

# GREENING DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLANS



Implementing Agency:  
Ministry of Local  
Government (MINALOC)

Project Start:  
01/07/2014

Project Duration:  
36 months

## What does the project do?

The project aims to ensure that environment and climate change issues are mainstreamed in development beyond the national level. This is achieved by:

1. Supporting District Authorities (DAs) in integrating Green Growth and Climate Resilience into their District Development Plans (DDPs);
2. Providing training to DAs in planning and project design to support them in being able to implement

## Why is the project needed?

District authorities in Rwanda are required to develop 5-year strategic plans, known as District Development Plans (DDPs). DDPs act as a tool for planning, implementing and coordinating district activities in line with the national government's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). The EDPRS was designed to achieve Rwanda's ambitious Vision 2020 target of becoming a knowledge-based middle-income economy by 2020. The 2nd phase of the EDPRS,

EDPRS2, looked to mainstream a number of cross-cutting issues into all sector strategies and district development plans, including Environment and Climate Change. The ambition was to ensure that environmental sustainability was mainstreamed, and climate vulnerability reduced.

The extent to which this ambition could be successfully realized at district level was untested, and an assessment of a sample of DDPs in 2014, combined with discussions

with stakeholders from government (REMA, MINIRENA and MIDIMAR) demonstrated that the DDPs were not fully aligned to the Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy (GGCRS). The lack of climate compatible development in the DDPs indicated problems not only with district level planning, but also with district level staff capacity to implement climate compatible development. This was further evidenced by the fact that district authorities had had little success under FONERWA's first call for proposals.

Prior to the current project, a FONERWA support project funded by CDKN had worked with a small number of national stakeholders, including some staff from district authorities, to support them in project design and proposal writing for accessing FONERWA. However, this project was not restricted to government and primarily aimed to raise awareness of and cultivate initial demand for the fund. As such, it did not address the institutional issues around capacity to implement development activities consistent with the GGCRS.

## Why is the project needed?

The Greening District Development Plans project is of a different nature to most FONERWA projects. While other projects deliver direct benefits to people and the environment, this project targets long-term planning to ensure that development in Rwanda takes a green path. The project systematically addresses how environment and climate resilience issues can be embedded and mainstreamed in development planning to avoid a more costly process of "retrofitting" climate issues as an afterthought. The project has far reaching implications for promoting green growth on a national scale.

The project initially designed an extensive DDP review process that was expected to take at least a year, familiarizing district authorities with the issues, identifying gaps, and working through the technical process of updating the DDPs. However, when the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA) initiated its own process for



Jackson Mugisha, one of the project staff

Jackson Mugisha from the project team explained that districts struggled to compete with other stakeholders to access FONERWA funds and were becoming frustrated by the high application requirements put in place by the fund. In responding to weak district capacity for designing FONERWA projects, MINALOC realized that addressing the issue of District capacity could represent a project in its own right. It was not only an issue of the quality of proposals, but a lack of understanding about the additionality that FONERWA expected to be demonstrated in project proposals. Jackson expects that many of the districts will be successful in the next FONERWA calls for proposals.

reviewing DDPs, the project was adapted to capitalize on that process. This process offered a way to minimize transaction costs whilst also ensuring greater ownership at the district level.

The project paired national and international technical experts to support district authorities, analysing the original - "ungreened" DDP and identifying gaps and weaknesses. After mapping out areas for improvement, consultation was undertaken with District Executive Secretaries to discuss what support would be necessary to enable the district to green the DDP. This resulted in training for key district staff including Planners, Agronomists, Environmental Officers, LODA engineers and infrastructure staff at the Provincial level. This was a practical exercise equipping district staff with the knowledge and understanding to be able to green the DDPs, engage in project design and facilitate training. As a result of this training, key district staff gained the skills to work with a wider range of staff in their districts to embed and institutionalise the greening of the DDPs. This process helped to ensure that the knowledge and training was not confined to a few members of staff, but thoroughly understood and practiced by the district authority as a whole.

The project has so far achieved the greening of 30 DDPs, covering all districts in Rwanda. Not only does this ensure that districts are on a path consistent with EDPRS2, but it has also raised awareness among district staff of the importance of climate compatible

development and the ways in which it is put into practice. DDPs and the staff responsible for implementing them now pay greater attention, for example, to the need for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) before embarking on large infrastructure projects. DDPs also include more ambitious targets for afforestation, the uptake of green technologies, improvements in agricultural sustainability and reduction in activities with negative environmental impacts, such as the use of chemical fertilizers.

Greening the DDPs does potentially add costs to some elements of the DDP. For example, using chemical fertilizers might enable a district to improve agricultural production more quickly, but it could come at the long-term expense of the environment by polluting the land and resulting in groundwater contamination. Promoting the use of organic alternatives, however, might initially create some additional costs for the district. By supporting them in project design and proposal writing, districts will have a better chance of achieving and exceeding the targets in their DDPs. The 8th FONERWA call for proposals in January 2016 is expected to attract a significant number of proposals from District Authorities.

To ensure that the DDPs are being effectively implemented, the project will continue to monitor the DDPs against green indicators for the remainder of the project duration. After the project period, LODA will take responsibility for ensuring that the DDPs stay on track.

# Gicumbi District

has the highest percentage of extreme poor (33.3%) in Rwanda's Northern Province, and has a higher percentage of poor than the national average. The district landscape is characterized by high mountains and steep slopes.

Even before the MINALOC training, Gicumbi district had ambitions to apply for project funding through FONERWA, but attempts had been unsuccessful. Applications had failed to clearly articulate the problems that the projects were aiming to address; were too narrow in scope, and did little to expand upon work already being undertaken by the district. The rejected proposals and stringent application led district staff to feel that FONERWA funding was beyond their reach.

Five district staff working on environmental issues were selected to participate in the MINALOC training, during which the district development plan was analysed. It was found that many of the objectives outlined by non-environmental sectors failed to consider the environmental impact of their activities.

Following this mapping activity, training was rolled out to all district technical staff to build their understanding of how to green the DDPs. As a result of this training by environmental experts provided by the MINALOC project, district staff, - including those in non-environmental sectors- began to understand the need to consider environmental issues. Jackson Lutagira, Environmental Officer in Gicumbi, gave

examples of how the project was making a difference to the district authority. With road construction, for example, the DDP states that "attention will be set on the environment to gauge the impacts road construction may impose on the environment". In practice, this has resulted in associated technical staff becoming aware of the importance of conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment, which has resulted in the environmental staff being more widely consulted in the activities of other sectors. In another example, Jackson described how the intention to build new health clinics now aimed to utilize rainwater harvesting and renewable energy sources.

The environmental staff in Gicumbi District Authority report that the MINICOM project has institutionalised a change in mind-sets and they are more frequently consulted by staff working in different sectors for advice on environmental issues. Gicumbi district has developed project proposals to significantly upscale watershed protection and waste management. The District is confident in the relevance and effectiveness of their project plan and eagerly awaits the next FONERWA call for proposals.



## How does the project promote green growth?

The MINALOC project makes an important contribution to decentralizing green growth in Rwanda by ensuring that climate compatible development is mainstreamed at the district level. Working through existing planning processes has ensured a high degree of ownership by district staff, and that the process of integrating environment and climate resilience issues involved low transaction costs. After one year of implementation, the project has made strong progress towards promoting green growth through its decentralization. Not only that, the project has also aimed to address the potential shortfall in funding that might result from the greening of the DDP by building the capacity of district authorities to access FONERWA funding. The

project's capacity building elements have meant that districts will be able to propose better projects and close the funding gap required to implement greener activities. The skills acquired in developing project proposals will also increase the capacity of districts to apply for international funding from other sources like the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Although this outcome is still at a very early stage, project beneficiaries' own perspectives on their capacity to write effective proposals indicates that a good start has been made. The project has also helped stimulate demand for the Fund, which acts as a mechanism to align future projects with national priorities. The project's legacy will be demonstrated by the breadth of mainstreamed climate compatible district development activities being carried out in the districts.

MINALOC is responsible for promoting the well-being of the population by good governance, community development and social affairs. The project has been implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MINERENA), the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA), and the 30 district authorities in Rwanda.

