



# Contribution of “Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi” Programme (UAP) or Parents’ Sunset Meeting to the Reduction of Family Conflicts in Rwanda: Case Study of Cyanika Sector, Nyamagabe District (2016-2019)

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**Abstract**— The research was dealing with the topic entitled Contribution of “Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi” Programme (UAP) or Parents’ Sunset Meeting to the Reduction of Family Conflicts in Rwanda:

Case Study of Cyanika Sector in Nyamagabe District (2016-2019). This period of time has been chosen following two major reasons. Firstly, a 4-year implementation of “Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi” Programme was long enough to record meaningful results within this local community. Secondly, to investigate into the recent results of UAP in the field under study. The study has intended to answer the research question like: Did “Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi” Programme (UAP) or Parents’ Sunset Meeting contribute to the reduction of family conflicts in Cyanika Sector of Nyamagabe District during the period of 2016-2019. This study is both quantitative and qualitative approaches and data from the sample of 99 respondents have been collected by using questionnaire, interview as well as the literature review to track information from existing relevant researches related to the topic under study. According to 73% up to 91% respondents the major causes of family conflicts in the study area were, among others: lack of frank and regular face-to-face communication between the couples, financial issues, conjugal infidelity, mismanagement of family material property, and parental roles-related issues. In addition, a vast range of 36% up to 92% respondents have pointed out some major consequences of family conflicts like: wasting family resources, conjugal infidelity, lack of trustfulness and confidentiality, teenage pregnancies and delinquency in children, sexual transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS contamination, imprisonment, low school performance, school dropout, and increased absenteeism in children. Furthermore, a high range of 81% to 99% respondents have recognized some major outcomes of “Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi” Programme (UAP) such as: Creation of favorable conditions for sharing family experiences, achieving reconciliation and unity in many conflicting families, organizing a regular follow-up to support the families recently reconciled, visiting and advising in confidentiality families still in conflict, and discussing different topics related to the socio-economic development in their local community such as: domestic violence, teenage pregnancies, children abuse, school dropout, creation of cooperatives or self-help groups. However, a very significant range of 78% up to 97% respondents have indicated some important challenges impeding UAP like moderate participation of the Village members in the meeting, repeated individual absences due to job constraints, lack of financial means and logistic challenges and resistance to change in many parents still supporting traditional patriarchal attitudes. And the study recommends further researches like:

*Contribution of increased participation of local community members in enhancing improved outcomes of UAP; and impact of well-designed sensitization approaches on reducing the resistance to social change within the rural local community.*

**Keywords—** *Umugoroba w’ Ababyeyi Programme (UAP), Family Conflicts, Rwanda National Women Council (NAWOCO), Gender Equality, and Local Community.*

## I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

From times immemorial the family is considered as the foundation of any human society that appears to be a collection of these basic small-sized social units. In this research the nuclear family that includes the father, mother, and children was specifically discussed. Many frequent experiences throughout the world have shown that within these small social units, conflicts might occur as a result of divergent interests related to, among others, extramarital affairs, financial difficulties, communication failure, and parenting issues (Mukashema, I. and Sapsford, R. ; Fish et al. 2012; Pancare 2019). In addition, other social situations are likely to cause severe conflicts harming individuals, families or entire social groups. Likewise, as a consequence of a discriminatory colonial domination, Rwanda—an East African country—has been for long victim of a distorted national history that eventually has strongly opposed the two major social groups namely Hutu and Tutsi. For decades this social discrimination supported by a bad political leadership has led to the extremely horrific 1994 Genocide against Tutsi where over one million Tutsi and tens of moderate Hutu politicians were slaughtered ruthlessly. As heavy results, thousands of Tutsi survivors were left disabled, traumatized, greatly impoverished, and thousands of girls/women violently raped and deliberately infected with HIV/AIDS (AVEGA Report 2011; IRDP 2017). Furthermore, at a large scale the country was socially and economically devastated by the civil war where all the population has been chaotically displacing either inside or outside the country. However, since over two decades Rwanda has achieved tremendous progress in all sectors of national life (World Bank Report 2018) but segments of the population keep today lasting effects of the tragic events that they have experienced in 1994 and afterwards. According to Ministry of Health (MoH) currently 14% of population and 35% survivors show at various extent real signs of depression ([www.moh.gov.rw/fileadmin/templates/Docs-Posted-National-Mental-Health-policy-in-Rwanda](http://www.moh.gov.rw/fileadmin/templates/Docs-Posted-National-Mental-Health-policy-in-Rwanda), Retrieved on September 15, 2020).

Therefore, according to many local observers increasing family conflict rates countrywide today are perhaps to be associated with the disastrous social and psychological situations that most people have experienced in the recent Rwandan history. Indeed, the post-genocide Rwanda has

been undergoing for around three decades family conflicts that have become one of the challenging social concerns. A recent study has revealed that “*family conflicts have become a major problem to security and are threatening the welfare of Rwandan families. In the last two decades following the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, the Rwandan society has witnessed quarrels of family members who reached the extent of killing one another, this despite ongoing peace-building efforts conducted in Rwanda*” (IRDP 2017). In addition, Rwanda Ministry of Justice reports that all over the country divorce cases have dramatically increased from 69 in 2017 to 1311 in 2018 ([www.minijust.gov.rw/last\\_children\\_policy\\_...](http://www.minijust.gov.rw/last_children_policy_...)). A Ministry of Health survey conducted in 2016 has shown that 17,444 girls aged between 16 and 19 were impregnated ([www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/...](http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/...)) Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) has reported 19,000 mothers in their teenage in late 2018 ([www.migeprof.gov.rw](http://www.migeprof.gov.rw)). And for only 2018, Rwanda National Police (RNP) has reported many tens of murders and suicides within households all over the country. [www.police.gov.rw/about-rnp-rnp-partners...](http://www.police.gov.rw/about-rnp-rnp-partners...)

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The researchers wanted to find out mainly the solutions and strategies to the following questions related to challenges and conflicts faced by some families of Cyanika Sector of Nyamagabe District in the period of 2016-2019 though “*Umugoroba w’ Ababyeyi Programme*”. 1) What are the causes and the consequences of family conflicts in the area under study? 2) What are the strategies used to reduce family conflicts in the local community selected as the area of study? Did “*Umugoroba w’ Ababyeyi*” Programme (UAP) or Parents’ Sunset Meeting contribute to the reduction of family conflicts in Cyanika Sector of Nyamagabe District in the period of 2016-2019? In line with these questions, the study was guided by the following objectives: 1) To explore the root causes and the consequences of family conflicts in the study area in 2016-2019. 2) To identify the strategies used by “*Umugoroba w’ Ababyeyi*” Programme (UAP) to reduce family conflicts in Cyanika Sector. 3) To determine the outcomes and the challenges to UAP and

suggest some solutions to the challenges opposing UAP in the local community under study.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This part attempts to explore the findings already worked out by social researches in the matter of family conflicts—a disturbing social reality identified in many households across the world. As studies have shown *“family relationships—between wife and husband, parents and children, brothers and sisters or between distant relatives—can be warm and fulfilling. But they can equally well contain the most pronounced tensions, driving people to despair of filling them with a deep sense of anxiety and guilt”* (Giddens 2002:193). Two major themes are considered in the following discussion such as: causes and consequences of family conflicts; and objectives, strategies and outcomes of “Umugoroba w’ Ababyeyi” Programme (UAP).

#### Investigating into the causes and the consequences of family conflicts

Family conflicts appear to be a disagreement or a friction within nuclear/extended family members resulting from divergent beliefs, viewpoints, goals or interests. Researchers claim that family conflicts are a pervasive human reality identified throughout the world. The nature of family conflicts consists of various aspects that should include fights, injuries, refusal/reduction of domestic cares, sexual harassment, temporary leave from home, causing anxiety or depression, separation, divorce, murder, and suicide. Giddens (2002:193) puts that *“the home is in fact the most dangerous place in modern society. In statistical terms, a person of any age or of either sex is far more likely to be subject to physical attack in the home than on the street at night. One in four murders in the UK is committed by one family member against another”*.

With reference to Western societies with the dominant nuclear family, studies reveal that the origins of family conflicts may largely vary in terms of their nature, intensity, and impact. In relating to the works of Valls-Vidal et al. (2010), Bost (2015) explains different causes of family conflicts like the death of a family member, illness of family member such as a cancer or other life threatening disease, financial hardship, career transition, relocating to new area, addition of new family members, and children having issues in school. Giddens (2002:194) indicates two major root causes of family conflicts: *One is the combination of emotional intensity and personal intimacy. Family ties are normally charged with strong emotions, often mixing love and hate. A second influence is the fact that a good deal of violence within the family is*

*actually tolerated, and even approved of (...). About one in four Americans of both sexes takes the view that there can be a good reason for a husband to strike a wife”*.

Nowadays, Rwanda appears to be a transitional society in which some aspects of traditional extended family are still mixing with features of the nuclear family. Thus, current Rwandan family is subject to a process of social change aiming at reaching modernity and at successfully managing multiple consequences of the devastating 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. And a research has attempted to identify some critical causes of widespread family conflicts in our country such as: *contrasted expectations of marriage, insufficient knowledge of each other, poor communication, coping with change, sex and adultery, poverty, property and land, influence of other people*. And the study has pointed out some consequences of marital conflicts such as: *divorce, health problems, effects on children, gender and the effects of conflicts* (Mukashema, I and Sapsford, R. 2013).

Similarly, Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP 2017)—a Rwandan public research agency dating back to 2001—conducted an interesting research using a rigorous qualitative approach where the participants in group discussion as well as individual interviews have given in details some important causes of the conflicts between conjugal partners like: jealousy and mistrust between the couples; financial difficulties influencing poor housing, health problems, poor conditions of life in the family; lack of dialogue, open communication and negotiation between couples; sexual dissatisfaction, adultery, reiterated refusal to have sexual intercourse with partners; practice of incest; unfair distribution of inheritance (umurage/umunani) within children; unwanted pregnancies, drug addiction, delinquency, and school dropout in children; and misinterpretation of the concept of gender equality in family life.

Most studies have shown that family conflicts often generate damaging impact on nuclear/extended members. Fabricius et al. (2007) indicates that *“family conflicts cause tremendous stressors such as anxiety, long term health effects such as high blood pressure, suppression of the immune system, premature aging, increase the risks of mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression (...) and behavioral problems in children”*. In addition, Bost (2015) and Joseph, M. (1993) point out that in a broader view family conflicts often result in family violence, intimate partner disruption, loss of psychological, emotional and physical security in children, and imbalance in power relations. Furthermore, IRDP (2017) has shown a number of devastating effects of family conflicts in Rwanda today like: conjugal infidelity in either partner; wasting family



resources; fights and destruction of household material equipment; divorce or separation; school dropout, drug abuse, delinquency in children, imprisonment; and committing suicide/murder.

To end this section it is worth noting briefly that family conflicts should result in positive effects. Although most of consequences of family conflicts generate damaging effects, many studies have indicated some positive consequences of family disruption. Indeed, many children who have supportive systems outside of their family are exposed to positive influences and role modeling. Support systems may be an after-school program, a friendship with a teacher or mentor, social support systems, and inclusion with extra-curricular groups. These children tend to be able to adapt well to change because they have eventually positive support during transitional stages in their life (Sroufe 2005, Lansford 2009, Mustonen et al. 2011).

### **Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi: Objectives, Strategies, Outcomes, and Challenges**

*Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi* Programme (UAP), a renovated traditional mechanism applied to solve conflicts within family/community members, was a creation of Rwandan National Women Council (NAWOCO) started in 1996 consisting in organized structures from the grassroots up to the national level and aiming at ensuring women's participation in local governance at all administrative levels. NAWOCO was legally established by article 187 of Constitution and article 4 of Law N° 27/23 of 18/08/2003. National Women Council (NAWOCO) conducts countrywide its activities following four (4) major sectors like: Civil Education; Health and Social Affairs; Capacity Building; and Women Economic Empowerment (<http://197.197.243.22/migeprof/index.php?id=194>).

*Umugoroba w' Ababyeyi* Programme (UAP), a creation of NAWOCO, is a platform that brings together male and female parents to discuss strategies to be taken by family members to enhance their relationships, to prevent/reduce conflicts that can arise in their households or neighborhood. UAP has started as a small idea in 2010 working as a forum bringing only women together to share life experiences and support each other. As UAP has eventually produced interesting results, in accordance with the Government of Rwanda through Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), NAWOCO has decided to launch officially countrywide the programme that was developed and broadened further to include also men and sometimes young people living in the same Village (*Umudugudu*)—the smallest administrative entity of the country.

As established by NAWOCO in 2013, UAP is intended to reach the goals as follows: To enable the parents to discuss

their relationships and welfare; To help parents to improve education in children; To listen and provide advices to parents or children victims of violence in the local settings; To discuss the implementation of national development programmes in their local community; and to share life experiences and various testimonies on how others have succeeded to manage household issues and family conflicts. The present study has mostly focused on family conflicts that have consisted in open conflicts within the couples because these ones were perceived as the cornerstone of family life.

In order to reach the goals planned, some efficient strategies have been set up and NAWOCO explained in 2013 that UAP operates its activities at the Village (*Umudugudu*) level and is composed of the general assembly comprising all the male and female members living in the same Village. UAP gathers at least once a month and whenever necessary for an urgent case. NAWOCO further points out that UAP is headed by a Coordination Committee (CC) elected for two years renewable once and made up of president, vice-president, secretary, and two advisors. This 5 person team is required to have some undoubted ethical values such as integrity, wisdom, good skills in solving social conflicts, ability of high confidentiality, and good reputation. CC is given periodic trainings by trained social workers on how to handle social issues occurring in the local community. In a well-organized manner, CC leads the working of the gathering. Members of conflicting families are requested to present their respective problems as more openly and frankly as possible to the parents' assembly. For more clarification of the issues under discussion, CC uses a well-structured democratic approach in sharing opinions and life experiences between conflicting parties and the general assembly. To solve the family conflicts, CC uses in general the techniques like negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation. Through negotiation, the parties are encouraged to formulate themselves the issues under dispute and find a satisfactory solution to all of them in win-win conditions.

The goal of mediation is creating by CC the process of dialogue, breaking destructive cycle and leading parties to agreement. The reconciliation appears to be the crossing point of truth, justice, mercy, and peace. Reconciliation occurs when the relationships severely broken are definitely restored. Along with other local community leaders and to ensure a long lasting solution to family conflicts, CC continues to conduct a regular follow-up and support to reconciled families. In this gathering a lot of advices are provided and, when necessary, reasonable punishment is proposed to the wrongdoer(s).

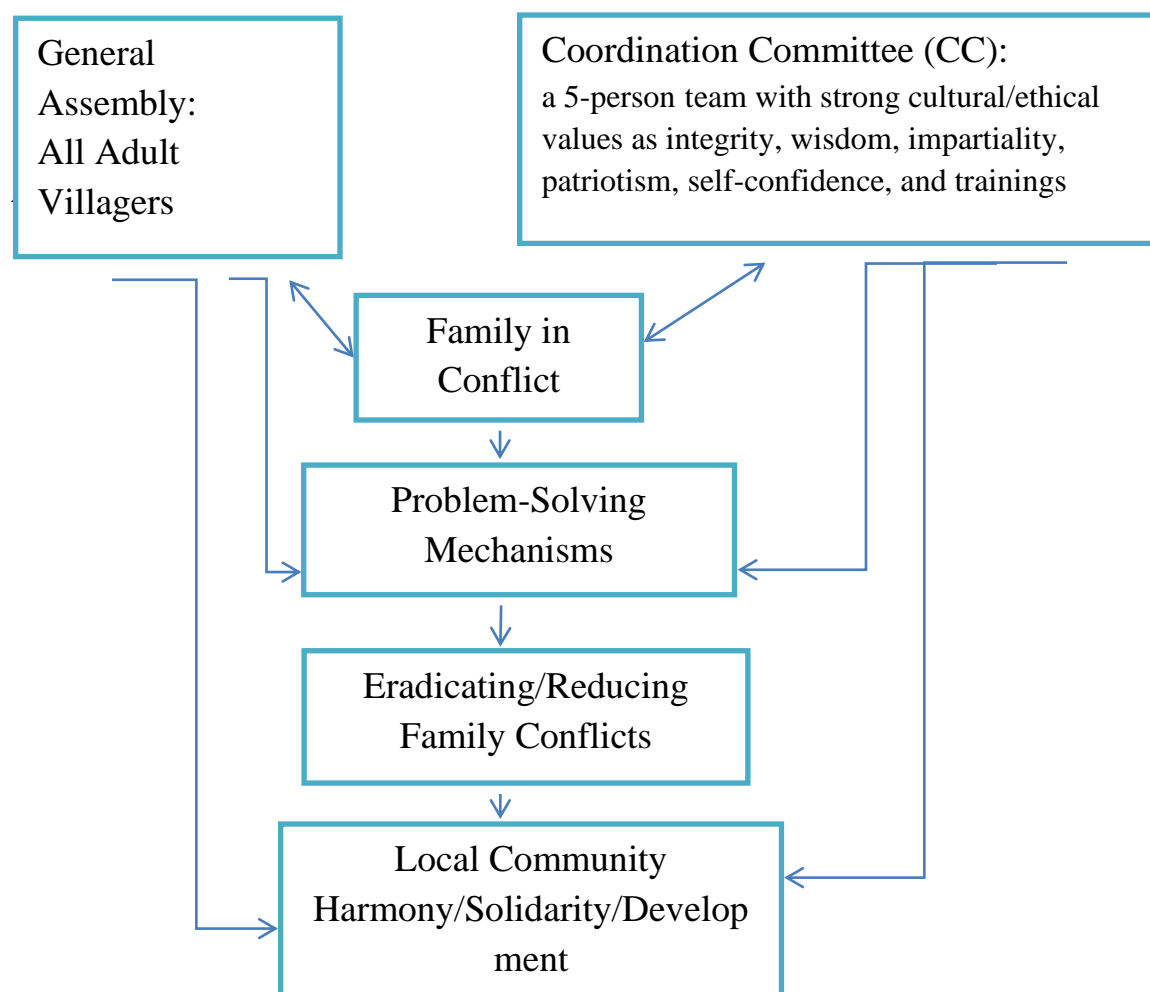
Finally, through the supervision of CC the individuals involved in dispute are encouraged to reach a frank agreement and to reconcile in front of UAP’s general assembly which strongly applauds as a sign of approval and joy. In addition to solving family conflicts, the Village leaders/sensitizers take the opportunity to discuss with the citizens about different development subjects related to hygiene, school dropout, drug abuse, security in the local community, teenage pregnancies, adhering to cooperatives of marketable production, etc. For more serious family conflicts the cases are transferred in administrative higher stages like Mediation Committee (*Abunzi*) at Cell (*Akagari*) or Sector (*Umurenge*) levels and perhaps finally to use ordinary judicial courts.

As Uwineza et al. (2009) have shown, traditional cultures include effective responses to various modern challenges. Indeed, the participants in UAP meetings have indicated numerous benefits that have improved their social conditions of life in their families. A worker in charge of gender and family promotion in Kamonyi District/Rwanda explained: *“We address issues related to domestic and gender-based violence, child abuse, family planning; we discuss how to improve security in our communities. Those found with deep rooted conflicts are taken through six-week counseling sessions”* ([en.igihe.com>news>umugoroba-w-ababyeyi-reuniting – broken...](http://en.igihe.com/news/umugoroba-w-ababyeyi-reuniting-broken...)).

In addition, citizens of Kicukiro District in Kigali City/Rwanda told the media that *“the initiative has made a big difference in the wellbeing of the society at large. When we meet we discuss about family, parents discuss issues concerning their children, matters of domestic violence, child abuse, and parents’ conflicts are also*

*debated on”* ([en.igihe.com>news> umugoroba-w-ababyeyi-reuniting- broken...](http://en.igihe.com/news/umugoroba-w-ababyeyi-reuniting-broken...)). On the other hand, a female citizen of Kigali City expressed about UAP: *“Oh yes! It means a lot to us. It has yielded unity and reconciliation where several women who initially couldn’t see eye to eye can now sit and talk. It comes to teaching people how to put conflicts aside and work towards a common goal”* ([www.newtimes.co.rw>section>read...](http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read...)).

Although the outcomes of UAP are convincingly appreciated by the public institutions like MINALOC and MIGEPROF, Village leaders/sensitizers indicated that these forums encountered a series of obstacles that impede their projected performance. To IRDP (2017) some three (3) major barriers to UAP have been identified such as: 1) Lack of sufficient ownership at grassroots level. The participation of the local population in the community gathering was moderate. Indeed, in some places lots of efforts by local leaders were needed to mobilize citizens to attend **UAP** meetings as some of them were busy in their ordinary daily occupations. 2) Financial means and logistic challenges: Absence of meeting room especially in rainy season. And there was no budget to support operational costs in relation to basic materials like notebooks, pens, files and communication tools like telephone and airtime. CC was obliged to work in volunteerism approach. 3) Resistance to change: Inability in some parents to adapt their views to easily adopt change. Especially in the matter of gender equality many male parents still support traditional beliefs and attitudes that cause family conflicts. The diagram below summarizes how UAP works.

**UAP: An indigenous knowledge-based approach to reduce family conflicts****IV. METHODOLOGY**

To conduct the research in the field the period of 2016-2019 has been chosen for two major reasons. Firstly, an implementation of four years was sufficiently long for UAP to record meaningful results in the study area. Secondly, to investigate the current results of UAP in the field under study. The study has used the qualitative method since the findings have included numerous individual testimonies and many sections related to the interpretation of the results. The research relied also on the quantitative method where the answers collected from a sample of respondents were translated into statistical frequencies and percentages. In addition to primary data collected from questionnaire and interview, the secondary data were also used to track information from books, reports, journals, and electronic documents so as to explore relevant findings of different researches related to the study. The total population (N) of the Sector under study was made of 9,254 adult people aged between 21 and 50 years old and above. To represent this large population ‘N’ under study, a random sample ‘n’ has been calculated by

using the formula of William G. Cochran (1909-1980), a well-known American and English prominent statistician of our times.

$$\text{Thus, } n = \frac{No}{1 + \frac{No}{N}}$$

$$\text{Where } No = \frac{(Za)^2 p \cdot q}{d^2}$$

And replacing in the formulas above the mathematical symbols by their respective numerical values, we have had  $No = (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 / (10/100)^2$  and  $N = 9,254$ . Therefore, the sample  $n = 99$ . In addition, Cyanika Sector is composed of 6 Cells. There was a need of sample stratification to determine the number of respondents to be selected in each cell. For instance, a questionnaire has been administered to 99 respondents including 21 respondents of Karama Cell where 1,936 people aged 21 years old and above were living. Data of questionnaire collected from the field were ready in the late March 2020.

Regarding the study area, according to Rwanda Fourth Population and Housing Census (RPHC 2012) Nyamagabe District comprising 17 administrative Sectors has registered 341,491 inhabitants with 310/km<sup>2</sup> as population density ([www.statistics.gov.rw/file/download](http://www.statistics.gov.rw/file/download)). In 2017 Cyanika Sector was composed of 23,093 people growing food crops like bananas, maize, beans, cassava; and cash crop only consisting of coffee. In addition to raising pigs, goats, and rabbits majority of farmers also had livestock like cows mainly given by Girinka Munyarwanda-a governmental programme started in 2007 to raise the conditions of life in poor households.

Although in the past 25 years Rwanda has been recording in general tremendous outcomes in the area of socio-economic development, the conditions of life still remain modest in rural areas like Cyanika Sector mainly because of less progress in terms of adopting modern attitudes to cause a quick social change. And to have more recent information on the area under study, a long interview was held in late August 2020 with Executive Secretary of Cyanika Sector.

## V. FIELD FINDINGS

### Causes and consequences of family conflicts

Although family conflicts might originate in various psychological, ideological and socio-economic processes, 73% up to 91% respondents have indicated some causes of family disruptions in Cyanika Sector of Nyamagabe District such as lack of frank and open communication, financial issues, conjugal infidelity, mismanagement of family material property, and parental roles-related issues. Major causes of family conflicts identified by the respondents were generally found in the couples themselves.

Furthermore, a high range of 78% up to 93% respondents have identified specifically in details the major causes of family conflicts in Cyanika Sector such as: jealousy and mistrust between spouses mostly originating in conjugal infidelity; lack of frank and open communication in the couples; high imbalance in power relations and in decision making processes; financial difficulties causing poor conditions of life in the household; sexual dissatisfaction in either partner; frequent opposing views in managing the household affairs like family planning, money allocation, in-laws and extended family relationships, disciplinary measures for children; misunderstanding and ill application of the concept of gender equality in the couples; and influence of external factors like working conditions, rumors, peer groups, and so forth. And 45%

respondents have stated to have experienced family conflicts in their households.

And a vast range of 36% up to 92% respondents in Cyanika Sector have pointed out some major consequences of family conflicts like: wasting family resources; conjugal infidelity; lack of trustfulness and confidentiality; divorce or separation; teenage pregnancies, delinquency, and drug addiction in children; sexual transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS contamination; low school performance, school dropout and increased absenteeism in children; and imprisonment. As indicated by most respondents, the consequences of family disruptions were sometimes severely damaging the good working of the households concerned and were impeding to some extent the socio-economic development of the local community.

### Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi (UAP) in Cyanika Sector: outcomes and challenges

Since its beginning, UAP has intended to make Rwandan family become a constantly safe place where the family members live in harmony and direct cooperation to promote better conditions of life within the households. In close cooperation with the local community and the Village leaders, UAP has conducted various activities in the field. A very significant range of 81% to 99% respondents have attempted to identify some major activities performed in UAP framework like: creation of favorable conditions for sharing family life experiences and testimonies; achieving reconciliation in many conflicting families; securing reconciliation between neighboring conflicting families; organizing frequent follow-up to support the families recently reconciled; visiting and advising in confidentiality families still in conflict; and discussing different topics related to socio-economic development in their local community like domestic violence; children abuse; drug addiction; teenage pregnancies, school dropout; adhering to cooperatives of marketable production; ensuring security in the Village; and so forth. According to Executive Secretary of Cyanika Sector, UAP “*was very beneficial to the population for different reasons such as being allowed a free talk; ability of listening to and critically analyzing a problem; opportunity of self-evaluation and adopting new behavior*”.

In addition, a very significant range of 78% up to 97% have attempted to indicate some important challenges impeding UAP such as: moderate participation of the Village members mainly because of being busy in daily occupations; repeated individual absences due to paid job constraints; and resistance to change (“*hari abantu bananiwe guhinduka*”). Some male parents have still resisted to gender policy and supported traditional beliefs



and patriarchal attitudes in managing the household affairs. To remove these obstacles to UAP, different agencies were considered as likely to provide a crucial contribution. To Executive Secretary of Cyanika Sector, current Rwandan programmes like *Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi* Programme (UAP) and *Inshuti z'Umuryango* (Family Friends Club) drawing from indigenous family conflict-solving mechanisms should be strengthened and empowered to prevent/alleviate family conflicts.

Moreover, the study findings have suggested that different public institutions like MINALOC, MIGEPROF, NAWOCO, Rwandan Commission of Human Rights and the local community leaders should strengthen sensitization campaign in order to raise awareness of gender policy within the population in order to prevent/eradicate family conflicts. Various private institutions like NGOs and Faith-based organizations should also enhance sensitization campaign among the population to promote harmony and cooperation in families. And family members/couples should change their understanding and practices to adopt the benefits of gender policy for a better working of families.

## VI. RESULTS DISCUSSION

The research has intended to demonstrate how *Umugoroba w' Ababyeyi* Programme (UAP) or Parents' Sunset Meeting has contributed to the reduction of family conflicts in Cyanika Sector during the period of 2016-2019. To evaluate the significance of the field results and to understand their implications, some major root causes of family conflicts have been selected in order to be discussed in depth namely: conjugal infidelity; mismanagement of family property; lack of frank communication; and misunderstanding of gender equality.

### Conjugal infidelity

Eighty-five per cent (85%) of respondents stated that conjugal infidelity in either male or female partner was identified in some families and consisted in having one or more sexual partners outside the couple. In interview, Executive Secretary of Cyanika Sector pointed out the frequent occurrences of jealousy, mistrust, unfair cooperation and violence between spouses as consequences of conjugal infidelity. Local community observers have noted that conjugal infidelity should be associated with factors like working conditions (for instance staying often a long time far from the home), negative influence of peer groups, and individual permissive behavior. In addition, some respondents have pointed out that perhaps the existence of females outnumbering the males was also one of the important

factors of conjugal infidelity. Indeed, to Rwanda Fourth Population and Housing Census 51,8% females totalized Rwandan population (RPHC 2012). According to Bost (2015) other studies have shown that relationship stressors such as having children, new career opportunities, financial difficulties, and death of loved ones tend to reduce relational satisfaction. Other factors like lack of income, lower educational level, and exposure to parental divorce increase infidelity in relationships. In many human societies supporting individualistic values, a suspected conjugal infidelity is considered as sufficient evidence to cause divorce or separation in couples. Many studies have shown that several broken families bring about multidimensional negative consequences within the offsprings (Cui et al. 2010; Fish et al. 2012; IRDP 2017).

### Mismanagement of family property

A high majority of respondents have stated that the mismanagement of household regarding property resulted also in family conflicts. Indeed, financial difficulties as a result of unplanned money allocation has caused poor conditions of life in the household such as inability of ensuring health cares and schooling expenses, keeping a decent nutritional status, and non-providing with indispensable household material equipment. In addition, some of other reasons given are unequal power-relation in favour of men as well as economic disparities regarding possession of assets. However, according to Family Law (2006) and Rwandan Constitution (2003,2015) men and women are equal before the law in terms of human dignity, right to succession, right to any form of his/her own property, right to education, right to various freedoms, etc. In contrast, as direct consequences of traditional patriarchal culture, many Rwandan men in their families consider themselves as arbiters on all important decisions, especially those regarding the household assets (IRDP 2017). Moreover, in some cases women alone produce an important part of family income and this should be perceived by men as source of frustration very likely to cause lasting family conflicts. In interview, Executive Secretary of Cyanika Sector explained that in either male or female parent a wrong use of monetary income or marketable production contributed to the family disruption. Furthermore, many researchers have abundantly shown that financial issues and in general the mismanagement of family assets have been a frequent source of family conflicts (Giddens 2002; Valls-Vidal et al.2010; IRDP 2017).

### Lack of frank communication

According to most respondents, the lack of frank and frequent face-to-face communication within couples was perhaps one of the major causes of many family



disruptions. Once again, the cultural practices in patriarchal societies support the monopoly of the speech in the male family members. Thus, within some families of the study area, in various decision-making processes males are leading and females remain passive. Therefore, for this reason, today in times of modernity, a reduced opportunity of open communication within the parents might bring about an increased rate of frequent divergent views in managing the household affairs like money allocation, disciplinary measures in children, family planning, in-laws and extended family. In interview, Executive Secretary of Cyanika Sector in Nyamagabe District has highlighted: *“the lack of sharing freely and extensively on the household matters, not giving room to a frequent consensus in decision-making processes and lack of honesty and integrity in daily conduct of either partner have been also a frequent source of family conflicts”*. In the same line of ideas, many studies have pointed out that frequent open communication within the couples was an indispensable strategy to successfully manage the household affairs (Mason 2007; Kariuki 2010; Mustonen et al.2011; Pancare 2019).

### Misunderstanding of gender equality

According to a high percentage of respondents, the concept of gender equality appeared not sufficiently understood. Since the late 1990s until now Government of Rwanda, especially through Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and its unit of Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), has been committedly engaging in raising awareness of gender policy within the population and has implemented different activities of regular sensitization in the local communities. Most respondents in Cyanika Sector stated that there still were in many couples a high imbalance in decision-making process for instance in family planning initiatives. Although big efforts have been made and tremendous successes registered in Rwanda in the area of gender equality, it remains a long walk to go, as said a woman Rwandan official: *“the path to real equality is a long and at times a difficult one. We shouldn’t forget that we still live in a patriarchal system. There are still some people who don’t have a full understanding of gender issues”* (Parliament Speaker, 2018; [www.newtimes.co.rw>section](http://www.newtimes.co.rw>section) read..). And as the study by IRDP (2017) has also observed, in Rwanda gender equality laws seem to be operating in a non-conducive environment where the mindset and attitudes of some couples are still guided by traditional gender practices. As a result, this misinterpretation of gender creates tension and instability in households.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The study has attempted to reach its specific objectives that in turn led to respond the research question: Did *Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi* Programme (UAP) contribute to reduce family conflicts in Cyanika Sector of Nyamagabe District in the period of 2016-2019? Field findings have convincingly shown that *Umugoroba w’ Ababyeyi* Programme (UAP) has recorded significant benefits to reduce family conflicts such as: achieving reconciliation in many conflicting families; achieving reconciliation between neighboring families in conflict; organizing frequent follow-up to support the families recently reconciled; and discussing various obstacles impeding the socio-economic development in their local community such as: domestic violence, drug addiction, teenage pregnancies, school dropout in children, wasting family resource, and misunderstanding gender policy. Apart from these UAP advantages, there were hard challenges that have impeded a good working of UAP including a moderate attendance of the Village members in UAP, financial and logistic challenges, and resistance to social/cultural change. To lead to a higher performance of UAP, further research should be conducted such as: Contribution of increased participation of local community in enhancing improved outcomes of UAP; Impact of eradicating/reducing the resistance to social change on promoting socio-economic development within the rural local community, to name a few.

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*Note:* It is NAWOCO, Rwanda National Women Council explaining UAP.
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*Note:* **IRDP** or Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace. A Centre created in 2001 by the Government of Rwanda in order to support unity and reconciliation in the post-1994 Genocide Rwanda.
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