



# Developing Capacity for Joint Action Development Forums in Rwanda

Good governance is recognized as critical for achieving successful development in Rwanda and thus, serious efforts within different governance domains have been undertaken (see [www.info.worldbank.org/governance](http://www.info.worldbank.org/governance) and [www.moibrahimfoundation.org](http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org)).

In 2008 Rwanda initiated a “home grown”, action-oriented set of governance indicators and a monitoring system: THE JOINT GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT ([www.minaloc.gov.rw](http://www.minaloc.gov.rw)). This governance landmark document identifies among other things the need to further improve dialogue and collaboration between civil society and the private and public sectors for improved service delivery and economic development, so as to bring development closer to the people. A JOINT ACTION DEVELOPMENT FORUM (JADF) strengthening program was developed to respond to this need.

## ➤ Accountable service provision

The JOINT ACTION FORUM —as part of the ongoing decentralization process— is a consultative platform used for the dissemination of information, promoting cooperation between the private sector, civil society and the public sector in the development and social welfare of the population. It aims to coordinate the activities of all development actors so as to enhance efficiency in these development efforts and avoid redundant efforts. It can be an effective tool for any sector or value chain wanting to improve collaborative, mutually beneficial action.

The JADF is considered to be a key platform for assisting in the implementation of effective decentralisation, consistent with the principles and objectives of the GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA (GoR), as outlined in the Decentralisation policy, the DECENTRALISATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (DIP), and the ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY (EDPRS).

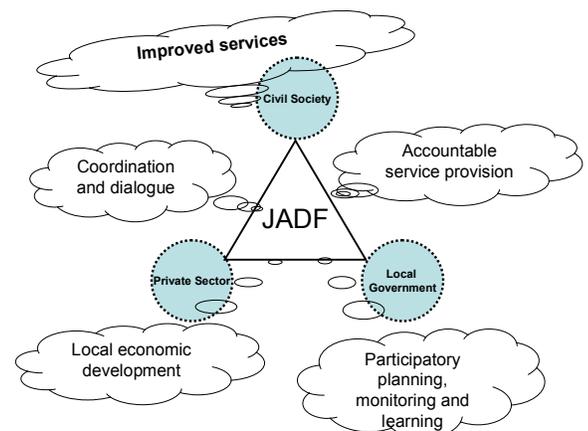
Rwanda scores low on *Accountability and Voice*, which are core principles for effective management of public affairs. The JADFs can contribute to improving Rwanda’s performance of these principles. JADF also treats issues such as *gender equity*, *social inclusion* of marginalised groups and *environmental sustainability*.

The NATIONAL DECENTRALIZATION IMPLEMENTATION SECRETARIAT (NDIS) is a semi-autonomous institution under the tutelage of the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC). In January 2010 the (NDIS) initiated the implementation of a program to strengthen the JOINT ACTION DEVELOPMENT FORUM (JADF). The JADF strengthening program is prepared by and will be implemented using capacity development support from the RWANDESE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES (RALGA) and the NETHERLANDS DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (SNV). The program is financially supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

## ➤ Capacity development

Various organisations have supported the set up and the functioning of the JADF. Notably the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) has been involved in pilot experiences with multi-actor forums at Provincial level from as early as 2001. Over time SNV developed both the methodology and guidelines on how to set up and support district level JADFs.

In 2007, the GoR enacted a Ministerial Instruction concerning the JADF. While supporting the implementation, development partners as well as the district authorities felt the need for a more systematic approach to develop capacity of the JADFs in all 30 districts and 416 sectors of Rwanda. This resulted in the preparation of the JOINT ACTION DEVELOPMENT Strengthening Program.



The goal of the program is to improve and create sustainable economic development, service delivery and domestic accountability in local communities.

### Anticipated outcomes:

1. Enabling environment and improved communications between field and policy levels
2. Local organisations are voicing the needs of their members and promote active citizenship
3. Responsible service providers and Local Governments are accountable to the public
4. Quality facilitation and management of the JADF space working towards tangible results in local development and improved service provision

Up to now, SNV has supported 10 districts in the organizing of JADFs. The support consisted of training the JADF committees on ministerial instruction, facilitating meetings in supporting the drafting of action plans and internal regulations.

#### Success factors:

- Confident, knowledgeable leaders with facilitative skills who are open to participation.
- The JADF functions better where it is actively supported by civil society organizations or the private sector.
- Coordination around tangible subjects such as water and sanitation or economic development (value chains) responding to concrete interests of groups and citizens.
- Financial and professional capacity development support.
- The dissemination of the JADF concept and the subsequent awareness by the public of its application and usefulness.

From: SNV Rwanda. *Joint Action Development Forums in Rwanda: Experiences and Lessons learned.*

### ➤ Results

In the run up to the preparation of the JADF strengthening program, SNV documented the experiences of the JADF in Rwanda from 2001 to 2009.

The main, positive effects attributed to the JADF are:

- Increased dialogue and exchange between development actors.
- Contributed to more participative planning and monitoring of the district.
- Helped to identify and overcome barriers in specific development challenges such as: implementation of national education policy, modernization of a market place, changing consultancy times for children in a local hospital and renegotiating the credit lines offered by a rural bank.

### ➤ Challenges and perspectives

The new program will increase the scale of the JOINT ACTION DEVELOPMENT FORUM principle to all the districts and to the technical sub-commissions such as health, economic development (agriculture), water and sanitation as well as education. The next three years will be used to further support the JADF in becoming a practical and effective instrument for local development, with full participation of the civil society and private sector.

The JADF study concludes that: *“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 freely voice their needs and enter into constructive dialogue with 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 support to enable local organizations to play their role. However to honour the decentralization spirit, the districts and sectors should have sufficient room to be able experiment, each in their own way, with the JADF and decide for themselves the best way to handle it. Learning in competition with others and a natural selection will further refine the JADF model”*



*The satisfaction to participate and jointly promote development.*

#### More information:

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