

Rwanda RIU

Country Assessment Executive Summary



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Background

The overall impression is of a country with accountable, goal-oriented leadership, driven by a desire to overcome the failures of the past, and with a sound understanding of what can be accomplished. There is a great deal of activity, and a sense that positive things are happening, and that the possibility for innovation is high. so the people remain very poor. The genocide destroyed the lives of many people and all of Rwanda's organisations. This means that the "supply side" of the knowledge system is very limited (though improving) and links between the sources of new knowledge and the actual and potential users are often very weak indeed. This inevitably leads to a concern that, even if 'demand' for new knowledge were stimulated, the supply response will be limited. Many organisations, such as the extension services and the recently reformed structures at the 30 Districts and (lower) 416 "sectors", are new and not fully capacitated. Rwanda has a large number of recent reports that provide high quality analysis of the situation. It also has a great deal of donor activity. In the agricultural sector the role of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) appears to be particularly catalytic. Rwanda has also attracted the attention of both DFID and the World Bank in the area of Science Technology and Innovation. DFID is likely to support the creation of a Science, Technology and Innovation Commission (coming on line probably towards the end of 2007) and is contributing to the 'Institutional Component' of the Strategic Plan for Agriculture (PSTA), particularly to strengthen farmer groups. Similarly the World Bank currently has consultants in Rwanda preparing a capacity building programme for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI). This will cover seven areas including Agriculture Research and Extension. The World Bank will also support Rwanda, a \$10m four year project to improve the delivery of services in selected key sectors (including agriculture) by providing better access to information through the use of technology. Useful summaries of the rural and agricultural systems in Rwanda are provided in the recently completed DFID Institutional Component report mentioned above. An even more recent World Bank report also gives a summary but

in addition provides a mathematical model of economic development within the Rwandan agricultural sector and concludes that the greatest poverty reducing impact is likely to arise from growth in food staples (crops and livestock).¹ All agree that the fundamental problem in Rwanda is the extent and depth of rural poverty.

Process

A RIU Country Assessment Team (CAT) visited the country from 29th January to 13th February 2007. Based on the results of a number of interviews and field visits, a review of available literature, and extensive team discussions, the Team has concluded that there are excellent opportunities for the RIU Programme to operate in Rwanda. Initial mapping was undertaken of the Rwanda 'innovation system'. The team identified eight types of key actor in the part of the Rwandan 'innovation system' that relate to agriculture and other renewable natural resources. The functions of these actors were identified, together with their links (actual and potential) to the rest of the system.

Recommendations

It quickly became clear that any proposed Innovation Platforms would inevitably involve the same cluster of organisations if they were to be effective. It therefore made sense that a "coalition" or consortium of key actors should form a central element of the RIU strategy - an "innovation coalition". It was then envisioned that this coalition would manage the resources necessary to facilitate up to six *Innovation Platforms*, as opportunities emerge and implementation capacity is enhanced. This national Innovation Coalition would work closely with district-level partners, given the central role that the districts play in

¹ "Unlocking pro-poor agricultural growth in Rwanda will depend on increasing productivity growth in food staples....this growth will be pro-poor in that it will disproportionately benefit low income groups, including households that do not grow cash crops and households headed by women" - paragraph 44, page xvi

Rwanda's decentralised structure. The Innovation Platforms at the district level would be formed by a network of individuals and organisations which are able to provide "intermediary services" between the suppliers of new knowledge and the users of such knowledge. This might build on and strengthen the links between the Business Development Service (BDS) units of the Rwanda Private Sector Federation, the rural financial institutions, other existing rural institutions (for instance the proposed Community Innovation Centres), extension agencies, Community Based Organisations (CBO) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) with a presence in the relevant districts.

Special transparent procedures are recommended that would be put in place to ensure full participation by clients and user groups in both the Innovation Coalition and the Innovation Platforms.

In addition, it is proposed that the Innovation Coalition should also manage three ancillary functions. These include:

- A platform focussed on Policy Dialogue.
- A platform focussed on Science and Technology Intelligence Gathering.
- A platform focussed on providing "Communications Services".

A RIU Programme in Rwanda could be expected to produce a fully functioning network of key actors in the Rwandan agricultural innovation system, with up to six Innovation Platforms operating in a decentralised manner principally at the district and 'sector' (sub-district) level. It can be expected to generate knowledge of how the use of scientific and technical knowledge can be increased in the specific circumstances of Rwanda, and generate effective demand to influence future research. It is likely to lead to increases in wealth and a reduction in poverty as a direct and indirect result of greater use of existing scientific and technological knowledge.

Other Opportunities and Constraints

Despite the formidable difficulties, the country assessment team felt that were many factors in Rwanda that would allow the RIU to add value to existing initiatives.

The innovation system is evolving rapidly, and government, NGOs and the private sector appear open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. There is strong support for the RIU approach from both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Research. There are also many other current and planned activities related to capacity building, science technology and innovation which will have a direct, positive influence on the RIU Programme.

But it would be naïve to think that it will be easy to increase the use of scientific and technological knowledge in Rwanda, whatever system is adopted. Rwanda is among the poorest countries in the world and the system is constrained by extremely difficult 'framework conditions' and lacks of much of the supporting infrastructure. With the right approach, these challenges can nevertheless be overcome.

Next Steps

These recommendations have not yet been discussed in detail with the key actors mentioned. It is therefore vital that comments on this draft are sought from these key actors at the earliest opportunity. The RIU is requesting comments from PAB members so that feedback can be provided to the team prior to distribution of the draft report.

In terms of the way forward, the team has concluded that a temporary Programme Development Team should be assembled to facilitate the formation of a coalition comprising the key "intermediary service providers" and selected representatives of "the demand side" of the innovation system, such as farmers groups, cooperatives, community-based organisations and other enterprises.

It is recommended that the programme is developed by a team of key "service delivery intermediaries" between April and July 2007 along the lines described in this report. This process should be fully funded by the RIU and should be supported by mentoring, support visits, advice about the formation of coalitions, and through a **due diligence** visit.

Next Steps *continued*

A fully articulated programme design, including memoranda of understanding between the main participants in the innovation coalition, and funding proposal would be produced by August 2007. This document – a strategic plan and detailed implementation proposal - would be the basis of RIU's decision to proceed.



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