

UMUGANDA

1. BACKGROUND

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.

The concept of Umuganda originates from Kinyarwanda word meaning woods used to construct traditional house, and can be translated as 'coming together in common purpose to achieve an outcome'¹.

In 1998, with the efforts to rebuild Rwandan society and nurture a shared national identity, the Government of Rwanda reintroduced Umuganda as one of the Rwanda's Home grown solutions to reinforce socio-economic development and to promote the use of cultural resources in mitigating effects of scarce resources as envisioned in vision 2020.

The program was implemented nationwide though there was little institutional structure surrounding the program. It wasn't until 17 November 2007 with the passing of Organic Law Number 53/2007 Governing Community Works and later on August 24, 2009 with Prime Ministerial Order Number 58/03 (determining the attributions, organisation, and functioning of community work supervising committees and their relations with other organs) that Umuganda was institutionalised in Rwanda.

Umuganda is always held on the last Saturday of the month. The population in consultation with relevant authorities may, however, where necessary, decide to carry out community work more than once a month. Umuganda takes place from 8:00 A.M to 11:00 A.M. In the same way, upon agreement by the participants in the community works and the supervising committee, the starting hour for the community works may be subject to change. All able persons aged 18 to 65 years do Umuganda.

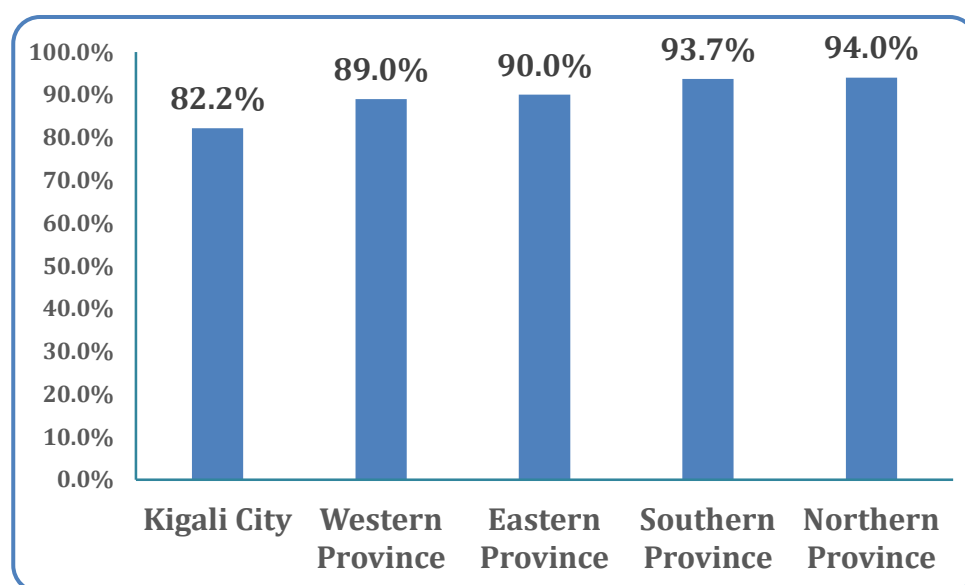
¹ <http://www.rwandapedia.rw/explore/umuganda>

2. BIG PICTURE

Citizen participation in Umuganda program

Umuganda is one of the government's programs where a big number of Rwandan citizens participate. MINALOC indicates that the level of participation is high (average of 91.3% countrywide for the fiscal year 2015-2016)². The target (in terms of participation) to be achieved by Umuganda every year, is calculated basing on the sum of days set aside (imibyizi) for all valid persons aged 18-65³. The figure below indicates the level of citizens' participation in Umuganda per Province.

Figure 1: participation level by province From July 2015-June 2016



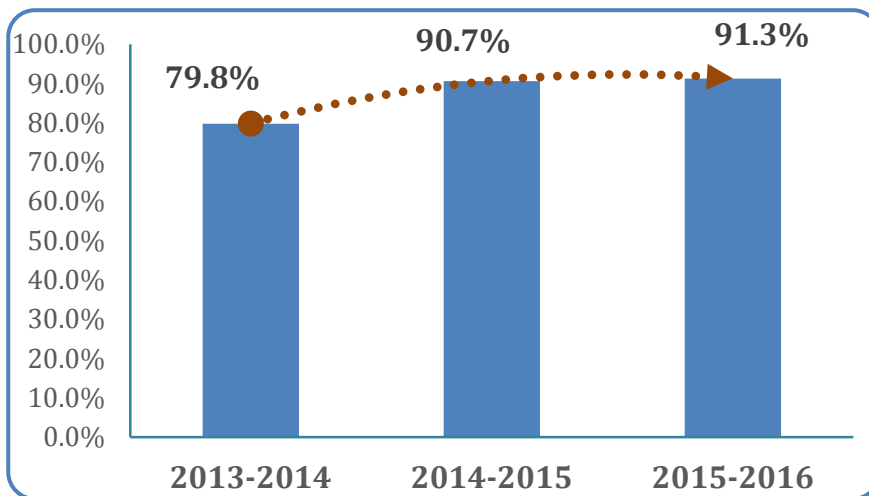
Source: MINALOC, Umuganda annual report, 2016.

One can say that the level of citizens' participation in Umuganda activities in all provinces is satisfying even though the CoK can do better; it has the lowest level of participation (82.2%) as the national average level is 91.3%. The Northern Province has the highest level of participation in Umuganda with 94.03%. The Southern Province attained 93% participation; the Eastern Province has 90% while the Western Province stands at 89%.

²Minaloc, Umuganda annual report, 2016

³ Idem.

Figure 2: Evolution of the national level of citizen' participation in Umuganda from 2013-2016



Source: MINALOC, Umuganda annual reports: 2014, 2015, 2016

The level of participation has increased by 4% from 87.8% in 2013-2014 to 91.3% in 2015-2016. This indicates the citizens' interest and commitment to building the country, and developing its infrastructure through public works.

Main achievements of Umuganda

As an indigenous initiative Umuganda was and is still regarded as crucial for economic and social development. It represents the idea of mutual assistance, mutual social responsibility, social obligation, self-help and traditional strategies for development.⁴

Umuganda contributes to environment protection through erosion control, tree planting, and cleanings; but also to developing, building and maintaining different infrastructures (roads, houses for vulnerable people, public offices, health centres, schools especially 9&12 years' education, etc.).

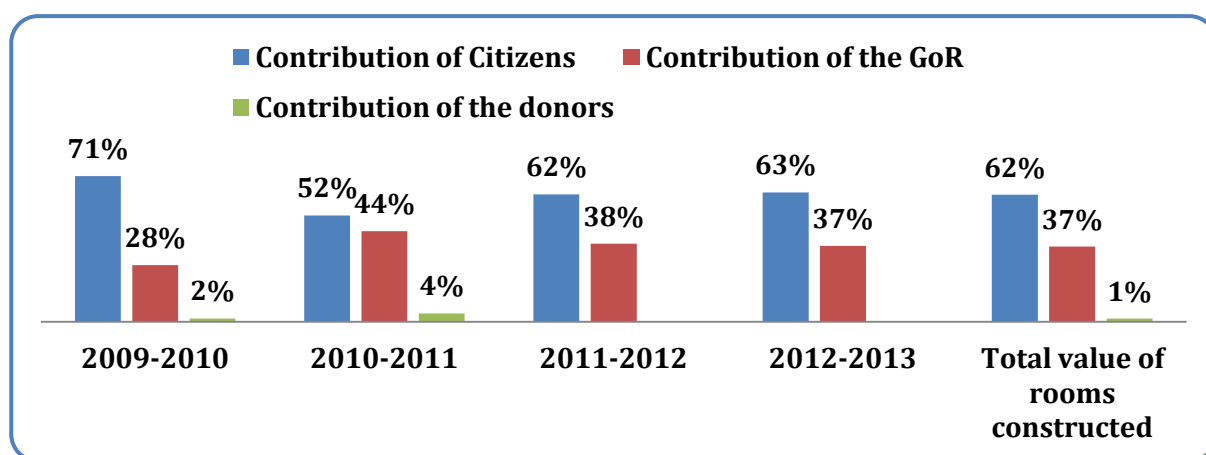
As well, Umuganda contributes to unity and reconciliation through conflict arbitration between community members. Doing Umuganda also strengthens cohesion between persons of different background and provides to the community an opportunity to articulate their needs and express their opinions on various issues. The following are examples that help to illustrate the contribution of Umuganda to national growth and development.

⁴PenineUwimbabazi,P.,(2012). Analysis of Umuganda: The Policy and Practice of Community Work in Rwanda. College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa ; p:22

Infrastructure development

Umuganda has contributed to infrastructure development. Achievements of Umuganda are numerous and they include the construction of houses for vulnerable people, support to the implementation of water supply projects, construction of new classrooms for 9 YBE and 12 YBE, health centers, administration offices, construction of genocide memorials and Police stations, road maintenance, tree planting, radical terracing and other soil erosion control infrastructures⁵. The graph below shows the level of contribution of citizens in the construction of 9&12 years' basic education classrooms.

Figure 3: Contribution of citizens and government in the construction of 9BYE classrooms



Source: RGB, National Umushyikirano Council: A decade of delivering democracy and development to Rwanda. 200-2014, 2016

Visually, it is evident that the contribution of citizens in the construction of 9 YBE rooms is much bigger than that of government or donors. The estimated monetary value of community work attained **61,9%** of the total cost for the classrooms construction, with FRW 135, 730,416,667 while 36.62% was the government's contribution. The citizens' contribution is made of the value of labour, money contributed to help payment of technical persons, and food provided to feed people in these construction activities. In fact, citizens constitute a valuable sponsor, a great partner in the development of the country.

In total, **3,172 classrooms** have been constructed under 9YBE by parents in collaboration with the Government. Today, the access to 9YBE attained a commendable percentage of 97%; thus contributing to achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

⁵MINALOC, Umuganda annual report, 2016

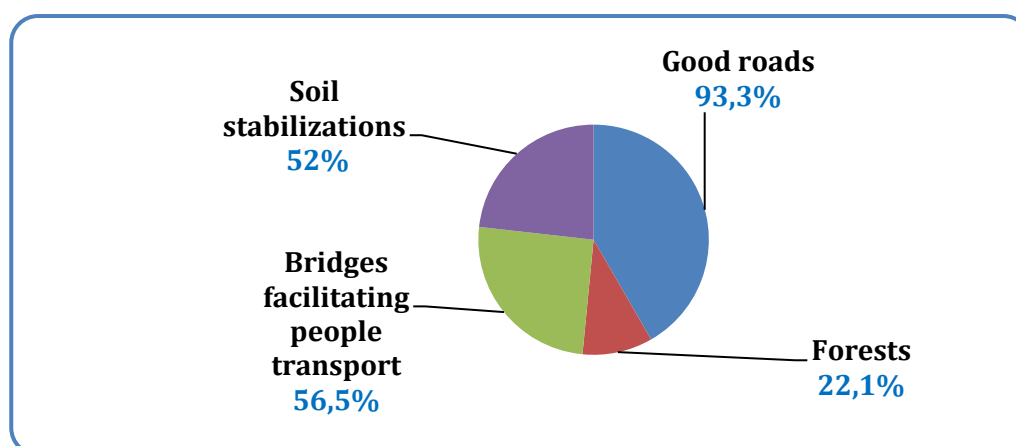
Special Umuganda: Army Week

Umuganda has also contributed to a good relationship between the army and the population. One of the innovations introduced in the practice of Umuganda is the participation of the Ministry of Defense in Community Work during the “Army Week”. These allowed achieving outstanding activities such as eye treatment for 2,266 people, dental treatment for 13,193 people, and construction of 1,089 houses for needy people⁶. The community works were also introduced in Darfur (Sudan) by the Rwandan troops⁷.

Impact of Umuganda

Umuganda impact can be summarised into socio-economic impact and governance impact.

Figure 4: Economic benefits brought by Umuganda



Source: RGB, the Assessment of the Impact of Home Grown Initiatives, 2014.

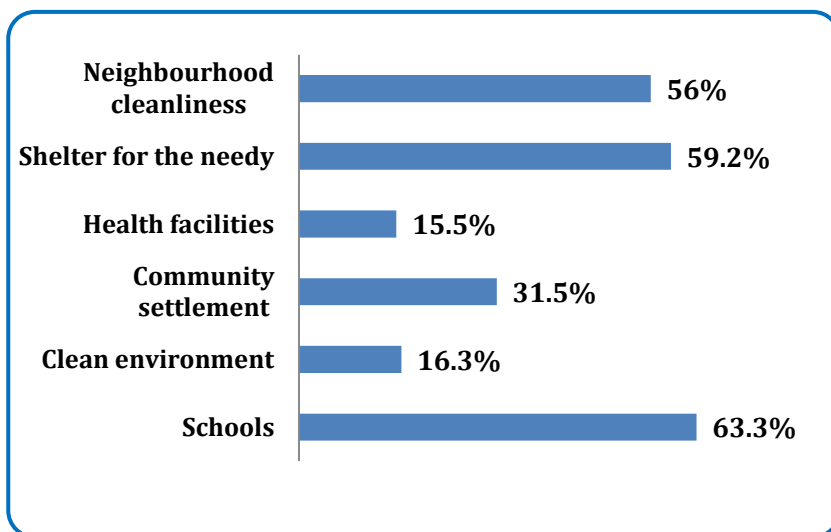
The surveyed households pointed out that Umuganda’s economic benefits are good roads (93.3%), bridges facilitating the transport of people (56.5%), soil stabilisation (52%), and improvement in agriculture productivity itself (19.7%), forests planting (22.1%)⁸. In fact, good roads and bridges have a great economic impact in the country; where there is a good road, there is chance for more employment, more businesses starting, more exchanges, trade is facilitated, but also movement of people and goods is improved.

Figure 5: Social benefits brought by Umuganda

⁶MINADEP, Army week report 2011

⁷MINALOC, Rapport y’ibikorwa by’Umuganda, 2010-2011, p12-2.

⁸RGB, the Assessment of the Impact of Home Grown Initiatives, 2014.



Source: RGB, the Assessment of the Impact of Home Grown Initiatives, 2014.

Cleanness (cleaning, greening and beautifying) is vital for one's good health; but also a clean neighbourhood has a better value for money/market and helps create positive environment for those living there. As shown by the figure above, Umuganda contributes greatly to Rwanda's cleanness and environment; when asked about the changes brought by Umuganda; apart from good schools, shelter and health facilities, citizens responded clean neighbourhood (56%), and fresh air and clean environment (16.3%).

Governance impact

Doing Umuganda strengthens cohesion between persons of different backgrounds and provides to the community an opportunity to articulate their needs and express their opinions on various issues. As well, Umuganda contributes to unity and reconciliation through conflict arbitration between community members.

It was found that Umuganda enables the population in the neighbourhood to know each other; it has allowed the population to engage in a friendship relationship, and enables mutual assistance in the community⁹.

Delegates from different countries all over the world come to visit Rwanda; they are impressed by the achievements of home-grown solutions such as Umuganda. As well, Rwanda Defence Forces peacekeepers wherever they are deployed, introduce and practice Umuganda by cleaning areas surrounding their military camps and beyond. They, in fact,

⁹ RGB, Assessment of the impact of Home Grown Initiatives, 2014, p.78

engage local communities to take part in community works; enabling a clean neighbourhood and protected environment.

Umuganda also enables to spread the good image of the country. On her visit to Rwanda, Malawi's Minister of Industry and Trade commended Umuganda and recommend this practice in other countries. In an article published in the Nyasa Times, she notes,

*"This is something all African countries need to do because wherever we go in Africa now, there is environmental degradation and the only way to resolve the issue is to have every person involved in curbing it."*¹⁰

Environment Protection

To a great extent, most activities of Umuganda countrywide are linked with environmental protection. Generally, people participate in cleaning streets, cutting grass, trimming bushes alongside the roads, planting trees and repairing public buildings¹¹.

Through the practice of umuganda, reforestation and erosion control have been successful in many communities¹². Government Institutions such as REMA urge people to take care of environmental and water resources and mobilizes people to plant trees, for example, to protect river banks¹³

¹⁰ Nyasa Times, 1 Nov 2010

¹¹ Penine Uwimbabazi, P., (2012). Analysis of Umuganda: The Policy and Practice of Community Work in Rwanda. College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. P: 66

¹² Rwanda Research Group (2009). "Peace-building Thought Good Governance and Capable Statehood." Peace Review 21(3): pp. 386 -295

¹³ 6 REMA, Community work (Umuganda rusange) of 30/05/2009 in Gisagara District, <http://rema.gov.rw>.



Picture1: Rwanda Police on Twitter: "#Rwanda Police officers joined # Kicukiro residents for 'Umuganda' to clear land & protect the environment

As the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame explained, *the concept of Umuganda is a good idea to maintain a clean society and this has helped the country to gain its new face*¹⁴. He added that *the concept does not only propagate a clean society but also; community work (Umuganda rusange) presents an opportunity for people to join hands to achieve set objectives, on top of fostering harmony among residents*¹⁵.

3. RESSOURCES

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¹⁵Idem

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