

Every Voice Counts

Social inclusion research

Burundi report

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Abbreviations

ABELO	Burundi Association of Local Elected Members (Association Burundais des Elus Locaux)
AFRABU	Association of Repatriated Women of Burundi (Association des Femmes R�patri�es du Burundi)
CAFOB	Women Umbrella Association of NGOs of Burundi
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCDC	Communal Committee for Community Development (Comit� Communal de D�veloppement Communautaire)
CDC	Hill-level Development Committee (Comit� de D�veloppement Collinair)
CDFC	Decentralised service of the Ministry of Gender
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CENI	National Independent Electoral Commission
CMS	Mixed Security Committee (Comit� Mixte de S�curit�)
CNDD-FDD	National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Democratic Defense Forces
CNL	CARE Netherlands
COCAFEM	Consultative Women Umbrella Association of the Great Lakes Region
CSC	Community Score Card
CTAS	Technical Advisor on Administrative and Social Issues
CTCD	Technical Advisor of Communal Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
EVC	Every Voice Counts
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
GoB	Government of Burundi
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
MIPAREC	Minist�re Paix et R�conciliation sous la Croix
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PAI	Annual Investment Plan (Plan Annuel d'Investissement)
PCDC	Communal Plan on Community Development (Plan Communal de D�veloppement Communautaire)
PNB	National Burundian Police
RFEL	Women's Network of Local Elected council members
RNE	Royal Netherlands Embassy
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
ToC	Theory of Change
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VNG-International	International development organisation of the Association of Dutch Municipalities
VSLA	Village Saving and Loan Association

Executive summary

Introduction

This qualitative study on social inclusion of women and girls in (in)formal planning and budgeting processes at local level took place under the EVC programme. In Burundi, EVC advocates for the respect of the 30% quota of women's participation at community level, it aims for inclusion of women and girls in community development planning (PCDC), and advocates for the completion and implementation of the Gender Based Violence (GBV) law; specifically looking at the quality of legal and health services offered to GBV victims and strengthening municipal marriage registration. Key strategies of EVC Burundi include the implementation of the Community Scorecard (CSC), support to Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), and advocacy on the aforementioned topics. Lobby is tied to CSC outcomes as well as existing community peace clubs.

There is very little data available on how women and girls participate in (in)formal governance spaces that focus on planning and budgeting, and how they perceive their participation. This research therefore aims respond to the following main research question: **What are the factors or "pathways" that contribute to women and girls participating in (in) formal planning and budgeting processes?** In line with the overall research framework of this study, specific emphasis lies on analysing different degrees of participation, notably access, presence and influence. Factors/pathways are tied to three types of empowerment (or obstacles): individual or collective agency of women, their relations with others (ex. family, community, organisations), and support offered by structures (ex. authorities and CSOs/INGOs). Findings aim to improve effectiveness of the EVC programme by offering insight into how the programme can influence these (in) formal planning and budgeting processes.

Methodology

Data collection methods included documentation study, key informant interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Data was gathered between 13 and 21 May 2019 in the 3 EVC Provinces (Gitega, Muyinga and Kirundo). The study covered 12 different locations (one commune and two collines per province, and three non-EVC collines). The spaces/mechanisms selected for the study (PCDC, colline meetings, CMS, VSLA, CSC and water/health committees) were distributed across the communes/collines to generate spread and depth of study, with the PCDC process and colline meetings being studied in all locations because of its link to EVC objectives. The intention was to look at specific pathways per case, but insufficient focus on the exact spaces selected per location in the KIIs and FGDs generated more general pathway data. In total 54 KIIs were held with women, men, state authorities, local powerholders, CSOs and INGOs. Also 28 FGDs were held with women, men and youth who mostly participate in one or more of the targeted spaces. Research in the field was ensured by a team of four Burundian researchers, who were trained and accompanied by an international consultant (who also conducted several interviews in Bujumbura). 50% of the KIIs and 90% of the FGDs were recorded, allowing for detailed transcriptions. For the other meetings notes were taken. Data was codified and analysed with NVIVO software.

Main findings

Especially at local colline level, progress is being noted in the number of women that are active in associations. As VSLA in particular pave the way for increased participation in colline meetings it is an approach to consolidate. From there certain women progress to be elected into the colline councils, also taking part in communal development planning structures such as the CDC. The study provided insufficient data on the pathway of progress towards participation/election of women in higher administrative structures (commune). Social norms and politicisation of election processes present important limitations in this respect. Although the study provided ample examples of women influencing specific cases of conflict/violence and decisions on locally relevant issues, their influence on setting priorities for community development through the formal PCDC process appears to be still

relatively weak, both on colline and commune level. Furthermore, the policy on gender and the 30% quota has without doubt increased awareness of the community and local leadership the importance to promote the participation of women. There is however a need to move from policy compliance to intrinsic gender transformative practice on the behalf of authorities. The effect of CSO/INGO awareness raising, although still important, has been curbed by the most recent political crisis, as CSO efforts are increasingly scrutinised by the central government for potential oppositional tendencies.

Conclusions & recommendations

In conclusion, the continued presence of patriarchal social norms at household level, the increased politicisation of (in)formal decision-making spaces (reduced civic space), and the fact that the study observed weak influence by women over formal planning and budgeting (PCDC), coupled with fairly limited progress from colline to commune level participation of women presents a need to come up with complementary alternative strategies.

For programmes like EVC, attention should go out to awareness raising at household level (targeting men in particular), combined with further catalysing economic support and saving schemes (ex. by linking up with electronic banking). Promoting peer support, including coaching and seeking opportunities to establish community solutions for commune level participation of women, should also be considered. Focusing CSC methodology on the evaluation of social inclusion, including PCDC, is a good initiative to further work.

For donors and INGOs, funding schemes should allow for more household focused programme support and engagement with government needs to continue by seeking out progressive individuals within institutions (instead of targeting the institutions or specific hierarchal positions as such) to work with on social inclusion, particularly on an advocacy agenda on the application of the quota system at colline level and flagging the risk of politicisation for progress on gender frameworks adopted by the country.

Finally, local authorities and CSOs are encouraged to step up efforts to inform and associate community members, in particular women, on the PCDC process, ensuring gender expertise is part of the planning teams so that equal influence by men and women can be better ensured on all topics that have community relevance (including security, land and politics).

1 Background to the Burundi context

This section addresses conflict and fragility dynamics, the set-up of local governance systems and processes, and policies and practices on social inclusion and gender equality. It also presents the spaces/mechanisms of (in)formal planning and budgeting targeted by this study.

1.1 Conflict and fragility dynamics

Since independence (1962) Burundi saw several episodes of violent conflict and civil war, whereby opposing political interests were often fought out along ethnic lines. Especially in 1972 and 1993 hundreds of thousands were killed in what was labelled 'acts of genocide'. Tensions often aggravated by conflict spill over from neighbouring Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The most recent crisis came when President Nkurunziza was elected into a third term in 2015. To many this went against the Burundian constitution and the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.¹ Since then, the ruling party CNDD-FDD tightened its grip on the country. Thousands are believed to have been killed and 350,000 Burundians are still in exile in neighbouring countries.² Human Rights Watch has on several occasions reported that the Imbonerakure³ (the CNDD-FDD youth league/militia) are, since the start of the 2015 crisis, responsible for numerous killings, disappearances, abductions, acts of torture, rapes, and arbitrary arrests.⁴ Mistrust, suspicion and fear is widespread and weakens social tissue, and the country faces high levels of inflation and food and medicine shortages.⁵

The inter-Burundian dialogue, led by the East African Community, has so far not succeeded to negotiate political reform. Also, women's voices and priorities are underrepresented in the current peace process as national and regional power holders are largely unaware of women's potential in bringing peace and security, but the Burundi government also actively blocks (women's) civil society. This is to a large extent caused by patriarchal norms that shape Burundi society, and whereby men dominate decision-making and the voice of women remains mostly unheard.

Civic space for local CSOs and civic activism "has been almost totally destroyed"⁶, with increased polarisation along political lines of organisations. In particular organisations that influenced human rights issues, including women's rights, have been shut-down or their leaders left Burundi due to intimidations. Reduced civic space also extends to international engagement with Burundi. In September 2018 a three month ban for INGOs was imposed, tied with a range of requirements that INGOs should comply with, amongst these the need to apply ethnic quotas for their staff. Most recently, in February 2019, the government closed the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is in particular the current political crisis and shrinking civic space that deepens fragility, increases the likelihood of new cycles of violent conflict⁷ and raises levels of poverty in the country. This will heighten vulnerabilities that particularly affect women and throw-back progress

¹ No ceasefire agreement was included with the main rebel factions and armed conflict continued until 2005.

² Situation as of April 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/burundi>.

³ The Imbonerakure ("those that see far") arose around 2010 out of disarmed fighters from the ruling party's, and were later reframed as the CNDD-FDD youth party league. They are predominantly male youth. The UN Mission said in 2014 that they act "in collusion with local authorities and with total impunity," behaving as a "militia over and above the police, the army, and the judiciary," the cable said. The New Humanitarian, <http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2015/04/28/who-are-imbonerakure-and-burundi-unravelling>

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/burundi>

⁵ <http://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/burundi-situation-report-december-2016>

⁶ CIVIC monitor, Burundi overview, <https://monitor.civicus.org/newsfeed/2016/06/01/burundi-overview/>

⁷ Oxfam (2018) Space to be heard: Mobilizing the power of people to reshape civic space. Oxford: Oxfam GB.

made on women-rights, as “restrictions to civil society are often accompanied by the intensification of fundamentalist discourse on national identity and traditional patriarchal value”.⁸

1.2 Local governance system and processes

Burundi knows different administrative levels: national, provincial, communal, zone and colline (hill). Decentralisation is enacted in the 2005 constitution. Only communes have the legal authority over decentralised planning and budgeting through five-year planning cycles (see section 1.4) that align with three important national policies: Vision Burundi 2025, the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and the Burundi priorities of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The communes generally lack gender expertise and another study showed that only 0.62% of the municipal budget is gender earmarked.⁹

As for positions of leadership, the Provinces are led by a governor nominated by the central government. Communal councils each have 25 elected members of which 30% need to be women (see below). The council is presided by an administrator who is supported by a team of technical and administrative staff. The collines have a five-headed elected council led by the *chef de colline*. Here the 30% quota does not apply. Burundi has a multiparty system, although the space for oppositional parties has been shrinking in recent years due to the above described country context.

1.3 Policies and practices on social inclusion and gender

The 2005 constitution enacts most international instruments promoting gender equality, such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. In 2003 Burundi adopted a gender policy, which was revised for the period 2012-2025 and is tied with a five-year action plan. Burundi also developed a National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2012-2016). Furthermore, the 2009 revision of the penal code and the 2016 SGBV law criminalised different forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including marital rape. The family code is under revision since 2004, in particular to grant succession rights to women, but still awaits enactment by Parliament.

The 2009 revision of the electoral law made a 30% women quota obligatory for communal councils, the Parliament and government members, the Senate and political party lists, either by suffrage or co-opting.¹⁰ Their real participation is hampered by party and patronage politics. It is hence not self-evident that women in higher decision-making positions automatically push for women’s rights¹¹ or really represent the voice and needs of rural women. The quota is often interpreted as a maximum and does not apply to the colline councils. Also, following the 2015 crisis female council members were actively replaced by men¹² as it is perceived they can better deal with national security concerns. Interestingly, municipalities that are led by women often score high in the annual communal performance evaluations done by the Ministry of Decentralisation between April and July, creating positive role models.¹³

⁸ Bishop, K (2017) Standing firm: Women and trans-led organisations respond to closing space for civil society. Amsterdam: MamaCash.

⁹ Douma, N (2017) Gender and conflict analysis in 8 communes, VNG-International, study conducted under the IDEAL programme on inclusive decision making, unpublished.

¹⁰ Co-opting allows for ex-post adjustments to fulfill gender and ethnic quotas stipulated in the electoral code. <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/PGP%20Burundi%20édité.pdf>

⁹ Browne, E (2014) Elected women’s effectiveness at representing women’s interests. GSDRC.

¹² Brand, S (2017) Political participation of women in Burundi: Case study. The Hague: CARE.

¹³ Following the 2015 elections, 41 out of 119 administrators are women (34%). The 2017 performance evaluation shows that out of the top 20 highest scoring communes, 9 have a female administrator. Derived after further analysis from CENI https://www.ceniburundi.bi/IMG/pdf/decret100-17_administrateurs_elus_2015.pdf and <http://burundi-agnews.org/decentralisation/burundi-levaluation-de-la-performance-des-communes-2017/> The evaluation follows clear

Although the above policy efforts positively influenced women's rights in Burundi, in practice patriarchal norms and beliefs still put the majority of women in a secondary position. They need to obey their husband and should not speak in public, hampering public governance ambitions that women may have. At the same time, women are expected to conduct all domestic and most agricultural work. Although men are perceived as the household provider, especially in rural areas they contribute little because of unemployment and (illegal) alcohol abuse, which causes adultery, cohabitation¹⁴, and frequent domestic violence (47%)¹⁵ and spousal sexual abuse.

1.4 Spaces of study

The following spaces/mechanisms of (in)formal community planning and budgeting were in collaboration with the CARE Burundi team selected for the study. This means during KIIs and FGDs specific inquiry was made about particular experiences with/in these spaces.

- **Formal space:** The **Communal Community Development Planning process (PCDC)** is the most important decentralised mechanism for five-yearly planning and budgeting, followed by annual investment planning (PAI).¹⁶ The process involves preparations, participatory diagnostics, thematic discussion and reflections, action planning and budgeting. It is led by the Communal Planning Team (ECP), composed of national consultants and communal sector representatives. Also, the CCDC (Communal Community Development Committee), local council members and the Colline Development Councils (CDC) are closely involved. Both committees are composed of representatives from the different sectors. Currently third generation PCDC (2019-2023) are under development, for which a gender guidance has been developed by the Ministry of Communal Development.¹⁷
- **Hybrid spaces:** Three types of hybrid spaces are included in the study. Monthly **colline meetings** involve the colline council and community members to discuss on actual topics and are generally held on Saturdays following the obligatory community labour. At times when the PCDC planning team visits the collines, specific meetings are held to retrieve context information and statistics as input for the planning. The other regular colline meetings furthermore informally feed the PCDC process, as the chef de colline report to the administrator. The **Mixed Security Committee (CMS)** brings together security actors (ex. police, army, secret service), municipal authorities, civil society structures and different social groupings to prevent and respond to security incidents. Since the 2015 political crisis, CNDD-FDD party politics and in particular the youth league (Imbonerakure) increasingly influences the CMS, in some locations going as far as overruling national police. **Committees that manage water points and community health** are put in place by the communal administration to ensure decentralised management of services but their operationalization is locally organised.

guidance capturing criteria for evaluation. This guidance as well as the results is publicly available/shared in official communications by the Ministry (often picked up on by the media).

¹⁴ Cohabitation (*concubinage*) is a term often used for a form of adultery whereby a man engages in a second, albeit unofficial, marriage/relationship. In most cases he arranges for a house where his second wife lives. In recent years (local administration, aided by legal reform, cracks down on this form of polygamy, only recognizing a marital union if it has been formally registered. Concubinage hence also refers to single unions that are not formalised.

¹⁵ Prevalence of domestic violence against women (lifetime), 2019 OECD gender index for Burundi.

<https://www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/files/datasheets/2019/BI.pdf>

¹⁶ The PCDC is reflected in the Burundian constitution (art. 267, 2005) and law 1-016 of 20/04/2005 on communal organization. The first generation of PCDC covered 2009-2013, followed by a second generation PCDC 2014-2018.

¹⁷ Ministry of Communal Development (2017) Guide national d'intégration du genre dans les plans communaux de développement communautaire.

Informal spaces: Finally, two EVC-supported informal spaces are included in the study.¹⁸ The **Community Score Card (CSC)** is a social accountability mechanism. In Burundi it involves authorities, service institutions and citizens to jointly assess satisfaction and performance of legal and health GBV services and marriage registration (linked to the thematic focus of EVC Burundi), and to formulate recommendations. The assumption is that inclusive participation in decision-making will improve service delivery. Under EVC the CSC results are used to lobby for improved service delivery. **Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA)** are in most cases women-exclusive (no interaction with powerholders) and encourage women to save and invest money for the purpose of launching (small) economic enterprises, using a cycle of activities of around a year that includes capacity strengthening on leadership and decision-making. EVC assumes that economic empowerment enables women to more effectively participate in governance processes. VSLA have been adopted by the government (April 2018) as preferred space for women economic empowerment, and the Ministry has trained CDFC staff (*Centre de Développement Familial et Communautaire*, the local branch of the Ministry of Gender) to set up and accompany VSLA. Also a funding promise has been made.

2 Influence and pathway of change

This section provides examples of change that respondents believe to have influenced. These changes are strongly tied to the types of spaces and domains of influence that are socio-culturally perceived to be for either women or men, hence these are first introduced. Thereafter the (chronological) steps that can be derived from the data are presented, as pathways of change for women to access planning and budgeting processes.

2.1 Types of spaces and influence

At the start of the FGD or KII respondents mentioned that women and men have the same possibilities for participation and are equally listened to in decision making. This shows that people generally understand the need for gender equality. However, it is most likely a socially acceptable answer, as disparities and obstacles were shared when the discussions evolved.

A major difference observed relates to the type of spaces in which men and women participate. In all locations visited, **women mostly participate in informal and associative spaces** and, moreover, predominantly in 'women only' spaces, such as the VSLA, Forum des Femmes, *League des Femmes*, as "women are more at ease to express themselves among women". Women are also particularly present in structures/associations that are tied to social issues that are considered the domain of women such as the CDFC, peace clubs and health committees. Women and men are somewhat equally present in colline meetings given the physical proximity of these and the likelihood of being informed about these. Although some women also occupy positions such as chef de colline, their number is marginal (6.3%)¹⁹ because the 30% women quota does not apply on colline level. Surprisingly, the CSC mechanism was only mentioned by one participant, but this is most likely due to insufficient framing of the CSC as a space of study by the local researchers. Other structures were also cited such as youth league, political parties, church, sports events, and diverse small associations. **Women that do not participate** state that this is because they lack the means (for VSLA integration), that they do not have time because of household activities and agricultural production work, or that their husband refused and/or that he participates in relevant structures and informs them subsequently.²⁰ In Giteranyi commune, close to Rwanda and Tanzania, especially returnees participate less because they are after

¹⁸ EVC (CARE) also supports peace clubs and advocacy networks at the colline level but these were not focused on in the research. In the peace clubs women are capacitated on conflict resolution and mediation. The topics discussed in peace clubs are also considered in the PCDC process. Advocacy networks use localised lobbying techniques to find solutions to various problems identified in the community. Their advocacy agendas are linked to the CSC process.

¹⁹ 2015 figures for the whole of Burundi. USAID (2017) Burundi gender analysis. Washington: Banyan Global.

²⁰ 190522 FGD women indirect, Bukirasazi/Migano CL; 190514 FGD men, Vumbi/Vumbi CL; 190514 INT community leaders, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190514 INT state authority, Vumbi; 190516 INT state authority, Giteranyi; 190520 INT CSO, Bukirasazi.

a long period of absence not (yet) fully integrated in/connected with the general community (less social networks).

Women's influence in the VSLA pertains to influencing other women to adhere, decision making about management of the savings/loans, as well as in relation to general management problems that may arise in the group or with specific members. This also goes for other type of associations. In other spaces, including colline meetings, female council members and local women leaders that are considered to be very active in the community have most influence. Women furthermore exercise influence on 'women themes', such as education, health, drinking water and socio-economic issues. Especially gender-based violence (GBV) influence was very frequently mentioned, especially mediation and conflict resolution on domestic violence cases, adultery, 'concubinage' and other family conflicts, as well as on alcoholism or other misconduct by community members.²¹ Having said this, it was mentioned that the Imbonerakure increasingly intervene in such cases, side-tracking women's influence.²² This has a direct link with the large degree of influence the Imbonerakure have on security matters, often mandated by the CMS and official security forces.

Youth participation is mostly confined to informal youth structures such as the youth league, sports clubs and associations linked to income generating activities. This is by all youth contacted explained by their social status: "to be authorised to take part in the colline council you have to be married: no household, no say (*ata rugo ufise ntibakwumviriza*)".²³ Youth that do take part in colline meetings generally fear to speak out because "the opinion of the smallest is misunderstood" (*irivuze mugufi rirakengerwa*).²⁴ A limited number of Imbonerakure are also present in the CMS. Girls are generally underrepresented in all of these structures.

Men have greatest presence in formal governance structures²⁵, such as political parties, colline councils, communal councils (and related technical committees such as CDC and CCDC), as well as the CMS. Almost all FGDs and KIIs were unanimous that men influence topics over which women have no control: politics, security and land.

Regarding land, this is caused by the fact that Burundi legislation offers no succession rights for women and culturally only elderly men (Bashingantahe) have a say over land and resolve land conflicts.²⁶ Security related matters are also considered the domain of men. The most dominant reason given is that women cannot go on the nightly patrols. This would expose them to the risk of being raped, but it is also seen as inappropriate for a woman to leave the house after nightfall.²⁷ Some respondents were of the additional opinion that security matters are too complex to be understood by women, or that they are physically fragile to deal with such issues. Women's weak influence over politics is also clearly influence by patriarchal norms and explained by the fact that women themselves see this as

²¹ 190516 INT CSO, Giteranyi.

²² 190514 FGD women, Vumbi/Vumbi CL.

²³ 190514 FGD youth, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190521 FGD youth, Bukirasazi/Migano CL; 190522 FGD youth, Bukirasazi/Shaya CL; 190522 FGD youth, Giteranyi/Mika CL.

²⁴ 190522 FGD youth, Bukirasazi/Migano CL;

²⁵ 190515 INT CSO, Buhinyuza/Kibimba CL; 190517 INT CSO Bujumbura; 190515 INT state authority, Vumbi/Vumbi CL; 190520 INT CSO, Bukirasazi.

²⁶ 190516 KII man, Vumbi/Vumbi CL.

²⁷ 190515 KII CSO Vumbi/Vumbi CL; 190516 KII CSO Giteranyi; 190514 INT community leader, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190513 FGD men Bugabira/Kigoma CL; 190514 FGD men, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190514 FGD men, Vumbi/Vumbi CL; 190514 FGD women, Vumbi/Vumbi CL; 190519 INT CSO, Vumbi/Vumbi CL; 190519 FGD women Buraza/Rweza CL; 190515 INT community leader, Buhinyuza/Kibimba CL.

being 'for men' because women prefer addressing more 'simple topics'. Interestingly, this viewpoint was uniquely shared by male respondents.²⁸

2.2 Examples of change in social inclusion

In a general manner, respondents testify that the **access of women to take part in local governance structures has increased**. This has been a gradual process and is mostly caused by increased information and mobilisation, mostly under the influence of the gender/quota legislation and CSO capacity strengthening. This appears to be mostly the case for informal structures that decide on 'women topics' and applies to women that generally have support of their husbands to participate. There are also examples of women, however still in minority, that were voted into the colline councils during the last elections of 2015. Women that are economically independent were preferred, "as they would be less prone to corruption".²⁹ Their number was however much lower than the number of candidates that presented themselves.³⁰

The data reports at least **34 concrete changes that women influenced**, mostly tied to specific cases on local colline level. Most of the women that reported these changes said to be involved in VSLA and colline meetings in particular. Their intervention involved denunciation, mobilisation and moving community members and local authorities into action, which eventually improved/settled the given problem. **Eight** changes are attributed to female chef de colline (hence a woman in a decision-making position) who took measures to address concubinage, mobilised people to rehabilitate the road toward the maternity ward, installed income generating activities (piggeries) and installed nightly patrols, which reduced theft.³¹ **Seventeen** changes are due to individual women's actions. **Eleven** of these dealt with specific GBV cases (illegal marriage, concubinage and domestic violence) and the rest involved mobilisation of community members on tree planting, child education, road works, birth registration and denouncing illegal habitation. **Nine changes** were attributed to women acting in an informal coalition, mostly again on GBV (concubinage) as well as on the rehabilitation of water points. Of all 34 changes, **five** explicitly involved lobbying at the higher communal level, resulting in the implication of the Administrator on the given issue.

In addition to these changes, nearly all female respondents gave examples about the **individual economic changes caused by their VSLA participation**.³² For example, at Kigobe colline a widowed woman testifies that she used to be very poor but is now member of 11 VSLA and manages to financially contribute to all of them, and how this helped to raise her self-esteem.³³ Also, many women autonomously created other VSLA and mobilised for new members to adhere.³⁴ In all locations visited the number of active VSLA has therefore increased over the past few years.

Examples on policy influencing were absent from the data. This can be attributed to the weak presence of women in formal decision-making structures (ex. conseil colline, conseil communal, political parties), which links to diverse obstacles along the pathway of change that will be referenced

²⁸ 190513 INT state authority, Bugabira/Kigoma CL; 190514 INT community leaders, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190515 INT man, Vumbi; 190515 INT local authority, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190515 INT CSO Vumbi; 190516 INT state authority, Giteranyi/Giteranyi CL; 190516 INT CSO, Giteranyi/Giteranyi CL; 190517 INT man, Giteranyi/Giteranyi CL; 190520 INT state authority, Bukirasazi.

²⁹ 190515 INT man, Vumbi/Kigobe CL.

³⁰ 190527 INT CSO, Kirundo; 190520 INT CSO Bukirasazi. Some examples given in the FGDs/KIIs: Bugabira commune: Kigoma 1/5, Gitwe 2/5, Nyamabuye 2/5. Rugasa 0/5; Vumbi colline 1/5; Bukirasazi conseil communal 6/15, conseil collaires: 8/15; Giteranyi colline : 2/5.

³¹ 190514 KII community leader, Vumbi/Kigobe CL

³² A study by Care Canada also shows VSLA increase household resilience to absorb shocks. Guy, I and Yakeu, S.E (2017) Promoting opportunities for women's economic empowerment in rural Africa. Agriteam Canada consulting.

³³ 190514 KII woman, Vumbi/Kigobe CL

³⁴ 190516 KII woman, Giteranyi CL; 190514 FGD women, Vumbi/Vumbi CL; 190517 FGD women, Giteranyi/Mika CL

in the next section. Some examples pertain to the increased number of women in the current PCDC Communal Planning Committees (in Vumbi their number raised to 7 from 2, among 20³⁵; and in the four communes of Kirundo, Bukirasazi, Gitega and Giteranyi, on average 42% of the members is woman.³⁶ Members are nominated by the Administrator. No reference/examples were given by respondents of women having influenced the content/proposed projects that were included in the PCDC. Examples given by women who were consulted by the PCDC planning team were also rare, and some women said to lack information about the PCDC process and see it to be “only for authorities”.³⁷ A study done by CARE partner shows that the planning team predominantly contact people in certain sectoral positions (ex. health, education, agriculture), and for the three EVC communes the degree of women present in such positions was just below 20%.³⁸ This points to a disconnect between how general colline level participation links to/feeds into commune level processes such as the PCDC. This also pertains to limited (civil society-led) monitoring data being available on PCDC process proceedings and tying it with the CSC process might be interesting in that respect.

Low participation on the PCDC may also reflect the increased influence of the leading party on development priorities. “Even though PCDC documents are well elaborated, the party programme is followed.”³⁹ Having said this, the latest PCDC process has become more realistic and less reliant on large infrastructural projects that can never be fully funded at local level.⁴⁰ Also, women that do participate increasingly support gender-specific projects, gender expertise in the planning teams is slowly improving (yet still insufficient)⁴¹, and PCDC evaluation criteria are currently being reviewed on specific gender indicators (spearheaded by CARE).

2.3 Pathway of change

The lack of space-specific data (see challenges noted in the annex) makes it difficult to outline pathways per type of space studied, but the data does show that there is strong interconnection between spaces in the general pathway of change of social inclusion. The data also shows little evidence of how change at local level links to higher administrative levels. This section outlines general elements of the pathway of change on social inclusion. Challenges or obstacles are also noted below.

In order to access spaces of (in)formal planning and budgeting women first need to be **informed** about them. VSLAs women are mostly informed by members or they **follow suit** by seeing the fruits of the approach (ex. other women earning money). Also CSO sensitisation, and particularly by CARE, was often mentioned. Furthermore, local authorities invite women to join VSLA during the colline meetings. Information about colline meetings is accessed through husbands, friends, communication in church or by direct invitation from the chef de colline. An obstacle in this regard is that many women complain that these meetings are often held during (morning) hours when they are occupied with domestic or agricultural work.⁴² Information about the PCDC process and related gatherings is lacking, except for local leaders that by means of their position are automatically integrated into the CDC or CCDC.

³⁵ 190515 KII state authority, Vumbi.

³⁶ 190517 KII CSO, Bujumbura.

³⁷ 190514 FGD youth, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190514 FGD women, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190514 FGD youth, Vumbi/Vumbi CL.

³⁸ MIPAREC (2017) Analyse objective de la prise en compte du genre dans les PCDC dans huit communes des trois provinces de la zone d’action du projet EVC.

³⁹ 190513 FGD CSOs.

⁴⁰ 190513 KII CSO, Bujumbura.

⁴¹ 190513 FGD CSOs, Bujumbura.

⁴² 190516 KII woman, Giteranyi/Giteranyi CL; 190517 KII community leader, 190514 KII woman, Vumbi/Vumbi CL; Giteranyi/Giteranyi CL; 190522 KII woman, Bukarakazi/Migano CL;

Except for widows, all women interviewed who participate in a given space asked for **marital approval**. Data shows that most successful women have a supportive husband⁴³, like this man: “I have hopes that her participation in the VSLA opens up doors. As she gets used to sharing her opinion, maybe she will be elected into the colline council one day”.⁴⁴ And a father about his daughter: “I can see that the VSLA prepares her for a bright future. She is now interested in the colline meetings and also expresses herself well, she even gives advise if I quarrel with my wife”.⁴⁵ Women who are not authorised by their husband to take part in (in)formal decision-making structures are largely absent from associations/VSLA. Main obstacles are men fearing their wife becomes more powerful than him, her inability to cater for household tasks, the risk of adultery, conflict and divorce, and eventually being ridiculed by the community. Once again, these fears were only expressed in KIIs and FGDs held with men/male authorities.⁴⁶ Girls are often obstructed to take part in VSLA because their parents fear it might cause school dropout, or they want her to contribute to the household work. “My parents said such structures are only for girls who have nothing to do at home”.⁴⁷

Once women **join an association or VSLA** they get access to **information** because of the social network function such structures fulfill and get access to **capacity support**, mostly organised by organisations such as CARE and partners (MIPAREC and COCAFEM under EVC) on the organization and management of VSLA, lobbying, leadership, human rights and gender and GBV. This and learning by doing helps women to overcome low levels of confidence self-esteem among women when it comes to public participation. The data shows ample proof of VSLA income helping women to improve their living standards, and to purchase basic necessities for public participation, such as soap and cloths. “You cannot show up wearing an old dress or wearing the same dress twice”.⁴⁸

Hence, the combination of increased confidence with improved economic capacity **improves social status/consideration** (especially since also husbands are in most cases supportive) and this creates opportunities for **taking part in other more hybrid spaces such as colline meetings**. A specific obstacle to this space is the timing of the meetings. . As they often happen following community work on Saturday morning, and as women do not participate in large numbers in the community work (it coincides with household tasks) their attendance is low.⁴⁹ Sometimes women are also weakly informed about changes in dates/timings that are proposed for these meetings. EVC monitoring has however shown that women also succeed in postponing certain meetings (especially those involving votes) when they observe low female turn-out. Transport and child care limitations are a barrier for women to attend **higher level commune level meetings**. Interesting in this respect is that a previous project by Twitezimbere supported community kindergartens, whereby women were stimulated to organise themselves in taking care of other ones’ children. This successfully raised the participation of women in events further away from home.⁵⁰

Once women take active part in colline meetings the community starts further noticing them, and this is considered to be a stepping stone for **being elected into formal decision-making structures**. The most obvious is the colline council, for which elections are held every five years. Being a council member then provides direct access to taking part in the CDC under the PCDC process. Women can

⁴³ 190513 KII INGO, Bujumbura.

⁴⁴ 190521 KII man, Bukirasazi/Shaya CL.

⁴⁵ 190517 KII man, Giteranyi/Mika CL.

⁴⁶ 190513 FGD men, Bugabira/Kigoma CL ; 190514 KII local leader, Vumbi/Kigobe CL; 190514 KII local leader, Vumbi/Vumbi CL; 190516 KII local leader, Buhinyuza; 190516 KII local leaders, Buhinyuza; 190519 KII state authority, Vumbi; 190520 KII CSO, Bukirasazi.

⁴⁷ 190514 FGD youth, Vumbi/Vumbi CL.

⁴⁸ 190513 KII CSO, Bujumbura..

⁴⁹ 190513 KII CSO, Bujumbura.

⁵⁰ 190513 KII CSO.

also be elected into other sectoral government structures, such as the CCDC, or network structures such as the Forum des Femmes and the League des Femmes. Nomination of women in the CMS remains low, first because of the social perception surrounding security being a men's issue. But also, members of the CMS are nominated based on other leadership positions they have in other hybrid/formal structures first.⁵¹

The KIIs and FDGs hardly provided insight into women that succeeded, as a next step in the pathway of change, to **progress onto higher levels of decision making**. This is also related to the fact that data collection focused on colline level, and those that did move on would now live elsewhere too. It would be an interesting area for further research.

2.4 In conclusion

At colline level an increased number of women are in informal associations and particularly VSLA. Access to VSLA provides income and experience in public expression/decision making, they are an important starting point for taking part in colline meetings. Subsequently, participation in colline meetings increases the possibility of being elected into colline councils, which allows also direct access to the committees involved in PCDC planning and budgeting process. "If you are not member of a VSLA you stand little chance to be elected into another decision-making structure".⁵² "I first joined a VSLA and that later offered me the chance to be elected as council member, as the network of VSLA women appreciated me a lot".⁵³ A few factors are primordial to enable women to participate: access to: information, follow positive examples, a supportive husband, access to capital, and community consideration. Influence by women is mostly restricted to colline-level issues that are considered to be the domain of women (GBV and conflict resolution in particular). Influence by women over male domains such as security, politics and policy making is rare. Obstacles that women face in the process of access, participation and influence mostly relate to socio-cultural norms of the patriarchal Burundi society. Because of this, amongst others, access to decision-making spaces at higher administrative level is rare.

3 Analysis: Factors interacting with change

Building on the previous, this section further analyses how transformative leadership and substantive participation take shape, looking at i) individual and collective agency of women (intrinsic drive, leading by example, peer support); ii) the role of political and institutional structures (laws, leadership involvement, institutional obstacles), iii) and the role of relations with others (social network, CSOs, social norms). Based on this analysis, some conclusions can be drawn about which factors were most influential in the pathway of change.

3.1 Agency: the role of women themselves

The **specific objectives that motivate women to participate** in (in)formal planning and budgeting spaces are diverse, but mostly centred on individual or local interests. Many VSLA participants argue they want to raise the economic position of their family, following the example of other women who managed to buy goats and even cows with VSLA revenues. Some added that becoming economically autonomous from their husbands is important to them: "A woman should not always be supported by her husband, she is also has eyes, ears, hands and feet".⁵⁴ A few wanted to create order in specific VSLA groups where funds were mismanaged. A large number of women also motivated their participation in colline meetings and other associations to assist women that are victim to family conflict, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, or to ensure access to health

⁵¹ 190521 KII woman, Buraza/Rweza CL

⁵² 190519 KII woman, Bukirasazi/Shaya CL.

⁵³ 190514 KII woman, Vumbi/Vumbi CL.

⁵⁴ 190521 INT woman, Bukirasazi/Migano CL

and drinking water. Others attend these meetings merely to be informed about what happens at colline level, or out of curiosity.⁵⁵ Making friends and ‘belonging’ was also mentioned.⁵⁶ In one FGD women mentioned they participate to support the female chef de colline in their locality, as she is often challenged by men in particular.⁵⁷ Finally, there were some women that said to participate in (male dominated) formal spaces to prove their ability, to “combat fear and shame to speak out”⁵⁸ and to challenge male majority and authority.⁵⁹ A few added that this would help them to prepare their candidacy for the 2020 elections, and two said they wanted to improve the governance of the country. In one FGD women said they are motivated by the need to be accountable toward community members that elected them.⁶⁰ Men predominantly motivate that their own participation in decision-making mechanisms is a logical result of their leadership/dominant position at family level, and that they have a general responsibility to inform, guide and serve the local community.⁶¹

As mentioned, the study shows ample evidence of the importance for women to join associations offering economic opportunity, in particular VSLA as these spaces serve women to access information, capacity building, raise confidence and hence serve as a stepping stone for also accessing hybrid and formal spaces of planning and budgeting. Merely being a member however proves not to be enough, as the data gathered shows that in particular women that **lead by example** evolve. It requires individual capacity to ensure that private investment projects are scaled up. Those women that manage to join multiple VSLA and saw their income significantly grow receive a lot of respect from the community. Also, as socio-cultural perceptions still scrutinise the ability of women leadership, women are called to exercise due care in how they combine public with private duties. As one woman mentioned, before standing as a candidate “I first analysed whether I would be able to combine what was expected of me in that role with my household occupancies”.⁶² Leading by example also extends to behaving like a role model once in a position of leadership to ensure that there are no mishaps to scrutinise. This involves being decisive and fair, not accepting bribes, and investing energy in initiative appreciated by the community.

A third aspect of individual agency extends to the need to offer **peer support**. Women that are influential in governance structures, also beyond the colline level, could play a very important role in coaching young women/girls who have the ambition. No specific evidence was however retrieved from the KIIs and FGDs on examples of such peer support, other than women telling other women (friends, neighbours) about the advantages of participating in VSLA or colline meetings and thereby mobilising others into participation.

3.2 Structures: the role of institutions

An important factor that contributes to women’s participation in informal, hybrid and formal decision-making processes around planning and budgeting is the **national legislation** on the 30% quota and gender policy. Nearly all state authorities and local leaders interviewed state they need to follow the law in this respect. The fact that communes are annually evaluated by the Ministry of Decentralisation and Communal Development on their performance, also plays a role in the attention attributed to women participation, in particular now that CARE, in collaboration with the Ministry, has taken the

⁵⁵ 190524 FGD women indirect, Giteranyi/Mika CL

⁵⁶ 190516 FGD women, Giteranyi/Giterany CL

⁵⁷ 190514 FGD women, Vumbi/Kigobe.

⁵⁸ 190514 INT woman, Vumbi/Kigobe CL.

⁵⁹ 190513 FGD women Bugabira/Kigoma CL; 190515 FGD women, Buhinyuza/Kibimba CL; 190517 FGD women, Giteranyi/Mike CL; 190514 FGD women, Vumbi/Vumbi CL.

⁶⁰ 190513 FGD women, Kigoma/Bugabira.

⁶¹ 190513 FGD men, Bugabira/Kigoma CL

⁶² 190514 KII local leader, Vumbi/Kigobe CL.

lead in the revision of communal performance indicators to include more gender-specific indicators.⁶³ Although these are successes, many respondents feel it remains ‘practice by obligation’. “If it wasn’t for the force of the law no women would be part of decision-making structures in our community”.⁶⁴ Another respondent adds, “although authorities are gender aware, they are not gender sensitive”,⁶⁵ meaning that leadership has knowledge about gender equality, but concrete gender sensitive practices could be strengthened. The main reason for this is that supporting women participation conflicts with a personal interest to hold onto positions.

Having said this, respondents gave ample examples about direct **involvement of the leadership** in support of women participation. For example, Administrators and colline chefs insist that women participate in VSLA and colline meetings and stimulate them to present candidacy for different types of elections. Administrators also call on colline chefs to integrate women in the various sectoral committees, including PCDC related structures. The Giteranyi Administrator requests a 50-50 repartition of men and women.⁶⁶ Higher level authorities, as mentioned in the previous section, also involve themselves in resolving problems that women bring to their attention. What perhaps positively influences leadership involvement is the fact that two out of the three EVC communes studied are led by a female Administrator, and the third male Administrator is known to be gender-progressive. Furthermore, VSLA has been ‘adopted’ by the Burundi government as a national policy. This is mostly motivated from the perspective of local economic development, notwithstanding its positive influence on social inclusion as this study finds. Monitoring of government control on VSLAs is in the current context however important.

There are also a number of **institutional obstacles** to the pathway of change. First, limitation for women to be elected into (in)formal decision-making spaces reflects a lack of means to campaign (or ‘propaganda’ as locally called), further complicated by their male opponents giving out bribes to buy votes (*pots de vin*).⁶⁷ Also party politics increasingly hamper the above described pathway, as support to candidates/nominations increasingly reflects whether they are member of CNDD-FDD or not. This is predominantly the case at medium to high levels of decision-making such as with council candidates. As a consequence, it also reflects those nominated for planning structures tied to the PCDC like the CDC and CCDC. It furthermore extends to women being called to attend meetings at communal level, who are either acquainted to the Administrator or member of the ruling party, and hence are not necessary representatives of women leadership at colline/commune level. This is also the case for PCDC planning meetings.⁶⁸ Female elected members hence have limited space to push for women-agenda’s or represent rural women’s needs as party politics are generally seen as more important to defend. So far politicisation seems to be least a risk at the lowest level of social organization. Another institutional obstacle is the fact that the Burundi government has over the past few years broken most ties with the international community and represses civil society that they consider to be oppositional. As consequence, crucial collaboration and support towards social inclusion in planning and budgeting has dwindled. For example, GIZ used to be the main partner of the government in accompanying the entire PCDC process, but they are not associated in the third generation planning cycle.⁶⁹

⁶³ 190513 KII CSO.

⁶⁴ 190521 KII local leader, Bukirasazi/Shaya CL.

⁶⁵ 190527 KII INGO.

⁶⁶ 190515 KII community leader, Giteranyi.

⁶⁷ 190521 KII local leader, Bukirasazi; 190521 KII woman, Bukirasazi; 190521 KII woman, Buraza.

⁶⁸ 190513 FGD CSOs, Bujumbura.

⁶⁹ 190513 KII INGO, Bujumbura

3.3 Relations: the role of interaction with others

Physical proximity at colline level ensures women are part of a **social network** that activates them into associative life, and in particular the structures that women already take part in (such as VSLA) offer them a social network. As mentioned, many women said they got inspired by other women and then accessed decision-making structures themselves too. Women that have less of a social network, such as for example returnees, as a few respondents noted, are by consequence less interested in participating. Many respondents also appreciate role models and specifically referenced the female colline chiefs as being ‘courageous’, ‘strong’, ‘decisive’ and ‘appreciated’. “Because our colline is directed by a woman, the other women are eloquent and have the desire to express their ideas”.⁷⁰ Although role models beyond the colline level are also inspirational, such as female Administrators or female communal council members, the direct network with and peer support offered by them to local women is weaker (ex. colline visits do happen but are not very frequent).

In addition, respondents say capacity **support by CSOs** has raised awareness and access to participation in decision-making structures among women. CARE and EVC-implementing partners were often referenced in relation to leadership training and how to manage VSLAs. Little reference was made to their role in accompaniment of the CSC, or in sensitisation on the PCDC process for example. Other women structures and CSOs were also cited for offering capacity support in leadership (ex. Dushirahamwe, CDFC). INGOs that were mentioned include World Vision, working with ‘Citizen Voice and Action’ methodology, which brings together authorities, citizens and service institutions in a approach comparable to the CSC. Other INGOs such as ZOA, INADES, Welt Hunger Hilfe, UNICEF and CRS support agricultural extension work, child right education and conflict resolution. Unfortunately, the data did not show detailed examples of how their approaches are different/complementary in (the effectiveness of) pathways of change on social inclusion. As space for civil society is dwindling in Burundi, there is a greater need for civil societies to act in coalition/collaboration, especially on topics such as political participation and leadership that are generally considered sensitive. Continuity of CSO/INGO engagement, and in particular women’s rights organisations, remains important for all localities, as communes where there is no assistance from financial partners, party programmes are much stronger pushed forward.⁷¹

Finally, **socio-cultural perceptions and norms** are still the major obstacle. Throughout this report reference was made to examples of unequal burden in household tasks preventing women to take up public roles. Also beliefs and perceptions give dominance to men in families and often lead to active obstruction of their wives/daughters who have ambitions of becoming active in public decision-making. Being raised in a context of such norms, and linked to a history of low education, women themselves also hold beliefs of inferiority and have low self-esteem. In light of how social norms present an obstacle to women to be included in decision making, in particular family relations and most specifically husband-wife relations are an important entry point for change.

3.4 In conclusion

Factors that positively influence the pathway of change on participation in (in)formal planning and budgeting structures outlined involve women’s own drive to (economically) progress and adopting role-model behaviour. Also national legislation on the 30% quota has been very influential in pushing authorities to promote and respect women involvement, although more gender transformative mentality change among authorities is still needed. CSO support on economic opportunities and leadership skills in particular are also important factors. In the current restrictive Burundi context closer collaboration/coalition between organisations should be sought. The main obstacles for

⁷⁰ 190514 KII woman, Kigobe.

⁷¹ 190513 FGD CSOs.

women's greater inclusion are unequal opportunities to be elected and the increasingly politicisation of decision-making structures and increasingly informal structures, as well as the persistence of patriarchal social norms. These obstacles require the need for alternative intervention strategies that take a very local and household-focused approach to supporting participation in decision-making.

4 Implications for policy and practice

This last section presents implications for policy and practice. These are formulated as recommendations and are geared towards i) CARE/EVC (although many of these are also valuable for other civil society organizations working on similar topics); ii) (I)NGOs and donors, mostly from the perspective of advocacy themes and strategies, and iii) local authorities and local civil society.

4.1 Recommendations for CARE/EVC

There is an ongoing need for capacity strengthening on women on rights, transformative leadership, gender and lobby skills. The findings of this study, coupled with the current political context as outlined, require that some specific adaptations and/or new approaches are tried and/or intensified.

1. As social norms obstruct women at household level to participate in public spaces, and as lowest levels in society are least likely to be politicised in the current context, increase **collaboration with individuals** and small women structures at the lowest levels (colline, household). Aside from continued the proven work with VSLA, **focus on men at household level** to raise awareness about the added value of women participation in decision-making structures (targeting those households where women fail to put their ambitions in practice).
2. **Support role models** at colline and commune level into offering **peer support** and coaching of other women and men. Make use in this respect of the *Abatangamuco* men⁷² who can target other men at household level (in relation to point 1 above), as well as women councillors, specifically linking them to young generation women (girls and young mothers).
3. To boost economic productivity as a catalyst for accessing other decision-making structures, explore possibilities of how to link VSLA members to **alternative 'banking' schemes** where savings can be electronically managed (ex. AUXFIN, which is quickly gaining ground in Burundi and already covering a large part of all rural households).
4. Building on the social networks and revenues established by the VSLA, stimulate community support for **women who want to participate in planning and budgeting spaces beyond the colline level** (ex. household assistance, child care (ex. community kindergartens) or transport). A possible financial solution for this could tie in with point 3 above.
5. Move ahead with using **CSC methodology for the evaluation of social inclusion**, particularly on strengthening (monitoring of) social inclusion in the PCDC related planning and budgeting process. Coupled with this, invest in strengthening citizen awareness on the exact agenda and procedure of information gathering and decision making under the PCDC process, in particular on the information interface between colline and commune levels. On this, seek to intensify collaboration with ABELO and the women network of elected council members (RFEL) to further connect citizens with communal council members on PCDC related matters.

⁷² Supported by CARE, this refers to a movement of rural men that challenge traditional gender-role expectations in their communities through personal change, testimonies and local community outreach activities.

4.2 Recommendations to donors and INGOs

With regards to advocacy themes and strategies, especially on the side of donors and INGOs, there is a need to continue engagement with the Burundi government, as well as to support alternative funding strategies and concrete advocacy agendas.

1. Privilege **work with targeted individuals** within government sectors that are known to be relatively open minded, objectively analytical and do not necessarily follow the line of the ruling party 'à la lettre', making use of silent diplomacy and other strategies to ensure that dialogue with the central government remains ongoing. In the context of social inclusion this would mean to single out government individuals that are favourable on this agenda.
2. In the current context of Burundi, be/remain open to **alternative programme funding** that takes a more individual and/or household focused approach towards awareness raising and longer-term network-based income generation, ensuring that other international partners/donors are on the same page. This could also involve advocacy towards the Burundi government for investment in long-term women economic empowerment (ex. on VSLA).
3. Support the advocacy agenda of women's structures and (I)NGOs to **establish a quota system for colline level** governance structures, such as the colline council and CDC (preferably beyond 30%), as these are clear intermediate stepping stones for women to access decision-making.
4. By making use of important gender frameworks adopted by the country, continue advocacy on the **risk of politicisation** of spaces where social inclusion (of women) must be undiscriminatorily ensured, such as criteria for political candidacy and the slow progress made on family law reform (ex. succession rights).

4.3 Recommendations for local authorities and local civil society

Finally, two recommendations are formulated for local authorities and other local civil society, pertaining to the PCDC process and decompartmentalization of 'male' and 'female' topics of influence.

1. More strongly invest in offering citizens at local level **detailed process information on PCDC proceedings** (ex. consultations, validation, investment planning, project implementation, evaluation). This should also extend to involving citizens in analysing drafts and monitoring their implementation (downward accountability).
2. Ensure and monitor the application of the new **PCDC gender guidelines and upcoming gender criteria for communal performance evaluation**, also ensuring that sufficient **gender expertise** is present within the PCDC planning teams.
3. Open up **space for dialogue on equal participation** in decision-making by men and women on topics linked to security, politics/administration and land, including pressing for the wider application of the 30% as a minimum standard, including for colline level structures.

5 Conclusion

Especially at local colline level, progress is being noted in the number of women that are active in associative structures, especially those raising their income (ex. VSLA). This gives them public speaking skills, confidence and planning and budgeting tools that pave the way for increased participation in colline meetings, and certainly is an approach to consolidate. From there certain women can progress to be elected into the colline councils, also taking part in communal development planning structures such as the CDC, although social norms and perceptions and politicisation of election processes present important limitations and must be addressed. Although the study provided ample examples of women influencing specific cases of conflict/violence and decisions on locally relevant issues, their influence on setting priorities for community development through the formal PCDC process appears to be still relatively weak, both on colline and commune level. Furthermore, the policy on gender and the 30%

quota has without doubt increased awareness of the community and local leadership the importance to promote the participation of women. There is however a need to move from policy compliance to intrinsic gender transformative practice on their behalf. The effect of CSO/INGO awareness raising, although still important, has been curbed by the most recent political crisis, as CSO efforts are increasingly scrutinised by the central government for potential oppositional tendencies. With this context of reduced civic space there is a need to come up with alternative strategies, and especially efforts at lowest levels of association and households need to be prioritised because that is where social norms are the most direct obstacle, and these 'spaces' are least politicised.

Annex

I) Introduction to the research

The research on social inclusion in (in)formal planning and budgeting process took place under the EVC programme. This section in the annex briefly introduces the EVC programme and outlines the objectives and scope of study.

I.1) Background EVC programme

The Every Voice Counts (EVC) program is an inclusive governance program that focuses on the social inclusion of women and girls in fragile settings. Fragile settings are characterised by the existence of imbalanced power structures and non-inclusive governance processes between government, civil society organization (CSOs)/community-based organisations (CBO) and citizens. In fragile settings, especially disadvantaged groups, such as women and youth, lack voice in governance processes. Policies and service delivery are often difficult to access for them or fail to respond to their needs, and the accountability of powerholders towards these groups is very limited. The EVC programme seeks to address these realities by contributing to inclusive and effective governance processes in fragile settings through four domains of intervention:

1. Empowering of members of excluded groups, in particular women and youth.
2. Strengthening the advocacy role of civil society organisations from the perspective of influencing policies and practices and holding power holders to account.
3. Strengthening responsiveness of public authorities and other powerholders to the needs of people.
4. Expanding and strengthening the space for dialogue and negotiation between the different stakeholder groups.

EVC is implemented by CARE NL in Afghanistan, Burundi, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia and Rwanda. In Burundi, EVC Burundi advocates to ensure that the 30% quota of women's participation is respected at community level, it aims for inclusion of women and girls in community development planning and advocates for the completion and implementation of the Gender Based Violence (GBV) law.

EVC is based on certain assumptions of social inclusion. It assumes that the most vulnerable (especially women and girls) must be identified and selected to be directly involved in formal participation processes or to be effectively represented in these processes, and that their inclusion will ensure their voices to be heard and eventually this leads to an improvement in the quality of services and policies.

I.2) Objectives and scope of the study

There is very little data available on exactly how exactly women and girls participate in (in)formal governance spaces that focus on planning and budgeting, and how they perceive their participation. That is why this research, which was conducted in Burundi and Rwanda, aims to respond to the following main research question: **What are the factors or "pathways" that contribute to women and girls participating in (in) formal planning and budgeting processes?**

The objectives of the research for Burundi are:

- Improve the effectiveness of the EVC program in Burundi, in particular its social inclusion work, and test the underlying assumptions.
- Analyse the different policies and implementation mechanisms ("spaces") in Burundi on the participation of women and girls in (in) formal planning and budgeting processes.

- Evaluate to what extent the specific interventions of EVC Burundi, such as Community Scorecard (CSC), support to Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), peace clubs, and advocacy can influence these (in) formal planning and budgeting processes.

Based on the EVC program framework, three concepts are central to the analytical process of the study with regards to social inclusion in (in)formal planning and budgeting processes.

- **Access:** Access implies the possibility for women / girls (or other socially excluded groups) to access dialogue and information sharing. The form of access may vary, for example the ability to report ad hoc or regular institutionalised forums, or to be consulted on a specific topic, obtain information, make one's voice heard, or hold accountable to power.
- **Presence:** Presence means institutionalizing the participation of women / girls in decision-making. Here, the focus is on the representativeness of women, for example through quotas in local governments which could in turn also influence qualitative participation.
- **Influence:** Influence means that women are through their access and presence in various governance structures that can have a significant influence on policy making, the functioning of the legal system and the delivery of services. It is at this stage where better accountability to women can be achieved.

According to CARE's theory of change on transformative leadership and substantive representativeness, it is also important to understand through which pathways and factors change / impact occurs. This study focuses on the pathways and factors that impact the inclusion of women and girls in planning and budgeting processes, all relating to empowerment at different levels:

- **Structure:** The (in) formal institutions that facilitate or limit women and girls' leadership and participation in public life;
- **Relationships:** The different relationships held by women and girls can hold them back from participation (because of inequalities in power) or facilitate them through support or representation. Relations can include the social/family circle, with a civil society association, between the electorate and a politician or between clients and a public service provider.
- **Agency (power to act):** This reflects the individual and collective capacity of women and girls to influence governance processes, based on general skills such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, as well as related technical skills (for example, knowledge of key governance processes and sectoral expertise).

II) Sampling of the spaces and locations studied

The CARE Burundi team was involved in proposing the spaces and locations to be studied, in order to maximize relevance to EVC and the general context. The different formal and informal spaces chosen to be studied are as much as possible be dealt with as 'cases', specifically looking at the pathways and factors that are specific to each space/mechanism (given the large number of spaces included, case specific analysis has not always been possible and instead more generic analysis on pathways and factors was done). Another interest was to look at their interconnections, and in how far participation in informal spaces also influences participation in more formal spaces.

II.1) Formal space: PCDC

The most important formal mechanism for planning and budgeting in Burundi concerns the **Communal Community Development Planning process (PCDC)**. The PCDC process is part of the decentralization of development planning, as reflected in article 267 of the Burundian constitution (2005) and law 1-016 of 20 April 2005 on communal organization. The PCDC align with the National Development Plan 2018-2027, Vision Burundi 2025 and the report on the contextualization/prioritisation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals for Burundi. The PCDC serves as a tool to enable municipalities to

manage local social and economic development and guide related intervention. It is also the only tool that serves as a basis for lobbying/mobilization of funds among development partners, as well as providing guidance to such external interventions. Increasing participation of women and girls in the PCDC is among the three objectives of EVC in Burundi. Therefore the PCDC process was chosen as the main case study, to be analyzed at all selected communes and hills so it brings a high degree of comparability.

Every five years, the PCDCs are developed in a participatory manner to identify and reflect the existing needs of community members. This is translated into a plan with proposed actions (projects) and includes the allocation of resources. The process is specified in national guidelines and consists of different stages: preparations (informing community members about the process), participatory diagnoses (through primary and secondary data collected at commune and colline level), and thematic discussions and reflections (making appeal to sectoral experts, among others). The process is usually led by a team of national consultants that are joined by representatives from all key local development sectors (together making up the Communal Planning Team, PCM). Also the CCDC (Communal Community Development Committee) and local council members are closely involved. Furthermore, sectorial working groups are established to reflect on specific sector needs/projects. At colline level the PCD process particularly involves the Colline Development Councils (CDC). The PCDC process is not required to meet the 30% quota of inclusion of women, and as women are generally underrepresented in the different local sectors (except for health and education) their participation in the PCM is generally lagging. Currently, new PCDC (2019 to 2023) are developed in all communes, reflecting the third generation PCDC (first generation 2009-2013, second generation 2014-2018). With regards to the PCDC as 'case' for the study, emphasis was given to the most recent PCDC process, also looking at participation in the above-mentioned sub-structures/steps that are part of the PCDC process.

II.2) Hybrid spaces : Colline meetings and CMS

At colline level, the chief (chef de colline) calls for regular **colline meetings** to inform or discuss with community members about actualities, and these are generally held on Saturday morning following the obligatory communal labour. Although these meetings are not officially recognised as a mandatory step in the PCDC process, quite often such meetings are used to feed the process, for example by identifying specific projects the community proposes in response to their needs. The meetings are led by the colline council, which is composed of five elected members (the chief being one of them). At the level of colline administration the 30% quota for women does not apply, hence there are many colline where neither the council nor the colline meetings sees significant participation of women. For these reasons this study labels the colline meetings as a hybrid mechanism for planning and budgeting.

Another hybrid structure is the **Mixed Security Committee (CMS)**. The CMS has been established around 2004 as a structure to operationalize the 'proximity police', which constituted of a new security philosophy following the Arusha peace agreement. The CMS is operational in all communes, and most often also on colline level. Various security actors (ex. police, army, secret services), municipal authorities, civil society structures and representatives of all societal section (ex. women, youth, handicapped) participate in CMS meetings. It is the CMS' mandate to monitor and respond to security incidents and needs at local level (with a double role of alert and prevention), with the National Police Force holding the main authority over security interventions in practice (ex. arrests). Following the third mandate of President Nkurunziza, national security has become among the key areas of concern of the government, also reflected by the 2013 National Security Strategy. Under the flag of national security, societal space in general has become increasingly politicised with the ruling party CNDD-FDD gaining control and influence. The CMS is therefore one of the structures where locally party-political influence is perhaps most strongly felt. In particular members of the CNDD-FDD youth league, the Imbonerakure, are since about five years unofficially mandated to take lead in the CMS, often to the point where their influence over local security (including physical interventions) surpasses that of the

national police force. “In this political context, the CMS have increasingly become spaces where youth of the ruling party justify violent behavior” (Nibigira, p.214).⁷³ Because of the above, the CMS is a sensitive space to study but its inclusion remained justified because security incidents often disproportionately affect women, and therefore it would be interesting to see how influential women are over decisions on alert and prevention.

Finally, in the non EVC areas visited two additional hybrid spaces were selected: **committees that manage water points and community health** (*comités de gestion des points d'eau, comités de santé communautaire*). These spaces are put in place by the communal administration in line with decentralised management of sectoral services. Their operationalization is locally organised in line with specific needs at community level, hence their hybrid nature. These spaces were chosen to be included in the study because it could possibly generate insights into pathways and factors of participation in mechanism that are installed by local authorities as compared to those that are externally support (ex. informal CSO spaces).

II.3) Informal spaces supported by EVC: CSC and VSLA

Furthermore, two informal spaces that are supported by the EVC programme were selected for the study.⁷⁴ The **Community Score Card** (CSC) is a social accountability tool aimed at improving participation, accountability, transparency and informed decision-making around the delivery of services. The CSC involves authorities, service institutions and citizens to jointly assess the satisfaction and performance of services and based on the recommendations an action plan is agreed upon. By facilitating this process of evaluation, dialogue and joint planning, the CSC contributes to good governance. The assumption is that through inclusive participation in decision-making around services, the level and quality of its services will also improve. Under EVC the results of these evaluations serve as a lobbying tool to improve service delivery. In Burundi the CSC process is applied to evaluating judicial services for survivors of gender-based and sexual violence, health services for victims of sexual violence, and the process registration of civil marriages.

Finally, CARE stimulates local women to organize themselves into **Village Savings and Loan Associations** (VSLA) where they can save and invest money for the purpose of launching (small) economic enterprises. The group activities follow a cycle of 9 months, after which the accumulated savings and the loan profits are distributed back to members. By this means savings and loan facilities are made accessible to groups in a community that generally cannot access formal financial services. EVC supports the VSLA with capacity strengthening on leadership and decision-making practices. The EVC hypothesis is that by economically empowering women through VSLAs, they will be able to better participate in/contribute to different community governance spaces of planning and budgeting, including the PCDC process.

II.4) Sampling of locations of study

Burundi has three different official levels of decentralised administration: provinces, communes (municipalities) and collines (hills). EVC operates in 8 communes in the provinces of Gitega, Muhinga and Kirundo. Each commune counts 10 collines (hence EVC is active at 80 collines in total).

⁷³ Nibigira, N (2017), « Les Comités mixtes de sécurité humaine (CMSH) au Burundi : un régime de sécurité communautaire dans un contexte politique critique », Afrique et développement, Volume XLII, No. 3, 2017, pp. 231-248.

⁷⁴ EVC (CARE) also supports peace clubs and advocacy networks at the colline level. Although these mechanisms were not chosen as a case study for research, the information that emerges from the related interviews will be taken into account in the analysis and reporting. For the peace clubs the focus lies on women's participation and their involvement in conflict resolution and mediation within the community. Members are empowered on different topics and methods of conflict resolution and mediation. The topics discussed in peace clubs are also considered in the PCDC process. Advocacy networks use localised lobbying techniques to find solutions to various problems identified in the community. The advocacy network consults with peace clubs and their advocacy agendas are linked to the CSC process.

In line with the intervention level of EVC, the study focused on commune and colline levels. In each of the three provinces one commune was chosen, and within the commune two collines were visited. As the communal level itself also consisted an area of study, 9 EVC locations were visited. In addition, three non-EVC hills (in three different communes) were visited, hence in total the study covered 12 locations, as represented in the table below. The choice was mainly motivated by the presence of informal and formal mechanisms of governance that link with the process of planning and budgeting and which will be chosen as a case study (previous section).

The spaces / cases to be studied have been distributed according to the communes/collines. The PCDC process and colline meetings were studied in all locations, whereas the other spaces were distributed across the locations. At commune level, it means that the PCDC process was studied in all three communes, the CMS in two communes, and the CSC in two communes as well. At colline level, the PCDC process and colline meetings were studied at all 9 collines, the CMS on two collines, the VSLA on three collines, and the CSC three collines as well. The water/health management committees were studied on three collines as well. The reality of data collection however not always followed this repartition neatly, as participants also spoke about other spaces, or the questioning was at times insufficiently targeted at the selected spaces.

Province	EVC	Commune	Colline	Space/mechanism
Gitega	Yes	Bukirasazi		• PCDC process ⁷⁵ ; CMS
			Migano	• PCDC process; colline meetings ; VSLA; CMS
			Shaya	• PCDC process ; colline meetings ; VSLA; CMS
	No	Bugendana	Bitare	• PCDC process ; colline meetings ; health and water committees
Muyinga	Yes	Giteranyi		• PCDC process; CSC
			Ruzo	• PCDC process ; colline meetings ; CSC
			Giteranyi	• PCDC process ; colline meetings ; CSC
	No	Buhinyuza	Kibimba	• PCDC process ; colline meetings ; health and water committees
Kirundo	Yes	Vumbi		• PCDC process; CMS; CSC
			Vumbi	• PCDC process ; colline meetings ; VSLA
			Kigobe	• PCDC process ; colline meetings ; CSC
	No	Bugabira	Kigoma	• PCDC process ; colline meetings ; CMS ; health and water committees
Total		6 communes (of which 3 studied)/ 9 collines		

III) Methodology of the research

The study followed a qualitative research methodology, relying on documentation analysis, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FDGs). These addressed the specific examples of spaces or mechanisms in which women take part, which were sampled across locations and as per their relevance to the context and the EVC programme (previous section). This section briefly provides further background on the research methodology (process and timeline, data collection and analysis methodology, and the challenges observed).

III.1) Process and timeline

The study was coordinated by an international consultant in collaboration with four Burundian researchers (two men, two women) and a CARE Burundi staff member. In May 2019 the ToR and data collection tools were developed, tailored to the Burundi context. These were first translated into

⁷⁵ Comme mentionné auparavant, l'étude de cas « processus PCDC » met également un égard sur les comités et structures qui font partie, e.x. CCDC, Équipe Communale de Planification, et le Conseil Communale.

French, and later on in Kirundi as well. Between 3 and 5 June 2019 the Burundi research team was trained on the data collection tools and methodologies. The session also served to further specify the sampling of informants, divide tasks across the team and agree on relevant deadlines. The international consultant conducted KIIs in Bujumbura with Data collection in the field took place between 13 and 21 May 2019. Final transcriptions were received by the international consultant on 11 June. A draft report was delivered mid-June, and after feedback from CARE Burundi the final version followed by the end of June.

III.2) Data collection and analysis methodologies

The international consultant conducted a **documentation review** of literature, policies and other relevant documents on social inclusion in Burundi. Two types of documents were looked at: i) Research reports, articles and other grey literature that is accessible online/internationally. ii) Documents related to inclusive governance mechanisms that were available in Burundi. The communal plans (PCDCs) of the communes that were visited were specifically targeted. Research reports produced by local civil society organisations were also studied, and a few relevant policy related documents on decentralisation and gender.

On each research site different **focus group discussions** (FGDs) (women, men, mixed youth) have been held with approximately 10 people per group discussion (see the targeting framework in section 3.3). Respondents were mainly targeted because they participate in the by the study targeted mechanism). At colline level all of these three FGD were organised, on commune level only the FGD with women was held. Where time allowed for it, a FGD with women that did not participate in the relevant mechanisms was also organised (3 FGDs in total).

As for the **key informant interviews** (KIIs), the international consultant conducted interviews in Bujumbura with a selection of State Authorities, CSOs, INGOs and diplomatic representation (ex. Ministry of Decentralisation, Forum des Femmes, GIZ, Cooperation Suisse, Royal Netherlands Embassy, and CSOs like COCAFEM, MIPAREC, Dushirahamwe, CAFOB, AFRABU, Twitezimbere). These interviews aimed to obtaining general perspectives on factors associated with the participation in PCDC in particular. In the field, one or two women per research site who participated in the focus group were interviewed on an individual basis. This helped to deepen on their point of view and experience. Depending on the context, the choice may fall on a woman who spoke well in the focus group, as well as a woman who was more reserved to express herself in a group. Also a number of men from the restricted family of some of the women interviewed (husband, father, brother) were interviewed. In addition, the following respondents were interviewed. Due to time restrictions not all of these interviews could be held in each location however.

- **State authorities:** Administrator (commune level), Economic / Social Advisor (commune level) and/ or a representative of the Communal Centre for Family and Development (CCDC);
- **Local leaders:** Chiefs of the colline, Bashingantahe, Religious leader, member of the Burundi Association of Locally Elected Council members (ABELO);
- **Civil society:** CARE implementing partners (MIPAREC / COCAFEMME), another NGO/CSO that intervenes on the theme of governance and/or supports the governance mechanisms targeted for our study, an international NGO active in the area.

For correct and detailed representation of the contributions of KII and FGD respondents, in all meetings people were asked if an **audio recording** could be made for the sole purpose of **transcription** of the discussions. For the KIIs, about 50% accepted to be recorded. For the FGDs, 90% could be recorded. The local team of researchers then transcribed the meetings in a template that was prepared in advance, also allowing room for observations they made and some points on analysis that could be done based on every meeting held. For those respondents that refused to be recorded, notes were

manually taken and worked out in the template. The transcripts were uploaded and for the **analysis** NVIVO software was used. A coding system was applied to the raw data that was as much as possible uniformised across the different country studies.

As for the **total sample of respondents**: 54 KIIs and 28 FGDs were held, in which in total 343 people participated. The table below provides an overview of how the respondents were distributed across administrative level, type of data collection methods and targeted subgroups.

Administrative level	KIIs (total #, total participants)	Sub-group	FGDs (total #, total participants)	Sub-group
National	8 (15)	Ministry of Decentralisation, ABELO, VNG International, GIZ, Cooperation Suisse, EKN	1 (6)	CSOs (COCAFEM, Dushirahamwe, CAFOB, Réseau Femmes et Paix, AFRABU)
Commune	22 (22)	State authorities: 7 KIIs Local authority/leader: 3 KIIs Women: 2 KIIs Local civil society: 4 KIIs (I)NGO: 6 KIIs	2 (20)	1 FGD women (12) 1 FGD men (8)
Colline	24 (24)	State authority: 2 KIIs Local authority: 4 KIIs Women: 11 KIIs Men: 4 KIIs	25 (256)	14 FGDs women (124), of which 3 FGD with indirect women 6 FGDs men (72) 5 FGDs youth (60)
Total	54 KIIs with in total 61 participants		28 FGDs with in total 282 participants	

III.3) Limitations

A number of limitations were observed in the research process, which are briefly enumerated below.

- **Time restrictions**: The budget for in particular the field research component was very tight. As travel time between locations also needed to be considered, it was not possible to ensure that the same number and type of KIIs and FGDs were held in each location. Regardless of this the local team of researchers has put in their maximum effort to cover as much ground as possible, working long days. Also on the side of some participants time restrictions were noted. Especially the KIIs with local leaders and authorities were often interrupted by people soliciting them. Also, on one colline another INGO held a meeting simultaneously, and as they were promised transport money for that meeting people were in a hurry going there.
- **Transcriptions**: Across the countries it was decided to work with recordings of KIIs and FGDs. Especially with the KIIs about half of the respondents refused to be recorded, mostly being wary about the use of their voice for possibly other purposes. This can be explained because of the general (political) context, where people are generally reserved in sharing opinion with people they do not know well. Also, time allocated to the transcriptions in the budget was insufficient from onset. Practice learned that for an hour-long recording, at least 4 hours were needed for the transcriptions. The fact that only three days were foreseen for transcriptions it has put a lot of strain on the local researchers to get the transcriptions done in time. This also explains the slight delay observed in the completion of all transcriptions, which impacted the start of the analysis and writing.
- **Access to respondents**: Access to respondents was generally good because the KIIs and FGDs were prepared in advance with help of the EVC local partners. No cases where registered where participants did not show up. Two initially scheduled locations could not be visited. At

one colline in Giteranyi other activities were going on at the time of the research, therefore another colline was chosen. Also, for one the collines scheduled to be visited in a non-EVC commune (Bugendana) authorisation for the research was not granted by the local authorities. Instead, a non-EVC colline in an EVC commune was targeted. As most respondents were drawn from spaces EVC collaborates with (in particular VSLA) there is likely some sampling-bias in the findings, as uninformed/non-participant/non-EVC opinion is less represented in the data.

- Limited detail on site-specific spaces: Although a limited number of spaces were to be studied more in-depth in each locations, the way in which the KIIs and FGDs were conducted gave way to a more general reflection by participants on a wide array of spaces they know of and/or participate in. This is also caused by the type of targeting of FGD and KII participants. Instead of only inviting participants from the selected spaces (added with some non-participants), CARE and partners seem to have mobilised participants mostly through existing VSLA. This unfortunately disbalanced somewhat available data: a lot of information was given on the VSLA process, but for the other spaces selected for the respective location detailed information on the process of access, participation and influence (concrete examples) were far more limited or absent. Finally, most data has relevance to the colline level, so comparison with the commune in the analysis of data was challenging.
- Pathways: Linked to the previous point, it proved challenging to reconstitute clear pathways of change in examples of successful participation given in the KIIs and FGDs. This can be related to time limitations, but also some limitations observed in the qualitative research profile and experiences of the local researchers (as opposed to a strong track-record in the administration of quantitative surveys that their profiles displayed). As a consequence, the sub-questioning and the inclusion of analytical additions in the notes/transcriptions remained somewhat superficial. This is however a general limitation to local researchers in region and is not necessarily specific to the selection process for this particular study.