Spurring sustainable social change interventions with dialogic communication: An assessment of ADRA Rwanda's Action for Social Change (ASC) Communication for Social Change (CFSC) Program

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Abstract
Can communication really catalyze sustainable social change in Africa? This is the question this study sought to address. It reviewed ADRA Rwanda's Action for Social Change (ASC) Program, which uses a Communication for Social Change (CFSC) approach to encourage Rwandans against overreliance on exogenous assistance as they rebuild their country following the 1994 genocide. Using such ethnographic methods as Focus Groups Discussions (FGD), In-depth Key Informant Interviews (IKII), Most Significant Change (MSC) narratives, personal observation and photo-validation, the study found that both the management of ADRA Rwanda and the staff of ASC are committed to furthering the CFSC activities. The ASC staff understand and have internalized Communication for Development (C4D), Appreciative Inquiry, REFLECT, and other popular empowerment and conscientization techniques. Also, the duty bearers appreciate the contributions that the ASC CFSC approach is making to the politico-economic empowerment and poverty reduction of poor rural and urban communities in Rwanda. Most importantly, the local people, *abaturage*, find the dialogic communication between duty bearers and the local people facilitated by the ASC program to be stimulating and empowering. The ASC CFSC program demonstrates the mass media and direct communication, such community conversations and dialogues, helps poor people to value their latent energies, potential, knowledge and skills, and turn these into startup capital that leads to sustainable social change.

Key words: *Action for Social Change, Communication for development, communication for social change, Conscientization, dialogue, REFLECT*

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1.0 introduction

Since 1978, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, through its Rwanda office (ADRA Rwanda) has been assisting the Rwandan government in the areas of education, health, economic empowerment, food security and relief services, particularly during emergencies, such as the aftermath of the internecine genocide of 1994. ADRA Rwanda's current mission is to transform itself, and other community based groupings (CBGs), into strong and vibrant civil society organizations that should effectively support the Rwandan government development agenda as encapsulated in its Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, a medium term plan for attaining the country's Vision 2020 *Umurenge* (SIDA, n.d.) whose objective is to reduce poverty to 30% and the national dependence on agriculture to 50% through exports, mining, industry, among others by 2020. Already, reviews indicate that because of its pro-growth policies and prudent use of foreign aid, Rwanda's economy has been growing at an average of 9.6% per year since 1995 and per capita incomes have been rising at 5.5% annually while rural poverty in Rwanda has been decreasing by 2.4% annually (Rodrik, 2013). Further, the number of poor people in Rwanda went down from 56.7 % in 2005 to 44.9% in 2011 while extreme poverty dropped from 41% in 2000 to 36.9% in 2005 and 24% in 2011 (SIDA, 2012). The major contributors to this success story include the reorganization of agricultural production into zones and value chains, the economic empowerment of rural communities through the establishment, the promotion of SACCOs and the encouragement of Village Savings and Lending Associations (VSLAs). While the operation of SACCOs and other credit-taking Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) is closely monitored and regulated by the National Bank of Rwanda, the VSLAs are considered first order MFI and are only encouraged to register with the most immediate administrative authority in their local areas and municipalities to reduce the red-tape and high interest that are often associated with large financial lending institutions (RCA, 2009; BNR, 2009).

ADRA Rwanda's ASC Program is meant to contribute to the social transformation of Rwandan society through communication for social change, adult literacy (REFLECT), increased entitlements and capabilities, and proper exploitation of their pentagone of assets (human, social, natural, physical and financial) (see DfID, 1999). To achieve this, ADRA Rwanda worked towards empowering existing political, health, educational and economic blocks or networks or organizations to become civil society organizations. Thus, in tandem with the Government of Rwanda's development plans, the ASC Program (ADRA Rwanda, 2012) was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Civil society actors (CBGs) are well-organized and able to mobilize their communities to address and take action on political, social and economic development issues.
2. Civil society actors (CBGs) have increased technical capacity to address identified challenges and felt needs in relation to education, health, and food security.
3. Civil society actors (CBGs) influence processes of democratization and promote their communities' rights and interests through dialogue, networking and advocacy.
4.   ADRA Rwanda is a strong player in the Rwandan civil society that promotes the rights and interests of vulnerable groups locally, nationally and internationally

2.0 Evaluating communication for social change: A literature review

Evaluating a communication-based development intervention is not an easy task since many development practitioners and donors are skeptical that communication interventions can really spur

change on the ground (see Gumucio-Dagron, 2007; Waisbord, 2008; Chambers, 2013). They ask for empirical quantifiable evidence that links communication activities to any changes relating to people's awareness, knowledge, attitude change and adoption of new behaviors. There are others, however, who believe that if well handled communication can and does change social behaviors, which leads to lasting social transformation. Chambers (2014), although not writing about communication for development (C4D) *per se* aptly captures this polarization in development discourse. He writes: "there is a tug of war between the (Newtonian) paradigm of [perceiving] things, which is top-down with control, measurement, standardisation and upward accountability, and the (complexity) paradigm of people in which we find discretion, judgment, diversity and downward accountability". Although quantifiable empirical evidence that directly links communication interventions to development and social change is elusive, some recent studies have proposed the quantification of qualitative findings (Jupp *et al.*, 2010) arrived at through participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). PM&E entails allowing the beneficiaries of development efforts to participate in setting the indicators for change, which points to the need by project planners to involve the beneficiaries in the planning and indicator identification. Writing about C4D, Lennie and Taachi (2013) argue that evaluators often fail to understand change brought about by communication activities because of their overreliance on predetermined indicators, a criticism that Catley *et al.* (2014) have also underlined.

Thus, sustainable social change interventions, such as ADRA Rwanda's ASC Program, require two types of evaluation. The first type of evaluation aims at gathering data whose analysis helps the program funders, planners and implementers to gauge, quantitatively, the level of change that has occurred in terms of predetermined benchmarks or indicators derived from the Program's initial baseline studies, program documents, operationalisation plans, and Logical Frameworks. These types of indicators can be monitored and evaluated formatively, that is, as the activities are implemented to determine progress being achieved and summatively to arrived at the overall impact of the project (Stake, 1967). Such an evaluation, usually conducted on a quarterly basis, is restricted to the lifetime of a project. The second type of assessment aims at gauging long term qualitative changes, which have to do with popular empowerment, feeling of self-worth, happiness, social inclusion, and participation; the very characteristics of social transformation. This kind of assessment does not rely on preset indicators only but also acknowledges "anecdotal evidence of interesting social change" (Taachi *et al*, 2009:34) that target beneficiaries experience during the lifetime of the development intervention. Social change takes a long time, perhaps an entire generation, while most Logframe impact evaluations look for project lifetime results. According to Lennie and Taachi (2013) and Waisbord (2008, lack of immediate proof of change is what leads Newtonian evaluators to the conclusion that communication has no effect. However, qualitative evaluations look at success from the primary stakeholders' or the beneficiaries' perspective and acknowledge that, through the processes of critical reflection, self-introspection and comparison of the past with the present, the primary stakeholders understand better what is good and successful from their perspective. Justifying the need to value the perceptions of primary stakeholders, Biekart and Gasper (2013) quote Robert Chambers as saying 'what change is significant […] cannot be reduced to economic growth alone, as growth is only one sort of change." Indeed, other sorts of change, such as spiritual change and happiness may not be amenable to quantitative measurement.

Lennie and Tacchi (2013) rightly argue that the best way to learn about social change is to engage primary stakeholders or beneficiaries in dialogue and in listening to their life stories. Analysis of Most Significant Change provides qualitative evidence exists that communication for social change interventions work. For instance, reviewing the impact of Radio Listening Clubs (RLC), as one CFSC strategy, Manyozo (2012: 150) found that the rural communities of Thyolo district in Malawi were

satisfied that, as a consequence of their participation in the RLCs, they had *mphamvu zambiri* (a lot of power) with which they held the duty bearers to account. According to Manyozo (2012), this *mphamvu* (power) to challenge duty bears meant that the RLC processes had conscientized, liberated, socially elevated the local people. Further, Manyozo(2012)   notes that the local people felt recognized nationally. Thus, a lot of power may not be felt by an external evaluator, but the beneficiary himself or herself knows the extent of that power. Cranton (2006) has argued that qualitative social and personal transformation can be observed when "a person [or society] starts responding to an alternative habit of mind by reconsidering and revising prior belief systems". This change can be quantified (Jupp *et al.* 2010).

This assessment of the role of communication in social change as implemented by ADRA Rwanda's ASC Program used the second type of evaluation.

3.0 Methodology
This study used three ethnographic field study tools (focus groups discussions (FGDs), in-depth key informant interviews (IKII), and Most Significant Change (MSC) narratives or longitudinal personal experience stories. FGDs and MSC tools were mostly used to collect information from large groups, such as cooperatives and other Community Based Groups (CBGs) while the IKII were mostly reserved for individual duty bearers and small groups such as the management of ADRA Rwanda, which involved only three managers. In addition, photography (although videography would have been a better tool) and personal observation were deployed to validate some claims, wherever that was possible. Copious field notes were also taken as a backup mechanism. According to Taachi *et al.* (2009), field notes are important because, in addition to recording highlight statements, they record what the assessors observe (such as facial expressions, communication and cultural mannerisms) and the initial impressions they make of the interviewees. Interview guides were used to control the direction the interviews and discussions. All discussions were recorded digitally and analyzed through Kvale's (1996) thematisation technique or narrative summary or threading as Stevens (n.d) describes this qualitative data analysis technique. Thematization involved listening to discussions and interviews three times to identify the major issues or themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews, personal observations, FGDs and MSC narratives.

3.1 Ethical Considerations
All interviewees and focus group discussants were informed about the objective of the study and were told that they were free to participate and contribute and that they were equally free not to participate. Apart from informed consent, the interviewees were told that their stories would be used in a report that would be circulated worldwide and, except for duty bearers, names of all interviewees, including ADRA Rwanda ASC staff, would not be published. This confidentiality has been kept.

3.2 Research Process
The field study lasted from Monday, December 2 to Sunday December 8, 2013. Although interviewees and focus group discussants were preselected by the ASC staff, chances of the interviewees and discussants coming up with rehearsed answers were almost inexistent because the researcher did not reveal the questions to anyone. The field study began with a discussion of the inception note that the assessor had prepared. This was modified into a feasible evaluation plan and in the afternoon of the same day a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with staff of the Action for Social Change Program (except the Program Manager) was held in Kigali. The aim of the FGD was to find out the extent to which the Program staff had internalized the CFSC approach the ASC Program was employing. The

assessment examined the extent to which the ASC appreciated and knew CFSC as an empowering, liberating, participatory and dialogic approach, which values and builds on local knowledge, and social-political structures of beneficiaries.

On Tuesday 3rd December 2013, the assessor travelled to Nyagatare in the Eastern Province to meet and discuss with the members of Community Based Groups (CBGs), such as cooperatives, that had benefited from ASC's trainings, among other activities. There, the assessor conducted one FGD with 15 (7 male and 8 female) members of the Cooperative de Maïs et de Soja (Maize and Soy Cooperative Society) at Rurenge. The Cooperative comprises 25 female and 7 male; which means that the cooperative was represented by approximately 47% of the membership. In the afternoon, the assessor had in-depth interviews with three participants (2 female and 1 male) in a training on book keeping which had been organized by ADRA Rwanda at Rukomo. The training attracted 70 participants (21 female, 49 male) who were taught by four trainers (1 female and 3 male).

On Wednesday, 4th December, 2013 the assessor drove to Karongi district, Western Province, where he met and interviewed the Officer in-Charge of Civil Affairs/Acting Executive Secretary at Murambi to learn how duty bearers had benefitted from the CFSC activities promoted by ADRA Rwanda's ASC, and how they thought communities they represented had benefitted. Later he had a FGD with 12 (8 female, 4 male) belonging to the COOPAGEMU Beekeeping Cooperative. The Cooperative has 68 members (51 female, 17 male) but most of them did not show up. On the same day he met with 23 (13 female, 10 male) members of the Abakoranarukundo (Basket Weaving) Livelihoods Cooperative, also in Murambi. The Cooperative's full membership is 30 (18 female, 12 male). Later the researcher attended an adult literacy network mobilization show at Tongati Cellule, Gashari. Over hundred people from across the municipality attended the activity. The researcher also interviewed the Officer in-Charge of Social Affairs at Gashari Sector, three of the Parents and Teachers Association, the President of Chishimbiri School, and Executive Secretary of the Gashari Sector to understand how their work had impacted formal education in the area.

Later the researcher had in-depth interviews with three (3) representatives of three Livelihoods cooperatives (Indatwa, Umucyo and Abakundamurimo) for their stories about the influence of ASC activities. Finally, the researcher interviewed the Sector Agronomist for Murambi to examine how his work had been influenced by the ASC CFSC activities.

On Thursday 5 December, 2013, the assessor interviewed the Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA) Provincial Team Leader (West), and the Officer-in-Charge of Cooperatives and Business Promotion for Karongi District to understand how, as duty bearers, they had benefited from the ASC CFSC activities; held a Focus Group Discussion with eight Child Rights Ambassadors (5 female, 3 male) from schools and communities around Mutuntu Sector, another FGD with four representatives of Anti-Aids Network (four clubs) from around Mutuntu and finally attended part of the open-air community discussion, an activity that is now regular in Rwanda (Ndacyayisenga, 2013).

On Friday 6 December 2013, the assessor met with representatives of the ADRA Rwanda Management and a representative of the Management board. The aim of interviewing the ADRA Rwanda management was to understand the ADRA Rwanda management's readiness to support the ASC CFSC and to transform ADRA Rwanda into and make it operate as a strong, self-sustaining civil society organization.

The data collection exercise ended on Sunday 8 December, 2013 when the members of ADRA Rwanda, mostly ASC Staff, were debriefed on the findings of the evaluation. Some of their comments were taken aboard.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of the assessment. As intimated earlier, the process of thematisation was employed to identify running motifs and emerging themes, which were consolidated into the findings presented in the subsections that follow.

4.1 Extent of ADRA RWANDA's Management's commitment to CFSC

The discussion with the representatives of ADRA Rwanda management clearly pointed to the conclusion that the management understands that social change, particularly changing people's knowledge, attitudes and long-held beliefs is slow and resource intensive. However, management still preferred long-run and sustainable change to immediate but superficial change that is often associated with short term interventions. To this effect, the management indicated its readiness to not only partner with like-minded institutions in Rwanda to promote and fund long lasting change but also to commit material support to CBGs that demonstrate willingness to change for the better, to ensure that ASC's CFSC approach was adopted by the Rwanda government, whose development policy aims was in tandem with ADRA Rwanda's social change objective of creating conditions for long lasting and sustainable social change throughout Rwanda. The representative of the ADRA Rwanda management board emphasized this commitment to support the ASC CFSC approach thus:

> "We feel the work ASC is doing is crucial to Rwanda's development. I feel that if we approached the government for funds to continue with the work, the government would be more than ready… We are also ready to partner with like minded development institutions to pool resources for the benefit of social development and change" (*Interview, ADRA Rwanda Office, 6 December, 2013*).

This shows that ADRA Rwanda management is ready to evolve into a vibrant and self-financing CSO.

4.2 Extent to which ASC Staff have internalized CFSC approach

It was also clear during the discussion with members of ASC staff that they understood and were passionate about the CFSC approach because they had already started seeing the fruits of the approach. They explained that CFSC works towards building community awareness about people's own worth and wealth, building knowledge bases through dialogic communication, changing attitudes and beliefs, and promoting transformative practices. The ASC staff saw their roles as catalysts or facilitators of consciousness-raising transformative discussions, trainings, among others. Witness this testimony:

> "Maybe we have also to confess that when we were starting this Program we were like…. 'No, this can't work out!' because we were used to service delivery. Always, we were the ones who were giving… but with time… as we are implementing the project we have come to realise… the importance of Communication for Social Change. We can see the difference it is making to the stakeholders. For instance, in the past we would sit and say 'these people need goats" but we would realise that that was not what they needed. In the past, the CBGs were ADRA groups…Even local leaders referred to such group members as ADRA people; they were our people. but that is not the case today," (*ASC Staff discussant, 2 December, 2013*).

4.3 How duty bearers have benefitted from ASC CFSC activities

Duty bearers were asked to explain how they thought they had so far gained from the ASC CFSC activities in their areas. A number of success stories and percentages were given to demonstrate that activity's positive impact. The Sector Agronomist at Murambi, for instance, indicated that due to ASC awareness campaigns on the operations, regulations and laws governing Cooperatives, the number of cooperatives that have already come to formally register at Sector level has increased

from 3 to 6 (100%), while others were in the process of organizing documents for registration. The Rwanda Cooperative Agency (RCA) Team Leader for the Western Province, too, reported that due to awareness and appreciation of the laws and regulations, many CBGs intending to become cooperatives were applying for registration at Sector, District and National levels. How many exactly? "I didn't count, but we have trays upon trays of applications!" responded the RCA Provincial Team Leader. Not only that, the number of Village Saving and Lending Groups has also grown. He said:

> "While we take credit for this, we feel ASC CFSC activities have contributed immensely to our work. For example, the live radio program has helped us to clarify sticky issues about cooperatives."

Other duty bearers had their own stories to tell. At Gashari Sector, the Officer in Charge for Social Affairs reported that catch-up classes for students who missed years of schooling, Parents and Teachers Associations, Child Rights Ambassadors, School Management Committees had improved school attendance because in every community every child had literally become everybody's child. At school, the teacher and school child rights ambassadors work to ensured the child learned happily and in the community child rights ambassadors did their part to make sure the child is in school. At Murambi, the Acting Executive Secretary and Civil Affairs Officer-in-Charge narrated how REFLECT campaigns (when adult learners give testimony) had created interest for literacy amongst the illiterate. As such, adult literacy classrooms are getting larger with both men and women. Previously, men did not attend such classes, but slowly they also started joining the classes.

4.4 What the local people or primary stakeholders have benefitted

The rural poor beneficiaries were also asked how they thought they had benefitted from the ASC CFSC activities. A lot of success stories were told. This section gives examples of what the community members thought were the most significant changes contributed by ASC CFSC activities.

4.4.1 Gender inclusion

The composition of the community based groups clearly indicates inclusion of men and women. Except for the training event at Rukomo, Nyagatare, all the groups the researcher talked to were dominated by women. In Murambi, a member of the COOPAGEMU Beekeeping (Livelihoods) Cooperative explained that Rwandan society is mostly made up of women and it should, therefore, surprise no one if CBGs were also dominated by women.   But, there are reasons. In Mutuntu, a FGD with the child rights ambassadors revealed that the CBGs were mostly dominated by women because the groups were formed during the time of internecine wars when most soldiers' wives were at home alone with their children. It is estimated that at one point the population of men in some areas was as low as 20% (Trinity College, 2007). However, later, men slowly started joining the CBGs. This, in a way, confirms the findings from the ASC Staff FGD that ASC worked with Groups founded by community members. The CBGs that ADRA Rwanda's ASC was working with were not created by ARDA for purposes of the project. Since the groups existed before, they were likely to exist after ASC.

4.4.2 Sense of self-worth and empowerment: three case studies

During the group discussions in Nyagatare and Karongi, one could easily discern a sense of self worth and empowerment amongst committed CBG discussants. However, one CBG group was the exception. Three cases are discussed below as representatives of other CBGs for purposes of drawing lessons and comparisons.

4.4.2.1 Cooperative de Maïs et de Soja, Rurenge, Nyagatare

Almost all the FGD participants at Rurenge told stories of how their engagement in 'commercial' agricultural production of maize, beans and soya had improved their children's nutrition levels because they ate some of the soya in the form of 'meat' pieces and 'milk', and drank milk from their livestock. They claimed that because of ASC CFSC activities (mostly trainings), they were better organised as a group than before, they had better knowledge of regulations and laws governing cooperatives, they knew better farming and agricultural produce storage methods than before. At the time of the study, the Cooperative de Maïs et de Soja dreamed of purchasing tractors and combine harvesters for use by its members and for hire.

However, it is the story of their determination to succeed that one finds fascinating. Once upon a time they had nowhere to dry or store their agricultural produce. So they raised RwF4 million (approximately US$6400) locally and went to CARITAS for assistance. CARITAS obliged and gave them RwF8 million (US$12,800) to construct a market shed complete with shelling and grinding maize mills. This participatory capitalisation of expensive infrastructure such as storage sheds is a demonstration that 'beggar attitudes' are vanishing from the people of Rurenge. Catalysed by ASC activities, the Rurenge participants have been conscientised and empowered so much so that they presently appreciate the importance of contributing to their own development. They proudly own the shed and treasure it.

Apart from this group success story, the FGD at Rurenge revealed how individuals had benefitted from their involvement in the ASC CFSC activities. Take, for example, the story of two men. One now feels confident enough to be called the local agronomist and while the other now plans to look for a salaried job as an accounts clerk or book keeper.

Then there is this lady who feels being member of the Cooperative saved her marriage. How? Because she now earns money from increased yield (from 50 bags in 2012 to 100 bags of maize in 2013; from 100 bags (100 kg/ bags) of beans in 2012 to 200 bags in 2013. Her husband respects her, does not beat her up and listens to her suggestions on how to run family affairs.

At Rukomo, an in-depth interview with one man and two women, revealed how committed the participants were to the bookkeeping training that ADRA Rwanda had organised. Previously, they said, they would come to such training sessions expecting to be paid for being trained. Thanks to ASC's CFSC campaigns, the interviewees related, that expectation and attitude have virtually gone. Trainees are ready to contribute and play their part. For example, one lady explained that she had travelled 30 kilometres to come and attend the training because she expected to benefit and run her business better.

4.4.2.2 Abakoranarukundo Livelihoods Cooperative, Murambi, Karongi

In Murambi, men and women belonging to the Abakoranarukundo Livelihoods Cooperative proudly showed the researcher their weaving products (stretcher-cum-chairs, mobile phone carrier bags, carpets, ornaments, and even peace baskets!) which they sold to raise money for assisting orphans and for their own livelihoods. They weaved baskets, make chairs, etc as individuals and as a group, but they marketed the products as a team. They shared the dividends. "This shirt", said one participant, wearing a smile, "is mine. I bought it with proceeds from the sales of my products." A female participant reported, "Following our group exhibit at Kigali, where our cooperative won a national award, I bought a she-goat and I now have three goats-the mother and her two kids!" Three goats and one shirt may not be worth the "investment" ADRA Rwanda has committed to the social transformation and development of rural Rwandan society. However, it is a sign of success as defined by the local people.

Like at Nyagatare, in Murambi, stories of individual success were told. While the Cooperative de Maïs et de Soja at Rurenge had virtually no problems with markets, Abakoranarukundo Livelihoods Cooperative at Murambi complained about lack of markets and visibility. However, at an individual level, members of the Abakoranarukundo Livelihoods Cooperative were as happy as those of Cooperative de Maïs et de Soja at Rurenge.

One beneficiary of adult literacy had a story. He narrated how all his life it pained him that he could not read and had problems even with simple numeracy. After the adult literacy classes, he learned how to write and count. To prove his point he volunteered to read what is written on the black chalk board. "It's like seeing light for the first time", he said. Another participant, a young-looking woman, also raised her hand to demonstrate her reading skills. She came forward. She read words and sentences. She smiled and walked back to her seat. Her colleagues clapped for her.

The members of the Abakoranarukundo Cooperative were not the only beneficiaries of adult literacy, many more people were yearning for knowledge, reading and numeracy skills as the Acting Executive Secretary at Murambi said. Her statement was proved right when the assessment team witnessed at the Tongati Cellule an adult literacy network mobilisation campaign that, according to the ADRA Rwanda coordinator for the area, recruited a whole new class of (85) learners who would start their lessons at Mwendo. This shows the value the community has attached to formal education. As Freire (1996) and Mandela (n.d) once argued education, one's ability to read, write and count is a passport to awareness and understanding of the causes of oppressing situations against which one must fight to be free. Education helps in raising awareness, consciences, solution-seeking behaviours and self-reliance. This is what ASC's CFSC activities seem to have cultivated in the minds of the members of the Cooperative de Maïs et Soja of Rurenge, Nyagatare and Abakoranarukundo Cooperative, Murambi, Karongi. However, there are some CBGs that seemed a little mired in the past as they still wanted to be assisted to do the most basic things. Solution-seeking behaviours did not seem to have taken root in such groups.

4.4.2.3 COOPAGEMU, Murambi, Karongi

At the time of the study, COOPAGEMU was a newly created CBG made up of 68 members (51 female, 17 male) who were living with HIV (PLWHIV). It was formed in 2012 and has been receiving training using materials produced by ADRA Rwanda's ASC. It knew that honey is a money-maker and a source of several medicinal properties and economic products. However, unlike the members of Cooperative de Maïs et de Soja at Rurenge and the Abakoranarukundo Cooperative at Murambi, the COOPAGEMU did not listen to radio and it did not seem to see the need for doing so. When it was suggested to the group to contribute money and buy a group radio so that it forms a Radio Listening Club/Committee, the answer was that no one would find time to listen because the members came from very far apart. Compare this attitude with that of the women who walked thirty kilometres to attend the bookkeeping training at Rukomo and you will appreciate that attitude rather than distance is the problem with COOPAGEMU. Compare this with the co-financing effort for the construction of the agricultural shed at Rurenge and you will appreciate that at COOPAGEMU there is still a penchant for exogenous relief. Self-help was not exposed as a development philosophy amongst the members of COOPAGEMU.

4.5 Social responsibility & ownership

The results of the FGDs and In-depth Key Informant Interviews seem to point to the fact that rural Rwandan society has learned to organise itself and take charge of its responsibilities to the benefit of society. At Mutuntu, for example, the FGD with Child Rights Ambassadors indicated that the

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schools and communities were united in ensuring that every child went to school and that those who had dropped out of school should go back. The FGD revealed that the Child Rights Ambassadors are of two types (School-based and Community-based). The School-based ambassadors are teachers whose job is to see to it that students have everything they need at school while the community-based ambassadors go out to community members, mostly parents, to sensitise them about their roles and responsibilities in the education of the children. The results of this effort were enormous, according to the Child Rights Ambassadors who participated in the FGD. They listed the impacts as follows:

- The extent of alcohol and drug abuse has gone down
- The rate of theft is down
- The number of students in schools is high
- Catch up classes are encouraging school dropouts to come back to school
- The rate of school dropout has substantially decreased.

By how much? One of the school based child rights ambassadors estimated that previously, that is before the commencement of the child rights ambassadors' activity, out of every 30 students, 10 (33%) would drop out before the end of the year. And later? Out of every 30 students, 5 (17%) would drop out, particularly in Mutuntu area, to work in the tea estates or out of pregnancies. Thus, one would say the school dropout rate has decreased by 50%; but that conclusion would be preposterous because the figures were only estimations by one group of people and there was no validation of class enrolment registers. However, to the child rights ambassadors this is change and they were happy it was taking place.

Interviews with Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) and School Management Committee members at Tongati, Gashari, also indicated that the convivial relations between parents and schools have led to reduced school dropouts. They also listed a number of successes. One interviewee related a story of a parent whose child had gone out to Kigali to work; but when this parent learned about the importance of sending children to school, the parent went to Kigali and brought his son back to Gashari to attend school. According to the interviewees, parents now follow up on their children's academic progress. Previously, some parents never gave their children a chance to study or do homework; currently they do. Previously there was no dialogue between schools and communities, currently there is because communities and schools share information. The school has become a common interest. Management committees ensure that school property is safe while the child rights ambassadors ensure children do not miss classes.

4.6 Power of Networking

Networks are very important in the delivery of social change programs. During the FGD with members of the Mutuntu Network of Anti-AIDS clubs it became apparent that change vis-à-vis HIV and AIDS was taking place. According to the FGD discussants, stigmatisation was no longer an issue because all communities had become aware that anyone, rich or poor, could catch HIV and develop AIDS, and that one can live productively while carrying the HIV. People came to members of the network to seek advice. Talk about HIV and AIDS was no longer taboo. The Network claimed it had been giving VCT lessons from school to school and community to community. As a result, "In one community we mobilised 153 people to go for VCT. It was the first time such a large number of people had come forward", said one FGD discussant. Another one added that at Gasenyi Secondary School 145 students were convinced and went for VCT. That was also the first time.

The Network also said it was advising discordant couples on how they could continue living together without infecting each other or breaking up. Messages also went to pregnant women to encourage them to go for VCT and, if the pregnant women were found HIV positive, the right advice was given.

5.0 Conclusion

The conclusion of this assessment is that based on the interviews and discussions conducted, the MSC stories or testimonies collected, most CBG members feel empowered and happy to stand on their feet.
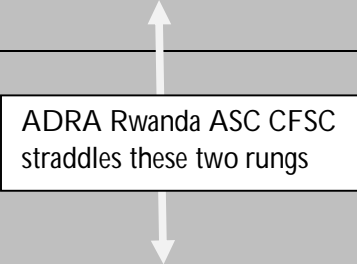
5.1.1 Empowerment

This statement by one of the participants in the FGD at Rurenge, Nyagatare, sums up the readiness of the communities to transform their own lives. "**We have hands and brains: why should we beg?"** Also, the fact that the community members were prepared to attend training without asking and expecting to be paid is already an achievement. The fact that at Rurenge, the Cooperative de Maïs et de Soja raised RwF 4 million (33% of total cost) to capitalise the building of an agricultural produce shed is further evidence that the community there was empowered and ready to stand on its own. Self-determination has been accepted and internalised as a tool for social and individual change, thus confirming that when people have "a deepened consciousness of their situation, [those people] apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation" Freire's (1996:66). In some societies, such training cannot take place. Participants have to be paid to be trained.

5.1.2 Where ADRA Rwanda's ASC CFSC stands

Empowerment has often been associated with participation of stakeholders. Full and Effective participation leads to empowerment and empowerment to sustainable social change. Using the seven-rung ladder of participation, one would place the ASC Program CFSC activities and outcomes upward of rung Number 6 as indicated in the table below.

Table 1: Typology of participation

Level	Characteristics of each type	Where ADRA Rwanda ASC CFSC stands
1. Passive Participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. It is a unilateral announcement by leaders or project management without listening to people's responses or even asking their opinion.	
2. Participation in Information Giving	People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.	

3. Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted, and external people listen to views. These external professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.	
4. Participation for Material Incentives	People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.	
5. Functional Participation	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organisation. Such involvement does not tend to occur at the early stages of project cycles or planning, but rather after major decisions have been made. These institutions tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may become self-dependent.	
6. Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.	
7. Self-Mobilisation	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilisation and	ADRA Rwanda ASC CFSC straddles these two rungs

	collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power.	

Source: Adapted from Pretty, 1995 as cited by Masanyiwa and Kinyashi, 2008: 11

A noted earlier, some rural CBGs are ready to stand on their own and become active civil society institutions because they seem to have passed through the awareness and consciousness-raising and dialogue phases and that they are now moving into the issue resolution/implementation phase (for a detailed discussion of this process, see Moore, & Gillis, 2005; Mphaka, 2006). The role of child rights ambassadors stands out as unique activity in ensuring that the community, parents, and the school unite to enable children to stay in school and learn.

6.0 Recommendation

As much as possible, this study attempted to capture all the most significant changes experienced by the beneficiaries of ADRA Rwanda's ASC CFSC activities. Also, it attempted to verify certain information through other sources, such as literature and document analysis, than just interviews and FGDs. However, typical of all qualitative studies, the results of this assessment may not reflect the perceptions and views of the entire Rwandan society. Further, because the researcher could not understand the Kinyaranda language, some of the issues raised by the communities could have been lost through translation and interpretation. Thus, the study recommends another carefully designed and fully funded nationwide study that to examine whether indeed the optimism shared in this study is a reflection of the state of happiness of the Rwandan people.

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