



End-line Evaluation of **UBU - ITUZE IWACU** Project

Final Report **Executive summary**

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Executive summary

This endline report is based on the external evaluation of the recently concluded Ubutabera Bwegereye Umuturage (UBU) Project in Rwanda. The Project was implemented by RCN J&D and other consortium members including Haguruka, Tubibe Amahoro and Lawyers of Hope (LOH) (Rwandan CSOs), Mashirika Performing Arts and Media Company Ltd (an expert in behaviour change communication) and Viamo (an expert in mobile technology solutions). Some consortium members such as ARAMA and the University of Sheffield dropped out of the Project during its initial years. ARAMA was replaced by Lawyers of Hope (LOH). The Project which was originally planned to run from 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2021 experienced delays in the kick off phase that made it start on January 1st 2019 to end on 31st December 2022. During the third year of the Project implementation, discussions with the Swiss Cooperation Office in the Great Lakes led to the signature of an agreement to co-fund UBU Project by adding **ITUZE IWACU** component (meaning approximately tranquility in our community/family in English). This new situation brought some changes in the Project. The title of the Project changed from **UBU Project to UBU-ITUZE IWACU** project. The geographical coverage changed from six Districts (Kicukiro, Nyanza, Karongi, Rutsiro, Ngoma and Kayanza) to seven with Nyabihu as an additional District. The third adjustment was the additional activities, among others the development of the radio programme, support of legal aid activities with particular attention to legal representation of women and young girl's victims of right violations. Some project activities were amplified including community dialogues, justice caravan, legal aid clinic activities, execution of judgments, support of JRLOS District committees, etc.

This evaluation had two main purposes: firstly, to assess the achievement of the expected results of the UBU ITUZE IWACU Project, draw lessons learned; and to situate stakeholders on its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Secondly, to identify and propose relevant future intervention opportunities, still required for the achievement of the SDGs in relation to justice, with a focus on the declaration of the Ministers of Justice in 2019. In the long run, the evaluation has reviewed the Project achievements on the basis of the international criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. It has focused on the achievement of results according to the Project's logical framework, on the relevance of strategies implemented by RCN J&D and their adaptability in case they are implemented by local implementation partners, the sustainability of the results, as well as the efficiency of the funds granted. Besides, it has assessed the Project contribution on national legal and political framework, SDG 16.3 as well as the national and international strategic priorities, according to the Justice Ministries Declaration of The Hague.

This assessment has also reviewed and provided insights on relevant policies related to the strengthening of Access to Justice and conflict prevention mechanisms as well as to the evolution of related policies. This will allow RCN J&D to identify where to put efforts in the near future, areas to

focus on for their strategic planning. The identification of strategic priorities, according to the current status of proximity justice as well as conflict prevention and resolution in the light of the current legal and political framework taking into account the SDG 16.3 and the Declaration of Ministers of Justice quoted in its five (5) has been referred to in coming up with this evaluation's conclusions. Finally, this report will inform RCN J&D and partners, including CSOs, development partners as well as government, to shape, scope and prepare future strategic interventions, for the consolidation of conflict prevention policy, and will inform policies of access to justice and conflict prevention in Rwanda.

The evaluation adopted a mixed methodology approach i.e. employing both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was obtained from Project documents as well as reputable publications such as the human right publications. Primary data collection was in form of qualitative methods with quantifications on closed ended questions. This was targeted to justice recipients and justice providers. At the end, a total of 29 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 70 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) was achieved from 420 justice recipients and 150 justice providers. This was distributed in 9 Districts that comprise of the 7 intervention Districts and 2 control Districts. Justice recipients included: Beneficiaries of legal aid clinics and Abunzi services at sector level and participants in community dialogues and justice caravan and intensive judgement execution. On the other hand, justice providers included: Supreme Court and court mediators, Inspectorate-General of Courts, Members of JLROs (RCS (Rwanda Correctional Service), Access to Justice Department in the Ministry of Justice, among others. Training of moderators and data collection took place from 3rd to 17th October 2023. Qualitative data was then analysed through thematic and content analysis.

The report has been organised along the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability as well as the evaluation objectives stated above.

Summary of Findings

Project's Relevance and Appropriateness

This evaluation finds that the UBU ITUZE IWACU Project was relevant to the needs of the justice recipients as well as those of the justice providers and that the project design was relevant. This was attained through:

- a. **Relevance to the needs of the justice recipients:** One of the barriers and gaps to accessing justice for justice recipients, in this case the community members and especially the vulnerable groups, had been the lack of knowledge on their basic rights, the functioning of the proximity justice system as well as community-level conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. This was addressed through the UBU ITUZE IWACU project.
- b. **Relevance to the needs of the Proximity Justice Providers (Actors):** Proximity justice is a concept that was defined by RCN to indicate the need to bring institutions of justice to the people. This concept includes timeliness of justice deliverable within a reasonable time, affordability, geographic accessibility, legitimacy and citizen participation. The actors therefore within this definition being proximity justice actors include government institutions and CSOs. Efforts of Proximity actors such as Conciliators committees and Local Authorities (LA) at sector level was

limited with mastery of the justice system. The UBU- ITUZE IWACU Project intervened through capacity building that included the coaching workshops of conciliators committees and Executive Secretaries by judges and MAJ. This helped address their needs.

- c. **Relevance of the Project Design:** The Project design took on the form of a supply-side; focusing on the justice providers and a demand side which focused on the justice recipients. The Project dealt with the challenges faced by the supply side and the demand side. This enabled the recipients of services to know what they can demand for (their rights) and the supplier of justice (PAJ) to know which services to supply and how to do it. UBU- ITUZE IWACU Project also worked with existing CSOs who work with JRLOS to capacity build them and therefore enhance their capability to create advocacy with the aim of influencing positive change in the justice system.

Project's Effectiveness

The evaluation was able to ascertain that used strategies were adequate in addressing identified specific issues and have well achieved the project objectives and can be extended to other zones of intervention based on the following:

Through goal one of the Project, justice recipients were informed on their basic rights, the functioning of the justice system and other alternative mechanisms, where to claim their rights and where to go to have their disputes peacefully resolved. Different activities applied in raising public awareness such as community dialogues, justice caravan, Radio programs, IEC and Mobisodes were effective in achieving this goal. For example, Justice Caravans toured all the sites as planned and were able to reach out to 97% of the target audience. Secondly, many of the citizens invited to the Community Dialogues were able to attend with a success rate of 96.7%. Through legal aid clinics present in seven Districts, the citizens were able to receive information from legal aid officers. The evaluation found that by year 3, 27.27% of respondents attending public awareness had supported their neighbours to claim their rights through appropriate mechanisms surpassing the 10% target in the 36th month of the Project. In addition, 9.98% of respondents in year 1 and 14.26% of respondents in year 2 had used the received messages to solve conflict themselves by changing behaviors. This demonstrates that the received messages were effective in promoting legal awareness to justice recipients and allowed them to make decisions pertaining conflict resolution.

Goal two aimed at building the capacity of CSOs in the justice sector to conduct advocacy in the interest of influencing positive change in the justice system. The main activities by UBU-ITUZE IWACU project on this initiative was: Capacity development in advocacy for JRLOs CSOs through networking, dialogue on role of CSOs, capacity building, developing advocacy policies and strategies, formal/informal meetings with DMI and rapid response funds as well as their participation in mass execution drives to reduce backlog in execution of decisions

The above strategy was not effective due to disinterested participation of the CSOs leading to low attendance of CSO leaders. Hence, it was very difficult for organizations to apply for the advocacy initiatives with funding from the project. Therefore, this activity did not contribute to increased activity by CSOs in advocacy as envisioned by the Project

Through goal two of building the capacity of CSOs and strengthening the justice proximity actors, Abunzi committee members were coached by Primary Court Judges and MAJ and had their performance improve from 34.37% before the intervention, 76.05% average after the intervention of the Project. They learned how to execute judgment through IECMS system and how to conduct a voluntary execution judgment session.

Project's Coherence

Project coherence was observed from the design of the Project in terms of selection of Project locations, CSOs, and collaboration with various stakeholders as discussed below.

District selection for the Project ensured coherence. The initial six Districts (Kicukiro, Nyanza, Karongi, Rutsiro, Ngoma and Kayanza) and later Nyabihu were selected based on a defined criteria to ensure they did not contain similar activities under different funding for example funding by EKNR under the Good Governance and Justice call for proposals; community dialogues and coaching of Abunzi by Primary Court Judges during RCN J&D's SIDA's-funded SPJR Project; USAID/Chemonics Duteze Imbere Ubutabera (DIU) Project and that CSO partners (Arama, Haguruka or Tubibe Amahoro) had an office there.

Information provided by CSOs working with Justice, Reconciliation, Law and Order Sectors (JRLOS) was used to segment the CSOs based on the Districts they worked which was vital in ensuring coverage of Districts as well as avoiding duplication of roles among the different stakeholders.

Involving PC Judges, MAJ Agents and local authorities in capacity building of Abunzi allowed different actors to improve collaboration whilst better understanding each other's mandate, and the different challenges faced in their role therefore permitting all concerned to work more effectively. Furthermore, there was adequate consultation of all relevant stakeholders at the various stages of the Project design, and redesign. This was done by proactively informing others about the Project and ensuring complementarity of efforts among all actors in the justice sector. There was also continuous sharing of information and collaboration with other CSOs in the wider justice sector to share lessons and to ensure complementarity and synergy.

Project's Efficiency

The Project was value for money taking into consideration the funding and the outcomes of activities.

- a. Financial Efficiency:** Though the Project kick-off delayed, the expansion of its duration and the innovative virtual implementation of some activities due to Covid -19 pandemic allowed the Project team to achieve most of the results with a lower budget. It was also noted that most of planned activities were implemented and hence most of planned outputs delivered within a very good rate of budget expenditure with 100% of the disbursed amount spent as of December 2022.
- b. Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL).** The evaluation found that there was adequate monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning by the Project. This involved the coordination of all monitoring, reporting and learning for the Project including coordination of annual/operational progress report. In addition, it included holding of steering committee

learning reflection meetings, reporting and coordination of Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) of Project achievements.

- c. **Collaboration with local authorities** - The Project was implemented in a context where the administration has an eye on everything happening in the area and ensure that it responds to their administrative entity's needs and priority. Without involving them from the beginning to the end of the Project would hinder its realization

A few challenges were however experienced which slightly affected the efficiency. They included local leaders postponing meetings with the CSOs and other PJAs which dragged out the Project's activities. Another challenge was with ARAMA – a consortium member who had to be dropped from the Project due to misappropriation of Project funds.

Project's Sustainability

RCN J&D ensured that its projects were fully in line with Rwanda's medium- and long-term political strategies, including the MINIJUST's strategic plan (2013–18), the JRLOS Strategy and the government's seven-year plan (7YGP). RCN J&D also worked closely with the MINIJUST ensuring a coordinated approach to project delivery by all actors working to support the justice sector, which supported the MINIJUST's priorities. There was also sharing of knowledge, tools and plans, which increased ownership of activities. RCN J&D worked to ensure that any tools developed involved institutional stakeholders from the start and could be handed over once the project ended (for example on-demand mobile resources, or materials concerning the execution of decisions). In addition, RCN J&D would continue to advocate for the provision of adequate budget support to justice sector institutions by the central government, particularly to support the on-going costs of the Abunzi system such as training, material support.

In addition, the project promoted sustainable behavior change in target groups (Justice Recipients) and local partners (PJA) through capacity building of local partners. Towards this end the capacity building of CSOs, legal aid services (including paralegal networks), MAJ and Primary Court Judges will allow them to act as reference points for community members especially because they have a known presence. Other key resources developed during the Project will continue to be available beyond the Project life and include on-demand education resources for Abunzi and citizens developed with Viamo. Sustainability was further enhanced through the knowledge gained by the general citizens in the intervention Districts through the various awareness strategies including IEC Materials, which some community members were noted to have kept for reference.

Other elements of sustainability observed were the mainstreaming of interventions under the UBU-ITUZE IWACU Project by organisations working with RCN for example Haguruka and Lawyers of Hope. Some consortium partners were also noted to have already mobilized resources to continue the work which was being done under UBU- ITUZE IWACU Project and included Haguruka, Tubibe Amahoro and Lawyers of Hope. The spirit of volunteerism was evident for paralegals working under the UBU-ITUZE IWACU project who had continued to provide their services beyond the Project period.

The only challenge to sustainability was funding challenges experienced by the organisations while mainstreaming project activities and that the work of MAJ and Primary Court Judges in supporting Abunzi was reliant on Government financial support.

Looking Forward

Despite some challenges incurred during UBU-ITUZE IWACU Project implementation, most of the intended activities respondent to their respectful objectives to some extent. These activities can however be more impactful in future based on the following suggestions:

- a. **Legal Aid Clinic Services:** The need for legal aid cannot be overemphasized. CSOs carrying this work still experience a large number of community members seeking these services. Findings from primary data indicate that there is still large demand for legal aid services.
- b. **Community dialogue:** Community dialogue as a means of giving advice and assistance is still important. This has been one of the best ways used to ensure that information about laws and access to justice has been received at community levels. This should continue even after the closure of the project.
- c. **Capacity Building of Proximity Justice and Conflict Resolution Actors-** In future, there should be more recruitment and training of non-professional bailiffs such as paralegals who would continue with the work even after the Project intervention. Recruitment should be nationwide. Additionally, there should be the availability of continuous training programs such as virtual programs to further equip the non-professional bailiffs
- d. **Justice Caravan:** Justice Caravan is a good idea in reaching many people. However, the timing of the project during the rainy season was nearly impossible to get people. This led to postponement of a number of activities due to rains. In future, Justice Caravans should consider having temporary tents that can shelter more people when raining.

For more effective implementation, the use of Justice Caravans should consider the following:

- (i) The scheduling of Justice Caravans- Preferably use the Justice Caravans during seasons where weather is more favorable to maximize on turn up and engagement by the public. Where alignment with seasons does not work, interventions should consider having temporary tents that can shelter people when raining.
- (ii) Have scheduled maintenance for machinery used during implementation to avoid technical disruptions as was noted by Mashirika where this had affected one of the performances
- (iii) Close collaboration with local authorities and support including continuous communication to ensure there is adequate awareness amongst targeted groups and critical actors on the planned activities. This will help to avoid last minute negotiations with actors on the ground that are critical in ensuring that the activities run efficiently as was noted in an instance reported by Mashirika where market managers had initially denied access to Justice Caravans. This was however at the time resolved through negotiation with the managers.

- (iv) Employ specific community recruitment strategies that would allow special interest groups such as persons with disability to participate. There should be specific tents and recruitment process for special interest groups.
- e. **Radio program:** Radio program was one of the most expensive awareness activities. However, there was lack of reporting of the actual numbers reached as a result of listenership to the radio program. The lack of these numbers largely undermines the likely impact this strategy had on awareness for justice recipients. This information can be easily obtained from the media itself and thus the program would need in future to obtain and track this numbers for adequate monitoring and reporting.
- f. **Continuous training of ABUNZI and Executive Secretaries:** Abunzi and Executive Secretaries are instrumental in proximity justice within the local communities. Their knowledge development on justice systems is also very instrumental. As a way forward, we recommend a project that would ensure their continuous monitoring.

Recommendations for Future Project design

The area of Access to Justice is still key to the people of Rwanda. This is seen from the whole question of relevance which is still important today including the fulfilment of the declaration of the Ministers of Justice and the SDGs. UBU-ITUZE IWACU Project intended to streamline access to justice under SDG 16 as part of its broader objective aimed at making progress under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This Project was also in response to the Declaration on Equal Access to Justice for all by 2030 whose intention is to move justice from access for few to justice for all. Based on this context, the following recommendations are made for RCN's future project design as well as their linkages to declaration on the SDG:

- 1) RCN has the opportunity to build on its successes by designing a larger intervention covering all Districts in the Country. UBU- ITUZE IWACU's intervention was in 7 Districts out of 30 which a small fraction is considering the SDG declaration on equal justice to all by 2023. Further, program concepts such as legal aid clinics are still in demand due to the ongoing justice reforms. A nationwide program intervention would enhance progress in the achievement of SDG 16 and Declaration on Equal Access to Justice for All by 2030
- 2) The Project was intended to reach vulnerable groups including women, children and persons with disabilities. However, there is little data on how the Project reached the children and persons with disabilities in the area of legal awareness and legal aid. There is need to have a deliberate monitoring of these two groups through capturing of disaggregated data by age, gender, disability, marginalized groups, etc. Thus all partners engaged in the implementation process should ensure their activities are designed to capture this information. This would also require that relevant capacity is built for staff engaged in this data collection/capture activity. This process would address the SDG declaration for universal access to justice.
- 3) There is need to establish M&E framework with a clear plan for measuring results and a data management system that produces reports, and links financial and project data. The current framework with dashboards are quite elaborate on field data reporting, however, they should be interlinked with the financial and project data systems to enable on time tracking on the project's efficiency.

- 4) Among the project activities, it can be concluded that radio program can be redesigned to expand its listeners' category and that there is adequate capture of the numbers reached during the radio programs. Consideration should be made on the timing of the project as well as contents that would appeal to a larger section of the population
- 5) The involvement of CSO leaders, the need for a membership framework and having advocacy in the mission of CSOs was key towards them playing their role in the JRLOS Committees: The unframed way of becoming members of the JRLOS as representatives of other CSOs, the lack of guidance on the role (especially advocacy role) of CSOs in the Committee role, led to the absence of their leadership's involvement and the ineffectiveness as members of the Committee. In future, the project should consider having a structured framework for CSO membership to the JRLOS. The structures should also define different roles by each CSO and make it mandatory for CSO leadership to attend meetings and other important functions.
- 6) There should be some extended funding for post-project monitoring on some components that would continue being relevant even after the project has ended for example support for Abunzi. Future budgets can therefore cater for post-project intervention support or in –lieu this role can be adapted by different CSOs, Government (Ministry of Justice) or project-intervention reserves or savings which can be used for this purpose.
- 7) While the Project largely achieved its outputs and outcomes, 4 years was found to be inadequate to produce tangible impact on behaviour change. The evaluation thus recommends a second phase in order to keep the momentum gained during the initial project phase and produce more long-term lasting solutions.