiction. They are also required to prepare five-year development plans through a bottom-up approach starting from the village plans which feed into cells and sector level. Most importantly, citizens participate in planning process[es] directly at the village and cell levels, and indirectly through elected representatives at the sector and district level.*

MINALOC (2013a: x)

While MINALOC's account is generally extremely positive, it does acknowledge that citizen's participation in local elections, community labour and financial contributions remain much higher in practice than their participation in planning and decision-making. It draws this conclusion from data produced by the Rwanda Governance Board's (RGB) *Citizen Report Card*. These findings are reproduced in Table 3.1.3 at the end of this section. Significantly, MINALOC attributes the lack of citizen participation in planning and decision-making to a lack of capacity on the part of citizens themselves (MINALOC, 2013a: 18) rather than to any shortcomings within the process or its leaders.

A decidedly more critical verdict on the process is delivered by Bert Ingelaere who focuses his attention on the first local elections held in 2006. Ingelaere observed these elections in a village in the Northern Province and interviewed a number of local citizens around these. In contrast to official observer reports, he reports a degree of political intimidation and manipulation and draws some worrying parallels with the pre-1994 process. In his own words,

*... under the guise of 'decentralisation', the RPF has actually expanded the central state's political reach down to the local level. Crucial to understanding this process is the fact that locally elected representatives have been displaced by centrally appointed authorities. Not surprisingly then, accountability in local governance structures flows upward to central authorities, not downward to the population.... the RPF has created parallel channels of command and control in the countryside to maintain centralised control over the population. These developments are worrying because top-down and authoritarian power structures are precisely what made the administration of violence so viciously efficient in 1994.*

Ingelaere (2011: 68)

A more nuanced, although also somewhat critical account is provided by the IRDP following extensive field research involving 40 FGs with local authorities and citizens across 10 randomly selected districts. The findings from this study reveal strong, ongoing "*centralist tendencies*" (IRDP, 2011a: 27) among local authorities and citizens alike with 53% of citizens feeling that decisions should be taken at central level and just 36% feeling that they should be taken at local level (4% by local authorities and 32% by the population) (IRDP, 2011a: 40). Possibly the most revealing finding from this study is that 74% of citizens claim not to have been involved in the development of policies and programmes, while 61% of leaders reveal that they did not consult the local population in decision making processes (IRDP, 2011a: 44). These latter findings are echoed by the Africa Peer Review Mechanism in its Rwanda country report when it speaks of "*a rehearsed participation in public affairs as determined by political authorities*" (APRM, 2006: 127). Notwithstanding their lack of participation in decision-making, 89% of citizens report participating in the implementation and execution of local programmes through community labour and local taxes (IRDP, 2011a: 45).

These findings resonate with those produced through the *Citizen Report Card* process of the RGB and are largely accepted by MINALOC who, as noted above, attributes these findings to insufficient capacity among citizens rather than any shortcomings within the process itself. We will return to this

latter point later, as it is one which was constantly reiterated by civil society interviewees during this research and, in the context of legacies of structural violence discussed above, merits further consideration. An important point of focus here however is the three main forms of participation employed within Rwanda's current decentralisation process which are highlighted by these studies. Within this study I have characterised these as a) procedural (electoral participation); b) substantive (ongoing participation through local meetings); and c) cost-sharing (ongoing participation through financial contributions and voluntary labour). These categorisations provide a framework for this study and will be examined in turn in Section 3.3. Before turning to a detailed examination of these however, it is useful to note that the findings from the RGB's *Citizen Report Card* which is reproduced in multiple government documents indicate a strong emphasis on cost-sharing and a weak emphasis on substantive forms of participation within Rwanda's local governance system as reflected in Table 3.1.3 below. The 'Activity' and 'Percentage population' columns within the table reproduce data from the RGB *Citizen Report Card*. I have introduced the 'Form of participation' column to highlight the important differences in aims and outcomes of the different activities.

**Table 3.1.3 Forms of participation in local governance**

Ranking	Activity	Form of participation	Percentage of population participating (%)
1	Community development works / <i>umuganda</i>	Cost-sharing	93
2	Election of local leaders	Procedural	92
3	Financial contributions	Cost-sharing	85
4	Speaking at local meetings	Substantive?? <sup>17</sup>	82
5	Assigned voluntary work in local administration	Cost-sharing	66
6	Monitoring services & holding leaders accountable	Substantive	37
7	Formulation of district council agenda	Substantive	35
8	Elaboration of district budgets	Substantive	35
9	Formulation of DDPs	Substantive	34
10	Formulation of <i>Imihigo</i> performance contract activities	Substantive	31

Source: Adapted from MINALOC (2013: 18 – Table 1)

Overall therefore, studies to date, while varying considerably in their final verdicts on the process, implicitly point to some links with the past in that participation appears primarily understood and mobilised as cost sharing through communal labour and financial contributions / local taxes. Bearing in mind the historical legacies of the process, the remainder of this study will seek to explore the reasons for this and the possible implications, as well as examining the effectiveness and performance of the process more broadly.

<sup>17</sup> The degree to which this represents substantive participation depends on whether the contribution is a question, comment or proposal – see my analysis in this regard in Section 3.3.4. It is also highly dependent on the degree to which the comment or proposal is acted upon by authorities.

## 3.2 *Decentralisation in theory*

The following section draws from both interviews and analysis of relevant documentation to set out the underlying philosophy and structures of decentralisation as set out in the different texts and strategies. The first sub-section sets the process in a historical context and takes us through the three phases of its development since its introduction in its current form in 2000. The main philosophy underlying the current process is set out in Section 3.2.2 while the final sub-section outlines the structures and roles at the different levels.

### 3.2.1 Evolution of decentralisation

Like its neighbours Burundi and the DRC, decentralisation has a long history within Rwanda. During the first (1962-1973) and second (1973-1994) so-called ‘Hutu Republics’, society was organised into prefectures (provinces), communes, sectors, cells, and groupings of ten households known as *nyumbakumi*. Each commune was run by a *Bourgmestre* who was appointed by the President. The *Bourgmestre*’s position resembled that of the local chiefs prior to the 1959 revolution with the entire structure operating in a tightly controlled top-down manner (Reyntjens, 1987; Ingelaere, 2011). As noted previously, many commentators (Human Rights Watch, 1994; Reyntjens, 1994; Uvin, 1998; Ingelaere, 2011, Prunier, 2011) highlight the crucial role played by these decentralised authorities in disseminating central orders and directing the genocidal violence and killing within their jurisdictions in 1994.

The current decentralisation policy, adopted in 2000, set out plans for the introduction of a new form of decentralisation over a phased basis (RoR, 2001a). Phase I (2000-2005) introduced territorial reform. Sous-prefectures were abolished and communes were replaced by districts. Phase I also introduced *ubudehe* – an innovative, local, participatory planning process involving social mapping, poverty categorisation and prioritisation of development activities and projects by communities themselves<sup>18</sup>. The principal aim of decentralisation at this time was the promotion of reconciliation and social reconstruction across the country<sup>19</sup>.

More sweeping territorial reform was introduced in Phase II (2006-2010). In January 2006, the number of provinces was reduced from 11 to 4; of districts (from 106 to 30); of sectors (from 1,545 to 416) and of cells (down from 9,201) (RoR, 2005). Boundaries were redrawn and most localities and major towns took on new names, some of which were inspired by pre-colonial Rwanda (Ingalaere, 2011). The administrative roles of these territorial entities were also redefined during this phase by removing the autonomy of provinces and transferring the principle coordinating and financial functions to the districts. A new administrative structure, the *umudugudu* – village or agglomeration created through the government’s controversial villagisation policy (also known as *umudugudu*) – was also introduced during this phase. Notably, this phase witnessed a concerted shift from political to administrative functions with a marked emphasis on increasing the administrative capacity of local authorities as the aim of decentralisation shifted from reconciliation to economic development and service delivery<sup>20</sup>. The first series of local elections was held throughout the country in 2006.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ubudehe* is examined in detail in Section 3.3.4.

<sup>19</sup> Interview state representative, 12/02/2013.

<sup>20</sup> Interviews state representative, 12/02/2013 and national NGO 06/03/2013.



The third and current phase (2011-2015) aims “...to deepen and sustain grassroots-based democratic governance and promote equitable local development by enhancing citizen participation and strengthening the local government system, while maintaining effective functional and mutually accountable linkages between Central and Local Governments entities.” (MINALOC, 2013b: 8).

### ***Imihigo***

In tandem with the increased concentration on administrative reforms and the shift toward economic development and service delivery, a new form of accountability known as *imihigo* or performance contracts was introduced and consolidated during Phase II of the process. In their traditional form, *imihigos* were public vows made by leaders of communities to honour them with their bravery. They emphasised leaders’ duties to their citizens and their accountability in this regard. In their current incarnation they constitute signed agreements or contracts between local officials and their superiors to meet specific targets within specific timeframes. *Imihigos* are signed by officials at all levels (district, sector, cell and village) and have recently been introduced at household level also. The strong influence of the aid industry’s results-based management system is apparent as contemporary *imihigos* bear a striking resemblance to logframes and results-based matrices (see Appendix II for an example of an *imihigo* from one of the research sites). Local officials’ (and households’) progress in meeting their targets are monitored on a regular (monthly at cell and sector level; annually at district level) basis and prizes are awarded by President Kagame for the “*top performing*” districts at a high level national ceremony each year<sup>21</sup>. As noted in Section 4.1.3 below, even households now sign *imihigos* with their village leaders. While the *imihigo* concept is hailed by the government as an effective tool of accountability which provides for “*healthy competition that draws together all stakeholders to improve their own communities*”<sup>22</sup>, the findings from this study indicate that, as it is currently being implemented, *imihigos* consolidate upward accountability and pressures to achieve targets set at senior levels, in the process narrowing considerably the space for both downward accountability and citizen participation. This is discussed further in Sections 3.3 and 4.

### **3.2.2 Relevant texts and policy**

Decentralisation is enshrined within the 2003 Constitution (specifically Article 167 – RoR, 2003) and there is a large body of legal and policy documentation underpinning the process. These include two key laws determining the decentralised administrative entities (RoR, 2005) and the organisation and function of the district (RoR, 2006b) respectively; a Presidential Order determining the structure and functioning of villages, cells and sectors (RoR, 2006a) two key policies – the *National Decentralisation Policy* – first formulated in 2000 and revised this year (RoR, 2001a; MINALOC 2013b) and the *Community Development Policy* – first formulated in 2001 and revised in 2008 (RoR, 2001b; 2008); and a number of additional plans and strategies – notably the five year *Implementation Programmes/Plans* (MINALOC, 2004; 2010) and the *Strategic Frameworks/Plans* (MINALOC, 2007; 2012).

As noted previously, the new decentralisation programme introduced in 2001 aimed at countering the centralised, authoritarian system of governance which was widely blamed as constituting a major factor in the 1994 genocide. The 2001 Policy succinctly captures the inter-related problems of

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<sup>21</sup> See for example “Kicukiro emerges best District”, *The New Times*, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> “Kagame’s speech at the Seventh Commonwealth Local Government Conference”, *The New Times*, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

previous decentralised regimes as including the inadequate participation of the population in decision-making; inadequate financial resources at lower levels; lack of accountability and transparency in local management structures; the accumulation of powers in one person – the *bourgmestre*; a passivity and dependency among the population caused by centralisation and their exclusion from participation; and “*an officialdom which erodes further the people’s say in the management of their affairs, the system being generally accountable to central government instead of being accountable to the people*” (RoR, 2001a: 4). The resultant aim of the new decentralisation programme was thus to transform this system, affording citizens a voice in their own communities’ development. “*The overall objective of the decentralization policy is to ensure political, economic, social, managerial/administrative and technical empowerment of local populations to fight poverty by participating in planning and management of their development process.*” (RoR, 2001a: 8). The new programme therefore places the substantive participation of Rwanda’s citizens at its very core.

In 2013, following a review of progress to date, the 2001 policy was revised. A comparison of the 2001 and 2013 revised policy objectives reveals two shifts in emphasis and three new objectives. The first shift is a greater emphasis on rapid economic growth at local levels. It also introduces the idea of local fiscal autonomy. This is reflected in the third objective of the revised policy which aims “*to fast-track and sustain equitable local economic development as a basis for enhancing local fiscal autonomy, employment and poverty reduction, by empowering local communities and local governments to explore and utilize local potentials, prioritise and proactively engage in economic transformation activities at local, national and regional levels, and ensure fiscal discipline.*” (MINALOC, 2013b: 8, emphasis in original). The second shift in emphasis envisages a greater role for central authorities in local planning. While the original policy stressed the importance of decentralised, local planning – as set out in objectives (iii) “*to develop planning, financing, management and control of service provision at the point where services are provided*’ and (iv) “*to develop planning at local levels*” of the policy, the revised policy proves somewhat ambiguous in this regard. While on the one hand, its first objective reiterates the commitment to substantive citizen participation in local planning – “*To enhance and sustain citizens’ participation in initiating, making, implementing, monitoring and evaluating decisions and plans that affect them by transferring power, authority and resources from central to local government and lower levels, and ensuring that all levels have adequate capacities and motivations to promote genuine participation.*” (MINALOC, 2013b: 8, emphasis in the original), its fourth objective introduces the concept of joint planning between central and local authorities with delivery left to local levels – “*To enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the planning, monitoring, and delivery of services by promoting joint development planning between central and local governments and ensuring that service delivery responsibilities and corresponding public expenditure are undertaken at the lowest levels possible.*” (MINALOC, 2013b: 8-9, emphasis in original).

In addition to these shifts in emphasis, the revised policy also includes three new objectives as follows: to consolidate national unity and identity; to build and consolidate volunteerism, community work and self-reliance; and to fast-track and translate the regional integration agenda. Thus, overall, while retaining some commitment to substantive participation, the revised policy reflects an increased emphasis on local economic growth, fiscal autonomy, and participation as cost-sharing via volunteerism, communal labour and increased local taxation.

Another key policy document in relation to participation within decentralised entities is the government’s *Community Development Policy* first elaborated in 2001 and revised in 2008. Like the revised *Decentralisation Policy*, this policy is also somewhat ambiguous and confusing in terms of community links to and engagement with decentralised structures. While on the one hand, it emphasises a cost-sharing conception of participation - speaking often about self-reliance and self-

development in the apparent absence of the state, on the other it invokes a more substantive conception – talking of public participation in policy decision-making. For example, the revised policy sets out two somewhat contradictory aims within the same paragraph. Noting that the overall aim of the 2001 policy was to “*ensure the effective and sustainable participation of the community in its own development, in order to achieve poverty reduction and self-reliance based on the sustainable exploitation of available resources.*” – i.e. participation through cost-sharing, the revised policy goes on to set out its overall aim as being “*to foster public participation in policy and decision making processes in a bid to turn around the centralistic development approach that had previously characterised the country*” – substantive participation (RoR, 2008: 4). While this might indicate a shift towards a more substantive concept of participation and community development over the seven year period between the original and revised policies, this is contradicted by the apparent reversal to a cost-sharing / self-reliance discourse two pages later.

***In this policy, the GoR envisages a community that is organised, self motivated, hardworking, forward-looking, and has the ability to exploit local potential within innovations geared toward sustainable development”***

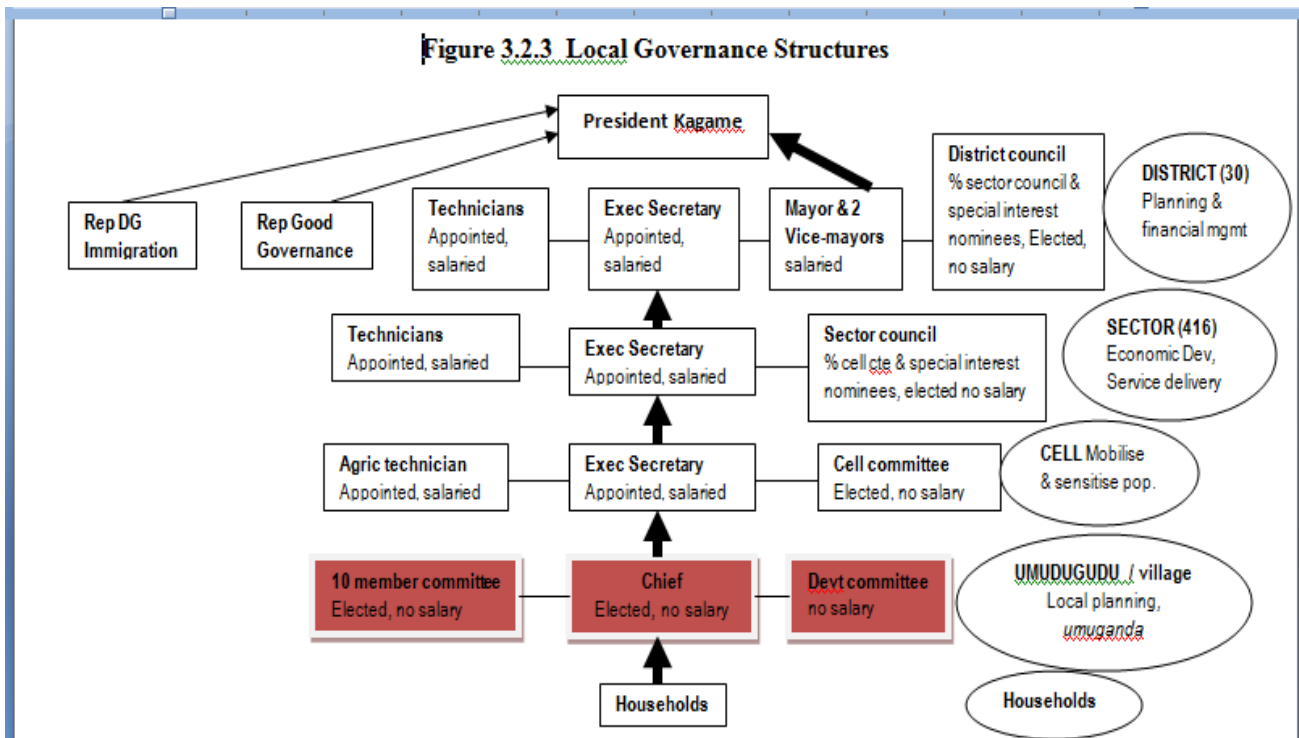
(RoR, 2008: 6, emphasis in original)

Further on, the *Community Development Policy* defines what is understood by ‘Community Participation’ which is identified as the first guiding principle of the policy. “*Local communities hold the key to sustainable development. They have the capacity to take charge of their own development and hence their effective participation is indispensable. Participation should be mobilised and concentrated at the lowest operational - Umudugudu level.*” (RoR, 2008: 11). Participation as cost-sharing rather than a more substantive, political form of participation appears to be what is in mind. This is confirmed as the policy progresses with the reminder, on page 16, that “*The Community Development Policy is based on the constitutional principles where the citizen has an obligation to use his labour to contribute to the prosperity of the country (Article 47 of the revised constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 4<sup>th</sup> June 2003).*” (RoR, 2008: 16).

Taken together therefore, these somewhat subtle and at times ambiguous shifts in policy over time appear to suggest an increased emphasis on participation as cost-sharing - through increased communal labour (now enshrined within Article 47 of the revised Constitution) and increased local taxation aimed at achieving local fiscal autonomy. In addition, a greater influence of central authorities in planning is apparent within the new climate of ‘fast-track’ economic development and there is a reduced emphasis on substantive forms of participation involving local planning and decision-making. The following section goes on to examine the structures through which this is achieved.

### **3.2.3 Structures and roles**

There are currently four main levels of decentralised authority, with an additional lower level of 10 households in certain *umudugudu*. These levels and their principal structures and functions are depicted in Figure 3.2.3 below. The structures in red indicate where opportunities for substantive participation (as well as cost-sharing) exist. Arrowed lines indicate accountability pathways and thick arrowed lines indicate accountability through *imihigo* / performance contracts.



While Figure 3.2.3 above depicts the principle structures as set out in the relevant legislation, interviews reveal that each level comprises a complex additional array of sub-structures and committees.

At district level, there are between 40 and 50 staff. While some report to the district Mayor, each district also includes staff reporting directly to central level (including a Good Governance officer and a DG for Immigration) as well as staff contracted by international donor agencies. As one international commentator notes, this leads to some confusion in relation to roles and the distribution of power and authority.

*The distribution of power is quite problematic here. The relations between the Mayor and the Executive Secretary are unclear... You also have the representative of Good Governance which comes from the RGB. So he is not a member of the council or district. He is just brought in from the RGB or MINALOC. You have the representative of the DG Immigration who comes from the central level. And those people do not respond to the district authorities. They respond to the central level. So this kind of relationship between members, it is problematic. We have had many cases reported of problems with actions, for instance registration of NGOs or implementation of activities, [which have been] decided and approved within the JADF with the approval of the Mayor. So with the approval of the Mayor you should have the green light. But then it comes to the representative of DG Immigration and he blocks it.*

(Representative of international agency, Kigali)

District councils, which meet every three months, are made up of between 30 and 40 members who are non-salaried. As outlined in Section 3.3.3, these are elected indirectly (by sector councillors) although many interviewees note that senior post-holders (mayors and vice-mayors – salaried positions), though passing through the indirect electoral process, are nonetheless political appointees. While district meetings are technically public (although they can be closed if councillors request

this)<sup>23</sup>, notice of meetings is not provided and the public never attends<sup>24</sup>. While citizens have a right to consult the minutes of council meetings filed in district headquarters, the council also has “absolute powers to decide that the debates of the meeting be maintained as a secret until it considers it unnecessary”<sup>25</sup>. There is no legal provision for making the district budget, which is prepared by the Mayor and Vice-Mayors and approved by the council<sup>26</sup>, public. The district council includes a myriad of commissions which draw in, as required, additional people. There is a high turnover of both senior elected and appointed officials. During the last electoral term (2006-2011), 24 of the 30 district Mayors ‘resigned’, with approximately half of these being ‘asked’ to leave<sup>27</sup>.

At sector level, staff include an Executive Secretary, a Civil Status Officer<sup>28</sup>, an Economic Affairs Officer, a Social Affairs Officer, and an Agricultural Advisor. Sector councils in the sites visited have between 22 and 24 non-salaried members. As with the district council, these are elected indirectly. Sectors also have mediation committees (for dispute resolution), development committees and security committees. Members of these are selected by the Executive Secretary and council. The balance of power within the sector lies with the Executive Secretary. Many council members – as public sector employees (local school principals, teachers, health centre managers etc.) – are *de facto* employees of the Executive Secretary who has the power to promote or fire them. Therefore, they remain subordinate to him<sup>29</sup>.

At cell level, staff include the Executive Secretary, a Development Officer, Health workers and, recently introduced in some cells, an Agricultural Advisor. Consultative committees in the sites visited have between 12 and 19 members. Although these are directly elected at village level, officials interviewed note that they include representatives of different interest groups including teachers (nursery, primary and secondary), health workers, business men, youth, disabled and women. There are also mediation committees, development committees and security committees at cell level.

Generally speaking, districts have primarily coordinating and financial functions; sectors coordinate, manage and execute development and service delivery; and cells mobilise and ‘sensitise’ the local population. Development activities are carried out at the lowest, village or *umudugudu* level. According to MINALOC (2007: 9), the primary functions at each level are as follows: “*Districts are charged with local economic development and planning and coordinating the delivery of public services. The Sector is the focal point for delivering services to the population. It is also charged with coordinating community participatory development, as well as collecting data and information. The Cell is responsible for needs assessment and prioritisation, and mobilising community action. Finally, the Umudugudu is charged with building cooperation, collaboration and solidarity among*

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<sup>23</sup> Article 36, GoR, 2006

<sup>24</sup> Interviews national NGOs and international agencies, Kigali, 11/02/2013; 14/02/2013; 05/03/2013.

<sup>25</sup> Article 44, GoR, 2006

<sup>26</sup> Article 135, GoR, 2006

<sup>27</sup> Interview state representatives, Kigali, 12/02/2013 and 13/02/2013.

<sup>28</sup> “Etat Civile” – The Etat Civile is second in command to the Executive Secretary and is responsible for ‘regularising’ marriages throughout the Sector.

<sup>29</sup> This problem was highlighted in interview by a number of council members.

*members of the community.*” It should be noted that, while the relevant policies speak of village level planning and substantive forms of participation, the Presidential Order – the one official document detailing the roles and functions of the sector, cell and village respectively – makes no reference to such participation, emphasising instead functions of mobilisation and sensitisation at village level (RoR, 2006a - see Appendix III for the relevant excerpts).

The principal roles of the councils/committees at all levels are detailed in the *Decentralisation Policy*<sup>30</sup>. In an effort to ascertain councillor and officials’ own understandings of their roles in practice, they were asked in interview to explain their principal roles together with the challenges they face in exercising these. These principal roles, as outlined in the *Decentralisation Policy* and by interviewees across the six sites, together with the principal challenges they identify, are set out in Table 3.2.3 below. The roles highlighted in grey indicate commonalities between those set out in the relevant policy and those identified by councillors and officials.

**Table 3.2.3 Principle roles of councils at different levels of administration**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Role (RoR, 2001a: 13, 16)</b>	<b>Role (interviews)</b>	<b>Challenges (interviews)</b>
<b>District</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion and approval of DDPs and budgets</li> <li>- Enact district by-laws</li> <li>- Mobilise district to participate in devt activities</li> <li>- Oversee &amp; monitor the work of the District Exec Cte, ensuring its accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Security</li> <li>- Development planning and monitoring</li> <li>- Financial monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Population mindset</li> <li>- Resources</li> <li>- Financial responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approval of sector plans &amp; programmes, assuring follow-up on implementation</li> <li>- Approving the annual budget</li> <li>- Analysing &amp; approving lower level decisions</li> <li>- Controlling Sector Exec Ctes’ activities &amp; functioning</li> <li>- Analysing problems and proposing solutions</li> <li>- Disciplining incompetent council members (decisions to replace these are taken by higher authorities)</li> <li>- Safeguarding sector security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Security</li> <li>- Development planning and coordinating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Population Mindset</li> </ul>
<b>Cell</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daily administration</li> <li>- Implementation of council decisions</li> <li>- Guiding cell pop in devmt activities</li> <li>- Identifying and prioritising needs</li> <li>- Mobilisation of pop, local partners and local resources for devt</li> <li>- Preparation &amp; submission to cell council plans for the cell</li> <li>- Submission to the sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Security</li> <li>- Resolution of local problems / conflicts</li> <li>- Coordination of development activities – mobilisation of population / <i>umuganda</i></li> <li>- Sensitisation of population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Population mindset</li> <li>- Poor office accommodation</li> <li>- Lack of office materials</li> <li>- Lack of transport</li> </ul>

<sup>30</sup> As noted above, the Presidential decree (RoR, 2006a) also details the role and function of sector, cell and village committees.

	council the needs of the cell that bypass its competencies - M&E of cell devmt activities		
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The comparison of roles as set out in the *Decentralisation Policy* and those as outlined by interviewees reveal a number of interesting issues. First, a key role identified at all levels (and often the first cited in interview) is security. While the final role outlined in the *Decentralisation Policy* at sector level is “*safeguarding sector security*”, there is no other mention of security as a role for councils or officials within this *Policy*. It is clear that this is a top priority at all levels however. Security committees exist at all levels and cell leaders organise nightly patrols of community policing. Indeed, one of the main obstacles identified in interviews to women’s leadership at village and cell level is their unsuitability for security roles. Cell and sector leaders submit weekly reports to their authorities (sector and district respectively) on the local security situation and records are maintained on all ‘strangers’ arriving into local areas who require official authorisation before being allowed to settle.

Second, although local prioritisation and planning is written into the *Policy*, in reality any local planning appears to take place at sector and district level. At sector level, one Executive Secretary describes his role and that of his council as “*top-down decision implementation*” going on to succinctly explain how this works, “*We in the Sector coordinate the Cell, and the Cell coordinates the village. The village is the organ of mobilisation*”. Both the district Mayor and Executive Secretary interviewed describe their principle role as being “*the implementation of national policies and district resolutions*”. Implementation of the resultant planned activities and programmes then takes place at cell and village level where coordination, mobilisation and sensitisation are the roles consistently mentioned.

Third, this means that participation at the most local levels is viewed principally as implementation. Therefore, the opportunities for substantive participation, as set out in Figure 3.2.3 above are, in reality, quite limited. .

Finally, the challenges highlighted by interviewees are also quite revealing in that they reinforce indications of quite a top-down, autocratic form of governance where top-down pressures to ‘fast-track’ development are meeting with some resistance – or, in the commonly repeated phrase, “*lack of understanding*” – from citizens. At all levels, the principal challenge highlighted by interviewees in exercising their roles is the “*mindset*” or “*mentality*” of the population. This is explained more fully in the following interview excerpts.

*When we are in development we need to change the peoples’ mentalities... there is a population who thinks that everything should be carried out by the state. But they also have an important role which they have started to realise, which they did not know before. And so the process is to change their mentality to understand that they also can work, that they can also participate - there is a challenge within it of sensitisation.*

(District Vice-Mayor, Site D)

*The first job we have is to change the compartment and the mentality of the population. To do this is a process.*

Question: how do you change this mentality?

*We do lots of meetings with the population. Through these meetings we tell the population what [how] we wish things to be. We also do home visits to verify that what we have said is being put into practice. We follow what the population does.*

(Sector Executive Secretary, Site D)

*Reform is very new. So that the population feels a little uneasy. There are resistances. When there is change there is resistance. And we are in a country that is advancing very fast. Life before is not like life now. But with education, with decentralisation, the majority finish by being educated and advancing with the programme which must be implemented.*

(Sector Executive Secretary, Site B)

*To deal with the population is not an easy thing. It is obvious that there might be some challenges. There are some that have this mindset that is not easy to change.*

Question: What is the mindset that is not easy to change?

*People who are too old, an old man, or those who have never been to school. They are the ones that we have to keep telling them to make so much effort to make change. We are in a country that is in a hurry. So there is an urgency in implementing government programmes and it can take an old man more time to understand and get the point.*

(Cell Executive Secretary, Site C)

The pressures on local leaders to ‘fast-track’ reforms and implement programmes and activities are clearly immense. The ambitious commitments and targets within their *imihigos* add to this pressure. Sector leaders interviewed note that they need to achieve a score of 80% or more to retain their posts. Otherwise, they are fired. Achievement of these *imihigo* targets depends on broad-based citizen participation – both financially and through their labour. Resistance to this understandably poses a problem for leaders whose livelihoods depend on meeting these targets. However, officials’ understandings of this resistance and their strategies for addressing it are worryingly redolent of the second prejudice identified by Uvin in pre-1994 Rwanda – the condescending, paternalistic, humiliating attitude of the *evolués* toward their more traditional, less educated, rural co-citizens.

Taken together, the overall analysis of relevant texts in this section, together with the findings from interviews with local officials regarding their roles and the challenges they face reveal a number of important shifts in the aim and trajectory of decentralisation over time. First, from the outset, opportunities for substantive participation at district level remain limited compared to other countries<sup>31</sup>. Accountability, through *imihigos* and regular reporting is upward, district council debates can be kept secret and the district budget is not made publically available. Second, a shift from more substantive forms of participation to participation as cost-sharing over time is apparent from subtle changes within the revised *Decentralisation and Community Development Policies*. This is acknowledged by senior state officials involved in the process from the beginning<sup>32</sup> and is reflective of the broader government strategy which, in the mid 2000s, shifted somewhat from peacebuilding through reconciliation and dialogue to peacebuilding through rapid growth and modernisation, efficient service delivery and building a strong middle class<sup>33</sup>. While a laudable strategy in itself, this has increased pressure on local authorities to achieve the ‘fast-track’ reforms

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<sup>31</sup> See for example the Burundi case (Gaynor, 2011) where legislation dictates that district (commune) council decisions and budgets be made public and posted outside district offices.

<sup>32</sup> Interviews state representatives, Kigali, 12/02/2013 and 13/02/2013.

<sup>33</sup> Interviews state representatives and international agencies, Kigali, 12/02/2013; 13/02/2013; 15/02/2013; 05/03/2013, also see Murenzi and Hughes (2006).



required for the strategy to succeed. This in turn has increased pressures on local populations to “*change their mindsets*” and reduce their resistance, providing the financial and physical contributions required by local authorities in the exercise of their functions.

Given the problematic legacy of decentralisation in Rwanda, these developments and shifts over time raise obvious questions about, at best, parallels with, and, at worst, a possible return to the dangerous and damaging practices of structural violence of the past. That said, it is also important to realise that the developmental focus and attention to service delivery at local levels (albeit heavily dependent on a citizens’ own resources) represents a welcome rupture from the predatory activities of previous regimes. Bearing in mind the legacy of previous decentralisation experiments, a key question remains in relation to citizens’ own views and perceptions of the new decentralisation programme and its proponents. This is the subject of the next section.

### 3.3 Decentralisation in practice

This section draws further from field research to examine both the effectiveness and responsiveness of decentralised structures and authorities in the eyes of citizens and the opportunities for different forms of participation in these. The section begins with a brief profile of the districts visited for the field research. It then moves on to examine the effectiveness and responsiveness of local structures employing two different methods of analysis. The third, fourth and fifth sub-sections examine the efficacy of the mechanisms of procedural, substantive and cost-sharing participation respectively. The final sub-section brings the data together to discuss the overall findings in the context of peacebuilding.

#### 3.3.1 Brief background to the five districts

Table 3.3.1 below draws from EICV and DDP data to present a brief profile of the five districts visited for this research. As noted in Section 2, efforts were made to select sites which provided for geographic and socio-economic diversity. While it would also have been desirable to select on the basis of ethnic diversity, this was not possible as ethnicity can no longer be openly discussed in Rwanda. Two of the districts are in the Northern province and three are in the Southern province. They are all predominantly rural districts. As the table indicates, one of the districts – Nyaruguru in the south – is currently ranked as the poorest in the country and has the highest proportion of households attempting to live off less than a third of a hectare of land. Rulindo district in the north lies in the top third most wealthy districts and correspondingly, of the sample here, has the lowest proportion of households attempting to live off less than a third of a hectare.

**Table 3.3.1: Brief Profile of five districts visited for field research**

Site	District	Population	% female / male	Poverty ranking	% population defined as poor	% of cultivating households with < 1/3 ha.
A	Gakenke	345,000	53 / 47	7 <sup>th</sup>	57%	43%
E & F	Gisagara	267,161	54 / 46	6 <sup>th</sup>	61%	46%
C	Nyamagabe	330,000	53 / 47	1 <sup>st</sup>	73%	58%
D	Nyaruguru	304,000	53 / 47	4 <sup>th</sup>	62%	52%
B	Rulindo	294,000	53 / 47	21 <sup>st</sup>	43%	38%

Sources: EICV3s Gakenke, Nyamagabe, Nyaruguru, Rulindo (NISRn.d.); DDP Gisagara

#### 3.3.2 Effectiveness and responsiveness of local structures

One of the key indicators of success within decentralisation is the effectiveness and responsiveness of local authorities in addressing local priorities and needs. The effectiveness and responsiveness of local structures in Rwanda's process is analysed two ways within this section. First, drawing on the approach employed by Manor and Crook (1998) in their seminal study on decentralisation across

four countries, local community priorities – explored in individual interviews – are compared with those outlined by local officials within interviews. Second, local communities’ use of local structures in both resolving local conflicts and addressing problems with services is examined.

### *Development priorities compared*

According to both policy and local officials interviewed, local priorities and issues are identified locally by citizens within village meetings. These are then fed upward through cell, sector and district planning processes and form the basis of both the DDPs and prioritised activities at more local levels. Following this process, we could expect to see a high degree of congruence between priorities identified by citizens and local authorities. Across the six sites, individual citizens were asked to define what it is that is important to be content in life (“*se sentir bien dans la vie*”). A second question aimed at eliciting the same information inversely explored what the causes of absolute misery are (“*quelqu’un qui est vraiment dans la misère, qu’est qu’il fait qu’il/elle est comme ça?*”). Across the same sites, officials at district, sector and cell levels were asked what the main priorities for communities within their jurisdictions are. The resultant coded and collated data is synthesised in Table 3.3.2 below. The issues raised are ranked in order of importance for each category according to the frequency with which they were raised.

**Table 3.3.2 : Community and authorities’ priorities compared**

Priority	Citizens	Cell leaders	Sector leaders	District leaders
No domestic GBV	1	4	3	-
Food security / access to land	2	4 (consolidatn)	1 (consolidatn)	1 (consolidatn)
Health services	3	1 ( <i>mutuelle</i> )	2 ( <i>mutuelle</i> )	-
Children in school	4	-	1	-
Decent clothing	5	-	-	-
To have an income	6	-	-	-
Security / peace	7	-	-	3
Family planning	-	2	-	-
Savings and credit facilities	-	3	1	1
Building a cell office	-	4	-	-
Hygiene & sanitation	-		3	
Roads	-	-	-	1
ICT and computer literacy	-	-	-	2
Electricity	-	-	-	3

For individual citizens, among women and men alike, by far the most important priority is the elimination of conflict and domestic violence at home. 32% of interviewees overall (26% male; 38% female) cited this as their single most important issue with a further 16% combining it with other issues - food security and health (7% - 11% male; 3% female), food security and good clothes (7% - 4% male; 9% female), and money/a job (2% - all female). Food security emerges as another particular preoccupation of women (37%) while access to land and/or money/a job is a particular preoccupation of men (38%). Health is a preoccupation among women and men with women

focusing on having access to services and men focusing more on being able to pay their *mutuelle*<sup>34</sup>. Other issues mentioned are having clean children in school (particularly predominant among women – 25%) and being able to clothe children and the family properly. Interestingly, the issue of security, although, as we have seen, of high importance for authorities, appears very low in priority for citizens interviewed with just 3% (4% male; 3% female) citing it as important.

These findings are mirrored in the corollary question of “*what causes misfortune / misery?*” where, in order of importance, conflict at home; food security and ill health; lack of land; having to work as a labourer for others; and no money/no job are cited as the principle causes. Reflecting the findings above, the most common response (34% - 30% male; 38% female) is conflict at home. This is followed by the lack of food security and ill health (with many noting this happens when you cannot pay your *mutuelle* and therefore are turned away at the health clinic) (17% - 15% male; 19% female). 15% (15% male; 16% female) cite a lack of land while 14% (22% male; 6% female) cite having to work as a labourer for others as main causes of misery. Allied to these issues, a further 7% (4% male; 9% female) cite having no money and no job.

From these findings it is apparent that the most important priority for men and women alike is the elimination of domestic conflict and violence. Questioned as to why such conflicts occur, many interviewees spoke of “*a poor understanding*” between couples where husbands remain resistant to changing gender relations, as well as problems of spouses – mostly men – sleeping with and/or moving in with other women. 70% of interviewees (59% male; 78% female) noted that such practices are a major source of conflict as the husband spends his money on his new partner and may also take land and property from his wife. One FG participant outlines the many causes of conflict at home:

*First there is poverty - the husband uses the [household] money for beer. Then there is polygamy - you might find all the things that you gain [earn] in the family the husband will take to the other woman. There is a poor understanding - you may find that that the family needs training and advice on understanding. It may be that they are not using the family planning so, when they find themselves with so many children that they cannot take care of, that causes problems. When the husband is always drinking, that causes problems.*

(Participant female FG, Site A)

It should be noted that, for local authorities, domestic conflict and violence is cited as a (albeit lower) priority because of its effects on other developmental outcomes. A Sector Executive Secretary explains:

*I forgot to mention that one of our priorities is disputes within household. Such disputes are one of our priorities. We educate the population to avoid such types of disputes. This type of behaviour is not good because it can impact on all our priorities which we need to implement at family level. With disputes we can have dropouts at school. With disputes we can have children on the streets. With disputes poverty enters the households...*

(Sector Executive Secretary, Site D)

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<sup>34</sup> The ‘*mutuelle*’ [*Mutuelle de Santé*] is an annual health insurance payment which must be paid for all individuals in order to be able to access public health services. Annual payments range from FrRw 3,000 to 7,000 per individual, with rates linked to individual’s *ubudehe* categorisation.

Taken together, the collated data on citizen and local authority priorities in Table 3.3.2 reveal some interesting trends. First, they show that cell and sector leaders appear more in tune with communities' priorities than district leaders. There are three commonalities with community priorities among cell leaders; four among sector leaders; and just two among district leaders. Second, local authorities at cell and sector level are somewhat in agreement with local communities on communities' top priorities – the elimination of domestic conflict / violence; food security (although authorities frame this as “*land consolidation*”<sup>35</sup> and do not address the access issue); and access to health services (authorities frame this securing *mutuelle* payments<sup>36</sup>). Third, authorities cite seven more priorities which are not cited by citizens. The most important one of these for authorities is the provision of savings and credit facilities – this being of principle importance for sector and district level authorities. This appears somewhat perplexing given the fact that communities are more preoccupied with securing an income, something not seen as a priority by authorities. With little or no income, it is difficult to know what communities will save. The attraction of credit facilities to authorities may in part be explained by the finding – reported later – that a number of citizens report having been urged to take out a loan in order to pay for their *mutuelle* this year. There is some divergence among authorities on priorities not cited by communities thereafter with cell authorities citing family planning and the building of cell offices as community priorities, sector authorities citing health and sanitation, and district officials echoing more national priorities of roads, ICT literacy and electricity.

Overall, the findings indicate a degree of congruency between community and local authority priorities although district level authorities appear more out of tune with community needs than cell and sector level authorities. Citizens' three top priorities of domestic conflict / violence, food security, and health are all reflected in the priorities of cell and sector leaders although differences exist in how these issues are framed, and thus, in the solutions proposed. For example, while domestic conflicts arising from *inter alia* acute income poverty, stress and complicated power relations, constitute a key issue for citizens, it is doubtful that the solutions proposed by officials – ‘regularisation’ of marriages<sup>37</sup> and instructing couples not to fight – will address the complex relational issues underlying this problem. The three top priorities of district officials however are more reflective of national economic development priorities and are of little concern to citizens. These findings overall indicate some level of effectiveness and responsiveness of cell and sector authorities, but practically none at district level where the final planning and budgetary decisions are made.

### ***Citizens' use of local structures***

Another way of assessing the effectiveness of local structures – most notably with regard to their legitimacy in the eyes of citizens – is to examine citizens' knowledge of their role together with citizens' use of these structures in this regard.

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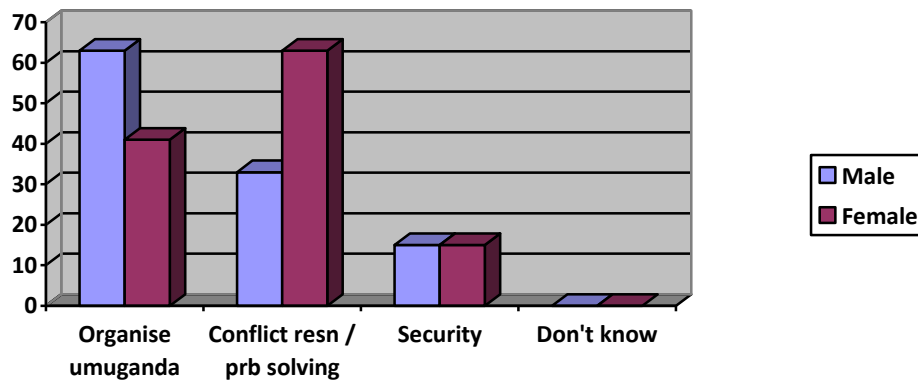
<sup>35</sup> “*Land consolidation*” is a government programme aimed at increasing agricultural output. It involves individual farmers pooling or ‘consolidating’ their land and growing a common subsidised crop (for example coffee) as advised/instructed by local authorities.

<sup>36</sup> *Mutuelle* payment targets form part of local authorities' *imihigos*.

<sup>37</sup> The principle function of the sector *Etat Civile* officer is to ‘regularise’ or legalise common law marriages. Targets of 100% regularisation are included the *imihigos* of sectors visited.

Interviewees were asked what the principle role of village level authorities is. The findings are collated in Figure 3.3.2a below.

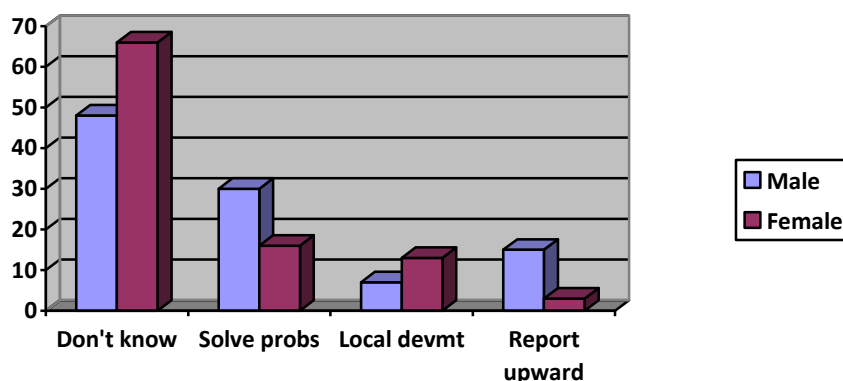
**Figure 3.3.2a: Citizens’ views on the role of village level authorities**



Interviewees – with some significant gender differences – cited three main roles. 36% of interviewees (52% male; 22% female) cited their principle role as being to direct and instruct the population by organising *Umuganda*, transferring orders from the top authorities, and reporting upwards to these. 34% of interviewees (22% male; 44% female) cited their principle role as being local conflict resolution and solving local problems. A further 15% (11% male; 19% female) cited both of these roles while the remaining 15% (equal male and female) cited local security as being their principle role. Thus, the role of local authorities is perceived to be three-fold – to direct the community in carrying out orders from higher level authorities (principally male participants); to resolve local conflicts and disputes (principally female participants); and to assure local security (male and female participants).

Interestingly, asked about the role of district level authorities, 58% of interviewees (48% male; 66% female) professed to not knowing, with a number noting they had never been to the district centre nor seen any district authority so therefore could not know. 22% of interviewees (30% male; 16% female) suggested that they are there to ‘solve problems’ which are not solved at village or cell level; 10% (7% male; 13% female) to carry out local development; 8.5% (15% male; 3% female) to report to higher authorities; and 2% (all female) for local security. These findings are collated in Figure 3.3.2b below.

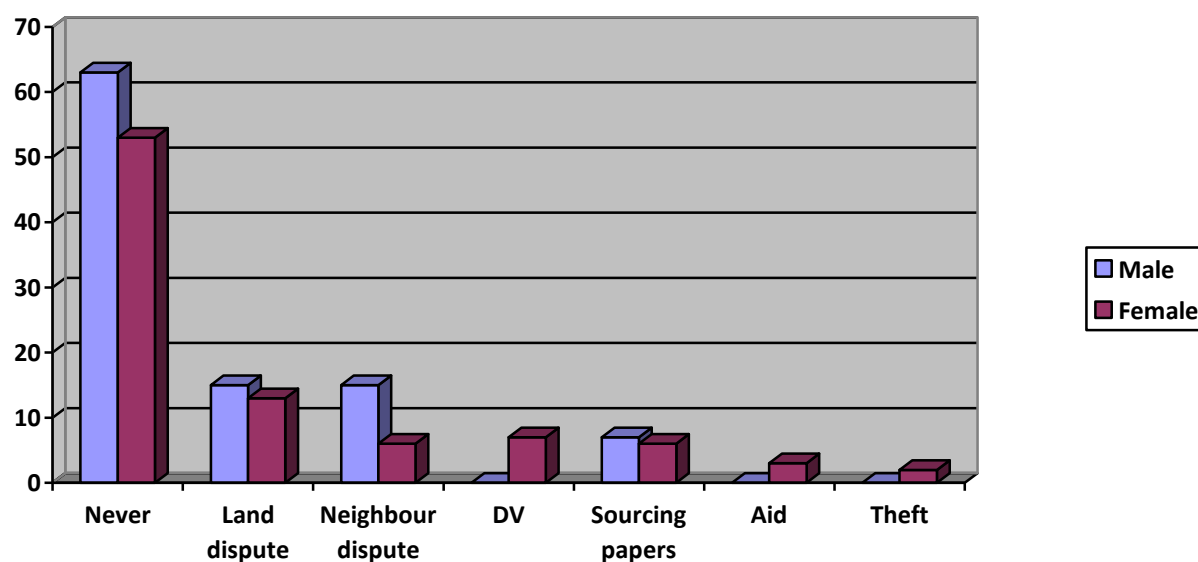
**Figure 3.3.2b: Citizens' views on the role of district level authorities**



Interviewees were also asked if they knew anything about their district budget. 97% (equal male and female) responded that no, they have never heard of this, while 2% (all male) claim to have heard it mentioned in meetings. 1% (all female) declined to respond. These findings suggest a low level of knowledge of the role of district authorities – particularly among women, thereby suggesting a poor level of representation (see following section).

Although 58% of interviewees were unsure of the role of district authorities, all interviewees had views on the role of their local, village level authorities as reflected above. Interviewees were asked, given these roles, how often they have gone to their local authorities with an issue to be resolved. The findings are summarised in Figure 3.3.2c below:

**Figure 3.3.2c: Citizens' use of local authorities**

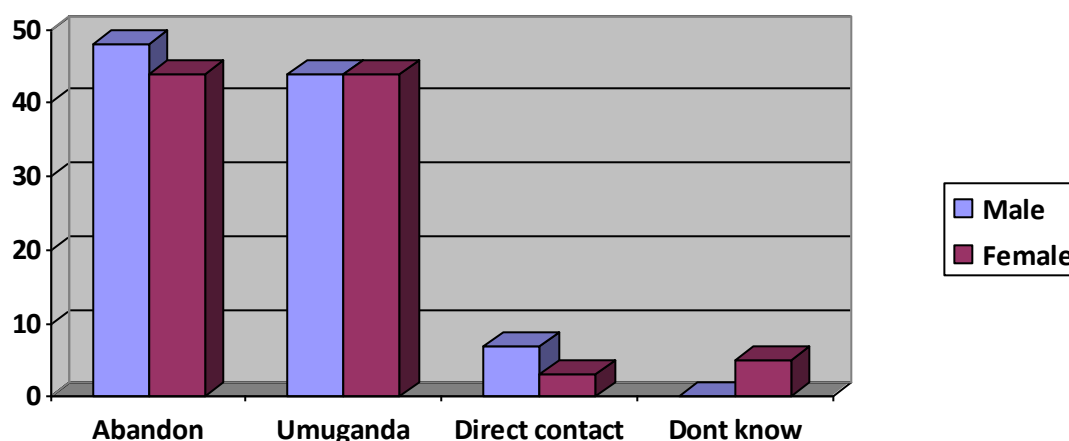


Overall 58% (63% male; 53% female) of interviewees have never approached their local authorities with an issue. This percentage is particularly high in both Site A (Gakenke district (70%)) and in Site E (Kansi sector of Gisagara district (73%)). The gender difference in this overall finding is somewhat consistent with the finding reported above where more women than men see their role in

local conflict resolution, while more men than women see their role as transferring orders from and reporting to higher level authorities. Of those that have consulted their local authorities, 7% (all women) have sought assistance in resolving domestic disputes/violence; 3% (all women) have gone to seek financial assistance as their family were starving; and 2% (all women) have gone to report theft from their homes. A further 14% (15% male; 13% female) have brought land dispute issues for resolution to local authorities; 10% (15% male; 6% female) have gone to seek assistance in resolving disputes with neighbours while 7% (7% male; 6% female) have gone to get official papers (to the Cell leader).

Interviewees and FG participants were also asked how, within their communities, they resolved a) problems with local services and b) local conflicts / disputes with neighbours and/or spouses. The findings from these questions are summarised in Figures 3.3.2d and 3.3.2e below.

**Figure 3.3.2d: How problems with services are addressed**

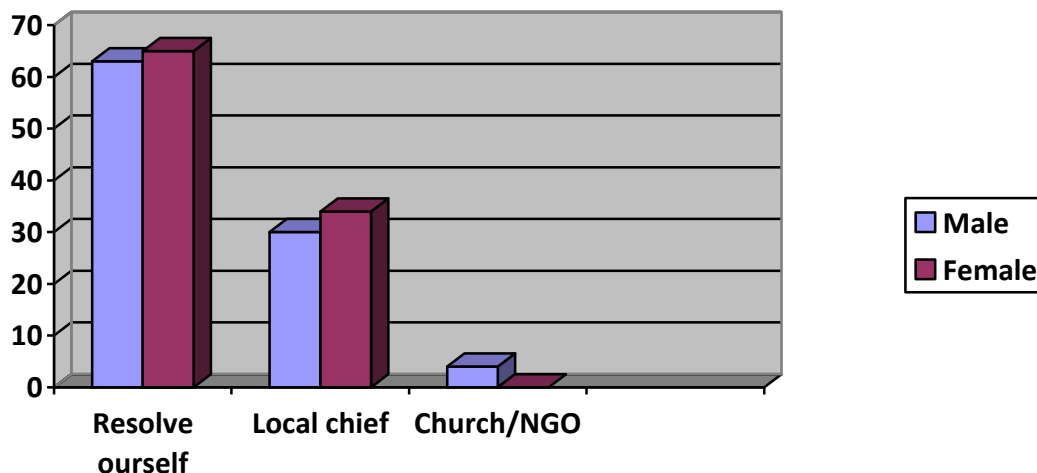


In relation to services, 46% (48% male; 44% female) noted that they abandon the service or find an alternative while a further 5% (all women) said they did not know what to do when services broke down. 44% (equal male and female) said that they go to the local village leader who organises an *Umuganda* to fix the service, while 5% (7% male; 3% female) said that they contact the service provider directly themselves. These findings illustrate that over half of all interviewees do not associate local authorities with service provision. This is particularly prevalent in Site D (Nyaruguru district) where all interviewees reported that they abandon the service and in Site F (Kigembe sector in Gisagara district) where 87% of interviewees abandon the service. In contrast, in both Sites A and B (Gakenke and Rulindo districts in the North), 80% of interviewees claimed to consult their local authorities in cases of breakdown.

These overall findings are somewhat mirrored in the findings in relation to how local conflicts are resolved as depicted in Figure 3.3.2e below.



**Figure 3.3.2e: How conflicts are resolved**



64% of interviewees overall (63% male; 65% female) attempt to resolve local disputes themselves, between families and/or neighbours without involving the local authorities. 32% (30% male; 34% female) involve the local chief while a further 4% (all male) consult another authority either from the church or from a local NGO. Comparing across research sites, interviewees in Sites A and B (Gakenke and Rulindo districts in the North) and Site F (Gisagara (Kigembe sector) in the South), make little use of their local authorities (10%, 20% and 13% respectively) while in Site D (Nyaruguru) 60% of interviewees consult with him/her.

Overall these findings indicate a relatively low level of active consultation with local authorities in relation to two of their core areas of work despite citizens’ awareness of these roles. On the one hand this might indicate that, contrary to suggestions of a passive citizenry, citizens are capable of resolving issues and getting on with their lives themselves. On the other, it may also be indicative of a strong distrust of local authorities and institutions – something both Desrosier and Thomson (2011) and the IRDP (2011b: 83-84) assert is the case. The findings also show that citizens associate local authorities, more strongly than anything else, with organising *umuganda* communal labour and transferring the orders and directives of higher authorities downward to citizens. This reflects the more traditional concept of leadership from the pre-1994 era rather than the more accountable, responsive one promoted within official rhetoric. At district level, the findings are unequivocal in pointing toward a very low level of awareness of role and work of district level authorities and practically no awareness of budgetary priorities or plans. While the findings suggest some level of effectiveness and responsiveness among cell and sector level authorities therefore, this is dramatically weaker at district level. The overall findings in this section raise questions around downward accountability and representation. These are explored in the following section.

### 3.3.3 Procedural participation

In a system of representative democracy, citizen participation is firstly assured through the electoral system. Following the administrative reforms introduced in Rwanda’s decentralisation process in 2006, the first local elections were held throughout the country. Following completion of the first five year term, a second round of elections was held in 2011. Combining a complex mix of direct and indirect suffrage, these elections afford citizens the opportunity to direct elect members of village and cell committees. This is done in a public manner, by lining up (standing) behind the

candidate of your choice. Members of sector and district level councils are then elected by members of cell and sector committees themselves with additional members (reserved seats) being nominated by special interest groups including (but not restricted to<sup>38</sup>) an interest group for women (the National Committee for Women); an interest group for the disabled (the National Council for People with Disability); and an interest group for youth.

Drawing on his observations of and research on the conduct of the 2006 elections in a local village, Ingelaere (2011, 71-73) highlights a number of problems in this election including a ‘sensitisation’ meeting organised by local ruling party representatives with local opinion formers (teachers and local business men) where candidates for the local cell committee were ‘proposed’. According to Ingelaere, all of these candidates were ruling party members who had been screened by soldiers beforehand. These candidates were then nominated at the elections and, with soldiers circulating nearby to ‘provide security’, all but one was elected. These restrictions notwithstanding, it is noteworthy that the remaining position was won by a candidate favoured by a group of residents while, in a neighbouring cell, citizens refused to continue with the elections when soldiers intervened to insist the ruling party representative had won even though he had received less votes than another non-ruling party candidate (Ingelaere, 2011: 76 – Note 7). Thus, Ingelaere’s account reveals political coercion but also local resistance to this.

In contrast to this account, there was some consensus from interviewees for this research that the 2011 local elections, held from February to April, were relatively free and fair, with little overt coercion involved. With “*mobilisation of the population*” constituting one of local officials’ *imihigo* targets however<sup>39</sup>, participation in elections is more or less mandatory. An election monitor from the RCSP interviewed reported that the only problem observers could report was the fact that some people – notably women – were either late in arriving or did not turn up at all, “*Some women were not coming. Some were still at home. By the time it is voting time they have still not come. And it should start on time.*”. All citizens interviewed for this research reported that they had voted. Asked why, they either responded that it is mandatory or that it is their “*civic duty*”.

While the findings from this research reveal little evidence of political interference in the direct selection of candidates, they do reveal evidence of indirect influence in that ‘sensitisation’ sessions were organised some days in advance by local authorities to inform citizens of the characteristics that they should seek in candidates (a Rwandan citizen who is honest - with any prison record not exceeding 6 months<sup>40</sup>, fair, literate, experienced in leadership and a problem solver). 3% of individual interviewees (all women) reported that suitable candidates were pointed out in advance by local authorities during these meetings. This ‘sensitisation’ notwithstanding, most interviewees were content that they had the freedom to choose their own choice among the candidates proposed. As a participant on one of the FGs noted

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<sup>38</sup> There is some confusion among interviewees regarding how many such special interest groups can nominate members. Some restrict it to the three cited here while others also include business interest groups, academic interest groups, economic sectoral interest groups, representatives of different local services (in health, education, etc.) and others.

<sup>39</sup> Interviews local officials, Sites, A, B, C, D and E. A number of local officials (and some citizens) noted that a 100% electoral turnout is an indicator of “good governance”.

<sup>40</sup> This effectively precludes many targeted opposition figures who, commentators argue, have been jailed on sometimes quite spurious grounds (see Reyntjens, 2004, 2010; Straus, 2006).

*Before, I would go [line up] behind someone who is my relative. Or maybe it was someone who will buy me a drink in the bar. [Today] Most people have changed their mindset and you can leave your relative and go and stand behind someone who will develop you.*

(Participant female FG, Site B)

While the direct election process thus appears relatively free and fair (although a number of interviewees note that the lack of a secret ballot makes it somewhat problematic), the process becomes far more complicated as one moves up the scale to sector and district levels. Here candidates are elected by cell and sector committee members themselves, with an unspecified number<sup>41</sup> of reserved seats provided for nominees<sup>42</sup> from special interest groups. There was some consensus among interviewees that the important and influential positions of district Mayor and, to a lesser degree, Vice-Mayor, while, in theory emerging from this indirect electoral process, constitute in reality strategic political appointments. How precisely this happens is unclear, but one commentator in Kigali outlines the broad contours...

*...in reality, there is a committee in Kigali who decides who becomes Mayor. So if you want to run as Mayor, forget it, you need to have the contacts here [in Kigali]. It is always you have the official way, and then how it is actually done. And that is always a big difference in Rwanda. The way it is actually done – how I understand it – is you have a committee with people from the ruling party, the army, the police etc. - those high ranking guys. And you need to have good contacts. Then they suggest you. Then the elections are a formal way, but it is clear who can be Mayor and who cannot.*

(Representative of international agency, Kigali)

Thus, it would appear that the high ranking positions, at district level at least, involve some level of political interference / influence, thereby undermining, to some degree, the level of citizen participation at this level.

Of course representative democracy also only works if two additional conditions are met – that elected representatives enjoy some degree of influence and control over policy, and that, in exercising this influence, they represent and remain accountable to their citizens. The findings reveal some additional problems in both these aspects within the Rwandan system.

On influence and control, as we have already seen at cell and sector level, committee/council members – either through job contracts within the public service or less formal socio-political networks – are often dependent on and therefore subservient to the Executive Secretary. It is therefore unsurprising that none of the local authorities interviewed could explain, when asked, the process through which decisions are reached when multiple views are expressed in council meetings. Instead, authorities at cell and sector level report that decisions are reached by consensus and there is never a problem of disagreement. At district level, as one interviewee notes, the problem appears compounded by the fact that councillors do not have access to the necessary documentation in advance of meetings and therefore have no basis on which to make decisions.

*Often they [district councillors] don't see any documents. It's interesting. Often even for the budget, or whatever, they should approve all those documents, but in fact they don't see them*

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<sup>41</sup> None of the interviewees at any level could specify the exact number of reserved seats at Sector and District levels.

<sup>42</sup> These are selected / elected from within their own associations.

*at all, or they don't have any time to prepare. So it just 'ok fine' once it comes to making a decision.*

(Representative of international agency, Kigali)

Regarding representation and accountability, elected leaders were asked how they mediate with and assure accountability to their constituents. The findings reinforce those in the previous section where little evidence of representation was apparent – most notably at district level where citizens are unaware who their representatives are. Thus, in response to a question on how he represents his constituents in his role as President of the cell committee, one interviewee responds that this is done by “*explaining to the community what has come from the higher authorities.*” The range of activities and directives discussed at monthly cell committee meetings are communicated by members when they return to their villages and villages are mobilised accordingly. The minutes of one recent cell committee meeting examined during the field research comprised the following items: a security update; plans for the preparation of Hero’s Day<sup>43</sup> celebrations; organisation of communal labour for local youth about to commence their national service<sup>44</sup>; and sensitisation regarding *mutuelle* payments. A sector council member interviewed however notes that this is a two-way process and that her role is also to bring issues from her cell constituents to the sector council for discussion. *I oversee the population. I see what the plans for the sector are and I take them to the cell level at the cell level meetings. And at the cell meetings, I can also hear about different problems or issues that are happening in the cell and I can take these to the sector level.*” There does therefore, among those directly elected, appear to be some level of representation – although the basis for selection regarding who or what is represented remains unclear. At district level, councillors interviewed struggled to explain their link to citizens. Most noted that citizen participation was assured through the planning process with priorities from villages feeding up to cells, those from cells to sectors, and those from sectors to DDPs. One vice-mayor also noted that she was elected on a platform<sup>45</sup>, with citizens aware of her platform (which, she notes, is to represent women), therefore this is how she represents them. While cell and sector councillors attend monthly *umuganda* meetings where citizens have an opportunity to express their views and concerns (see the following section), attendance at these fora by district councillors is reported to be rare.

Of course all of these issues are certainly not unique to Rwanda. In fact they mirror issues reported elsewhere, together with the shortcomings of procedural participation and representative democracy more broadly in the global South and North alike. For these reasons, the last thirty years have witnessed increased interest in and support for more substantive forms of participation which provide for ongoing citizen influence and control over decisions and policies affecting their local, daily lives. As we have seen in Section 3.2, an ethos of substantive participation was one of the driving forces of Rwanda’s decentralisation process from the outset. How this is played out in practice is examined in the following section.

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<sup>43</sup> Hero’s Day, which falls on Feb 1<sup>st</sup>, is one of a number of annual celebrations commemorating the “*liberation struggle*”, as it is now known, from 1990-1994 and the ensuing genocide. See “Rwandans mark Heroes Day” and “Kagame pays Tribute to Fallen Heroes”, *The New Times* February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> All male second level graduates are obliged to carry out three months of National Service.

<sup>45</sup> It later emerged in interview that the vice-mayor was nominated by the National Committee for Women

### 3.3.4 Substantive participation

As we have already seen, relevant policy and legislation emphasises that the opportunity for citizens to engage, deliberate and take decisions on local issues and priorities lies at the heart of Rwanda's decentralisation process. This more substantive form of participation is facilitated through three principle mechanisms which are discussed below.

#### *Ubudehe*

Possibly the most innovative mechanism affording citizen participation is that of *ubudehe*. *Ubudehe* is described as “*the traditional Rwandan practice and cultural value of working together to solve problems*” (MINALOC, n.d.: 1). Applied in the context of decentralisation, *ubudehe* is a process developed by MINALOC which involves a four step process - social classification (assigning people to wealth/poverty-based *ubudehe* categories); social mapping; prioritisation of problems; and the elaboration of a strategy and action plan to address these problems (MINALOC, n.d). Community trainers have been trained to facilitate communities through these four steps. The process was piloted in 2001-2003 and rolled out nationwide in 2004-2006 with the first social maps produced in 2006. In 2008, the process won a UN Public Service award and, according to Shah (2013), by 2010 a map for every village throughout the country had been produced. Action plans aimed at addressing identified priorities were funded through a Community Development Fund provided by the EU and administered through MINALOC. In December of 2010, the NISR and the Ministry of Health produced a national database of statistics from *ubudehe* poverty classification data and, for the first time, began to link VUP<sup>46</sup> payments and *mutuelle* obligations to these *ubudehe* categorisations.

While there has been little empirical research on this process, the small amount of existing research appears quite positive. Shah (2011) argues that *ubudehe* represents “*a paradox of hidden democracy amid autocracy*” and, in a later contribution (Shah, 2013), argues that *ubudehe* “*has contributed to democratization in Rwanda through the introduction of elements of village level participatory democracy and through a less tangible impact on a broader shift from an ‘obedience culture’ to a ‘citizenship culture’ in the country.*”

Strong efforts were made over the course of this research to uncover more information on the *ubudehe* process. However, all that is left of this process today is the first step only – social categorisation for the purposes of targeting citizens for VUP and *mutuelle* payments. When asked about the *ubudehe* process within their villages, citizens instantly responded with their own categorisation – “*I am in category 3*” etc., with many following up to express dissatisfaction with this. This research uncovered no evidence of trained community facilitators. Instead village leaders lead the categorisation process during *umuganda* meetings. Villagers propose categories for different households. However, the final decision on categorisation is made at cell level by the cell leader and it now appears that resource availability for welfare schemes linked to the process rather than community preferences dictate the final categorisation.

So what happened to *ubudehe*? How did it change from an exciting, innovative mechanism of substantive participation to an externally driven social classification exercise? Three principal factors appear to have contributed to its demise. First, the EU fund administered through MINALOC for plans and projects prioritised through the process no longer exists. Second and allied to this,

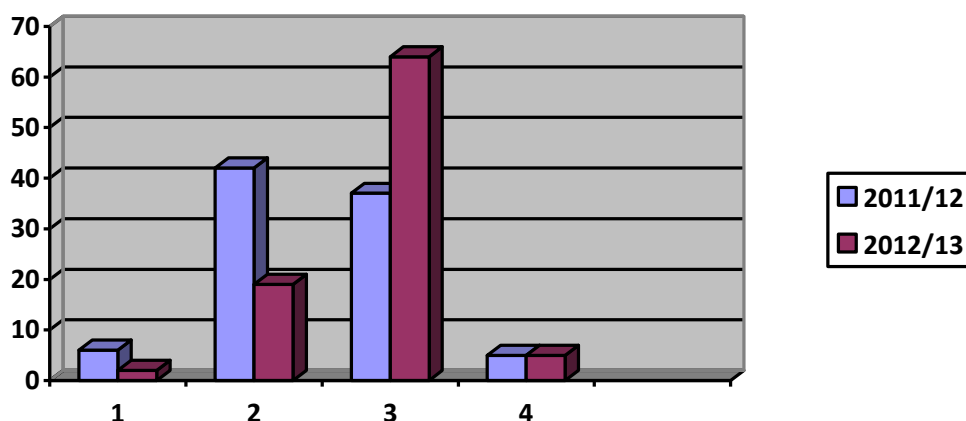
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<sup>46</sup> The VUP programme targets low income households and provides cash transfers (direct and in return for work) and micro-credit facilities.

many of the issues prioritised by communities for action requiring outside assistance were not actually addressed. Consequently, as one interviewee explained “*in doing the same exercise each year, the problems remained the same. The solutions were coming drip by drip [very slowly if at all]. There weren't really many changes.*”. Third, the spirit and functioning of the mechanism changed considerably since its linkage to welfare schemes in late 2010. *Ubudehe* is now conceived and understood as a classification exercise. While communities participate during village meetings in assigning categories to households, the final decision rests with the cell leader and, with limited resources available for associated welfare schemes (most notably the *mutuelle*), these decisions are now necessarily based on resource availability rather than community classifications with households in categories 1 and 2 receiving some VUP assistance and having their *mutuelle* contributions paid for them by the state. As we will see below, there is considerable evidence of a consequent ‘upgrading’ of households to Category 3 for these reasons.

Individual participants in field research for this project were asked about the *ubudehe* process in their village. Their categorisations for this year and last are set out in Figure 3.3.4a below.

**Figure 3.3.4a: *Ubudehe* categories for interviewees in 2011/12 and 2012/13**



The majority of individual interviewees (64% - 70% male; 59% female) are currently in *ubudehe* category 3. The percentage of interviewees in this category is markedly lower in Site A (Gakenke district (30%)) than in the others (between 60% and 80%). Overall, the next most common category among interviewees is category 2 (19% overall – 15% male; 22% female) with again, a markedly higher proportion of interviewees from Site A (Gakenke (50%)) than elsewhere within this category. 5% (4% male; 6% female) of interviewees are in Category 4; 2% (all female and all from Site E (Kansi Sector in Gisagara district) in Category 1; and 10% (11% male; 9% female) do not know what their category is<sup>47</sup>.

As noted above, in late 2010, *ubudehe* categorisation became linked to *mutuelle* payments with Category 1 and 2 households having their *mutuelle* fees waived, Category 3 households having to pay FrRw 3,000 per person and Category 4s reportedly having to pay FrRw 7,000 per person. This development has coincided with some changes in *ubudehe* categorisations across all sites. Overall, 58% of interviewees’ households lie in the same category as last year, 33% have changed category, and 9% are unsure of their category. 31% have been moved upward in category while 2% have

<sup>47</sup> It is likely that this 10% fall into category 3 or higher as they reported paying their own *mutuelle*.

moved downward. Of these, the vast majority (25%) have been moved from Category 2 to Category 3 meaning, as most are quick to point out, they now have to pay FrRw 3,000 per person for their *mutuelle*. This trend is particularly prevalent among interviewees in Site C (Nyamagabe district) where 50% have been moved from Category 2 to 3. A further 2% have been moved from Category 1 to 2 (a number of these on their own request as they did not wish to be associated with the “*typical Category 1 type*” described by local authorities as someone with no self-respect left to eat the crumbs of others<sup>48</sup>); 2% from Category 3 to 4; 2% from Category 1 to 3; and 2% from Category 4 to 3.

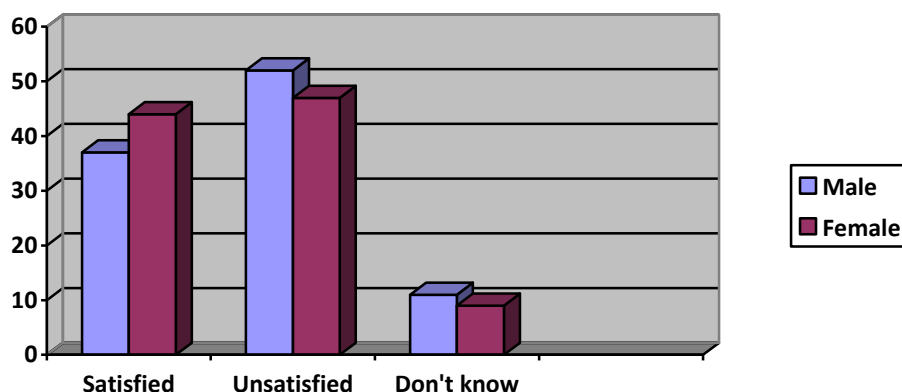
The changes in *ubudehe* categorisations may reflect general improvements in poverty levels indicated by official government statistics deriving from household surveys as discussed in Section 3.1). Or they may reflect the need for greater cost-sharing in state expenditure on welfare schemes. The manner in which *ubudehe* categorisations are made and the level of public satisfaction with these provide an indication of this. Interviewees and FG participants were asked to describe the process through which these categorisations are agreed. Some interviewees describe a process resembling that outlined by Shah (2013) whereby community members, in a community meeting with the village leader, assign categories to all households. They note however that these categories may subsequently change as the final decision rests with cell leaders. Other interviewees claim that cell leaders alone make the decision with no discussion within village meetings. Whatever the level of village engagement however, all interviewees in all sites agree that the final decision on categorisation rests with cell leaders. For their part, cell leaders interviewed note that they need to consider public resources when assigning households to particular categories.

Bearing in mind the strong link between horizontal inequalities, political marginalisation, grievance and conflict outlined in Section 3.2, perhaps the most important question is the degree to which citizens are satisfied with their categorisation. As outlined in Figure 3.3.4b below, of the 59 citizens interviewed, a slight majority (49% - 52% male; 47% female) are unhappy with their categorisation; 41% (37% male; 44% female) are satisfied and 10%, not knowing their category, did not respond to the question. There are some slight variations from site to site with a low (20%) level of dissatisfaction in Site A (Gakenke) (where 50% of interviewees were in Category 2 and just 30% in Category 3 – 20% did not know their category) compared to a high level (82%) in Site E (Kansi sector in Gisagara) where the highest percentage of interviewees – 73% - lie in Category 3. While, given the small sample size, these figures in no way reflect overall *ubudehe* categorisations in the sites sampled nor indeed nationally, both the correlation between high levels of level 3 categorisations and levels of dissatisfaction with these and the tendency to re-categorise upward do suggest a growing dissatisfaction with authorities’ cost-sharing policy regarding social welfare programmes. This represents a significant challenge for peacebuilding moving on into the future.

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<sup>48</sup> Interviews Sites B, E and F.

**Figure 3.3.4b: Levels of satisfaction with *ubudehe* categorisation**



While these findings demonstrate the demise of *ubudehe* as a mechanism for substantive participation, a number of interviewees argue that its spirit continues in the dialogue, discussions and planning sessions which take place at monthly *umuganda* meetings. This second mechanism is discussed below.

### *Umuganda*

*Umuganda* refers to the Rwandan tradition of communal labour on public projects. On the last Saturday of every month, all Rwandans are obliged to participate in communal labour works. Following the physical work, a meeting is held where, in theory, the communal work carried out that day is evaluated and plans for further works are discussed and agreed, together with community issues and plans more broadly. The issues raised at these meetings are supposed to feed upward to cell, sector, and district plans with, every five years, a formal upward-planning process taking place for the development of the DDP. In interview, when asked about citizen participation in this planning process, all local authorities stressed that the DDP draws from priorities identified by communities during *umuganda* meetings, although there is some variation in various accounts on the specific process for this. Generally the reported process is as follows. It begins with a prioritisation of issues at village level. The resultant list of priorities is then sent to the cell. These lists are collated and re-prioritised by the cell committee and sent to the sector. The sector council then collates and re-prioritises and a list is sent to the district. At district level, DDPs are said to ‘draw from’ these lists and specific programmes, projects and activities from the resultant DDP are then communicated back down to sector, cell and villages for implementation.

For meaningful substantive participation to take place within any policy or planning sphere, there needs to be a well worked out system of ranking / prioritisation of preferences which is open, transparent, and follows a set of clearly defined criteria. Local officials were asked what the process for prioritisation was at each level. Nobody was able to provide a clear response to this question. At cell and sector level, it is particularly unclear, with leaders suggesting that issues from all cells and villages are the same. “*The priorities are similar. They are almost the same with all the cells so it is not like a big problem how to prioritise. All the cells seem to be on the same level.*” (Sector Executive Secretary, Site E). At district level, a range of factors come into play including sectoral, ministry plans, national plans, budgets, etc. In a process which, this time round, has been coordinated by MINECOFIN rather than MINALOC, the current round (2013) of DDPs are being drawn up by



consultants. Again, none of the interviewees could respond to questions on prioritisation criteria or levels of influence at this level although it was noted that national strategies and plans as well as budgetary constraints constitute important factors.

*We see all the problems coming from the sector and we have a team that deliberates on this at the level of this district. It depends on the budget that we have and we select the ones that are high priority.*

(Vice Mayor, Site D)

*The current plan is for five years. It commences at the most local level. We are in the month of February. We started last March. We started in the villages, we assembled the priorities and onto the cell, and onto the sector. There was a calendar which was given by MINECOFIN. There were plans for the level of the district, for the level of the province, and at a national level. We have also other plans, for example Vision 2020. We have tried to include the priorities of the different ministries... We also try to look at the EDPRS. There are also the MDGs. These are all different plans but they show the priorities of the government. We contract a consultant to bring together all of these ideas... If you have the opportunity to analyse these different plans, they are all complementary. If I go into the EDPRS, the main areas are the same although the targets may differ. There is no difference between the needs of our population and what is in these documents. In the domain of economics, the priorities are the same. In the social domain, they are the same, water and sanitation, electricity, there is no difference. No document merits more attention than the other.*

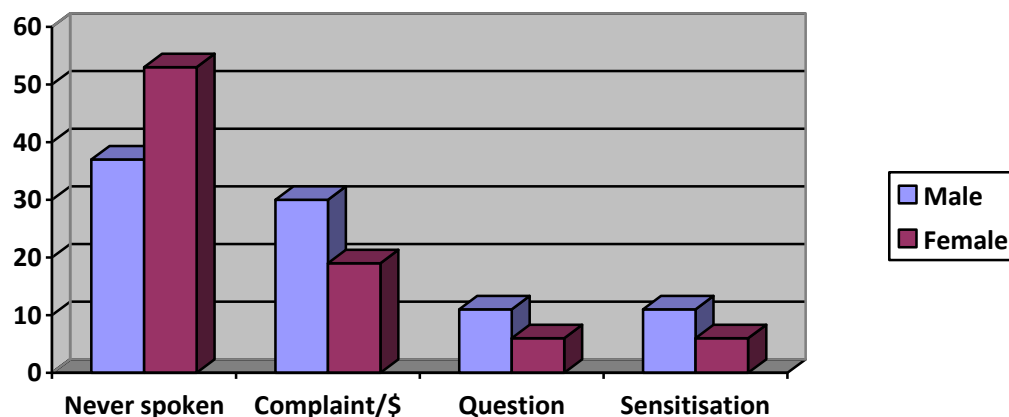
(District Executive Secretary, Site B)

Despite the bottom-up rhetoric, the consistent failure to explain the prioritisation process for different inputs / ideas / proposals at the different levels together with the myriad of national level priorities and plans which also need to be represented within DDPs suggests that, even if citizens are consulted, their inputs wield little influence. Indeed, a representative from an international agency supporting the local planning process claims that the current process, organised by MINECOFIN and conducted in considerable haste, was merely a desk-based exercise with no field visits and no use of local plans of any sort.

Although the link between *umuganda* discussions and the planning process appear weak or non-existent therefore, it is important to note that, in a significant and decisive break with pre-1994 *umuganda* works, discussions and deliberations do indeed take place following the completion of communal labour. Many interviewees (state and civil society) were extremely keen to point out that these meetings represent important democratic spaces for citizens to speak out openly and freely as envisaged within the original decentralisation policy.

While being free to speak out is certainly extremely important, both the specific communication act (questioning, proposing, advocating, sensitising, criticising etc.) and its reception (ignored, applauded, acted upon etc.) are also important. What is the point in speaking if no one is listening and no action results? The level and quality of communication within *umuganda* meetings were examined in two ways in this research. First, individual interviewees were asked if they participate in *umuganda* meetings and, if so, have they ever spoken and for what purpose. The responses are summarised in Figure 3.3.4c below

**Figure 3.3.4c: Levels of participation in *umuganda* meetings**



Overall, 86% (89% male; 83% female) of interviewees report that they regularly attend their meetings although 93% (93% male; 94% female) report participating in *umuganda* communal labour. Of those attending meetings, 46% (37% male; 53% female) have never spoken at a meeting. This percentage is particularly elevated in Sites A and B (the Northern districts of Gakenke and Rulindo) where 80% of interviewees have never spoken at a local meeting. Of those that have overall, 24% (30% male; 19% female) have made a complaint or sought financial aid either for themselves or a neighbour; 8.5% (11% male; 6% female) have asked a question, and 8.5% (11% male; 6% female)<sup>49</sup> have used the opportunity to sensitise people on a particular issue – e.g. family planning.

Individual interviewees were asked what issues were raised for discussion in *umuganda* meetings. 15% (14% male; 16% female) talked of sensitisation by local authorities in three main areas – payments for services and programmes (school building programmes, *mutuelle* etc.); land consolidation plans / orders on what crops to grow where; and village and house cleaning programmes. A further 15% (19% male; 13% female) talked of the organisation of the work for the coming *umuganda*. 24% (23% male; 25% female) raised both these issues. 38% (41% male; 34% female) talked of security updates, with 33% raising them in conjunction with the other issues cited above. Thus, the main topics for discussion are payments – in cash and kind – for local programmes and local security issues. This echoes findings on citizens’ views of the role of local authorities (see Figure 3.3.2a previously).

To triangulate these findings and obtain a clearer idea of how *umuganda* works in practice, field research included a structured observation of an end of month Saturday *umuganda* session in a working class neighbourhood in Kigali. While the aim had been to attend *umuganda* in one of the research sites, circulation restrictions did not allow us to reach the site<sup>50</sup> and so we (my translator and I) travelled to the Kigali site on foot instead. I carried out a structured observation where I documented and timed all interventions. I later coded these into the different forms of intervention from the different participants resulting in Table 3.3.4 below.

<sup>49</sup> These are generally local representatives of NGOs – selected as local leaders / ‘opinion formers’. Such roles are highly coveted as they offer a potential route out of poverty (through training allowances and potential future employment) and add to people’s status within local communities.

<sup>50</sup> Police road blocks prohibit all traffic circulation on *umuganda* days.

**Table 3.3.4: Results from a structured observation of *Umuganda* discussions in Kigali city**

Type of intervention	Speaker	Gender	Length of time spoken (mins)
Introductions	Cell Executive Secretary	Male	3
Announcements	Cell Executive Secretary	Male	10
Questions	Citizens	Male (x10) Female (x2)	10
Responses	Sector Council member	Female	7
	District Council member	Male	13
	Cell Executive Secretary	Male	5
Wrap up	Cell Executive Secretary	Male	2

It is worth recounting in full the detail of the meeting as the tenor and issues raised provide valuable insights into local authority – citizen relations. The meeting, which took place outside the cell office following the communal labour (which consisted of cleaning and digging ditches on the sides of a number of nearby unpaved roads), lasted 50 minutes in total. Sitting at the top table were the cell Executive Secretary (male) who chaired the meeting, 4 members of his committee (all male), a female delegate<sup>51</sup> from the sector who is in charge of elections, and a male member of the district council. Approximately 300 citizens were in attendance. There were a few benches and everyone else stood.

Over the 50 minutes of the meeting, the cell, sector and district officials spoke for a total of 40, or 80% of the total time. Citizens – 10 men and 2 women – spoke for a total of 10 minutes, or 20% of the total time.

The meeting began with introductions of the different people at the top table by the cell leader. He then continued with five announcements. The first was to sensitise citizens to separate their recyclable waste including plastic bottles, disposing of this in the recycle bins provided by the private company contracted for this purpose. The second announcement was that the fee for this recyclable waste collection has now been raised from FrRw 1,000 to 3,000 per month per household as the cell leaders have changed the company they are contracting for this. The third was the announcement of the introduction of an additional financial contribution of FrRw 5,000 per month for a new *Education Fund*. This was to be introduced with immediate effect. This was met with some murmurs of protest from participants. The cell leader responded that households would have to contribute at least FrRw 3,000 and that he would visit each house during the coming week to collect this. The fourth announcement was that all members of households, and not just their heads, must participate in *umuganda* communal labour. Furthermore, they should all bring their own hoe. Individuals turning up without a hoe will be recorded as absent and will be fined accordingly (FrRw 5,000). The fifth announcement was to request members of the local branch of the RPF to stay on after the meeting as a party meeting would take place thereafter. The cell leader then asked if anyone present had any questions.

The first question came from a man, roughly in his 30s, who asked why they are being continually asked for so many financial contributions. Listing contributions relating to security, the *mutuelle*, the schools, and waste collection, he claimed this was all too much and unaffordable for households.

<sup>51</sup> She introduced herself as a ‘delegate’ and it remained unclear if this meant she was part of the sector council or one of its committees.

His intervention was met with good natured laughter and a round of applause from other participants. A younger man, roughly in his 20s, then stepped up and asked what the new education contribution is for, given that they have already contributed for schools in the area. A third man, roughly in his 30s, asked a question about *umuganda* participation, asking what a household with a wife and young children could do if all over 18 are obliged to participate. A fourth man, again roughly in his 30s, asked for precision on whether the new FrRw 5,000 education contribution is per individual or per household. The cell leader briefly responded to this question, confirming it was per household. A fifth man, roughly in his 50s, noted that *umuganda* communal works should be organised to fix the bridge on the river nearby as it has become dangerous and many people pass by every day.

Following these 8 minutes of citizen intervention, the cell leader invited the authorities at the top table to respond. The sector representative was first to speak. She noted that the financial contributions are for everyone's common interest and that "*the government wants everyone to participate*". She explained the *Education Fund* was like the *mutuelle* and was to allow the government to meet its targets in extending the '9 years basic education' to 10 years<sup>52</sup>. She added that this contribution will only be for some time and said that anyone who is unable to pay should come to see 'us' (it was unspecified who exactly), and they would sign a paper exempting them from this obligation. Regarding the final question on the bridge, she noted that the bridge is not included in the DDP and that the cell authorities cannot afford to do this maintenance themselves. She asked the District representative present to lobby on their behalf for assistance on this at district level. Addressing problem of childcare and *umuganda* participation, she noted that "*the rules are written but the implementation is always different*" and the head of the household just needs to explain the situation to the cell leader who will exempt his wife from participation.

The district representative then stepped up to respond. His intervention was framed more as a general sensitisation beginning with the reminder that both *umuganda* and financial contributions are all required by the government for citizens' benefit. He asked what should they (the authorities) stop. Should they stop the *mutuelle*? Participants responded in chorus, no. Should they stop education? Again, a chorus of no. Security? No. He then asked if anyone present knew how much education costs the state. Failing to provide a figure, he went on to stress that FrRw 5,000 is necessary but those who feel they cannot pay can discuss this with the authorities. He added that the government cannot achieve its vision with contributions of just FrRw 1,000. With regard to the question on increases in waste charges, he noted that "*a study has been done and the Sector committee and authorities have decided that FrRw 5,000 is required from each household*", adding that he pays FrRw 5,000 in his cell.

The cell leader briefly intervened at this point to argue that all studies done at sector level should be announced to the population. This intervention was applauded by participants.

A woman, roughly in her 30s, then rose to speak. She asked whether if, in the case of casual workers such as herself, it would be possible for the authorities to collect the money when they have it rather than wait until the end of the month, as it is spent by this time.

The district representative responded that this should be possible. He added that the sector representative should respond to the comment on informing the population regarding studies as the waste study was conducted at sector level.

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<sup>52</sup> In its strategy to increase primary enrolment, thereby meeting its MDG2 target, Rwanda has embarked on an ambitious programme aimed at guaranteeing nine years primary education to all children. The government is now extending this to ten years.

The sector representative then responded that although the sector committee decided on the FrRw 3,000 fee, this was following instructions from the Rwanda Regulatory Society who advised between FrRw 3,500 and 5,000. The sector committee then decided on FrRw 3,000. She agreed that everything was getting expensive but asked people to make the effort as it is important to have a city that is clean. On the education fee, contradicting the earlier information provided, she noted that this is FrRw 5,000 per year and not per month and that this can be paid in instalments.

The district representative then attempted to wrap up the session beginning *“It’s clear I think. Please follow up and do what we ask. If you don’t understand something or if your security is not assured, come and tell us. I will lobby for your bridge at the district and will keep you updated.”*

A woman, roughly in her 40s, then stood to ask if the waste charges also apply to businesses and will larger businesses pay more.

The cell leader failed to directly answer the question but responded that all businesses would pay and the waste disposal company will make the contract with each payee. Attempting to bring proceedings to a close, he thanked the ‘visitors’ at the top table. Noting that participants had solely applauded interventions questioning financial contributions, he reprimanded them for not applauding the interventions from their leaders asking if they were not content with the responses. No applause ensued. He then added that the sector should look for tenders from waste disposal companies and then select the lowest tender.

The sector representative responded saying she agreed and admitted the sector had not had time to look for tenders. She promised to see has the district obtained tenders and come back to the population with feedback. This intervention was met with enthusiastic applause with the sector representative responding that *“this is what decentralisation means – that the population takes part in decisions. We will come back with a solution.”*

Once more the cell leader then tried to bring the meeting to a close. However, another man, roughly in his 20s, rose to report a break-in in his house at 2am that morning and to complain that the citizen in charge of security that night did not arrive when notified. The cell leader responded that he would visit him during the week and ‘take action’ (what such action might be remained unspecified). Another man, roughly in his 40s, then intervened to note that the citizen in charge of security in question is an Adventist and therefore should be replaced from Saturday duties<sup>53</sup>. At this point the meeting ended abruptly.

A number of points may be drawn from this detailed account. First, the observation corroborates interview data that *umuganda* meetings do provide citizens with an opportunity to voice their issues, ideas and concerns. Although citizens were afforded just a fifth of the overall time, with a number insisting on this despite leaders attempts to draw proceedings to a close prematurely, and although the interventions were from just 4% of the total population present – with these being predominantly men, the insistence of a number of participants in speaking, together with broader participation through, at various times, applause, laughter and murmurs of dissent suggest a strong public appetite for participation. Second, the meeting demonstrates a level of accountability from local leaders when they are challenged by citizens. There is also however – most notably in the case of the announced increase in waste charges - evidence of a) passing the buck / blaming higher levels for

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<sup>53</sup> Saturday is a day of rest within the Adventist religion.

inadequacies; and b) admonishment of citizens themselves – this is most notable in the district officials’ interventions where superior budgetary knowledge and ‘studies’ are invoked to silence dissent as well as in the cell leader’s (unanswered) appeal for applause for sector and district leader responses. Third – and probably most striking, considerable disquiet at the imposition of arbitrary taxes / financial contributions is evident. Three further points in relation to these taxes are noteworthy – a) their arbitrary nature; b) the lack of clarity on how much they actually cost (the *Education Fund* moved from FrRw 5,000 to 3,000 and from a monthly to an annual payment in the space of a 50 minute meeting); and c) their negotiability on a case by case basis. These issues are discussed further the next section on participation as cost-sharing. Fourth, while significant resistance to arbitrary taxation is apparent, there appears to be some engagement with the communal labour component of *umuganda* as evidenced by the proposal for work on the nearby bridge. Unfortunately, although this is clearly a community priority, its omission from the DDP is clearly an obstacle in including it in *umuganda* planning. Again, reinforcing findings reported earlier, this calls into question the rhetoric of bottom-up planning.

Overall, although clearly a distance from the broad, open dialogue among citizens themselves envisaged by the original policy, and also, as a number of participants noted privately to me at the end, probably not very representative of less open *umuganda* meetings in rural districts, the meeting nonetheless illustrates that a space exists for citizens to voice their views and, perhaps more importantly, they appear keen and not afraid to exercise this voice – most particularly in relation to dissent and concern on the growing number of arbitrary taxes. What is not so clear however, is whether these concerns are genuinely being heard and acted upon. These concerns in relation to taxation are discussed further in the following section. Before turning to this however, we will examine one final mechanism in place for substantive participation at district level.

### ***Joint Action Development Forum (JADF)***

One of the main organs of citizen participation identified by a number of officials and NGOs alike is the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF). Organised and run by district officials, the JADF was established as a forum for dialogue among the principle development partners at district level and, in theory, opens a space for NGOs and local associations to raise issues from their constituencies. In practice however, the JADF principally functions as a way of coordinating interventions and exchanging information on who is doing what. As the JADF Permanent Secretary in one district visited explains, “*The JADF is the forum of partners, all of the partners who have activities in the district, to see what it is they do... We do a plan of action together, we do monitoring, and evaluation of activities of each development partner in each sector.*” There are 27 international agencies and 16 local associations – including local churches, NGOs, banks, insurance companies – involved in the JADF in this district which meets every three months.

As a forum for coordination of activities, the JADF appears to function well. However, as a forum for dialogue and a space for substantive citizen participation, it suffers in a number of respects. First, its role and mandate are unclear to participants. Second, participants appear to participate passively rather than actively – in part due to confusion on the function of the assembly, and in part due to insufficient time in preparing for it. One commentator explains the problems:

*The role and the mandate of the JADF is still not clear... And it doesn't work in practice because the playing field is not level. So in theory you have the tripartite [state, local civil society, donor agencies] multi-stakeholder dialogue. But it's the local government that is initiating the meeting very often. The chairperson is the Vice Mayor. So there is already a*

*difference in power obviously which you cannot bridge easily. And then people are invited late. They don't receive an agenda. They cannot provide any inputs. If they do, these are not taken into account. And it is very selective in who participates.*

(JADF member, Site D)

And third, even where space is available for more substantive inputs, citizens themselves do not actually participate. While civil society groups often claim to represent their constituents' interests, this cannot be presumed in the Rwandan context where a number of studies highlight the highly clientelist nature of civil society and its consequent weakness in representing the more marginalised and vulnerable (IRDP, 2008; Ingelaere, 2010a; Civicus, 2011; Gready, 2011). In this context, the IRDP finding that just 0.1% of citizens get their information from local civil society organisations is revealing (IRDP, 2011a: 140)<sup>54</sup>.

Overall therefore, the findings reveal that some spaces for substantive citizen participation exist and that there appears quite considerable enthusiasm to use them. The findings also reveal however that these spaces have closed somewhat over time – in the cases of both *ubudehe* and the JADF, fulfilling functions other than that for which they were originally intended. Possible reasons for this are discussed in further detail in the concluding section. For now however we turn to the third, and most prevalent form of participation within Rwanda's local system – participation as cost-sharing.

### 3.3.5 Participation as cost-sharing

As the RGB's *Citizen Report Card* research has revealed and, as this research has substantiated, the most common form of participation in Rwanda's local governance process is cost-sharing. This takes two forms – physical contributions in the form of *umuganda* communal labour work and financial contributions in the form of arbitrary, *ad hoc* taxes imposed for different activities and services. These are discussed in turn below.

#### *Umuganda communal labour*

As we have seen, *umuganda* communal labour is held on the last Saturday morning of every month. On this morning, all citizens are obliged to report to their cell office for work. They generally have been notified in advance of what work is to take place. While *umuganda* works officially take place just once a month, in rural areas they are far more frequent. In the sites visited for this research, communal labour works were being organised 2-3 times a week. Many of these involved construction projects – schools, credit and savings facilities<sup>55</sup> and offices for cell leaders<sup>56</sup> were among the most common activities.

Questioned as to how citizen participation is assured in local governance, many local authority leaders interviewed referred to these communal labour works. For example, a sector leader who has received NGO training in participation responds:

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<sup>54</sup> 87% get their information from the radio; 8.3% from *umuganda* meetings; 1.6% from their local political representatives and, as noted above, just 0.1% from local CSOs.

<sup>55</sup> Part of the government's current programme (and local *imihigos*) is the promotion of savings and loans among citizens. Facilities for this – SACCOs – are currently under construction or completion in sectors throughout the country.

<sup>56</sup> Offices for cell leaders were under construction in all sites visited. These are also in current *imihigos*.

*The participation of the population, that is when you can use them well. For construction of the bridge [in the sector centre] for example. When there is an election coming up, you know how to mobilise the population. For example the credit and saving building [local SACCO] was built by the population. There were no funds from the government or from any organisations. We just needed to mobilise the population and it was built.*

(Sector Executive Secretary, Site A)

Again, a district vice-mayor echoes this understanding.

*We plan development projects - economic or social. We start the district planning from what the sector has shown as priorities. Having done this planning, we start the execution and we make sure that there is citizen participation in the execution at all stages. For example here [district centre] we need to construct a building for health [health centre]. We need to find land, and the lands will be worked by the population. That is their participation.*

(District Vice-Mayor, Site C)

While the frequency of *umuganda* obligations might seem a little too much for citizens, individual interviewees, when asked about the usefulness of these works, were generally very positive. 86% of interviewees (89% male; 84% female) asserted that it is important to work for the country. For these respondents, there is some ambiguity in terms of who benefits. While most noted that they benefit from construction and maintenance projects (schools, health clinics, SACCOs, road maintenance etc), at the same time they stressed the importance of working for authorities (cell office construction, cleaning of genocide memorials etc.). Given the origins of the term *umuganda*, it is noteworthy that just 5% of interviewees (4% male; 6% female) noted that *umuganda* is useful as it allows the community to help those less well off – notably the *ubudehe* category 1 households for whom *umuganda* labour workers built houses when their traditional thatch homes were destroyed last year<sup>57</sup>. A FG participant explains her views on the process.

*It is a good thing. There is a school here that was built recently and we are now starting a second school and this also is being done through umuganda. If you cannot participate you must pay [FrRw] 1000 a day to replace your labour. Even those people who resist, who do not attend willingly, during the umuganda meetings they are blamed.*

(Participant FG women, Site B)

### ***Financial contributions***

As well as contributing labour, citizens are also required to financially contribute to a range of projects and programmes including local building projects, services and the public health insurance scheme – the *mutuelle*. As we have seen in the *umuganda* session outlined above, these payments prove extremely difficult for families and households which are already struggling to meet their daily requirements and are the source of growing resentment and frustration. There are a number of reasons for this growing unease.

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<sup>57</sup> One of the nationwide programmes last year (included in *imihigos* at all levels) was the destruction of traditional thatch round huts and their replacement with the new approved, modern-style rectangular houses with tin roofing. While many households were obliged to undertake this work and expense themselves, Category 1 households had their housing built through *umuganda*.



First, for many households it simply proves too difficult to manage to pay these obligatory contributions. As we have seen, one of the payments consistently highlighted – partly because of cost and partly because of worries over not being able to access health care – is the health insurance premium, the *mutuelle*. As we have seen, with an increasing number of households being recategorised upward in the *ubudehe* scheme, increasing numbers are having to pay this themselves. While some interviewees related stories of coercion by local leaders in efforts to bring in these payments in the past (forcing households to sell some livestock for example), the current strategy appears to be to force citizens to take out loans. Participants in two FGs explain how they have managed.

*We have made associations [groupings of a number of households] and borrowed money from the bank to pay our mutuelle. All of us here have done this.*

(Participant FG men, Site A)

*For the health insurance it is mandatory. You must pay this. Last year they brought us books from the bank. The cell leader brought these. So whenever you get [FrRw] 500 you take this to the village chief. He takes the money and he signs that he has deposited this. So by the time of buying a new health insurance, they saw how much we had deposited. If we had not deposited enough, they [cell authorities] would lend us the money. So now some of us are paying back for this.*

(Participant FG women, Site B)

Second, there is a lack of clarity around local budgets. As we have seen in Section 3.3.2, citizens are not familiar with even the broad contours of local budgets, including sectoral allocations. While the percentage of devolved resources is reported to have increased to approximately 33% in recent years (MINALOC, 2013b: 19 – following MINECOFIN figures), discussions with budget officers in two districts visited reveals confusion regarding both the provenance (direct ministerial transfers vs. block grants. vs. earmarked donor funds – these are all included together in budgets) and the destination (district, sector or cell – this information is not available) of these funds. The sectoral breakdown of funds (health vs. education vs. cell office construction etc.) also remains unclear.

Third, for particularly vulnerable households (*ubudehe* categories 1 and 2), there are reports of welfare payments being used to pay these arbitrary taxes. A representative from one of the international agencies supporting one of the welfare programmes outlines the issue.

*I want to talk about the extent to which households have free choice in how they use those [welfare] resources in the current context. For example in our programme, when it was in full pelt, if you talked to people about what they spend their money on, a lot of it was spent on iron sheeting for their roofs [an obligatory purchase last year when thatch roofs were outlawed]. This is a very delicate area and it's a very tricky one but I think there is something there about the extent to which households have full control of the choices they make and about the resources they receive when local space is so controlled by the sector administration in terms of how a household behaves and the contributions they have to make.*

*...The other example would be, recently our head of office went out to visit some schools. VUP beneficiaries there were complaining about the fact they had to contribute to the school fund and they had to use some of their cash transfer to do that. In a sense there is a question*

*about how fungible the money is from the government perspective because it is given out by the government but it often also gets reabsorbed in a circular motion.*

(Representative of international agency, Kigali)

Fourth, it remains unclear to citizens how much of the collected taxes are actually used as they should be. As one interviewee notes

*You have to pay for the community policing. Do a simple calculation. You pay 1000 per month. And this is an area of 800 household so it is already 800,000. And imagine, the guy earns maximum 15,000 per month. And they have 5 people. So that's 75,000. So what happens with the 725,000 FrRw? Nobody knows. And this is just one contribution. Then you have to pay here and you have to pay there. And it's always more and more and more. And you don't know what's happening with the money.*

While President Kagame exercises a strict no tolerance policy for corruption at national level, there are broad allegations of small scale corruption or “*manipulation*” at local level, in part exacerbated by the reliance on voluntary labour from local leaders at the most local levels and in part by the clientelist nature of local leadership. As one state interviewee notes:

*The social protection schemes here are very well manipulated. You find this, for instance, with the funds to support the genocide survivors. Everybody is so poor, so they try to make false lists and so on. And then we find a brother to [X – speaker gives own name] who is on the list for that. So people try to access whatever facility is in place... it happens at a level where you can't call it corruption. It's manipulation really. It's really acceptable and common. It is acceptable. It is accepted. But it is really dangerous.*

(Representative of national state agency, Kigali)

And fifth, as we have seen in the account of the *umuganda* meeting in Kigali, citizens complain that the number and amount of these contributions are rapidly escalating. This is borne out by the government's own plans for local revenue generation. The revised Decentralisation Policy notes the low level of revenue generation at local level and is aiming to increase this significantly “*Districts generate only between 5-20% of their budgets. MINECOFIN is in the process of commissioning a revenue potential study for districts to determine the potential of districts after which baselines will be determined and targets set for revenue improvement.... It is anticipated that with effective tax administration, within the first year of implementing the LG tax law, local government revenues will increase from the present RwF 16 billion to as much as RwF 90 billion.*” (MINALOC, 2013b: 19). In addition, in the wake of aid cuts at the beginning of 2013, the government introduced a new tax to fund a new *Rwanda Development Fund*. Under this scheme, public servants must pay a months' salary per annum (or a 12<sup>th</sup> of their salary). It has since been expanded for all salaried employees including those in the private sector. While this payment is still called ‘voluntary’, interviewees note that there is no such thing as a voluntary contribution, “*It is called voluntary but it is not. Even X, he was told that he had to contribute and that he didn't have a choice. The umudugudu [village] chief came around with a list and said 'this is what your neighbour paid'. And he just had to do it. If you don't sign and pay, then you are in trouble.*”

### 3.3.6 Participation, decentralisation and peacebuilding

The findings from this overall section show some level of responsiveness at cell and sector levels to citizens' needs compared to district level where priorities more closely resemble those of national authorities and where links with citizens appear low to non-existent. This points to weaknesses in the procedural system of participation at district level. The higher level of dialogue and communication between sector and cell levels provides leaders with a more accurate sense of citizens' priorities although, mediating between these needs and those of their superiors, they are not always in a position to address these effectively. Given this closeness to the population, it is perhaps surprising that citizens' use of local authorities is so low (see Figure 3.3.2c). This suggests, despite local dialogue and communication, ongoing low levels of trust in and popular legitimacy for local leadership as argued elsewhere by both Desrosier and Thomson (2011) and the IRDP (2011b).

The findings also show that the main form of participation employed within the Rwandan process is that of cost-sharing – both in labour and financially. The manner in which this is implemented has a number of consequences for local relations. First, as well as increasing financial pressures on households which are already on the margins, the fact that these financial demands are increasing; their apparent arbitrary nature; and the lack of clarity on where the balance of these funds ends up is leading to growing disquiet and concern among citizens which necessarily impacts on local leaders' legitimacy and support. Second, local leaders' attitudes towards their citizens as they seek their involvement in this cost-sharing – exacerbated by pressures to meet ambitious *imihigo* targets – at times echo the condescending, paternalistic, prejudicial attitudes of the past which, as we have seen, constituted one of the important background factors to the genocide. And third, the clientelist nature of political representation – both generally and in negotiations around welfare payments and taxation rates – necessarily favours certain individuals (the well connected, influential and powerful) over others (the marginalised and voiceless). This impacts on both relations between leaders and their communities, but also on relations between and within communities themselves. As certain individuals and households are privileged through their political contacts and networks, grievances fester and the cohesion and solidarity fostered through various reconciliation processes suffers.

The implications for peacebuilding are clear. As discussed in detail in the accompanying report on *Local Governance, Conflict and Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*<sup>58</sup>, key ingredients for peacebuilding include a rebuilding of trust and confidence between citizens and the state; the promotion of equity and redistribution; and inclusive governance (driven by institutions and not individuals). While Rwanda's decentralised process overall, rolled out equally across all provinces throughout the country, has aimed at regional equity in terms of service provision and institution building, its demands of, attitude toward, and impact on local communities remain problematic. While many national level participants in this research argue that any problems are due to deficiencies in local capacity – among local officials and citizens alike – this research indicates that they are more systemic. These points are discussed further in the final concluding section below.

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<sup>58</sup> Available at [http://doras.dcu.ie/view/people/Gaynor\\_Niamh.html](http://doras.dcu.ie/view/people/Gaynor_Niamh.html).

## 5. Conclusion and issues arising

This research has examined the decentralisation process in Rwanda in the context of its overall aim of countering the social, economic and political marginalisation of citizens experienced pre-1994. It has done so through both documentary analysis of relevant legislative and policy materials and through field research in six sites across the country employing a framework which differentiates between procedural participation (electoral participation); substantive participation (ongoing active participation in local decision making); and participation as cost-sharing (ongoing participation through financial contributions and voluntary labour). The findings reveal four important things.

First, although there is much talk among officials and commentators about bottom-up planning processes emanating from local village meetings (formerly *ubudehe* and now *umuganda*), and while such an ethos underpins the original *Decentralisation Policy* formulated in 2001, the accompanying legislation is somewhat scant in its references to such a form of participation, and indeed to mechanisms whereby this might take place. The Presidential Order setting out the roles and functions of village, cell and sector structures emphasises their mobilisation and education roles but makes no mention of local planning while the law determining district organisation and function makes no provision for public reporting of either decisions taken or a budgetary breakdown.

Second, a shift in emphasis within the programme over time is evident. The current national strategy of fast-track economic development as a route out of poverty has been superimposed on the original goal of reconciliation and community building. This is evident in the 2013 revisions to the *Decentralisation Policy* as well as in the shift from political decentralisation toward administrative decentralisation evidenced in the introduction of public management frameworks such as *imihigo* and the emphasis on the administrative capacity of local leaders. It is also evident in the demise of the local planning function of *ubudehe* which is now a social categorisation mechanism with final categories being decided by cell leaders.

Third, the findings from both the comparison of local official and community priorities and citizens' knowledge and use of local structures reveal no evidence of representation or accountability at district level where plans and policies appear heavily influenced by national prerogatives and where senior political figures are, paradoxically, both elected through the official system and strategically selected at national level. However, these same findings reveal some evidence of responsiveness at sector and cell level where communications and contact with communities are more frequent. Although aware of community priority issues and needs, local officials are somewhat constrained in their capacity to address these however, due to pressures to meet the ambitious targets set out in their *imihigos* which draw from higher level plans and targets.

And fourth, of the three forms of participation examined, participation as cost-sharing emerges as the most common, with increasing emphasis placed on this in recent years as local entities are encouraged to move toward fiscal autonomy and self-reliance. The heavy emphasis on this form of participation is viewed as problematic in a number of respects. The increase in financial contributions; their apparent arbitrary nature; and the lack of clarity on where the balance of these funds ends up is leading to growing disquiet and concern among citizens which necessarily impacts on local leaders' legitimacy and support. In addition, local leaders' attitudes towards their citizens as they seek their involvement in this cost-sharing – exacerbated by pressures to meet ambitious *imihigo* targets – at times echo the condescending, paternalistic, prejudicial attitudes of the past which constituted one of the important background factors to the genocide. Moreover, the clientelist nature of negotiations around welfare payments and taxation necessarily favours certain individuals

over others impacting on both relations between leaders and their communities, but also on relations between and within communities themselves. As certain individuals and households are privileged through their political contacts and networks, grievances fester and the cohesion and solidarity fostered through various reconciliation processes suffers.

For adherents and supporters of Rwanda's ever-evolving decentralisation process, three broad questions arise from these findings.

First is the important but often overlooked fact that history matters. In Section 3.1 some important parallels between views of the pre-1994 regime and the current one were highlighted – namely the broad perception within the development community of Rwanda as a developmental success story drawing from the state's strategic control of statistics and narratives around this; the prejudice of the *evolués* (among state and civil society officials alike) toward their rural, illiterate, underdeveloped brothers; and the use of decentralised structures to promote centralised interests and plans. This, of course, is not to say that Rwanda today, nor indeed its decentralisation process, mirrors that of the past. Nor is it to detract from the significant development achievements of the current government. Like the many domestic conflicts which play out under shiny tin roofs glinting in the sun in villages throughout the country, it is simply a reminder that shiny, modern veneers can mask deeper problems. The development community has been blinded by this veneer before. In this context, it is perhaps worth reflecting on how “good enough” does “good enough governance” need to be? While international attention is turning to Rwanda's internal governance issues, this remains in relation to issues at a national level. However, both history and contemporary peace research show that attention needs to be paid to local as well as national levels.

An allied critical question at this juncture is whether “fast-track development” is compatible with other peace-building objectives aimed at transforming the political space resulting in equity, social cohesion and local political legitimacy. Some assert you can have it all but the findings from this study raise a number of problems with such an assumption. Specifically, the pressures of a fast-track approach dependent on high levels of cost-sharing by citizens jeopardises the quality of the social contract between leaders and citizens and, by necessity (bottom-up development takes time), pressures local leaders to adopt less inclusive forms of governance. Moreover, in a country where, by the government's own admission, patriarchy is endemic (MIGEPROF, 2010: 8) and where women outnumber men in small-scale farming by 2 million to 1.1 million (NISR, n.d.e: 28), questions need to be raised about the gendered (as well as class-based) effects of the government's rapid industrialisation strategy. In this regard, the *EICV Gender Report* finding that over the past five years there has been a fall in the number of men working in agriculture but a rise in the number of women doing so is instructive (NISR, n.d.e: 28).

In this context, when placing capacity and capacity building at the heart of supports to the process, the question needs to be posed - what and whose capacity are we talking about? Is it the capacity of communities to substantively interact with detailed administrative policy and budgetary mechanisms within a complex system or is it the capacity of the system to engage with community members as equals, valuing their knowledge and analysis, and developing the capacity, skills and tools to translate this into the necessary policy and budgetary frameworks? If the former, the futility as well as the dangers of the process are apparent as the problem then becomes the familiar, condescending one of an illiterate, uneducated population incapable of mastering the technical expertise required as expressed here by a national civil society agency representative.

*What we do see lacking until now is we haven't got enlightened citizens who will know what has been planned so that they can call the leadership to account... We have a big percentage of an illiterate population and therefore they cannot hold the leadership to account at district, sector or at cell level because they are less competent. Secondly most of those who have been to school do not have sufficient educational backgrounds. To master the auditing and all that, quantifying the volumes of work that are supposed to be done, and all that stuff. They are not competent.*

(Representative of national civil society agency, Kigali)

If the latter, tools such as the promising early version of *ubudehe* need to be developed so that community priorities and analyses can not just be collated, but can genuinely form the basis of district and national plans. Beyond lists, this means developing open, transparent criteria for prioritisation of both issues and analyses which are clear and communicated to all. It means significant capacity building at national levels. And, above all, it means challenging officials on what constitutes knowledge and transforming dominant views on – to paraphrase Chambers (1997) – “whose knowledge counts?”.

The challenges are clearly immense. However, with these questions in mind, it is important to remember that decentralisation was not just the key mechanism through which communities were physically mobilised during the genocide, it was also (together with the aid industry more broadly), for decades running up to the genocide, one of the key mechanisms through which the conditions of structural violence (marginalisation, alienation, humiliation) that preceded and underpinned the genocide were disseminated and consolidated. Decentralisation, like participation, is not, on its own, necessarily a good thing. It depends on the underlying aims, ambitions and motivations of its adherents and supporters. While it can certainly oppress, subjugate and alienate communities, leading to frustration, anger and physical revolt, it can also actively engage communities, opening new political spaces and leading to a renewal of the social contract between citizens and their leaders while building social cohesion and stability. The important thing is to learn from and not replicate history.

# Appendix I

## Map of Rwanda



## Appendix II

### Imihigo for Nyamagabe district – 2012-13

#### INTRODUCTION

Situated South-West of the Southern Province, Nyamagabe District is one of the 8 Districts comprising the Southern Province. It is surrounded by the Districts of Karongi and Ruhango in the north, Nyanza and Huye on the East, Nyaruguru in the South, Rusizi and Nyamasheke on the West. Nyamagabe District is subdivided into 17 administrative Sectors, 92 Cells and 536 Villages (Imidugudu).

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF 2012-2013 PERFORMANCE CONTRACT

The District Performance Contracts for the year 2012-2013 capture essential socio-economic and political activities mainly, infrastructure development, agriculture and livestock productivity, environment protection through terracing, education by increasing enrolment, construction of classrooms for 9YBE, resolved communal conflicts and reduced unnecessary court backlogs to mention a few.

The so captured priorities have been developed from grassroots level (Household to Villages, Villages to Cells, Cells to Sectors and Sectors to District). They also consider the Partners (JADF) interventions.

The planning and the prioritization exercise has been guided by:

- ☒ Presidential promises,
- ☒ Vision 2020 and CCLs,
- ☒ Government 7 years Program and MTEF,
- ☒ MDGs,
- ☒ Cabinet decisions,
- ☒ National dialogue recommendations,
- ☒ Leadership retreat recommendations,
- ☒ Recommendations from various reviews (Province, District Consultative Council, JADF and Sectors).

The table below highlights 53 priorities of Imparirwamihigo za Nyamagabe for 2012-2013 fiscal year. Those priorities are distributed in 4 pillars which are Economic development (with 32 priorities), Social development (with 13 priorities) and Good Governance and Justice (with 8 priorities).

No	OUTPUT	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TARGET	COST ( RWF )	(SOURCE OF FUNDS)
<b>PILLAR I: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>					<b>1,856,527,995</b>	
<b>Objective I: To increase agriculture and Livestock production and value addition</b>					<b>98,223,377</b>	
1	<b>Output 1.1</b> : Land consolidated /cultivated under CIP increased	Number of Ha consolidated for each crop	Cassava: 3 543,1 Ha (2011-2012)	Cassava consolidated on 4 000 Ha	15,100,000	RAB, MINAGRI, DISTRICT
			Wheat: 7621 Ha (2011-2012)	Wheat consolidated on 8 000 Ha (Season B)	1,000,000	RAB, DISTRICT
			Irish Potatoes: 14 906,7 Ha (2011-2012)	Irish potatoes consolidated on 16 000 Ha ( 7500 Ha Season A and 8500 Ha Season B)	1,500,000	CITIZENS, DISTRICT
			Maize: 7 244,6 Ha (2011-2012)	Maize consolidated on 8000 Ha ( 7000 Ha Season A and 1000 Ha/ SeasonB)	1,500,000	RAB, DISTRICT
		Number of Ha cultivated	Beans : 11 982.1 Ha	Beans cultivated on 12 027 Ha (6013 Ha Season A and 6014 Ha/ SeasonB)	300,000	DISTRICT, MINAGRI
2	<b>Output 1.2</b> : Land productivity increased	Productivity and production on consolidated land for each crop	Irish Potatoes: 15T/Ha (2011-2012)	Irish Potatoes: 20T/Ha	500,000	DISTRICT
			Maize: 2.8 T/Ha	Maize: 3.2T/Ha	500,000	DISTRICT



No	OUTPUT	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TARGET	COST ( RWF )	(SOURCE OF FUNDS)
3	<b>Output 1.3:</b> Post harvest facilities (drying grounds) augmented	Number of Maize drying ground constructed	1 Cassava drying ground	1 Maize drying ground ( BURUHUKIRO Sector) constructed	14,823,377	MINAGRI
4	<b>Output 1.4:</b> Livestock Production and productivity increased	Number of cows distributed	1851 cows	2000 cows distributed to poor HH	35,000,000	GIRINKA, KWITURA, PARTNERS,
		Number of Slaughterhouse	1 Slaughterhouse	1 Slaughterhouse (TARE) constructed	30,000,000	WV
5	<b>Output 1.5:</b> community agro-processing units developed	Number of MCC constructed	Tender process	1 new MCC (TARE Sector) constructed	25,000,000	WORLD VISION
6	<b>Output 1.6:</b> Export crops promoted	Number of Ha Covered	Coffee: 154,3 Ha (2011-2012)	Coffee planted on 400 Ha	1,300,000	NAEB, DISTRICT
		Number of Ha Covered	Tea: 227,2 Ha (2011-2012)	Tea planted on 250 Ha	1,700,000	NAEB, DISTRICT
<b>Objective II: To enhance Urbanization, rural settlement and sustainable development</b>					<b>972,200,000</b>	
7	<b>Output 2.1:</b> Urban viable sites established	Number of Km of roads with street lights	7 Km (2011-2012)	Street lights installed on 5 Km(GASAKA: 2.5 Km, TARE: 1.5 Km and KITABI: 1 Km)	200,000,000	RLDSF
8	<b>Output 2.2:</b> Greening and beautification promoted	Number of new Km greened and beautified	2 Km	3 new Km greened and beautified	5,500,000	OWN REV.
9	<b>Output 2.3:</b> Rural Settlement improved	% of Households Settled in appropriate sites (imidugudu)	42 153 Households / 67 739 Households settled in appropriate sites(imidugudu) (62.22%) (2011-2012)	70.2% (including Households from high risk zone) of District Households settled in appropriate sites(imidugudu)	228,000,000	OWN REV, VUP, PARTNERS
		Number of layouts plans developed	2 layouts plans	92 layouts Plans developed	9,200,000	OWN REV, VUP, PARTNERS
		IDP model	0 IDP model	NYABIVUMU IDP model village established	30,000,000	OWN REV., PARTNERS
10	<b>Output 2.4:</b> Infrastructure developed	Number of Km rehabilitated /stone paved roads	1.5 Km of roads rehabilitated using paved stones (2011-2012)	2.4 Km of roads rehabilitated using paved stones	300,000,000	RLDSF
		Number of new households connected to electricity	2474/72861 Households (3.39%).	10% of Households connected to electricity	5,000,000	OWN REV.
		Number of new people that have access to clean water	250 943/328 460 People (76.4%)	8 540 new individuals accessing clean water	4,300,000	OWN REV.
<b>Objective III: To promote entrepreneurship and business development</b>					<b>263,977,286</b>	
11	<b>Output 3.1:</b> Market infrastructure developed	Number of Selling points constructed	0	A selling point constructed in Kitabi Sector	45,000,000	RLDSF, OWN REV
12	<b>Output 3.2:</b> Viable SMEs & cooperatives promoted	Number of integrated craft production centers constructed	0	Gasaka integrated craft production Center constructed	128,000,000	RLDSF, WV
		Number of youth income generating projects supported	4 projects	1 Youth income generating Project ( Construction of a Fruit processing unit/MUSANGE) supported	25,000,495	MINIYOUTH, DISTRICT
		Number of women income generating projects supported	0	1 Women income generating Project ( a mushroom tube production unit constructed /GASAKA ) supported	30,000,000	WV

NO	OUTPUT	INDICATOR	BASELINE	TARGET	COST ( RWF )	(SOURCE OF FUNDS)
13	<b>Output 3.3:</b> Access to finance Improved	Number of individuals banked with U-SACCO	18737 members (2011-2012)	21 440 new members banked with U-SACCO	1,000,000	OWN REV
		Recovery rate of loans distributed by U. SACCO	(190151407/214630383)= 88.5%	95 % of loans recovered	1,000,000	OWN REV.
		Number of U. SACCO having own office	1 U.SACCO has its own office	16 U. SACCO Offices constructed	1,000,000	OWN REV.
14	<b>Output 3.4:</b> Resource mobilization enhanced	Amount of taxes collected	425,200,192 RWF (2011-2012)	500,000,000 RWF as own revenues collected	3,976,791	OWN REV.
<b>Objective IV: To improve natural resources management for sustainable development</b>					<b>522,127,332</b>	
15	<b>Output4.1:</b> Soil erosion controlled through radical terracing	Number of Ha of radical terraces constructed	Ha 207,5 (2011-2012)	260 Ha of radical terraces constructed	260,000,000	MINAGRI, VUP, FPNV
16	<b>Output 4.2:</b> Are covered by forests	Number of Ha Covered	2120 Ha	1465 Ha	62,127,332	RNRA, DISTRICT
17	<b>Output 4.3:</b> Pollution controlled	Number of Dumping site constructed	Study available	A "Modern dumping site" in Nyamagabe Town constructed	200,000,000	RDSF
<b>PILLAR II: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</b>					<b>756,603,069</b>	
<b>Objective I: To ensure access to quality education and skills development</b>					<b>427,065,069</b>	
18	<b>Output 1.1:</b> early child development centers (ECDs)promoted	Number of centers established	1 ECD	1 ECD established and operational	10,588,126	MINEDUC, CITIZENS
19	<b>Output 1.2:</b> Quality education within 9/12 YBE raised	Number of classrooms and toilettes built	102 classrooms and 204 toilettes (2011-2012)	62 classrooms and 105 toilettes built	209,164,851	MINEDUC, CITIZENS
		Number of Teachers' hostels build	0	17 Teachers' Hostels built (68 rooms for men and 68 rooms for women)		
20	<b>Output 1.3:</b> TVET scaled up	Number of TVET schools constructed	1 (2011-2012)	2 TVETs schools constructed	200,000,000	WDA,UNITY CLUB, RWANDA MOUNTAIN TEA
21	<b>Output 1.4:</b> Illiteracy rate reduced	Number of adults taught (writing, counting and reading)	11014 (2011-2012)	9 156 Taught	4,000,000	OWN REV.
22	<b>Output 1.5:</b> Dropout rate in Primary reduced	Dropout rate	3.3% (2011-2012)	Dropout rate in primary reduced to 2%	3,312,092	MINEDUC
<b>Objective II: To improve access and use of quality health</b>					<b>314,538,000</b>	
23	<b>Output 2.1:</b> Population covered under health insurance scheme increased	% of population covered under health insurance scheme	98,2%	100% of district population covered under Health Insurance scheme	7,000,000	MINISANTE
24	<b>Output 2.2:</b> population using maternal and child health services increased	% of population using modern contraceptive techniques increased	(30766/ 77278 = 39.8%) (SIS)	Population using modern contraceptive techniques increased to 45% (SIS)	5,000,000	MINISANTE
		% of Women attending 4 ante-natal visits	(2685/13428=19.9%) (SIS)	Women attending 4 ante-natal visits increased to 25% (SIS)	1,298,000	MINISANTE
		% assisted deliveries	(9447/13428=70.3%) (SIS)	assisted deliveries increased to 75.2% (SIS)	1,240,000	MINISANTE
25	<b>Output 2.3:</b> Health facilities increased	Number of Health Centers constructed	17 Health Centers in the District	BURUHIKIRO Health Center constructed	300,000,000	RDSF

## Appendix III

### *Members of the Village Executive Committee and the their responsibilities (Excerpts from RoR, 2006a)*

#### **a. Members of the Village Executive Committee**

##### **Article: 11**

The Village shall be administered by the Executive Committee comprising of five (5) people:

- 1° The Village Coordinator;
- 2° The in-charge of social Affairs;
- 3° The in-charge of security and Immigration and Migration in the Village;
- 4° The in-charge of information and education;
- 5° The in-charge of development.

#### **b. Responsibilities of the Executive Committee**

##### **Article: 12**

The **Village Coordinator** shall have the following responsibilities:

- 1° Convene and chair Council and Executive Committee meetings;
- 2° Monitor the implementation of decisions taken by the Council;
- 3° Publicise and lead the implementation of Government policies and plans from higher echelons;
- 4° Promote the culture of a harmonious relationship of all Village residents;
- 5° Collect information on the crime of genocide and mobilise the population to participate in Gacaca Court sessions
- 6° Fight domestic violence and injustice;
- 7° Fight laziness and prostitution;
- 8° Promote good family relations and culture;
- 9° Coordinate activities of the Village Executive Committee;
- 10° List family problems which would be discussed in the Village Council;
- 11° Attend meetings of the Committee responsible for communal work (umuganda) at Cell level;
- 12° Submit report to the Cell.

##### **Article: 13**

Responsibilities of the **in-charge of Social Affairs and family relations** at Village level:

- 1° Mobilise the population to promote hygiene in their Village;
- 2° Identify and advise parents of street children;
- 3° Identify children who attend or don't attend school and advice them accordingly;
- 4° Mobilise citizens to join associations and tontines;
- 5° Put in place an adult literacy plan of action;
- 6° Mobilise citizens on the family planning;
- 7° Mobilise the population to prevent and fight pandemics;
- 8° Identify the vulnerable in the Village;
- 9° Promote harmonious relations in the family especially those which have experienced

domestic violence;

10° Mobilise the population to join health insurance schemes;

11° Submit a report to the in-charge of social affairs at cell level.

**Article: 14**

The **In-charge of security, migration and immigration** in the Village shall have the following responsibilities:

1° Mobilise the population to keep their own security and that of their property by doing night patrols;

2° Ensure security related decisions from higher authorities are implemented;

3° Mobilise the population to keep their own security and help each other in times of danger;

4° Receive and record in the relevant exercise book all visitors to the Village;

5° Submit report to the person in-charge of security at Cell level.

**Article: 15**

The **in-charge of information and training in the Village** has the following responsibilities:

1° Fight rumour mongering by providing factual information and submit report to in-charge of information at Cell level;

2° Collect information from the Village and submit it to his/her superior at Cell level through the Village Coordinator;

3° Prepare an action plan to educate the population;

4° Mobilise the population through civic education and factual information;

5° Mobilise the population to be good citizens;

6° Act as secretary to Village meetings.

**Article: 16**

The **In-charge of development** has the following responsibilities :

1° Plan communal work (Umuganda) and mobilise the population to massively participate in it;

2° Assist the Cell to access basic data;

3° Mobilise the population to join associations to fight poverty;

4° Mobilise the population to maintain infrastructure;

5° Mobilise the population to protect the environment;

6° Mobilise the population to start development activities and join associations;

7° Submit report to the in-charge of development at Cell level.

## Appendix IV

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