



## INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

### ENHANCING CAPACITY, CHANGING BEHAVIORS: RAPID RESULTS IN GASHAKI, RWANDA, 2008

#### SYNOPSIS

More than a decade after the 1994 genocide, Rwandan government ministries struggled to implement long-term plans or even meet mid-term targets. A skills shortage hindered projects at the district and local levels. In 2008, Charles Karake and Stella Mugabo, senior officials at the Human Resources and Institutional Development Agency, a government organization charged with improving national capacity, experimented with a management practice known as the Rapid Results Approach to enhance ministries' ability to implement successful projects. Rapid Results encouraged officials to focus on small-scale projects that could be completed in a relatively brief time span, usually less than four months. This case shows how Rwanda's Ministry of Local Government, under the direction of Protais Musoni, championed the technique to advance the goals of an anti-poverty program. A pilot program in Gashaki, an impoverished region in north Rwanda, improved the ability of local officials and leaders to help poor families raise their incomes. Although adoption of Rapid Results did not progress beyond the initial phase for a variety of reasons, public servants who participated in the program increased their ability to deliver services effectively and many of Gashaki's residents improved their financial positions and quality of life within a surprisingly short period. However, critics noted the high cost of implementing Rapid Results and stressed that other factors also contributed to the positive results in Gashaki. This study considers the approach as an alternative to traditional methods of building capacity.

*Rushda Majeed drafted this case study on the basis of interviews conducted in Kigali and Gashaki, Rwanda, in September and October 2011. Case published January 2012. Two related ISS cases, "The Promise of Imihigo: Decentralized Service Delivery in Rwanda, 2006-2010" and "Energizing the Civil Service: Managing at the Top 2, Bangladesh, 2006-2011," examine approaches similar to Rapid Results.*

#### INTRODUCTION

In September 2011, Sylvie Ntabanganyimana had nothing but praise for a new management strategy that had reshaped government services in her remote area of Rwanda. "Before Rapid

Results came to Gashaki, people would trek 10 kilometers to get medical services," she said. "Now we are proud to say that we have a health center. The furthest a person walks is only two kilometers." Her knowledge was firsthand. She

was one of the local officials who had helped mobilize residents of Gashaki, an administrative division in the Musanze district of northern Rwanda, for the Rapid Results program in 2008.

In Gashaki, a dusty half-hour drive from the busy highway between the cities of Kigali and Musanze, local officials and residents proudly showed off a health clinic and a bank where none had existed three years earlier. Like Ntabanganyimana, they attributed Gashaki's accomplishments to a new management strategy that helped teams organize to complete meaningful short-term projects. The central government's Human Resources and Institutional Development Agency (HIDA) had helped government ministries experiment with this approach in an effort to redress the skills shortages that remained more than a decade after the 1994 genocide that killed more than a half million Rwandans.

In 2005, Charles Karake, formerly city manager of Kigali, had taken over as director of the newly created HIDA, which was responsible for improving public sector performance. For three years before taking charge of HIDA, Karake had led a national task force to assess the country's capacity challenges. He recalled the challenge that confronted him. "Rwanda had a clear vision and direction by 2000, but there was always an issue relating to capacity and implementation," he said. "We planned, developed targets and trained people. But when we evaluated after three months, we found that we had not achieved the targets."

During 2006-07, HIDA looked for project management techniques that had worked well in other countries. Programs that set short-term, roughly 100-day goals caught Karake's attention. One version was Rapid Results, originally designed by Schaffer Consulting (formerly Robert H. Schaffer & Associates), a U.S.-based management consulting firm. With the firm's

help, the World Bank introduced this approach in 2000 for one of its projects in Nicaragua, and then extended the experiment to Kenya, Madagascar, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Sri Lanka and India. Schaffer created an independent not for profit organization, the Rapid Results Institute, to support its work in developing countries and launched programs in Sudan, Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Jordan and Iraq.

Rapid Results offered a way to improve civil service capacity without having to put in place an institutionally complex pay-for-performance system first. It aimed to change behavior on the job by encouraging individuals or groups to complete small-scale projects that had clear, measurable goals. Proponents hoped that the successful completion of narrowly focused projects with time lines of less than 100 days would help change attitudes and practices on the job in ways that would foster success in larger structural reforms. The technique emphasized leadership, collaboration between groups, teamwork and innovation.

In 2008, under the guidance of HIDA, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the National University of Rwanda agreed to incorporate Rapid Results into some of their programs. Within a few months, the technique had helped the four organizations achieve short-term targets set out by their leaders. Of particular note were the results within the Ministry of Local Government, where officials embedded Rapid Results into the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program, a nationwide social safety net, and piloted it in Gashaki. (*Umurenge* meant "sector" in the official Kinyarwanda language.)

The case documents efforts to implement this alternative approach to conventional methods of training and building capacity and performance and describes the results. It focuses on the

Ministry of Local Government and looks at how public servants applied Rapid Results in Gashaki.

## THE CHALLENGE

In the late 1990s, Rwanda sought to overcome the legacy of a combined civil war and genocide that had decimated its population and government capacity earlier in the decade. In 1997, the government of President Pasteur Bizimungu and Prime Minister Pierre-Célestin Rwigema launched a nationwide consultative process to define a development strategy and help forge a new national identity. Completed three years later, Vision 2020 emphasized reconstruction, human resource development, a market-based economy and an efficient private sector. Importantly, Vision 2020 also stressed community leadership and engagement in a formally decentralized system of government that would enable citizens to help achieve national goals.<sup>1</sup>

During the decade that followed, the government struggled to find the skilled people it needed to manage public services. In 2011, Stella Mugabo, head of the Public Sector Capacity Building Secretariat, the organization that succeeded HIDA, recalled: “The problem in Rwanda was one of lack of institutional capacities to fix immediate development issues. After the genocide, there were no institutions or people to run them. There was nothing. The offices were empty. Files were destroyed. There were no records. [The] government had to pick existing resource persons [who] sometimes [had] no experience [to] head institutions.” Mugabo, part of HIDA’s top management, had worked as a public policy analyst with the Office of the President of Uganda before taking on administrative positions at Kigali’s Institute of Science, Technology and Management. She held degrees in education from Makerere University in Uganda and economics and social studies from UK’s University of Manchester.

The government made progress in staffing and providing services but, by 2005, many public sector officials and managers still lacked the skills needed to complete projects successfully. Despite detailed planning, ministries failed to meet medium- or even short-term targets. The resulting gaps undermined efforts to achieve the goals in Rwanda’s first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002-2005), a broad policy document that outlined the country’s macroeconomic, structural and social policies to accelerate growth and reduce poverty.<sup>2</sup> Mugabo saw a complex and intertwined problem. “With time, we crafted our Vision 2020 and developed wonderful policy documents, like poverty reduction strategy papers ... and midterm strategies, [that were] well [budgeted]. Everything started falling in place: the resources and the plans. However, upon review and assessment of our [first] Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, [we] observed that we were not effectively meeting our targets. The question was why. The challenge was that capacity building was not embedded in the design and implementation of our programs, [nor] was it linked to the overall planning and budgeting cycle,” she said. “When we reviewed and assessed the progress of the poverty reduction and growth strategies, we realized that we would not meet our targets and were not likely to meet them within the next five years if we do not embed capacity building into the overall planning process.”

Although the government had made strides in economic development, it struggled to deliver better services to rural and remote areas of the country. Surrounded by the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda, landlocked Rwanda in 2006 remained one of the poorer countries in Africa, with annual per capita income of US\$281. Household surveys indicated that 56.9% of the nation’s 10 million citizens lived in poverty, with 36.9% in extreme poverty. Low agricultural productivity, high rural

unemployment, and population pressures contributed to the high poverty levels. The genocide also had increased the number of vulnerable citizens, such as widows, orphans, people with disabilities, and landless farmers.<sup>3</sup>

In 2005, with the support of the African Capacity Building Foundation, a regional organization offering technical and financial assistance, and the World Bank, the government launched a Multi-Sector Capacity Building Program to tackle human resource and capacity challenges. The four-year program introduced a new approach to improve the performance of public institutions. Mugabo said, “We started thinking about how to deliver on targets as we developed the right capacities.”

Given the government’s urgent agenda of reforms and the pressing need to move ahead with Vision 2020 programs, Karake and Mugabo realized that they had to develop and implement new strategies quickly.

### FRAMING A RESPONSE

Karake realized that HIDA would have to find novel ways to help ministers reach the goals laid out in Vision 2020. In 2006, during conversations with a World Bank team, Karake learned of Rapid Results initiatives that other countries had used to speed progress. Stefanie Teggemann, task team leader of the US\$20.5 million Rwanda Public Sector Capacity Building Project, which was linked to the government’s Multi-Sector Capacity Building Program, said, “I had visited Madagascar, where we [the World Bank] had helped apply Rapid Results, and thought that it would be great to do it in Rwanda as well. The government of Rwanda was moving quickly on reforms and was interested in getting a tool that matched that expectation.”

In 2006, Karake traveled to Madagascar to see Rapid Results at work. The government of Madagascar had used the approach to develop capacity to provide agricultural services, with

impressive results. Between 2005 and 2006, for example, productivity of rice, the national staple food, rose from a baseline average yield of 2.5 tons per hectare to 4.0 tons in Boeny, an important rice-producing region.<sup>4</sup> “The lessons from Madagascar were quite exciting,” Karake said. “They had a problem of near-famine in the country, and agricultural production had slackened. Through Rapid Results, they had stepped up production. Not only were they able to satisfy demand but also enjoyed a surplus. A country, which had famine and starvation, was able to do this within a short amount of time.”

Impressed by the results, Karake sought to apply the approach in Rwanda. He shared his enthusiasm with Mugabo, in charge of institutional and capacity development at HIDA, and assigned her the responsibility of piloting and coordinating Rapid Results within government ministries.

Rapid Results offered an unusual approach to managing the work of individuals assigned to carry out projects. A typical performance management program is data-intensive and systems-intensive, relying on goals, targets and standards for each job in the civil service, annual employee appraisals, and a direct link between individual achievement and pay and promotion. In contrast, Rapid Results held that material incentives were not necessary to stimulate improvements in individual performance, and that workers would respond positively to short-term, clearly defined challenges that required them to focus their efforts and to develop the skills needed to get the job done. Coaching was a crucial element of this effort to encourage civil servants to learn by doing.

Hirut M’cleod, a member of the Rapid Results Institute team that helped manage Rwanda’s implementation of Rapid Results in 2008, noted, “If the project is purely technical—like installing computer software—then it is not a project for Rapid Results. But, if it involves

shifting people’s behaviors—getting ministry staff to turn on the computer and use it, instead of using books—then there is more opportunity to see whether or not Rapid Results initiatives can be used.”

Rapid Results developers had concluded that ideal projects should have a time line of 100 to 120 days. Nadim Matta, president of the Rapid Results Institute, said, “The notion of a hundred days helps in creating urgency and deadlines. People react to that naturally. It is also important because Rapid Results initiatives often involve a new social contract between the front-line team and senior leaders in the organization or community. The 100-day time frame makes this shift in expectations more believable for team members.” While people focused on their projects, they had access to coaches or mentors who helped them solve problems. “The coach helps them persist in the face of setbacks,” Matta explained. Proponents held that short-term immersion, coupled with mentorship, created a sense of personal achievement.

In 2007, with Matta’s help, Karake and Mugabo asked several cabinet ministers for permission to experiment with the strategy. Mugabo noted, “One of the key things we looked at were the priority programs in the country at the time—health, poverty reduction and decentralization. We went to the ministries responsible for these programs and identified the key capacity gaps hindering delivery of priority programs, and this is where we piloted [the] Rapid Results approach of learning by doing.” They also worked to build support among permanent secretaries and officials, citing the government’s push to achieve Vision 2020 and explaining how Rapid Results could help implement projects aligned with national goals. The Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the National University of Rwanda signed on for the pilot program.

Each organization decided how it wanted to use the approach to achieve targeted goals. At the Ministry of Health, consultants and officials would use it to increase rates of assisted births and postnatal care in a small area within a specific district. Similarly, officials within the Ministry of Education planned to use the technique in one sub-district to help schools manage the shift from a six-year to a nine-year basic education system. The National University of Rwanda wanted to use Rapid Results to cut costs and increase revenues. The Ministry of Local Government viewed Rapid Results as a way to fire up the Umurenge Program, which had been lagging behind.

Within the Ministry of Local Government, Minister Protais Musoni, who headed the ministry from 2005 to 2009, became one of the early champions of the approach. Musoni had ample experience in local development and government through stints as provincial administrator, permanent secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, and Minister of State in charge of good governance, community development and social affairs. Ministry of Local Government officials Johnson Mugaga and Justine Gatsinzi also helped apply Rapid Results in local government. Mugaga, the national coordinator of the Umurenge Program, had previously headed the Rwandese Association of Local Government Authorities, a network of local government organizations. Gatsinzi ran another ministry program for public works projects, the *Programme de développement local à haute intensité de main-d’oeuvre*, popularly known as PDL-HIMO.

One of the flagship programs under the 2007 Economic Development and Poverty Strategy and in keeping with the broader goals of Vision 2020, the Umurenge Program was a decentralized rural development and anti-poverty program. Launched in 2008 with an annual budget of 24 billion Rwandan francs (US\$44 million), the program provided support to extremely poor

households through unconditional grants, employment for as long as eight months on public works projects, and loans. It also encouraged citizens to work closely with officials in reducing poverty in their communities. Mandated to reduce extreme poverty from 36.9% in 2006 to 24% by 2012, Umurenge targeted 600,000 people—5% of households through grants and 10% of households through employment in public works projects such as road building.<sup>5</sup>

### GETTING DOWN TO WORK

Musoni's Ministry of Local Government decided to test Rapid Results in Gashaki, the poorest sector in Musanze district. Rwanda's central government was subdivided into 30 districts and the capital city of Kigali. Each district was divided into sectors or *imirenge* (plural of *umurenge*) and each sector into four cells. A cell contained a number of villages, each made up of 10 households. Ministry officials decided that Rapid Results consultants would work with local government officials and communities to help fulfill the goals of the Umurenge Program in Gashaki's four cells. Umurenge's first national coordinator, Mugaga said, "The program was not on par with the other programs under the umbrella of Vision 2020. It was lagging behind and HIDA felt that Rapid Results could help us improve implementation so that we could be on track with some of the other programs." Musoni added: "The whole purpose of embracing Rapid Results was to see how it could quicken the pace of implementation, but at the same time to get the people to be part of the process."

Ministry officials chose Gashaki for a variety of reasons. Prior to Rapid Results, the ministry had conducted a countrywide survey to assess national poverty levels through a traditional tool called *ubudehe*. The *ubudehe* survey grouped households into six socioeconomic categories, based on responses to questions on income, assets, access to markets and services, and social

participation. Using the survey findings, officials identified Gashaki as the poorest sector in Musanze district, with the greatest number of people in the lowest two categories—those who had the least access to land, livestock, education, health services, sanitation and housing. The Musanze district also had dedicated government officials, including an activist district mayor and sector executive secretary. Gatsinzi said, "Musanze had ranked its sectors well, and Gashaki emerged as the poorest one. The district had a strong leadership—an important ingredient, as we were launching Umurenge and wanted to see successes. We thought that Gashaki would be a fertile ground to ensure that activities would kick off very quickly."

The broad goal for Umurenge in Gashaki, as in the 29 other sectors where the program was active, was to improve the standard of living for families in the lowest two *ubudehe* categories. But ministry officials were aware that other anti-poverty programs, including PDL-HIMO (2004-2008), had not been entirely successful in lifting households out of extreme poverty even though they provided public works jobs. Ministry officials such as Musoni, Mugaga and Gatsinzi, as well as local officials including the district mayor of Musanze, feared that Umurenge might hit similar roadblocks. With past experiences in mind, Musoni decided to experiment with Rapid Results to move the Umurenge Program in Gashaki forward. "We introduced Rapid Results in Gashaki to see how rapidly it could move the new Vision 2020 Umurenge Program forward, with participatory planning and serious leadership development," he said.

#### *Enlisting local buy-in*

Before introducing Rapid Results in Gashaki, Mugabo and M'cleod knew they had to build support among officials at all levels of local government, including the provincial governor, district mayor, and executive secretaries, the

administrative heads of the sector and the four cells. Rapid Results Institute and HIDA representatives hoped that the initial outreach would translate into continued support.

In early 2008, with Musoni's blessing and under Mugabo's supervision, consultants teamed up with Mugaga, head of the Umurenge Program. With his help, they reached out to Musanze and Gashaki officials. Mugabo said the strategy hinged on involvement. "We identified people from the very top of the leadership, from the minister downwards, getting all the leaders one by one to ensure they take ownership of the programs and drive delivery," she said. "When we got to the local leaders and the community, we made sure we involved them in all the activities, leading teams to identify quick wins and deliver quick results. The beneficiaries had to be part of the whole thing."

Involving officials from the top to the bottom of the leadership chain ensured that the team could work more effectively, M'cleod said. "For Gashaki, we had leadership focal points at each level of government," she said. "This allowed us to diagnose a problem all the way up and down the line. For example, the district mayor helped open doors to lower levels of government. He created an authorizing environment for the work and, when there were problems, he would help fix things."

The consultants also encouraged senior officials to think about the challenges they thought they might face in trying to achieve Umurenge goals. They believed that senior officials would be more willing to support solutions to challenges that they had helped to identify. Based on experience with programs such as PDL-HIMO, Musoni and other ministry officials feared that even with the help of earnings from up to eight months of public works employment, Umurenge target families would not use the income in ways that would raise their

standard of living and move out of extreme poverty.

#### *Identifying local teams*

In March 2008, the district mayor introduced Rapid Results in Gashaki at a meeting of officials and local leaders. The forum provided an opportunity for church leaders, teachers, workers for non-governmental organizations, and local officials to discuss challenges, air concerns and nominate teams to work with coaches. M'cleod said, "We set up an orientation to bring all stakeholders together to talk about challenges. For example, we talked about how past public works programs had been unsuccessful and challenges that could make the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program fail."

Acting as facilitators, consultants encouraged participants to nominate four teams, one for each cell of the Gashaki sector (see Figure 1). The teams would be responsible for working directly with citizens to move the Umurenge Program forward. Executive Secretary Alfred Nsengimana, who had taken over as administrative head of the Gashaki sector in 2008, backed the effort wholeheartedly. "We called a meeting to choose those who were going to help in the mobilization," he said. "The people chose opinion leaders such as health workers, government officials, businessmen, church people and teachers to form teams." Eleven members made up a team, with one serving as the team leader. The executive secretary of each cell was part of that cell's team. Team members were volunteers and did not receive money. Similarly, local officials in the teams were not entitled to extra pay.

A "strategic leader" oversaw the four teams. In Gashaki, Nsengimana became the head of strategy for all four teams. M'cleod explained the role: "A strategic leader had the authority to create an enabling political environment for the team. So, if the team came against roadblocks that were

not technical, the coach worked with a strategic leader so that he or she could open doors for the team, and did it in a way that enabled members to play the roles they had been assigned as part of the Rapid Results team.” For instance, if team members needed the support or approval of the mayor for certain projects or activities, the strategic leader could help them.

In March 2008, after the four teams were in place, officials presented Rapid Results at a public event to help build support. At the gathering, the mayor introduced the teams, and officials and consultants explained how they planned to proceed and the responsibilities of the team and the community. M’cleod said, “The launch [was] a very public event, so that the community and the team knew that it was important and that everyone cared about what they did.”

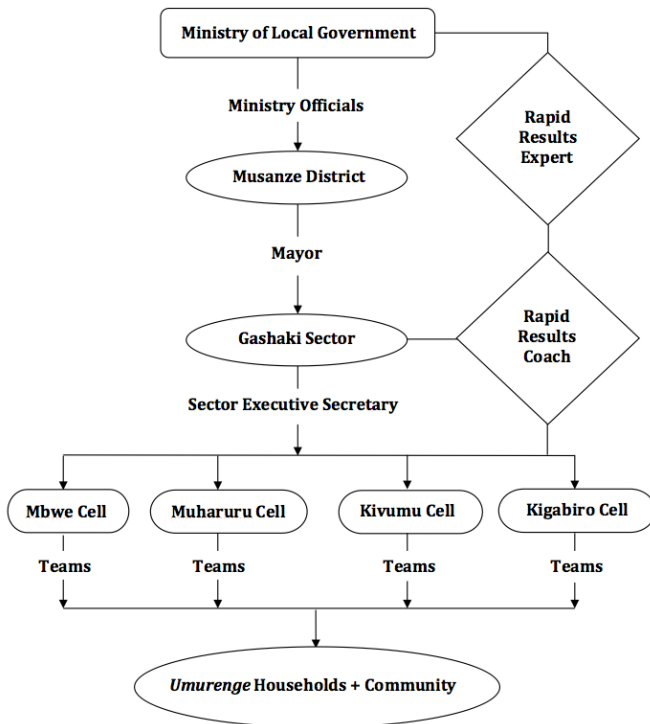


Figure 1: Rapid Results in Gashaki Sector, 2008

In addition, a team contract established how team members would work together. Members signed the contracts in front of the district mayor to strengthen their commitment to achieve goals. Similar to performance contracts, the documents laid out the names of the team members and provided guidance for handling problems that teams might face in trying to work together. M’cleod said, “The contract is there so that the team does not lose a month figuring out how to deal with someone who is missing or comes late to meetings. The members have already decided how to deal with all those administrative issues.”

*Transferring knowledge*

In April 2008, Mugabo, with the help of the Rapid Results Institute team, hired four local Rwandan consultants as coaches. Each coach was to work directly with Rapid Results Institute, which planned to train Rwandans to take on its role after the initial test was completed. HIDA advertised the positions in local newspapers and shortlisted candidates with prior leadership, and community and teamwork experience. Susanne Balera and Musoki Francis were hired to support the four teams in Gashaki. The other two new coaches worked with teams in the other institutions.

With on-the-job mentoring by the consultants, the new coaches learned to facilitate workshops, help teams and communicate with high-level officials. Balera and Francis worked with sector Executive Secretary Nsengimana, the district mayor, and four local teams. Because of funding delays within the Umurenge Program, however, the teams applied Rapid Results in Gashaki in June, several weeks later than planned.

*Setting goals and implementing work plans*

In June 2008, Rapid Results coaches and consultants in Gashaki asked each of the four teams to think of ways to address the challenge identified by the ministry and local government officials, that is, to encourage Umurenge beneficiaries (the target group of people who qualified for public works projects under the



program) to change certain aspects of their lives in order to improve their long-term standard of living. After discussions, each team agreed that its goal would align with that of the Umurenge program, namely to improve the quality of life for the poorest people in their respective cells, those who were grouped in bottom two categories under the ubudehe survey and were eligible for public works employment. The teams would help a total of 1,074 Gashaki residents enroll in and receive income through the Umurenge public works projects in Gashaki, which built roads and other infrastructure projects. For example, the team for the Kivumu cell would help 155 people register for public works jobs, while the team in Mbwe targeted 377.

Rapid Results required each of the teams to go beyond simply registering people for public works employment, a step that local government officials could undertake, and to devise small-scale projects that would enable Umurenge to target families to improve their living conditions and move out of poverty. From July through October, with coaching support and after speaking with the families, teams decided upon and then carried out initiatives whose aggregate contribution would be to improve the group's quality of life and economic condition. The initiatives were relatively simple measures to teach recipients how to invest the money they earned through public works jobs and how to take advantage of existing government services. Teams organized workshops and ran projects to encourage Umurenge families to be tested for HIV/AIDS, buy health insurance, open bank accounts, attend adult literacy courses, take advantage of educational opportunities, and plant vegetables or buy livestock. In addition, they worked with other community members to help families build homes and make fuel-saving stoves.

With the help of coaches, teams created work plans that detailed tasks, timelines and the people assigned to each job. Balera said, "The teams,

community and local government officials all had responsibilities. So, each level had responsibilities, and we had to put it in our work plan: who is going to do what, when it is going to be done, and what activity it would be."

Each team worked directly with the poor households that benefited from public works jobs within each cell. Team members divided up the workload, each taking charge of five households and following up on activities regularly. Ntabanganyimana, the Kivumu cell's executive secretary and team leader, recalled, "Our first motivation was to see the very poor climbing the ladder and improving standards. So we would ask members to find out if a household had a fuel-saving stove or a vegetable garden. We got a report when we met the following week. If we found weaknesses, we would try to find solutions. Then the team member would go back to encourage the beneficiaries. In this way, we knew activities were done because we saw them with our own eyes."

Team members spoke daily with the families that benefited from Umurenge public works jobs, gauged needs and designed projects. They held regular meetings with families to discuss problems, overcome suspicions and get ideas for projects. Sometimes members of the community asked questions or expressed concerns that required advice from specialists, such as in health or education. In such cases, teams, with the help of coaches, facilitated community workshops so that people could get answers. They also solicited the help of NGOs and officials in putting together projects. For instance, they invited health officials and representatives from the NGO *Aprogedefarwa (Association pour la Promotion du Genre et du Développement de la Famille Rwandaise)* to speak to families about HIV/AIDS testing before organizing a community event for people to be tested. They also worked with local government officials and the NGO Cosmos to build homes for the homeless.

Local ministry officials set examples as well. Executive Secretary Nsengimana said, “The mayor initiated the opening of bank accounts for local government officials. The idea was that officials should first set an example for the population, which would be more comfortable in opening bank accounts.” The mayor also persuaded a savings and credit cooperative, CLECAM (*Caisse Locale d’Epargne et de Crédit Agricole Mituelle*), to open a Gashaki branch so that people would not have to walk far to access their bank accounts.

### *Monitoring progress*

Team members followed up daily with their assigned households, and teams and coaches met weekly to discuss results and future tasks. The strategic and team leaders met once or twice a month, depending on issues that came up. In addition, teams met with the mayor every two weeks to report progress and cultivate continued support. For their part, coaches reported progress to M’cleod, who worked directly with officials in Kigali. Balera said, “Every two weeks we had meetings with local authorities, together with the team and the coaches, to share what we are going to do, what we have already done, and the plans for the future. Also, the team met with the community every day during public works.”

Coaches and local officials provided constant oversight. “The coach looked to the work plan to see if it was followed,” Nsengimana said. “He or she was the connection between the planning and coordination with all the teams within the sector, separately. I, as executive secretary, would follow up with activities and monitoring.”

Teams publicized a tracking chart measuring their progress toward goals, as a way of holding each other accountable and keeping the community informed.

M’cleod noted a gradual change in the attitudes of officials, teams and the community. “One of the key aspects of the approach is the adoption of certain ways of thinking,” she said.

“Rapid Results begins to get everyone to think about problems. People begin to see that they have a role in addressing that problem. In Gashaki, people now had different perceptions of what is possible and what can get done by a group of their own people.”

In October 2008, the first phase of Rapid Results in Gashaki concluded. A month later, after an evaluation to assess expanding the program, coaching support for the teams ended and officials could continue using the technique on their own.

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

The rollout of the program was not trouble-free. A lack of funding and limited staff at the Ministry of Local Government caused initial delays. Mugaga, in charge of Umurenge, said, “The World Bank’s support for the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program came from another fund that provided for only a few salaries, and not for Rapid Results.” The delays lasted for over a month. Karake summarized the urgency: “You package activities that must be achieved in 100 days. You count day one, day two, and so on. The clock does not stop if you slack. So, everyone is under pressure.”

Incentives did not always align as well as hoped. The program did not pay team members anything extra for their participation, but it did try to reimburse people for transportation to meetings and to provide tea and coffee. In a context where transportation options were limited, however, it could still cost a civil servant to play an active role if people would have to walk many kilometers to attend a meeting. Mugaga said, “As a new tool in a new environment, Rapid Results needed its own resources. For example, to organize the seminars and meetings, we could have provided transportation and fed the people who attended.”

In addition, the staff members of the newly launched Umurenge program and local officials were overstretched. Mugaga said, “We had 100

days. But they had so many other tasks and could not focus on one program. The staff on the ground was also lean. We could not get everyone to just focus on Rapid Results. We therefore found ourselves going over and above the 100 days.” Local government officials had competing priorities and activities as well. For example, executive secretaries were responsible for other projects related to health, infrastructure, agriculture and elections. In many cases, they did not have vehicles. It therefore became difficult for them to devote full attention to Rapid Results projects.

Adding to the resource constraints, the program initially faced resistance from local leaders, including some team members. Unconvinced that poor families could change deeply ingrained habits and break the cycle of poverty, some teams hesitated to move beyond enrolling people in public works employment.

With persistence, ministry officials eventually were able to get funding and start work. Mugaga requested that the World Bank reassign some capacity-building funds to Rapid Results. “We approached the team of the World Bank Public Sector Capacity Building Project to say that we were not using a certain amount of money [allocated to us by the bank],” he said. “We requested that they allow us to run Rapid Results workshops, etc., from this unused money. But all this took time.”

Regular reporting ensured that subsequent delays were overcome quickly. In one instance, the executive secretary realized that there was no money to pay public works participants of the program even though the ministry had released the funds. M’cleod said, “Technically, the money had been released down to the sector level, but it was stuck at the district. We did not know why the money was not there. But, something that could have taken months to fix took only a couple of weeks. It was just a matter of asking questions up and down the line to resolve it.”

Musoni’s support helped ministry officials rally behind Rapid Results in Gashaki. “Anything new disturbs the comfort zone of people; they tend to reject it,” he said. “So you have to go in and explain to them. It takes some leadership, but in the end those resistances break down.” He added, “The Umurenge team saw it as an extra piece of work. They were busy rolling out a program throughout the whole country, and here was another one that required them to concentrate on one sector. That was a major problem. I had to go in there and push them.”

The mayor of Musanze also intervened to support local leaders and teams, enabling teams to move beyond the simple task of registering people for public works jobs and start thinking about ways to change the conditions of poor families. Soon, they started holding meetings and talking to the people earning income through the public works projects.

The consultants also worked closely with the coaches to tackle special issues. Because the coaches were new to the process, M’cleod helped them prepare for meetings with teams and strategic leaders. M’cleod and local coaches identified potential problems and came up with possible solutions before the coaches returned to work directly with the teams.

Musoni’s commitment throughout the process helped the teams complete the first phase of Rapid Results. He made sure that he was always accessible, sitting down with officials and explaining the value of the approach and why it was worth doing. He also extended his support to the local teams. If he had to miss a meeting, he would follow up with a phone call to team members.

## ASSESSING RESULTS

Of the 1,074 citizens in the target group, 882 enrolled in public works jobs and opened bank accounts, and 446 went to clinics for medical help, including HIV/AIDS testing. A total of 119

people attended adult literacy courses and 2,819, including family members, bought health insurance. With the income earned from the public works jobs, families were able to buy 257 animals for rearing, and almost all the households planted vegetable gardens. In addition, the community helped build 19 homes and 145 fuel-saving stoves.

Balera, one of the two coaches for the Gashaki teams, said the program's achievements could be measured in less tangible ways. "We know we were successful," she said. "The faces of people were brighter. Their children were going to school, and they were putting on uniforms because their standard of living had changed." She also noted that the teams succeeded in getting a small health-care center in Gashaki.

Nsengimana stressed that community mobilization through Rapid Results paid rich dividends. In one example, teams in consultation with community members decided to allot a day for HIV/AIDS testing in Gashaki. They asked the Musanze health center to send medical personnel to Gashaki to conduct tests but found that the health officials lacked transportation to bring required equipment to the sector. To overcome the hurdle, team leaders assembled volunteers to carry the equipment on foot or on bicycles.

Although a locally targeted effort, Rapid Results helped implement the national government's broader policies of community development and decentralization. M'cleod noted, "The most dynamic place [for development work] up until that point had been the district, but recently Rwanda was developing leadership, ownership and accountability at the sector level. And with Rapid Results, we were seeing teams at the cell level engaging with NGOs, writing their own program proposals for small-scale projects that addressed the needs of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program beneficiaries."

Mugaga said, "Because Rapid Results was on the ground on a daily basis, it helped reinforce the process in terms of capacity building of local leaders. It was also an extra eye on the ground to monitor activities."

Musoni praised the progress made during the first phase. "I believe that we achieved what we wanted to achieve," he said. "Results showed in infrastructure and access to water [through public works projects], health clinic, school [attendance], and rehabilitated areas. People were also better organized. More than that, Gashaki started as the poorest of all the sectors in Musanze but, all of a sudden, beneficiaries were telling their friends that they now had what others did not." Soon, officials started showcasing the Umurenge Program in Gashaki to visitors from other sectors.

Along with new sources of income, people involved in the program changed habits as well, according to local officials. Team Leader Ntabanganyimana said: "What we achieved was that people climbed the ladder. For example, people did not buy health insurance before. Now we just remind them that the date is here and they go and deposit the money."

Some government officials, however, were not convinced that the positive changes in Gashaki could be attributed entirely to Rapid Results. Karake said, "The approach is good and scientific with tasks clearly defined. But, with capacity building, it was not easy to measure the results. It was also very difficult to design and decide which outputs should be attributed to Rapid Results or to other government interventions. One could not discern if the results were 100% due to Rapid Results."

Indeed, parallel programs complicated attempts to gauge the impact of Rapid Results. In 2008, Gashaki had a number of other initiatives, including *imihigo* and *ubudehe*. Adopted in 2006, *imihigo*, a similar Rwandan-designed practice, encouraged mayors to sign traditional pledges or

contracts, and combined these with social pressure to improve government performance in the districts. Ubudehe, which allowed local groups to administer household surveys, was a timeworn method for engaging communities to form teams and participate in projects. Mugabo, formerly at HIDA, noted, “Rapid Results was something that built on already existing initiatives of the government. The government had programs that were Rwandan, like imihigo, based on performance contracts, which it had already been started and initiated. Mayors were signing contracts and setting targets. It was therefore not easy to pin positive changes to Rapid Results. Rapid Results also focused more on quick results and less on developing capacities to sustain change.” The Ministry of Local Government did not undertake comparison studies with other sectors, which might have yielded more conclusive results.

Some officials thought that Rapid Results complemented imihigo. Karake emphasized, “Imihigo is a performance contract, but Rapid Results is a tool. One does not conflict with the other. Rapid Results is about measuring and balancing efforts and time, packaging outputs, defining deliverables, and giving them time limits. Rapid Results can be used to accomplish the activities within the performance contract. In fact, sometimes the government has capacity challenges with imihigo. Rapid Results would be a useful tool for the local government to help them fast-track the process of realizing imihigo.”

Team members and officials who had applied Rapid Results in Gashaki agreed with Karake’s point of view. While imihigo relied on performance contracts and social pressures, Rapid Results focused on building skills and ownership as teams crafted their own goals, learned to work together, mobilized the community, and managed tasks effectively. Ntabanganyimana said, “Imihigo was there before Rapid Results, but we were not really implementing. Rapid Results helped us to

implement imihigo in a systematic way.” Musoni echoed their sentiment: “I would say that it achieved the objectives set forth in the imihigo.”

In September 2008, after the end of the first phase, Rapid Results could not be scaled up in the Ministry of Local Government or the other three institutions that had launched pilot projects. According to Gatsinzi, high cost was one reason. The cost of implementing the Umurenge Program in Gashaki using Rapid Results exceeded the cost of implementing the program in other sectors. Expansion would mean additional costs, not just for extending the program but also for training more managers at higher levels of government.

During the first phase, the Rapid Results Institute trained only four local consultants or officials who could carry the approach forward, two of whom remained active and participated in a refresher exercise in 2010. According to Karake, the National University of Rwanda, one of the four pilot agencies, in conjunction with the Rapid Results Institute, had agreed to develop a university-based team that could carry the program forward in Rwanda at a lower cost. However, the training never took place. The lecturers asked for special pay to learn. Although training did require people to expend some extra effort alongside their regular jobs, the organizers saw skill development as an investment, with returns in the future, and urged lecturers to adopt a new mindset. Not all embraced this approach. Karake added, “The lecturers at the National University of Rwanda were not convinced that Rapid Results was new. Many of them told me that it is similar to the community-based participatory approach in planning and implementation of projects. In retrospect, we should have chosen people who were enthusiastic about Rapid Results and not imposed it on people within the National University of Rwanda.”

Musoni’s promotion to the post of minister of cabinet affairs in 2009 contributed to the demise of Rapid Results within the Ministry of

Local Government because it deprived the initiative of a champion, although Musoni remained supportive. Senior government leaders disagreed about whether to extend the practice, with some ministers and officials in favor and others against. For a time, at least, deepening and expansion came to a standstill as HIDA funding stopped. Nsengimana regretted that the second phase had stalled. “In 2009, Minister Musoni asked me to organize a team of 12 people to implement Rapid Results in the whole country. He wanted it to continue as a big project and the officials and leaders from Gashaki, who already had experience, would form teams to go to every district. Gashaki would have served as a model. But the plan did not move forward after Musoni left the ministry.”

In 2011, despite the lack of formal support, the four teams in Gashaki continued to function. Members met regularly to discuss community needs, government services and local issues. But Nsengimana said it was difficult to sustain the work. “It was a problem when the coaches left, as it was difficult for me to coach the teams alone,” he said. “Coaches had been monitoring constantly but later it was difficult to see if the teams were carrying out the tasks. ... The problem today is that it is difficult to coach groups because I am alone. I have no formal support. I have so many other things to do. But I keep mobilizing people. The teams are also there and keep mobilizing the people.”

## REFLECTIONS

Alfred Nsengimana, executive secretary of Gashaki, reflected in 2011 on the program’s success in the sector three years earlier. “When you are a leader and you lead a poor population,

you lead with nothing,” he said. “But if the community can participate and achieve objectives, it will remain invested. For this reason, Rapid Results succeeded in Gashaki and affected the whole population. What we do now is follow what we taught the population and local officials in 2008.”

Recognizing the long-term effects of the approach in Gashaki, coach Susanne Balera lamented that it had not been broadened to other areas of Rwanda. “What I saw is that, like in the Ministry of Local Government, the importance of Rapid Results was not really captured,” she said. “If they had done that, I think the scale-up should have happened because it is an important, useful and sustainable methodology.”

Some officials reflected that Rapid Results could have been sustained in Rwanda if it had more time and attention. Others thought that it might have had better a chance of enduring if both Rwandans and the Rapid Results Institute had agreed on a way to train many more local coaches and consultants, both reducing cost and expanding capacity. Justine Gatsinzi, the director general at the Rwanda Local Development Support Fund of the Ministry of Local Government in 2011, observed that “International consultants could not spread Rapid Results to the Umurenge Program in 120 sectors.” He said, “We would have had to spread it to local people who would then be hired to spread it elsewhere.” He added: “In Rwanda, increasingly we are recognizing the importance of the community members in taking charge of their development agenda. In this context, there is a lot that could be borrowed from Rapid Results if the mode of application could be modified.”

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- <sup>1</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, *Rwanda Vision 2020* (2009): 12, <http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/ministry/key/vision2020> (1 December 2011).
- <sup>2</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, *Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008–2012* (2007): xii, <http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/ministry/key/vision2020> (1 December 2011).
- <sup>3</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Local Government, *Community Development Policy* (2008): 5, <http://www.minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=498> (1 December 2011).
- <sup>4</sup> Govindan Nair, Eric Champagne and Cia Sjetnan, “Madagascar: Building Decentralization Capacity through Rapid Results Initiatives,” *World Bank Institute* (2007): 4, <http://go.worldbank.org/FBXBGF2QW0> (1 December 2011).
- <sup>5</sup> Rwanda Ministry of Local Government, *National Social Protection Strategy* (2011): 4–5, <http://www.minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=269> (1 December 2011).

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