



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

AN INITIATIVE OF
THE WOODROW WILSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AND THE BOBST CENTER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Series: Civil Service

Interview no.: Q 4

Interviewee: Protasis Musoni

Interviewer: David Hausman

Date of Interview: 12 March 2010

Location: Kigali, Rwanda

HAUSMAN: This is David Hausman and I'm here at the Primatur (Prime Minister's Office) in Kigali, Rwanda on March 12th, 2010, with Mr. Protais Musoni. I wanted to start by asking you a little bit about your career and how you came to be Minister of Local Government and then cabinet minister here.

MUSONI: *Thank you. I had training as a mechanical engineer at Makerere University, which I finished in 1980. I worked with Uganda Airways as a structural engineer.*

The situation then in 1980, 1981 were very difficult politically and security-wise, but more specifically Rwandans, because the then government was associated with the [indecipherable]. So 1981, I was first to join. I had to flee to Kenya. Then I joined an organization which was aspiring to liberate Rwanda, which was called RANU, Rwandese Alliance for National Unity. At that time we were more focused on trying to rally the Rwandans who were in the diaspora to get enough voice and to be able to deal with Habyarimana's [Juvénal] government on a diplomatic level. So basically we're dealing with AU (African Union), United Nations, some friendly embassies, trying to show the plight of Rwandans who had been in exile since 1959 and they seem to have been forgotten.

In Kenya I was a science teacher, physics and mathematics. Then I got involved in grassroots organizations for the Rwandan people. In '83 I headed what you called a "region" [of RANU activity] then in Kenya—Kenya was "Region A," so I headed it.

In '85 I was elected Secretary General for the movement. In '87 the conditions were now much better after Museveni had liberated his country. So, '86 I came back to Uganda as Secretary-General. I set up the movement there. In '87 December, we decided we needed to convert RANU into a broader-based movement, the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front), but still more or less we were doing more on the political and diplomatic level. It was in '87 when we could see that we had to wage an armed struggle.

At that time, I was elected as Deputy Secretary General for RPF. In '89 when we decided now we needed to really form an armed wing with some of armed groups, friends, I was again elected as a general coordinator and vice-chairman to the chairman who was Fred Rwigema. So in '90 we launched the struggle. Since then I've become the mobilizer, the grassroots person.

Until '94, with the events of '94, which I'll discuss later on—as we were capturing territories, I was assigned the eastern part and eventually I became a prefect, more or less like a governor. 1997 [correction] in December, I came to head the city of Kigali. In 1999 [correction] February, I was made Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local—the Ministry of Local Government was created, I was made the Permanent Secretary. It is a ministry that was basically formed to spearhead decentralization, so I was made the Permanent Secretary.

HAUSMAN: You said that was in which year?

MUSONI: *Two thousand and—no, no, no, 1999. So 1997 to 1999 I was heading the city of Kigali, then Permanent Secretary in 1999 up to 2002, when I was made Minister of State for Good Governance. So, 2002 to 2004 as the Minister of State for Good Governance. Then 2004 up to last year August I was a full Minister for*

Local Government. That's briefly the path I went through to come to the Minister of Local Government.

HAUSMAN: Great, thanks so much. I'd like to ask you about two different periods in your work—first, to ask you about some of the immediate challenges of setting up an administration after the genocide. What were the very first things that needed to be done to set up a government at all?

MUSONI: *I would describe it at two levels. At the national level because I was then a member of the National Executive Committee of RPF, but I also can talk about at the provincial level, which I was heading as a prefect.*

At the national level, as we were fighting and captured Kigali on the 4th of July, you can imagine the chaos. The administration was crumbling ahead of us and because we were fighting, destroying, we didn't have time to set up an administration. So immediately we put up a committee to decide for us how we were going to set up the administration, national administration. We had to create institutions because you can't have a capital to fight and so on without having setting up some institutions. At the same time we would keep every area that would be liberated, we would assign it to a certain officer to take it up. That's how I was assigned to Kibungo and Rose Kabuye was assigned Kigali. I can tell quite a number—.

But still, we decided at that time, that first of all, we cannot—we had our own thinking. As a liberating force, we had our own administrative procedures and so on, but you couldn't do it without setting up rules. Therefore we decided we were going to go by the existing rules until you have democratic institutions that can change those rules. That was the first critical—.

HAUSMAN: Was that a decision taken by the committee?

MUSONI: *Yes. RPF has, or had, even now has a National Executive Committee. At that time it was about twelve people, but it could expand also into what we call the Consultative Committee or a congress. At that time, what I'm saying, immediately after Kigali was captured, a small group of four people were set up to think out, then report to the executive committee, and get the right support for it.*

HAUSMAN: Who were those people?

MUSONI: *There's Poris Dito, me and Mazmaka, and also the former president. So, what legal framework are you going by and how should you do it? The decision that we made at that time, that we were going to go by existing laws, but since we had negotiated with the former government in the Arusha Accords, to us—as you negotiate, of course, you don't get all you want, but at least the principles that we wanted to go by were in the Arusha Accord. That's why we picked it and it became the constitution. You could call it a transitional constitution that would be based on written law, so that's the one that guided us.*

Now in it, it was a power-sharing mechanism. Another major decision we made that time was that although we wanted to go by the Arusha Accord, we could not afford to have those political forces that had been championing in the genocide. So MRND (National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development) and [indcipherable] were excluded. So we had to start looking up all the other members of political parties, mainly five, I think. That was agreed to in the Arusha

Accord. On the 19th of July a government was put in place. So I would say that was the first national [government].

Next was to work out mechanisms on creating the parliament, the transitional parliament. We went by Arusha Accord, but using one way or the other, signatories excluding [indecipherable] and MNRD. As I was saying, we didn't have enough time to craft laws that go with our thinking so we had to go with existing laws. Now I can shift to when I governed, how I'm a prefect.

HAUSMAN: Let me ask you another question first. In that first phase, in what ways did you and others in the RPF draw on your administrative experience from within the RPF?

MUSONI: *Quite a number because even before capturing power, we had about four years managing the captured areas, the liberated areas in the north of the country.*

If I can go back a bit in time, as I started in eighty-something, we still had—we were managing certain structures with members all over the world. So we would say we had a core knowledge of how you would have decisions made, how you would have things executed and so on, but we had our own constitution. We had our own codes of conduct. We had quite a number of laws that would manage how to do things, so it is a consultative committee, what you call a political bureau—the members and how they would function, and so on.

What we would do next, once we go in the liberated areas, we would more or less organize the population as RPF was organized—more or less. So it goes through elections, creating committees, they manage themselves, and so on. In a way you can see that the first affair of RPF for a long time was on a decentralized plan. And there's no other way you could have done it anyway. You can't manage membership all over the world unless you really give them the powers to decide how to do things, but still be accountable to the higher levels that are democratically elected.

HAUSMAN: Can you say more about exactly how that organization, that decentralized kind of organization worked?

MUSONI: *Let me give you a few [examples]. Uganda—we had four regions. No, no, two regions, sorry, two regions in Uganda, what you called B1 and B2. B1 would come up to Masaka and go northwards. The southern would be B2. That one would have a committee, which would recall the regional committee, but with a council that would be elected below it. Below the regional structure we would have what we do have called a branch with a similar—so below regional there would be a branch. Below a branch we would have a cell.*

We have a national—originally when we were still very few, our regions would correspond with countries, but as members became more, regions started getting smaller than countries. Tanzania we had three. Tanzania was C. Kenya was region A—it was small so it didn't have another. As you know, that's where we started. Uganda was B; they had two. Tanzania was a C; it had three. Burundi had two, it was D and had two. Congo was E; it had three. Kinshasa was one, one, two, three...no five, it had five. Europe started as one, F, and later on it broke into five. America used to be H, it had two. Canada eventually became its own. So basically that is what you are seeing, but any region would have regional committee and then it would have branches and then cells.

What is more in the powers, decision and powers, and how to contribute—what they are going to send to the war zone and the diplomatic actions they would have to do—were mainly done at that level. Ours would be giving direction and then from there they make their own decision on how they will organize, and so on.

Now, the region Rwanda, we used to call it O and because it had more members there were very many O's. The level of organization in terms of numbers would depend on the level of insecurity to our membership. For example, for O in Rwanda where the insecurity was very high, then you would create very small cells. In the places like refugee camps where the membership—it would go up to 100 members per cell. People also would decide.

So basically that's—going back to setting up the—let me—I was given Kibungo prefecture to lead. What are the issues I faced, first of all? The first glaring problem was insecurity. There has been genocide. There has been a war of liberation. Quite a number of people have moved into Tanzania, others have gone into Burundi. You are remaining with a few survivors and also pockets of not survivors but also those who didn't get involved in the genocide, in the killings. But still, people would want to come to finish off the others. So the first thing I did was to encamp everybody—put them in camps, so that you can be able to give them protection.

Now as we put them in the camps, you know, we are very thin on the ground therefore we had to go through elections so that they elect their own leaders. You don't know them. You happen to be the only one there so you needed to create structures that give you, that you can deal with—to give you local information and to make you understand their cultures—but most importantly, to be able to deal with them so that they can enforce what you think should be done.

That was major: insecurity, encampment, and trying to make sure that you provide for food for those who are there. In most cases, if they went out to look for food in the fields they would be attacked by interahamwe. The security forces were on the front line, but it was quite—in terms of security and the provision of services—but through creating those committees, we alleviated quite a number of problems.

The second part now. After beating off—when we were winning the war and our armed forces came back, the insecurity lessened. So the next part to deal with was that you couldn't keep people in the camps. They need to go back to their homes. But since it was also the first area that was liberated, the old case refugees from Burundi, from Tanzania, from Uganda, were coming to that area and they were finding an empty area. So of course the insecurity—people who love their country are coming home unassisted so they are buying other peoples' homes and that kind of thing. But they are coming back, every time we got a wave of returnees we would go back and discuss with the appropriation and create new committees so that you get everybody represented.

At that time we, I, could see a balance of population as time moved. So originally I started with only people in Rwanda. In about four to five months, I found the people who came outside are now more than the people in Rwanda, so we had to remix the representativeness. Now, it can be taxing. We are getting people from Burundi with a different kind of administration, people from Uganda are different from the people from Tanzania and people from Congo, and the original people in Rwanda—and you don't know the laws that used to govern Rwanda!

That also is—I remember I had to ask around and they told me there is a secretary of the former prefect who was a good man but had escaped and was in Tanzania. I bribed some people to have him returned so that he can teach me the administration rules, because you need some institutional memory.

I'm saying that one to see the detail. The first thing about what to do, there were no offices, nothing. So the first job I did was to sweep the offices, then hustle for furniture because everything had been taken. Then the next was, you go to the camps and you say, "Who knows how to type." They say, "Yes, I can do it." "So come and get a job!" "Who used to work in the community?"—because of course you now have a prefecture, but you say, "Who used to work in a prefecture?" They say, "Ok, so-and-so." Some are really low level. So we ask them how is this done or this done. They say, "There is somebody called Simon who used to work here and he went to Tanzania. He's a good man." I had to deal with Tanzanians and UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) and some other people to have him come.

HAUSMAN: And he did come?

MUSONI: *He did. I gave him assurance and protection and he did come. After, I stayed with him in my little house with his family. To me that's, I think, he was a gold mine.*

HAUSMAN: Can you describe some of the things that he remembered that were useful to you?

MUSONI: *Simply by saying, Mr. Prefect this is the law that governs how prefectures work. That one itself was critically important. This is the law that governs how communes—communes within broad prefectures—this is how they work. This is how they write the letters, administrative letters. Those two laws, I would say. Now next time I meet an issue of registration of birth, and so on, he would bring me along.*

As I said, we all agreed we want to use the legal system that was there because our parliament has to enact quite a number of laws. Somehow things started shaping up. By December 1994, I would say all the communes were manned by people. A semblance of an administration now was in place, but I decided to keep the committees that were formed at cell and sector level because they were so useful. They were very useful in security, administration, in between the other small things like looking for food, medicine, and setting up medical services.

HAUSMAN: Were there particular administrative skills that you think you had gained from leading the RPF that helped you?

MUSONI: *Yes, I think the major administrative skill I would say I acquired was getting people involved in solving their own problems. The participatory approach that we used all along was quite helpful for me. I will describe to you a number of programs that we managed in that prefecture better than others because of that. So listening to people, leaving them to manage, allowing them to make decisions, working out with them how they're going to implement it, and then setting up when you can meet to check it out. To me I would say that was very critical, delegating to grow our structures and allowing them to work in consultation, delegation, and then holding the people accountable. I would say*

those three in RPF were quite—so you took consultation, you get people to do that—put there some management control mechanism that allows you to—.

So progressively then—now Kibungo had been with a population of 600 [thousand] with this influx of the old case refugees and the existing population. By the end of '95, we had 300,000. Now that—and the 400—there were 400,000 across into Tanzania. At the national level we also decided that it was very critical that we started repatriation. The reason behind is both political in nature but also of organizational importance.

You are a people who want to liberate a country. Quite a number of people who had become refugees had been whitewashed—that you are the enemy, that you are the internal enemy. You want to set up the way things should work, so you cannot set it when you have less than half of the population. So politically you need to get as many within your borders as possible. That's for political and also for security reasons. Most of the time you would find we are not patrolling around the border with incursions and so—.

I'll say that the repatriation of '95, '96 became a major problem for us in the program.

HAUSMAN: Go ahead. You were describing repatriation.

MUSONI: *We started dealing with neighboring countries to allow us to go and explain to the people in the camps. You can imagine how—the first reaction was, “Would you want to talk to them?” You say, “But they are my people.” “But these are your enemies. You are from RPF.” You say, “No, no, no. Our struggle was to fight against divisions among Rwandans. I have been a refugee for more than thirty years. I don't want Rwandans to be refugees so they need to come. We started with Burundi and we were very successful. As we came with people and settled them, we started now using those ones who are settled to go and talk to their relatives in Tanzania and setting up repatriation. UNHCR was quite useful in that one. By 2006, I could definitely see we were going to get refugees coming, but I had a dilemma.*

We had a situation, which was very funny but interesting. The old case refugees from that area of Kibungo had come from Kibungo and gone to Tanzania, and as to Burundi and as to Uganda. Now in '94—so now that means their land had gone to the people who remained in the country, over time. So in '94 these ones who remain in the country now go out, so the other ones come. And when they come they go directly to where they used to be, where they knew their fathers had land projects. I had a problem now. These ones, I'm convincing them come, but where would they go? I'm sure he will also come and then go to the recent home he had. So you get a situation where they are saying, “Whose property is this?” Is it the one whose family owned it before '59 and left it because he was just away? Is it for this one who is returning to the land he owned in 1994?

That point of dilemma, I think, initiated quite a number of programs you see around today. I would come to my fellow colleagues in RPF and discuss it. We couldn't get any legal solution. We couldn't get any legal solution. We went to the Cabinet, we sent it to government—again people couldn't say whose property is this until I discussed it with the then President (Pasteur) Bizimungu, and Vice-President (Paul) Kagame. I said, “These people know exactly who has the

ownership. Why don't we give them the opportunity to also tell us what they think they should do?" I remember that day when the President said, "Oh, go ahead, if they will agree, go ahead."

As I was driving back, and that was, we finished the meeting at around four in the morning, 4 a.m. We used to have long—because you know people had—you were either fighting, or you are trying to look for food or you are—so meetings would be in the night. Our normal meetings would be starting around eight in the evening so it would go up into, sometime midnight, sometimes beyond if there was a tricky issue that we had identified. So at that time we ended around 4, I remember I was driving and I asked myself, "If this was a national problem, why have I put it on my shoulders?" But then I said, "Let's go."

So I called the leaders, all of them from the sector level. The next day we had a meeting. So I gave them the dilemma: "Look, we have a population that used to remain here and have come up to their place and others who used to remain there and now going to come. I'm sure they're going to come." That was on the 29th of November 1996. "I'm sure they're going to come."

I was co-chairman on the security committee with the Tanzanians. Who was the general? I can see the picture, but I've forgotten his name. I'll remember it. He had assured me they would come. So my dilemma was—am I going to get so-and-so an arrest because of property? Because I could imagine now people—you know, these ones who are coming could be children of genocide—and because of property you could get some more killings and how are we going to control it, and so on.

So I used the participatory method again and put the question, described it and said, "What should we do?" We blocked them into groups, said go and discuss, come back and tell. It was interesting. All the committees came back and said, "No, no. Let's convince people to share. This is our country. There's no other country for Rwanda, so let's tell the populations to share." But that means we are going to go and sell that point to who was in the country.

We agreed, first of all, they are going to return and when they return there should be no revenge acts at all. The moment they enter the compound, because people do it where they should receive them—provide the food, provide the water, momentarily put a space where they can put their plastic sheeting or allow them in the house and then get the plastic sheeting. So we went out to mobilize the population.

Then in December we had massive repatriation and the population was so good, they served them properly, shared with the food whatever there was, and so on and so on. I remember it was a Christmas. The World Food Program was distributing food and they were looking for the newer returnees. The people said, "No, no, no. They shared what they had. So give all of us." But the World Food Program said, "No, no, no. We are now giving those who have just returned and who have the card ration." Fine. So they gave these ones and they shared immediately with the others.

We took an intensive three weeks talking to people, coalescing the future of the country. So the future of the country was pulling people more than anything. Do you want us to go back to '94, where brothers are killing brothers and husbands killed wives? Is that what you want? What is land compared to life? No.

So that gave us tremendous good will on the part of the population. But the situation couldn't be permanent—it's not sustainable. You can't have two people sitting on the same plot of land, each claiming it. And you think that one is sustainable.

In 1997, I worked with the leadership and we—I also talked with UNHCR. I talked with different people and said this is a situation that can be easily be chaotic without repatriation. It would be shameful if people went back into exile where we had another massive killing because of property. So we devised a short consultation piece of work with simply one question. No, no. Yes. It was one question, but later on we had another question. The question was: What causes disunity among us?

Now we resolved we didn't need to do it at the national level, or even the provincial level, or even district level, but at the sector level, as low as possible, where the people can be. But we could—it had also to be representative, the forum, whatever forum was set up. We identified mainly five groupings within the repatriation identities.

People who could feel they are the survivors of genocide had particular problems and trauma, and the anger and the hopelessness. That one was an identity group that needed to be looked at—what should be done?

Then there were those who came from outside—1959 people who said we're not sure what in the country could be done, but we're more committed to the future. They have left whatever they had in the countries of exile. So they were committed and could even offer leadership on what should be done.

There were the newly arrived. Those ones, you can imagine, what those ones who went away where many—some of them were killers, of genocide. So they were fearful. They weren't sure of the future. Secondly, they are the people whose homes are occupied. You can imagine also their anger. Most of them could be Hutu and those occupying the houses are Tutsi. With their old ideologies that had been putting them through the almost same refugee situation, these ones have come and that's—.

Then there are the other ones of the Hutu who had not gone anywhere. Those ones had quite a number of problems also. They weren't feeling a sense of belonging to the new regime, but they were also fearful of the people who had just come back because some of them had also taken their property. Some cases, if the wives had remained they had reminded them of those kinds of things, so it was—.

And then there was a group of the former leaders, teachers, doctors that were now without their authority. They had to have both within the country and outside in the camps. So you would find them, those groups, at least you would find them.

What we did was to get, at the cell level, each group electing two people. So in a way, in a cell you would to get ten. So if you had a sector of ten cells you would get a group of about 50 people. By then we would also add in the elected leaders of the cells and the sector people.

HAUSMAN: And this was true nationally?

MUSONI: *No, no. It started there and eventually it became national. The other places didn't have the same problem, I imagine. We started with Kibungo, but eventually it went all over the whole country.*

So we were asking 'what are the causes of disunity,' because all these ones, they are all banyarwanda, but each with different identities and similarities and fears which are different. We wanted that consciousness to go into them that they are one, and yet there are these reasons that cause them to be disunited, to be insecure, to be angry, and that kind of thing.

And it would take about seven days. You would be amazed. The first day nobody would talk and we had to give an instruction to the facilitators not to over talk. At first they were to only explain how things were going to be done. We let them choose their own leadership, choose their own recorders of information, resolve their own conflicts. Actually, I had given people to be more in a window—people go outside in the windows and observe them as they would act.

So you started the exercise, now you have given the question—you start the exercise by giving pieces of paper so that people write the reasons, one reason, without putting on their names. Then once they put them in a certain basket then you ask them to choose three people—two to read and one to verify and another one to record on the blackboard the reasons and then tabulate them statistically.

That piece of writing without their names, and then blocked in pairs and then the process of reading out. If people read about five you tell them stop, another five comes to read, and so on and so on, so that you get people involved.

After doing that people would then discuss, to agree on the reasons. First day, you could see the tension. First day, it would mean they agree on the reasons. Second day, they would come up with what can be done, what are the solutions. And that's when you see anger, real anger. Second and third day—people really talking, really fighting. But by fourth day, they will say, "What alternative do you have? You killed my husband but I have to live with you, unfortunately. I wish I could kill you, but I won't because there's a government."

In any case, by the end of seven days you would find that people are more reconciled, determined to work in the programs. So we asked them to create committees, create committees that will make sure there are programs. What comes out is that they say one problem is—the biggest problem that they were talking about was, in Kinyarwanda, they call it ndanini. Ndanini means "big strong," "selfishness." That was—but they would put it on the leadership, selfishness. Others would talk about limited land, colonialism legacy, poverty, illiteracy, genocide. So they would get a whole list of them. They would come out with solutions.

When they came to the solution of land, one would say, "No, no. I want my piece of land." The other one would say, "Yes, but remember it is also mine. It was my father and your grandfather who left that tree. You remember? Your homestead was the other side." But they said, "No, no, it's the government which gave it to me." "But which government can give you my property?" In the end, we should share.

You can imagine, at a central government level we couldn't get the solution, a legal, bound solution, and then I was a prefect allowing people to—.

Fortunately, UNHCR would be recording everything, everything. Janus would be there. So at every meeting they would be diffused. We ended up agreeing that the solution is that those who have to share the land and settle the groups in settlements, what we call Imidugudu. When we got to Kibungo, everybody's now in settlements and land is shared out.

Out of that one, out of those discussions, they would find everywhere—they would ask me one question: "Why didn't you ask us this question before we killed each other?" I said, "But I wasn't here." They said, "Oh, but you're all the same. Show me that there's a gap between the led and the leadership. You're all the same."

The second question that was dizzying to me, you can imagine that at that time we still also had emergency relief and the food distribution. So they were saying, "Look, now that you have brought us and you can make a decision, can we be a permanent structure so that if there is [aid] to come, we can sit and say who gets it?" So I ask them, "What do you want to you call yourself?" They say "council." In Rwanda it is interesting to say inama. Inama means the one who gives advice.

So although now I knew what the organizational structure was legal, still after discussion with other people, and many other people said, "Ok, let's allow them. As long as they don't disrupt the powers of the legally constituted, they can really—." So it started.

At that time, ??? was in prison, and ??? [Indecipherable 21:36] was the Permanent Secretary of the ministry in charge of local governance. So as we were giving reports, creative solutions that were coming out could be rolled out nationally. So they started sending teams of people to work with us. After that it went throughout the whole country. Now as we rode the whole country, centrally and with RPF, we gathered what programs people really wanted.

HAUSMAN: When was this?

MUSONI: *This was 2007. Well, 1997. I keep confusing 2000s in the head. So it was 1990s. Kibungo started in 1996. It went into 1997. But then the whole country did it in 1997. Those consultation processes gave us a lot of insight on how to manage post-conflict countries.*

When the military drafted the report and presented it to the President and the NEC counselor who said, who can be a better political programmer than this, what we have? The question now was how to implement them without having a consensus around them? So out of that the decision was why don't we get all the other parties on board? Why don't we get religious organizations on board? Why don't we get universities on board? The military officers, gendarmes at that time, the military police or gendarmiers, and members of Parliament.

We then started the famous Urugwiro discussions, which started in May 1998 to March 1999. So every Saturday the leadership would congregate in the office of the President and discuss the effort. It was decided we were not going to tell the leaders what the population said, but rather we were going to ask the leaders to pursue the leaders through the same mechanisms.

So the first day we—the President leaders said, "Look, we are Banyarwanda, this is our country, there is now some level of stability, although we are getting

incursions, but we now need a program that is going help us to move forward. What do you think are the major problems of this country?"

So we had a full day discussion. In the end, we identified five. National unity, that was critical—the nation as an identity, as a state, as a concept for a people. That it was genocide and the war and the history had really shattered it and it needed to be reconstructed. That was a major problem that we identified.

The second was how we govern, because people had told us every time, even now you to go to prison, they say, "They misled me, they misled me into killing." What structure of governance would guarantee that the choice? The decision of the person is theirs. It's not—.

The third one was—you know earlier on because people were saying "this one killed"—you don't have courts, you don't have anything, so you put them in a prison for safety. Now we end up having too many and we didn't have the capacity so the question was what do we do with these prisoners and what do we do with justice?

The fourth was we had a very dependent economy. Even now, you've got—the image was at that time were really the suppliers of goods and services. As we were getting organized, the contradictions were becoming higher. As a state you are getting the command but you don't have what to supply. Somebody has it and you want them to give it to you to supply it and they say, "No, no, no." So that one—the economy. We had to say how the economy was shattered, and we cannot build even a nation on nonviable economy, as it was.

The last but critical one was insecurity, because again, in 1998 we were getting quite a lot of incursions from Congo. There was a lot of war in the North.

So those were the major ones we identified. We would meet every Saturday on one, but not one Saturday. Discuss it until you think we have a solution. Now once we get a solution, you get the principles and create a committee to go and work out the details, then come back and report.

HAUSMAN: What were the major problems then that led you to the large program of decentralization that followed afterwards?

MUSONI: *I am coming to that.*

HAUSMAN: Okay.

MUSONI: *Because out of—as I said, we discuss one item, agreed in the general, in the broader terms. By then we would set up a committee with enough experts to go out and slash it off—what's to be done, come and report, we discuss and so on.*

I will give you the few programs that are now running. Out of that one, the nation—national unity as a problem and the reconciliation, we got a program with a commissioner of national unity and reconciliation and a program of national unity and reconciliation.

Now, on the governors, and the major one we were told was decentralization, that the center should not be appointing leaders who have allegiance only to the center. Secondly, we need to give people voice to participate in their own way of life decisions. Thirdly, that they—wait. Firstly they have to be representative,

participatory—representative. I think they gave us—I was one of the committee they put—they gave us five principles to go by: should be as participative as possible, should be representative not appointment, we should work towards creating equity, and should look for separation of powers.

Again, in the former system the bourgmestre (mayor) was everything. He was the legislature, he was an executive, and he could even put people in prison. So the separation of powers had to put—and the balance of powers. Then respect of human needs, rule of law. Those are the five they gave us and then they told us “go out and decide.”

Now when we were discussing, what was the third? The economy? No—justice. We could see there was no way we could do it unless we went back to the traditional way. And incidentally, when we were doing those consultations, the former consultations, the people were saying that—in Kibungo they had started, but not dealing with at the point where people killed others, but where they took cows—they took this one, so they started resolving them on their own and we encouraged them. So, Gacaca (community justice court) came up as a solution and a team was put in the place again. I was also on it, those two—.

Then there’s on the economy, where again you get the principles of what you are going to do and agriculture and industry, and so on. Then you put in a team and out of it you got the Vision 2020 program. On the security we got out the creation of the police and have the population involved in the security, this local defense. Then professionalizing the army. I think that’s the three major ones.

So back to decentralization, if you want. When we went to design the principles of decentralization at the start, if you go back in that time, there was quite a lot of mistrust, still quite very high. And now you’re talking about elections in a sea of mistrust. You have people, how would you say, a rainbow of peoples’ experiences. You have people from Canada, you have others from United States, from Europe, from Uganda, from Tanzania, from—it’s hard to agree on what would bring them all together and pick the best from left and right and craft your own. That’s also a bit tricky.

Thirdly, we saw those problems there had been when adopting any one single model. From Uganda, for example, where we had experience—rather from Burundi, where they had the experience, simply couldn’t work. So out of this discussion we agreed we are going to be build from scratch, but we need to be informed.

The first to do was to test democratization. So by 1999, in May, we had elections at the cell level—cell and sector level—with committees, executive committee, and the council. Exactly similar to what we used to be using in RPF, but now adapted to suit bigger communities. And where the other ones were political and ideological, these ones are more focused on development and service delivery, but the area model was more or less the experience we had along the level.

Those elections were an eye opener. Before I go into that one, we designed them in such a way they would be very transparent because originally, people would be told who to vote for. So we thought we could not base our democratization on that long history of values, so we needed to make it transparent and be hands-off. That’s what we went for lining up.

Secondly, we wanted to end up with committees that are inclusive without engineering them. That becomes—without saying that the Hutu will be ten, without giving quotas—because we knew that giving quotas would be reinforcing separation where we want to forge unity.

To get those things we used two mechanisms. One, lining up for every post but also creating many posts.

HAUSMAN: Can you say more about how the lining up worked?

MUSONI: *For example, an executive committee would be of nine people, ten. You've got the chairman, the vice-chairman, the executive secretary, then you go to secretaries of security, development, social affairs, women, youth, you get the picture. So if they are going to elect the chairman they would first of all present candidates. The candidates would be standing in front and then the others would go behind. The one who had the longest line would be elected.*

So that one gets its method. Now you come to elect the vice, the same thing. What becomes interesting is that you have people who couldn't even tax. Every time one would say, "Are these the Hutu?" But now because they are in the community, they are lining up and you can also say, "I will go after this one because—" But when they are lining up they are also discussing, they are talking. Who are they going to elect and that kind of thing. It opened up the population and that's what we had intended.

Now suppose one dominant community goes to the first chairman, the second chairman, and the vice-chairman, secretary general, and so on. At a certain point they will say, "Oh, but there are the others." Without you telling them that one also comes up and says, "Let's also give this one, let's also give women, let's also give—" and you find they make up mixing on their own. That tolerance in politics had to be forged now. As a community we have watched many—ah—but there are others. That one became an eye-opener.

The third thing that it produced was people were saying, "I elected, I wish they hadn't told—I wish I knew they wouldn't force us to vote for so and so." So they would say, "Who would the government want." And then they would say that "I'm not forced." So it's opened for the next 2001 election to be very vibrant because they knew now they are shifting off of being directed who to vote for.

That was the first phase now but that was at a committee. Now we are going to craft the decentralization policies, strategy, program and rules, so we started moving up and down Africa and Europe and, in particular, I visited Uganda, I visited South Africa, I visited Eritrea, I visited Mali, I visited Burkina Faso and Ghana, then Sweden—because they told us Sweden was the best model of decentralization, but we were also reading.

By then I was a chairman of a drafting committee as a secretary general because I was a current secretary. So, always the first question was "Yes, we've got this experience here, we've got this one, we've got this one, but what do we want?" That was the first question. What do we want? What don't we want? What can't we do at this moment? That brought to us a strategy spanning a space of time. We agreed we are not going to have the decentralization that we eventually want immediately now, but put them in phases.

Unfortunately, I don't have my—I have a diagram we drew at that time. This was the form of administration. No, no, no, this is wrong. In terms of power and resources, we had an inverted—where all the resources were central government and at the grassroots level there was nothing.

HAUSMAN: An inverted pyramid?

MUSONI: *Yes, an inverted pyramid. Of course, one thing this one invites is instability, because in a time it can—so if this was the central government, let's put here the prefecture, there was what you would call sous-préfecture. Then you would get the commune, you would get—actually let me put this sector here, sector and cell. In the sector and the cell you had no workers, completely. It's only here at the community level that you would get some few workers, not more than five. As you go up you get a whole host of stuff. There was no budget for cell and there was no budget for sector, and insufficient budget at the community level. So you would still get there.*

Looking at the three things, first of all there was little capacity in Rwanda then. Even the capacity that was there had been washed off by killings and genocide, the war. We couldn't—ultimately, what we wanted was to invert the pyramid, but shorter. This one—we could say this one for control passes, but not for development. This one is a development and democratization.

We had to craft now a strategy that will move us here to that one. This—2002 when we started. So it went into 2001. We decided the process would be reducing layers of the administration as we were moving to that end. So let's say this will be central government. It should be a cell and possibly one or two layers, although one would be enough for a district with an administrative sector. That's where we would want to be.

Moving from this one we removed one layer completely and moved resources and personnel to the prefecture so that now we—no, no, no. I think I could draw it like that. So the prefecture now gets closer but with more personnel, more budgets.

In 2005, 2006 really, we now shifted more to the districts. What we have now is—it's more like this. The provinces are now very tiny. The districts are, in terms of power, in terms of resources and responsibilities they are huge. Now the sectors, they are quite effective in terms of budgets, in terms of personnel and so on.

This year we are going to do evaluation so that we know what there's going to be in 2011. That will be the next one. If, my original thinking—but when I get here I doubt it because I don't know. I would now remove the provinces and find a way of starting the cells so it starts getting substantial.

HAUSMAN: Can you describe some of the challenges of building all of these new administrative structures?

MUSONI: *I'm coming to that. Eventually, we are leading to that one in 2015. You can't be sure. There are quite a number of—the challenges that we were meeting, one which is in any policy reform, is political will. You really need to have a communications strategy, to have an organizational strategy that captures the political will and keeps it behind you. The moment you start missing it, it kills you, because doing this one there are so many interests that you're going to hurt. Although the general population is going to—but there are quite a number of*

interests and some of the interests by the nick of a pen, they can say, "You go away." So that's creating and maintaining the political will, both at the top and at the population level.

The second one which is equally important is the issue of the capacity to administrate, first of all to organize it, think it through, move it to a point that it becomes a legal instrument and then organize to put them in place. After that, managing them. That one is quite teasing. The first ones, the capacity to think through—if you are determined, you can even get consultants, you can do this one. But managing them properly, I think it is really something that one has to keep an eye on.

HAUSMAN: Can you give some examples of the problems that come up with that management?

MUSONI: *As you're passing power and responsibility and resources close to the ground you need a culture of accountability and transparency. That needs—because as you go lower and then the corruption is visible. "It's the son of so and so, and so and so—oh, look at them." It's not now somebody with the Minister who is a President who has a God-given right to be leader, to be that. It is my neighbor. It becomes visible. So there's that mindset change that you need to manage, which has to be quick, but you need information flow that's quick and you need to be able to really be tough on it so that—on the financial part.*

Financial management, apart from the attitude, the mind set, is a skill you have to acquire. Those skills are not easy to—you'll find it even now. It is still a challenge that really people would want to do well, but they don't know how to do it. The attitude of the party is changing, but the art is not to date, so you still get a few people messing up because they don't know how to do it. That's one.

The other bit of a challenge comes also from attitude. If for centuries, from the days of the kingdom to colonialism, to other regimes and so on—it's a top down thing to command and obey. Now you are creating a system that wants humility in a leader that wants to make the citizen the king. It doesn't come overnight. So sometimes you have to do a lot of trainings and sensitization and so on, that you can create a—it's like having a container. What do you call this in the Bible, have a new wine in old skins? There's a biblical saying, I think, Jesus was saying that you can't have—if you put new wine in the old skins it will bust it. So it's also like having a new machine, a new airplane with old skills of pilots. Then you get that bit of that you need to be aware of. Technical skills are quite good, and you need these.

The other part I would say is financial. Decentralization sets up expectations. You are saying it's power—you'll get your money, you'll manage it, you'll move forward on it, you will—and normally it goes with participatory planning, needs assessment. We have what we call social maps. People looking at their needs, looking at their strengths, looking at what they can do on their own with this one and so on. In the end they become very good at that one and if you don't have the money flowing then you can get a population that is—you are not delivering. So not meeting expectations can be a danger, and that's why you need it.

Now I have described the three mechanisms that you need to operate together. You have to do political and administrative decentralization that needs to be supported by community decentralization, if you call it, community development, participation, and so on. But you need to do a fiscal decentralization that has to

go along to meet the needs, the aspirations. And then the first one you do—you have to do a lot of capacity building.

To me those are the—I forgot the fifth one. The one, the political, maintaining some good will into it. And you need to deliver because if the political leadership says “Yes, let’s do decentralization,” then you are going to get better and faster development. If you don’t deliver and yet, you have got some interests that have—you can easily get put aside.

So those are five. Those five are needed to go: the political and administrative decentralization, community development, fiscal and financial management, capacity building, but also keeping political will.

HAUSMAN: Can you describe the connections between the local democratization for sectors and cells and the administrative decentralization?

MUSONI: *And the what?*

HAUSMAN: The administrative decentralization.

MUSONI: *Oh, yes. I would say the community democratization is a key to bring about ownership of the progress. Then you have to do administrative decentralization to make sure that you get the services closer. And you—I can assure you the demand, as you create good awareness and the ownership, the demand for easier and better services become incredible. For example, let me show you here. Formerly a citizen would come here—.*

HAUSMAN: To the sub-prefecture.

MUSONI: *For officiating of marriages. Now they can do it at sector level. In actual fact, the first satisfaction people were showing is that, you know, the impact. While at this time we had only 45 families legally married, we are now close to 100%. With a certain level of poverty you only have one piece of cloth. You are not going to go to people you are not used to. But if it is in your community—.*

I left after the demand was “let’s put it at the cell level.” So that means you can go into the field and come out, wash your hands and feet, and go and get married. I’ve just given one. One, which brought immediate satisfaction. That yes, you can now get married and you don’t have to look for vehicles, you don’t have to look for bicycles.

HAUSMAN: You mentioned the problem of transparency and accountability. What are some of the mechanisms that you put in place to hold the local governments accountable?

MUSONI: *That’s quite a number. I want to give them the order we brought them in. What’s important in these systems is you have to be highly innovative, open to discussion, discussing with the population and so on. You want to see what works.*

Let me start with accountability in performance. We started an imihigo process. I always try as much as possible not to say it’s a contract performance, because there’s a certain nuance of difference. I’m sure if you talked to these people they told you in the contract performance, in the classic sense, I have a contract with you and I need to deliver this so that you give me this. With the imihigo process,

it is me, their leader, who works with my people I lead and declare publically what I want to achieve.

Now holding to account is not from the top, it is more from the bottom because in it there is—that bit of public, you bring in competition. That's the essence of the imihigo process. Even in the older days, it would be passing by saying "no, no, I will outperform you." The other says "no, I will outperform you" and so on and so on. There's that bit of competition, which is not on the leader, but on the community.

To go back to our old culture, every district now has a surrogate name. So I'm administrative when I say this is Gasabo, but they have a special—we call it ichivu (?). If they say, they have many, there are thirty now. Every district has a special name, which encompasses every citizen of that district. Let me try to remember some. So others, you have where the people who, as I see ahead of them, you get the whole community in the district never wanting to be second. There's that competition, so you get the whole—.

HAUSMAN: Competition among districts.

MUSONI: Among districts.

HAUSMAN: How do you measure?

MUSONI: *I will come to that. I'm still in the basics. Then you need to put there a forum where originally, the chiefs and kings, they would bring pot of beer. Then people would pass by saying what they did. This time, of course, we give them microphones and then with PowerPoints they show what they have done, and with photographs and so on. So that one's done quarterly.*

Let me go back to what you—. When it was started in 2006, the President himself came to the newly elected and said, "You are newly elected, you're in the second term, but I'm not happy with the rate of implementation." He said, "What can we do? What can we do?" So we say, "Since the church has helped us with one of the big problems, why don't we go back to our roots and find—." So we proposed a system of imihigo. Now, in the imihigo process we want the communities—. First of all, the districts, they sit and say, "How many schools do we have," for example. We get to set a baseline. How many would we want to have by the end of the year? So they set a target for that. Then they think through the planning process, where they are going to get what resources, whether they are resources from central government, whether they are resources from the community, whether they are resources from donors, and so. But they have to think it through.

So, at the start of the year we show that we are at this point, by the end of the year we should be at this point—whether it is the productivity in agriculture, whether it is in number of students who pass and move to secondary school, whether it is women who are going to have antenatal attendance. Normally, we look at our Vision 2020 and the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), then since we want to achieve them, and you can only achieve them through the implementers at the districts, they have to test themselves on those national objectives and what they are going to do to achieve them.

Once they have done it, then they discuss it with you the population at the cell level—discuss it, pass it in the council, and then they come at the national level

and discuss it with the central government, then publically in front of the President. They say what they are going to achieve and that is the one that gets signed.

And it has to be on air. It's not a contract that is between me and you signing, no, no. You are making a contract with the population. You are making a contract with the population in front of the President. Normally that's what happens, because normally, somebody is supposed to announce in front of the President. But now, the modern way is to affix your signature.

Once done, it's not—and that's another interesting thing, it's not the district in isolation to feel they need it to achieve that one. Central government must also support them to achieve it. That's why each Member of Cabinet has a district he's assigned to or she's assigned to. So if a district fails in its imihigo, even the Minister has failed. That's why it comes now—you are assigned that and therefore, it's not to control or to direct, but to advise, to look for resources, to show problems to other ministers that are there. That's why the difference now between that contract. That's one that is put there.

Then every three months the governor and his team at provincial level, including civil society and private sector, go and inspect because they have them leave and so they need to—so you had 70 km of pipe to order. You said you were going to make 100. How far are you? They bring a forum to declare now what they have done. In the process they are awarded marks. If you are first, there is a need for you to keep the pace so that they don't get behind. But if you are the last you need to go back to the population and mobilize to work harder, look for more resources, so that next time you are not. That gives accountability but also a desire to perform that—and in a process that is measurable.

Then every four months the Prime Minister goes around the country, province by province. That's the pressure that is put on to make sure that things work out. That's one mechanism.

The other mechanism is what you call public accountability day, where the mayors—the executive sectors, sector level—every three months must open the doors to the population so that somebody can come in ask you, "Mayor, what here was the program? What have we achieved? Did this one—? Then there is a press conference after that. That public accountability is now shifting to be part of imihigo, of self-assessment before you get the provinces to come. The population, the injanam of the council reassesses themselves before externals and then the leaders' public account, but in the process of public accounting seek or introduce new ways to make sure they achieve their—.

That process of going out of the box, if I can call it that, we also have given it a mechanism. We call it Innovation Day, because as I don't tell—normal resources are there, they are not tapped. What do you do to tap them? There are many ways so we—a faster way of doing things so that you catch up and that kind of thing. So we set up, how to say, it's a pride enhancement, or inducing people to be creative. We call it Innovation Day in each district—normally it's lower than the district. We allow it at sector, cell level, and community level.

So they start the competition. Who has innovated? If I can give an example, there is one who is going to get an award, I think a sector leader. Why this year you find the mutual insurance by the end, mid-year, because in December, or mid-year, they were at around 65% of the population. This man was at 100% for

this year and 33% for next year. So once you hear that one you say, "What did he do?" So he writes and we publish it in what we call a Bulletin of Excellence. Those ones who write their experience in the Bulletin of Excellence are eventually brought to Kigali when the President and all of us are there, and they show the innovations they have created in public administration. That gives them creative juices.

HAUSMAN: Let me go back a second, if I can, and ask you about how you found qualified people to staff all these local administrations.

MUSONI: *Why don't I finish the accountability? What I mentioned, the earlier—no, no, no—but skills, the desire to do well might be there, but skills are not there. So we crafted another mechanism we call the Clean Audit program, which is more like a peer audit. In each province the chief accounting officers, every month, go to audit their peer in one district. As they do it they discover mistakes. Some discover mistakes that they also do, but the important thing is when they are there they say we have these and these mistakes. Next time you come to another district you won't see them. Some may declare they don't have the required skills in order to do it, in which case the Minister of Local Government and Minister of Finance promise to find an associate to send somebody there and train this one. So it does help.*

So what was your question? Finding the personnel. It's natural that people want to work in the capitals so once you want people—. When we were reviewing decentralization of 2001, we found we had created a pool of democratic, civic, participatory-minded from the population, but with little linkage with the skill, the planning skills, the development and that kind of thing—. So we could see that we needed to have very highly skilled people close to the population. The only way we could do it would be if we could offer incentives.

We convinced the government that the people at the sector level, for example, should be paid as people at the central government, and even have a high rank. For example, if I get a university graduate to go in to head a sector, automatically he gets a rank of a director. Or one that finishes university and comes to central government, he becomes a staff. So one gets 300,000 francs and another one gets 179. So you invite that when you attract people in the other—. That one started causing problems, but now it is agreed that actually they should be paid more—the level of responsibility, the amount of development they contribute to our country. So basically that's what we did, that we pay higher—pay equivalent to central government.

HAUSMAN: Was there a connection to the retrenchment that took place in the central civil service around the same time?

MUSONI: *Well that contributed, I could say, but it caused also problems. As we were reforming, definitely the idea was when we started reforming at central government level we wanted efficiency and we wanted new ways of doing things, and we needed people to be better paid. Now with an envelope that is not expanding, it automatically meant fewer—when we looked at the central government and the way that people may lose jobs en mass, and that kind of thing. For example, we were moving from about 9000 personnel to around 2000. So in that case, if you are a former you are always looking for opportunities. That was an opportunity that you would say, "Yes." We have some people who are experienced. They have nowhere to go now, but they can be trained in local*

governance as long as you don't pay them less. I will say it was an added—however to say, quite a number of staff.

When we reformed in 2006, we increased the staff in local government by about ten times. You see here at the sector level there was no single worker. Now we have seven and tending to—we started at five but are extending it to nine now. At the cell level there was no single worker, so we put there one tending to two. I think by June this year I should have two. This number of people, they are graduates. When you multiply the number, because you have 416 sectors, 416 sectors times nine, will give you close to 4000 workers. That is half the number of central government and the provinces before the reform. But then, what you are doing now is to get skills and knowledge within, in the communities. And we think with the participatory mechanisms that are—with the ownership of it then you can get, what I would say a catalyst, to get it moving fast and forward.

HAUSMAN: Great. All right, well I don't want to take up much more of your time, but is there anything you would like to add before we stop?

MUSONI: *You have taken in everything, I think. What I would say is that to decentralize efficiently you have to believe in it, and that's what I call the political will. You need to feel that in the end, somebody must be responsible for their own livelihood and you need to give them the opportunity. But then don't give too much. That's what I would say. For us, we hoped for an incremental process that you would move on and then listen, observe, monitor, evaluate, and know which are the factors for further reform. Normally, they are there, especially when you find—when the further reform is due, you get a level of dissatisfaction somewhere. It may be at the central government level on performance. It may be at the local government level—an amount of work that is bothering them. It may be at the population level, at the level of services. Somehow, as you listen and as you observe, you'll know when next to reform and what you are going to reform. But the most important thing is that whatever you do, it should be to help the people to have better services, to develop faster, and take the ownership of the process. Thank you.*

HAUSMAN: Thank you.