CHAPTER 10

Emerging People-Oriented Leadership in Rural Development in Rwanda

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

This case study explores how current leaders in rural development in Rwanda perceive their role, the challenges they experience, and their strategies for operating effectively as leaders. The study involved both young and senior leaders, male and female, and also private sector and government leaders. The study aims to be of use for developing young leaders for the future, especially (but not exclusively) for people in Rwanda and in Africa.

How is this chapter structured?

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- Section 10.3—"Case Study Data": We describe how our data were collected.
- Section 10.4—"Perceptions of Hierarchy": This includes the national culture and aspects of organizational culture, notably in the context of decentralization.
- Section 10.5—"The Need for Change": The survey results, backed up by leaders' personal experiences, indicate a gradual shift in perceptions of effective leadership, typically a move from authoritarian/control focused leadership styles towards people-oriented leadership styles, based on the concepts of participation and consultation.
- Section 10.6—"Leaders' Diversity": Leaders differed in their age, gender, and sector. We explore the constraints and challenges identified by these diverse leaders.
- Section 10.7—"Leaders' Attributes": We discuss leadership attributes that are considered important, including decisiveness, candidness, doing good, honesty/integrity, and adaptability.
- Section 10.8—"The Road to Becoming a Leader": We explore how people have become leaders, their role models, and different initiatives for development of leadership skills
- Section 10.9—"Conclusions/Discussion": We discuss lessons learned and suggestions for the further development of leadership in rural development in Rwanda.

10.2   Context: Leadership in Rural Development in Rwanda and the Policy Framework

In Rwanda, a district is a key geographical area and administrative unit to which the leadership has been transferred from all national level ministries and governmental and non-governmental organizations as detailed by the Rwanda National Decentralization Policy of 2001 (GoR, 2001).

Through the Rural District Organizational Structure, established in 2014, the district is well appointed with different units for ensuring the proper service delivery to farmers and other beneficiaries. The revised National Decentralization Policy (GoR, 2012) details the responsibilities, authority, and functions, as well as power and appropriate resources which have been transferred to district and sub-district levels, that is, sectors, cells, and villages (see Fig. 10.1). The Government of Rwanda adopted the National Decentralization Policy to achieve three main goals: (1) good governance; (2) pro-poor service delivery; and (3) sustainable development.

The revised National Decentralization Policy (GoR, 2012, p. 22) states, as a lesson learnt after a decade of implementing the decentralization policy,

Fig. 10.1 Rural District Organizational Structure
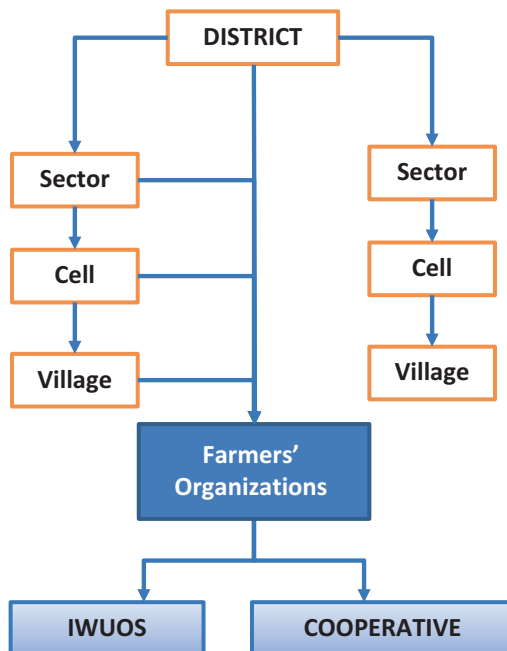
that: "Empowerment is a process and doesn't happen uniformly: A lot of effort has been put in citizen empowerment and participation, change of mindsets, and embracing decentralization as the most effective mechanisms to promote good governance and sustainable service delivery. Nonetheless, there are still challenges, and communities and local governments have different levels of empowerment. Government now realizes that a long-term empowerment agenda through decentralization must be developed and impact will happen after a long time and must target both the leaders and the led (citizens)." In the context of rural development, the decentralization includes empowerment and leadership of farmer organizations (FOs), as well as leadership by government staff at different administrative levels (cell, sector, district, and national level—see Fig. 10.1).

As indicated by the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC, 2018) in Rwanda, districts are responsible for coordinating public service delivery and economic development. They are divided into sectors, which are responsible for the delivery of public services as mandated by the districts. The cells and villages are the smallest units, providing a link between the people and the sector. All adult resident citizens are members of their local cell council, from which an executive committee is elected. In addition, farmers are organized

into farmer organizations. These include Cooperatives and Irrigation Water User Organizations (IWUOs). IWUOs are responsible for operating and maintaining irrigation schemes. Some have up to 900 members, and some irrigation schemes are spread over an area of 15 kilometres long, divided into zones or blocks. Cooperatives are often even larger; some have several thousand members. Their main function is to support farmers with agricultural inputs, for example, for rice or maize production, including seeds, fertilizer, and credit, and organize collective marketing of the produce. FO leadership is organized with an executive committee headed by a president, and in addition an audit committee and a conflict management committee.

The World Bank in its 2015 Rwanda Poverty assessment report states that "In 1997, three years after the genocide, the country was characterized by deep and widespread poverty, rock-bottom health indicators, and pervasive hunger and food insecurity" (World Bank, 2015). The World Bank further states that while poverty in Rwanda is still high, the trends over the past decade have been firmly positive. Between 2001 and 2011, Rwanda's economy grew at more than 8% per year, earning the country a spot on the list of the ten fastest-growing countries in the world. Strong growth resulted in rapid poverty reduction. "The share of the population below the national poverty line dropped from 59 per cent in 2000 to 46 per cent in 2010 and 39 per cent in 2013", as is shown in Fig. 10.2 (Knoema, 2019).
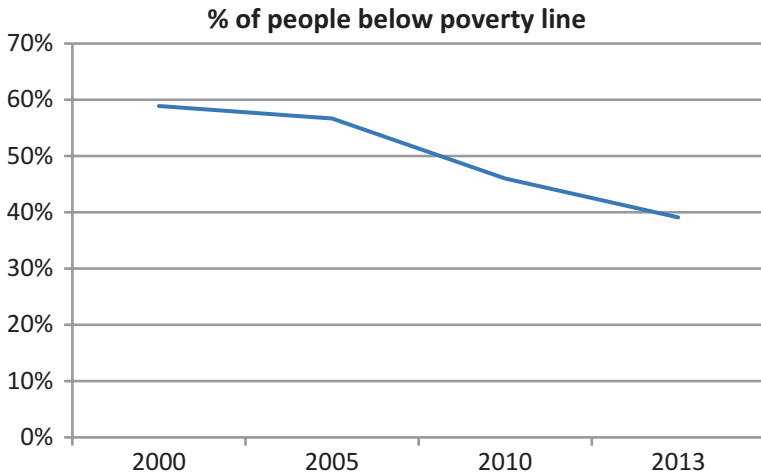

Fig. 10.2 Percentage of people below poverty line. (Source: Derived from Knoema, 2019)

10.3   Case Study Data

This chapter is based on data and insights that have been derived from an online survey that was sent to 50 people who are working in government, non-government, and private companies involved in rural development. The survey was completed by 25 leaders—6 female and 19 male. The majority, 60%, have less than six years of leadership experience. The survey was followed up by in-depth qualitative interviews held with 18 leaders; of these, there were 7 senior and 11 young leaders (35 years or younger), with 3 of them being young female leaders (Table 10.1). The interviewees included nine government staff leaders, and nine leaders from the private sector, including farmer organizations (three) and six leaders from companies/NGOs. The sample of leaders interviewed was collected based on availability and their interest and willingness to be interviewed. The major-

Table 10.1   Demographic information on the interviewees (Rwanda)

Name	Gender	Young/senior	Private/government	Position/role
Ngabo Marc	Male	Senior	Government	District official
Muhiza Juste	Male	Senior	Government	Cell executive secretary
Kalisa Patrick	Male	Young	Private	Cooperative president
Gasangwa Leo	Male	Young	Private	IWUO president
Mugisha Pierre	Male	Young	Government	Cell officer
Senga Jado	Male	Young	Government	District official
Kamali Modeste	Male	Young	Government	Sector executive secretary
Ineza Sophie	Female	Young	Private	Supply assistant for NGO in refugee camp
Uwase Divine	Female	Young	Private	Senior researcher for Int. NGO
Hirwa Jean	Male	Young	Private	Rural development consultant
Mukiza Freddy	Male	Senior	Private	Director of contractor firm
Muhigo Anaclet	Male	Senior	Private	MD consultancy firm
Shimwa Danny	Male	Young	Private	IWUO president
Muhineza August	Male	Young	Government	District director
Sangwa Alice	Female	Young	Private	NGO trainer
Ngengiyumva Euladie	Male	Senior	Government	National level leader
Mugisha Eric	Male	Senior	Government	District director
Gashumba Luc	Male	Senior	Government	District official
Total 18	15 M, 3 F	7 senior, 11 young	9 private, 9 govt.	

Table 10.2   Coding frequencies by attributes (Rwanda)

Code Category (5)	Codes (15)	Number of times coded (339)	In how many different interviews (18)	Attributes of interviewee (Number)						Number of interviewees, by attribute, who mentioned the coded issues two or more times					
				Age		Gender		Sector		Age		Gender		Sector	
				Youth	Senior	Man	Woman	Private	Govt.	Youth	Senior	Man	Woman	Private	Govt.
01-Perception of hierarchy	General	11	10	6	4	8	2	3	7	1		1			1
	Organization Specific	13	7	4	3	7	0	4	3	2	3	5		4	1
02- Leadership Style	Strategic Leadership	41	18	11	7	15	3	9	9	6	7	13		5	8
	People Oriented Leadership	79	18	11	7	15	3	9	9	11	7	15	3	9	9
03_Leader Diversity	Women leaders	4	3	3	0	0	3	3	0	1			1	1	
	Youth	6	3	2	1	1	2	3	0	1	1	1	1	2	
04_Leadership Attributes	Candidness	10	9	4	5	7	2	5	4		1	1		1	
	Decisiveness	17	12	6	6	11	1	5	7	2	2	4		1	3
	Integrity	23	16	11	5	13	3	8	8	4	1	3	2	4	1
	Doing Good	17	11	8	3	9	2	6	5	3	1	3	1	2	2
	Adaptability	33	16	9	7	13	3	7	9	4	6	8	2	5	5
05_Leadership Development	Leadership determinants	19	18	11	7	15	3	8	10	1		1		1	
	Role Model	32	17	10	7	14	3	7	10	6	3	6	3	6	3
	Skills Development	16	9	6	3	7	2	4	5	3	2	4	1	3	2
	Confidence	18	14	8	6	11	3	7	7	2	1	1	2	3	

ity (15) of the interviewees were not able to participate in the online survey, partly because of limited information technology (IT) access and partly because of timing. Three national level leaders interviewed responded to the online survey. Overall, the study covers the views of 40 different leaders (32 men and 8 women; 25 young and 15 senior).

Table 10.2 shows the coding scheme used for the case studies (see the Methodology chapter for an explanation) along with the coding frequencies, which are also disaggregated by attributes of age and gender.

The following sections (Sects. 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7 and 10.8) report the findings from both the survey and interview data, organized by the interview coding categories.

10.4   PERCEPTIONS OF HIERARCHY

The leadership context in Rwanda encompasses many different elements, including leadership norms and beliefs and also aspects of organizational culture, notably specific aspects of rural development that involves both private and government sector stakeholders. An important concept that is influenced by cultural values is the norms and beliefs around hierarchy. The survey recorded both respondents' experiences of hierarchy as well as their personal *preferences* on hierarchy. Below the data ($n = 25$) is presented (Fig. 10.3).

The results are positioned in four quadrants. The respondents in two of these could be considered broadly satisfied (the green quadrants) and the respondents in the remaining two quadrants could be considered broadly dissatisfied (the red quadrants).
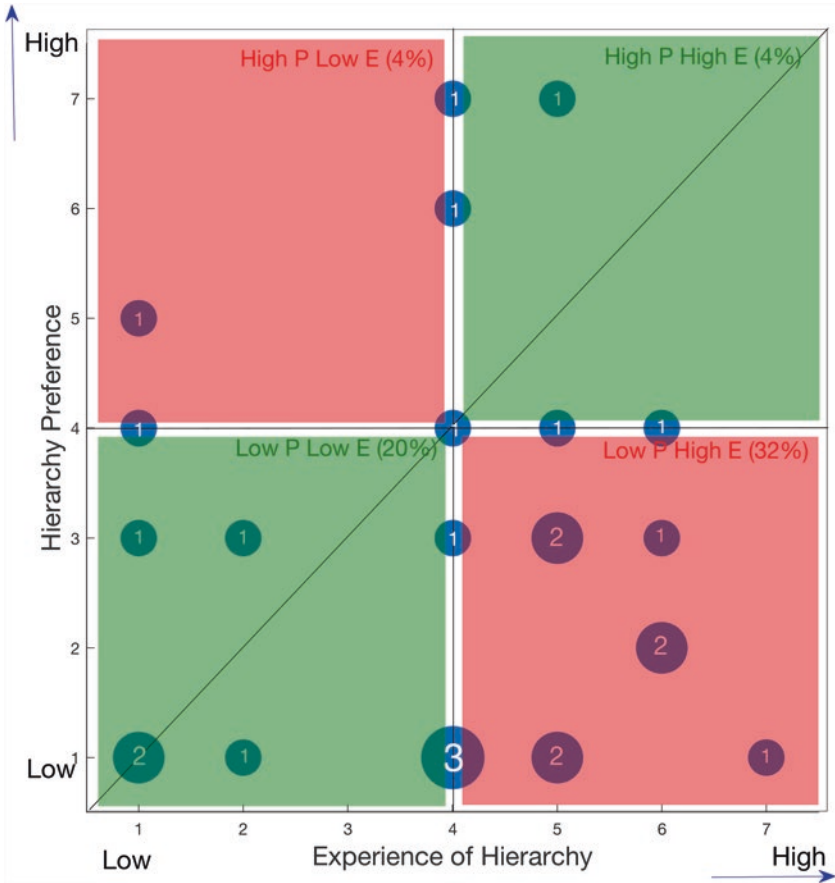
Fig. 10.3 Experiences and preferences towards hierarchy (Rwanda)

Broadly dissatisfied (72%):
- *Lower right quadrant*: The largest group of eight respondents rates their experience as quite hierarchical and would personally prefer less hierarchy than they currently witness in the society.
- *Upper left quadrant*: One respondent considers the current practice not very hierarchical and would prefer more hierarchy than they currently witness in the society.

- *On the lines*: There are a further six respondents who consider the current practice average to high but would prefer a lower hierarchy, and another three who consider the current practice low to average but would prefer a higher hierarchy—so these could likely be also termed broadly dissatisfied.

Broadly satisfied (28%):
- *Upper right quadrant*: One respondent perceives the current practice on hierarchy as high, which is also the strong preference.
- *Lower left quadrant*: Five respondents consider the current practice not very hierarchical, and this links to their preference.
- *In the middle*: One respondent perceives the current practice as average, which is also the preference.

If we look at this in more detail, the closer a respondent's answer is placed near the diagonal, the more satisfied this person is, as the practice and preference are identical; if far from the diagonal the level of satisfaction is lower. In this case, three respondents' (12%) responses are on the diagonal, mostly (two) in the lower left quadrant. A further four respondents are close to the diagonal (one space removed). Thus, these respondents (a total of seven, or 28%) are more or less satisfied. However, the majority (18 or 72%) of respondents fall further from the diagonal, with most—12—preferring a lower hierarchy, in other words less enactment of power differences than they currently experience. As one private sector leader stated: "*I consider first of all my employees as my 'bosses' because my success depends on them.*" However, six respondents would prefer more hierarchy than they currently experience.

How perceptions on hierarchy can influence the position and effectiveness of a leader is illustrated in the following challenge mentioned by one of the highest ranking district officials, who was promoted from a lower ranking position to take up this high position.

Young male leader's Personal Experience—Managing hierarchy reversal
The challenge I have experienced after my promotion is the complexity of leading staff members whom used to lead me before, who are mostly my seniors in age. Before I was working in the same district but at the lower sector level, and I was led by district officials. Since I

(continued)

have been promoted to my current role these same persons now actually fall under my responsibility. To lead in this situation takes time and a process of convincing these male and female employees that the roles have changed, in other words the "game" has changed. To end this challenge, I tried to improve my collaboration with them through consultation. I involved them and asked them to explain to me their opinions on our objectives. After analysing the objectives and jointly developing our action plan, including roles and responsibilities, these employees have become convinced that I have to coordinate and lead them and now understand how much they need me for supporting their activities. **Senga Jado**, District official

Senga Jado's personal experience also shows that he chose to adopt a participatory leadership style to address the challenge, ultimately leading to a workable situation for all. This experience was echoed by a young female leader: "*Today the challenge I meet is in terms of mindset of some staff of my team, who are not happy with my promotion. I was under the responsibility of some of them; nowadays it is not easy for them to consider me as their leader as I am younger than them*." The following example also indicates that choosing to use a participatory style instead of an authoritarian one was the answer to the challenge he faced.

Young male leader's Personal Experience—People's involvement leads to the solution
Since I am a leader, the challenge that I have experienced is about managing the issue of land inheritance among family members whose parents have died. The eldest sons want to share only with brothers and do not consider sisters who are married. Other difficult situations are related to selecting beneficiaries for the programme of "One cow per poor family". However, all of these issues have been resolved by involving the villagers and to let them take decisions themselves in the meetings I have organized at village level. This has shown me how the people should be involved if I want to succeed in my task. **Kamali Modeste**, Sector executive secretary

Not everyone agrees that using a participatory style of leadership is feasible, citing education level and time constraints for encouraging more participation and consultation. One survey respondent remarked: "*Low level of education of citizens and lack of enough resources make citizens oppose to leaders decisions. In addition, the economic development aspirations require taking quick decisions and thus reducing consultations which take much more time.*"

Survey respondents also described the challenges they themselves face as a leader, with the most frequently mentioned challenge being managing downwards (16 times out of 25 respondents). Examples included *resistance of beneficiaries or team members, lack of trust in them as leader, lack of leadership skills, no team spirit*, and *problems with decision-making and conflict management.*

Young female leader's Personal Experience: Competition for promotion is a challenge
My challenge is the competition within my team. All of them need to be promoted. So, some team members sometime do not advise their colleagues, so that they will be disqualified. As a leader to deal with this challenge, I try to create a good environment within the team and work hard so as not to discourage our organization. And for those who consider me as child, I do really work in excellent ways to show them how able I am. For me this challenge gives me the courage to work. **Ineza Sophie**, Supply assistant for NGO in refugee camp

10.4.1   Hierarchy and Decentralization

Specific situational and organizational characteristics of rural development also affect perception of hierarchy, notably in the context of decentralization which involved devolving decision-making and implementation from national to district and lower levels. Leadership in rural development within the context of a decentralization brings about its own challenges. Leaders involved in this study work at various levels in the hierarchy, from national level to farmer level. Often, their responsibilities involve balancing and negotiating the policies and directives from above with the demands and ideas from below. In some way, it can be compared with the position of middle managers in larger firms. Analysing the middle manager, Anicich

and Hirsh (2017) state that "by virtue of their structural positions, middle managers are simultaneously the 'victims and the carriers of change' within an organization, receiving strategy prescriptions from their bosses above and having to implement those strategies with the people who work beneath them. In many cases, the norms and expectations associated with being a leader (e.g. assertiveness) are incompatible with the norms and expectations associated with being a subordinate (e.g. deference)."

Within the decentralized rural development system, a leader's important roles are to consult, plan, coordinate, and communicate, on behalf of the team or farmer organization, with outside actors and stakeholders, and influence and negotiate upwards on behalf of the people. Furthermore, stakeholders are placed not only at higher hierarchical levels but also at lower levels, so leaders need to simultaneously manage upwards as well as downwards.

The capacity to do this depends on leaders' communication skills and their degree of power and influence, which are also linked to the enactment of hierarchy by their bosses. Managing these interactions is a key responsibility of leaders at each level. From the interviews it became clear that "managing upwards" to address the needs identified at lower levels, is identified as a challenge, and some leaders feel "*sandwiched*", meaning they face a difficult choice between two duties or responsibilities (Macmillan Dictionary, 2018) in trying to reconcile their responsibilities towards different stakeholders.

Senior male leader's Personal Experience: Not being heard at higher level
My leader at the district could improve his way of taking decisions on budget use. Sometimes, my leader doesn't consider the ideas of Sector level staff on how the activities can be oriented, though these sector staff members know much more of the needs and strategies of the farmers. **Ngabo Marc**, District official

Some leaders interviewed expressed the friction of being caught in the middle between higher and lower hierarchy levels and ultimately the farmers. A feature of this buffer position is that different interests, expectations, and attitudes are focused here and this may give rise to conflict. A leader in the middle "falls between two stools"; does he or she, for example, go for the interests of those at the higher level or those at the lower level? Where does his or her ultimate loyalty lie? How participatory can the decision-making processes be? Figure 10.4 presents the decentralization
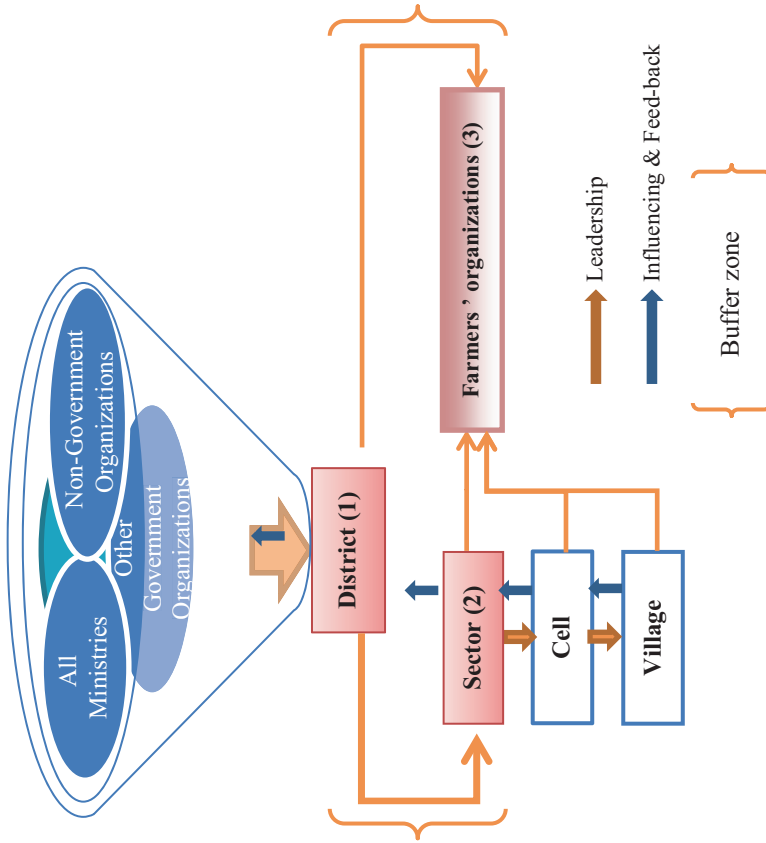
Fig. 10.4 Decentralization of leadership

of leadership between central level and decentralized administrative entities as well as the farmers' organizations.

There are three main buffer zones where leaders find themselves at a "crossroads" between higher and lower levels: these include district level, sector level, and FO level.

At district (1) level, the leaders are responsible for responding to all basic duties of all ministries and to act as the representative to the citizens of the central level. This is done through different approaches and strategies to provide the response required to the target group's needs and for smooth communication between all institutional levels. However, in our study some constraints were mentioned. One respondent talked about his disappointment and frustration with his leader's regular cancellation of village level meetings at the last minute, when more than 300 farmers would have already gathered. Another respondent recounts: "*People from outside or a higher level in the hierarchy come and start (re)directing our work, not taking into account our planning prepared in a participatory manner.*" At the same time, this research confirms that the approaches used in communication between the different levels do not need to be formal in order to be fruitful. At the field level, most of the time the leaders work closely together and sometimes this is done in an informal way due to the level of flexibility and ownership of responsibilities.

At the sector (two) level, the leaders are linked and report directly to the district staff and leaders. Some sector leaders are supposed on a daily basis to combine several responsibilities coming from the district level. There is both a formal and informal relationship between district and sector levels. Sector staff is directly interacting with (three) farmers' organizations and responding to their needs as well as cell level staff and the villages.

For example, a sector agronomist is right in the middle between the forces from top and from bottom. Based on bottom-up information and pressure from farmers, a sector agronomist is supposed to respond to their needs as he/she is the one at sector level who is in charge of agriculture and natural resources on behalf of farmers' organizations, such as the Irrigation Water Users Organization, FOs in cash crops, FOs in forestry and natural resources, and so on. To respond to his tasks, the sector agronomist has to manage these pressures from all sides and has to achieve results.

In order to manage these pressures, the sector agronomist uses different approaches to make sure that the communication and service delivery are well done. The effective field approaches identified are proximity coaching of FOs, training of farmers groups, and improving the commu-

nication style and the use of a standard reporting format. For knowledge transfer in agriculture among the target group, information technologies were introduced such e-soko (which is the use of ICT for market prices information) and free mobile calls between farmers' promoters and cell and sector leaders. Communication through local workshops, farmers' competitions, and household performance contracts are also used to accelerate rural development and achievements.

At the FO level (three), two farmer leaders provided examples of situations in which coordination and communication were not ideal and issues were at times decided beyond their control.

Two young male FO leaders' personal experiences
Need for Coordination: As there are several responsible officials at sector and district level, it would be better if they could coordinate with each other so that they can organize one integrated intervention plan. We sometimes have various institutions which provide training to us, and we found both some duplication and divergence on different topics we learn. So once they co-operate, they can produce matching contents and they can help us manage our time more efficiently instead of planning their activities separately, which takes a lot of our time. **Kalisa Patrick**, Cooperative president

Support Needed: For officials, especially who are working in local administration like sectors, district, and ministries, they could evaluate if what we do corresponds with their vision. They could support us in managerial and technical issues. Even if they visit us, such kind of visit supports all farmers to feel responsible for the irrigation scheme. **Gasangwa Leo**, IWUO president

There are also examples of successes, with mobile phone technology greatly facilitating communication.

Young male leader's Personal Experience—Request for support by farmers
The success I experience is that farmers are calling me by phone to ask me to support them. This shows me that there is no barrier between us. When someone believes in me to be the one who can do something for him, this is my success I experience since I started working with them. **Mugisha Pierre**, Cell officer

Nevertheless, a key constraint in the context of this organizational set-up is to manage effectively upwards. Overwhelmingly, the answers to the survey question on scope for improvement of their own leader indicates that respondents (19 out of 25) expect from their leader more consultation and consideration: that is, they are (more) consulted in decision-making and have their suggestions and opinions listened to.

- *My leader can improve her leadership because she is a dictator. If she says something nobody is supposed to challenge her or to disagree. She likes blaming staff rather than encouraging them and she is poor at motivating staff;*
- *Sometimes my leader takes decisions without consultation, not taking into consideration the ideas of the staff;*
- *As far as possible, my leader should consider the citizen participation in the process of different decisions/policy making;*
- *Consultation with the subordinates, listen to the employees voices;*
- *Accepting his or her weakness when making an error or making a wrong decision.*

Interestingly, the question on scope for improvement of their own leader led to respondents requesting for anonymity, as openness on this aspect could be seen as criticism and reflect negatively on them. Encouragingly, two respondents could not see any need for improvement of their own leaders, as they are very pleased with them:

- *My leader is the best one that I have ever seen. I do not know what he can improve as I have seen him being very simple and effective. Leadership is his vocation.*
- *My leader is very brave and a good motivator. He is very flexible and a good collaborator. I wish him to continue like this.*

The survey findings and personal experiences thus illustrate organizational challenges and change management challenges centring on reconciling managing upwards and downwards more effectively and the wish for less enactment of hierarchy. People have different expectations and leadership approaches and these do not (yet) match. Often this results in sub-optimal planning, decision-making, and communication, ultimately affecting the outcome and sustainability of the activities. At a personal level, it can lead to feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and demotivation.

10.5   THE NEED FOR CHANGE: LEADERSHIP STYLES

A common theme among the survey respondents and interviewees is the need for or evidence of a change in leadership styles. This relates to both strategic leadership, as well as people-oriented leadership styles.

10.5.1   Strategic Leadership

Several of the survey responses and all interviewees indicated the importance of and their experiences with strategic leadership. Strategic leadership is defined by Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2001) as "the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change as necessary". In our study, this mostly related to the importance of having a vision and being able to plan to reach this vision. The need for strategic leadership was mentioned twice or more often mostly by senior leaders and by leaders in government.

Senior male leader's Personal Experience—To realize our vision we need a strategy
My vision is to develop farmers. To be successful, my organization should set in place the planning and evaluations tools with specific periodic targets. This can help to know where the organization may improve before the end of every year. Every period, the organization may be assessed to see what is missing and suggest ways to correct this. My leader may be simplifying different procedures which delay the activities. In my plan, I always see what I can do better to achieve my set tasks. Sometimes, it becomes difficulties to realize it due to the challenges like "transport facilities". As a leader, I have to use my available time efficiently to do better. So I have to create my strategy and planning accordingly. **Gashumba Luc**, District official

Strategic leadership issues also came up in the context of decentralization; these centred on issues of decision-making and budget responsibility, as the following experience indicates.

Senior male leader's Personal Experience—Lack of control and budget
The challenge that I experience is to manage a problem while not being able to take a decision. For example, if there are some people who are constructing their house in an illegal way, I have to respond. However, we are at cell level not the ones who authorize construction permits. This authorization is given by the district, but we do not have any copies showing us who are building legally or illegally. Furthermore, my leader (who is in his early forties), can improve his ways of managing his subordinates. As the institutions are decentralized, they should also decentralize the power and the financial capacity. At cell level, we are responsible for a range of activities, but we do not have any budget. **Muhiza Juste**, Cell executive secretary

Strategic leaderships was also linked to flexibility and managing the necessary changes. As such, it is reflected in the section on the leadership attribute "adaptability".

10.5.2   *People-Oriented Leadership*

Survey respondents rated the need for a change towards a more participative style of leading and managing change and innovations as one of the important challenges that leaders have to deal with at the moment and in the near future.

Respondents rated how frequently they have experienced eight leadership styles, based on Redeker, de Fries, Rouckhout, Vermeren, and Filip's (2014), and indicated the most and least suitable leadership styles for addressing the challenges that leaders in their context face. Combining these two questions in one figure, with the styles ranked according to their suitability, we see the pattern emerging, as shown in Fig. 10.5.

None of the styles are very common: most are averagely used, with only small differences. Directive is somewhat more common, whereas distrustful, withdrawn, and coaching are slightly less common.

The inspirational style is considered the most suitable style of all and is averagely common. Next, two people-focused styles, coaching, and participative are considered very suitable, but coaching is relatively less common; and participative is slightly more common. The most common style,
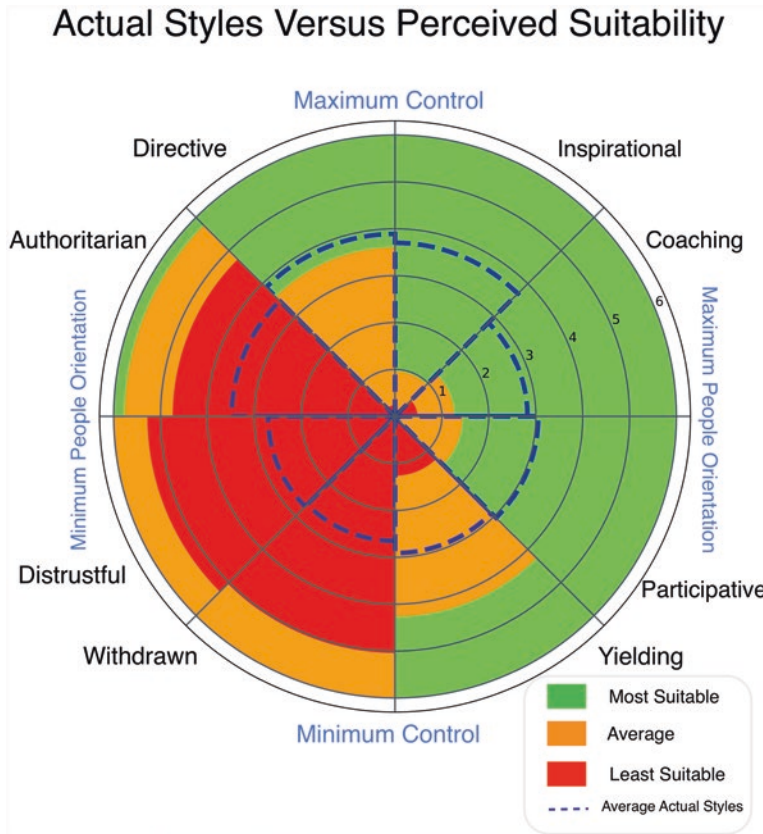
Fig. 10.5   Actual leadership styles versus perceived suitability (Rwanda)

directive leadership, is considered averagely suitable. Yielding is less common but averagely suitable. The second most common leadership style, authoritarian, is considered not suitable. The withdrawn and distrustful styles are somewhat less common and are also considered the least suitable styles. The experience with, and need for, some different leadership styles was expressed by survey respondents as follows:

- *I dislike that sometimes, my leader delays to respond or provides no reaction on reports or requested support* (withdrawn leadership style);
- *The biggest challenge is the lack of trust of leaders in their subordinates* (distrustful style);

- *The approach of top-down leadership from my superior whereby he imposes decisions to employees shows that later on the results are unsustainable* (authoritarian style);
- *Need to create a team spirit* (inspirational style); and
- *Need for a better understanding and respect for rights of employees and benefits of motivating employees* (coaching style).

Some respondents find it challenging to adopt, for example, a coaching or participative style, as one leader explained: "*My challenge in adopting a participative style is followers' expectations and lack of initiative: they expect to receive everything from their leader, think every initiative should come from the leader.*"

During the interviews the leaders found it very interesting to review their own behaviour against the different leadership styles, as they had never before come across a theory or model on different styles of leadership. The need for people-oriented leadership styles was very often mentioned—79 times, and multiple times by all 18 interviewees. What is evident is that the people-oriented styles, inspirational, coaching, and participative are considered the most suitable, with inspirational the second most common style, with coaching and participative less common. Among these three most suitable styles, interviewees mostly provided practical examples of a participative style, but only a few gave examples of a coaching or inspirational style. An example of a coaching and inspiration style was given by a young female leader:

> *Young female leader's Personal Experience—Motivation and support*
> In my team, we interact regularly through different means. We have a WhatsApp group that is used to communicate urgently. Every day we conduct in the evening a field meeting with all team leaders and facilitators to evaluate the day activities and plan for next day. My motivation to my team members is to encourage them by creating a friendly and hopeful environment. Motivation does not take money; just saying "Thank you for your work" is effective. I always look for all we can do to support them in their activities, motivate them, and support them directly where they have some challenges. **Uwase Divine**, Senior researcher for an international NGO

The majority identified as the biggest challenge the need to adopt a participative style, which is a change from the more commonly used authoritarian style. This is expressed in the following opinions:

- *In Africa, many top leaders take decisions without consulting their subordinates, often bowing to specific interests. Instead, they need to understand what people need and their point of view.*
- *Leaders have to know how to mix styles of leadership in order to make subordinates more participative.*
- *The biggest challenge is the lack of trust of leaders of the subordinates.*
- *African leaders should know how to deal with criticism. They should not consider it as opposition.*
- *At the moment, followers in Africa are not very well informed and so they do not show interest in their leadership. In the near future, leaders will not be able to meet accountability need from followers.*

Senior male leader's Personal Experience—I facilitate sharing within my team
I have different channels to interact with my team. Most important is that we meet every Monday to discuss to the action plan of coming week in which we evaluate even the activities conducted in previous week. In our meeting, we use a participatory approach in which everyone is able to provide inputs to other team members. As we have staff working in different fields, such meetings help each of us to know the progress in general and share the experience based on field experiences. Everybody should be satisfied during this meeting. **Ngengiyumva Euladie**, National level leader

The picture that thus emerges from this case study is of a period of transition: leaders are favouring the need or preference for a change towards more people-oriented leadership styles and less hierarchy and control enacted by leaders.

Young male leader's Personal Experience—A participative style
My "leaders" are the farmers in our Farmer Organization. I meet them regularly, and even outside planned meetings. I meet them also when I am working in my own field, as I am also a farmer. By interacting with them, if there is any issue, I have to make sure that is resolved directly with the farmers supporting me as best as possible. Every problem of any farmer, I consider as if it is me who is facing this problem. So it gives me the courage to look for possible solutions. First of all, I make sure that I am a good example and I am practising what I am mobilizing them to do. The farmers are always my leaders because I am their leader only because they elected me.
Gasangwa Leo, IWUO president

10.6   Leaders' Diversity

Here we discuss some findings on the impact of age, gender, and sector on perspectives on leadership. The study covers the views of 40 different leaders (80% men; 62.5% young) and half are leaders in a government job and the other half are farmers or from the private sector. Our data and insights indicate the following lessons on the impact of age, gender, and sector differences.

10.6.1   Age

Overall, the majority of both men and women involved in this study prefer to adopt people-oriented leadership styles and want the society to change in this direction. Young leaders were more outspoken as compared to senior leaders on the need for this change and, probably for that reason, more critical of their own leaders. Young leaders also indicated they face issues around respect, especially from older team members who struggle to accept their leadership.

10.6.2   Gender

The Rwandan political sphere stands out because of the large number of women in parliament (more than half of the seats in lower house are occupied by women). From our survey and interviews, no striking differences between men and women in terms of leadership are evident. It was men-

tioned that leadership is formed by character and also by how you are brought up in your family. A notable difference is that less women than men have university degrees. This is partly due to favouring/promotion of technical sciences over social sciences for scholarships. With the latter more often chosen by women, less women have a chance to study. Also, if a family has limited means there is a preference to send sons to university instead of daughters. Some of the women interviewed had attained leadership positions due to their hard work and were studying for a university degree during weekends in order to progress further. Nevertheless, there is some anecdotal evidence that men more often use authoritarian styles, and that most women, but not all, tend to favour people orientation and flexibility. An interviewee said, "*Women are ready to accept you, understand you more than men. For example, a policewoman will likely be more understanding than a policeman.*"

10.6.3   Sector

Leadership in the private sector: The study involved a balance of staff in government and farmers and private sector leaders. Flexibility and people-oriented leadership appear to be more valued and considered essential for achieving results in the private sector and FOs compared to the government.

Senior male leader's Personal Experience: Result and benefits
In my company, my leadership is based on results to be achieved. The company profit results from how the employees are treated and what each of them benefit from the outcome of the projects available within the company. It means that the more we speed up construction, the more profit we gain. This profit helps me to motivate my employees, especially the team leaders and technicians, by paying some bonus according to their contribution. Based on my experience, to become a good leader, people don't need to have university degrees or have experience in terms of working period. The leadership is a principle of humanity and personality: "owning" the people and the work—that is leading. **Mukiza Freddy**, Director of contractor firm

Senior male leader's Personal Experience: Flexibility and responsibility
We sell our skills. In terms of leadership, my employees are hired according to the available projects. Every employee is considered as a leader for the position that he has to own and be accountable for it. In our company, we are flexible, essential is that whatever we do generates cash, which is totally different from government institutions. The success I experienced is to see how my colleagues accept to work even during crisis while we are waiting payments. Their commitment to serve is higher than I could have imagined. This is the result from the collaboration we have created within our company. For me leadership is being flexible in managing and organizing the human being and their resources through flexible and friendly ways. **Muhigo Anaclet**, MD consultancy firm

The above experiences indicate that people-oriented leadership styles are key to results and success in the private sector. It also shows that there is much more flexibility on hiring and motivating staff as compared to the government, and the success and empowerment of staff leads directly to success for the company.

10.7   Leaders' Attributes

In the survey responses and interviews, several leaders' attributes were mentioned and considered important. This means that several qualities or features were regarded as a key characteristic or an inherent part of being a good leader. Below we describe the following attributes that were mentioned in detail:

- *Candidness*: Mentioned in nine interviews
- *Decisiveness*: Mentioned in 12 interviews
- *Integrity*: Mentioned in 16 interviews
- *Doing good*: Mentioned in 11 interviews
- *Adaptability*: Mentioned in 16 interviews

These attributes resonate both with the findings of the survey and the personal experiences shared during the interviews.

Candidness: Interviewees (nine) indicated the need for a leader to be candid and the benefit of frequent and direct feedback.

> *Young male leader's Personal Experience: Negotiation failed*
> The main challenge I have experienced was to present to the general assembly on how the water fee paid through cooperative was, contrary to what was agreed, not transferred to our IWUO account. I was ashamed, as even I and my farmers are members of this same cooperative. Finally, I have written an official letter to the cooperative requesting transfer of the specific amount to our IWUO account. I have also explained to the cooperative everything in detail. But till now the Cooperative has never paid us. For me as president I feel like I am the one who failed. **Shimwa Danny**, IWUO president

To facilitate feedback within teams, several mentioned the use of social media tools that facilitate communication among teams being easy, regular, and inclusive.

> *Young male leader's Personal Experience—WhatsApp management*
> My team is composed of twelve technical sector staff (male and female) that I have to coordinate. Each week I make sure that I meet everyone in his sector and discuss our progress of activities. The interaction is done regularly because we also have a WhatsApp group, which allows us to discuss all the time. The feedback when we are in a meeting doesn't require much time due to the discussion on WhatsApp where we share in friendly mood. Working as a team makes everyone motivated and in case we have some difficulty we are used to share and explore together how we can resolve it. **Muhineza August**, District director

Decisiveness: Decisiveness was mentioned in 12 interviews, both as a quality of being a leader, but also interviewees were at times critical of a lack of decisiveness in their own leaders. Among the most important qualities of a leader it was mentioned most often by survey respondents (six). They included the following comments:

- *Self-confident decision maker; Decision-making; To partner and collaborate with subordinates and beneficiaries in decision-making for any policy design before its implementation starts (collecting different ideas from different participants for satisfaction of citizen's needs); Man of Decision and cooperative; Being able to take a decision and stick to it*

Senior male leader's Personal Experience: A business mind
Nowadays, I sometimes employ more than one thousand people, mostly local people who excavate trenches and transport materials at construction sites. To take the decision to start a company, and invest capital at my own risk, did not come as a surprise. When I was in primary school, I already used to work for myself and see how I could innovate and generate much money by buying and selling something. **Mukiza Freddy**, Director of contractor firm

Integrity: In the survey, *corruption or sin* (ten) emerged as the single most important cause for losing respect for a leader, with specific comments such as:

- *Misconduct, bad behaviour, lack of integrity, corruption, injustice, lack of honesty of the leader*, and *sin*

Likewise, in the interviews the need for integrity was mentioned by almost all interviewees (16), and mentioned multiple times by mostly young leaders in private sector. Lying, or being corrupt, and not being responsible were mentioned as the most important reason for losing respect for a leader. "*A leader should not lie. It is not easy to respect someone who lies.*"

Young female leader's Personal Experience
In Africa, most of leaders become leader almost "by accident", without having the character of a leader. Some of them are not well informed on leadership and understand it as if it is like a job that first and foremost has to benefit themselves. So the challenge is a lack of change in terms of mindsets, lack of accountability. **Uwase Divine**, Senior researcher for an international NGO

Doing good: Doing good, in the sense of improving the lives of staff or the rural poor, is a key driver for many of the interviewees in their job, mentioned specifically by 11. This was, for example, expressed as follows: "My vision is to participate in change of livelihood of population where I am working." The interviewed leaders are genuinely interested in achieving their goals in order to improve the lives of rural poor people.

Young male leader's Personal Experience: Seeing poor people develop
The success I have experienced is to see people who were very poor and become someone who can support others. We have some families who used to be supported by government and now they have started to contribute for other poor families who need support of insurance. For me when my target group changes or develop, I feel stronger and successful. **Muhineza August**, District director

Young male leader's Personal Experience: I support my young staff
My success is not only earning money with my company, it is more. First of all is to create jobs for more people. Since I have started my company, I have 12 young engineers who have grown up within my company after completing their university studies. They have got married and they are able to live with their families and pay all requirements like school fees of their children, health insurance and other social needs. I feel happy when I see how their life has changed and nine of them already have their own houses. If one of them has family project, I have to support him or her by giving some credit without interest. So he can pay as long as he works with me according to his capacity. **Mukiza Freddy**, Director of contractor firm

Adaptability: A leadership challenge mentioned by the majority of respondents (16) is managing change and innovation. Views were, for example, expressed as follows: leaders should be more ready to deal with changes happening in the world, in their institutions, be innovative and dynamic, keep up with expectations and increase innovation. In every developing society, the change and the innovation are phenomena which are completely inevitable. For that, the leaders should accept such change

and innovation and promote such phenomena. Nevertheless, some leaders consider or observe change in a negative way.

During the interviews, the need for adaptability, or flexibility was mentioned by almost all, 16 out of 18 interviewees.

> *Young male leader's Personal Experience—Accepting change*
> Before I started working as a president of water users' organization, as farmers we have experienced various conflicts within the Cooperative that I am a member of. The conflicts were based on elections, decision-making, management of cooperative accounts, etc. The former president was considered as the one who has to take decision for the whole general assembly and farmers were not aware of their own responsibility in managing the cooperative. The farmers who used to present their points of views on management of cooperative were considered as the enemies; some of them have even been driven out of cooperative. This is a serious challenge that some societies face. A leader who does not accept change or innovation is the one who works only for his own interest not for all his members. In my leadership, I prefer to consult my members and consider that I represent them as people with their ideas. A leader who wants to develop in sustainable way, he has to consider change and innovation like inputs which should support the organization. **Shimwa Danny**, IWUA president

10.8   The Road to Becoming a Leader

More than half of the interviewees indicated that becoming a leader had *not* been their goal, ambition, or intention. An FO leader remarked: "*I didn't dream to be a leader. I thought that to lead people you have to study and have different experiences. But, I have been voted by farmers by about 90%, after I first was the vice president of IWUO.*" Some indicated that stories of leaders that abused their power had discouraged them from thinking about leadership. "*I heard the story of Napoleon Bonaparte, Mobutu Sese Seko, Robert Mugabe, and Idi Amin Dada. Maybe that is why I was not thinking to be a leader.*"

The road to becoming a leader was for most respondents thus not straightforward. To become a leader they were democratically elected because of their skills and attitude, prompted to take leadership positions by others or applied or appointed for leadership positions when their first choice of career did not work out as planned.

Young male leader's Personal Experience—An unexpected nomination
I have been elected to be President by the farmers working in this marshland. I was not confident that I would be able to manage more than 600 farmers. Before, I used to participate as a group member in all activities of scheme maintenance and I contributed a lot to the meetings, sometimes I was critical in the meeting. I have been president of water users' organization since 2013. Before this current position I was the vice president of the executive committee of the water users' organization. The then president resigned due to pressure of farmers after they observed that he was not able to lead them well, and I was then nominated. **Gasangwa Leo**, IWUO president

10.8.1   Role Models

With one exception, the leaders interviewed mentioned the need for role models, although almost half of the leaders interviewed indicated that they lacked inspiring role models in their vicinity or had no role models of good leaders. As one district official said: "*I have never learnt about leadership by looking at others. I have taken the decision to look for my methodology based on the situation of my beneficiaries.*" Majority of young leaders and all women interviewed mentioned the issue of role models more than once. Some respondents mentioned teachers as their role models; the teachers were persons they admired when they were young.

Senior male leader's Personal Experience: My role model: My teacher
My vision was never to be a leader of group of people as I am doing now. In my life, I was thinking to teach in primary school closer to my home. I used to see the teachers and I considered them amazing and wanted to become like them. After my primary school, I continued my secondary school at a teacher training centre. After my study, I didn't find the job I dreamed of. After one year, I got a scholarship for university of Rwanda where I did four years on education. I completed my university in the period of decentralization in 2004 when most of the students of my class, including me, were appointed to work as leaders in local administrative institutions. **Ngabo Marc**, District officer

> *Young female leader's Personal Experience*
> I am the firstborn in my family; when you are first born you have to be responsible for your brothers and sisters, as I do. This is also leadership. I have started my weekend programme for studying in the university where I have been promoted to class representative. To be class representative, it is like coaching me in leadership, on how to deal with people having various behaviours and how to manage the complicated ones. I think there should be clubs or schools specialized in leadership where identified qualified people should be trained as leaders. **Ineza Sophie**, Supply assistant for NGO in refugee camp

A little more than half of the respondents mentioned well-known leaders that they have read or heard about, and that they consider as role models. Frequently mentioned were African leaders such as Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda; Nelson Mandela; and former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere. In interviews with a private sector leader it was indicated that "*I am inspired by businessman leaders as I am working with a private company. I know some like: Warren Buffett, Jeff Bezos, and Jack Welch.*" Others mentioned author Stephen Covey, Jack Ma of Alibaba, and Steve Jobs. The only female leaders were mentioned by a female NGO leader. "*As I am a woman, I like the stories of women. The example that I know is Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice, etc. and in my country I like Louise Mushikiwabo* [Foreign Affairs Minister] *and the story of Agathe Uwiringiyimana* [who served as *Prime Minister of Rwanda* from July 1993 until her assassination in April 1994]."

10.8.2   Leadership Determinants

School and university is a phase that presents an opportunity for young people to assume first leadership roles. A national level leader remarked: "*When I was at my University I have been a Secretary of an organization for two years, and I can say that my leadership experience started from there.*" Two leaders interviewed indicated that they feel that being a leader starts when you are young and gave examples of their own youth.

Young male leader's Personal Experience—Training ground

I remember that I started to be a leader in my first year of primary school when I was chosen by other students to become their leader of the football team in a competition. I do not remember what criteria they used to select me, but what I know is that I was not at all good in football.

During my second year in University, I was pushed by friends to apply for the position of Commissioner of Sport, Culture and Leisure and was elected with many votes. My vision was to satisfy all those who voted for me, and also those who did not vote for me. My success was based on implementing ideas of the university students, which I collected through meetings of the general assembly. It was an amazing period that I will never forget. All who played a role were considered important; we shared the successes and challenges as one team. I found that success depends on how a leader interacts positively with his group members, by soliciting their views and sharing the successes. **Hirwa Jean**, Rural development consultant

Young male leader's Personal Experience—Born leaders

For me, I think that the leadership doesn't come accidentally. I started to feel a leader when I was in secondary school where I was a class monitor in my senior two, three, and five; I was voted by students as a "doyen" to represent them. That day I was known by all students because I also used to lead a scouting troupe. **Senga Jado**, District official

Respondents were asked their advice for young people in developing effective leadership skills and behaviour.

Advice to young leaders

A young male elected farmers' leader: My advice to young people is to accept being led by their people. When you are a leader, you have to accept that the community that you lead is like your boss. Young leaders have to consider the idea of community and give them time to contribute in the development of their organization. To succeed in leadership doesn't require special skills. The important thing is to respect the vision of community and integrate the idea of all through cooperation. **Gasangwa Leo**, IWUO president

A young female NGO trainer: My advice to young people is that leaders should accept and lead people based on their contexts. The leadership is specific in each situation, and you should not copy and paste as most of them they do. The leadership depends on the society, its culture, the ways of believe, social cohesion of local communities, etc. A leader should know the society he wants to lead and try to improve what they have, not change everything. Every community has its own ways of being managed. **Sangwa Alice**, NGO trainer

A senior male district director: Young leaders have to develop their emotional skills and they should be intelligent in order to know how to handle community issues. They should motivate their team and facilitate all services as soon as possible. The leaders should be flexible and responsible in all activities conducted under their leadership. These leaders should create a good environment within their team. **Muhineza August**, District director

10.8.3   Skills Development

The Rwanda Government's Policy note on decentralization states that empowering stakeholders for action is a part of the change management strategy. The note states that a "decentralized service delivery approach is a relatively new concept that will need capacity building support and training. Training will support new expected behaviours during the transition period and will provide tools to implement the new management practices."

Young male leader's Personal Experience: Training on roles and responsibilities
About seven years ago, I worked in the district as director of planning and evaluation. I organized training for staff at district, sector, and cell level in order to clarify their objectives and roles and responsibilities and relationships between all staff. We designed various templates for a reporting system. The resulting success was that all participants were aware of the vision on all levels. Thus, the capacity of a group that you are leading can be built by having common goals and objectives. **Hirwa Jean**, Rural development consultant

Nevertheless, respondents indicated that a challenge they face is the lack of leadership skills or team management skills. The majority started leading people without any, or enough experience, and developed their skills mostly by learning from mistakes. This is not necessarily a problem, as for example one district official remarked: "*I consider leadership as a vocation. I have seen successful leaders who did not get any training or education, whereas some who are specialized in it can do the worst things.*"

Some of the leaders from farmer-based organizations were involved in a training programme based on participatory principles, combining leadership training with participatory planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. This was the Kirehe Community-based Watershed Management Project (KWAMP), an International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) supported project, implemented by the Rwanda Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources in Kirehe District (IFAD, 2016). This project facilitated IWUO capacity building. Four key areas were covered: management and governance; agronomy, technical irrigation, and water management; monitoring and review; and exchange of experiences. Governance issues related to understanding the roles and responsibilities of the IWUO; causes of conflicts and their resolution and the awareness of the members of IWUO on their rights related to access to water services; information and their collective power in holding their leaders accountable. Participatory and practical training activities at scheme level improved the retention of learning among the IWUO committees, block leaders, and farmers. Training in the field, instead of in

a classroom, increased awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the IWUO among a large number of members and other stakeholders. This resulted in enhanced monitoring and planning practices by all stakeholders involved. A large pool of trainers was involved: it included district, sector, and cell staff, local leaders, IWUO committee members, and farmers. This wide involvement had an impact on improved coordination and planning and resulted in an increased sense of ownership. After thus strengthening the organizations, the operation and maintenance of large irrigation systems in the district of Kirehe was formally transferred to IWUOs.

Author Joseph K. Nsabimana worked as Water Users' Organization Specialist; he explains: "*The vision was to see farmers own the irrigation scheme, able to maintain the infrastructure, and pay water fees. The key challenge was that most of these farmers experienced a serious problem with management of the Cooperative in the past. To succeed, the farmers needed to take the lead and be involved in the process of creating their own, new, organization. To determine the roles of each member was also important because everyone had to know how each role is important for the whole group. In this situation, a leader is the one who is working friendly with subordinates and wants to build their capacity.*"

10.9   Conclusions/Discussion

The majority of survey respondents and leaders interviewed in Rwanda indicate a desire for a shift to more people-oriented leadership styles. Several examples were cited where the use of more authoritarian leadership styles was seen as hampering proper planning and ultimately obstructing achievement of results in rural development. Many leaders interviewed already practice a participative style and believe that this is the reason they are achieving results. Most of them express the wish that their own leaders also become more consultative.

To support the process of decentralization, which entails devolving power and responsibilities to lower levels in the administration and farmer organizations, they argue for greater (financial) control and more coordination and consultation. Managing upwards and reconciling, or buffering, different needs and interests by leaders who feel "sandwiched" in middle level positions is identified as a systemic challenge, especially as perceptions of enactment of hierarchy are changing.

Respondents' leadership challenges also relate to managing downwards, such as the management of people/followers, especially when attempting to use more participatory, inspirational, or coaching leadership styles.

Overall, people have different expectations and leadership approaches and these do not (yet) match. Often this results in sub-optimal planning, decision-making, and communication, ultimately affecting the result and sustainability of the rural development activities. At a personal level, it can lead to feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and demotivation.

An interesting finding is that the majority of leaders never aimed for a leadership position but happened to be elected or appointed. Few of the leaders interviewed had received any leadership training prior to becoming a leader. Probably the most trained are the Farmer Organization leaders. They did receive training, mostly on governance, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of their organizations and on the functioning of different committees in their organizations.

Many leaders lack Inspiring Leadership role models in their vicinity. They indicated that they want to be a different type of leader—use more a participative, coaching, or inspirational style—but only a few have experienced these styles from their own leaders.

The findings indicate that development of young leaders needs to focus on learning skills to support the people-oriented leadership styles, as well as communication, influencing, and negotiation skills to implement these styles in a changing environment with mixed values and expectations and in "sandwich" positions. Mentoring by inspiring role models would be of great benefit in the learning process.

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