



# Citizen engagement in public policy in Rwanda

20 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PUBLIC POLICY INFORMATION,  
MONITORING AND ADVOCACY (PPIMA) PROJECT

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2009-2019

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20 Lessons Learnt from the Public Policy Information,  
Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) Project



Norwegian People's Aid



Embassy of Sweden  
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### PPIMA

The Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project is a civil society support project aimed at strengthening the voice of Rwandan civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens in public policy affairs.

# Telling the **PPIMA** **STORY**



FOREWORD | RÓISÍN DEVALE - NPA COUNTRY DIRECTOR

As Rwanda has changed and progressed over these past 10 years, PPIMA has adapted and progressed with it. From an early focus on building basic knowledge among civil society and communities about human rights, civic participation and advocacy, the project has progressed to a point now in 2019 where citizens are substantially influencing local government planning and decision making, civil society organisations are skilled advocates and contributors to policy development and monitoring, and government and service providers are positively engaging with this important contribution. PPIMA partners contributed to the development of the National Strategy for Transformation and will play a very important role in its realisation.

Throughout that time, we have been learning along the way. In the current phase, NPA and partners have invested time in trying to capture that: reflecting on what works and what is challenging, where we can improve, and what we need to change. We have looked internally at our partnerships, our systems and processes, and within our programme, at the community scorecard, at AJICs, at partners' advocacy and collaborative action. In the context of already bulging work plans and the desire to relate to emerging policy opportunities for civil society engagement, this has not always been very easy. Learning is not neat and tidy or easy to contain. But notwithstanding the

challenge of finding time to do it, perhaps our greatest lesson has been that a purposeful effort to reflect and learn has been richly rewarding.

This PPIMA story belongs to many people. To the Rwandan civil society organisations and the hundreds of community volunteers that have been the engine of the project. To the tens of thousands of women and men that have participated so vigorously from community up to national level to advocate for citizen priorities, playing their part to make national policies and service delivery work better. To the many dedicated public servants from the Government of Rwanda, from local leaders and councillors up to the Mayors of 8 Districts, and to the Rwanda Governance Board who have provided the backbone of guidance and partnership throughout the project lifetime.

PPIMA has only been possible because of the support provided by the Governments of Sweden and the United Kingdom. Their investment in strengthening local civil society to support citizen engagement in local governance, promote human rights and contribute to national policy formulation has made a lasting contribution to the democratic development of Rwanda that will sustain long after PPIMA ends.

Our very sincere thanks go to every single one of these contributors to the PPIMA story.



# Empowered Citizenry & ACCOUNTABLE LEADERS

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project is a civil society support project aimed at strengthening the engagement of Rwandan civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens in public policy affairs.

PPIMA began in 2009 and there have been three main phases: PPIMA I (2010-2013), PPIMA II (2013-2016), PPIMA III (2016-2019). Coordinated by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), PPIMA III is implemented by 15 Rwandan CSOs and is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and UK Aid through the Department for International Development (DFID).

Since it began, PPIMA has sought to support the participation of Rwandan citizens in public policy, in holding decision-makers to account, and in fulfilling their own development role. It acts in harmony with the national objectives set out in the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) and the National Strategy for Transformation (NST). PPIMA works at both the national and the district level, and by PPIMA III was operational in 8 of Rwanda's 30 Districts: Gatsibo and Nyagatare in Eastern Province; Gakenke and Burera in Northern Province; Ngororero and Nyabihu in Western Province; and Nyaruguru and Nyamagabe in Southern Province.

Under each phase of PPIMA, the partners have set themselves specific goals. PPIMA I focused on building the capacity of CSOs to engage in policy influencing

at national level, and introducing tools to foster the participation of citizens in decision-making on services. PPIMA II consolidated the gains of PPIMA I, empowering citizens to share their views on local and national policy priorities and to contribute to budget processes through innovations such as the Community Score Card (CSC), District Dialogue Forums, National Policy Dialogues, Radio Call-Ins, Anti-Corruption and Justice Information Centres (AJICs) and Access to Legal Aid Centres (ALACs), Gender Budget Statements, Citizens' Alternative Budget, Rwanda Bribery Index, as well as carrying out a range of research studies and awareness-raising campaigns.

By the end of PPIMA II, there was a growing appetite amongst citizens, local leaders and national authorities for the evidence emerging from PPIMA activities to feed more into planning processes from local through to national levels. Furthermore, there was demand for the PPIMA activities that encourage citizen participation to become sustainable beyond the lifetime of a donor-funded intervention and to become more integrated into existing governance mechanisms.

PPIMA III therefore had a dual focus. Firstly it aimed to expand the reach of the Community Score Card and to pilot ways to integrate it into local governance and planning structures. Secondly, it sought to build stronger coalitions amongst CSOs to make use of evidence for effective advocacy at national and district levels, and to analyse the responsiveness of leaders.



## 2019 PPIMA PARTNERS

- Association pour le Développement Intégré (ADI-Terimbere):** Focuses on agricultural production, the environment, gender equality, and good governance, health and education.
- Association pour le Développement de Nyabimata (Adenya):** Promotes rural development by helping people improve their living conditions.
- Association de la Jeunesse pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme (AJPRODHO):** Empowers youth to promote human rights through advocacy, research, networking and coalition building.
- Community of Potters in Rwanda (COPORWA):** Strengthens the capacity of the Batwa to actively participate in the country's social, economic and political affairs.
- Federation of Leagues and Associations for the Defence of Human Rights in Rwanda (CLADHO):** Protects and promotes human rights. Monitors and conducts research on public policy issues.
- Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD):** Contributes to the respect and promotion of the rights of individuals and groups. Engages in public interest litigation.
- Health Development Initiative (HDI):** Strives to improve quality and accessibility of health care for all Rwandans through advocacy, education, and training.
- IMBARAGA Organization:** Defends and safeguards farmers' interests and promotes their socio-economic rights.

## FORMER PARTNERS

- Association Pour le Développement et la Transformation Sociale (ADTS)
- Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base (CCOAI)

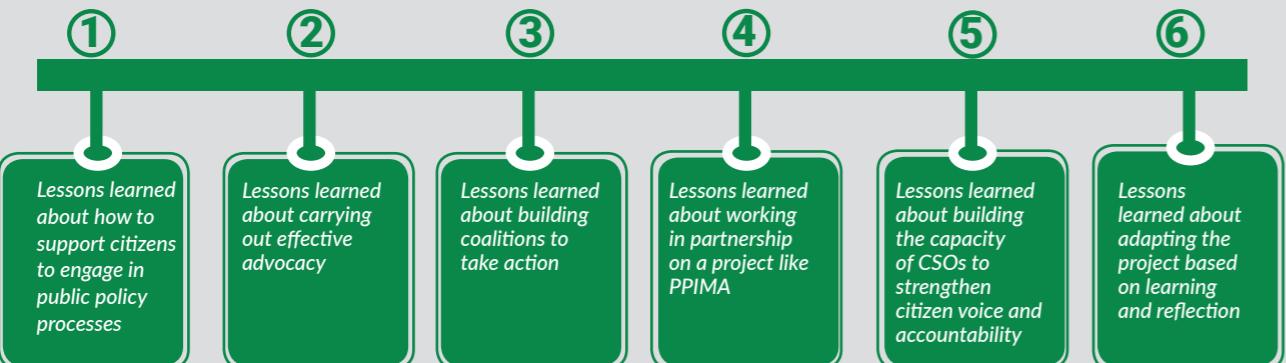
# Overview

## SHARING LESSONS LEARNED

Over almost 10 years, PPIMA has grown, evolved and adapted. That adaptation comes from learning. Learning takes many forms. It can come from good experiences and bad ones. It can come from a formal process, for example when an external evaluation, research study or feedback from decision-makers recommends that changes are made based on evidence. It can come from informal reflection, when those deeply involved in a programme come up with new ideas based on their analysis of good or poor practice. And it can happen without you even realising it, in the small tweaks made to everyday activities based on lived experience.

Sometimes it is only when you look back far enough that you can see the lessons that have been learned.

The following pages capture 20 key lessons under six headings:



Some of these lessons are more internal to the project, but most have broader resonance. By building on these lessons, we hope that PPIMA partners, other CSOs, citizen representatives, government institutions, local

This study set out to analyse the story of PPIMA so far, to consider the positive and negative lessons that have led to changes in the programme over the past 10 years. We spoke with current and former partners and staff, with government representatives and funders, and with external evaluators and governance experts. We reviewed the major programme documents and studies, including many internal documents and memos from meetings that captured knowledge and reflections in many different ways. Key documents that capture the PPIMA story can be found at the end.

Our purpose was not to identify and promote the achievements of PPIMA, but to critically reflect on the programme's approach and to examine how learning has impacted on its evolution.

Community Score Card was a good forum and platform to engage citizens and give power to citizens. They are able to provide views and to contribute in terms of planning; to have courage to hold leaders accountable. Now that the CSC seems to be being incorporated into cell assemblies it is not duplication and is not parallel. It is very pertinent and very good.

- DR FELICIEN USENGUMUKIZA  
Rwanda Governance Board  
May 2019

In PPIMA I we had to drag information out from community people – they were so shy, so unwilling to talk. This time [PPIMA III] they wouldn't keep quiet! The transformation of where communities were in PPIMA I and where this stood in PPIMA III, that was amazing, that was a very dramatic change and very pleasing.

- EXTERNAL EVALUATOR FOR PPIMA I & PPIMA III  
May 2019

Overall, the PPIMA is a hugely successful project in Rwanda, as demonstrated by its many positive results and the ringing endorsement of local and national stakeholders. The project has proved itself in many ways to be a learning, flexible and adaptive project, particularly in terms of its adaptation of the CSC model. Given its successes and the scope for expansion and further reinforcement of sustainability, the arguments for continuing into a new phase are very strong.

- PPIMA III MIDTERM REVIEW  
JUNE 2018

This programme is one of few that really tackles poverty through the power of voice... Today PPIMA has legitimacy and good results... But I know that when we started 9 years ago, Sida and NPA took a risk on how to manage the programme. So, the results we now harvest are from many years... Lesson learned in Rwanda is that when you have a programme, it takes a long time to gain trust and legitimacy. I am happy that we have had the patience.

- SARA HAGLUND  
Sida - May 2019



# ENABLING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Supporting citizens to engage in public policy processes has been the primary objective of PPIMA since the start. But what have PPIMA partners and stakeholders learned over the years about how to do this well in the Rwandan context? We identified five key lessons:

- Using a range of tools to help build the confidence of citizens to engage
- Nurturing champions of citizen voice
- Creating demand among decision-makers through demonstrating the value to them of citizen participation
- Building trust among leaders and citizens in order to enhance the legitimacy and credibility of civil society
- Investing in the long-term process of changing mind-sets and perceptions

These lessons are inter-related, and combining these approaches has enabled PPIMA to make progress towards achieving its goal.

## LESSON 1

### BUILDING THE CONFIDENCE OF CITIZENS TO ENGAGE

It might seem obvious, but PPIMA partners have had to learn how to give citizens the confidence not just to participate in public policy processes, but to **actively** participate and to push for their concerns to be heard and addressed. It takes time and effort to build up confidence, so identifying appropriate approaches is crucial.

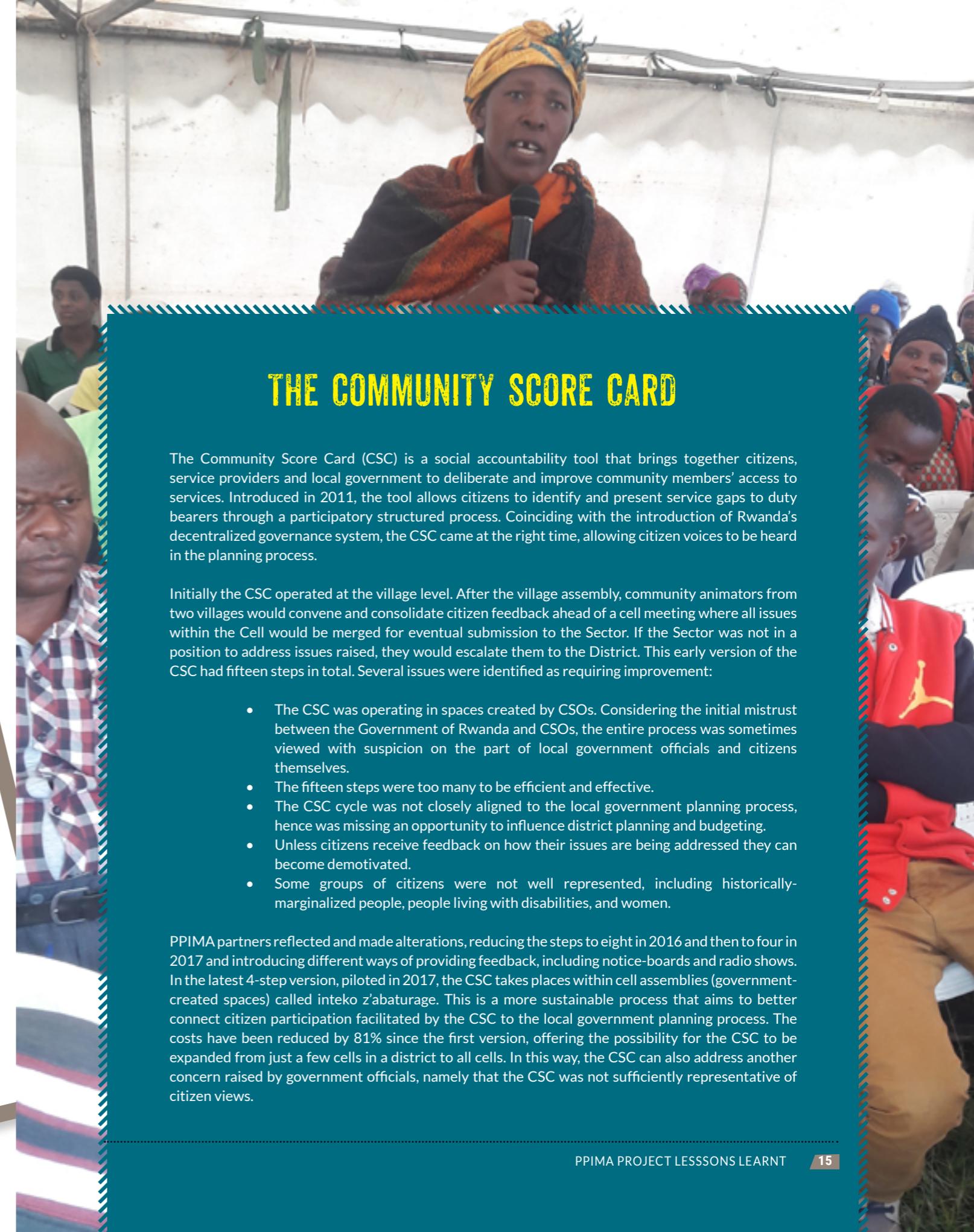
PPIMA partners have developed a range of methods. The most prominent tool has been the Community Score Card.

Public dialogues and media spaces have also given citizens the opportunity to speak up, and many have taken that opportunity. For example, when CLADHO joined PPIMA in 2010 it was already starting to do research on budget and socio-economic rights. But the idea of citizens participating in budget discussions was very new for Rwanda. PPIMA enabled CLADHO to wake up Rwandan citizens to the concept of contributing their ideas on the budget. This required going beyond high-level research and production of documents to creating spaces for citizens to debate the budget at the community level. Since then, due to the work of several PPIMA partners, participation in planning and budgeting processes in PPIMA districts has improved.

In 2013, Pax Press was brought into the PPIMA project, creating new opportunities for citizens to use media channels, such as live and recorded radio talk shows and community debates, to express their views and to hold leaders to account. This appears to have amplified citizen's voice and emboldened them to speak out. It brought dynamism into the programme and stirred debated on hitherto sensitive issues, such as social protection programmes like Ubudehe, human rights, abortion, corruption, and land rights.

*Initially citizens lacked confidence to talk to leaders. I remember in 2010 an old woman standing up in a meeting and saying 'I'm going to say it all [issues with fertilisers] even if it means dying' but now people don't fear to raise issues affecting them.*

— PARTNER TESTIMONY  
Nyaruguru,  
May 2019



## THE COMMUNITY SCORE CARD

The Community Score Card (CSC) is a social accountability tool that brings together citizens, service providers and local government to deliberate and improve community members' access to services. Introduced in 2011, the tool allows citizens to identify and present service gaps to duty bearers through a participatory structured process. Coinciding with the introduction of Rwanda's decentralized governance system, the CSC came at the right time, allowing citizen voices to be heard in the planning process.

Initially the CSC operated at the village level. After the village assembly, community animators from two villages would convene and consolidate citizen feedback ahead of a cell meeting where all issues within the Cell would be merged for eventual submission to the Sector. If the Sector was not in a position to address issues raised, they would escalate them to the District. This early version of the CSC had fifteen steps in total. Several issues were identified as requiring improvement:

- The CSC was operating in spaces created by CSOs. Considering the initial mistrust between the Government of Rwanda and CSOs, the entire process was sometimes viewed with suspicion on the part of local government officials and citizens themselves.
- The fifteen steps were too many to be efficient and effective.
- The CSC cycle was not closely aligned to the local government planning process, hence was missing an opportunity to influence district planning and budgeting.
- Unless citizens receive feedback on how their issues are being addressed they can become demotivated.
- Some groups of citizens were not well represented, including historically-marginalized people, people living with disabilities, and women.

PPIMA partners reflected and made alterations, reducing the steps to eight in 2016 and then to four in 2017 and introducing different ways of providing feedback, including notice-boards and radio shows. In the latest 4-step version, piloted in 2017, the CSC takes place within cell assemblies (government-created spaces) called inteko z'abaturage. This is a more sustainable process that aims to better connect citizen participation facilitated by the CSC to the local government planning process. The costs have been reduced by 81% since the first version, offering the possibility for the CSC to be expanded from just a few cells in a district to all cells. In this way, the CSC can also address another concern raised by government officials, namely that the CSC was not sufficiently representative of citizen views.

## THE COMMUNITY SCORE CARD

This journey so far has produced valuable lessons :

**SIMPLIFYING THE CSC PROCESS.** Each iteration represented an improvement on the previous version. The value of patience and being bold was underscored.

**INTEGRATING CSC FEEDBACK INTO THE DISTRICT PLANNING PROCESS.** The programme saw an opening in the Imihigo planning process and seized it. Many Districts are now using the CSC as an integral element in the districts' planning process. This has also helped to gain traction with district leadership. A further step is to build greater engagement with the Joint Action Development Forums (JADF) which have the mandate to ensure citizen participation in local development.

**ELEVATING ISSUES FROM THE LOCAL TO THE NATIONAL LEVEL.** Some issues cannot be resolved at the district level, but require attention at the national level. CSOs operating at the national level can help with lobbying for such issues to be addressed using tools such as the RCSP thematic working groups, national radio debates, and a database for tracking issues.

**BUILDING CAPACITY OF LOCAL OFFICIALS.** PPIMA investment in the training of local councillors,

provision of information and guidance on laws and the planning process, as well as enabling peer learning between districts has fostered uptake and follow-up by local leaders. Most importantly, the training was a joint venture between PPIMA and the Local Governance Institute (LGI), enabling LGI to identify capacity gaps.

**REACHING THE MARGINALISED.** The programme brought in additional partners to help with reaching and addressing the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups. Going forward, this will require more focused attention, particularly as cell assemblies are more inaccessible for some groups than the original village meetings.

**PAUSING & REFLECTING.** PPIMA partners realized that they were in uncharted territory and needed to reflect on how the CSC was working. Through research and routine monitoring data, they analysed and improved the CSC. This needs to continue, particularly as CSOs change their role from actively implementing the CSC to facilitating government and monitoring the results.



... initially, service providers sadly perceived the CSC as a citizens' policing tool, while citizens perceived it as a tool of holding government officials accountable for public service delivery while ignoring their own responsibilities and participation in the implementation of public policy.

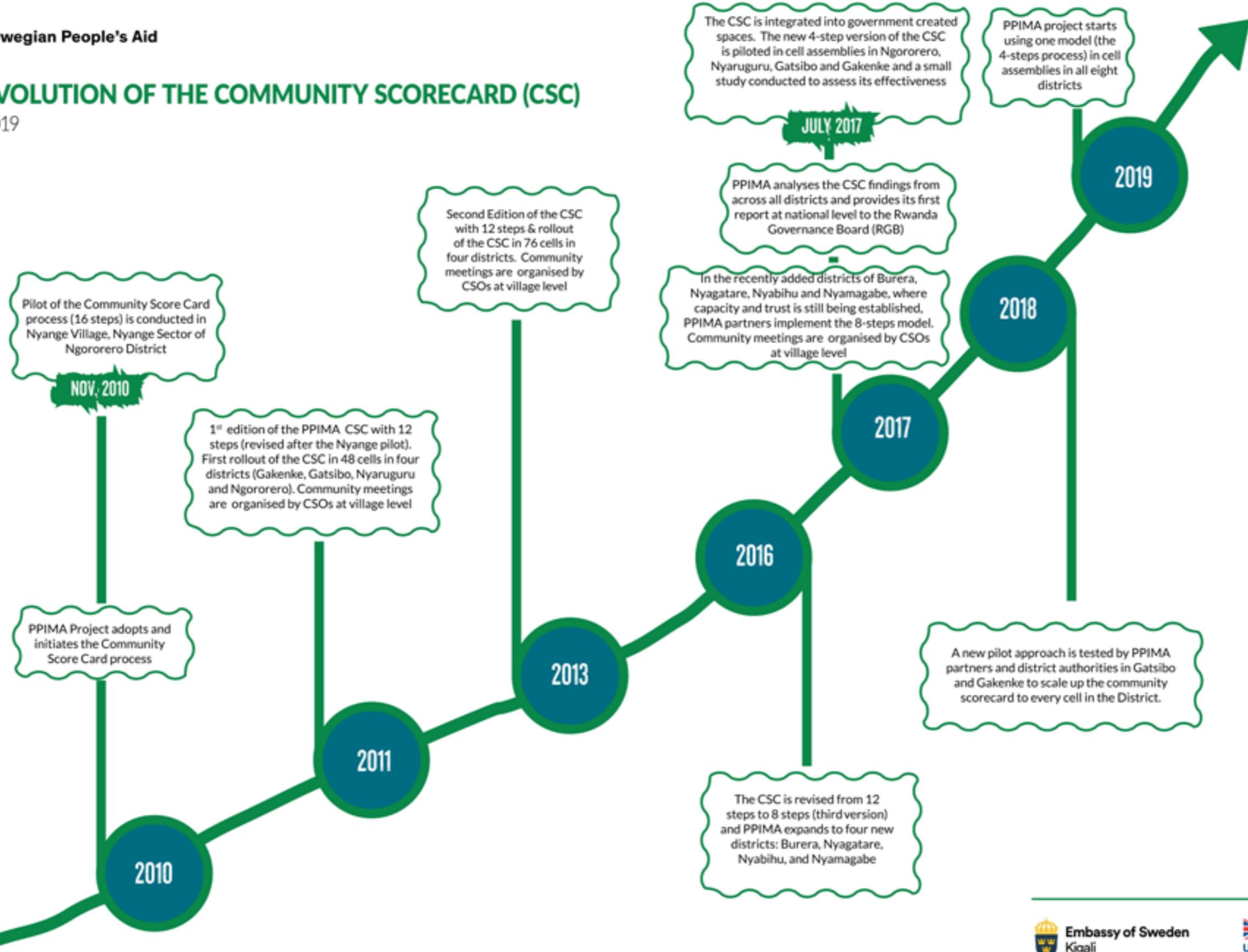
- PETER TURYAHIKAYO  
Rwanda Women's Network  
(May 2015)

GFPs interviewed during research in Gatsibo district in 2019 highlighted how the confidence of citizens to express their ideas had grown, and how the attendance of citizens in cells assemblies had also expanded: "Before leaders were the only ones to provide ideas about activities that will take place but now citizens understand their roles and intervene to share ideas so that their country can be developed; that's why the attendance increased."

- GFP, Rugarama Sector,  
May 2019

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE COMMUNITY SCORECARD (CSC)

2010-2019



## LESSON 2

### NURTURING CHAMPIONS OF CITIZEN VOICE

Over the course of the PPIMA project, we can see that clear 'champions' have emerged who are enthusiastic and motivated to ensure that the voice of citizens is heard in public policy processes. We can identify champions among voluntary Governance Focal Persons (GFPs), cell and sector councillors, technical staff within district authorities, paralegals and mayors.

The GFPs in particular stand out at the local level. In the early phases of PPIMA these people were facilitators drawn from local communities, who were financially supported by the PPIMA CSOs to help implement the Community Score Card. However, partners learned that this was not a sustainable approach. So more recently GFPs have carried out this function as volunteers. Some cell local councillors have also become GFPs which helps further with integration of the system. The capacities and confidence of these people is growing, and they are becoming valuable intermediaries in their communities.

We have also seen mayors from the districts where PPIMA has been operating for some time becoming enthusiastic advocates for the CSC at national level and among other district authorities. They have really taken ownership of the process. For example, the Mayor of Gatsibo recently took responsibility for explaining the benefits of using CSC methodology in local Imihigo planning processes at a Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) meeting in Gatsibo district and at a peer learning workshop of JADF partners in Eastern Province.

Nurturing such people therefore represents an important lesson from PPIMA in order to foster acceptance of PPIMA activities, find solutions for sustainability, and to replicate activities for impact at scale. Cascading capacity building to new actors and facilitating peer-to-peer learning are two approaches that are proving useful.



*I seldom attend meetings organised by CSOs delivering the so called 'tangible' things' but I have never missed PPIMA meeting. The programme helps us to avoid prescribing wrong solutions.*

- FRANCOIS HABITEGEKO  
Mayor / Nyaruguru  
District  
May 2019

“

*Before the CSC, we would prioritise schools for example without any evidence that this is what the citizens wanted. ...The score card helps us to comply with MINALOC and Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning participatory planning guidelines.*

- NDAYAMBAJE  
GODEFROID  
Mayor / Ngororero District  
May 2019

## LESSON 3

### CREATING DEMAND FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

One obvious way to nurture champions, particularly among leaders and decision-makers, is to show them how the expansion of citizen participation can help them to meet their performance targets on governance. Through persistence and perseverance PPIMA partners are demonstrating the value of their tools and approaches. This is particularly evident from the CSC process. As PPIMA has progressed, many partners have been overwhelmed by what they have described as the 'unexpected enthusiasm' from leaders who were quite hostile towards them at the start. Many local leaders are now asking for the CSC to be rolled out more widely in their areas, as it can help them to hit the targets imposed on them from the national level.

A lesson for CSOs in generating demand was to come at it from two directions: on the one hand by working actively to motivate district leaders; and on the other hand by making the case at the national level. Getting endorsement from the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) was particularly important. A key moment came when PPIMA partners, the RGB and some district leaders came together for a National Policy Dialogue in April 2018. This focused on sharing evidence on both the Citizen Report Card and the Community Score Card and their synergies. Evidence was presented that suggested a possible link between the CSC and district performance. The Policy Dialogue resulted in the RGB recommending the scale-up of the CSC across the country.

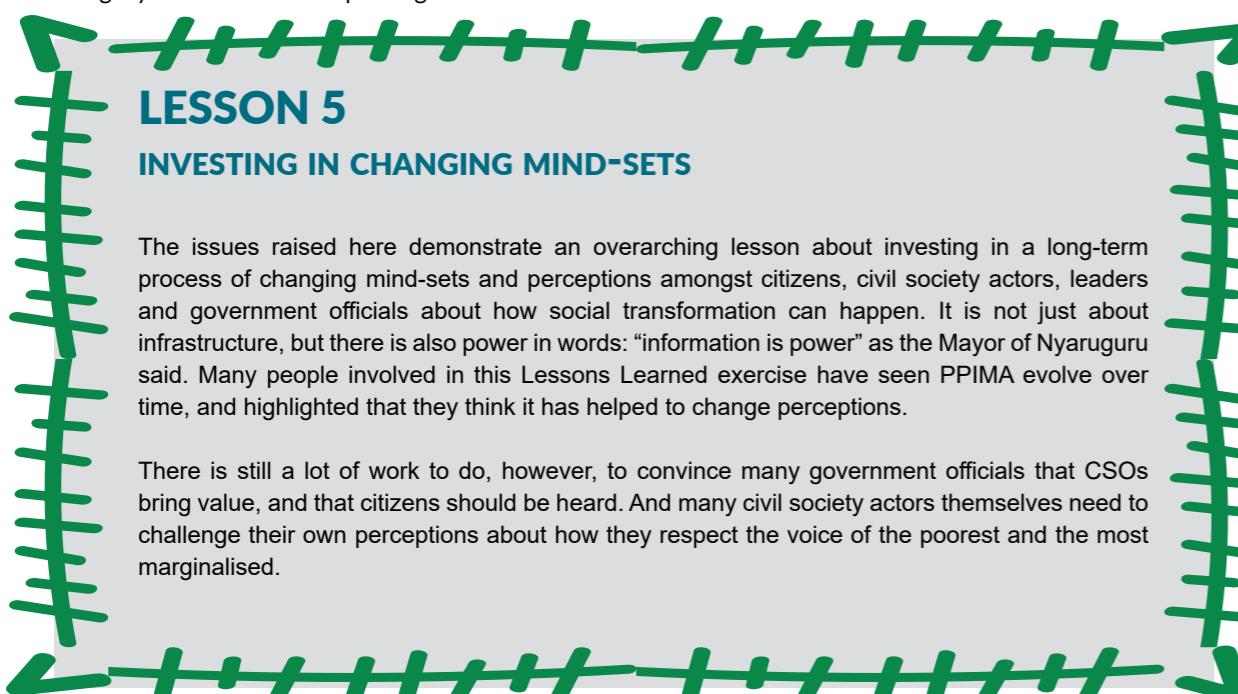
## LESSON 4

### BUILDING TRUST IN CIVIL SOCIETY

The interest in PPIMA activities by leaders is also a sign of growing trust in the CSOs, as well as a recognition of their legitimacy and credibility as facilitators of citizen voice. The long-term perspective of PPIMA shows how this credibility has evolved. Nearly every PPIMA partner who was involved in PPIMA I spoke of the atmosphere of distrust in them and in civil society more broadly when PPIMA started. No value was placed on CSOs that were not offering tangible development interventions, so CSOs working on human rights, citizen voice, and policy processes were not regarded as contributing positively towards national development efforts. This hostility existed at both district and national level. The change in attitude between PPIMA I and PPIMA III in this regard is significant.

One mechanism that has facilitated this growing relationship of trust has been the formalization of relationships between government and CSOs. Some PPIMA partners have entered into or are developing MoUs with different ministries at national levels, or have signed agreements with districts.

Going forward, however, CSOs do need to think carefully about how they maintain their independence and integrity in their relationship with government.



## LESSON 5

### INVESTING IN CHANGING MIND-SETS

The issues raised here demonstrate an overarching lesson about investing in a long-term process of changing mind-sets and perceptions amongst citizens, civil society actors, leaders and government officials about how social transformation can happen. It is not just about infrastructure, but there is also power in words: “information is power” as the Mayor of Nyaruguru said. Many people involved in this Lessons Learned exercise have seen PPIMA evolve over time, and highlighted that they think it has helped to change perceptions.

There is still a lot of work to do, however, to convince many government officials that CSOs bring value, and that citizens should be heard. And many civil society actors themselves need to challenge their own perceptions about how they respect the voice of the poorest and the most marginalised.

“

*In the beginning some leaders thought PPIMA was there to cause trouble; but as we grew to understand its objectives, we realized that it is there to help us do our work better and interact with citizens.*

- Gakenke Sector Civil Status Officer  
May 2019

“

*The government's perception has changed from where they see civil society as opponents of the government to now seeing them as partners.*

- PPIMA Partner  
May 2019



“

*What is often not captured is the changed mindset that has become prevalent amongst PPIMA target citizens... people show a high level of understanding of rights and responsibilities. There are also numerous initiatives which can be identified where citizens have not only discussed needs and problems, but have got together to resolve them as well. Instead of behaving as passive recipients of government funds and programmes, they have become active leaders, realising that government cannot resolve every major and minor issue for them.*

-Mid-Term Review of PPIMA III  
June 2018, p.25

# EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

PPIMA III had the overarching goal of supporting Rwandan civil society and citizens to influence local and national policies and plans. Although advocacy had always been a part of the PPIMA project and was central to the activities of many of the partners, by PPIMA III we can observe a much stronger emphasis on advocacy impacts, with additional capacity building around advocacy strategies in the final year of the project. So what do PPIMA partners consider they have learned about doing effective advocacy?

## LESSON 6 PERSISTENCE & PATIENCE

In 2018 NPA altered the PPIMA monitoring system. The approach to reporting on a quarterly basis was obscuring changes that took time to show themselves. One thing that clearly stands out from PPIMA is that it can take a long time, often years, to see results of advocacy initiatives. Partners have had to learn to be persistent and patient in order to push for changes to laws and policies, often against all odds and requiring considerable bravery to advance agendas that are not welcomed. They have learned that while government might not accept evidence on an issue today, they might consider it later.

This happened, for example, when PPIMA partners first presented research findings on the effects of court fees on access to justice. Following a rise in court fees in 2014, evidence from the AJICs, ALACs and broader civil society demonstrated that the cost was a barrier for the poor. Research findings from AJPRODHO were at first dismissed by the Ministry of Justice. However, GLIHD submitted an alternative report to the African Charter on the issue of lack of access to justice for citizens through high costs of court fees, and Transparency International Rwanda and other CSOs continued to follow up through advocacy and informal meetings with bureaucrats at the Ministry. The breakthrough came in 2018 when the fees were reduced.

As well as patience and persistence, CSOs also need to keep following up on advocacy activities, to monitor the evolution of a debate as it unfolds over time.

Progress in respect of gender-responsive budgeting illustrates the importance of being patient and using different approaches to achieve advocacy goals. The gender budget statement requirement started in 2003 but only began to take root in 2013 following continuous advocacy by Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe; and it is still a work in progress. In 2018, Pro-Femmes conducted follow-up meetings in PPIMA districts to ascertain the inclusion of gender priorities in the district budget, and to identify issues for consideration in the 2019-2020 plans. Pro-Femmes also reached out to national actors, including the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the Ministry of Local Government and other civil society actors. Government agencies recognised the gaps identified in Pro-Femmes' report and conceded that there were still capacity constraints at district level to prepare gender budget statements. These capacity constraints were echoed by the Director of Planning in Nyaruguru district during an interview in May 2019.



## LESSON 7 EVIDENCE & RELATIONSHIPS

A fundamental lesson that PPIMA partners have learned is that the government institutions in Rwanda expect advocacy to be informed by evidence, with a preference for robust and rigorous evidence from research. National CSO partners in particular have regularly commissioned or undertaken research to underpin their advocacy on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, agricultural value chains, water and sanitation, corruption, inheritance rights, freedom of information and the press. Numerous examples of this are captured in PPIMA's regular reports and minutes of reflection meetings.

Over time partners have become better at using evidence to make their case, presenting evidence in multiple formats including written reports and video documentaries. For example, when the CSC was first introduced it was seen as a tool for facilitating participation of citizens and for holding authorities and service providers to account. However, in 2017 and 2018 CSC data from all districts was collated and analysed, and presented to the Rwanda Governance Board. This marked a new stage in using evidence for advocacy.

Evidence matters, but it works best when combined with good relationships with relevant power-holders. Credibility is important for this, as well as skills to identify and use opportunities to influence. This has required partners to evolve from taking an approach that some described as confrontational in PPIMA I to a more collaborative approach by PPIMA III, one of "criticizing in a positive way" as one partner said. Partners have learned how to be more politically smart in navigating the political context; in finding out who can open doors in order to reach the policy targets. They are thinking about new avenues for influencing, including through parliament, political parties and technical advisors to Ministers.



## LESSON 8

### COLLABORATIVE ADVOCACY MEANS A BIGGER VOICE

Partners have also learned that when they carry out advocacy together they have a much greater voice. This has not always been easy, but there have also been many instances where small groups within the larger PPIMA project have come together to take collective action.

This has included district partners relaying issues to national partners for advocacy purposes. Some of the issues that are raised by citizens through the CSC need national level attention, but it has been very challenging to identify an adequate pathway for systematically elevating those issues. Collaborative advocacy between civil society partners, while not sufficient on its own, is one strategy to address this. Some good practices exist, such as the national policy dialogues organised by RCSP and other partners on citizen issues identified from the CSC, Pax Press national radio debates on CSC issues, and a database tool for tracking CSC issues, as well as the emerging RCSP thematic working groups. However, more work needs to be done to improve the process of identifying and elevating critical policy issues to the national level. And national partners need to get better at feeding back from the national to the district level.

The Organic Law N° 01/2012/ of 02/05/2012 among other provisions criminalized sex work and abortion. Acting on public interest, GLIHD petitioned the Supreme Court of Rwanda, seeking decriminalization of prostitution and abortion on human rights grounds. In 2016, after a sustained campaign by CSOs, led by PPIMA partners GLIHD and HDI, the Law Reform Commission proposed an amendment that would relax the abortion penal code provision to allow doctors, rather than courts, to determine when a woman can have abortion. The President did not only decline to assent to the law, but also pardoned 367 women who had been convicted for the abortion offense – a remarkable victory for women and reproductive rights activists.

## LESSON 9

### MOBILISING THE MEDIA

Engaging the power of the media has made a significant difference to PPIMA. In PPIMA I there was concern about involving a media partner. At the time there was limited enthusiasm or buy-in from government for PPIMA, and a low-key approach was appropriate. However, with growing confidence about the potential impacts of the project, the decision was made in PPIMA II to take a more proactive approach. Pax Press was brought in at this point. Radio talk shows have been a crucial means of “making a noise” as Pax Press put it, leading to more and more partners working collaboratively with the media at district and national level to amplify their voice. Radio has also proved to be a valuable tool for closing feedback loops with citizens, for example through live call-ins where citizens can engage with leaders on how they are responding to citizen concerns.

Going forward, there is potential for expanding the use of different forms of media, including social media channels to find new ways to bring citizens and decision-makers together.



# BUILDING COALITIONS FOR ACTION

Building effective coalitions of likeminded organizations is important for the kind of work that PPIMA does. For a long time CSOs in Rwanda were largely seen as playing a complementary role to government in terms of service delivery with not much to bring to the decision-making table. Relationships were often marked by competition and not collaboration. Civil society platforms and networks of likeminded organizations have existed through which individual organizations can channel issues or receive support, but these networks have often not managed to have wider impacts on policy.

When PPIMA I was designed, it had an explicit objective of helping Rwandan CSOs to organise themselves, notably through a strengthened Rwandan Civil Society Platform (RCSP). In PPIMA II greater emphasis was placed on CSOs working together to develop alternatives, to organise debates and dialogues, and to share knowledge and experiences. Throughout PPIMA's history it is possible to point to instances of successful collective action, but sometimes the project can seem quite disjointed with limited interaction between national and district partners, and with some partners less inclined to work with others. So what did partners learn about building coalitions, not just among themselves but also with other civil society actors and stakeholders?

## LESSON 10

### BEING PRO-ACTIVE

A major lesson for PPIMA partners, and one that they should do more of in the future in order to strengthen their collective voice, is the value of being proactive in forming coalitions. However, such coalitions should be driven by Rwandan civil society organisations, coming together because they want to. They should not be initiated or pushed by international partners, donors or government. As one workshop participant said in May 2019: "Do not wait for others to coordinate organisations – go ahead".

For coalitions to work they require dedicated leadership and the commitment of all involved. And there needs to be a good reason to come together.

Frequently mini-coalitions have formed among PPIMA partners around specific topics. Such mini-coalitions can work well because they can come together quickly, be more agile, and bring in relevant expertise from within or outside PPIMA. All those involved have a stake in the results, and can see the value of the collaboration. It is a reality that not all topics are relevant to everyone, so often mini-coalitions offer a better chance to push an agenda than a large coalition. So while there is an appetite for coalition-building - indeed, several PPIMA partners during a partner workshop in May 2019 expressed a desire to see at least one large common campaign run per year by CSOs – the learning from PPIMA is that mini-coalitions can be effective.

“

When organisations form coalitions, they are extremely powerful... There is strength in numbers.

-PPIMA partner workshop participant  
May 2019

“

PPIMA partners, coordinated by RCSP and CLADHO, carried out an extensive consultation of CSOs to make recommendations from civil society to the National Strategy for Transformation in 2017. After intense lobbying to see their inputs included, the final draft of the NST that was presented at the 15th National Dialogue (Umushyikirano) addressed 23 out of the 31 inputs presented by civil society.

-PPIMA Annual Project Progress Report 2017

The district dialogue forum (DDF) shows the power of speaking with one voice. Issues raised by the CSC become more credible when other CSOs sitting in a DDF voice the same issues. In some instances, other CSOs have committed to addressing identified issues. For example, since 2014 COPORWA had been lobbying Nyaruguru District for the extension of water to Rwinanka and Nyacyondo villages in Nyamabuye Cell with little success. In 2016, the issue came up again in the DDF and a commitment was made by World Vision to finance the extension of clean water in the 2017/2018 fiscal year. By October 2017, the two communities had received 8 boreholes.

“

Do not wait for others to coordinate organisations – go ahead.

-PPIMA PARTNER WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT

May 2019

## LESSON 11

### CONFRONTING TENSIONS & FINDING SOLUTIONS

A central pillar of NPA's partnership policy is to respect the differing agendas of partner organisations and to avoid standardised approaches. Sometimes this does not sit very well with the pressure to design a project where CSOs are working together towards common goals.

In reality, the PPIMA project is made up of many partners who have different target groups, missions, and values. This creates a risk that the collective mission can be undermined by competition for funds, lack of trust among CSOs, and territorial disputes when more than one CSO is working on the same topic in the same area. Getting the balance right between respecting different perspectives and sharing a united purpose is another important lesson that PPIMA partners have learned.

PPIMA partners have had to recognise that CSOs will not always agree. Indeed "disagreement is healthy for a diverse civil society" as one PPIMA partner said in May 2019.

Therefore, when tensions arise within a large collective project, ways have to be found to move forward. Advocacy around the Penal Code is a good example. There were very different perspectives among PPIMA partners on the topic of abortion. This caused friction amongst the CSOs. The lesson for the partners was to be more respectful of differences in opinion, to use evidence to convince each other of their respective positions, and to not attempt to assert power over others in the collective.

# PARTNERSHIP

NPA places a huge value on its partnerships with civil society organisations.

*NPA sees partnership as a two-way cooperative relationship, sharing the complementary resources of various partners in terms of finance, skills, technology, information, knowledge of particular realities, and thus power – in order to fulfil their objectives related to oppressed social groups.... For NPA partnership is a two-way relationship with commitment from both sides where NPA should adapt to the local context, respect the partners agenda and leading role.*

– NORWEGIAN PEOPLE'S AID PARTNERSHIP POLICY, 2009

But what has it meant in practice for CSOs to partner with NPA on the PPIMA project? What have all the partners learned about partnership itself? How have experiences of the partnership changed over time, and what would the partners do differently in the future? These were the questions we were interested in reflecting on as part of the lessons learned exercise.

## LESSON 12 BEING A RESPECTFUL PARTNER

When PPIMA I began, NPA was already working with some CSOs in Rwanda who would become PPIMA partners and who have been with the project ever since. Others joined later, recommended by donors or identified to bring new skills into the mix; a few were only involved for a short period of time. So there were different pathways to becoming a PPIMA partner.

Over the 10 years since PPIMA was first conceived, there has been learning on both sides (NPA and the Rwandan CSOs) about what it means to be a partner on a project like PPIMA in Rwanda. Discussions with NPA staff, past and present, revealed that NPA has become less top-down and less directive over time. In other words it has become better at living up to its own principles of respecting its partners.

**CONSULTATIVE**  
Mutual learning advisory  
organisational funding  
**Long-term**  
**collaborative**  
Earned credibility  
earned legitimacy  
Partner not a donor  
**SUPPORTIVE**  
**Proud to be a partner**

From the CSO perspective, there is always a challenge when a partnership is closely connected to project financial support. For some partners, PPIMA offered a means to fund their activities and the relationship was primarily between project staff and NPA. For others the relationship was clearly deeper, and more akin to the mutuality sought in NPA's partnership policy.

For both sides, therefore, there are valuable lessons to be learned about mutual respect in order to get the most out of the partnership and to not take it for granted when the partnership has been long-standing. This includes being aware of power dynamics, listening to each other and regularly reviewing the partnership experience.

## LESSON 13 BALANCING HANDS- ON SUPPORT WITH EMPOWERMENT

Several CSOs described NPA as a 'hands-on' partner. This was generally a positive rather than a negative comment. NPA had criteria for assessing a partner's suitability to the programme and capacity for it also. Criteria included leadership, mandate and legitimacy of the CSO, and whether it shared NPA's vision around civil society. Partners then had to complete a capacity needs assessment and other bureaucratic procedures. This formed the basis for capacity building support to strengthen the CSOs based on their real needs.

Several partners appreciated the balance that was struck between ensuring due diligence for accountability purposes, and helping partners to rectify problems in their reporting and accounting when they arose. However, there were also times when senior leadership of CSOs have felt undermined by the close working relationship between their project staff and NPA technical staff.

An important lesson is therefore to ensure that hands-on support does not become micro-management but is provided in such a way as to empower the staff and leaders of the CSOs.

## LESSON 14 RECOGNISING & VALUING DIFFERENCES

Thinking about partnership principles and practices throws up potential contradictions in a project like PPIMA. On the one hand there is an imperative for partners to be working to the same agenda, sometimes using the same systems and processes to meet accountability requirements. On the other hand, as noted in other lessons, PPIMA partners are all independent CSOs with their own missions, visions and values; and NPA's policy is to respect these differences.

A lesson from PPIMA is that all partners need to reflect on what their individual core principles would be within the partnership, and to decide how to deal with situations that make them uncomfortable. In interviews, several respondents said that NPA needed to be more mindful of the differences between the CSOs. Some approaches had been too uniform, for example setting salary caps, and had failed to take account of existing organisational systems and policies. Others were concerned about 'mission drift', which is when an organisation starts to implement activities that are not relevant to its core purpose or target groups. This has happened with some of the district partners involved in the CSC, such as COPORWA with its emphasis on historically marginalised people, ADI-Terimbere with its emphasis on agriculture, and AJPRODHO with its focus on youth. The CSC is a standard process that throws up all sorts of community issues related to multiple population groups. PPIMA partners who are responsible for facilitating the CSC in the districts may end up focusing on issues that lie outside their core mission.

In such circumstances, NPA and partner CSOs need to work together to resolve their differences in perspective, and ultimately decide if they want to be partners.

# CAPACITY BUILDING OF CSOs

The project proposal for PPIMA III described the trajectory of the programme thus: PPIMA I was about capacity building and organizing; PPIMA II was about mobilising and engagement; PPIMA III would be about sustainability of interventions. Capacity building of citizens and civil society in Rwanda has been at the centre of the project throughout and a range of types of support have been provided. So what was learned over the three phases of PPIMA about providing relevant and effective capacity building?

## LESSON 15 SUPPORT FOR ORGANISATIONS, NOT ONLY INDIVIDUALS

A core lesson learned on capacity building is the importance of providing support that reaches the whole organisation, including Boards, and not only individuals. This can be a common problem with capacity development, particularly in contexts where high turn-over of staff is common and where training tends to focus on technical project staff. In some circumstances leaders and other staff can feel that the training is not for them. Although some training provided by NPA was standardised, the approach to organisational development support was tailored to meet the needs of the partners. Where gaps were identified, support was provided.

Organisational development needs to be provided in ways that work in the context, and it needs to be continuous; there are always new staff to induct, new Board members to train, and new issues to address. Undertaking regular assessments and reviews of partner capacity is valuable, something that NPA has both done and recorded.

## LESSON 16 USING NEW KNOWLEDGE FOR GREATER GAINS

Related to Lesson 15, there were some PPIMA partners that took advantage of knowledge gained from capacity building and spread that wider within their organisations. This is one way to overcome the problem of training and capacity building being seen as individual and not organisational. Several partners described how they had passed knowledge on to their fellow staff or members, not only from training but also from reflection meetings and events. This ranges from GLIHD sharing learning during regular staff meetings, to NUDOR and RCSP using PPIMA training to provide onwards training to their members. Some also transferred skills to their key stakeholders, including paralegals, councillors and local leaders.

New knowledge and strengthened systems have also enabled partners to attract additional funders and international partners. For example, lessons learned about working with communities from PPIMA was used by Imbaraga to build a new project with an international NGO. A number of partners have managed to secure more funding because of their strengthened financial and organisational management systems.

The important lesson here is that partners have to be proactive in using capacity building provided to individual staff members or projects for the wider benefit of their organisations.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

The approach to partner capacity building in PPIMA I was anchored on the findings of a pre-award audit conducted on behalf of SIDA, and NPA's own assessment conducted in 2011. The findings indicated various areas where CSOs required support. These included developing procedure manuals, segregating administrative and financial responsibilities, internal controls, procurement, and tax management. A capacity building plan was then agreed and partners received training in the required areas of financial management. Partners were also supported to develop policy manuals, and an accounting system was purchased for them. Partners also received training in the human rights-based approach (HRBA), as well as monitoring and evaluation, sexual harassment in the workplace, and strategic planning. DFID did its own due diligence assessments and 'follow the money visits' while SIDA conducted assessments at the start of each phase.

Arguably, PPIMA I was a 'capacity building phase' from both a programmatic and financial perspective. In the later phases, the capacity building became more focused on the individual needs of organizations, revisiting areas that

required adjustment as the programme evolved, and tackling new topics. This was the case with advocacy strategies and monitoring systems, where new approaches were developed in PPIMA III to improve or catalyse greater results. Training on governance for Boards, business development for GFPs, the Rwandan planning and budget cycle, the Rwandan legal framework, and disability rights and inclusion was also undertaken.

A mix of methods has been used, including large training courses with external trainers, participatory workshops, organisational site visits, exchange visits, and one-to-one coaching. The overall capacity building programme and the follow up support and accompaniment provided stands out as one area where NPA was highly valued by its partners.

The mid-term review of PPIMA III observed that: "PPIMA has produced good results in terms of CSO capacity building... Over time all 15 partners have shown improvements in their internal financial management systems, according to the NPA Finance Section, the 2016 audit and NPA's financial monitoring system assessment conducted in 2017."

## WHO BENEFITTED THE MOST?

Small or nascent organizations, such as NUDOR, GLIHD and Pax Press, appear to have made most of the capacity building compared to organizations that already had a modicum of systems and procedures. The capacity building meant that small community-rooted organizations developed the systems and processes which, combined with their being embedded in communities, made them legitimate interlocutors on issues affecting their constituencies.

# LEARNING & ADAPTATION

In several evaluation reports, recommendations have been made that the PPIMA project improve its learning and communications. However, stepping back from the day-to-day activities, the entire PPIMA programme from 2010 until the present day is a story of using learning and knowledge gained from experience to adapt the programme. The series of three-year donor-funded projects has facilitated this, with annual reporting, periodic evaluations, final reporting, and design of the next phase creating the conditions for a cycle of planning, implementation, analysis, reflection and redesign.

Recognising the learning that is constantly happening both consciously and unconsciously among the thousands of people involved in or affected by PPIMA activities is itself a major lesson.

“

*Why do I say that PPIMA brought a different perspective? It came at a time when CSOs were being challenged [by donors] to think about a policy level and advocacy role which they were not used to... NGOs didn't know what it meant. It was good that they had this programme that actually accompanied them on this evidence-based approach. They have been trying to gather evidence that does not expose the CSOs a lot. That was a political risk in this context.*

Dominique Habimana (Governance expert, May 2019)

## LESSON 17 ADAPTING & EVOLVING

The clearest example from which lessons can be drawn about adaptation is the CSC. Since it was first piloted in 2011, the CSC has evolved from a complex, time-intensive and expensive process. It was implemented only in spaces created by CSOs and accessible in a few cells of 4 districts. It was largely unrecognised by leaders, and focused on giving citizens voice rather than responding to their concerns.

It has been through many revisions since then, evolving into a highly appreciated tool for tackling citizen issues in district planning processes and a source of evidence for national advocacy. It offers greater value for money, has the possibility of being sustained, and is delivering results for citizens. This has happened through numerous informal reflection sessions among those most involved, media interactions with stakeholders, external studies, partner retreats and workshops, and formal events with government. It has happened through recognising weaknesses, bottlenecks and failures, and coming up with solutions.

## LESSON 18

### LEARNING HOW TO UN-LEARN & RE-LEARN

A long-term project has major advantages in terms of building up knowledge and skills that can be used to achieve results. However, it can also have disadvantages if the people involved become stuck in their ways and unwilling to consider new ideas and methods.

A further lesson from PPIMA is therefore about learning to think again, to reject ideas that are not working, and to try something new. That is what we mean by 'un-learning' and 're-learning'. For example, by PPIMA III it had become clear that the monitoring and reporting system for PPIMA was not delivering useful information to help with improving the programme results. New methods had been introduced in order to track progress against the theory of change, notably an outcome mapping system. But it was not working well. Lots of data were being produced but everyone was struggling to handle it, and more importantly to see the changes resulting from their actions. So the system was revised again, requiring NPA staff and partners to push aside elements of the system that were not working and take on board another set of new ideas.

“  
We unlearned how to do advocacy through talking in corridors, to doing it with a strategy.  
- PPIMA partner workshop participant, May 2019



## LESSON 19

### STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS FOR LEARNING

During PPIMA III considerable efforts have been put into refreshing learning activities in an attempt to improve sharing of information and to make better use of evidence for advocacy. Some of this has worked. For example, the new way of capturing case studies as part of reporting offers fresh learning material. As PPIMA III has progressed there have been more focused retreats, working groups, and strategic reflection meetings.

Oral methods for sharing learning have also been used widely, and in the Rwandan context these seem particularly important. For example, showcasing results of the many participatory tools for citizen accountability that PPIMA has developed through study visits between districts, through inviting district officials to speak about their experiences in national forums, and through radio shows has been extremely powerful.

At the same time, many partners still hold the view that there is insufficient sharing happening across the programme, and documentation of the wealth of knowledge on PPIMA could be stronger. What we can learn from this is the importance of ensuring that there is a system in place to promote learning and to recognise that learning starts from within – within individuals and within organisations. Some partners have been very proactive to share learning, while others take a more passive approach by waiting for NPA to initiate the process. Much like coordination, it also demands that partners do not wait for others, but that they go ahead and take their own advice to share learning. Practically this requires the leaders of CSOs to dedicate time, staff and resources to learning.

“

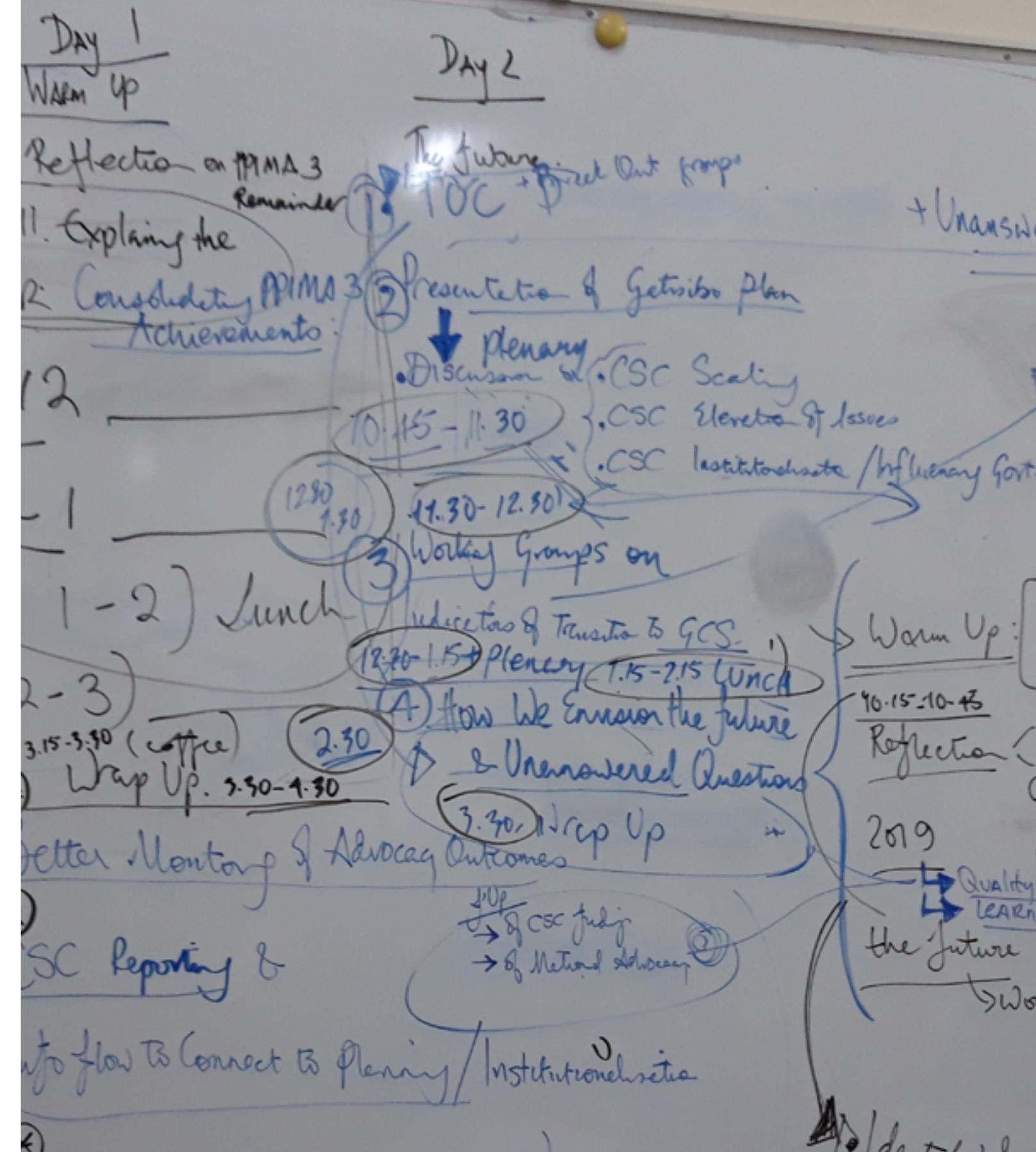
*It is not enough to say that the quarterly reflection meeting should be more reflective; it has to be someone's job to make that happen; the systems have to be in place; the appetite has to be there among partners.*

*- PPIMA Partner workshop participant, May 2019*

## LESSON 20

### LEARNING WITH PURPOSE

In busy organisations, focused on tackling major challenges in society, learning often seems like a luxury. A valuable lesson from PPIMA is therefore to ensure that learning has a clear purpose. That purpose might be to bring together evidence for an advocacy campaign, to improve programme activities based on new knowledge, to document stories for new communications materials, or to find out about good practice that other organisations are using to change your own ways of working. As with other activities, learning should be monitored to assess what was achieved because of a specific event or study.



# WHAT WE LEARNED

“ I have learned advocacy skills and how to encourage citizen participation in planning and budgeting processes

**PETER KALINGANIRE**  
**CLADHO**

“ I have learned that without evidence there is no room for advocacy

**OLIVIER GATABAZI**  
**Norwegian People's Aid**

“ I have become a citizen journalist

**ALBERT BAUDOUIN TWIZEYIMANA**  
**Pax Press**

“ I have become an advocate on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)

**MARIE ANGE UWASE**  
**Health Development Initiative**

“ I have become a good person in terms of hearing citizen legal issues

**NORBERT HABINEZA**  
**Tubibe Amahoro**

“ I learned how advocacy can influence government policies

**BOSCO NYEMAZI**  
**RCSP**



“ I have learned the importance of dedicating time for learning and reflection

**ROISIN DEVALE**  
**Norwegian People's Aid**

“ I have learned participatory planning approaches

**DOMITIEN RUGIRABAGANWA**  
**ADENYA**

“ I have learned that contextualizing is very important, and that change doesn't come easily- it takes time

**ANITA NAMARA**  
**Norwegian People's Aid**



“ I have become a better community mobiliser

**EMMAUS SIBOMANA**  
**Rwanda Women's Network**

“ I have learned that citizens can hold their leaders accountable

**PATRICK MUNINI**  
**Norwegian People's Aid**



“ I have learned to align my daily work with my professional background

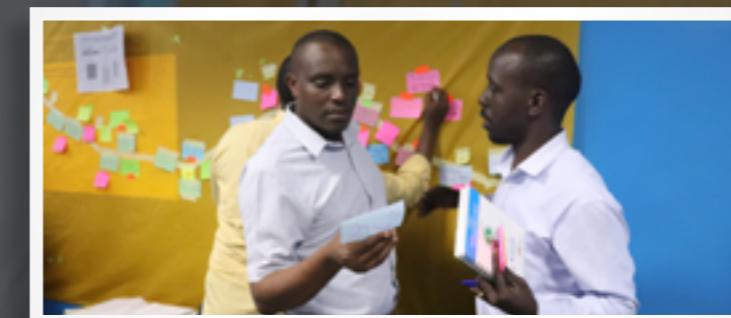
**ANDREW KARIMA**  
**AJPRODHO**

“ I have learnt how to synergize with other CSOs to reach our goals

**SOLANGE AYANONE**  
**Pax Press**

“ I have learnt that for advocacy to be successful, it must be based on research

**ALAIN SANO MUGENZI**  
**Transparency International (R)**



“ I have learned to be a voice of the voiceless

**JOSEPH NTAKIRUTIMANA**  
**Imbaraga Organization**

“ I have become a dynamic strategist

**JULIUS KWIZERA**  
**Norwegian People's Aid**

“ I have learned that human rights come with responsibilities

**MATTHIEU BAVUKIYIKI**  
**CLADHO**

“ I have gained skills to capture advocacy change because PPIMA is a learning programme

**JULIUS KATURAMU**  
**Norwegian People's Aid**

“ PPIMA made me an advocate of gender equity, gender responsive budgeting and policies

**MARIE MEDIATRICE**  
**UMUBYEYI**  
**Pro-Femmes / Twese Hamwe**

“ With PPIMA, I built better relationships with the Ministry of Health

**DR. AFLODIS KAGABA**  
**HDI**

“ I have gained more knowledge on disability rights and inclusion

**EUGENE TWAGIRIMANA**  
**NUDOR**

“ I have acquired skills in doing citizen-centred advocacy to increase accountability

**JEAN BOSCO NSHIMIYIMANA**  
**Imbaraga Organization**

“ I have learned that the population can influence government priorities

**EMMANUEL SAFARI**  
**CLADHO**

“ I have learned to be a better citizen who strives for matters of public interests

**JOHN SCARIUS**  
**GLIHD**

“ I have learned that citizens views and ideas can be captured with resources that are available within us

**ANDREW NDAHIRO**  
**Rwanda Women's Network**

“ I learned the use of the Community ScoreCard in empowering communities

**FULGENCE MPAYIMANA**  
**Tubibe Amahoro**

# Looking to the future



This publication captures some of the main lessons from the PPIMA project since it began. Key documents gathered by the PPIMA team – formal studies, annual reviews, evaluation reports, presentations from workshops, minutes of meetings – demonstrate the wealth of knowledge that exists on the project. Recent materials are rich in reflection, and already recognise and seek to build on many of the lessons mentioned here. Conversations with partners, programme staff and stakeholders mirror those documents.

For example, future plans include suggestions on: reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized citizens; sharing knowledge of the participatory tools through peer learning between districts and within governance institutions such as the JADF; expanding the scale of activities to more districts; and developing sustainability and exit strategies. They also include reflections on partnership, capacity building and policy influencing.

The enthusiasm that exists for capitalising on the PPIMA legacy among these people bodes well for the future. The task that lies ahead is to strive for ever greater results, using this knowledge and learning for the next 10 years and more.

**If there are two over-arching lessons from PPIMA they are that taking the long view and being proactive are essential.** PPIMA started at a time when citizen participation in public policy at both national and local levels was low; when government spaces for citizens to engage were few; and when capacity amongst CSOs to catalyse engagement was limited.

PPIMA has shown ways in which CSOs can build trust

and open up spaces, using creative, collaborative and non-confrontational methods. It has shown how decision-makers and leaders can be encouraged to listen to citizens; and how those leaders can motivate others to try new ideas. It has demonstrated that by working together, even when opinions and goals differ, CSOs can have a greater voice.

It has shown the value of long-term partnerships which have allowed relationships of trust to be built. Partnership with NPA has enhanced the credibility and visibility of some PPIMA partners in the eyes of government and funders.

But there is still much to be done. This emerged from the discussions to inform this study. The Rwanda Governance Board and many local leaders want to see the CSC producing more representative data from across the country. Current PPIMA funders want to see more evidence of PPIMA's impact on policy and more results from partner advocacy. And PPIMA partners themselves identified long lists of areas for further work.

PPIMA reports and reflection sessions have identified numerous challenges and bottlenecks that affect the inclusion of citizens in planning processes, that affect the ability of local leaders to respond, and that impact on national government willingness not just to listen to CSOs but to act on their advocacy demands. By building on these lessons learned, PPIMA partners could go well beyond their achievements to date. However, they have to seize the initiative and drive the process themselves, and bring those with power on the journey with them.

We therefore pose one final question for different users of these Lessons Learnt: how can you build on this learning for greater impact on development in Rwanda through addressing citizen concerns and enabling citizens to play a full role in the country's public policy decisions?

## RWANDAN CSOS & CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES

- Be proactive and creative in making use of evidence and learning, building on the rich data now available from PPIMA to identify critical policy issues and then champion these causes across district and national levels.
- Do not wait for encouragement, financial support or for someone else to mobilise you.
- Use collaboration with other CSOs to expand your impact. Come together to assess potential policy issues and laws that might be coming onto the political agenda, and form coalitions even before issues become 'live'.
- Keep monitoring advocacy activities and outcomes after 'the big event'.

## GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKERS AND LEADERS

- PPIMA demonstrates good practice in how government can gain from evidence and pilots produced by CSOs. Be open to listening to different types of evidence and encouraging best practice.

- Act on the issues identified that can only be resolved by government, such as working collaboratively on capacity building of local leaders and finding ways to scale citizen participation tools in sustainable ways.
- Provide a clear pathway for elevating citizen issues that need national attention up from the local level.

## NPA AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ON GOVERNANCE IN RWANDA

- Turn emerging good practice on learning into best practice. PPIMA demonstrates how incremental adaptation can work in a complex programme. Formalise more of the learning for future programming in order to embed these adaptive processes.
- Carry out regular partnership reviews through peer assessments to ensure that partnerships with CSOs are continuously strengthened and are built on mutual expectations. Ensure that exit strategies are in place for when partnerships come to an end.
- Carry out regular organisational capacity assessments that enable partners to also assess their own use of training and capacity building support.
- Invest in further research on PPIMA and share research publicly.

# Further information

## STUDIES & REPORTS

1. NPA 'Unleashing and maximising the impact of PPIMA/Community Score Card to facilitate citizens' inputting into local government plans, imihigo and budget: Opportunities, Challenges and Missing Links', Final Report, May 2018.
2. Matthews, H. 'Public Policy Information Monitoring and Advocacy Project in Rwanda: Success Stories', May 2015
3. NPA, 'Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy - The PPIMA Project: Sharing experiences for learning', March 2017
4. NPA / RGB, 'Supporting citizen participation in local government planning and budgeting processes', Event report, August 2018

## VIDEO TESTIMONIES

PPIMA and partners have also produced documentaries and reports on short thematic briefs. The following are just a few examples:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nb1QP031cYw>
2. <http://paxpress.rw/amakuru/ubukungu/article/pax-press-and-npa-launch-survey-media-and-policy-making-in-rwanda>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phowbqxGObE>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-4xe5yop8s>
5. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_UFa9\\_RdPPU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UFa9_RdPPU)
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nywBSIltbzQ>
7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBM6JwXTpZI>

“

*The PPIMA experience demonstrates that, when equipped with knowledge and skills, provided with the required tools and effective strategies, and given the platform to interact with decision makers and service providers, Rwandan civil society and citizens can meaningfully participate and contribute positively to influence policy and service delivery.*

*(Sharing Experiences for Learning, PPIMA, March 2017, p.3)*

