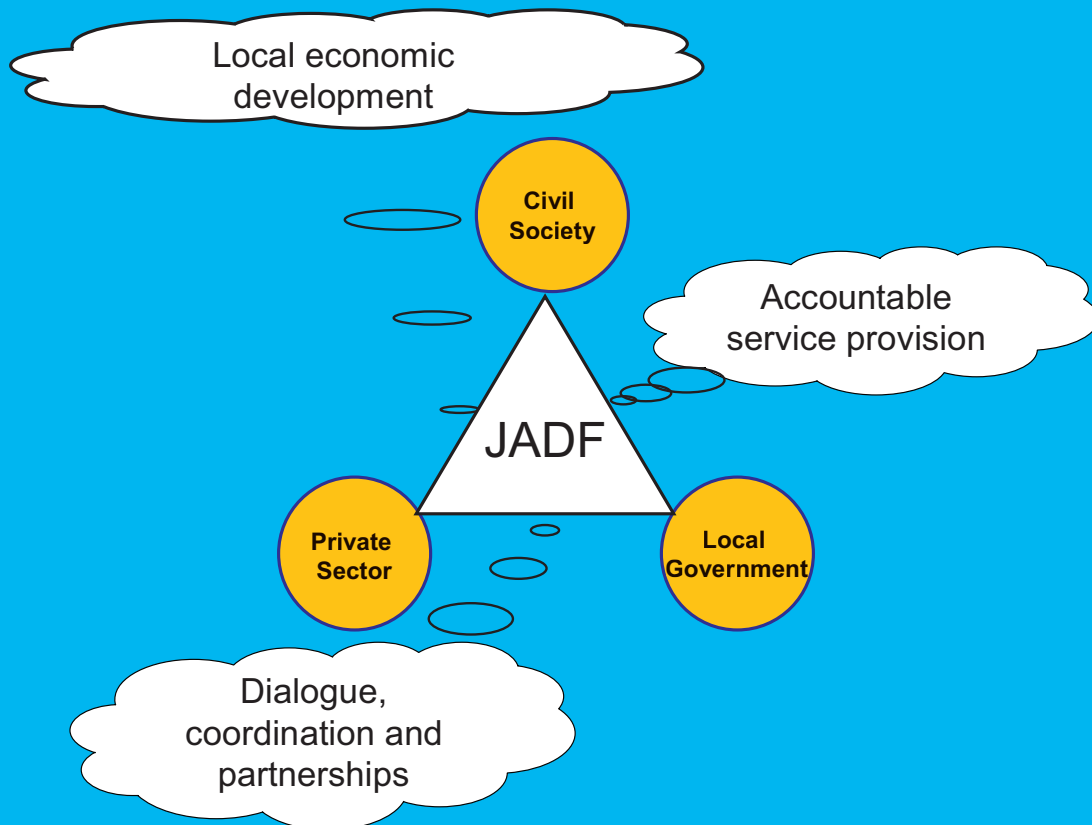


JOINT ACTION DEVELOPMENT FORUM IN RWANDA

Experiences and lessons learned



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Netherlands Development Organisation

September 2009

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List of acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organization
CDC	Community Development Committee
CTB	Coopération Technique Belge
DIP	Rwanda Decentralization Implementation Program
DCDP	Decentralization and Community Development Project
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
FENU	Fonds d'Équipement des Nations Unies
ICAP	International Centre for Aids Care and Treatment Programs
INES	Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur
ISAE	Institut Supérieur d'Agronomie et d'Élevage
JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
JADFESC	JADF Education Commission
JAF	Joint Action Forum (terminology used before 2006)
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
NDIS	National Decentralization Implementation Secretariat
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Government Organization
OCIR	Office des Cultures Industrielles du Rwanda
PADEC	Projet d'appui au développement communautaire
PAGOR	Programme d'appui à la gouvernance locale en milieu rural au Rwanda
PAQ	Partenariat pour l'Amélioration de la Qualité
PED	Paix et Décentralisation (Agence Suisse de Développement)
PDD	Plan de Développement de District
PPP	Public- Private Partnership
PTA	Parents-Teachers Association
RADEM	Réseau des Acteurs de Développement de Musanze
RALGA	Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities
RDB	Rwanda Development Board
RDSF	Rwanda Decentralization Strategic Framework
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
Umurenge	"Sector" the administrative level below District level
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States of America for International Development
VUP	Vision 2020 Umurenge Program
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Acknowledgments

The idea for this document arose during a meeting early in 2009 of personnel from the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), the Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA) and the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV). The leading question was: How do we know what we have to improve in the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) if we don't know how it actually works in the different districts? The Joint Action documentation exercise was then commissioned to SNV.

This document depicts the experiences of district authorities and development practitioners in relation to the Joint Action Development Forums. It is produced with the help of fieldwork, inputs and reports prepared by the consultant Jean-Marie Vianney Makuza. The SNV team that particularly contributed to the study consisted of Country Director Jean de Matha Ouédraogo, Program Coordinator Apollinaire Mushinzimana and advisors Michiel Verweij, Beatrice Mukasine, Emmanuel Ruzibiza, Egidia Uwera, Jorrit Oppewal (intern) and Russel Mushanga.

Many people from different institutions were consulted and contributed to this study. We want to mention James Mwijukye, Oswald Burasanzwe, Yvonne Gakuba and Goreth Mukundiricyo from MINALOC-NDIS. Among other people who shared their experience and insights we want to thank especially: Theogene Karake (RALGA), Nadine Umutoni (Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands), Antoinette Uwimana (Intrahealth-Twubakane), Elena Zanardi (GTZ), Thadee Karekezi (Civil Society Platform), Nepo Rugemintwaza (Itorero), Mukama Vincent and Elie Nzeyimana (DCDP). Last but not least, we want to thank the authorities, staff and development actors from the districts of Bugesera, Gasabo, Kamonyi, Musanze and Ngororero for the inputs and analysis they provided.

Executive summary

This document describes the experiences of the Joint Action Development Forums (JADF)¹ from the beginning up to the present, drawing lessons and developing recommendations for the further strengthening of the Joint Action Mechanism.

The JADF is a mechanism designed to achieve improved service delivery and economic development at the local level. It is expected that local development and service provision such as water and sanitation, education, health, agriculture, and finance, will benefit by improving accountability relations between the demand side (consumers, citizens, farmers) and the supply side (local government and service providers). Following the first early experiences with Joint Action Forums from 2000, the Ministry in charge of Local Government in 2007 decided to make JADF one of the key mechanisms for the implementation of its Decentralization policy.

Now, two years after the Ministerial Instruction on the JADF, the JADFs across the country have accumulated a variety of experiences in bringing together representatives from civil society organizations², the private and the public sectors. This process has been supported by various international and national NGOs and development programs which assisted the district administrations to put in place, manage and facilitate JADFs at district and sector level.

The most important impact of the JADF mechanism seen so far is the growing team spirit among organizations, through improved participation and coordination in planning, monitoring and evaluation of development activities in the districts. Improved dialogue and exchange on development issues is viewed as a valuable asset that has led to greater efficiency and effectiveness of interventions. Some JADFs undertook various poverty reduction initiatives. There are also a few examples of JADFs performing at sector level.

Several success factors were identified. The most critical is to have confident district leaders who are knowledgeable on the JADF concept and the roles they must play. A JADF is a powerful instrument for leaders who cultivate good relations with citizens, promote participation and know how to value the viewpoints and inputs of different actors. Another success factor is financial support and capacity building inputs from international development partners.

Despite some promising results of the forums' work in some districts, in general the JADF mechanism is still in its infancy. The JADF does not yet fulfill all aspects of its assigned role and most importantly, the forums are still far from delivering substantial impact in terms of improved accountability or local development.

This study envisages room for improvement in the functioning of the JADF mechanism. But before that can happen the concept must be further disseminated and the mechanism and its purpose better explained.

-
1. In 2006 the Joint Action Forum (JAF) changed its name to the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF).
 2. Organizations, groups and institutions of citizens and for the interest of the citizens: includes faith based organizations, clubs, consumer organisations, cooperatives, NGOs, professional organizations.

One area for attention is the rather poor participation of representatives of civil society and the private sector. Their participation is fundamental to align development to the real needs of citizens who are the consumers and clients of the services. Small organizations (e.g. producer associations, water user committees) lack resources to participate and their members are not used to expressing their thoughts. They have difficulty asserting their claims to receive adequate service, particularly when they challenge the leadership. They need to be supported to learn their rights and obligations; they also need support to be more confident and conversant regarding development issues.

The private sector is not participating in large numbers in the JADF due to time constraints, among other reasons. The investment in terms of time for the JADF has not yet been compensated with clear benefits. The JADF needs to find a way to satisfy participants' needs and bring benefits to all of them. The private sector is more interested in participating in those JADF sub-commissions working on a specific economic product or service. It has been suggested that district chapters of the Private Sector Federation could represent business in the district JADF, while individual businesses would participate more in the commissions and at the sector level.

There is need for an environment where platforms can be used for actors to gain experience and learn. Practices such as multi-actor dialogues and joint monitoring are rather new so JADF leaders need to acquire the skills to interact with other organizations in a climate of trust and mutual accountability. Also civil society organizations, (I)NGOs, and faith based organizations are not always accustomed to working with other organizations.

In order to achieve the necessary leap in the quality of JADF co-ordination and a shift in orientation towards results, there needs to be a coherent strategy to strengthen JADFs. The study makes several recommendations for the implementation of such a strategy, with the involvement of the private sector and civil society. It recommends that JADF should aim more at achieving tangible results on the ground, for example by using the JADF to exchange best practices in agriculture. To increase the effective participation of civil society and the private sector, priority should be given to support for developing the capacity of local actors to make their views heard and demand accountability, while service providers must learn to better relate to the people, accommodate varying views and acknowledge their duty to be accountable.

The recommendations also address the need for more widespread knowledge of the JADF mechanism. Any gains should be widely shared and communicated to the general public. Some JADFs are ahead of others, so a system is required through which those districts and sectors which lag behind can learn from the forerunners. For that learning to happen, JADF experiences should be better documented. Up-scaling and up-grading from learning requires written in-depth case studies telling the stories of the people involved, sustained by "hard" data from objective sources.

The full list of recommendations is set out in Chapter Four.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the period in which the Rwandan government developed its decentralization policy (2000-2007) it had watched the practice of joint action growing and had actively sought assistance from the development partners engaged with it. It was not a surprise, then, when in 2008 MINALOC requested SNV Rwanda to jointly develop a program to strengthen Joint Action Development Forums (JADF) at national level. As a first step, SNV was requested to document the available information, experiences and lessons learned around the JADF. This study was commissioned to fulfill this request.

This study gives a picture of the state of affairs of the JADF: how it actually works, what was done and what has been achieved. It is necessary to record this systematically so that the actors involved can learn from both positive and negative experiences.

The objectives of the study were the following:

- Document the experiences and stories of the JADF. What worked well, what worked less well and the reasons why.
- Describe concrete cases of issues treated by the JADF at district/sector level to illustrate the functioning and value of the mechanism.
- Draw conclusions and make recommendations for the continuing strengthening of JADF.

The investigation consisted of a qualitative survey using three basic approaches: literature review, interviews and case illustrations. Interviews were conducted with actors involved in the JADF at central and local levels (Ministry, NGOs and several districts) and with informants representing public institutions, private sector organizations, civil society institutions and International Organizations working in Rwanda. The information gathered from all interviews was processed in a SWOT analysis. Lessons are drawn to inform the further strengthening of the JADF mechanism.

A consultant elaborated case illustrations from five districts from each Province (South, West, North, East and the City of Kigali) which were supported by different JADF facilitators (SNV, Twubakane-Intrahealth (USAID) and GTZ).

Selected districts

- Bugesera (Eastern Province): Facilitation by GTZ and SNV
- Gasabo (Kigali City): Facilitation by Twubakane-Intrahealth
- Kamonyi (Southern Province): Facilitation by Twubakane-Intrahealth
- Musanze (Northern Province): Facilitation by SNV
- Ngororero (Western Province): Facilitation by SNV

Though the study is based on experiences of different organizations and includes inputs and ideas of people from different districts, the authors do not pretend to give a fully representative picture of the state of affairs of the JADF across the country. It is recommended that this study

be complemented with more quantitative data related to the JADF in each district such as the number of meetings held, activities planned and implemented, number of participants, issues solved, budgets used etc.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of SNV Rwanda.

2. DECENTRALIZATION POLICY AND THE JADF MECHANISM

In 2000, the Government of Rwanda adopted a decentralization policy meant to transfer substantial public functions, authority and responsibilities from the central administration to local government led by elected representatives. The Rwanda Decentralization Strategic Framework (RDSF) set out the overall objectives and strategy lines and the Decentralization Implementation Policy (DIP) provided the guidelines for implementing the decentralization strategy. The purpose of the DIP is “equitable, efficient and effective pro-poor services and local development in an environment of good governance”. Activities are designed to promote political, economic, social, managerial, administrative and technical empowerment of local populations to fight poverty by increasing their participation in the planning and management of the local development process.

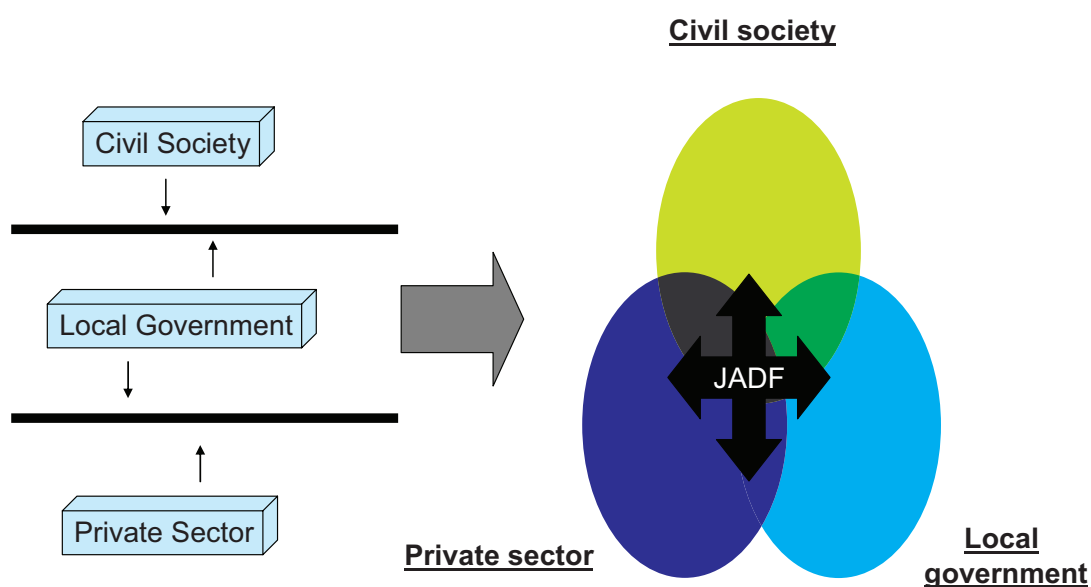


Fig. 1. Expanding options for collaboration between sectors

Two main developments in a framework of democratization have contributed to this: administrative reforms and liberalization. Decentralization saw the relocation of, most government functions at district level to fall under the mandate of the district authority. And secondly, as a result of liberalization, the central government reduced its scope and responsibilities both in economic activities and in social sectors. Through privatization and embracing Private Public Partnerships

(PPP) the Government of Rwanda is creating more space for the private sector to participate in service provision. The JADF provides a space where such PPP arrangements can evolve and government withdrawal from social sectors has also increased the scope for non-governmental organizations, CBOs and NGOs, to take up tasks and complement government efforts.

Decentralization Objectives³

- To enable and reactivate local people to participate in initiating, making, implementing and monitoring decisions and plans that concern them, taking into consideration their local needs, priorities, capacities and resources by transferring power, authority, and resources from central to local government and lower levels.
- To strengthen accountability and transparency in Rwanda by making local leaders directly accountable to the communities they serve and by establishing a clear linkage between the taxes people pay and the services that are financed by these taxes.
- To enhance the sensitivity and responsiveness of public administration to the local environment by placing the planning, financing, management and control of service provision at the point where services are provided and by enabling local leadership to develop organization structures and capacities that take into consideration the local environment and needs.
- To develop sustainable economic planning and management capacity at local levels that will drive planning and implementation of social, political and economic development to alleviate poverty.
- To enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the planning, monitoring and delivery of services by reducing the burden from central government officials who are distanced from the point where needs are felt and services delivered.

The principles which guide the implementation of the above policy are:

- Ensuring national unity, indivisibility and development.
- Ensuring local autonomy, identity, interests and diversity.
- Separation of political and administrative/technical authority/work.
- Matching transferred responsibilities with the transfer of financial, human and material resources.

2.1 Beginnings of Joint Action

At the end of the 1990's, before the government introduced its Decentralization policy, the idea for joint action had already been born, with a community development program in Gitarama⁴. It was called *Projet d'appui au développement communautaire (PADEC)*, was funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands, and focussed on development in five districts (then called communes) of the province (then prefecture). As the project funding through PADEC was scheduled to end in 2003, the provincial authorities of Gitarama, with the support of SNV Rwanda, remodeled it, focusing more on local governance aspects⁵.

3. Decentralization and Good governance in Rwanda, MINALOC, 2007

4. A former province of Rwanda, located in the central part of the country.

5. Strengthening local governance, SNV Rwanda, 2004.

SNV Rwanda's interventions in this Province between the years 2000 and 2002 were aimed at preparing provincial and district authorities and civil society to take more responsibility in managing the development process. To promote this, the first joint action forum in Gitarama was put in place around the end of 2000. As part of the initial steps a study trip was taken to the District of Same in Tanzania, known for its success in increasing coordination between local government, the private sector and civil society. Through coordination and dialogue, Same District had been able to remove barriers to the development process.

A general effect of the joint action experience in Gitarama was improved communication among the various organizations and establishment of a framework for dialogue on development activities. In the beginning the forum secretariat was housed in the provincial office but not many organizations showed up for the meetings. This changed when the secretariat was moved to an NGO office. After Gitarama, Joint Action Forums were also established in other former provinces of Rwanda, such as Kigali Ngali, Gikongoro and Ruhengeri provinces. The forums established at the provincial level comprised NGOs and members from civil society. As a result of the forums, the organizations felt better informed, better connected to each other and more involved in local development.

The Ministry in charge of Local Government followed the initial experiences with interest and decided to make joint action one of the key mechanisms for implementation of Decentralization, officially established in May 2002⁶ .

In 2006, based on the initial experiences, SNV drafted a methodology for the development actors' forum called the Joint Action Forum (JAF), while supporting the setting up and facilitation of forums in the districts of Ngororero, Nyamasheke, Musanze and Gisagara. The Government thereafter called upon SNV to give inputs to the design of a Ministerial Instruction on the JAF with the aim of scaling up the JAF establishment to all districts. SNV developed a methodology/guideline for the JAF, the JAF vademecum (working document in French) for awareness raising and explanation of the JAF mechanism. Within the 2006 decentralization policy, the JAF officially became the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) with 'Development' being added to emphasize the Development objective of the Joint Action. The Ministerial Instruction was eventually issued in 2007.

The Joint Governance Assessment done in 2008 reconfirms the JADFs as an important institution to promote collaboration between private- and public sector and civil society. On the international scene one can link the JADF with the spirit of the Cotonou Agreement⁷, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development and the NEPAD⁸ . The Paris Declaration implied a strong commitment to harmonize development actor interventions and is also concretely mentioned in relation to the emergence of JADF.

6. Strengthening local governance : SNV Rwanda, 2004.

7. The Cotonou Agreement is a treaty signed in June 2000 by the European Union and ACP (African Caribbean and Pacific) countries.

8. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted as the socio-economic development programme of the African Union (AU) at the OAU/AU Summit of July 2001.

2.2. The Ministerial Instruction 04/07

The Ministry of Local Government, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs (MINALOC) finally institutionalized joint action through the enactment of the Ministerial Instruction No. 04/07 dated 17th July 2007. The Ministerial Instruction determines the responsibilities, organization and functioning of Joint Action Development Forums (JADF) at district and sector levels.

It defines the JADF as a consultative level of information dissemination, promoting cooperation among people or actors in development and social welfare of the population. It aims at coordinating activities of all development actors so as to promote efficiency and avoid duplication of efforts⁹. The forum can be viewed as a multi-stakeholder platform¹⁰. The major responsibilities of the forum at the sector and the district levels are the following¹¹:

Responsibilities of the JADF ¹²	
Sector level	District level
1. Advise the CDC on development activities of the Sector in line with attributions.	1. Advise CDC on allocation of resources and other development issues.
2. Coordinate activities of development actors.	2. Coordinate and harmonize District's development activities.
3. Resolve conflicts that may arise.	3. Resolve conflicts that may arise.
4. Follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of adopted programs.	4. Follow-up of service provision to the community.
5. Promote participatory planning process based on community needs.	
6. Identify basic community priorities in poverty alleviation programs and service delivery.	
7. Monitor implementation of poverty alleviation programs.	
8. Distribute equitably development projects in the Sector.	

Following the government decree, development partners, among them SNV, Twubakane-Intrahealth, GTZ, PED, RALGA, PAGOR, DCDP, CTB and FENU supported the implementation of JADF in a number of districts. Some JADF at the lower administrative level known as umurenge (sector) were also supported by local and international NGO's.

9. Ministerial Instruction, 04/07, Article 2

10. Multi-stakeholder processes are long term processes that bring different groups into constructive, dialogue, decision making and engagement around collective issues.

11. Idem, Articles 6 & 13

12. The ministerial order No 04/07 does not foresee JADF at Provincial level.

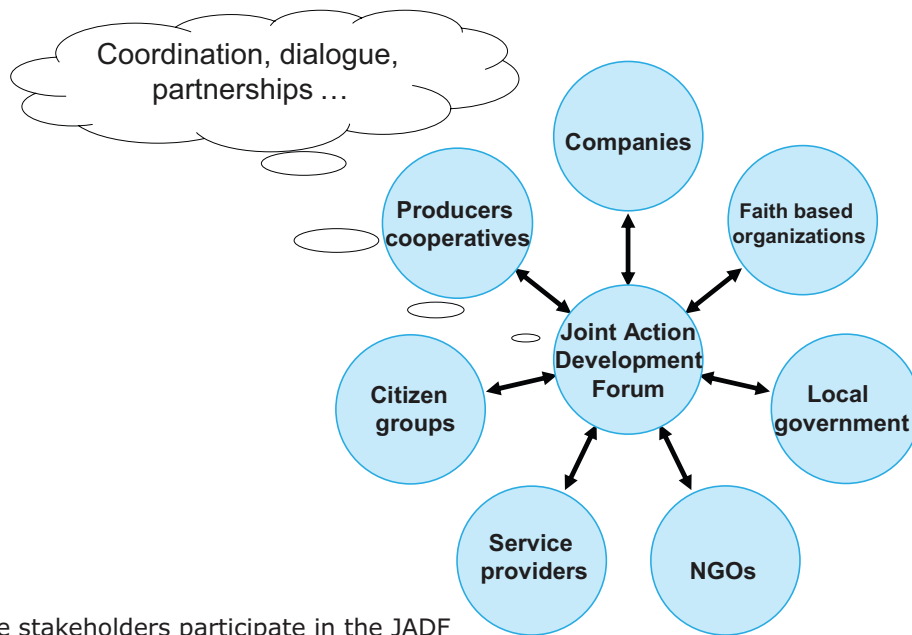


Fig. 2. Multiple stakeholders participate in the JADF

2.3. What is a Joint Action Forum?

The joint action forum is a multi actor platform at the district level (Akarere) or at the lower administrative level called sector (Umurenge). It is also called the JADF mechanism when it refers to the JADF as a system of forums at district and sector level linked to the Ministry of Local Government and specific line Ministries at national level. The JADF general assembly at district level may decide on the financial contribution to be made by members. Some JADFs count more than 70 member organizations. The JADFs select committees at district and sector level prepare for the meetings, propose action plans and follow up recommendations of the JADF. Each committee consists of President, Vice president, Treasurer and advisors. Some JADFs also have a permanent secretariat paid by member contributions or in some cases a particular development partner active in the district. The JADF mechanism oversees the installation of (sub-)commissions such as economic development, education, health, infrastructure (with eventually sub commission for water and sanitation), governance. These (sub-)commissions are expected to report to the general assembly of the JADF. In sectors with existing coordination mechanisms those should be incorporated in the JADF to avoid duplication of structures.

The joint action forums are put in place to achieve full participation of the citizens in the local development process through their representatives from the public, private and civil society. It is a space for inclusive dialogues and accountability where the voices of the people, including the marginalized and the vulnerable, can be heard and met by responsive authorities and service providers.

The JADF is also part of a wider system of checks and balances in the planning and monitoring of services and development. The JADF aims at functional accountability in the implementation of development activities between development partners. It should not be confused with political accountability which is achieved at the local level through the elected district council.



Fig 3. Launching of JADF in Gakenke District. 'Terimbere' (Development) Gakenke 2006.

Joint action is not just a task but a process that requires cooperative spirit, common agendas, a culture of working together and bearing joint ownership and responsibility for challenges, activities and outcomes. Joint action can then be seen both as means to an end (i.e. as a partnership arrangement to achieve specific goals) and as an end in itself (i.e. as a dialogue between actors to enhance accountability and foster democratic governance). Joint action is important for achieving poverty reduction and good governance objectives at local level. Its basic principles are the following¹³

- Collaboration among parties
- Mutual respect, equality and confidence among actors involved in joint action
- Engagement of all actors, crucial for combating collective problems
- Respect for partners' identity, seeking complementary roles and synergies
- Shared responsibility and consensus building for development decisions
- Transparency

Two main aspects of government's decentralization policy mentioned above favor the JADF:

a) administrative reforms placing most government functions at district level and b) liberalization which embraces the private sector's development role.

13. Joint action basic principles, SNV Rwanda

3. JADF EXPERIENCES

This chapter takes a deeper look into the JADF experiences. The first part describes capacity development support from different development partners. In section 3.2 specific JADF experiences in 5 districts are described and analyzed. 3.3 is a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) based on information gathered from the interviewees, and the chapter closes with the lessons learned.

3.1 Capacity development for JADF

Since 2007, development partners have been supporting the district authorities to put in place, manage and facilitate JADFs at district and sector level. They have supported development of internal regulations, the election of the JADF committees at district and sector level and prepared, facilitated and financed meetings of the JADF to explain the background and objectives of the Ministerial Instruction. The young forums were coached on how to develop agendas, seek inputs from various stakeholders and draft discussion documents to be submitted to the general assemblies. The support has included training of the JADF committees and (sub-)commissions at district and sector level. Advisors from different development partners have supported the districts in identifying and mapping the local stakeholders operating in their territory. Each supporting organization has its own strategy and approaches but in general they do not differ much and they all promote participatory methods.

Facilitator	Kigali City	Northern Province	Southern Province	Western Province	Eastern Province
SNV	Nyarugenge	Musanze Gakenke Burera Rulindo Gicumbi	Nyaruguru Ruhango Gisagara Nyamagabe	Nyamasheke Ngororero Karongi Rubavu Nyabihu Rusizi	Bugesera Kirehe
Intrahealth Twubakane	Nyarugenge Kicukiro Gasabo		Nyamagabe Nyaruguru Muhanga Ruhango Kamonyi		Kirehe Kayonza Rwamagana Ngoma
GTZ					Ngoma Rwamagana Kirehe Bugesera
PED/Suisse				Karongi Rutsiro Nyamasheke Rusizi	

All support organizations foster the participation of civil society and the private sector in the forums. The civil society platform developed a training manual for training of trainers for local civil society agents and used it in more than 14 districts. The focus was on rights and duties and orienting NGOs in how to start up partnerships with local government. The explanation of JADF and sensitization to its role was an important part of the training. Apart from this there was no evidence found of a more structural support to civil and private actors to improve the quality of their participation in the forums. Neither is there mention of structured support to improve the skills to manage multi-actor coordination. PED in its experience of supporting the decentralization process activated JADFs and used JADF groups in 4 districts as entry points for trainings of local leaders and representatives of CSOs, notably on participatory planning.

Development partners were involved in several efforts to improve the capacity of the districts to assess needs and monitor development progress. Some JADFs organized field visits to observe the progress of development programs. Twubakane-Intrahealth, along with RALGA and VNG International (Association of Netherlands Municipalities) developed a self-assessment tool for districts. When integrated into the district planning process, this tool makes it easier for local government to systematically scan the range of capabilities required to effectively finance, manage and deliver health services. It enables them to identify gaps, so that they can build capacity in areas most critical for effective performance.



Fig. 4. Who is accountable for dysfunctional latrines?

Development partners have also helped in capacitating JADF sub-commissions, which are viewed as a vehicle for the development of basic services like WASH and Education. They have been used to plan and monitor but also to disseminate and analyze sector policies and baseline data and to exchange experiences. For example the Burera District used the JADF to exchange and disseminate experiences around ecological sanitation.

In some areas such as Education, WASH and Agriculture, SNV offers specific services including the following:

- Supporting local authorities and development actors in policy formulation, providing tools for participatory development planning, and monitoring/ evaluation, helping to integrate gender issues, sustainability and social inclusion.
- Promoting the development and sharing of knowledge between development actors in Rwanda.
- In partnership with other organizations, SNV Rwanda seeks to influence the policy-making process at all levels, and lobbies in favour of more resources for capacity development and multi-stakeholder processes. SNV in particular advocates for specific opportunities and support for girls, children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- The organization of (sub) commissions.

The WASH sub-commissions are in the process of being formalized in Musanze and Rubavu. The forums have been used to promote awareness and analysis of national WASH policy. Among others, they discussed the need for baseline data and validation of baseline studies, monitoring, analysis of sector policy and identification of training needs. The recommendations made during the meetings were taken up by SNV and included in the design of baseline studies. During the presentation of baseline study findings, the district officer in Musanze made promises regarding “taking them into consideration in the planning” Unfortunately, those promises were not made explicit in the minutes of the meeting. A strategy must be developed for implementation of the decisions of the meetings and creating a mechanism to follow up on issues and make the JADF WASH function effectively. CARE and UNICEF are exploring ways to use the WASH forums for the implementation of water and sanitation programs. At the district level the JADF sub-commission still has to define a strategy to connect to the lower sector level. This could be done by linking it to the sector WASH committees which at present only exist and function in a few sectors in a few districts.

In education, SNV currently supports the creation of JADF education sub-commissions (JADFESC). Districts are at different stages of installing the JADFESC. In Musanze the JADFESC has already elected the sub-commission members and has developed an action plan. So far, the main benefit of the JADFESC meetings in Musanze has been the identification and joint analysis of issues. motivation of teachers, and involvement of parents in the education of their children. Other issues are the strengthening of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and absences of pupils from child headed households.

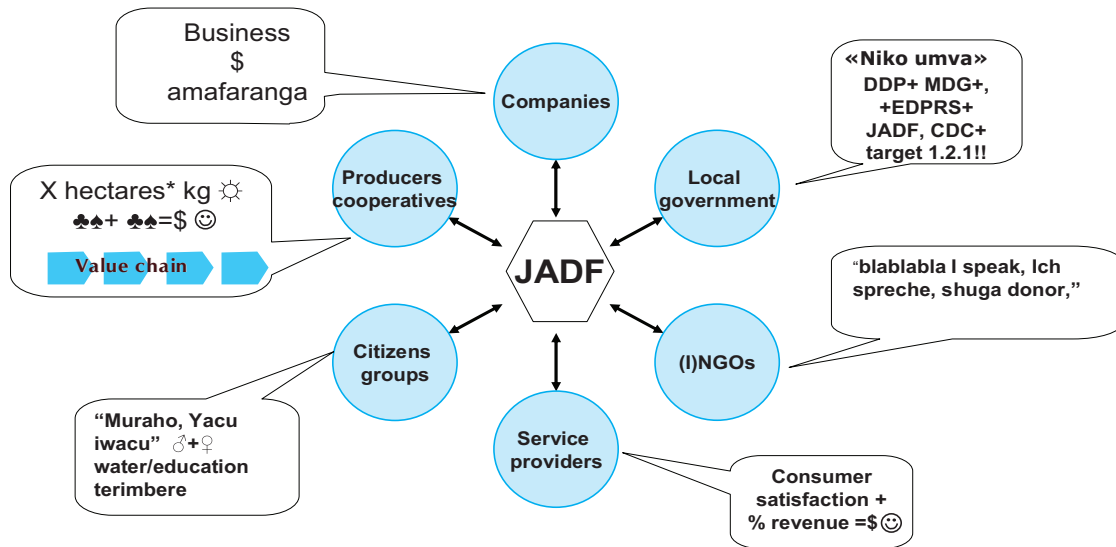


Fig.5. Communication between diverse stakeholders

The issues addressed in the joint meetings vary widely and include national education policy implementation (double shifts, the use of English in teaching, promotion of girls’ education), However, while some issues are translated into suggestions or appreciation, there are no clear actions to take them further. For example, the members stressed the need to obtain an accurate estimate of the number of children who would attend primary education under ideal circumstances. However, it is not made explicit how the JADFESC will ensure that these numbers will be produced.

Twubakane-Intrahealth developed a comprehensive documented experience around their support to a multi-stakeholder platform in health at the sector level. Formally it is not a JADF sub-commission on health but the PAQs (Partenariat pour l’Amélioration de la Qualité/Community Partnership for Quality Improvement) could be easily considered as a JADF. The PAQs were developed as a structure to bring local leaders, health center personnel, health center managers and community representatives together to improve services provided by health centers. These community-provider partnerships have increased responsiveness at the facility level. Several interviewees gave examples of how PAQ-initiated discussions—and in some cases complaints—led facility managers to make changes. As discussed above, examples of changes include health provider behavior (punctuality, attendance and patient interaction), increased resources for facilities, and infrastructure improvements. A recent study of health worker motivation in Rwanda confirms the scope of the problem of staff behavior as well as the positive impact that community oversight has had in addressing them. In 2008 134 PAQ were operational involving practically all health center facilities in the districts. An assessment done in 2008 revealed that 74% of PAQs were able to influence change in the health facilities, affecting health services or infrastructure. Through a team assessment Twubakane pinpointed that it had achieved the greatest impact on governance in three areas: responsiveness, accountability, and efficiency and effectiveness.

In coffee, SNV promotes a multi-stakeholder mechanism for joint analysis and action for improvement of the coffee product environment. In tourism there are multi-stakeholder groupings called "steering committees" and in beekeeping they call these arrangements multi-stakeholder platforms. The beekeeping multi-stakeholder platforms are territorially organized in zones around national parks: Akagera, Nyungwe, Gishwati & Virunga. The joint action forum for coffee is called "district coffee commission" which is linked to the JADF through the commission for economic development. The idea of building a permanent coffee multi-stakeholder platform at district level originated from a meeting in November 2006 between SNV Rwanda, OCIR CAFÉ and the district authority in Rusizi. The aim was to support implementation of the national coffee strategy at local level and address common issues in coffee development. Its responsibilities are basically participating in the planning, monitoring and evaluating of coffee activities. The commission also offers an opportunity to small farmers' cooperatives to be represented and have a voice at district and national level.

After surveying the presence of the different development partners one realizes that districts like Bugesera (East), Ngoma (East) and Nyamagabe (South) benefit from support organizations, while other districts don't have any facilitator. Though this study did not look specifically at this aspect, there is a general consensus on the fact that the districts without organizational support are lagging behind in implementation of the JADF and have significantly fewer multi-actor activities.

3.2 Case illustrations

The small cases approach targeted 5 districts, each from a different province. The districts were specifically selected, each one benefiting from facilitation by different cooperation agencies such as SNV, Intrahealth-Twubakane and GTZ.

Case 1: JADF Bugesera: A model for planning and monitoring

JADF Bugesera began working in 2006 and it is now composed of more than ninety organizational members. It is chaired by the Coordinator of a Luxembourg-sponsored development project in Bugesera District. The co-chair is the Vice Mayor in charge of finance and economic development. Other members of the Coordination Committee come from other partner institutions.

In Bugesera, it is the District Planning Officer who also performs the function of the permanent secretary to the JADF. Early this year, JADF Bugesera managed to put in place JADF committees in all its sectors. A Training of Trainers on organizing and creating awareness of the JADF at sector level was held for the district JADF committee members. However, JADF Bugesera has not yet developed its internal regulations.

This district's plan is specially known for having a systematic monitoring framework which has been recognized as a role model in monitoring systems and won a prize at the national level Innovation Day in 2008. JADF Bugesera managed to make major inputs to the District Development Plan 2008-2012.

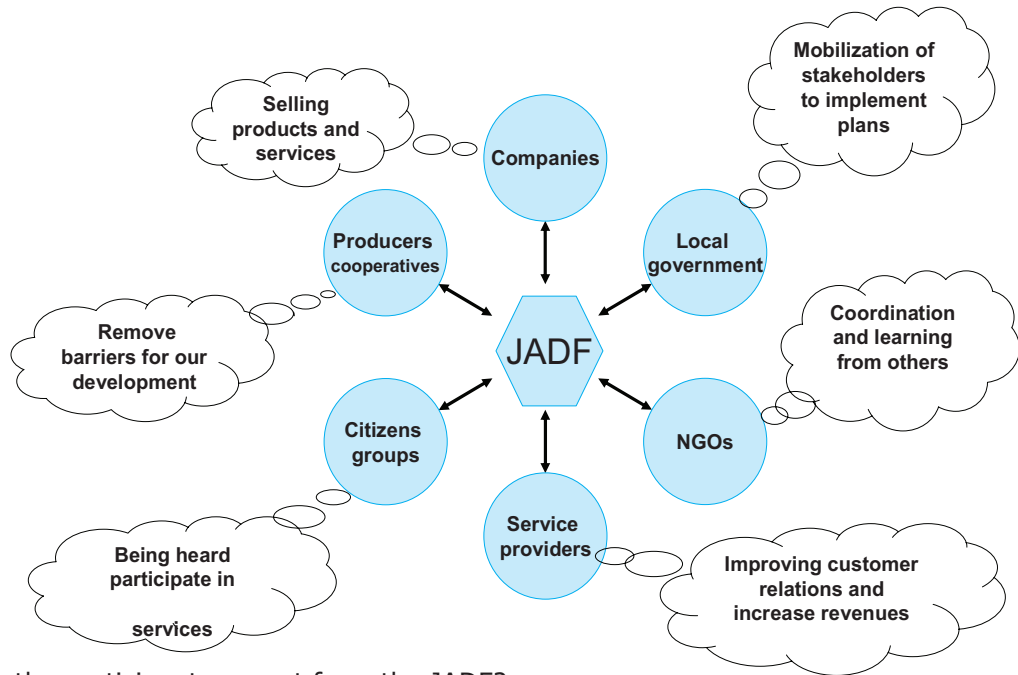


Fig. 6. What do the participants expect from the JADF?

Recently, JADF Bugesera found that its number one development challenge was poor hygiene related to the existence of many grass-thatched houses in the district. This problem was identified in the DDP. Thanks to the JADF the problem was analyzed and adopted as a shared priority. The presence of different organizations in the JADF helped to coordinate a solution which would otherwise not have been possible. The final result was that ADP Nyamata (World Vision Program), Gashora and Ngenda mobilized about 13 000 iron sheets to replace grass-thatched huts in the district and thereby improve the health situation.

Bugesera is a district with a large number of JADF members, but has some limitations in terms of real actor participation. The district produced an annual report in 2008 that was presented at a JADF meeting. After presentation, the participants formulated only a few questions and there was little discussion. It was observed that participants in the meeting commented to their neighbors on the report but they did not express these concerns in public. The JADF facilitators apparently did not see the advantage of analyzing and discussing the report; the JADF president did nothing to provoke discussion and quickly moved to next agenda items. One of the reasons for little analysis was also that the information in the report was new to the participants. This example shows that there is still need to build a culture of meaningful discussion and interaction between the JADF participants.

As in many other districts, JADF as an institution has not yet managed to play an advisory role to the CDC on allocation of resources and other development issues. A member of JADF Bugesera declared: "You know: CDC and JADF do confuse us. They have the same mandate and almost the same members. That is why here, we have given priority to JADF". Somebody else does not agree: "if you look at the mandates of JADF and CDC, there are clear differences: the JADF

being principally a platform for exchange and coordination with a much broader participation of actors and citizens groups". However, these different interpretations show that people need more clarification on the institutions involved in the decentralization process. Bugesera also suffers from a large number of members that are reluctant to release their annual financial contribution for the functioning of the JADF.

Case 2: JADF Gasabo: The challenge of the member contribution

JADF Gasabo is chaired by an official who works with Twubakane/USAID. It started operating in 2007 and has managed to put in place various sub-commissions: economic development, health, good governance, and education. These commissions, however, are not yet fully operational.

JADF Gasabo also plans to launch its operations at sector level and to have its own secretariat. Currently the JADF secretariat is managed by the District Planning Manager. JADF Gasabo successfully achieved agreement of JADF members to pay varying membership fees¹⁴ and with this budget it can meet its day to day expenditures.

Among Gasabo JADF's proclaimed achievements is the initiation by one of its members (Rwanda Red Cross) of the construction of 60 houses for the poor in the sector of Bumbogo.

However, JADF Gasabo encounters the challenge of poor participation by businesses and local organizations. One NGO made the observation on the financial contribution that its main donor already supports the decentralization process at national level and thus should not contribute for JADF in the district. An NGO representative also commented that it participated a few times and the only thing that was done was that each organization had to present its plan and budget: *"this becomes boring after the second meeting"* she said. According to her the organizations need platforms for exchange because everybody is curious about what the other organizations are doing and wants to learn from them. *"Just define a subject of common interest for each meeting and then invite some people to prepare a presentation"*.

Case 3: JADF Kamonyi: Real participation?

JADF Kamonyi has been operational since 2007. It is composed of about thirty institutional members. At the district level, JADF is chaired by the Vice Mayor in charge of economic affairs. In the Kamonyi JADF, the Coordination Committee is also composed of representatives of local NGOs and cooperatives.

JADF Kamonyi has a schedule for meetings and members regularly attend. JADF Kamonyi's key partners have participated in the district performance contract locally known as Imihigo and the District Development Plan. JADF has also started its operations at sector level. Furthermore JADF Kamonyi has a full time secretary who is paid by JADF. Most of the JADF partners do

14. Contribution categories (in RWF)

- A. 500,000 and Above
- B. 100,000- 500,000
- C. 50,000 – 100,000
- D. 10,000 - 50,000

contribute financially both at the province and the district level according to agreed contribution categories¹⁵.

With support from Twubakane, Kamonyi has conducted evaluation of the JADFs. A monitoring matrix was developed to keep track of progress of the development programs. The matrix includes all the major NGOs but surprisingly does not track the progress of the district administration itself as the main development actor.

Poverty reduction is among the issues which JADF Kamonyi has emphasized, addressing cases of extreme poverty in the district. An example of the initiative stemming from the JADF is reviving the culture of *"Inka y'akaguru"*. This means a cow is given to a poor family and after it has given birth, they retain the calf and the cow is passed on to another poor person.

One of the obstacles or constraints which deserve mentioning is the poor quality of the participation of the JADF partners. Though the development partners are present they have not managed to participate effectively. That means the representatives of NGOs do not have much influence in setting the agenda and in the outcome of the meetings. The people that were interviewed identified several reasons. One reason is that organizations and people still do not know the JADF. Others only know of the JADF's existence but do not understand what it is all about. Another NGO director said regarding the JADF *"It is easy to start it up, it is difficult to keep it going"*. The JADF will only become sustainable if all the participants can really participate. *"Small organizations just sit there and don't say anything, so finally you don't know what they think and whether it is useful to them"*.

Case 4: JADF Musanze: Joint efforts to improve services

JADF Musanze is also called 'Réseau des Acteurs de Développement de Musanze' (RADEM). It is headed by a member of the civil society organization called 'Fair Children'. JADF Musanze has a full time permanent secretary fully paid by JADF contributions.

JADF Musanze began with 57 organizations which included churches, local NGOs, international NGOs and other public organizations, cooperatives and diverse enterprises. The district currently has around 90 registered JADF members and has designed and implemented its own statute and internal regulations. The JADF has a meetings calendar, holds coordination meetings on time and presents its plan of action which is sponsored by JADF members. In all, JADF Musanze has a good record of having executed its plans.

JADF Musanze is comprised of the following operating sub-commissions:

- Education, chaired by Educational Institute INES.
- Health, chaired by Ruhengeri hospital.
- Tourism, chaired by RDB and PNV.

15. In only the Southern Province, JADF still has a platform at the province level.

- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene(WASH), chaired by SNV.
- Agriculture and animal husbandry, chaired by ISAE Busogo.

In Musanze district all the 15 sectors have JADFs, two of which (Muhoza and Rwaza) even have full time secretariats that are supported financially by the members.

A joint action meeting around a water and sanitation baseline study led to animated discussion and people visibly enjoyed exchanging information and exploring the issues in depth. Using baseline data for joint analysis opened their eyes about villages with better, and villages with poorer, access to water and sanitation. The interpretation of the data also led to new insights like how to define a “good latrine”. In addition, members came up with new questions to be answered through data collection. The district officer first hesitated and seemed a bit uncomfortable entering into open dialogue, but in the course of the meeting he relaxed, and even tried to translate the discussion into activities for the next planning round.

In 2008 JADF Musanze carried out an evaluation exercise of the JADF in the 15 sectors, as a result of which sectors were put in 3 categories .The categories were rated as best performers, middle performers, and low performers. The evaluation included indicators such as the regularity of meetings, reporting, and existence of an activity plan. The first category which included JADF Muhoza, Kinigi and Rwaza received rewards from JADF Musanze. This reward stimulated deeper analysis and awareness of what constitutes a good and functional JADF. The benchmarking experience can serve as an example for other districts.

Voice and accountability around hospital services

On the 27th March 2009, JADF Musanze held a general assembly. Among the problems which were raised and which needed special attention was the service level at the Musanze Hospital. The clients had complained about unclean situations in maternity, the need for a night room for the nurses and for the pediatric service, people requested to be attended to earlier in the morning (not only after 9:30 hrs). After the meeting, the JADF committee visited the hospital and discussed these problems with hospital officials and then made recommendations to district authorities, especially the unit in charge of health. The direct outcome of that visit is that the Musanze Hospital has started to attend JADF meetings which was not the case before. Secondly the managers of the hospital were sensitized to the problems and promised to make necessary follow-up and find solutions in the near future. Pediatrics now attends the public from earlier in the morning.

Case 5: JADF Ngororero: promoting agricultural development

JADF Ngororero, also called Isangano, was launched on the 15th September 2006. It is headed by the district Vice Mayor in charge of economic affairs. The JADF has a Coordination Committee that is composed of members from BRD, ICAP, UNICEF and SNV. It has its own statute, internal regulations and an annual plan. JADF Isangano does not strictly oblige its members to pay annual financial contributions, but in case there is a need, members voluntarily contribute.

JADF Isangano has laid out a strategy whereby every one of its members is supposed to contribute to district development in various ways such as in logistics, expertise, advocacy etc. In Ngororero the JADF is operational at the sector level and there are plans to launch it at the cell (Akagari) level as well this year (2009).

JADF Isangano has made a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of the district. Among its achievements is the implementation of an initiative called 'Magirirane program'. This initiative is about mutual cooperation between the rich and the poor, whereby the rich person lends a cow, goat or other livestock to the poor person who in turn rears it. Later on, the beneficiary takes the offspring and returns the original animal to the owner. In the same way, the rich may lease land to the poor for cultivation while they share the harvest. The Magirirane strategy has led to an increase in livestock sharing in the district. Thanks to Magirirane, in 2008, poor people got 3112 cows, 2100 pigs and 6000 rabbits in addition to those obtained through the program of "One family, one cow", initiated by the President of the Republic. The exchange of rabbits is mainly done between children.

In Ngororero the JADF leadership really stimulates people's participation. Through active networking by the district authorities, organizations are contributing more to the planning and feel enthusiastic about developing new ways of assisting the JADF. This contrasts with forums in other districts where leaders are more distant from development actors, and appear to be saying: *"leave it to us, we know what is good for you..."*.

3.3 SWOT analysis of Joint Action Forums

The SWOT exercise identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of JADF mechanisms as they emerged from interviews from key informants in the public and private sectors and civil society. It arranged lessons learned in an organized way, allowing opportunities for strengthening the mechanism in the future to be identified.

STRENGTHS

The legal framework

- JADF at district and sector levels are governed by the Ministerial Instruction No. 4/07. This allows the local government, private sector, civil society and international organizations operating in Rwanda to fully collaborate in improving service provision and participating in local economic development.

JADF as a key mechanism for implementing decentralization policy

- The decentralization policy cannot be effectively implemented without full participation of organizations from civil society, private sector and local government at local level. JADF is one of the key mechanisms for accountability and effective implementation of the decentralization policy.

JADF as a mechanism for economic development

- Before the adoption of the decentralization policy in Rwanda, development planning used to be the business of government. Now, with the new economic system, all partners are involved in the public planning and monitoring process and their respective plans are integrated in an overall development agenda through the District Development Plan (DDP).
- Harmonization: fewer parallel activities and less isolated effort.
- Demand and supply come together and win-win situations are created: Service providers and businesses benefit from networking, information sharing and lobbying with local government in the JADFs.
- The JADF helps to build bridges between the sectors and actors: it helps to strengthen social cohesion, creating a feeling of “togetherness” around common development issues.

Weaknesses

People have insufficient knowledge of JADF and the Ministerial Instruction

- The Ministerial Instruction is not broadly known and understood by the public.
- Members from public institutions are better informed on the JADF than members from civil society and the private sector.
- Organizations do not know which level they should relate to: do we participate in the JADF at sector or district level and in which commission?

Insufficient understanding of JADF's role and responsibilities

- There is confusion between the coordination versus implementation roles of the JADF. Ideas of developing JADF's own projects (hotel, poverty alleviation initiatives) and productive activities persist.
- The JADF mechanism is often used to execute development priorities of the district authorities. Then the participants feel they are in the JADF to legitimize the actions and solve the problems of the district officials.
- JADFs tend to focus more on planning than on monitoring. Sometimes monitoring is focused more on the development partners than on the local government.
- Leaders set the agenda based on their own interests without necessarily taking into consideration the interests of the other development partners.
- Sometimes the JADF is merely used as an information channel by local authorities to inform the development actors of district decisions.
- JADF is seen as a means of controlling the development partners. Accountability of CSOs, and NGOs towards the LG is overshadowing the accountability of the local government towards the citizens.
- JADF is used for collecting the so called "members' contribution", not only for the JADF operation but for all kinds of other initiatives (from school building, to charity campaigns).
- The JADF does not reach the small organizations and the informal sector.

No overview of what is happening in the 30 JADFs at district level and in 416 sectors.

- It is difficult to find hard data to sustain the many opinions and perceptions about the JADF. There is need for a system that collects information (including quantitative data) on the performance of the JADFs at district and sector level. Documents like minutes of JADF meetings and mission reports of supporting organizations are often too general and lack the detail to get a deeper understanding of the functioning of the JADF.

Weaknesses

Limited capacities for multi-partner dialogue

- Real dialogue with the participation of citizen groups and the private sector is scarce
- Organizations and people are not aware of their rights to be informed and to participate in district development.
- Many JADFs lack skills and knowledge of mobilizing organizations and funds.
- Only a few district officers and members of JADF know how to efficiently lead and facilitate meetings; their attitudes and skills do not always foster participation. They tend to focus on the bigger development partners, ignoring the smaller organizations
- A high percentage of participants are not active. Sometimes it seems lack of real interest, and at other times it seems they lack confidence and skills to express themselves.
- The participants lack skills and knowledge to effectively monitor service provision and local development.

Relationship between JADF and CDC

- In principle JADF has the responsibility to advise CDC on allocation of resources and other development issues. However this is not yet widely done. Apart from lack of understanding and experience this is also partly due to the fact that CDC seems less active at district level than at sector level.

Information is not trickling down to the users and the general public

- The people in the villages complain that they are often not informed by their representatives about trainings and meetings. The representatives do not have a habit of sharing the information with the group. There is no culture of widely sharing and informing the constituents after meetings.
- During WASH and JADF trainings, trainees and representatives more than once complained of not having funds for replication. On the other hand people in the villages often show a distant attitude of "why bother since the leaders will solve the issue?" The villagers do not know how to get information.
- The participants do not really understand their role as representative of a group and don't know how best to participate and influence service provision.

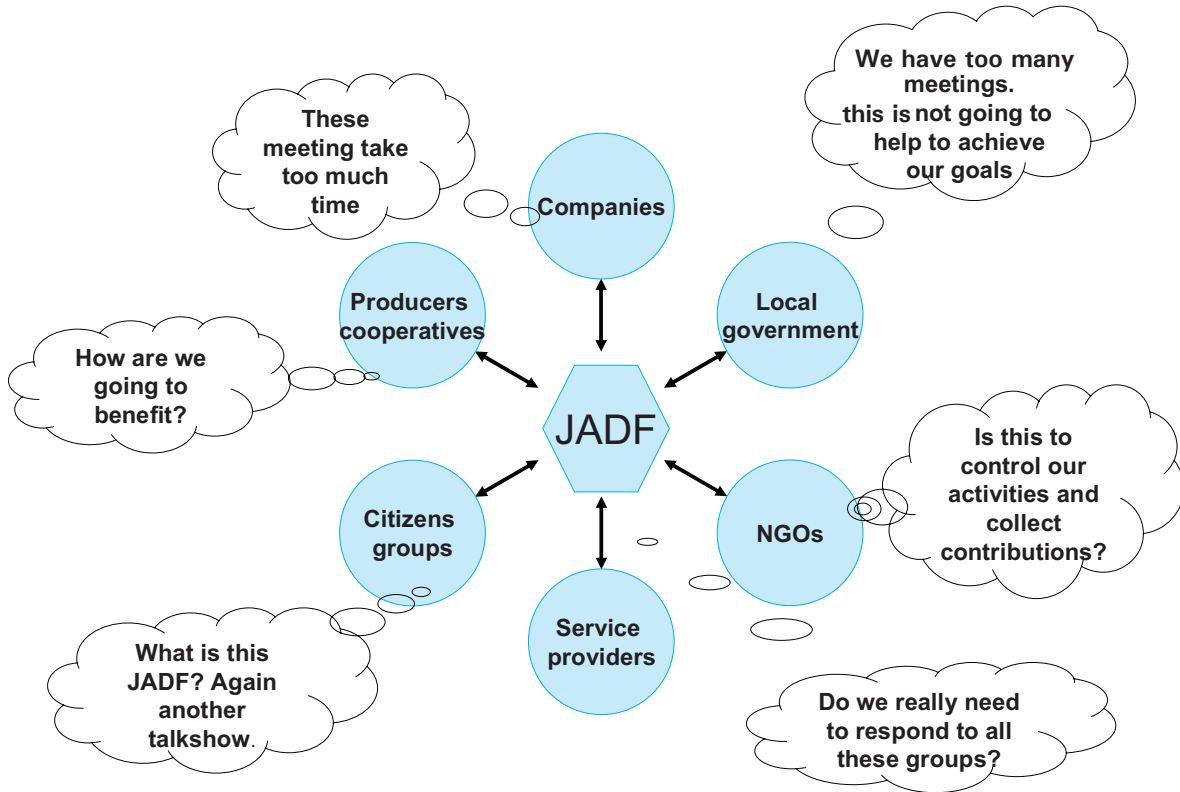


Fig. 7. Concerns of the JADF participants

Opportunities

National and International support

- Rwanda’s government is committed to improving governance by decentralization, fighting against corruption, building accountability and using the JADF. Accountability forums are generally viewed as a means to improve service delivery. Decentralization increasingly emphasizes the level of the sector where actual service provision takes place.
- Development partners can be mobilized around a JADF strengthening strategy. SNV, USAID, GTZ, PED, PAGOR, FENU and CTB have been facilitating joint action forums and some expressed interest in continuing to do so.

Interest of development partners in decentralization and JADF

- The 3rd phase of the decentralization process which is supposed to start in 2011 will delegate more responsibilities to civil society and private sector organizations.

People's role in local development

- With decentralization and the JADF mechanism, the citizens, men and women, have more and more opportunities and more responsibilities to promote the development of their communities.
- The deep and multiple transformations in Rwandan society require broad enthusiasm and collective efforts. The JADF mechanism can link national policies with grass root organizations and citizen actions.

Learning from JADF experiences

- In 2009 the Western Province with the PED organized an exchange meeting with several district JADFs. The aim was joint reflection and learning from each other. In 2008 there was a similar exchange meeting in Musanze. These meetings can be a source of innovation for the whole JADF mechanism. Professional facilitation support is needed to pin down the lessons learned and identify gaps and needs for improvement. Quality documentation of events like these can be disseminated to accelerate overall JADF learning.

Threats

Unclear ownership of JADF by MINALOC, NDIS and District actors

- The establishment of the JADF is often viewed as an initiative of the Government. For people to fully participate they need to feel it is theirs.

From highly centralized system to a decentralized one

- The Rwandan political system used to be highly centralized, so working in the JADF framework requires a paradigm shift. This transformational process is resisted due to difficulties inherent in changing engrained habits and interests. There is a danger that JADF will be used to solve issues in a top-down manner.

JADF dependence on public leadership

- From its inception, JADF effectiveness has relied on public leaders' understanding and competence. This is especially true with regard to Mayors and Vice Mayors in charge of economic affairs. So their performance, willingness, availability and turnover tend to have a considerable impact on JADF performance too. A Vice Mayor does not have time to run the JADF and the CDC alongside other duties.
- JADF is too much identified with the district and seen as an instrument of the district due to the fact that the chairperson is often Vice Mayor. People are more positive in cases where the JADF president represents a non-governmental organization.

Sustainability

- JADF's capacity to function depends too much on the support of international organizations, which is unsustainable.
- The JADF mechanism is still weak. To become part and parcel of the institutional arrangement in Rwanda there is need for a long- term strategy to make the JADF a financially self-sustainable mechanism.
- The JADF urgently needs to become a practical instrument that demonstrates results through improved service delivery and local development. Otherwise, it will remain a "talk show" and the support for the JADF mechanism might dwindle fast.

Duplication of governance activities

- Donor coordination under the leadership of MINALOC should ensure that all governance and decentralization efforts are integrated and aligned.
- Clear roles and responsibilities are needed to avoid policy contradictions.

3.4 Lessons learned

The JADF has to be considered a part of the decentralization process which is gradually changing the habits of a centralized administration. But it will not become a perfect institution overnight, and still has to prove itself in practice

This section attempts to define lessons learned in the following domains: JADF leadership and participation; legal environment; participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation; coordination and harmonization of development activities; voice and accountability; advice to CDC on allocation of resources and other development issues; JADF at sector level; and JADF sub-commissions.

JADF leadership, participation and facilitation

Although there is urgency for inter-sectoral dialogue, it is evident that JADF facilitation is not easy. The forums involve multiple stakeholders with people from widely divergent walks of life, different interests and different capacities. Communication in itself is sometimes a challenge when development partners do not master the local language, Kinyarwanda. At the basis of joint action lies the need for people to have confidence to express themselves in an atmosphere of openness, respect and mutual accountability. Joint action forum participants also need to develop skills of human interaction and communication. The different cultures of government officials and entrepreneurs cause friction when the meeting starts an hour late. These differences also come out sharply when comparing the concerns raised by representatives from urban-based NGOs versus representatives of a rural producer association. Bringing these people together and facilitating constructive dialogue requires special capacities, attitudes and skills.

It has been observed that the success of any given JADF depends heavily on the understanding and perception of the concept by its leaders. The leader has to be confident in explaining the concept and create an enabling environment for dialogue in the forums. Leaders are usually the Mayor and the Vice Mayor in charge of economic affairs at the district level, and the Executive Secretary at the sector level. The level of effort required of civil servants to do their own work is often too high, and therefore they can't give JADF development due attention.

An official of the Private Sector Federation commented in relation to leadership *"A confident leader who has good relations with many people and is interested to know all opinions can achieve much"* And he adds: *"But a leader with too much self confidence is not good if he or she does not appreciate others' participation; under such circumstances of leadership you pray that the meeting may end soon"*. The high turnover of district officials is generally seen as a constraint but the official of the Private Sector Foundation sees a positive side effect: *"local leaders are more open for dialogue and answerable to the people, because they know that they might soon be replaced"*.

Some leaders believe in the JADF mechanism and put their energy into making it a success. On the other hand you may find that some forums' leaders do not act according to the JADF basic principles such as members' equality, respect for each other and transparency etc. At times, the Chairperson just informs the participants on issues rather than having matters analyzed and discussed jointly. Several district officials lack skills to communicate sensibly with the representatives from civil society and the private sector. They show little compassion and have difficulty in establishing real connections with the people to achieve meaningful participation. To illustrate, in one of the districts we visited, we asked the Vice Mayor in charge of economic affairs how he works with development actors. His response was: *"it is common that you find most NGOs come and want to concentrate in one place and the worst of it is that they even want to do similar things. Of course, it is our responsibility to tell them where to go, since we are the ones who know priority areas"*.

Most people interviewed think that the JADF president should be chosen from the private sector or from civil society. Having a non-governmental person leading the JADF will help to create an environment where people can speak more openly. We are dealing with a problem of the leadership culture but also of members and stakeholders feeling 'ownership' of their own organizations. The organizations at grass root level are weak. Farmers often are not very loyal to their cooperatives: it was said that coffee farmers readily sell to someone else if they are offered a better price.

Participation depends initially on who is invited to the meeting. Some districts are specific in who they invite for the JADF. The participants depend on the understanding and (personal) inclinations or relationships of the conveners. In one JADF meeting at sector level the majority of the JADF members present were pastors.

The existence of the JADF alone is not enough: it is necessary to stimulate and achieve broad

and active participation from civil society organizations and private businesses. NGOs, religious and international organizations are not always familiar with working in multiple-actor settings. Communication, especially with organizations from other sectors, requires interpersonal skills. In other words there is still a lot of learning ahead for the representatives of the public, private and civil society sectors to enable them to engage in effective dialogue. The role of facilitators from (I) NGOs could be to support the JADF until the practice becomes part of the local culture.

With regard to the role of the JADF in conflict resolution, it was mentioned several times that the JADF has been useful in making sure that development partners' interventions are not concentrated in the same geographical areas and that support from development partners is distributed in an equal and equitable manner. The JADF president in Huye District is the representative of a cooperative. He played a key role in aligning the interests of the district in order to build a new market place. During the joint analysis they became aware of the need to join efforts to avert the threat of all being left out by active foreign investors (see box).

Strengthening social cohesion through JADF

This example concerns the construction of a new complex for the main marketplace in Butare. A cooperative had purchased the land and wanted to build a kind of modern shopping mall on it, with space for the traders who were already using the marketplace as well as for modern shops. A conflict emerged between the traders and the cooperative. Initially the local leadership was torn between the two positions and was unable to mediate an agreement. Then the issue was taken to the JADF for discussion. In this multi-stakeholder setting, the actors managed to identify common interests and objectives. A JADF member explained how they realised that not reaching an agreement could result in foreign investors taking the lead, and all local actors losing out. Eventually the discussion and analysis of the issue in the JADF led to an agreement.

JADF legal framework

"Every development actor represented at district or sector is free to be a member of the forum and is encouraged to do so". And "Depending on the needs of the forum, members may choose to contribute to the operations of the forum based on expressed needs" ¹⁶. These rules for the JADF have generated strong discussions countrywide. How can we generate funds if participation is free? How can we guarantee adequate representation if participation is on a voluntary basis?

The lesson drawn from this debate is that the JADF does not work effectively under pressure. In

16. Respectively articles 3 and 4 of the Ministerial Instruction

cases where JADF leadership insists on the financial contribution as a precondition to becoming a JADF member, there is a low level of participation.

On this particular issue, JADF Ngororero has an exceptional experience. In Ngororero there is no compulsory annual contribution and JADF members only contribute for the implementation of joint projects which they agree upon. Also their contribution is not necessarily in cash; a member may contribute in kind such as offering logistical support, expertise or taking up an advocacy task.

The result is that JADF Ngororero is among the most active in the country. It has reached a very high level of performance. Since the obligation to contribute is an obstacle to JADF development it was made voluntary and the district is searching for alternative ways of financing the JADF.

Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation

JADFs have been used in the preparation of District Development Plans (DDP) in all districts. It is generally agreed that thanks to JADF, the planning system in the districts has improved. The monitoring systems have also improved, although to a lesser extent: for example JADF Bugesera has launched a systematic framework for monitoring the DDP 2007-2012. The next challenge is to increase the participation of the other development partners and achieve real joint monitoring not just approval of the district report.

In JADF action planning, Musanze has a successful experience. It has annual action plans strictly based on JADF functions which it completes almost 100%.

District authorities are benefitting more from JADF for planning and monitoring than NGOs, civil and private sector actors. For the continuity of the JADF forums it is important that a balance is found and all participants get some benefit out of the JADFs.

Harmonization of development activities and exchange of information

All people interviewed pointed to the benefit of the JADF in helping all to know other organizations and their activities better. Many organizations are able to indicate how they gained from information exchange or contacts that originated in a JADF meeting. Some organizations started bilateral collaboration around a subject. The JADF has definitely responded to a need to meet and talk more often with representatives from other NGOs, civil society organizations, companies and public institutions about concrete development issues in the districts and the sectors.

It is important to identify issues that are interesting for all participants. For example the Burera District used the JADF to exchange and disseminate experiences around ecological sanitation.

However, not all JADFs allow all organizations to present something or to intervene during the

meetings. The agendas leave little space for new issues and it is observed that time for questions was limited. What then happens, is that the same people always ask questions and the more “timid” representatives of the private sector and civil society remain quiet. This obviously doesn’t favor the functioning of the JADF as a platform for accountability.

There is still need for a mechanism of reporting from the local to the central level. In order for the NDIS to support the JADF they need to centralize information on what is happening on the ground. This information can then be shared with other organizations.

Voice and accountability

The JADF is a space for inclusive dialogues and accountability where the voices of the people, the users and consumers of the services including the marginalized and the vulnerable can be heard. The capacity to voice the needs of the citizens towards relevant service providers is very weak. First of all many local groups are not represented at all. For example the water users associations and small producer associations do not show up at the meetings although they have the opportunity to participate. This absence is due to various reasons: the cost of participation inhibits smaller organizations, and some organizations are not informed about the events. It appears that the NGOs that are in direct contact with the district authorities are often better informed.

Access to information is still limited at the district level and below. Government officials have to learn to cope with criticism and not to react in defensive or offensive manners. Transparency in the organizations towards the members and particularly among organizations is often a great challenge since it makes leaders exposed to observations and criticism. A member of civil society said: “Instead of being an inclusive platform, JADF has become an exclusive platform, which meets only big institutions.”

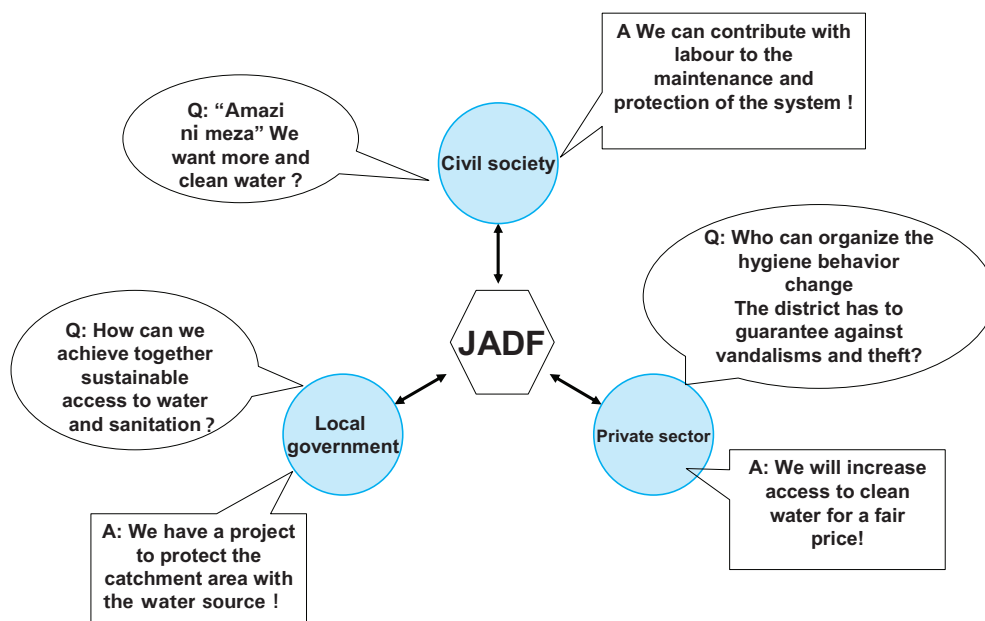


Fig. 8. Accountability, a game of questions and answers

People are reluctant to share information on delicate monitoring issues. For example it was difficult to get some details regarding a JADF that raised questions about the service level in a local BPR Branch (Banque Populaire Rwanda). But it is this kind of openness and frank accountability that is necessary to improve service provision. Local authorities and local leaders and service providers have to learn to become responsive and get used to the fact that they are called upon to account for the public resources that they have used. However, the reality is that representatives of small, often rural, organizations are restrained in expressing their thoughts and fail to voice their concerns especially when the remarks concern the leadership. The reverse is observed in relation to district officials who sometimes show little confidence when communicating with the more vocal NGO's.

There is no structural way the forums monitor service provision such as water supply, roads, education. There is also no system to follow-up on recommendations and observations made during JADF meetings. A system of systematic follow-up on JADF issues is necessary to effectively monitor service providers and implementation of development programs. Here lies a clear opportunity for International and local NGO's to add value to the process.

To advise CDC on allocation of resources and other development issues

There is a risk of adding new structures thus increasing the burden to unsustainable levels. Some organizations still ask the question whether it is really necessary to have CDCs and JADFs next to each other at district and sector level. To avoid this duplication and confusion MINALOC should establish clear roles and responsibilities for both organizations. At sector level in particular, with fewer development partners, the participants in the JADF and the CDC are often the same. The roles and responsibilities should also include the relationship with the more political councils.

There is no information on how the JADF gives advice to the CDC. There seems to be confusion on how to interpret the role of the JADF in this respect. The JADFs are tempted to focus on projects and assume an implementing role which is conflicting with the Ministerial Instruction. The District JADFs have difficulties in separating consultative and advisory roles from the implementing ones.

The JADF Ngororero (Isangano) has an experience of putting in place a "Projects Unit" where its members contribute substantially in cash and other ways. Various initiatives whose objective is to reduce poverty have been noticed in all districts, the most innovative of which are Inka y'akaguru in Kamonyi and Magirirane¹⁷ in Ngororero, mentioned in the case illustrations.

JADF has become a space in which new ideas related to Rwandan traditions of fighting extreme poverty are revived: In the Butaro sector of the Burera District, the sector JADF has generated discussion and promoted a practice called Ubukwe bw'umukene (wedding of the poor). This practice consists of mobilizing the community to support a poor young man to get the minimum

17. See the case illustration of Ngororero

means for a wedding. So the community helps the person to build a house and gives him financial and logistical support in this endeavor. Though members complain about the fundraising function it can be mentioned as an achievement that the JADF in Kinigi sector has managed to contribute Irish potatoes valued at two million Rwanda francs to support the “One Dollar Campaign”, a campaign for mobilizing funds to build houses for genocide orphans.

JADF at the Sector Level

One interviewee commented in relation to speeding-up JADF implementation at the sector level: *“Let us concentrate on the district first, and when the JADF is effective at this level, we shall see how to put it in place at the sector level”*. Others argue that the JADF function is more important for the sector level since it is closer to the people who have to benefit from it. The JADFs need explicit linkages with the grass root level participation of citizens in the development process. JADF can work together with agricultural extension officers and function as a space to analyse best practices. Agricultural practices do not change because of district officers but because the people see with their own eyes and make their own calculation of costs and benefits.

At field level, we also encountered evidence that supports emphasis on the sector. There are districts where JADFs at district and at sector level are said to be performing very well: e.g. JADF Musanze, Ngororero, but some sector JADFs seem to work even better than the ones at district level. In certain districts, sector JADFs seem to meet more regularly and with better participation than the district-level JADFs. Examples of this include the sector-level JADFs of Kinigi and Muhoza in Musanze district, Gacurabwenge in Kamonyi District and Rugarama in Burera District.

The sector level is where most concrete development activities and service delivery take place. The sector is ultimately where policies are concretized in development for the citizens and where they can participate meaningfully. MINALOC-NDIS needs to help clarify the responsibilities of the district regarding the JADF at sector level. It is important to include this level in the trainings and make sure that development assistance does not end at the district level.

JADF Sub-commissions

The implementation of JADF (sub-)commissions is a rather new development. The advantage is that they have very concrete issues to look at in specific areas such as education, agricultural development, health etc. It was shown that the combined stakeholders in education or WASH were able to identify common problems and questions. If the stakeholders become a little bit more assertive in the follow-up on these issues they can achieve ‘quick wins’ by removing small obstacles and seizing opportunities that are within reach of joint action.

It has to be clear to each organization at what level and in which JADFs it should participate. Otherwise it can lead to too many meetings. At the moment it could be that a NGO works with activities in water and sanitation and health in two districts and seven different sectors. That

would imply the NGO would need to participate in more than 10 JADF meetings each trimester! Obviously that is not a workable solution.



Fig 9. How can we citizens benefit more from the JADF?

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to enable joint action forums to achieve their objectives, the following recommendations are made:

Joint Ownership of Responsibility for Development

1. Raise trust levels between the private and public sectors and civil society so that they assume a shared responsibility for service provision.
2. Emphasize the spirit of decentralization and bring JADF closer to the people through implementing the JADF mechanism at sector level.
3. Stimulate non-governmental leadership in JADFs to avoid the perception that they are an extension of the local governments at district and sector level.
4. Create a balance in mutual accountability between the public sector, civil society and private sector.
5. Maintain customer/consumer focus, dialogue must lead to concrete actions and tangible results in the end.

Information dissemination, documentation and learning

6. Promote awareness of JADF at all levels, through various gatherings, forums and popular media channels.
7. Promote and support more systematic documentation of the JADF experiences.
8. Develop a system for tracking the JADF performance of the 30 districts (and sectors), recording where they are in terms of JADF implementation (meetings held, training, knowledge of the JADF mechanism, planning/reporting, major achievements) and aligning it with the practice of performance contracts.
9. Develop a coherent reporting system and tie it in with M&E to avoid adding more systems.
10. Promote and support learning through exchange of joint action forums at district, provincial, and national level
11. Develop a JADF benchmarking system and competitions at the district, province and national level.

The JADF mechanism: structure, role and responsibility

12. Define roles and responsibilities for JADF especially in relation to the CDC and the district council and other existing coordinating mechanisms. Define attributions of its permanent secretariat.
13. Define the JADF agendas in a participative way so as to ensure that each meeting responds to the interests of all participants.
14. Make it clear to organizations to which commissions they contribute and at which level.
15. Develop a strategy for increased involvement of the private sector and civil society organizations.
16. Develop clear policies regarding criteria for membership and levels of financial contributions.
17. Develop concrete linkages between JADF and relevant development programs like vision Umurenge 2020, agricultural transformation etc.
18. Develop a mechanism that connects the JADF sub-commissions like WASH and Education at sector level with the respective national Ministries. For example WASH sub-commissions would be connecting the grass root WASH committees with the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Capacity development

a) JADF structures and personnel

19. Strengthen JADF structures at the district and sector levels through support to drafting of internal regulations, establishment of full time secretariats and sub-commissions.
20. Strengthen JADF leadership through trainings on the multi-stakeholders process, citizens' voice and accountability, resources mobilization, etc.. Simple tools like community score cards, already known in Rwanda, can be promoted and used.
21. Set up and strengthen the JADF sub-commissions around production (e.g. coffee) and services like tourism.
22. Develop the capacity for JADF management (e.g preparation of meetings, reporting and follow-up)

b) Local government & service providers

23. Develop the capacity of local government and service providers in leadership for participatory planning and monitoring and accountability in service provision.

c) Local organizations/NGOs

24. Develop the capacity of the local organizations in knowing their rights and obligation, expressing their needs and for monitoring service provision.

25. Train local NGOs in professional JADF facilitation.

d) Development partners/donors

26. Harmonize JADF facilitation practice among development partners, and other governance/ decentralization initiatives such as RALGA, Itorero, Umuganda to increase efficiency and avoid duplication and overlaps in JADF support.

27. Mobilize and harmonize donors support around a JADF strategy in line with the decentralization policy. A kind of basket fund could be an option.

28. Select at least one development partner for each district for the targeted JADF support, coordinated by NDIS.

These recommendations do not envisage stand-alone activities but should be implemented in an integrated and synchronized way. For example, capacity building for local government and local organizations is essential to ensure that the activities are embedded in a comprehensive strategy to enable them to achieve the goals of improving service provision and achieving economic development.

5. CONCLUSION

The Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) is surrounded by many questions, partly because there is little written material that systematically treats the JADF experiences.

However, from this study it can be concluded that, two years after the publication of the Ministerial Instruction, the Joint Action Development Forum, in one way or the other, is now operational in all districts and some sectors across the country.

The JADF has responded to a felt need for increased dialogue and exchange between actors of civil society, private and public sectors. In several districts the JADF has become a platform for information exchange and inter-institutional contacts between development partners from the three sectors. Organizations recognize that the JADF has helped to distribute activities better, avoid duplication and make development interventions more effective and efficient. Some forums have shown substantial progress in making planning and monitoring of the District more participative and inclusive, with more success in the planning than the monitoring. The JADF has a role connecting organizations horizontally at district level and making better vertical links between policy issues and realities on the ground.

JADF has also contributed to the promotion of cooperation among actors to achieve concrete development initiatives for the population. JADF has become a space in which new ideas can arise or traditions can be revived, to improve the social welfare.

Support to the JADF from International NGOs and development programs has been predominantly oriented at creating awareness, explaining the Ministerial Instruction and assisting its implementation at district level. There is also an incipient start to support the sub-commissions in WASH, education, health, and economic development (around products like tourism, coffee and honey).

The JADF mechanism is thus functioning but still weak. Notwithstanding some promising experiences, in general the JADF as a national institution has not yet reached a satisfactory level of performance. Even districts which appear to be role models like Musanze and Ngororero still counter serious limitations in terms of coordination, cooperation and funding.

The JADF still has a long way to go to become a platform for the exercise of the people's voice and the achievement of accountability. Civil society organizations and the private sector are under-represented or failing to participate meaningfully. The interviewees were unanimous about the many challenges that lie ahead before the JADF mechanism can be a really powerful instrument to improve service delivery and boost local economic development.

The current momentum for the JADF might quickly ebb away if it fails to find a true function and distinctive responsibility in the institutional landscape. There is an urgent need for improvement in the quality of JADF facilitation with a more explicit orientation to results linked to the lives of the people. It is believed that such a quality leap is possible through a national program to strengthen the capacities of JADF with due attention for the ownership/leadership/participation issue, defining clear roles and responsibilities, building capacity for voice and accountability and communication with the public at large. The sector JADFs and the specific JADF sub-commissions for economic development, water and sanitation, education and health are potentially powerful means of coordinating implementation of national policies and programs and bringing tangible development to women and men in the villages.

To sum up: A lot has been gained now that the Government of Rwanda and development partners increasingly recognize the value of dialogue and coordination around common interests in economic development and improved service delivery. However, a lot has to be done before the JADF will be a true forum for accountability where the citizens as users of public services can voice their needs and enter into constructive dialogue with open and responsive leaders. Consolidation of the JADF mechanism will be best served by an intensive learning process at all levels. This requires a confident policy environment and professional capacity development to enable local organizations to play their role. But to honor the decentralization spirit, the districts and sectors should have enough room to define what they think is best and experiment each in their own way with the JADF. Then, let learning and a kind of process of natural selection do the rest to refine the JADF model.

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"If all the development actors could play their roles effectively through the JADF, this could have an extraordinary impact on the development of this country".

Civil society leader in Rwanda

A climate conducive for collaboration between civil society, private sector and the public sector is one of the main conditions for development to happen. The Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) provides such a space for multi-actor collaboration.

The JADF is a mechanism for participatory governance where local organizations jointly analyze obstacles and opportunities, plan development and monitor performance of service providers.

This document on early JADF experiences is a source of information and inspiration for civil society, private sector and public sector to engage in joint action to improve services and expand economic options for the betterment of the population of Rwanda.

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