Social inclusion in Fragile Contexts
Pathways towards the inclusion of women & girls in local governance processes
Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

Research aims & questions

Every Voice Counts (EVC) is an inclusive governance program in fragile and conflict-affected settings, with the social inclusion of women and youth at its core. The program hinges on certain assumptions with regards to social inclusion. First of all, the EVC program assumes that the most vulnerable are either able to directly participate in formal planning and budgeting processes or that they can be effectively represented in these processes. It also assumes that this participation either leads to women and girls’ voices being heard or their direct influencing in decision making, and that the influence of women and girls will eventually lead to better quality services and policies. However, little is known about how women and girls are actually enabled to engage with local governance spaces, and what are the factors and pathways that either enable or inhibit their inclusion. EVC commissioned this research in order to test the EVC program’s assumptions, and to generate knowledge that will feed into EVC’s interventions and CARE’s programs.

This research aims, therefore, to understand the pathways and factors that enable women and girls to be effectively included in local governance processes in fragile contexts. It interprets ‘inclusion’ in terms of degrees: from access, to participation, to influence. Its main focus is on formal local government budgeting and planning processes: the Communal Community Development Planning Process (PCDC) in Burundi and Imihigo planning and budgeting in Rwanda. However, it is recognized that the distinction between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ may not be fully apparent or useful in some contexts. For instance, governance spaces can function more like hybrid structures, or, in other cases, the interests of women and girls can be incorporated into formal planning processes via informal channels. The research, therefore, also seeks to understand the informal governance spaces in which women and girls participate, such as village meetings led by non-state authorities or women and youth-led groups. The main aim is to understand how women and youth participate in these spaces, and what factors either enable or prevent them from being able to effectively access, participate in, and influence local decision-making.

Methodology

The research analyzed specific outcomes of social inclusion in local governance processes, and the factors and pathways that either enabled or hindered inclusion. The data collection involved focus groups discussions (FGD) with women, youth and men across 6 communes (administrative districts) in Burundi and three districts in Rwanda. Key informant interviews (KII) with local authorities (state and non-state), civil society, INGOs/donors and women and girls were also conducted. In total, 61 people were interviewed and 282 people (170 female, 112 male) were involved in FGDs in Burundi. In Rwanda, 39 people were interviewed and 80 people (51 female, 21 male) were involved in FGDs. The findings from primary data were triangulated through a review of the global and country-specific evidence on social inclusion, fragility and governance, including government policies, policy research reports and academic literature. For further detail on the methodology, see Annex A.
Main Findings

What the literature says

The literature reviewed on governance, fragility and social inclusion presents a number of opportunities, and also challenges, for programs aiming to support women and girls in local governance processes. Key opportunities include working with women leaders, movements and associations to challenge gendered political settlements, which are expressed in both the formal structures and informal norms that govern societies in fragile settings. The literature suggests that addressing women’s immediate practical needs or interests can act as an entry point for collective actions towards longer-term shifts in entrenched gender relations and norms. This finding resonates with the cases in this study, where participation in non-state economic structures, like VSLAs, functioned as a steppingstone towards women being elected into local government decision-making spaces.

There is also evidence to show that closer attention to the political dynamics of gender inequality by donors and INGOs can help them to effect transformational change. The political settlements framework, for instance, has been found in feminist scholarship to hold significant potential for understanding the power dynamics that affect gender empowerment agendas in fragile settings, particularly the likelihood of gender equality norms gaining political traction. Importantly for local governance work, applying the political settlements framework could also help reformers address gender inequalities via a full range of ‘different constituencies within the state’ in fragile settings, including non-state actors at subnational levels. This is particularly significant in light of a tendency in past donor interventions to pursue gender outcomes in post-conflict state building predominantly through technical support for formal or national level structures and actors.

At the same time, there remains a gap on informal, subnational spaces in the literature addressing governance, social inclusion and fragility. In particular, the relationship between gender outcomes in the social accountability spaces and informal community structures supported by INGOs and gender outcomes in formal government budgeting and planning requires further exploration. This study aims to contribute towards filling this gap via two country case studies, the findings of which are presented next.

What the case studies say

Both country cases indicate that the participation of women and girls in local governance processes, including government planning, has increased in recent years. However, this participation tends to be limited to decision-making around certain issues or in specific spaces. It also does not seem to be translating into greater influence over decision-making. For instance, in Rwanda, whilst women’s participation in Imihigo planning processes is perceived to have increased\(^1\), their influence over budget planning and decision-making related to resource allocations is typically still not perceived to be as strong as men’s. This points towards a missing link in the relationship between participation and influence in the Imihigo process.

The research in Rwanda also finds that participation in local government planning meetings brings individual benefits to women. For instance, attending meetings is an important way to gain access to information about local service delivery, for women as well as men. The research found that it also enables women to learn about budgeting and finance, which are skills that they have applied in their own lives.

However, as the literature also indicates, women who are able to take advantage of such opportunities tend to be those who are already in an elevated position due to having an education. The Rwanda study pointed towards lower levels of effective participation amongst grassroots citizens at the village level. It also found that female youth were the least likely to participate in local government planning meetings due to the perception that it was not a suitable space for them to pursue their interests. Similarly, in Burundi, women who have been able to take advantage of new opportunities to participate in local governance tend to be those who are more economically independent. This points towards the need to take an intersectional and multifaceted approach to social inclusion programming in fragile settings, paying close attention to the ways in which socioeconomic status, age and gender interact.

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\(^1\) Because Imihigo planning may take place within a variety of spaces, an exact answer to whether participation has actually increased is not possible. Many studies examine this question qualitatively and all point to an increase based on the perceptions of the community members participating in these meetings.
In Burundi, the study finds that women’s participation in local governance is generally limited to more informal spaces and lower administrative levels. However, several examples show how engagement in non-state associative structures, like VSLAs, can function as a steppingstone towards participation in the PCDC. The case study indicates that women’s engagement in VSLAs gives them access to social capital through engagement with other women in their community. It was also reported to have strengthened public speaking skills and confidence. Moreover, improved economic conditions brought about by engagement in VSLAs allow women to access the resources needed to participate in local government meetings. Through increasing their exposure and capacity to engage, participation in local government meetings eventually enabled some women to be elected into local colline councils and nominated for committees tied to the PCDC process.

Unfortunately, however, increased participation at the colline level in Burundi is not paired with greater influence over decision-making, particularly at higher administrative levels. Influence is mostly restricted to local-level ‘women’s issues’, particularly gender-based violence and community dispute resolution. Influence in areas considered to be ‘male domains’ such as security, land, and politics remains weak.

In sum, the findings show that there are significant opportunities and also benefits for women and girls to engage in public life at local levels in Burundi and Rwanda. At the same time, there remain barriers in place for the translation of access and participation into influence. In addition to identifying the level of social inclusion that has been achieved, the case studies also sought to understand the factors that have either positively influenced or inhibited change. The factors and pathways affecting the inclusion of women and girls in local governance processes are summarized below.

The drivers of increased inclusion of women and girls in local decision-making were identified as:

- Better access to information about local government meetings via local authorities and civil society;
- National legislation and policies that enshrine the right to participate, including the 30 percent women’s quota for women in elected positions;
- Females in elevated positions within their community, who act as role models for other women and girls, inspiring them to participate;
- Support from male family members, who are encouraging their wives and daughters to participate because they see the benefits for their families;
- Increased awareness and capacity to engage via trainings conducted by INGOs and their partners, for example pre-consultation meetings with women and girls to help organize and present their ideas and priorities;
- Increased access to capital, social recognition and confidence due to engagement in non-state associative structures like VSLAs;
- Higher education levels, which make it easier for women to take advantage of opportunities to participate in local government planning meetings.

The identified barriers to inclusion of women and girls in local decision-making included:

- Social norms and beliefs in the public sphere that restrict women’s influence over issues that are considered to be the domain of male decision-making, particularly those that take place in formal political and security spaces;
- Social norms and beliefs in the private sphere, for example fear amongst male family members that the empowerment of their wives or daughters could threaten their position and have negative impacts on their family;
- Timing and location of meetings, which tend to be early in the day when women are engaged in domestic or economic roles, or too far away for them to access easily;
- The perception that it is not possible to further interests in government planning processes, particularly amongst female youth;
- The combined impact of poverty, lack of education and gendered marginalization, which makes the social inclusion of women and girls an intersectional and multidimensional challenge;
- Lack of sufficient legislation in place to protect women’s land rights (in Burundi), which weakens their position in relation to economic decision-making;
- The increasing politicization of local planning and budgeting processes, which makes it hard for women to access influential positions without existing political, social and economic capital;
- Restricted civil society space, which reduces the opportunities and avenues available to pursue empowerment issues and agendas, particularly by women’s civil society movements and associations.
Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, this study makes the following recommendations for increasing the inclusion of women and girls in local governance processes in fragile contexts.

For donors and INGOs

1. Partner with targeted individuals and allies within government sectors who are committed to women’s empowerment and social inclusion agendas.

2. Tackle gender restrictive social norms by increasing collaboration with individuals and associative structures at the lowest levels, including households. Focus on men at household level to raise awareness about the added value of women’s participation in decision-making structures.

3. Support both male and female leaders to offer peer support and coaching of other women and men. For example, in Burundi, make use of the Abatangamucu men’s movement who can target other men at household level, as well as women councilors, who can support younger women (girls and young mothers).

4. Support the ongoing mobilization and capacity strengthening of women and girls in local government planning processes through continued support to CSOs and government structures, for example National Youth and Women’s Councils, which are working in these areas.

5. Strengthen the enabling environment for civil society to pursue women’s empowerment agendas and inclusive development goals by advocating for increased civic space and democratic rights in closed political environments. This involves tying efforts to secure legal or policy reforms with politically-aware programming that brokers relationships between key allies across government, civil society and the private sector to form locally driven coalitions for change.

6. Implement capacity building for local authorities, particularly on topics of gender balance, gender rights, and gender budgeting.

7. In designing gender and social inclusion programming more broadly, pay closer attention to the subnational and informal dimensions of post-conflict state building and reconstruction.

8. Support women as active agents in their own pathways towards empowerment, through, for example, partnering with local women’s movements and associations. This includes recognizing the practical importance of access to resources. Providing practical support in the form of small grants to women’s movements, for running costs can be critical for the effectiveness of collective action.

9. Continue to develop innovative, locally led funding mechanisms that provide financial assistance to women’s movements, associations, women leaders and allies in fragile settings. These mechanisms should be capable of providing targeted support to less formalized community structures and individuals; they must be able to respond to political opportunities to pursue specific agendas as and when they arise.

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2 Supported by CARE, this refers to a movement of rural men that challenge traditional gender-role expectations in their communities through personal change, testimonies and local community outreach activities.
For government and local authorities

1. More strongly invest in offering women and girls at the local level detailed process information and timelines on local government planning and budgeting processes, including consultations, validation, investment planning, project implementation and evaluation.

2. Address the practical challenges that women and girls face in accessing Imihigo and PCDC processes, including the location and timing of meetings. Ensure accessibility of meetings by women and girls, especially for those who are most excluded (e.g. women who are physically disabled, those living in hard-to-reach areas, women living in extreme poverty).

3. Open up space for dialogue on equal participation in decision-making by men and women on topics currently dominated by men, for example topics linked to security, local politics/administration and land.

4. Improve feedback mechanisms and accountability to communities by sharing information on the drafts and finally approved plans and budgets, including which issues get integrated into the budget, which do not and why. This should extend to involving women and girls in analyzing draft plans and budgets and monitoring their implementation, which would strengthen downward accountability.

5. Strengthen social support for women who want to participate in planning and budgeting meetings beyond the lower administrative levels. This could include household assistance, childcare in the form of community kindergartens, or transport assistance.

6. Ensure safe and expanded civic space for civil society organizations advocating on behalf of women and girls.

For local and national civil society organizations

1. Engage in evidence-based advocacy work with central government and local authorities to open up more spaces for all citizens, including women and girls, to participate in local government budgeting. Provide technical assistance to local authorities in analyzing plans and budgets against local priorities, including the integration of gender concerns.

2. Understand and address the social norms that negatively impact the participation and inclusion of women and girls in planning and budgeting processes by working with men and boys, including individuals at household level and local authorities.

3. Increase interventions that involve conducting pre-consultation meetings and feedback sessions tied to the Imihigo and PCDC processes, especially with groups of women and girls.

4. Raise awareness on the ways in which poverty and (lack of) education can be drivers of inequalities in the participation and influence of women and girls in local governance processes.

5. Press for the wider application of the 30 per cent women’s quota as a minimum standard, including at lower administrative levels, to help ensure that grassroots women and girls are represented in local planning and decision-making.

Outline of the study

The study begins with a brief introduction to social inclusion, governance and fragility, including how these terms are being interpreted and applied in this study. It then summarizes the findings from a review of the global evidence on the factors and pathways that enable and inhibit social inclusion in fragile contexts, with a focus on the inclusion of women and girls in local governance processes. The findings from two case studies (Burundi and Rwanda) are then presented, followed by a conclusion and recommendations for government, donors, and civil society.
1. Introduction: social inclusion, governance and fragility

The OECD has warned that, by 2030, 80 percent of the world’s poorest could be living in fragile contexts. Fragility poses a specific and major challenge to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It can reverse decades of development progress and exacerbate the very social, political and economic factors that led to conflict in the first place (OECD 2018). For example, institutions damaged by war can take many years to rebuild and the political settlement to arise from post-conflict situations can bring forth more acute social inequalities—including those specifically affecting women—than those that existed before conflict. Fragility is a feature of some of the poorest countries in the world, and interacts directly with the social, political and economic progress of women and girls.

Definitions & case selection

This study follows the OECD’s definition of fragility as:

‘the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility can lead to negative outcomes including violence, the breakdown of institutions, displacement, humanitarian crises or other emergencies’ (OECD 2016, 22).

Whilst Rwanda may not be considered a ‘fragile state’, its politics, governance structures and society are conflict-affected. Burundi, on the other hand, is a less stable governance environment. In addition to civil war (1993 – 2005), Burundi has experienced more recent political turmoil, which has resulted in huge displacements of people and shrinking civil society space. Indeed, both Burundi and Rwanda are challenging political contexts for civil society because of limited space to pursue agendas that fall outside of ruling party interests or control. In different ways, they are both closed political environments, which has implications for the pursuit of gender empowerment and equality at both local and national levels. From a programming perspective, both countries have formal local planning and budgeting processes in place, which EVC’s informal spaces (e.g. community score card, community dialogues, pre-consultation meetings) aim to feed into. Thus, the pathways between informal and formal governance spaces are of interest to the EVC program.

Following CARE’s gender equality and governance frameworks, for the purposes of this study, social inclusion is understood in terms of the extent to which women and girls’ access, participate in, and/or influence local governance processes. Social inclusion is therefore measured by degrees: from access to influence (see Box 1). For instance, whilst ‘access’ to governance spaces for planning and budgeting processes may include substantive opportunities to participate and voice interest or opinions, unless this participation has had a tangible impact (e.g. on policy, legal frameworks, or quality of service delivery) then ‘influence’ has not been achieved (Goetz 1995). It is therefore possible to say that all three levels reflect degrees of social inclusion, but that the most substantive forms of participation lead to influence. This kind of influence results from, and has the potential to advance, transformative change in the structures and norms that affect the empowerment of women and girls.

Box 1. Social inclusion framework

Access: the opening up of local governance spaces that were previously closed, whether formally or informally, tacitly or explicitly, to women and girls.

Participation: the institutionalization of participatory rights for women and girls in governance structures, e.g. 30 percent women’s quota for elected positions, giving women substantive opportunities to influence decision-making and represent their constituents.

Influence: the translation of presence into effective participation involves achieving influence over decision-making, e.g. by having the priorities of women and girls reflected in local government resource allocations.
Challenges & opportunities for social inclusion in fragile contexts

In global development policy and research, there has been growing recognition of the connections between social inclusion and building more peaceful and stable societies, with particular reference to women’s empowerment and gender equality. Whilst women’s participation and empowerment can contribute to sustainable peace, achieving gender equality often depends on understanding and reducing conflict and fragility (OECD 2017). In particular, this means understanding the ways in which the social norms that drive gender inequality are intricately linked to those that perpetuate violence and insecurity. Increasing attention, for instance, is being given to the relationship between conservative gender norms, conflict, gender-based violence, and women’s marginalization in public life (O’Rourke 2019).

Evaluations of donor interventions show that they have had trouble addressing the connections between social inclusion and fragility. A recent OECD review of donor efforts found that programs could do more to enable women as active agents in post-conflict and state building processes. It found that donor programs tended to include women affected by violence and conflict as passive beneficiaries only. Similarly, donors have not been able to successfully contribute towards transformative gender programming because they fail to address gender norms (OECD 2017). These include the types of social, political and economic exclusion that are prevalent in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Discriminatory attitudes and social norms define the spaces that women can inhabit and the roles that they can perform in both public and private spheres. They must, therefore, be at the center of any intervention aimed at increasing women’s inclusion in local decision-making and governance processes.

Donors have also failed to adequately address the relationship between gender inequalities and broader political economy factors (Castillejo 2018). Previous research by CARE shows that work on gender in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAS), including on women’s political participation, is rarely based on solid analysis of how gender inequalities relate to broader political economy factors, power dynamics and contestations (Koester 2015, in Castillejo 2018). This results in programs that are frequently based on weak or unrealistic theories of change, which are not grounded in local political realities. A failure to understand the political economy of gender inequality also results in a tendency in donor programming to focus on the outcomes of gender inequality rather than its determinants (Castillejo 2018).

Addressing fragility from a gender perspective is not only about supporting women and girls to manage the gender-differentiated ways in which they experience fragility. It also necessitates a focus on women’s ‘full and equal participation and inclusion in good governance’ (Sweetman and Rowlands 2016, 341), including peacebuilding, state building and transitional justice processes. These processes can be heavily dominated by (male) elites and are capable of entrenching violent and repressive social norms in the aftermath of conflict.

Conflict and its aftermath can also, however, create unique opportunities to reconstitute unequal gender relations in, for instance, the writing of new constitutions and peace building texts (GSDRC 2014; Domingo et al 2013; O’Connell 2011; OECD 2013). Governance institutions, both formal and informal, in fragile contexts are particularly important for women and youth because they are the vehicles through which many of the drivers, and outcomes, of violent conflict and fragility can be addressed. Some of the opportunities include restoring the rule of law and access to justice; promoting women’s political rights and participation; advancing women’s economic empowerment; re-establishing basic public services; addressing trauma, and re-building trust and social relations (GSDRC 2014).
A gap in the literature: local & informal governance processes

The study found that literature addressing gender, fragility and governance has a stronger focus on national than sub-national processes of governance, and on formal over informal processes. There is a tendency to focus on opportunities and obstacles arising from formal legal and political reform processes, particularly at the national or state level. Earlier CARE research (Spearing 2016) on inclusion in fragile contexts emphasizes the importance of local governance as the locus of state-society relations. Local governance is constituted by a set of subnational institutions, systems and processes through which services are provided to citizens. It is a context for potential political action and empowerment, where citizens articulate their interests and needs; where they mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations (Spearing 2016). Local government is a formal set of institutions with statutory public authority over a subnational area, while local governance is the collective system and practices around who gets what, when, how, and who decides these things, whether formally or informally.

In conflict and post conflict-affected contexts, the formal state apparatus is often fragile; it can lack material resources, legitimacy to govern, and technical capacity. This can mean that governance processes that are closest to citizens are often less formal in highly conflict- and post-conflict affected environments. Moreover, women’s engagement with formal governance structures is often mediated by other, non-state, governance institutions, including the household. This means that an understanding of both formal state structures and informal non-state institutions – including how they interact – is crucial for addressing women’s social inclusion in fragile contexts. As emphasised in the literature, working with non-state actors and informal institutions, including community-level norms, can provide ‘the most effective entry points for addressing gender-based inequalities and discriminatory social norms, as well as renegotiating women’s public and private roles’ (Domingo et al. 2013).

The Every Voice Counts (EVC) program recognizes that a key obstacle to achieving stability and sustainable peace in fragile settings is the structural exclusion of segments of society from local governance processes. The EVC program Theory of Change (ToC) addresses this problem by focusing on inclusive governance processes at the local level. It aims to overcome the systematic exclusion of disadvantaged groups who seek to participate in decision-making, in particular women and girls. This study has been conducted with the aim of assisting the EVC program in testing its theory of change. It does so by investigating the factors and pathways that enable, or inhibit, the inclusion of women and girls in local governance processes in fragile settings. The next part of this study will summarize findings from a review of the global evidence.
2. Factors & pathways identified in the global evidence

This study begins with a review of the global evidence on governance, fragility and social inclusion. The review was able to identify a number of factors and pathways that can either drive or obstruct the inclusion of women and girls in fragile contexts. Rather than a single trajectory or factor, the review identified a set of influencing factors and drivers of change that should be considered when designing programs aimed at advancing social inclusion in fragile settings. In sum, the global evidence supports the following six factors and pathways most persuasively.

1) The role of women-led movements and associations

One of the most prominent messages to emerge from the literature is the central role played by women’s collective action and social movements in pathways towards empowerment and social inclusion in fragile contexts (Earle 2011; O’Connell 2011; Castillejo 2008 & 2009; Weldon & Htun 2013). This is translated into the need for external interventions not to overlook the priorities and activism of women themselves (Grau 2016; O’Connell 2014; Sweetman and Rowlands 2016). Bele Grau (2016), for instance, conducted interviews with Afghan women’s rights activists and concludes that the ‘top-down’ focus on government state structures, post-9/11, has had very limited impact on the lives of women in Afghanistan. She notes that development work with women has tended to have a technical focus that does not address power relations and social norms. In order to overcome this, she advocates working in partnership with Afghan women and their movements. This finding is echoed in research from the Action for Empowerment and Accountability Research Program (A4EA), which identifies a case for donors to support “unruly’ spontaneous communities’ (Christie and Burge 2017), including social movements and associations.

Whilst the evidence on successful support for women’s movements by donors and INGOs is limited, the literature does claim that social movements in conflict-affected and fragile states can gain traction and legitimacy by linking their demands and activities to debates overseas (Earle 2011). In terms of designing interventions, the literature suggests that successful donor/INGO efforts in these areas are more likely to be those that address women’s immediate practical needs before, or at least alongside, efforts to address more entrenched institutional arrangements or norms (Earle 2011; O’Connell 2011; WaterAid 2009; Zulminarni et al 2018).

Partnering with local women’s movements involves enhancing the enabling environment for political action, for example through addressing legislation that limits political space (Fernando 2012), as well as the basic needs of women’s groups. The latter includes recognizing the practical importance of access to resources. As Lucy Earle highlights, providing practical support in the form of small grants to women’s movements for running costs can be critical for the effectiveness of collective action. The mobilization of women’s groups to lobby for gender equality agendas has required basic funding to, for instance, physically get to strategic protest or lobbying sites (Earle 2008 & 2011).
2) Government policy & legislation

Considerable attention is given in the literature to formal, state-centered pathways towards women’s political empowerment in fragile settings (GSDRC 2014; O’Neil and Domingo 2016; O’Connell 2011; OECD 2013; Holmes et al, 2014; Harcourt 2009). There is evidence that the opening up of democratic space at both national and local levels, in the aftermath of conflict, facilitates women’s political participation, through for example decentralization and electoral processes (O’Connell 2014). Quota systems have often been introduced in post-conflict countries to address gender inequality in political decision-making.

Tripp (2012) reveals that legislative representation of women tends to be higher in post-conflict situations than in situations of no conflict. The conflict-affected Great Lakes Region, for instance, has a minimum 30 percent quota for the proportion of women in parliament across all countries (GSDRC, 2014). Rwanda is an often-cited example of progress in this area. In 2018, 61 percent of seats in its parliament were held by women, making Rwanda a world leader in terms of women’s political participation. At the local level, although women are represented in cells, sectors and districts, participation remains more male-dominated than the national level at approximately 40 percent (Abbott et al 2015; Mbabazi 2018).

Globally, there is some evidence that greater numbers of women in public positions result in greater attention to issues of concern for women (O’Neil and Domingo 2016; O’Connell, 2014; Domingo, Holmes et al 2015). At the subnational level, evidence points towards improvements in local service delivery as a result of women’s participation in local politics (Domingo, Holmes et al 2015; Jackson and Wallace 2015). For example, Domingo and Holmes et al find evidence of women playing a key role in successfully advocating for improved local environments, including sanitation, social housing, transportation, anti-pollution (Ibid). However, as noted by Klot and Seckinelgin (2014), there should not be an assumption that the increased participation of women in governance leads to better outcomes for gender equality, at either local or national level.

The literature commonly observes a challenge posed by the disconnect between policy, its implementation and more inclusive institutions (O’Neil and Domingo 2016; Rocha Menocal 2015 2017; Klot et al 2014). For instance, in seeing the full benefits of quota systems, there is a central challenge posed by the intersectional inequalities that women and girls face. Those who are able to take advantage of new political opportunities tend to be at an elevated position already due to a combination of other factors. These include education, being closely related to men with power or being already recognized within their community due to holding various other public positions, for example within village committees (Secure Livelihoods Program 2019). Moreover, gaining access to public decision-making spaces and political influence often requires money and connections, which women typically have less access to than men (O’Neil and Domingo 2016).

In order to address these challenges, the literature points towards the value of more connected or integrated approaches that address both the technical and political requirements of gender equality agendas. Underpinning programming with the recognition of gender equality as a fundamentally political issue calls for donor/ INGO interventions to include more politically aware engagement on gender equality by working with key power holders and brokers. This requires moving beyond a limited programming focus on quotas and elections and seeking to enhance women’s influence and ability to promote gender issues once in office, as well as working with male party leaders to demonstrate the value of women’s participation and incentivize them to meaningfully include women in party, parliamentary and government business (Castillejo 2018).

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3) The underlying political settlement

The literature on gender and state fragility commonly highlights the link between gender and the underlying ‘culture of power’ (Cordaid 2010; Castillejo 2011), which is expressed both formally and informally in the way fragile contexts are governed. Catherine O’Rourke (2017), for instance, points towards the gendered nature of ‘political settlements’ in fragile contexts, particularly in their ability to perpetuate and entrench gender norms and gendered distribution of power.

There is widespread agreement across the literature that advancing gender equality agendas involves ‘contesting and redefining the political settlement’ (Domingo et al 2015). Sustainable pathways towards more effective and inclusive institutions involve some kind of ‘re-articulation of the rules of the game’ about how power is used and distributed and about the nature of state-society relations (Alina Rocha Menocal 2017). The viability and sustainability of collective feminist voice therefore depends on there being in place favorable institutional structures and political opportunities. This includes the political space for associational life that enables voice to translate into influence (Domingo et al 2015). Regime transitions, post-conflict peace processes or constitutional reform processes all present opportunities to redefine the political settlement.

Recognizing that change is fundamentally driven from within, but that external actors have an important role to play in facilitating locally-rooted collective action, a significant body of research has advocated for the practice of ‘politically smart’ and ‘locally led’ development practice (Booth and Unsworth 2014; Laws and Marquette 2018). For donor and INGO interventions, this involves not only understanding the political landscape, but also ‘thinking and working politically’ (Laws and Marquette 2018). The latter could involve, for instance, facilitating strategic coalitions and partnerships between key male brokers and women in politics, and linking them to cross-sectoral grassroots initiatives and broader civil society (Domingo et al 2015).

From a feminist perspective, it also involves closer attention to ‘different constituencies within the state’ (O’Rourke 2017, 607), including informal local governance spaces and even the household. This would help overcome a tendency in global gender policy and corresponding interventions to ‘essentialize the state as the single domain of activity’ (Ibid). Working politically requires donors and INGOs to address the links between gender inequalities and broader political economy factors, local power dynamics and political realities, including at subnational levels. This contributes towards identifying and understanding the determinants of gender equality, rather than merely working towards achieving gender equality outcomes (Castillejo 2018).

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4 The UK Department for International Development defines political settlements as: ‘...the expression of a common understanding, usually forged between elites, about how power is organized and exercised. They include formal institutions for managing political and economic relations, such as electoral processes, peace agreements, parliaments, constitutions and market regulations. But they also include informal, often unarticulated agreements that underpin a political system, such as deals between elites on the division of spoils.’ (DFID 2010, 22)
CARE’s Journey for Transparency, Representation, and Accountability (JATRA) project in Bangladesh used Citizen Forums to help 15 percent of voters in its target regions to get involved in an open budget process, which resulted in local officials budgeting nearly 25 percent of their resources to fulfill requests from the poorest people in their area (Janoch 2018). Citizen Forums support poor and marginalized citizens to claim their rights and entitlements, access services, and negotiate resources with elected local government representatives, maximizing the participation spaces provided to them. They are made up of representatives of poor and marginalized communities, half of whom are women.

JATRA’s Citizen Forums used tools like community scorecards and social audits to connect communities more closely to local service providers in order to foster accountability. The Citizen Forums helped engage marginalized communities with government and monitor budgets together. Key aspects driving the success of CARE’s approach include the use of participatory analysis to understand the political drivers of inequality. This brings local authorities and marginalized groups together to collectively organize, visualize, and come to a shared understanding of their local development trajectory. The process results in an ‘actionable evidence base’ that is produced and used locally by CARE country teams and the communities themselves (Haines, Haq & Aziz 2018).

Box 2. Journey for Transparency, Representation, and Accountability (JATRA)

4) Social accountability spaces & tools

There is also some evidence to support women’s participation in INGO supported social accountability mechanisms and processes, like community scorecards (CSC) and social audits used to monitor local government services (World Vision 2019; Wild et al 2015; Chambers 2016; Domingo, Holmes et al 2015). These include outcomes such as increased transparency in government decision-making; increased budget allocations for services that benefit women; more accessible or responsive services for women; legal or administrative redress for women affected by gender-based violation, and shifts in public policy priorities towards a focus on poor, marginalized and excluded communities, especially women (Domingo, Holmes et al 2015; Zulminarni et al 2018; Jackson and Wallace 2015; Green 2015b).

CARE’s own experience with the CSC approach shows that engagement in social accountability mechanisms can have a strong positive impact on attitudes and behaviors that affect women (Wild et al 2015; Chambers 2016). For instance, in Rwanda, women involved in CARE’s CSC program credited the process with empowering them to successfully bring gender-based violence (GBV) issues into the open. They gained the knowledge and confidence to challenge their husbands and assert rights that they were previously unaware of (Wild et al 2015). Following this success, both CARE Burundi and Rwanda have adapted the CSC approach to score the involvement of women and girls in government planning. CARE’s experience in Bangladesh offers further insights into how international NGOs can enhance social inclusion in fragile contexts via contextualized participatory processes that are underpinned by locally-rooted power and political economy analyses (see Box 2).

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Globally, however, despite the proliferation of accountability models in donor programming, civic space continues to be at risk and democracy is in decline. This has resulted in a debate about ‘open-washing’: the habit of authoritarian regimes embracing open government or citizen participation against a backdrop of increasingly illiberal tendencies. This contradiction emphasizes the need to ask hard questions about whether citizen participation models are challenging power, or rather providing an unthreatening, safe mechanism for governments to extend their authority whilst demonstrating a veneer of democratic norms (Haines 2017). Earlier CARE research cautioned that women’s mere access to, or presence within, social accountability spaces should not be interpreted as equaling meaningful participation and influence, although these may be an important prerequisite (Castillejo 2018).

A large World Bank study on participatory development (Mansuri & Rao 2013) notes that an important way in which participatory interventions can work is ‘by changing the character of everyday interactions’ (91), which is a process that, over time, can reshape social relationships. Drawing from Gibson and Woolcock’s (2008) theory of the ‘capacity to engage’, the study argues that participatory approaches, through changing the nature of speech, can transform not only how people are perceived within their communities but also how they perceive themselves. Even if they do not have an immediate impact on the allocation of public resources, tools for ‘deliberative contestation’ can give marginalized groups a more equitable shot at negotiating, asserting, and making demands that are in line with their needs and interests. With repeated interaction, more equality can be achieved in the ability of different social groups, including women and youth, to articulate demands (Mansuri & Rao 2013).

Social norms & gender relations

The conclusion in the literature is that, to be effective, interventions must address the ‘root causes’ of gender equality. These causes are found in the social norms and attitudes that define gender relations in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. By not grappling with the political nature of institutional change processes, opportunities have been missed to address the norms that determine women’s empowerment in fragile contexts. Not only does this mean that opportunities to redress gender inequality have been lost, it also means that opportunities for preventing future instability have been missed because preventing fragility requires challenging gendered social norms. As noted by Sweetman and Rowlands, ‘gender inequality is part of the very DNA of what makes societies violent and insecure’ (2016, 347).

The Political Settlement Research Programme (PRSP)10 (O’Rourke 2017 & 2019) finds that gender norms that define ‘private’ spaces and relations, including those that legitimize and perpetuate intimate partner violence, permeate into the way public institutions function. This is because the same norms operate in both public and private spheres, rendering the distinction problematic in responses, for instance, to violence against women in conflict-affected contexts. The research finds ‘striking continuities’ in women’s experiences of gender-based violence before, during and post-conflict, as well as continuities in the conservative gender norms that enabled such violence in the first place (O’Rourke 2019,10).

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8 In addition, norms within governance structures exist that affect the inclusivity of public authorities toward women and youth. Such legal and formal norms shape how institutions and governments relate to their citizens through decentralization processes, bottom-up planning approaches, gender responsive budgeting, amongst others. An investigation of these norms is outside the scope of this study, but they have implications for social inclusion.
This has policy implications for addressing gender norms in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Engaging directly with communities, including men and adolescent boys and girls, is seen as a particularly valid approach to address gender norms (Haider 2017 & Plongo et al 2016). In Oxfam’s Raising Her Voice (RHV) program, working with men was found to be an effective strategy for targeting the social norms that affect women’s political empowerment. For instance, they found that ‘signing up the powerful’ – e.g. through forging relationships with influential male opinion leaders from the outset – was crucial for shifting damaging social norms (Green 2015).

International norms and agendas

As discussed, from the perspective of fostering social inclusion in fragile contexts, there have been a number of problems with the way international interventions have been designed and implemented to date. These include a disproportionate focus on the formal and technical aspects of state-building and post-conflict reconstruction. As O’Connell notes, the rush to achieve a political settlement, elections and an end to the conflict has come at the cost of engaging with longer-term and more complex institutional change processes. The latter is more likely to transform the root causes of gender-based discrimination and inequalities at all levels – social, political, cultural, and economic (2014).

There are, however, important roles for international actors and donors. The literature, for instance, highlights the role of global gender policy in establishing and perpetuating gender norms. O’Rourke observes the existence of an ‘inclusion norm’ lying at the center of how international agencies like the UN and World Bank approach conflict prevention (2019). This is reflected in the World Bank’s 2018 World Development Report on ‘inclusive approaches to preventing conflict’ (World Bank, 2018). Inclusion norms for women and girls are also reflected in international legal provisions and structures, notably the UNSC Resolution 1325 and its treaty basis in the CEDAW. They can also be seen in the emphasis on addressing inequalities in the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda to ‘leave no one behind’.

The global policy emphasis on inclusion has been translated into innovative models and approaches being used by donors to address the marginalization of specific groups within society, including women and girls. For instance, the Dutch government has developed policy and funding frameworks that provide direct support to local women’s movements, like the ‘Leading from the South’ program. This has strengthened Dutch MFA’s cooperation with partners in the South through targeted women’s funds that provide core funding (Castillejo 2018).

An issue to consider is the relationship between the prevalence of global gender norms and actual gender outcomes at the national or local level. The PSRP research finds that international norms can have a role in underpinning the mobilization of women’s movements that challenge the prevailing political settlement and enabling them to find allies in other social movements (O’Rourke 2019). By adding external validity and legitimacy to their claims, the literature provided evidence that, with support from external actors, women’s movements can use the leverage of international conventions and agreements to make the case for enshrining gender equality into national legislation (O’Rourke 2019; Grau 2016; O’Neill and Domingo 2016; Earle 2011).

Conclusion

To conclude, the literature reviewed on governance, fragility and social inclusion presents a number of opportunities, and also challenges, for programs aiming to support women and girls in local governance processes. Key opportunities include working with women leaders, movements and associations to challenge gendered political settlements, which are expressed both formally and informally in the way societies are governed at the subnational level. At the same time, there remains a gap on informal, subnational spaces in the literature addressing governance, social inclusion and fragility. Of particular interest to CARE EVC, the relationship between gender outcomes in informal community spaces supported by INGOs, and gender outcomes in formal local government budgeting and planning, requires further exploration. This study aims to contribute towards filling this gap by gaining a clearer understanding of the factors and pathways that lead women and girls to be included in local governance processes in fragile settings. It does so via two country case studies, the findings of which are presented next.

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11 See ‘Leading from the South’ program at: https://www.leadingfromthesouth.org/
3. Country Case Studies

3.1 Women and Girls’ Engagement in Formal and Informal Development Planning and Budgeting Processes at the Local Level in Burundi

3.1.1 Background to the Burundi context

Fragility, conflict and women’s rights
After having gained independence from Belgian rule in 1962, Burundi’s monarchy was transformed into a republic in 1966. Its post-independence history is one of on-going conflict, with ethnic dimensions, preventing the country from rising from poverty (United States Institute of Peace 2011).
Progress on gender in Burundi is rooted in the 2005 constitution that enacts international instruments promoting gender equality (e.g., CEDAW). Burundi also adopted a gender policy (most recent for 2012-2025) and a UNSCR 1325 action plan (2012-2016). The revised penal code (2009/2013) and GBV law (2016) criminalize sexual and gender-based violence, including marital rape. The family code has been under revision since 2004, in particular to grant succession rights to women, but still awaits enactment by Parliament. Since 2009 a 30% women quota applies to communal councils, the Parliament, the Senate and political party lists, either by suffrage or co-opting. Municipalities led by women often score high in the annual communal performance evaluations conducted by the Ministry of Decentralization.

Yet, women’s voices and priorities are underrepresented in the current peace dialogue. The current crisis is exacerbating the fragility and increasing the likelihood of new cycles of violent conflict. This will likely heighten vulnerabilities of women and throw-back progress made on women-rights (Bishop 2017). Patriarchal norms expect that women obey their husband, conduct domestic work, and make them susceptible to domestic violence (47%) and spousal sexual abuse. The dominating role of patronage in politics hinders women in higher decision-making positions from automatically standing for women’s rights (Browne 2014) or representing the voice and needs of rural women.

Spaces of (in)formal planning and budgeting

Under the decentralized administration (2005) communes spearhead five-year local planning and budgeting: the Communal Community Development Planning Process (PCDC). Currently third generation PCDCs (2019-2023) are under development, for which gender guidance has been provided for the first time. As a formal space the PCDC was object of this study, alongside hybrid spaces such as regular colline meetings, water and community health committees, and the Mixed Security Committee (CMS) that bring together security actors, municipal authorities and civil society to prevent and respond to security incidents. Finally, two informal EVC spaces were included: the Community Score Card (CSC) for joint assessment and lobby on legal and health GBV services and marriage registration (EVC focus in Burundi) and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) that stimulate women to launch (small) economic enterprises.

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15 Burundi’s administrative levels are: Province, Commune, Zone, Colline.

16 The PCDC is reflected in the Burundian constitution (art. 267, 2005) and law 1-016 of 20/04/2005 on communal organization. The first generation of PCDC covered 2009-2013, followed by a second generation PCDC from 2014-2018. The PCDC process aligns with three important national policies: Vision Burundi 2025, the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and the Burundi priorities of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The process involves preparations, participatory diagnostics, thematic discussion and reflections, action planning and budgeting.

17 Since the 2015 political crisis, CNDD-FDD party politics and in particular the youth league (Imbonerakure) increasingly influences the CMS, in some locations going as far as overruling national police. Human Rights Watch has on several occasions stated that the Imbonerakure are, since the start of the 2015 crisis, responsible for numerous killings, disappearances, abductions, acts of torture, rapes, and arbitrary arrests. Source: Ngendakuman, Evrard (2017) Burundi Events of 2017. Human Rights Watch.
3.1.2 Burundi main findings

Women’s participation in (in)formal planning and budgeting

Increased participation but confined to specific spaces

Respondents say that women’s participation in local governance structures has gradually increased, except for youth/girls as they lack social status: “you have to be married: no household, no say”. Women mostly participate in informal associative spaces that are linked to topics considered to be the domain of women such as VSLA, peace clubs and health committees. Women and men are somewhat equally present in colline meetings, given physical proximity. Female chef de colline are still rare (6.3%, USAID 2017) as the 30% women quota does not apply to colline level. Economically independent women are preferred for such positions, “as they are less prone to corruption”. Some examples of increased participation of women in PCDC committees were noted. Also gender expertise in the planning teams is improving, and a gender review of PCDC annual evaluation criteria is currently conducted by CARE.

Objectives that women have for their participation

Women participate in (in)formal planning and budgeting spaces out of individual or local interests. VSLA participants aim to raise the economic position of their family or become economically independent: “A woman should not always be supported by her husband, she also has eyes, ears, hands and feet”. Through colline meetings women aim to assist victims of family conflict, domestic violence and other forms of GBV. Others seek information about what happens in their community, or out of curiosity. Making friends and ‘belonging’ was also mentioned. Finally, some women said to participate in formal spaces to prove their ability, to “combat fear and shame” and to challenge male authority. A few said to participate to prepare their candidacy for the 2020 elections or to improve the governance of the country.

Women mostly influence on ‘women’s issues’

Within associations and VSLAs women’s influence extends to motivating other women to adhere, to manage savings/loans, and to address problems within the group. VSLA members all report positive economic changes. For example, a poor widow is now member of 11 VSLAs and financially contributes to all of them. Also, many women autonomously created other VSLAs. In all locations visited the number of active VSLAs had increased over the past few years. In semi-formal spaces (ex. colline meetings) influence is mostly exercised by female council members and active local women leaders on locally relevant ‘women themes’, such as education, health, drinking water, and socio-economic issues. In particular conflict resolution and SGBV were often referenced as a topic of influence (over 50% of 34 reported changes).

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18 Members are either council members, or professional staff of different sectors. In Vumbi their number raised to 7 from 2, among 20; and in the four communes of Kirundo, Bukirasazi, Gitega and Giteranyi, on average 42% of the members is woman.

19 The Ministry of Communal Development evaluates all communes on an annual basis (April-July) and publishes results.

20 A study by CARE Canada also shows VSLAs increase household resilience to absorb shocks. Guy, I. & Yakeu, S.E (2017) Promoting opportunities for women’s economic empowerment in rural Africa. Agriteam Canada consulting.
Where women and girls still lag behind
Influence over topics that are considered to be the domain of men
Men have greatest presence in formal governance structures, such as political parties, colline councils, communal councils and the CMS and mostly influence politics, security and land; all topics over which women have no control. Regarding land, this is mostly caused by the fact that Burundi legislation offers no official recognition of land succession rights for women and security related matters are perceived to be too risky, physically hard, or too complex for women. Women’s weak influence over politics is explained by the fact that women prefer more ‘simple topics.’ Interestingly, this viewpoint was uniquely shared by male respondents. Also, it was mentioned that the Imbonerakure (male youth of the ruling party) increasingly intervene in GBV/conflict cases, sidetracking women’s influence.

The link between local level participation and influence over policy
Concrete examples of women influencing PCDC content or general policy were not given. Women said to lack information about the PCDC process or related meetings. Also, as women are underrepresented in formal decision-making structures (ex. conseil colline, conseil communal, political parties) and sectoral functions that are predominantly involved in the PCDC process, there is a disconnect between how local needs and priorities inform higher level planning and budgeting. Also, communal administration is generally felt to be remote from everyday life (Gaynor 2011).
Drivers of inclusion in local governance processes

VSLAs as an important stepping stone to broader participation

Women join VSLAs because they see the economic benefits in other women or are sensitized by CARE and local authorities. Within VSLAs women are informed about other types of community meetings and benefit from capacity support on lobbying, leadership, human rights and gender and GBV (also offered by for example Dushirahamwe, CDFC, World Vision). This raises women’s self-esteem for public participation and VSLA income allows women to buy basic necessities for public participation, such as soap and clothes. “You cannot show up wearing an old dress or wearing the same dress twice”. VSLA membership is hence a stepping stone towards participation in other structures. “Joining a VSLA got me elected as council member, as the network of VSLA women appreciated me a lot”.

Women role models are inspirational

Local women that lead by example are a role model to others. For example, women who joined multiple VSLAs and saw their income significantly grow and receive a lot of respect from the community. Respondents also specifically referenced female chef de colline as being “courageous, decisive and appreciated”. “As our colline is directed by a woman, the other women are eloquent and have the desire to express their ideas”. Because of patriarchal scrutiny women leaders also feel pressure to behave like a role model, avoiding mishaps. Although role models beyond the colline level are also inspirational, such as female Administrators or communal council members, their connection with local women appears to be weaker. No specific evidence was found on peer support offered by female role models.

Marital approval and support

Except for widows, all women interviewed that participate in a given space asked for marital approval. Data shows that the most successful women have a supportive husband, like this man: “I have hopes that [my wife’s] participation in the VSLA opens up doors. As she gets used to sharing her opinion, maybe she will be elected into the colline council one day”. And a father about his daughter: “I can see that the VSLA prepares her for a bright future. She is now interested in the colline meetings and [...] even gives advise if I quarrel with my wife”.

National legislation on 30% women quota and the role of local authorities

What furthermore contributes to women’s participation is the national legislation on the 30% women quota. All authorities and local leaders interviewed say they align with it, although many respondents feel it is ‘practice by obligation’. “If it wasn’t for the law no women would be part of decision-making structures in our community”. The main reason for this is that women’s participation conflicts with male interests to hold onto positions of relative power.

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21 Two out of the three EVC communes studied are led by a female Administrator, and the third male Administrator is known to be gender-progressive.
Barriers for the inclusion of women and girls in local governance processes

Socio-cultural perceptions and norms

Socio-cultural perceptions and norms are still the main obstacle to women participation. Women that are absent from associations/VSLA are usually obstructed by their husbands who fear their wife will overpower them, will neglect household tasks, or become unfaithful; all elements conducive for conflict, divorce, and mocking by the community. These fears were only expressed in KIs and FGDs held with men/male authorities. Women themselves hold beliefs of inferiority and have low self-esteem. Others say they do not participate because they lack the means (for VSLA participation) or lack time because of household activities and agricultural work.

Timing, location and full information about meetings

Another obstacle pertains to the timing of formal meetings. Colline meetings are mostly held in the morning when women are still occupied with domestic or agricultural work. Transport and child care limitations are a barrier for women to attend higher level commune level meetings. Interestingly, a previous project by Twitezimbere supported community kindergartens, whereby women organized care for neighboring children. This raised the participation of women in events further away from home. Women also lack full information about governance processes, in particular the preparation, implementation and evaluation phases of the PCDC, hampering them to play an active role.

Election and nomination processes

As mentioned, participation in VSLA and colline meetings are a stepping stone for being elected into formal decision-making structures such as the colline council or sectoral government structures (ex. CCDC, Forum des Femmes). Female candidates have however limited means for campaigning (or ‘propaganda’, as locally called) and face male competition who buy votes (pots de vin). Hence, the number of female candidates is generally much higher than those elected. Nomination of women in the CMS is low as security is seen as a men’s issue. But also, CMS members are chosen from other leadership positions, in which women are underrepresented.

3.1.3 Burundi Conclusion

At colline level an increased number of women is active in associative structures. Especially VSLA offer them an income and skills that serve as a stepping stone towards participation in colline meetings, from where some women are elected into the colline councils and nominated into committees tied with the PCDC process. Participation on colline level is however not paired with greater space for women to access decision-making spaces at higher administrative levels. Influence of women is mostly restricted to local-level ‘women’s issues’ (GBV and conflict resolution in particular). Influence over male domains such as security, land, politics is weak, including influence over the PCDC process.

A few factors especially enable women to participate: access to information about structures and meetings, the ability to follow role models (individual agency), a supportive husband, access to capital (VSLA), and positive consideration by the community. Also, national legislation on the 30% quota has been very influential in pushing authorities to promote and respect women’s inclusion, although a true gender transformative mindset among authorities is still missing. CSO support on economic opportunities and leadership skills is also important.

The main obstacles for women’s greater inclusion include a lack of means, challenges faced in election processes, and persisting patriarchal norms. Closer collaboration/coalition between CSOs should be sought to further address obstacles that women face in the process of accessing, participating and influencing planning and budgeting processes. Alternative intervention strategies that take a local and household-focused approach are recommended, as social norms are strongest felt at that level and these ‘spaces’ are still least politicized. Also, more attention needs to be directed towards fully informing women and girls about the entire PCDC process.
3.2 Women and Girls’ Engagement in Imihigo Planning and Budgeting Processes in Rwanda

3.2.1 Background to the Rwanda context

Imihigo origins
Imihigo (i.e., performance contract) refers to the annual planning and budgeting process between central and local governments in Rwanda. This process is a modernization of an Indigenous practice that has been institutionalized into government planning since 2006. A key component of the decentralization policy, Imihigo has led to enhanced upward accountability, but authorities are now focused on improving on downward accountability between leadership and citizens (Government of Rwanda, 2011). Imihigo takes place across and between all government levels, within organizations, and even within families.

Imihigo planning and budgeting cycle
Imihigo, in coordination with the national planning cycle is done annually. This planning cycle for Imihigo starts at village level and makes its way to the central level to be signed by the mayor of each district and the President. At each level, some ideas are included in the plan and others will be dropped, typically based on central government priorities, sector targets, urgency of need, and available budget. The councils at the different levels approve the final set of ideas that are raised before sending them up to the next level. Local leaders, including the Sector Council Committee and Executive Committee, choose the final three Imihigo projects and create a preliminary budget, then share this with the district.

Once the ideas from the sectors arrive to the district level, the district LAs complete a project profiling, budget (which is elaborated upon only at the district level), feasibility study, and the annexes including the gender budget...
statement (GBS). The GBS is one of the annexes required of all Imihigo plans and it is used to determine if the plans are gender responsive. It requires district planners to look for things such as the number of women who will be involved in the implementation of the plan’s activities and other issues of gender sensitivity (e.g., number of women employed during the construction of a road).

Spaces and mechanisms for Imihigo participation
According to the Constitution of Rwanda, Article 48: “All Rwandans have the duty to participate in the development of the country...” (Government of Rwanda, 2015). Thus, citizen participation in development is not optional, but rather mandatory. One of the mechanisms is Imihigo, but the concept of Imihigo does not articulate precisely how citizens should participate (Never Again Rwanda, 2018).

There are different mechanisms for citizen participation, though there is not one dedicated space for Imihigo planning at the local level. Spaces where citizens can directly participate include community assemblies (inteko z’abaturage), community works (umuganda), and the Parents’ Evening Forum (Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi). Indirect citizen participation mechanisms are the local councils, National Youth Council (NYC), National Women’s Council (NWC), National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), and civil society organizations (CSOs) (Never Again Rwanda, 2018). As a result, studies report mixed results on the percentage of women who have participated in Imihigo planning as somewhere between half (Administrative and Governance (A&G) Services, Ltd., 2018) to over 80 percent (Makuza, 2011).

Figure 1: Imihigo Planning Cycle

STAGE 2, highlighted in an orange box, is the phase where citizens can participate in Imihigo planning processes. This is the primary time when all inputs from the community level are incorporated into Imihigo, which constitutes a limited time horizon.

22 The GMO is lobbying for the GBS to be weighted at 5% in the Imihigo evaluation; as of 2019, GBS is not a component of the evaluation criteria. This proposal is currently in negotiation. Since GBS is not a part of the evaluation criteria, it is typically given little priority by district planners. If it is added to the evaluation criteria, the GMO will be able to look at how the GBS was planned and how it was actually used.
3.2.2 Rwanda Findings

Women’s participation in Imihigo planning and budgeting
Almost everyone who participated in the FGDs had participated in at least one meeting where Imihigo planning was taking place, except for the girls in Kamonyi and Muhanga where none or few (respectively) of them had taken part. Women, men, and girls in all districts reported learning about the Imihigo planning meeting through community mobilizers the same day or the day before. Some respondents agreed that more advance notification would increase their likelihood of participation. Respondents said women’s and youth groups may be reached out to directly regarding upcoming meetings, though not always.

Because there is not one dedicated space for Imihigo planning, the regular community meetings (inteko z’abaturage) were cited as the most influential spaces for getting an idea into the Imihigo plan. Community meetings are utilized for making all community decisions—including but not limited to Imihigo. The Community Score Card was raised as the best space in two districts (Nyanza and Muhanga) by girls because they feel freest during the CSC to raise their ideas. Other spaces that people indicated as most influential included: inama z’amasibo, National Youth Council, Parents’ Evening Forum, and Umuganda.

Women and girls are raising ideas across all three Imihigo pillars
Each activity in an Imihigo plan falls under one of the three pillars (Economic, Social, and Governance). Most believe that women tend to focus on social transformation activities, and based on the data, this is accurate, but women are also raising issues related to all pillars. Some examples of women’s influence include:

- Getting the interest reduced for women who ask for loans from banks or removing the requirement of collateral for especially vulnerable women;
- Expansion of water plants;
- Setting up voluntary savings and loans groups;
- Instituting specialized care for GBV and domestic violence victims at health centres;
- Bringing electricity to communities or specific spaces;
- Constructing Early Child Development centers;
- Fix the Ubudehe classification (i.e., social class) of many citizens since many were incorrectly classified.

By analyzing the 2018-2019 final Imihigo plans for each of the three districts, the most striking finding is the low percentage of the total budget allocated to the needs cited as those raised by women.

Women and girls still report not actively participating, despite knowing they have the right
Of all respondents, the only people who reported not participating in Imihigo planning were women and girls, mostly due to having other obligations (or lack of interest or information for girls). It is possible (but not certain) that some men also have not participated but chose not to report accurately due to the social norm that men should be attending government meetings. Respondents in all districts also agreed that girls’ attendance at Imihigo planning meetings is the lowest.

Since one of the commonly cited reasons why women cannot participate to the same extent as men is because of their availability, the groups identified their preferences for when Imihigo meetings should be held. The estimated best time for each district is based on the closest time that all respondents cited:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kamonyi</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhanga</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyanza</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although all agreed that women have the right to be heard and that they are given the opportunity to speak if they choose, most also agreed that women tend to speak less than the men. Some participants felt that the ideas of women carry less influence than those of men. Despite that, overall most felt that men and women both do speak but youth do not, especially girls. Some youth have said that when elders show willingness to work with them and ask them their opinions, then they are more likely to feel as if they belong.
Some of women and girls’ needs are not included in Imihigo plans

The examples that came up most frequently were related to one of three themes: access to financial resources, teen motherhood and street children, and GBV and domestic violence. A couple of respondents expressed that if ideas are left out of the plan or not implemented, it is due to a shortage of resources but not because the idea was raised by a woman. For instance, an idea may be planned for, but it will be superseded by a more urgent priority.

The data points toward exclusion of ideas based on misalignment with central government priorities (regardless of who raised the ideas), but also to the smaller percentage of the total budget that is dedicated to the issues often raised by women and girls.

Community members – regardless of gender or age – are not participating in Imihigo budgeting

None of the participants felt that grassroots citizens (regardless of gender or age) typically participate in Imihigo budgeting. Of all nine FGDs, only two people (one man, one woman) participated in Imihigo budgeting processes because of an official role they possessed (e.g., member of the sector council). Instead, Imihigo budgeting is proposed, revised, and finalized exclusively by sector- and district-level elected representatives including councils, and district technicians. Although, at least one woman or local authority from each district reported the inclusion of women in elected positions and therefore, felt that the inclusion of women in the Imihigo budgeting process has been achieved as a result of women holding elected positions.

The right to participate in Imihigo budgeting is not well understood by citizens or LAs. Some discrepancies emerged: some FGD participants—primarily men—said it is not a right of citizens (instead, it is a responsibility of representatives), others—primarily women and LAs—thought it was a right, but the majority of participants overall did not know. LAs confirmed that the public is not invited to attend Imihigo budgeting meetings. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning’s guidelines outline the citizens’ role as identifying their needs, but also suggests that citizens may attend many different government meetings to provide input if desired. Some respondents felt that they would like to be given the opportunity to participate, while others felt that they would not have the capacities in budgeting needed.

Drivers of inclusion for women and girls in Imihigo processes

**Imihigo participation is more than a right – it is a duty as a citizen**

The right of all citizens to participate in the country’s development processes is guaranteed by the Rwandan Constitution. Therefore, the most significant enabler of women and girls’ participation in Imihigo planning is the existing legal framework, even though it does not directly outline Imihigo planning and budgeting as mandatory for participation. Contrary to Imihigo budgeting, respondents across the three districts were aware of their right to participate in Imihigo planning and many viewed participation as their responsibility as a community member, though they did not feel the same about budgeting.

**Women serve as role models and inspirations to each other**

Many women are inspired by other women they have seen in their communities or know about due to regional or national fame who have demonstrated the capacity to not only participate, but to influence and find personal success as a result. Having these women as role models helps other women to gain confidence to participate in Imihigo planning. Girls in Nyanza felt that by seeing women in decision making positions, other women and girls are more motivated to participate in government programs.

**Participating in Imihigo meetings can strengthen capacities and provide insight into beneficial policies and information**

Some men and women spoke of the advantage of attending the planning meetings as a way to gain knowledge about initiatives and policies of the government that one may not know otherwise. Some women have been able to capitalize on this knowledge and further their own interests or the interests of the community. Being present in these meetings has taught women about how to plan and budget, which has positively impacted their own personal well-being. A respondent highlighted that these learnings, particularly around budgeting and finance, remain largely reserved for the women who are educated; those without education are still afraid to participate.

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23 In the 2017/2018 Imihigo Evaluation Report, three major changes have been adopted in all Imihigo evaluations going forward including central and district coherence; so, Imihigo planning should incorporate central priorities going forward as districts will be assessed against it.
Governmental and CSO actors act as mobilizers to empower and inform

Government Councils, local NGOs and INGOs, and community groups have been a significant factor of change toward increasing the participation and influence of women and girls in Imihigo planning. As mobilizers, these actors work to inform and organize citizens to attend Imihigo planning meetings and respondents in all districts reported one or more of these groups to be a key mobilization method. Women and girls specifically spoke of women’s associations, savings groups, and cooperatives as some of the ways they have been mobilized to participate in Imihigo planning. Women and girls who have participated in Imihigo planning said these groups informed them about meetings and encouraged their participation. CSOs help in the process of meeting with citizens, especially at the more localized level where sector, district, and central-level authorities do not reach. Some have reported that it is only Every Voice Counts and COCOF that are mobilizing women at the grassroots level.

Capacity strengthening has helped to better consolidate and incorporate the ideas of women and girls into Imihigo planning

Many local authorities feel that Imihigo is still not well understood, especially at the village level, which impacts participation. All categories of respondents felt that understanding has increased largely due to trainings and information being distributed by CSOs and some LAs. In general, CSOs help to train women to better understand the issues their community is facing and mobilize them to act upon them. CSOs such as CARE and PFTH, through the EVC program, organize pre-consultation meetings to help women gather and organize their ideas and collectively share them in front of the public at the Imihigo meeting. Girls in Nyanza and women in Muhanga spoke also of the saving groups as a way to participate in consultation meetings.
Barriers for the inclusion of women and girls in Imihigo processes

Citizens and local authorities lack certain skills needed for Imihigo planning and budgeting

Both some citizens and some local authorities lack certain skills such as literacy, public speaking, budgeting, and understanding of Imihigo process and gender issues. Many described a lack of confidence of women whereas others were more explicit about issues such as illiteracy that drive the perception of a lack of capacity. Many local authorities and girls in focus groups said that women and girls do not feel confident and that stops them from participating or speaking during meetings. Some of the local authorities, including the women, do not necessarily have the skills and capacities needed to perform their duties fully. For instance, they may not have the technical skills for some planning and budgeting responsibilities.

Availability and logistics pose challenges to Imihigo participation

The most commonly cited harmful norm is that women alone should take care of the chores at home such as cooking and cleaning. One woman said, “In daily life we have many home activities ... we don’t have time to waste.” As a result, women are busier and unable to spend time participating in community meetings. There are other reasons that women may not be able to attend including being forbidden by their husbands, risking violence for participating, not having clean clothing to wear, or being pressured by their church not to attend. Even if women do not attend, some feel that their views are being represented by their husbands or village leaders. This perspective, despite appearing to embrace the influence of women, exemplifies the persistence of patriarchal norms.

Many still believe women should not or cannot speak in public

Many women in all three districts do not speak during Imihigo planning meetings, even if they do attend, which limits their ability to influence the planning process. They do not speak for a variety of reasons including the lack of confidence as described, but also due to lingering cultural beliefs that a woman should not speak in front of men. Also, women who are very poor face an even harder time being respected in community meetings and are typically unable to provide suggestions or influence decisions. Some women said that if a poor woman who looks unwell (e.g., unhealthy, dirty clothing) is speaking at a meeting, members of the community may even laugh at her.

Deferring decision making is common

Other persistent social norms exist around who should make decisions. Some women feel that “strong” decisions (i.e., crucial, significant) are only for men. Many women feel that only the leaders should make decisions or that leaders’ opinions are always right. Some leaders even cited this as an issue and they deliberately choose not to give opinions or speak at all during meetings because when they do, the conversation and debate amongst participants will end. Conversely, one CSO representative finds that LAs and opinion leaders may deliberately limit citizen participation in Imihigo processes, because of the belief that citizens do not have sufficient knowledge, or because they worry that citizens will raise issues that the LAs do not have the ability to incorporate into the plan, due to conflicting priorities or budgetary reasons.

Local authorities face time barriers and encounter poor participation and logistical issues

LAs are also extremely busy during Imihigo planning periods and often do not have enough time to meet with every community. There are logistical challenges, such as Imihigo planning meetings lacking physical space to accommodate all the citizens in the meeting, or citizens not learning about the meetings due to poor communication mechanisms. Budgetary constraints limit the amount of outreach that LAs can do as well. At times, participation is so poor that leaders have postponed meetings. At other times, citizens elect not to participate because they do not feel leaders are listening to their ideas or giving them feedback on Imihigo planning.

Feedback mechanisms are lacking

It is not transparent where the ideas raised at the village level are adopted or rejected along the planning process. Feedback to the community about Imihigo plans is not prioritized, so community members do not know why some of their ideas raised at the village level did not make it into the final district plan. One girl illustrated, “When we raise our issues and nothing is done, we think that our leaders did not care about us. It is good when they come back and explain to us why they did not do this and the barriers they faced.” An official mechanism for providing feedback to the community on the Imihigo (planning or budget) process does not exist. The responsibility to monitor the progress of Imihigo and report back to the communities lies with elected representatives and representatives of the NWC and NYC, though CSOs could start playing a bigger role in bridging this gap.
Ideas from the village level can be “lost” along the way
The ideas are compiled and harmonized at the village level, cell, sector, and finally district. The village and cell leaders record and share ideas on pieces of paper to the sector level, and the ideas are not digitalized into the tracking system by the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA) until much later in the planning process. Therefore, it is not always clear which ideas are coming from villages, versus which are coming from higher-level authorities. Also, planning is done in local language and then translated into English and sometimes translation during different phases results in ideas losing their real meaning.

CSOs face limitations in their ability to implement
Although the primary data collected did not surface this concern, the secondary data review surfaced important possible barriers to inclusion. CSOs must work toward the government’s developmental priorities according to Rwanda’s INGO law, Article 4 (Rwanda Directorate General of immigration and Emigration, 2015). Therefore, CSOs working to increase the participation of women and girls in Imihigo should not face any legal limitations to this activity. There may be challenges, on the other hand, if there are instances where the needs or ideas of women and girls do not align with the government’s developmental priorities. In this case, CSOs may struggle to operate freely to increase the influence of women and girls in Imihigo planning and budgeting.

3.2.3 Rwanda Conclusion
The study highlights some important findings such as the growth in women’s participation in Imihigo planning and the universal lack of engagement with Imihigo budgeting. It is evident that there is much to be celebrated in Rwanda in terms of progress of inclusion, while many opportunities still exist to enhance influence and minimize barriers to inclusion. Governmental and CSO actors have played a key role in enhancing inclusion through provision of capacity strengthening for local authorities to incorporate gender considerations into planning and for women and girls to better exercise their rights and learn to speak publicly. CSOs (and programs such as EVC) have played a key role in the empowerment of women and girls to raise their voices, mobilization, and in the facilitation of community dialogues.

Despite this progress, further development of women and girls’ ability to participate—but more importantly to influence—is needed. Participation alone does not guarantee that women and girls can influence the content of Imihigo plans, so identifying pathways for collective influence rather than individual participation may be more effective for the incorporation of women and girls’ needs into Imihigo plans and budgets. EVC and other programs may consider deeper focus on raising collective voices rather than increasing numbers of participants in Imihigo planning. Addressing negative social norms, for instance, may help reach equality in participation and influence of both genders. EVC may have a role in designing interventions aimed at changing such norms. Also, the central government still has strong influence over Imihigo planning due to its set priorities and targets. Thus, navigating barriers of structural inclusion by looking beyond Imihigo at other complementary planning processes (that may be less top-down) may be necessary to ensuring the needs of women and girls are addressed.

Finally, the Government of Rwanda (e.g., MINECOFIN and MINALOC) needs to address participation in Imihigo budgeting directly. To truly realize the Constitutional right of citizens’ participation in the development of their country, tackling the perceived ambiguity of Imihigo budgeting processes and deciding how citizens can exercise their right in this phase is essential. The outcome of this decision may also impact the need for capacity strengthening in budgeting skills of both local authorities and other citizens. The study recommends to more deeply institutionalize the bottom-up process that Imihigo is meant to be by empowering women, addressing social norms, raising awareness of inequalities and gender, building capacities, facilitating timely dialogues, clarifying spaces for decision making, and improving communication and feedback. The next section of this report addresses these recommendations in more detail.
4. Global conclusion & recommendations

The findings from the two case studies show that there are significant opportunities and also benefits for women and girls to engage in public life at local levels in Burundi and Rwanda. At the same time, there remain barriers in place, particularly for the translation of access and participation into influence. In addition to identifying the level of social inclusion that has been achieved, the case studies also sought to understand the factors that have either positively influenced or inhibited change. To conclude, formal policies, laws and government structures increase opportunities for women and girls to access and even participate in local decision-making, but full inclusion remains constrained by social norms, broader political economy dynamics and other factors affecting women and girls, including socioeconomic status and education. The factors and pathways affecting social inclusion in local governance identified in this study are summarized below.

The drivers of increased inclusion of women and girls in local decision-making were identified as:

- Better access to information about local government meetings via local authorities and civil society;
- National legislation and policies that enshrine the right to participate, including the 30 percent women’s quota for women in elected positions;
- Females in elevated positions within their community, who act as role models for other women and girls, inspiring them to participate;
- Support from male family members, who are encouraging their wives and daughters to participate because they see the benefits for their families;
- Increased awareness and capacity to engage via trainings conducted by INGOs and their partners, for example pre-consultation meetings with women and girls to help organize and present their ideas and priorities;
- Increased access to capital, social recognition and confidence due to engagement in non-state associative structures like VSLAs;
- Higher education levels, which make it easier for women to take advantage of opportunities to participate in local government planning meetings.

The identified barriers for the inclusion of women and girls in local decision-making included:

- Social norms and beliefs in the public sphere that restrict women’s influence over issues that are considered to be the domain of male decision-making, particularly those that take place in formal political and security spaces;
- Social norms and beliefs in the private sphere, for example fear amongst male family members that the empowerment of their wives or daughters could threaten their position and have negative impacts on their family;
- Timing and location of meetings, which tend to be early in the day when women are engaged in domestic or economic roles, or too far away for them to access easily;
- The perception that it is not possible to further interests in government planning processes, particularly amongst female youth;
- The combined impact of poverty, lack of education and gendered marginalization, which makes the social inclusion of women and girls an intersectional and multidimensional challenge;
- Lack of sufficient legislation in place to protect women’s land rights (in Burundi), which weakens their position in relation to economic decision-making;
- The increasing politicization of local planning and budgeting processes, which makes it hard for women to access influential positions without existing political, social and economic capital;
- Restricted civil society space, which reduces the opportunities and avenues available to pursue empowerment issues and agendas, particularly by women’s civil society movements and associations.

Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, this study makes the following recommendations for increasing the inclusion of women and girls in local governance processes in fragile contexts.
For donors

1. **Support women as active agents in their own pathways towards empowerment** through, for example, partnering with local— and less formalized—women leaders, women’s movements and associations. This includes recognizing the practical importance of access to resources by, for example, providing small grants to cover the running costs of women’s movements.

2. **In designing gender and social inclusion programming more broadly, pay closer attention to the subnational and informal dimensions** of post-conflict state building and reconstruction.

3. **Continue to develop innovative, locally led funding mechanisms** that provide support to women’s movements, associations, women leaders and allies in conflict-affected and fragile settings. These mechanisms should be capable of providing targeted support to less formalized structures and individuals; they must be able to respond to political opportunities to pursue specific agendas as and when they arise.

4. **Understand and address the normative roots of gender inequality and violence, including how they interact.** Taking a normative approach at the local level includes partnering with politically active women’s rights activists and associations. It also involves working with communities, including men, and adolescent boys and girls, to address the social norms that underpin gender inequality through, for example, community dialogue mechanisms and communications strategies.

5. **Take an intersectional approach to gender equality by being more aware of the ways in which socioeconomic status, ethnicity and age interact with gender inequalities.** One way in which external donors and INGOs could address intersectionality is by acting as a broker between elite-driven, urban-based women’s movements and rural grassroots initiatives and groups. Evidence shows that social movements that include and represent different social groups, including different ethnicities and classes, are more likely to make legitimate and successful claims.

6. **Use a gender lens in conflict and political analysis** in order to design programming that is more responsive to the complex and interconnected ways in which fragility, violence, and gender affect governance processes and women’s empowerment. One way for donors to more effectively address this intersection is to apply a gender lens to context analysis tools (e.g. conflict and political economy analyses).

7. **Work with local authorities and governments in fragile settings to improve feedback mechanisms and information sharing** within budgeting and planning processes. The research showed that information relating to the process (e.g. timing and location of meetings) and outcomes (e.g. which priorities get integrated into the budget, which do not and why) could be more effectively shared with communities who have participated in order to strengthen downward accountability.

8. **At the organizational level within donors and INGOs, encourage gender awareness and commitment internally, including amongst top-level leadership.** Establish organizational gender commitments and use robust accountability mechanisms to ensure that they are implemented as intended. Getting gender reflective management structures and approaches right *internally* is the starting point for any donor/INGO intervention that seeks to redress social inequalities.

9. **Underpin programming with the recognition of gender equality as a fundamentally political issue** and apply politically-aware models accordingly. This involves more connected or integrated approaches that address both the technical and political requirements of gender equality agendas. It calls for donor/INGO interventions to partner with targeted individuals and allies within government sectors who are committed to women’s empowerment and social inclusion agendas, alongside technical support for gender equality institutions.
For INGOs

1. **Tackle gender restrictive social norms** by increasing collaboration with individuals and associative structures at the lowest levels, including households. **Focus on men at household level** to raise awareness about the added value of women’s participation in decision-making structures.

2. Strengthen the enabling environment for civil society to pursue women’s empowerment agendas and inclusive development goals by **advocating for increased civic space and democratic rights** in closed political environments. This involves tying efforts to secure legal or policy reforms with politically-aware programming that brokers relationships between key allies across government, civil society and other sectors to form locally driven coalitions for change.

3. Support both **male and female leaders to offer peer support** and coaching of other women and men. For example, in Burundi, make use of the Abatangamuco men\(^\text{24}\) who can target other men at household level, as well as women councilors, who can support younger women (girls and young mothers).

4. Support the ongoing **mobilization and capacity strengthening of women and girls** in local government planning processes through continued support to CSOs and government structures, for example National Youth and Women’s Councils, who are working in these areas.

5. Implement **capacity building for local authorities**, particularly on topics of gender balance, gender rights, and budgeting.

6. Consider **alternative program funding mechanisms** that take a more individual and/or household focused approach, like direct cash transfers. In Burundi, this could be paired with advocacy towards the Burundi government for investment in long-term female economic empowerment.

7. In Burundi, provide support to women’s rights organizations that are advocating on behalf of women’s land rights.

For government and local authorities

1. More strongly invest in offering women and girls at local level **detailed process information and timelines on local government planning and budgeting processes**, including consultations, validation, investment planning, project implementation and evaluation.

2. **Address the practical challenges that women and girls face in accessing spaces**, including the location and timing of meetings. Ensure accessibility of meetings by women and girls, especially for those who are most excluded (e.g. women who are physically disabled, those living in hard-to-reach areas, women living in extreme poverty).

3. Open up **space for dialogue on equal participation** in decision-making by men and women on topics currently dominated by men, for example topics linked to security, local politics/administration and land.

4. Improve feedback mechanisms and accountability to communities by **sharing information on the drafts and finally approved plans and budgets**, including which issues get integrated into the budget, which do not and why. This should extend to **involving women and girls in analyzing draft plans and budgets** and monitoring their implementation, which would strengthen downward accountability

5. **Strengthen social support for women** who want to participate in planning and budgeting meetings beyond the lower administrative levels. This could include household assistance, childcare in the form of community kindergartens, or transport assistance.

6. **Ensure safe and expanded civic space for** civil society organizations advocating on behalf of women and girls.

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\(^{24}\) Supported by CARE, this refers to a movement of rural men that challenge traditional gender-role expectations in their communities through personal change, testimonies and local community outreach activities.
7. Ensure and monitor the application of the new PCDC gender guidelines and upcoming gender criteria for communal performance evaluation in Burundi. Ensure that sufficient gender expertise is present within the PCDC planning teams.

8. In Rwanda, build more time into the Imihigo planning cycle to allow groups that are often excluded to participate, and to enable local authorities to participate in more Imihigo planning meetings and spaces.

9. To address the feedback gap in the Imihigo process in Rwanda, consider a dedicated formalized space for Imihigo planning and budgeting meetings to gather citizen input. Invest in analytical resources (capacity, time, financial means) to bridge the feedback gap between government and citizens on Imihigo plans and budgets.

For local and national civil society organizations

1. Engage in evidence-based advocacy work with central government and local authorities to open up more spaces for all citizens, including women and girls, to participate in local government budgeting. Provide technical assistance to local authorities in analyzing plans and budgets against local priorities, including the integration of gender related concerns and priorities.

2. Understand and address the social norms that negatively impact the participation and inclusion of women and girls in planning and budgeting processes by working with men and boys, including individuals at household level and local authorities.

3. Increase interventions that involve conducting pre-consultation meetings and feedback sessions tied to the Imihigo and PCDC processes, especially with groups of women and girls.

4. Raise awareness on the ways in which poverty and (lack of) education can be drivers of inequalities in the participation and influence of women and girls in local governance processes.

5. Press for the wider application of the 30 per cent women’s quota as a minimum standard, even at lower administrative levels, to help ensure that grassroots women and girls are represented in local planning and decision-making. Encourage gender awareness and commitment to gender equality at all levels of government including local authorities.
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Annex A – Country Methodologies

A.1. Burundi Methodology

Introduction to the research
The research on social inclusion in (in)formal planning and budgeting process took place under the EVC program. This section in the annex briefly introduces the EVC program and outlines the objectives and scope of study.

I.1) Background EVC program
The Every Voice Counts (EVC) program is an inclusive governance program that focuses on the social inclusion of women and girls in fragile settings. Fragile settings are characterized by the existence of imbalanced power structures and non-inclusive governance processes between government, civil society organization (CSOs)/community-based organizations (CBO) and citizens. In fragile settings, especially disadvantaged groups, such as women and youth, lack voice in governance processes. Policies and service delivery are often difficult to access for them or fail to respond to their needs, and the accountability of powerholders towards these groups is very limited. The EVC program seeks to address these realities by contributing to inclusive and effective governance processes in fragile settings through four domains of intervention:

1. Empowering of members of excluded groups, in particular women and youth.
2. Strengthening the advocacy role of civil society organizations from the perspective of influencing policies and practices and holding power holders to account.
3. Strengthening responsiveness of public authorities and other powerholders to the needs of people.
4. Expanding and strengthening the space for dialogue and negotiation between the different stakeholder groups.

EVC is implemented by CARE NL in Afghanistan, Burundi, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia and Rwanda. In Burundi, EVC Burundi advocates to ensure that the 30% quota of women’s participation is respected at community level, it aims for inclusion of women and girls in community development planning and advocates for the completion and implementation of the Gender Based Violence (GBV) law.

EVC is based on certain assumptions of social inclusion. It assumes that the most vulnerable (especially women and girls) must be identified and selected to be directly involved in formal participation processes or to be effectively represented in these processes, and that their inclusion will ensure their voices to be heard and eventually this leads to an improvement in the quality of services and policies.

I.2) Objectives and scope of the study
There is very little data available on how exactly women and girls participate in (in)formal governance spaces that focus on planning and budgeting, and how they perceive their participation. That is why this research, which was conducted in Burundi and Rwanda, aims to respond to the following main research question: What are the factors or "pathways" that contribute to women and girls participating in (in) formal planning and budgeting processes?

The objectives of the research for Burundi are:

- Improve the effectiveness of the EVC program in Burundi, in particular its social inclusion work, and test the underlying assumptions.
- Analyze the different policies and implementation mechanisms ("spaces") in Burundi on the participation of women and girls in (in) formal planning and budgeting processes.
- Evaluate to what extent the specific interventions of EVC Burundi, such as Community Scorecard (CSC), support to Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), peace clubs, and advocacy can influence these (in) formal planning and budgeting processes.
- Based on the EVC program framework, three concepts are central to the analytical process of the study with regards to social inclusion in (in)formal planning and budgeting processes.

Access: Access implies the possibility for women / girls (or other socially excluded groups) to access dialogue and information sharing. The form of access may vary, for example the ability to report ad hoc or regular institutionalized forums, or to be consulted on a specific topic, obtain information, make one's voice heard, or hold accountable to power.
Presence: Presence means institutionalizing the participation of women / girls in decision-making. Here, the focus is on the representativeness of women, for example through quotas in local governments which could in turn also influence qualitative participation.

Influence: Influence means that women are through their access and presence in various governance structures that can have a significant influence on policy making, the functioning of the legal system and the delivery of services. It is at this stage where better accountability to women can be achieved.

According to CARE’s theory of change on transformative leadership and substantive representativeness, it is also important to understand through which pathways and factors change / impact occurs. This study focuses on the pathways and factors that impact the inclusion of women and girls in planning and budgeting processes, all relating to empowerment at different levels:

- **Structure**: The (in)formal institutions that facilitate or limit women and girls’ leadership and participation in public life;
- **Relationships**: The different relationships held by women and girls can hold them back from participation (because of inequalities in power) or facilitate them through support or representation. Relations can include the social/family circle, with a civil society association, between the electorate and a politician or between clients and a public service provider.
- **Agency (power to act)**: This reflects the individual and collective capacity of women and girls to influence governance processes, based on general skills such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, as well as related technical skills (for example, knowledge of key governance processes and sectoral expertise).

**Methodology**

The study followed a qualitative research methodology, relying on documentation analysis, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FDGs). These addressed the specific examples of spaces or mechanisms in which women take part, which were sampled across locations and as per their relevance to the context and the EVC program (previous section). This section briefly provides further background on the research methodology (process and timeline, data collection and analysis methodology, and the challenges observed).

II) Sampling of the spaces and locations studied

The CARE Burundi team was involved in proposing the spaces and locations to be studied, in order to maximize relevance to EVC and the general context. The different formal and informal spaces chosen to be studied are as much as possible to be dealt with as ‘cases’, specifically looking at the pathways and factors that are specific to each space/mechanism (given the large number of spaces included, case specific analysis has not always been possible and instead more generic analysis on pathways and factors was done). Another interest was to look at their interconnections, and in how far participation in informal spaces also influences participation in more formal spaces.

III.1) Process and timeline

The study was coordinated by an international consultant in collaboration with four Burundian researchers (two men, two women) and a CARE Burundi staff member. In May 2019 the ToR and data collection tools were developed, tailored to the Burundi context. These were first translated into French, and later on in Kirundi as well. Between 3 and 5 June 2019 the Burundi research team was trained on the data collection tools and methodologies. The session also served to further specify the sampling of informants, divide tasks across the team and agree on relevant deadlines. The international consultant conducted KIIs in Bujumbura with Data collection in the field took place between 13 and 21 May 2019. Final transcriptions were received by the international consultant on 11 June. A draft report was delivered mid-June, and after feedback from CARE Burundi the final version followed by the end of June.

III.2) Data collection and analysis methodologies

The international consultant conducted a documentation review of literature, policies and other relevant documents on social inclusion in Burundi. Two types of documents were looked at: i) Research reports, articles and other grey literature that is accessible online/internationally. ii) Documents related to inclusive governance mechanisms that were available in Burundi. The communal plans (PCDCs) of the communes that were visited were specifically targeted. Research reports produced by local civil society organizations were also studied, and a few relevant policy related documents on decentralization and gender.

On each research site different focus group discussions (FGDs) (women, men, mixed youth) have been held with approximately 10 people per group discussion (see the targeting framework in section 3.3). Respondents were mainly targeted because they participate in the by the study targeted mechanism. At colline level all of these three
FGD were organized, on commune level only the FGD with women was held. Where time allowed for it, a FGD with women that did not participate in the relevant mechanisms was also organized (3 FGDs in total).

As for the key informant interviews (KII), the international consultant conducted interviews in Bujumbura with a selection of State Authorities, CSOs, INGOs and diplomatic representation (ex. Ministry of Decentralization, Forum des Femmes, GIZ, Cooperation Suisse, Royal Netherlands Embassy, and CSOs like COCAFEM, MIPAREC, Dushirahamwe, CAFOB, AFRABU, Twitezimbere). These interviews aimed to obtain general perspectives on factors associated with the participation in PCDC in particular. In the field, one or two women per research site who participated in the focus group were interviewed on an individual basis. This helped to get more insight into their point of view and experience. Mostly, the choice fell on a woman who spoke well in the focus group, as well as a woman who was more reserved to express herself in a group. Also, a number of men from the restricted family of some of the women were interviewed (husband, father, brother) were interviewed. In addition, the following respondents were interviewed (due to time restrictions not all of these interviews could be held in each location however).

State authorities: Administrator (commune level), Economic / Social Advisor (commune level) and/ or a representative of the Communal Centre for Family and Development (CCDC);
Local leaders: Chiefs of the colline, Bashingantahe, Religious leader, member of the Burundi Association of Locally Elected Council members (ABELO);
Civil society: CARE implementing partners (MIPAREC / COCAFEMME), another NGO/CSO that intervenes on the theme of governance and/or supports the governance mechanisms targeted for our study, an international NGO active in the area.

For correct and detailed representation of the contributions of KII and FGD respondents, in all meetings people were asked if an audio recording could be made for the sole purpose of transcription of the discussions. For the KII, about 50% accepted to be recorded. For the FGDs, 90% could be recorded. The local team of researchers then transcribed the meetings in a template that was prepared in advance, also allowing room for observations they made and some points on analysis that could be done based on every meeting held. For those respondents that refused to be recorded, notes were manually taken and worked out in the template. The transcripts were uploaded and for the analysis NVIVO software was used. A coding system was applied to the raw data that was as much as possible uniformized across the different country studies.

As for the total sample of respondents: 54 KII and 28 FGDs were held, in which in total 343 people participated. The table below provides an overview of how the respondents were distributed across administrative level, type of data collection methods and targeted subgroups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative level</th>
<th>KII (total #, total participants)</th>
<th>Sub-group</th>
<th>FGDs (total #, total participants)</th>
<th>Sub-group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>8 (15)</td>
<td>Ministry of Decentralization, ABELO, VNG International, GIZ, Cooperation Suisse, EKN</td>
<td>1 (6)</td>
<td>CSOs (COCAFEM, Dushirahamwe, CAFOB, Réseau Femmes et Paix, AFRABU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commune</td>
<td>22 (22)</td>
<td>State authorities: 7 KII, Local authority/leader: 3 KII, Women: 2 KII, Local civil society: 4 KII (1)INGO: 6 KII</td>
<td>2 (20)</td>
<td>1 FGD women (12), 1 FGD men (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colline</td>
<td>24 (24)</td>
<td>State authority: 2 KII, Local authority: 4 KII, Women: 11 KII, Men: 4 KII</td>
<td>25 (256)</td>
<td>14 FGDs women (124), of which 3 FGD with indirect women 6 FGDs men (72), 5 FGDs youth (60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54 KII with in total 61 participants</td>
<td>28 FGDs with in total 282 participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III.3) Limitations
A number of limitations were observed in the research process, which are briefly enumerated below.
**Time restrictions:** The budget for in particular the field research component was very tight. As travel time between locations also needed to be considered, it was not possible to ensure that the same number and type of KIIIs and FGDs were held in each location. Regardless of this the local team of researchers has put in their maximum effort to cover as much ground as possible, working long days. Also, on the side of some participants time restrictions were noted. Especially the KIIIs with local leaders and authorities were often interrupted by people soliciting them. Also, on one colline another INGO held a meeting simultaneously, and as they were promised transport money for that meeting people were in a hurry to go there.

**Transcriptions:** Across the countries it was decided to work with recordings of KIIIs and FGDs. Especially with the KIIIs about half of the respondents refused to be recorded, mostly being wary about the use of their voice for possibly other purposes. This can be explained because of the general (political) context, where people are generally reserved in sharing opinions with people they do not know well. Also, time allocated to the transcriptions in the budget was insufficient from the onset. Practice learned that for an hour-long recording, at least 4 hours were needed for the transcriptions. The fact that only three days were foreseen for transcriptions, has put a lot of strain on the local researchers to get the transcriptions done in time. This also explains the slight delay observed in the completion of all transcriptions, which impacted the start of the analysis and writing.

**Access to respondents:** Access to respondents was generally good because the KIIIs and FGDs were prepared in advance with help of the EVC local partners. No cases where registered where participants did not show up. Two initially scheduled locations could not be visited. At one colline in Giteranyi other activities were going on at the time of the research, therefore another colline was chosen. Also, for one of the collines scheduled to be visited in a non-EVC commune (Bugendana) authorisation for the research was not granted by the local authorities. Instead, a non-EVC colline in an EVC commune was targeted. As most respondents were drawn from spaces EVC collaborates with (in particular VSLA) there is likely some sampling-bias in the findings, as uninformed/non-participant/non-EVC opinion is less represented in the data.

**Limited detail on site-specific spaces:** Although a limited number of spaces were to be studied more in-depth in each of the locations, the way in which the KIIIs and FGDs were conducted, gave way to a more general reflection by participants on a wide array of spaces they know of and/or participate in. This is also caused by the type of targeting of FGD and KII participants. Instead of only inviting participants from the selected spaces (added with some non-participants), CARE and partners seem to have mobilized participants mostly through existing VSLAs. This unfortunately somewhat unbalanced the available data: a lot of information was given on the VSLA process, but for the other spaces selected for the respective location, detailed information on the process of access, participation and influence (concrete examples) were far more limited or absent. Finally, most data has relevance to the colline level, so comparison with the commune in the analysis of data was challenging.

**Pathways:** Linked to the previous point, it proved challenging to reconstitute clear pathways of change in examples of successful participation given in the KIIIs and FGDs. This can be related to time limitations, but also some limitations observed in the qualitative research profile and experiences of the local researchers (as opposed to a strong track-record in the administration of quantitative surveys that their profiles displayed). As a consequence, the sub-questioning and the inclusion of analytical additions in the notes/transcriptions remained somewhat superficial. This is however a general limitation to local researchers in region and is not necessarily specific to the selection process for this particular study.
A.2 Rwanda Research Scope & Methodology

Scope

The Every Voice Counts program is an inclusive governance program, with social inclusion of women and youth at its core. In Rwanda, the program focuses on strengthening the capacity of women and girls, CSOs, and local and public authorities to effectively participate in or enable participation in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes. The EVC program hinges on certain assumptions with regards to social inclusion. First of all, the EVC program assumes that the most vulnerable are known and selected to either directly be part of Imihigo participation processes or be effectively represented in these processes. It also assumes that this participation leads to either women’s voices being heard or women’s direct influencing, and that this process will eventually lead to better quality services and policies. However, there is very little data on how women and youth are actually enabled to engage with these spaces, how they perceive this participation and what they appreciate about it and what they do not. This research is meant to conduct such an appraisal of the quality of this participation in order to test our assumptions and to generate knowledge that will feed our programs.

Aim

This country-level study analyzed the factors that led to, or enabled, women and youth to access, participate in, or influence Imihigo planning and budgeting processes. The aim was to gather a set of ‘cases’ (or examples) across village, sector, cell, or districts of more and less successful attempts (made by women and youth themselves, or by others) to increase the influence of women and youth in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes.

The main research question is: **What are the pathways or factors that enable or inhibit women and girls’ active participation in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes?**

The following set of sub-questions also applied:

**Women & Girls**

These questions address the role of ‘agency’ in the participation of women and girls in local governance processes in fragile contexts. This refers to individual beliefs, expectations and capacities, as well as the collective capacity of women and girls to drive their own pathways towards greater social inclusion.

1) Why do women/girls choose to—or to not—exercise their right to take part in Imihigo processes? When they do participate, what do women/girls appreciate in participating in processes?
2) What does ‘participation’ mean for women and youth engaging in these processes?
3) When women and girls are made more aware of their rights and responsibilities, will they become more motivated to participate in Imihigo processes?
4) What are the main expectations of women and girls in participating in Imihigo? Are the expectations different for planning and budgeting?
5) How are grassroots women and girls included in *each stage* of the Imihigo processes throughout the year?
6) What are the barriers and enablers that prevent or encourage women and girls from participating in Imihigo planning and/or budgeting processes (both informal and formal)?
7) Do women/ youth leaders, or women/ youth-led associations support or enable the participation of women and youth in local governance processes (e.g., through creating new spaces)? What role do they play? Do they face any unique challenges or barriers?
8) Do women and girls who have participated in planning/ budgeting processes feel the Imihigo plans represent their views or do they feel they have been able to influence these processes? If so, how and what enabled them to do so? If not, what was it that prevented them from having influence?

**Structures (formal & informal)**

These questions will address the kinds of formal and informal structures that affect the capacity of women and youth to participate effectively in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes. It addresses the beliefs, attitudes and norms held by others within a social system (e.g., men), as well as the formal policies and structures that shape local governance systems and processes. ‘Local authorities’ can include both state and non-state actors, and will include both political and administrative staff from the village to central government levels.

9) What specific policies should facilitate inclusion? Are these policies implemented fully? If not, why?
10) Do local authorities (both traditional and formal/state) value or appreciate the role of women and girls in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes? If so, how?
11) Do local authorities at the village, cell, sector, and district levels perceive the participation of women and girls in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes to be equal to that of men/ adult men? [i.e., Are there...
12) How do the beliefs held by men and other power holders affect the capacity of women/ youth to engage in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes?

13) Do local authorities at the village, cell, sector, and district levels believe that women and girls have the capacity to freely participate and influence Imihigo planning and budgeting processes? If not, why not? How do these perceptions differ by government level?

14) What roles do local authorities at the village, cell, sector, and district levels play in enabling women and girls to participate in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes more effectively? How do these perceptions differ by government level?

15) Are the local authorities at the village, cell, sector, and district levels currently encouraged to ensure women and girls participation? Are there any factors that could encourage or incentivize (personal interests or external pressure) local authorities to play a more active role in ensuring that women and girls participate in Imihigo budget and planning processes (e.g., specific programs/policies/procedures)? How do these perceptions differ by government level?

16) What are the factors that could enable effective use of the existing spaces for dialogue that are directly or indirectly linked with Imihigo planning and budgeting processes?

17) What do local authorities (both traditional and formal/state) believe are the most appropriate channels for the participation of women and youth in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes?

18) What are the perspectives and recommendations of local authorities to improve linking of village, cell and sector-level planning to district planning and budgeting processes (using the case of community score card and other informal dialogue processes)? How is the monitoring system in place structured (from village to District level) and how does it function?

19) What motivates local authorities to create and/or maintain spaces for dialogue that are directly or indirectly linked with Imihigo planning and budgeting processes?

20) What are currently the most effective spaces at the village level for women and girls to make their voice heard and influence local governance processes, regardless if these spaces are designed specifically for Imihigo or not? Which spaces currently not used in Imihigo planning and budgeting could be promising entry points to target for future work in Imihigo? And why?

21) Does use of the CSC or other citizen engagement tools by women and girls improve downward accountability of local authorities?

22) Does the perception of their own capacity to engage in Imihigo budgeting correlate with LAs choosing to include women and girls in budgeting at that level?

23) What kinds of norms, beliefs and attitudes affect the participation of women and youth in Imihigo processes?

24) To what extent do the expectations placed on women in the private or domestic sphere affect their capacity to engage in public life?

Relations (the role of external & internal support)

These questions refer to the kinds of relations that women and youth have with support structures and systems, which could be both local and global in scale. An obvious example would be the role of civil society actors or groups. These might be formal NGOs like CARE, or informal networks and groups that work with women and youth to increase their participation in local governance processes. In terms of women and youth-led groups, there is a crossover between ‘agency’ and ‘relations’ because agency is also reflected in the collective capacity of women youth to secure their own participation in local governance processes.

25) What role does external support (e.g., skills training, facilitation) have in enabling women and girls to participate in Imihigo budget and planning processes?

26) What type of skills, facilitation and other support do women and girls need to be able to participate in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes? And who is most appropriate to deliver this support?

27) What are the factors that enable CSOs and INGOs to influence inclusivity in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes (using the case of community score card and other informal dialogue processes)? What are the hindrances?

28) What kinds of partnerships and networks facilitate the inclusion of women and youth in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes? How can these partnerships be supported and/or established across different levels of government?

29) What external factors effectively incentivize local authorities and other power holders to ensure that women and youth participate effectively in Imihigo planning and budgeting processes (e.g., specific programs/policies/procedures/ advocacy strategies)?

30) Are there any risks associated with advancing the voice and influence of women/ youth in Imihigo planning and budgeting? Are women/ youth vulnerable to any forms of backlash from within their families, communities, etc. when they are empowered in this way?
Methodology
The research methods included a review of Rwanda specific literature, policies and other relevant documents related to social inclusion. The types of documents reviewed included: 1) research reports, articles, and other publicly-available literature and documentation; 2) EVC reports and documentation; and 3) documents related to governance mechanisms (namely Imihigo) available in Rwanda.

The primary data collection of the case study was gathered exclusively through qualitative methods in Rwanda including key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Three of the districts in which EVC operates were sampled in the case study. The three districts were identified by selecting the first three that began implementation activities in year one. In each district, three focus group discussions of 8-10 participants were held and 11 interviews were conducted. Data collection was conducted in a gender sensitive way, with one FGD of each category in each district level for women, men and boys, and girls. The FGD participants were identified through the support of PFTH. The participants were people who were active in the community already through advocacy groups, local chapters of the NWC/NYC, or other community associations.

The data was collected by eight enumerators under the direction of two data coordinators. In each FGD there were two enumerators – one facilitator and one note-taker. In the KII, one enumerator facilitated the interview. The FGDs and KII were audio recorded in most cases after being receiving consent by all participants. If a participant did not consent to the interview, the interview data was not collected, but this did not occur in any group except for central authorities. If the participant did not consent to the audio recording, then only notes were taken. Following the data collection, the enumerators took notes in Kinyarwanda (the language of the KII and FGDs) and then the notes were translated into English. The only exception was the KII with central government authorities, which were all conducted in English.

The KII were conducted with government authorities at the cell, sector, district, and national levels; civil society (e.g., Profemmes Twese Hamme); religious leaders; opinion leaders; women leaders (from NWC); and youth leaders (from NYC). The KII were identified through purposeful sampling by the CARE Rwanda Country Office, while being mindful of including a diverse sampling by gender, sub-national level, and job classification. In all cases, an invitation was extended to the target group (e.g., government ministry) and the staff of the organization identified the most relevant person to participate based on their job title or responsibilities (e.g., Director of Good Governance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FGDs</th>
<th>Kamonyi District</th>
<th>Nyanza District</th>
<th>Muhanga District</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women (age 30+)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and Boys (age 18+)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls (age 18-29, unmarried)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total FGDs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KII</th>
<th>Kamonyi District</th>
<th>Nyanza District</th>
<th>Muhanga District</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority: district level</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority: village, sector, or cell level</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women &amp; youth community leaders</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional or religious authority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local civil society (e.g., RWAMREC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| International practitioners & global civil society | 2 |
| State authorities                                     | 4 |
| **TOTAL Overall**                                    | **119 people** |

The data was analyzed by one analyst through the qualitative analysis tool, Dedoose. The analyst used deductive coding methods. Primary data collection was triangulated with policy and legal framework documentation, as well as country specific literature on the state of budget planning processes and social inclusion when possible.
Limitations

Sample bias: The participants in the focus groups were all selected due to their involvement with EVC and/or with associations that have some type of leadership role in their communities due to the convenience of the sample. Thus, the participants are more informed about and/or engaged in Imihigo than the average citizen. Most of the central and local authorities interviewed were identified by their respective agencies/ministries rather than by the research team or at random. A letter was sent to the government offices and an interview participant was assigned primarily based on the relevancy of their position (e.g., Director of Good Governance, etc.). Also, each of the three districts in the study receive EVC interventions, so the participants from these districts have received more resources and capacity strengthening than most of the other districts’ citizens and local authorities in Rwanda. Thus, the findings likely skew toward more awareness of Imihigo processes and acceptance of women’s participation and influence than what would be found if the entire population of Rwanda were included.

Audio recording: All of the KIIs and FGDs were audio recorded, transcribed, and then translated. The audio recording helped to enable enumerators to capture everything that was said during the data collection, but it may have influenced the types of responses given. All participants had the right and were given the opportunity to refuse audio recording, but none refused. Therefore, it is possible that the findings skewed more positively because people did not want to be recorded giving critical or negative responses.

Resource restrictions: The budget for the research was limited, resulting in a shorter amount of time for data collection and a smaller sample of FGDs and KIIs that could be conducted. Including travel time, the local enumerators put in long days of data collection to gather as much information as possible. Enumerators were also asked to transcribe and translate the audio recordings. Although the transcriptions and translations were not captured verbatim, the time originally allocated to this step was insufficient. The process took over double the amount of time originally planned due to variable comfort levels with typing speed and English translation. The transcription and translations were originally budgeted to take four times as long as the recording (4 hours for every 1 hour of recording), but the entire process took nearly double the amount of time.

Qualitative capacities: The data collection tools that were designed were too long for the enumerators. The tools were designed to provide many probes and lines of questioning to choose from, but instead of using the tools as a roadmap of possible avenues of inquiry as instructed in the training, the enumerators relied on the tools like a questionnaire. As a result, the data collected did not probe deeply into topics, because the enumerators felt pressured to ask most of the many questions in the tools. The data collected was mostly superficial because the enumerators were not comfortable being selective about probes and knowing when to deviate from the data collection tools to dig deeper into specific, relevant topics.
Annex B – Country contexts & Spaces of Inquiry

B.1. Burundi Study Context & Background

Formal space: PCDC

The most important formal mechanism for planning and budgeting in Burundi concerns the Communal Community Development Planning process (PCDC). The PCDC process is part of the decentralization of development planning, as reflected in article 267 of the Burundian constitution (2005) and law 1-016 of 20 April 2005 on communal organization. The PCDC align with the National Development Plan 2018-2027, Vision Burundi 2025 and the report on the contextualization/prioritization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals for Burundi. The PCDC serves as a tool to enable municipalities to manage local social and economic development and guide related intervention. It is also the only tool that serves as a basis for lobbying/mobilization of funds among development partners, as well as providing guidance to such external interventions. Increasing participation of women and girls in the PCDC is among the three objectives of EVC in Burundi. Therefore, the PCDC process was chosen as the main case study, to be analyzed at all selected communes and hills, so it brings a high degree of comparability.

Every five years, the PCDCs are developed in a participatory manner to identify and reflect the existing needs of community members. This is translated into a plan with proposed actions (projects) and includes the allocation of resources. The process is specified in national guidelines and consists of different stages: preparations (informing community members about the process), participatory diagnoses (through primary and secondary data collected at commune and colline level), and thematic discussions and reflections (making appeal to sectoral experts, among others). The process is usually led by a team of national consultants that are joined by representatives from all key local development sectors (together making up the Communal Planning Team, PCM). Also, the CCDC (Communal Community Development Committee) and local council members are closely involved.

Furthermore, sectorial working groups are established to reflect on specific sector needs/projects. At colline level the PCD process particularly involves the Colline Development Councils (CDC). The PCDC process is not required to meet the 30% quota of inclusion of women, and as women are generally underrepresented in the different local sectors (except for health and education) their participation in the PCM is generally lagging. Currently, new PCDC (2019 to 2023) are developed in all communes, reflecting the third generation PCDC (first generation 2009-2013, second generation 2014-2018). With regards to the PCDC as ‘case’ for the study, emphasis was given to the most recent PCDC process, also looking at participation in the above-mentioned sub-structures/steps that are part of the PCDC process.

Hybrid spaces: Colline meetings and CMS

At colline level, the chief (chef de colline) calls for regular colline meetings to inform or discuss with community members about actualities, and these are generally held on Saturday morning following the obligatory communal labor. Although these meetings are not officially recognized as a mandatory step in the PCDC process, quite often such meetings are used to feed the process, for example by identifying specific projects the community proposes in response to their needs. The meetings are led by the colline council, which is composed of five elected members (the chief being one of them). At the level of colline administration the 30% quota for women does not apply, hence there are many colline where neither the council nor the colline meetings sees significant participation of women. For these reasons this study labels the colline meetings as a hybrid mechanism for planning and budgeting.

Another hybrid structure is the Mixed Security Committee (CMS). The CMS has been established around 2004 as a structure to operationalize the ‘proximity police’, which constituted of a new security philosophy following the Arusha peace agreement. The CMS is operational in all communes, and most often also on colline level. Various security actors (ex. police, army, secret services), municipal authorities, civil society structures and representatives of all societal section (ex. women, youth, handicapped) participate in CMS meetings. It is the CMS’ mandate to monitor and respond to security incidents and needs at local level (with a double role of alert and prevention), with the National Police Force holding the main authority over security interventions in practice (ex. arrests).
Finally, in the non EVC areas that were visited, two additional hybrid spaces were selected: committees that manage water points and community health (comités de gestion des points d'eau, comités de santé communautaire). These spaces are put in place by the communal administration in line with decentralized management of sectoral services. Their operationalization is locally organized in line with specific needs at community level, hence their hybrid nature. These spaces were chosen to be included in the study because it could possibly generate insights into pathways and factors of participation in mechanisms that are installed by local authorities as compared to those that are externally supported (ex. informal CSO spaces).

**Informal spaces supported by EVC: CSC and VSLA**

Furthermore, two informal spaces that are supported by the EVC program were selected for the study. The Community Score Card (CSC) is a social accountability tool aimed at improving participation, accountability, transparency and informed decision-making around the delivery of services. The CSC involves authorities, service institutions and citizens to jointly assess the satisfaction and performance of services and based on the recommendations an action plan is agreed upon. By facilitating this process of evaluation, dialogue and joint planning, the CSC contributes to good governance. The assumption is that through inclusive participation in decision-making around services, the level and quality of its services will also improve. Under EVC the results of these evaluations serve as a lobbying tool to improve service delivery. In Burundi the CSC process is applied to evaluating judicial services for survivors of gender-based and sexual violence, health services for victims of sexual violence, and the process registration of civil marriages.

Finally, CARE stimulates local women to organize themselves into Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) where they can save and invest money for the purpose of launching (small) economic enterprises. The group activities follow a cycle of 9 months, after which the accumulated savings and the loan profits are distributed back to members. By this means savings and loan facilities are made accessible to groups in a community that generally cannot access formal financial services. EVC supports the VSLA with capacity strengthening on leadership and decision-making practices. The EVC hypothesis is that by economically empowering women through VSLAs, they will be able to better participate in/contribute to different community governance spaces of planning and budgeting, including the PCDC process.

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26 EVC (CARE) also supports peace clubs and advocacy networks at the colline level. Although these mechanisms were not chosen as a case study for research, the information that emerges from the related interviews will be taken into account in the analysis and reporting. For the peace clubs the focus lies on women’s participation and their involvement in conflict resolution and mediation within the community. Members are empowered on different topics and methods of conflict resolution and mediation. The topics discussed in peace clubs are also considered in the PCDC process. Advocacy networks use localized lobbying techniques to find solutions to various problems identified in the community. The advocacy network consults with peace clubs and their advocacy agendas are linked to the CSC process.
### Sampling of locations of study

Burundi has three different official levels of decentralized administration: provinces, communes (municipalities) and collines (hills). EVC operates in 8 communes in the provinces of Gitega, Muhinga and Kirundo. Each commune counts 10 collines (hence EVC is active at 80 collines in total).

In line with the intervention level of EVC, the study focused on commune and colline levels. In each of the three provinces one commune was chosen, and within the commune two collines were visited. As the communal level it was also itself an area of study, 9 EVC locations were visited. In addition, three non-EVC hills (in three different communes) were visited, hence in total the study covered 12 locations, as represented in the table below. The choice was mainly motivated by the presence of informal and formal mechanisms of governance that link with the process of planning and budgeting and which will be chosen as a case study (previous section).

The spaces / cases to be studied have been distributed according to the communes/collines. The PCDC process and colline meetings were studied in all locations, whereas the other spaces where distributed across the locations. At commune level, it means that the PCDC process was studied in all three communes, the CMS in two communes, and the CSC in two communes as well. At colline level, the PCDC process and colline meetings were studied at all 9 collines, the CMS on two collines, the VSLA on three collines, and the CSC three collines as well. The water/health management committees were studied on three collines as well. The reality of data collection however not always followed this repartition neatly, as participants also spoke about other spaces, or the questioning was at times insufficiently targeted at the selected spaces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>EVC</th>
<th>Commune</th>
<th>Colline</th>
<th>Space/mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gitega</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Bukirasazi</td>
<td>PCDC process</td>
<td>CMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Migano</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; VSLA; CMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shaya</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; VSLA; CMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Bugendana</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; health and water committees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muyinga</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Giteranyi</td>
<td>PCDC process; CSC</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ruzo</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; CSC</td>
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<td>Giteranyi</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; CSC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Buhinyuza</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; health and water committees</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirundo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Vumbi</td>
<td>PCDC process; CMS; CSC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Vumbi</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; VSLA</td>
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<td>Kigobe</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; CSC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Bugabira</td>
<td>PCDC process; colline meetings; CMS; health and water committees</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>6 communes (of which 3 studied)/9 collines</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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27 As mentioned before, the case study PDCD also puts a focus on the committees and structures that are part of, e.g. CCDC, Communal Planning Team, and the Communal Council.
B.2 Rwandan Context & Imihigo Background

Imihigo began as a strategy for reducing poverty; Rwanda attributes its drastic drop in poverty and rapid increase in national GDP to Imihigo (IPAR, 2015; World Bank, 2018). Rwanda strives to be a middle-income country by 2020 and views Imihigo as a central component in achieving that goal (IPAR, 2015).

Preparation of Imihigo involves three major pillars: economic, social, and governance. Each district, sector, cell, and village proposes projects in these three pillars based on the identified local needs. In theory, village, cell, sector, and district councils approve Imihigo plans before passing them up to the next level for compilation and refinement. In practice, however, the councils often submit the Imihigo to the next level before refining it or influencing changes based on the needs of those they are elected to represent (Never Again Rwanda, 2018). The district finalizes the projects that are aligned with national strategic planning documents (Vision 2020, DDPs, and joint sector reviews) (Never Again Rwanda, 2018).

The Rwandan Constitution affords numerous advantageous rights to women, including their right to participate in the development of Rwanda. There are also ministerial orders in local levels of how Imihigo should be prepared and that it should be based on citizen input. Nationwide, local authorities (LAs) are required to inform the public about implementation and evaluation, but they are not required to involve citizens in Imihigo planning and selecting of priorities, though (Ndahiro, 2015). The Constitution also gives women the right to at least 30 percent of leadership positions at all levels of government from central to village level.

Highlights of some key policies include:

- **National Decentralization Policy**: citizen-centered policy that advocates for active participation and engagement in areas, such as policy formulation and evaluation and has made “stakeholders’ ownership” and “stakeholders’ participation” the key concerns (Never Again Rwanda, 2018).

- **Vision 2020 Umerenge Program**: poverty reduction and public participation strategy of the government with good governance and a capable state at its foundation. Good governance is meant to enable the GoR to further commit to ensuring accountability, transparency, and efficiency as well as empowering citizens to participate in making decisions over issues that affect them (The Hunger Project).

- **Community Development Policy**: emphasizes the discourse of self-reliance and self-development as key drivers of community engagement (Never Again Rwanda, 2018).

- **National Social Protection Policy**: recognizes vulnerable populations – namely people living below the poverty line and women – and the unique risks and challenges they face. The policy urges CSOs to enact longer-term strategies to address their needs, in particular literacy, so they can participate in decision-making processes (CARE Rwanda, 2013).

- **National Gender Policy**: ensures equal participation of women and men in policy design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of public development programs (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, 2010).

- **5th Resolution**: requires institutions to mainstream gender in budgets (LG Consult Ltd, 2017).

- **Organic Budget Law #12**: states that gender is one of six fundamental principles that should govern public finance management, the gender budget statement (GBS) is one of 12 mandatory annexes to submit for approval, and all public entities must submit an annual activity report to MINECOFIN on how plans for gender balance have been implemented (LG Consult Ltd, 2017).

- **Gender mainstreaming plans**: MIGEPROF is working with the sectors in Rwanda to create their own gender mainstreaming plans; currently 10 of the 16 sectors have one.