

Governing with and for Citizens



August 2016

Lessons from a Post-Genocide Rwanda



A report conducted by Never Again Rwanda and Interpeace as part of the Societal Healing and Participatory Governance for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda.

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Interpeace and Never Again Rwanda are implementing the Societal Healing and Participatory Governance for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda.

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Foreword



Twenty-two years ago, Rwanda was on the verge of the void. Since the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi was stopped, efforts were deployed to help Rwanda heal the wounds infringed by political violence. After emergency period (1994-1999), the citizen centered governance strategies have been woven to ensure that the people of Rwanda plan for, participate in implementation, and evaluate policies and programs meant for their social and economic development. There is no doubt; such a resolve has paid back.

Never Again Rwanda (NAR) is one of the organizations that were created to contribute to rebuilding the post-genocide Rwanda. It is a Peacebuilding and social justice organization. It was created in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in order to mitigate the consequences of the genocide. NAR aims to empower Rwandans and give them opportunities to become active citizens and ultimately become agents of positive change and work together towards sustainable peace and development.

At the beginning of 2015, NAR embarked on a four-year program with Interpeace, entitled *Societal Healing and Participatory Governance for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda*. This program, funded by the Government of Sweden, aims to contribute to the consolidation of a peaceful and inclusive Rwandan society where citizens participate in governance, influence programs and policies that reflect their priorities. It also aims to encourage Rwandans to peacefully manage conflicts and diversity, as they overcome the wounds of the past. The program uses Participatory Action Research (PAR) to ensure that there is enough evidence, and all stakeholders participate in defining and strategizing for a better future.

This report on “Governing for and with Citizens: Lessons from a post – genocide Rwanda” shares evidence of how the Rwanda’s governance has changed over time in a positive manner. It also highlights some challenges that have persisted, and if not appropriately dealt with, we would not be sure of sustainable development of Rwanda. We are therefore calling upon our stakeholders to put hands together as we build on the documented best practices and address the challenges.

Dr Joseph R. Nkurunziza
Country Director, Never Again Rwanda

This report is dedicated to late Professor Naasson Munyandamutsa. His leadership in the conception and implementation of the Societal Healing and Participatory Governance Program for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda was vital.

Executive Summary

Never Again Rwanda (NAR) is a Peacebuilding and social justice organization. It was created in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in order to mitigate the consequences of the genocide. NAR aims to empower Rwandans and give them opportunities to become active citizens and ultimately become agents of positive change and work together towards sustainable peace and development.

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In a bid to implement the Participatory Governance axis of the program, NAR, among other activities, carried out a research on “Governing for and with citizens: Lessons from a post – genocide Rwanda”. The study has specifically sought to examine perceptions of Rwandans on citizen participation in governance, provide citizens with a forum to openly analyze key issues regarding citizen participation and explore avenues for improvement, explore Rwandans’ perception of the participation in policy phases, assess the effectiveness of some existing mechanisms for citizen participation, identify major challenges in citizen participation and suggest possible solutions.

NAR’s research relies primarily in participatory action approach (PAR). This approach considers participants as experts and co-researchers, due to their lived experiences related to the research theme. Concerned communities are involved in identifying, analyzing and suggesting solutions to challenges they face.

Throughout this study, this approach was used in two complementary ways. On the one hand, (1) a working group comprised of stakeholders 21 from CSOs and governance institutions, and a sub working group, comprising four researchers and governance experts were formed to provide technical support to the research team throughout the entire research process, deepen the analysis and increase the ownership of the findings; on the other hand, (2) Citizens and other governance stakeholders (local leaders, decision-makers, CSOs, media and academics) were involved in assessing the issue of citizen participation in Rwanda, and in identifying areas of progress/success to build on and gaps to fill at individual and policy levels.

The research was conducted in selected sectors from 10 Districts and the City of Kigali. A total of 616 people were interviewed for this report. Specifically, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involved 30 FGDs with 445 citizens; 6 FGDs with 98 participants representing Civil Society Organizations: 1 FGD with 10 women participants, 1 FGD with 12 people living with disabilities, 1 FGD with 14 participants from the media and 1 FGD with 10 participants from the academics. Also, the study collected data through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) where a total of 27 key informants (members of civil society Organizations, members of local Councils and Districts Mayors). All interviews were recorded audio - visually whenever participants consent was secured.

The findings from data analysis indicate that citizens appreciate the political good will and mechanisms put in place to facilitate citizen participation. They define citizen participation in terms of electing leaders and holding them accountable, leaders’ requirement to consult citizens on key issues affecting them, allowing citizens to voice their priorities for consideration in policy making, citizens’ ownership of governance processes, and interactions with leaders. Rwandans understand and value citizen participation as an important tool for governance. They believe that in a post-genocide context, citizen

participation can be harnessed through tackling issues associated with trust and respect, access to information, citizens' right to feedback, provision of safe spaces to interact, as well as appropriate education and socialization.

Participants also analyzed the effectiveness of some participation channels including state sanctioned and non-state sanctioned ones. State-sanctioned channels include citizens' assemblies (*Inteko z' Abaturage*), local councils (*Inama Njyanama*), Members of Parliament, National Women Council, National Youth Council, the National Dialogue, the Presidential outreach visits, as well as programs like *Imihigo*, *Ubudehe*, and *Umuganda*. Non-state sanctioned channels include broadcast media and Civil Society Organizations.

By large, all state - sponsored channels assessed in this study, have improved citizen participation to some extent, but in most of these, women and girls tend to participate less mainly due to the cultural legacy of confining females into positions and roles involving "soft matters". It was mentioned that the Presidential outreach visits appear to be the most appreciated. This challenges other leaders in central and local government to do the same. As for non- state sponsored channels, the media have increasingly been appreciated for giving citizens a forum to participate in governance, but there is room for improvement. The CSOs have also been appreciated for their role in service delivery but challenged for their less involvement in evidence – based advocacy. All in all, despite some challenges, the existence of such mechanisms reflects the Government of Rwanda's political will to enhance a citizen-centred governance.

That said, there are still challenges that seem to hamper the effectiveness of mechanisms meant to spearhead citizen participation including (i) a long standing culture of centralism and culture of obedience, (ii) communication gaps among citizens' representatives (iii) gaps in local vs central government planning and coordination, (iv) gaps in women's participation.

Despite Rwanda's many efforts aimed at promoting "integrated citizen-centered local and national development planning, evidence for this study suggests that state centralism is still manifest in attitudes and practices of local government leaders and citizens. Some local leaders do not involve citizens in decision making, are not confident enough to take initiative to solve citizens' concerns. They use authoritative language that inhibits their participation. Instead of asking for citizens' views, some leaders impose their will. Clearly, consulting citizens on major issues affecting their daily lives has not been genuine. Citizens, too, have not asked accountability from local leaders without the support from the central government. Usually, citizens are reluctant to use direct channels to denounce unsatisfactory actions of local government leaders. Most of the time, citizens' complaints are shown during Presidential outreach visits.

Decentralization process is not leaping its envisaged results because of socialization processes. The culture of centralism was so entrenched in daily lives of citizens that their participation in governance issues is not smooth. It looks like Rwandans were raised in situations where their leaders always knew what was good for them instead of asking them to voice their needs. They were passive bystanders, incapable of positively shaping their destiny. This is exemplified in many *Kinyarwanda* proverbs including "*Uko zivuze niko zitambirwa* (the way the drums are beaten is the same way you should dance), and "*Umwera uturutse ibukuru bucya wakwiriye hose* (*what the mighty decide quickly spreads to the rest of the population*) illustrate how culture does not allow men and women to participate meaningfully. Instead of challenging leaders, they may decide to follow in a blind manner. Of course, leaders are elected or selected from the large community, implying that they too may share the same beliefs.

Secondly, there are communication gaps among citizens' representatives (councilors and MPs). While participants commended the performance of Local Councils, including reviewing and approving action plans, *Imihigo* and District budgets, they were criticized for failing to consult citizens on matters affecting their lives and for failing to give feedback where it was due. There is lack of smooth collaboration between and among *Njyanama* at different levels. Evidence suggests that council members at the sector level for example are not required to exchange information with their counterparts at the District level. Decisions taken at the Sector level do not necessarily inform those taken at the District level. In such an environment, the District Council members do not address real issues if they are not

in regular and systematic contact with councilors at the sector and cell levels. Factors behind this performance include lack of adequate institutional, human and financial capabilities to carry out their representation roles, but above all, there is no official avenue that citizens can use to denounce a councilor who is not performing to their expectations. As for MPs, the study recognizes some efforts made to get in touch with citizens through participation in community work “Umuganda” and Radio Rwanda Inteko. Some field visits are also organized by MPs’ commissions on an ad hoc basis. However, longstanding complaints such as “we do not see them”, “they do not consult us”, “the last time we saw them was when they came to campaign” persist. Such complaints about MPs were also reported by previous studies (IRD, 2010, 2011 & 2013). With recently reported outreach initiatives by all MPs, such complaints may be addressed so long as citizens are informed in advance about such visits and prepared to use them accordingly.

Of course, such visits cannot bring about sustainability if local leaders do not play their role. An acute question also is posed in line with inappropriate communication between council members and MPs, which leads to inadequate representation of real needs, views and priorities of citizens. Recalling that, citizens have complained that their council members do not adequately consult them on issues that affect their daily lives, and the fact that when MPs visit the District, they cannot meet every citizen. They meet their local representatives, taking into account the fact that citizens often see some of MPs during Umuganda but the former do not have no time to voice our concerns, citizens priorities be voiced for action and advocacy. Some questions are worth pondering on. What should representative democracy mean for Rwandans? Does it merely mean the mandate to think and act on behalf of voters without any obligation for regular contacts with them and get feedback? How can representatives be sure that what they approve or adopt actually reflects the major needs and priorities of citizens when the latter have not been consulted? To whom are MPs accountable? Can citizens ask MPs to resign if they are not happy with their performance? These questions are pertinent and need to be addressed if representative democracy is to be a reality in Rwanda.

A third challenge is about gaps in local – central government planning and coordination, despite a clear direction and guidance provided by the decentralization policy. Instead of synchronizing plans and budgets with local priorities as expressed by citizens and consolidated in District Development Plans and Annual Performance Contracts, partly due to centralism of the state, policy measures and programs that are adopted at national level have largely been forwarded to local entities with an urgent request for immediate implementation. This has put a lot of pressure on local entities to the extent that they do not have time to consult citizens. By the way, it seems that the Government of Rwanda (GoR) had this in mind when the Joint Imihigo were recently adopted to streamline and synchronize local and central government plans regarding agriculture, energy, exports, job creation, urbanization and rural settlement, social protection and service delivery. This approach also seeks to clarify responsibility areas between central and local government. Undoubtedly, there is apparent will to shift in the practice of performance contracts and the collaboration between local and central government. Nevertheless, there is still need for more timely communication.

Fourth, the study recognizes some efforts and results from empowering women in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. However, women’s political positions in local government have not gone far beyond the constitutional 30% quota in the local governments. While the quota has been an instrumental strategy to increasing women’s participation, it is observed that they tended to take up fewer positions and that they tended to reflect the traditional gendered division of labor where women occupy almost all offices for Vice Mayor for Social Affairs and men occupied almost all offices for District Mayor, and Vice Mayor in charge of economic affairs. Socialization agents including families, communities, schools, religion and government practices may explain why women lag behind despite the concrete and supportive policies. In Rwandan culture, women have by large been subjugated to patriarchal sayings including: *nta nkokokazi ibika isake ihari* (a woman cannot talk when a man is around), *uruvuze umugore ruvuga umuhoro* (when a woman has a say, the household becomes chaotic), *umugore arabyina ntasimbuka* (women can only dance but they cannot jump). Such sayings have influenced the kind of primary education that boys and girls receive in their families.

Given the above findings, recommendations are addressed to different stakeholders. First, two recommendations are addressed to MINALOC. (i) Given the highlighted conflict between Ministerial Sector plans and Local Government plans, there is need to synchronize Local Government plans and

Ministries' plans, reflected in national priorities. For this to happen, Ministries should avail resources on time, give Local Government enough time to implement and follow-up on their plans instead of working under pressure. (ii) Considering low levels of citizen participation in planning, high participation in implementation, and passive at the evaluation phase, it is recommended that MINALOC should enhance citizens' participation throughout the formulation, monitoring & evaluation of policies and programs affecting citizens' lives through participatory action research, existing state and non-state consultative mechanism.

Second, although there is a welcome trend of MPs getting closer to citizens there is still a gap felt by citizens, Sometimes MPs come to citizens when they [citizens] are not prepared in advance so that they pool their concerns. This results in one way communication. It is recommended that (i)MPs should enhance their contacts with citizens in a way that benefits both by having citizens' concerns recorded and incorporated for policy or advocacy purposes. This new development should be replicated by the Local Government in order to make the benefits sustainable. (ii) Given that both chambers of Parliament are endowed with a research unit, it is suggested that this unit should assist the Parliament to conduct periodic participatory action research aimed at assessing citizens' feedback on selected laws. (iii) Considering evidence from this study which suggests gaps in citizen involvement in policy formulation, which has translated in either resistance or blind obedience during implementation. It is suggested that for policies and laws initiated by Ministries and that affect citizens' lives, an auditable checklist that maps citizen's inputs be put in place. Citizen participation should be legally binding in such a way that it is enforceable on the side of an official who fails to bring citizens on board. Once leaders do not take it as optional, all laws will reflect the will of the citizens.

Third, the Local Government Institute and Rwanda Institute of Management have their share in recommendations. Taking into account the fact that some Local Government leaders may be willing to make citizens participate but lack human capacity, it is recommended that systematic training needs assessments be conducted for all Local Government leaders, especially new ones. As such, a continuous capacity building practice, especially in participatory approaches will help leaders increase knowledge, skills, attitudes, practices to improve facilitation of citizen engagement.

Fourth, given the CSOs high involvement in service delivery and low involvement in capacity building and research and advocacy, the following recommendations are suggested to improve their activities, (i) CSOs should facilitate citizens' access to information, engage in evidence based advocacy and initiate a partnership with RMI and LGI during the processes of curriculum development and review as well as facilitating training of local government leaders. (ii) CSOs should also use existing or new mechanisms to increase critical thinking and engage policy makers NGOs, academics, private sector and ordinary citizens on emerging governance issues on a regular basis; (iii) it is recommended that the Media High Council continues to identify opportunities for capacity building and take them so that they practice journalism in a more professional manner. Similarly, the media are advised to enhance critical thinking among Rwandans, through the provision of more spaces for open debate on public issues/policies, debatable issues of public interest. (iv) the broadcast media should finally provide space / or design citizen-oriented shows that allow the citizens to voice their concerns, provide feedback on public policies, interact with leaders, and hold leaders accountable. However, for all initiatives to work, citizens are required to play their roles as they are beneficiaries and primary partners in any efforts meant to fast track local development.

Finally, although all attempts have been made in this study to document information about governing for and with citizens in the post-genocide Rwanda, some areas require further inquiry. These include *gender and women's participation in local government*, *CSOs vibrancy in Rwanda*, with a focus on opportunities, persisting challenges and mitigation strategies, a deep analysis of dynamics behind the citizen participation in *Imihigo*. In relation to this, there is more need to conduct a study on *participation in pro poor programs and policies such as Ubudehe and land consolidation*, and finally there is need for investigating the *relationship between psychosocial healing and citizen participation in governance*.

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This report is a fruit of efforts from different individuals and organizations that provided their valuable time, experience and insights which made this endeavor successful. Needless to say, the research team takes responsibility for the interpretations and conclusions it contains.

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We are also grateful to all public institutions that participated in this study. We particularly think about the Parliament, MINALOC, Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), Rwanda Management Institute (RMI) and selected local authorities, both in executive committees and local councils. Their openness, insights and recommendations were a great contribution to this report.

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Acronyms

CRC:	Citizen Report Card
CSOs:	Civil Society Organizations
EDPRS:	Economic Development & Poverty Reduction Strategy
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GMO:	Gender Monitoring Office
GoR:	Government of Rwanda
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
IPAR:	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
IT:	Information Technology
IRD:	Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace
JADF:	Joint Action Development Forum
KII:	Key Informant Interview
LGI:	Local Government Institute
MINALOC:	Ministry of Local Government
MINECOFIN:	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MPs:	Members of Parliament
NAR:	Never Again Rwanda
NDI:	National Democratic Institute
NGOs:	Non-Government Organizations
NWC:	National Women's Council
NYC:	National Youth Council
PAR:	Participatory Action Research
RBA:	Rwanda Broadcasting Agency
RDF:	Rwanda Defense Forces
RGB:	Rwanda Governance Board
RIM:	Rwanda Institute of Management
RNP:	Rwanda National Police
SMS:	Short Message System
TV:	Television
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program

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1. Introduction

A study on citizens' participation in post-genocide Rwanda was jointly undertaken by Never Again Rwanda (NAR) and Interpeace in the framework of their Societal Healing and Participatory Governance for Sustainable Peace Program.

Both organisations believe that in a wounded society, participation of citizens in governance is a major healing mechanism. In Rwanda, given the history of bad governance, violent conflict and genocide, involvement of citizens in governance requires empowering them with confidence to participate in social and political fora. It also necessitates creating an environment of trust and transparency that enables them to voice their needs and desires.

This study was undertaken with the aim of informing NAR and Interpeace joint program and the decision-making community about the issue of citizen participation as a core dimension of good governance in the post-genocide context. NAR as a civil society organization strongly believes in the power of dialogue informed by research. This research therefore serves as a channel to engage citizens and other stakeholders in dialogue and debate on issues concerning citizen participation. The intention was not to conduct an academic research, but rather to carry out an applied and action oriented research to ensure that beneficiaries of public programs can contribute to finding solutions to the challenges they face.

This report is structured in six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the whole report. Chapter 2 presents the background to this study, highlights its rationale and objectives. Chapter 3 defines key concepts; Chapter 4 gives the methodology used in this study and focuses on approaches, sampling plan, quality assurance, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 discusses the various aspects of citizen participation from the participants' perspective. Chapter 6 concludes the report and gives recommendations.

2. Background and objectives

Governance remains intimately connected to development and peace all over the world. Many societies which have experienced bad governance remain prone to poverty, exclusion, corruption which, in turn, pave the way to political instability and various forms of violence. The 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi which claimed more than a million lives in Rwanda is a classic example.

In the attempt to describe the Genocide against the Tutsi, Uvin (1998) argues that "violence in the pre – 1994 Rwanda was a structural process characterised by longstanding dynamics of exclusion, marginalisation, inequality, frustration, humiliation and racism (p.7). Shyaka (n.d), elaborating on root causes of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, observed that nepotism, clientelism, corruption and exclusion which were practiced by the successive regimes in this country [Rwanda] since its independence have led to social

split and identity-based fission and, eventually, to the crystallization of conflict-generating cleavages (p.18).

Similarly, Interpeace and partner organizations (2015) recently conducted a study about land, identity, power and population movements as they relate to conflicts in the Great Lakes region (in French : *terre, identité, pouvoir et mouvements de population : l'escalade des conflits dans la région des Grands Lacs*), which revealed that bad governance in these countries, especially in the post-independence period, shaped to a big extent the escalation of violent conflicts and population movements in the region.

In Rwanda, political centralism, dominant top-down leadership style and the political culture of submission (blind obedience) to authority largely contributed to the massive participation



A participant in the focus group discussion, 2016.

of Rwandan citizens in the genocide. In a bid to explain this, Smith (as cited in Staub, 1999) mentions that “child-rearing was authoritarian, the culture was characterized by strong respect for and obedience to authority, and society was organized in a highly hierarchical fashion” (p.313). Smith further argues that fear of the Tutsi, and the long lasting ideology against them, violence against the Hutu who did not cooperate, as well as obedience to leaders can largely explain why some segments of the population participated in the killings” Straub (1999). Such a high political culture of submission and dominant top - down approaches to governance contributed to the

tragic history that Rwanda went through and that culminated in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

The main question today is how to set up a model that facilitates peaceful cohabitation and contributes to building a better future for the next generations.

Globally, the concept of governance has attracted particular attention in the debate on international development for the past three decades. The World Bank defines it as a “complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and mediate their differences” (The World Bank, 1997, p. x).

Rwanda has borrowed a leaf from global best practices in governance and interwoven them with home grown solutions. In its endeavour to boost post-genocide reconstruction and long-term development, the new government has put good governance on top on the list of its priorities.

The constitution of Rwanda as amended today, especially in articles 27 and 48, is an expression of the willingness of Rwandans to turn a page from passive to active citizens’ participation. Different policies have been developed, including the National Decentralisation Policy, Vision 2020, and EDPRS 1 & 2. The two EDPRS’ accountable governance strategic objective envisages “empowering Rwandan citizens by engaging them in formulating, executing, monitoring and evaluating policies and strategies for accelerated growth and poverty reduction” (Republic of Rwanda, 2013, p.70). The aspirations of Rwandans are also well documented in Vision 2020, which emphasises “the reconstruction of the nation and its social capital anchored on good governance, underpinned by a capable state” (Republic of Rwanda, 2000, p.4).

A number of institutional reforms have been undertaken in order to enhance citizens’ participation and achieve sustainable development. Similarly, new institutions have been created including Ministries, Boards and Commissions. Also, governance and oversight institutions were created, including the Office of the Ombudsman, Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), the Office of Auditor General, the Rwanda Public Procurement Authority, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Reconciliation Commission, and the Rwanda Governance Board.

Drawing from its history and culture, different home grown initiatives have been established in a bid to enforce the policies.

Such initiatives include *Umuganda* (community work), *Itorero* (cultural mentoring and leadership training), *Ubudehe* (social support mechanism), *Ubwisungane mu kwivuzza* (medical insurance), *Girinka* (a cow for every poor household) and *Agaciro* (giving oneself dignity) (UNDP & Government of Rwanda, 2015).

As a result of all this, Rwanda has been commended for all these initiatives and efforts. It is also worth noting that Rwanda has made important steps in terms of social and economic development of its citizens. Africa Otherwise (2015) quoting the Gallup Group Gallup Global Law and Order 2015 Report rates Rwanda as the safest African country to live in (92%) while the RGB's Rwanda Governance Scorecard (2014) highlights improvement in citizens' participation (71.68%). The Ibrahim Index for African Governance (2015) suggests that Rwanda is among the African continent's top ten improvers in overall governance since 2011, while the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment for 2016 (CPIA) ranked 1st among Sub Saharan Africa with a score of 4. The highest performing cluster was Structural Policies and Policies for Social inclusion and Equity with a score of 4.2 (The World Bank, 2015).

However, a number of governance assessments consistently show that citizen participation in the formulation of policies and programs remains weak (Rwanda Governance Board, 2013, 2014; IRDP, 2010, 2013; Transparency International Rwanda, 2015). The recent RGB's Citizen Report Card - CRC (2015) highlights the low level of appreciation of citizens regarding their participation in performance contracts. It indicates that only in 5 of 30 District, the level of satisfaction is between 50 and 75%. In 10 out of 30 Districts, the level of citizen satisfaction is between 25 and 50%, while in 15 out of 30 Districts, the level of citizens' satisfaction is below 25%. In terms of participation in budget planning, the CRC (2015) shows that the citizens' satisfaction is between 25 and 50% in only 2 Districts while in 28 out of 30, their satisfaction is below 25% (Rwanda Governance Board, 2015).

Specifically, the comparison of the Citizen Report Cards (2014 and 2015) shows a sharp decrease in citizen participation. The CRC 2015 net satisfaction with citizen participation in preparation of district plan of action was 10.6%, while the 2014 CRC showed that 72.2% of respondents said yes to the question on whether they participated in the preparation of district action plan. Also, the CRC 2015 citizen participation in determining in preparation of district budget was 7.4% as compared to 28.9% in 2014.

Although the Ibrahim Index for African Governance (2015) and the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (2016) praise Rwanda for its reforms, the same Ibrahim index for African Governance highlights that Rwanda occupies the 47th position out of 54 countries, with a 19.3% score in the participation sub-category, while it comes at the 39th position with a score of 34.5% in the rights sub-category - although some contention has been raised on the rating showing that "a deeper analysis of the ratings shows mismatches in the indicators, especially that on safety and rule of law as well as participation and human rights" (Shyaka Anastase, The New Times, October 2014) - while the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (2016) suggests that the Public Sector Management and Institution cluster was the lowest performing with a score of 3.6%. Overall, such trends call for more efforts in engaging citizens in various governance programs at the grass-root level.

Most of those assessments are largely quantitative and do not often provide enough clarification on the dynamics of citizen participation. There is therefore need for an in-depth qualitative examination of the persisting issue of low citizen participation both at local and national level, with a particular focus on the post-genocide context.

This study seeks to evaluate citizen participation in governance in post-genocide Rwanda and to inform the policy making processes. Specifically, it intends:

1. To examine the way Rwandans define citizen participation in governance;
2. To provide citizens with a forum to openly analyze key issues regarding citizen participation and explore avenues for improvement;
3. To explore qualitatively Rwandans' perception of citizen participation in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation;
4. To explore the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for citizen participation in governance; and,
5. To identify major challenges in citizen participation in governance and suggest possible solutions



Members of the citizen forum participate in a focus group discussion, 2016.

3. Review of Key Concepts

This chapter reviews key concepts related to the study at hand. They include governance, good governance, participatory governance and citizen participation. A conceptual framework is presented to show how all these concepts relate to each other and how they influence citizen participation in post-genocide Rwanda.

3.1. From Governance to Good Governance

It was mentioned in the introductory part that over the past three decades, the concept of governance has increasingly dominated the international development discourse as a shift from the concepts of public administration and public sector management.

The World Bank (1989) defines governance as “exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs”. This definition emerged after noticing that “countervailing power has been lacking and state officials in many countries have served their own interests without fear of being called to account” (p.60). However, the concept of governance calls for a qualifier, which may explain the shift from governance to good governance discourse. The first use of the term “good governance” dates back in 1989 when the then President of the World Bank, Barber B. Conable, in the forward of the report on Sub-Saharan Africa entitled *From Crisis to Sustainable Growth, A Long Term Perspective Study*, referred to it as a “public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that is accountable to its public” (World Bank, 1989, p.xii).

Fifteen years later, the concept was further unpacked and since then, the World Bank (1994), sees good governance as encompassing a “predictable; open, and enlightened policymaking (that is, transparent processes); a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions, and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law” (p. vii). Good governance is, therefore, characterized by transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation, as well as responsiveness to the needs of people (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2016).

While all the above definitions capture essential and substantial aspects of good governance,

in this study, governance is seen as a process while good governance is rather a quality of that process. It is “good” as opposed to “bad” governance. Governance is qualified as good governance when it encompasses values such as “full respect of human rights, the rule of law, effective participation of various stakeholders, effective multi-actor partnerships, constructive political pluralism, transparent and accountable processes and institutions. It should also be characterized as an efficient and effective public sector, legitimacy [government should have the consent of the governed], competence [effective policymaking, implementation and service delivery], information and education, political empowerment of people, equity and sustainability” (United Nations Human Rights, 2016).

The Government of Rwanda (GoR) believes in the ethos of good governance. Its Vision 2020 highlights good governance and a capable State while the EDPRS (2013 -2018) is built on, among other pillars, accountable government. In the context of post-Genocide Rwanda, it is crucial that the definition of good governance takes into account country-specific dimensions. This is to ensure that the legacy of the genocide (wounded hearts, broken social fabric, etc.) and the big challenges of development (skills, political and legal environment, stability, partnership, participation, etc.) are effectively addressed, and the kind of violence experienced in the genocide is not repeated.

3.2. Participatory Governance

In this study, participatory governance is seen as a subset of good governance. It consists of state-sanctioned institutional processes that provide effective avenues to citizens to exercise their rights to voice their ideas, to vote constantly, directly and indirectly, and to contribute to the formulation and implementation of public policies and programs, which in turn, produce substantial changes in their lives (Brian Wampler & McNulty, n.d).

3.3. Citizen Participation

Holdar and Zakharchenko (2002) define citizen participation as “a community based process, where citizens organize themselves and achieve



Citizen forum facilitators interacting in a training session, 2016.

their goals at the grassroots level and work together through non-governmental community organizations to influence the decision-making process. Citizens get most involved in this process when the issue at stake relates directly to them” (p.12). This definition highlights the necessity for the citizens to be part of the decision-making process, particularly for issues that affect their lives directly. According to Crosby *et al* (1986), citizen participation usually starts with a diverse group of people, who are informed or who receive information on a particular topic and who subsequently can recommend the policy which they find most appropriate to the relevant authorities in a suitable and organized way. More importantly, “citizen participation implies a readiness on the part of both the citizen and government institutions to accept certain pre-defined civic responsibilities and roles” (Milakovich, 2010, p.2).

All the definitions above are important and interconnected. However, they implicitly suggest that civil society is the sole partner in influencing decision-making. This overlooks the role of other key stakeholders such as local councils and local leaders, Members of Parliament, the media, political parties and the private sector.

In Rwanda, a need was felt to align with these concepts, both under influence of global trends, but mostly as a response to lessons learnt from

the Genocide against the Tutsi. The National Decentralization Policy was put in place with the aim of enhancing and sustaining citizens’ participation in initiating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating decisions and plans that affect their lives. It also aimed to transfer power, authority and resources from central to Local Government and lower levels, and ensure that all levels have adequate capacities and motivations to promote genuine participation (The Republic of Rwanda, 2012, p.24).

In addition, as Stewart (2003) puts it, there exist two modes of citizen participation, that is: (1) the opportunity to engage in policy making directly and (2), the opportunity to engage in policy making indirectly. Nabatchi (2012) says that direct participation happens when citizens are personally and actively engaged in taking decisions that affect their lives, while indirect participation occurs when work through representatives who make decisions on their behalf. These two channels exist in Rwanda. The direct channel includes meetings with local leaders, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the media, while the indirect channel involves Councils (*Njyanama*) and institutional representatives at local and national levels.

According to MINALOC (2012), citizen participation implies the involvement of citizens in a wide range of policymaking activities,

including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the approval of physical construction projects in order to shape government programs toward community needs., It also aims to build public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within neighbourhoods. In this study, citizen participation refers to the process of and means by which citizens influence the policy/programs formulation, implementation and evaluation as well as the way they hold them accountable. This participation is both direct and indirect. We also concur with Michael (2010, p. 2) who argues that “citizen participation implies a readiness on the part of both the citizen and government institutions to accept certain pre-defined civic responsibilities and roles”.

Figure 1 below presents the relationship between the 3 key concepts discussed above. The overall aim is to show the relationship between governance, good governance, participatory governance and citizen participation within the wider context of post-genocide Rwanda.

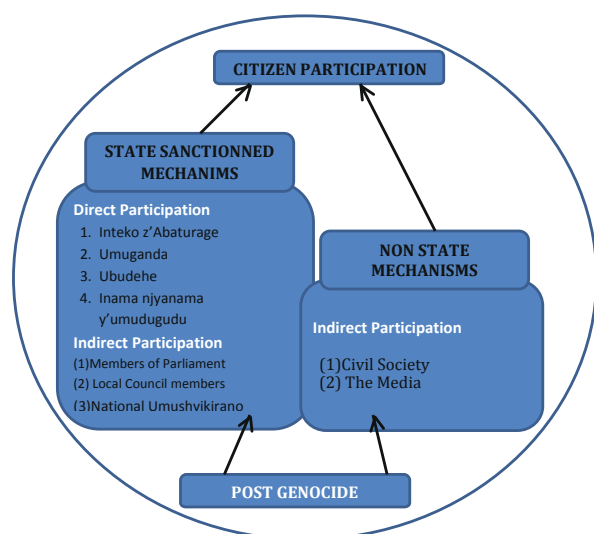


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Source: Authors of this study based on literature review

The post – genocide context is a vast environment in which governance and citizen participation can be assessed. That environment influences the state’s direct and indirect as well as the non-state channels meant to boost citizen participation in Rwanda.

3.4. Citizen Participation in Post - Genocide Rwanda

Twenty two years ago, Rwanda was in utter ruins. Its human, financial, infrastructural and social capital was reduced to ashes. The Government of

National Unity devised various policies, programs and institutions to deal with that legacy. Some of the mechanisms put in place after the genocide against the Tutsi are the following:

3.4.1. Citizens Assemblies - Inteko z’ Abaturage

Since the adoption of decentralization in 2000, Rwanda's quest to find an appropriate governance model to deal with the enormous post-genocide challenges led to the restoration of "home grown solutions". Citizens' assemblies known as *Inteko z’ Abaturage* were part of this process.

Inteko z’ Abaturage were initially established in 2010, following Ministerial Instruction N° 002/07/01 of 20/05/2011, intended to guide decentralized entities to handle citizens’ concerns. Article 16 of this instruction states that “*Inteko z’ Abaturage* are attended by Cell residents and leaders from various structures who should come to provide the citizens with advice and share ideas (MINALOC, 2011)”. *Inteko z’ Abaturage* constitute one of the three mechanisms put in place to examine and solve citizens’ concerns at the Village level. It was established along with *Ikaye y’ Umuturage* and *Urwego rw’ Abunzi* (mediation committees) by the Ministerial Instruction No 002/07/01 of 20/05/2011, guiding Decentralized Entities to handle Citizens’ Concerns (MINALOC, 2011).

3.4.2. Council – Inama Njyanama

Inama Njyanama (the Council) was established to facilitate consultation with and representation of citizens as well as strategic decision-making in decentralized entities (Ministerial Order instituting the internal rules and regulations of the Council of the Decentralized Entities, 2013; Law N° 87/2013 of 11/09/2013 determining the organization and functioning of decentralized administrative entities). It is one form of indirect citizen participation in Rwanda, particularly at the Cell, Sector and District levels, through elected citizen representatives. At the Village level, the council involves directly all the citizens.

3.4.3. Parliament

Parliament is one of the best known mechanisms of indirect participation in contemporary democracies. In many cases, the traditional role of Parliamentarians consists in making laws and overseeing the executive actions. In Rwanda, the Parliamentary branch of the State is established by Article 64 of the Constitution¹.

1 2003 Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda revised in 2015

Parliamentarians (Deputies and Senators) are elected (directly and indirectly) by citizens to represent them with lawmaking and government oversight responsibilities.

3.5. Home-grown Initiatives

In Rwanda, the “Home Grown Initiatives” (HGI) refer to initiatives “taken in Rwanda” in the post-genocide context. These were thought to be context-specific and capable of weaving appropriate solutions to complex challenges. They include *Umuganda*, *Imihigo*, *Ubudehe*, and National *Umushyikirano* Council. Each of these concepts is defined below:

3.5.1. Community Work - Umuganda

Umuganda a concept that means gathering together with a common purpose to achieve a specified outcome. It is currently regulated by the Community Development Policy adopted in 2001 and revised in 2008 (MINALOC, 2013). It is embedded in the traditional Rwandan culture, where members of the community would call upon their family, friends and neighbors to help them accomplish a difficult task.

The Government of Rwanda drew lessons from this traditional practice so that it could help rebuild Rwanda after the Genocide against the Tutsi. *Umuganda* is obligatory and it is carried out from 8:00am to 11:00 am on the last Saturday of each month. Residents aged between 18 and below 65 across the country are expected to participate in this community work, socialize and share information of common interest. As such, the *Umuganda* achieves both economic and social cohesion objectives (Rwanda Governance Board, 2016).

3.5.2. Performance Contracts - Imihigo

Imihigo (performance contracts) is another homegrown initiative. It is meant to fast track delivery of plans and investments that have a transformational impact on the lives of Rwandans. Starting with the 2015/2016 fiscal year, a new concept of Joint *Imihigo* has been introduced. Joint *imihigo* are elaborated for 7 priority areas: agriculture, energy, exports, job creation, urbanization and rural settlement, social protection and service delivery. The joint *imihigo* reflect commitments for joint planning and implementation. They cut across central and local government institutions and they are elaborated in consultation with the private sector (MINECOFIN, 2016).

3.5.3. Ubudehe

Ubudehe refers to the long-standing Rwandan practice and culture of collective action and mutual support to solve problems within a community. It is not known exactly when *Ubudehe* was first practiced, but it is thought to date back more than a century ago. The focus of traditional *Ubudehe* was mostly on cultivation. This was carried out by local communities, working on neighbors farms on a rotating basis. This was, however, eroded by colonization, which introduced a cash-based economy in which individuals could afford to pay others to do similar work. While this was the trend across the country, in some places *Ubudehe* was still practiced up until the 1980s. The Government of Rwanda drew some aspects of *Ubudehe* to help in the social and economic reconstruction after the Genocide against the Tutsi (Rwanda Governance Board, 2016b).

In the current form of *Ubudehe*, communities get involved in their development by setting up participatory problem-solving initiatives. It is regarded as a way of strengthening democratic processes and good governance through greater community involvement in decision making. *Ubudehe* creates opportunities for people at all levels of society, especially at the Village level, to interact with one another, share ideas, and make decisions regarding their collective development (Rwanda Governance Board, 2016b).

3.5.4. National Umushyikirano Council

The National *Umushyikirano* Council is an annual event where the President meets different government officials, including representatives of Districts and Kigali City Council members, government high ranking officers, members of the judiciary, parliamentarians, governors, Mayor of the City of Kigali, members of civil society, representatives of the business community, Rwandans from the Diaspora, representatives of higher education institutions (The Republic of Rwanda, 2016). The format is a series of interactive sessions where citizens can call in, send short messages and tweets to lodge their complaints or ask pertinent questions. Importantly, the evaluation of implementation of the National Dialogue resolutions is carried out at the start of the following *Umushyikirano*.

3.6. Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations are formed by citizens who decide to get together in order to defend their interests and those of their constituencies, and to



Members of the focus group discussion engaged in a community activity, 2016.

promote certain values, beliefs and ideologies. In Rwanda, members of the civil society include mainly non-governmental organizations (both local and international), religious organizations and media houses, academic institutions, and research centers.

Civil Society “can have a positive influence on the State and the market”, and is therefore “seen as an

increasingly important agent for promoting good governance especially in terms of transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness and accountability” (Ghaus-Pasha, 2004). However, previous research has shown that CSOs in Rwanda have not been vibrant enough to influence the policy making process (IRDP, 2010; IRDP, 2013; Transparency International Rwanda, 2012; Rwanda Governance Board, 2012).



Women participating in a focus group discussion, 2016.

4. Methodology

The relationship and definitions of the concepts involved in this study was the subject matter of the previous chapter. This chapter sets out to describe the methodology used in this study and focuses on approaches, sampling plan, quality assurance, and ethical considerations.

4.1. Approaches and methods

The approach and methods used here are the ones commonly utilized in qualitative and participatory action research (PAR). According to Patton & Cochran (2002), qualitative studies seek to understand “some aspects of social life” and use methods which generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis” (p.2). Chambers (2003) appreciates the strength of qualitative methods as they are context specific and are more participatory.

This is why the qualitative approach was adopted mainly to look into citizen participation from a perspective that is different from, but complementary to several quantitative methodologies used by the majority of researchers who assessed this issue in Rwanda over the past five years. As for Participatory Action Research (PAR), Berg & Erin (2012) define it as “a process through which people investigate meaningful social topics, participate in research to understand the root causes of problems that directly impact them, and then take action to influence policies through the dissemination of their findings to policymakers and stakeholders”. The uniqueness of this approach is that it considers participants as experts and co-researchers, due to their lived experiences related to the research topic, ensuring that relevant issues are being studied (Watters, Comeau & Restall, 2010).

This approach was used in two complementary ways: on the one hand, NAR established a “Sub-Working Group”, comprising four researchers and governance experts (1 woman and 3 men). This group supported the research team technically throughout the entire research process. Their role was instrumental in understanding and clarifying concepts, developing the methodology and research tools as well as in data analysis. On the other hand, citizens and other governance stakeholders (local leaders, decision-makers, CSOs, media and academics including men and women) were involved in assessing the issue of

citizen participation in Rwanda, and in identifying areas of progress/success to build on and gaps to fill at individual and policy levels.

We should add that the data collected were analysed, and preliminary findings were subject to pre-validation by the established Working Group comprised of 20 members from key governance stakeholders institutions/organisations. The role of this group was also instrumental in reviewing and validating the research methodology and tools. These also were among the participants the National Stakeholders Meeting meant to validate the findings and “prioritize” the recommendations of the study.

After considering comments and suggestions from stakeholders, a steering committee will be set up to engage decision makers so that they include relevant recommendations in their action plans, and finally, implement them. This is where the “action” element came in.

4.2. Sampling plan

Sampling in qualitative research does not stick to the same rigorous statistical requirements as is the case in quantitative research. However, this does not imply that sampling in qualitative research is less important than what some quantitative researchers claim.

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2013), qualitative research relies on non-probability sampling as it does not aim to make statistical inferences. As regards the sampling strategy in qualitative research, Elmusharaf (2012) highlights the “theoretical saturation” principle, according to which a researcher should continue to sample as long as they are not gaining new insights”. However, Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2013), clarify other considerations that dictate the sampling strategy and the sample size both in qualitative and quantitative research.

They include the target population, research objectives, available resources, reporting time period, to name but a few. The same authors suggest that because qualitative investigation aims for depth as well as breadth, the analysis of large

numbers of in-depth interviews would simply be unmanageable because of a researcher's ability to effectively analyse large quantities of qualitative data. The population under investigation was made up of citizens (men and women, boys and girls) aged 18 and above, members of the civil society organizations, academics, local leaders and central government decision-makers including women in decision-making positions. Respondents were drawn from 10 Districts of Rwanda and from the City of Kigali in which some particular key informants from specific institutions were purposively targeted. This is a sampling method which consists in "selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions" (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p.77).

Participants for both Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informants' Interviews (KII) were selected on the basis of the objectives of the study and the nature and type of data expected from them. Attention was paid to their roles in participation and/or their assumed knowledge of this area, depending on their current or past professional positions. These include Members of Parliament, representatives of selected government institutions, Local Government leaders, and journalists.

As far as the sample size is concerned, there was a trade-off between theoretical saturation, resources and time. This resulted in working with 34 FGDs and 27 KIIs. All in all, 616 people participated in this exercise as outlined in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Numbers of FGDs, Key informants' Interviews and Participants

Category	# FGDs	# of participants	# of participants by sex
FGDs with Citizens	30	445	(245 M; 200F)
FGDs with CSOs	6	98	(67 M; 31 F)
FGD with special group (women, PLWD ¹ , media, academia)	1	10	(27 M; 19 F)
Total # of FGDs	40	589	(339 M; 250 F)
Key Informants (27 personal interviews)		27	(22M, 5F)
Total # participants		616	(361M, 255F)

Data were collected from 10 Districts (2 per province and the City of Kigali) as highlighted in table 2 below:

Table 2. Decentralized entities in which FGDs with citizens and CSOs were conducted

FGDs with Citizens				FGDs with CSOs	
Districts	Sectors			Districts	Sectors
Bugesera	Nyamata	Rweru	Shyara	Gasabo	Kacyiru
Nyarugenge	Mageragere	Muhima	Nyarugenge	Nyarugenge	Nyarugenge
Gasabo	Kacyiru	Bumbogo	Gikomero	Huye	Ngoma
Rwamagana	Kigabiro	Fumbwe	Gishari	Karongi	Bwishyura
Gicumbi	Kageyo	Rutare	Byumba	Nyabihu	Mukamira
Nyabihu	Mukamira	Bigogwe	Jomba	Musanze	Muhoza
Karongi	Gishyita	Bwishyura	Rubengera		
Huye	Gishamvu	Rusatira	Ngoma		
Nyaruguru	Kibeho	Munini	Rusenge		
Musanze	Gashaki	Nkotsi	Muhoza		

4.3. Data Collection

This study utilized three main data collection techniques including desk review, KIIs, and FGDs. Each one is discussed below:

4.3.1. Desk review

Desk research was used to collect extant literature related to governance and citizen participation. It involved the review of a number of governance and participation assessment frameworks, both national and international (e.g. UNDP, World Bank, USAID, Rwanda Governance Board, and IRDP). It also examined the legal, policy and institutional frameworks for citizen participation in Rwanda, which include the Constitution of Rwanda (both the new and previous versions), Vision 2020, EDPRS, National Decentralisation Policy, Decentralisation Implementation Plan 2011-2015, District, Sector and Cell *Imihigo* plans, District Development Plans, *Imihigo* Policy Paper, Rwanda's, District/Sector Budgets, National Priority Program, the Prime Minister's action plan/priorities, the Concept Note of *Imihigo*, and the Minutes of *Imihigo* at *Umudugudu* and Cell levels.

4.3.2. Key Informants Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) were also conducted. They are defined by UCLA Center for Health Policy Research (n.d) as “qualitative in-depth interviews with people who know what is going on in the community (p.1)”. The same author argues that their purpose “is to collect information from a wide range of people, including community leaders, professionals, or residents, who have first-hand knowledge about the community”. In this study, they were conducted with selected decision-makers, representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), members of local Councils and District Mayors. Discussions covered issues raised by citizens and other participants, especially issues raised in FGDs. These interviews were carried out in Kigali and various Districts covered by the research.

4.3.3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

In addition to desk reviews and Key Informants Interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted. Kitzinger (1995) observes that “the idea behind focus group methodology is that group processes can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview”. FGDs are of such a nature that they foster the dialogue-element of the research, to bring people with different perceptions together in a dialogue, with the objective to have a better mutual understanding, based on which, consensus-solutions can be worked out.

In this research, FGDs involved groups of citizens, representatives of women and gender-related organizations and institutions, Non-Governmental Institutions, academics, people living with disabilities and journalists. All in all, 30 FGDs with citizens and 4 with special interest groups were organized throughout the country. Each group was comprised of 15 individuals, recruited purposively and engaged in discussions for around 2 hours. NAR focal points in Districts facilitated the identification and invitation of participants as well as recommending convenient venues for the discussions. Citizen participants were selected on the basis of criteria such as diversity (age, gender, socio-professional category, education, etc.) as well as the assumed ability to discuss openly governance issues.

FGDs with citizens were vital in discussing citizen participation from a community perspective. For instance, those conducted with specific groups helped get insights into the participation of groups such as women and people with disabilities. The FGD with academics in particular was useful in analyzing the social, cultural and political context of participation in Rwanda.

For both FGDs and KIIs, researchers could ask any question related to the research and probe for clarifications, as well as interpret the likely meaning and validity of what was said by the participants (e.g. tone of voice and body language). Participants, too, were not restricted in the kinds of responses they were expected to provide. Data were collected using a semi structured interview guide in Kinyarwanda (see appendix 4). The data for this study were collected by NAR researchers assisted by program officers. The rationale behind this choice is rooted in the very nature of this research. It required that both FGDs and KIIs be facilitated by people who have a clear understanding of the research design, the research context and



A citizen Forum member, 2016.

objectives and who have the ability to ask relevant and specific questions. Two research teams were involved. Each team comprised a facilitator, a co-facilitator/note-taker and an audio-visual researcher. Focal points were identified and selected in all Districts under study; they were given criteria to consider when identifying participants in FGDs. Appropriate templates and guides were developed on items to observe through FGDs and KIIs.

Lastly, given the PAR approach used within NAR and Interpeace programs, and the importance of the audiovisual method, the latter proved to be an indispensable tool in this study. It served in filming FGDs and KIIs (wherever informed consent was granted) and the end product was a recorded version of the discussions and the production of a documentary film. The film will not only serve as part of the dissemination of findings and advocacy; it will also be used to inspire dialogue within dialogue spaces facilitated by NAR and Interpeace.

4.4. Data Analysis

While quantitative data analysis is generally concerned with providing responses expressed numerically, qualitative data analysis focuses mainly on getting the meaning of the data (O' Connor & Gibson, n.d). After collecting the data from the Districts, they were organised, and data were cross-checked to find similar and diverging findings. Then key ideas were mapped, and main themes identified. This exercise mainly helped to identify major themes for further discussions with other key informants at national level. After completing these interviews and FGDs, data were organised and matched with the previous ones based on the themes built. Plausible meanings and explanations were thereafter extracted.

4.5. Data Quality Control

While designing research, “researchers need to ensure that data collection, organisation, and analysis, as well as the processes and outcomes of such studies are trustworthy and believable” (Herschel, 1999, p.1). A number of measures were taken to ensure the quality of data as follows: First of all, there is a generally held belief that Rwandans in general and some journalists tend to engage in self-censorship, especially when they are talking about governance in post - genocide Rwanda (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2010; Bouka, 2013). The research team anticipated this and came up with a strategy. NAR has worked with citizens fora in its areas of operation and in such spaces, citizens are trained about their role in governance in Rwanda. Such citizens were instrumental in our research.

As for participants who are not necessarily members of the citizens fora, they were guaranteed anonymity if they so required. As it turned out, however, many were free to participate without any fear. The ethical consideration sub-section provides more clarifications about confidentiality and anonymity.

Secondly, as was mentioned above, since the outset of the research process, a working group made of 4 researchers and governance specialists was established to serve as technical advisors for the research team throughout the whole process. Their expertise and experience were vital in operationalizing concepts, fine-tuning the research methodology and data collection tools, as well as in data analysis. They also contributed in reviewing and validating key steps of the research process.

Thirdly, data triangulation was carried out to ensure quality. The data were collected from diverse sources (citizens, decision-makers, local leaders, CSOs, media), and various methods were used (FGDs, KIIs, desk review, audio-visual recording) to enrich the study with different but complementary perspectives.

Fourthly, the language aspect was managed in a manner that ensured the quality of the data. Although the final report is written in English, both interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Kinyarwanda. Effort was made to involve researchers and research assistants who are Kinyarwanda native speakers, possess analytical skills, and have a good command of English.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Researching citizen participation as in governance may involve discussing sensitive issues which require a number of ethical considerations. This is why due attention was paid to the following: First of all, the principle of informed consent was observed. As per requirements of informed consent, participants were given enough information regarding the research objectives and the use of the data as well as what was expected from them. The research team explained clearly that they were not obliged to participate if they did not want to, and that they were free to withdraw from the study without fear of any personal consequence. This also applied in relation to the video-recording during FGDs and KIIs.

Secondly, as highlighted in the quality assurance sub section above, participants were asked if they would be willing to disclose their names in the report and documentary film. Confidentiality and anonymity were therefore granted to those who expressed the need.

5. Findings and Discussion

Citizen participation is a fundamental aspect in any democracy. It is therefore crucial to assess Rwandans' perceptions of this important concept and how it is manifest on the ground. These perceptions provide insights into the way they define participation, if they participate in the policy cycle process, whether they are aware of the existing participation channels, and whether they understand the challenges involved, all based on their lived experiences. Participants narratives are analyzed, interpreted and discussed in the light of extant literature.

5.1. Understanding Citizen participation in Post-Genocide Rwanda

This part of the report describes the definition of the "citizen participation" concept from the point of view of participants. Suggested definitions are a reflection of their lived experiences. It also explores core elements of the conducive environment for citizen participation.

5.1.1 Citizens definition of the "citizen participation" concept

Effective participation varies according to the extent to which citizens understand the nature and relevance of their participation. Citizens are likely to participate when they understand the value of their contribution. Rwandans who participated in this study highlighted various key components as far as participation is concerned. The most pronounced are (i) putting leaders in offices and holding them accountable, (ii) consultations, (iii) voicing their priorities, (iv) taking ownership of government interventions, (v) interaction as an act of participation, and (vi) implementing government programs. The following figure 2 provides further illustration.

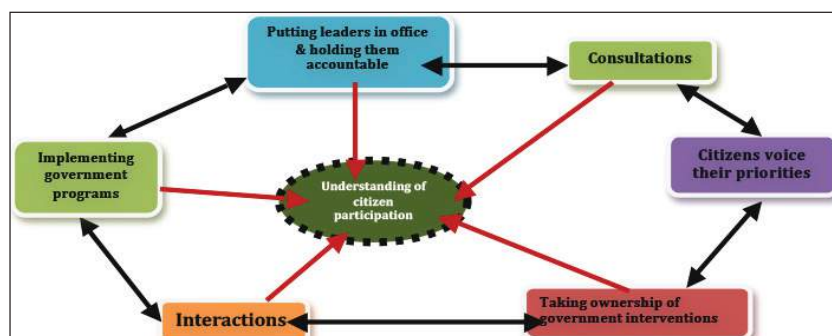


Figure 2: Meaning of citizens participation
Source: Authors of this report based on findings

a) Electing leaders and/ or representatives and holding them accountable

Citizen participation is one of the many political and civil rights. Such participation includes the right to participate in electing leaders and representatives. In democratic societies, elections are an avenue through which individuals are mandated to represent citizens at various levels of the country's governance. This is precisely the view expressed by participants in the study, who view elections of leaders and their representatives as one form of participation and as a right. One participant pointed out that: "Citizens participation is about electing leaders you want at local, parliamentary, presidential and other levels to represent citizens in the management of public affairs" (FGD, Citizen, Huye).

For the participants interviewed, electing leaders is closely linked with the right to hold those leaders accountable. As one participant noted:

"Citizen Participation involves offering local people a chance to elect leaders of their choice for different political positions and holding them accountable over developmental issues" (FGD, Citizen, Rwamagana).

For most Rwandans interviewed, elections are an important criterion for measuring the vitality of democracy and citizen participation. It is an essential participation tool. Because citizens cannot participate in all deliberations during the decision making processes, they delegate their power to elected leaders. It is this delegation which inevitably calls for accountability. This is what will induce leaders to meet the promises made during election campaigns. For participants in focus groups, strengthening accountability should remain a constant priority for the country especially in decentralized entities.

b) Consultations

According to participants, another facet of citizen

participation is consultation between leaders and community members so that they share ideas, concerns and priorities which would subsequently inform policies and programs aimed at achieving community and national development. One of the participants argued that:

“Citizen Participation is when ideas come from the citizen and are taken to the leaders for discussion; citizens get involved directly in activities that benefit them, and work alongside government officials to fully implement the decisions taken (FGD, citizens, Rwamagana).”

A Council Member noted that: *“Citizen participation is when leaders consult citizens about their priorities and discuss with them the final decision taken after due consideration of their views at various levels. (Council Member, Gicumbi).”*

In general, participants in this study believe that citizens need to be consulted because they are the ones who own the problems but they are also the ones who hold the key to possible solutions. This is why they regard citizen participation as more than consultation; they also see it as enabling them to identify their priorities and propose adequate solutions.

For most people involved in focus groups, effective citizen participation requires that each decentralized administrative entity avails information to citizens regarding matters of public interest. This is an important pre-condition for participation to be real. We also noted that citizens and local leaders interpret consultation differently. Indeed, for citizens, consultation means that they are engaged and their opinions are taken seriously.

While some local leaders believe in consultation, others think that their role ends with simply providing information. These consider the process of consultation as a waste of time that would delay implementation of actions.

Some participants (both leaders and citizens) argued that this attitude derives partly from the past culture of centralism that characterized the country for a long time. This calls for a systematic and deliberate effort for cultural change for leaders to be willing to consult their citizens and citizens to provide input in the planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs meant for their social and economic development.

c) Voicing citizens' priorities

Citizen participation is visible when planning priorities reflect the needs expressed by the citizens themselves. As one of them said, *“Citizens participation takes place when policy makers design policies based on citizen priorities and needs, and where necessary, leaders play a part in informing them and facilitating the identification of those needs (FGD, Media).”*

The need for citizens' voice was also highlighted by another participant who argues that: *“participation is seen when every citizen is free to give ideas on priorities and leadership respects them; the citizen can criticize (kunenga), appreciate (gushima) or evaluate governance programs without fear of any consequence” (KII, Kigali).”*

The above narrative emphasizes the need for citizens' voice to be heard. While the first part is limited to the imperative of citizens' voice in planning, the second one extends participation to



Citizen forum facilitators brainstorming on how to enhance citizen participation.

evaluation. It is therefore important to ensure that citizens are heard throughout the policy cycle to ensure sustainable development.

d) Having ownership of governance processes

One other important finding is that participation secures ownership of the programs in question. One participant suggested that:

Citizen Participation happens when citizens own government programs and when there is deep and meaningful interaction with leaders. Ownership therefore is crucial for a citizen to feel that she / he has a stake in what is done and this has the added advantage of making the whole process smooth (KII, Musanze).

In fact, lack of participation may dilute the sense of ownership. This was made clear by one participant, who said the following:

“We participated in placing people in Ubudehe categories at the Village level. When lists were forwarded to higher authorities, they challenged us because they felt that it was not possible to have a citizen who cannot afford a regular meal (Category 1). The leader asked us why we put citizens in category 1 who do not belong there.’ The leader went ahead and changed lists without considering the information we had provided” (FGD, Citizen, Karongi).

When citizens have opportunities to participate, they own projects. When they are not involved, they lose interest. Leaders should be trying to work closely with citizens and take into account their views in planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs.

e) Interacting with leaders

Interaction between leaders and citizens is another important channel through which they exchange ideas, seek clear information, and provide feedback on issues that concern them all on a daily basis. This was highlighted by one of the participants who said the following:

“It is our view that our leaders at Village level understand the issues that we face on a daily basis because they talk to us and are well aware of the realities on the ground. On the contrary, there are leaders who are

detached from the reality and who do not bother to advocate for the citizens, or seek to find solutions to problems they face (FGD Citizens, Karongi).

Real and people-centered development cannot easily take place in the absence of constant and meaningful interaction between the leaders and the led.

f) Participating in policy implementation

Participating in policy implementation, like interaction, consultation, and ownership, is also crucial if the intention is to improve the wellbeing of the citizens. This was clearly stated in the FGDs, KIIs and various interviews held with both citizens and leaders. After all, the policies are put in place to benefit the citizens; it would be unwise and counterproductive to exclude them from the design and implementation of these policies. One of the participants observes that:

“In many cases, we are told to implement projects such as the construction of a Cell office, schools, and roads and we are even requested to make a contribution in cash or in kind but in most cases, we are not part of the design and planning process” (FGD, Citizens, Huye).

Clearly, citizens are aware of the important role they need to play in their own development process. As the findings above illustrate, they understand what participation means and what it entails. For them, participation in all activities in which they have a stake is not a waste of time. On the contrary, it adds value. Such citizens’ views tie with extant literature.

Electing leaders and holding them accountable is not new in the governance literature. Berganza (1998) observes that “apart from aggregating and representing voters’ conflicting interests, elections perform two other different functions (i) to discipline the elected officials by the threat of not being reappointed and (ii) select competent individuals for public office (p.2)”. UNDP (2010) also observed that “the most common mechanism for the exercise of vertical accountability is an election”.

Currently, Rwanda applies a mixed form of democracy which involves, on the one hand direct participation of citizens (Presidential election, *Inteko z’ Abaturage* at Cell and Village level), and, on the other, citizens’ representatives acting on behalf of the voters (Councils – *Inama Njyanama* – Sector and District levels, and Members of Parliament - both

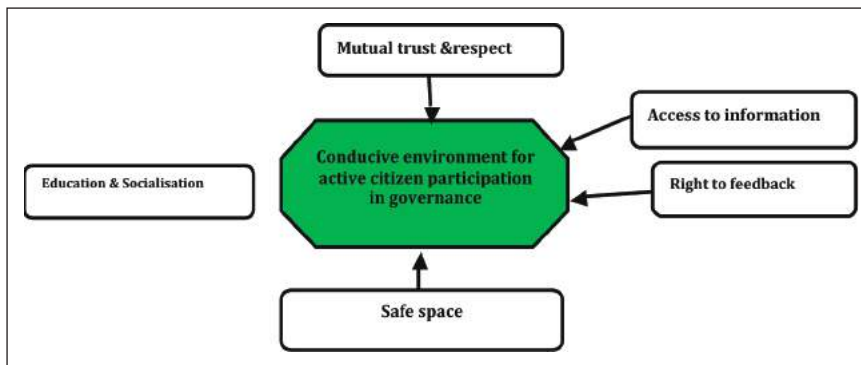


Figure 3. Elements of a conducive environment for citizen participation

Source: Authors of this report based on findings

5.1.2. Core elements of a conducive environment for Citizen Participation

Citizen participation in policies and programs flourishes where there is a supportive environment. In the Rwandan context today, it makes sense given that the country has not fully recovered from the legacy of genocide that was characterized by a breakdown in the social

fabric, wounded hearts, mistrust, fear and suspicion. All these cannot be ignored in the search for an environment where citizens can participate freely and achieve the desired results.

According to the participants in this study, a conducive environment is characterized by features that include (i) trust and respect, (ii) access to information, (iii) right to feedback, (iv) safe space, as well as (v) education and socialization. Figure 3 below outlines these elements before each of them is discussed in a more detail.

a) Mutual trust and respect

Trust is an instrumental aspect of any human relationship. Mutual respect between leaders and ordinary citizens and the value assigned to each one's ideas and choices have an impact on the nature of their collaboration. The same applies to collaboration between institutions, and between institutions and the citizens, as well as horizontally amongst the citizens at large. The amount of trust and respect influences the quality of individual participation or that of a specific category in governance.

Due to the involvement of leaders and government institutions in the planning and implementation of genocide, trust and confidence in leaders were totally lost for many Rwandans. Those who were supposed to protect the ordinary citizens turned out to be the very people who were involved in the execution of the genocide. Given this situation, participants to this study argued that citizen participation in governance can hardly be achieved when there is no trust in leaders. This came out in a number of interviews and discussions with participants in the study, as exemplified by the following quotations:

the lower and upper chambers). For representative democracy to work, elected and appointed leaders should be accountable to citizens. The post-genocide Government, which is committed to good governance as a pillar of reconstruction and development, considers accountability as a core dimension of governance and development. In fact, the National Decentralization Policy in 2001 kick-started a new era of citizen empowerment, which enabled them to voice their priorities and concerns for policy-making purposes. In order to achieve the objectives of this policy, a number of priority actions would be undertaken, including “*promoting integrated citizen-centered local and national development planning*” (MINALOC, 2012).

However, among other issues, accountability was almost unheard of in Rwanda throughout the different political regimes Rwandans experienced due largely to a high level of political centralism, irrational obedience and the political culture of submission.

As such, asking citizens to hold leaders accountable does not work easily. This may explain gaps in interactions between citizens and leaders, leaders practices regarding seeking citizens views and priorities, which translate in low citizen participation in policy design, implementation and evaluation. In such an environment, sustainable development is not assured since citizens are not partners and owners of policy processes.

Conclusively, from lived experiences of participants, it is clear that what citizens define as their participation is a reflection of the ideal situation which has not yet been fully effective. There is need for the central and local government to deliberately address such challenges that hinder the implementation process of the Decentralization Policy.

“[..Before and during the Genocide against the Tutsi], *citizens were betrayed by the government many times. Restoring trust and confidence between them will take time* (KII, Former Senator).”

“*Citizens are still characterized by the fear of the leaders and the government they represent. During the pre-genocide era citizens were betrayed by the government many times. Restoring trust takes patience. It takes time for them to believe that things have changed* (KII, Kigali).”

As a matter of fact, one leader said:

“I went to the Northern Province for a meeting with citizens who were back home after serving their sentence in prison for genocide - related crimes. One of them told me that the only person he can trust is the President of the Republic of Rwanda (Paul Kagame). He had the capacity to do any harm to us but he did not. I am not sure that other leaders would behave in the same way. Sometimes they do not appear to be close to us” (KII, Kigali).

Likewise, a university lecturer said the following:

“You can't reason a local leader; they use an authoritative language which sometimes sounds like intimidation, especially when they want to impose something on citizens. For example, sometimes our local leader, while addressing us in a meeting, he normally begins with statements like: 'listen attentively to this message because it comes from the Mayor'. How do you trust and have confidence in someone who lacks self-confidence? By contrast, the President goes out of his way to visit citizens' upcountry where he interacts with them. He does not only win over their respect, he also ends up tackling issues that local leaders should have dealt with' (FGD, Academics).

Moreover, it could be argued that the need for citizens to have trust and confidence in leadership stems from a historical deficit in this respect until the advent of the decentralized system. As a key informant noted:

“*Connecting confidence, trust, and citizen participation is crucial in Rwanda. Before 1994, citizens lived through a centralized system that used to instill fear. It will take time for citizens to recover the confidence to actively participate in the management of public affairs* (KII, Member of Parliament).”

In all this, mutual respect appears to be the most important element, as exemplified by the following quotation:

“*Sometimes you get discouraged when you suggest an idea in the meeting and the only feedback you get is criticism. The effect is that you feel you will not engage in active participation anymore in the future*” (FGD, Citizens, Nyamata).

In conclusion, it was clear that trust in leadership and respect were considered to be crucial. In view of this, governance in post-genocide Rwanda should explicitly take into account this reality. Trust and respect are not gained automatically; they are built over time between two parties who take deliberate measures to nurture them.

b) Access to public information

Information is a precious resource in any undertaking. This applies to the development process in general and to governance in particular. Accessing information regarding government policies and programs is an important pre-condition for fulfilling one's responsibilities to one's country. For leaders, it is an opportunity to show that they are keen to protect and safeguard citizens' rights. A participant succinctly put it this way:

“I once went to one of the Sectors of the Eastern Province and asked citizens how they benefitted from a newly established program known as Akarima k' Igikoni (household vegetable garden). The citizens reported that their main concern was lack of information on the importance of the program. In the end, they were disillusioned and gave it the name of the Executive Secretary of that Sector who had introduced it to them” (FGD, Media).

This view was echoed by an RGB official:

“*When citizens have limited information, it has a negative impact on their level of implementation and ownership, which in turn jeopardizes the sustainability of the program* (KII, RGB official).

Failure to provide information to citizens brings about resistance in policy implementation because, more often than not, they do not understand the benefits. One citizen said:

We had initially resisted cutting down our banana plantations until the leaders called other people (*abakarasi*) to come and cut them. We did not understand why until the Minister of Agriculture came and explained to us the benefits of the new farming method that the government was introducing' (FGD, Citizen, Gicumbi).

The quotations above indicate that accessing information enhances awareness which, in turn, leads to citizens' ownership, implementation and sustainability of programs.

c) Right to feedback

Feedback gives meaning to participation. One of the findings from this research is that without it, all mechanisms geared towards enhancing participation will not work effectively. Yet, on the ground, giving feedback is still problematic and it is struggling to take root. The following excerpt from interviews explains this further:

“When the leaders come to us to seek ideas on the formulation of Imihigo, we expect them to come back to us and tell us the outcome of our discussions. Unfortunately, the reality is that we only see them again when they come to tell us about the implementation of Imihigo. I think it is improper to collect good ideas from citizens and subsequently discard them and never bother to explain why it was done” (FGD, Citizen, Gicumbi).

One of possible explanations was provided by a key informant who observed that:

“Some leaders have a bad mindset that induces them to think that citizens do not have the right to feedback. This is usually motivated by the wrong assumption that those citizens will not benefit from that feedback or that their level of education is too low to make them appreciate the value of that feedback. The fact of the matter is that citizens know what they want and appreciate that leaders value their advice” (KI, Kigali).

d) Safe space for citizen participation

Human interaction in a wounded society needs to take place in a safe environment. Interaction between citizens and leaders in such a society has a greater chance of succeeding if citizens are convinced that interaction will not have adverse consequences.

Beyond the relationship between citizens and leaders, citizen participation necessitates an environment in which they can openly voice their needs, learn and provide feedback on public policies, and discuss real problems. Participants stressed the need for such an environment that

is designed in such a way that it fosters open and critical discussions as illustrated in the following comment:

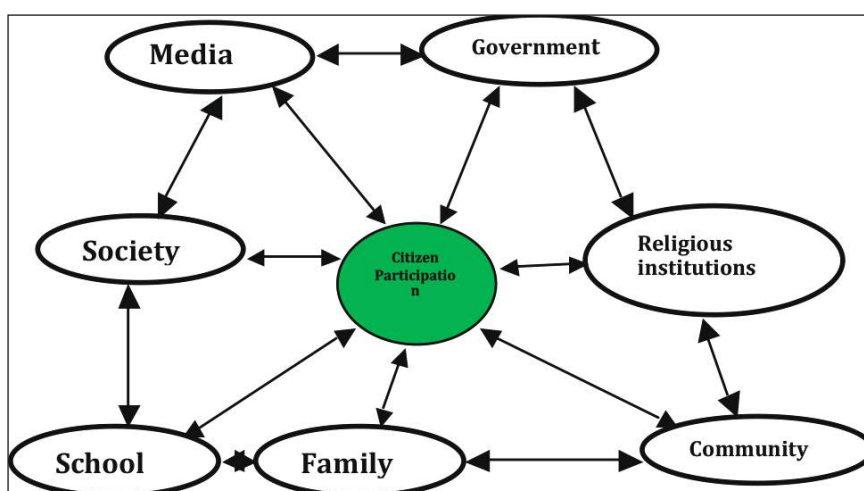
“I can give an example of some meetings we attend. We give our opinions on certain topics, and in most cases they are ignored. Sometimes you get discouraged when you suggest an idea in the meeting and the only feedback you get is a reprimand. When this happens, you can never be motivated to participate in the future” (FGD, Bugesera District).

It should also be noted that offering citizens safe spaces to express themselves freely can empower them and reinforce their confidence to take part in policies that affect their lives. It should not be expected either that all views expressed by citizens should be adopted unconditionally. Ideally, leadership should be able to incorporate such views that could be deemed sound enough, while providing feedback to citizens on ideas that were not retained.

e) Education and socialization

Education and socialization are crucial in shaping individual attitudes towards civic engagement. Members of any community or society need to be educated properly so that they can actively participate in the governance of their country when they grow up. Figure 4 below captures the essence of this statement. It should be noted that citizen participation is partly about attitudes and knowledge which are a result of how individuals were socialized. Both citizens and leaders come from various backgrounds which determine cultural values and norms that shape their attitudes, and to some extent, their knowledge.

Depending on the type of socialization that people go through, they may have positive or negative attitudes towards participation. Since early age, children begin to learn about and internalize the cultural norms and values. For example it is through socialization process that gender roles, critical thinking attitudes and skills are assimilated. Traditionally, while male youth were socialized to take leadership roles and positions, females were taught to be submissive and deal with social and soft roles. In the same line and in general, young people were socialized to be obedient to adults and leaders to the point of not challenging them. Participants in this study indicated that various socialization agents have shaped the attitudes of Rwandans in regard to participation. The role of families and schools was particularly highlighted. As one participant puts it:



Source: Authors of this report based on findings
 Figure 4. Agents of socialization as some determinants of citizen participation

Let us reflect a bit on our culture. As boys and girls, we learnt what ‘culturally appropriate’ in terms of gender roles. We have even gotten names that predict how we should behave as elderly people. For example, boys are called Rwema, Shyaka, Ntwali, while girls are called Teta, Karabo, Keza. That tells a million stories of expectations of their parents....When we grow up, these gender roles affect even the extent to which boys and girls, men

and women participate in governance, and even income generating activities. For example, cooperatives have been promoted by the Government to spearhead inclusive social and economic development; ideally, this is good for men and women who did not have opportunities to advance their education. Unfortunately, I have observed that women do not participate adequately because they are busy on household chores (KII, Kigali).

‘How do we promote participation in our families? Some parents don’t allow their children to participate in family discussions and some even ask their children to leave the sitting room when visitors come. These children will grow up with the knowledge that it is not proper to express themselves in front of elders or leaders, and yet these are the very citizens we want to see participate in the governance of their country when the time comes’ (FGD, Academics).

In the same vein, in some families children are instructed never to challenge parents and the elderly. In many cases, when these children grow up, they are not keen to openly express their opinions in public such as in meetings, schools, and other social gatherings. While this applies to all citizens, women and girls face a different experience. This was illustrated by a KII who commented:

The role of schools and other educational institutions is also important in determining whether learners develop the capacity or otherwise to participate in governance today and tomorrow. An education system that promotes participation and critical thinking at an early stage prepares the ground and plays an essential role in the capacity of citizens to participate in the governance of the country when time comes. In contrast, when educators do not promote participation values, they tend to reward



Members of the citizen forum in Karongi, 2015.

silence. Once silence is rewarded, learners will not challenge anything even outside the school. This has been the case in Rwanda for a long time.

Similarly, the media, churches and or mosques have an important role to play in shaping citizens' attitudes towards participation. When the media are not given the latitude to express opinions on public affairs, and when churches / mosques preach subservience, it becomes difficult to subsequently change and feel the urge to actively participate in governance matters.

The socialization agents outlined above and presented in figure 3 are not only interrelated, they also influence and cross-feed each another. It is difficult to ascertain the magnitude of influence of each of the socialization agents. What is important to note is that a citizen is a product of the interaction of these socialization agents and of his level of involvement in interaction with the various agents.

The need for access to information and right to feedback, trust and safe space, education and socialization has been reflected upon in different contexts in extant literature.

Information is an important factor in creating a conducive environment in which citizens participate in their governance. When they are not aware of government policies and programs and existing mechanisms of participation, they can hardly influence policy-making. This is corroborated by Irvin and Stansbury, (n.d) who observe that information is indeed an indispensable element in citizen participation. This study demonstrates that in fact, information is often given in a form of communiqué with very little margin for citizens to challenge its content or its relevance. This could partly be explained by the long standing culture of centralism. Some participants have observed that local government leaders are often given instructions of what should be done on a short notice. In such a situation, they are not required to consult citizens but to pass on instructions to citizens. In other instances, this culture has influenced the leadership style of local government officials in such a way that they do not value benefits associated with citizen consultation, instead they give orders.

In addition, the GoR has invested in technologies that seek to ensure information flows to citizens. These include E- government, Irembo, and posting service charters at public notice boards of government offices. Considering a weak reading culture and low literacy levels among many citizens and particularly among women and girls, one may wonder whether

this is enough. Clearly then, making information available to the public and providing adequate means to access that information is vital for effective citizen participation.

Similarly, effective communication between citizens and leaders takes place where there has been information dissemination and feedback. This requires that the sender (government officer) adapts the message to the receivers (citizens), uses the right communication channel, and receives feedback. On the other side, local and central government should provide space where citizens voice their concerns and views. In this situation, citizens should have feedback on the outcomes of their suggestions. When citizens are not given feedback on what the elected leaders have done and achieved in relation to the concerns and needs they expressed, the level of trust and participation is diminished and might ultimately translate in passive participation.

As far as trust is concerned, Mizrahi, Vigoda-Gadot & Cohen (p.25) observe that "trust can lead people who face uncertainty and risk to cooperate with the organization, thus increasing performance and satisfaction". Building on this statement, local government is an organization that exists to perform a set of duties as it serves clients (citizens) to their satisfaction. A recent study conducted in Vietnam confirms that trust influences citizens' choices of their leaders and how they interact and determines levels of citizens' engagement (Wells-Dang, Thai & Lam, 2015).

Conversely, trust is much needed in post-genocide Rwanda. Before and during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, leaders manipulated citizens and were the workhorse used to commit the genocide. This resulted in total erosion of trust in leadership. Never Again Rwanda (2015) observes that genocide infringed to citizens a lot of psychological wounds, mistrust, suspicion and fear that hamper people's openness and willingness to express their opinions freely, which hinder their participation in governance. To rectify this, leaders need to be open and trustworthy during electoral campaigns. They should also bear in mind that citizens are their partners during their office tenures, otherwise they will not perform to their satisfaction.

Conclusively, behaviors and practices of government officers and citizens are largely a result of and are caused by the education and socialization that citizens experienced. Human beings are shaped by their families, communities, schools, religion, the media, and the government of the day. By large, families and communities in Rwandan

culture do not allow children to speak in presence of elder family members. In patriarchal cultures, women's participation in governance is less. Formal education may not liberate learners to participate if it perpetuates social inequalities.

Religion and faith based organizations may not always encourage critical thinking and participation. Media that reproduces stereotypes does not prepare citizens to participate in a meaningful manner, and so on. For example, *nta nkokokazi ibika isake ihari* (a woman cannot decide when a man is around) explains why there may be less participation of women in families and public spaces; *Irivuze umwami* (no one contradicts what the king has said), the king represents any authority in family, school, church, community and government. Such a proverb does not facilitate citizen participation at different stages in their life.

It is important to note that these institutions influence one another and shape individuals differently at different levels in life. They also change in response to changes in external environment. All in all, leaders and citizens have various backgrounds that affect the amount and quality of participation. Leaders may not be ready to invite participation or do not know how to do that; citizens may not be ready to participate due to their attitudes and perceptions towards participation in governance.

5.2. Citizen Participation in Policy Cycle

Citizen participation in policy and program processes is key to ensuring that those citizens' priorities and concerns are voiced and taken into account. Abels (2007) observes that participatory approaches to policy cycle increase citizens motivation, enhance their knowledge and values basis of policy-making, initiate a process of social learning, create opportunities for conflict resolution and achieving the common good, as well as improve the level of acceptance and legitimacy of political decisions (p.1) This part presents participants narratives in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, from their lived experiences.

5.2.1. Participation in Policy and Program Formulation

Citizen participation in policy and program formulation is key to ensuring that citizen priorities and concerns are voiced and taken into account. This is the only way policies and programs can be sustained and citizens feel that they own them.

At the local level, citizen participation is largely expected when it comes to developing District Development Plans, District budgets and *Imihigo*. A Sector Executive Secretary put it this way:

"Consultations are held at Village level to collect citizens' priorities; these are consolidated and prioritized at Cell level, and the same exercise is replicated at the District level. At the District level, local priorities are consolidated with national priorities from Central Government (Ministries) and are then approved by the District Council, before they are signed by the Mayor and the President of the Republic of Rwanda. Once District *Imihigo* are signed, they are returned to Sectors, Cells and Villages for implementation" (KII, Kigali).

However, as it was suggested before, this varies from leader to leader and from place to place. In fact, some citizens claimed that they are not given space to voice their priorities for *Imihigo* and, when this happens, their priorities are not taken into account. In this regard, *Imihigo* process tends to be top-down rather than bottom-up. As a participant claimed, "We are not involved in the *Imihigo* process; it is only when we attend meetings that we are informed that *Imihigo* have already been approved" (FGD, Citizen, Nyabihu).

It was claimed that in many instances, citizens' concerns are not reflected in *Imihigo*. Local leaders concur with this view put forward by citizens. The Sector Executive Secretary put it this way:

"For example, in the 2014/2015 financial year, none of the priorities put forward by our Sector for inclusion in the *Imihigo* were considered" (Key Informant, Kigali).

In addition, citizens claim that Council members and Executive Secretaries do not provide feedback to citizens regarding their suggested priorities. Some citizens state that, as a consequence, they are no longer keen to attend community meetings.

It appears that Budget-funded *Imihigo* are implemented by both the District and the Sector, while those which do not require District budgets are implemented by stakeholders (NGOs, Private Sector) and the citizens/households. Although some local leaders maintained that the *Imihigo* process is participatory and involves citizens directly at the Village level, others argue that some citizens do not attend such meetings.

It is often argued that many citizens do not have technical skills and competence to formulate policies. What cannot be denied is that at least they are the ones who know what is in their best interest. In any case, most government policies are implemented in the Villages and often by citizens.

Implementation of policies that affect people's lives has a greater chance of succeeding when those people have had a say in the planning process and feel that they own them. Failure to engage them may result in a vicious cycle because unless citizens are given room to participate today, they will not feel inclined to participate in future.

5.2.2. Citizens' implementation of policy / programs

Participation in the implementation of public policies and programs, both local and national, emerged as the area in which citizens' participation is most crucial. Most of those programs are implemented locally through *Imihigo*. According to participants, their participation involves contribution of labor through *Umuganda*, money and material assets, and other commitments at the household level.

In some Districts, *Umuganda* is done every week while, officially, *Umuganda* is done on a monthly basis. This turns out to be a burden as it takes much of their time. Also, some citizens complained that they are often asked to make financial contributions that appear to be beyond their means. One participant said:

"We are being asked to pay too much money in a short time. For example, we are told to make contributions to political parties, Agaciro Development Fund, Construction of nine-year-basic education schools, Mutuelle de Santé, Contribution to the Teacher's Motivation but we are not well-off" (FGD, Gicumbi).

Though this perception prevails in some areas, officials approached clarified that it could be to some overzealous leaders who, from their own initiative, implement programs differently from guidelines they are given.

However, the apparent frustration suggests that there is lack of ownership on the side of some citizens. Many of the issues raised such as the medical insurance, schools for their children benefit them directly. Why would citizens resist implementation of projects that benefit them? The answer may be in lack of participation in the planning process.

5.2.3. Participation in evaluation of programs

Evaluation is essential as it provides an opportunity to assess the worth, the desirability, the effectiveness, and the outcomes of programs (Sara, 1970). Participation of relevant stakeholders, including citizens, in program evaluation is also important especially in order to ensure ownership and sustainability. In practice, there is one official mechanism allowing citizens to participate in program evaluation: Public Accountability/Open day held quarterly at the District level. This is an opportunity given to citizens to engage with District leaders and development stakeholders regarding the implementation of development programs. Participants who are aware of this space commend it for being a real dialogue and accountability forum. However, some citizens are not aware that this space is meant for them. As one participant said,

"it is hard to participate in the evaluation while you did not have a say in the planning phase" (FGD, Nyabihu).

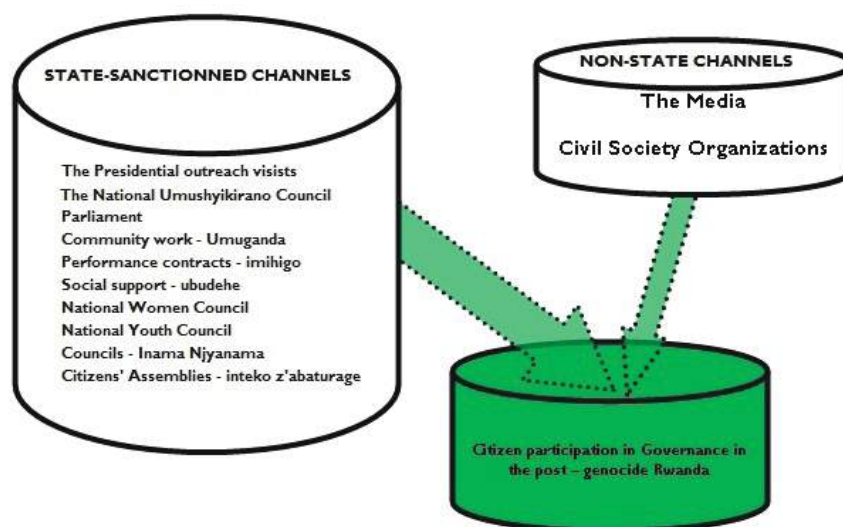
It should also be noted that Districts are so vast that it is hard for many citizens to walk long distances from home to attend Public Accountability Days at the District Headquarters. In conclusion, it appears that despite the political goodwill to ensure that citizens own policy processes, the practice is that citizens are not involved in planning. They are highly involved in implementation while their participation is not meaningful in policy evaluation. In a process, as observes Renee A. Irvin & John Stansbury (n.d), inadequate citizen involvement denies them opportunities to learn and enlighten the government. Similarly, the government denies itself the opportunity to learn from citizens, build trust, build strategic alliances, and gain citizens legitimacy regarding decisions taken. In a long run, inadequate citizen participation does not prepare a seed for sustainable development.

5.3. Citizens views on existing participation mechanisms

As outlined at the start of this report, in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, Rwanda has taken various measures to promote good governance and, especially enhance citizen participation. In a bid to concretize its political will, the GoR put in place a series of mechanisms intended to ease citizen participation in the aftermath of the Genocide against the Tutsi. Some of these mechanisms are State endorsed while the rest are established by non-state actors.

Figure 5. Major mechanisms for citizen participation in Rwanda

Source: Authors of this report based on findings



5.3.1. State - sanctioned channels / mechanisms

The State - sanctioned channels that were identified by participants are *Inteko z' Abaturage* (citizens' assemblies), *Inama Njyanama* (Councils), *Umuganda* (community work), *Imihigo* (performance contracts), *Ubudehe* (social support), Parliament, the National Umushyikirano Council, National Youth Council, the National Women Council, and the Presidential Outreach. Each of these is discussed below:

Citizens' Assemblies - Inteko z'Abaturage

The citizens' assemblies are meant to help iron out grassroots issues (see appendix 6 for this representation body and other local government bodies). Participants in this study clearly underlined that citizens' assemblies serve as a channel of direct participation in governance of the population at the local level. They help in problem solving especially with regard to local conflicts. It is especially this aspect of local conflict resolution that was clearly highlighted as the most important in the functioning of *Inteko z' Abaturage*. Decisions are made in public and everyone is encouraged to give their opinion. This is different from court procedures in that it reinforces social cohesion since all the citizens at the Village level are expected to participate.

To a lesser extent, participants in different focus groups also mentioned the importance of *Inteko z' Abaturage* with regard to identifying priorities in the planning process especially those to be included in *Imihigo*.

When discussing with the political leaders, they stressed that the rationale of *Inteko z' Abaturage* is to gradually empower citizens at grassroots level with the aim of deconstructing the culture of dependence that prevailed in Rwanda for a long time. This, they said, is a positive move. In the process of making citizens participate, they assume their rights but also exercise their responsibilities. A citizen from Musanze District concurred with the leader and said:

'For example, whenever a land conflict at the family level is brought to the Inteko y' Abaturage, we are involved as much as possible to identify the root causes of such a conflict and suggest solutions' (FGD, Citizen, Musanze District).

Furthermore, in few places *Inteko z' Abaturage* are reported to provide space for citizens and members of the Cells' Councils to meet over specific community issues such as security and sanitation, which may require action and advocacy. One of the citizens said:

"Sometimes when a problem that is identified in the community exceeds the power of the Inteko y' Abaturage, we call upon some members of the Council to attend our next meeting so that they get to know the problem, propose solutions, or advocate on our behalf" (FGD, Citizen, Bugesera).

However, this good practice of involving members of the Councils was not reported in many places. One of the possible explanations is confusion in

citizens' understanding of *Inteko z' Abaturage* especially in terms of intent and purpose, and the decentralized entities in which they are based. In many places, participants, including some elite, confuse *Inteko z' Abaturage*, *Umuganda* and the Village Council (*Inama Njyanama y' Umudugudu*).

A participant in Gasabo District put it this way:

"I think we have Inteko y' Abaturage after Umuganda. I have never been invited to any meeting except that one. After Umuganda, we meet and briefly reflect on some issues affecting our Village. However, the meeting is mostly dominated by announcements that come from top leadership, for example MINALOC, MINAGRI etc."

However, despite the progress that Rwanda has been making in promoting gender equality, the participation of women and girls may not be active in *Inteko z' Abaturage*. As highlighted by a participant:

"The gender division of labor gives more public space to men than to women and girls. When such meetings are taking place, many women and girls know they should be dealing with household chores and preparing for members of the households" (KII, Kigali).

Many participants referred to *Inteko z' Abaturage* as meetings organized by Village leaders after community works (*Umuganda*). In many places, both rural and urban, *Umuganda* is organized at Village level on the last Saturday of the month. After carrying out some manual work, meetings are held with citizens to discuss some community issues and individual concerns.

The fact that some issues intended for discussion at *Inteko z' Abaturage* (Cell level) are solved at the Village level creates confusion as to what constitutes *Inteko z' Abaturage* and what it is not. Besides, it was reported that there wouldn't be enough space to accommodate *Inteko z' Abaturage* in urban settings. Rural areas do not necessitate elaborate infrastructure to hold such meetings. Also, if this is not done after *Umuganda*, urban citizens would find it difficult to attend such meetings due competing demands on their time.

According to local leaders, this is why they tend to invite only a few people, generally opinion leaders, and the rest of the citizens do not get to know.

Apart from lack of information, there is a number of obstacles that hinder the proper functioning of *Inteko z' Abaturage*. They include:



Members of a citizen forum setting priorities, 2015.

Lack of clear rules for resolving local conflicts. Indeed, for most participants, the proper functioning of *Inteko z' Abaturage* largely depends on the goodwill of the Cell Chief. In some places, *Inteko z' Abaturage* do not take place or are dominated by the Village chief who imposes his views. The rules governing their conduct and the practice on the ground differ and only common sense prevails.

The working relationship between *Inteko z' Abaturage* and higher administrative entities, especially during the planning and identification of development priorities, is far from being clear. It depends on the whims of leaders in place and how effective they are. As an illustration, when we asked participants in this study how priorities to include in *Imihigo* are set, most replied that this is done through telephone conversations between the Village Chief and the Executive Secretary of the Cell. Rarely are priorities collected through citizens' assemblies.

Minutes of *Inteko z' Abaturage* are not available for follow - up actions.

Given its role of handling citizens' concerns, attendance tends to be low where they do not have personal and individual issues to table.

Women and girls were reported to participate less, one of the major reasons being that they are restricted by household chores unlike men and boys

It was reported that in *Inteko z' Abaturage*, the youth are often absent.

Local Councils - Inama Njyanama

Inama Njyanama is an important channel of citizens' participation. It takes place at all levels of Local Government. Participants in this study acknowledge the role Councils play in making decision at various levels. Examples include solving local problems, reviewing and adopting District Development Plans, adopting performance contracts (*Imihigo*), adopting the Sector and District budgets, and dismissing disgraced executive committee members. In a few cases, citizens mentioned that some Council members do reach out to citizens mainly through community meetings and community work. In such cases, some local issues are discussed and eventually taken to relevant authorities for action. *Inama Njyanama* at the Village (*Umudugudu*) level, which actually brings together all village

residents, was commended for its role in providing citizens with space to dialogue on both individual and community issues. It is worth noting that the Village, as the lowest decentralized entity, is primarily responsible for mobilizing the citizens about government policies and programs. Above all, this space is used to discuss and solve security issues and deal with the general welfare of the citizens.

Although Councils are generally praised, the top-down communication, which participants referred to as "*umwanya w' amatangazo*" (time for announcements) was almost unanimously criticized. A feeling of frustration was apparent due to the fact that bottom-up communication is often non-existent. People expect to use this space - also wrongly referred to by many participants as *Inteko z' Abaturage* - as a forum to voice concerns and views about public policies for advocacy purposes. While it is well done in some places, there is room for improvement.

In fact, most participants were of the view that council members do not represent them, because they do not engage them, listen to their concerns, or provide feedback on their ideas. At District level, it was found that in some cases, members of Commissions organize visits on an *ad hoc* basis to deal with local issues. While this is commendable, it is hard to imagine that pending issues will be resolved only when members will have time for visits.

A participant commented as follows: "*Frankly speaking, Councilors are elected but do not do a good job. First of all, they do not listen to us or seek our views. They should come to us, listen to our concerns, channel them to the right offices, and give us feedback* (FGD, Citizens Musanze).

In the same vein, a key informant said:

'I have to say that Njyanama is only preoccupied with decision making. I am saying decision making minus 'strategic' because this role is supposed to be 'strategic decision making'. At least, based on my experience in local governance, the decisions Njyanama takes are not strategic because they do not consult citizens' (KII, Kigali).

It was also highlighted that of the reasons why citizens may be dissatisfied with the job done by the council members is that both councils and executive committees of Districts and Sectors

include few women. As such, though citizens by large may not have their views heard and taken into consideration, women are even less likely to have their voices represented and needs prioritized. A KII said:

“The membership of Njyanama is not gender balanced. As far as I know, the Njyanama Bureau is male dominated. The president and vice president are often men. After those positions have been taken, those involved in electing them remember that there should be a woman in the bureau and vote for women as secretaries of Njyanama. The women are involved just for the sake of meeting the constitutional requirement of at least 30% seats for women in all decision making organs... in addition, the District executive committee is also male dominated. By large, Mayors and Vice Mayors for Economic Development are men while women are in charge of social affairs. According to district guidelines, the vice mayor in charge of economic affairs works in an acting capacity in absence of the Mayor, implying that the Vice Mayor in charge of social affairs will never have a chance to meaningfully influence decisions, which reflects the traditional gendered division of labor where women should be caring.” (KII, Kigali).

Interestingly, some Council members agree that some of the citizens’ claims are valid. They add that limited resources which would enable them to visit and meet with their constituencies are the main challenge. One of them made this point clearly:

“One of the challenges we face is limited transport facilitation to enable us to travel to our respective constituencies and interact with citizens and know their concerns.” (Council member, Gasabo District).

Due to lack of consultations, *Njyanama* were criticized for taking decisions without relevant facts. A key informant (KII, Kigali) questioned this behavior as follows:

“If they do not interact and consult their constituencies how do they know whether what they approve reflects citizens’ priorities?”

The government is aware of this resource constraint faced by Councilors, and according to Government officials interviewed in this study; it

is working out an appropriate solution. This point was made clear by an RGB official in the following terms:

“The Government acknowledges that Councils are faced with various challenges while addressing citizens’ concerns and it is working out a solution. The issue of transport facilitation allowances is being dealt with and should have an appropriate solution in the near future to allow councilors to organize regular visits to their constituencies.” (KII, RGB official).

What emerged also is that there are no clear channels of communication between councils at different levels. This means that a Councilor at the Cell level does not interact with a Councilor at the Sector level and the latter does not interact with the District Council member. This lack of communication and collaboration means that there is no synergy amongst Councilors in ensuring that there is a citizen’s voice in the strategic management of local entities.

However, it is worth noting that the participation of women and girls in leadership positions in *Njyanama* (District Level) remains challenging. Participants highlighted that these positions tend to be constantly male dominated except for the position of council secretary. This is also supported by the numbers¹ of men and women in positions such as chairpersons of districts councils and City of Kigali (2 women out of 31), councils vice-chairpersons (12 women out of 31), while women secretaries of councils are 26 out of 31.

Interestingly, this male dominance is also observed in the District Executive Committee. The list of Mayors, vice mayors for economic affairs and vice mayors in charge of social affairs (see appendix 7), only 5 out of 31 Mayors of Districts and the City of Kigali are women; only 6 out of 31 Vice Mayors for Economic Affairs in Districts and the City of Kigali are women. The situation changes with the position of the districts vice mayors in charge of social affairs (including the City of Kigali), this is female dominated as 24 out of 31 are women, thus confirming the observation where women tend to occupy positions which reflect the traditional caring roles.

1 Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities, “Contacts for District leaders and staff”, consulted on 17 May 2016, at <http://www.ralgarwanda.org/index.php?id=162>

Community Work - Umuganda

Umuganda is a citizen's participation channel where community members are involved in infrastructure development and maintenance. It also boosts social cohesion through interactions between citizens and leaders, as well as amongst citizens themselves at local level. Where necessary, residents discuss and pledge resources necessary for their social and economic development. Participants in this study said that *Umuganda* is one avenue which citizens use to solve community issues and to implement government policies. One of them said:

"In our village, we had a serious problem of communicating with a neighboring village due to a damaged bridge. We decided to repair the bridge and to do it through Umuganda. Residents of both Villages mobilized all required resources and managed to rebuild it. As a result, social and economic interaction between both Villages was revitalized." (FGD, Citizen, Rulindo).

More importantly, *Umuganda* has proven to be a major tool for changing the mindsets about national development. Everyone understands that sustainable development can only be achieved if citizens participate and own interventions geared towards their emancipation. However, participants claimed that in some places citizen participation in *Umuganda* is limited to carrying out activities without being consulted in the planning phase. This was reported to be one reason why in some areas there is low turnout. *Umuganda* appears to be more than a forum for carrying out community work; it is also perceived as a forum for holding meetings between citizens and local leaders. However, the top-down approach used in practice to convene these meetings tends to make them less interesting and attractive. A participant commented that

"The meetings are used by our leaders to communicate decisions, rules and guidelines they have already taken/adopted. No time is allocated for our opinions or feedback. The whole meeting is about announcements." (FGD, Citizens, Huye).

As a result, some participants declared that they are not eager to attend *Umuganda* or other meetings associated with it. They further argued that Local Government leaders should devise ways to involve citizens in the planning and overall *Umuganda* initiative.

Performance Contracts - Imihigo

Imihigo was highlighted as one of the Home Grown Initiatives aimed at boosting the Results Based Management in local and central Government performance in Rwanda. Evidence gathered for this study tells two stories. On the one hand, *Imihigo* has provided space for citizen participation. As a citizen from Bugesera District said,

"Each household prepares its Imihigo, then all performance contracts are aggregated at a District level. This makes me feel good because my voice has been heard and respected." (FGD, Citizen, Bugesera).

On the other hand, citizens reported that their participation in *Imihigo* is limited. The following excerpt from our interviews and discussions illustrate this point:

"I am the youth representative at the Sector level. I am told that the District pledged to form about 600 youth saving groups. Yet I, the youth representative, do not know about that. How will those groups come into existence without my input?" (FGD, Citizen, Gicumbi).

"The performance contracts that do not require funds from Government are pledged by households and they are forwarded to higher levels. Other than that, we have no say in the elaboration of Imihigo because the District has a five- year District Development Plan, which highlights the District's development priorities." (FGD, Citizen, Bugesera).

"We are called upon to come and approve the performance contracts prepared by technicians. They always say that it is urgent and it requires immediate action. This explains how Imihigo end up being a brain child of the Councilors." (FGD, Councilor, Gasabo).

"We visited a rural District. We noted an 800 million - worth feeder road that was developed about 6 months before. The decision had been taken by higher authorities. The Local Government just implemented. Apparently, this was not a priority. When we visited it, it was already in a state of disrepair. This shows that Local Government has no capacity to say no to decisions from above, irrespective of the value of such decisions." (KII, Kigali).

“They plan to achieve the highest targets in a short time and they put pressure on us to implement these decisions in which we’ve not been involved. I would recommend that targets are reasonable, that citizens get involved, and that we participate in monitoring the progress of such Imihigo. This will improve the relationship between us and them.” (FGD, Citizens, Rwamagana).

“We citizens don’t feel close to our leaders. This can be illustrated by some meetings we attend. Leaders only invite us to meetings only to communicate to us the Imihigo targets and many times we are asked to implement them without questioning.” (FGD, Citizen, Karongi)

“In one of my field trips to schools, I spoke to a headmaster. He suggested that the school dropout statistics reported at national level may not be accurate. He had shared dropout statistics with the Sector education officer but the officer instructed him to go back and bring the “right” statistics. He went ahead and provided another version of statistics on dropouts in his school.” (FGD, Academics).

Basically, findings on *Imihigo* tell the three stories. The first story is that *Imihigo* has proven to be a real innovative and homegrown planning tool in post-genocide Rwanda. The second story is that citizens participate largely in the implementation phase of *Imihigo* including those planned at local level as well as some national priorities. The third story says that, in many places, *Imihigo* persistingly follow a top down approach leaving therefore limited room for citizen participation in both planning and evaluation phase.

The role of citizen in the evaluation phase is generally observed through the assessments regularly conducted by IPAR (commissioned by the Prime Minister’s Office to evaluate *Imihigo*) and RGB (Annual Citizen Report Card). However, this involves a very limited number of people reached by assessment teams through related surveys.

Ubudehe

Ubudehe, one of the Home Grown Initiatives (HGI), was mentioned by participants to this study as one of the channels through which they participate. However, there are different opinions regarding the level of participation. On the one hand, there is a view that citizens fully participate in *Ubudehe*, as can be seen from the following:

“We went through an interesting process. We were asked to gather social and economic characteristics of our Village. We ended up with a community map. We further went through a process of collectively defining and analyzing the nature of poverty in our community; looked at local categories of poverty, the characteristics of each category, and mobility between categories, as well as the causes and impact of poverty etc. This shows that we fully participated in this process.” (FGD, Citizens, Gicumbi).

On the other hand, citizens are requested to participate but there is lack of information and feedback; this makes the exercise less motivating as exemplified by the following.

“At a grass root levels, we were asked to put our neighbors in Ubudehe categories. We did that because we knew them [our neighbors] better than anyone else. After submitting lists to higher levels, they were changed. We neither got clarification as to why some citizens’ categories were changed, nor were we asked to clarify the status of certain citizens. Eventually, some people’s categories were changed in a way that we failed to understand.” (FGD, Citizen, Huye).

Ubudehe was meant to help bring about an inclusive social and economic development where grassroots citizens take a lead. As practiced today, citizens are involved but there seems to be lack of adequate information, consultation and feedback, all of which can be improved to ensure effective citizen participation.

Parliament

Some participants in this study recognized efforts made by Parliament in getting closer to citizens. Over the past years, there has been an important shift after constant criticism from citizens that *“the last time we saw MPs is when they came to campaign”*. Participants mentioned cases where Members of Parliament attend community work (*Umuganda*), while Radio Rwanda *Inteko* was also mentioned as a channel of information dissemination about Parliament.

Moreover, MPs in various commissions conduct some field visits to investigate some issues that were brought to their attention. From their government oversight role, some MPs attend District councils meetings to get familiar with some local issues discussed in this forum, as follows;



A member of a citizen forum expressing his concerns in a session, 2016

“MPs do sometimes visit our District. Even yesterday the Commission on Social Welfare visited us to assess the state of Mutuelle de santé. MPs are also seen when they are invited by the District authorities or when sent by Ministries to deal with issues of concern” (Interview, Nyabihu District).

However, despite this shift, MPs’ participation in Umuganda did not emerge as an avenue where citizens could participate in policy formulation. For example, citizens are not advised in advance to get together, identify and articulate their needs and concerns for advocacy or consideration by MPs. Besides, such a space is rarely used by MPs to share information with citizens about some bills and collect citizens’ views for consideration. Similarly, some participants who are aware of the existence of Radio Rwanda Inteko argued that it could work better if it engaged citizens in constant discussions and debates on relevant bills affecting their lives.

It is obvious that citizens’ perceptions may occasionally be misled as to the work of MPs, like in the above statement where they feel that an MP who comes to discuss a topical policy issue is sent by the relevant Ministry. That said, citizens are often not aware of such visits. MPs meet with

District Councils, but as mentioned above, many of them are disconnected from citizens they are meant to represent.

Another finding about the representation of parliamentarians has highlighted gender issues. Undoubtedly, Rwanda’s parliament has the world largest number of women. However, individuals consulted through KIIs suggested that the prevalence of women in parliament does not necessarily translate into women’s substantial representation. This may be affected by levels of education and professional experience.

“Let us be honest with ourselves. Given a tradition gendered access to and control over resources; men have had more access to education than women. Now, imagine a scenario where a male MP, with a Master’s degree, is discussing in the parliament plenary. On his side, there is a female MP, with a high school certificate. The male MP is discussing and quoting authors he read especially when he was writing his thesis. What will the female MP say? Nothing, she is just scared by the vocabulary and academic debate. Will she say no to issues she did not understand? Not at all! For substantive representation to take place there is need for more education.” (KII, Kigali).

In conclusion, it is clear that MPs' efforts to collect citizens' concerns and priorities for advocacy and lawmaking purposes still fall short. MPs should do more and endeavor to meet with citizens directly through existing channels such as *Umuganda*, *Inteko z'Abaturage*, *Radio Inteko*, etc. The need for citizens to be consulted and get feedback on bills that affect their lives cannot be overemphasized. There is also need for ongoing capacity building of MPs to ensure that they can adequately perform their duties.

g) National Umushyikirano Council

The National Umushyikirano Council is one of citizen participation mechanisms put in place in post-genocide Rwanda. Evidence gathered for this study tells two stories. On the one hand, citizens view it as an avenue to interact with high level authorities, which gives them an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback to leaders. One of the citizens interviewed for this study said:

"National Umushyikirano Council is organized every year. It is an opportunity that brings together leaders in public administration, private sector and nonprofit spheres. It also involves Rwandans from the diaspora. I can call in and ask a question with confidence that it will be channeled To Whom It May Concern because all leaders are there." (FGD, Citizens, Huye).

On the other hand, *National Umushyikirano Council* is viewed as one of other high level meetings where authorities meet to discuss high level issues. One of the citizens said that:

"I heard about National Umushyikirano Council from my son. It is just one of these meetings in Kigali where the President and Ministers, as well as other dignitaries meet to discuss about high level issues. I think there is no space for ordinary citizens like me." (FGD, Citizens, Gicumbi).

Clearly, *National Umushyikirano Council* is one of the mechanisms that give chance to citizens to participate. Some citizens are eager to participate, perhaps because of the trust they have in the President of the Republic, who chairs it. Another reason may be that it is broadcasted live through Radio Rwanda and the Television of Rwanda.

However, it was not echoed by many participants. Possible reasons may be the fact that it takes place once a year; also, it requires some

technology including radio receivers, telephones, and television sets which may not always be adequately available in all households.

Finally, the fact that this meeting is broadcasted through Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA)'s radio and television alone, makes it hard for other citizens who follow different media outlets to know. It is equally important to raise awareness on the meeting so that the citizens can learn about it and develop readiness to exploit it as one of the opportunities to participate in governance.

National Youth Council

The National Youth Council (NYC) is an institution that was set up by the GoR to cater for the needs of the youth and to ensure that they had a voice at various levels of public administration. It has proved to be an important and popular avenue for mobilizing the youth and making sure that the youth participate in the governance of their country after the 1994 Genocide. As it was explained by a key informant, the NYC offers an array of services including capacity building in entrepreneurship and vocational training, as well as prevention of drug abuse and diseases like HIV/AIDS. The NYC also promotes patriotism among the youth and mobilizes them to become citizens in programs like *itorero ry'igihugu*.

Despite all these services provided by NYC, this organization faces several challenges to promoting youth participation such as lack of financial resources, lack of technical capacity and lack of clear terms of reference for youth representatives. In the end, most of the interventions intended to promote youth activities are usually carried out by non-state actors and it is done on an ad hoc basis. It was noted by a participant who opined that:

"In my opinion, the youth do not participate adequately. While their representation is required by laws, it seems that they do not have consistent programs. If you ask representatives and leaders, they do not know where they are leading them to. They may say that young men and women will participate in Itorero ry'igihugu, which is not bad. My concern is what they become after they graduate from Itorero ry'igihugu. For example, I would be glad if the Ministry of Youth and ICT shared with me statistics on the youth who participated in training at Iwawa Rehabilitation Centre, where they are today and what they became after graduation." (KII, Kigali)

Participants in this study voiced other concerns most notably that youth do not generally participate in most of the mechanisms aimed at facilitating citizen participation at grassroots levels. A number of social forces may be constraining youth participation such as a lack of parental encouragement to participate and distraction from social media and entertainment.

National Women's Council

Like the National Youth Council, the National Women's Council (NWC) was set up by the Government of Rwanda to serve as an institution that would champion the interests of women across the country from grass-root to the national level. It is one of the organs stipulated in the constitution of Rwanda as a means of rectifying the gender imbalances that had characterized Rwanda before 1994.

It emerged from this study that the NWC has empowered women in various ways and given them self-confidence and self-esteem. For example, it has encouraged them to study and develop skills they need; it has motivated them to participate in elections at all levels, not only as voters but also as candidates for all kinds of political positions.

One participant highlighted the role this council plays to encourage women to take advantage of the 2003 constitutional mandate of at least 30% representation of women in all decision making positions, which offers another avenue to influence policy and participate in all facets of national life. This representation is also a way of encouraging young women to set high standards for themselves and feel that there is no inhibition.

Recently, the NWC established the *Umugoroba w' Ababyeyi*, which provides a space for preventing and resolving conflict within families and community. A number of participants agree that *Umugoroba w' Ababyeyi*, is increasingly playing a commendable role in reducing family conflicts. While this program is meant to target all villages, it is only operational in some villages. Another limitation is that even though it is supposed to bring together men and women, in some places men do not attend the *Umugoroba w' Ababyeyi*.

A participant in this study witnessed how the NWC mobilized women to engage in income generating activities.



A participant in a CF-led community activity, 2016.

"I have been economically empowered and I have financial autonomy. I have developed the capacity to participate in all kinds of income generating activities that have helped me; my family and the community at large. My children go to school; I have bought cows that produce milk for home consumption. I also supply some to a milk collection center" (FDG, Citizen, Bugesera).

Despite the many contributions made by the NWC, a number of challenges remain. Some women are still reluctant to submit their candidacies even when they have the potential and the capacity to represent their fellow women.

However, some participants complain that the mindset of most people regarding gender equality and equity, including that of men, has not changed. It was even reported that some women have misunderstood the whole concept of gender equality and what it is meant to achieve, which hinders their participation. Some women are still reluctant to stand as candidates in elections, even when they have the potential and the capacity to represent their fellow women. Understandably, some women may stand for election when it is clear they do not have the required knowledge, attitude and skills. In some cases, women are fronted by individuals and/or pressure groups.

Also, some women may be reticent to vie for certain positions because there are no financial incentives. It was also mentioned that some women may want certain posts as a stepping stone for higher, more lucrative positions. Yet others may accept responsibilities but fail to perform as required because of competing demands on their time.

The study suggests that the National Women Council does not perform enough strategically. For example, members of the NWC were reported to less participate in mechanisms aimed at ensuring participatory governance. As one of the participants in this study commented:

Truth be told, the NWC does not perform to my expectations. Members show off at national level without addressing core issues at grass root level. Many people have over-celebrated statistics on women in parliament without necessarily asking what meaningful results came from that representation. I am not saying that women should not be represented; they should rather be substantively represented. I would like to advise the Ministry of Gender to assess the changes that took place among rural women at grass-root levels as a result of the NWC. If they find this organ poorly performing, it should be reengineered (KII, Kigali).

In a final analysis, the NWC's mandate to ensure women participation in decision making at different echelons of government has contributed to empowering women, research evidence suggests that there is a big room for improvement. This would be possible if its strengths are maintained while root causes of its inadequate performance are identified and addressed accordingly.

Presidential outreach visits

It has become a common practice for the current President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, to reach out to citizens across the country. In every District he visits, long queues are seen made up of citizens raising questions on cases of alleged injustice and problems which have not been addressed or unsatisfactorily handled by local leaders and other relevant authorities.

Many participants reported that citizens are excited to meet with the President during his field visits. This view was almost unanimous. The visit itself and the safe space it provides to citizens to voice their concerns, as well as the President's willingness to address their complaints and priorities emerge as the core reasons for that excitement.



A District official with a NAR staff participating in the opening of a citizen forum, 2015.

From participants experiences, it is underlined that reservations associated with other spaces are significantly dissipated during presidential outreach visits. Considering this, two particular dynamics of those visits are noteworthy, both of which center on the difference between speaking with a high authority rather than a local leader. First, there are few or no issues of accountability when speaking with the President because there are no intermediaries. Second, issues of trust and confidence in leadership that are associated with the local level are not present here. It is also important to note that when the President is listening to citizens' concerns, there is a team from his Office that documents problems raised for follow-up.

All in all, Presidential outreach visits appear to be one of the most reliable and effective mechanisms for citizens to voice their concerns. This challenges local leaders to solve citizens' problems. Recently, Local Government leaders (example of Rubavu District) have adopted this practice. It is commendable and needs to be maintained and replicated so that issues raised by citizens are addressed in a timely manner.

The lesson to draw from this is that when a citizen interacts with the President, it is a good example of participation especially that the citizens may go beyond personal problems and give feedback on the effectiveness of government policies. If local leaders emulate such practices, accountability and service delivery can be boosted.

5.3.2. Non-state participation channels

The mechanisms discussed above are the ones established and managed by the GoR. The following mechanisms are the ones that were not put in place by government. They include media and the Civil Society. These were mentioned by participants as avenues that give them space for participating in governance.

Media and citizen participation in Rwanda

In democratic societies, vibrant media are a sound channel for citizen participation. In this study, media houses, especially broadcast media, emerged as increasingly effective in channeling citizens' concerns. Indeed, participants in various discussions commended the new trend of Rwandan broadcast media of offering citizens spaces to raise their concerns and express their needs.

Different radio shows have been identified by participants in this study as a privileged channel citizens for citizen participation. These are such programs like 'makuruki muri karitsiye (Radio and TV 10), *Ikaze Munyarwanda* (Flash FM), Rwanda Today (KFM), *Rirarashe* (Radio and TV 1, *Kubaza Bitera Kumenya* (Radio and TV Rwanda – RBA), among other media programs involving citizens through calls - in, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook handles and short messages (SMS).

Citizens are constantly heard raising their individual and community concerns through media shows and sometimes reports on changes induced by those programs. Cases raised by Radio and TV One through their news programs are eloquent enough in this regard.

In addition, as one Member of Parliament commented,

«Citizens are increasingly informed. They have radios through which they get informed about their rights. For example, we have 'Radio Inteko' and it broadcasts different discussions about policies and laws. Through this, sometimes citizens call and ask questions. I can say that they are informed through the media shows».

Participants also mentioned the media as a channel of accountability. They highlighted how citizens hold leaders accountable through media shows. One of participants said: *“Even if we don't face our local leaders to hold them accountable, we prefer to call some radio shows like Bwakeye Bute, Mubayeho Mute, Amakuru yo muri Karitsiye etc. to denounce some leaders who are not meeting our expectations”*

Likewise, they reported that leaders such as Mayors listen to citizens' claims via radio shows. This way, they are given information about citizens' concerns and, subsequently, try to address them.

Similarly, it was claimed by journalists that sometimes, after receiving citizens' calls, they talk to the people concerned, especially local leaders, who endeavor to find solutions to the problems raised by citizens via radio shows.

However, some journalists claimed that many citizens practice self-censorship when it comes to expressing their views on political issues, while they easily open up on social matters. Similarly, some media houses were criticized for giving

preference mainly to entertainment programs while leaving very little or simply no space for citizens to voice their concerns and needs. One of the KIIs shed more light on the reason why some citizens may practice self-censorship. It was said that:

Some citizens are not yet free from the dictatorship that characterized Rwanda in the past. I think ignorance exacerbates this too. Unfortunately, some cases have been reported where a citizen had reported an issue in the radio show, next time when he sought a service from local government, they told him to go and seek a service from media (KII, Kigali).

Some participants pointed out the need for a healthy and constant policy debate at national level which, in turn would influence the culture of openness at the local level. The memory of the negative role played by political parties in radicalizing citizens during the genocide remains one of the factors of self-censorship for many ordinary citizens, the media, and CSOs.

There is a real difficulty in engaging in constructive open debates on sensitive topics. Some participants stated that various stakeholders refrain from speaking out in order to keep a balance between the need to maintain social cohesion in a post-genocide context and the imperative of a healthy open debate, which is essential to any viable democracy. As such, it is likely to take time for Rwandan citizens to open up while they are still recovering from the wounds inflicted by the Genocide against the Tutsi.

Civil Society Organizations

In order to be more effective in defending their interests and those of certain groups, promoting certain values, beliefs and ideologies, some citizens get together and establish both informal and formal groups or organizations that are embodied in what is generally referred to as civil society. In Rwanda, members of the civil society include mainly non-governmental organizations (both local and international), religious organizations and media houses, academic institutions, research centers, etc.

While some citizens hardly named at least one CSO operating in their area a part from religious organizations, others claimed that most of CSOs (alluding to NGOs) focus on providing some services to their constituencies.

“CSO provide us with social support. They contribute to paying school fees, and provide us with capacity building in terms of conflict resolution, Village Savings and Loan Associations (FGD, Bugesera).”

“We are very close to citizens and help them in many ways. Considering the history of Rwanda, citizens may not associate well with political authorities. These inform them about government policies. CSOs on the other hand largely connect well with citizens. They expect us to be neutral and our interventions are based on their real needs. As such, we help the local government serve citizens.” (FGD, Nyabihu)

Evidence also suggests that CSOs are involved in some form advocacy. Through advocacy, some changes have taken place.

“As CSO, we attend parliament plenaries when MPs are discussing draft law projects. I can give you an example, we advocated to have a Kinyarwanda version of the citizen guide. We worked with MINECOFIN to translate it. Its copy is now available at sector levels. But one challenge remains: citizens do not have copies.” (KII, Kigali).

These findings highlight that CSOs are largely involved in direct service delivery, and to some extent involved in evidence based advocacy. CSOs seem to pay less attention to collecting citizens’ concerns and priorities for advocacy agendas. Previous research (IRDP, 2010; Transparency International Rwanda, 2012, Rwanda Governance Board, 2012) showed that CSOs in Rwanda were not vibrant enough to influence policy making process. In order to achieve inclusive development, CSOs should reconsider their advocacy role in order to really impact the lives of citizens.

5.4. Major challenges to citizen participation

One of the objectives of this study was to explore major challenges that hamper citizen participation in post – genocide Rwanda. Previous sections have obviously tackled some challenges in ways citizens define their participation, how they perceive their participation in key phases of policy /program cycles, their participation with regard to different direct and indirect channels. This part of the report seeks to identify and discuss only major challenges that are cross cutting in nature,

which may be root causes of all issues discussed in this report.

From participant's narratives, major challenges that explain inadequate citizen participation in governance are (i) a long standing culture of centralism and culture of obedience, (ii) communication gaps among citizens' representatives (iii) gaps in local vs central government planning and coordination, (iv) gaps in women's participation. This report sheds light on each of the challenges below:

5.4.1. Culture of State Centralism and Blind Obedience

The top-down style of governance was singled out by extant research on Rwanda as one of major drivers of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi (Uvin, 1998; Shyaka.. n.d., Staub, 1999). That is why the post-genocide government has demonstrated political will to reverse that and ensure that there is meaningful citizen participation in public affairs. This political will is expressed mainly through various commitments at policy level (Constitution, Vision 2020, EDPRS, National Decentralization Policy, Gender Policy, etc.) where governance, encompassing citizen participation, remains a core pillar of development and peace.

Despite all these efforts aimed at promoting "integrated citizen – centered local and national development planning, evidence for this study suggests that state centralism has persisted and is still manifest in attitudes and practices of local government leaders and citizens. In some cases, local leaders do not involve citizens in decision making, some leaders are not confident enough to take initiative that solve citizens' concerns, while citizens have not yet fully understood that it is their civil right to participate meaningfully in local government affairs.

This research documents some attitudes and practices of local leaders that result from the centralism culture. Some leaders use authoritative language that does not show respect towards citizens and inhibits their participation. Instead of asking for citizens' views, some leaders impose their will. In other words, consulting citizens on major issues affecting their daily lives has not been genuine. In addition, there has been confusion between consultation aimed at collecting citizens' views on the one hand, and information provided to seek citizens' buy-in to implement activities from policies adopted at the

central government. In some instances, evidence also suggests that having a contrary view and expressing it publically has been discouraged by local government leaders who accuse citizens of hindering the implementation of public policies (*kubangamira gahunda za Leta*). In other cases when citizens spoke up for their rights and some local government offices did not help, they resorted to media and CSO. When they sought other services from government offices, they ironically received answers such as "go to media or CSO, they are the ones that help you better" (KII, Kigali).

Due to effects of a long standing state centralism, citizens have not asked accountability from local leaders without the support from the central government. Usually, citizens are reluctant to use direct channels to denounce unsatisfactory actions of local government leaders. Most of the time, and as noted above, citizens' complaints are shown during Presidential outreach visits. Participants in the study shared that their local representatives do not consult them adequately. Citizens also report that they do not influence decision-making at the District Level, or that their representatives and leaders do not always solve problems faced by the citizens.

By way of example and evidence, participants pointed out that instead of genuinely letting citizens participate in the design of *imihigo*, local government gives instructions of what must be implemented; as a consequence their participation in evaluation is not substantive. Such low citizen participation was previously echoed by other studies (RGB, 2014, IRDP, 2013). Explanations include the fact that citizens fear to challenge their leaders because they do not know what the reaction might be. Also, the culture of blind obedience persists, which implies that citizens will not question irrespective of whether they agree or not.

Arguably, the decentralization process is not leaping its envisaged results because of socialization processes. The cultural of centralism was so entrenched in daily lives of citizens that their participation in governance issues is not smooth. It looks like Rwandans were raised in situations where their leaders always knew what was good for them instead of asking them to voice their needs. They were passive bystanders, incapable of positively shaping their destiny. This is exemplified in many *Kinyarwanda* proverbs including "Uko zivuze niko zitambirwa (the way the drums are beaten is the same way you should

dance), and “*Umwera uturutse ibukuru bucyu wakwiriye hose (what the mighty decide quickly spreads to the rest of the population)*” are eloquent examples of how culture does not allow men and women to participate meaningfully. Instead of challenging leaders, they may decide to follow in a blind manner. Of course, leaders are elected or selected from the large community, implying that they too may share the same beliefs.

Some lessons are worth capturing. First, while it is legitimate for a country that has experienced genocide to move fast and embark on development projects, it is essential to find a balance between the need to go fast and the necessity to ensure ownership, which minimizes resistance and curbs halfhearted implementation and guarantees the sustainability of those development programs.

This is supported by the observation of a participant who shared that “... *it is worth taking time to engage citizens in development. If their participation is genuine, they will also protect what they have contributed to putting in place*” (KII, Kigali). Second, neither local government leaders nor citizens necessarily have bad intentions that explain the way they behave; there might be lack of adequate capacity. There is therefore need for

more awareness-raising and capacity building for citizens and Local Government leaders. This would come true as a result of joint initiatives between government agencies, CSOs, and the private sector.

5.4.2. Communication Gaps in Citizens Representatives

Rwanda applies a mixed form of democracy which involves, on the one hand direct participation of citizens (example: Presidential election, *Inteko z’ Abaturage* at Cell and Village level), and, on the other, indirect participation where citizens’ representatives act on behalf of voters such as Local Councils – *Inama, Njyanama* – Sector and District levels, and Members of Parliament - both the lower and upper chambers). The analysis of participants’ narratives suggests three major issues with representative democracy (indirect participation).

First, while participants commended the performance of Local Councils, including reviewing and approving action plans, *Imihigo* and District budgets, some issues have persisted. They were criticized by citizens for failing to consult citizens on matters affecting their lives



Musanze citizen forum members in a session, 2016.

and for failing to give feedback where it was due. There is lack of smooth collaboration between and among *Njyanama* at different levels. Evidence suggests that council members at the sector level for example are not required to exchange information with their counterparts at the District level. Decisions taken at the Sector level do not necessarily inform those taken at the District level. In such an environment, how will the District Council members address real issues if they are not in regular and systematic contact with councilors at the sector and cell levels?

Some factors explain why councils perform the way they do. One participant shared that *“local councils lack adequate institutional, human and financial capabilities to carry out their representation roles. Local councils are struggling to pick momentum”* (KII, Kigali). They are manned with members who are not necessarily experienced and educated enough in matters regarding public and local government management.

Members have reported that lack of adequate finances restricts their visits to their electorates so as to collect their views and provide feedback. In addition, looking at the guidelines governing councils, there is no official avenue where citizens can denounce a local council member if they are not happy with their performance. This implies that, besides communication amongst councilors themselves, they do not communicate in a sufficient manner with the people they represent.

Secondly, as regards MPs, the study recognizes some efforts made to get in touch with citizens through participation in community work *“Umuganda”* and Radio Rwanda *Inteko*. Some field visits are also organized by MPs’ commissions on an ad hoc basis. However, longstanding complaints such as *“we do not see them”, “they do not consult us”, “the last time we saw them was when they came to campaign”* persist. Such complaints about MPs were also reported by previous studies (IRDP, 2010, 2011 & 2013).

With recently reported outreach initiatives by all MPs, such complaints may be addressed as long as citizens are informed in advance about such visits and prepared to use them accordingly. Of course, such visits cannot bring about sustainability if local leaders do not play their role. In addition, despite the fact that the number of women MPs is higher than that of men, *“it does not necessarily lead to substantive representation of the female citizenry”* (KII, Kigali).

Thirdly, there is no appropriate communication between council members and MPs, which leads to inadequate representation of real needs, views and priorities of citizens. Recalling that, citizens have complained that their council members do not adequately consult them on issues that affect their daily lives, and the fact that *“when MPs visit the District, they cannot meet every citizen. They meet their local representatives (council members), as suggested by one MP interviewed in this study; taking into account the fact that “we see some of MPs during Umuganda. They speak to us after Umuganda but we have no time to voice our concerns”* as observed by one participant; how will citizens priorities be voiced for action and advocacy?

From the foregoing, it may be appropriate to ask a number of questions. What should representative democracy mean for Rwandans? Does it merely mean the mandate to think and act on behalf of voters without any obligation for regular contacts with them and get feedback? How can representatives be sure that what they approve or adopt actually reflects the major needs and priorities of citizens when the latter have not been consulted? To whom are MPs accountable? Can citizens ask MPs to resign if they are not happy with their performance? These questions are pertinent and need to be addressed if representative democracy is to be a reality in Rwanda.

5.4.3. Gaps in local – central government planning and coordination

The Rwanda’s revised Decentralization Policy (2012) articulates the need to fast track local autonomy in a way that respects local identity, interests and diversity in order to ensure that decentralization champions people’s participation in identifying local needs and interests, making plans for satisfying them, mobilizing resources and committing their energies to the implementation of the plans.

Theoretically, planning in Rwanda draws from local government and central government ideas.

From central government, programs are inspired by the Vision 2020 and the derivative Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies (EDPRS). It is also inspired by the 7 year government program, which is a collection of what the President pledges to achieve during his 7 year term in office. Ministries plans must be synchronized with these policies and programs.

From local government, each District has a 5 year District Development Program (DDP). Also, citizens through the process of *imihigo* express their views and priorities which inspire annual plans in every District.

However, this study evidenced the fact that there are gaps between local and central government in terms of planning and coordination. Instead of synchronizing plans and budgets with local priorities as expressed by citizens and consolidated in District Development Plans and Annual Performance Contracts, partly due to centralism of the state, policy measures and programs that are adopted at national level have largely been forwarded to local entities with an urgent request for immediate implementation.

This has put a lot of pressure on local entities to the extent that they do not have time to consult citizens. Due to the fact that local government has received many sectorial plans from Ministries, *“local leaders have dubbed local government ‘multiprise’, meaning that they receive so many adhoc demands and plans with a sense of urgency. They eventually become overloaded and confused ”* (KII, Kigali). It has even been echoed by one participant that *“the multiprise’ may eplode”*, meaning that the local government is too overloaded to keep functioning properly.

It seems that the GoR had this in mind when the Joint *imihigo* were recently adopted to streamline and synchronize local and central government plans regarding agriculture, energy, exports, job creation, urbanization and rural settlement, social protection and service delivery. This approach also seeks to clarify responsibility areas between central and local government. Undoubtedly, there is apparent will to shift in the practice of performance contracts and the collaboration between local and central government. Nevertheless, there is still need for more timely communication.

5.4.4. Gaps in women’s Participation in Local Government

The revised Decentralization Policy is aware that men and women need to be given equal opportunities to participate in governance and development activities at all levels. It also highlights that women should participate in local governments in order to be exposed to political apprenticeship arenas. As such, the voices of women must continue to be amplified through decentralization (MINALOC, 2012).

The cell’s council is composed of all citizens aged 18+. The mandate of the cell’s council is to mobilize residents, identify, discuss and prioritize the problems of the Cell, and take decisions for their resolution. At the sector level, the council is a political organ that takes policy related decisions. Its mandate includes approving the Sector’s action plans and programs and ensuring the follow-up of their implementation (MINALOC, 2011).

As for the District, article 10 of the law determining the organization and functioning of the District (2006), highlights that the council is composed of (1) Councilors elected at the level of Sectors which make up the District, each Sector represented by one councilor; (2) Three (3) councilors who are members of the Bureau of the National Youth Council at District level; (3) The coordinator of the National Council of Women at District level; (4) at least thirty percent (30%) of women councilors of the members of the District Council.

Considering the mandate of the local government organs, substantive representation of women is highly needed there to ensure that priorities and views of women at grassroot levels are heard and advocated for and acted upon accordingly. However, despite their role during the struggle for liberation that stopped the Genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, the aftermath of genocide and today, their political positions in local government have not gone far beyond the constitutional 30% quota in the local governments. While the quota has been an instrumental strategy to increasing women’s participation, it is observed that they tended to take up fewer positions and that they tended to reflect the traditional gendered division of labor where women occupy almost all offices for Vice Mayor for Social Affairs and men occupied almost all offices for District Mayor, and Vice Mayor in charge of economic affairs.

Looking at previous reports is clear that the patriarchal division of labor is still rampant in the local government councils. For example, the Gender Monitoring Office (2011), reports that in 2011 elections (4 Feb 2011 - 5 March 2011), women occupied 38,66% of positions in heads of villages; 43,92% of members of Cell Councils; 45,05% in members of Sectors councils; 43,17% in Districts Councils; 37,8% in Executive Committees of Districts; 43,75% in Kigali City Council; 33,3% in the executive committee of Kigali City (p.33). In GMO, 2014, female mayors occupied 10 % of mayoral offices. They occupied 16.7% of offices for Vice Mayors for Economic Affairs, 83,3% of



A Citizen Forum member sharing her opinion, 2016.

Vice Mayors for Social Affairs, 6,7% of Executive Secretaries of Districts, 45% of sector councils.

In the New Times (January 30, 2016)' article written by Eugene Kwibuka, 2,068 candidates were ready to compete for District Council seats. That number included those who sought to represent their sectors as councilors in the districts and women who would be elected to be part of the district councils in respect to the principle of 30 per cent women representation in the country's decision making institutions. Of the 2,068 candidates vying for district council slots, 59.6 per cent were men, while 40.4 per cent were women.

When election results were announced, they once again reflected that the presidency of District Councils and the City of Kigali is male dominated. There are only 2 women as compared to 29 men. As for the deputy presidency positions, women have taken up only 10 positions while men have 21. Finally, the secretary position is almost female exclusive where only 5 men are secretaries of the councils.

Currently, the list of Mayors, Vice Mayors for economic affairs and Vice Mayors in charge of social affairs shows that, only 5 out of 31 Mayors of Districts and the City of Kigali are women; only 6 out of 31 Vice Mayors for Economic Affairs in Districts and the City of Kigali are women. The

situation changes with the position of the Districts Vice Mayors in charge of social affairs (including the City of Kigali), this is female dominated as 24 out of 31 are women, thus confirming the observation where women tend to occupy positions which reflect the traditional caring roles.

Socialization agents including families, communities, schools, religion and government practices may explain why women lag behind despite the concrete and supportive policies. In Rwandan culture, women have by large been subjugated to patriarchal sayings including: *nta nkokokazi ibika isake ihari* (a woman cannot talk when a man is around), *uruvuze umugore ruvuga umuhoro* (when a woman has a say, the household becomes chaotic), *umugore arabyina ntasimbuka* (women capacity limitation as compared to men). Such sayings have influenced the kind of primary education that boys and girls receive in their families.

Given the picture painted above on women representation in local government, taking into account the discussed persisting challenges, recalling that women represent more than 50% of the total population, it is clear that there are issues with citizen participation in general and women in particular. While, Rwanda leads the world with the highest number of women parliamentarians – 63.8% (Inter-Parliamentarian Union, 2016), and ranked 6th worldwide and first African best country for women (Global Gender Gap Index 2015), there are differences in women representation between local and central government.

This implies that so long as women in local government are not substantively represented, issues that hinder inclusive development will persist. This will eventually have differential effects on girls struggling to take role models and mentors that would help in preparing them for leadership roles at local and central government.

All put together, citizen participation is post-genocide Rwanda has registered important achievements. At the same time, major challenges have defied all efforts meant to ensure that local citizens are in a driving seat of development. Centralism, challenges associated with representative democracy, gaps in local – central government planning and coordination, as well as gaps in women participation in local government are daunting issues that need to be addressed, bearing in mind that change may not happen overnight.



Members of a Citizen Forum in a reflection, 2015.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This section highlights conclusions and recommendations for this study based on findings.

6.1 Conclusion

This report is a result of a study which aimed to examine citizen participation in post-genocide Rwanda and to document lessons to be learnt. It specifically sought to examine perceptions of Rwandans on citizen participation in governance, provide citizens with a forum to openly analyze key issues regarding citizen participation in policy phases, explore the effectiveness or otherwise of some existing mechanisms for citizen participation and identify major challenges and suggest possible solutions.

This research used a participatory approach to gather, analyze and interpret the data from different stakeholders. This study met all its objectives. It is worth recalling that the objective of providing citizens with a forum to openly analyze key issues affecting their participation and suggest avenues for improvement does not end with reporting. It goes a step further in the whole process of PAR, with the intention of contributing to addressing issues hindering citizen participation in Rwanda.

The following step consisted of convening a national stakeholder's meeting to review and validate the findings and recommendations, and eventually provided orientation for future research. It is also envisaged that a steering committee will be set up to engage with relevant decision-makers to negotiate the integration of policy recommendations in their plans of actions. This is, indeed, the essence of PAR: to ensure that stakeholders are part and parcel of the whole process until the desired action is taken and positive changes are effected.

Participants in this study recognize Rwanda's political will to enhance citizen – centered governance as a pillar of post-genocide development. A number of national commitments have been made, including policies such as Vision 2020, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy - EDPRS 1 and 2, the Decentralization Policy, Gender Policy etc. Institutional reforms have been made in Ministries, the RDF, the RNP, Boards, Commissions, etc. Governance-related institutions such as the Gender Monitoring Office, Office of the Ombudsman, the

Office of the Auditor General, the Rwanda Public Procurement Authority, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Reconciliation Commission, the Rwanda Governance Board, etc have been put in place. Besides, homegrown initiatives such as *Umuganda* (Community work), *Ubudehe* (social support), *Girinka* and *Agaciro* (self-worth or dignity), concretize this political will for citizen participation in governance in the post-genocide Rwanda.

Overall, Rwandans understand and value citizen participation as an important tool for governance. They also believe that in a post-violence context, participation of men and women cannot be effective unless a conducive environment is put in place. Such an environment is characterized by trust and respect, access to information, citizens' right to feedback, safe space for voicing their views, as well as an appropriate education and socialization. This makes sense in the post-genocide context, which is characterized among other things by broken relationships between citizens and leaders.

In this study, different mechanisms designed to boost citizen participation were discussed and their effectiveness assessed by participants. The Presidential outreach visits, *Inteko z' Abaturage* and broad-cast media were particularly commended for their increased role in promoting citizen participation. However, the role of other mechanisms such as local councils (*Inama Njyanama*), CSOs, MPs, were ambivalent. The legacy of longstanding political centralism and limited participation of women and girls emerged as a serious hindrance to participatory approaches among both leaders and citizens.

In addition, apparently, there has been pressure to achieve fast development at the expense of citizen participation. The trend has been to move fast without necessarily seeking citizens' input, which may challenge sustainability.

In the final analysis, the key challenges affecting citizens' participation in the governance of post-genocide Rwanda can be summarized as follows:

Despite important progress made on the journey to making citizen participation in the governance of post-genocide Rwanda a reality, this study documents a number of challenges including (i)

a long standing culture of centralism and culture of obedience, (ii) communication gaps among citizens' representatives (iii) gaps in local vs central government planning and coordination, (iv) gaps in women's participation.

Despite Rwanda's many efforts aimed at promoting "integrated citizen – centered local and national development planning, evidence for this study suggests that state centralism is still manifest in attitudes and practices of local government leaders and citizens. Some local leaders do not involve citizens in decision making, are not confident enough to take initiative to solve citizens' concerns.

They use authoritative language that inhibits their participation. Instead of asking for citizens' views, some leaders impose their will. Clearly, consulting citizens on major issues affecting their daily lives has not been genuine. Citizens, too, have not asked accountability from local leaders without the support from the central government. Usually, citizens are reluctant to use direct channels to denounce unsatisfactory actions of local government leaders. Most of the time, citizens' complaints are shown during Presidential outreach visits.

Decentralization process is not leaping its envisaged results because of socialization processes. The culture of centralism was so entrenched in daily lives of citizens that their participation in governance issues is not smooth. It looks like Rwandans were raised in situations where their leaders always knew what was good for them instead of asking them to voice their needs. They were passive bystanders, incapable of positively shaping their destiny. This is exemplified in many *Kinyarwanda* proverbs including "*Uko zivuze niko zitambirwa* (the way the drums are beaten is the same way you should dance), and "*Umwera uturutse ibukuru bucyu wakwiriye hose* (what the mighty decide quickly spreads to the rest of the population) illustrate how culture does not allow men and women to participate meaningfully. Instead of challenging leaders, they may decide to follow in a blind manner. Of course, leaders are elected or selected from the large community, implying that they too may share the same beliefs.

Secondly, there are communication gaps among citizens' representatives (councilors and MPs). While participants commended the performance of Local Councils, including reviewing and approving action plans, *Imihigo* and District budgets, they were criticized for failing to consult citizens on matters affecting their lives and for failing to give feedback where it was due. There is lack of smooth collaboration between and among *Njyanama* at

different levels. Evidence suggests that council members at the sector level for example are not required to exchange information with their counterparts at the District level. Decisions taken at the Sector level do not necessarily inform those taken at the District level. In such an environment, District Council members do not address real issues if they are not in regular and systematic contact with councilors at the sector and cell levels. Factors behind this performance include lack of adequate institutional, human and financial capabilities to carry out their representation roles, but above all, there is no official avenue that citizens can use to denounce a councilor who is not performing to their expectations.

As for MPs, the study recognizes some efforts made to get in touch with citizens through participation in community work "*Umuganda*" and Radio Rwanda *Inteko*. Some field visits are also organized by MPs' commissions on an ad hoc basis. However, longstanding complaints such as "*we do not see them*", "*they do not consult us*", "*the last time we saw them was when they came to campaign*" persist. Such complaints about MPs were also reported by previous studies (IRDP, 2010, 2011 & 2013). With recently reported outreach initiatives by all MPs, such complaints may be addressed so long as citizens are informed in advance about such visits and prepared to use them accordingly. Of course, such visits cannot bring about sustainability if local leaders do not play their role.

An acute questions also is posed in line with inappropriate communication between council members and MPs, which leads to inadequate representation of real needs, views and priorities of citizens. Recalling that, citizens have complained that their council members do not adequately consult them on issues that affect their daily lives, and the fact that when MPs visit the District, they cannot meet every citizen. They meet their local representatives, taking into account the fact that citizens often see some of MPs during *Umuganda* but the former do not have no time to voice our concerns, citizens priorities be voiced for action and advocacy.

Some questions are worth pondering on. What should representative democracy mean for Rwandans? Does it merely mean the mandate to think and act on behalf of voters without any obligation for regular contacts with them and get feedback? How can representatives be sure that what they approve or adopt actually reflects the major needs and priorities of citizens when the latter have not been consulted? To whom are

MPs accountable? Can citizens ask MPs to resign if they are not happy with their performance? These questions are pertinent and need to be addressed if representative democracy is to be a reality in Rwanda.

A third challenge is about gaps between local and central government planning and coordination, despite a clear direction and guidance provided by the decentralization policy. Instead of synchronizing plans and budgets with local priorities as expressed by citizens and consolidated in District Development Plans and Annual Performance Contracts, partly due to centralism of the state, policy measures and programs that are adopted at national level have largely been forwarded to local entities with an urgent request for immediate implementation.

This has put a lot of pressure on local entities to the extent that they do not have time to consult citizens. By the way, it seems that the GoR had this in mind when the Joint imihigo were recently adopted to streamline and synchronize local and central government plans regarding agriculture, energy, exports, job creation, urbanization and rural settlement, social protection and service delivery. This approach also seeks to clarify responsibility areas between central and local government. Undoubtedly, there is apparent will to shift in the practice of performance contracts and the collaboration between local and central government. Nevertheless, there is still need for more timely communication.

Fourth, the study recognizes some efforts and results from empowering women in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis. However, women's political positions in local government have not gone far beyond the constitutional 30% quota in the local governments. While the quota has been an instrumental strategy to increasing women's participation, it is observed that they tended to take up fewer positions and that they tended to reflect the traditional gendered division of labor where women occupy almost all offices for Vice Mayor for Social Affairs and men occupied almost all offices for District Mayor, and Vice Mayor in charge of economic affairs. Socialization agents including families, communities, schools, religion and government practices may explain why women lag behind despite the concrete and supportive policies.

In Rwandan culture, women have by large been subjugated to patriarchal sayings including: *nta nkokokazi ibika isake ihari* (a woman cannot talk

when a man is around), *uruvuze umugore ruvuga umuhoro* (when a woman has a say, the household becomes chaotic), *umugore arabyina ntasimbuka* (women capacity limitation as compared to men. Such sayings have influenced the kind of primary education that boys and girls receive in their families.

In a final analysis, the study sought to explore governing for and with citizens in Rwanda in the post – genocide context. The study clearly concludes that various channels and mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that leaders govern for the people. These include all the state sanctioned avenues discussed above. As regards, governing with citizens, there is no doubt, the post – genocide Rwanda experienced a shift from central to Local Government where, in policy and principle, citizens should have a say. However, governing with citizens is still facing many challenges connected to leaders themselves, citizens, as well as the very post – genocide environment and a patriarchal culture that tends to perpetuate male dominance. To improve on the effectiveness of mechanisms for citizen participation in Rwanda, the following recommendations can be made:

6.2. Recommendations

After the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda was committed to progressively get the power closer to the citizens. The implementation of the decentralization policy is a sound illustration of this political will.

Bringing the power closer to the citizens (men and women, boys and girls) produces meaningful results, if elected leaders and voters at different levels of the state administration feel constantly connected. At the central level, apart from the President of the Republic, the representation function is accomplished by Members of Parliament elected by citizens. However, this research has shown that, as mentioned above, there is a disconnect between the elected leaders and the citizens who put them in office. This perception is persistent despite the fact that Parliamentarians involved in this study argued that of late, they have sought to rectify this and increasingly make regular visits to the grassroots to consult and involve citizens in a meaningful manner.

Locally, citizens are generally represented by Councils at Cell, Sector and District levels but women are not meaningfully represented. Women and men who participated in this study claimed that in many cases, as is the case for Parliamentarians, their link with Councilors remains weak.

This situation deserves special attention so that there is an improvement in indirect citizen participation through elected representatives. The participants in this research have made recommendations to different stakeholders in governance, including (i) Central Government (ii) the Rwanda Governance Board (iii) Members of Parliament (iv) Local Government Institute & Rwanda Management Institute (v) Rwanda Media High Council & Media houses and (vi) Civil Society Organizations. These are summarized below.

6.2.1. Recommendations to MINALOC

First, evidence from this study shows inadequate synchronization of plans between Ministerial Sector plans and Local Government plans. There is a need to synchronize Local Government plans and Ministries' plans, reflected in national priorities. For this to happen, Ministries should avail resources on time, give Local Government enough time to implement and follow-up on their plans instead of working under pressure.

Second, evidence from this study has shown that participation of citizens is low at the planning level, high at the implementation level, and passive at the evaluation phase. We recommend harnessing citizens' participation, both men and women, throughout the formulation, monitoring & evaluation of policies and programs affecting citizens' lives through participatory action research, existing state and non-state consultative mechanism.

6.2.2. Recommendations to members of parliament

First, although there is a welcome trend of MPs getting closer to citizens there is still a gap felt by citizens. Sometimes MPs come to citizens when they [citizens] are not prepared in advance so that they pool their concerns. Also it is important to consider that men and women may not have equal access to information. This results in one way communication. It is, therefore recommended that MPs enhance their contacts with citizens in a way that benefits both by having citizens' concerns recorded and incorporated for policy or advocacy purposes. This new development should be replicated by the Local Government in order to make the benefits sustainable.

Second, given that both chambers of Parliament are endowed with a research unit, it is suggested that this unit should assist the Parliament to conduct periodic participatory action research aimed at assessing citizens' feedback on selected laws.

Third, evidence from this study shows gaps in citizen involvement in policy formulation. This has translated in either resistance or blind obedience during implementation. It is suggested that for policies and laws initiated by Ministries and that affect citizens' lives, an auditable gender-sensitive checklist that maps citizen's inputs be put in place.

Citizen participation should be legally binding in such a way that it is enforceable on the side of an official who fails to bring citizens on board. Once leaders do not take it as optional, all laws will reflect the will of the citizens.

6.2.3. Recommendation for Local Government Institute and Rwanda Institute of Management

First, evidence has suggested that some Local Government leaders may be willing to make citizens participate but lack human capacity. It is the responsibility of RMI and LGI to equip public servants with capacity required to engage citizens, both men and women, in participatory governance processes integrating gender perspective.

It is, therefore, recommended that systematic training needs assessments be conducted for all Local Government leaders, especially new ones. As such, a continuous capacity building practice, especially in participatory approaches will help leaders increase knowledge, skills, attitudes, practices to improve facilitation of citizen engagement.

6.2.4. Recommendations to the Civil Society Organizations including media

This study came up with a finding that shows that CSOs are actively involved in service delivery but are absent in policy research and advocacy, the following recommendations are suggested to improve their activities.

First, CSOs should facilitate citizens' access to information, while considering that men and women do not have equal access information, to engage in evidence based advocacy and initiate a partnership with RMI and LGI during the processes of curriculum development and review as well as facilitating training of local government leaders in areas such as participatory approaches, facilitation skills, to name a few.

Second, CSOs should also use existing or new mechanisms to increase critical thinking and engage policy makers NGOs, academics, private sector and ordinary citizens on emerging governance issues on a regular basis.

Third, it is recommended that the Media High Council continues to identify opportunities for capacity building and take them so that they practice journalism in a more professional manner. It should conduct an assessment to analyze gender biases and stereotypes in the media. Similarly, the media are advised to enhance critical thinking among Rwandans, through the provision of more spaces for open debate on public issues/policies, debatable issues of public interest, etc. These spaces should take into consideration that men and women may have unequal access to media outlet and they should at the same time provide equal opportunities for men and women to participate.

Finally, the broadcast media should provide space / or design citizen-oriented shows allowing the citizens to voice their concerns, provide feedback on public policies, interact with leaders, and hold leaders accountable.

If such recommendations are adopted and implemented by different stakeholders, changes will take place. However, citizens are required to play their roles as they are beneficiaries and primary partners in any efforts meant to fast track local development.

6.2.5. Suggestions for future studies

Although all attempts have been made in this study to document information about governing for and with citizens in the post – genocide Rwanda, some areas require further inquiry in two ways:

First, this study explored citizen participation in governance. It unveiled different channels designed to give voice to citizens and different challenges involved. However, considering different categories of citizens and their particularities, it would be of a great importance to explore the *gender and women's participation in local government*.

Second, findings of this research highlight that CSOs are essentially involved in service delivery and not very active in evidence based advocacy and capacity building of citizens and Local Government. A participatory action study would provide more current insights regarding the *CSOs vibrancy in Rwanda*, with a focus on opportunities, persisting challenges and mitigation strategies.

Third, this research also analyzed mechanisms for citizen participation, among other things, especially with emphasis to home grown initiatives from governance perspective in a post – genocide Rwanda. However, it did not carry out a deep analysis of dynamics behind the citizen performance in *Imihigo*. In relation to this, there is more need to conduct a study on *participation in pro poor programs and policies such as ubudehe and land consolidation*.

Fourth, this study was conducted in a post conflict situation. Some particular and contextual aspects were highlighted. However, the *relationship between psychosocial healing and citizen participation in governance* was not explored.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 List of key informants

SN	Name	Position	Institution
1	Hon. Francis Kaboneka	Minister	MINALOC
2	Dr. Felicien Usengumukiza	Director of Research and Advocacy	Rwanda Governance Board
3	Mr. Oswald Burasanzwe	Executive Secretary	Political Party Forum
4	Hon. Kayiranga Rwasa Alfred	Chairperson, Political Affairs & Gender Commission	Parliament
5	Hon. Yvonne Uwayisenga	Deputy Chairperson, Political Affairs & Gender Commission	Parliament
6	Hon. Gasamagera Wellars	Director General	Rwanda Management Institute
7	Mr. Safari Emmanuel	Executive Secretary	CLADHO
8	Mr. Jean Baptiste Kayiranga	Member of InamaNjyanama	Rwamagana District
9	Mr. Rwamurangwa Steven	Mayor	Gasabo District
10	Mvuyekure Alexandre	Mayor	Gicumbi District
11	Ildephonse Sinabubariraga	Director Ishingiro Radio	Gicumbi District
12	Marie Chantal Icyimanizanye	Sec InamaNjyanamaNyabihu	Nyabihu District
13	Alexandre Sahunkuye	V.C Mayor Economic Affairs	Nyabihu District
14	Nyirasafari Solange	Etat Civil Mukamira Sector	Nyabihu District
15	Nyangezi Bertin	President Inama Njyanama Munini Sector	Nyaruguru District
16	Valens Rusinwankiko	Executive Secretary Rusenge	Nyaruguru District
17	Niyitegeka Fabien	Vice Mayor Economic Affairs	Nyaruguru District
18	Rwagaju Louis	Mayor	Bugesera District
19	Rwabuhihi Jean Christophe	ES. Rweru Sector	Bugesera District
20	MpembyemunguWinifride	Mayor	Musanze District
21	Munyamahoro Alexis	ES. Nkotsi	Musanze District
22	Byabagabo Claude	President District council	Karongi District
23	GashananaTaiba	Es. Gishyita sector	Karongi District
24	Muzuka Eugene	Mayor	Huye District
25	UwamariyaVeneranda	Member of InamaNjyanama	Huye District
26	MbyayingaboAnastase	Es. Rusatira sector	Huye District
27	Robert Mwesigwa	ExecutiveSecretary	National Youth Council
28	Ingabire Immaculée	President	Transparency International Rwanda

Appendix 2. Interview Guide-Citizens' Focus Group Discussions on Citizen Participation in decision making

- Q1.** Citizen understanding/ perceptions on participatory governance - What is your understanding/definition of the citizen participation in governance?
- Q2** What role do citizens play in the a) Preparation/formulation;b) Implementation;c) Evaluation of the Government Plans? (Imihigo, District Development Plan, Umuganda, volunteer leadership, Ubudehe, VUP, list of needy, FARG beneficiaries, 12YBE , land consolidation, infrastructure/ Local roads ,etc) ?
- Q3.** Which role do you play, as citizens, in the election of leaders and representatives: At local level? (councils, etc), At national level?
- Q4.** In your view, what are the channels/organs that serve as bridges between citizens representatives and other decision-making organs at the central government level, such as MPs, district councils, etc?
- Q5** As citizens, do you have opportunities to interact with:
- Local councilors? Njyanama zo kurwego rw'ibanze?
 - Members of the Parliament/Abagize inteko ishingamategako?
 - National Youth Council/ National Women Council Representatives?
 - Abahagarariye inzego z'urubyiruko/abagore?
 - Political Parties? Abahagarariye amashyaka
- Q6.** What is the role played by CSOs in citizen participation?
- Q7.** As per Rwanda's governance practices, what are the successful initiatives which have promoted participatory governance.
- Q8.** What are the governance challenges/gaps that you face, as citizens, regarding your participation in decision making?
- Q9.** In your view, which measures/actions should be taken for a better participation of citizens in policy/programs formulation, implementation and evaluation of the various development programs?

Appendix 3 Interview guide in Kinyarwanda

Muraho.....,

Turi itsinda riturutse muri Never Again Rwanda (Umuryango Nyarwanda utari uwa Leta). Tukaba turi mu gikorwa cy'ikusanya makuru rigamije kumenya uruhare rw'umuturage mu miyoborere n'ifatwa ry'ibyemezo mu nzego zitandukanye ndetse n'imbogamizi ahura nazo muri iyo gahunda.

Tukaba twarabahisemo kugira ngo muduhe amakuru ku ngingo zikubiye muri iki kiganiro. Gutanga amakuru ni ubushake bwanyu kandi mufite uburenganzira bwo guhagarika ikiganiro mu gihe cyose bibaye ngombwa. Iki kiganiro kiramara amasaha 2.

Amakuru muduha ni ingezi cyane kuri ubu bushakashatsi. Amakuru yose azakusanyirizwa hamwe n'andi azaturuka mu tundi turere kandi mu kuyasesengura, amazina yanyu azagirwa ibibanga.

Haba hari ikibazo mufite mwifuza kubaza mbere y' uko dutangira ikiganiro? [Niba ntacyo rero ndumva twatangira ikiganiro niba mubyemeye].

▣ IBIBAZO BIKUBIYE MUKIGANIRO

1. Iyo bavuze uruhare rw'umuturage mu miyoborere wumva iki cyangwa ubyumva ute?
2. Kuri wowe, hakanewe iki kugira ngo umuturage agire uruhare mu miyoborere (nyuma ya jenocide)?
3. Ubona ari uruhe ruhare umuturage agira mu itegurwa, ishyirwamubikorwa n'isuzumabikorwa ry'igenamigambi rya Leta? (imihigo, igenemigambi ry'akarere, umuganda, ubudehe, icyerekezo 2020 cy'umurenge, kugena urutonde rw'ibikenewe, Gahunda y'uburezi bw'imyaka 12, imicungire y'ubutaka, ibikorwaremezo, kubaka imihanda yo munsisiro, imisoro, Gira Inka, n'ibindi)
4. Ni izihe gahunda za Leta wumva wagizemo uruhare kandi zikaba zaratanze umusaruro mwiza? (akamaro) haba ari kuri wowe cyangwa ku muryango wawe ndetse ni gihugu muri rusange?
5. Ni uruhe ruhare nk'umuturage ugira mumatora y'abayobozi nabandi baguhagarariye haba ari mu nzego zibanze ndetse no kurwego rw'igihugu?
6. Ni ubuhe buryo nk'umuturage ukoresha kugira ngo abayobozi n'abandi baguhagarariye bakugaragarize ibyo bakorera abaturage bijyanye ninshingano ndetse n'ingamba biyemeje nk'abayobozi?
7. Nk'umuturage ujya ugira umwanya wo kuganira no kungurana ibitekerezo na:
 - Abayobozi bo mu nzego z'ibanze (Umudugudu, akagari, umurenge n'akarere)?;
 - Abagize inama nyanama ku buryo bw' umwihariko?
 - Nabagize inteko ishingamategeko?

- Nabahagarariye inama nkuru y'igihugu y'urubyiruko?
- 8. Nabahagarariye inama nkuru y'abagore?Nk'abaturage iyo muhuye n'abayobozi n'ababahagarariye mu nzego zitandukanye za Leta, ni nk'ibiki by'ingenzi mukunda kuganiraho muri izo nama?
- 9. Muri rusange, ibitekerezo mutanga murizo nama byakirwa gute n'abayobozi cyangwa ababahagarariye muri izo nzego?
- 10. Ese mubona imiryango itari iya Leta ifite ruhare ki mu gutuma uruhare rw'umuturage mu miyoborere rwiyoungera?
- 11. Nk'umuturage, ni izihe mbogamizi ubona muhura nazo mubijyanye no kugira uruhare mwifatwa ryibyemezo bitandukanye bijyanye n'imiyoborere?
- 12. Ese, wumva hakorwa iki kugira ngo umuturage agire uruhare rwimbitse mu miyoborere?

Umwanzuro

Ndabona twegereje umusozo w'ikiganiro twagiranaga, ese hari ikindi mwumva mwatubwira cyangwa mwatubaza? Tubashimiye uruhare mwagize muri iki kiganiro ndetse n'amakuru mwaduhaye.

Turabashimi yecyane, Murakoze!

Appendix 4 Interview guide with Key Informants

- 1) What is your understanding of citizen participation?
- 2) What is your view on Citizen Participation in post genocide situation?
- 3) Which factors could explain low citizens' participation in planning and evaluation processes of government programs in Rwanda?
- 4) Our citizens' forums revealed that indirect elections could affect leaders' accountability at the local level. What is your take on that?
- 5) Citizen engagement is a key element of leaders' accountability and citizens participation in all decision making process. What do you think should be the role of the government in engaging citizens?
- 6) What can be done to enhance citizens' participation in planning, implementation and evaluation processes?
- 7) Our discussions with citizens revealed that many CSOs /MPs / political parties/ ... do not provide enough time and space to citizens expect for implementation of their projects?

How can you explain this? What are the reasons?

Appendix 5: Gender related Questions

Thank you for sparing time to talk with us. We appreciate your busy schedules. We cannot take this opportunity for granted. We have been conducting a study on citizen participation in governance in post genocide Rwanda. We thought your insights would be of a great relevance especially regarding a gender perspective.

- 1) To you, in what "citizen participation in governance" is worth analysing/researching in post-genocide context?
- 2) It emerged from this research that both formal and informal education, as well as socialization affect citizen participation. In Rwanda, one of the most salient illustrations from our research is blind obedience resulting from lack of critical thinking. Drawing from your work and experience, does this affect women and men differently?
- 3) What is your take on citizen participation throughout policy / program cycle? Do men and women participate equally? What explains possible differences?

- 4) Preliminary findings are pointing a finger to the fact that citizens of Rwanda do not freely ask their leaders for accountability. What do you think may explain this? Does it work the same for men and women?
- 5) Our preliminary findings suggest that the youth tend do not largely participate in government programs. What might be reasons for that? Do the same reasons apply to boys and girls?
- 6) It has been debated that women have got “too much” in terms of empowerment and a fear that men may be “left” behind. What is your take on that?
- 7) What is your evaluation of NWC performance with regard to being a channel for women’s participation in governance in Rwanda? Probe for achievements and weaknesses/challenges
- 8) Gender profiles produced by Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) show that women remain underrepresented (below 30%) in decision-making positions in decentralized entities (District, Sectors, cells). How would explain this situation? (if not covered through the questions above): What are the major issues (and needs) for women participation in governance in Rwanda today? Rwanda has the highest proportion of women parliamentarians in the world? How is this shaping women’s participation in Rwanda. What works and what does not work?
- 9) What would you recommend for an increased participation of men and women in governance in Rwanda?

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 6. Decentralized entities and corresponding authorities

	Entity	Executive Bodies	Composition	Representation Bodies	Composition
1	Village	Village executive Committee	Elected members	Village Council	All village residents (aged 18 and above)
2	Cell	Cell Executive Secretary	Hired official	Cell council	Elected members
3	Sector	Sector executive Secretary	Hired official	Sector Council	Elected members
4	District	District Executive Committee	Elected members + Executive Secretary (hired)	District Council	Elected members
5	Province	Governor	Appointed official	NA	NA



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