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The Implications of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in Fostering Livelihoods in Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing emphasis on moving away from conventional survey questionnaires towards innovative participatory appraisal and analysis methods, enabling local rural or urban populations to take on tasks previously carried out by external parties. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) involves an appraisal and analysis process that can result in local community or group action, such as the implementation of experiments planned and designed by farmers. The purpose of this paper was to examine the impact of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) on livelihood development in Rwanda, with a focus on a citizens' assembly in Bugesera district. Specifically, the study aims to assess the benefits of PRA, the main obstacles faced by citizens in fully engaging in PRA initiatives like citizens assemblies and key strategies to address them. Both primary and secondary sources were utilized for this research. Primary data was gathered through questionnaire surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. The data demonstrated a strong connection between PRA and livelihood development in Rwanda. For instance, findings revealed that PRA resulted in increased accountability of leaders, transparency in public services, greater citizen participation, improved planning, monitoring, and evaluation, and provided a platform for citizens to voice their concerns and needs. Additionally, the data highlighted various challenges hindering full citizen participation in PRA initiatives, such as lack of education, poverty, corruption, and fear of expressing concerns. Therefore, the study suggests recommendations for the government to promote education, empower economically disadvantaged individuals, enhance decentralization efforts, and implement measures to combat corruption at the local level.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, there have been significant shifts in the discourse surrounding rural development compared to the actual implementation of initiatives. These transformations encompass a transition from top-down to bottom-up approaches, from centralized standardization to local diversity, and from rigid blueprints to adaptive learning processes (Work, 2002; Faguet, 2014; Adamolekun, 1991). Concurrently, changes have emerged in strategies for knowledge acquisition and application. There is a growing emphasis on moving away from conventional survey questionnaires towards innovative participatory appraisal and analysis methods, enabling local rural or urban populations to take on tasks previously carried out by external parties (Cavestro, 2003; Chandra, 2010; Chambers, 1994).

The primary inquiry at hand pertains to the extent of efficacy possessed by these strategies and techniques in enhancing the feasibility of participation and ensuring the authenticity of the discourse. These advancements have been significantly influenced by two interconnected categories of methods and approaches commonly known as rapid rural appraisal (RRA), which gained prominence in the 1980s, and its subsequent transformation into participatory rural appraisal (PRA), which experienced rapid proliferation throughout the 1990s (Cavestro,

2003). The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was originally developed as a methodological tool and strategic approach that allowed policy consultants to gather information and evidence from local communities. It has since been widely utilized in various regions around the world (Chambers, 1993).

The techniques and methodologies of PRA have been applied in a range of contexts, including analysis, assessment, and research, as well as in the planning and evaluation of different subjects. These subjects include but are not limited to: customary land holdings; agricultural ecosystems; forestry and agroforestry; fisheries and aquaculture; irrigation systems; technology and innovation; social welfare programs; management of natural resources; research and extension in farming systems; food security; nutrition; disaster response; pastoralism; marketing strategies; evaluation and design of organizations; socio-cultural and economic conditions; as well as more complex areas such as national elections and the evaluation of poverty reduction strategies (Mathur, 1997). Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) is a method employed by researchers seeking to collaborate closely with rural communities to plan their work. PRA involves an appraisal and analysis process that can result in local community or group action, such as the implementation of experiments planned and designed by farmers

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(Narayanasamy, 2009; Webber & Ison, 1995). PRA not only enhances researchers' understanding of farming challenges but also fosters improved interaction and idea exchange between rural communities and researchers. Additionally, the culmination of a PRA process typically involves the collaborative planning of research projects or experiments (Bainbridge, 1998).

The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach is especially valuable in less developed countries, particularly in Africa, as it empowers marginalized segments of society to voice their perspectives on transportation and accessibility issues from which they are typically excluded (Webber & Ison, 1995). By facilitating the participation of diverse groups such as women, the elderly, people with disabilities, children, researchers, and professionals; PRA allows for a comprehensive understanding of community dynamics. Through the use of various PRA techniques, participants are able to address pertinent questions related to their transportation needs, prioritizing the requirements of rural populations and assessing the balance between supply and demand for transportation methods (Menconi *et al.*, 2017).

Additionally, Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) is founded on the fundamental principle of engaging in interactive and continuous learning processes. The indigenous communities possess a wealth of knowledge, experiential wisdom, historical and cultural background, unique perspectives, and individual interests and choices. By actively listening to local individuals, their distinctive "worldview" can be made visible, which would otherwise remain hidden. The level of learning attained is directly correlated with the listener's receptiveness rather than the speaker's delivery, leading to an enhanced capacity for knowledge acquisition (Chandra, 2010).

Following the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda has implemented development policies that emphasize equality, inclusive development, citizen participation and engagement (Niyonzima and Eyayu, 2023). A governance model focused on citizen involvement was established to guarantee that Rwandans play an active role in the planning, execution, monitoring, and assessment of socio-economic development policies and programs. This approach encompasses initiatives such as Umushyikirano, as well as the President's outreach programs like Meet the President and Rwanda Day, among others. At the community level, the Ministry of Local Government is responsible for the management of good governance, social affairs, decentralization, local finance, and community development. They oversee the empowered citizens' assembly known as Inteko z'Abaturage, aimed at enhancing coordination among stakeholders. The focus is on prioritizing community members in order to enhance the solutions generated by the citizens themselves to address the challenges they encounter in everyday life and ultimately improve their socio-economic status (MINALOC, 2018). In this context, the citizens' assembly platform has significantly contributed to the execution of various development initiatives, including the Vision

2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) and Ubudehe. Through this platform, citizens are empowered to define their key pri-orities and ascertain the beneficiaries who are most deserving, as evidenced by official documents and academic sources (MINALOC, 2018; Ruterahagusha, 2009; Ahimbazwe *et al.*, 2024)."

However, a notable number of the populace believe that local authorities lack an understanding of the priorities and goals of the citizens (Never Again Rwanda & Interpeace, 2019). 34% of the population in Rwanda are not knowledgeable about the process of planning and budgeting, while 36% are well-informed and actively participate in it. Specifically, there is a undesirable lack of engagement from the local community in issues relating to their own development, especially in initiatives, programs, policies, and projects aimed at reducing poverty. According to RGB (2014), citizen engagement in district development plans and budgeting processes at the district level was recorded at 11.7% and 11.2% respectively. Despite the government's efforts to address poverty issues in Rwanda, there remains a lack of trust among citizens in holding local leaders accountable for the funds allocated to community development projects such as VUP and Ubudehe (Twizeyimana, 2018; Banks, 2007; Gaynor, 2014). This research seeks to scrutinize the impact of Participatory Rural Appraisal on livelihood development in Rwanda, focusing on the citizens' assemblies in Bugesera district, while also identifying the primary challenges hindering full citizen participation in participatory rural appraisal policies like citizens assemblies as well as possible recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research studies highlight the connection between the implementation of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and the enhancement of livelihoods. These studies emphasize the benefits of facilitating direct citizen participation in decision-making processes and national policymaking (Chambers, 1993; Mustanir *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, other literature suggests that the role of PRA in promoting citizen participation remains limited (Leurs, 1996; Campbell, 2001; Brown, 2006). In the following section, we examine the impact of PRA on livelihood development.

Firstly, several research studies view Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as a tool for prompting development. Chambers (1993) suggests that PRA data is predominantly shared and controlled by community members. He further notes that Participatory techniques encompass activities such as mapping, transect walks, matrix scoring, seasonal calendars, trend analysis, well-being and wealth assessment, and analytical diagramming. Moreover, PRA is utilized in various fields including the management of natural resources, agriculture, poverty alleviation initiatives, social programs, as well as health and food security projects. Similarly, Mustanir *et al.* (2017) suggest that the implementation of PRA methods aims to facilitate participatory rural development planning

by engaging the entire community in the assessment and management of local resources. However, Mustanir *et al.* (2017) notes that the utilization of PRA is primarily constrained to direct deliberation meetings at the village level, involving a wide range of citizen groups from the lowest village tiers such as resident groups or neighborhood associations.

Binns & Nel (1997) contended that ineffective development strategies have been the result of approaches that do not consider the comprehensive view of rural communities, particularly overlooking the perspectives, necessities, and comprehension of local inhabitants. They also highlighted that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) marks a notable advancement in the development of methodologies and assessed various techniques within this framework. Numerous PRA methodologies share similarities with the field research techniques that geographers have long utilized to analyze the interactions between people and their environment. Mosse (1994) adds that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) entails public social gatherings that facilitate the creation of local knowledge through the lens of established social connections. He also posits that the data gathered for planning purposes is influenced by power dynamics, gender roles, and the biases of the researchers, leading to the omission of certain forms of knowledge. Moreover, he contends that while PRA serves as a valuable tool for articulating existing local knowledge, it should be supplemented with other participatory methods that foster altered perceptions and fresh modes of understanding. These additional approaches are essential for fostering locally driven innovation and transformative change.

Additionally, King (2002) posits that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) serves as a valuable tool for conducting development research. Furthermore, data suggests that the utilization of various advanced technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), is prominent in PRA. An emerging trend highlighted by members of the GIS community is the necessity of a “participatory GIS” to ensure the inclusion of local knowledge and participation in various planning endeavors. Consequently, this alignment of interests has led to an increase in research in developing regions seeking to integrate PRA methodologies with GIS resources. Likewise, Ahmad *et al.* (2018) contends that PRA contributes to community empowerment. According to their perspective, the resulting Participatory Rural Appraisal method generates village social assessments or village maps that outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the community, acting as a foundation for problem-solving, program development, goal attainment, and collaborative monitoring based on their existing capabilities and resources.

Campbell (2002) discusses various methodological challenges that should be carefully considered when utilizing Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). These challenges, when combined with the complexities

of integrating participatory methods with qualitative and quantitative research, underscore the importance of approaching PRA with caution and conducting foundational research on participatory methods themselves. He further explores the evolution of PRA in development research, critically analyzing three methods: interviewing, visualization, and ranking/scoring in their connection to qualitative research. The question of the reliability of PRA is then examined within the context of debates on the sequencing and triangulation of research techniques, which are seen to be as problematic as the uncritical use of PRA methods.

In Lara *et al.*'s (2018) study, they utilized Action Research and Community Problem-Solving methodologies to create a participatory rural appraisal workshop aimed at examining the cultural, biological, and legal aspects of a situation to facilitate sustainable development at a human-scale level. The study found that the Totonac community in Huehuetla municipality possessed profound knowledge of their environment and maintained a strong connection to the land and the natural world. Despite the community's biological and cultural richness, issues such as disruption and exclusion were observed in the region, largely stemming from a lack of self-governance in resource management within the community. According to Sandham (2019), the implementation of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is essential for environmental development as it yields a more comprehensive understanding compared to traditional Participatory Planning (PP), particularly benefiting vulnerable and marginalized populations. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the significant potential of the PRA approach in enhancing meaningful community engagement, which in turn is expected to improve Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), empower local communities, and bolster sustainable livelihoods and resource utilization.

Furthermore, several research studies highlight the various obstacles encountered in the implementation of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). For instance, Alam and Ihsan (2012) have succinctly outlined the primary challenges currently confronting PRA, along with the transformative implications of these challenges. By examining secondary sources, they emphasize that these challenges manifest themselves at six distinct levels: individual, community, organizational, project and programmatic, donor, and policy levels. These challenges have been identified based on the existing literature on PRA, as well as insights gathered from recent workshops conducted by the authors with personnel from six non-governmental organizations (NGOs) promoting PRA in South Asia. Eventually, they attribute these challenges to five overarching factors: disparities in power dynamics, cultural differences, varying levels of knowledge, financial constraints, and time limitations. Stadler (1995) has also opined on the potential of PRA as an innovative approach to traditional development research methods but highlights certain deficiencies that hinder its core objectives, particularly concerning assumptions related to the social

backdrop. The author proposes the incorporation of a more critical viewpoint into PRA to address its current limitations effectively.

Previous research has established a sophisticated and intricate connection between participatory rural appraisal and the development of livelihoods (Chambers, 1993; Mustanir *et al.*, 2017). This research has shown the importance of increased citizen participation, accountability, and transparency in public spending. Furthermore, studies have highlighted how participatory rural appraisal can address issues related to inclusivity and equity in sustainable development (Binns & Nel, 1997; Mosse, 1994; Campbell, 2002). Other research has indicated that participatory rural appraisal may be hindered by factors such as low levels of education among citizens, the re-moteness of certain areas, and poverty (Leurs, 1996; Campbell, 2001; Brown, 2006). Despite the numerous studies conducted on the involvement of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in development, limited research has focused on the importance of citizen participation within PRA processes. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical studies utilizing effective data collection methods such as focus group discussions. It has been noted that interviews with community leaders have not been effectively utilized in research pertaining to participatory rural appraisal. In an effort to address these gaps, this study aims to examine the significance of participatory appraisal by utilizing robust data collection methods such as interviews and focus group discussions. Additionally, this study will explore the challenges that hinder community participation in PRA initiatives. Lastly, while previous research has overlooked local initiatives that promote community participation, this study will delve into examples such as performance contracts in Rwandan culture and community gatherings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The research utilized a descriptive research design, which involves the thorough examination, comparison, measurement, classification, and interpretation of data (Myers *et al.*, 2013). Indeed, a descriptive survey research approach was chosen to gather feedback on the various factors influencing PRA performance. Furthermore, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies was employed to analyze the data, enabling the derivation of insightful conclusions and recommendations.

Study Population

Population refers to a collective group of individuals, entities, or objects from which samples are selected for study (Arias-Gómez *et al.*, 2016; Shipsey, 2022). In this study, the total population under consideration amounts to 167,620 individuals. Specifically, residents of the Musenyi, Nyamata, and Ntarama Sectors in Bugesera District who are 16 years old or older are considered part of the active population and thus eligible to participate in governmental initiatives.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

In the process of sampling, units are carefully chosen from a specific population, with an emphasis on ensuring that the outcomes accurately reflect the broader population being studied in a representative manner (Singh & Masuku, 2014). For this research, the Yamane formula was employed to determine the sample size.

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where n: is the sample size, N: is the population size, and e: is the level of precision. (Yamane, 1967).

$$\text{Then, } n = 167,620 \div 1 + 167,620 (\pm 5)^2$$

$$n = 167,620 \div 1 + 4,190,500 = 0.39, \sim 0.04$$

$$\text{Hence, } n = 0.04$$

To resolve 0.04×10^4 , follow these steps:

1. First, calculate 10^4 , which is 10,000.

2. Next, multiply 0.04 by 10,000.

$$\text{So, } 0.04 \times 10,000 = 400.$$

$$\text{Therefore, } 0.04 \times 10^4 = 400.$$

From the overall population of individuals aged sixteen and older, a sample size of 400 was chosen utilizing the Yamane formula. Specifically, calculations were conducted to ascertain the sample size for three sectors - Musenyi, Nyamata, and Ntarama in Bugesera District. Each sector was assigned a segment of the sample proportion based on its percentage of the total population. Consequently, out of the 400 participants, the study included 97 individuals from Musenyi, 194 from Nyamata, and 109 from Ntarama sectors. To accomplish this, the researcher utilized a combination of simple random and purposive sampling techniques to gather pertinent information from participants regarding residents and leaders involved in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

Data Collection

In order to acquire primary data, the researcher utilized, questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions and interview methods to gather information from the field regarding the topic at hand. Secondary data sources were accessed through a review of relevant documents including books, articles, reports, and websites pertaining to the impact of Participatory Rural Appraisal on livelihoods in Rwanda. Additionally, primary data was gathered through two different types of interviews. One method involved face-to-face interviews, where the researcher and participants met in person to engage directly with one another. The second method utilized was telephone interviews, which were conducted when participants were not easily reachable. In all interview formats, the researcher posed unstructured and open-ended inquiries. To maintain alignment with the research subject, interview guides were utilized as tools, allowing the researcher to pose additional probing questions for clarification. Furthermore, focus group discussions were employed. This approach proved advantageous in fostering candid discussions, especially for individuals who may have literacy challenges (Mazhar *et al.*, 2021; Chaleunvong, 2009). FGDs were also found to be suitable for individuals who are reserved or uncomfortable engaging in one-on-one interviews.

Data Analysis

The process of converting the opinions of participants into coherent written text is essential in research (Borenstein *et al.*, 2021). Various quantitative and qualitative methodologies were utilized to analyze the data. The findings were interpreted and presented in both numerical and narrative forms. The Focus Group Discussion and interviews were meticulously organized, coded, and tabulated before being analyzed in relation to the study objectives. A systematic approach was adopted to examine the data, leading to the identification of key findings that informed the conclusions and recommendations. Field data collected in Kinyarwanda was transcribed and translated into English. The researcher employed a structured method to identify themes within the data. Integration of both interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) data was crucial, with codes being utilized to group similar information and highlight important themes relevant to the research questions (Gaughan, 2009).

Ethical Consideration

This research placed a strong emphasis on ethical principles by obtaining approval from local authorities

in the Musenyi, Nyamata, and Ntarama regions before beginning. Participants were clearly informed that the study was solely for academic purposes. They were provided with the choice to participate voluntarily and were guaranteed that their data would be kept confidential. Additionally, measures were taken during the study to safeguard the welfare of all participants. In order to maintain anonymity, the identities of respondents will not be disclosed in the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implications of Participatory Rural Appraisal to the improvement of livelihood

Participants were questioned regarding the utility of citizens assemblies as a participatory rural appraisal method in fostering livelihood development. Specifically, participants were asked to illustrate how citizens assemblies contribute to the enhancement of their livelihood. This inquiry sought to discern the potential correlation between participatory rural appraisal and socio-economic progress.

According to the information presented in the table, there appears to be a significant correlation between citizens assemblies as a participatory rural appraisal (PRA)

Table 1: The role of PRA in ensuring policy sustainability

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Strongly agree	284	71
	agree	56	14
	neutral	10	10
	disagree	0	0
	Strongly disagree	20	5
Total		400	100.0

Source: Primary data

method and the long-term viability of community policies, as indicated by the participants. The data reveals that 71% of the respondents expressed strong agreement with the questions, while 14% indicated agreement. A further 10% of respondents remained neutral on this matter. In contrast, 5% of the participants asserted that there is no relationship between PRA and the

sustainability of policies. This underscores the potential for improved outcomes in community policies through the enhancement of PRA practices.

As demonstrated above, 47.5% of the respondents strongly supported this notion, with another 25% expressing some level of agreement. Furthermore, 22.5% of the participants maintained a neutral stance on

Table 2: Promote Transparency in Public Spending

		Frequency	Percent(%)
Valid	strongly agree	190	47.5
	Agree	100	25
	Neutral	90	22.5
	disagree	10	2.5
	strongly disagree	10	2.5
Total		400	100.0

Source: Primary data

the matter. These findings underscore the importance of promoting the use of citizens assemblies within the decision-making and planning processes. Research indicates a significant correlation between advocating for citizens assemblies as a Participatory Rural

Appraisal (PRA) method in local government initiatives and the advancement of inclusiveness, equality, and sustainability in public service provision. Specifically, statistics reveal that 82.5% of participants recognize the potential for PRA to foster increased inclusivity, equity,

Table 3: PRA Promotes social equity and inclusive development

		Frequency	Percent(%)
Valid	Strongly agree	330	82.5
	agree	25	6.25
	Neutral	15	3.75
	disagree	16	4
	strongly disagree	14	3.5
	Total	5	71.4
Total		400	100.0

Source: Primary data

and ultimately sustainable development. Conversely, only 6.25% of respondents acknowledge a connection between the two variables under investigation. Moreover, a small minority of participants (3.5%) expressed strong disagreement regarding any correlation between the variables. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating PRA into policies geared towards fostering inclusivity and equity for long term sustainable development.

Participants emphasized the crucial role of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in promoting citizen engagement and improving livelihoods. However, they also pointed out certain deficiencies in existing policies that need to be rectified. A member of the focus group discussion exemplified this concern by stating the following:

“Under the Imihigo framework, local leaders consistently pursue ambitious targets within tight timeframes, often placing pressure on citizens to implement decisions in which they have had limited opportunity to participate. We suggest that these targets be subjected to inclusive discussion to ensure that citizens’ perspectives are fully incorporated into the process. Such an approach would strengthen communication and improve relationships between citizens and their leaders”. (FGD)

One of the respondents emphasized that leaders often employ authoritarian language, thereby hindering citizen participation. Rather than actively seeking input from

citizens, some leaders exert their authority without regard for joint agreement. Furthermore, it was observed by respondents that local leaders discourage dissenting views, often attributing them to impeding government program implementation.

The Implication of Citizens Assemblies As One of The PRA Approaches to Performance Contracts Monitoring and Evaluation

The one of the purposes of the research was to demonstrate the significance of citizens assemblies in the context of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) for assessing and evaluating performance contracts. The researcher put forth three statements to gauge the extent of consensus among participants. Analyzing the responses to these statements will allow us to make inferences based on the perspectives of the respondents. The accompanying table provides a visual representation of the extent of agreement or disagreement with these statements.

The data indicates that the majority of respondents emphasized the importance of citizens’ assemblies as a crucial participatory approach in the process of Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) for ensuring prompt feed-back. Specifically, 80% of participants strongly supported this notion, with 11% expressing only partial agreement. Furthermore, 9% of respondents remained neutral on this stance.

Table 4: Ensure timely feedback

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	320	80
	agree	44	11
	Neutral	36	9
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly disagree		
	Total	5	71.4
Total		400	100.0

Source: Primary data

Research indicates that citizens assemblies, as a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) method, play a crucial role in holding leaders accountable. A significant 76% of respondents strongly support this notion, while

14% partially agree. These findings underscore the importance of promoting PRA within local government contexts to enhance accountability and foster sustainable development.

Table 5: Citizens assemblies as one of the PRA approaches and Accountability of leaders

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly agree	304	76
	agree	56	14
	neutral	24	6
	disagree	16	4
	strongly disagree	0	0
	Total	5	71.4
Total		400	100.0

Source: Primary data

The data also indicates that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) plays a crucial role in providing a platform for citizens to voice their concerns and express their opinions. As demonstrated in the table above, a majority

of respondents believe that citizens assemblies enable them to express their views on national policies and personal needs. Moreover, only 10% of respondents disagreed with this notion, underscoring the importance

Table 6: Allowing the citizens to display their views and needs.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	284	71
	agree	40	10
	neutral	24	6
	disagree	0	0
	strongly agree	12	3
	Total	5	71.4
Total		400	100.0

Source: Primary data

of enhancing PRA initiatives on a broader scale.

The participants also raised apprehensions regarding citizens assemblies as a method utilized in Participatory Results Accountability (PRA) for engaging citizens in the oversight and assessment of performance contracts, which could potentially result in tensions with community leaders. They highlighted possible adverse consequences for themselves stemming from voicing their viewpoints. In addressing this issue, a respondent articulated:

“Citizens continue to harbor fear toward their leaders and the government. In the period leading up to the Genocide against Tutsi of 1994, citizens’ rights to participate in monitoring and evaluation processes were frequently violated by leaders, who often portrayed such involvement as interference in governance or challenging authority. These practices severely damaged the relationship between citizens and government. Rebuilding trust will therefore require considerable time and effort to reassure citizens that genuine change has occurred.”Interview

As illustrated above, some participants emphasized the importance of Public Relations Advocacy by voicing their concerns in public forums, which could potentially strain their relationships with community leaders and lead to reluctance in sharing their viewpoints.

The Role PRA to the Implementation of Identified Priorities

The Rwandan government consistently encourages its citizens to actively participate in the implementation of the budget. It is widely acknowledged that planning comes before budgeting. The priorities established during the planning phase are carefully examined, evaluated, and refined before being incorporated into the yearly budget. Researchers surveyed the population to determine if the specified priorities have been executed according to the initial plan, using citizens’ assemblies as one of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods.

The data presented in the table reveals that a mere 31% of the identified priorities have been executed in their entirety, with 14% being partially implemented, and a 55% not even being taken into consideration. Surprisingly, the priorities identified during citizen assemblies have not been implemented, despite being the most accessible forums for many people. This situation discourages citizens from further involvement, as they feel their efforts to identify key priorities are disregarded by local

Table 7: Implementation of Identified Priorities

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Fully implemented	124	31%
Partially implemented	56	14%
Not implemented	220	55%
Total	400	100%

Source: Primary data

authority.

Citizens’ Awareness of the Planning and Budgeting Process

Participants were questioned about the potential connection between the implementation of Participatory Ru-ral Appraisal (PRA) and the enhancement of knowledge pertaining to planning and budgeting. This inquiry aimed to ascertain whether PRA played a significant role in determining budget priorities and guiding the planning pro-cess.

Various channels and forums have been established to

facilitate greater involvement of citizens in the planning and budgeting process. A survey revealed that only 32% of respondents were aware of these processes, whereas the remaining 68% were uninformed. This underscores the need to improve citizen engagement in planning and budgeting efforts.

Challenges for the Effectiveness of PRA in Fostering Livelihood

The research also sought to pinpoint the primary obstacles presently impacting Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and assess the consequences of these challenges in

Table 8: Awareness on planning and budgeting

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Aware	272	68%
Not aware	128	32%
Total	400	100

Source: Primary data

Musenyi, Nyamata, and Ntarama Sectors of Bugesera District. The analysis delves into these concerns from six distinct perspectives: individual, community, policies, and programs. According to the data presented in the table above, a significant portion of participants, amounting to

31%, identified the lack of access to information as the primary obstacle hindering the efficacy of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in enhancing livelihoods in the regions of Musenyi, Nyamata, and Ntarama within the Bugesera District. Additionally, they articulated that the

Table 9: challenges for the effectiveness of PRA in fostering livelihoods

Hindrances	Frequency	Percentage
Fearing to hold account local leadership	87	21%
Low level of literacy	40	10%
Lacking access to information	122	31%
Financial constraints (Poverty)	25	6%
Time limitations	119	30%
Others	7	2%
Total	400	100

Source: Primary data

ability to access information is essential for obtaining insights maintained by the local authorities. One of respondents (Executive Secretary of Sector) emphasized: *Limited access to information among citizens affects their engagement and sense of ownership, thereby posing potential risks to the effective implementation and long-term sustainability of the program.*”(FGD)

From this perspective, citizens’ rights include the capacity

to seek and obtain information, as well as the obligation of the government to actively distribute it. This structure facilitates citizens in holding the government answerable, voicing their viewpoints without constraint, and staying informed on matters impacting their well-being. For leaders, this serves as a chance to showcase their dedication to safeguarding and promoting citizens’ rights. A lack of information leads to opposition to policy execution as

citizens frequently fail to grasp the advantages. In relation to the issue of literacy in Musenyi, Nyamata, and Ntarama Sectors of Bugesera District, 10% of respondents expressed that a lack of literacy skills acts as a deterrent for their engagement in governance activities. Furthermore, concerning time constraints, 30% of respondents mentioned that their busy schedules prevent them from actively participating in governance initiatives as they are preoccupied with their daily obligations. An additional obstacle hindering the implementation of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) among residents in Musenyi, Nyamata, and Ntarama Sectors of Bugesera District is a reluctance to hold local leadership accountable. Approximately 21% of respondents admitted to harboring concerns about seeking clarification on government programs, citing a fear of reprisal or exclusion from certain initiatives without valid justification. Furthermore, when voicing their grievances, they have experienced dismissal or mockery by local authorities. The limitation of poverty significantly impacts the efficiency of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), with 6% of participants expressing that poverty serves as the main obstacle hindering their involvement in governmental initiatives through their attendance at meetings and community gatherings designed to facilitate civic engagement. In one instance, a respondent remarked: *“Rich people frequently serve as opinion leaders and work hand in hand with leaders, making it challenging for poor ones to participate in government programs while they continue to face difficulties in securing daily sustenance”*. Interview

Discussion

This research aimed to evaluate the impact of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) on livelihood development in Rwanda, focusing on the use of citizens assemblies as a PRA approach in Bugesera district. Specifically, the study aimed to assess the effectiveness and challenges of PRA in promoting livelihood development in the designated areas. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for this study. Primary data was gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaire surveys, while secondary data was obtained through documentation. The data revealed a significant correlation between PRA and livelihood development in the study areas. For instance, the data indicated that PRA resulted in increased accountability of leaders, enhanced citizen participation, and improved transparency in public expenditure. These findings align with previous research on the relationship between PRA and livelihood development (Chambers, 2004; Hasselskog, 2016; Gosselink & Thompson, 1997; Alam & Ihsan, 2012). Initially, data indicated that participatory rural appraisal was associated with an increase in the accountability of leaders and greater transparency in public expenditure. Participants in the interviews highlighted the significance of participatory rural appraisal in facilitating their involvement in governmental policies and holding leaders accountable. Additionally, they emphasized that

PRA played a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of policies and promoting social equity and inclusivity. Prior to the implementation of decentralization and participatory rural appraisal, individuals lacked awareness of government policies, but significant changes have since been observed. These findings resonate with previous studies that have explored the connection between participatory rural appraisal and livelihood development. For instance, research conducted by Binns *et al.* (1997) and Campbell (2001) linked PRA to increased citizen participation, decreased corruption and misappropriation of public funds, and poverty alleviation. Alam & Ihsan (2012) further underscored the significance of PRA as a tool for promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction, improved service delivery, and overall development. Furthermore, the data indicates that the implementation of participatory rural appraisal is essential for enhancing the development of effective policies, as well as for the monitoring and evaluation of those policies. Similarly, participatory rural appraisal serves as a platform for citizens to communicate their concerns and needs to their leaders. For instance, citizens have reported that the utilization of participatory rural appraisal has enabled them to hold leaders accountable, select their own leaders, monitor progress, and have a say in performance evaluations. According to their feedback, this has resulted in improved planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes, ultimately leading to the advancement of livelihoods in the Bugesera district. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the significance of participatory rural appraisal in enhancing planning, monitoring, and evaluation practices, as well as fostering citizen engagement in performance evaluations. Previous studies have indicated that participatory rural appraisal contributes to increased accountability, enhanced monitoring and evaluation, and greater public involvement in the development and implementation of government policies (Chambers, 2004; Hasselskog, 2016; Gosselink & Thompson, 1997). According to the data analysis, certain obstacles hinder the complete involvement of citizens in policies related to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), such as performance contracts and community councils. Participants highlighted that factors such as limited education, Poverty, and corruption within local governments are preventing them from fully engaging in PRA activities. Additionally, they expressed reluctance to challenge local leaders publicly when voicing their opinions. Moreover, they noted that some policies have not been fully decentralized and suggested that the government should consider decentralizing them. These findings are consistent with previous research on the barriers inhibiting citizens' participation in government policies. For instance, Leurs (1996) identified low education as a hindrance to citizen participation, while Campbell (2001) found that low income and financial constraints pose challenges to full participation. Additionally, studies by Brown (2006), Drijver (1994), and Rachel (1997) have underscored

the negative impact of corruption and insufficient decentralization on citizens' active involvement.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to examine the impact of Participatory Rural Appraisal on the advancement of livelihood in Rwanda, with a focus on citizens assemblies in the Bugesera district. Specifically, the study aimed to assess the effectiveness of PRA in promoting development and identify the obstacles hindering the implementation of PRA policies for the improvement of livelihood. The data revealed a significant correlation between Participatory Rural Appraisal and livelihood development. For instance, the data indicated that PRA increased the transparency of leaders, boosted citizen engagement in government initiatives, improved the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of performance contracts, and provided a platform for citizens to voice their opinions, concerns, and needs to the government. Moreover, the findings highlighted various challenges that hamper PRA initiatives and hinder full citizen engagement in government policies, including low levels of education, financial constraints, corruption at the local government level, and hesitancy to express opinions publicly. Therefore, the study recommends that the government prioritize citizen education and promote policies that facilitate citizen participation, such as Imihigo and community councils.

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