



Republic of Rwanda
Ministry of National Unity
and Civic Engagement

Strengthening Resilience: A community-based participatory framework for assessment of resilience in Rwanda



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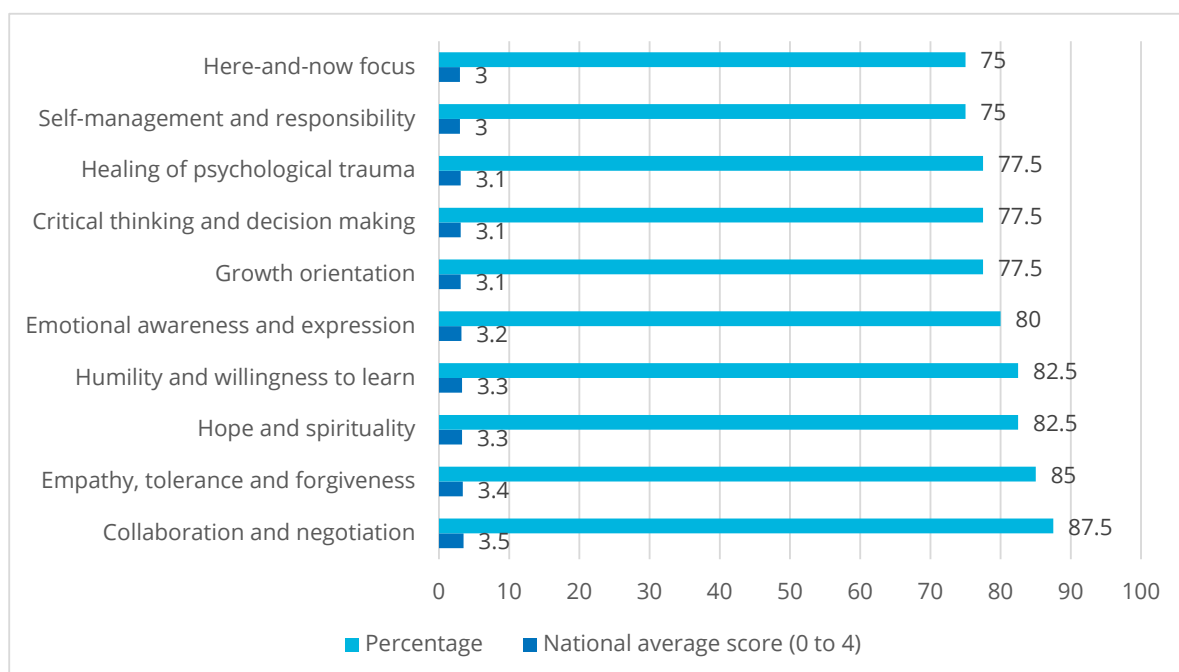
Executive Summary

The aim of this community resilience assessment study was fourfold: 1) to develop and validate resilience indicators that can be used to structure future research activities, policies and programmes for community resilience in Rwanda; 2) to devise a participatory, mixed-methods and multi-level methodology for the assessment of resilience indicators, building on existing frameworks but customised to the needs of Rwanda; 3) use the resilience assessment methodology to establish a community resilience baseline across all districts of Rwanda; and 4) to generate policy and programmatic recommendations for greater resilience across Rwanda.

The study adopted a mixed approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Data were collected at four levels: individual, household, community and institution. At the individual level, a self-assessment questionnaire served to collect data on individual psychological resilience. At the household, community and institutional levels, the study used a community scorecard approach through focus group discussions (FGDs) to measure the level and sources of resilience along with sources of fragility. Some 90 FGDs were organised at each of these three levels. The 270 FGDs conducted countrywide attracted a total of 2 297 participants (40.3% women and 59.7% men), while the individual survey involved 4 484 participants (50.4% women and 49.6% men). The total number of participants in this Community Resilience Assessment Framework study stands at 7 481 people.

The major findings are illustrated in graphics 1-4.

Graphic 1: National average scores and percentages of individual resilience level per indicator



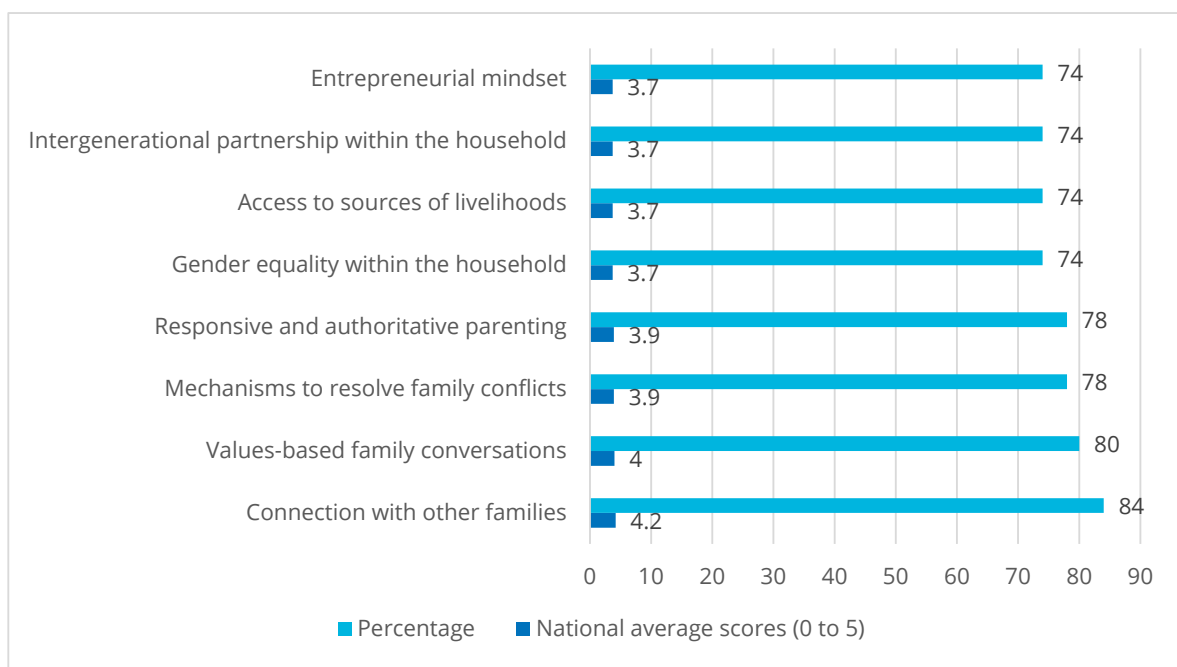
The highest national average score was found for the collaboration and negotiation, with an impressively high at 3.5 out of 4 (87.5%). This suggests a robust ability of individuals to work together, find common ground and engage in effective negotiations. Following closely is the variable empathy, tolerance and forgiveness with a score of 3.4 out of 4 (85%), reflecting a society that values understanding, acceptance and the ability to forgive.

However, the indicator hope and spirituality was found lagging somewhat, as indicated by the score of 3.3 out of 4 (82.5%). This indicates a need for additional efforts to foster a collective sense of optimism and spiritual well-being. Similarly, humility and willingness to learn -3.3 out of 4 (82.5%), emotional awareness and expression -3.2 out of 4 (80%), suggesting a high level of resilience in these areas. Furthermore, growth orientation, critical thinking and decision making all hover around 3.1 out of 4 (77.5%), denoting only a moderate level of proficiency in these areas, hence calling for improvement.

The scores dip further for healing of psychological trauma, self-management and responsibility, and here-and-now focus, where the national averages range from 3.0 to 3.1 out of 4 (77%). These results suggest challenges in addressing psychological traumas, taking personal responsibility, and maintaining focus on the present moment.

In summary, the national average scores from the individual-level survey reveal a society with notable strengths in collaboration, empathy and certain cognitive skills. However, there is an opportunity for growth in areas related to spiritual well-being, humility, emotional expression, and coping with psychological trauma. These insights can guide targeted interventions and policies to enhance the overall resilience of the population.

Graphic 2 - National average scores and percentages of household resilience level per indicator



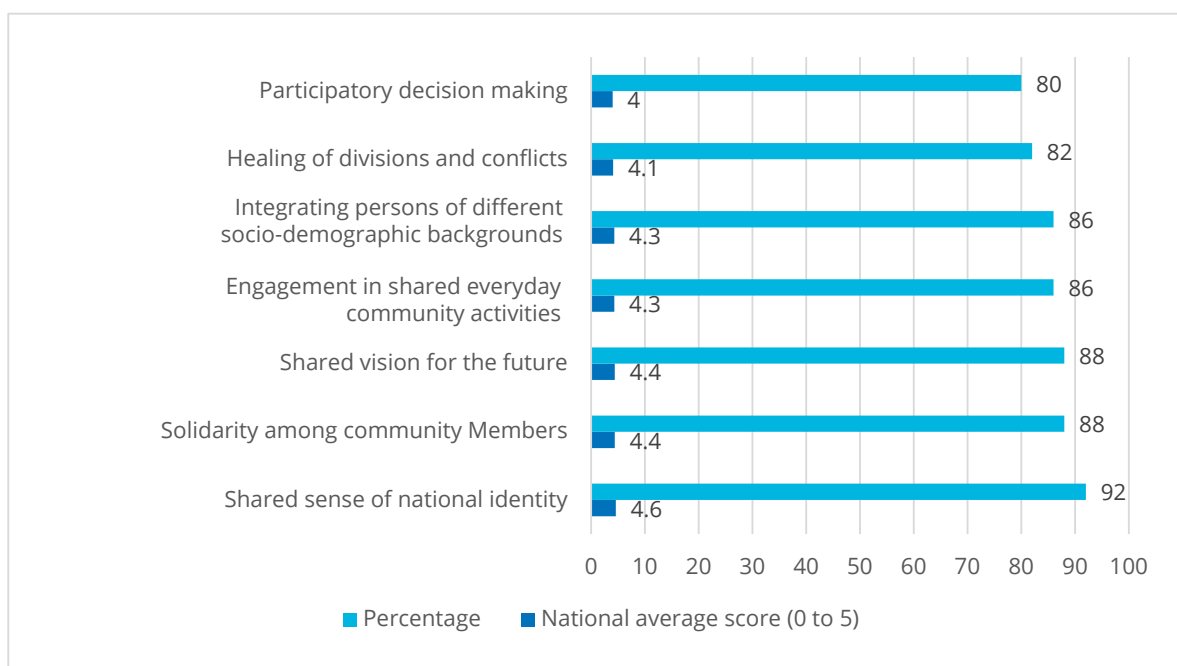
The level of resilience at the household level in Rwanda also presents a diverse landscape, with varying scores across key indicators. Notably, connection with other families (4.2 out of 5, i.e. 84%) and values-based family conversations (4.0 out of 5 i.e. 80%) exhibit moderate resilience, indicating the need for stronger social bonds and meaningful family interactions.

Similarly, there is room for improvement in mechanisms to resolve family conflicts and the practice of re-

sponsive and authoritative parenting, each of which display moderate resilience with scores of 3.9 out of 5 (78%). This suggests the need for enhancing conflict resolution strategies and parenting skills within Rwandan households.

Furthermore, gender equality, access to livelihood sources, intergenerational partnership and the entrepreneurial mindset all maintain moderate levels of resilience with scores of 3.7 out of 5 (74%). These areas signal ongoing efforts to promote gender equity, economic stability, family relationships across generations and innovation within households. Overall, while some aspects of household resilience in Rwanda are robust, there remains a scope for strengthening certain facets to bolster the overall resilience of households across the nation.

Graphic 3 - National average scores and percentages of community resilience level per indicator

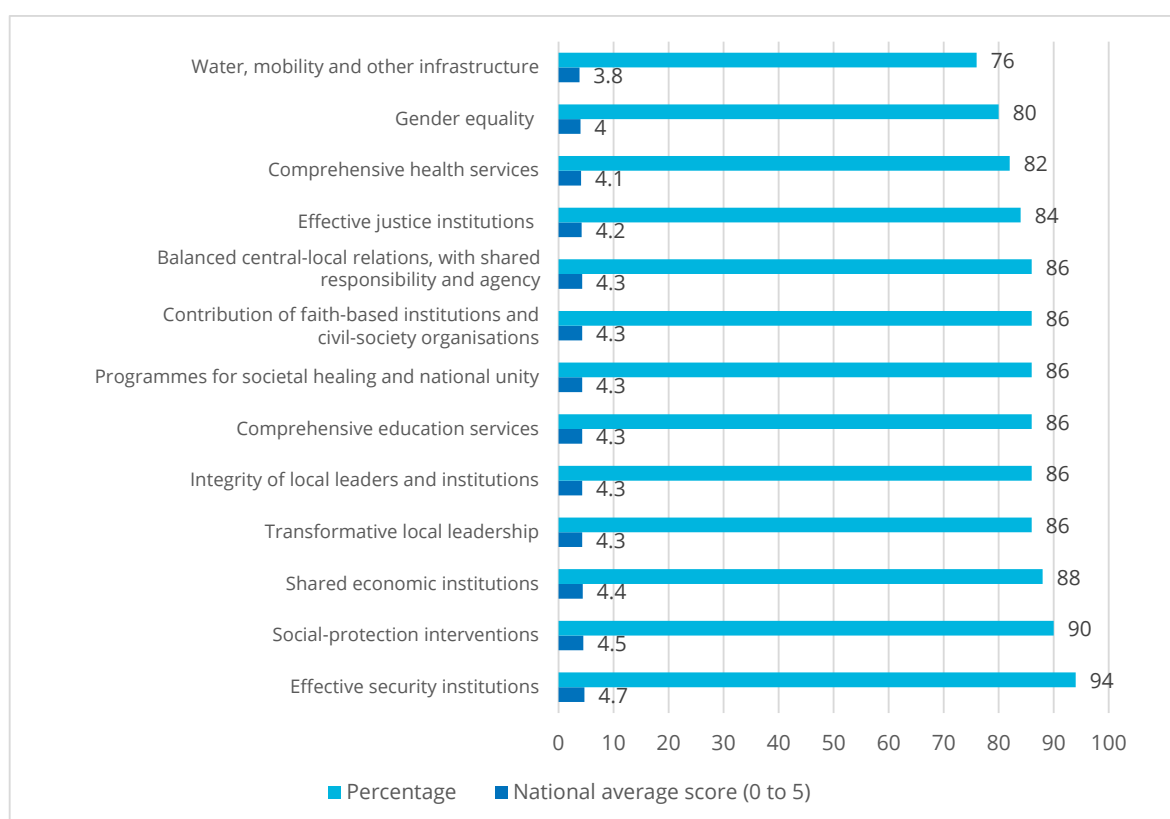


At the community level, the landscape of resilience in Rwanda is marked by overall strength and unity. A shared sense of national identity stands out with a high resilience score of 4.6 out of 5 (92%), reflecting a strong connection to a unified national identity. Additionally, solidarity among community members and a shared vision for the future both score 4.4 out of 5 (88%), underscoring a strong sense of support, cohesion and common goals within communities.

While these indicators demonstrate high resilience, there is room for further enhancement in certain aspects. Engagement in shared everyday community activities scores 4.3 out of 5 (86%), indicating high resilience and suggesting increased opportunities for participation in communal activities. Integrating persons of different socio-demographic backgrounds also maintains a moderately high score of 4.3 out of 5 (86%), indicating remarkable efforts toward inclusivity. Healing of divisions and conflicts displays moderate resilience with a score of 4.1 out of 5 (82%), reflecting the need for continued work in resolving past issues. Last, participatory decision making, scoring 4.0 out of 5 (80%), represents an area with moderate resilience, offering potential for heightened community involvement in decision-making processes.

Overall, Rwandan communities display commendable resilience, with several strong indicators and opportunities for growth and improvement in specific dimensions.

Graphic 4 - National average scores and percentages of institutional resilience level per indicator



At the institutional level in Rwanda, resilience is generally high, reflecting a robust and well-structured system. The country exhibits remarkable strength in various key indicators. Effective security institutions lead the way with the highest score – 4.7 out of 5 (94%)– underscoring Rwanda’s commitment to maintaining a secure environment. Social-protection interventions also score notably high at 4.5 out of 5 (90%), highlighting the nation’s dedication to supporting its vulnerable populations.

Shared economic institutions 4.4 out of 5 (88%), transformative local leadership, integrity of local leaders and institutions, comprehensive education services, programmes for societal healing and national unity, and the contribution of faith-based institutions and civil-society organisations all maintain a high level of resilience with scores of 4.3 out of 5 (86%) respectively. These indicators showcase Rwanda’s strong governance, social development, and inclusive leadership. Furthermore, balanced central–local relations, with shared responsibility and agency also score 4.3 out of 5 (86%), indicating effective co-operation and collaboration between different levels of government. Effective justice institutions, with a score of 4.2 out of 5 (84%), confirm Rwanda’s commitment to a reliable legal system.

In some areas, only moderate resilience is observed, such as comprehensive health services with a score of 4.1 out of 5 (82%) and gender equality at 4.0 out of 5 (80%). However, these scores still reflect Rwanda’s dedication to health care and gender equity. The indicator for water, mobility and other infrastructure, with a score of 3.8 out of 5 (76%), signals areas for potential improvement. Overall, Rwanda’s institutional resilience is commendable, with strengths in various critical sectors, indicating a well-structured and efficient system with room for further development in certain aspects.

Several factors have contributed to Rwanda’s resilience status as summarised above. These include the inclusive nature of government at central and decentralised levels, social-protection programmes in the health and education sectors that cater for the needs of the most vulnerable, existence of community-based conflict

resolution mechanisms and the effectiveness of security and justice institutions. The study also pointed to some factors of fragility at all the assessed levels. Those that appeared frequently in all three assessed levels include, among others, persistent poverty, corruption in local government structures, the mindset of dependence on government support and unhealed wounds resulting from the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and its aftermath.

In response to identified fragilities and in line with the scores per indicator as detailed in Chapter 4, several recommendations have been suggested by the study participants. Institutions responsible for the implementation of the said recommendations are also highlighted in Chapter 5.

Concerning the individual indicators assessed, the study recommends to elaborate programmes aimed at building collaboration and negotiation skills and practical compassion to promote social solidarity and community cohesion. It is also suggested that a need exists to expand collective-healing activities that include a component of emotional education, such as resilience-oriented therapy, multifamily therapy and sociotherapy, to build participants' capacity to regulate their emotions, cope with challenging feelings and take positive action. Also recommended are the promotion of community envisioning activities to build a sense of the future, the strengthening of leadership training and peace education programmes, and participation in collaborative-livelihoods initiatives.

At the household level, it was recommended to pursue sensitisation campaigns on the benefits of equal rights and opportunities between boys and girls, men and women. It was also suggested to institutionalise intrafamily dialogues by activating the family council (*inama y'umuryango*)¹ to prevent or manage family conflicts more efficiently, to design exit strategies for government-assisted groups to rise out of poverty and dependence, and to expand financial-access opportunities to empower individuals and families.

At the community level, participants echoed the need to devise innovative measures to ensure active participation of elites and youth in community-based activities, including *Umuganda*, *Umugoroba w'imiryango* and other related programmes. The empowerment of communities to prevent and fight the abuse of drugs, particularly among the youth, was also underlined as a need by respondents. Participants indicated that a resilient community can only be achieved by the strengthening of mental-health services at the community level to ensure an effective response to cases of unhealed wounds associated with the genocide and with trauma. For the country to maintain a strong development and a peaceful trajectory, this study recommends running campaigns to raise youth interest in the history and the reconstruction process of Rwanda.

Last, institutional-level recommendations point to the need for the intensification of the control and fight against corruption, particularly at the local government level. It was further recommended to improve agricultural extension services to farmers, roads and access to electricity, mainly in the rural areas. Recommendations also stressed the need to accelerate the development of employability skills and diversify employability opportunities to respond to the pressing needs, particularly among the youth. This implies the development of employability skills through the expansion of technical and vocational education and training facilities.

¹ As per Law No. 32/2016 of 28 August 2016 governing persons and family, "the Family Council is an organ within the family especially responsible for ensuring the safeguard of interests of the family members and settling the disputes arising in the family (Art.162). Some of its responsibilities include: 1) to protect the interests of the family; and 2)°to listen and to settle disputes relating to succession and any other dispute arising in the family" (Art.163).



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