

# When Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Integrate Supply Chain Plans with Government: An Enviably Silent Blue Print at Trôcaire Rwanda

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## Abstract

This paper explores the genesis of relationships between NGOs and government in the context of delivery of public services that is conceptualized as a supply chain. Existing research reveals that traditionally the relationships between governments and NGOs has been dominated by adversarialism, denying citizens the value that would be retrieved from public service supply chains if the two actors worked in partnership. Based on interviews, focus group discussion and review of documents, the study finds that despite the traditional state of relationships between NGOs and government, a new trend is emerging. This is enabling citizens to achieve more in the public service supply chains in developing countries such as Rwanda. The outcome of this paper points to the fact that government and NGOs should model partnerships to deliver public services that cause impact on citizens welfare. This paper is relevant as it proposes a new kind of partnership that enables citizens to achieve extra out of public service delivery supply chains amidst increasing financial difficulty for government to deliver public services on their own.

## Keywords

Non-Governmental Organizations, Government Partnership, Public Service Delivery, Supply Chains

## 1. Introduction

Partnerships between governments and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have remained a contentious issue. While the origins of partnership have suggested fragility, new trends are emerging [56]. Such trends are defining new fronts in partnerships with NGOs and state. NGOs are committed to organizational autonomy; they are organized on the principle of voluntarism; and they seek to mobilize 'popular energies in support of community goals [6]. Historically, NGOs have operated adversarial relationships with the state [60]. However, over years NGOs have secured pace in public domain due to gaps in welfare delivery by the

state [37]. In their public space, NGOs do not only liaise between state and society but also fulfill vital welfare functions that would otherwise go un-served [60].

Partnerships remain one of the important assets necessary to deliver public value [21, 22, 32, 33]. As the role of the state becomes increasingly stretched NGOs and state partnership become inevitable.

In the aftermath of genocide in Rwanda 1990-1994, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) embarked on a reconstruction, rehabilitation and development mission. Like any other government world over, improvement of livelihoods is pitched as key on electoral agenda. As governments strive to achieve this agenda, they have been faced with overstretched budgets amidst other long-term investments such as delivery

of public infrastructure (roads, power dams, railways, airports, hospitals), necessary to smoothen demand and supply flows in economies. Amidst this

While Non-governmental organizations were previously viewed as enemies of state, the trend is changing. A shift from some adversarial relationships remains across nations but with difficulty. The severity of this kind of relationships has and continues to be silently and formally cemented by Acts and regulations that tend to eliminate the freedoms that NGOs have previously enjoyed [61]. Despite enormous value that NGOs provide in times of crisis such as feeding the displaced, hungry, persons whose human rights have been violated and promotion of state programmes in areas of health and education, the environment in which NGOs operate is worrying. Amidst this worry lies a question facing national governments, multilateral institutions, and national and multinational corporations, is not whether to include NGOs in their deliberations and activities [11]. Although many traditional centres of power are fighting a rear-guard action against these new players, there is no real way to keep them out. Instead, the real challenge is figuring out how to incorporate NGOs into the international system in a way that takes account of their diversity and scope, their various strengths and weaknesses, and their capacity to disrupt as well as to create [49].

In China, with the birth of the People's Republic of China ("PRC") in 1949, the Chinese government abolished or co-opted all independent social groups including religious organizations, professional societies, and labour unions [29]. In this process, foreign NGOs were compelled to leave China. However, since the "Reform and Opening-up" policy of the late 1970s, the government adopted a more flexible and variable legitimacy for social organizations, which resulted in an initial emergence of NGOs. NGO's have in been in most cases blocked from entering the country. Those that have managed have faced sporadic operations [61].

In China, NGOs space was curtailed with the establishment of the Republic of China spelled a dark era for NGOs China [58, 60]. However, over time several reforms have been undertaken that have required greater participation of the private sector [29]. Additional dramatic changes in the Chinese economy have set in motion a process of social transformation. New socio-economic groups such as rich farmers, traders, entrepreneurs, and Chinese managers in foreign companies have begun to emerge [29, 60, 62].

In Japan, the NGO and state experience has been characterised by adversarial [47]. They further assert that NGOs have risen due to growth of capitalism, and defence against despotism.

In Latin America, the move towards neo-liberalism has created interest in NGOs and their potential role as agents of delivery services [19]. Proponents of such events view NGOs as efficient, small-scale, cost-easily managed, and able to further policies of decentralization, eliminate strengthen civil society and facilitate political participation at grassroots [5, 18].

In South East Asia and particularly in Philippines, the relationships between NGOs and the state has always been

on the verge of divorce [12, 49]. In Philippines, NGOs were involved in drafting the country's constitution in 1987 and now participate in election campaigns, socio economic events. However, in the years 1980s and early 1990 the work of NGO's have faced trauma as NGO workers were killed by government and opposition promoters due to their political participation [43, 49]. Despite such events and closure of NGOs, the NGOs have continued efforts to increase political participation of communities amidst weak opposition political parties, trade unions and peasant associations.

In United Kingdom, Singapore and Netherlands, NGOs' comfort with government is yielding fruition. Governments are increasingly broadening boundaries of perception that are enabling governments to secure strategic foresight [26]. Greater engagement on matters of national policy is enabling governments to deliver extended value in human rights observance, public investments in healthcare, transport, legislation [13].

In Africa, new prominence of NGOs naturally attracts the attention of public authorities. Whether NGOs are international and community-based, all operate within the boundaries of a nation-state and at the pleasure of a sovereign government. Because governments resist any reduction of their leadership role in development, they are likely to attempt to condition the context for voluntary sector activity, for example enacting legal and administrative instruments [6]. The origin of NGO activity is traceable in the colonial period before early 1960s when most states started securing Independence. Non-government organizations, in the form of churches and missionary societies, were the principal providers of health and education services, especially in the undeveloped hinterland [6]. The origins have and continue to cement a close relationship between citizens than the state as entry points of engagement define the needs of bottom of the pyramid that puts the state in vulnerable position.

In Uganda, the NGO movement is traceable from colonial rule to 1980's where there was a relatively small NGOs sector, dominated mainly by the humanitarian and evangelistic organizations such as church related organizations [34]. Faith based organizations provided crucial services such as schools, medical care and counseling. Other NGOs such as Women's Organizations, social clubs, professional organizations were organized along interests of their constituents. Until recently NGOs were not looked upon as significant alternative providers of services to the state sector or as representing alternative policy framework to the state or private sector NGOs are a key stakeholder in the development process [34, 40]. This could be partly due to lack of credibility on ground [40]. This has overtime created adversarial relationship between government and NGOs.

### **1.1. Role of Government in Public Affairs**

The state has cardinal responsibility of allocation of resources. By allocation of resources across various sectors through budgeting frameworks, the state can be able to create and stabilise financial markets [51]. Duffield and Waddell [11] argue that all states have a role in development, but this

varies widely. The spectrum is defined at one end by the *laissez faire* minimalist state whose role is limited to ensuring a stable and secure environment so that contracts, property rights and other institutions of the market can be honored [19]. Government have a role to improve competitiveness of business, which in turns translates into creation of employment, widened tax base [39].

### **1.2. NGOs & Public Service Delivery as Supply Chains**

Public value is delivered through supply chain flows of supplies, services and works that have always delivered public infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. NGOs role has over years focused on perseverance of human rights through initiating activities aimed at providing a voice to the voiceless and influencing consumption behavior. Globally, NGOs have focused on three core issues; improving endowments of the poor so that they can compete more effectively and achieve basic level of security, voice and equality of rights; enabling vulnerable groups to explore modes of production and exchange which are less costly in social and environmental terms, building social capital for use in market settings and turn market forces to the advantage of poorer groups by reducing benefits normally siphoned off by intermediaries using joint marketing associations [14].

It has also been argued that service by NGOs alleviates the symptoms of poverty without challenging the causes [14] and may indirectly reduce pressure to reform bureaucratic and ineffective ministries [1]. Government has a role to deliver public value through offering public services like health, education, and transport in ways that are acceptable to its citizens [12]. On the other hand, government must create economies that work. Making them work requires that adequate regulation of market forces and players [57].

### **1.3. NGO Experience in Rwanda**

The post Genocide period in 1994 ushered a new era in Rwanda [52]. In the aftermath of Genocide, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) embarked on recovery, reconstruction and development phase [56]. This has dominated the agenda of the Rwanda Patriotic Movement and Rwandan government has been on the move. Despite criticism over human rights abuse and complexities that surround the process of undemanding the extent of compliance with human rights [9, 16, 53] such as freedom of speech and movement in Rwanda, there are enormous strides that have been achieved in delivering public value to the Rwandan people. Enormous achievements have been secured in ICT [27], doing business where Rwanda has over the last years been ranked at the most attractive destination in East Africa [2].

### **1.4. Trôcaire Rwanda (NGO) and Its Non-Government Organizations Operations**

Trôcaire Rwanda has been implementing a three-year

project entitled 'Equitable and sustainable wealth creation for small scale producers in Rwanda (2012 - 2015). This project intended to support 10,610 small producers and vulnerable people (6,286 women and 4,324 men) to improve their household food security and income through improved agricultural production and market value chain development. The project was implemented in five districts by six local partners; Caritas Gikongoro, IPFG and UNICOPAGI in Nyamagabe and Nyaruguru districts, COCOF in Kamonyi and Muhanga districts, DUHAMIC ADRI in Kamonyi district and RDO in Nyagatare district. The project sought to deliver public value through partnerships with Executive Secretaries at sector local government administration level. The principal's agents participated at sector level contributing to determining development priorities and contributing to setting of targets that result into framing and signing up of national performance contracts known as 'Imihigo' across various levels of administrative structures in Rwanda's governance.

## **2. Research Methods**

The study adopted a survey approach, where researcher administered questionnaires, semi structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD's) and document review were used to collect data. In using Focus Group Discussion, the study held discussions with Trôcaire Staff, partner staff, SACCO cooperative farmer members who organized themselves in a workshop setup

Population; The Trade project targeted support 10,610 small producers and vulnerable people (6,286 women and 4,324 men) to improve their household food security and income through improved agricultural production and market value chain development.

Sampling strategy & size selection; A stratified random sampling was adopted: Potential respondents are organized into strata, or distinct categories, and randomly sampled using simple or systematic sampling within strata to ensure that specific subgroups of interest such as Trôcaire staff, Project Partner Focal points, Farmer Cooperative Executive Committee members and members of interest groups were selected. Within the stratified samples, the study conveniently and purposive reached out to target 119 members under this study that adopted qualitative investigation framework. This targeted sample is appropriate as excess are discouraged in qualitative investigation [61].

Data Collection Approach; the study adopted a survey approach. Interviews, focus group discussions (FGD's) and semi structured interviewed were used to collect data.

Focus groups discussions were used. In using focus group discussion, the study held focus group discussion with Trôcaire Staff, partner staff, SACCO cooperative farmer members who organized themselves in a workshop setup. The study also adopted observation to try and reflect on the impact of the project in supporting daily livelihoods of participants in the study. Conversation methodology was adopted in among vulnerable communities. To achieve

maximum impact, we shared drinks with participants of the study with the objective of creating a friendly environment that enabled us to retrieve deep stories on the whether the project created impact on their livelihoods.

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### 3. Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics from semi structured questionnaires. The study also transcribed data from recordings and organized them in structured themes to triangulate analysis. Transcribed data was obtained from recordings, field notes, observations and conversations held with beneficiaries of the trade project. Themes were aligned with semi structured questionnaires response flow. The findings of this study were shared with Trōcaire monitoring and evaluation team members and later presented in meeting with Trōcaire Rwanda team and representatives of partner members' team. The study reviewed work plans, memoranda of understanding with partners, results based framework, project baseline survey report, project appraisal document, audit reports and many other relevant documents. The objective of this meeting involved validation of baseline and outcome data. Confirming results with participants, and peer debriefing is recommended to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research [23-25]. Validity was further confirmed by seeking feedback from colleagues with monitoring and evaluation background, development studies and agronomy. The study sought to triangulate by comparing multiple sources which were visited in search of common themes.

### 4. Findings

Findings in the study to some extent disagree and agree with previous studies undertaken on the role of partnerships between governments and NGOs in public service delivery supply chains.

#### 4.1. Scope of NGO and Government Partnerships

The data collected reveals that across 5 districts, areas of engagement included;

##### 4.1.1. Sector Planning Meetings

One partner member remarked,

*'We participate in sector planning meetings at local government level. At such meetings we provide input in setting of targets associated with crop yield, and stabilisation*

*of farm crop farm gate prices'.*

Another partner member in Nyagatare on the border between Uganda and Rwanda shares in the same thought;

*'we have worked with the sector leadership here to provide post-harvest facilities to farmer cooperative members that are enabling the sector to meet targets in the Imihigo (government performance contracts with public servants)'.*

#### 4.1.2. Partnership to Provide Quality Seed to Citizens

Findings reveal that Trōcaire and its partners supported local government administration in providing quality seeds. Farmers in Kamonyi district revealed that the partners had provided seed shops that provide quality and subsidized seeds to farmer cooperative members and the public. Such partnerships in delivering intervention had delivered improved crop tiled with farmers revealing at least 40% to 100% increase in crop yield at the end of the project. This is deemed to have supported government efforts in reducing poverty among Rwandans.

#### 4.1.3. Contribution Towards Sector Activities

NGO partnership with government in identifying opportunities is considered as an element of commissioning in the public sector [30]. Trōcaire and its NGO partners reveal that by working with government at sector level, they have been able to identify opportunities that enable citizens and develop shared strategies with sector administration to improve their livelihoods. For instance, in Kamonyi district, an NGO partner revealed;

*'we have been able to identify soya crop as priority crop together at Kamonyi. The crop has previously been considered as a crop for the poor. Working with sector officials, we have been able to include soya as a priority crop. Now our cooperative farmer member able to sale soya and take care of their basic needs, pay school fees, and pay their healthcare insurance'.*

In other districts like Muhanga, soya is now used to make soya flour supplied in schools, supermarket chains and exported. The crop has also contributed to industrialization agenda as soya milk processing plants have been established creating employment and market for farmers' soya produce. This stride is in line with the view that citizens expect more from their governments than mere arm's length trading [56].

#### 4.2. How NGO's Partner with Government to Enhance Public Service Delivery Chains

No nation has become great without developing its agriculture and its concomitant institutions [31, 44]. In Africa, there is increasing evidence that suggests that Africa's success in achieving food self-sufficiency rests deeply with a large part of small holder farmers [58].

##### 4.2.1. Agricultural Production (Yield/Outcomes)

Overall, 99% of respondents indicated that their incomes

had increased. 35% of respondents attributed their growth in incomes due to access to improved seeds and fertilizers, 30% attributed growth in comes on access to knowledge and 20% attributed their increase to collective bargaining, 15% indicated that growth in household incomes was attributed to access to post harvest facilities such as threshers, hangers, reduced sickness incidents due to the ability for cooperatives to provide healthcare insurance (Imihigo). A Saving Society Association member remarked;

*Continuing population and consumption growth will mean that the global demand for food will increase for at least another 40 years. Growing competition for land, water, and energy, in addition to the overexploitation of fisheries, will affect our ability to produce food, as will the urgent requirement to reduce the impact of the food system on the environment.*

By partnering with government, NGOs are able to support government to achieve their role of ensuring that their citizens are self-sufficient [17, 30].

#### 4.2.2. Access to Improved Quality of Seed and Increased Crop Yield

*Through the sector and our partners of Trôcaire we have received improved quality seed ('imbuto') that have enabled us to improve crop yield'. Before, the project crop yield at my household per acre of maize was 0.3 tons per acre and now am able to harvest 2.5 tons per acre'.*

**Table 1.** Status of Crop Yield over the Trade Project Period (2012-2015).

S/N	Nature of Crop supported by the Trade Project	Baseline Yield /ha (2012)	Current Yield/ha (2015)
1	Maize	3.0 tons	3.5 tons
2	Soya	0.8 tons	1.2 tons
3	Wheat	2.5 tons	3.2 tons

Findings from review of farmer cooperative members indicate that yield per hectare for soya increased by 59.1% from 2.2 tonnes to 3.5 tonnes with input of 50kgs seed input per hectare. Participants attributed this greatly to access to a partnership between sector's agronomists and partners' agronomists improved seeds, and knowledge on use of improved technologies such as fertilizers and access to post harvest facilities such as drying grounds provided by farmer cooperatives supported under the Trade Project. "Growing populations and competition for land, water, and energy, in addition to the overexploitation of fisheries, will affect our ability to produce food, as will the urgent requirement to reduce the impact of the food system on the environment" [20]. The ability for government to partner with NGOs to increase food production and productivity is enabling nations and governments to feed its people.

#### 4.2.4. Food Security

*A participant revealed;*

*'We are now food secure'. We used to eat one meal a day*

This is in line with earlier studies that suggest that government should support interventions that enable improvement of capacities of citizens at lower levels [48]. It is further argued that over 20% of Africans cannot access quality seed [20]. By supporting government efforts to reduce hunger through provision of good quality subsidized seed, this intervened on the current crisis of limited access to quality seeds.

#### 4.2.3. New Crops Discovered, and Extended Value Secured

*An Executive Secretary laments;*

*'Soya was traditionally considered to be a crop of the poor. We have worked with Trôcaire to promote the crop. Through our partnership and their partner members in our sector; soya has been promoted. The soya crop has helped our people diversify sources of income, earning money that has enabled them to contribute to their healthcare insurance, buy cows, and pay school fees. In Districts, unlike ours, soya has immensely contributed to supporting Rwanda's Industrialization agenda. For instance, in one district, soya production has enabled commencement of factories that transform soya into soya meat and soya milk that has resulted into direct and indirect job creation for staff'.*

Further evidences suggest that crops that were supported included maize, soya and wheat had increased yield in the project period.

*and didn't know what we shall eat the next day. These people and our political leaders at sector level have provided us with seed and technical support that has enabled us to secure improved yield per harvest. We are able have enough to eat, sell and we store food for future consumption from up to 3 to 4 months. You can come and see what we have in stores'.*

Tomlinson [55] defines food security as the ability for households to have food reserves to last at least 3 years. Further analysis revealed that over 86% of respondents from a baseline of 50% are now able to have at least 2 meals per day as well and have food to last them at least 3 months ahead. Food insecurity has been linked to high-risk sexual behavior in sub-Saharan Africa, predisposes individuals to risky sexual practices [36]. Therefore, by partnering with government to increase food security, the costs associated with managing the effects of high risk behavior such as contraction of HIV-AIDS can be reduced and managed.

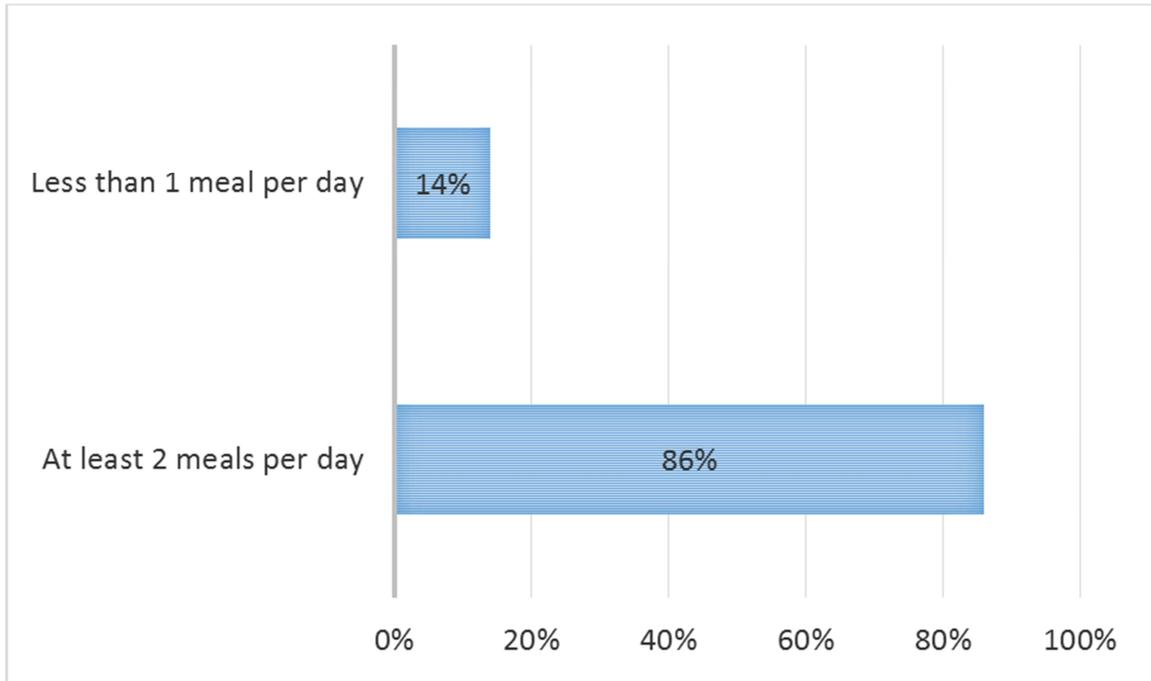


Figure 1. Trade Project's Contribution in Increasing Food Security.

Source: field data

Farmer cooperative members reveal that food security was attributed to access to improved yield seed and technical agricultural training support provided by the Trade Project.

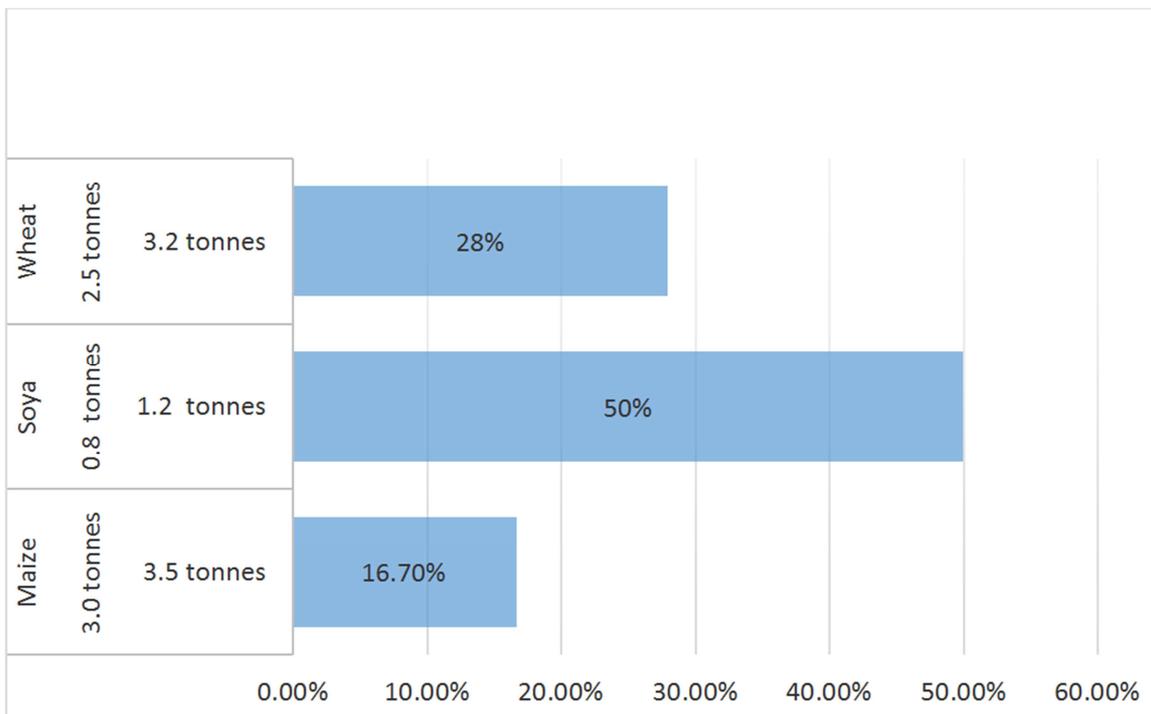


Figure 2. Change in Crop Yield over the Trade Project Period (2012-2015).

Source: field data

Overall, the study revealed that yield for crops supported by the Trade Project; maize, soya and wheat increased. Increase in yield helped to provide not only meals for farmers

but provided surplus that enabled farmers to service basic needs such as paying for health care insurance, school fees for children, and construct houses.

#### 4.2.5. Better Prices for Crop Yield

The study reveals that when government at local government partner with NGO's, farmers can retrieve greater returns from sale of their produce. The findings reveal that the trade project connected farmer cooperative associations to microfinance institutions and banks that would buy the crop yield of maize using what is known as the 'warrantage system'. Under the 'warrantage' system, banks and microfinance institutions would agree a market rate for the crop, pay 70% of the agreed value at maturity and pay the balance within at least a period not exceeding 3 months. Due to high poverty levels, farmer cooperative members who would previously sell off their produce prematurely and at low prices are now able to retrieve extended returns from sale of crops. Further analysis reveals that there was an overall 41% increase in prices for maize from Rwf 160/kg to Rwf 205/kg has been witnessed and 21% increase in price of wheat from Rwf320 to Rwf 450/kg was achieved in the year 2015. Several responses saturated responses from study farmer cooperative members participants;

*'the warrantage system now has enabled me to feed my people, pay school fees. Through returns from the warrantage system I have been able to renovate my house'.*

*'Greater returns have enabled my family to buy additional land that am preparing for the next planting season. I expect my family crop yield to double at the next harvest'.*

The study findings reveal that when governments partner with NGOs, citizens are empowered to secure greater returns from their crop yield with innovations such as the innovative 'warrantage' systems. As governments increasingly become financially constrained to offer, innovative financing options like such are not only vital now but will always remain critical for uplifting livelihoods of citizens.

#### 4.2.6. Technical Skills Enhancement

Despite governments' efforts to improve livelihoods through agriculture, lack of skills has always been an impediment to adoption of improved agricultural technologies and practices in Rwanda [56]. Maxwell [35] argues further that government run agricultural extension services are simply too overstretched to support small holder farmers' need to increase production of market –quality produce. Through working with partners like Caritas Gikongoro, the sector's administration agricultural services to the community were extended. A respondent in Nyamagabe district notes;

*'I am now able to use fertilizers in the right mix, adopt modern maize spacing practices, and identify appropriate pesticides for crop spraying'*

Another cooperative farmer member supported, reveals; *'yield from land has increased due to adopting land consolidation practices'.*

By supporting government administration to deliver extension services, citizens are able to have the most from

their life expectancy.

### 5. Key Success Factors for NGO's and Government Partnership for Service Delivery

The findings reveal that for NGOs to partner with government to improve public delivery supply chains, several enablers exist. Revelations from participants suggest that these include;

Adopting a collaborative other than an adversarial approach

The study revealed that once NGOs work with a partnership approach with government agencies, both NGOs and partners can achieve their objectives. However, some respondents revealed that through collaboration with government actors, NGOs risk losing their independence. This view is supported by Selsky and Parker [48]; Yanacopulos [59]; Mutua [38]; and Coston [10], that argue that one of the collaborations increasingly enable NGOs to achieve their objectives.

Understanding of government priorities and aligning activities to support government activities to provide solutions to problems

Participants believe that when NGOs understand government agenda they are able to develop interventions that are aimed at addressing previously solo but rather shared problems.

*'Previously we operated in isolation of government agenda, but by focusing on understanding government priorities we now focus on gender mainstreaming, end hunger, through improving food security by working with sector government, citizens are able to trust more what we do'.*

In Kigali, one partner in Kamonyi district,

*'by aligning our activities to contribute to Imihigo (National Performance Contracts) we support sector administration to meet targets. This has enabled strengthening of partnership between us and sector administration.'*

*'In Nyagatare district, NGOs must show us how they will contribute to our Imihigo (annual performance contracts). We share with them our plans and they are allowed to map out sectors they will contribute to. Once this is done we set them targets which help us to measure their performance as well''*

### 6. Conclusion

A shift from adversarialism to collaborative arrangements is increasing for NGO and Government world over. Adversarialism delays service delivery as both government, as a regulator, is likely to develop mistrust with NGOs. Evidences reveal that public service supply chain increasingly require a collaborative approach to deliver outcomes earlier and in a more sustainable manner.

The study concludes that when NGOs and governments adopt a supply chain philosophy, they are likely to deliver extended service to their citizens. For this to succeed, the study came up with several implications for policy.

While adopting a supply chain framework, Government, public administration and NGOs should adopt a partnership other than an adversarial approach that is based on maintaining independence but striving to engage in shared actions that will ultimately result into extended service to citizens through fact based approach (commissioning). The Public sector through Ministries and at local government level should engage NGOs in sector planning in order secure integrated support from NGOs and mutualisation of development objectives and enhanced service delivery.

Despite the inevitability of adversity that may arise in such partnerships, commissioning lies in the ability to reconfigure NGO & Government engagement towards a collaborative supply chain engagement. A supply chain approach is recommended for public service delivery. This will involve identification of actors, their roles, flows of resources and information and integration of activities aimed at achieving the objectives associated with satisfying needs of citizens

Public administrators should hold forums for disseminating progress achieved with working with NGOs. This motivates NGOs to sustain partnerships with government and public administration actors. Giving NGOs space to operate and do research with citizens can help NGOs to create and innovate new untapped livelihood frontiers. For instance, discovery and commercialization of new crops. Public administrators and government should require that NGOs map an area of support to annual work plan and be given targets to deliver in that mapped and selected area. This will help to eliminate complacency in partnership.

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