



Search for
Common Ground
Trust, Collaboration, Breakthroughs



OUTCOME HARVESTING REPORT

Strengthening trust and collaboration between citizens and government officials for the prevention of violent extremism

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1. Executive Summary

This final evaluation report offers a comprehensive overview of the project "Strengthening Trust and Collaboration between Citizens and Government Authorities for the Prevention of Violent Extremism." This initiative, implemented by Search for Common Ground (Search) in partnership with the Rwanda Scouts Association and funded by the U.S. Department of State, was designed to foster trust and collaboration among youth, local authorities, security personnel, and communities to prevent violent extremism. The project targets Nyaruguru and Rusizi districts for activity implementation as both are affected by violent extremism-related insecurity, and Kigali for national level activities from September 2021 to September 2023.

Methodology

The evaluation employed an outcome harvesting approach, combining data from monitoring forms, focus group discussions, and reflective sessions. This method allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the project's effect. This comprehensive final evaluation engaged a total of **180 respondents (88 women and 92 men)**, drawing from various data sources. It encompassed 82 respondents who provided insights through the monitoring form, as well as 98 participants from focus group discussions.

Limitations

This evaluation has limitations, including potential respondent bias due to self-reported perceptions and a relatively small sample size that may not fully represent diverse perspectives within the target communities. Variations in sample sizes across different indicators and the possibility of double-counting among participants engaging in both project activities and focus group discussions further add to these limitations.

Key Findings

The project's role in enhancing collaboration cannot be understated. It has brought these stakeholders together, breaking down barriers that may have existed before. This heightened collaboration serves as a powerful tool in addressing community security concerns effectively. The project's success lies not only in shifting perceptions but also in translating those shifts into tangible actions and collaborative efforts.

One of the project's major achievements was the significant **improvement in youth's knowledge and understanding of conflict identification and transformation**. Youth participants underwent significant skill development, notably in research, analysis, and reporting. The project also achieved notable success in empowering young girls from remote areas. Through training, research opportunities, and interaction, these girls gained the confidence to voice their viewpoints during national forums. The project's influence even extended to key institutions, with a youth researcher successfully joining a security organ, exemplifying the tangible career opportunities generated by the project. Additionally, the project fostered collaboration through sports teams that brought together security personnel and youth, emphasizing the holistic nature of the project's impact.

The project's **transformative impact on youth empowerment and confidence building is noteworthy**. Youth across educational backgrounds realized their pivotal roles within their communities, dispelling the perception that education level determined their influence. Particularly, less-educated youth underwent a significant mindset shift, acknowledging their capacity to make positive contributions. Importantly, these contributions were not only recognized but actively welcomed by authorities and security personnel. It's noteworthy that **92% of the local leaders and security staff surveyed reported that their participation facilitated trusted interactions with youth**.

One of the standout achievements of the project was **the activation of youth participation and engagement transcending educational disparities**. Beyond conducting research, youth actively engaged with their communities to identify solutions to communal issues. The project's impact extended into various domains, encompassing solidarity events and advocacy efforts. This multifaceted engagement altered the dynamics between citizens and public officials. Authorities and the broader community began viewing youth as peers, thus promoting collaboration and trust. The notable growth in civilian night patrols further emphasized the community's increasing sense of responsibility and engagement in security matters.

The project effectively facilitated interactions between communities and government authorities, resulting in significant positive changes. **Youth participants were empowered to raise security-related questions during town hall meetings, and authorities responded constructively**. Importantly, even when dealing with sensitive topics such as security, authorities displayed a receptive attitude. Government commitment to involving youth was underscored by key security agencies at both national and local levels, actively sending representatives to forums, highlighting the pivotal role of youth in governance and security. Furthermore, the project's success at the local level prompted local sectors to continue town hall platforms at the cell level, ensuring the sustainability of its impact. Ministries of Justice intervened by providing valuable information on conflict resolution policies, addressing community conflict needs.

Lessons learned and best practices

Several best practices have been identified that contributed significantly to its success. The use of **Youth-led Research (YLR)** on sensitive topics such as security proved to be highly relevant. This approach established a strong connection between local youth and their communities, making them credible sources of information and ensuring that solutions were tailored to local realities. The **adoption of a community participatory approach** facilitated engagement with both youth and community members, promoting the integration of youth into community activities. Prioritizing youth involvement and creating platforms for their input and leadership in security and governance matters was essential. **Partnering with the Rwanda Scouts Association**, a reputable organization recognized by local authorities, played a crucial role in building credibility and facilitating project acceptance. Additionally, **maintaining regular communication with local authorities** fostered trust and a sense of ownership, leading to their active support and participation in project activities.

The project also provided valuable lessons that underscore the **importance of a comprehensive approach to project design, implementation, and sustainability**. The project's relatively short duration impacted the full realization of the Theory of Change (ToC), as a matter of fact complex projects like this may require **more extended periods to achieve meaningful and sustainable change**. **Advocacy and accountability mechanisms** should be integral components of project design, ensuring transparency and

feedback at all levels. **Robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems** are essential for tracking progress and outcomes. Finally, sustainability planning, including strategies for addressing long-term challenges faced by youth, should be incorporated into project design, with a **particular emphasis on economic empowerment initiatives** to enhance sustainability.

Recommendations

The recommendations below can enhance the effectiveness of future similar initiatives, achieve more sustainable outcomes, and better address the goals of building trust and collaboration among youth, local authorities, and security sector personnel for preventing violent extremism.

- Continue and expand initiatives that empower youth with research, communication, and advocacy skills to maintain their active role in positive community change.
- Provide ongoing training and capacity-building programs for authorities to effectively engage with diverse and marginalized populations, including a focus on bridging gaps with women.
- Encourage the development of youth-led community security projects and initiatives to address local security concerns.
- Develop and implement structured forums for dialogue between community members and security personnel to enhance mutual trust and understanding.
- Facilitate regular knowledge-sharing sessions and forums among youth, local leaders, and security personnel to exchange best practices and lessons learned.
- Prioritize advocacy and transparency by sharing project reports and engaging with stakeholders at all levels. Create clear mechanisms for feedback and accountability.
- Integrate sustainability planning into project design, including economic empowerment initiatives to address the long-term challenges faced by youth
- Ensure that the theory of change (ToC) is achievable and realistic, and in line with the duration of project activities and expected results.

2. Background Information

Introduction

While not presently at-risk of violent extremism (VE), Rwanda’s history of extremist rhetoric and violence has prompted the national government to take initial steps to address the potential for VE through the design and development of a Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) National Action Plan. Search has supported the development of this action plan by providing capacity building among key stakeholders and increasing awareness of VE dynamics in the country. Search’s support included contributing to the Action Plan, which outlines some of the push/pull factors to extremism in Rwanda. Integrating the findings from this action plan, Search developed the project “*Strengthening Trust and Collaboration between Citizens and Government Officials for the Prevention of Violent Extremism*” to address frustrations associated with governance, human rights, and the rule of law. It aims to prepare youth and government officials to work together to collaboratively address community needs and concerns. By taking a preventative approach, prior to an escalation or outbreak of extremist recruitment, this project will seek to remove barriers, misconceptions, anger and mistrust between government, security organs and communities that could fuel future conflict/grievances and establish a foundation from which joint community-security efforts can address and respond to concerns as they arise.

Project Overview

“*Strengthening trust and collaboration between citizens and government officials for the prevention of violent extremism*” is a 22-month project implemented by Search in partnership with the Rwanda Scouts Association, and funded by the U.S. Department of State. Its **overall goal** is to strengthen trust and collaboration between citizens and Government authorities in the prevention of violent extremism.

This goal is supported by the following **two objectives** and **four expected results**:

1. Increase the capacity of youth and local authorities (including security organs) to engage with one another on governance, law enforcement, and security needs in local communities.
 - 1.1.1. Youth have increased skills and knowledge in research and non-adversarial communication and advocacy.
 - 1.1.2. Local leaders and representatives have increased skills to engage with diverse and marginalized populations on governance issues and law enforcement techniques.
2. Empower youth and security personnel to jointly address community security concerns.
 - 2.1.1. Youth have increased confidence to identify, report and advocate on community security concerns.
 - 2.1.2. Trust between community and security sector personnel is strengthened.

The theory of change (ToC) of this project is: *“If young men and women, as well as local leaders and security sector personnel have the skills and opportunities to build relationships and trust among them, and if principles of inclusion and collaboration are accepted and acted on by local leaders and security sector personnel, then peace and security initiatives will be responsive to local needs and inclusive of marginalized voices, to prevent violent extremism in Rwanda, because there will be increased trust and strengthened relationships between community members, local leaders, and security sector personnel.”*

Methodology

Objectives

The final evaluation aims to:

1. Identify the expected and unexpected results induced by the various project interventions in line with the theory of change
2. Identify lessons learned and good practices to provide recommendations for future initiatives

The evaluation questions are framed around

1. Identifying the expected and unexpected results induced by the various project interventions in line with the theory of change

1.1. What are the values of the following indicators after implementation?

- (Ind 1.1.1) Percentage targeted youth who demonstrate strengthened knowledge and understanding of conflict identification and transformation.
- (ind 1.1.2) Percentage of targeted youth surveyed who report that their participation in the project facilitated trusted interactions with local authorities.
- (ind 1.2.1) Percentage of targeted local leaders who demonstrate increased knowledge and understanding in how to engage marginalized groups.
- (ind 1.2.2) Percentage of targeted community and security sector representatives surveyed who report that their participation in the project facilitated trusted interactions with youth.
- (ind 2.1.1) Percentage of targeted youth who report increased levels of confidence engaging with security and government representatives around community security concerns.
- (ind 2.2.1) Percentage of targeted community and security sector representatives who report increased collaboration with the other.
- (Ind - Peace impact framework – agency) Percentage of participants that believe they can make a positive difference in their neighborhood
- Ind - Peace impact framework – agency) Percentage of participants that take action to influence the things they care about.

1.2. What are the outcomes (expected or unexpected) of the project and how do these outcomes contribute to the expected changes, including:

- 1.2.1. knowledge and understanding of conflict identification and transformation
- 1.2.2. capacity of youth and local authorities (including security organs) to engage with one another on governance, law enforcement, and security needs in local communities

- 1.2.3. relation between youth - local leaders and security sector staffs
- 1.2.4. knowledge and understanding in how to engage marginalized groups.
- 1.2.5. trust interactions between youth - local leaders and security sector staffs
- 1.2.6. collaboration between youth - local leaders and security sector staffs
- 1.2.7. confidence of youth engaging with security and government representatives around community security concerns.
- 1.2.8. collaboration of community and security sector representatives with the other.

2. Identifying lessons learned and good practices to provide recommendations for future initiatives

2.1. Which are the lessons learned/best practices?

2.2. What are the recommendations for future initiatives and for improving the quality of the program?

Data Collection

The core methodology designed for this evaluation was the "outcome harvesting" approach, which is an approach that consists of identifying evidence-based results on the contribution of our program to change in the target community

The evaluation methodology consists of 3 steps using qualitative and quantitative methods:

- **step 1: data collection during the implementation phase using a monitoring form** : some indicators values (of change) were collected during the activities such as restitution meetings - town hall meetings - solidarity activities - national conference on inclusive governance, using *barometer with 5 scales of agreement, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"*
- **step 2: data collection at the end of the implementation phase using Focus Group Discussions**
- **step 3: reflective session:** this phase included reflective workshops in which the outcome harvesting evaluation approach was used to validate the results identified and discuss lessons learned and good practices during project implementation and strategy for future initiatives.

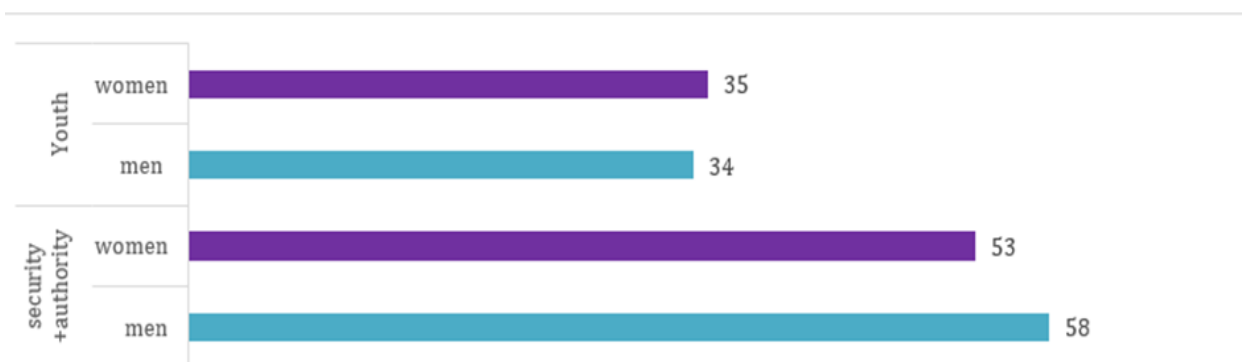
Characteristics of respondents

This comprehensive final evaluation engaged a total of **180 respondents (88 women and 92 men)**, drawing from various data sources, which encompassed 63 young people and 111 members of the security staff and local authorities.

The youth, local leaders and security staff reached during this evaluation played roles in various activities of this project, such as town hall meetings, solidarity activities, national conferences, youth-local leaders restitution meetings, and a Youth Common Ground Approach (CGA) training.

Participants targeted for this evaluation represented a diverse group, with varying ages, educational backgrounds, and affiliations. Their educational levels ranged from primary school to university education. Additionally, their activities and affiliations included memberships in religious associations,

local associations, youth-led organizations, and youth movements, institutional authorities, security representatives, local authorities, and traditional authorities.



Graph 1 : Characteristics of respondent by categories and sex

Limitations

While this evaluation has provided valuable insights, it's essential to recognize and address certain limitations.

- The findings heavily relied on self-reported perceptions, which can introduce potential respondent bias. Furthermore, the study is based on a relatively small sample size, and it's important to note that this sample may not fully represent the diverse range of perspectives within the target communities.
- Another noteworthy limitation is the variation in sample sizes across different indicators, which can be attributed to differences in target populations for various activities. The evaluation involved distinct cohorts for the baseline and final assessment, further complicating direct comparisons. A graphical representation illustrating trends in perceptions over time, segmented by activity, could help provide a clearer understanding of these variations.
- Lastly, there is a possibility of double-counting among participants who engaged both in project activities and focus group discussions.

3. Findings

4.1. Outcomes

4.1.1. Knowledge and understanding of conflict identification and transformation and engaging marginalized groups

Youth, local authorities, and security representatives were equipped with skills through their participation in the common ground approach training during the project's implementation. The common ground approach has emerged as a pivotal tool, fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and trust among diverse stakeholders.

Through the common ground approach, participants from both youth and local leaders/security staff groups have demonstrated significant improvements in their knowledge and understanding, leading to positive shifts in their respective roles within the community.

Youth Participants

100% of targeted youth “strongly agree and agree” with the statement: I demonstrate strengthened knowledge and understanding of conflict identification and transformation.

In the context of conflict identification and transformation, youth participants, regardless of gender, have shown a remarkable level of agreement and strong agreement (13% of the participants strongly agree and 87% agree) that the CGA training strengthened their knowledge and understanding. They credited the training for equipping them with practical tools like the conflict tree, which empowers them to pinpoint the root causes of conflicts and provide solutions. Additionally, they highlighted their ability to analyze, criticize, and evaluate themselves, enabling them to assist others in resolving conflicts within the community. This newfound knowledge has empowered them to take an active role in conflict resolution, fostering an environment of trust, collaboration, and conflict mitigation.

“Inclusion of Youth in key institutions: a youth researcher was able to join a security organ, showcasing the project's impact on career opportunities” – project staff member – reflective session

Youth participants have effectively applied the knowledge acquired through CGA training in several ways, such as :

- **Information sharing and socialization:** youth stated that they engage in information sharing with local leaders and security staff about security issues, fostering collaboration and trust. Socializing with these stakeholders and the community as a whole helps build relationships and

strengthens community cohesion.

- **Concrete community initiatives :** youth participants have taken concrete actions to support their communities, including establishing teams and setting up facilities like a canteen for food, and involvement in night security patrols. These initiatives not only addressed security needs but also contributed to broader community development, reflecting a profound sense of ownership and commitment to their communities. The fact that authorities and security personnel welcomed and supported these community initiatives is significant. It indicates a shift in the dynamics between youth and authorities, fostering collaboration and trust. This positive reception is likely to encourage youth to sustain their efforts and engage further with local authorities.

FGD with young women in Nyaruguru: “now we are confident. We support the community to solve their related problems. We have established a team of 12 members and we have now set up a canteen for food and drinks”

This showcase a concrete community initiative led by youth on how they applied their new skills, which contribute to both security and broader community development.

- **Advocacy** : youth participants advocate for community security issues by identifying and submitting problems to local leaders and security personnel. They also engage in advocacy efforts for specific projects or improvements in collaboration with their communities.

Specific advocacy initiatives presented by youth during the focus group discussions

Inadequate street lighting in Rusizi: youth participants in Rusizi district identified the prevalent issue of inadequate street lighting in their communities, which posed safety concerns, especially during the night. They submitted this problem to local leaders and security personnel through formal channels. Discussions were initiated in Rusizi District to improve street lighting in specific areas, enhancing both security and overall safety.

Community cleanup initiative in Rusizi: youth participants collaborated with their communities to initiate a community cleanup project. They advocated for this project as a way to enhance security by improving the overall appearance and cleanliness of their neighborhoods. The advocacy efforts led to the successful organization of community cleanup events, engaging both youth and community members. These events not only improved the environment but also fostered a sense of unity and pride among residents.

Community watch program in Nyaruguru : in response to concerns about security, some youth participants advocated for the establishment of a community watch program. They worked with local leaders and security personnel to develop this project. The advocacy efforts culminated in the creation of a community watch program, where residents, including youth, actively participated in patrolling their neighborhoods. This initiative contributed to enhanced security and community vigilance.

School infrastructure improvement in Nyaruguru: in collaboration with their communities, youth participants advocated for improvements in school infrastructure, particularly focusing on enhancing the safety of school buildings and premises. Their advocacy efforts led to discussions with educational authorities and local leaders, resulting in planned renovations and safety enhancements in schools. This not only addressed security concerns within educational institutions but also improved the learning environment for students.

- **Common Ground Approach (CGA) as a pivotal tool, fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and trust among diverse stakeholders** : Youth perceive CGA as a mechanism for reconciling with others, conducting research on security concerns and community needs, and advocating for these issues.

Specific insights shared by participants during FGD include:

- The use of tools like the conflict tree to pinpoint the root causes of conflicts.
- The ability to analyze, criticize, and evaluate themselves, which in turn helps them assist others in their community.
- Increased motivation to encourage community members to openly raise their concerns and advocate for relevant solutions.

Local Leaders and Security Staff

All local leaders and security staff interviewed have expressed agreement, with strengthened knowledge and understanding of how to engage marginalized groups. They outlined specific changes in their approach, including ensuring that people's problems are received and solved equitably, actively encouraging marginalized individuals to express their concerns, and motivating individuals in lower socioeconomic categories to strive for advancement. This transformation in their knowledge and understanding has led to more inclusive practices, improved service delivery, and a flexible approach to handling diverse community members.

100% of targeted local leaders “agree” with the statement : I demonstrate increased knowledge and understanding in how to engage marginalized groups.

Authorities participants have effectively applied the knowledge acquired through CGA training in several ways, such as :

- **Collecting and addressing citizens' issues:** adults stated that they actively collect citizens' issues and provide feedback, fostering two-way communication and ensuring community concerns are heard and addressed.

FGD with local leaders and security staff from Nyaruguru: “We value the role of youth of sharing with us the community security issues” ...” Youth are acting as community security agent. We have initiated a surveillance team including youth to easy communication and collaboration to identify the community security issues and find responsive decisions”.

- **Youth involvement:** leaders and security staff recognize the importance of involving youth in security efforts, actively involving them in security tasks and consulting them for problem-solving. This leverages a **positive impact on youth as** this not only enhances community security but also empowers the youth and strengthens their engagement in community matters. By gathering and sharing information with local leaders and community members, security staff highlight a community-centered approach to addressing security needs. This approach fosters inclusivity and ensures solutions are tailored to community-specific concerns.

FGD with local leaders and security staff from Rusizi: “We welcome the ideas of young people and consult them in order to solve the problems in the communities together. They provide us with information on the ongoing smuggling business and help us prevent and combat it” ...” Now the exchange of information has increased, so you can see the crime and bad behavior of some people has decreased”

Specific insights shared by participants during FGD include :

- Ensuring equal reception and resolution of people's problems, regardless of their background or status¹, emphasizes the importance of impartiality and fairness in addressing community issues
- Actively encouraging people from different categories to express their security concerns, fostering inclusivity.

¹ People come from diverse backgrounds, including differences in education, social status, economic status, age, gender, and more. These differences can sometimes lead to disparities in how individuals are heard and how their problems are addressed. However, the goal of ensuring equal reception and resolution of people's problems is to create an environment where every community member, regardless of their background or status, is treated fairly and respectfully when they raise concerns or issues

- Adopting a more flexible and respectful approach to handling different individuals and their behaviors, which has led to improved service provision to the public.

Both youth participants and authority/security staff have demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing community security through the Common Ground Approach. While the specific actions may differ, their collective efforts contribute to improved community security, well-being, and inclusivity.

The overall impact of the CGA training is evident in the substantial positive changes observed in both groups. Youth participants are now better equipped to identify and address conflicts, contributing to more harmonious community dynamics. Local leaders and security staff have improved their ability to engage with marginalized groups, resulting in more inclusive and respectful practices and enhanced service provision.

While the baseline² findings highlighted mixed perceptions of youth, the final evaluation indicated a significant positive impact on youth participants' knowledge and understanding of conflict identification and transformation.

The final evaluation showed that the CGA training had a positive impact on youth, local leaders and security staff participants, addressing the knowledge gap identified in the baseline.

4.1.2. Youth - local leaders and security representative relationships

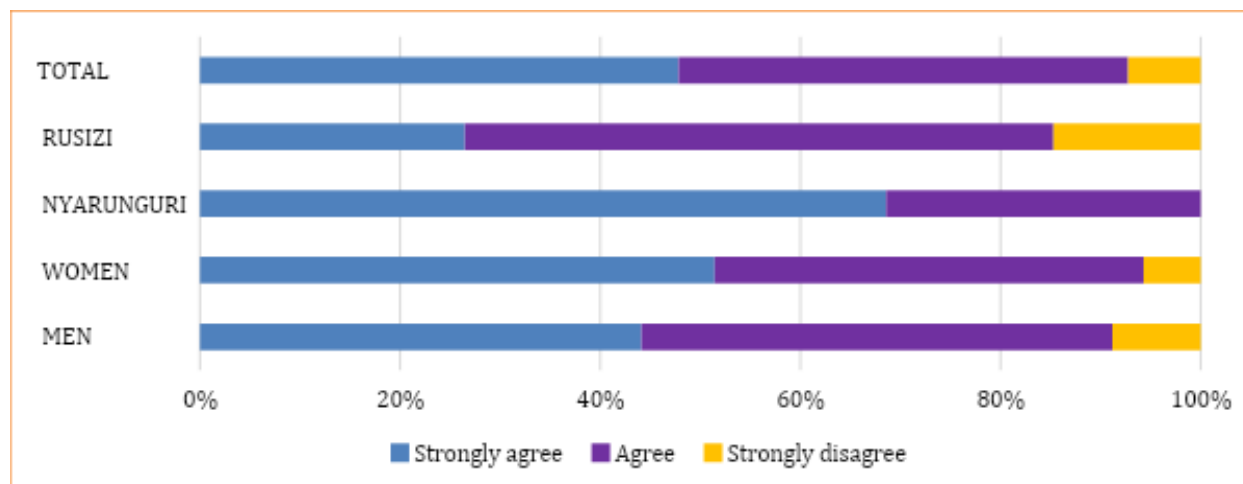
Youth perception change regarding security staff and local leaders

Youth participants' perceptions of security staff and local leaders have undergone a significant positive shift. Prior to the project, many youth held misconceptions, perceiving security staff as primarily focused on imprisoning people and local leaders as unapproachable figures. However, the focus group discussions revealed that these youth now view security staff and local leaders as cooperative and flexible collaborators.

"Through our interactions and collaboration with them during the project, we realized that security staff and local leaders are cooperative and flexible collaborators" Youth participant, Rusizi - Focus Group Discussion

93% of youth participants surveyed, including both male and female participants, strongly agree and agree that the project facilitated a significant positive change in their perception of security staff and local leaders. The 7% who disagree, wouldn't provide an explanation to their perception.

² Baseline of the project “Strengthening Trust and Collaboration between Citizens and Government Officials for the Prevention of Violent Extremism” – April 2022 – Search for common Ground



Graph 2 : Percentage of young respondents relating that the participation in this project has changed their perception vis a vis local authorities and security representatives

Specific insights shared by participants during FGD include :

- **Pre-project misconceptions:** prior to the project activities, youth held certain misconceptions about security staff and local leaders. These misconceptions included perceiving them to be focused only on imprisoning people (in the case of security staff), and unapproachable.
- **Perceived cooperativeness and flexibility:** the FGD data highlights that youth participants now view security staff and local leaders as cooperative and flexible. They express surprise at how these individuals actively facilitated field data collection and demonstrated a willingness to collaborate with the youth.
- **Recognition of Youth's role:** Youth participants have come to recognize that security staff and local leaders value their ideas and consider their role essential in working together to address community issues. This signifies a shift from their previous belief that their input was not welcome.

Community members, local leaders, and security staff perception change regarding youth

The data from the focus group discussions (FGDs) with local leaders and security staff indicates a notable shift in their perceptions regarding youth as a result of the project. The analysis of these findings reveals the following key points:

- **Increased youth engagement:** participants acknowledge that youth have become more actively engaged in identifying community security needs and advocating for them. They have also noticed that youth are involved in selfless services and

“Before, there were people, especially the youth, who did not participate in government activities, even giving information about things that did not concern them, but now they are good partners in solving community security issues” FGD with local leaders in Rusizi

contribute to addressing human security issues.

- **Transformation of youth behavior:** there is a consensus among adult participants that the project has led to a positive transformation in the behavior of youth. While some delinquency may still exist, the overall perception is that youth have changed their behavior for the better.
- **Youth as valuable partners:** local leaders and security staff participants now view youth as valuable partners in addressing community security issues. They note that youth have transitioned from being disengaged or uninvolved in government activities to becoming active collaborators in solving security concerns.

Additionally, community members interviewed recognize that **youth now understand their role in solving community problems**. They provide feedback to the community on raised issues and actively advocate for solutions. Youth are seen as playing a crucial role in promoting harmony within families.

While the overall perception is positive, some community members express that there is room for further improvement, especially considering the project's limited duration. They highlight that relationships and improvements are more prevalent among educated youth compared to their uneducated counterparts.

Youth perception regarding improved relations with security staff and local leaders (and vice versa)

Both male and female youth participants express agreement, with some strongly agreeing, that the project has significantly improved their relations with security staff and local leaders. Some youth emphasize the improved relations with the existence of a clear exchange of information and collaboration in addressing security concerns.

“Using the public address system (Sonorization) provided by Search for common ground, we organize entertainment activities that connect us with local government officials and security organs” – FGD women participants in Rusizi

Youth described engaging in community-building activities facilitated by the project, such as solidarity events, youth-led research which served as opportunities for interaction and connection with local government officials and security organs.

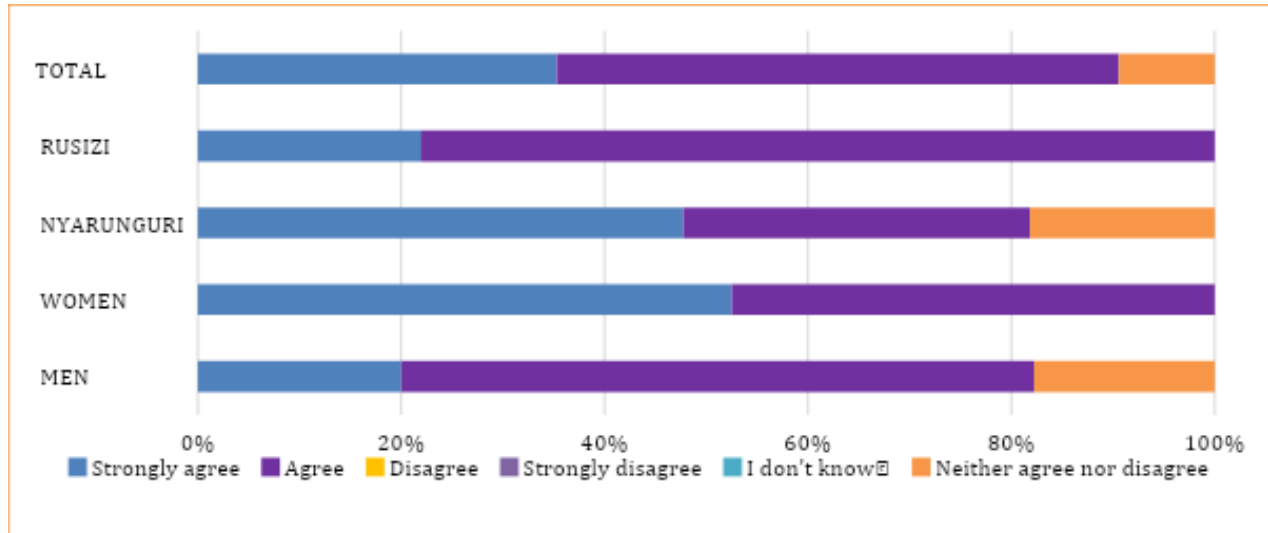
“Youth share with us the information and they do the advocacy for the community security issues” FGD with men local leaders from Nyaruguru

“Our relationship is improved and we help each other in everything in order to find the best for our community. We organize games through them we transmit the important messages to the citizens” FGD with security staff from Rusizi

Local leaders and security staff perspective relates that local leaders and security staff strongly agree that the project has considerably improved their relationships with youth. They now work closely with youth to solve community problems and even organize joint activities. The project has enhanced their ability to share information and collaborate effectively with

youth, leading to improved community security.

91% of targeted local leaders and security staff “strongly agree and agree” the project facilitated relationships between youth and security staff, local leaders



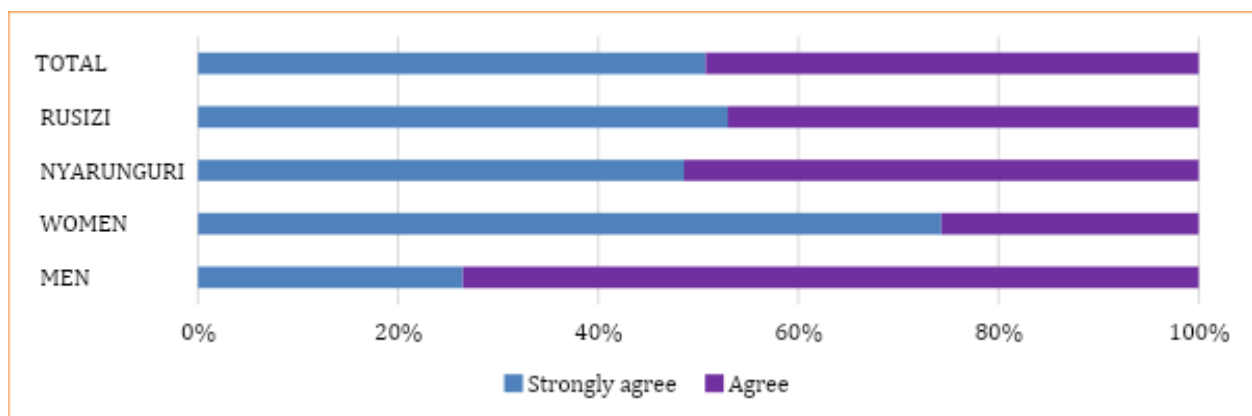
Graph 3 : Percentage of targeted leaders and security staff responding to the project facilitated relation between youth and security staff, local leaders

Improvement in the interaction between youth, security staff, and local leaders

The data from the focus group discussions with youth participants indicated a substantial improvement in the interaction between youth, security staff, and local leaders, as a direct result of the project.

'As a result of the youth led research, interaction between young people and authorities has been possible in the search for solutions to community issues' a result reported by a project staff member during the reflective session.

The interactions are not merely formal but also include friendly games and social gatherings where food and drinks are shared. This demonstrates that the project has successfully created an environment of camaraderie and collaboration between youth and authorities. These interactions have the potential to build trust and mutual understanding, crucial for addressing community security concerns effectively.



Graph 4 : Percentage of targeted youth surveyed report that their participation in the project facilitated trusted interactions with local authorities.

Youth participants now express confidence in discussing problems with authorities to find solutions. This newfound confidence signifies a significant shift from any previous apprehensions they may have had in approaching leaders and security staff.

“In all activities that are going to be conducted at the community level, youth are engaged, we share ideas before conducting them and everyone’s role is agreed on. When there are activities organized by the youth, we participate as leaders and help them” – FGD with local leaders and security staff from Rusizi

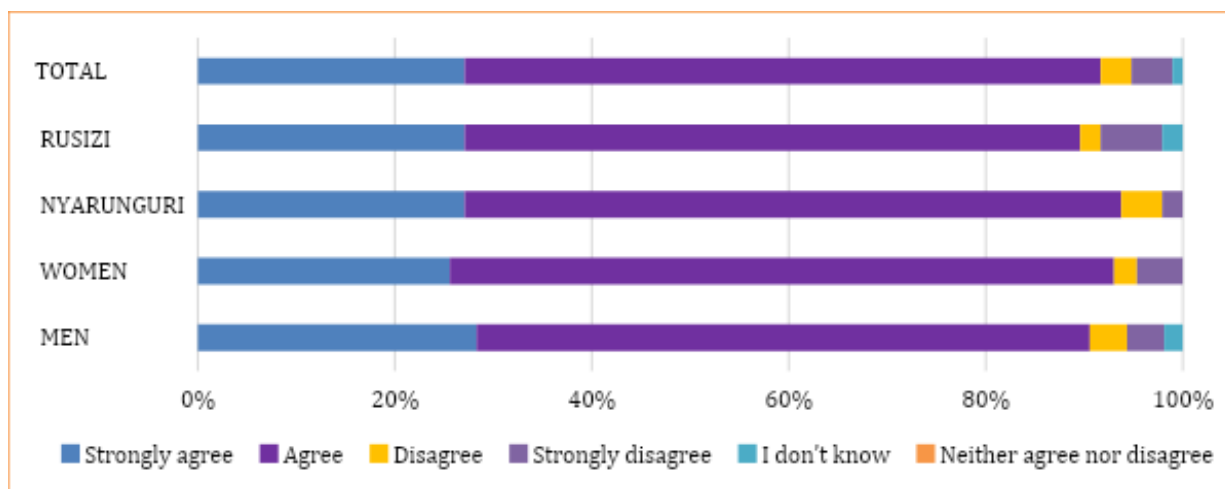
Local leaders and security staff

participants in focus groups indicated a significant shift in their interactions and relationships with youth as well. Leaders and security staff participants report that youth and authorities actively engage in planning and executing community-level activities together. The youth are actively involved in decision-making processes, and roles are agreed upon, indicating a sense of equality and inclusivity.

The project made us believe in the youth because they showed more and more that they are capable. Thus, they have been given the opportunity to work closely with security organs and local leaders to handle community security concerns. FGD with local leaders and security staff from Rusizi

The project has led to the establishment of **youth forums** at the cell level, promoting information sharing and collaboration in addressing community security issues. These forums serve as platforms for dialogue and cooperation between youth and authorities.

92% of targeted community and security sector representatives surveyed report that their participation in the project facilitated trusted interactions with youth.



Graph 5 : Percentage of targeted community and security sector representatives surveyed who report that their participation in the project facilitated trusted interactions with youth

Specific insights shared by participants during FGD and project staff members during reflective sessions showing interactions :

- **Collaborative activities:** participants report that youth and authorities actively engage in planning and executing community-level activities together. The youth are actively involved in decision-making processes, and roles are agreed upon, indicating a sense of equality and inclusivity.
- **Supportive relationships:** local leaders and security staff mention that they support each other in their interactions with youth. This mutual support fosters an environment where information sharing and problem-solving can occur effectively.
- **Youth Forums:** the project has led to the establishment of youth forums at the cell level, promoting information sharing and collaboration in addressing community security issues. These forums serve as platforms for dialogue and cooperation between youth and authorities
- **Enhanced community-Government interaction:**
 - o Youth were able to raise security-related questions during town hall meetings, and authorities responded.
 - o Authorities showed receptiveness to the project, even when dealing with sensitive subjects such as security.
 - o Key security agencies at the national and local levels sent representatives to forums, emphasizing the importance of youth involvement.
 - o Local sectors decided to continue town hall platforms at the cell level in response to the project's success.
 - o Ministries of Justice provided information on conflict resolution policies, addressing community conflict needs.

These findings highlight a clear linkage between perception, relation, and interaction. The change in perception, driven by the project, has laid the foundation for improved relations. As perceptions evolved from skepticism to trust, it paved the way for meaningful interactions between youth, security staff, and

“Thanks to the training, research, interaction with authorities, the confidence of remote girls (Nyungwe/Burundi forest) to express their point of view during the national forum” result reported by a project staff member during reflective session

local leaders. This interconnected transformation is a testament to the project's ability to break down barriers, foster collaboration, and create a more cohesive and engaged community committed to addressing security concerns. The project's impact extends

beyond shifting individual beliefs; it has led to tangible changes in behavior and cooperation that can positively influence community security and governance in the long term.

4.1.4. Youth and security representative collaboration

100% of youth participants strongly agree that the project has significantly increased collaboration between youth and security staff, local leaders. They highlight that this collaboration revolves around finding solutions for community security needs. For instance, through communal activities like

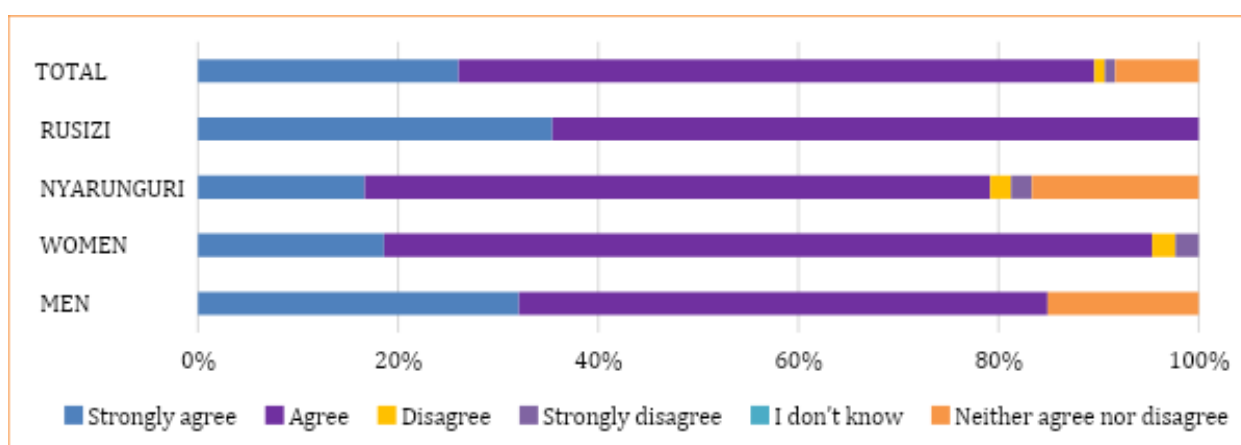
“The collaboration is through finding solutions for the community security needs. Through UMUGANDA, the youth collaborate with local leadership, security personnel and community as a whole to solve some human security issues like taking care of infrastructure” FGD – community members – men from Nyaruguru

"UMUGANDA³" Youth actively engage with local leadership, security personnel, and the entire community to address various human security issues. This collaborative approach includes responsibilities such as infrastructure maintenance and care.

These collaborations manifested through:

- **Strong collaboration and problem-solving:** a significant number of youth and security staff participants strongly agree that collaboration has intensified. They now work closely together to address various human security issues. This collaboration is not limited to just sharing information; it extends to actively participating in solving problems on the ground. Youth, local leaders, and security staff have become a united front in tackling community security concerns. For example, a security staff representative stated that when any problem arises in the community, they work together to find solutions. This unified problem-solving approach is seen as essential in addressing various issues efficiently. Another example, the collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where the youth demonstrated exceptional teamwork with authorities to combat the virus successfully.
- **Effective communication channels:** youth participants who agree also emphasize the importance of communication. Various communication channels have been established, such as telephone conversations, face-to-face meetings, and even a dedicated WhatsApp group. These platforms facilitate regular interaction and ensure that everyone is well-informed about ongoing activities and security matters.
- **Unified problem-solving approach:** collaboration is a prominent theme among participants, who state that when any problem arises in the community, they work together to find solutions. This unified problem-solving approach is seen as essential in addressing various issues efficiently

90% of targeted community and security sector representatives who report increased collaboration with the other.



Graph 6 : Percentage of targeted community and security sector representatives who report increased collaboration with the other.

³ Umuganda means "coming together in common purpose" in [Kinyarwanda](#) – and takes place on the last Saturday of every month for mandatory nationwide community work from 08:00 to 11:00.

However, there is limited trust as a barrier ; while there is overall improvement in collaboration, some (youth and community members) participants express reservations. They note that collaboration is not yet at its peak because local leaders may not completely trust youth at this stage. This suggests that there is room for further progress in building trust and increasing collaboration.

Even if there is improvement, collaboration is limited because the leaders are not yet reaching the level of trusting youth at 100%” FGD – men community members from Nyaruguru

The project has succeeded in fostering increased collaboration between youth, security staff, local leaders, and the broader community. This collaboration is most evident in community security initiatives and annual planning processes. However, there is an acknowledgment that trust between local leaders and youth still requires further development. Nevertheless, the project's achievements in enhancing collaboration are evident in the increased engagement of youth in various community activities and their growing role in addressing security needs.

Even if there is improvement, collaboration is limited because the leaders are not yet reaching the level of trusting youth at 100%” FGD – men community members from Nyaruguru

4.1.5. Youth confidence and agency in engaging with authorities on community security concerns

Youth confidence

100% of targeted youth report increased levels of confidence engaging with security and government representatives around community security concerns.

The data from both male and female youth participants indicates a substantial increase in their confidence levels when engaging with security and government representatives concerning community security concerns. Prior to the project, there was a significant fear of approaching authorities, but now they express courage and assertiveness in conveying their needs and issues. They highlight the transformation from a place of fear to one of confidence in advocating for community security concerns at various levels of leadership, including local leaders and security organs.

“Before, it was not easy to approach the authorities to talk because of fear, but now we have courage, if there is something we need to talk to them about, we approach them and tell them what we need....now we have reached the level where we have their telephone numbers and exchange information” FGD with young men form Nyaruguru

“The young people realized that they too had a role to play, regardless of their level of education” - result reported by a project staff member during the reflective session.

The confidence building manifested through:

- **youth realization of their role:** the youth recognized that regardless of their educational background, they have a role to play in their communities.
- **Increased confidence in contribution:** the perception among less-educated youth that they couldn't make a difference shifted, and they realized their potential to contribute positively.
- **Positive reception of youth contribution:** authorities and security personnel welcomed the contributions of young people and became more attentive to their voices.

This shift in confidence is a positive outcome of the project, indicating that youth feel more empowered to actively participate in community security matters.

The data from local leaders and security staff reflects the same positive trend. They acknowledge the increased confidence of youth in engaging with them on governance, law enforcement, and security needs. Youth now have access to their contact information, and there is a sense of collaboration and cooperation in addressing community security issues. The cooperative efforts and engagement with youth through programs like "Tujyanemo⁴" demonstrate a willingness to work together to solve security concerns. This collaboration signifies a significant shift from a lack of freedom and engagement with youth to an open and productive relationship where all parties are involved in community problem-solving.

Agency

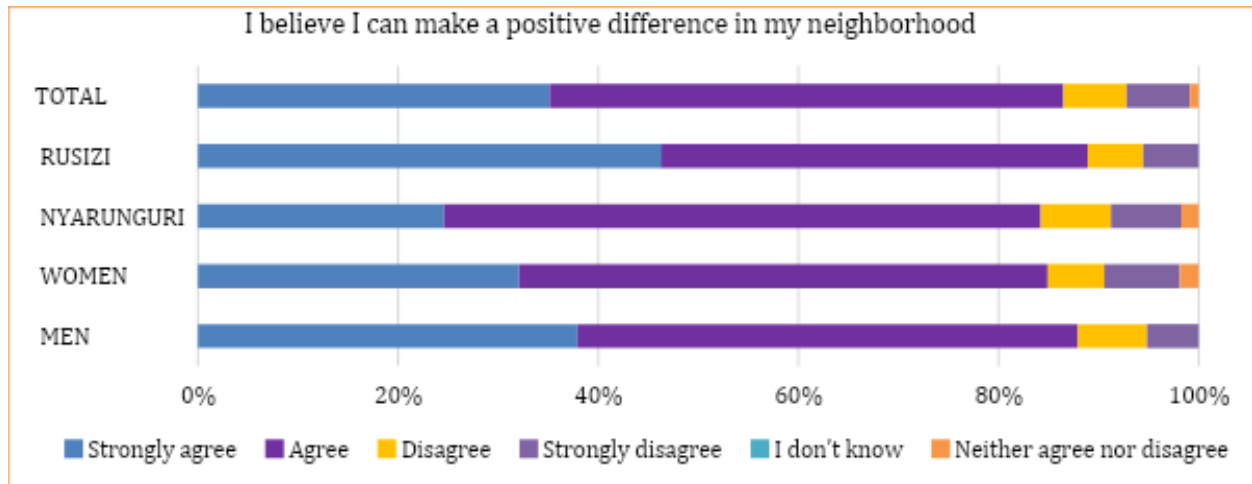
Youth participants in both Nyaruguru and Rusizi demonstrate a strong sense of agency and the belief that **they can make a positive difference in their neighborhoods and reveal a strong belief in their ability to take action and influence the issues they care about.** The majority of participants strongly agree or agree that they have the capacity to bring about positive change. They see themselves as **role models and mentors for others**, particularly young people, and are committed to changing negative mindsets and behaviors. This includes teaching young individuals to make positive choices and engage in constructive activities.

Additionally, they express their willingness to collaborate with others in the community to resolve conflicts and contribute to decision-making processes. They recognize the importance of advocacy and providing advice on matters that impact the freedom and well-being of citizens.

Community members acknowledge and support the youth's role in making a positive difference in their neighborhoods. They believe that youth can contribute to positive change by engaging with other young people and involving them in decision-making processes, providing advice and advocacy on various issues affecting the community.

86% of participants believes they can make a positive difference in their neighborhood

⁴ Tujyanemo⁷ is Rwandan program and was piloted by Rusizi District to encourage all people living in different parts of the country to help build houses in the district as many are homeless and others live in very poorly constructed ones.



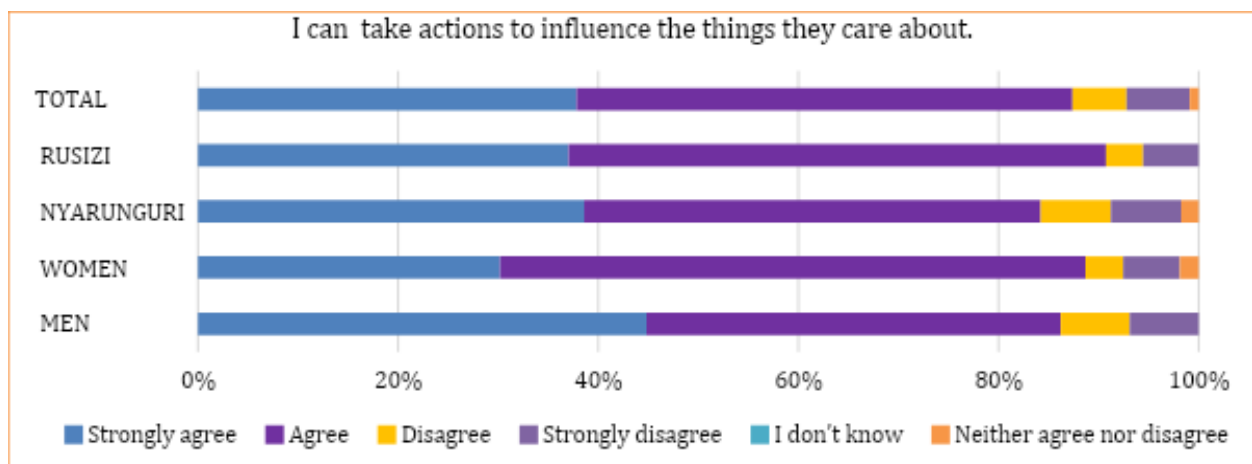
Graph 7 : Percentage of young person who report they can make a positive difference in their neighborhood

Also, data from youth participants in both Nyaruguru and Rusizi reveals a strong belief in their ability to take action and influence the issues they care about relating to the fact that they are actively engaging in various initiatives. They are committed to reaching out to other young people, providing guidance, and advocating for their peers to find employment opportunities.

Furthermore, youth participants emphasize their role in striving for safety and security management within their communities. They facilitate dialogues on family law, highlighting their commitment to addressing social and legal issues affecting families. Their actions also extend to encouraging responsible behavior among young people, such as avoiding prostitution and drug use.

Additionally, youth participants engage in practical activities like mobilizing community members to go home on time for safety purposes. They express a sense of responsibility and ownership in advocating for community security concerns and conducting home visits to resolve conflicts.

87 % of participants who report they can take action to influence the things they care about.



Graph 8 : Percentage of young person who report they can take action to influence the things they care about

The statements "I can make a positive difference in their neighborhood" and "I can take action to influence the things I care about" both reflect a strong sense of agency and empowerment among participants, whether they are youth or community members.

These statements are closely related, and the analysis reveals several key connections based on FGD with youth and some community members:

- **Community-centered action:** the idea of making a positive difference in their neighborhood implies taking action within the community context. Participants acknowledge their role in improving the local environment, which may involve addressing various issues such as safety, security, poverty, or social dynamics.
- **Advocacy and influence:** the notion of taking action to influence things they care about extends beyond immediate community concerns. It encompasses advocacy and influence over broader social, economic, or policy-related issues that matter to participants. This implies a willingness to engage in proactive efforts to drive change.
- **Responsibility and ownership:** both statements reflect a sense of responsibility and ownership. Participants perceive themselves as active contributors to their community's well-being, taking responsibility for addressing challenges and opportunities. This sense of ownership fosters a greater commitment to meaningful action.
- **Proactive approach:** youth participants are not passive observers but proactive initiators of change. They are willing to engage with others, mobilize resources, and collaborate with community members to achieve their goals. This proactive approach is vital for community development and problem-solving.
- **Interconnectedness:** the two statements are interconnected, as making a positive difference in one's neighborhood often requires taking action to influence various aspects of community life. Participants recognize that their actions can lead to positive outcomes both within and beyond their immediate surroundings.

4.2. Project Indicators

Table 1 : Table showing project outcomes by indicator

	Baseline Value	Project Target	Endline value	Comments on % of Target Achieved
	Project Goal: To strengthen trust and collaboration between citizens and Government authorities in the prevention of violent extremism.			
	Objective 1: Increase the capacity of youth and local authorities (including security organs) to engage with one another on governance, law enforcement, and security needs in local communities.			
	Expected Result 1.1: Youth have increased skills and knowledge in research and non-adversarial communication and advocacy.			

	Baseline Value	Project Target	Endline value	Comments on % of Target Achieved
1.1.1: % targeted youth who demonstrate strengthened knowledge and understanding of conflict identification and transformation.	N/A	90%	100%	This value is based on perception from 29 youth trained reached during the evaluation The 100% is related to “strongly agree and agree”
1.1.2: % of targeted youth surveyed who report that their participation in the project facilitated trusted interactions with local authorities.	N/A	60%	100%	This value is based on perception from 69 targeted youth reached during the evaluation The 100% is related to “strongly agree and agree”
	Expected Result 1.2: Local leaders and representatives have increased skills to engage with diverse and marginalized populations on governance issues and law enforcement techniques.			
1.2.1: % of targeted local leaders who demonstrate increased knowledge and understanding in how to engage marginalized groups.	N/A	90%	100%	This value is based on perception from 25 local leaders and security staff trained reached during the evaluation The 100% is related to “agree” -0% responded “strongly agree”
1.2.2: % of targeted community and security sector representatives surveyed who report that their participation in the project facilitated trusted interactions with youth.	N/A	60%	92%	This value is based on perception from 96 targeted local leaders and security staff trained reached during the evaluation The 92% is related to “strongly agree and agree”
	Objective 2: Empower youth and security personnel to jointly address community security concerns.			
	Expected Result 2.1: Youth have increased confidence to identify, report and advocate on community security concerns.			
2.1.1: % of targeted youth who report increased level of confidence engaging with security and government representatives around community security concerns.	N/A	60%	100%	This value is based on perception from 69 targeted youth reached during the evaluation The 100% is related to “strongly agree and agree”
	Expected Result 2.2: Trust between community and security sector personnel is strengthened.			
2.2.1: % of targeted community and security sector representatives who report increased collaboration with the other.	59.6%	75%	90%	This value is based on perception from 96 targeted local leaders and security staff The 90% is related to “strongly agree and agree”

4.3. Lessons learned and best practices

Best practices

The use of Youth-led research, a participatory approach, strategic partnerships, and effective communication with authorities have all played pivotal roles in achieving the project's objectives :

- **Use of youth-led research (YLR)** on sensitive topics like security has proven to be highly relevant. Local youth conducting research can establish a strong connection with the community, making them more relatable and credible sources of information. This approach ensures that solutions and interventions are tailored to the specific realities of the area, ensuring their effectiveness.
- **Community participatory approach** adopted in the YLR methodology has been effective in engaging both youth and community members. It facilitates the integration of youth into community activities.
Furthermore, the community's acceptance of the approach has played a significant role in promoting its effectiveness. When communities trust and accept youth-led initiatives, it becomes easier to implement projects and achieve local and national participation.
- **Youth-centered approaches** prioritize youth engagement by creating platforms for them to voice their concerns, provide input, and take leadership roles in security and governance matters.
- **Selection of a relevant partner:** partnering with the Rwandan Scouts Association, a well-established organization recognized by local authorities, was a smart choice. The Scouts' good reputation made them a credible partner. This credibility not only facilitated the acceptance of the project but also ensured its smooth implementation.
- **Regular communication with authorities** was instrumental in achieving their acceptance and integration into project activities. This ongoing dialogue helped build trust and fostered a sense of ownership among authorities, making them more likely to support and participate in the project.
- **Structured dialogue and forums** bring together community members, local leaders, and security personnel to discuss issues, build trust, and collaborate on solutions.

Lessons Learned

The evaluation findings highlighted the importance of flexibility, adaptability, and long-term engagement in addressing complex issues like building trust and collaboration between youth, local authorities, and security sector personnel.

- **The project's duration** was considered too short to fully realize the Theory of Change. While the ToC laid out a comprehensive approach, practical constraints like late implementation due to project registration issues impacted its timeline. It's important to recognize that complex projects like this one might require more extended periods to achieve meaningful and sustainable change. It's important to recognize that local authorities may perceive certain projects, particularly those related to governance, as non-durable, so we need to make sure these authorities have a full understanding and appropriation of the project. Strategies for ensuring long-term engagement and sustainability should be developed.

- **Delayed implementation** activities, particularly the Town Hall Meetings, affected the project's overall timeline. It's essential to account for potential challenges when designing project interventions. The logic of the project's intervention was sound, but external factors like registration delays played a role in slowing down implementation.
- **Effective advocacy** was noted as essential in sharing project reports and fostering accountability at all levels. Mechanisms for feedback and transparency should be incorporated into project design.
- **Need for robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems**, including monitoring the progress of the project and its impact, was highlighted. It's crucial to have clear mechanisms in place for tracking results and outcomes
- **Sustainability and economic empowerment** should be a key consideration in project design. The question of how the project can address the long-term challenges faced by youth, including economic empowerment, should be explored.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings from the project, the following recommendations can be made to further enhance the effectiveness of the "Strengthening Trust and Collaboration between Citizens and Government Officials for the Prevention of Violent Extremism" project :

Define and adapt the theory of Change (ToC) alignment and long-term sustainability : ensure that project activities and outcomes are in clear alignment with the Theory of Change. Continuously refine and adapt the ToC as needed based on project experiences. Consider extending the project's duration or developing follow-up programs to ensure the sustainability of the positive outcomes observed. Longer-term engagement can solidify the trust and collaboration achieved during the project.

Sustain and expand youth engagement Programs : continue and expand initiatives that empower youth with skills and knowledge in research, non-adversarial communication, and advocacy. This will ensure that youth remain active and effective agents of positive change in their communities.

Strengthen and extend the capacity building for authorities and security representatives : provide ongoing training and capacity-building programs for **authorities and security representatives** to engage with diverse and marginalized populations effectively. This will enable them to bridge gaps and maintain trust with different community segments, notably with women.

Foster the community-based security initiatives : strengthen and diversify efforts that encourage youth to identify, report, and advocate on community security concerns. Encourage the development of youth-led community security projects and initiatives.

Enhance trust-building Activities : develop and implement trust-building activities and forums between community members and security sector personnel. Promote dialogue and collaboration to enhance mutual trust and understanding.

Set up a robust monitoring, evaluation and learning system throughout the project : implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the project's impact continually. This will help in making data-driven adjustments and improvements as the project progresses.

Enhance knowledge sharing and best practices on security matters among “young champions” and with authorities involved during this project : Facilitate regular knowledge sharing sessions and forums where youth, local leaders, and security personnel can exchange best practices and lessons learned. This will foster ongoing collaboration and innovation.

Establish advocacy and transparency : continue to prioritize advocacy and transparency by sharing project reports and engaging with stakeholders at all levels. Establish clear mechanisms for feedback and accountability.

Incorporate an economic empowerment component : incorporate sustainability planning into project design, including strategies for addressing long-term challenges faced by youth. Consider economic empowerment initiatives to enhance sustainability.

Engage Local Authorities Strategically : recognize that local authorities may have perceptions about project sustainability. Develop strategies for long-term engagement and collaboration with local authorities to address these concerns.

Reinforce the Gender-Sensitive Approach

Ensure that project activities and strategies are designed with a gender-sensitive lens. Consider the distinct needs, challenges, and perspectives of both women and men in the target communities.

Actively promote and ensure the representation of women in all project activities, including leadership roles, decision-making processes, and participation in events such as Town Hall Meetings and Youth-led Research

Collaborate with women leaders, both within the community and in formal positions of authority, to amplify women's contributions to peacebuilding and security.

Partner with local women's organizations and civil society groups that focus on gender equality and women's empowerment to leverage their expertise and resources.

6. Conclusions

The evaluation of the "**strengthening trust and collaboration between citizens and government officials for the prevention of violent extremism**" project has provided valuable insights into its impact on youth, local authorities, and security sector staff.

Youth engagement, particularly through Youth-led Research (YLR), emerged as a powerful tool in building bridges between the community and authorities. The use of YLR on sensitive security matters allowed local youth to establish credibility and trust within their communities. This participatory

approach ensured that solutions were rooted in the specific realities of each area, leading to more effective outcomes.

Furthermore, the project's emphasis on a community participatory approach fostered acceptance and trust in youth-led initiatives. The engagement of the community was crucial in promoting project success and securing local and national participation. The involvement of youth in security and governance matters, coupled with their active participation, has proven to be a best practice.

Additionally, the choice of a credible partner, the Rwanda Scouts Association, played a pivotal role in project acceptance. Regular communication with local authorities further facilitated their involvement, highlighting the importance of dialogue in building trust and encouraging support.

However, certain lessons have been learned during the project's implementation. The project duration was considered short, impacting the full realization of its Theory of Change. Advocacy, accountability, and robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems were identified as essential components for project success.

Looking forward, it is recommended that the project further aligns with its Theory of Change, extends its duration or implements follow-up programs for sustainability, continues to empower youth, strengthens capacity building for authorities, encourages youth-led community security projects, and enhances trust-building activities. A robust M&E system, knowledge sharing mechanisms, advocacy, transparency, and economic empowerment should also be prioritized in future endeavors.

This evaluation underscores the effectiveness of youth engagement, participatory approaches, and strong partnerships in fostering trust and collaboration among youth, local authorities, and security sector personnel. By incorporating these key findings and recommendations into future projects, we can continue to work towards the prevention of violent extremism and the promotion of peace and security within our communities.