

IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE UBUDEHE PROGRAMME IN RWANDA: AN EXAMINATION OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE UBUDEHE PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed at investigating the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Ubudehe program. Ubudehe is a Rwandan social protection system of intra-community co-operation based on collective and individual actions. There is increasing recognition among many governments and donor organizations that rigorous evaluations of social protection interventions such as the Ubudehe program should feature in the social policy decision making process. However, little was known about the relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Ubudehe program. The evaluation was based on secondary data that was collected by European Union Commission in Kigali.

Results show that the Ubudehe program appears to be largely relevant and consistent with the policies of the Rwandan government for fighting poverty and developing the country's economy. Looking at the effectiveness, estimations show that at least 1.4 million people (the lowest estimation) have been direct beneficiaries of Ubudehe program. On impact, 95% of the sample confirms that their incomes had improved, within that, about 71% consider that their income had doubled and 22% consider that their income had more than tripled. Regarding the social impact, with close to 89% answers of the sample asserting a "great" and even a "very great change" in terms of social cohesion. In terms of efficiency, there were some difficulties, especially during the first phase concerning the financial management of the programme. The sustainability of proposed acquisitions of livestock is based on the system of gift and counter present.

As an overall conclusion, it can be emphasized that Ubudehe program is one of the best achievements. Ubudehe has won the prestigious UN Public Service Award due to the participation and ownership of millions of citizens and the strong support of the Authorities of Rwanda for poverty alleviation. The findings in this paper have important policy implications.

Keywords: Social security, Ubudehe, relevancy, impact, sustainability

INTRODUCTION

This paper evaluates the Ubudehe programme in Rwanda. In 2001, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in partnership with Ministry of Local Government launched the Ubudehe project. After a pilot phase in the former Butare province from 2001 to 2004, the Ubudehe project was launched countrywide. Ubudehe is a Rwandan system of intra-

community co-operation based on collective and individual actions. It is initiated and implemented by the population itself at the level of the decentralized administrative entity nearest to the recipients, i.e. the cell/villages. The name Ubudehe was chosen as a reminder that collective action and participatory development are very rooted in Rwandan ancestral culture. The aim of the Ubudehe process as it has recently been designed in Rwanda is to build on the positive aspects of this history and complement it with modern participatory techniques, which have proven their worth in community development.

Under the Ubudehe program, the communities are tasked to choose a priority community project among five competing projects. Local community members themselves identify development issues and decide on priority actions to fight poverty in their neighborhoods. A team of national master trainers develops district trainers who then train 2 persons selected by the community of each cell/village. These two persons selected by the community function as facilitators of the collective action process that moves from generating information in a visual / public process to creating an adaptive system. Cell residents are helped to take action on a problem of their choosing through institutions of their own design. The final priority selected is not always first ranking, as the authorities of the Sector or the District can consider this project as either already integrated into their own development plan (the construction of classrooms for example), or not realistic with the funds at the disposal of Ubudehe. After this process, funds of about 600,000 FRW (equivalent of 750 € in November 2009) are made available to support the identified Ubudehe collective action community project.

In addition, the community also assesses the financial situations of citizens living in villages throughout Rwanda. The community evaluates each household's or citizen's financial/asset situation and places it in one of six categories defined by a set of criteria, from the poorest category (without land, facing difficulties to have food) to the more rich people. Those categories are similar for all villages to ensure certain coherence among the territory. One poor and vulnerable household in every cell/village is given a maximum amount of 60,000 FRW (equivalent to 75 €) in financial support for a project of their own identification, with support from local advisory elders. However, the chosen poor household must have the capacities to manage a project and to go up in the scale of poverty. In return, the beneficiary is expected to pass the profit to the next person on the waiting list. The basic principle is similar to a micro-finance system, but they are managed by the community, which chooses the beneficiary and fixes the modalities of a refund.

Under the broad context of poverty reduction, the EU provided 1 Million € funding in 2002 for the implementation of a pilot phase of Ubudehe in the former Butare Province. Subsequently, the EU has funded two further phases of the Ubudehe programme (2005-2006 and 2007-2008), to a tune of 23,338,883 Euros, through its Decentralized Programme for Rural Poverty Reduction (DPRPR - 9th EDF). Action Aid has been participating in the Ubudehe programme since the early stages, through its 'Programme for the Eradication of Poverty' in Rwanda. Action Aid has also provided an expert to Ubudehe (a master trainer) and has supported the logistics of the programme from mid-2001 to April 2009. The other stakeholders in the Ubudehe programme include the Common Development Fund (CDF), Ministry of Local Government, Belgium, provincial administrators and community members. The Ubudehe social protection program emerged best among 150 countries and received the Better Management & Better Service Award in the United States in 2008.

There is increasing recognition among many governments and donor organizations that rigorous evaluations of social protection interventions such as the Ubudehe program should feature in the social policy decision making process. Impact

evaluations can provide information on whether a program measurably benefits participants, determine if it is cost-effective relative to other options, and yield insights into why a program may not deliver as intended. However, little was known about the relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Ubudehe program. This paper fills this research gap by carrying a rigorous evaluation of the Ubudehe program.

This paper is mainly based on analysis of secondary data collected by European Union Commission in Kigali in October, 2009. A review of literature and documents including the Evaluation of Ubudehe program report by the European Union Commission (2009) was also undertaken. Data was collected on 120 Community projects out of 14,837 accomplished projects during the second stage (2007-2008) and 60 selected "household" projects under the Ubudehe program. These projects were spread in all 30 Districts of Rwanda and in 2 Sectors by District, with 2 projects per Sector. In percentage shares, livestock/breeding, construction of classrooms, water, and roads/bridges projects accounted for 26%, 17%, 13% and 9 % respectively. The rest were spread among electricity, agriculture, mills, radical terraces, construction of health centres and small shops. As regards the household projects, livestock breeding, small shops, agriculture and crafts projects accounted for 45%, 29%, 19% and 3% respectively.

The major objective of this paper is to investigate the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Ubudehe program. This paper is organized as follows. The next section covers the evaluation framework and empirical literature review, the third section covers results and discussion and last chapter concludes.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Evaluation framework

Taking into account the objectives of the Ubudehe Programme, the evaluation framework has been structured around the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, as defined in the EU evaluation guidelines (European Union,2004). This framework has been used to direct the process of data analysis.

Relevance is the extent to which an intervention's objectives are pertinent to the needs, problems and issues to be addressed. It is also concerned with the extent to which the objectives of the Programme are consistent with policy identified needs and objectives. It also refers to extent to which the structure of the Programme is appropriate in comparison to the needs identified and the degree to which the Programme performs its tasks as set out in the legal framework.

Efficiency is measure of how economically resources/inputs are converted to benefits/outputs. It is also the extent to which desired effects are achieved at a reasonable cost. This also includes the management structures and the way they support a cost-effective implementation. Efficiency is also the extent to which desired effects are achieved at a reasonable cost. It also refers to the extent to which the programme management and management systems are adequate in terms of Programme planning and the extent to which the selection of projects is through a fair and transparent decision making process. In addition, it refers to the extent to which the running costs of the Agency and the Programme are reasonable and within timescales and the extent to which project monitoring tools and procedures contribute to the successful completion of projects.

Effectiveness refers to the extent to which the objectives of the programme were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance. This also includes the functioning of management structures and the way they support the organization in delivering results. It also refers to the extent to which the Programme ensures accountability. Sustainability refers to the extent to which positive effects are likely to last after an intervention has terminated. It also refers to the extent to which positive effects are likely to last after an intervention has been terminated.

Impact assesses the extent to which effects achieved correspond with the needs, problems and issues to be addressed. The impact that social protection programmes have on household welfare is analyzed in the literature using different approaches. One of the indicators used in some studies for this purpose is the value of Social Protection transfers received by the poor as a percentage of the poverty line expenditure (Baulch, et al, 2006). This ratio is described as the impact on expenditures of social protection activities. In general, an objective of social protection policy will be to raise the ‘impact on expenditures’ indicator. Examining this indicator helps to assess whether the level of transfers to protect the poor and the vulnerable is adequate and how their effectiveness could be improved. Other approaches include, simulations to establish poverty-reduction effects of social protection grants (Bhorat, 2003), experimental evaluation at the design stage to establish impacts on adult labour force participation, child mortality, agricultural productivity (Zepedo, 2006 and Gertler,2006).

Literature review

There is ample evidence of poor countries that have reduced poverty through universal social provision and from whose experiences much can be learnt. A statistical analysis of the BIG scheme in South Africa was undertaken by Bhorat (2003), to estimate the cost to the state of cash transfers to minimize the national incidence of poverty, considering the different population categories. The simulations were closely linked to the specific proposals on a BIG scheme tabled variously by the labour union movement and the Department of Welfare. The poverty-reduction effects of such a universal grant would be significant: at R 100 per month it would reduce (i) the incidence of households under the poverty line by 51%, and (ii) the mean poverty gap by 67%. The corresponding figures for a R 50 grant would be 27% and 42%; for R 200: 77% and 85%, and for R 300: 86% and 92%.

In an evaluation of Bolsa Familia, a social cash transfer programme in Brazil, the labour market participation rate of participating adults was 2.6% higher than among those not benefiting from the programme (Veras et al, 2007). Despite concerns about negative impacts on productivity, evidence from Brazil indicated that cash transfers can actually increase labour force participation. According to Adams and Kebede(2005), cash transfers increase families’ investment in agriculture, and petty trading as well as spending on food, healthcare and education, and therefore, generate income and increase demand for goods in local markets.

According to Martin (2005), BRAC, the largest development NGO in Bangladesh, has experimented with a ‘linkage model’ for the poorest over the past two decades, using transfers as a strategic entry point. These experiences led to the establishment in 2002 of a new programme Targeting the Ultra-poor (TUP) with the idea to enable them to develop new and better options for sustainable livelihoods using a combination of approaches – both promotional (e.g. asset grants, skills training) and protective (e.g. stipends, health services) – as well as addressing socio-political constraints at various levels. Early assessments of change suggest that average food intake levels of TUP participants have increased and become more

diversified. Perceived levels of food security and health status have also registered significant positive changes, and are reflected in health-seeking behavior and anthropometric improvements. TUP is seen as a local success, rather than that of an external organization. There is pride in the achievements of TUP participants, whose initial living conditions and prospects were so poor that they were routinely written off as beyond help (Martin, 2005). There is increasing evidence that this broad-based social protection programme, incorporating a social safety net, livelihood promotion, asset transfer and empowerment, can reach Bangladesh's poorest households and help them break out of long-term poverty traps (Barrientos, et al, 2005).

A study by Hyun Son (2005) assessed the impact of cash transfers on income poverty and school attendance in 15 Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries through exploring different budget scenarios and targeting strategies. The data source is household surveys, and the study is limited to estimating short-term income effects on demand for primary education. The poverty simulation results indicate that a transfer of 0.5% of GDP to all school-age children has a very small impact: poverty incidence falls by only about 1%, the poverty gap by about 2%, and the severity of poverty by about 4%. Targeting children in poor and/or rural household's results in much greater total poverty reduction as per capita transfers are higher than in universal programs.

Cash transfers have been effective in reducing the overall incidence of illness in Malawi (illness reduced by 23% among participants compared to 12.5% among nonparticipants) (Miller et al, 2008). There is strong evidence that cash transfers also combat the underlying causes of child mortality by contributing to increase in income in Malawi (Zepedo, 2006). According to Save the Children (UK)(2009), cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa resulted in improved access and greater affordability of healthcare, including increased use of preventative healthcare. In Ethiopia, transfers enabled poor farmers to farm their own land negotiate better terms on agricultural contracts (Adams and Kebede, 2005).

In South Africa, a study of the labour market impacts of the Child Support Grant and Old Age Pension found that adults living in recipient households were more likely to seek work, and more likely to find work, than people in similarly poor households that do not receive these grants (Samson, 2007). The authors of the study speculate that the explanation for this is that social grants alleviate financial constraints and give beneficiaries the resources and economic security they need to invest more in job searching - by spending cash on transport costs, etc.

According to Zepedo (2006), Mexico was the first country to introduce a nation-wide cash transfer programme, Progresa, in 1997. An experimental evaluation was introduced at the design stage, conducted by independent and renowned researchers. It provided evidence of positive impacts, boosting international recognition. One panel survey of Progresa participants in Mexico found no evidence of statistically significant changes in adult labour force participation. Instead, it emerged that some men and women used their Progresa grants to seek salaried work and shift from informal family enterprises to higher-paid formal sector employment. There is strong evidence that cash transfers also combat the underlying causes of child mortality by increasing incomes in Mexico (Zepedo,2006). In Mexico, 12% of the transfer is invested in agriculture, generating a 17.5% return on income (Gertler, 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Relevance

Ubudehe program appears to be largely relevant and consistent with the policies of the Rwandan government for fighting poverty and developing the country's economy. The exact name of the programme: "Ubudehe mu kurwanya ubukene", actually means "Ubudehe to fight Poverty". Ubudehe is relevant and consistent with the "Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme" (VUP), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP – 2002-2005), the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS - 2008-2012) and the Millennium Development Goals, which are guiding all the reform initiatives being undertaken by the government of Rwanda. In particular, Vision 2020 includes a specific objective to achieve "Rural economic transformation", while the PRSP and EDPRS identified the key priorities as rural development and agricultural transformation, as well as the need to intensify small-scale agriculture, livestock and skills development. About 100% of the questioned people consider that the selected project corresponded to one of their priorities, thus demonstrating a very high relevance of the Ubudehe programme. It can be concluded that programme and operation objectives are mainly consistent with the beneficiary's needs.

Efficiency

In terms of efficiency, there were some difficulties, especially during the first phase concerning the financial management of the programme and more generally as regards the inadequacy of EDF financial procedures to such kind of complex programme. Specific difficulties included the lack of human resources provided at the level of the CDF for a proper management and follow-up of 55,000 funding, as well as obvious gaps in the information feedback between the Sectors and the CDF, through the Districts.

Despite previous recommendations, monitoring, audit and evaluation reports have not sufficiently been taken into account in terms of the M&E of the programme and related projects. Nevertheless, there was some recent positive development on this issue, notably through the pressure of "Imihigo" regular evaluations, but also through different M&E initiatives in the field of the VUP (Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme) or inside the Common Development Fund and others.

In this context, there are noticeable improvements between the first and second phase of Ubudehe. The CDF has in fact progressively established a complex follow-up system, even if not perfect. The weak point actually remains the reporting and documentation. The degree of efficiency of the projects has been largely positive at the level of the Cells/Villages.

The case of Ubudehe shows how difficult it is for complex programmes to adapt to the financial regulations of the European Commission. This inappropriateness is also pointed out due to the fact that the financial regulations allow no sub-state control; they are not adapted to accompany a process of decentralisation. As highlighted by one of the interlocutors in CDF: "It is a real problem, because CDF is a decentralising institution while the management rules of the EDF centralize everything in CDF." It is necessary to strongly emphasize that combining specific procedures of EDF, Ubudehe and CDF do not make financial management of programme any easier. In Rwanda, the CDF cannot sign by mutual agreement above 100,000 RFW (equivalent to 120 € in current exchange rate), while the EU accepts a 5,000 € threshold for the same kind of

procedure. As an example, when it was necessary to buy something as simple as notebooks for the keeping of the registers of Ubudehe projects at the level of villages, it was necessary to follow the procedure of an invitation to tender, which lasted several months.

Nevertheless, the funds that were given to the beneficiaries were appropriately invested in the priority projects, which they defined themselves. Nearly 100 % of all villages visited by the investigators could have access to the Ubudehe bank booklets. Moreover, the control of the Ubudehe Committees linked to the strong social control exercised over the use of these funds leaves little room for manipulation in a possible misuse of funds. The investigators were even surprised to discover how much the Ubudehe committees control the management, the monitoring and the registers related to their projects. In this respect, Ubudehe records an indisputable success.

Although the European Union is the first contributor to Ubudehe as part of our sample, about 9 % come from financial contributions of the beneficiaries. All respondents (100%) confirmed that the community have respected their obligation to contribute financially. According to evaluation, nearly 55% of the contributions were allocated to electricity projects and 21.5% to water conveyance projects, thus meaning that more than 75% of the contributions made by the beneficiary communities were concentrated on two types of projects only. This strong concentration of funds, other than from the Community the European Union, are confirmed by the fact that only 22 projects out of 114 that answered the investigation, have received such a complementary support (i.e. 19%). The percentage of supplementary finance (31 %) comes from local authorities (Districts, Sectors), from ministries (Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Defense, especially for road facilities) or even from churches and NGOs (Adventist Church, Muslim funds, World Vision etc.).

The results from the question of financial participation from the household sample showed that nearly half of all households' that were questioned succeeded in contributing financially to their plan. It is interesting to compare the sums invested by households with the Ubudehe financing of 60,000 RFW/household, since 44 % of all households' that were questioned invested in addition to the equivalent of a third to two thirds of their Ubudehe funds and 22 % invested even more than that.

In Butare, where the Ubudehe pilot project took place in 2002, there were some irregularities whereby households who accepted nanny goats and then selling them before giving to those on the waiting list. Villagers searched for a more community-based approach as part of the Phase II of the programme. Ubudehe II have turned more in favour of poor people who are able to manage their donation, rather than towards the poor who are in abject poverty. This aptitude for the management of donation is also outlined in the criteria for the selection of household since Phase II.

In addition, 86% of the respondents declared that their community had participated in the implementation of their project. If the plans for donating cattle are eliminated, which require no active Community participation, it is probably close to 100 % of the villages that have participated with their working force and the recovery of materials in the realization of their plan. This collective involvement shows a high degree of ownership, which appears to be one of the strong successes of Ubudehe.

When asked whether the community projects were carried out according to time schedule, about 96% of the respondents answered positively. 83 % of plans started the same month that funds were received. This rate goes up to 96 % if we take into account the first two months. More than 31% of respondents actually answered that they were not totally satisfied with their own achievements and even 3 villages were not convinced at all on this issue. A cross-examination was carried out on the 34% unsatisfied respondents to uncover their reasons for dissatisfaction and 85% of the respondents consider the funds placed at their disposal as insufficient for reaching their Ubudehe objective. This was more likely because of their high expectations due to the scale of their needs.

In conclusion, concerning the efficiency of Ubudehe, there are heavy weaknesses in terms of management of the programme, especially as regards the financial management during its first phase and, more generally, the lack of human resources and means provided by the authorities to the CDF for a proper management and operational follow-up of 55,000 funding. There were also obvious gaps in the information chain between the field (Sectors) and the upper levels (Districts, CDF, ministries), as well as an inability to specify the real number of projects implemented at the level of the villages, a lack of impact assessments and related lessons learned and inadequate EDF financial procedures to such a complex programme.

Effectiveness

Looking at the effectiveness, estimations show that at least 1.4 million people (the lowest estimation) have been direct beneficiaries of Ubudehe, thus leading to the conclusion that probably at least 20% of the population of Rwanda has benefited from the programme including potential indirect beneficiaries into the scope. By taking into account the budget spent by the EU for Ubudehe (23,338,883 €) the investment would represent the equivalent of 16 € per final recipient.

During the two phases of Ubudehe (2005 -2006 and 2007 -2008), some 50,000 people have been trained on Ubudehe concepts and procedures, according to the CDF, which has greatly contributed to the improvement of local community skills, the capacity of self-management and the ability to acquire new skills in terms of participation, planning and management of the collective and individual initiatives.

The overall objective of empowerment of the population through strengthened collective action for a real partnership with the Government in the fight against poverty and the specific objective: to reinforce the framework of Community participation were largely achieved. Indeed, the empowerment of people and community participation has been significantly strengthened through Ubudehe training activities and learning on the ground. At the level of the villages, about 26% of respondents have attended several training courses and 95% of the trainees in the villages declare themselves satisfied with the quality and the relevance of the training sessions.

Impact

The answers to the survey were persuasive in terms of the impact perceived by the households themselves: more than 74 % of all households believed that the approach can abolish poverty in their communities; over 74 % of all households expressed that Ubudehe empowers the poor either well, very well and excellent; 86.11% believed that Ubudehe reinforced the

participation in planning, and more than 82 % indicate that Ubudehe has enhanced unified action (good, very good and excellent

Certain projects can have several impacts; for example, the radical terraces make it possible to fight against erosion, which is important in Rwanda because of strong frequent rains on steeply sloping grounds. But simultaneously they increase the agricultural productivity and place fodder at the disposal of the cattle. In a similar way, the water management and delivery projects simultaneously have an impact on the access to drinking water, the reduction of hydrous diseases and the improvement of the sanitary condition of the population, as well as the reduction of the distances to seek water. The impacts also vary depending on the type of projects. In fact, a project on cow breeding does not have the same broad impact, in terms of recipients, as the construction of a health centre. In the sample, breeding projects were observed to affect 5 to 6 households, whilst projects of health centres often impacted on over 3,000 beneficiaries.

As far as the capacity to become food secure is concerned, the impact of Ubudehe on the households of our sample is extremely significant: whilst 96.6% were not able to properly nourish their family before the project started, 89.9% of households now declare to have a fair or good capacity to respond to being food secure. Concerning the capacity to pay the school expenses of the family's children, it is worth noticing that 100% of households expressed a very low ("no" or "little") capacity to face such expenses, whilst 77.08% declare their ability to do it thanks to their Ubudehe project.

In the sample, 95% of the respondents confirm that their incomes had improved, within that, about 71% consider that their income had doubled and 22% consider that their income had more than tripled. Finally, one of the most significant answers is the fact that more than 96% estimate that they are less poor today than before the project, thus significantly confirming the statement from "Voices of Ubudehe" that this programme appreciably empowers the poor. When the beneficiary households of Ubudehe were asked how they intend to invest their assets, the most frequent answer was that they wanted to invest in cattle. However, 56% to 60% still stated that they want to pay their health insurance cover, to be able to save money and improve their dwelling.

Regarding the social impact, with close to 89% answers of the sample asserting a "great" and even a "very great change" in terms of social cohesion, this registers one of the main successes of Ubudehe in terms of social impact. It does not seem exaggerated to assert that the DPRPR, financed by the EU in Rwanda, has truly supported the national reconciliation process undertaken with conviction and determination by the government.

Ubudehe, however, cannot only be summarized through its social and economic impact. A notable cultural change has also been witnessed; that of the progressive birth in the campaign of a spirit of entrepreneurship. While learning how to prioritise their needs, in order to implement projects together, the population improves their knowledge capacity regarding their management, investment and productivity. It seems that there is an emergence of rural micro-capitalism, certainly still in the early stages, but promising for the future. All the people that were interviewed wish that today to invest, gain more, increase their standard of living and send their children to school.

In addition, unplanned and unintended changes occurred through Ubudehe, as actually noticed in the sample of villages with the creation of 4,805 temporary or more long-term jobs, through the construction of class-rooms, health centres, roads and

bridges, mills, electricity and water infrastructures, as well as the creation of radical terraces. New jobs have also been created for teachers, shepherds, employees of mills, small traders or distributors of water. Within the sample, there was creation of new activities in different fields, as an unexpected impact of Ubudehe: co-operatives, mills, water sale, small shops, new breeding and agricultural projects. Moreover, analysis has confirmed that incomes have noticeably improved at household level thanks to Ubudehe projects: about 71% of our respondents consider that their own income has doubled and 22% confirm that they have more than tripled. In addition, more than 96% of our respondents estimate they are less poor today than before the project, thus significantly confirming the statement of “Voices of Ubudehe” that this programme appreciably empowers the poor. It might only be the perception of the respondents, but it is psychologically very important.

Despite some possible exceptions, every Euro invested by Ubudehe creates a multiplier effect. The investment, however small, in terms of livestock, radical terraces, small shops, crafts, storage silos, agriculture, small road improvements or tracks, facilitate the improvement of production and trade and increase the general wealth, which is leading the development of other sectors by increasing demand.

Good governance is properly carried out at the level of the village, which is significantly due to strong local social control, which does not facilitate any attempt to bypass the programme. The village communities are incredibly close-knit, so that in addition to Ubudehe Committees for management and control, social control itself is also very significant. It is therefore, almost impossible not to manage the Ubudehe funds transparently. In conclusion, the results confirm that good governance is properly carried out at the level of the village.

Despite the various audits, monitoring and evaluations carried out since 2003 within the framework of Ubudehe or the DPRPR and underlining these important gaps in terms of follow-up-evaluation and impact studies of the programme, one should never forget that the genocide took place only 17 years ago, which has deeply disorganized the country economically as well as sociologically. Therefore, we cannot expect all the structures and tools to be in place in such a short time.

Sustainability

If Ubudehe is to become increasingly more self-sustainable, the fundamental question remains to determine whether the initial funding of the two phases were sufficient to provide the impulse for a long-term movement or if it is necessary today to envisage additional funds to amplify the action undertaken and to promote a durable Community development. By analyzing the sample with regards to the sustainability of the projects undertaken, it was confirmed that 98% of the respondents, i.e. almost all of the 300 groups surveyed, believe that the improvements acquired through Ubudehe will continue.

It is interesting to see this “entrepreneurship spirit” appearing here, which we already evoked, since nearly 57% of the respondents state that they wish to reinvest their profits realized. Savings are not the first objective, for those people who do not live in a monetary world. For these agro-stockbreeders, the true capital remains as the cattle and the ground, the money being only the means to acquire them. Nearly 47% of the households in addition, estimate that their future development is ensured, because their business was going well at the present time, whereas this does not represent in any case a certainty for the future.

But the sustainability of proposed acquisitions of livestock is also based on the system of gift and counter present ("Kugabira") established by Ubudehe, as already noted in the audit / review conducted by KPMG in 2003: « Furthermore, it was clear to the respondents that they were only initial beneficiaries in a chain event, and were expected to ensure continuation of the process. The illustration most commonly used was the passing on kids or calves once born to the next identified member of the Cellule.» "The high rate of increase by the small animals coupled with the commitment to give one animal to another family makes it feasible that the distribution of livestock among the members of the community will continue even after EU funding is exhausted."

Concerning the sustainability of construction of roads and bridges, most communities use the "umuganda", that is to say 'work in kind' that the entire population of Rwanda is obliged to provide a few hours a month, usually on the last Saturday morning each month. The roads in question are, indeed, mainly arrangements of tracks, which can be easily maintained by the villagers concerned. The health centres depend on Sectors that service them with the support of the Districts. Classrooms are either extensions of schools, or new classes. Their maintenance is the responsibility of the schools concerned. The water conveyances depend either on specialized co-operatives, or directly on the villages, which envisage in the selling price of water a supplement in preparation for maintenance. There thus does not seem to be a particular problem for the future maintenance of the whole of these infrastructures.

Agricultural projects include two main types of community projects: either crop (new or extension of existing cultures) or radical terraces. The radical terraces record impressive growth of production rates, with increases in output multiplied from two to five according to the types of production. The productivity of these terraces should still increase in the future, thus ensuring the sustainability of the investments carried out. The 534 tontines initiated throughout the country during the second phase of Ubudehe, for example, present an interesting case. By placing all or part of the funds in a tontine and asking the villagers to add their contributions, efficient microcredit structures were developed. Final acceptance of projects for funding is made by members of the tontine and beneficiaries pay back at an interest rate defined by the same members. Repayment of principal and interest increases steadily the amount of the tontine for new potential investments. The state also encourages rural people to develop their capital by tontines or co-operatives so as to continue the Ubudehe actions partly by their own means.

All these strategies for achieving sustainability are benefitting from the very high degree of ownership by the beneficiaries, because the great force of Ubudehe is precisely to be rooted in the Rwandan community. The system is based on deep and secular cultural roots, which enable it to be in phase with the local culture. There is not any doubt that micro projects thus conceived on pre-existent cultural compost have a real impact on the fight against poverty. As such, we cannot presume that the Ubudehe model could be easily exported as such.

Finally, despite previous recommendations, monitoring, audit and evaluation reports have not sufficiently been taken into account, there had been some recent evolution in terms of the M&E of the programme and its related projects; notably through the pressures of "Imihigo's" regular evaluations, but also due to the different M&E initiatives that were utilized in the field of the VUP (Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme) and also inside the Common Development Fund.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed at investigating the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Ubudehe program. There is increasing recognition among many governments and donor organizations that rigorous evaluations of social protection interventions such as the Ubudehe program should feature in the social policy decision making process. However, little was known about the relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Ubudehe program. The evaluation was based on secondary data that was collected by European Union Commission in Kigali.

Results show that the Ubudehe program appears to be largely relevant and consistent with the policies of the Rwandan government for fighting poverty and developing the country's economy. In terms of efficiency, there were some difficulties, especially during the first phase concerning the financial management of the programme and more generally as regards the inadequacy of EDF financial procedures to such kind of complex programme.

Looking at the effectiveness, estimations show that at least 1.4 million people (the lowest estimation) have been direct beneficiaries of Ubudehe. The Ubudehe objectives can be considered as widely achieved in terms of the empowerment of people and community participation, with a very high feeling of ownership.

On impact, 95% of the sample confirms that their incomes had improved, within that, about 71% consider that their income had doubled and 22% consider that their income had more than tripled. In addition, unplanned and unintended changes occurred through Ubudehe, as actually noticed in the sample of villages with the creation of 4,805 temporary or more long-term jobs, through the construction of class-rooms, health centres, roads and bridges, mills, electricity and water infrastructures, as well as the creation of radical terraces. The radical terraces make it possible to fight against erosion, which is important in Rwanda because of strong frequent rains on steeply sloping grounds. A notable cultural change has also been witnessed; that of the progressive birth in the campaign of a spirit of entrepreneurship. Regarding the social impact, with close to 89% answers of the sample asserting a "great" and even a "very great change" in terms of social cohesion.

The sustainability of proposed acquisitions of livestock is based on the system of gift and counter present ("Kugabira"). In addition, 98% of the respondents, i.e. almost all of the 300 groups surveyed, believe that the improvements acquired through Ubudehe will continue. The radical terraces record impressive growth of production rates, with increases in output multiplied from two to five according to the types of production. Concerning the sustainability of construction of roads and bridges, most communities use the "umuganda", that is to say 'work in kind' that the entire population of Rwanda is obliged to provide a few hours a month, usually on the last Saturday morning each month.

As an overall conclusion, it can be emphasized that Ubudehe is one of the best achievements. Ubudehe has won the prestigious UN Public Service Award due to the participation and ownership of millions of citizens and the strong support of the Authorities of Rwanda for poverty alleviation. As such, the prize that was awarded seems totally justified. This success was no coincidence, but the result of work, often unique, made by all project stakeholders, led by the Rwandan government more especially President Paul Kagame and the constant support provided by the European Union, Action Aid and other donors who participated in the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It remains crucial to review and enhance the whole mechanism of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment of Ubudehe and all related programmes. This must include the establishment of an appropriate database in order to best inform the government, all line and sectoral Ministries and all the Districts on the exact development and impact of poverty reduction programmes and projects implemented in the field. The current on-going work for establishing the VUP M&E system could be the basis for this mechanism.

Any suitable monitoring and evaluation system at national and district levels should be designed jointly with other donors, so that all projects and budget supports dedicated to poverty reduction are co-ordinated efficiently. Now is the right time to start mapping all major existing M&E systems in Rwanda, in order to seek their co-ordination. This would assist in more effective data collection and aggregation. This task could be completed under the umbrella of the NDIS, which is already working on this important issue.

Appropriate mechanisms for planning and M&E are also urgently required at sectoral ministries and Districts levels. Until an effective M&E system is established at the district level, they could ask their villages to update their social map once a year. This information, summarized to the level of sectors could be sent to districts to monitor the changes recorded in the field in terms of poverty trends, housing or new infrastructure.

There is need to increase the contributions of the local communities and government so that eventually this successful Ubudehe program is sustained without foreign support. In addition, there is need to increase the number of household beneficiaries, compared to the current system where only one household benefits from the revolving fund in each village. The first beneficiary almost becomes like a lottery winner and this may create social tensions. Even if it means starting with chicken but a large number of poor people benefit in the process, would be much better than the current system.

Special efforts should possibly be undertaken by the financial partners under the current EDPRS period in terms of electrification and provision of computers at least at the level of the Sectors' headquarters, as no efficient decentralization system could be established without decent possibilities of information flow.

Finally, a reform of the CDF seems to be necessary if it is expected to pursue its tasks, which will provide the organization with all the required resources and internal structures to complete its activities that are related to the co-ordination and development of the decentralized Districts. Restructuring of the CDF, which has recently been approved by the Senate, may be a step in the right direction, if it is also approved at the level of the government.

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