

Investigating structural barriers to Historically Marginalized People's (Batwa) inclusion in development in Rwanda

Kick off Meeting & Training of Interviewers

Kigali – Alpha Palace Hotel - 9-12 February 2015

1. Introduction

Consortium partners in the project aimed at *investigating structural barriers to Batwa (Historically Marginalized People's) inclusion in development in Rwanda* held their project kick-off meeting on 9 and 10 February 2015. The meeting was followed by training for interviewers on 11 and 12 February 2015. The partners, further, visited a Batwa community on 13 February in Nyaruguru District of the Southern Province, some 162 Km from Rwanda's capital city Kigali; the aim of this visit was to witness the living conditions of members of a Batwa community and to speak with members of the community. The five days proved to be rich in insights and very fruitful in laying the ground for the implementation of the project.

2. Workshop on categories of Functionings (methodology) and Partner meeting

The project started in November 2014 and the first three months were used to lay solid foundations for the different activities throughout the duration of the project, including the workshop, the selection of the interviewers, and the securing of a research permit (no easy task given the subject matter of the project). This first period was also used to draw up a provisional list of categories of 'functionings' that could serve as a basis for discussion and translation to the Batwa and Rwandan contexts in the kick-off meeting. The categories were established based on the dynamic public reflective equilibrium methodology as developed by Wolff and de-Shalit, using Sen and Nussbaum's capability approach.

The first day of the meeting was devoted to brain-storming the project methodology. In addition to the six project staff members, fifteen other stakeholders (from civil society, government, academia, COPORWA, and IRDP) with current or past involvement in problems faced by members of the Batwa community were invited to share their ideas on the methodology and, more specifically, on the categories of 'functionings'. The six interviewers also participated in the first day's exchanges in order for them to get a good understanding of the project and methodology prior to the training.

After preliminary introductions, Morag Goodwin presented the goals of the project and gave an introduction to the methodology to be used. She concluded the session by answering questions from the audience. The provisional list of categories of functioning were distributed to all the participants, who were split in to four small groups to brainstorm on whether the categories were relevant and applicable to the Batwa, how the categories should be interpreted in the Batwan/ Rwandan contexts and whether any aspect of a good life was missing. After slightly more than two hours of discussions, each group made a presentation on the results of the discussions.

There was strong enthusiasm for the methodology of dynamic public reflective equilibrium in general, particularly from senate members, representatives of the Ministry of Local Development and from participants from NGOs, such as Care International. The discussions on the category list delivered some surprising insights and were very helpful in refining the list for the Rwandan context. From an initial list of 14 categories, some were adjusted, while an additional category was added based on suggestions

from participants. Participating stakeholders expressed their keen anticipation of the results of the project and strong desire for practical recommendations for policy-makers and other strategic actors.

The second day (10 February) was used by the project staff to discuss further the refinement of the categories of 'functionings' and to discuss the planning of the various activities in the project. Project staff took the opportunity to clarify in detail the division of tasks, the financial aspects of the project and the timelines for specific deliverables. In addition, the partners discussed the selection criteria for drawing up interviewee lists. Minutes of this meeting have been circulated.

3. Training of interviewers

Prior to the meeting, the Rwandan partners (COPORWA and IRDP) in consultation with Tilburg University had identified six individuals from the Batwa community who are to serve as the project interviewers. The six selected were chosen because they all were members of the Batwa community (making it easier to conduct very personal exchanges with the interviewees), hold university degrees and have prior experience of involvement in other research projects targeting members of the Batwa community. The training was intended to revisit the basic guidelines of field research (interviewing technique and ethics) but was primarily aimed at introducing the interviewers to the dynamic public reflective equilibrium methodology. The training was conducted and overseen by the various consortium members (who all have prior experience with qualitative field research) and Rwandan academic Dr. Ezechiel Sentama, who was invited to provide assistance in adjusting the methodology to the local context.

The project staff explained clearly to the interviewers what was expected from them during the two phases of interviews and the terms of collaboration in the project. The practicalities of the interviews were discussed. Interview 'steps' were drawn up, brainstormed and amended. The participants had an intense discussion of the revised functionings as they translated them into questions that made sense in Kinyarwanda - the local language to be used during the interviews. The second day of training was dedicated to practice: the six interviewers were split into three couples and had the opportunity to practice the interviews on each other. They were supervised by the project staff together with Dr. Ezechiel Sentama, as well as filmed. The final session of the training allowed the project staff to give feedback on the interviewers' performance but also gave the interviewers to raise difficulties or problems, which were addressed by the group as a whole. The enthusiasm and commitment shown during these two days were very promising for the implementation of the project.

4. Conclusion

The meeting and training provided a great opportunity for consortium members to plan the work ahead and to anticipate the difficulties ahead in implementing the project. The feedback from the workshop, the partner meeting and the training of the interviewers were all very rich in positive feedback on the project substance. We left Rwanda even more enthusiastic for the project and looking forward to the work ahead, starting with the process of planning and conducting the first phase of interviews.