

# ENGENDERING DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN DECENTRALIZED ENTITIES: LESSONS FROM SNV-UNDP PARTNERSHIP IN RWANDA

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During the period 2002-2006, the Rwanda Government implemented phase one of its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Evaluation of the PRSP revealed that gender was not adequately taken into account during PRSP design and execution. As a result of these findings, phase two, known as the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) called for additional focus on gender and increased partnership with decentralized units. In response to these recommendations, the Activity Agreement 4 (AA4) project, initiated by UNDP (United Nations Development Program) and SNV in Rwanda, committed to assisting gender mainstreaming efforts at district level.

After two and a half years of operating pilot projects in five districts, national level stakeholders were able to identify differences between the five districts in terms of gender consciousness when compared to other districts. The five pilot districts have demonstrated changes in their understanding and application of gender in development plans following the pilot project. For the first time, these districts have included gender-related activities in their budgets. Project outcomes include strategies to combat gender-based violence, economic empowerment projects targeting women, health, education, sanitation and pro-poor projects aimed at reducing the gender gap.

## CHALLENGE

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set early this decade to coordinate and focus poverty reduction interventions. MDG 3 addresses gender equality and women's empowerment.

In keeping with these goals, Rwanda's vision for development is currently guided by its *Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), 2008-2012*. Implementation of the plan is decentralized and operates at district level. Implementation of engendered development plans depends on several factors at both national and district levels. One issue is to ensure that gender matters are fully integrated into districts plans.

**Some baseline indicators related to MDG 3 in Rwanda**

Indicator	Baseline before the project (2006)
Gender gap in literacy (%)	0.2
Gender gap in primary education (%)	0.0
Gender gap in secondary education (%)	11
Female in tertiary education (%)	30
Female in decision-making positions (%)	47.5
Seats held by female in parliament (%)	48.8

## CLIENTS

In 2007, during District Development Plan preparation, gender analysis was not emphasized. The budget for implementing district plans depended heavily on government spending priorities. As a result, decentralised entities placed emphasis on those activities included as performance indicators by line ministries. In most cases, gender issues were not included. Clear budget commitments to gender issues did not exist. Nor was there a culture of tracking gender disaggregated data from which policy makers and civil society could identify the differential impact of development activities, policies and service delivery on both men and women. At national level, an independent evaluation of Rwanda's Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP 1) found that while gender did receive more attention than other cross-cutting development issues, its recommendations regarding policy priorities and budget commitments for gender equity were not sufficiently incorporated into sectoral programs due, in part, to low capacity, poor planning, attitudinal challenges and an inadequate monitoring framework.<sup>1</sup> The lack of gender integration impacts, for instance, the education sector (see table above).

In 2006 (the year before the project started), women's representation on local government councils was approximately 42% (MINECOFIN, EDPRS, 2007). Only 50% of civil society organisations were satisfied with their level of involvement in the socio-economic planning process (MINECOFIN, EDPRS, 2007). The Baseline Survey Report for districts, carried out between February-April 2008, showed that district personnel lacked basic information and documentation about the policies that the EDPRS is built on, apart from those on the environment, land and inheritance. Generalised gender blindness and some gender discrimination were also observed at district level.

SNV-Netherlands Development Organization and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) at corporate level signed Activity Agreement IV (AA4), on June 16, 2006, which formed the basis for providing an "Integrated Package of Services (IPS) to support MDG-based National Development Strategies". At country level, SNV RWANDA and UNDP engaged in a partnership to implement the AA4 through the project, *"Reinforcing Capacities of Local Governments to integrate Gender in Decentralized Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS)"*. In collaboration with partners including, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), the Ministry in charge of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the National Women Council (NAWOCO), the project was designed to achieve the following outputs:

- Improved baseline information on gender awareness and mainstreaming in five districts (Nyarugenge, Musanze, Bugesera, Ngororero, and Nyamagabe)
- Improved integration of gender-based analysis into the EDPRS district policies and plans
- Improved implementation and monitoring of gender sensitive EDPRS district plans
- Increased understanding of gender issues amongst district populations

<sup>1</sup> MINECOFIN (2006) Independent Evaluation of Rwanda's Poverty Reduction Strategy 2002-2005 (PRSP1): p47.

**Rationale**

Both SNV Rwanda and UNDP were key collaborators with the government of Rwanda (GoR) during the development phase of EDPRS in 2007, especially in ensuring that gender was integrated as a crosscutting issue. During EDPRS implementation, GoR is putting great emphasis on its decentralization policy. SNV supports MINALOC in the development of its Decentralization Implementation Strategy, which emphasizes the integration of gender in District Development Plans (DDPs). In this project, SNV and UNDP continue to support GoR to achieve its goals of gender equality, a pillar of its *Vision 2020*, in its EDPRS and its international commitments. The project aims to localize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular MDG 3: gender equality and women's empowerment.

The aim of the AA4 project in Rwanda was to enhance the capacity of district officials to effectively mainstream gender in District Development Plans (DDP) and practices. The project began in 2007 in five districts: Bugesera, Musanze, Ngororero, Nyamagabe and Nyarugenge, each district representing one of the four Provinces of Rwanda, as well as Kigali City.

UNDP, as a senior development partner of the Government of Rwanda (GoR), had a coordinating role at national level, while SNV played a clear role in bridging the macro-micro divide through capacity development at the district level.

The project was scheduled to end in June 2010, but some closing activities are still underway. This case study seeks to document the achievements and lessons learned during the implementation phase of the project. SNV was involved in the project with a view to enhancing civil society participation in decision making, ensuring accountability, promoting gender, and improving overall governance for empowerment in the districts involved.

**Actions**

In November 2007, SNV in collaboration with UNDP, recruited the National University of Rwanda to implement the first phase of the project.

In December 2007, the first project steering committee meeting was held with representatives from the five districts, MINALOC, MINECOFIN, MIGEPROF, UNIFEM and NAWOCO. The expectations, tools and skills needed, resources required and the framework for the project were determined. A detailed work plan was developed in January 2008 and shared among different stakeholders.

The project developed a national gender survey methodology and conducted a Gender Baseline Survey from January to May 2008, which established, among other things, the existence of good practices at district level in information sharing, HIV/AIDS prevention, campaigns to promote girls' education, and the operation of a health insurance scheme.

The baseline survey report was written in English, translated into Kinyarwanda and distributed. A workshop on engendering district plans was held, in which representatives from the five districts participated.

Steering committee meetings were held on a regular basis and involved district authorities, civil society representatives, and development partners involved in gender promotion. Such meetings served as a platform for sharing lessons, supporting each other, planning together and monitoring achievements.



***Participants in a workshop of district officials to engender their DDPs, June 2008***

From June 2008 to June 2009, the project conducted various training activities involving women and men from the districts (local leaders, women council leaders, youth forum leaders, etc.) and stakeholders at central level. These activities promoted skills development for gender based planning and budgeting as well as training of trainers (ToT) (district cadres and community workers) who, in turn, would train various categories of decision makers and implementers of District Development Plans (DDPs), including district executives, professionals (in education, health, land, police, etc.), and opinion leaders, to carry out gender sensitization, awareness and advocacy campaigns in their constituencies. Currently, the District Joint Action Forum is conducting gender awareness workshops for local leaders from village, cell and sector levels.

Senior staff from the five districts were trained to develop engendered district development plans, and have contributed to the elaboration of gender survey tools to be applied countrywide. Furthermore, the AA4 project has developed gender sensitive indicators for different sectors such as average attendance and performance of women and men in training programmes, percentage of women and men trained in entrepreneurial skills, engaged in micro and small enterprises, identified as extremely poor in the population, transport means used by women and men to collect drinking water, gross enrolment ratio for girls and boys in primary, etc.

*"Gender budget statements have been produced this budget year 2010-2011. This would not have been possible without the contribution of capacity building programs from various partners such as the SNV-UNDP AA4 project", Francis Nsengiyunva, MINECOFIN, GRB programme manager during the gender sensitive M&E tools workshop held in Kigali in 2010.*

From July to December 2009, the project developed a methodology and tools to conduct a participatory Gender Audit, the report of which came out in May 2010. Currently, Gender Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators proposed by the Government of Rwanda in 2009 have been customized for each of the five project

## OUTCOME

districts. Data sources have been identified and data collection tools have been designed and tested by district staff. As a result a handbook on gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation tools was produced.

SNV and its partners supported districts through facilitating participatory planning workshops, and providing backstopping services for the creation of gender-inclusive district development plans, and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Through the acquisition of knowledge and tools necessary for developing gender-sensitive plans, districts gained the *capacity to deliver* on development objectives, particularly gender development objectives, In addition, the *participation* of civil society in the process, as evidenced by the planning workshops in which they were actively involved, ensures effective commitment, improves the sense of ownership of the plans developed, and thus the goodwill required to implement them. Most of the project districts scored high during a recent performance evaluation for the first semester of 2010. There is now heightened awareness of gender mainstreaming among district stakeholders and greater capacity for gender auditing.

In addition, district authorities are integrating gender issues in their daily routines; committing themselves to tracking gender issues on an on-going basis and taking them into account during the development of performance contracts and other plans. Each of the five districts has an active joint action forum in which civil society works with districts authorities to plan and monitor development activities. Steering coordination and joint action forums that have been either established or strengthened through the project serve as good foundations for *coherence* of district policy and action. They also play an important role in promoting *accountability, transparency, and participation*, which are important in SNV's 'governance for empowerment' framework.

Documentation of gender aware practices during the analysis phase revealed stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions of gender issues. Findings were disseminated at national level, and have contributed to shaping policies (including EDPRS) and informing stakeholders about best practices for engendering planning processes within decentralized administrative entities. Workshops provided an effective means of disseminating best practices and initiating multi-stakeholder exchange and synergy.

More specifically, the Gender Audit showed the following results:

- Districts have been mindful of ensuring gender parity in their districts during the recruitment process. Ngororero District, for example, had only two women at the start of the project and now has more than 10 women; in the District Executive Committee and among Coordinators of Units, three out of five are women.
- District staff members have been conscious of observing gender balance when working with partners. Bugesera and Ngororero, for example, report that when working with cooperatives or other vulnerable groups, they make sure gender balance is taken into consideration.

*"In 2006, when we started to work with the District we did not care to look at data and deal with disaggregation in terms of women and men. We were thinking that if we already have the 30% seats for women in the District Council as requested by the constitution, this was enough. With this project, we have understood why we should disaggregate the data, what women and men bring together and what their specific needs are. This has helped a lot in changing our behavior related to gender. The changes have started with us and now we are also contributing to changing minds at lower levels", TURAHIMANA FERDINAND, district statistician, Ngororero District*

- Following the district level Training of Trainers, trainees have conducted sector, cell and community level trainings, making this a regular activity
- At meetings with local partners, a gender sensitization topic is included
- Those who participated in the AA4 activities have influenced fellow staff to appreciate gender as a development issue. They say that top leaders now are convinced there was a need to address gender otherwise they would not meet their district development targets. The problem is now "how can we?" not "why should we?"
- Some said they are trying to address "gender blindness" when planning and trying to look beyond the numbers. Ngororero gave an example of the case of girls' dropout from primary schools in the district. By tracing the girls, they established the root cause of the problem: child labour in tea plantations. Working with lawyers, heavy sanctions are now taken against the plantation owners (not parents), which has drastically improved the situation.
- The gender sensitivity of districts is reflected in the following numbers: In the five districts, women occupy: 48% of all places in district councils, 46% in sector councils, 42% in cell councils, 36% in local civil services, and 31% in decision making positions at district level

*"Each one has to understand that empowering women is to your advantage. Now we are getting more and more women involved in different businesses, they are more involved in tendering activities at the District and their number has increased in banking", BIRORIMANA JEAN PAUL, Ngororero District planner.*

- There are strategies in place to combat gender-based violence. These strategies target the police, local defence and community, economic empowerment projects targeting women, health, education, sanitation and pro-poor projects aimed at reducing the gender gap.

#### **Critical success factors**

- The agreement of the Country Directors of SNV Rwanda and UNDP to participate in the AA4 program and their endorsement of the project.
- The selection of the National University of Rwanda and the appointment of the Lead Consultant to manage the project.
- The decision to incorporate the project within the UNDP's larger *National MDGs Awareness Campaign in Rwanda* project and the approval of funding from UNDP headquarters.
- The support of the Government of Rwanda for our efforts and agreement from MINALOC, and the five districts to participate in the process.
- Sharing the results of the process with regional and international staff attending the 2008 regional meeting in Nairobi and their support of the project's efforts.
- Recognition of other agencies' involvement in similar projects, i.e. the UNCDF and UNIFEM Gender Equitable Local Government project, and the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities engendering local government project

### LESSONS LEARNED

Two major lessons were learned during the implementation of this project: First, mainstreaming gender works better if it is a bottom up process involving grassroots level stakeholders. Policies and instructions from higher up have little impact at ground level, simply because they are seen as someone else's responsibility ("The Ministry of Gender has asked us to develop action for gender promotion, but we never received the budget for that").

Secondly, gender mainstreaming works well when it is a multi-stakeholders' venture. Engaging partners and civil society at district level significantly contributed to the success of the project vis-à-vis the objectives it was meant to achieve.

In order to capitalize on, replicate and up-scale the project's achievements, discussions on how the project can be deepened or extended to remaining districts are underway. This, however, will depend on SNV's and partners' capacity to develop a new program and mobilize the required resources. A scaling up phase would seek to go further in training professionals on gender mainstreaming, monitor gender mainstreaming inputs, processes and outputs and evaluate gender mainstreaming outcomes and impacts. Internal and external gender audits would also be carried out in order to recognize the best performing districts, individual units and individuals, thereby allowing for replication of best practices. The project's gender audit recommended including a gender dimension in the performance contracts that districts sign each year with the President of the Republic, that gender audits be conducted regularly, and that M&E tools be developed to ensure gender mainstreaming.

The aim of future endeavours is to set up a government-run project on gender equality within the EDPRS at district level. This would be run by the Ministry of Local Government, with support from SNV and UNDP and other partners. Discussions have also started with the Millennium Village Project in Mayange (Bugesera) beyond the SNV/UNDP AA4 project framework, in order to explore the possibility of replicating project best practices in the area.

Moreover, consultations among UN agencies, UNIFEM and UNCDF are considering implementing two similar projects in two additional districts as part of a regional program in which Rwanda is one of five pilot countries. The "Gender Equitable Local Development" (GELD) project has similar objectives to ensure that local governments have the capacity to mainstream gender into their public finance management processes and to work towards more equitable implementation of the EDPRS. Within GELD, there is potential for continued collaboration with SNV and scaling up of joint activities.

#### Literature references

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