

# Local Government Imihigo Process:

Understanding the factors contributing to low citizen participation



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# FOREWORD

In Rwanda, imihigo, also known as performance contracts, are signed between the president, local governments, and line ministries to achieve community targets. They play an integral role in the ability of the Rwandan government to deliver a better life for all. This study, which relied on the generous funding of Palladium/Ikiraro cy'Iterambere and the Norwegian People's Aid, examined the effectiveness of imihigo and the impact of citizens' participation in order to address important challenges related to citizens' involvement in the imihigo process.

Citizen participation is a crucial component of a democratic society. The involvement of the Rwandan people in taking ownership of their communities is indicative of the strides made in a post-conflict era: an era where people feel free to live without the threat of violence and intimidation. A society in which people have a voice allows them to work toward the collective good and build communities that can withstand the trauma of the past.

In this context, a year-long project was designed to examine the reasons pertaining to the low levels of citizen participation in the imihigo process, as documented in earlier studies. This report aims to address these gaps as well as other related factors, while highlighting the challenges faced at the community level and making recommendations that may have a positive impact on imihigo processes.

The focus of this research was 15 districts across the country. Field information was collected in Kinyarwanda and then translated into English for easier reading and coding. Data collection consisted of focus group discussions and key informant interviews, which were found to be appropriate tools to not only unearth participants' opinions on low citizen participation but also their suggestions on how to remedy the situation. There were some constraints that made it impossible to work within the time frame initially set for the project. The most notable one was the 2017 national elections that coincided with the research process and subsequently prolonged it.

Achieving the milestones and goals set for progress in Rwanda – goals aimed at an improved economy, gender equity, and education for all – is a joint effort between the government and the people. We hope that this research improves the effectiveness of homegrown initiatives and that it positively impacts the ways in which Rwanda's government and its people engage with each other to reach these goals.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Imihigo – performance contracts – are signed between the president of the Republic of Rwanda, line ministries, and local government leaders with the aim of ensuring economic progress and reducing poverty within communities. A number of studies on good governance in Rwanda have reported that citizen participation in the imihigo process is low (Rwanda Governance Board 2013, 2014; Research and Dialogue for Peace 2010, 2013; Transparency International Rwanda 2015; Rwanda Governance Board's Citizen Report Card 2014, 2015; Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities 2013; Never Again Rwanda 2016). However, none of these studies have adequately explained the causes of low citizen participation in the imihigo process.

Through its regular Citizen Report Card, the Rwanda Governance Board has perhaps been the leading research institution on this particular topic – adopting a quantitative approach and at times a descriptive approach to tackle it. Other research institutions, such as the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace and the Rwandan Association of Local Government Authorities, have used mixed research methods to examine citizen participation.

Due to the predominant use of the quantitative research method, the causes and contributing factors of low citizen participation have not been identified, let alone analyzed. All a quantitative approach has been able to do is confirm that citizen participation is low. Quantitative research methods endeavor to establish the rapport that exists between a research hypothesis and the situation on the ground; in other words, it deals with statistics. It establishes facts and ratios without interrogating the figures in order to understand the motives, opinions, and explanations as to why things happen the way they do.

Never Again Rwanda (NAR) in partnership with the Youth Association for Human Rights Promotion and Development (AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA) used a qualitative research approach to examine why citizen participation in imihigo is low and to understand what needs to be done in order to improve the rate at which citizens participate in the imihigo process. A qualitative approach seeks to understand the behaviors of individuals and communities. Experiences and views are considered as sources of credible information. Explanatory models are built and solutions are proposed.

As current data suggest that citizen participation in the imihigo process is below 50%, the main objective of this study was to elucidate why citizens do not significantly participate in all imihigo processes. Determining whether citizens meaningfully and constructively participate in imihigo was another concern of the study.

The research was designed with clearly formulated objectives and the following research questions in mind:

1. *How effective are the existing mechanisms to enable citizen participation in local governments' imihigo processes?*
2. *What is hindering citizen participation in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of imihigo processes?*
3. *What existing good practices of citizen participation exist that make imihigo a responsive process?*
4. *At which layer of local government and corresponding stage of the imihigo process is direct citizen participation effective?*
5. *What could explain the inefficient citizen participation over the last eight years?*

These questions and corresponding objectives were not formulated in isolation, but were rather established to serve as tools to investigate gaps in the existing literature. The lack of a qualitative explanation concerning low citizen participation in imihigo processes is of primary interest.

It is generally perceived that "citizen participation" refers to what Nabatchi describes as a "practice by which public concerns, needs, and values are integrated into decision making" (2012: 704). Citizen participation is believed to go hand in hand with another equally important concept, namely "good governance". Scholars have long debated the significance of good governance and have come to stipulate that the term is defined as a value-driven concept. To refer to Graham et al., governance is perceived as "good" as long as it includes the attributes of "responsiveness, inclusiveness, participation, integrity, accountability and fairness" (2003: 5).

This study has understood citizen participation in the wider framework of good governance as defined above, but also in light of policy in Rwanda. Firstly, it supposes that governance is an effective way by which the administration achieves goals of social and economic importance. Further, it takes into account that "good governance" relies on the quality of public services and the participation of citizens in the elaboration of national policies (Office of the Ombudsman 2011: 12). Importantly, good governance innovatively seeks to actively engage citizens in a phase of planning that used to





be an exclusive privilege of leaders at the level of local government – that is, the “design” or “elaboration” of national policies – with the intent of “increasing people’s participation in the planning and management of the development process” (Republic of Rwanda 2011: 3). The entire logic of participation is emphasized in the Constitution of Rwanda, Article 48: “All Rwandans have the duty to participate in the development of the country...” Thus, citizen participation is not optional or elective, but rather mandatory.

This study focuses on citizen participation in the imihigo process, with imihigo a key concept that should be understood in the broader sense of good governance as described above. Imihigo was designed to serve the purpose of improving service delivery under a decentralization program. In his keynote address to newly elected mayors in 2006, President Paul Kagame said: “Imihigo had its roots in a pre-colonial Rwandan cultural practice whereby leaders or warriors would publicly pledge to achieve certain goals—and face public humiliation if they failed. The modern imihigo process linked this traditional Rwandan practice with planning, monitoring and oversight” (Scher 2010: 1). Imihigo are performance contracts between the president of the Republic of Rwanda and mayors, which commit the latter to achieve a set of goals within a given time frame in their respective local government settings.

The concepts used in this study are based on past studies on governance and citizen participation in Rwanda, as well as decentralization and imihigo policy documents. Studies, reports, and policy documents have all converged toward the integration of quality citizen participation, as indicated by principles of good governance, in imihigo. It repeatedly emerged from literature that ordinary citizens should be given the chance to influence policies that affect them. Having established the importance of citizen participation, the study aimed to address two important questions:

- (1) How does the citizen participation model fit into imihigo?
- (2) How does citizen participation feed the imihigo process to become a tool for planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluation?

The study used focus group discussions and key informant interviews to collect the data. Over 600 people from all walks of life coming from 15 districts across the country participated in the study.

The study discusses a number of issues from which certain findings were drawn:

- Power asymmetry between the elected council and local executive officials: Technical staff members – including the director of planning, the corporate services division manager, and the executive secretary – were found to be predominantly, if not completely, entrusted with the planning of the imihigo process. District councils have sometimes been consulted when imihigo plans have already been entered into the web-based planning tools of the Ministry of Economic Finance and Planning. This situation makes it difficult, if not impossible, for district councilors to question anything or influence changes in the best interest of the public that they are elected to represent.
- Intergovernmental relations (IGRs): These refer to ways in which various layers of government with clearly defined functions relate and complement one another (Box 1995: 23–4; Agarnoff and Lindsay 1983: 227) and amongst themselves in pursuit of goals, policy development, and implementation (Wright 1978). For the purposes of this study, IGRs refer to how the central government and local government in Rwanda relate to one another on the one hand and how local government entities relate amongst each other on the other. Questions were raised about the challenges of maintaining a balance between the central government and local priorities in terms of planning and implementation; a problem mostly attributed to IGRs.
- Regulatory and institutional policy framework for IGRs: Rwanda has made commendable efforts to streamline the relationship and collaboration between the two tiers of government and amongst decentralized administrative entities. Nevertheless, arrangements about IGRs are still inconsistent and they are more institutional than regulatory. Moreover, they lack clear guiding principles. The Cabinet Manual, which guides the principles of these relationships, stresses the importance of the separation of power and independence, while simultaneously underlining the necessity of collective responsibility (Republic of Rwanda 2013: 10). Most importantly, it emphasizes the importance of collaboration between various branches of government, which is instrumental in achieving state-defined development vision and goals (Republic of Rwanda 2013: 11).
- Effectiveness of citizen participation mechanisms: All citizen participation mechanisms have been legally established. However, subsequent policy frameworks have broad objectives that sometimes fail to adjust with the particular context of imihigo. For example, community work or umuganda was established to introduce the principle of cost-





sharing at both cell and village levels. In this framework, umuganda meets its stated objective to a large degree, however, when taken in the context of citizen participation in the imihigo process, it fails to adjust to the procedural nature of imihigo. Although citizens directly participate in the implementation of umuganda at the village level, their participation is often limited to the implementation phase. As both theoretical and empirical discussions highlighted, participation in implementation is far from being enough for overall citizen participation. This gap is not only relevant to umuganda, but also to community assemblies, the Parents' Evening Forum, the National Women's Council, the National Youth Council, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, and various media organizations.

- Citizens' capacity to participate effectively through the above stated mechanisms: Citizens' capacity may hinder their effective participation in the imihigo process in many ways. One area that is usually referred to is participatory budgeting. Proponents of participatory budgeting would argue that at least the cell level should participate in the budgeting process, adding that councilors should ensure that lower levels of local government have adequate budgets to meet citizens' demands. Yet, low-level councilors may lack the capacity to participate in a particular field of budgeting. Similarly, lower levels of local governments may not be knowledgeable in a particular field. It is important to note that it is the responsibility of the government to educate citizens about the ways in which to participate.
- Contributing factors to low citizen participation: These were analyzed in light of the effectiveness of citizen participation mechanisms using past studies, reports, and policy documents. Contributing factors were found to be many, multifaceted, and not exhaustively captured. The major ones include centrism and a top-down approach to governance. Mayors and executive secretaries subscribed to these approaches, describing their role, in key informant interviews conducted in Gatsibo, Gasabo, and Rutsiro, as being the "mere implementation of national policies and district resolutions". Subsequent planned activities and programs take place at cell and village levels, where local leaders are responsible for the coordination, mobilization, and sensitization to involve citizens. This issue is also linked to IGRs as discussed above. Citizens are fully engaged in the implementation phase of decision-making processes, but are totally absent in the planning phase. The study also pinpointed capacity-related challenges that impede meaningful citizen participation, which include citizens' lack of skills in active listening and of the confidence required for public scrutiny. Citizens and local councils also lack sufficient capacity to mainstream inclusion-related crosscutting issues into local plans, which affects the design and delivery of inclusive imihigo. The high turnover in sector leadership positions compounds capacity-building efforts and continuity in the process of effectively engaging citizens. Another challenge highlighted across all districts relates to institutional financial capacity. Participation is costly in terms of logistics and is also time consuming. The limited resources at sector, cell, and village levels affect any good and genuine will to actively engage citizens. There is also a general feeling amongst local officials that citizens do not have the required level of competence to participate in local government decision-making processes, an assumption that was more prevalent in rural and remote areas than in urban cities. The most affected citizens are those in categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe (individuals with little, if any, awareness of their rights and duties). They are also perceived as being people without the knowledge and skills required for sufficient understanding of complex processes of local planning, including imihigo processes and upward accountability. These citizens' low levels of literacy were found to explain the abovementioned factors.

A number of good practices were identified in this study, including isibo, umuryango w'ingobyi, and Community Score Cards. Citizens mainly support these practices, perceiving them as channels that enhance the quality expression of opinions and create community support. These good practices nuance the reality of citizen participation in the imihigo process, leading to the belief that citizen participation is possible. However, certain factors need to be considered. First, citizens can overwhelmingly participate in the imihigo process at village and cell levels. Second, local leaders are regarded as key actors likely to succeed in championing citizen participation. Trust in local leaders enables an environment that offers the opportunities required to build citizens' capacity. In addition, constructive collaboration between local leaders and citizens was highlighted as a key factor for citizen participation to take place.

This study also highlights the challenges that citizens are faced with while being actively involved in the imihigo progress. It provides recommendations for improving the process and the means by which citizens can get involved and reclaim ownership of a process geared toward improving their lives. Based on Rwandan cultural traditions, homegrown initiatives play an influential role in stimulating society, reducing poverty, and increasing economic wealth. This study is a modest contribution of NAR to the success of this overall ambition of Rwandan society.



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CRC	Citizen Report Card
CSC	Community Score Card
CSO	civil society organization
DDP	district development plan
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
FGD	focus group discussion
IGM	intergovernmental management
IGRs	intergovernmental relations
IRDP	Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace
JADF	District Joint Action Development Forum
KII	key informant interview
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
NAR	Never Again Rwanda
NCPD	National Council for Persons with Disabilities
NGO	non-governmental organization
NWC	National Women's Council
NYC	National Youth Council
PAR	participatory action research
PPIMA	Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy
PSF	Private Sector Federation
RALGA	Rwandan Association of Local Government Authorities
RGB	Rwanda Governance Board
TSWG	Technical SubWorking Group
TWG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Study Background and Rationale

Since 2006, the Government of Rwanda has adopted imihigo as a public service performance management policy. As a results-based planning, performance, and accountability tool, imihigo are signed at the beginning of every fiscal year. They involve the president and sector ministers on behalf of their ministries on the one hand, and all district mayors and the City of Kigali on behalf of the citizens on the other.

Both the central and local governments use imihigo to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate government programs. Their purpose is to ensure that performance and accountability of each layer of government are measurable. The initial aim of imihigo was to accelerate results-based planning and delivery of both national and local developmental priority agendas.

The imihigo framework has over the years improved the timing and quality of government programs (IPAR 2015: 3). In particular, through imihigo, public institutions effectively account for their action or inaction with regard to the implementation of development strategies articulated in various policy documents, including Vision 2020, the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), and district development plans (DDPs), to name a few. Undeniably, imihigo have proven to be an efficient planning and monitoring tool to deliver on globally, nationally, and locally agreed development goals. The Institute of Policy Analysis and Research conducted its first independent evaluation of imihigo for the 2014–2015 fiscal year. Amongst other things, it showed an increased engagement of different partners through public-private partnerships, an increased citizen involvement in imihigo implementation, and improved levels of citizen satisfaction in terms of service delivery.

These findings indicate that stakeholders from non-government spheres have a high-level ownership of and place importance on imihigo. However, the same evaluation also noted that there was limited participation of citizens in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of imihigo (IPAR 2015: 38). Similarly, the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) published several editions of the Citizen Report Card (CRC) between 2013 and 2016, with findings consistently highlighting low levels of citizen participation in local government imihigo processes (RGB 2016: 116).

In 2016, Never Again Rwanda (NAR) conducted a study called "Governing for and with Citizens: Lessons from a Post-Genocide Rwanda" in order to assess citizen participation in governance processes, including imihigo. The study confirmed low levels of citizen participation, not only in planning but also in budget allocation, monitoring, and evaluation (NAR 2016: 23). It pointed out that the majority of past studies that analyzed imihigo did not investigate the reasons why citizen participation in imihigo is low, nor did they explain the challenges that citizens are faced with. Thus, further research on citizen participation in the imihigo process to address this research gap was recommended.

Citizen participation in decentralization enables citizens to have a say in problem-solving, priority-setting, planning, and budgeting, and in asking for accountability from their leaders (MINALOC 2013: 12). This is intrinsically linked to the philosophy of imihigo as described above. In fact, McConnell (2009: 5) argues that the decentralization policy (2013) depicts a vision focused on the concept of accountability. Placing citizens at the center of public service delivery means that local governments work for and are accountable to the citizens who, in turn, participate in shaping how their communities are governed. The dynamics of the citizen-local government relationship should be that of representation, whereby the local government implements decisions co-adopted with citizens (Ndahiro 2015: 14).

Citizen participation in imihigo thus means that citizens and their local governments should jointly plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate community development, social welfare, good governance, and justice service delivery that shape their communities and individual lives. As highlighted in past studies, low citizen participation in imihigo indicates that citizens are not partners of their local governments' service delivery function. Thus, there is a gap in the intended positive outcomes of imihigo.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

A number of studies on good governance in Rwanda have reported that citizen participation in the imihigo process is low (RGB 2013, 2014; IRDP 2010, 2013; Transparency International Rwanda 2015; RGB's CRC 2014, 2015; RALGA 2013; NAR 2016). However, none of these studies have adequately explained the causes pertaining to this.

Through its regular CRC, RGB has perhaps been the leading research institution on this particular topic – adopting a quantitative approach and at times a descriptive approach to tackle it. Other research institutions, such as the

<sup>1</sup> Vision 2020 and EDPRS are Rwanda's long-term strategy programs for development. For more information, please visit <http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/index.php?id=148> and <http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/index.php?id=149>.

<sup>2</sup> Recently, its name has changed to "district development strategies".

<sup>3</sup> For more details, see Article 5 of Law No. 14/2016 of 2/5/2016, available at [www.primature.gov.rw](http://www.primature.gov.rw).





Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) and the Rwandan Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA), have used mixed research methods, but have failed to establish the causes of low participation in the imihigo process. Due to the predominant use of the quantitative research method, the causes and contributing factors of low citizen participation have not been identified, let alone analyzed. Findings have merely established the fact that citizen participation is low.

According to the RALGA (2017: 15), there are different mechanisms for enhancing citizen participation. Direct citizen participation mechanisms include community assemblies (inteko z'abaturage), community works (umuganda), and the Parents' Evening Forum (Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi). Indirect citizen participation mechanisms are the councils at the cell, sector, and district levels. In addition to these, there are the National Youth Council (NYC), National Women's Council (NWC), National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), various media organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs), which exist at the different layers of local government (village, cell, sector, and district). It remains largely unclear, however, whether low citizen participation may be attributed to the ways in which these mechanisms are utilized.

Lastly, it is important to have directives that enable citizens to understand how to participate and to know their expected level of participation. Yet the imihigo concept (Versailles 2012: 4) does not provide a clear indication of how citizens should participate, or even how to evaluate and promote their participation. It is also not clear whether traditional good practices exist to help citizens participate in the imihigo process.

## 1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

In order to address the above stated problem, this research had clearly formulated objectives and was designed to respond to corresponding research questions.

### 1.3.1 Research objectives

The overall objective was to understand the factors supporting citizen participation in the imihigo process in order to recommend alternative policy options. Specifically, the research aimed to:

1. *Assess the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for citizen participation in the imihigo process*
2. *Identify and analyze the contributing/hindering factors to citizen participation in the imihigo process*
3. *Identify good practices likely to boost citizens' participation in responsive imihigo processes*
4. *Compare citizen participation in the different layers of local government and their respective stages of the imihigo process*
5. *Gather field-based perceptions and opinions on the reasons for the low levels of citizen participation in the last eight years.*

### 1.3.2 Research questions

Given the above objectives, it was important to ascertain about the lived experiences of the citizens – what Mouton describes as the “how, what, why and when” questions (2003: 6). The general research question was “What makes citizen participation a success in local governments' imihigo processes?”

The specific research questions were:

1. *How effective are the existing mechanisms for enabling citizen participation in local governments' imihigo processes?*
2. *What is hindering citizen participation in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of imihigo?*
3. *What existing good practices of citizen participation make imihigo a responsive process?*
4. *At which layer of local government and corresponding stage of the imihigo process is direct citizen participation effective?*
5. *What could explain the inefficient citizen participation over the last eight years?*

These questions and corresponding objectives were not formulated in isolation, but were rather established to serve as tools to investigate gaps in the existing literature. The lack of a qualitative explanation regarding low citizen participation in imihigo processes is of primary interest. Similar gaps can only emerge from extensive reading – that is, a literature review.

<sup>4</sup> This is about the first version of the decentralization policy that was drafted prior to 2013.



## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is connected to many past studies, with the gaps identified in existing literature used as an entry point for this research. The consistency in findings of earlier studies was critically analyzed in light of this study's research objectives and questions. The below literature review focuses on what various scholars have written about citizen participation, with emphasis firstly put on the conceptual framework (that is, the clarification of concepts).

### 2.1 Definitions of Concepts

A number of concepts used so far – for example, citizen participation, governance, good governance, local governance, local government, and imihigo – are often vague and difficult to accurately understand. As Babbie and Mouton suggest, “it is necessary to clarify what we mean by these concepts in order to draw meaningful conclusions about them” (2001: 138).

#### 2.1.1 Citizen participation

Many authors have defined citizen participation with different nuances. In general, definitions have converged toward bringing citizens and decision-making processes together. For example, Nabatchi (2012: 704) defines citizen participation as a “practice by which public concerns, needs, and values are integrated into decision making”. According to the same author, it “extends to civil society, electoral, legislative, and administration, and often takes many forms that range from information exchange to democratic decision making” (Nabatchi 2012: 6). Hardina (2008: 1–2) outlines that citizen participation involves citizens who have the least resources being involved in decisions about the services they receive from their representatives. The United Nations (UN) Public Administration Glossary (2008) goes even further and states that citizen participation is when citizens are involved in policy-making activities. Importantly, this perspective gives details on the different areas where citizens are invited to participate, including determining levels of service, budget priorities, and the approval of physical construction projects in order to orient government programs toward community needs, build public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within neighborhoods (UN 2008: 23). Such citizen participation is viewed as one of the key characteristics of governance.

#### 2.1.2 Governance

Like citizen participation, regular use of the term “governance” has made it a fairly generic concept. However, although it appears familiar, it still bears many conceptual difficulties. According to the World Bank (2005: 4), governance refers to “a set of rules, norms, procedures, practices, etc. that determine who exercises power, for what purpose, and how this power is shared and eventually, who makes decisions, for what, for whom, and how these decisions are made”. It is important to note that for the purposes of this study, this definition propounds that citizens are simultaneously key actors and beneficiaries of governance.

#### 2.1.3 Good governance

Good governance is a normative concept and an institutional arrangement. It links people directly to the decision-making processes of the state in a manner that does not bypass the institutions' representational democracy but complements it. Good governance aims to strengthen people's capacity to influence public policies and programs more positively (World Bank 2005: 4).

Usually, “good governance” is defined as a value-driven concept. To refer to Graham et al. (2003: 5), governance is perceived as “good” as long as it includes the attributes of “responsiveness, inclusiveness, participation, integrity, accountability and fairness”.

From a human rights perspective, and considering the UN Sustainable Development Goals Declaration, it is generally accepted that good governance encompasses the following key attributes (Graham et al. 2003):

- Full protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, and social rights for all
- Practices of democracy and respect for human rights, including rights of vulnerable persons such as disabled people, women, and youth
- Inclusive political processes, allowing genuine participation by all citizens
- Freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information





Out of the above, “genuine participation by all citizens” is a key attribute that informs this study and aligns with the understanding of good governance in the particular context of Rwanda. For example, the Office of the Ombudsman (2011: 12) views governance as an effective way by which the administration achieves goals of social and economic importance. Furthermore, it states that “good governance” relies on the quality of public services and the participation of citizens in the elaboration of national policies. An important benefit associated with good governance is that it innovatively seeks to actively engage citizens in a phase of planning that used to be an exclusive privilege of local leaders – that is, the “design” or “elaboration” of national policies – with the intent of “increasing people’s participation in the planning and management of the development process” (Republic of Rwanda 2011: 3). This entire logic has a constitutional base, with Article 48 of the Rwandan Constitution stating: “All Rwandans have the duty to participate in the development of the country...” Thus, citizen participation is not optional or elective, but rather mandatory.

### 2.1.4 Local government

“Local government” is a concept primarily understood when compared to “central government”. The local government level in Rwanda consists of four tiers – 30 districts, 416 sectors, 2,148 cells, and 14,837 villages. These are local administrative entities that emerged from the decentralization process. In other words, as according to Shah (2006: 17), local government refers to specific institutions or entities created by the constitution or organic legislation from the central government to deliver a range of specified services to a relatively small geographically delineated area. It is of interest to investigate the low level of citizen participation in these layers of local government – districts, sectors, cells, and villages – as these are the same layers that serve as a lens from which governance locally performs.

### 2.1.5 Local governance

“Good” governance was discussed earlier to highlight the value judgment the term brings with it. The concept of “local governance” aims to make a clear demarcation between the central and local spheres of government in Rwanda. Though the term has this “local” supposition, various scholars and institutions have defined it differently.

For instance, the World Bank (1992: 17) views local governance as a broader concept – defining it as the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level. The definition encompasses direct and indirect rules of formal institutions of local government and central government hierarchies in the pursuit of collective action. The World Bank clarifies that the framework requires citizen-state interactions to engage in collective decision-making about locally based public services.

Other scholars, including Novacx and Chemouni, have defined local governance in more descriptive and normative terms, with the latter defining it as a system whereby organized local bodies are expected to be more efficient and effective in enhancing local democracy and good governance, and in delivering services to local people (Chemouni 2016: 765–78). This consolidated view more or less concurs with the definition in the National Decentralization Policy of Rwanda. Thus, local governance is regarded as a system of governance at the local level through which local people manage their affairs. The imihigo process is a suitable tool for such management.

### 2.1.6 Imihigo: performance contract

Imihigo were designed to improve service delivery under the decentralization program. Since the decentralization program was initiated, the central government made use of imihigo to hold mayors accountable. It is an innovative system – a homegrown solution – to contemporary challenges.

Various studies, political actors, and CSOs are in agreement about the origins of imihigo. The imihigo process is a traditional practice. In his keynote address to newly elected mayors in 2006, President Paul Kagame said: “Imihigo had its roots in a pre-colonial Rwandan cultural practice whereby leaders or warriors would publicly vow to achieve certain goals—and face public humiliation if they failed. The modern imihigo process linked this traditional Rwandan practice with planning, monitoring and oversight” (Scher 2010: 1). Imihigo are performance contracts between the president of the Republic of Rwanda and mayors, committing the latter to achieve a set of goals within a given time frame in their respective local government settings.

Imihigo also includes the concept of guhiganwa, which means to emulate amongst peers. The imihigo process has not only become a performance management system, but a planning tool and multilayered oversight mechanism. To refer to Scher (2010: 2), it is a “way of using social and traditional pressure to push mayors to greater levels of achievement”.

<sup>5</sup> Available at [www.primature.gov.rw](http://www.primature.gov.rw)





In other words, it fosters the spirit of competition in service delivery amongst mayors when implementing development programs. Under the framework of the decentralization policy, local government institutions were entrusted with this responsibility to ensure that the imihigo process provides due support to the planning, monitoring and evaluation, and accountability framework (MINALOC 2012: 17). Since 2006, the imihigo have been designed with the following objectives:

- To speed up the implementation of local and national development plans
- To ensure stakeholder ownership of the development agenda
- To promote accountability and transparency
- To promote result-oriented performance
- To encourage competition amongst districts
- To ensure stakeholders' (citizens, civil society, donors, and the private sector) participation and engagement in policy formulation and evaluation

Remarkably, the National Decentralization Policy has made "stakeholders' ownership" and "stakeholders' participation" the key concerns. More importantly, it is a citizen-centered policy that advocates for active participation and engagement in areas such as policy formulation and evaluation. Likewise, Ndahiro (2015: 1–2), citing an unpublished concept paper on imihigo, underlines that imihigo has a procedural approach divided into phases:

- Planning and budgeting
- Implementation at all decentralized local government institutions
- Monitoring and evaluation of implementation

Based on the National Decentralization Policy and the abovementioned concept paper, citizen participation covers the entire process of imihigo – that is, from the design up to the evaluation phase. If citizens have merely been active in policy implementation, they have not covered the entire scope of citizen participation as formally stipulated.

The concept paper makes it clear that the preparation of imihigo involves four major pillars: economic, social development, governance, and justice. In this regard, each district or local entity plans in accordance to its own objectives. Individual planning is based on real and identified local needs that are aligned with national strategic planning documents (Vision 2020, EDPRS, DDPs, and joint sector reviews). These documents also extend to cabinet resolutions, ministerial and provincial instructions, national dialogue councils (also known as umushyikirano), and government retreat resolutions.

Similarly, the preparation of imihigo processes is aligned with national priorities. The central government communicates the national priorities to the local governments, which, in turn, identify local priorities in their respective locations. Then, these priorities are approved and adopted. District councils have the mandate to approve imihigo plans of individual districts. After approval, imihigo plans have to be signed by the mayor of the district and the president of Rwanda. Upon signing, mayors pledge effective and efficient service delivery.

The implementation of imihigo requires the active participation of different stakeholders, including local leaders, citizens, civil society, and donors. On behalf of the civil society and donor community, the implementation of imihigo is supposed to actively involve the District Joint Action Development Forum (JADF). To encourage inclusivity, this implementation likewise extends to all levels of local government institutions, as well as youth, women, the business community, and religious organizations.

Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process is an important phase through which relevant institutions ensure that the imihigo process is effective. This is carried out in two stages. First, it involves the line ministries reviewing the progress made in consultation with district authorities, JADF, and the province. Second, the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) annually consolidates evaluation results in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister.

The National Decentralization Policy and related law provide a framework through which the involvement of citizens in the imihigo process is analyzed and understood.





## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

In line with this study's objectives and questions, special interest is placed upon better understanding the factors that support low citizen participation in the imihigo process. The fundamental question is: "What causes this phenomenon to exist in the first place?"

### 2.2.1 Citizen participation within the larger context of participatory governance

The concepts used in this study were based on available study reports as well as policy documents. The clarification of concepts led to the conclusion that citizen participation is not limited to governance, but rather extends to many other areas. Essentially, all conceptual definitions have pinpointed citizens' voice as a central theme to decision-making and policy-making.

Arnstein informs the understanding of citizen participation by firstly offering a typology of citizen participation against which each society can benchmark itself. He assumed that "citizen participation is citizen power" (1969: 216), with citizen participation ranging from the "empty ritual of participation" to the "real power" that citizens need to affect, for instance, the outcome of the imihigo process. Arnstein (1969: 216) understood citizen participation as:

"...a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society."

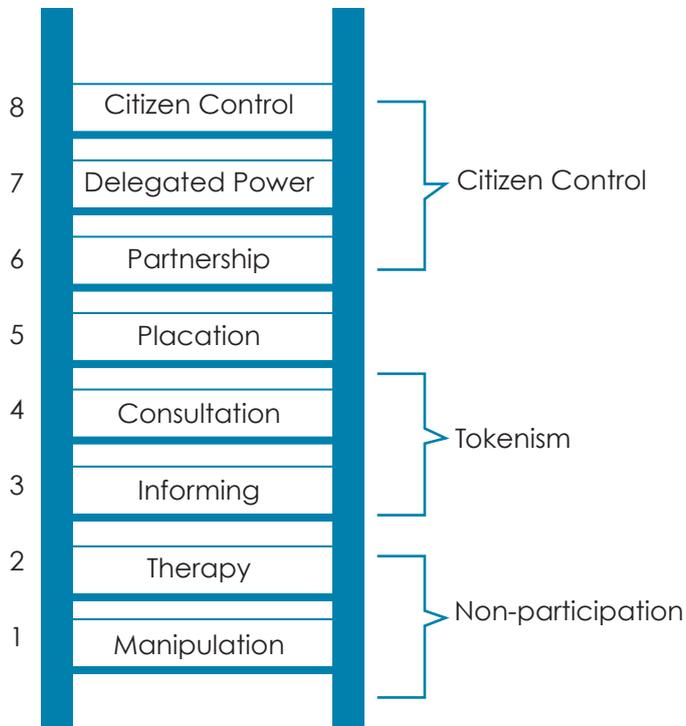
This conceptual understanding strongly supports that citizen participation is about the "redistribution of power". Otherwise, it would be regarded as an empty and frustrating process whereby only powerholders would benefit and perpetuate the status quo.

The idea of power redistribution is further captured in Figure 1 below, showing Arnstein's classification of citizen participation (1969). Three levels of citizen participation are shown. First is non-participation – that is, manipulation and therapy – which is a substitute for genuine participation. It does not enable citizens to participate in planning or conducting programs, but rather enables powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants (Arnstein 1969: 217). Thus, citizens do not have any opportunity to influence decisions or policy-making processes. Second, citizen participation is regarded from the lens of tokenism – informing, consultation, and placation: "Citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful" (Arnstein 1969: 217). In other words, powerholders have the maximum power to deliberate and make decisions over citizens' ideas. Under placation, citizens can advise, but again the right to decide is in the hands of the powerholders (or local leaders). As a result, citizens have no follow-through or any assurance of whether the status quo will change or not. Participation under "tokenism" only allows citizens to provide comments at the beginning of the process: they inform and are consulted, but do not have any control over what leaders accept or reject.





**Figure 1: The Ladder of Citizen Participation**



Third and last, the level of citizen power translates to an increase in decision-making. Citizen power ranges from “partnership” to “citizen control” via “delegated power”. **Partnership** enables citizens “to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders” (Arnstein 1969: 2017). At the same time, **delegated power** and **citizen control** bring “have-not citizens [to] obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power” (ibid).

There are two important observations to make from this classification of citizen participation. First, the higher up the ladder the more citizens can be sure that their opinions will be integrated into decision-making processes and implemented to the advantage of their community. Second, there are significant gradations of citizen participation. These gradations can be put to good use to benchmark the levels of citizen participation in the particular context of this research.

Arnstein also raises a question regarding the most significant roadblock to achieving genuine levels of participation – that is, *citizen power*. On a theoretical level, at least, he argues for responsibility-sharing amongst both citizens and leaders. On the powerholders’ or leaders’ side, he purports that roadblocks “include racism, paternalism, and resistance to power redistribution” (Arnstein 1969: 217). These roadblocks apply differently from one society to another. More importantly, they may entirely or partially apply depending on the nature of existing social, cultural, and political conditions. On the citizens’ or have-nots’ side, the roadblocks include “inadequacies of the ... community’s political socioeconomic infrastructure and knowledge base, plus difficulties of organizing a representative and accountable citizens’ group in the face of futility, alienation, and distrust” (Arnstein 1968: 217). Again, societies differ from one to another. Therefore, these constraints will apply differently to citizens or have-nots depending on various parameters. They may be regarded as context-specific roadblocks.

Arnstein’s “Ladder of citizen participation” has, however, been criticized. On a conceptual level, Gershman (2013: 34–5) argues that, “Arnstein’s notion of participation is both devoid of context and, critically, has no means of making sense of the context in which the ladder is used. Second, in situations when the nature of the issue is highly contested or undefined, Arnstein’s ladder provides few insights into how participation might be progressed as a collective process between all of the stakeholders involved.”





Arnstein's ladder makes it clear that citizen participation differs significantly from public involvement. Public involvement is defined as participating in collective decisions within an organization – it is not about the sharing of power and decision-making with ordinary people. Citizen participation goes beyond mere public involvement, implying renegotiation of power relations where views, opinions, and the needs of ordinary people are incorporated in the process both as a means and an end. For the purpose of inclusivity, specific groups such as women, youth, and disabled people are equally catered for. Ultimately, citizens are both stakeholders and beneficiaries of processes and outcomes.

Citizen participation comprises empowerment aspects. To Irvin and Stansbury (2004: 55), for example, citizen participation promotes civic education through which citizens acquire the necessary skills and some levels of control over policy-making and implementation processes. Thus, civic education affects the outcome of citizen participation. Discussing the advantages of citizen participation, Irvin and Stansbury (2004) state that citizen involvement is intended to produce better decisions and thus more efficiency, which benefits society. In line with both citizen participation and subsequent civic participation, informed and involved citizens become citizen-experts. More than anybody else, they technically understand difficult situations and see holistic community-wide solutions.

Irvin and Stansbury (2004), Pateman (1970), Sabatier (1988), and Blackburn and Bruce (1995) all underline the educational benefits of citizen participation. To quote from Irvin and Stansbury (2004: 55–6): “Administrators are able to explain their reasons for pursuing policies that, at first glance, would not be popular to the public. It is assumed that more participants with a more sophisticated level of technical and social understanding will yield better policy decisions.”

Though citizen participation has advantages, it also has disadvantages. Irvin and Stansbury (2004: 58–9) boldly highlight the lengthy processes of public involvement. The more people are involved, the higher the cost of the process tends to be. Another disadvantage is the ineffective indirect representation of public opinions and positions, which may increase the chance of wrong decisions being made. The list of disadvantages is long and not exhausted at this time.

## 2.2.2 Citizen participation in policy processes

Citizen participation encompasses indirect and direct participation. The former includes voting and supporting advocacy groups, and occurs when citizens elect representatives to make decisions for them. The latter takes place when citizens are personally and actively engaged in the decision-making process.

Numerous studies have thoroughly explored direct and indirect citizen participation to document the ways in which both forms support policy processes. Roberts (2004: 315), for instance, establishes that direct citizen participation is the cornerstone of democracy, while at the same time recognizing the existing ambivalence about citizens directly participating in their government's processes and policies. Direct citizen participation, she argues, keeps community life vital and public institutions accountable. Concurring with Barber (1984), she views direct citizen participation as an appropriate tool for conflict resolution through “a participatory process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent private individuals into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods” (Roberts 2004: 315). To successfully resolve conflicts, citizens need to have the necessary knowledge and ability to participate more fully in the making of political, technical, and administrative decisions that affect their lives (Barber 1984; Box 1998).

Indirect citizen participation too has its advantages. It protects citizens from the dangers of direct involvement, buffers them from uninformed public opinion, and prevents the tyranny of the majority. Above all, it acts as a corruption watchdog (Roberts 2004: 316), meeting the needs of a complex society that requires technical, political, and administrative expertise to function. Unlike public officials, citizens do not have time or interest to deliberate for the purpose of developing informed public judgment. In line with the size and complexity of the modern nation state, Roberts states, citing Dhal (1989), that direct citizen participation is not a realistic or feasible expectation (Roberts 2004: 316). Hence, indirect citizen participation is an alternative. In Rwanda's case, both forms of participation are functional mechanisms that have legal and policy backup. They work in parallel depending on the scope of decisions to make.

What makes citizen participation effective is another area that many scholars have explored. Innes et al. (1994) and Beierle (1999) set out a comprehensive array of strategies for effective participatory practices. Commonly cited strategies include a careful selection of a representative group of stakeholders, transparent decision-making processes to build trust amongst participants, clear authority in decision-making, competent and unbiased group facilitators, regular meetings, and adequate financial resources to support the group process during the potentially long learning and decision-making process (Irvin and Stansburg 2004: 61–2).

<sup>6</sup> See the Constitution of Rwanda (2015), law determining the organization and functioning of decentralized administrative entities (2013), and the decentralization policy (2013).





Participation mechanisms and the responsiveness of decision-makers, it can be concluded, play a critical role in whether the voice of citizens is heard in the policy process. This is only made possible in the context of citizen-centered decision-making processes, since citizen participation processes require well-designed participatory mechanisms. In this context, decision-makers are more responsive to citizens' involvement in order to yield expected outcomes and catalyze for feedback, resulting in citizen participation becoming meaningful.

### 2.2.3 Policy, legal, and institutional framework for citizen participation in the imihigo process

Decentralization is enshrined within the 2003 Rwandan Constitution and its subsequent amendments. Article 6 stipulates that: "Public powers are decentralized at local administrative entities in accordance with provisions of law. A law determines the organization and functioning of decentralized entities." In addition, two key policies were established: (1) the National Decentralization Policy, first formulated in 2000 and revised in 2013, and (2) the Community Development Policy, first formulated in 2001 and revised in 2008. A number of plans and strategies were established to enforce these policy documents and laws. A non-exhaustive list of examples includes, most notably, the MINALOC's 2010 Five-Year Implementation Plan and its 2012 Strategic Frameworks/Plans.

These documents are a response to issues of inadequate citizen participation in decision-making that characterized previous decentralized regimes, inadequate financial incentives at lower levels, and a lack of downward accountability and transparency in local management structures. In addition, they address the challenges related to the concentration of powers in the hands of one leader. They offer tentative solutions to the passivity and dependency that have characterized Rwandans for long, as a result of strong centralization and the exclusion of citizens from meaningful participation. Lastly, they advocate for a system that is accountable to the people rather than the central government.

The overall goal of the decentralization policy is to ensure "political, economic, social, administrative and technical empowerment of local populations to fight poverty by participating in planning and management of their development process" (MINALOC 2012: 8). Accordingly, the National Decentralization Policy places citizen participation at the center of policy processes. In 2013, the revised policy emphasized the need "to fast track and sustain equitable local economic development as a basis for enhancing local fiscal autonomy" (MINALOC 2012: 8).

An additional key feature of the National Decentralization Policy is joint planning that involves the central government and local governance structures on the one hand and active citizens on the other. The National Decentralization Policy shares some features with the Community Development Policy, which emphasizes a cost-sharing concept of participation, highlighting the discourse of self-reliance and self-development as key drivers of community engagement. In the revised version of the National Decentralization Policy, a community that is organized, self-motivated, hardworking, and forward-looking is envisioned: a community that has the ability to exploit local resources using innovations geared toward sustainable development.

Community participation is the first guiding principle of the Community Development Policy, with "local communities hold[ing] the key to sustainable development. They have the capacity to take charge of their own development and hence their effective participation is paramount" (MINALOC 2008: 11). The rationale behind this policy shift in Rwanda is "to foster public participation in policy and decision making processes to turn around the top down centralistic approach that had previously characterized the country for the last several decades" (MINALOC 2008: 4). There have been an impressive number of benefits from this policy so far and a boost to citizen participation in various government-led programs.

### 2.2.4 Linking citizen participation to the imihigo process

The procedural and substantive essence of imihigo makes it possible for citizens to participate in various phases of the process. The literature review then progressed to address two important questions:

- (1) How does the citizen participation model fit into imihigo processes?
- (2) How does citizen participation feed the imihigo process to become a tool for planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluation?

Regarding the concept of accountability, it may be vertical or horizontal. Vertical accountability engages the central government and local leaders, while horizontal accountability refers to various ways and mechanisms in which citizens have control over the decisions impacting their needs and lives.

<sup>7</sup> Available at <http://minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=185>





Callahan (2005: 196–8), meanwhile, considers three models of citizen participation: active, passive, and transactional models of interactions. Active citizen participation means that citizens have full control of the processes taking place: they own the processes, articulate policy, and serve as the primary consultants. As far as the imihigo process is concerned, citizens are actively engaged and the process is deliberative in all three phases (that is, planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluation). Passive citizen participation occurs when local leaders are in control of the processes taking place. In these cases, participation is merely about formalities. Local leaders act as rulers and may coerce citizens who completely lose control over decisions and are made to comply in the total absence of dialogue. In the transactional model, power and control are shared between citizens and agencies. The role of citizens is essentially advisory. In this model, local leaders are open and warmly welcome citizens' suggestions. Citizens keep passive vis-à-vis the final outcomes and decisions of the leaders.



### 3. EXPLORATION OF GAPS

As outlined earlier, the National Decentralization Policy was formulated to mark the shift from previous governance styles in Rwanda. At the center of this policy was a strong interest in understanding citizen participation at each level of decision-making. In this respect, the MINALOC was straightforward in as much as citizen participation is concerned:

*“Citizen participation in decision-making is one of the key elements of the national decentralization policy revised in 2013. By law local government authorities are required to conform to participatory process in planning and budgeting as well as other processes in their areas of jurisdiction. They are also required to prepare five-year development plans through a bottom-up approach starting from the village plans which feed into cell and sector levels. More importantly, citizens participate in planning process directly at the village and cell levels, and indirectly through elected representatives at the sector and district level.” (MINALOC 2013: 20)*

This policy orientation of citizen participation is a good place from which to begin to understand the role and scope of citizen participation in decision-making processes. The MINALOC argues for a robust legislative framework that strongly encourages citizen participation. The RGB's CRCs assert that the highest rate of citizen participation is in cost-sharing activities. Examples of these activities include community development work, elections of local leaders, voluntary work, and some financial contributions. Citizen participation has consistently scored 93% in these areas. However, substantive citizen participation in areas such as the formulation of district council agendas, elaboration of district budgets, and the formulation of imihigo has consistently scored less than 50% (RGB 2016: 116).

Planning and decision-making are important areas that also need much attention. In most cases, the lack of citizens' capacity is used to explain the low, if any, citizen participation in planning and decision-making processes (MINALOC 2012: 15). This is an indication that the implementation of the decentralization policy still faces challenges; in other words, the National Decentralization Policy framework has gaps in terms of citizen participation. Such gaps relate to when (i.e. the specific point in the decision-making process) and how citizens need to participate.

A study of this scale must analyze the gaps in the existing policy framework that could explain the low levels of citizen participation. An institutional analysis can help to understand the main features in decision-making processes with respect to the imihigo process and resource allocation. In this analysis, attention should be paid to intergovernmental relations (IGRs) (central government, local leaders), the relationships between district councils and executive committees, as well as the relationships between councilors and their constituencies.

In addition, much interest is paid to the existing channels/mechanisms for citizen participation. These include community development work (umuganda), community assemblies (inteko z'abatwariye), the Parents' Evening Forum (Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi), and other specific forums for groups such youth, persons with disabilities, and women, to name a few. An analysis of different mechanisms/channels for citizen participation offers valuable opportunities to assess the enabling factors of citizen participation. In this study, particular emphasis is placed on policy frameworks, the capacity of citizens, and the responsiveness of local leaders. The enabling factors are likely to vary across categories as well as the types of citizen participation throughout the imihigo process. To analyze the effectiveness of the mechanisms for citizen participation, the outcomes of participation, and various factors affecting such participation, a gap analysis model was designed. The model focuses on the following gaps: policy, capacity, incentive, representativeness, and power asymmetry.

It is crucial to understand the context of citizen participation in order to link its outcomes to historical, social, economic, and policy conditions. This contextualization sheds light on the specific enabling environment to explain the existing policy gaps – that is, the failure to regulate and guide citizen participation in decision-making processes, the failure of local leaders to translate community priorities and citizens' voice into policy actions, and the consequent failure to recognize citizens as actors and beneficiaries of local governance. The same type of failure occurs when IGRs between the central government and local structures are not clear to the various actors involved, resulting in their failure to understand their roles and mandates.

Citizens' capacity translates to certain levels of skills, knowledge, and various resources needed to boost the ability of local governments to fully convert citizens' inputs into policy outputs. The incentive gap is also analyzed. The concept of incentive refers to the fact that citizen participation does not come without a cost. The UN describes the incentive gap as a shortfall in terms of finances, time, and opportunity. In Rwanda, for instance, the existing fast tracking of development targets toward transformation strategies is a challenge for the new generation of joint imihigo planning.

Under the framework of indirect participation, the study examines the representativeness gap. Representativeness gaps arise in the relationship between elected leaders and their constituencies. Ultimately, local councils have the mandate





to translate the needs and priorities of citizens into demands. At higher levels of local governance structures, these needs and priorities are systematically aligned with those of lower levels. Power distribution within local councils is an important parameter to ensure that they meet their mandates.

A power gap may form from the systemic asymmetry of power relations between citizens and local leaders. Sometimes power asymmetry simply results from the mere fact that the executive secretariat is part of a larger hierarchy of local government institutions with clear reporting lines, while the council is autonomous. It also follows that staff of the former are part of a larger and better organized entity with employment benefits while the councilors are not. It may also arise from the vertical accountability between central government officials and local leaders, or those with financial sovereignty over those who do not have the financial resources to carry out their tasks.

### 3.1 Power Asymmetry Between Elected Local Councilors and Executive Local Officials

Power asymmetry is given due importance in this study. According to the law N° 87/2013 of 11/09/2013 determining the organization and functioning of decentralized administrative entities, local councils are considered the supreme decision-making organs at various layers of local government. Ideally, their role consists of approving major local decisions that affect citizens' lives, with these decisions including imihigo. Experience has shown that wide discrepancies between decision-making in theory and practice exist. Imihigo tend to be forced onto local councilors, mostly at the cell and sector levels.

There is power asymmetry between elected local councilors and executive local government officials at the district level. Technical staff members entrusted with planning – including the director of planning, the corporate services division manager, and the executive secretary – predominantly, if not completely, drive imihigo processes. In theory, councils should first approve imihigo before they are passed on to the next level. In practice, however, councils do not put on hold the process of compiling and then feeding imihigo up the ladder. This situation makes it difficult, if not impossible, for district councilors to question anything or influence changes in the best interest of the public they are elected to represent.

At the subdistrict level, the executive secretaries at the sector and cell levels are said to be at the epicenter of local government imihigo decisions. Not only do they allegedly not take citizens' inputs into consideration, they also demean local councilors' inputs. According to Burke (2014: 67), IGRs are founded on administrative and political positions that move along a conflict and cooperation continuum. For such cooperation to take place, Burke suggests that intergovernmental actors must be willing to act as partners and therefore seek to understand each other. However experience shows that effective cooperation between elected local councils and other local government management organs is lacking. Although the existing legal framework is clear about who should play which role and fairly distributes the relevant powers, this situation persists. Arguably, power asymmetry arises in circumstances in which elected local councilors are not assertively playing their role.

While some local councilors might be willing to challenge the imihigo proposals made by executive secretaries, they simply refrain from doing so to avoid the risk of losing their jobs. The same fear would apply where accountability is concerned. Some members of local councils are employed by agencies such as health facilities or schools falling under the direct supervision of the districts. This inhibits local councilors to present independent arguments. Having more independent people in councillorship positions at all layers of local government might perhaps enhance the vibrancy of local councils in vetting and therefore adopting better citizen-centered imihigo processes.

### 3.2 Intergovernmental Relations and Management

Broadly speaking, the term "intergovernmental relations" refers to ways in which various layers of government, with clearly divided functions, relate to and complement one another (Box 1995: 23–4; Agarnoff and Lindsay 1983: 227) in the pursuit of goals, policy development, and implementation (Wright 1978). For the purposes of this study, IGRs allude to how the central government and local government in Rwanda relate with one another on the one hand, and how local government entities relate amongst themselves on the other – with IGRs aimed at ensuring efficient and effective public service provision.

<sup>8</sup> Available at <http://minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=477>





Closely linked with IGRs, intergovernmental management (IGM) emphasizes how those relationships foster cooperation and synergy amongst government agencies and officials, and help achieve stated (unified) goals and objectives (Agarnoff and Lindsay 1983: 227). In addition, IGM places an emphasis on operative relationships around the process, leading to specific objectives of public policy development and implementation being met (Agarnoff and Lindsay 1983: 228). The ability of various actors to operate within the limits of structured legal, political, and technical frameworks of IGRs makes, amongst other things, IGM work effectively (ibid).

Effective intergovernmental relations and management are instrumental to the smooth running of governmental processes. Healthy and synergetic intergovernmental relations and management have become a necessity in decentralized contexts. When effectively regulated, they can minimize tensions or disputes (Burke 2014: 67) and reduce the blame game over policy process failures between layers of government, regardless of the level and depth of the decentralization pursued. Effective IGRs are premised on a number of guiding principles which, albeit some commonalities, tend to differ from one country context to another. The 2012 Intergovernmental Relations Act in Kenya is an illustrative example. Kenya pursues decentralization in the form of devolution. The guiding principles for IGRs include fostering inclusive and participatory governance. The “requirement for consultation and cooperation (...) minimizes intergovernmental disputes while co-operating in exercising their functions, the promotion of accountability to the people in decision making and actions taken, and the institutionalized protection of marginalized groups” (Republic of Kenya 2012: 6). In the context of Rwanda, this study further benchmarks the implementation of guiding principles for IGRs.

### 3.3 Regulatory and Institutional Policy Framework for IGRs

Rwanda has made commendable efforts to streamline the relationships and collaboration between the two tiers of government and amongst decentralized administrative entities. Nevertheless, arrangements about IGRs are still inconsistent and are more institutional than regulatory. Moreover, they lack clear guiding principles. The Cabinet Manual stresses the importance of a separation of power and independence, while simultaneously underlining the necessity of collective responsibility (Republic of Rwanda 2013: 10). Most importantly, it highlights the importance of collaboration between various branches of government that is instrumental in achieving state-defined development vision and goals (Republic of Rwanda 2013: 11).

As adopted by the Cabinet in early 2013, the National Decentralization Policy outlines a number of institutional arrangements to facilitate IGRs. They include the National Decentralization Stakeholders Forum, Program Steering Committee, the RGB, and the Decentralization Cluster (MINALOC 2012: 20). There are also Decentralization Focal Points in ministries and provinces, as well as the Local Government Consultative Forum (ibid). Recently, this has evolved to also include coordination committees at the provincial and district levels, the JADF, and the Sector Working Group and Technical Working Group (TWG) at the ministerial level.

In the current set up, no standalone regulation/legislation on IGRs exists. To streamline central agency interventions in local government, however, a Prime Ministers' Order has been issued. Nevertheless, its scope remains limited to the coordination of these interventions. It does not clarify issues of decision-making between competing local and national priorities.

As far as the relationships amongst decentralized administrative entities are concerned, the Rwandan government is yet to put in place specific regulations. The law N° 87/2013 of 11/09/2013 on the organization and functioning of decentralized administrative entities provides some orientations about working relationships amongst some organs. For instance, Article 38 of the abovementioned law establishes that the council, executive committee, and the secretariat form the management organs of the district. The same article states that security committees and coordination committees should assist these organs, but does not provide guidance on how these organs should work amongst themselves.

Although Rwanda implemented the National Decentralization Policy in 2000, the country is yet to take any steps to better regulate IGRs despite the fact that the local government implements most government policies and programs. To date, sectoral decentralization is yet to be effective (RGB 2014). In virtue of the Prime Minister's Order, however, the MINALOC has to provide formal clearance before interventions coordinated by the central agency are implemented.

<sup>9</sup> Available at <http://minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=477>



## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter summarizes the methodological approach selected for this study. It covers the study population, sampling method, sample size, techniques of data collection, data analysis and management, interpretation and discussion of findings, quality control, ethical considerations, and constraints and mitigation strategies.

### 4.1 Research Approach

In reference to the earlier formulated problem statement and subsequent research questions, this study is an extension of many other studies. From a quantitative angle, past studies have found low levels of citizen participation in the imihigo process in Rwanda, but none have sought to investigate why citizen participation is low. The methodological nature of this question demands a drastic shift in research approach.

This study was thus designed to be solely qualitative in nature, in terms of data collection, dataset, and data analysis. According to Patton and Cochran (2002: 3), qualitative studies seek to understand “aspects of social life and use methods that generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis”. This approach allows this study to undertake a suitable, in-depth analysis of underlying reasons, causes, and contributing factors to explain low citizen participation in the imihigo process. The rationale for selecting a qualitative approach stems from the fact that a lot of quantitative data exist that show low citizen participation in the imihigo process over the years.

This paradigm shift perfectly tallies with the research experience of NAR, which exclusively specializes in participatory action research (PAR). By definition, PAR is a qualitative inquiry considered to be democratic, equitable, liberating, and life enhancing (Koch et al. 2002: 10). Participants in PAR are not subjects but are rather active contributors and participate in all phases of the research process. In PAR, participants are considered as experts who mainly contribute lived experiences about the issues under investigation.

### 4.2 Study Population

Study population refers to an aggregate of several elements or simply a universe of units out of which a target research sample will be drawn (Babbie 2011; Bunham 2008). It is comprised of all possible units of observation collectively (Channels 1985: 121). Simply put, a study population is a group or collection of subjects from which a sample is drawn and studied. Researchers are interested in the study population in order to generalize their findings as they answer the research questions (Babbie 2011: 125).

#### 4.2.1 Units of analysis

Units of analysis include different areas from which the contributing factors of low citizen participation in the imihigo process were analyzed. On one side, the study focused on IGRs (central government, local leaders), the relationships between district councils and the executive committee, as well as the relationships between councilors and their constituencies. On the other, the study investigated the effectiveness of existing channels or mechanisms for citizen participation in the imihigo process. Examples of these mechanisms/channels include community work (umuganda), community assemblies (inteko z'abaturatione), the Parents' Evening Forum (Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi), local councils, CSOs, media organizations, and more specific councils for groups such as youth, persons with disabilities, and women. For each mechanism/channel, the study analyzed the enabling factors from the policy framework, the capacity of citizens, and the responsiveness of local leaders.

In addition, this study analyzed the enabling factors of citizen participation from two other important parameters: the practicability of direct citizen participation at different levels of local government and good practices to support citizen participation in the imihigo process.

#### 4.2.2 Units of observation

Units of observation refer to citizens, including both opinion leaders and ordinary citizens. In line with PAR, citizens participated in the study either on an individual level, i.e. key informant interview (KII) or collective level, i.e. focus group discussion (FGD). The reason behind this was simply that the patterns of citizen participation in the imihigo process vary from ordinary citizens to opinion leaders. It was assumed that the difference significantly depends on the level of influence citizens may have on the process of decision-making.



## 4.3 Purposive Sampling

This study primarily aims to understand the process by which ordinary people participate in the imihigo process. Unlike previous studies, it is not interested in individual attributes data as it does not intend to estimate statistical parameters like probability sampling studies do. This is a non-probability sampling study. According to Saunders et al. (2012: 344), a qualitative research design is well suited to the use of non-probability sampling methods.

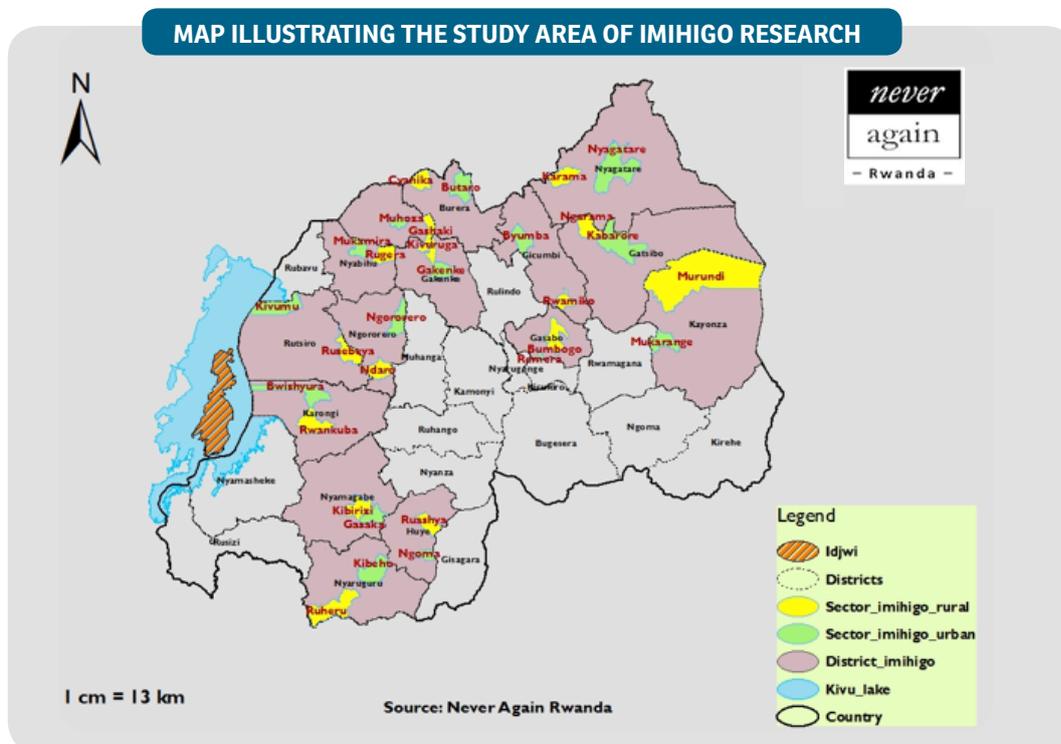
In line with the qualitative approach, this research used purposive sampling techniques. Hence, researchers sought to build rapport with and collect required data from pre-identified informants on the basis of clear judgment. As Bernard (2000: 176) advises, judgment has served a strong basis to select both the study areas and individual participants in research. Researchers exclusively collected data from individuals who had good knowledge, or technical, managerial, or lived experience on the subject matter under investigation. As Bernard states (2000: 144), these are “people who can offer expert explanations and who represent the intercultural variation that we find in all societies”.

### 4.3.1 Study areas and timeline

On the basis of their respective levels of performance in the imihigo process, 15 out of 30 districts were selected for an intensive investigation. The selection was guided by the level of citizen participation in government programs, as according to the 2015 edition of the CRC. Specifically, seven districts with the highest performance rates were selected together with eight districts with the lowest performance rates. Appendix 3 summarizes details of the districts sampled. Figure 2 below shows the distribution of the districts on a map of Rwanda.

This study began in May 2017 with the writing of the problem statement and research proposal, as well as discussions with different partners both from government institutions and CSOs and funding partners. After the desk study was completed in late July 2017, field data collection was scheduled to start immediately. However, this date coincided with the national elections that took place in August 2017, thus postponing the data collection. It thus took place from October 2017 to early January 2018, and analysis and report writing took place from February to June 2018.

**Figure 2: Study Area**



<sup>10</sup> The CRC is an annual publication by the RGB, available at <http://rgb.rw/publications/citizen-report-card/>.





### 4.3.2 Sample size

This research was exclusively qualitative in nature. The principle of data saturation, as according to Strauss and Cobin (1998) and Neuman (2003), was applied to determine the final number of KIs and FGDs needed.

In total, 57 KIs and 62 FGDs were conducted before data saturation took place. In terms of the FGDs, 38 were held with ordinary citizens, 18 with opinion leaders at the local community level, and 6 with opinion leaders at the national level. In terms of the KIs, these were held with ordinary citizens, opinion leaders, academics, local leaders, members of CSOs working in the target districts, as well as senior government officials of public institutions in charge of decentralization policy implementation.

Participants in KIs and FGDs were selected according to different criteria. Criteria for the latter included the social economic status (ubudehe categories) and social demographic characteristics (area of residence, e.g. rural, peri-urban, or urban; age; and gender) of participants.

**Table 1: Number of FGDs, KIs, and Participants**

Category	No. of FGDs and KIs	No. of Participants	Participants by Gender
<b>District Level</b>			
FGDs with Ordinary Citizens (Men)	15	152	152M
FGDs with Opinion Leaders	18	140	82M 58F
FGDs with Special Groups (people with disabilities, youth, women, and the historically marginalized community)	23	225	43M 182F
<b>Total FGDs</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>277M 240F</b>
KIs	53	53	35M 18F
<b>Total Number of Participants at the District Level</b>		<b>570</b>	<b>312M 258F</b>
<b>National Level</b>			
FGD with Different Groups (Academia, CSOs, and Media)	6	53	36M 17F
KIs	4	4	4M
<b>Total Number of Participants at the National Level</b>		<b>57</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>119 (62 FGD and 57 KIs)</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>355M 272F</b>

As Table 1 summarizes, data saturation was reached after 627 individuals contributed field information to this study through FGDs and KIs.

## 4.4 Data Collection Techniques

Qualitative data collection methods were used to collect data. These included: desk review of existing literature, FGDs, and KIs.

<sup>11</sup> The Rwandan government introduced ubudehe as a socioeconomic database to assist poor people in the communities where they live. The information came out of community deliberations about families' economic status. Families were classified into four classes. Classes 1 and 2 designate the poorer members of the community, while class 4 specifies the most economically well off in the community.





#### 4.4.1 Desk review

Secondary data such as existing policy documents, reports focusing on citizen participation, published and peer reviewed articles and books, the policy concept paper on imihigo, the volunteerism policy, and the decentralization policy were comprehensively reviewed.

#### 4.4.2 FGDs

The principle of homogeneity guided the research team in terms of involving participants in FGDs. Homogeneity in FGDs also allowed the research team to assess the level of consensus around different themes, and interpretations and opinions about the same themes. Again, the homogenous composition of FGDs enabled the research team to make comparisons and analyze patterns across the participating groups.

#### 4.4.3 KIIs

These interviews were conducted using a guide outlining a set of semi-structured, open-ended questions. This strategy allowed the interviewers to prompt and probe in a spontaneous manner on the basis of the interviewees' responses, thereby providing the research team with opportunities for an in-depth understanding of the respondents' positions and opinions.

The research team purposively sampled key experts to take part in the KIIs on a one-on-one basis. As a guiding principle of PAR, citizens meeting the criteria, including ordinary citizens, were seen as experts on the subject matter. The purposive sampling technique allowed the research team to garner in-depth views and analyses from individuals who have special expertise on the subject matter.

For both KIIs and FGDs, debriefing sessions were held at the end of each one. These sessions allowed for a discussion on the progress, lessons learnt, challenges, and possible improvements to consistently ensure quality data collection.

### 4.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

Field data were collected in the audio-video format; it was watched and analyzed – that is, broken up into manageable themes, patterns, and trends. Emerging themes were discussed in light of the unit of analysis, and research questions and objectives.

Recorded discussions and interviews were first transcribed, sorted out, and uploaded on Atlas.ti version 7.3, which is specialized qualitative data analysis computer software. Then, raw data were coded and the codes were brought together in groups to form subfamilies or subthemes. Further, the subthemes were grouped to form major themes. Using Atlas.ti 7.3, the subthemes and major themes were analyzed into patterns, similarities, links, and distributions across different social demographic groups and trends, consensus, variations, positions, common experiences, problems, needs, and demands.

In addition, this analysis considered social economic characteristics such as the ubudehe classification and role in the community (opinion leader versus ordinary citizen). Salient quotations were extracted and used to support the findings. The major findings were analyzed and linked to existing literature.

### 4.6 Data Quality Control and Assurance

Data quality control comprises standards, processes, and procedures established to control and monitor data quality (Chapman 2005). Several procedures were undertaken to ensure the quality of data in this study.

In accordance with the principles of PAR, a TWG comprising of 40 members was established to review and validate the research project proposal prior to the data collection. The members included academics; representatives of CSOs, media organizations, and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs); central government officials from different institutions (i.e. RGB, MINALOC, MINECOFIN), and local government officials, amongst others. The TWG members were divided into small groups to facilitate the review of data collection tools in efforts to ensure quality of the research process and data collected.





In addition, a Technical SubWorking Group (TSWG) was formed from members of the TWG. It consisted of eight people: two university lecturers, one RGB representative, and five representatives from CSOs working in the area of good governance. Three of the members were women. The TSWG reviewed the findings' reporting structure and supported the research team technically throughout the research process and, in particular, during data analysis. Further, they scrutinized the methodology and emerging findings prior to the validation process.

To prepare for the data collection process, NAR held a rigorous five-day training for the research team. Enumerators were able to familiarise themselves with the data collection tools. The research team strongly emphasized the principles of data quality. In addition, data collection tools were pretested in Gikomero sector, Gasabo, engaging members of the NAR citizen forum program, a forum outside the scope of this study. The pretesting allowed the research team to assess the clarity and effectiveness of the questions.

Lastly, several sessions were organized to share the research progress with partners. Each session provided insightful inputs and guidance in the area of quality research. Likewise, several dissemination meetings were held at the provincial level to share the findings with different stakeholders. These meetings served as an opportunity to bring on board the districts that were not part of the study area so that they could also benefit from the recommendations of this study. With each meeting/session, the draft report kept improving until the final report was shared with all relevant stakeholders at the national and district levels.

## 4.7 Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, the research protocol was presented to the RGB and the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda for ethical approval. Informed consent was sought from all participants to be audio-visually recorded. Before interviews began, each interviewer explained to the participants the purpose of the research, how the information was going to be used, and assured them about their anonymity and confidentiality. To ensure participants' confidentiality, personal identifiers were not captured and records of participants' names were not kept. The FGDs took place in quiet and non-discriminatory locations where only interviewers and recorders were allowed to be present as agreed with the participants. Data were stored at NAR offices, either under lock and key or on secure servers.

## 4.8 Constraints and Mitigation Measures

As in all qualitative studies, the major limitation of this study was interviewee bias. This might have happened during interviews when key informants elaborated on contributing factors for persisting low citizen participation in imihigo processes. Funnell (1996: 178), however, acknowledges that receiving biased answers in such cases is reasonable as the perceptions of the respondents are affected by their interest.

The study involved a wide range of key informants ranging from community members, to local elected leaders and appointed leaders, to representatives of NGOs. In addition, existing literature was intensively reviewed to include as many sources of information as possible.

Another limitation was the potentially inaccurate information due to informants' memories. It is not easy to trace back and remember events that took place a long time ago. There might have been inaccuracies wherever researchers required informants to recall past experiences. To overcome this, informants were accorded reasonable time to recall their lived experiences.



## 5. EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING MECHANISMS FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE IMIHIGO PROCESS

The gap exploration highlighted important channels/mechanisms for citizen participation in the imihigo process. To understand their effectiveness, this study considered the coherence of related policies and their implementation. This chapter presents, interprets, and discusses the major findings in light of the literature and gap analysis model as discussed in chapter 2.

### 5.1 Community Work

Community work, or umuganda, is a homegrown solution that supports participatory governance. On a monthly basis, people are brought together to solve common issues. The Organic Law 53/2007 was established to regulate this community work (MINALOC 2007). This law is complemented by the revised Umuganda Policy and Strategy (2017–2022).

Findings show that citizens across all groups commend the umuganda as a relevant tool to ease the implementation of the imihigo process. This was particularly the case for citizens at the village and cell levels. The FGDs and KIIs in particular set out to investigate the value that citizen participation adds to imihigo. Respondents perceived umuganda as being an important channel for various reasons:

- It helps villages and cells to contribute in basic areas such as infrastructure (roads, schools, health centers, etc.), security, and information-sharing and mobilization.
- The costs involved in these interventions are shared between citizens and their local governments.

Umuganda was thus regarded as a more valuable mechanism for citizen participation than procedural participation through vote, as it enables citizens to directly participate in the implementation of various local development initiatives. Field data strikingly highlighted that citizen participation was limited to the implementation phase. As a participant of a FGD held with youth in Ngoma in Huye illustrated: “There is a sense in which we participate in the implementation and that is okay. We do not participate in the planning and do not even know where the planning takes place. I hear that we shall implement all the planned activities ... but I have no clue about what is in the plans and why it is there.”

As umuganda was established long ago, it should theoretically be working properly across the entire country. However, several interviewees revealed that umuganda is poorly managed. A male participant in category 3 of ubudehe said during a FGD held in Ngororero: “I see no important ideas being suggested [any more]. Sometimes they leave umuganda to the village leader or one of his assistants like the secretary in charge of security. He comes without any guidelines. You find no other leader present.” Without any guidelines or a clear agenda, there are scarce opportunities to engage citizens in meaningful discussions.

Other interviewees considered umuganda as a platform local leaders use to deliver announcements of public interest. This includes “already approved imihigo”, as cited by a vice-mayor from the Southern Province. A FGD held with national-level Public Policy Information Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) partners was also consistent with this sentiment – they observed that umuganda generally does not have a lot of depth, with “most of [the problems discussed being] announcements about government policies or other upcoming government programs”.

Contrary to its intended goal of solving shared community concerns and holding village meetings, umuganda has been turned into a meeting platform. Some interviewees expressed a feeling of disappointment when asked to name their preferred citizen participation channel. One senator disclosed: “I do not want to say umuganda, I hope you are not expecting [me to do so] ... It's a lost opportunity; we do not [give it enough] strength and the citizens [have] also put it aside. I would not say umuganda.”

Umuganda was created with the aim of accelerating community development and thereby actively involving citizens and providing them with a platform to voice their concerns in the area of local development. However findings consistently showed that this intended goal is not yielding the expected results. In some areas, umuganda is supporting the imihigo process well, while in others there are visible shortcomings. The findings also highlight the clash that exists between soundly written policies and their implementation. There is a lack of awareness-raising campaigns to equip local leaders with the necessary skills to effectively and strategically use the available mechanisms.





## 5.2 Community Assembly

The community assembly, also known as *inteko z'abaturatione*, is held once a month or whenever there is a need at the cell level. The Ministerial Instruction N°002/07/01 established community assemblies to encourage citizens to solve their own problems. They are also aimed at providing an avenue where local leaders and citizens can meet and exchange ideas.

Findings consistently showed that these assemblies are effective in solving conflicts and misunderstandings amongst citizens. Citizens expressed a higher level of satisfaction with these assemblies. In other words, community assemblies meet a number of expectations and purposes in the areas of interpersonal and community problem-solving. Citizens consider community assemblies as successful channels for citizen participation, as illustrated by a mayor from the Western Province: "Citizens participate more through *inteko z'abaturatione* because they [can] solve their problems." Many citizens shared this feeling. A sector-level council member in Bumbogo in Gasabo stated that community assemblies "ease problem and solution identification at the grassroots level. It also offers a more appropriate context [of these problems] because people involved are present in that meeting. Thus, problems can be easily solved ... It is easy for people to voice their views because they are free and they are in their community."

When it comes to using these assemblies in imihigo processes, however, a number of gaps were identified. Community assemblies fail to achieve citizen participation in imihigo for a number of reasons. Informants in categories 3 and 4 of *ubudehe* agreed that these assemblies are primarily used to solve conflicts, omitting strategic issues and discussions. This was found to be linked to another phenomenon. Citizens in categories 3 and 4 of *ubudehe* are usually members of the business community or employed in the service sector by public and private institutions. As such they are not free to attend community assemblies that take place on Tuesday afternoons. Failure to attend community assemblies means that they are not informed about what is discussed in the assemblies and that they do not use these assemblies to raise issues. During a FGD held in Mukarange in Kayonza, citizens of these categories expressed their frustration. For instance, one respondent said:

*"The meeting we do not attend is the community assembly ... Issues discussed are mainly petty problems like personal conflicts and small cases ... A lot of time is spent on those issues; we do not get time to voice ideas about development ... You find cases of a man who had a misunderstanding with his neighbor or seven siblings having wrangles over a small piece of land ... When you have left your work, closed your shop, not gone to declare taxes, it is a big sacrifice. You have put many opportunities at risk just to come and listen to problems. The next time he or she will not honor the invitation."*

Citizens in categories 3 and 4 of *ubudehe* would rather conduct their usual business than attend community assemblies. Citizens feel that their local authorities do not use community assemblies to tackle the difficult issues that communities are faced with, resulting in low citizen participation in the governance of their communities. Two important gaps emerge. First, the demands of some citizens are not fully represented in the community, which leads to frustration. Second, citizens are not given the opportunity to set the agenda of discussions, a function that is considered the privilege of local leaders. This situation translates to asymmetric power.

Although the data collected makes it clear that community assemblies are useful channels for citizen participation, unfortunately they are not put to good use to enhance citizen participation in the imihigo process.

## 5.3 Elected Local Councils

Elected local councils, also known as *inama nyanama*, are an indirect citizen participation mechanism. Elected local councils exist at cell, sector, and district levels and play an oversight role over the executive committees at these levels. These councils were established by Law N° 87/2013 of 11/09/2013, which also determines the organization and functioning of decentralized administrative entities. Elected local councils are designed to represent citizens' interests, including when it comes to imihigo and approve imihigo plans at each level of local government. Through these councils, citizens participate in decision-making and policy-making processes at all local levels.

Data highlighted the strategic role the imihigo process plays in Rwanda's decentralized entities. Empirical data boldly emphasized the paramount importance of effective working relationships between council members and their respective constituencies. Unfortunately, citizens were unanimous in their declarations that they do not get feedback from their representatives; the lack of feedback was the most frequently raised problem as far as the citizen-council relationship is concerned.

<sup>12</sup> Available at <http://minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=477>



Amongst other challenges, councils often do not consult citizens due to geographical distance. Given that most of the elected councilors do not live in their constituent communities, they largely work for institutions under the supervision of the districts. For this reason, citizens often think that councilors are independent from the influence of the district; that to an extent they are controlled by the executive committees. Above all, there is no legal framework that regulates the periodicity of councilors' interactions with citizens.

It was also found that not only citizens encounter difficulties in the citizen-council relationship – so do elected local councilors at lower levels of local governments. A FGD held with elected local councilors in Gatsibo highlighted that transportation and communication fees are a challenge. "Sometimes", one councilor disclosed, "I ask for facilitation from the executive committee, but the response is 'there is no budget for that'. In such a situation, citizens end up not getting expected feedback. This is the reason why sometimes I fail to consult citizens before representing them in the council."

The executive committee's domination over council members was also observed in a FGD held in Ngororero. A councilor, who successfully served one term and resigned during the next as he could no longer cope with this domination, observed: "They call you and you cannot suggest or contribute your own ideas, you only approve what they have planned." Thus, the elected local councils at cell and sector levels mostly fail to effectively influence the decisions that executive committees advocate for. As far as policy is concerned, elected local councils should represent citizens. Sometimes, however, as a president of a sector-level elected council observed: "The executive secretary weighs in his power as a civil servant. You may invite him to the council meeting and he declines the invitation for no valid reason. We have often reported this kind of challenge to higher authorities. At some point, we hear that these types of leaders are transferred to other cells." Collaboration between local government officials and elected local councils is an ensuing problem that, to some extent, has been solved. What needs more attention is holding elected local councilors accountable when problems reported in their respective constituencies go unreported or unanswered. To be successful in their official mandate, these councilors need strong support: they need to be empowered in order to fulfil their responsibilities.

Desk research highlighted policy-related difficulties as some of the visible gaps in this area. Besides the lack of facilitation, power asymmetry has resulted in citizens bearing the burden and as such facing the consequences of this problem. If elected local councils fail to consult and give feedback, citizens are not able to voice their opinions about the issues and processes affecting them. It was widely reported that while Articles 39, 46–49, 71, 73, and 80 of Law No 87/2013 of 11/9/2013 clearly describe the relationship between the executive committee and elected local councils, the councils

**"There seems to be a lot of work in the local government, which affects the time allocated to the imihigo process. I think that the imihigo process does not receive due consideration in terms of time with citizens in their communities. In this situation, elected local councils decide and adopt the imihigo prepared by professional teams at the executive level. This is visible at the time of implementation; citizens do not know what is in the imihigo."**

<sup>13</sup> Available at <http://minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=477>





are formally mandated to oversee the executive committees. However, executive committees seem to have taken power from elected local councils.

In addition, citizens reported that they do not know their representatives. Cell- and sector-level council members find it difficult to cover their areas without the means of transportation and communication, thus ending up simply not visiting their constituencies. Nevertheless, citizens of categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe believe that council members are doing a good job. "The council helps us a lot and represents us," said a participant in a FGD with women held in Gasabo. At the same time, they lamented that they are largely excluded from decisions affecting them. Councilors "take the lead in the identification of needs ... they are the ones to initiate everything; they never consult us". In view of the imihigo process, a FGD held with PPIMA partners established the following:

*"There seems to be a lot of work in the local government, which affects the time allocated to the imihigo process. I think that the imihigo process does not receive due consideration in terms of time with citizens in their communities. In this situation, elected local councils decide and adopt the imihigo prepared by professional teams at the executive level. This is visible at the time of implementation; citizens do not know what is in the imihigo."*

With no transportation and communication means and, for some, no financial incentive, elected local councilors report whatever they perceive to be citizens' priorities without any consultation, while discerning themselves to be somewhat empowered to effectively represent their constituencies. Some went as far as reporting that they are no longer interested in attending council meetings because they see no results. Data also pointed out elected local councilors' residence as a constraint of citizen participation in the imihigo process. A FGD held with PPIMA partner observed as follows:

*"Some elected local councilors fail to represent their constituencies because they do not stay in their constituencies. If you are an elected local councilor for Nkorane sector in Nyamagabe District, and you live in Remera sector in Gasabo District and have full-time occupation or employment, citizens in Nkorane will lose contact with you. You will fail to know their views and preoccupations."*

Previous studies have also reported these challenges. A clear legal and binding framework that would obligate elected local councilors to make regular visits to their constituencies is still regarded as the answer. Although there are still important gaps in terms of the functioning of elected local councils, it is evident that these councils do help citizens in different ways.

## 5.4 National Youth Council

The NYC was established to serve as a platform aimed at providing youth with opportunities. Its formal mission is to facilitate and encourage youth to participate in socioeconomic development and transformation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable society (NYC 2018: 1). To achieve this, the NYC has to ensure that the voices of youth are heard at various levels of public administration, especially on issues related to development. Part of the NYC's mandate is mobilizing youth to take part in decision-making processes (NYC 2018: 1). The NYC has proved to be an important and popular avenue for mobilizing youth to participate in the imihigo process.

A number of challenges were unraveled in terms of youth participation in the planning, monitoring and evaluation, and review phases. For instance, high levels of youth participation in the implementation of imihigo were reported, whereas planning has remained the exclusivity of higher levels of central administration. A FGD with youth organizations established that they are not aware of imihigo preparations but "because [the central government] need[s] our contribution through physical labor, they inform us during implementation".

Top-down aspects found in the imihigo process amongst national-level youth organizations seemed to extend to lower levels of these organizations. During a FGD with youth held in Huye, a NYC committee member at the district level placed a strong emphasis on these aspects while reacting to contradicting views:

*"You have just said that we bring you imihigo to implement without you having a say in planning. It is youth imihigo [that] come from the national level and are common across the country... We asked the ministry why [it] thinks on our behalf and end up preparing imihigo that are contrary to what our youth want ... The ministry informed us that the NYC does not have a budget [and that we] have to do [our own] mobilization and advocacy..."*

Aside from the top-down approach, with lower level structures of the NYC serving as intermediaries that take already





planned imihigo to peer youth groups for implementation, the next challenge is ownership. In a FGD with youth held in Huye, it emerged that it is “difficult ... to refuse imihigo plans if [they] have not been part of the planning. [They] prefer not to get involved at all...” As they are drafted at the ministry level, they set the same targets across Rwanda as if all districts are homogeneous. In the same FGD it was suggested that, “youth imihigo should be set per district by the youth living in that district. If this is done, even the implementation will be easy...” Not only is youth not engaged in the planning of the imihigo, these statements highlight that youth imihigo are not context-specific enough to genuinely promote youth participation in the process.

Local leaders at the sector level were found to have low respect for the youth. Sometimes, they neglect youth's ideas. A district coordinator of the NYC argued in a KII that “some of the leaders in local government have not understood what the country wants from the youth in general ... We still have that problem where leaders in local government perceive the youth as a group of people who are just there and not important.” He added, “If ministers value youth as the strength of Rwanda and have put necessary mechanisms to support the youth, how come local leaders have not yet understood that the government of Rwanda values collaboration from the youth?” A FGD with cell-level youth councilors in Huye further added that, “local leaders consider us as people who cannot contribute ... [or] voice developmental ideas”.

In addition, NYC structures were found to not be functioning properly. For instance, NYC representatives sometimes do not consult with the youth they represent. Cases were reported where a whole electoral term expired without NYC members having met with the youth. During a national-level FGD with a youth organization, a participant revealed: “I have never before seen an elected representative holding a meeting with their electorate in my neighborhood...”

Although the NYC has been instrumental in involving the youth in the implementation of imihigo, youth participation in other phases, such as planning, and monitoring and evaluation, is completely absent.

## 5.5 National Women's Council

The NWC was designed as a public institution, mandated to build women's capacity and to ensure their participation in national development through advocacy and social mobilization. It works under the guidance and close supervision of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (NWC 2018: 4).

This research confirmed that the structures of the NWC – from the village up to the district level and beyond – are well established. More importantly, most women are aware of its existence. However, the use of these structures in the imihigo process was found to be slightly inadequate. It was found that the NWC lacks proper guidance at the local level to effectively carry out its mandate. In some areas, NWC representatives were reported as being dormant and not functional. Some participants went as far as to describe these representative structures as formalities. At the village level, for instance, a FGD held in Karongi confirmed that NWC structures are weak, with NWC representatives seen as operating in fear or with a lack of confidence. A FGD held in Huye with women of categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe underscored that this confidence could only be built through training.

The NWC also cited limited budget as a constraint impeding on the empowerment of local representatives. District-level NWC representatives fail to visit and supervise lower levels of NWC structures. A FGD held with women of categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe in Karongi concluded: “If you're at the district level, you're supposed to visit and consult citizens at the village level. But you find there is no facilitation [means] for women at the [NWC]. Then you ask yourself, how shall we reach there? How shall we train them? How will they know?” This results in women usually not meeting with their representatives.

Many interviewees suggested budget decentralization as a quick solution to address this challenge. A FGD that involved sector-level councilors in Nyagatare established that “decentralizing the budget should be done so that [planned] activities can be done and [NWC representatives] are able to do field visits... The biggest problem is the budget.” These councilors made these statements when their term in office was ending before being able to carry out their mandates, which is undoubtedly an indication of dysfunctional NWC structures at lower levels of local government.

Beyond financial limitations, however, there are some “women comfortably in the National Women's Council who do not know what they were voted for”, as revealed during a FGD held with women of categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe in Musanze. This perception was also voiced during other interview sessions.





## 5.6 National Council for Persons with Disabilities

The NCPD was established by Law N°03/2011. Under the supervision of the MINALOC, it was set up as a national organ tasked with advocacy and social mobilization on issues affecting persons with disabilities. The idea was to build the capacity of persons with disabilities and ensure their participation in national development (MINALOC 2018).

Although persons with disabilities place a strong trust in the NCPD, highly commending its work, they also raised some concerns. At the village level, they argue that the NCPD is not represented. Interventions are needed to alleviate low levels of education. One participant in a FGD with members of the National Union of Disability Organizations in Rwanda (NUDOR) described the problem as follows: "At the district level there could be many people with disabilities... In our district, we have 4,687 persons with disabilities. Amongst these people, 90% might not be able to read and write. This makes it very difficult for these persons with disabilities to change their thinking." This FGD participant continued: "It's very difficult to find an educated representative for people with disabilities at the cell level. Even when you go there, you find he or she has only studied up to Form 3 and hence has fear of oneself and the public." Not only does a low level of education dissipate self-confidence, a lack of knowledge and the inability to form arguments are also detrimental for citizen participation.

It is also a challenge for persons with disabilities to cope with the hilly terrain mostly found in the Western and Northern Provinces. Imihigo-related issues are primarily raised within the framework of umuganda. When the umuganda is organized in very hilly areas with steep slopes, it is difficult for persons with disabilities to attend and therefore their voice and ideas go unheard in the imihigo process.

The NCPD may be an effective citizen participation mechanism but participation of persons with disabilities depends on the NCPD's success in advocating for hosting imihigo discussions in convenient and accessible venues. Empowering persons with disabilities is also an area to look into for enhanced participation.

## 5.7 Parents' Evening Forum

Also known as Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi, the Parents' Evening Forum was created in 2010. Initially, it was an exclusive forum for women to enable them to get together and discuss the wellbeing of their children and families, as well as other related issues. Later, this forum was revised to also include men. The Parents' Evening Forum was officially relaunched in 2013 with the aim of improving family relationships and living conditions toward sustainable development (NWC 2013).

The Parents' Evening Forum was the most commended citizen participation mechanism. Through it, women have been playing a key role in reducing family conflicts and creating an environment where citizens feel free to express themselves. The Parents' Evening Forum ranked highest as compared to the other mechanisms for citizen participation. For instance, a FGD held in Karongi with women of categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe established that: "If ... umuganda is a general meeting that helps people, the Parents' Evening Forum is the best of all [citizen participation mechanisms]. It takes place at the village level while other meetings take place at cell or sector levels..." The fact that this forum tackles issues related to citizens' personal lives is its most advantageous aspect. The majority of participants are women who mostly prefer to voice their concerns in a forum perceived as homogeneous. A FGD held in Musanze with women of categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe concluded: "We come closely together and discuss everything because we have privacy." This was a widespread view.

A few limitations were nonetheless identified. Even though the Parents' Evening Forum is supposed to bring together men and women, it was established that men's attendance rates in many places are poor. The participants also reported that this forum does not offer much of a chance to examine community development issues, but is rather used as a platform for sensitization. A KKI with a woman with a disability held in Kayonza pointed out that this forum acts as an opportunity for leaders to teach citizens how to behave: "They tell us that women should act in a way that commands respect! They have never allowed everyone to express his/her idea on a particular topic." A participant in a FGD held with men of category 3 of ubudehe in Ngororero openly said that there was no difference between this forum and other meetings they attend. It has turned into an opportunity for village leaders to deliver the announcements about decisions made at the cell level.

Like many other mechanisms for citizen participation, the Parents' Evening Forum is faced with certain challenges. First, it is perceived as a women's gathering, as highlighted in a FGD held in Musanze with men of categories 2 and 3 of ubudehe:

<sup>12</sup> Available at <http://minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=477>





“Men have not yet fully embraced it to the extent [that] they attend it frequently as would be usually expected...” In addition, the forum yields less participation in urban areas than rural areas, as explained by the inconvenient timing of meetings. A man from Musanze put it as follows: “During the time allocated to Umugoroba w’Ababyeyi most of the people are busy with their business. Those meetings work better in [rural] villages because people have come back from their gardens [the time meetings are convened]. In urban centers, people are running around trying to earn a living. For sure such a person cannot be available.”

## 5.8 Civil Society Organizations

The term “civil society organizations” refers to the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, and express the interests and values of their members or others based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, and religious or philanthropic considerations (World Bank 2007: 1). One of the roles of CSOs is to bridge the gap between the state and citizens.

In Rwanda, CSOs mainly comprise of NGOs (both local and international), religious organizations, media organizations, academic institutions, and research centers. Literature suggests that “civil society can positively influence the state and the market, and therefore it is increasingly understood as an important agent for promoting good governance; they also tend to be more transparent, effective, open, responsive, and accountable” (Gaus-Pasha 2004: 3). However, studies by the IRDP (2010, 2013), Transparency International (2012), and RGB (2012), amongst others, have found that CSOs have not managed to influence the policy-making process in Rwanda, while also highlighting the challenges faced by CSOs operating in the country. The 2016 report “Governing with and for Citizens: Lesson from a Post-Genocide Rwanda” by NAR likewise supports this, also underlining that CSOs are not always involved in advocacy (2016: 36).

The data collected in this study confirm the abovementioned gaps. It was found that although CSOs play a role in indirect citizen participation through the JADF, improvements in JADF’s role with regards to citizen participation in the imihigo process are urgently needed. CSOs need to be given the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the planning of imihigo. This concern was widely raised by most interviewees. For example, strong frustration was expressed at a FGD held with PPIMA partners:

*“Most members are invited to approve the document prepared by the district beforehand instead of inviting JADF members to consult on what should be considered. The district presents an already elaborated plan and comes to ask how CSOs would help. Every CSO is expected to pledge its contribution to the budget ... In such a case, JADF is no longer a partner but rather a funding donor. Districts like approaching donor agencies and saying, ‘I have a plan, how much will you contribute?’”*

Some interviewees stated that CSOs’ support of development efforts was not based on their knowledge of district plans. The following emerged during a FGD held with PPIMA partners: “It is not because they know what has been planned, but rather because [their] activities coincidentally match with what the district has planned. There is no framework or document that directly links [their] planning with that of imihigo planning at the district level.” It is the responsibility of the district to prepare the agenda for JADF meetings and no additional item is allowed. “If you bring something that is not on the agenda,” it was observed during a FGD held with PPIMA partners, “they will say that you’re an opponent. The agenda is prepared by district officials instead of the JADF committee.” This situation jeopardizes the formal mandate of CSOs that primarily consists of advocating for citizens’ interests.

Another challenge stems from the fact that effective advocacy is evidence-based. In other terms, scientific research findings rather than opinions should back up all initiatives (Shanklin and Tan 2016: 7). As this study found, CSOs lack capacity to conduct research, which severely impedes their ability to adequately advocate for citizens’ interests. There are certain levels of ignorance about priority needs of citizens. A national-level FGD held with PPIMA partners established that unlike NAR and PPIMA partners that do research and, as a result, “have credible data ... other civil society organizations do not have the capacity to do research and collect citizen’s ideas in a more systematic way...” One CSO cited as an example was the Imbaraga, a Rwandan platform for farmers. A participant in a FGD held with PPIMA partners said that: “They do advocacy at their own local level ... If they have not attained good agricultural yields, they share their experience of how things went. But in a real sense, they do not do any research [to] generate data [likely] to convince the Ministry of Agriculture.” This is an example of a CSO lamenting about something – in this case, diseases that destroy crops – without having scientific backup.





Coverage of CSOs is another challenge. With the exception of churches, it was observed that CSOs do not generally operate at the village level, but are based in urban areas. There was little knowledge, if any, amongst citizens about CSOs, despite the fact that these organizations are expected to interpose between the government and citizens. A direct implication of this, as stated during a FGD held in Nyagatare with citizens of categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe, is that “JADF fails to consult citizens living in remote rural areas”. Meanwhile an official of the RGB said that, “there is still a gap with civil society organizations. Apart from religious institutions, other civil society organizations do not go to rural areas. You only find them in towns...”

The discussions held with CSOs confirmed that their narrow coverage is a crucial problem. This is largely because the majority of CSOs are faith-based organizations. In addition, numerous CSOs fail to carry out evidence-based advocacy, with communities the ones that pay for it. Similarly, wider gaps in representation will persist if CSOs capable of conducting evidence-based advocacy are largely located in major centers and urban districts, leaving citizens in remote rural areas hardly benefiting from their work. Lastly, fieldwork elucidated that there are worries about the inefficient use of available resources. If CSOs are not fully engaged in district planning, they end up duplicating interventions already planned by the districts. Strong competition of interests is likely to undermine citizen participation in different government-led programs, including the imihigo process. Hence, CSOs need to streamline their interventions to enhance citizen participation in the imihigo process.

## 5.9 Media Organizations

Media organizations are an indirect citizen participation channel and they have proven to be considerably useful in promoting good governance and accountability. There are three basic roles that the media plays in the area of good governance: (1) as a watchdog that protects public interests through the close monitoring of powerful sectors in society, and by uncovering corruption and misinformation; (2) as an agenda-setter that raises awareness about social issues and crises, and convenes relevant actors for appropriate intervention; and (3) as a gate-keeper that unites a plurality of perspectives and voices to debate issues of concern (Norris and Odugbemi 2009: 1).

As far as citizen participation in the imihigo process is concerned, participants highly commended the media. Nevertheless, the media is not satisfactorily put to use in terms of the imihigo process. For instance, the media mainly covers imihigo at the district level. Most interviewees perceived media organizations as limiting their coverage to scandals. Their role in community-building is accorded trivial interest. It was suggested at a national-level FGD held with PPIMA partners that some media organizations “are always looking for controversial news. They do not report the role citizens have [to play] in what is done for them. They only look for issues that will make their radios popular but not those related to their role in the development of the country...”

As not all citizens are comfortable with opening up to media practitioners, the latter meet pre-selected people who have possibly been briefed on what to and not to say. This results in biased information being collected and reported, with many pointing out this gap. A man of category 3 of ubudehe participating in a FGD held in Ngororero recalled times when journalists came to visit:

*“One day the media people came to our village, our local leader instructed me what to say in response to their questions. I said a lot of things to make the sector feel good. I became famous in my neighborhood; and whenever people saw me since that interview, they would say that I disclosed the truth. You cannot just say that things are not going well, you would not be able to get any service from the local leaders, you would end up being isolated...”*

Irrespective of these perceptions, communities have strong trust in media organizations. In a KII, a senator said he did not “know how it came about that citizens trust the media this much”. This could be explained by the fact that the media effectively communicate to local leaders and yield tangible results. Participants in a FGD held in Musanze with citizens of categories 2 and 3 of ubudehe disclosed that “the reasons why we love radios and TVs is because, for example, we requested the cell executive secretary to construct a house for a lady with four kids. He refused and said that it was impossible to build a house using bricks made from loam since she lives in town. But when she aired the problem on TV1, the executive secretary ... built the house. Now, it is completed. That’s the reason why we like the media...” Media organizations can use their power to boost citizen participation in the imihigo process. Many interviewees believe this should alert those media organizations that mainly look for high publicity events to ensure their survival to report more frequently on community matters.



## 6. LOW CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE IMIHIGO PROCESS: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS, CAPACITY GAPS, GOOD PRACTICES, AND PRACTICABILITY

This chapter discusses the different reasons that could explain the low levels of citizen participation in the imihigo process as elucidated during the fieldwork. It also discusses good practices for effective citizen participation.

### 6.1 Centralism and Top-Down Approaches

As outlined in the policy concept note, imihigo involves a three-step process: (1) local planning comprising prioritization and planning; (2) implementation; and (3) monitoring and evaluation. Local prioritization and planning are outlined both in the decentralization policy and imihigo concept note. In practice, however, no local planning takes place at the sector and district levels. A sector-level executive secretary describes the role he shares with his counterpart elected councilors: we “coordinate the cell, and the cell coordinates the village. The village is the organ meant for mobilization of citizens.”

Mayors and executive secretaries subscribe to this top-down structure of citizen participation. They describe it as being the “mere implementation of national policies and district resolutions”. Subsequent planned activities and programs take place at cell and village levels, where coordination, mobilization, and sensitization are the main ways local leaders are supposed to involve citizens.

When asked to identify challenges that lend force to low citizen participation, mayors and executive secretaries emphasized the “mindset” or “mentality” of the population. A quote from the vice-mayor in Nyamagabe illustrates this: “We still have a population that strongly believes everything comes from the state. Our first job is to change the mentality of the population. To do this is a process. We organize lots of meetings with the population ... to tell [them] what [how] we wish things to be. We also do home visits to verify that what we have said is being put into practice.”

These statements conjure up an image of a culture that patronizes its citizens – a view that found strong support in this study. The same pattern of leadership was suggested in a FGD conducted in Ngororero: “Decisions are made upward from the central government and district levels and they just request us to implement without any further explanation.” Youth participating in another FGD asserted that “district leaders decide in our name without consulting us and the priorities set are implemented as stated”.

Although citizens are fully engaged in the implementation phase of decision-making processes, they are totally absent in the planning phase. Local leaders established that in the planning of imihigo, there was no effective participation of citizens and councils. After the preparation of imihigo at both cell and sector levels, they are submitted to the district. But as an elected local councilor in Nyabihu pointed out, “at this level, none of us, even citizen representatives [councilors], are called upon to take part in imihigo planning. Instead we are presented with the final document containing priorities and targets on the agenda. This may have been prepared by one staff member at the district in charge of planning in close collaboration with the mayor and the central government.” This top-down approach is seen as frustrating and results in priorities and targets that are sent down for implementation deviating from what citizens want and need.

These factors are clear indications of a top-down form of governance that exists in Rwanda. It is often the case that local government institutions have to implement projects of the central government institutions generally within very limited time frames and at very short notice. It is obvious that constant pressure from the central government affects the quality of local government achievements, including effective citizen participation in the local imihigo process.

Research by NAR and Interpeace (2016) has found that there is constant pressure to deliver on governmental plans of action. As was established during a FGD held with sector-level councilors in Kayonza:

*“The local government receives many urgent orders with requests for immediate implementation from central agencies. Everything has become urgent and this is happening in every field: malnourished children, Vision 2020 Umurenge Program, girinka, etc. When MINALOC calls upon the district to deliver on those urgent requests, the latter puts pressure on the sector, then the sector on the cell, and the cell on the village.”*

<sup>14</sup> Available at <http://minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=185>





A senator pointed out during a KII that although effective citizen participation in priority-setting is a must, “this is not easy to achieve since [Rwanda] is very committed to fast tracking equitable and inclusive development”. He went on to add:

*“When people are constantly under pressure to deliver, the most difficult question becomes how to set people-centered local priorities. [Local leaders] are requested to urgently do ABC, etc. in order to materialize, let say, presidential pledges and other ambitious government-led development goals. In so doing, some local leaders fall short in considering and paying attention to local priorities as defined by local populations.”*

The fact that national priorities tend to overweigh local priorities, soliciting citizens' inputs on the imihigo process becomes less of a priority. The following idea emerged from a FGD held with participatory governance investigative journalists in Kigali:

*“There will always be an urgent priority from central agencies that needs to be acted upon at the local level. Such unexpected demands permeate all layers of local government ... [and] not only do they inverse the order of predefined priorities, they also shift the focus of decentralized administrative entities from equally concentrating on the delivery of their local priorities. When you talk to various local leaders, they all highlight constant requests for immediate execution from the central government as a key inhibitor of participatory local government in the imihigo process.”*

Delivering results and achieving goals comes above all other responsibilities of local leaders. In an environment where success is highly desired, downward accountability toward councils and citizens is the only option if an executive local leader wants to keep his job. There is constant competition as well as constant pressure to score good marks in the imihigo evaluation every year.

Performance-based contracts have increased the quality of service delivery at the local level and have decreased poverty levels of marginalized populations. Rwanda has achieved almost all of its Millennium Development Goal targets in terms of health and education. In the last decade, mortality at birth has decreased from 107 to 32 per 1,000 and the school enrolment rate has improved from 72.6% to 96.8%. These indicators show a clear commitment to improving the lives of citizens. However, challenges still persist, for example in that subdistrict layers are not financially and technically empowered to successfully drive the participatory governance required for sustainable development.

Many districts' heavy reliance on earmarked budgets means that they do not have the freedom to reallocate funds according to their needs and priorities given the organic budget and finance law in place. Although districts need these budgets to spend on specific projects, compliance with the conditionalities allows for downward accountability to gain ground. There is also no clear and robust framework for IGRs in as far as vertical accountability is concerned. There are no clear guidelines for when and how citizens should be consulted.

All the above challenges point to the fact that a holistic approach alone can address the issue of centralism. This approach can lead to a change in attitudes and behavior, and to financial autonomy of local structures characterized by strong local economic development. Thus, there is a need for a clear framework that links upward accountability and downward accountability, and gives voice to citizens for effective participation.

## 6.2 Capacity Gap Analysis

Many informants perceive that the capacity of both local governance and citizens is typically low. The next section discusses the findings regarding the capacity of local leaders to actively engage citizens, followed by a discussion on citizens' competence.

### 6.2.1 Capacity of local leaders

“Capacity” is defined as the capability of a person, an institution, or an organization to effectively and efficiently perform a given task or mandate. It is a continuous process characterized by a reduction on the dependence on external resources (Vincent and Stephen 2015: 1). It is concerned with human resource development (people), institutional development (local government system), and the overall policy environment within which the local governments, as public service organizations, operate and interact. According to the Rwandan Capacity Building Strategy for Local Governments (2011–2015), capacity is understood as a process through which individuals, organizations, and society

<sup>15</sup> See the Ministry of Health website: <http://www.moh.gov.rw/index.php?id=2>.





obtain, strengthen, and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their development agenda.

The study has highlighted various capacity-related challenges that impede meaningful citizen participation. These include a lack of skills in active listening and of confidence required for public scrutiny. Citizens were found to also lack sufficient capacity to mainstream inclusion-related crosscutting issues into local plans. This affects the design and delivery of inclusive imihigo. The high turnover in sector leadership positions compounds capacity-building efforts and continuity in the process of effectively engaging citizens. Another challenge highlighted across all districts relates to institutional financial capacity. Participation is a costly endeavor in terms of logistics and time. The limited resources at sector, cell, and village levels affect any good and genuine will to actively engage citizens.

To build capacity requires, at a minimum, knowledge about existing and pressing needs. As data show, however, local leaders fail to mobilize such knowledge. Individual and collective interviews conducted in different areas highlighted that some local leaders do not engage with citizens to learn about pressing needs, challenges, and perspectives pertaining to governmental programs. A representative of the youth who participated in a FGD held in Musanze explained that, "some local leaders don't even know how to facilitate meetings, get insights from the audience, and actively engage with us".

The local leaders' lack of capacity was attributed to the fact that they have little, if any, experience when they take office. A youth in the same FGD stated: "Local governments appoint fresh graduates. They are not fully informed and trained about imihigo. This end[s] up causing mistrust... toward bureaucrats and local leaders." A cell-level executive secretary served as a tangible example. "Just after I finished secondary school," he reported, "I was appointed to rule the cell before I gained any basic leadership and mobilization skills, or any relevant induction training. Certainly the lack of skills has affected the whole exercise of actively engaging people to participate in the imihigo process."

To address these capacity gaps, the National Decentralization Implementation Plan includes a capacity-building component. Implicitly, there is informed recognition about inadequate capacity amongst some local leaders. Facilitation, negotiation, mobilization, citizen leadership, agenda-setting, and conflict resolution are the basic areas in which local leaders urgently need an induction as they undertake leadership positions in local government.

In line with the National Decentralization Implementation Plan, a number of capacity-building activities have taken place in recent years. The most striking challenge to come out of these was related to different, fragmented, and often uncoordinated interventions. Currently, there is an ongoing policy elaboration on capacity-building, which is expected to clarify some issues of standardization of curricula, quality assurance, and roles and responsibilities of capacity-building providers.

Another issue is that capacity-building is made an exclusive tool for empowering local leaders with leadership skills. While training is a universally recognized tool, it is not sufficient in itself. It does not include mentoring and coaching, for example, and has no relevant means by which to measure its outcomes. Capacity-building of local leaders should be holistic in that it integrates local leaders' training, and fills institutional and policy gaps. In addition, it should combine capacity strengthening with material incentives to create an environment of collaboration between local leaders and citizens. Similarly, it should help elected local councilors to build working relationships and collaboration with their respective constituencies. Local councils also need capacity to enhance their role as representatives.

Various challenges still prevail in the design and delivery of capacity-building interventions. There is a genuine commitment to empower districts so that they can provide and deliver services. In terms of capacity, the central government has empowered local governments so that they can fulfill their mandates. All districts and some sector staff (including the executive secretary and internal auditor) are required to have a university degree. Since 2013, directors of district health units have been required to have a master's degree in a move to eliminate any inferiority complexes aimed toward their medical colleagues and ensure proper oversight of the latter's tasks (Chemouni 2016: 5). Empowerment also comes in the form of financial incentives for retention, with salary alignment across the public sector

## 6.2.2 Citizen competence

There is a general feeling amongst local officials that citizens do not have the required level of competence to participate in local government decision-making processes. This assumption seemed to gain more ground in rural and remote areas as opposed to urban cities. Interviews established that citizens in categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe have little, if any, awareness of their rights and duties. They are also perceived as people without the essential knowledge and skills





required for sufficient understanding of complex processes of local planning, including imihigo processes and upward accountability. This is mainly attributed to low levels of literacy. A FGD held in Rutsiro with women from categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe confirmed this. These women were not conversant with imihigo processes and objectives; they did not know how decisions pertaining to imihigo are made and why they should be part of imihigo's design. Many of these women did not meet the minimum skills required to communicate ideas properly or negotiate with different stakeholders, especially when the latter are more knowledgeable.

In many cases, citizens without the minimum skills required to participate keep silent even though they are encouraged to voice their concerns and needs. They just attend, sit in the corner, but do not express opinions and views in the presence of people in positions of power, such as councils and executive secretaries. This indicates that an in-depth discussion rarely takes place in the participation process – especially where economically disadvantaged groups and those living in rural and remote areas are involved. However, most participants in these forums belong to socially marginalized groups, including categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe, women, youth, and people with disabilities.

Informants believe that low levels of civic competence result in lower levels of political and social awareness. In turn, these low levels of civic competence inhibit citizens' potential to meaningfully express their concerns. As a result, elite groups such as businesspeople, activists, and technicians continue to dominate decision-making processes. To illustrate, an academic who participated in a national-level FGD asserted: "Currently, the citizen has no capacity to take decisions on his own. Even those who represent him in forums where decisions are made do not have the capacity required to fully and meaningfully represent him. The citizen is not ready to take decisions. He needs guidance and help." In a KII, a representative youth based in Nyabihu explained the youth's limitations in as much as knowledge is concerned: "The fundamental issue is related to our ignorance of how and where imihigo are crafted and designed. That [leads to] our inability to explain to other young citizens about imihigo. It is like tough exam."

There is a strong belief that CSOs and media organizations are entrusted with bridging these capacity gaps. These organizations play a fundamental role in the process of building citizens' education and harnessing their potential to convene and facilitate platforms in order to increase their civic awareness. However, many of the interviewed citizens indicated that civil society and media organizations are not visible in their communities. These organizations fail to reach rural areas, and to serve as a powerful interface between the state and society. As a result of limited coverage, these organizations have not meaningfully strengthened citizens' capacity as one would expect. These are areas government interventions need to consider if citizens are to transform into more active participants in the imihigo process. Strong support to civil society and media organizations is one of the key interventions that can strengthen community organizations.

The existing literature concurs with this guidance for interventions. As Osmani (2007: 36) reports, scholars have pointed out that people who live in more socially mobilized communities, or in communities with strong social networks or social capital, easily acquire civic skills that are needed to engage in debates of public issues and to become more engaged in public affairs.

## 6.3 Selected Good Practices

Good practices are often defined as a collection of actions, approaches, and methods that are proven most successful in achieving or contributing to an objective. They are shared with peers in order to contribute to collective learning (SALGA 2013: 3). This research used a set of criteria to identify certain practices likely to successfully contribute to collective learning in the particular area of imihigo.

### 6.3.1 Isibo

The term isibo stems from the cultural civic education practice known across Rwanda as itorero. Isibo is a Kinyarwanda term that takes a plural form to become amasibo. Generally, an isibo is made of 15–20 households. Every village is divided into three or more amasibo depending on the number of households in that particular village. Each individual isibo has three leaders with the main leader called intore yo ku mukondo and two assistants called umuyobozi w'uruhembe rw'ibumoso and umuyobozi w'uruhembe rw'iburyo.

In the Eastern Province particularly, amasibo were identified as a good practice in the sense that they are put to good use to facilitate the mobilization of citizens over the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the imihigo process at the village level. The Eastern Province has enacted a bylaw establishing an isibo, which is recognized





as an official entity in the structure of the province's government system. It operates as a community discussion and mobilization platform that promotes cultural values and community development initiatives.

This research pointed out that amasibo were effective tools used to facilitate less empowered groups of citizens, such as women, to freely participate in, especially, gender-based violence-related imihigo, thereby adding tremendous value to inclusive participation. As a FGD held in Kayonza with women of categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe elucidated: "the problems raised by women from isibo are greatly valued". Arguably, the practice of isibo has enabled the participation of the most important group of citizens that has initially been excluded due to cultural norms. Amasibo are widely understood as citizen-driven platforms in local government structures where citizens open up and interact. In a KII held in Gatsibo, a JADF member representing nursery schools put it as follows:

*"In the local government structure, citizens most comfortably feel free to express themselves in amasibo. This is because there are a lot of people who encountered problems but feared approaching the village leader. For example, if my husband physically abused me and I know that he shares alcohol with the village leader or is a friend to the village leader ... I am scared to go and tell a friend of my husband. When such a problem happens again, even when I am scared, neighbors approach me and advise me to report the issue to the leaders of isibo and they solve that problem. You find that citizens have opened up."*

**Isibo is undoubtedly an enabling factor to citizen participation while amasibo leaders are effective drivers of the family-based imihigo process. Isibo eases the implementation of household imihigo, which is perceived as rigid.**

In addition to being credible platforms, amasibo are characterized by speedy information and service delivery in the Eastern Province. This is partly due to the close geographical and logistical proximity of amasibo to citizens. For instance, a FGD held in Nyagatare with men of categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe established that "when a citizen has a simple problem within the vicinity of 15 to 20 households, it is solved even before it reaches the village leader". These factors benefit imihigo by enabling citizens to promptly participate in imihigo implementation. As a FGD held in Nyagatare with men of categories 3 and 4 established:

*"The leader of isibo knows very well whether the households in his area of jurisdiction have been part of imihigo and what they have planned to achieve. This is because the leader of isibo meets citizens at least once a week. This is really important in achieving imihigo targets. When imihigo targets have been achieved, the leader of isibo knows before the village leader and this is so nice."*

There are many reasons as to why isibo enables citizens to open up and express ideas. For example, most participants mentioned isibo's jubilant atmosphere. A FGD held in Nyaruguru observed that "citizens are warm and as a result people express what is in their hearts". Also cited is the ability of amasibo leaders to follow up on household imihigo and to provide feedback. Women of categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe participating in a FGD held in Kayonza said: "[Amasibo leaders] come and ask us why are you not doing what you planned? What are the challenges? They visit us twice in a month."

Isibo is undoubtedly an enabling factor to citizen participation while amasibo leaders are effective drivers of the family-based imihigo process. Isibo eases the implementation of household imihigo, which is perceived as rigid. Ifishi y'imihigo is a standard form designed at the national level and signed by the head of the village. It includes specific household

<sup>16</sup> The form is designed by MINALOC. At the time of printing this report, the existing form was being reviewed to make it more effective for capturing citizens' inputs.





targets to meet in a fiscal year. Theoretically, the village executive committee consolidates all household imihigo. The consolidation is intended to select common household imihigo priorities that ideally constitute village imihigo (IPAR 2017: 15; MINALOC 2012). Whether this process duly takes place is fiercely contested, however. Most interviewees identified the rigid design of implementation, which makes it difficult for households to feed locally based targets to the upper layers of local government. It is viewed as a one-size-fits-all tool that barely takes into account household realities.

After household heads have filled in and village leaders have signed the household imihigo forms, they remain with the household heads. Since it was introduced in 2014, the household imihigo form has continuously been administered until the 2016–2017 fiscal year. During the data collection period, the form for the 2017–2018 fiscal year was not yet administered to households. These are levels where citizens live and work, and where mobilization in support of government policies occurs (RALGA 2017: 10). The village level does not have the time it requires to effectively engage and seek citizens' inputs throughout the local government imihigo process.

Under these circumstances, *amasibo* became appropriate platforms to ensure citizen participation in the imihigo process. *Amasibo* leaders make sure imihigo planning forms are availed to their respective citizens. They also check the extent to which the activities planned are being implemented. A FGD held in Kayonza with women of categories 1 and 2 of *ubudehe* described this process as follows: "After supplying the imihigo forms to citizens, we request them to bring the filled-in forms back outlining what they have planned to achieve. Later we refer to these forms to see if what someone planned, for example, having a vegetable garden, sanitary facility, buying livestock, or paying health insurance (*mutuelle de santé*) has been achieved."

*Isibo* not only mobilizes citizens to engage in the imihigo process, it also serves as a strategy to raise money for health insurance, which is particularly useful for low-income citizens. A citizen interviewed in Kayonza asserted: "We save a certain amount of money per week and by the time we are required to pay health insurance, you find you have the needed amount."

*Isibo* is an innovatively good practice that strongly supports the imihigo process. With the interest of sharing with peers to contribute to collective learning, it is a practice that can be replicated provided more studies are conducted to document the feasibility of such replication. Such studies could determine why such an innovative and useful practice has only taken off in the Eastern Province, while it was popularized countrywide through *itorero*. Finally, more light should be shed on ways in which family imihigo could feed the imihigo planning process at different layers of local government.

### 6.3.2 Umuryango w'ingobyi

*Umuryango w'ingobyi*, also known as *umuryango wa duhekerane*, is a good practice predominantly visible in Burera, Northern Province. It adds significant value to the planning and implementation of the imihigo process. *Umuryango w'ingobyi* is not a new phenomenon in Rwanda; it is enshrined in the country's cultural practices. Starting out as a social solidarity initiative, it has evolved over the years into an important all-round community-inspired initiative. *Umuryango w'ingobyi* consists of 20–30 households that periodically come together to discuss community issues and that also support each other through a members-only savings scheme.

This practice plays a key role in the imihigo process. In the health sector, it successfully mobilizes citizens to pay the community-based health insurance, also known as *mutuelle de santé*, thereby contributing to community access to healthcare. Particularly, *umuryango w'ingobyi* has fast tracked imihigo through an increased collaboration between citizens and leaders, and eased mobilization for specific imihigo-related activities. One of its benefits is that through the savings scheme, households can afford to pay their health insurance through their annual savings. Many field observations support the importance of *umuryango w'ingobyi* in citizens' life.

If families are not able to pay their community-based health insurance, the "umuryango w'ingobyi pays the health insurance for that particular family or lends money to the family to pay for it", as was pointed out in a FGD held with women of categories 3 and 4 of *ubudehe* in Burera. The same *umuryango w'ingobyi* would help with expenses involved in the transportation of seriously ill persons when they do not have the means. This could involve hiring a vehicle or a motorcycle to take ill persons to health centers or hospitals.

Owing to its success in the health sector, local leaders have started using *umuryango w'ingobyi* to spread necessary information to citizens. In this process, leaders of *umuryango w'ingobyi* play an instrumental role. These leaders' strong domination over household members has made *umuryango w'ingobyi* a successful channel that ensures





active interaction between citizens and local government leaders. Field data established that leaders of umuryango w'ingobyi rank higher than village leaders, and that extremely good collaboration exists between heads of umuryango w'ingobyi and local leaders. This constructive collaboration proves to be an appropriate base for successful community mobilization that supports well-coordinated imihigo planning at the village level. The economist of Burera supported this sentiment during a KII, saying: "It is true, we have many of those families (umuryango w'ingobyi). Everything related to development we do is mostly based on those families."

Though umuryango w'ingobyi makes it easy for the community to successfully participate in the imihigo process, it has another trusted implication: It helps citizens access financial services and thus solve individual problems. It has fostered the spirit of solidarity and togetherness that has in turn laid a strong base for community spirit in general. This is a unique outcome attributable to umuryango w'ingobyi, as women participating in a FGD held in Burera voiced: "When one loses a relative, the family provides food and drinks during the time of vigil. Funds are raised for the person and family who lost someone to utilize to buy sorghum, fermented drinks, and foodstuffs for people to eat. That's how we do it in our family."

Umuryango w'ingobyi appears as a purely citizen-led participation mechanism. Constructive collaboration was factually established between local leaders and heads of umuryango w'ingobyi. There is an urgent need for continuous monitoring to pre-empt any risk of local leaders dominating. Local leaders and heads of umuryango w'ingobyi only need to be complementary partners. Although umuryango w'ingobyi has existed for several decades and is associated with many benefits, this citizen-led participation mechanism has not yet been replicated countrywide. Further investigations are highly recommended to assess the feasibility for replication on a larger scale.

### 6.3.3 Community Score Cards

In Rwanda, Community Score Cards (CSCs) are an approach to improving efficiency, policy effectiveness, accountability, and participation in decentralized levels of administration. The World Bank (2004) defines CSCs as "quantitative monitoring tools that are used for local level monitoring and performance evaluation of services" (World Bank 2006: 78). Both local leaders and citizens have strongly commended the CSC, underlining the value it adds to the existing imihigo process. It has increasingly eased citizen participation in areas such as planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. A project by PPIMA has involved a coalition of 15 CSOs to implement CSCs in seven districts: Gakenke, Nyabihu, Burera, Nyamagabe, Nyaruguru, Gatsibo, and Nyagatare. This project was initiated in 2009 and currently operates in 108 cells of 54 sectors.

By design, CSCs facilitate quality citizen participation when they ensure inclusiveness, accountability, follow-up, and transparency. Many interviewed citizens consider the CSC as an appropriate channel that enables citizens to voice their concerns to local leaders, including their views on the imihigo process. Citizens attribute much of the improvement of district performance to the success of the CSCs, a feeling that emerged during a national-level FGD with CSOs:

*"Over the past years, districts have not ranked well vis-à-vis imihigo performance nationwide. In partnership with development partners [such as PPIMA], a district could hold meetings and identify some areas of intervention. Despite the available agricultural production, the performance continued to worsen. 'What could be done?' remained an unanswered question... The contribution of the Community Score Card and commitment of development partners brought citizens to the center of planning at the district level."*

Inclusive citizen participation was also attributed to CSCs, as they allow all groups of citizens to be carefully consulted, including historically marginalized sections of the population. The CSC process does not need separate spaces for citizens to open up. As a national-level FGD indicated, discussions involve different themes of local interest: "Usually we select five problems/concerns that are urgent in each cell. From these, three are generally community problems while two are specific to special groups." Citizen participation in the imihigo process is initiated by the identification of as many community needs as possible. In each CSC forum, a group of 20 persons offers a list of five community needs. These needs are likely to vary depending on the composition of the groups involved. The next step is priority-setting. As a FGD held in Gakenke with PPIMA partners elucidated: "We look across the groups and select the issues/concerns with the highest votes. For example, youth may have selected a health facility and women may have selected a health facility ... [which means we make] a health facility ... the number one priority and advocate for it."

CSCs provide several avenues for local leaders to give feedback to citizens, thereby making the latter active actors. During a FGD held in Nyamagabe, it was observed: "Leaders come back ... to explain when there are problems that





have not been solved. They present the challenges and we discuss them. This [opportunity] gives us hope that [workable] problems are actually in the process of being solved."

In a FGD held with PPIMA partners in Nyamagabe, the CSC was seen as an instrument for streamlining and raising citizens' concerns to leaders: "[These partners] also go with [citizens] to verify whether what [they] suggested is being implemented and how is it being done. They closely monitor and help [citizens] meet local leaders. They constantly remind [citizens] to follow up and know the progress of the implementation of our suggested concerns." According to a national-level FGD held with PPIMA partners, meetings are organized to follow up what leaders have committed to do and then "a report is prepared and shared with leaders at cell and sector levels and with the PPIMA field officer so that advocacy for different concerns can take place".

Arguably, the CSC process is doing impressive work to empower citizens with the necessary skills to monitor in a timely manner the interventions addressing community needs. More importantly, CSCs contribute to the shift from the top-down to the bottom-up approach to the imihigo process. Many interviewees highlighted this, with an official in charge of social affairs in Nyabihu saying that ideas about imihigo that used to originate from above now originate from below. As a result, close collaboration and interaction between citizens and local leaders is increasingly gaining ground.

To some extent, local leaders have equally benefited from CSCs. A FGD held with village-level PPIMA partners revealed, for instance, that it has provided these village leaders with knowledge of real problems in their communities:

*"In the village, there was a time when we had a problem of which the leaders were not aware. With PPIMA, we used the Community Score Card and invited sector leaders to participate. When there was a problem in the area of health or education, we invited the leader in charge of health or education to come and attend the meeting. The leaders observed and saw how we are filling in the Community Score Card and the marks we awarded to different concerns. After observation, one leader was fully convinced about [that particular] problem in the village or cell."*

Furthermore, it was established that CSCs are visibly promoting strong responsive leadership. In a FGD held with village and cell leaders in Nyamagabe, a participant stated that the "the Community Score Card keeps us alert to citizen concerns". A different participant highlighted that the CSC practice puts pressure on the leader who, in turn, makes strong commitments without delays. He asserted: "There was a time when we, as leaders, were a bit reluctant and would say 'We shall solve those citizens' issues when have enough time.' These days we sit with citizens and together we fill in the Community Score Card. Citizens criticize and report us to upper leaders. This has increased our zeal to solve citizen's problems so that the concerns do not come up again."

Owing to this close working relationship and collaboration, local leaders are fast becoming more accountable and transparent throughout the entire imihigo process. An official in charge of social affairs in Nyabihu claimed in a KI: "Citizens are very knowledgeable. You cannot, say, lie or present forged data. You cannot promise miracles; they were trained and know the responsibilities of leaders... Now when you come to the meeting and try to present doctored data, they can tell straight away that what you're suggesting is not true."

Both local leaders and citizens commended the CSC in enhancing quality citizen participation in development planning – going further to recommend the incorporation of the CSC into existing government programs that support citizen participation channels countrywide. This idea mainly emerged in a FGD held in Gakenke, where local leaders explained that "in the areas where [the PPIMA] project operates, we have realized that citizens' mindsets have changed positively. Leaders really commend the use of the Community Score Card." Instead of operating in just 10 out of 19 sectors of his district, a mayor suggested that the CSC "should be used in [all] other sectors. That has been our request in all meetings we have had with PPIMA staff."

The CSC is an example of a good practice, with various participants citing it as a tool with impressive potential to enhance citizen participation in the imihigo process. Several success stories were unearthed. In a national-level FGD with PPIMA partners held in Ngororero, it was said: "The last time we checked the approved imihigo of June 2017 up to July 2018, there were 52 approved imihigo in total. From this, 13 emanated from the Community Score Card. You can see [how big] the percentage contributed by the Community Score Card is in approved imihigo." The CSC process has also found success in the education sector – the school of Giramahoro is an example. After an official in charge of education attended a meeting organized in the framework of the CSC, he considered high classroom numbers (i.e. more than 70 students per classroom) a problem that needed urgent attention. He took it to the district level for advocacy and as a result, to refer to a village-level FGD held in Gakenke with PPIMA partners: "They have built us two extra classrooms and the students are studying well with more space. Even water was inadequate but it was increased for citizens to benefit."





Likewise, water and electricity-related issues identified in the framework of the CSC were given due attention following successful advocacy, as consistently observed by most interviewed citizens and local government leaders.

## 6.4 Practicability of Citizen Participation in the Imihigo Process

Practicability of citizen participation encompasses ways and approaches that improve the conditions under which meaningful citizen participation can take place. Concerned here are both indirect and direct citizen participation. Indirect citizen participation comprises voting and supporting advocacy groups, and occurs when citizens elect representatives to make decisions for them. Direct citizen participation refers to all means and channels through which citizen-centric development gains full support of different decentralization policies, strategies, and programs.

Undisputedly, the decentralization policy puts citizen participation and the imihigo process in the wider political and governance context of Rwanda. Combined with the agency of citizens and local leaders, these specific conditions help to clearly define the prospects of and the constraints related to the feasibility of citizen participation in Rwanda. A lot of progress has been made in the area of citizen participation in Rwanda, however, challenges and gaps – in as much as the decentralization policy is concerned – still remain.

The technical nature of imihigo was boldly highlighted in this study. The budgeting process was the area where citizens were found to have the least capacity. For instance, citizens belonging to categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe asserted that they were not aware at all of the complexities surrounding imihigo. A FGD held with Private Sector Federation (PSF) members in Kayonza found that: “It is impossible to elaborate the imihigo for the district without [the participation of] citizens. But again, there are highly technical aspects ... that citizens often fail to capture. For instance, education practitioners may not explain everything to ordinary citizens. Rather, they give the major lines and leave the more complex aspects to education experts. It is the same with imihigo.” The same challenge exists in the planning phase of imihigo.

Once citizens have expressed their views, the local-level district leadership is in charge of setting priorities. This also applies to the monitoring and evaluation phase. More often, citizens are involved in the implementation phase of the imihigo process only. A FGD held with men of categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe in Burera found that “when the local government prepares imihigo, they plan and we usually implement”. Citizens reported of generally not being aware of when and where monitoring and evaluation of imihigo takes place, including at the cell level. The higher on the ladder of local government, the more citizens get lost in as far as the imihigo process is concerned.

It also emerged that citizens are not familiar with the stages of the imihigo process. Interviews widely established that there is no nationwide awareness-raising campaign about how imihigo are planned. This lack of information is a challenge that compounds citizens to meaningfully utilize various channels set up in the decentralization framework. Thus, effective participation is made difficult particularly when elected local leaders are requested to engage their respective constituencies. Interviews also highlighted the limited resources in many local governance structures as a major obstacle. In addition, citizens reported that they never receive feedback from their local government related to their priorities in imihigo. A woman in charge of cooperatives at the district level illustrated this in a KII: “They never come [back]! All of a sudden, you hear it on the radio saying that this year our district is the best performer in imihigo! It is confusing because we do not even know why there has to be a last rank! I mean that all districts have done something in that year, right? We do not know what is going on...” Combined, these challenges justify poor citizen participation in the imihigo process.

Another inhibiting factor to citizen participation is the misunderstanding of what constitutes meaningful participation amongst local leaders. This encompasses very tight planning and budgeting timelines that barely support genuine citizen participation in the imihigo process.

In late 2016, the Rwandan government, through MINECOFIN, issued a set of new planning guidelines for the 2017–2018 fiscal year. It emphasized bottom-up multistakeholders' participation in local government planning in general and in the imihigo process in particular (MINECOFIN 2016: 1). However, as the CRC has established, local government priorities did not sufficiently reflect citizens' inputs and real needs (ibid). Consequently participatory local planning and imihigo were included in the evaluation criteria (MINECOFIN 2016: 3). It was found, however, that the planning and budgeting timeline set by MINECOFIN was too tight to encourage any genuine form of citizen participation. Many interviewees, particularly those coming from CSOs and academia, voiced the same concern.





From the time MINECOFIN releases the first planning and budgeting instructions (i.e. around mid-October each year), districts have about three weeks to consult various stakeholders on citizens' priorities from the village level to the district. The latter is required to submit planning documentation to MINECOFIN for review and quality assurance around the third week of November. This is a very tight deadline, especially if multistakeholders' consultations have to be conducted at all layers of local government. Following this, inputs from lower layers are consolidated and prioritized at the upper layer, and provide the population with feedback on the decisions made. Limited time allocated for multistakeholders consultations might mean that the process is rushed, implying that no genuine citizen participation will occur. Local government staff in charge of planning reportedly use this limited consultation timeline as a ground to legitimate why local councilors' – let alone citizens' – inputs on imihigo are not solicited. This corroborates previous findings by NAR and Interpeace (2016) on contributing factors to low citizen participation in local decisions.

This situation denotes a sort of elite capture of the local government imihigo process. It begs questions about the citizen-centered nature of both the imihigo process and its outcomes. At the same time, it suggests some internal weakness within local government entities pertaining to their autonomy to productively use their discretionary powers and take advantage of their proximity with their population to continuously and regularly engage them on key issues. This research was unable to identify any existing legislation about local planning that forbids local governments to initiate and engage their population in the process of issue identification and local priority-setting prior to the planning and budgeting instructions being issued by the MINECOFIN.

In order to maximize citizens' input into the local imihigo process, participants recommend that multistakeholders' consultations on the most desired local priorities start earlier than in October. A cell-level executive secretary in Nyaruguru said in a KII:

*“Participatory imihigo elaboration should be initiated a bit earlier by the higher local government layer in order to allow us enough time to interact with and seek citizens' views, and eventually educate on and seek public support for national priorities and some local priorities through community mobilization. In so doing, the district and sector top leadership should also come close to community members. This is fundamental to demonstrate that imihigo are not the village leader's or cell executive secretary's thing.”*

Scarce resources were identified as another factor that seriously impedes citizen participation in the imihigo process. A mayor in the Eastern Province said that citizen participation in the imihigo process is in line with budget constraints. Limited resources stemming from weak fiscal capabilities of many districts and the preponderance of the earmarked budget in some of the districts' plans make it difficult to adequately respond to citizens' needs. Otherwise, the mayor considers citizens as key actors in the imihigo process:

*“We do more than just imihigo at the level of district. To plan the activities for the year, we consider the national priorities as enshrined in Vision 2020, EDPRS, district development plans and strategies, and the district's particular plans. In one way or another, all these documents originate from the views of the Rwandan people. We also go back to our constituencies and ask them if there is still something relevant on the list of desired activities as discussed in the last five years. From the list, the constituency picks activities that we consider as new priorities if we really find [them] important. That is participatory planning... citizens' priorities are just too many. That is why we narrow them down as we see fit and [what is] within our budget margins... So I think that in the last three years we have included our constituencies in our planning. They have participated.”*

Two important ideas emerge. First, that a long list of priorities that dates back five years awaiting implementation exists (it is incrementally updated with new ones). Second, that as much as citizens voice new priorities, district officials remain the ones to deliberate and decide on the priorities to include (or not) in the district planning. Citizen participation in district planning is thus more or less a formality; that is, token participation. This style of participation dilutes the quality contribution of citizens who should be regarded as active partners and beneficiaries. A FGD held with JADF members in Kayonza established what citizen participation is and the strategies they have put in place to ensure genuine participation:

*“Citizen participation is possible when leaders consider citizens as [genuine] partners. Citizens support leaders to meet their objectives when they openly participate without feeling coerced. Thus, both leaders and citizens will easily collaborate... If all people and institutions collaborate through meetings, we can bring about change in mindsets. We raise awareness not only for the citizens but also for local leaders who often see the imihigo coming*





*down from their hierarchical superiors. We try to explain that citizens are key partners/stakeholders as well as primary beneficiaries. When citizens participate in shaping their communities, they are also responsible for safeguarding change in their communities ... as they understand that it is in their benefit."*

Citizen participation is possible and feasible, and there are only a few gaps in the implementation of the decentralization policy framework. However, whereas local governments claimed to be enjoying participatory planning, field evidence suggested otherwise. Citizens implement the plans of the district, however, citizen participation in the imihigo process is not straightforward.

Existing citizen participation mechanisms need to be optimally utilized. There is an urgent need for appropriate strategies to be developed with the goal of empowering local leaders to shift their mindsets. Such a shift would transform local leaders into confident actors for public scrutiny and empower citizens to hold leaders accountable.

Citizens honestly acknowledged that some targets included in imihigo were completely beyond their capacity. For example, school construction was considered of a scale that went beyond their capacity. Data elucidated confirm that citizens strongly believe participation is always possible, citing inadequate technical capacity as what is slowing down its pace. According to a FGD held with elected local councilors in Gakenke:

*"Even if you have contributed ideas to the preparation of imihigo, there are imihigo-related activities that are beyond the capacity of the citizens. The construction of roads is an example; in their preparation citizens are rarely involved. Actually, they are only involved in the evaluation phase when evaluation teams come to ask citizens, for example, what are the benefits of this road? That is where citizens are mostly involved. Otherwise, citizens are not involved in the preparation of big imihigo. Contrary, citizens are involved in household imihigo where they have a standardized template."*

In some areas, the top-down approach still dominates, making it difficult for citizens to participate in certain imihigo stages. Many interviews held in Burera with both men (of categories 3 and 4) and women (of categories 1 and 2) of ubudehe emphasized that imihigo are planned at the district level and sent down to the village level for implementation.

According to field data, citizen participation was regarded as always being possible as long as there is close cooperation between local leaders and citizens. Local leaders have to actively engage and empower citizens. A sector-level president of JADF in Nyaruguru concluded in a KI: "there is will for citizens to have an active role in what is done for them". The same feeling was captured in a FGD held in Kayonza: "It's very possible for the citizen to have a role [to play in the imihigo process]. Wherever local leaders try to involve the citizens, the latter become happy... However, this is only possible if [both local leaders and citizens] work together."

Citizen participation also heavily depends on the source of funding. It has emerged that citizen participation in planning may not be possible when funds earmarked for certain activities come from international development donors such as the World Bank. A district-level official for good governance in the Eastern Province provided an example in a KI: "The World Bank released money for the construction of the Kayonza-Rusumo highway. Such an activity cannot be taken anywhere else even if ... citizens' ideas [were to suggest so]." As such funds come with strict conditions, locals may not be in a favorable position to influence the process of such projects.

By the same logic, citizens also reported that it is difficult to participate in specific phases of the imihigo process, particularly the evaluation phase. As was concluded in a FGD held with PSF members of categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe held in Kayonza: "You cannot prepare and implement your imihigo and then award yourself marks. In such a case it would be 100%."

Certain factors need to be considered when deciding if citizen participation is always feasible. First, citizens overwhelmingly found it possible to participate in the imihigo process at the village and cell levels. Second, local leaders are regarded as key actors likely to succeed in championing for citizen participation. Trust in local leaders links to an environment that offers the opportunities required to build citizens' capacity. In addition, constructive collaboration between local leaders and citizens was highlighted as a key factor for citizen participation to take place.





## 6.5 Layer of Local Government Most Preferred for Citizen Participation

Interviewees overwhelmingly preferred to participate in the imihigo process at the village and cell levels. When asked why they preferred these levels, they cited the close geographical and logistical proximity as the major reasons. They also mentioned the ease with which they can approach village leaders. In a FGD with women of categories 1 and 2 of ubudehe held in Burera, the following was asserted:

*“After we formulate the imihigo for our household, we submit it to the head of the village. In turn he submits it to the cell level after consolidation. Sometimes we go to the cell and they keep us waiting. Sometimes you spend the whole day there without receiving the service you are looking for. On the contrary, everyone knows the head of the village and he knows everybody. When you tell him about a problem in the village, he usually solves it simply because he knows everyone. He talks to the concerned.”*

Women in categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe participating in a FGD held in Gakenke expressed similar views: “our voice is largely heard at the village level”. The village level also offers opportunities to citizens to speak without fear. This perspective emerged during a FGD held with JADF members in Nyamagabe who said that the village level is most preferred and “easy for citizens because people are more free and feel at home. Village leaders know their problems very well.” An ordinary citizen participating in a KII in Gakenke also mentioned this feeling of freedom: “Truthfully the citizen feels more free at the village [level].”

While geographical and logistical proximities are seen as the driving forces for selecting the village level over other layers of local government for citizen participation, persons with disabilities have a different perspective. As they have a strong belief in representative structures, persons with disabilities choose to participate in the imihigo process at the cell level, the lowest level where they are represented (by the NCPD). A cell-level representative of people with disabilities interviewed in Ngororero stated: “Wherever local government layers meet the NCPD, they exchange ideas and pass on our ideas to the other levels.”

The above narratives represent a snapshot of citizens' preference of village and cell levels over the sector and the district. As field data clearly showed, these are the two levels where citizen participation in the imihigo process could comfortably thrive.

## 6.6 Stage of Imihigo Process Most Preferred for Citizen Participation

Earlier discussions have shown that citizens are mostly involved in the implementation phase of the imihigo process. However, the empirical data collected to this end established that citizens would be much happier if they were involved in the preparation stage of the imihigo process.

This was the belief of many participants. For instance, men in categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe participating in a FGD held in Karongi asserted that district officials “are preparing activities for citizens. It would be good for citizens to play the biggest role. But currently that's not how it is.” Similar views were found in a FGD held in Kayonza with PSF members in categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe. Ideally, “citizens should play the primary role, with support from local leaders because citizens' capacity is still low”.

Though citizens expressed an interest in the preparation of the imihigo process, they widely acknowledged their gaps in capacity. At the same time, leader-driven empowerment for citizens was hypothesized as a starting point for meaningful citizen participation in the preparation phase of the imihigo process. Through the preparation phase, citizens are more likely to influence district planning and related activities that closely relate to their livelihoods. Citizens considered monitoring and evaluation to be the primary roles of leaders.



## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter outlines conclusions and recommendations drawn from the findings of this study.

### 7.1 Conclusions

This study aimed to assess the causes of low citizen participation in the imihigo process in Rwanda. It specifically sought to examine citizens' lived experiences and views in relation to this theme, as well as perceptions of various stakeholders in order to document the lessons learned from decentralization processes. The research explored and discussed the effectiveness of citizen participation mechanisms, as well as identifying major challenges and gaps. A discussion of possible and actionable solutions rounds off the study.

The report begins with a brief formulation of the research problem, its objectives, and questions. It then proceeds with a review of the existing literature, first defining key concepts and then discussing the theoretical framework, which encompasses participatory governance and citizen participation. Thereafter, the report outlines the gaps the research explores and its methodology. Findings on the effectiveness of current citizen participation mechanisms, contributing factors to low citizen participation, practicability of citizen participation in the imihigo process, and selected good practices are then summarised, with quotations from the field. The report ends with a brief conclusion and recommendations.

The study used a PAR approach to collect, interpret, and analyze data. To support this approach, KIs and FGDs were mostly conducted. During the data collection process, the NAR research team provided an open forum to various stakeholders to raise key issues surrounding their effective participation in imihigo processes. Citizens were given an opportunity to share their views on different avenues and possible ways for increasing the effectiveness of their participation. In this regard, the research met its stated objective. The PAR approach implied consultation with well-informed stakeholders involved in areas aimed at strengthening citizen participation. The ultimate goal was to address some of the barriers that hinder meaningful citizen participation.

Throughout the research, NAR invited a technical group to advise on the best ways in which to approach and research issues of citizen participation. The group comprised of experienced governance practitioners, seasoned researchers from academia, CSOs, and government institutions. The next step was to convene a national stakeholder meeting to review, discuss, and validate the findings and the recommendations. The ensuing discussions led the NAR research team to formulate actionable recommendations. These steps were core to fulfilling the PAR approach, and strove to put stakeholders and decision-makers into the broader spectrum of NAR interventions. In other words, PAR is able to link the research to practical advocacy, thus paving the way for desired outcomes.

Across the board, research participants recognized the existing political will of the Rwandan government to enhance meaningful citizen participation. This is mostly visible in the policies put in place, the national commitments, and in the resources promised. Different participatory mechanisms translate these commitments into concrete actions. Examples include umuganda, inteko z'abaturage, Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi, nyanama, the NYC, the NWC, the NCPD, CSOs, and media organizations.

This study discussed mechanisms for citizen participation and their effectiveness. To ensure accuracy and reliability, data were triangulated. In some areas, these mechanisms were found to be effective channels for direct citizen participation. However, there are also numerous barriers that hamper citizens to actively participate. These include a strong legacy of centralism and top-down approaches to participation, which is prevalent in many local governance structures. The research also established that a wide discrepancy exists between formal objectives of decentralization policies and strategies, and what happens in practice in local governance structures.

Field evidence confirmed that there is a lack of guidelines on how and when citizen participation should take place in the imihigo process. Some official directives about imihigo might exist, however, these are not sufficiently popularized in order to help local leaders to harmonize their approaches for engaging citizens. There is no policy related to imihigo and how it is linked to citizen participation, resulting in local leadership having no means by which to engage citizens. Policy gaps are compounded by a strong lack of competence-based training and induction on participatory approaches, when these should be used, and how.

As centralism is embedded in culture, it affects both local leaders and citizens – citizens behave and act as passive bystanders while local leaders act as autocrats who know exactly what their respective constituencies need. Evidence from the field suggests that channels for citizen participation are primarily used to convey instructions and mobilize





citizens for collective government plans and agendas.

Different groups of councilors were commended for their engagement in reviewing district or sector plans, however, they were overwhelmingly criticized for failing to consult and engage citizens on matters affecting their lives. This indicates the weak ties that exist between councilors and their constituencies, which can be explained by a lack of resources for transportation and logistics that prevent councilors from reaching their constituencies. This representativeness gap means that the citizens' role in governance is limited to voting in their representatives. In addition, there is a communication deficit between councilors at different layers of local government, resulting in decisions made at the district level not necessarily reflecting the views and priorities presented at the village and cell levels.

The need to include both local leaders and citizens in the imihigo process was empirically established. The capacity of local leaders and citizens was regarded a tool these actors use to meaningfully engage in a dialogue about priorities and needs. Empirical evidence overwhelmingly established the lack of skills and user-friendly tools for local leaders to engage confidently in dialogue with their constituencies, with many local leaders not possessing these skills when they are elected. Moreover, these leaders do not benefit from any induction to familiarize themselves with leadership and related issues, such as citizen empowerment for participation.

It was found that generally citizens do not have easy access to information about various government programs. The imihigo process and its technical aspects were no exception. CSOs are expected to organize timely interventions that serve as an interface between leaders and citizens. Findings showed, however, that they do not reach poor communities, or remote and hard-to-access areas. This gap leaves vulnerable groups without knowledge of local governance dynamics at the sector and district levels. Many local leaders have vowed to enlist competence-based capacity-building that will allow them to engage their constituencies more regularly and with confidence.

The study established that local leaders are not responsive enough to citizens' needs and priorities, which has created fertile ground for downward accountability. Many local leaders respond more to the upward pressure from the central government to deliver than the imperative to be responsible and responsive to their constituencies. The fast-track nature of development and the government's ambitious development targets are widely cited as the reasons for this. The central government places a heavy pressure on local leaders to deliver, which leaves the latter with little time and insufficient resources to engage with their constituencies.

Despite the highlighted challenges, Rwanda has made tremendous progress in the area of citizen-centric development. To sustain this progress, urgent efforts are needed for decentralization to be a citizen-centered initiative. These efforts should aim at empowering both citizens and local leaders, bridging representativeness gaps, and making local leaders more responsive to the needs of their constituencies.

Good practices that encourage citizen participation in the imihigo process were also identified. The research elucidated that citizens are able to organize themselves in smaller, targeted household groups in order to improve their participation in the imihigo process. One main example is umuryango w'ingobyi, which is used to facilitate citizens' compliance with community-based health insurance premiums payments. Another notable practice is the CSCs, which have been enabling citizens to identify the most urgent priorities within their communities. In collaboration with PPMA partners and relevant local government institutions, districts using CSCs have been found to have higher levels of citizen participation. If these good practices are applied countrywide, citizen participation in the imihigo process is likely to significantly improve.

## 7.2 Recommendations

The following section presents actionable recommendations for possible solutions to the gaps identified in this study. The recommendations are targeted at specific institutions with the required capacity to address them and, in doing so, enhancing citizen participation in the imihigo process.



**Table 2: Recommendations**

Responsible Institution	Identified Gap	Recommendation
The Central Government	1. Technical staff members entrusted with planning at the district level predominantly, if not completely, drive the imihigo process. The executive committees are at the epicenter of local government imihigo decisions. District councils are sometimes consulted on imihigo when they have already been entered into MINECOFIN's web-based planning tools. Mostly, however, imihigo tend to be forced onto local councilors.	1. Develop a comprehensive and binding imihigo policy and legal framework for genuinely engaging citizens in the imihigo process
	2. Local councilors poorly interact with their constituencies. The fast-track nature and ambitious development targets of the government are widely cited as the reasons why local leaders are heavily pressured to deliver, with no time or sufficient resources left to engage with their constituencies. Besides this fast-track nature, there are other explanatory factors such as long distance to and big size of constituencies, residence of councilors, no clarity regarding the frequency of visits, and lack of transportation and communication means. As a result, local leaders rarely consult and give feedback to citizens and are not responsive enough to citizens' needs and priorities.	2. Develop regulations that oblige local councils and elected representative bodies of special groups to regularly interact with their constituencies in order to ascertain their needs and priorities, and provide them with feedback
	3. The planning of youth Imihigo is top-down oriented countrywide. It has emerged that the Ministry of Youth thinks on behalf of the youth, thus overlooking local context priority needs. As a result, youth participation has been limited to mobilization and advocacy for implementation, while planning has remained the exclusivity of the ministry. Youth organizations are deprived of a budget to implement any priority needs.	3. Decentralize youth imihigo elaboration and allocate a budget for their implementation
	4. The Ministry of Youth sends down imihigo to district youth organizations for implementation. They are advised to add more imihigo suited to their respective contexts. However, the youth are skeptical about adding more imihigo, which may not tally with the core imihigo. This results in lower levels of ownership. In addition, youth representatives do not generally consult their constituencies. A similar problem was identified with the NWC, which is afforded no financial means for representatives to visit villages. Due to high levels of illiteracy, the NCPD is not represented at the village level. Council members are not given proper guidance regarding imihigo at the local level. This results in imihigo likely not having any backup from the views of youth, persons with disabilities, and women.	4. Ensure that the needs and priorities of youth, women, and persons with disabilities in local government imihigo processes are met
	5. Though Rwanda has made commendable efforts to nurture the relationships/collaboration between the two tiers of government and amongst decentralized administrative entities, arrangements regarding IGRs are inconsistent and are more institutional than regulatory. No standalone regulations/legislations exist regarding IGRs. Beyond the National Decentralization Policy, Rwanda is yet to make a move to better regulate IGRs, which would likely maintain a balance between the planning and implementing priorities of the central and local governments.	5. Adopt a comprehensive intergovernmental relations and management law with key guiding principles to effectively enable local governments to strike the right balance between national and local priority-setting





Responsible Institution	Identified Gap	Recommendation
<b>MINALOC</b>	<p>1. All mechanisms for citizen participation (i.e. umuganda, inteko z'abaturage, Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi, the NWC, the NYC, the NCPD, and various CSOs and media organizations) have been legally established. However, subsequent policy frameworks have broad objectives that sometimes fail to adjust with the particular context of imihigo. For example, community work (umuganda) was established to introduce the principle of cost-sharing at both cell and village levels. In this framework, umuganda meets its stated objective to a large degree, however, when taken in the context of citizen participation in the imihigo process, it fails to adjust to the procedural nature of imihigo. This gap pertains to all citizen participation mechanisms investigated. The mechanisms are effective enough within the limits of their formal mandates. However, clear guidance and instructions for how to use each mechanism for citizens to effectively participate in the imihigo process are required.</p>	<p>1. Regularly provide clear and systematic instructions that will guide the use of existing citizen participation mechanisms in the imihigo process</p>
	<p>2. Despite internal tools being available, there is still a visible lack of guidelines on how and when citizen participation should occur in the imihigo process. These tools do not seem to be sufficiently popularized to help local leaders to harmonize their approaches to engage citizens. There is no specific policy related to imihigo and how it is linked to citizen participation.</p>	<p>2. Establish and institutionalize social audits to cross check tangible evidence on whether or not genuine citizen participation in the entire imihigo process effectively takes place</p>
	<p>3. Elected local councilors are mandated to play an oversight role over executive committees across local government layers. However, capacity-related challenges amongst councilors especially those at lower levels (cell and sector) were boldly highlighted, such as a strong lack of skills in active listening and of confidence required for public scrutiny.</p>	<p>3. Empower local councils to confidently oversee the functioning of executive secretariats and hold them accountable</p>
	<p>4. To cope with capacity gaps amongst local leaders, the National Decentralization Implementation Plan includes a capacity-building component. A number of capacity-building activities have taken place in recent years. The most striking challenge to come out of these was related to different, fragmented, and often uncoordinated interventions. There was a lack of a common strategic vision and the capacity-building interventions did not fit into a comprehensive capacity-needs assessment. The lack of coordination and clear policy guidance has likewise led to disperse efforts in this area.</p>	<p>4. Establish a harmonized strategic capacity development program for cell, sector, and district councilors in line with the recently adopted capacity-building strategy for local governance structures</p>
	<p>5. Many local leaders have vowed to enlist competence-based capacity-building that will allow them to engage their constituencies more regularly and with confidence. There is a clear lack of competence-based training and induction on participatory approaches, when they should be used, and how. Capacity-building is made an exclusive tool used to empower local leaders with leadership skills, however, training is not sufficient in itself. It does not include mentoring and coaching,</p>	<p>5. Adopt a competence-based approach to capacity-building, including coaching and mentoring of local leaders</p>





Responsible Institution	Identified Gap	Recommendation
	<p>for example, and has no relevant means by which to measure its outcomes. Capacity-building of local leaders should be holistic in that it integrates local leaders' training, and fills institutional and policy gaps. Holistic capacity-building should combine capacity strengthening with material incentives to create an environment of collaboration between local leaders and citizens.</p> <p>6. Various capacity-related challenges impede meaningful citizen participation. Some local leaders do not have enough skills to facilitate meetings, get insights from the audience, and actively engage with citizens. Local governments also appoint fresh graduates who are not fully informed about and trained on imihigo. This ends up causing mistrust toward bureaucrats and local leaders. Local councilors lack sufficient capacity to mainstream inclusion-related crosscutting issues into local plans. In view of the above, local leaders urgently need induction sessions as they undertake leadership positions in local government.</p> <p>7. Isibo is a successful mechanism for citizen participation in imihigo. Leaders of isibo are effective drivers of the family-based imihigo process. Household imihigo are filled out using a standardized form, known as Ifishi y'Imihigo. Citizens complained that this form is not flexible enough to allow them to include imihigo targets suited to their conditions and context.</p>	<p>6. Increase technical staff at the cell level to enable them to adequately support the sector in mainstreaming community development programs and meeting local priorities</p> <p>7. Design flexible household imihigo forms that enable citizens to easily specify their individually set targets</p>
MINECOFIN	<p>1. Across all districts, institutional financial capacity is widely established. Limited resources at the sector, cell, and village levels affect any good and genuine will to actively engage citizens. Budget constraints are another explanatory factor to low citizen participation in the imihigo process. Due to the amount of citizens' needs and priorities, resources need to be rationalized. There is wide agreement that citizens have too many priorities.</p> <p>2. The lack of transportation and logistics prevent elected local councilors to reach their constituencies for consultations and providing feedback. Limited transportation means and communication fees are major constraints. Limited budgets impede the empowerment of local representatives. To address this challenge, budget decentralization was suggested as a quick solution. Decentralizing the budget would smoothen the implementation of planned activities at the lowest levels of local government.</p>	<p>1. Provide sufficient resources for implementing capacity-building strategies and models that include participatory approaches</p> <p>2. Provide operational budgets for local councils and representative bodies of special groups established at the sector and cell levels to facilitate their operations and interactions with constituents</p>





Responsible Institution	Identified Gap	Recommendation
RGB	<p>1. The National Decentralization Policy is a citizen-centered policy that advocates for active participation and engagement in areas such as policy formulation and evaluation. However, effective cooperation toward citizen-centered imihigo is lacking between elected local councils and management organs at the level of local government. Although the existing legal framework is clear about who should play which role and fairly distributes the relevant powers, this situation persists.</p>	<p>1. Review the design of all existing citizen participation channels to emphasize citizen-centered planning and budgeting of local imihigoas expected process outcomes</p>
	<p>2. The levels of citizen power translate to an increase in degrees of decision-making. Citizen power ranges from partnership to citizen control via delegated power. Partnership enables citizens to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders. At the same time, delegated power and citizen control bring have-not citizens to obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power. In view of the above, citizen participation implies renegotiation of power relations where the views, opinions, and needs of ordinary people are incorporated in the process both as a means and an end. For the purpose of inclusivity, specific groups such as women, youth, and disabled people are equally catered for. Ultimately, citizens are both stakeholders and beneficiaries of processes and outcomes. Improvements are needed to reach this level of citizen participation.</p>	<p>2. Incorporate techniques and tools to facilitate genuine citizen participation in government decisions in any capacity-building intervention intended for government officials</p>
	<p>3. When it comes to citizen participation in all stages of the imihigo process, from the planning, to implementation, to monitoring, evaluation, and review, there are a number of challenges. For instance, citizen participation is highly limited to the implementation stage, while planning has remained the exclusivity of the higher levels of central administration and executive committees of local governments.</p>	<p>3. Adapt the methodology of evaluating the imihigo process to include all its phases from planning to final evaluation of district performance</p>
Districts	<p>1. Most citizen participation mechanisms investigated are faced with certain challenges. The most visible is lower levels of citizen participation in urban areas as compared to rural areas. This is largely explained by the inconvenient timing of meetings. At the time that the Parents' Evening Forum takes place, for instance, most people are busy working. The meetings are more suited to rural villages because people have come back from their farms by the time the meetings are convened. In addition, citizens in categories 3 and 4 of ubudehe are usually members of the business community or employed in the service sector by public and private institutions. As such they are not free to attend, for instance, the community assemblies that take place on Tuesday afternoons.</p>	<p>1. Adjust the day and time when the community assembly (inteko z'abaturatione) takes place to enable citizens in formal employment and those in urban areas to participate</p>
	<p>2. The implementation of imihigo requires the active participation of different stakeholders. On behalf of the CSO and donor community, the implementation of the imihigo process is</p>	<p>2. Genuinely utilize the JADF as an avenue for CSOs, the private sector, and others to</p>





Responsible Institution	Identified Gap	Recommendation
	<p>supposed to actively involve the JADF. However, the study confirmed the weak engagement of CSOs. JADF members are only asked to approve the document prior to it being prepared by the district instead of being consulted on what should be considered in the first place. Every CSO is expected to pledge its contribution to the required budget, which turns the JADF from a partner to a funding donor. It has also become the exclusive responsibility of the district to prepare the agenda for JADF meetings with no additional items allowed. This style of preparing and running meetings jeopardizes the formal mandate of CSOs to advocate for the interests of the citizens they serve.</p>	<p>regularly provide inputs on behalf of citizens to local government imihigo, planning, and budgeting</p>
<p><b>CSOs</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CSOs are expected to organize timely interventions to serve as an interface between leaders and citizens. However, they do not reach poor communities, or remote and hard-to-access areas. This gap has left vulnerable groups in these areas without knowledge of local governance dynamics at the sector and district levels. There is very little knowledge, if any, amongst citizens about CSOs, even though they are supposed to interpose between the government and citizens.</li> <li>2. Advocacy is widely accepted to be a viable strategy used by CSOs to influence policy-making processes. To be effective, advocacy initiatives need to be backed by evidence, not opinions. However, CSOs lack the capability to perform research, which seriously impedes their ability to adequately advocate for citizens' interests. There are certain levels of ignorance amongst CSOs about the priority needs of citizens that they represent. As a result, numerous CSOs fail to carry out evidence-based advocacy.</li> <li>3. Consistent with existing studies, this research established that CSOs are not visible enough to influence the policy-making process in Rwanda. As a result, they are not always involved in advocacy.</li> <li>4. Districts only have about three weeks – around mid-October each year when MINECOFIN releases the first planning and budgeting call circular – in which to consult stakeholders on citizens' priorities from the village to district levels. This is a very tight deadline that impedes meaningful citizen participation.</li> <li>5. There are worries about the inefficient use of available resources. If CSOs are not fully engaged in district planning, this results in interventions being potentially duplicated. Strong competition of interests is likely to undermine citizen participation in different government-led programs, including imihigo.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish strong ties with citizens to become the legitimate voice of their concerns and priorities before competent public decision-makers</li> <li>2. Build capacity to generate research data and conduct evidence-based advocacy</li> <li>3. Build capacity to monitor local government programs to hold local leaders accountable to citizens</li> <li>4. Partner with local governments in the collection, consolidation, and definition of citizens' priorities ahead of the first planning and budgeting call circular</li> <li>5. Harmonize advocacy efforts with local government planning and budgeting to ensure effective use of resources</li> </ol>





Responsible Institution	Summary of Identified Gaps	Recommendation
	<p>6. Media organizations and CSOs are entrusted with bridging capacity gaps. These organizations play a fundamental role in the process of building citizens' education and harnessing their potential to convene and facilitate platforms in order to increase their civic awareness. However, the study indicated that CSOs and media organizations are not visible enough in their communities. These organizations fail to reach rural areas, and to serve as a powerful interface between the state and society. As a result of limited coverage, these organizations have not meaningfully strengthened citizens' capacity as one would expect.</p>	<p>6. Sensitize civil society members of their mandate to continuously educate citizens regarding their participation in decisions affecting their lives, rights, and obligations</p>



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Fieldwork Schedule

Activity	Sectors		No. of FGDs and KIIs		Timeline	Duration (in days)
	Rural	Urban	FGDs	KIIs	Dates	
<b>Data Collection Phase One</b>						
1. Gasabo	Bumbogo	Remera	7	4	(16th -20th) October 2017	5
<b>Western Province</b>						
2. Karongi	Rwankuba	Bwishyura	4	4	22nd - 27th October 2017	6
3. Rutsiro	Rusebeya	Kivumu	3	3	29th October - 2nd November 2017	5
4. Ngororero	Ndaro	Ngororero	3	5	29th October - 2nd November 2017	5
5. Nyabihu	Rugera	Mukamira	4	3	22nd - 26th October 2017	5
<b>Southern Province</b>						
6. Huye	Ruhashya	Ngoma	4	3	6th -10th November 2017	5
7. Nyamagabe	Kibirizi	Gasaka	4	3	6th -10th November 2017	5
8. Nyaruguru	Ruheru	Kibeho	4	4	12th -16th November 2017	5
<b>Eastern Province</b>						
9. Nyagatare	Karama	Nyagatare	4	4	12th -16th November 2017	5
10. Kayonza	Murundi	Mukarange	4	4	19th -23rd November 2017	5
11. Gatsibo	Ngarama	Kabarore	4	3	19th -23rd November 2017	5





Activity	Sectors		No. of FGDs and KIs		Timeline	Duration (in days)
	Rural	Urban			Dates	
Dates of Data Collection Phase One						
			FGDs	KIs		
<b>Northern Province</b>						
12. Musanze	Gashyaki	Muhoza	4	2	26th - 30th November 2017	5
13. Burera	Cyanika	Butaro	3	4	26th - 30th December 2017	5
14. Gicumbi	Rwamiko	Byumba	4	2	3rd - 7th December 2017	5
15. Gakenke	Muzo	Gakenke	4	2	5th - 8th December 2017	4
<b>Total District Level</b>			<b>57</b>	<b>50</b>		<b>75 days</b>
<b>National Level Data Collection</b>						
Kigali City	NA	NA	6	7	Later in December and January	7 days
<b>Total (Both district and national level)</b>			<b>63</b>	<b>57</b>		<b>82 days</b>





## Appendix 2: Data Collection Tools

### Target: Ordinary Citizens

#### Introduction

Hello, how are you? My name is .....and I'm representing Never Again Rwanda (NAR). I will be your moderator today. NAR is a peace-building and social justice organization established in response to the 1994 genocide perpetrated against Tutsis. Guided by a vision of a nation where citizens are agents of positive change and work together toward sustainable peace and development, NAR aims to empower Rwandans with opportunities to become active citizens through peace-building and development. NAR is conducting research assessing citizen participation in imihigo. This research aims to improve policy-making and citizen participation in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. The overall objective of the proposed study is to investigate citizen participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the imihigo process, and to assess the ways in which citizen participation can strengthen the imihigo process. The research findings will be presented to government ministries and institutions, the Rwanda Governance Board, civil society organizations, citizens, and other relevant stakeholders.

Also here with me is ..... who will be our note-taker today. **[Moderator: Let the note-taker introduce himself/herself to the participants.]** We also have NAR supporting staff and an audio-visual expert who will be responsible for videotaping the discussion. **[Moderator: Let the audio-visual technician introduce himself/herself to the participants.]**

We emphasize that the discussion is confidential. It is non-attributable; we will not refer to anyone by name when writing the report.

We therefore request your consent in conducting the focus group discussion (FGD)/key informant interview (KII). **[Moderator: Wait and seek consent from the participants.]**

Our discussion will take 60–90 minutes. Everyone is free to contribute. I encourage everyone to participate fully in the discussion. Please speak clearly so our note-taker is able to take notes.

We would like to check if you will allow us to film a video. No audio-video materials will be used without your consent. This material will mainly be used to back the documentation of the research findings.

**[Moderator: Ask if participants have any questions before proceeding. You can also ask them to put in place some ground rules for the group, for example, respecting all opinions.]**

May we please begin the discussion?

**[Moderator: Use this session to establish rapport with the participants and make them feel comfortable. Further probe where there is a need and encourage even participation throughout the FGD or KII.]**

#### Tool 1: Guide for Conducting FGDs with Ordinary Citizens (Men)

1. Can you tell us what you know about imihigo and their role in development of your local area?
2. Can you tell us how imihigo are prepared, monitored, evaluated, and or reviewed in your local area (village, cell, sector, or district)?
3. Why do you think direct citizen participation in the imihigo process is important?
4. Tell us about the platforms, mechanisms, or channels you use most frequently to directly prioritize what should be put in imihigo at the following levels:
  - village
  - cell
  - sector
  - district





5. In which of the following imihigo stages do you most directly participate in and why?
  - planning
  - implementation
  - monitoring
  - evaluation
  - review
6. Which stages of imihigo (as above) are the easiest for you to directly participate in and why?
7. Could you provide some concrete examples of how your direct participation as a citizen has helped to improve the imihigo process in your local area?
8. What (new) issues affecting your local community have been discussed and considered in approved imihigo and consequently allocated a budget as a result of your direct participation? And what channels did you use to effect such changes?
9. Can you tell us about any innovative/good practices of direct citizen participation that are unique to your local area and appear as contributing to responsive imihigo and budgeting?
10. In your view, is direct citizen participation in the imihigo process always feasible? If not, why not? If yes, in which stage(s) of the imihigo process is it the most feasible?
11. At which layer of local government (village, cell, sector, or district) do you think the participation of citizens is still the lowest and why?
12. What do you see as the major factors hindering optimal direct citizen participation in imihigo processes and budgeting at each of the following layers of local government? And what do you suggest to overcome them?
  - village
  - cell
  - sector
  - district
13. Can you tell us if your direct participation in the imihigo process of your local area has made your local leaders more accountable to you? If so, how?
14. In your experience, do your representatives (i.e. local councilors or non-governmental organizations advocating for your rights and interests) genuinely consult you prior to voicing out your preferences as to what needs to be considered for the imihigo of your local area? If not, why not? And what do you think can be done to improve this situation?

## Tool 2: Guide for Conducting FGDs with Youth

1. Please tell us what you know about imihigo and their role in the development of your local area?
2. Can you tell us how imihigo are prepared, monitored, evaluated, and/or reviewed in your local area (village, cell, sector, or district)?
3. Why do you think direct youth participation in the imihigo process is important?
4. Tell us about the platforms, mechanisms, or channels you as the youth use most frequently to directly prioritize what should be put in imihigo at the following levels:
  - village
  - cell
  - sector
  - district





5. As youth, in which of the following imihigo stages do you most directly participate in and why?
  - planning
  - implementation
  - monitoring
  - evaluation
  - review
6. Which stages of imihigo (as above) are the easiest for youth to participate in directly and why?
7. Could you provide some concrete examples of how your direct participation as youth has helped to improve the imihigo process in your local area?
8. What (new) issues affecting youth have been discussed and considered in approved imihigo and consequently allocated a budget as a result of your direct participation? And what channels or mechanisms did you, as youth, mostly use to effect such changes?
9. Can you tell us about any innovative/good practices of direct youth participation that are unique to your local area and appear as contributing to responsive imihigo and budgeting?
10. In your view, is direct youth participation in the imihigo process always feasible? If not, why not? If yes, in which stage(s) of the imihigo process is it the most feasible?
11. At which layer of local government (village, cell, sector, or district) do you think the participation of youth is still the lowest and why?
12. What do you see as the major factors hindering optimal direct youth participation in the imihigo process and budgeting at each of the following layers of local government? And what do you suggest to overcome them?
  - village
  - cell
  - sector
  - district
13. Can you tell us if direct youth participation in the imihigo process of your local area has made your local leaders more accountable to you? If so, how?
14. In your experience, do your youth representatives (i.e. local councilors or non-governmental organizations advocating for your rights and interests) genuinely consult you prior to voicing out your preferences as to what needs to be considered for the imihigo of your local area? If not, why? And what do you think can be done to improve this situation?

### **Tool 3: Guide for Conducting FGDs with Women**

1. Please tell us what you know about imihigo and their role in the development of your local area?
2. Can you tell us how imihigo are prepared, monitored, evaluated, and/or reviewed in your local area (village, cell, sector, or district)?
3. Why do you think direct participation of women is important in the imihigo process?
4. Tell us about the platforms, mechanisms, or channels you as women use most frequently to directly prioritize what should be put in imihigo at the following levels:
  - village
  - cell
  - sector
  - district





5. As women, in which of the following imihigo stages do you most directly participate in and why?
  - planning
  - implementation
  - monitoring
  - evaluation
  - review
6. Which stages of imihigo (as above) are easiest for women to directly participate in and why?
7. Could you provide some concrete examples of how your direct participation as women has helped to improve the imihigo process in your local area?
8. What (new) issues affecting women have been discussed and considered in approved imihigo and consequently allocated a budget as a result of your direct participation? And what channels or mechanisms did you, as women, mostly use to effect such changes?
9. Can you tell us about any innovative/good practices of direct women's participation that are unique to your local area and appear as contributing to responsive imihigo and budgeting?
10. In your view, is direct participation by women in imihigo always feasible? If not, why not? If yes, in which stage(s) of the imihigo process is it most feasible?
11. At which layer of local government (village, cell, sector, or district) do you think the participation of women is still the lowest and why?
12. What do you see as the major factors hindering optimal participation of women in the imihigo process and budgeting at each of the following layers of local government? And what do you suggest to overcome them?
  - village
  - cell
  - sector
  - district
13. Can you tell us if the direct participation of women in the imihigo of your local area has made your local leaders more accountable to you? If so, how?
14. In your experience, do your women's representatives (i.e. local councilors or non-governmental organizations advocating for your rights and interests) genuinely consult you prior to voicing out your preferences as to what needs to be considered in the imihigo of your local area? If not, why? And what do you think can be done to improve this situation?

#### **Tool 4: Guide for Conducting FGDs with People with Disabilities**

1. Please tell us what you know about imihigo and their role in the development of your local area?
2. Can you tell us how imihigo are prepared, monitored, evaluated, and/or reviewed in your local area (village, cell, sector, or district)?
3. Why do you think direct participation of people with disabilities (PWD) in the imihigo process is important?
4. Tell us about the platforms, mechanisms, or channels you as PWD use most frequently to directly prioritize what should be put in imihigo at the following levels:
  - village
  - cell
  - sector
  - district





5. As PWD, in which of the following imihigo stages do you most directly participate in and why?
  - planning
  - implementation
  - monitoring
  - evaluation
  - review
6. Which stages of imihigo (as above) are easiest for PWDs to directly participate in and why?
7. Could you provide some concrete examples of how your direct participating as PWD has helped to improve the imihigo process in your local area?
8. What (new) issues affecting PWD have been discussed and considered in approved imihigo and consequently allocated a budget as a result of your direct participation? And what channels or mechanisms did you, as PWD, mostly use to effect such changes?
9. Can you tell us about any innovative/good practices of direct PWD participation that are unique to your local area and appear as contributing to responsive imihigo and budgeting?
10. In your view, is direct participation of PWD in imihigo always feasible? If not, why not? If yes, in which stage(s) of the imihigo process is it the most feasible?
11. At which layer of local government (village, cell, sector, or district) do you think the participation of PWD is still the lowest and why?
12. What do you see as the major factors hindering optimal direct participation of PWD in the imihigo process and budgeting at each of the following layers of local government? And what do you suggest to overcome them?
  - village
  - cell
  - sector
  - district
13. Can you tell us if direct participation of PWD in the imihigo of your local area has made your local leaders more accountable? If so, how?
14. In your experience, do PWD representatives (i.e. local councilors or non-governmental organizations advocating for your rights and interests) genuinely consult you prior to voicing out your preferences as to what needs to be considered in the imihigo of your local area? If not, why? And what do you think can be done to improve this situation?

#### **Tool 5: Guide for Conducting Klls**

1. In your view and experience, how do existing citizen participation mechanisms affect quality citizen participation in the local government imihigo process?
2. In your experience, what are the contributing factors of persisting low citizen participation in local imihigo planning, monitoring and evaluation, and review and how can they be sustainably addressed?
3. What good practices of citizen participation exist in your locality or elsewhere in the country, and how do they appear to add value in terms of responsive imihigo and related budgeting?
4. At which layer of local government and at which stage of local imihigo and budgeting processes is direct citizen participation achievable and should therefore be further envisaged?





## Appendix 3: FGD Recruitment Criteria for the 15 Districts

**Table 1: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Gasabo**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in each category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Gasabo	7	1 FGD of women from any 5 cells	Bumbogo		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD of men from any 5 cells	Bumbogo		To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe category 3
		1 FGD of youth from any 5 cells	Remera		To capture the views of youth	Mix of all ubudehe categories
		1 FGD of cell council members from any 5 cells		Bumbogo	To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b>
		1 FGD of sector council members from any 5 cells	Remera		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b>





District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in each category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
		1 FGD with district council members from any 5 cells		NA	To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 NWC rep</li> <li>- 1 NYC rep</li> <li>- 1 rep of business people</li> <li>- 1 NCDP rep</li> <li>- 4 rep of Sectors</li> <li>- 2 general councillors.</li> </ul>
		1 FGD with village executive committee members from any 5 cells	Remera		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 heads of village</li> <li>- 2 secretaries in charge of social and civil affairs</li> <li>- 2 secretaries in charge of security and immigration</li> <li>- 2 secretaries in charge of information and education</li> </ul>



**Table 2: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Huye**

District	Total number of FGDs	No. of FGDs in each category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Huye	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells	Butare		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells		Ruhashya	To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Butare		To capture the views of youth	Mix
		1 FGD with cell council members from any 5 cells	From both Butare and Ruhashya		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 councillors representing villages</li> <li>- 1 NWC rep</li> <li>- 1 NYC rep</li> <li>- 1 NPCD rep</li> <li>- 1 rep of nursery school teachers</li> <li>- 1 rep of business people</li> </ul>




**Table 3: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Nyagatare**

District	Total number of FGDs	No. of FGDs in each category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social economic status (Ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Nyagatare	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells		Karama	To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells	Nyagatare		To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Youth from both Karama and Nyagatare		To capture the views of youth	Mix
		1 FGD with the district council	NA		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> - 1 NWC rep; - 1 NYC rep; - 1 rep of business people; - 1 NCPD rep - 4 reps of sectors - 2 general councillors.



**Table 4: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Gatsibo**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Gatsibo	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells	Kabarore		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells		Ngarama	To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	From both Kabarore and Ngarama		To capture the views of youth	Mix
		1 FGD with cell council members from any 5 cells	From both Kabarore and Ngarama		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 councillors representing villages</li> <li>- 1 NWC rep</li> <li>- 1 NYC rep</li> <li>- 1 NCPD rep</li> <li>- 1 rep of nursery school teachers</li> <li>- 1 rep of business people</li> </ul>




**Table 5: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Kayonza**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Kayonza	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells		Murundi	To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells	Mukarange		To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with members of the JADF at the district	NA		To capture the perspectives of local development partners	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 reps of National NGOs</li> <li>• 1 rep of international NGO</li> <li>• 3 reps of religious/faith-based organizations</li> <li>• 1 permanent secretary of JADF</li> <li>• 1 rep of public sector institution operation in the district</li> <li>• 2 reps of private sector operating in the district.</li> </ul>
		1 FGD with village executive committee members from any 5 cells	From both Mukarange and Murundi		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 heads of village;</li> <li>• 3 secretaries in charge of social and civil affairs</li> <li>• 2 secretaries in charge of security and immigration;</li> <li>• 2 secretaries in charge of information and educating the public</li> </ul>



**Table 6: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Gakenke**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Gakenke	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells	Gakenke		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells		Muzo	To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Muzo and Gakenke		To capture the views of youth	Mix
		1 FGD councils or with the district council	NA		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 NWC rep</li> <li>• 1 NYC rep</li> <li>• 1 rep of business people;</li> <li>• 1 NCPD rep</li> <li>• 4 reps of sectors</li> <li>• 2 general councillors.</li> </ul>





**Table 7: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Burera**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Burera	3	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells		Ruhunde	To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells	Butaro		To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Butaro and Ruhunde		To capture the views of youth	Mix



**Table 8: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Musanze**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (budehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Musanze	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells	Gashyaki		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells		Muhoza	To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Gashyaki and Muhoza		To capture the views of youth	Mix
		1 FGD with cell council members from any 5 cells	Gashyaki and Muhoza		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 councillors representing villages;</li> <li>• 1 NWC rep</li> <li>• 1 NYC rep</li> <li>• 1 NCPD rep</li> <li>• 1 rep of nursery school teachers</li> <li>• 1 rep of business people</li> </ul>




**Table 9: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Gicumbi**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Gicumbi	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells	Byumba		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells		Kanga	To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with village executive committee members from any 5 cells	Byumba and Kanga		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 heads of village;</li> <li>• 2 secretaries in charge of social and civil affairs;</li> <li>• 3 secretaries in charge of security and immigration;</li> <li>• 2 secretaries in charge of information and educating the population</li> </ul>
		1 FGD of JADF members at the district level	NA		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 reps of national NGOs</li> <li>• 1 rep of international NGO</li> <li>• 3 reps of religious/faith-based organizations</li> <li>• 1 permanent Secretary of JADF</li> <li>• 1 rep of public sector institution operation in the district</li> <li>• 2 reps of the private sector operating in the district.</li> </ul>



**Table 10: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Ngororero**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Ngororero	3	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells	Ngororero		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells		Ndaro	To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Ngororero and Ndaro		To capture the views of youth	Mix



**Table 11: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Nyabihu**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Nyabihu	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells		Rugera	To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells	Mukamira		To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Mukamira and Rugera		To capture the perspectives from elected local leaders	Mix
		1 FGD with council members at any 5 cells	Mukamira and Rugera		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 councillors representing villages</li> <li>• 1 NWC rep;</li> <li>• 1 NYC rep;</li> <li>• 1 NCPD rep</li> <li>• 1 rep of nursery school teachers</li> <li>• 1 rep of business people</li> </ul>



**Table 12: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Karongi**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Karongi	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells	Bwishyura		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells		Rubengera	To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Bwishyura and Rubengera		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 heads of village</li> <li>• 3 secretaries in charge of social and civil affairs;</li> <li>• 2 secretaries in charge of security and immigration</li> <li>• 2 secretaries in charge of information and educating the public</li> </ul>
		1 FGD with JADF members at the district level	NA		To capture the perspectives of local development partners	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 reps of national NGOs</li> <li>• 1 rep of international NGO</li> <li>• 3 reps of religious/faith-based organizations</li> <li>• 1 permanent secretary of JADF</li> <li>• 1 rep of public sector institution operation in the district</li> <li>• 2 reps of the private sector operating in the district.</li> </ul>




**Table 13: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Rutsiro**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Rutsiro	3	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells		Boneza	To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells	Kivumu		To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with sector council members from any 5 cells	Boneza and Kivumu		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 NWC rep</li> <li>• 1 NYC rep</li> <li>• 1 rep of cooperatives</li> <li>• 1 NCPD rep</li> <li>• 1 rep of primary schools</li> <li>• 1 rep of secondary schools</li> <li>• 1 rep of cells</li> <li>• 3 general councillors</li> </ul>

**Table 14: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Nyaruguru**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Nyaruguru	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells		Ruheru	To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells	Kibeho		To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with youth from any 5 cells	Ruheru and Kibeho		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	Mix
		1 FGD of sector council members from any 5 cells	Ruheru and Kibeho		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 councillors representing villages</li> <li>• 1 NWC rep</li> <li>• 1 NYC rep</li> <li>• 1 NCPD rep</li> <li>• 1 rep of nursery school teachers</li> <li>• 1 rep of business people</li> </ul>



**Table 15: FGD Recruitment Criteria for Nyamagabe**

District	Total No. of FGDs	No. of FGDs in Each Category	Sampled Sectors		Reason for Conducting FGD	Social Economic Status (ubudehe)
			Urban	Rural		
Nyamagabe	4	1 FGD with women from any 5 cells	Gasaka		To capture the views of women	People belonging to ubudehe categories 1 and 2
		1 FGD with men from any 5 cells		Mushubi	To capture the views of men	People belonging to ubudehe categories 3 and 4
		1 FGD with district council members from any 5 cells	Mushubi and Gasaka		To capture the perspectives of elected local leaders	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 NWC rep</li> <li>• 1 NYC rep</li> <li>• 1 rep of business people</li> <li>• 1 NCPD rep</li> <li>• 4 reps of sectors</li> <li>• 2 general councillors</li> </ul>
		1 FGD with JADF members at the district level	Mushubi and Gasaka		To capture the perspectives of local development partners	<b>Composition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 reps of national NGOs;</li> <li>• 1 rep of international NGO</li> <li>• 3 reps of religious/faith-based organizations</li> <li>• 1 permanent secretary of JADF</li> <li>• 1 rep of public sector institution operation in the district;</li> <li>• 2 reps of the private sector operating in the district.</li> </ul>











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