

IDEAL 2017 | 2021

Strengthening Local Authorities in Burundi

Effectiveness, Responsiveness and Accountability



Executive Summary

Inclusive Decisions at Local Level (IDEAL) is a five-year programme (2017-2021) implemented by VNG International. The programme aims to strengthen the involvement of citizens in local governance in seven countries facing fragility or conflict, including Burundi. IDEAL Burundi (implemented in eight communes in central-south Burundi) contributes to inclusive local governance by strengthening the inclusive and gender-sensitive approach of the five-year strategic local development planning process (PCDC).

This report aims to answer the question *'What approaches/models/interventions have strengthened inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive local development planning in IDEAL Burundi?'* through both an analysis of programme reports and interviews with participants in the IDEAL programme including local government authorities, civil society representatives, and ACO-Burundi staff. The intention is for local government officials and all those working on inclusive governance in Burundi to be able to utilise this report as a resource when practicing any of the approaches highlighted.

Between 2017-2021, three key approaches were used in the IDEAL Burundi programme: capacity development, building local resilience, and gender sensitivity.

1 Capacity development. The main objective of the capacity development approach is to strengthen the skills and knowledge of local authorities to assess, plan, and implement effective inclusive development, especially in regard to inclusion of women, girls, and other vulnerable groups in development programmes and local governance mechanisms. Capacity development was delivered predominantly through four interventions: trainings, training of trainers, action learning, and on-the-job coaching.

Trainings – themed on inclusive governance with a specific focus on PCDC – included general modules and those specific to Burundi. The three fundamental principles of good governance (transparency, participation and accountability) formed the backbone of the training. The *Training of Trainers* (ToT) model comprehensively prepares local agents (often civil society representatives) to deliver trainings directly (often to CDC and CCDC members) in their local contexts. Action learning focusses on making sure that the learning process – including training activities – is centred around participants' concrete professional problems and their actions to address these problems. Following the training module, *on-the-job coaching* occurred with local authorities to follow-up on learnings. The coach helped local authorities to

improve service delivery, work on participatory budgeting, manage taxes, and improve transparency of public resources.

2 Building local resilience. The process of building local resilience occurs by strengthening and making more inclusive existing systems and processes and/or putting new ones in place as needed. The primary mechanism in Burundi is the *development of the community development plans* (PCDC). IDEAL supported *relaunching the CDCs* with a renewed and clear mission toward inclusivity. Furthermore, IDEAL supported local authorities and CSOs to complete the 3rd PCDC. The key was to shift the direction of the PCDC process: rather than the plan being dictated centrally down to the hillsides, instead the PCDC was viewed as a collection of hillside plans synthesized down to the commune level. As a result, PCDCs of the eight IDEAL municipalities are more responsive to and inclusive of diverse citizens' priorities than PCDCs in previous years or those from other municipalities. However, making inclusive plans is only the first step. Plans must be resourced to become reality, which is why IDEAL introduced *participatory budgeting*. With support from IDEAL, some communes prepare the Annual Investment Plan (PAI) in a more participatory way where CDCs and other civil society groups (CLBG) deliver input on citizens' behalf. With this approach, the population is able to follow the annual implementation of communal projects, as they are involved in the PAI preparation. IDEAL introduced new *accountability tools* (e.g., Community Score Card (CSC)) to local authorities and civil society representatives as a framework for dialogue between municipal staff and community representatives to improve the quality of the services that are offered by the municipality through a social audit.

3 Gender sensitivity. Cross-cutting across all aspects of governance is a need to be sensitive to the needs and interests of all genders. Historically, women in Burundi have experienced exclusion from key governance processes and holding decision-making positions. With support from IDEAL, local authorities, civil society representatives, and community members have been sensitised on gendered considerations for development. IDEAL began with *raising gender awareness*: the ability to view society from the perspective of gender roles and how these roles affect women's needs in comparison to the needs of men. Strengthening gender sensitivity involved *translating this awareness into action* through policies, programs and budgets. Building on a foundation of capacity development, numerous approaches and activities were implemented including ensuring women's inclusion in PCDC processes including in CDCs/CCDCs, the development of a *gender strategy* for ACO-Burundi and REFECOM, and awareness raising workshops.

Recommendations

- 1 **Continue Inclusion of Target Groups:** Citizens overwhelmingly appreciated being able to participate in public meetings and influence real communal issues and decisions. Ensure that their participation sustains into future PCDC planning, PAI budgeting, and other communal activities even without partner support from IDEAL.
- 2 **Prioritise PCDC Evaluation:** To date, little attention has been given to PCDC evaluation. This remains a gap in the participatory process. CDCs and CCDCs are responsible to monitor and evaluate projects on behalf of the community. They must gather information on how plans are evolving and share accurate information on projects' implementation regularly.
- 3 **Train Support Staff:** Administrators have been trained on topics such as communal finance that are key to the functionality of the commune. However, training for staff such as Accountants, Assistants, Collectors of Municipal Taxes, etc. has not been well-provided. Focusing training on staff who often have the least amount of professional training and most interaction with citizens would benefit the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.
- 4 **Build Sustainability Plan for Training:** Training cannot be delivered once: it is a continuous process. Skills must be continually updated, and new staff members are routinely starting who need to be properly trained. Expand the Training of Trainers model to ensure a robust and sustainable roster of trainers is capacitated and ready to deliver cascading training as needed.
- 5 **Provide Coaching:** Training may be not be a powerful enough tool alone. Couple with coaching to support and monitor whether and how skills and lessons learnt are enacted. Coach CDCs, CCDCs, and civil society associations to help them own PCDC and PAI processes and outputs by demanding realisations of planned activities.
- 6 **Shift Social Norms:** Harmful social norms are a key deterrent for women and other marginalised groups' participation in community processes such as PCDC planning and participatory budgeting. Develop and deliver initiatives that sensitise communities to their rights and work toward shifting harmful social norms.
- 7 **Invest in Software:** The biggest need commonly expressed by local authorities is the need for civil registry and accounting specific software. Without civil registry software, citizens' important documents are being mismanaged and births, deaths, and marriages are not being registered in a systematic way. Without accounting software, budgets are not being adequately kept or managed, leading to reductions in efficiency and misuse of funds.

While the main objective of this report is to showcase and learn from inclusive governance models and approaches, the key takeaway is the sustainability of these approaches to support and strengthen inclusive and gender-sensitive local development planning for the Burundi government and other development partners. To build on successes and address challenges, future phases of the IDEAL programme or similar programmes should concentrate on participatory budgeting and PAI, the active use of the CSC tool for PCDC evaluation, and continued emphasis on gender inclusivity in the 4th generation PCDC.



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Inclusive Governance in Burundi

The CIVICUS Monitor categorises Burundi as having closed civil space,¹ meaning both in law and in practice state and non-state actors can imprison or use violence on those who exercise civic rights or speak out negatively against authorities.² Since the contested elections of 2015, dialogue between citizens and authorities has been almost absent, resulting in a climate of mistrust despite laws and policies that support accountability (e.g., municipal law mandating authorities to meet with citizens every six months). Furthermore, all citizens do not experience governance equally. Although progress has been made recently, women remain in a secondary position to men and are not encouraged to speak up in front of men or oppose their husband. A 30% women's quota in decision-making positions is mandated, and reached at higher levels of government, but it struggles to be met at local levels.

The key space where citizens of Burundi can contribute their inputs into the development of their country is within the *Communal Community Development Planning (PCDC)* process. PCDC is part of the decentralization of development planning, emerging from the 2005 Constitution. Every five years, the PCDCs are developed, with the latest PCDC developed in 2019. National guidelines specify the following stages, all of which delineate moments for citizen engagement:

- preparations (informing community members about the process),
- participatory diagnoses (primary and secondary data collected at municipality and hill level),
- thematic discussions and reflections (making appeals to sectoral experts, among others).

The PCDC process translates into a plan with proposed actions (projects) and feeds into the allocation of resources. The process is typically led by a team of consultants and with local representatives from a Communal Planning Team, Communal Community Development Committee (CCDC), local council members, and the Colline Development Councils (CDC) at the hill level. The PCDC process does not have an inclusion quota; thus, women and people from minority groups such as indigenous (Batwa) people and people³ with disabilities have been historically underrepresented.

1 CIVICUS Monitor (2021) National Civic Space Ratings: Burundi. Available at: www.monitor.civicus.org/country/burundi/ (Accessed: 2021-09-02).

2 CIVICUS Monitor (2021) Ratings. Available at: <https://monitor.civicus.org/Ratings/#closed> (Accessed: 2021-09-02).

3 In many cases, indigenous populations in Burundi are referred to as 'Batwa' people or vice versa.

Introduction to IDEAL Burundi

Inclusive Decisions at Local Level (IDEAL) is a five-year programme (2017-2021) implemented by VNG International, funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The programme aims to strengthen the involvement of citizens in local governance in seven countries facing fragility or conflict: Burundi, Mali, Palestinian Territories, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. The goal is to support local governments in building bridges with their citizens, especially historically marginalised groups. IDEAL's target outcomes are to support (1) more responsive and effective service delivery, (2) more inclusive and participatory policy processes, and (3) improved institutional and policy environment.

The IDEAL programme in Burundi contributes to inclusive local governance by strengthening the inclusive and gender-sensitive approach of the five-year strategic local development planning process (PCDC). The eight selected IDEAL pilot communes are located in the central-south part of Burundi, in the provinces of Bururi (4) and Rutana (6). The programme is built upon the following key assumption: inclusive governance will solve conflict, and therefore the key ambition of the programme is high levels of participation (of mainly women and youth). IDEAL stimulates the effective participation of marginalised communities to define their priorities and mobilise local resources.



- 1 Mugamba
- 2 Matana
- 3 Songa
- 4 Bururi
- 5 Vyanda
- 6 Rutana
- 7 Gitanga
- 8 Bukema

IDEAL Burundi Key Approaches

Between 2017-2021, following key approaches were used in the IDEAL Burundi programme:

Overarching Approach	Specific Approaches and Interventions
Capacity Development	Training of Trainers Action learning On-the-job coaching
Building Local Resilience	Development of inclusive PCDC and hill plans Participatory budgeting Community Score Card Micro-grants for PCDC plans
Gender Sensitivity	Gender strategy for ABELO and RFEL ⁴ Women's inclusion in PCDC processes Inclusivity of CDCs and CCDCs Village Savings and Loan Associations

Methodology

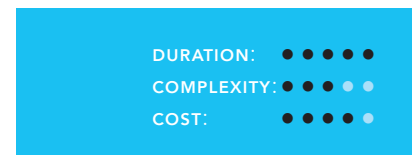
This report aims to answer the question 'What approaches/models/interventions have strengthened inclusive, participatory and gender-sensitive local development planning in IDEAL Burundi?'. The intention is for local government officials and all those working on inclusive governance in Burundi to be able to utilise this report as a resource when practicing any of the approaches highlighted.

Evidence from both *primary and seco data sources* has been utilised in order to formulate an answer to the question. Twenty-four (24) secondary data sources reviewed included IDEAL annual reports, baseline and mid-term evaluation, inception report, most significant change stories, and The Hague Academy for Local Governance and ABELO training documentation. Primary data collected included 23 interviews across four (of the eight) IDEAL communes: Bukemba, Bururi, Rutovu, Songa. In each commune, two local government authorities and two civil society representatives were interviewed by a local enumerator. Seven representatives from ACO-Burundi were also interviewed. The primary data was analysed by the external consultant and the evidence from both primary and secondary data sources was synthesised.

⁴ The names of ABELO and RFEL were amended in mid-2021 to better reflect their mandate; these two organisations are now referred to as ACO-Burundi and REFECOM, respectively.

The main limitation of this report is the small sample size of primary data. Many more individuals – including local authorities, civil society representatives, and citizens – interacted with the programme over the years whose perspectives are not reflected in the study. An additional key limitation is translation: data collection tools were written in English, translated to French or Kirundi, then data collected was translated back to English again for analysis. The translation may have altered some meaning in the process. Finally, the interviews were not audio recorded. Therefore, the notes taken by the enumerator were not verbatim and were reliant upon the ability to take notes and conduct the interview simultaneously, and to complete the notes after the interview from memory.

1 Capacity Development



The delivery of trainings was the most significant activity of the IDEAL programme. The main objective of the capacity development approach is to strengthen the skills and knowledge of local authorities to assess, plan and implement effective inclusive development, especially in regard

to inclusion of women, girls, and other vulnerable groups in development programmes and local governance mechanisms. Capacity development was extended to other key stakeholders including civil society organisations/groups, the media, and community members, specifically women and girls.

Trainings – themed on inclusive governance with a specific focus on PCDC – included general modules and those specific to Burundi.⁵ The three fundamental principles of good governance (transparency, participation and accountability) formed the backbone of the training. Of the trainings delivered, CSO participants overwhelmingly felt that the citizen participation / inclusive facilitation techniques training was the most impactful for them. Local authorities claimed to have benefited most significantly from the trainings on communal finance (including budgeting, taxation, and resource mobilisation).

Training of Trainers: The Training of Trainers (ToT) model comprehensively prepares local agents (often civil society representatives) to deliver trainings directly (often to CDC and CCDC members) in their local contexts. The Hague Academy for Local Governance (THA) was central in the development of the ToT programme. The ToT begins with a thorough needs analysis of the trainers and the target groups. The needs

'With leadership, I gained capacity to listen better to people and understand their needs so I can serve them well. With meeting facilitation, I gained the capacity to develop mutual understanding in a large group. With gender sensitivity, I pay more attention, for example, to a disabled person when they come to the office.'
Local authority, Rutovu

⁵ **IDEAL general modules included:** inclusive governance and the role of local authorities; good governance; social accountability; citizen participation/inclusive facilitation techniques; inclusion of marginalised groups in governance; gender sensitivity; conflict management and non-violent communication; transformative leadership; Community Score Card methodology; participatory budgeting; and change management, among others. **Training modules specific to Burundi included:** PCDC preparation including data collection techniques; communal finance (including budgeting, taxation, and resource mobilisation); and PCDC monitoring and evaluation.

analysis dictates the training content and the contextualisation of modules. After initial trainings are delivered, annual refreshers and ad-hoc trainings continue. The trainers are supported through on-the-job coaching and distance learning by THA trainers. During the training, approximately one-third of the time is reserved for lectures, another third for interactive methods, and the final third for open discussion.

Action Learning: Action learning focusses on making sure that the learning process – including training activities – is centred around participants’ concrete professional problems and their actions to address these problems. The capacity development programmes encourage participants to translate the new knowledge and skills acquired into real-life problems and actions. The training cycles are linked to the development of concrete action plans in order to address the problems identified.

On-the-job Coaching: Following the training module, coaches were assigned to local authorities to follow-up on learnings. The coach helped local authorities to improve service delivery, work on participatory budgeting, manage taxes, and improve transparency of public resources. As part of this coaching, the municipalities were also provided with a model for the handover between the outgoing municipal council and the incoming municipal council.

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KEY OUTCOMES

- Between 2018-2019, 3,244 people participated in trainings, including 169 local trainers who were capacitated to deliver trainings.
- 26,615 community members (44% women) were trained on gender and governance.
- After training, Communal Administrations decided that citizens, including Batwa Community (indigenous people), would no longer pay civil status registration fees. This resulted in little to no unregistered children in communities.
- Administrators have systemised delegation. Following training, communal staff can now also sign and stamp official documentation such as birth and marriage certificates in an effort to improve service delivery for citizens.

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LESSONS LEARNT | BUILDING ON WHAT WORKS

- **Capacity development has rippling effects:** It is important that IDEAL started by training local authorities, communal staff, and CDC/CCDC representatives providing them with capacity to conduct the planning process by themselves. This positioned future successes in inclusivity of PCDC, participatory budgeting, and more.
- **Local, diverse trainers improve training:** The ToT approach maximises sustainability of the programme by working with local trainers and coaches. Local trainers bring contextual and cultural insights into the training elements. Capacitating local trainers also embeds sustainability. A pool of trainers was created from ACO-Burundi staff, former mayors, administrators, technical ministry advisors, and professors. Together, they form a sustaining knowledge network on local development planning, governance, and decentralisation.
- **Learning materials support sustainability:** Creating easy to understand materials that can be left behind can be used by others for whom the information is relevant. Notably, IDEAL provided a Training Kit for trainers and the Commune Resource Mobilisation Manual. These knowledge transfer materials improve the likelihood of sustainability beyond the initial trainee and ensure that municipalities continue to have support even after the training.
- **Multi-modal training and coaching work:** The combination of training methods – especially interactive elements – and use of real-life examples helps to maintain energy during the training and made trainings more actionable and memorable. When coaching follows trainings, there is more added value than theoretical training alone. Furthermore, coaches met trainees during their work, enabling real-time response to practical and strategic needs.
- **Focus on topics that are actionable and changeable:** Overwhelmingly participants appreciated being capacitated on topics that they could immediately utilise in their work. For example, meeting facilitation – particularly how to invite community members and ensure that all categories of people are present and expressing their needs during meetings – was viewed as most impactful. Also, improving processes such as delegation (how to better distribute tasks among municipal staff) and language

‘After the training something changed. If I am invited in a meeting, I pay real attention so I can contribute. I no longer leave the room without saying my point of view. Before, I did not know where to start to say something in front of all those people. Or I skipped some meeting, feeling I am dispensable. IDEAL opened our eyes to the fact that women have their own view and that those views are good for the community’
CSO representative, Songa

usage (using the words people want to use for themselves) were considered highly useful changes. As one local authority in Bukemba explained: *'I no longer say ikimuga: 'a cripple', I say 'abagendana ubumuga': persons with disabilities. I don't say umutwa: 'member of Batwa community', I rather say 'umusangwabutaka autochthone': indigenous people.'*

- **Knowledge of rights and responsibilities increased:** All training participants expressed that they better understood their responsibilities – and the limits of their responsibilities – as well as responsibilities of others following the training. Furthermore, they gained a deeper appreciation of what the commune requires from its citizens and what citizens are entitled to request/demand from the commune based on citizens' legal entitlements.
- **Trainings in a team environment are beneficial:** Respondents appreciated being in a team during the trainings. They felt that the group setting enabled them to feel that they were trained together on 'rules of the game.' As a result, they felt a shared common understanding of what they each needed to do and what is expected of them.
- **Forming of informal networks is useful:** During the handover between outgoing and incoming civil society members/staff, participants found that keeping an informal group together to share information and questions was useful. It enabled former staff to continue to be engaged in decentralization and different actions and to support the new team.

LESSONS LEARNT | CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENTS

- **Be mindful of the sphere of control/influence:** Designing action plans within the spheres of control or influence (i.e., realistic) of the individual local authorities proves challenging. Actions that require coordination across different actors to establish new structures and processes are more difficult for individual local authorities to achieve. Overly ambitious plans lead to false expectations and frustrations. Trainers must ensure that the action plans are achievable.
- **Maintaining attention of administrators is challenging:** Municipal administrators are regularly busy, and many admit to problems with punctuality. Trainings must be well-planned in advance. Training should last more than two days for them to commit to participating for the full programme. Furthermore, consider the location of the training strategically in order to maximise the commitment of participants. Locations with fewer distractions (e.g., outside of authorities' constituencies), may result in greater attention during the training.
- **Turnover diminishes training impact:** After each election, communal teams change. After the 2020 election, only one communal administrator



remained (Songa Administrator). Building in structured time to facilitate the transfer of competences to the municipalities must be incorporated. Emphasis should be placed on coaching and training modules for experienced staff to train new staff. Also, widening the pool of those who are trained would ease the handover period. Junior and mid-level staff should also participate in trainings as they are often the front-line personnel interacting with citizens.

- **Trainings must meet trainees where they are:** Local authorities, administrative staff, and CSO representatives may not be equipped with the skills necessary to perform their roles. Update training sessions based on the needs of the participants and customisation of trainings based on the existing knowledge and skills of participants may be necessary.
- **Budgeting knowledge continues to be a gap:** Consistently participants—particularly communal staff—emphasise a need for more training on budgeting and accounting. They express a lack of competencies available to effectively manage the budget of the commune. Without adequate budgetary competencies of staff, effective participatory budgeting with citizens is challenging.
- **Disconnects exist with the central government:** While local authorities and communal staff have improved their knowledge of local processes, there remains a disconnect at the central government level. For instance, authorities and staff remain uncertain about how to write a PCDC draft using needs expressed by the people on the ground and relate the PCDC to the national development plan (PND). Furthermore, sensitisation of central government officials is still needed to achieve progress on effective decentralisation and good governance.

Case Example

Creating the Commune Resource Mobilisation Manual

The capacities of local authorities to manage and mobilise resources has been a challenge as it requires expertise beyond the basic management of tax revenues. Thus, IDEAL developed a coaching program in Bururi and Rutana. Through discussion during the trainings, local authorities shared that the absence of documentation that explains municipal taxation in Burundi has hindered their work. IDEAL staff found that municipalities' budget forecasts were done without an inventory of taxable materials or a taxpayers' census. Furthermore, information meetings for taxpayers about the use of their taxes were not being held.

As a result, IDEAL created the Commune Resource Mobilisation Manual. The Manual supports increased financial transparency and inclusivity of commune resources and improvement in the quality of services offered to communities. As part of the coaching process, municipalities were provided with this manual to facilitate the handover of the responsibility from the outgoing municipal council to the incoming municipal council. Local authorities who participated in the coaching recommended extending the training to other stakeholders involved in collecting and managing municipal finances (e.g., tax collectors, finance commission of the municipal council, etc.). As a result of the coaching and the manual, the collection of municipal taxes has improved markedly, especially in the Vyanda commune.

2 Building Local resilience

DURATION: ●●●●●
 COMPLEXITY: ●●●●●
 COST: ●●●●●

Building up local resilience occurs by strengthening and making more inclusive existing systems and processes and/or putting new ones in place as needed. The participatory development process begins with developing policies, plans, projects and programmes. Civic engage-

ment is particularly useful to ensure that limited government resources are properly allocated to issues and problems that affect citizens most. Local parties (i.e., local government, CSOs, community members) must be the owners of the development process; their exclusion from decision-making undermines the effectiveness and sustainability of initiatives or projects. Traditionally in Burundi, power imbalances have led to mistrust, lack of engagement in decision-making and development, and even conflict and violence. By focusing on local resilience, power imbalances are de-emphasized, and trust can improve. Furthermore, the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the necessity of building up local expertise rather than relying on international or even national-level support.

Development of inclusive PCDC and hill plans:

The development of the community development plans (PCDC) is an institutionalised opportunity for citizen participation every five years. The process mandates citizen input, either directly through hillside⁶ meetings or indirectly via representatives such as chiefs, CDCs, or CCDCs. CDCs and CCDCs have historically risked being politicised or co-opted by external donor programmes. By restoring the power to citizens to choose who serves in these groups and ensuring they are inclusive via quotas (for women, youth), PCDC processes have become more representative and transferred ownership to the local communities they represent.

‘ “Tuvuga ibintu ngo bizoje mu ngiro... Ntitwifuzza kuyaga amasigaracicaró”, meaning: We say things in order to have them put into action...

We do not wish to utter words which remain on the seat.’
Local authority, Songa

In 2017-18, IDEAL supported relaunching the CDCs with a renewed and clear mission toward inclusivity.⁷ In 2019, the PCDCs of the eight IDEAL municipalities were approved following citizen consultation and with gender-sensitive committees (CDC/CCDC). Getting the PCDC plan realised on time – and in an inclusive manner – was a significant change for the municipalities. In years past, citizens expressed that they had no information about the plans and felt that authorities did not work transparently or collaboratively.

In 2019, IDEAL supported local authorities and CSOs to complete the 3rd PCDC. The key was to shift the direction of the PCDC process: rather than the plan being dictated centrally down to the hillsides, instead the PCDC was viewed as a collection of hillside plans synthesised down to the commune level. Local authorities and committees focused heavily on inclusive invitations. If all demographics were not adequately represented at a hillside meeting for the PCDC, then the meeting would be cancelled. During the meeting, all groups were given equal time to share their ideas and needs. When needed, tools such as hillside mapping and the problem tree were utilised. Citizens, not accustomed with this inclusive approach, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be heard.

As a result, PCDCs of the eight IDEAL municipalities are more responsive to and inclusive of diverse citizens’ priorities than PCDCs in previous years or PCDCs from other (non-IDEAL) municipalities. Local authorities found the biggest advantage of inclusive and consultative approach: citizen ownership. When people are involved in deciding on what is in the plan, they feel more engaged to support authorities in the realisation of the plans.

TOOLS FOR PCDC PLANNING

Hillside mapping: Make a physical map of the community. Draw signs representing houses, farms, roads, rivers, etc. and identify where there are needs.

Problem tree: Break into groups to identify the biggest problems facing the colline. Come back together to analyse those big problems using the ‘problem tree’ (trunk = major problem; roots = causes of the problem; leaves = consequences) and propose a solution.

⁶ ‘Hillside’ is approximately the best translation of the French word ‘colline’. Both terms in this report will be used interchangeably.

⁷ Committees were set in an inclusive manner: two men, two women, one young man, one young woman, chief of hillside.

Participatory budgeting: Making inclusive plans is only the first step. Plans must be resourced to become reality, which is why IDEAL introduced participatory budgeting. In Burundi, consultation on the municipalities' Annual Investment Plan (PAI) occurs biannually. This consultation is not necessarily open to all citizens. Historically – and still today in most communes – only a small group of municipal administrators prepared the communal budget without consulting anyone else. With support from IDEAL, some communes prepare the PAI in a more participatory way where CDCs and other civil society groups (CLBG) deliver input on citizens' behalf. With this approach, the population is able to follow the annual implementation of communal projects, as they are involved in the PAI preparation.

Previously, communes' budget was solely made of salaries and administrative fees, with no investment into the PCDC process included. Now, IDEAL communes better understand their taxable base on the hillsides. When citizens pay taxes, local authorities can discuss with them what to do with their taxes. ACO-Burundi finds that IDEAL communes are more advanced than others in the area of fiscal management: they are better at defining the tax base and organising the tax collection as a result.

Accountability Tools: IDEAL introduced new accountability tools to local authorities and civil society representatives as a framework for dialogue between municipal staff and community representatives. The tools can improve the quality of the services that are offered by the municipality through a social audit to assess the level of satisfaction of citizens and give their feedback to the Administrator to improve the quality of services. The most significant tool was the *Community Score Card* (CSC). The CSC allows for the development of a joint plan between local governments and citizens on service delivery through a joint scoring process and dialogue. The CSC has been successful in Rutovu since 2019 (see box below); however, it is yet to be fully implemented in other IDEAL communes despite training received.

Small grants/investments: Within the framework of strengthening the capacities of civil society organisations, IDEAL Burundi via its partner ACO-Burundi sponsored a competition for proposals in which community associations submitted funding requests for micro-projects (e.g., making soap, chicken husbandry, growing potatoes and maize, etc.) that were registered in the PCDC. The criteria for how projects would be selected was made transparent through open discussion during hillside meetings. Once the projects were selected, a follow-up meeting was held when the selection criteria were discussed again, and winners were announced. Two associations per municipality were selected to receive funding for the PCDC plans.

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KEY OUTCOMES

- 8 PCDCs and 169 hill plans were inclusively developed and approved in 2019.
- Local authorities in IDEAL municipalities are ready to manage the 4th generation PCDC process on their own from the hillside to the commune level. They plan to write the terms of reference for the of the EPC and CDC/CCDC, collect primary and secondary data, and write the first PCDC draft. In the past, this was primarily led by external consultants.
- Following community consultations, IDEAL municipalities have agreed that no public building will be constructed without specific access facility for people with disabilities or separated toilets for men and women.
- For the first time, an inventory of taxable materials was made in IDEAL communes.
- 2 grants per municipality (totalling 5,000 euros per municipality) were given to local associations to fund PCDC micro-projects.

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LESSONS LEARNT | BUILDING ON WHAT WORKS

- **Inclusive invitations work:** Extend an invitation to the hillside general assembly to the whole population. Display written communiques in public spaces and read them in churches and other group meetings. As civil society organisations are often embedded within communities, utilise them to reach populations directly. Representatives should personally invite people from groups who do not usually attend meetings until a culture of inclusivity is built.
- **Use inclusive facilitation:** Once all categories of people are present, then the rest depends on facilitation. Using a dual facilitation technique where both a man and a woman are facilitators helps encourage inclusivity. Give the floor to everybody and make visible efforts to encourage even timid people to speak their ideas. Consider a facilitation strategy in which two people of similar backgrounds cannot speak one after the other (e.g., woman speaks then a man). Hillside mapping and the problem tree are two examples of effective tools

After the training something changed. If I am invited in a meeting, I pay real attention so I can contribute. I no longer leave the room without saying my point of view. Before, I did not know where to start to say something in front of all those people. Or I skipped some meeting, feeling I am dispensable. IDEAL opened our eyes to the fact that women have their own view and that those views are good for the community.'
ACO-Burundi representative, Bujumbura

Case Example

CSC Generates Civil Registry Service Improvements in Rutovu

The Problem: In Rutovu, the registration of marriages and births was a slow and difficult process, especially for Batwa populations. The Civil Registry had a critical problem with archive management and recording; it did not have a system for tracking citizens' ID numbers accurately, which resulted in people having multiple registration and national ID cards. Additionally, citizens raised the issue of corruption in the service to the surprise of the communal councillors and administrator.

The Process: Over 80 participants took part in Community Score Card workshops two years in a row (2019, 2020). To do the CSC, participants broke into three groups: communal staff, citizens, and authorities including chiefs of hillside and chiefs of zone. Each person rated the services of the Civil Registry, and as a group a final score was given for each

service. A dialogue session following the scoring allowed citizens and civil society to express their (dis)content with the communal services such as the provision of certificates or land administration and for authorities and staff to share their challenges, thereby increasing transparency and accountability. The exercise allowed the communal administrator to see the reality of the service and to make improvements. A second CSC workshop was held the next year following the same process to assess any changes in the services.

The Result: Important changes were realised. Some services were scored 0 in the first year and increased to 80 in the second year. The most significant service improvement was seen for the registration of births and marriages for Batwa communities.

that generate conversation and collaboration. The CSC is another tool that can be used to spark inclusive and objective discussions, particularly on evaluation.

- **Thematic thinking is needed for plan aggregation:** When aggregating hillside plans, rely on thematic thinking.⁸ Identify the most commonly raised ideas and by whom those ideas were raised. Ensure that the most important ideas rise to the top and that there is an even distribution of the priority ideas across demographic groups.
- **Go on site visits when possible:** Expand thinking beyond one hillside, zone, or commune when possible. Visit other communes in order to take into account inter-communal linkages in each PCDC. Meet and discuss plans with experts from the central government ministries to better understand the link between commune PCDC priorities and the national priorities of the PND.
- **Budget for PCDC sustainability:** Communes are required to save each year a provision to fund the next generation of PCDC; it will be one of the performance criteria on commune performance assessment tool. Putting this savings into the PAI will support its sustainability.
- **Tax accountability is vital:** Before collecting the taxes, explain how paying taxes contributes to plans in the PCDC. Holding accountability forums to discuss the progress of PCDC plans with citizens – and form solutions together when there is not enough budget available for all plans – builds citizen trust and continued ownership. Because citizens also bring in their resources, making in-kind contribution to public works or paying taxes, they must remain part of budget planning and implementation.
- **Transparency increases trust:** When people trust their leaders, projects are easier to realise. For local authorities, the advantage of this trust is increased citizen ownership. Stronger trust increases the likelihood that citizens will submit more reasonable demands, pay taxes more willingly, contribute to communal works, and take better care of public property.
- **CSC supports objectivity:** The CSC instructs participants to consider results, not the actions of particular authorities or individual emotions. For both citizens and local authorities, it decreases the tendency to suspect each other of bad intentions or judgement. Using the CSC in parallel with accountability sessions could contribute to increased transparency.

⁸ Hillside plans should encompass following 10 sectors: agriculture and livestock; health; education; water, Hygiene, Sanitation and Environment; energy, mines, and carriers; cooperatives and associative movements; habitat, villagization, and urbanism; transport, infrastructure, and tourism; commerce and industry; and information and communication technology. The methodology to select the PCDC plans is to identify the challenge and its origin, defining what action to take, assessing risks and threats, identifying a source of resources, and naming who would be responsible for implementation.

- **Funds build PCDC legitimacy:** Granting of funding for micro-projects in the PCDC made the PCDC more credible in the eyes of hillside inhabitants. Increased credibility motivates them to contribute to planning and promote their ideas.

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LESSONS LEARNT | CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENTS

- **Shifting organisational culture takes time:** Strong inclusion and consultation has been new to the eight IDEAL municipalities; so, it has not yet been systemically institutionalised into the organisational culture. Its sustainability without support of the IDEAL programme is likely, however to what extent is uncertain, especially as trained staff leave positions. Additionally, the culture shift is unlikely to occur as quickly in other municipalities in Burundi without training and support.
- **PCDC implementation still lags:** Once plans have been made in the PCDC, they must be budgeted and implemented. Due to increased citizen engagement in the planning process, citizens are more demanding for updates on the progress of the plans and information about their implementation. As such, consistent accountability forums are necessary to keep citizens updated and address any implementation challenges.
- **Setting bounds for realistic plans is needed:** Strong inclusion in PCDC planning resulted in a large diversity of projects requested. However, the plans are not realistic given the available budget and resources. In the current PCDCs, many activities cannot be realised which may be damaging to the trust of citizens in the process. Setting more realistic expectations up-front and getting citizens more involved in budgeting would help deter this problem in the future.
- **Insufficient citizen competencies hinder inclusion:** Citizen engagement in budgeting especially (and planning to some extent) remains inhibited by competencies such as literacy. Budgeting is challenging to understand for citizens and even some administrators as they lack education on the topic, however this challenge is compounded for those who are illiterate. Contributing their voice to the process remains challenging.
- **Poor engagement in participatory budgeting:** While some communes have made progress in participatory budgeting and PAI, it has yet to become systematic and institutionalised. In many communes, it has not yet begun. In others, its reach has been limited. Managing time pressures and insufficient competencies for budgeting are the two key barriers for its implementation.
- **Budgeting for future PCDCs is inadequate:** Despite saving for future PCDC processes being a requirement, communes are not adequately resourcing themselves to independently run their planning process. For example, in Songea, the 3rd generation PCDC cost BIF 30 million, but only



BIF 250,000 is being budgeted to be saved each month. At best, the 4th generation PCDC will only be halfway financed and the commune will need to seek complementary funding.

- **Extra-budgetary spending is not accounted for:** Outside of budgeted resources, citizens provide donations to some public projects (that may even be greater than the communal budget allocations), but these contributions are typically not captured in the budget, resulting extra-budgetary spending.
- **Contradictory legal texts exist:** While the 2018 decentralisation law transfers powers to communes for human and financial resources, the resources still remain mainly with the central government. Furthermore, urban communes centralise their fiscal revenue. In fact, three communal administrators have been imprisoned for defending contrary views to current fiscal practices. Also, the Ministerial Ordinance that officially created CDCs outlined the members of a CDC by position (e.g., Communal Administrator, Communal Engineer, etc.). Unfortunately, those positions in communal staff are mostly held by men. With IDEAL support, ABELO established the National Guide on Integrating Gender into Local Planning, which was officially adopted by the Ministry of Decentralisation in 2018.
- **Constantly shifting tax base:** Having a tax inventory has been lauded as good progress. However, the inventory must be continuously updated. Currently, a well-understood process for updating has not been arranged. Citizens are unlikely to continually update administrators about when they purchase or sell their taxable inventory, quickly making lists outdated.
- **Managing citizens' unfulfilled expectations:** Citizens are accustomed to receiving distributions such as food when they are widely invited to a community meeting. When citizens were invited to PCDC planning meetings, many expected to receive food or other items and many left disappointed. This could have impacts on their attendance for future meetings.
- **Miscommunications about grant funding:** ACO-Burundi and the associations experienced a miscommunication in at least one commune about the types of projects that could be funded. ACO-Burundi informed the community that they would not fund infrastructure projects after the winning proposal—which was an infrastructure project—was already selected. Later, the commune found out infrastructure was funded in a neighbouring commune, which led to confusion.
- **Mitigation of future grant expectations:** While micro-projects were awarded grants by IDEAL once, mitigating future expectations of funding must be given careful consideration. Beyond IDEAL, building an expectation that civil society will fund PCDC proposals must also be mitigated. Local authorities have expressed that they may use the PCDC as a resource for sharing with civil society which projects need to be funded, which deflects the responsibility of government to budget for PCDC plans appropriately.

3 Gender sensitivity



Cross-cutting across all aspects of governance is a need to be sensitive to the needs and interests of all genders. Historically, women in Burundi have experienced exclusion from key governance processes and holding decision-making positions. With support from IDEAL, local

authorities, civil society representatives, and community members have been sensitised on gendered considerations for development. IDEAL began with raising gender awareness: the ability to view society from the perspective of gender roles and how these roles affect women's needs in comparison to the needs of men. Strengthening gender sensitivity involved translating this awareness into action through policies, programs and budgets.

Building on a foundation of capacity development, numerous approaches and activities were implemented including ensuring women's inclusion in PCDC processes including in CDCs/CCDCs, the development of a gender strategy for ABELO and RFEL, and awareness raising workshops.

Women's inclusion in PCDC processes: Techniques to ensure that women were included in PCDC processes was core to the trainings in which local authorities and civil society representatives participated. Inclusion is two-fold: invitation and influence. Inclusive invitations must reach all members of the population. While not all citizens must participate, equitable representation from all groups must be present (for example, half of the participants should be women). Next, inclusive facilitation ensures that women, and other traditionally underrepresented groups, have an equal opportunity to share their thoughts. It often requires direct solicitation of their opinions and ideas, as harmful historical social and cultural norms have limited their agency to speak their minds in the past.

Women's inclusion in CDCs/CCDCs: While CDCs/CCDCs have set a 30% gender quota, this has traditionally not been well enforced. In IDEAL's eight communes, women's participation in these committees has reached 50% (up from 25% prior to IDEAL). In addition to targeting women,

"We women we do not trust ourselves and we do not trust each other. When the time came to elect CDCs members, the first ideas expressed were 'Let's elect men, they are the ones who have enough time to carry out community activities.' I told them, 'Again and again you are demeaning yourselves and sabotaging your own possibilities. Why can't we be represented by our fellow colleagues?'"
CSO representative, Rutovu

IDEAL also supported a 25% youth quota and the integration of other minority groups such as indigenous and Albino persons. This was achieved by setting inclusion quotas and by supporting groups to nominate and elect their own representatives (i.e., young women electing a young woman, etc.).

Gender awareness raising: Awareness raising events and trainings were foundational to gender sensitisation. All trainings were delivered through a gender-inclusive lens. Awareness raising events were also held in the community. For example, during the 16 Days of Activism campaign, husbands of elected women were invited to participate in a workshop. This workshop supported elected women to get commitment of their husbands to support them during their tenure; their role was reframed to be an honour for the husband and family, as opposed to a concern about women neglecting their households. This workshop, as well as other awareness raising events executed by IDEAL, used tactics to challenge harmful socio-cultural norms and engage more positive masculinity.

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA): Through the VSLA methodology, women can flourish and contribute to local economic development. Women's economic empowerment is an important step toward inclusive governance because it enables women's leadership over a space and builds their confidence, while simultaneously demonstrating women's contribution to the local economic development of the municipality. IDEAL supported the launch of VSLAs by providing key trainings.

Gender strategy for ABELO and RFEL: The strategic plan of ABELO was revised to include a mandate for integration of women's priorities. After the gender strategy was created, RFEL – the Local Elected Women's Network (of ABELO) – became operational. As a consequence, women's needs have been better reflected in both organisations' strategic plans and budgets.

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KEY OUTCOMES

- Gender-specific needs have been reflected in communal community and colline-level development plans (PCDCs) of all eight IDEAL communes.
- Women's participation in CDCs/CCDCs doubled from 25% to 50%, resulting in an increase in representation of women's concerns in PCDC such as combatting GBV, protecting children's rights, enforcing female autonomy and financial independence, and ensuring transparency in communal resource management.
- A 5th axe was added to the PCDC structure, which focuses specifically on gender, local justice and security, and good local governance.

- Women were elected into positions for the first time in 2020; for example, 2 (out of 17) women were elected hillside chief in Songa and 3 (out of 22) in Rutovu, and 6 women were elected to national Parliament.
- 60% of ACO-Burundi's general assembly are women (two women to every one man per commune).
- 231 (ToT) community members (86% women) were trained on community savings and credit in 169 hills, resulting in 333 savings and credit associations being formed since 2019.

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LESSONS LEARNT | BUILDING ON WHAT WORKS

- **Women's agency and sensitisation on women's right shifts norms and behaviours:** The increase in women's participation in PCDC and in CDCs/CCDCs – and the related increase in women expressing their needs – is due in large part to improved confidence of these women and greater receptiveness on the part of facilitators who also attended trainings. Aiming interventions at strengthening women's agency and awareness raising on women's rights ultimately influences the inclusivity of PCDC.
- **Broadening the definition of gender:** Broadening the definition of gender beyond a simple man/woman binary view helped to sensitise powerholders to diverse needs. When discussing gender, highlighting the differentiated needs of different groups such as indigenous people, young people, and people with disabilities helped to illustrate to local authorities how different groups within the population have diverse issues and require different types of supports.
- **Purposefully electing inclusive CDCs:** A successful approach to electing diverse members of the CDC during the hillside assembly began with asking the population to break into gender and age groups: men, women, young men, and young women. Each group can present one or two names of representatives from their demographic to be part of the CDC to represent them.
- **Leverage VSLAs as a space for sharing information:** VSLA members reported using the VSLA as a space to exchange news and inform each other about public meetings and events. It can be used as a space to promote PCDC and participatory budgeting opportunities as well.

'Our eyes need to be gender sensitive and perceive the real perspective of the non-privileged group. For example, when the ID card can be obtained in one day and for free, the average citizens does not see a big change. It is the poor woman of the 'Batwa' community who sees a big difference, as she had no chance to get this ID card before. The poor is the one who profits most from the changes.'

Local authority, Rutovu

- **Income helps to shift social norms:** As women earned money and gained leadership skills through the VSLA, social norms in the community began shifting in favour of increased women's rights. Complement these natural shifts alongside sensitisation sessions with community members, especially men, about women's rights and roles.
- **Diversify VSLA trainings:** Women in VSLAs requested – and benefited from – technical trainings such as animal farming and fertilizer use. Deliver necessary VSLA trainings such as money management as well as technical and soft skill-building to strengthen women's diverse capacities and build their personal agency and confidence.

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LESSONS LEARNT | CHALLENGES AND IMPROVEMENTS

- **Harmful social norms persist limiting participation and/or influence:** Women lack the time to participate in community affairs because of the social norm that they should perform all household duties. They reported that engaging in politics is traditionally not a women's task, especially in rural areas, which is why many do not perceive politics as something for them. While significant improvement in women's participation has been realised, this is only a first step. Participation does not necessarily translate into influence. Often social norms still dictate that they cannot freely share opinions (nor are they respected when they do), limiting their participation to merely tokenistic.
- **Logistical barriers limit participation:** Women and others from marginalised groups often face disproportionate logistical barriers to participation. Women are often overburdened in the household and unable to find time to attend community meetings, or community meetings may be held at a time when they are otherwise occupied. They may also lack transportation to meetings, which is especially challenging for groups who may live further away from central locations and people with disabilities. Also, those who are in extreme poverty do not wish to attend community gatherings when they cannot clean themselves or their clothing.
- **Lack of support to women's associations:** Many municipalities encourage women (and other groups such as youth) to organise themselves into associations in order to strengthen their collective action capacity. However, they are offered little support, and instead referred to incidental opportunities to receive donations from external donors and NGOs.
- **There is a lack of women candidates:** In many cases, women had to be 'recruited' into positions because there were not enough women candidates to meet the women's quota. This often results in women being less interested or willing to share their opinions or have influence over

decisions. At times, no female candidates applied to positions because the position required a university degree. Women still experience a significant education gap compared to men, automatically excluding them from many roles.

- **Laws are not always operationalised:** When laws are not translated into a procedural manual, they are rarely operational. Despite the constitution and the code election that requires municipal councils to be at least 30% women, it is not translated into the municipal administrative and procedures manual. As a result, at local levels, the quota is often not upheld.

Conclusions

The IDEAL programme in Burundi contributed to inclusive local governance through the three key approaches of capacity development, building local resilience, and gender sensitivity. Effective participation of marginalised groups in governance processes, predominantly communal planning (PCDC), enabled them to define their own priorities and more efficiently mobilise local resources.

While the main objective of this report is to showcase and learn from inclusive governance models and approaches, the key takeaway is the sustainability of these approaches to support and strengthen inclusive and gender-sensitive local development planning for the Burundi government and other development partners. The approaches delivered results that are not time-bound to the IDEAL programme. In the community, many citizens are now aware of their right not only to participate in development planning, but also to influence its budgeting, implementation, and evaluation. Furthermore, local authorities and civil society representatives trained by IDEAL have taken positions in higher levels of government and have the possibility to influence decentralization processes.

To build on successes and address challenges, future phases of the IDEAL programme or similar programmes should concentrate on participatory budgeting and PAI, the active use of the CSC tool for PCDC evaluation, and continued emphasis on gender inclusivity in the 4th generation PCDC.

Recommendations

Provide Coaching: Training may not be a powerful enough tool alone. Couple with coaching to support and monitor whether and how skills and lessons learnt are enacted. Coach CDCs, CCDCs, and civil society associations to help them own PCDCs and PAIs by demanding realisations of planned activities. Experienced (retired) local government and civil society staff may serve as strong coaches. Furthermore, VNG International and ABELO technical staff could spend more time in the programme field office to coach civil society actors on addressing needs and challenges in their day-to-day efforts.

Prioritise PCDC Evaluation: To date, little attention has been given to PCDC evaluation. This remains a gap in the participatory process. CDCs and CCDCs are responsible to monitor and evaluate projects on behalf of the community. They must gather information on how plans are evolving and share accurate



information on projects' implementation with people in the hillsides on a regular basis. Consider utilising the Community Score Card as a tool for evaluating the commune's PCDC service delivery and even the PCDC and PAI development processes themselves.

Train Support Staff: Administrators have been trained on topics such as communal finance that are key to the functionality of the commune. However, training for staff such as Accountants, Assistants, Collectors of Municipal Taxes, etc. has not been well-provided. These staff members are often fresh from secondary school with little or no professional training. Authorities, CSO representatives, and citizens alike expressed frustrations with staff not having sufficient information or skills to deliver services. Focusing training on staff who often have the least amount of professional training and most interaction with citizens would benefit the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Build Sustainability Plan for Training: Training cannot be delivered once: it is a continuous process. Skills must be continually updated, and new staff members are routinely starting who need to be properly trained. Expand the Training of Trainers model to ensure a robust and sustainable roster of trainers is capacitated and ready to deliver cascading training as needed. Supplementing with coaching and mentoring from experienced administrators will support continuous learning. Additionally, when staff attend trainings, instituting a process where they deliver a short summary report of the lessons learnt and key takeaways to all relevant staff. Materials such as training notes and these short summary reports should be kept centrally for reference as needed and for training for new staff.

Continue Inclusion of Target Groups: Citizens overwhelmingly appreciated being able to participate in public meetings and influence real communal issues and decisions. Ensure that their participation sustains into future PCDC planning, PAI budgeting, and other communal activities even without partner support from IDEAL. Use approaches such as inclusive invitations and facilitation to draw out vulnerable members of the community to voice their needs. VSLAs have specifically requested to be more involved in decision-making. Honouring requests such as these from VSLAs will further build mutual trust.

Shift Social Norms: Harmful social norms are a key deterrent for women and other marginalised groups' participation in community processes such as PCDC planning and participatory budgeting. Social norms that women should not participate in affairs outside of the home results in women's self-exclusion but also limitation from husbands placed on their wives. Develop and deliver initiatives that sensitise communities to their rights and work toward shifting harmful social norms. Utilise female role models to

educate and inspire other women and male role models to shift oppressive beliefs of men.

Invest in Software: The biggest need commonly expressed by local authorities is the need for civil registry and accounting specific software. Without civil registry software, citizens' important documents are being mismanaged and births, deaths, and marriages are not being registered in a systematic way. Without accounting software, budgets are not being adequately kept or managed, leading to reductions in efficiency and misuse of funds. With such software, adequate training must also be provided.

Colophon

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IDEAL ●
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AT LOCAL LEVEL



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