

# OWNERSHIP OF THE POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY IN RWANDA

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# Abstract

Ownership is said to be the key principle of efficient aid and crucial for a successful outcome of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). However, it is a contested concept and has been criticised for being vague and contradictory. This study discusses problems of developing cooperation and aid, with focus on the concept of ownership, and tries to define ownership and assess the state of ownership in Rwanda through the definition. The Rwandan ownership is assessed through an external and an internal dimension, where the behaviour of the donors, the Government of Rwanda (GoR), and the domestic stakeholders in Rwanda has implications for the state of ownership. Ownership is defined as government leadership and stakeholder participation in the PRS process. The study concludes that the state of ownership in Rwanda is mixed; there are indicators of both strong and weak ownership. The government leadership is strong, but there are contradictions in the relation to donors that complicate the state of external ownership. There is space for stakeholder participation in the PRS process, but the openness of the space can be discussed, and the capacity to participate among stakeholders is weak. Moreover, the controversial aspects of ownership are still in question; Rwanda can exemplify the vague as well as the contradictory features of the concept.

*Key words:* Rwanda, ownership, Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), government leadership, stakeholder participation.

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# List of abbreviations

ACHA	Aid Coordination, Harmonisation and Alignment
APR	Annual Progress Report
CDF	Common Development Framework
CSO	civil society organisation
CPAF	Common Performance Assessment Framework
DPCG	Development Partners Coordination Group
DPAM	Development Partners Assessment Matrix
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoR	Government of Rwanda
JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
Minecofin	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP1	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 1
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SWG	Sector Working Group
VUP	Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme

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# 1 Introduction

The concept of country ownership<sup>1</sup> has been the key principle for efficient aid in the last decade. For poverty reduction to become successful, i.e. for aid to be efficient, donors shall not impose policies and decide what recipient countries shall do to develop. Instead, strategies shall be owned by the recipient; strategies shall be designed by the country in concern and the poor themselves shall be involved in the process of reducing poverty.

However, the concept of ownership is controversial. It is criticised for being vague, ambiguous and slippery; a buzzword in the international aid discourse that is no longer of use (see Buiters 2007, Cornwall – Brock 2005). There are diverging attitudes towards the definition of ownership, what to incorporate in the concept and which phenomenon the term is referring to. Ownership is also said to be contradictory or paradoxical since it is hard to claim a country owns its development strategies when they are financed by external funding; there can be no real ownership as long as a country is aid dependent (Raffinot 2009, Hayman 2006).

What does this imply for developing countries? If country ownership is said to be crucial for poverty reduction there might be a risk in not defining the concept explicitly; developing countries will not know how to improve. Therefore, it is important to investigate the implications of ownership. What is ownership? What do the official policies say? Can ownership be used at all when the definition is vague and slippery? Will the controversial aspects of the concept still be there when assessing ownership in a country?

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘country ownership’ and ‘ownership’ will be used interchangeably in the rest of the paper.

This study aims at investigating the concept of ownership in theory and in practice through looking at the case of Rwanda. This is a country that is often claimed to possess strong ownership (World Bank 2008a). Through looking at ownership in a certain case it will be possible to look deep into the concept and find out important aspects and implications.

The specific research question of this study is: *What is the state of ownership in Rwanda?* To answer this question, ownership first has to be defined and operationalised in theory. This will be done from the literature of ownership, where academic literature as well as official documents from international organisations are used. The operationalisation of ownership constitutes the theoretical framework, and there will also be a suggestion of how to assess ownership qualitatively. Thereafter, ownership will be assessed in the case of Rwanda. Finally, conclusions are drawn about the state of ownership in Rwanda, as well as theoretical implications learned from the analysis of Rwanda. The study concludes that ownership is partly strong in Rwanda. The picture is not black or white; there are certain factors in Rwanda that weaken the state of ownership, even if there are indications of strong ownership as well. Moreover, the analysis of the state of ownership in Rwanda will illustrate the problematic aspects of the concept, for example the importance of defining the concept before judging the state of ownership, and the contradictions between ownership and conditionality.

This is a combined literature study and a field study. The theoretical framework has been based on the recent literature about the concept of ownership and the case study of Rwanda has been carried out in Rwanda. The empirical material for Rwanda comes from interviews and documents. Representatives from donors, the civil society, the Parliament and Government of Rwanda (GoR) were interviewed in Kigali in Rwanda between the 17th of June and 7th of August 2009. Documents from donors, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the GoR have complemented the interviews in the empirical material.



The interviews had the character of non-structured conversations to get a deeper understanding of the subject. Questions about the Rwandan context in general and about the state of ownership were posed, and the questions were adjusted to be suitable to the role of the interviewee. It is always difficult to be able to rely on the answers from the interviewees; they might speak on behalf of a certain interest. However, caution was taken because of this. Most of the material used from the interviewees reflects general views and have been confirmed by other sources. In the case of opinions from an interviewee reflected in the text, it is clarified that it is from one person only. Moreover, there is always a risk that the questions and the interpretations of answers might be affected by preconceptions related to the subject. This aspect has been taken into account through trying to be as objective as possible. The interviewees have not been selected according to a certain principle but there have been attempts to get a balanced composition of interviewees from different groups of actors through a “snowball effect”. The answers from the interviewees were often useful, even if there were some problems because of language and lack of understanding of the subject. On the whole, the interviews were helpful to get a deeper understanding of Rwanda and the state of ownership.

## 2 Ownership in theory

This chapter operationalises the concept of ownership settled on a definition that will be the basis for the analysis of ownership in Rwanda.

### 2.1 What is country ownership?

Country ownership refers to the principle that poverty reduction shall come from within. In contrast to the previous aid principle of conditionality, ownership implies that the country in concern shall decide upon strategies to reduce poverty so that the local context is taken into account and that the strategy is supported by the population. This will lead to better aid effectiveness and a more successful outcome of the poverty strategy.

#### 2.1.1 Definition

As said in the introduction, ownership is difficult to define as there are many definitions used in different situations; people refer to different phenomena when talking about ownership. As this study aims at assessing ownership in Rwanda the definition used here has to be clear. In brief, this study defines ownership as *government leadership and stakeholder participation in the process of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)*. However, as the definition relates to many aspects it needs further explanation.

### 2.1.2 Explanation

To change the international aid structure away from the criticised Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), the World Bank introduced the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in 1999<sup>2</sup>. Today, the PRS is the most common medium-term development strategy in aid receiving countries. It is constructed to enhance ownership and it is used by donors to channel aid. Therefore, the definition of ownership in this study is delimited to the ownership of the PRS. However, the strategy in itself is not interesting; it is the process of designing, implementing and monitoring the strategy that shows the state of ownership (Raffinot 2009).

The concept of ownership refers to different principles. For example, the principle that the PRS shall reflect the needs and priorities of the country in concern so that the local context is taken into account (Morrissey – Verschoor 2003), the principle that recipient governments, rather than the external partners, shall master and control the public policy (Raffinot 2009), and the principle that the majority of the population and its representatives shall participate in the PRS process (Eberlei 2007).

However, the different principles can be difficult to sort, especially if one explicit definition of ownership is used. Therefore, this study will analyse ownership through two dimensions of ownership: external and internal ownership (Hayman 2006, Mills – Darin-Ericsson 2002). These dimensions have helped to identify different actors within the PRS process and different indicators of ownership. External ownership refers to a relationship between the recipient government and the donors, where the recipient shall lead the PRS process, and donors shall use a hands-off approach. Internal ownership refers to the relationship between the government and the internal stakeholders, where the government shall include stakeholders in the PRS process and the stakeholders shall participate. Thus, the indicators of ownership used in this study are recipient government leadership, donor hands-off, government inclusion, and domestic stakeholder participation.

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.worldbank.org/prsp](http://www.worldbank.org/prsp)

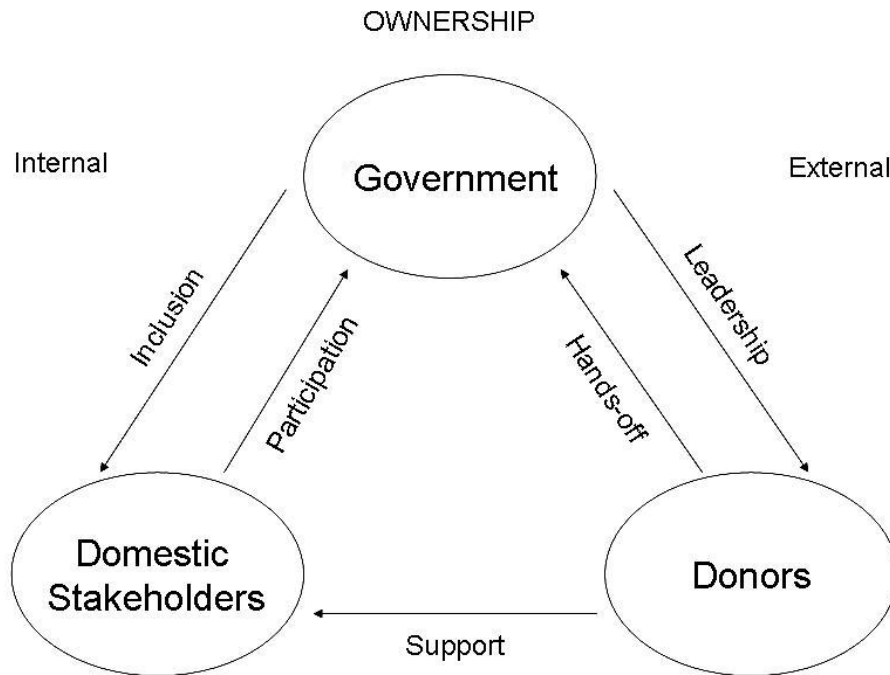


Figure 1. Ownership indicators

Source: Partly developed from Cling et al 2002:180

This figure summarises the indicators of ownership and the relationships between the different actors in the PRS process. Below there will be a deeper explanation of the indicators with more specific examples of what they comprise. However, focus will be on the relations between the government and the donors and the domestic stakeholders respectively; the support indicator from donors to domestic stakeholders is somehow included in the external ownership dimension.

### 2.1.3 Emphasis in the definition

The definition used in this study is also derived from the Accra Agenda for Action, the final document from the conference on aid effectiveness in Accra 2008 (OECD 2008b). Together with the Paris Declaration 2005 (OECD 2005), Accra has set the international standards for aid assistance where donors and recipients have signed to enhance ownership. Therefore, the definition used in these documents is important for the practical implications of ownership. However, the definition used by the Paris Declaration 2005 has been criticised for mainly focusing on the government leadership

(OECD 2008a, Dürr et al 2008). In the Accra Agenda for Action the definition was broadened and stakeholder participation was said to be crucial for the ability of a country to own its PRS. Hence, more emphasis now lies on stakeholder participation and the internal dimension of ownership. Democratic ownership and civic rights were also discussed in relation to a broadening of the concept, and Accra stated that this issue has to be further explored (OECD 2008a). The democratic aspect of ownership and the PRS has not yet been emphasised by the World Bank (Dürr et al 2008).

## 2.2 How to assess ownership

This study will assess ownership according to the operationalisation of the concept used here. Hence, the assessment is made through the different qualitative indicators within the external and internal dimensions of ownership. The indicators will be assessed along the design, implementation, and monitoring parts of the PRS process as it is ownership of the PRS process that is in focus. The design process implies formulating the strategies, goals and means of poverty reduction, and to prioritise among policies. The implementation process is meant to put the strategy into practice through translating the priorities in the PRS to the budget, and formulating more operational strategies that correspond to the medium-term PRS. In the monitoring process the implementation is evaluated to improve the process in the future and strengthen accountability.

The indicators used in this study can be exemplified in many ways depending on the context. Two factors that are important to the indicators are formal structures and capacity. These factors can be used to identify and assess indicators of ownership in the PRS process. Enwistle (2005) argues that ownership is more likely to occur with the right formal structures for the PRS process. Accra Agenda for Action stresses the fundamental importance of capacity for ownership; if countries do not have the capacity to lead or participate, the prospects for ownership are small. Examples of formal structures are laws, rules, institutional frameworks, coordination, consultation,

etc. Capacity can be skills, number of skilled people, knowledge of the rules, access to information etc. (Eberlei 2007).

## 2.3 External ownership

External ownership refers to the relationship between donors and the recipient government. This relationship shall be based on a partnership between donors and the recipient government, where both parts have obligations: donors shall use a hands-off approach while the government shall lead the PRS process (UN 2008, OECD 2005).

The partnership approach is based on ideas from the World Bank's Common Development Framework<sup>3</sup> (CDF) and has been further elaborated in the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness. It stands in contrast to the previous conditionality relationship where donors put conditions on loans (see IMF 2009). Recipient countries had to fulfil the conditions to receive loans and they did not have much influence on the policies they had to implement. Now there is focus on recipient government leadership, dialogue and negotiations of the aid policy setting in the PRS. However, even though recipient governments have received more space for agenda setting etc, this does not imply donors are absent. Since recipient governments are dependent on donor funding, the donors shall be part of the process, support and suggest, but they shall do this in a hands-off manner and respect ownership (ODI 2008). The relationship is no longer based on conditionality; the partnership opens the possibilities for a more equal relation between the donors and recipient, and is aimed at leading to more effective aid.

Leadership means the willingness and responsibility to reduce poverty; to carry out the task of design, implement, and monitor the PRS process (Entwistle – Filippo 2005). It implies that the recipient government, not donors, shall set the agenda for the PRS process and content, and that the government is able to conduct the process. For

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.worldbank.org/cdf](http://www.worldbank.org/cdf)

example, the government has to be responsible for elaborating formal structures for the PRS process. Entwistle – Fillippo (2005) give examples of ownership enhancing structures. There shall be clarified roles and responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms between different levels and functions within the government, to ensure that the relationship between different levels of government is functioning well. Regular consultation mechanisms with donors and stakeholders will improve the probabilities of a good partnership with donors and participation from domestic stakeholders. To avoid duplications, the PRS shall also have a clear role in relation to other developing strategies in the country. Entwistle – Filippo also stress the importance of institutionalising the PRS process into existing domestic systems. Moreover, a strong link between the PRS, the annual budget and a Medium Term Expenditure Framework<sup>4</sup> (MTEF) will increase the likelihood of an implementation of the PRS through the budget, which in turn will affect the overall outcome of the PRS (World Bank 2008a). This will be easier if the planning and budgeting functions are aligned (World Bank 2008a). Then, there is need to look at the practical functioning of these structures to sort out whether the government is willing and responsible to carry out the PRS process in practice. Reforms such as eliminating corruption and attempts to strengthen capacity are examples of indicators of leadership as they will increase the likelihood of a better outcome of the PRS.

The hands-off approach implies that donors shall respect the recipient government leadership and let the government set the agenda for the PRS process. Donor coordination and aid predictability are two concepts often mentioned around the partnership and hands-off approach. Donors need to coordinate their aid and development projects and programmes in the country to avoid duplications and facilitate aid prediction for the recipient government. To strengthen the PRS as the leading medium-term development strategy in the country they shall also align their aid to domestic systems, especially the PRS, and harmonise their operations in the country. Donors also have obligations to support domestic stakeholders, so that these can take an active role in the PRS process (OECD 2008a).

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<sup>4</sup> An MTEF shows a country's three-year budget spending. See <http://go.worldbank.org/80OVWNYE30>.

## 2.4 Internal ownership

Internal ownership refers to the relationship between the recipient government and the domestic stakeholders. The government shall lead the PRS process, but in an inclusive manner with broad-based stakeholder participation. The idea is that the PRS shall reflect a national consensus about the countries' priorities of poverty reducing policies, not only the government agenda. Through participation the strategy is anchored within the society, and holds a broad-based political support, which makes it easier for the strategy outcome to be successful (Eberlei 2007). This also refers to the democratic aspect of ownership; the participation implies representation of interests, accountability and the right to influence the policy process in the country (Dürr et al 2008). Stakeholders that are important for the PRS participation differ between countries, but usually the parliament, local authorities and civil society are mentioned as legitimate stakeholders in the process (OECD 2008a).

Eberlei (2007) stresses the importance of institutionalised, or meaningful, participation for strengthened ownership. He claims there are four important elements of participation to be institutionalised: structures, rights, legitimacy, and capacity. The government shall include stakeholders through the provision of space, structures and rights, for participation. Stakeholders shall participate through the use of the space which in turn will be affected by the stakeholder capacity to participate. Moreover, stakeholder representation of interests is important for the legitimacy of the PRS process, where capacity to represent is crucial. Parliament involvement in the PRS process is seen as the most important for the legitimacy of participation since they are democratically elected bodies (Eberlei 2007).

The government shall include stakeholders in the PRS process. Stakeholders shall have the right to participate, and the inclusion shall be based on formal structures for participation, such as consultative mechanisms at all levels and in all parts of the PRS process (Entwistle – Filippo 2005). However, the formal structures will not be useful



for meaningful participation without other indicators of government inclusion. Rights such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press are important for the possibilities for the stakeholders to communicate their opinions and wishes for the PRS (Eberlei 2007). The government shall also provide enough information and make sure stakeholders are aware of the implications of the PRS process. Government transparency and openness in the process, and the provision of information, is important for the domestic accountability and will facilitate meaningful participation for stakeholders in the monitoring part of the PRS process (World Bank 2008a).

Participation means that stakeholders influence and share control over the PRS process and depends on to what extent stakeholders use the space for participation. The use of the space can be of quantitative or qualitative nature. The former refers to the number of participants and frequency of participation. The latter implies the ability for stakeholders to communicate their wishes and opinions to the decision-makers, the capacity to understand issues around the PRS process, and the capacity to represent the interests of the ones they claim to represent.

## 2.5 Summary

Ownership is divided into an external and an internal dimension reflecting the relationships between different actors in the PRS process. In turn, there are four main indicators of ownership affecting the relationships. For example, the leadership and hands-off indicators both affect the partnership approach; when recipients take the lead and are willing and responsible to carry out the PRS process, donors are more likely to use the hands-off approach since they believe in the government. Concerning the internal dimension, the stakeholders are more likely to participate when the government includes them in the PRS process.

## 3 Ownership in Rwanda

The different ownership indicators will now be assessed in the case of Rwanda. First, there will be a short introduction to the country context. Then there will be a description of the formal structures for the Rwandan PRS process set out in different government documents. Finally, there will be an assessment of the ownership indicators according to the external and internal dimension in relation to the formal structures.

### 3.1 Country context

Rwanda is a small and land-locked country in Sub-Saharan Africa sharing borders with Uganda in the north, the Democratic Republic of Congo in the west, Burundi in the south, and Tanzania in the east. Rwanda is one of the world's 10 most densely populated countries, with a population of 10.4 million and 82 % of the population living in rural areas (CIA 2009). Rwanda is poor with 60 % of the population below the poverty line in 2001 (Ibid.). The GDP per capita is 1000\$ and the annual GDP growth was 11.2% in 2008 (Ibid.). The main export is coffee and the largest sector is agriculture. The country is heavily dependent on aid and half of the government budget comes from Official Development Assistance (ODA) (Hayman 2007).

The genocide in 1994 was one of the world's most tragic incidents in recent history, with over 800 000 people killed (World Bank 2009). The genocide was due to a long period of economic and political instability which fuelled ethnic tensions between the Hutus and the Tutsis (CIA 2009). Today, ethnic labels are banned, but the reconciliation process is problematic because of the real and perceived Tutsi political dominance (CIA 2009). The Tutsi rebel group Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) defeated

the Hutu regime and got control of power in July 1994. Today the RPF is still in power, with the former rebel leader Paul Kagame as president.

After the genocide in 1994 the country had a devastated economy, non-functioning institutions, and a traumatised population. The situation has improved, but there are still security concerns in neighbouring countries, and restrictions in political competition and human rights (Hayman 2007). However, the recent fifteen years has been characterised by remarkable economic and social development which has attracted attention internationally.

There are several development strategies in Rwanda. In 2001 the country formulated the Vision 2020; a long-term development strategy where it is said that Rwanda shall be a middle-income country by 2020. Between 2002 and 2005, Rwanda ran its first PRS, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 1 (PRSP1), which was set in a post-conflict context with focus on reconciliation and development. Currently, the second PRS is in place; the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) 2008-2012. The planning of the EDPRS started in 2006 and endured for eighteen months. The EDPRS is a comprehensive national development strategy that covers a big part of the Rwandan policy structure. There are three big flagships: Economic Growth, Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) (a rural development programme), and Good Governance. The EDPRS is currently in progress and the government is open for changes in the formal structure of the EDPRS process.

### 3.2 Formal structures of the EDPRS process

Looking at the formal structures of the EDPRS process, there are reasons to believe that Rwanda has strong ownership. Many of the structures are in line with the ownership enhancing structures outlined in the previous chapter. For example, there are regular consultative mechanisms with donors as well as domestic stakeholders at different levels and in all parts of the EDPRS process, and there are coordinating

mechanisms within the government. There is a link to the budget and to an MTEF, the comprehensive medium-term EDPRS is translated into sub-strategies for a smoother implementation, and the strategy shall be constantly monitored. Information about the formal structures is mainly found in documents from the web site of the Rwanda Development Partners<sup>5</sup>, especially the National Planning, Budget and MTEF Guidelines (Minecofin 2008), and will therefore not be referred to explicitly in the text. In the case of another source, there will be a reference.

### 3.2.1 Three levels

The formal structures for the design, implementation and monitoring parts of the EDPRS process are divided into three dimensions: overall, function and area (Sida 2008). The dimensions refer to the national or central level, the sectors at national level, and the local level of government. Donors are involved at all levels through the Aid Coordination, Harmonization, and Alignment (ACHA) framework, which aims at improving development activities with connection to the EDPRS, Vision 2020 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), through mutual support between GoR and donors. Internal stakeholders are also included in this framework, and in the different parts of the PRS process, through participation mechanisms for the civil society, the private sector and grass-root levels.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.devpartners.gov.rw/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=36&Itemid=56](http://www.devpartners.gov.rw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=36&Itemid=56)

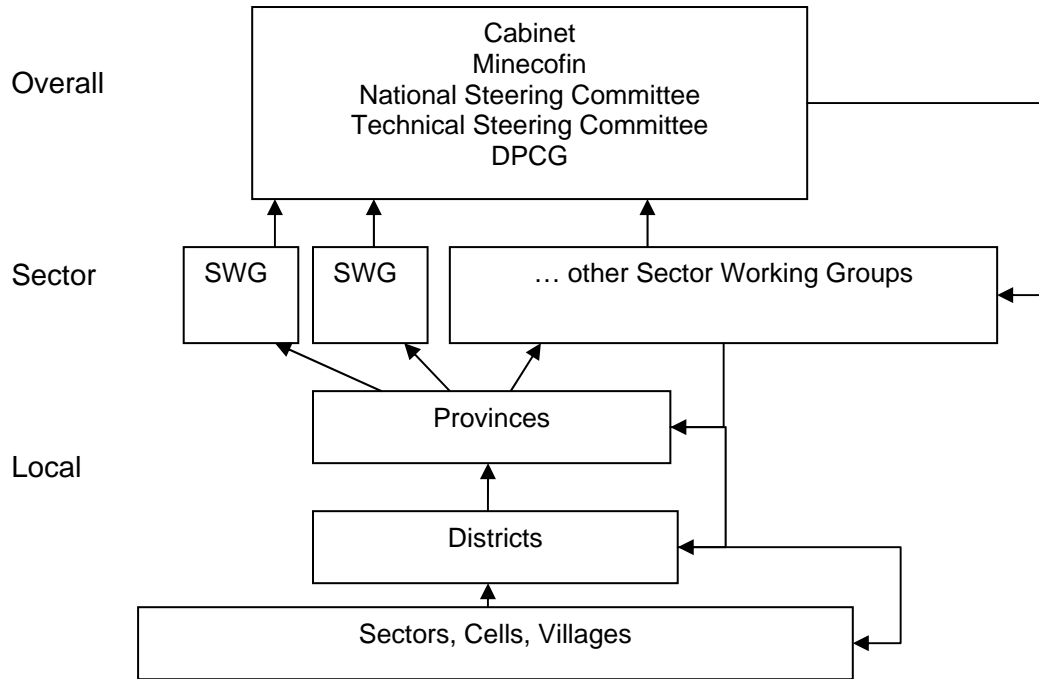


Figure 2. EDPRS formal structures.

*Overall*

The overall dimension relates to the central structures that exist on the level of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (Minecofin), the ministers, the secretary generals and the president. At this level the process is conducted, overseen, coordinated, and there is general guidance provided. In general, the Minecofin leads the process and has the overall responsibility. Depending on the part of the process, there are different groups and committees involved. For example, the design process was led and overseen by the National Steering Committee, consisting of Ministers and Province Governors. In the implementation and monitoring parts of the process the Cabinet is the highest responsible body and the high-level coordinating work is done in the Development Planning Unit at the Minecofin. However, donors and stakeholders are included at this level as well. In the design process the Technical Steering Committee, consisting of secretary generals from the GoR ministries and representatives from donors, civil society and the private sector, coordinated the design process and gave guidance and proposals of how to prioritise in the EDPRS. There is also a Development Partners Coordination Group (DPCG), consisting of GoR Secretary Generals, heads of donor agencies, and representatives of civil society and

the private sector, which shall assist in the EDPRS process, especially in the implementation and monitoring.

### *Function*

The function-based dimension has a more technical approach. The EDPRS is a comprehensive strategy that covers a big part of the policy structure in Rwanda. Therefore, different sectors concentrate on different parts of the EDPRS, for example education or economic growth, and set out strategies for each sector. The sectors are coordinated in twelve Sector Working Groups (SWGs) that each brings together all relevant stakeholders within the sector. Each group has a chair from a GoR institution (i.e. the relevant ministry for the sector) and a co-chair from the donor side. There are some stakeholders that shall be represented in all SWGs: local authorities, civil society, private sector, the Parliament, and the Minecofin. The civil society is represented through the civil society platform consisting of fifteen umbrella organisations covering the whole civil society in Rwanda. The private sector is represented through the Rwandan Private Sector Federation, which is the umbrella organisation for the private sector.

### *Area*

Finally, the area-based dimension, structured around Rwanda's decentralised system, takes local needs into account. There are five levels of local government that are derived from the traditional division of the country: 5 Provinces, 30 Districts, 416 Sectors, 2150 Cells, and 14975 Villages. The Province functions as a coordinating level between the central government and the decentralised levels. The District level is the centre for service delivery and the basic political-administrative unit. This also implies that the District is the key institution mediating between the government and the citizen. Districts and provinces are involved in the EDPRS process in a formalised way through committees (Province Steering Committees and District Steering Committees) that communicate with the SWGs. These committees are led by the executive secretaries in the Province and District, and the local civil society, faith-based organisations and the private sector are also supposed to be represented in these

committees. Within the ACHA framework, there is a donor coordinating forum at the District level called Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) to support the local government administration in management of the development process in the District. This forum is chaired by the mayor of the District and consists of donors, the local civil society, faith-based organisations and the private sector. The local government levels also function as a consultation mechanism with the population. There are community meetings on a regular basis at every level to consult with people on different issues concerning the community. The outcomes of these meetings are supposed to be communicated through coordination mechanisms among the different levels where the lower level reports to the level above. The decentralisation process is currently in progress, which means that the overall governance and participation are likely to increase in the near future through the transfer of administrative functions and decision-making power to lower levels of government (Minaloc 2008).

### 3.2.2 Design, implementation, monitoring

#### *Design*

The basis for the elaboration of the EDPRS was laid out in different evaluations of the first PRSP1 and a household survey of the state of poverty in the country. There was an independent evaluation made by international consultants and joint reviews made by the SWGs and the Districts and the lessons from these evaluations were taken into account in the formulation of the new strategy. The design of the new strategy followed the three-level structure with donor involvement, stakeholder participation and coordination among different levels of government.

#### *Implementation*

The EDPRS is implemented through implementing agencies at different levels that formulate sub-strategies of the EDPRS. The main part of the implementation is made in the District, but the SWGs have a big role in linking the EDPRS with the budget through their Sector Strategic Plans (World Bank 2008a). The SWGs translate the EDPRS into five-year Sector Strategic Plans which are the basis for the District

Development Plans elaborated by each District. In such a way, the EDPRS priorities are reflected at all levels, which in turn make the EDPRS the leading national medium-term strategy. The EDPRS is linked to the budget as each implementing agency formulates an annual agency budget and a three-year agency MTEF. As such, the budgeting is also made bottom-up.

### *Monitoring*

In the monitoring process each implementing agency reports to the level above about the performance of the implementation. Districts and SWGs write Joint Sector Reviews and Joint District Reviews that are coordinated at central level and summarised in the Annual Progress Review (APR), the annual report on the overall EDPRS implementation. The EDPRS monitoring framework is aimed at strengthening the political accountability of the government to the electorate through the regular publications of different reports and reviews of the EDPRS implementation. There is also a framework for mutual accountability between the GoR and the donors. In the Common Performance Assessment Framework (CPAF) donors are to hold the GoR accountable for the use of development assistance. The Development Partners' Assessment Matrix (DPAM) is used by the GoR and donors to assess donor behaviour.

## 3.3 External ownership

The analysis of the external ownership follows the government leadership and the donor hands-off indicators set out in chapter 2. Issues about the partnership are included in the donor hands-off indicator. There have been several findings that indicate strong or weak ownership, and these are discussed in different topics under each indicator.



### 3.3.1 Government leadership

One of the most common comments about ownership in Rwanda is that the GoR possesses strong leadership in the EDPRS process. There is an eagerness to develop, reduce poverty and increase the economic growth (Sida 2009).

#### *Formal structures*

The formal structures indicate willingness and responsibility from the government to reduce poverty through the EDPRS. They are elaborated by the government, but all stakeholders have also agreed with the PRS, and they take factors of ownership into account (Minecofin 2006b). *Ceteris paribus*, these structures increase the probability for a successful outcome of the strategy.

However, there are examples of shortcomings of the functioning of the existing EDPRS structures. This is probably due to weaknesses in the government capacity, failures in coordination within the government, and because the EDPRS system is still in its infancy (Minaloc 2008). Even if the structures are generally good, there is room for ameliorations such as integration and streamlining of the EDPRS process in the budget framework, better alignment of planning and budgeting functions, and better coordination among stakeholders and levels of government, especially between the SWGs and the Districts (World Bank 2008a). According to interviewees, the lack of capacity is a huge problem for the Rwandan development in general. The capacity in sector ministries and at local government levels is weaker than in the Minecofin and the Cabinet, which implies that the implementation of the EDPRS is hampered (Minaloc 2008). However, one of the interviewees pointed out that the willingness from the government is there, and that much would happen if there were more capacity and skilled people.

#### *Reforms and policies*

Government reforms and policies for poverty reduction are another indicator of the willingness and responsibility of the government to reduce poverty. There are

programmes on capacity strengthening and rural development, non-tolerance of corruption, and willingness to increase the transparency and openness of government (Minaloc 2008). The budget is in line with the EDPRS priorities and the overall budget performance in 2008 was good (Minecofin 2009). Moreover, the lessons from the evaluations of the PRSP1, which mainly came from the independent evaluators and stakeholders, were taken into deep consideration by the government. These lessons focused on improving ownership and the prospects for a successful implementation, for example by a strengthening of the budget link and a deepening of the integration of decentralised levels in the EDPRS process (Minecofin 2006c).

In 2006, the GoR elaborated an Aid Policy that states the government's position on aid and is meant to be a coordinating tool for aid. The government has expectations of donor behaviour in terms of giving aid in line with national priorities such as the EDPRS simplify procedures, and enhance local ownership of development activities (GoR 2006b). The Aid Policy is another example of the government leadership; the GoR has put its foot down and wants donors to coordinate and align the aid in line with GoR wishes.

#### *High level leadership and support for the GoR*

The president Paul Kagame is an example of high level leadership in the EDPRS process, as he is strongly committed to the fight of poverty and has a zero tolerance against corruption (Minaloc 2008). The high level leadership increases the likelihood for a better outcome of the EDPRS. The president and the GoR, including the leading RPF party, have strong support among the Rwandan population, and according to a national survey in 2007, 97 % of the population think the government has done much good for the country (NURC 2007). This implies there is strong support for the EDPRS among the population.

The commitment from the president and the government to reduce poverty might be a way for them to gain legitimacy among Rwandans. As Paul Kagame and the RPF originate from the Tutsi rebels who took power by force in 1994, they have to deliver

results to the population to gain support. Interviewees also claim that the strong lead from the government might originate in a fear of new ethnic tensions coming up, and that the government has to give the population an alternative to conflict in terms of development.

However, there are some controversial aspects about the presidential and government leadership, and the support from the population. Much power is concentrated in the president, both constitutionally and in practice (Freedom House 2008). “The president’s word is the law”, one of the donor interviewees said and pointed to the strong leadership in dealing with the ministers. Even if the prospects for a re-election of the current president are good, Rwanda can not rely on this person only. Therefore, a long-lasting high level leadership seems weaker. Additionally, the strong support among the population might be due to lack of political alternative, a tradition of consensus based policy setting, and the authoritarian tradition in the country where powerful leaders have controlled the population (The Economist 2009). These restrictions of democracy raise concerns about the legitimacy of the EDPRS process.

### 3.3.2 Partnership and donor hands-off

The formal structures for the partnership between the GoR and donors are generally good, with space for negotiation and a balanced relationship within the ACHA framework. However, there are certain issues that make the relationship complicated, and the hands-off approach is not used all the time.

#### *Donors believe in the GoR*

Generally, donors believe in the government leadership and think the GoR seems genuinely willing and responsible to conduct the EDPRS process. Hayman (2007) points out that the GoR is talking the language of international development and that it has committed to international norms of development. The policies and reforms for poverty reduction, the lessons from the PRSP1, and the Aid Policy are examples of this. Therefore, donors have said they respect country ownership and will let the GoR

take the lead in preparing plans and budgets (GoR 2006). One of the interviewees mentioned that another example of donors' commitment to the GoR is that they keep providing assistance to the GoR in times of financial crises because they see results from the EDPRS. The APR 2008 points to a successful implementation of the EDPRS in 2008 even though there are some shortcomings (Minecofin 2009d).

### *Negotiation position*

In general, donors listen to the government; they do not have a policy-imposing approach. According to donor interviewees they provide support and use dialogue, negotiation, and persuasion as methods for deciding upon policies and aid, in case of diverging agendas. For example, this was used in the design process of the EDPRS and the trade-off on the priorities between export and agriculture. In the early draft of the EDPRS the GoR wanted to have a strongly export oriented strategy to be more reliant on export revenues and get away from the aid dependency. Donors did not see this as a realistic development approach because of the poorly developed rural sector. Instead, they argued there had to be efforts to reform the agricultural sector to secure the food production. In this case, the GoR listened to donor advice and agreed to do more for the agriculture sector.

The government shows a strong leadership towards the donors. One of the interviewees claims the government added the VUP in the final draft of the EDPRS without consulting the donors. The government held strongly on to its agenda and in the end donors accepted this final EDPRS even if they did not agree on all policies.

However, there are examples where donors have sanctioned the government. In December 2008 the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) retracted the budget support because GoR financed rebels in Congo (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008). Even if this is not directly connected to the EDPRS it shows the vulnerability in the partnership approach. The fact that donors have the power to retract aid money, or go against GoR wishes if they do not like the GoR agenda, shows imbalances in the relationship; Rwanda is the aid-dependent party.

### *Coordination*

Coordination between donors and the GoR is a part of the partnership. For example, the Sector Working Group coordination among donors and GoR institutions is important for the overall performance. There is a wide range of stakeholders included in the SWGs, as well as sub-sector groups, which increases the importance of coordination. The coordination is dependent on the leadership in the SWG; the GoR chair and the donor co-chair. The leadership has to be strong, the chairs have to agree, and there is need for understanding of the importance of coordination among the various actors included in the sector.

For example, the coordination in the education SWG is working quite well because the lead donor has put effort into this. On the contrary, the health SWG is less coordinated because the health ministry has not understood the importance of coordination and the donor lead is not engaged (Hayman 2007). Hence, lack of a clear leadership from the donor is often a big constraint to the coordination of the SWG since the GoR lead institution does not have the capacity to coordinate alone (Hayman 2007). One of the donor interviewees admits that donors seldom want to take the responsibility as a co-chair as it requires a lot of work. This implies the outcome of the SWGs is reliant on the donor engagement; once again the GoR is dependent on the donors.

### *Budget support and domestic system*

According to the Aid Policy the GoR wants donors to harmonise their programmes, align aid to the EDPRS, use the domestic system, and provide 100 % of the financial assistance in the form of budget support. This will make it easier for the government to plan and predict aid. Donors have agreed on most targets in the Aid Policy but are not willing to provide 100 % budget support, they can agree on 85 % (GoR 2006b). According to the GoR DPAM assessment of donor performance in 2008 most of the donors are off track according to the outlined targets (Minecofin 2009a). The total provision of budget support was 55 % in 2008, which is insufficient for the GoR target

of 100 % in 2010. Nor is the use of domestic systems on track for the 66 % target to be met in 2010 (Minecofn 2009a).

There is a wide range of donors in Rwanda and the performance and attitudes of the hands-off approach diverges among donors. Here is an overview of the top eight bilateral donors in Rwanda in the years 2001 and 2007. The other table shows the provision of budget support in 2008.

Table 1. Donors in Rwanda.

<b>Top Eight Bilateral Donors in Rwanda</b>				<b>Percentage of ODA as Budget Support 2008</b>	
<b>2001</b>		<b>2007</b>		<b>Donor</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Donor</b>	<b>Total US\$m</b>	<b>Donor</b>	<b>Total US\$m</b>		
United Kingdom	60.0	United Kingdom	95.0	Netherlands	79
United States	36.4	United States	90.8	Belgium	76
Netherlands	33.1	Belgium	42.7	United Kingdom	74
Germany	23.8	Netherlands	27.8	Sweden	54
Belgium	20.1	Germany	23.1	Japan	43
France	18.4	Sweden	21.8	Canada	33
Sweden	14.2	Japan	19.5	United States	1
Canada	11.3	Canada	9.7	Germany	na

Source: Minecofn 2009

Source: OECD 2009

The type of aid can vary from general budget support to programme support to specific projects, and donors in Rwanda are represented along the whole scale. For example, the USAID have almost only small-scale projects run by themselves. Sida is not satisfied with their own use of domestic systems; they want to improve since they believe in using domestic systems. Hence, the donors are not fully using the hands-off approach.

However, a donor interviewee claims that the hands-off approach is somewhat complicated in Rwanda as there is lack of capacity in the domestic systems. For

example, donors face difficulties in the use of the revenue authority on the reporting of how the aid money is used. Bilateral donors have to report on off-budget assistance to the GoR, as well as have obligations of reporting to the own country. For example, agencies in Rwanda do not report their revenues on time, or at all, because of the weak capacity. Hence, donors are not always able to use the domestic system. There is a trade-off in using the domestic systems and parallel or own systems; on the one hand it is important to use domestic systems as it will help in building them up; on the other hand, the use of own systems will increase the likelihood for a better outcome. Another example of the difficulties in using the hands-off approach is the budget support. Donors claim they can not provide 100 % budget support since they want to support non-governmental stakeholders or activities such as free media, capacity to have a critical view of the government, or women's participation in certain processes. Hence, sometimes the government is not the right channel for aid.

### 3.4 Internal ownership

The assessment of internal ownership is structured as the previous section with different topics discussed under the government inclusion and the stakeholder participation indicators.

#### 3.4.1 Government inclusion

“The EDPRS is a national strategy and involves all levels of Rwandan society. Sector Working Groups bring together central and local government institutions, development partners, civil society and the private sector. Districts will be particularly involved in discussions about effective implementation of the EDPRS. Ministers will be responsible for validating the strategy.” (Minecofin 2006).

This is the introduction in a GoR document on the EDPRS planning process, and much of the government's intent is reflected in the formal structures for the EDPRS process.

The government is providing space for participation in all parts of the process and at all levels, and it seems to understand the importance of participation and the anchoring of the EDPRS among the population. Interviewees from donors, GoR officials and domestic stakeholders talk about the government as inclusive and the formal structures have been praised for their inclusiveness (World Bank 2008b). However, when looking closer the picture is more blurred; there are indicators that point to inclusive features, as well as indicators of a non-inclusive government.

### *Provision of information*

Even though the formal structures are good, there are complaints about the government working too fast and that this decreases the efficiency of the participation. For example, according to a donor interviewee the local level finds it difficult to plan, implement and report on time because of the short time frames from the central government, and in consultations with grass-root levels government officials do not provide enough information for the population to get versed in the process. The central government wants to develop and move fast, but the local levels are not able to follow.

There have been concerns about the openness in the budget process. In 2008 the Open Budget Survey Rwanda scored 0 out of 100 in the provision of budget information to the public during the budget year (OBS 2009). However, when the government became aware of this, it changed the policy to be more inclusive; now the Minecofin publishes documents about the budget process in newspapers and on the web.

This is one example of the willingness from the government to improve the information provision, the openness and transparency of government, and the strengthening of accountability. The EDPRS flagship Good Governance is an example of this, and there is a general increased understanding of the importance of these issues (Minaloc 2008).

Another positive feature of the information provision is the translated version of the EDPRS into the local language Kinyarwanda. There is already a translated version of



the Vision 2020 and the government has information campaigns in the city as well as in rural areas to inform the population about the development strategies. The Vision 2020 is widely known among the population and now the government wants to spread the information about the EDPRS (World Bank 2008a).

### *Government listening to stakeholders*

The inclusiveness does not only depend on the formal structures for participation; the government also has to listen to the participants and take their opinions into consideration. The evaluations in the beginning of the design process were the most participative and inclusive element in the EDPRS process because the government took the lessons from the evaluations into account; the government listened to the stakeholders. Moreover, the household survey made before deciding on the EDPRS priorities implied the strategy was based upon facts about the poor and that they were included in the process. However, one of the donor interviewees claims that the technocrats took over and formulated the EDPRS after the evaluations. The interviewee argues that even if the structures are inclusive, the government strongly holds on to its agenda and usually does not listen to the stakeholders.

Another donor interviewee claims the government is not listening to the civil society because lack of capacity and knowledge of the issues among CSOs, except for a few stronger organisations. The government “ignores noise but listens to substance” and thinks that most of the CSO participation is “noise” and that most CSOs are not contributing to the process in a constructive way. Interviewees from some of the stronger CSOs claim they have been included in the process, and that their opinions were taken into account even if everything was not reflected in the EDPRS.

What does this imply for the ownership indicator of government inclusion? Does the government include sufficiently or does it have to listen to the stakeholders to a greater extent? Or is it up to stakeholders to use the space provided and start contributing to the process in a more meaningful way? What comes first, government inclusion or stakeholder capacity to participate? These questions can not be answered here, but the

government has a point in that it is not able to listen to everything; the time is limited and the government wants to develop fast. However, it might also be up to the government to strengthen the capacity among stakeholders; capacity building can be seen as a sign of inclusion.

### *Open debate*

Rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, etc. are under stress in Rwanda, which affects the prospects for the space for open debate (Freedom House, Minaloc 2008). Even though there have been improvements in the legal framework in recent years, the practical implications of these improvements have not been seen (Minaloc 2008). Moreover, the politics in Rwanda is based on consensus and power sharing, and in practice the RPF controls the agenda and public debate (Minaloc 2008). These restrictions of democracy and freedom of expression affect the public debate; the citizens do not speak out loud and the government is hardly ever criticised in public (Minaloc 2008). Thus, there is space for participation, but the openness of the space can be questioned.

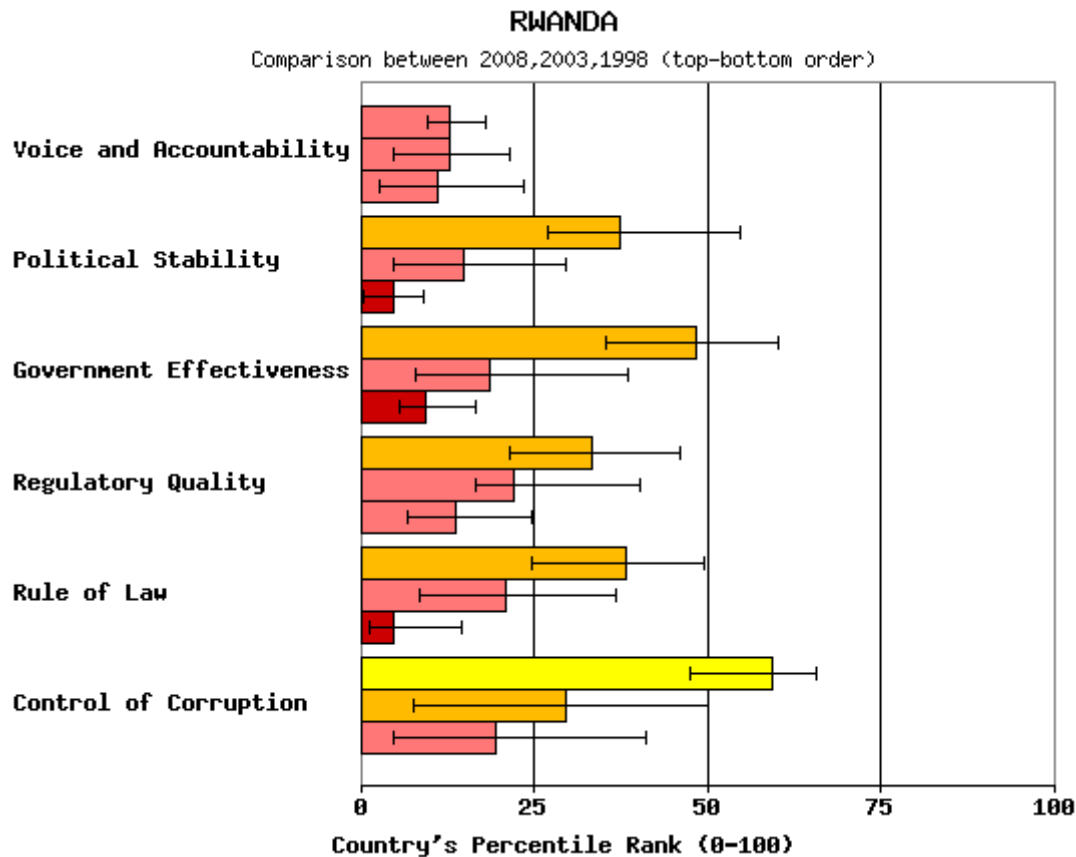


Figure 3. World Governance Indicators.

Source: WGI 2009

The World Governance Indicators illustrate the state of open debate in Rwanda. The indicator of voice and accountability measures the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media (WGI 2009). When looking at the diagram above, other governance indicators have increased in the last decade, while the voice and accountability has not improved. This might show the government approach to continuing the restrictions on democracy and human rights, which in turn affects the prospects for inclusion in the EDPRS process. However, it is argued that this has to be seen in the light of the genocide; there is fear of new ethnic tensions coming up (Minaloc 2008). The government argues there have to be restrictions on political competition and freedom of speech to keep the security and hinder riots from coming up.

### 3.4.2 Stakeholder participation

The outcome of the participation in practice relies on the stakeholders; the extent to which they use the government provided space will determine the state of participation. In general, the participation is broad-based in quantitative measures, but there are several factors indicating a less qualitative participation.

The stakeholders in Rwanda – the Parliament, local government and civil society – are weak institutions. Even though there is participation in terms of stakeholders attending meetings, discussions and forums within the EDPRS process, the weakness of the stakeholders weakens the extent of participation. Capacity is seen as the biggest constraint for participation in Rwanda (Minaloc 2008). Together with the comment that there is strong government leadership in the EDPRS, this is the most common observation among the interviewees. The education level is low in Rwanda and the big poor population does not have the capacity to control the government, which implies the weak accountability. Capacity in terms of understanding of the EDPRS, education, number of skilled people, equipment, and financial resources, are a big constraint to participation as well as a successful outcome of the EDPRS.

#### *Parliament*

The Parliament is one of the weakest institutions in Rwanda and there are great imbalances between the GoR and the Parliament in terms of power and capacity (Minaloc 2008). Constitutionally the Parliament has a representative, legislative and overseeing function and different groups of the society must be represented, i.e. women, youths and disabled (Minaloc 2008). Hence, the Parliament could be a good representative of the population, but the lack of skills and understanding of the EDPRS hinders this. As parliament involvement in the PRS process is one of the most important requirements for a legitimate process, the weak capacity of the Parliament and the lack of representation is a big constraint to the Rwandan ownership.

The role of the Parliament in the EDPRS process is somewhat unclear. The terms of reference for the SWGs declares that the Parliament shall have one representative in each group. However, according to most of the interviewees, this is not the case in practice; there are no parliamentarians in the SWGs. Instead, the Parliament shall participate indirectly through overseeing of the budget and the process so that they are able to put questions to responsible ministers. Whether the role of the Parliament is to participate directly in the SWGs or if its role is to control the EDPRS process does not matter for ownership in this case; the Parliament is weak and is not able to represent the interests of the citizens. Even if there are some parliamentarians who understand the process and ask critical questions of ministers, the legitimacy can not rely on these individuals.

#### *Local government*

According to the interviewees, there is broad-based participation in community meetings at the local government levels. In the 2007 social cohesion survey 91% of respondents agreed that “citizens take part in decision-making on problems concerning them” (NURC). These numbers might indicate a participative feature at the local levels. However, the extent of participation is limited to the frequency of meetings and the number of attendants. The local government lacks capacity to communicate the views and opinions of the citizens to higher levels. This is not only due to the weak capacity of the local authorities, but also because of the weak coordination among different levels of government, the short time frames from the central government, and the newly introduced formal structures.

#### *Civil society*

The civil society in Rwanda is big with over 37 000 community-based organisations (96 % of the whole civil society) (NURC 2007). There are relatively few organisations dealing with policy advocacy and government overseeing, which implies that the function as a watch-dog, or a counter weight to the government, is not strong (Minaloc 2008). An interviewee from the civil society states that the civil society adjusts its agendas instead to the EDPRS and works together with the government.

The civil society participates at central, sector and local levels. Theoretically, the platform covers every segment of the civil society since it incorporates fifteen umbrella CSOs, but interviewees maintain that in practice the lack of capacity limits the ability to represent. There are only a few rather strong CSOs, and their base is in the capital of Kigali. Outside the offices of the organisations, most parts of the civil society do not know about the EDPRS issues, especially not the technical parts. Moreover, there is seldom information about the target groups of the organisations, which implies they do not know what to claim in the EDPRS process. There is lack of skilled people, human capital, and financial resources. This lack of capacity limits the legitimacy of the EDPRS process as well as hinders the CSOs from doing their work.

## 4 Summary and conclusions

According to the definition of ownership used in this study, there is a mixed picture of the state of ownership in Rwanda. On the one hand, the government leadership is strong and there is willingness and responsibility to carry out the EDPRS process in an inclusive way. On the other hand, the participation among the domestic stakeholders does not fulfil the requirements of meaningful participation since stakeholders lack capacity to represent and understand the EDPRS process and because the space for public debate is limited. However, the external and internal dimensions of ownership in Rwanda are complex and it is difficult to determine the state of ownership. The complexity also raises concern about the usefulness of the concept of ownership. As said in the introduction, the concept is vague, ambiguous and contradictory, and this becomes even more evident after this study.

The partnership between GoR and its donors is complicated. The contradictions in the concept of ownership become even more obvious when looking at Rwanda whose government already possesses a strong lead towards its donors. Rwanda is still an aid-dependent country and there are several examples of where the state of ownership can be questioned due to donor behaviour. The partnership implies there have to be negotiations on the PRS, but since donors have more power in terms of money there are concerns about whether the partnership is equal. There have been examples of donors using their power to extract aid, or that declines in their engagement have negative effects on the outcome of the EDPRS. Hence, donors affect the EDPRS process in areas which the GoR can not control. Moreover, donors claim they have certain values to protect and can not always accept the government agenda and use the hands-off approach. For example, the authoritarian feature of Rwanda might imply donors do not always want to support the government and that they raise conditions on the provided aid. On the one hand, one can claim a country can not have ownership as

long as donors are involved and pose these conditions. On the other hand, donors have to be involved in the policy process since they are responsible to make sure the aid money is not devastating the recipient country. This is a problematic feature of ownership and the aid system in general. In this case the state of ownership depends on to what extent conditionality is included in the concept.

The state of the internal ownership also gives a mixed picture, even if the conclusion is that ownership is weak. The government does provide space for participation, but the space is not enough; there is need for a more open public debate in terms of freedom of expression. Moreover, stakeholders participate in quantitative measures, but the weak capacity of stakeholders implies that they can not represent their interests, and that they do not understand the EDPRS process. Hence, Rwanda is an example of a country where capacity is crucial for ownership and that the two concepts are mutually reinforcing; the central government capacity is strong, which implies strong leadership, and the stakeholder capacity is weak which implies participation is weak. The crucial factor of parliament involvement is not present in Rwanda and the weak capacity of the parliament weakens the state of ownership even more; there is no scope for a democratic PRS process. However, there are capacity building programmes in progress and the decentralisation process will continue to improve participation at local levels. This might imply a stronger internal ownership in the future.

Taking the two dimensions together the overall assessment implies the country ownership in Rwanda is weak. This is somewhat surprising because of the perceptions of strong ownership in Rwanda. However, compared to other countries, the strong lead and the large quantity of participation might show a stronger ownership in Rwanda. Rather, this calls for a mixed picture of ownership; it is both strong and weak. However, the conclusion made in this study is based on the assumption that the participation aspect is more important than the government leadership; the emphasis in the definition is put on the internal dimension of ownership. This shows that the definition of ownership is crucial for the statement of ownership and that policy



analysts have to be aware of the meaning of ownership before drawing conclusions about the state of ownership in a country.

However, putting emphasis on the internal dimension of ownership might also be problematic. Maybe a broadening of the concept of ownership, including a further discussion of democratic ownership (as in the Accra Agenda for Action), is too broad and incorporates too many factors for the concept to be effective. When ownership includes factors such as democracy and capacity, it is hard to point to policy implications for a country to be able to improve the state of ownership and better carry out its PRS. However, if a clear definition of ownership is made, the concept might be useful. Therefore, in this broadening of the concept of ownership there is need for further discussion about the definition and implications of ownership before using it; the concept will not be useful as long as it is vague and slippery.

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