

**SOCIAL INTEGRATION & POVERTY ERADICATION: INDICATIONS FROM POST-
GENOCIDE RWANDA**

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Discussion draft ONLY²

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² This short paper is a distillation of material from numerous secondary sources and interviews with a wide range of people in Rwanda under the auspices of the DFID-funded Crisis States Research Programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, and the Africa Power and Politics Programme at the Overseas Development Institute, London (UK).

Discussion question: *What efforts can be taken to ensure that policies to promote poverty eradication... are non-discriminatory and rights-based, provide for equality of opportunity, and facilitate the participation of all people in their formulation and outcomes, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons?*

Introduction

This paper is a brief review of three of several steps undertaken by the post-genocide government in Rwanda to promote social integration as an ingredient of efforts geared towards not only promoting national reconciliation and cultivating social cohesion, but also uplifting the living standards of its people through poverty eradication. No presumption is made about the degree to which the steps have achieved the objectives set for them. Rather, the intention is to use the brief exploration of the innovations as a basis for a discussion about what is likely to work and not work in efforts to promote anti-poverty programmes that attach a premium on “responsibilising” the poor. In the discussion which, for reasons of space will be oral, examples will be drawn from two other countries: Uganda and South Africa.

The Rwandan Context

In order to achieve the objective of reconstructing the country and nurturing a population that is proud of its identity, the government of Rwanda decided to harness and draw on the positive aspects of some Rwandan cultural and traditional practices that had long been abandoned and in some cases, forgotten. Their revival took place within the context of a far-reaching decentralisation programme which started in 2000, and among whose objectives was the dispersal of decision-making powers and resources from the centre to the local level. Decentralisation followed wide-ranging consultations on the causes of disunity among Rwandans and underdevelopment of the country. During the country-wide consultations, Rwandans expressed a desire to be accorded a voice in decision-making at all levels.

Since the end of the genocide and accession to power by the Rwanda Patriotic Front, the country has gone through a number of phases and undertaken several policy initiatives seeking to promote social, economic and political transformation. The first phase from 1996 to 1999 was the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase entailing, among other objectives, laying the ground for national reconciliation. The second phase (2000 to 2005) focused on poverty reduction and laying the ground for decentralisation. Currently the government is engaged in implementing the medium-term (Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy) and long-term (Vision 2020) developmental phase. In the process it is also laying the ground for an efficient state and accountable government within the framework of decentralized service delivery.

Objectives of decentralization

- enable and reactivate local people’s participation in planning, implementation and monitoring of decisions;
- strengthen accountability and transparency by making local leaders accountable to the communities they serve;
- enhance the sensitivity and responsiveness of public administration to the local environment;
- develop sustainable local economic planning and management capacity;
- enhance effectiveness and efficiency in planning, monitoring and service delivery.

As already pointed out, the Government of Rwanda has opted to harness culture and tradition in addressing problems that have blighted the country's post-colonial history. *Ubudehe* has been introduced to accelerate the efforts of reducing poverty based on the exploitation of the potential of collective action. Imihigo is being harnessed to revalorize courage, competitiveness, bravery and the pursuit of excellence. Itorero ry'igihugu is intended to revive the practice of inculcating positive values into Rwandans and promote a spirit of patriotism as a key element in the efforts they make to serve their communities and country. Imihigo is intended to promote a culture of setting goals and measuring results.

UBUDEHE

The ubudehe initiative was intended to help address the many challenges faced by the country after the genocide and its consequences. The full name in Kinyarwanda is "*ubudehe mu kurwanya ubukene*". The idea is very much in line with action planning and derives from a tradition of mutual assistance, particularly with regard to work in agricultural fields. Currently the approach to ubudehe is to involve the entire community in local-level anti-poverty activities conceived either by the communities themselves or through the intervention of local governments or the central government working in concert with its local counterparts. The concept of ubudehe is ample demonstration that collective action and popular participation are rooted in Rwandan culture and society. Although it is vulnerable to interpretations which link it to images of rural people engaged in outdated actions, it is at the cutting edge of participatory action geared towards the elimination of poverty. The new approach to ubudehe was first piloted in the Butare region in the south of the country and later extended to all parts of the country and to all levels of administration, up to umudugudu level.

Objectives

Besides involving all members of the community in collective action geared towards the eradication of poverty, through ubudehe the government sought to put in place a system of empowerment for selected poor families identified by the community, two per umudugudu (village). The expectation was that it would enable the poor themselves to analyse their situation using lived experience, including their stock of skills and existing opportunities. Behind the idea is a desire to encourage community dialogue and strengthen local governance, accountability, transparency and empowerment at the community level. It was intended to strengthen grassroots people's capacity for problem analysis and strategy formulation, and implementation. The strategies would be defined by members of the community themselves without discrimination or exclusion.

The Ubudehe process seeks to create deliberate opportunities for people at the grass root level to interact with one another, to share information, and to create institutions of their own which assign duties, benefits, responsibility and authority. It is through such processes of local interaction for mutual benefit that trust between individuals will increase, as will reciprocal relationships. The assumption is made that strong social capital creates high levels of trust and communication within a group and opportunity for economic co-operative formation. If such a group faces a conflict situation they will attempt to resolve the conflict through local institutional means without resorting to violence. Consequently, the Ubudehe process, through encouraging local collective action is also building a foundation for reducing vulnerability and the potential for divisionism and conflict.

Decentralisation, ubudehe and poverty eradication

The concept of ubudehe was selected to present a quick mental image of local people working collectively to solve local problems with support from local governments, NGOs and donors. Indeed, ubudehe works within and reinforces decentralised structures and processes. Decentralisation on the other hand, has injected financial resources into the rural economy, thereby overcoming one of the main obstacles to pro-poor economic growth. By targeting communities at the village level, ubudehe penetrates right down to the lowest decentralised structure and has become a tool for bottom-up planning and policy making. It has now been institutionalised as a mechanism for helping community groups and poor households engage in problem-solving activities.

Ubudehe in action

Ubudehe at umudugudu (village) level is made up of two distinct processes, one at the community level and one at the household level. Both processes use the same methodology. With the help of facilitators, the community goes through the following steps:

- Determination of the poverty profile as perceived by members themselves;
- Determination of the causes and consequences of poverty;
- Drawing up of the social map of the village, including the names of household heads, their social category (as determined by members), development infrastructure, and the roofing material of each house;
- Identification and analysis of problems faced by the community and determination of priority problems to be addressed;
- Planning the activities and means required to address the prioritised problem;
- Putting in place a system to manage collective action;
- Submission of the action plan to a pertinence test for all stakeholders to see if the chosen strategies are appropriate to solving identified problems;
- Approval of the execution plan by an elected committee which ensures respect for principles of collective action.

After this process, resources are made available to support the implementation of identified collective action.

At household level the same process is applied to a poor household selected by the community. The idea is to have a model in the community which shows that poverty can be overcome through determination. For households, emphasis is placed on analysing and identifying their survival or coping strategies. Together with facilitators, members of the household:

- Identify their coping strategies throughout the year, in line with seasons;
- Analyse the strategies in order to come up with one that is favourable to the improvement of their living conditions (preference scoring);
- Plan activities and budget for the execution of the chosen strategy;

A pertinence test is then carried out by wise men (inyangamugayo) in the village to ensure that the chosen strategy is appropriate and will be of good use to the household. The household members finally sign for the funds to facilitate execution.

Monitoring the Ubudehe process

In each of the districts, there is a person trained in the ubudehe approach who is responsible for the day-to-day follow up in all the villages. Every month all these district people gather at the provincial level to discuss and evaluate implementation. The monitoring is done at all levels from the national level to the village. Activities at village and household level are evaluated every year and the best performers awarded.

Achievements

One of the main achievements of ubudehe has been the transformation of the nature of participatory poverty assessments (PPAs). It has led to a move away from traditional approaches to where citizens are truly in control. Rwanda has achieved 100% nationwide coverage with people in villages throughout the country actively involved in developing their own social maps and visual representations and collecting data on the state and extent of poverty and exclusion faced by different social groups. It is reported that the use of social maps has begun to transform and influence new thinking about how national statistical systems can shift away from survey based methodologies to ones controlled by ordinary people and which capture their voices and preferences on a regular basis. By 2007 members of communities across the country had actively participated in generating social maps and defining and stating their preferences and priority problems. The information generated from social maps is now used to determine performance criteria by which the national government and its ministries are held to account against their own commitments.

The second achievement has been bringing together citizens in collective action to act on their own priorities. In 2006-2007, across 9000 villages, citizens joined hands to execute plans they had devised collectively, such as replacing livestock lost during the genocide and provision of public goods such as primary health care or water, in collaboration with the government. In 2007-2008, 15000 villages benefited from the same support. 25 million Euros were given directly to all the villages by the central bank, at minimal cost. This experience has influenced the government to ensure that citizens remain active in planning, budgeting, use, implementation and monitoring of state and donor resources in the provision of public goods. The ubudehe initiative now boasts several thousand examples of active citizen action. It demonstrates the power of a proactive citizenry if governments can play a more active enabling role. The ability of citizens, emerging from the trauma of genocide, to come together and work together to solve common problems has contributed significantly to national healing and trust building, thereby laying the foundation for durable peace. In so doing it has contributed to the process of democratization.

IMIHIHO

Imihigo are performance contracts signed among different layers of the public administration system right from the lowest level of local government to the national level. They draw their inspiration from an ancient tradition whereby warriors used to make pledges to the king about what they intended to accomplish in war.

The history

The imihigo were a mechanism for regulating people's efforts and energies in their pursuit of security and prosperity. It entailed planning and executing tasks individually or collectively in a competitive but amicable atmosphere. In the implementation of tasks everybody strove to get the best results possible, which encouraged emulation. Society stood to gain a great deal from the spirit of competition. Imihigo undertakings reflecting the priority needs of the society or community were declared in public. To avoid failure or half success following a pledge, strenuous efforts were invested in the tasks. Those faced with the prospect of failure usually sacrificed their own lives. By achieving what one had undertaken to do, one saved his credibility and honor. Those who achieved success became role models for other members of the society.

The imihigo included an element of evaluation. Although the community became immediately aware of the success of an undertaking, a public ceremony would be organized where the actor or actors would be given a chance to inform them of their exploits. At such gatherings attributes such as bravery and courage would be highlighted. Individual or group exploits were kept alive through oral tradition passed down the generations. People's courage, bravery and hard-work set examples which others were encouraged to emulate. This would challenge individuals and groups to undertake challenging tasks for the good of society. This means that setting targets for themselves and subjecting themselves to evaluation is part of Rwandan culture. The imihigo as (re)introduced by the current government therefore entails contracts among leaders at different levels of government. It can be looked at as a management strategy, strategic planning concept, or as a service delivery tool.

Imihigo & Decentralisation

As decentralization deepened, the Government of Rwanda introduced new strategies to ensure that good governance was benchmarked to targets and results in service delivery. One such strategy were the performance management contracts signed between districts and the central government and between districts and lower-level local governments. The performance contracts are popularly known as imihigo.

The imihigo were first introduced after the April 2006 local elections. This is when new mayors on behalf of the people they led and the districts they represented, signed each a contract with the President of the Republic of Rwanda. Since then, contracts are signed each year. Every contract entails a number of targets to be achieved in a period of a year by the district administration.

The contracts also commit the central government to support local governments technically and financially in realizing their targets. Nowhere else in the Great Lakes region of East Africa do elected local leaders sign contracts with the central government that oblige them to make pledges about what they aspire to do to deliver services to their electorates. The contracts are monitored through a three-tier system. Every month districts submit reports on progress to the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC). In addition they submit quarterly reports to the Prime Minister. Further, they submit semi-annual reports to the President of the Republic. The pledging and contracting have been replicated at lower levels of the local government system up to the village [*umurenge* (sector), *akagari* (cell), & *umudugudu* (village)]. The central objective of the Government of Rwanda in harnessing this centuries-old cultural practice and incorporating it into modern local government was to improve the quality of service delivery both at central and local levels. For local elected local leaders, imihigo has empowered them while at the same time opening them up to keen scrutiny, thereby focusing their minds on living up to the expectations of their constituents and the central government.

Signing the Imihigo

Like ubudehe, the imihigo are undertaken at different levels of the administrative hierarchy, starting at the individual level upwards. Contract signing starts early in March with each family signing with the umudugudu executive committee indicating what it will do in terms of improving its circumstances in a particular year. Thereafter, the process continues. Each umudugudu executive committee then signs imihigo with the cell council, indicating the development activities they will undertake in a particular year, depending on the priorities of each umudugudu. From umudugudu, each cell represented by its executive secretary signs with the sector council, indicating the priority activities they will execute in the following. The activities must be responding to the major problems of the cell. Thereafter, the sector represented by the executive secretary then signs with the Mayor. The mayor signs with the President of the Republic on behalf of the entire population of the district. At each level, the activities prioritised by the lower level are included. This allows for the bottom-up planning approach to work and for problems raised at the grassroots level to be addressed.

Imihigo are also signed between mayors and representatives of other institutions supervised by the district, including hospitals, schools, and health centres. Generally speaking, imihigo are used as a mechanism for regulating people's efforts and energies in their endeavors to ensure their security and prosperity. They have stimulated leaders to work on a clear and a well defined agenda as opposed to the routine and non-focused methods which were used before their (re)introduction. In addition, they have inculcated a culture of ownership and accountability among the leaders and the people they lead. This is because they are constantly aware that they have to give an account of what they have done in relation to what was planned. It is being claimed by the government of Rwanda that the implementation of imihigo has yielded good results both in promoting socio-economic development and in making ordinary people from all walks of life part of the process of reconstruction.

ITORERO ry'IGIHUGU

The Itorero ry'Igihugu (or simply Itorero) is a training institution charged with providing Rwandans with civic education. In 2008 the cabinet established a task force in the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission to oversee its activities. Through it Rwandans meet and are mentored into setting objectives and each developing a vision in their ways of working and life. They learn about national aspirations of achieving economic and social revolution and how they can be realized by harnessing positive aspects of Rwandan culture.

Background

Despite the many achievements the government has made in terms of rebuilding the country following the genocide of 1994, there is still a perception that there is something about the Rwandan mindset which has stood in the way of fast progress. In introducing itorero, the government intended to work towards focusing the minds of Rwandans on the need for them to take pride in solving their own problems rather than depending on others for solutions. The introduction of Itorero ry'Igihugu happened at a time when other national institutions and programs focused on providing civic education with regard to human rights, good governance and unity and reconciliation were already in place. Itorero ry'Igihugu was therefore intended to supplement their efforts through the promotion of positive cultural values.

Historically *Itorero ry'Igihugu* was a school in which a sense of patriotism, voluntarism and commitment to service in the general interest were developed through, among other activities, military training, sport, artistic expression (e.g. through poetry recitals) and music. Consequently, young people grew up with a good understanding and attachment to their culture. It was also through *Itorero ry'Igihugu* that future leaders were trained. Among the things they were taught were cultural taboos, virtues of hard work, voluntarism, mutual aid and collaboration with others. It was through the activities of *Itorero ry'Igihugu* that Rwanda as a nation expanded and developed.

During colonial rule the institution in its traditional form was suppressed, with the cultural schools which remained focusing exclusively on music and dancing. It was partly through the suppression of institutions such as *Itorero ry'Igihugu* which brought Rwandans together in a non-discriminatory manner that the development of divisions that led to the 1994 genocide started. Their revival, therefore, represents an attempt at reconstructing society in Rwanda, in which cultural and traditional practices that once created and preserved cohesion are harnessed in the search for economic and social development and, ultimately poverty eradication.

Specific objectives of *Itorero ry'Igihugu*

- Equip Rwandans with the capacity to analyse their problems in order to find solutions thereto;
- Promote the Kinyarwanda language;
- Mentor Rwandans in collective action, team spirit and promotion of invention and performance contracts;
- Mentor Rwandans to understand and participate in the implementation of national programmes;
- Educate Rwandans to be physically fit, clean in their homes, protect the environment, strengthen democracy, engage in constructive debate, enforce the law, fight corruption and violence;
- Educate Rwandans in building and promoting the culture of peace based on mutual trust, respect, humility, respect of human rights, protection against discrimination and genocide ideology;
- Educate Rwandans to be efficient in service delivery, courageous, and to deliver good and efficient work;

Vision and Mission

Vision: that Rwandans should

- have a shared mindset and values to promote their unity and patriotism,
- be aware of the goals of the country, ways to achieve them and their contribution in implementing them,
- be self confident in solving their problems,
- have a shared vision to strive for self development and pride to develop their country.

Mission: to mentor *intore*³ with:

- values based on Rwandan culture
- *motivation* for positive change
- A desire to promote opportunities for development using Rwandan cultural values; identify taboos that inhibit the development of the country; fight violence and corruption; eradicate the

³ Graduates of *Itorero ry'Igihugu*.

culture of impunity; strengthen the culture of peace, tolerance, unity and reconciliation; and eradicate genocide ideology and all its roots.

- Respect for dignity (*ishema*) and the heroic aspects (*ibigwi*) of Rwandan culture

Rwanda's National Values

- Speed and respect for time: A country in hurry;
- Customer service mentality: Constant improvement and anticipation;
- Quality of delivery: High standards, spirit of excellence, efficiency;
- Completion-towards results: we finish what we start;
- Self respect: National pride.

Rwanda's National Taboos

- Inattention to results: status& ego
- Avoidance of accountability: missed deadlines
- Lack of commitment: ambiguity
- Fear of conflict: artificial harmony
- Lack of trust: invulnerability.

Current achievements

In late 2007, the cabinet decided that the '**Itorero ry'Igihugu**' would be used as a method of improving and changing the mindset and ways of thinking of the Rwandan people. This, it was believed, would be useful in achieving the country's transformation. It was on November 16, 2007 that President Paul Kagame officially launched the Itorero in Parliament. In the same month, the first intore consisting of local leaders were mentored. In December 2007, the National Dialogue Council⁴ decided that all Rwandans should go through the Itorero. In April 2008, the Itorero of primary and secondary school teachers was launched. In December 2008, it was the turn of all the top civil servants (executive secretaries) in local government. Other groups have gone through the mentoring ever since.

⁴ Every year Rwanda conducts an Annual National Dialogue (Inama y'Umushyikirano), which brings together government officials, national and local, members of the business community, civil society organizations, and Rwandans living outside the country. The objective is collectively to chart the country's path to prosperity.