

Urban Maestro

New governance strategies
for Urban Design

Kigali Yacu, Our Kigali

Community-driven homegrown solutions
alongside transformative urbanization
projects in Rwanda

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INTRODUCTION

Rwanda's government plans to accelerate urbanisation to achieve an urban population of 35% by 2024. In the National Strategy for Transformation (7 years Government Programme that provides the foundation for sustained growth and transformation), the target to accelerate sustainable urbanization from 18.4% (2016/2017) to 35% by 2024 identifies the City of Kigali and the Secondary Cities as economic poles of growth¹.

In strategically electing to accelerate Sustainable Urbanization to facilitate economic growth, the Rwandan government acknowledges that significant progress in the past has necessitated key collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders with embracing Home-grown Solutions and Values, notably enhancing ownership at all levels.

Rwanda's Home-Grown Solutions (HGSs) are governance innovations that have provided unconventional responses to societal challenges unlikely to be addressed through conventional means. HGSs are based on national heritage, historical consciousness and strive for self-reliance. HGSs have been enablers for stability and accountability, but also drivers of socio-economic transformation in Rwanda². The HGSs are culturally owned practices translated into sustainable development programs.

This paper explores three Home-Grown Solutions that have been at the forefront of the process of elaborating and implementing Sustainable Urbanization initiatives, as well as the transformative projects anchored to these initiatives: **Imihigo**, **Umuganda** and **Ubudehe**.

Imihigo³ is the plural Kinyarwanda word of Umuhigo, which means “to vow to deliver”. Imihigo also includes the concept of **Guhiganwa**, which means “to compete among one another”. **Imihigo** describes the pre-colonial cultural practice in **Rwanda** where an individual sets targets or goals to be achieved within a specific period of time. The person must complete these objectives by following guiding principles and be determined to overcome any possible challenges that arise. In 2000 a shift in the responsibilities of all levels of government, as a result of a decentralisation program, required a new approach to monitoring and evaluation. Local levels of government were now responsible for implementing development programs, which meant that the central government and people of Rwanda needed a way to ensure accountability. In

¹ National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) 2017-2024

³ <http://www.rgb.rw/index.php?id=36>

² <http://rgb.rw/department/home-grown-solutions-department/>

2006, Imihigo (known also as performance contracts) was introduced to address this need.

Umuganda⁴ can be translated as “*coming together in common purpose to achieve an outcome*”. This day also serves as a social gathering where citizens can present concerns and share ideas on how best to deal with challenges within their communities. **Umuganda** is a practice that takes root from Rwandan culture of self-help and cooperation: in traditional Rwandan culture members of the community would call upon their family, friends and neighbours to help them complete a difficult task. The activities of the then Umuganda included, for instance, farming for those who were unable to do so due to either physical handicap or old age, building houses for the poor and providing transportation to medical facilities to those who were in need. While it is, however, defined as a single day of communal gathering for a common purpose, its results have far exceeded the limited scope of a day’s work, with contribution made towards infrastructure development and environmental protection⁵.

Ubudehe⁶ is one of the country’s core development programs, launched in 2001 as a way to better involve communities by setting up participatory problem-solving mechanisms at the village level; it addresses issues such as land disputes, ensuring child education, access to health facilities among others. Furthermore, through community collective action, the Ubudehe Credit Fund works to advance collective development (with risks and costs minimized) by people owning the solution to their local problem, and consequently the benefits. Ubudehe is a home-grown socio-economic categorization mechanism for determining eligibility for Rwanda’s key social protection interventions including public works, direct support, community-based health insurance (CBHI) and education grants⁷. Ubudehe also serves as a pro-poor credit channel: since finance institutes find it risky and costly to transact with the poor, Ubudehe offers an opportunity to mitigate the risk and lower costs through community collective action. In the Ubudehe Credit Scheme each beneficiary/client will sign a contract with the community and will be informed of his obligation and commitment to pay back, so that the next beneficiary designated for credit can be able to get it from cumulative reimbursed amounts.

This paper presents the application of the selected Home Grown Solutions as soft governance tools that have enabled the City of Kigali to attain its ambition to become

⁴ <http://www.rgb.rw/index.php?id=37>

⁶ <http://www.rgb.rw/index.php?id=35>

⁵ http://www.rgb.rw/fileadmin/Key_documents/HGS/UMUGANDA_2017.pdf

⁷ NST-1 Social Protection Sector Strategic Plan (SP-SSP) 2018/2019-2023/2024, Ministry of Local Government

a Clean, Green, Safe and Smart City through community engagement that is anchored on institutional accountability.

1. BACKGROUND CONDITIONS

The prerequisite policy, legal and institutional frameworks have been established across the Central and Local Government and the relevant institutional structures, while tools in use have continued to evolve, in order to provide the backbone for sustainable urbanization initiatives. Emanating from the process of decentralization that was initiated in 2000, the “*Decentralization Policy*” has been critical in defining the role of Local Government and, most importantly, the empowerment of citizens to participate in local decision-making as well as the development process⁸. While there are still debates on the conduciveness to promote allocative efficiency of some of the platforms established under this policy (i.e. Joint Action Development Forum⁹), alongside Imihigo-Performance Contracts introduced in 2006, mechanisms for accountability were enhanced.

The Law No.10/2012 of 02/05/2012 governing Urban Planning and Building in Rwanda, recognizes the role of decentralized entities in implementing laws governing urban planning and construction, and inherently the role of decentralized entities in elaborating Master Plans. The law underscores the provisions for sustainable land administration, efficient land management, urban planning and design as stipulated in the National Land Policy of 2004¹⁰ and 2019¹¹. Alongside this, the “*National Land Tenure Regularization Program*” (LTRP) issued registered titles to all landholders, unlocked potential for sustainable growth that would be equally valid to all users of land, further empowering citizens and enhancing inclusiveness through its systematic land registration process. This land reform process converted majority of land from state land into privately owned or leased land.

⁸ Good Governance and Decentralization in Rwanda, Rwanda Governance Board 2018;
http://www.rgb.rw/fileadmin/Publications/Rwanda_Governance_Review/Rwanda_Governance_Review_2018.pdf

¹⁰ https://rema.gov.rw/rema_doc/Policies/National_land_policy_english_version_.pdf

¹¹ https://www.environment.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Moe/Publications/Policies/Revised_National_Land_Policy-Final_Version_2019.pdf

⁹ *ibid*

The “*National Urbanization Policy*” (NUP)¹², which addresses all aspects of cross-sectoral action in urban development and governance, introduces four policy pillars against which the sustainable urbanization of the country will be measured:

- **Coordination pillar** addressed the enhancement of institutional capacities, to manage urban development in a coordinated manner at all levels of governance;
- **Densification pillar** captures how to integrate urban planning in order to achieve resource-efficient and compact growth;
- **Conviviality pillar** introduces a focus on how to support quality of life and equity in urban settlements; and
- **Economic growth pillar**, which has the objective to facilitate employment creation and off-farm productivity for local subsistence and regional competitiveness.

Alongside the National Decentralization Policy, the NUP empowers local authorities to drive their urbanization processes within their contexts, constraints, and opportunities. The five-year “*Decentralization Implementation Programme*” (DIP) considers, among others, **citizen participation** and **accountability mechanisms** as key for further development.

Sustainable management of natural resources as well as innovative and inclusive urban planning remain at the core of the “*National Land Use Master Plan*”¹³, as well as of the District Land Use Plans and Master Plans for the urban areas and emerging centers, driven by Local Governments.

¹²https://www.mininfra.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Mininfra/Publications/Policies/Urbanization__Human_Settlement_and_Housing_Development/Rwanda_National_Urbanization_Policy_2015.pdf

¹³https://rlma.rw/index.php?id=41&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=375&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=a0f94d3902d3b4f56dd34bb1861878d3

2. EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION

The collective use of the performance-based management system (Imihigo) in combination with community-based approaches to implementing local development (Umuganda and Ubudehe) has yielded extensive and impactful results. The contribution of Umuganda to the country's development since 2007 has been estimated at more than US \$60 million, and every year a citizen participation scorecard report is released; complementary, an accountability day where citizens meet and engage with their respective local leaders on socio-economic related matters is held on a quarterly basis¹⁴.

Furthermore, extended and growing community engagement has resulted in increased informed community participation in the decision-making process, and in higher expectations on the local authorities, with accountability mechanisms structured from bottom to top. Communities' involvement in implementation of projects has also ensured that their needs are at the forefront of any solutions presented, and that ownership, innovation, inclusivity and increasingly competitiveness underscore the role plaid by the communities.

Umuganda has been applied to several initiatives, inclusive of which are national tree planting initiatives^{15 16 17}, road repairs and construction¹⁸, and the construction of homes for the vulnerable, identified under the Ubudehe household classification mechanism and community projects¹⁹. Furthermore, incorporating the anticipated activities and expected deliverables in the Imihigo Performance Based Management System has benefited the citizens. The annual evaluation process has heightened the level of accountability and continued to emphasize the need for increased community engagement and participation, with the preparation of Imihigo emanating from the needs and commitments of communities at household level²⁰.

We recognize the use of Imihigo, Umuganda and Ubudehe as powerful tools of governance that continue to contribute to Rwanda's initiatives towards sustainable urbanization, and describe hereafter two examples where these have been applied in the context of City of Kigali. Through Umuganda sessions, the community priorities

¹⁴ <https://www.rgb.rw/>

¹⁵ <https://www.ktpress.rw/2018/11/diplomats-join-rwandas-campaign-to-plant-43000-ha-of-trees/>

¹⁶ http://rwfa.rw/index.php?id=64&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=16&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=c14e28adcb0a93146683c4f4d31781e

¹⁷ <https://rwandainspirer.com/2018/10/27/government-accelerates-efforts-to-plant-over-700000-hectares-of-trees-by-2020/>

¹⁸ <https://rwanda.unfpa.org/en/news/rwandas-homegrown-solution-building-road-kigali-nairobi-through-umuganda>

¹⁹ <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/207550>

²⁰ https://gasabo.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Imihigo_evaluation_2014-2015.pdf

have been defined and incorporated into Imihigo performance contracts that form the basis for sustainable development initiatives, as well as the collective and collaborative responsibility in the implementation of these initiatives. Alongside this, the Ubudehe program has ensured that inclusivity is enhanced in the identification of development and poverty reduction priorities.

3. KIGALI YACU! OUR KIGALI! KIGALI MASTER PLAN 2020-2050²¹

The City of Kigali's journey towards becoming a Green City may have initially been premised upon the understanding that the increase of tree cover and protection of the environment would be adequate to achieve the goal of Greening Kigali. While extensive tree planting initiatives did achieve their expected goal of "greening Kigali", the *"Detailed Master Planning Process"* of 2013, and now the review in 2020, brought to light aspirations to become a Green, Clean, Safe and Smart City. Aspirations that far exceeded greening through planting of trees alone.

In the 2013 version of the City of Kigali Master Plan, the three Districts that form Kigali (Nyarugege, Gasabo and Kicukiro) were planned separately. The review of 2020 was intended to consolidate, ensure consistency and coherency. The main considerations in 2013 were:

- The need to establish a range of employment centers/commercial nodes around which development would be structured;
- Creation of affordable and quality living environments in Kigali;
- Development of a compact, vibrant and transit-oriented city placing importance on increased densities;
- Managing and improving the environment and infrastructure;
- Preservation of urban heritage and enhancement of public greens; and
- Consolidation and reservation of land for future needs

²¹<https://masterplan2020.kigalicity.gov.rw/>

The 2020 review process was designed to be innovative, centered on rigorous needs assessment, establishing integration and synergies, inclusive, and building on transit oriented development based on sustainable infrastructure development, while ensuring it was implementable.

The 2020 review of the Master Plan, guided by the above main considerations from the 2013 Master Plan, has resulted in an updated urban sustainability framework formed on a unique set of eight principles that have been adopted to guide urban growth, economic growth, land and urban management in Kigali over the coming decades. An extract from the Master Plan Report presents the following glance into some of the rationale behind the selection of the principles:

- **Accommodate incremental development:**

The element of flexible housing options with room for growth, responding to the ability of households to spend, and allowing for changing housing demand to dictate development.

- **Facilitation of affordable housing**

New housing models (like SKAT), to provide for lower rungs of income groups with housing options. Furthermore, these kinds of models focus on the use of local materials, involving local communities in the process, exploring alternative funding models

- **Encourage detailed phasing aligned to city development strategy**

City's growth corresponding to the population and economic growth -phase wise increment

- **Promote mixed use development**

Compact and integrated neighborhoods with amenities accessible at a short distance, promoting diverse built up use at one place, with a combination of varying housing typologies

- **Support green growth (balance protection vs development)**

Sensitive to development impacts on environment, caring for eco-fragile and agriculturally fertile land and promoting sustainable use of natural resources in the development process

- **Ensure sustainable and resilient infrastructure services**

Weather and climate proof infrastructure provision -Roads, transit modes, water, sanitation, electricity etc., that is affordable and accessible to all

- **Promote inclusivity and equity**

Attention to vulnerable groups like women, children, poor, old, differently abled etc. Promoting inclusive and representative planning.

While retaining the overall ambition of becoming a city of urban excellence, the principles were defined along the needs and capacities of the citizens. Increased Community participation helped to inform the principles on the need for incremental development, responsive zoning, inclusivity, affordability and equity as well as green, growth, sustainability and resilience, as clearly resonates throughout the Master Plan report. The community and stakeholder engagement process included among others:

- 13 Focused groups discussions with Community and City of Kigali representatives
- 8 Technical Advisory Group meetings
- 5 Stakeholders meetings
- More than 100 technical meetings
- 30 days of Public Exhibition in the 3 Districts for citizens to provide feedback
- Comments collected and incorporated from City Districts through Community Consultations Sessions at the Village level, SMS , WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter.

Successes of incorporating the Communities inputs are evident in sample projects, such as the **Kimisagara In-Situ Upgrading project** presented herein below (implemented concurrently with the Master Plan Review).

Drawing back to the Home-Grown Solutions and their contribution to informing the Master Planning Process, the Umuganda Sessions were used to gather local information during the planning process and share preliminary planning ideas for inputs. Catalytic Capital Improvement Projects, defined as critical for the Master Plan implementation, were also further informed by these sessions as the process promoted bottom-up planning. These Catalytic Projects now form part of the City's Imihigo, and will continue to guide development initiatives over the next years.

Principle One: Kigali Integration in the National and Regional Context

Principle Two: Incremental development

Principle Three: Facilitating Affordable Housing

Principle Four: Detailed Phasing aligned to City Development Strategy

Principle Five: Mixed Use Approach (in all areas, along transport corridors, etc.)

Principle Six: Green Growth (protection vs. development)

Principle Seven: Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure



Figure 1: Engaging the community while embracing the role of professionals in the Master Planning process

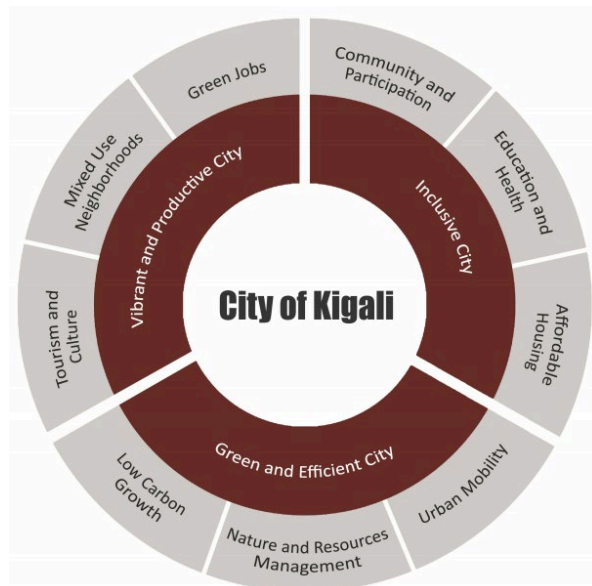


Figure 2: Urban Sustainability Framework for the City of Kigali alongside the 8 guiding principles²²

²² Kigali Master Plan 2050 Report, City of Kigali 2020

4. IN-SITU URBAN UPGRADING- DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN KIMISAGARA SECTOR

Densification, upgrading and urban renewal are increasingly being presented as solutions to dealing with the growing population of the City of Kigali and the resulting increase in demand for affordable housing. The Master Plan has provided for incremental growth, densification, upgrading and urban renewal.

A demonstration project, resulting from a partnership between the PROECCO project- SKAT (Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development), the City of Kigali, the Nyarugenge District, Rwanda Housing Authority and the residents of Kimisagara Sector, has seen the design and construction of multi-family housing in a dense urban neighborhood that served also as an on-the-job training for construction firms, both public and private²³. With the use of this in-situ upgrading and densification approach, social economic issues tied to expropriation and relocation are alleviated, with community ownership and participation enhanced.

The demonstration project, which is aimed at scaling-up for use in upgrading of unplanned settlements in the City of Kigali and across the Country, has resulted in:

1. Introduction of a Cost-Effective Densification Method that can be applied to in-situ upgrading schemes. The compact design of the Demonstration Block responds to the unique planning and construction challenges associated with building in dense, urban environments by introducing cost-effective and para-seismic building solutions suitable for difficult terrains.
2. Community-driven urban development
 - Community Engagement through Umuganda. Engagement has been driven through the Upgrading Committees, which are formulated by a select group of residents including women and the most vulnerable.
 - Employment Creation. Promoting off-farm employment and income through climate responsive construction material production.
3. Building local industry: addressing the construction materials value chain.



Figure 3: In-situ upgrading of Kimigasara Unplanned settlement, engaging the community in the construction works

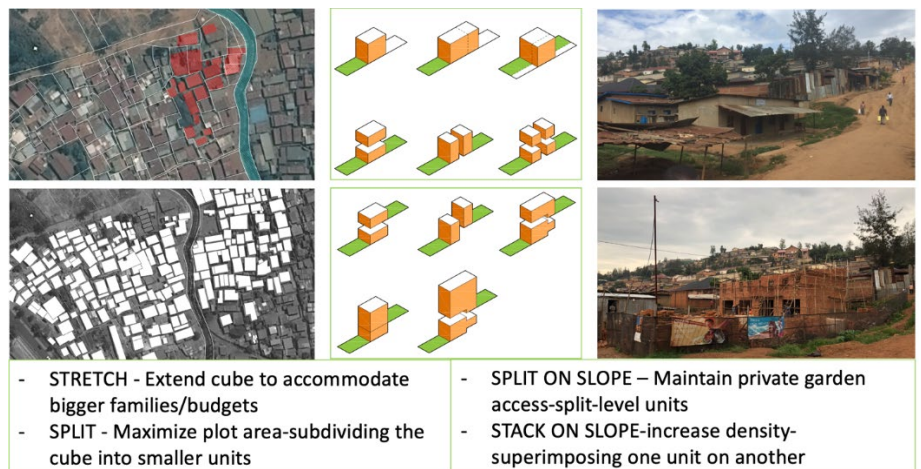


Figure 4: Demonstration project PROECCO project- SKAT (Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development), the City of Kigali, the Nyarugenge District, Rwanda Housing Authority and the residents of Kimisagara Sector

CONCLUSION

The community insights provided during Umuganda Sessions are incorporated into the City Imihigo, with the Ubudehe Programme ensuring that planning and initiatives are pro-poor, gender responsive and socially inclusive. This has proven effective in ensuring sustainable and inclusive development. However, there is a need for continued innovation and improvement in their use, to truly attain the desired level of community engagement and resulting continued transformation of the citizens through tangible benefits that address their needs. Improved community consultation during the elaboration of the Imihigo and enhanced coordination among stakeholders²⁴, inclusivity and extensive community sensitization, awareness and knowledge sessions during Umuganda have been cited as critical to the continued success of community-based initiatives. The heightened level of the communities' knowledge on sustainable development, master planning and related projects and activities was evident in the quality of feedback received during this Master Plan review process of 2020, in comparison to the initial planning in 2013. While this may be attributed to continued community engagement and awareness over the years as implementation of the 2013 Master Plan was ongoing, a focus must still be placed on bringing the technical knowledge, and communicating it in a form that the citizens can easily understand. In which case, the 3 Home-Grown Solutions still represent strong platforms for the enhancement of Community Participation moving forward, as they each promote a significant sense of ownership, responsibility, and accountability at all levels.

²⁴ Imihigo Evaluation FY 2014/2015, Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) on behalf of the Government of Rwanda 2015

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URBAN MAESTRO

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