



**Explaining *Imihigo* Performance in Gicumbi District, Rwanda:
The role of Citizen Participation and Accountability (2009-2014)**

A Research Paper presented by:

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

Governance, Policy and Political Economy
GPPE

Specialization:

Public Policy and Management

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The Hague, The Netherland,
December, 2015

Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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Acknowledgements

My sincere and deepest gratefulness go to my supervisor Dr. Helen Hintjens and my second reader Dr. Joop de Wit, for their intellectual advice, guidance, encouragement and regular discussions which were very valuable and inspiring in the process of research writing, research undertaking and field working. I thank the Government of Rwanda, Ministry of Local Government for supporting me during the period of my master's programme in the Netherlands. I acknowledge NUFFIC for funding this study and for the scholarship for my studies at ISS. My sincere thanks go to the staff of International Institute of Social Studies of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam, GPPE students for all the support during my study period at the ISS. I am indebted to thank administrative staff and citizens of Gicumbi District (Shangasha and Byumba Sectors) for their support during field study. Without their acceptance and eagerness to share their time, primary data collection would not have been possible. I honestly thank them whole for providing the information and truthfully answering my questions. I would like to express my gratitude to my loving wife Claudine Umuteteri and two children Shema Ndahiro Bertin l'Ainé and Ikundwe Ndahiro Bertine for their patience away from home during my studies in the Netherlands. Finally, I would like to express my thanks to my family and all my friends involved in my research.

May God Bless You All.

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List of Acronyms

ADB	African Development Bank
DDP	District Development Plan
DFID	Department for International Development
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
EWSA	Energy Water and Sanitation Authority
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GPPE	Governance, Policy and Political Economy
H.E	His Excellence
IHLCS	Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
IRDP	Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace
ISS	International Institute of Social studies
JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
LTIF	Long Term investments Framework
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Economic planning and Finance
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MINISANTE	Ministry of Health
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditures Framework
NISR	National Institute of Statistic of Rwanda
9YBE	Nine Year Basic Education
NGO	Non-Government Organization
RGB	Rwanda Governance Board
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme

Abstract

In the context of decentralisation policies in Rwanda and public management challenges, *Imibigo* contracts were introduced by the Government of Rwanda in 2006 as a form of public performance contract implemented at District level. *Imibigo* contracts were intended as a tool to speed up national development. This study suggests that the success of *Imibigo* requires active citizen participation beyond consultation, and official accountability that engages local people in planning as well as implementation of development projects. To show this, the study uses Arnstein's ladder of participation model to analyse both the participation of citizens and how this relates to official accountability in *Imibigo* performance in one District in Rwanda. Gicumbi District was selected because of the need to explain dramatic performance inconsistencies that were experienced in this particular district during the years 2009 to 2014. The study highlights variations in the level of citizen participation over time, and in the degree of official accountability as useful ways of explaining these differences in *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi District. Besides this, the research provides some policy recommendations, including enhanced downward accountability, which could strengthen active citizen participation. The aim is to overcome some of the gaps highlighted in this study between citizens, local officials and elected authorities, taking the case of Gicumbi. In this way, the study hopes to contribute to enhancing citizen participation and accountability as vital inputs in improving *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi District.

Relevance to Development Studies

After the 1990-1994 liberation war and Genocide, the new regime embraced the decentralization policy in 2000 with the aim of achieving sustainable integrated development. Through this policy, the Government of Rwanda sought to empower its citizens by creating autonomous local entities capable of initiating planning, financing and executing devolved functions independently. Different approaches were used to implement this policy. In this context, Rwanda has adopted *Imibigo* contract that offer citizens the opportunity to take part in activities affecting their communities and the accountability of officials to their respective people through *Imibigo* process. Performance contracts have been globally recognized for improving the performance of organizations and individuals to accomplish the predictable goals within a given period of time. By analysing the level of participation and type of accountability to determine the role of citizen participation and accountability in *Imibigo* processes within one selected district, Gicumbi. This research contributes to the field of development studies by the fact that it provides critical analysis on the way performance contracts are established and implemented between Local Governments and the extent they are applied in the field in a participatory and accountable manner.

Keywords

Imibigo, performance contracts, citizen participation, accountability, Arnstein, Gicumbi District, Rwanda.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of *Imihigo* contracts in Rwanda

Before Genocide against Tutsi in 1994, citizen participation in Rwanda was well-known to be forced on local people, an imposed method used by colonial and post-colonial regimes to achieve public works projects. Forced labour were used by the colonial power under a system known as *corvée*, and by post-independence governments used a form of voluntary community work to complete infrastructural projects, known as *umuganda* (community works). The political system in Rwanda has long been highly centralized and development policies are generally decided from the top.

However, since 1994, drawing lessons of mistakes made by the previous regimes, the newly Government of National Unity started to redefine and revive the practicability of the concept of citizen participation on a voluntary basis (IRD 2010: 3). Several political, social and administrative policy reforms were put in place to improve the living conditions of all Rwandans, from the poorest to the highly educated and to respond to the societal effects of recovery from the tragedy of genocide. *Imihigo*, which will be described below, was introduced in the context of implementing a Poverty Reduction Strategy and a National Decentralization Policy, started in 2000 (ADB 2012: 3; Golooba-Mutebi 2008: 23).

It is imperative to recall that after Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, citizen participation was less popular than before because of mass participation in the genocide itself. The citizens lost trust in the instructions of public authorities and it took time to reconstruct confidence in orders from above (ADB 2012: 4).

The adoption of *Imihigo* contracts requires a level of public trust in the policies and programs of government. The goal of government in its decentralization reforms was to consolidate both public accountability and to improve public confidence in the transparency of decision-makers (Rwiyereka 2014: 688). Overall, it was hoped that by combining more honest governance with greater trust from citizens, public service delivery as well as reconstruction outcomes could be improved and state institutions enhanced in terms of their legitimacy (Nicaise, 2013 ; Rutaremara 2011:9).

In 2006, Government of Rwanda came up with a form of public performance-based assessment for officials, known as *Imihigo* (performance contracts) which was intended to draw on forms of traditional accountability in order to ensure that there could be ‘positive competition’ that could reinforce local government performance (Rwiyereka 2014: 689). Through this approach, Local Governments were supposed to articulate their own objectives together with inputs and ‘participation of local citizens (Scher 2010:13). The aim was to come up with realistic strategies that could be used to achieve the agreed objectives which had arisen from discussion with the local population through various forms of participatory inputs (Scher 2014:34).

Imihigo is the plural Kinyarwanda word of *Umubigo*, which means to promise to deliver. The term also comprises an idea of *Guhiganwa*, which signifies competition (Golooba-Mutebi 2008:25). *Imihigo* was a pre-colonial cultural practice in Rwanda, where an individual or community was set targets or goals by the King, or Mwami, then the central authority in the country (ADB 2012:3). These tasks were to be planned in such a way that they could be achieved within a specific period of time and achievements were followed by celebrating individual or collective success (Nsabimana 2010:6). The person or the community must accomplish a given tasks by

respecting the orientations given and do his or her best to handle any constraints faced during the execution of the mission.

According to the concept note on *Imibigo* planning and evaluation as developed by The Ministry of Local Government in 2010, *Imibigo* are based on three key principles (MINALOC 2010:2). The first principle is that *Imibigo* should be voluntary, but within guidelines set by public priorities and budgetary constraints. Goals and targets can be debated and selected freely, and are the choice of the community and the individual officials who will undertake to achieve these goals (MINALOC 2010: 3). Even so, such choices cannot be made without taking into account national guidance, and budgetary provisions, which then have to be matched in turn with local realities. The second principle is ambition, and it is hoped that this will encourage community members and individual officials to achieve more, giving them the ambition and determination to push existing limits of what is thought possible (MINALOC 2010: 3). The third and last principle is excellence. *Imibigo* are intended to inspire ambitions and high expectations of performance (MINALOC 2010: 4).

Imibigo activities are prepared and put in the four pillars: Economic development, social development, Governance and Justice (MINALOC 2010:5). The concept paper on *Imibigo* planning and evaluation in Rwanda indicates that *Imibigo* should result from a participatory process of ascertaining and executing priorities from the grassroots to the national level and vice versa (MINALOC 2010:6). The same concept indicates that ‘in the process of identifying the priorities, each level demonstrates its contribution to achievement of development goals’ (MINALOC 2010:7).

1.2 The Research Problem

Since 2006, every district was requested to set targets and priorities and to commit to achieving those targets in each fiscal year. Performance under the *Imibigo* contract is evaluated annually through a comprehensive measurement of achievements in all Districts, which are then ranked according to their performance levels for that year (Rwiyereka 2014:689). One of the reasons Gicumbi District was chosen as a case study, is that among all the Districts, from 2009 to 2014, there were significant inconsistencies in performance of Gicumbi in particular. According to four successive District *Imibigo* evaluation reports from 2009-10 to 2013-2014, Gicumbi District’s performance changed dramatically over time, compared with relatively less obvious fluctuations in other Districts. For the table below (Table 1), we chose three other Districts to compare with Gicumbi. A low number is positive (1 = top performer) and there are 30 Districts in total (30 = poorest performer).

Table 1: *Imibigo* Performance Evaluation Report from 2009-2014

Districts	Fiscal Years				
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Gicumbi	2	27	25	30	14
Kicukiro	5	3	1	6	1
Bugesera	4	6	3	3	13
Kamonyi	20	20	2	9	16

Source: Own construction, adapted from District *Imibigo* evaluation reports 2009-2014.

The research problem is to explain the wide variation in the level of *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi in particular. Therefore, the fact that this research is successfully conducted, it will empirically and theoretically enrich existing literature on how *Imibigo* approach could be prepared and assessed. It will provide information to those who may be interested in conducting further research on *Imibigo* in Rwanda. Finally, the findings of this study might help to propose some

appropriate measures that can improve citizen participation and accountability in Gicumbi District vis-à-vis *Imihigo* for the future.

1.3 Presentation of Gicumbi District

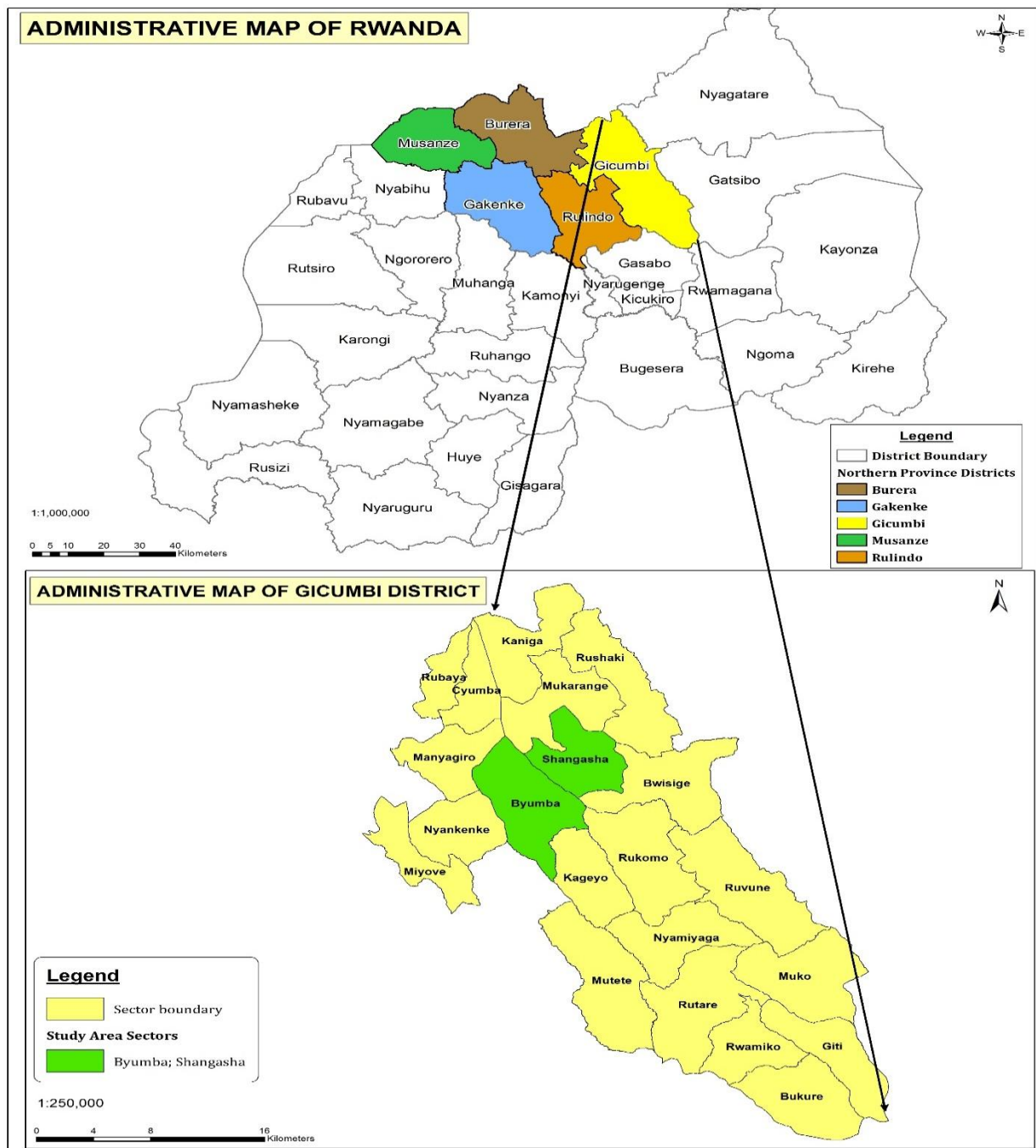
Our research was carried out in Gicumbi District. It is a rural District and one of the five Districts of the Northern Province. Byumba is the capital of the District. It is namely bordered to the North by Burera District, Kabare District-Uganda and Nyagatare District of Eastern Province. To the East by District of Gatsibo. To the South by Rwamagana and Gasabo District of City of Kigali and to the West by Rulindo and Burera Districts. It has a surface area of 829 km², Gicumbi District is characterized by a mountainous relief with an altitude of 2 500 meters (Gicumbi, DDP 2013-2018).

According to Gicumbi District development plans 2013-2018, ‘the total population is about 374 639 habitants among which 182,478 are men being (49%) and 192,161 females (51%). Population density in this area stands at almost 437 inhabitants per km². The economy of the District is basically based on agriculture with about 90% of the population. The principal cash crops in the District are tea and coffee’ (Gicumbi, DDP 2013-2018).

Administrative structure of the District of Gicumbi is subdivided into lower decentralized entities including 21 Sectors, 109 Cells and 630 Villages. District is composed of three organs. The first organ is the District Council, the supreme organ made up of 38 Councillors representing the Sectors. The second is the District Executive Committee that daily manages the District composed of Mayor of the District, two Deputy Mayors (one in charge of social affairs and another in charge of finances and economic development) elected among the Councillors of the District and the third is the District Executive Secretariat composed of a pool of technicians working at District.

The map (1) below shows the location of Gicumbi District.

Map 1: Map of Rwanda showing the location of Gicumbi District



Source: Rwanda Natural Resources Authority, Office of Registrar of Land Titles, 2015.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

This research aims to investigate the role of citizen participation and official accountability in the variations in *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi District during the period between 2009 and 2014. These two key factors are selected for special consideration, and the inter-relational aspects of citizen participation and public officials' accountability in connection with performance and capacity indicators is a central focus, as well as the opinions of local stakeholders about how these factors play a role in *Imibigo* implementation and performance.

The study aims to assess how local people – including District officials and poor people - explain differences in *Imibigo* performance from year to year in Gicumbi District, given the pic-

ture presented in table (1). This may help the researcher to determine how important the citizens' involvement in *Imihigo* process, compared with other factors. Accountability of officials will also be important, mainly as it is perceived by the members of the local community in Gicumbi District.

The key goal is to explain the dramatic annual variations in the ranking performance of *Imihigo* in Gicumbi, especially between 2009-2010 when performance appeared to be excellent, and the period thereafter, when performance ranking became very poor, suggesting a decline in capacity at District level.

The main question of this research is:

What role do citizen participation and official accountability play in the dramatic variations in *Imihigo* performance in Gicumbi District between 2009 and 2014?

In specific chapters, some sub-questions will also be addressed in the following order:

1. What are the key indicators of *Imihigo* performance and capacity in Gicumbi District?
2. What factors are used by different local stakeholders in Gicumbi to explain the differences in *Imihigo* performance from year to year in the District?
3. What role do citizen participation and official accountability play in *Imihigo* performance differences?

1.5 Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative case study approach based on Gicumbi District located in the Northern Province of Rwanda. The details on the employed methodology in this research are provided below.

1.5.1 Selection of the Case Study

The research paper was carried out in Gicumbi District of the Northern Province of Rwanda. The reason for such a choice is the fact that the fieldwork delivers opportunity to reach informants and reliable data within the research period. The researcher worked in the Ministry of Local Government, in charge of monitoring the implementation of different policies and programs related to governance and decentralization. The researcher then found it easy to access all the information needed as well as meeting with respondents. It was an added value due to the fact that, the researcher knew most of the district personnel very well, so contacting them was relatively easy and there was strong enthusiasm for the research topic in Gicumbi, once it was clearly explained.

1.5.2 Selection of the Respondents

As O’Leary (2010:160) says: ‘...If the research is all about getting your research question answered, then it is probably a good idea to think about whom might hold the answer to your question’. In this research, the purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents and participants in FGDs basing on the knowledge, expertise they have on the process of *Imibigo* from conception to evaluation within the District. While searching answers to research questions, Interviewees and FGD participants were given the space to express themselves on the research. The research used both primary and secondary data.

1.5.3 Primary Data

In this research, interviews, FGDs and short survey for attitudes were employed¹. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with current local leaders to obtain face to face explanations of the dramatic variations in *Imibigo* performance during the period 2009-2014. We also asked about the role of citizen participation in such explanations (O’Leary 2014: 218). Four District officials, four Executive Secretaries of chosen Sectors (rural and urban), four Cell officials (rural and urban) were interviewed. In addition, an informal interview was also conducted with both a former District Executive Committee member and a former chairperson of the District Council who had headed Gicumbi District from 2006-2011. In total, 14 officials were interviewed.

The FGDs were held in two sectors of the case study to get the opinions from local people about the differences in *Imibigo* performance from year to year in Gicumbi District and about the role of citizens’ participation and official’s accountability in such explanations. Four FGDs were held in Byumba and Shangasha Sectors. The two FGDs in each Sector were made up of ten ordinary people between the ages of 35 and 70. We organized and conducted FGDs for men and one for women, in each Sector.

The relevant unpublished documents were collected like Gicumbi District *Imibigo* documents, from 2009 to 2014 and unpublished information on the District’s profile like self-mid-term assessments, District Council and District Executive Committee meeting resolutions and minutes which discussed the progress of *Imibigo* goals and objectives. A short survey of public attitudes towards citizen participation and accountability in *Imibigo* performance was also carried out with 20 people aged between 20 and 40. This was to supplement and verify information collected about *Imibigo* in Gicumbi District generally. Among 20 people, 10 were women and 10 were men. Throughout the study, italics will be used for material collected during fieldwork from respondents (primary data).

1.5.4 Secondary Data

The secondary data collected and analysed included the literature review of classical and more recent studies about citizen participation and accountability, the original concept note of 2010 for *Imibigo* in Rwanda, the revised decentralisation policy in Rwanda of 2012, District *Imibigo* Evaluation Reports for 2009 to 2014, and finally the official District website of Rwanda.

¹ See Appendix 1: Guiding questions used for Primary Data Collection.

1.6 Risks & Ethical challenges

The researcher has allowed for the fact that some of the respondents would probably not be available at the scheduled timetable for the interviews and group discussions. Some respondents would refuse answering to our questions because several reasons including: some people do not like to express their views publicly because of fears about job security, for instance. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that ethical standards were adhered to and privacy of respondents was respected. This should make it less likely that respondents would refuse to give the right information for the research study. Furthermore, some would fear to respond where as others would request money as a motivating factor. For this, we would need to provide a budget for getting more information, for instance, transport and refreshment for FGD participants.

In conducting a research, the researcher considered a number of ethical issues as required by established research ethics. Though this, the researcher declares that data which was collected for this research would not be used for other purposes (O'Leary 2014: 206). Besides that, people who were involved in this research were first contacted and asked about time and place which would be more conducive for them. Addition to that, at each interview, a copy of the questions, with the background was provided to each interviewee and every interview followed conversation ethics such as confidentiality, anonymity and results storage.

The participants were guaranteed that the tape recording was to be heard only by the researcher and that it would be destroyed after completion of research project. Moreover, the participants were informed on the purpose and design of the study, as well as the unpaid nature of their involvement. Whilst in another context, of a larger country, it might make sense to anonymize the District, in Rwanda; this would not be possible, given that *Imibigo* rankings of Districts are publicly available. However, by referring not to names, but to posts such as 'Executive Secretary' or 'District official', the identity of informants has been anonymized in the text.

1.7 Structure of the Paper

This research paper is organized into five chapters. The first one is dedicated to an introduction. The second chapter deals with the conceptual and the theoretical framework used in the study. Chapter three details the *Imibigo* process in Gicumbi District. Chapter four focuses on various explanations of the dramatic variations in *Imibigo* performance during the period 2009-2014 and specifically examines the role citizen participation and official accountability play in such explanations. Finally, the fifth chapter analyses the key findings of the study and the last chapter draws together some conclusion and modest recommendations.

Chapter 2 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter deals with the key concepts used in this research. It also analyses the context in which the citizen participation can contribute to the achievement of Government set development programmes. This contribution is possible when some approaches are applied especially through public performance management which uses home-grown *Imibigo* contract as a tool. Accountability principle is important to tackle on the relationship between citizens and officials' role in the performance levels in given development sectors of the community. The Performance Management requires the capacity of local leaders and implementers. Finally, it draws the framework of both citizen participation and accountability in development.

2.1 The Performance Management Approach

The concept of 'performance management' remains ambiguous in spite of the enormous attention it has received in academic writings (Carroll, 2000 cited in Ohemeng 2009:102). Therefore, different scholars defined it differently.

Briscoe and Claus (2008:15) defined a performance management as 'the system through which organizations design work goals to achieve, define performance standards, allocate and evaluate work, deliver performance feedback, ascertain training and development needs, and dispense rewards'. Carroll and Dewar (2002:413) describe four main elements that compose of performance management. These include: '(a) deciding the desired level of performance ;(b) measuring performance; (c) reporting or communicating performance information; and (d) using performance information to compare actual performance to the agreed performance level '. Thus, based on this conceptualization, Ohemeng (2009: 112) shows that 'it is imperative that any performance management system should at least have some, if not all, of these components'

Nevertheless, performance management in the public Sector is debatable (Ohemeng 2009: 112). As the same author points out that '... Yet there is no common agreement among scholars on whether it enhances organizational efficiency, effectiveness and public accountability' (Ohemeng 2009:114). It has been argued that performance management leads to managerial freedom or autonomy and that such autonomy can enhance performance. Managerial freedom can be defined as 'the right to choose how to pursue a goal once it has been set by others, that is operational autonomy' (Ohemeng 2009:114). It differs from strategic autonomy which can be defined as 'the freedom to set one's own agenda' (Verhoest et al. 2004:212).

Performance management can be further affected by the personal and leadership factors. Flavia (2010:13) made a difference of these two factors as follows:

'...The personal ones refers to individual skills, confidence, and commitment of officials that one has to complete his or her responsibilities in order to attain organizational and individual objectives while leadership factors are vital for performance including for example the quality of encouragement, guidance and support provided by the manager and team leaders' (Armstrong and Baron, 1998; Flavia 2010:13).

But, this approach can face some constraints, related to institutional capacity. They include lack of systems of incentives and sanctions, lack of political commitment and seriousness, lack of training (Ohemeng 2009:114). Despite these challenges, Some authors like Ohemeng (2009:109) argued that: '... performance management has become a key element in the modern public Sector management and consequently, many developing countries have introduced it as a means

to measure organizational and individual efficiency in order to ensure that the public Sector meets the needs of the public’.

It could be suggested that performance management in Rwanda is a culturally adapted form, rooted in past pre-colonial practices, as discussed in Chapter (1). In this research, the approach used to analyse the process of *Imibigo* in the context of Rwanda, especially in Gicumbi District, is to ascertain the factors that influenced differences in *Imibigo* performance of the District from 2009 to 2014, with a particular focus on two elements – citizen participation and official accountability. Both of these can be said to have some relation with culture, generally speaking.

2.2 Performance Contracts as measure of capacity

Performance contracts can be differently understood depending on the organizational structure of specific countries. They define performance contracts as ‘contract-plan, memorandum of understanding, signalling system, performance agreement, results framework, incentive contracts, performance monitoring and evaluation system, and many more’ (Simpson and Buaberg 2013:13). There are so many names for the same phenomenon.

Performance contracts can also be explained as any: ‘agreement which may be formalized by clearly defining objectives, specifying targets, intentions, obligations, responsibilities, and pledges made by parties concerned’ (Simpson and Buaberg 2013:12). Performance can be considered as ‘the managerial autonomy required achieving the expected goals within a given time frame’ (Caulfield 2006 cited in Simpson and Buaberg 2013:12). Besides, performance contract has the legal effect as it has been argued by Rotish et al. (2014:7) who stated that ‘Performance contracts are legally binding contractual obligations that tie an organization or individual to undertaking specified tasks at predetermined levels of performance within a given period of time’.

Additionally, performance contract systems were first initiated in France in the late 1960s (Simpson and Buaberg 2013:12). From this period, many countries adopted this new strategy of working across sectors in different years and there are several models of performance contract across the globe aimed to improve public performance, including through the involvement of the private sector. Shirley and Xu (1997) cite four models. For instance, ‘the three-year contract targets (Senegal’s contract plan); annual targets contract (Ghana’s PC, India’s memorandum of understanding, Korea’s performance evaluation and monitoring systems, and Philippines’ performance monitoring and evaluation system and Pakistan’s signalling system’ (Shirley and Xu, 1997 cited in Simpson and Buaberg 2013:12). Furthermore, Since the inception of performance contracts in Rwanda, *Imibigo* has started to affect every level of society, insofar as these kinds of contracts commitments are now to be found within government departments, but also in schools and even inside families (Rwiyereka 2014: 690).

However, the performance contract has been a subject of considerable debate among scholars and human resource practitioners regarding their effectiveness as an instrument of public policy (Rotish et al. 2014:12). According to Armstrong and Baron (2004:2), ‘performance contracts are a branch of management science taken as management control systems and is freely negotiated performance agreement between the organizations and the individuals on one side and the agency itself in order to ensure delivery of quality service to the public in a fair and equity manner for the sustainability of the institutions’.

Performance contracts obviously spell out the desired end results expected of the officials who have signed them and are a measure of their perceived capacity to implement a combination of local plans and central decisions (Rotish et al. 2014:12). For Morgan (2006:3) ‘the concept of capacity and its practice remain puzzling, confusing and even vacuous especially in inter-

national development'. Fukuda-Parr and Lopes (2013:33) define capacity as 'aptitude to achieve set goals and solve problems'. Likewise, Grindle and Hildebrand (1995:442), see capacity as 'the capability to execute relevant jobs successfully for future significant outcomes'. Some authors argued that for developing viable and strong organizations, 'the personal incentives and measure controls are pre-requisites in any organizational performance' (Grindle and Hildebrand 1995: 444).

As Morgan (2006:4), capacity can be considered as 'both a means and an end to achieve development targets and realise initiatives at local as well as national level'. In this research, capacity is similarly viewed as both a means and an end that supports development planning performance in Gicumbi District. Capacity is also related closely with human development skills and the how local leaders operate in human resource terms, all influence how projects and programs of the government are implemented at local level (Grindle and Hildebrand 1995: 445). Therefore, when both local leaders and citizens are capacitated, in theory the performance of targets and goals set by them should be scored highly in *Imibigo* rankings. Therefore, achievement of *Imibigo* should involve both leaders and the citizenry if it is to be successful.

2.3 Citizen Participation

The concept of participation is frequently described with prefixes such as citizen, community, popular, civic, political and public to reflect various perspectives from which the term can be used. This can lead participation to be a puzzling concept. In this research, we are concerned mostly with citizen participation, although community and civic participation are also related terms.

A useful starting point is the definition of André et al. (2012) who view citizen participation as 'a practice in which ordinary people take part – whether voluntarily or through civic duties – individually and/or as a group, in influencing a decision involving significant choices that will affect them as communities and individuals'. This definition displays diverse perspectives in which ordinary people may participate. The participation can be 'voluntary or obligatory' (André et al. 2012). The citizens are invited to take part in a given process without any force to do so such as participating in public debates and meetings. This kind of participation is not formalized whereas the obligatory or institutionalized participation is legalized so that citizens must take part, for example participating in a referendum or a population census (André et al. 2012).

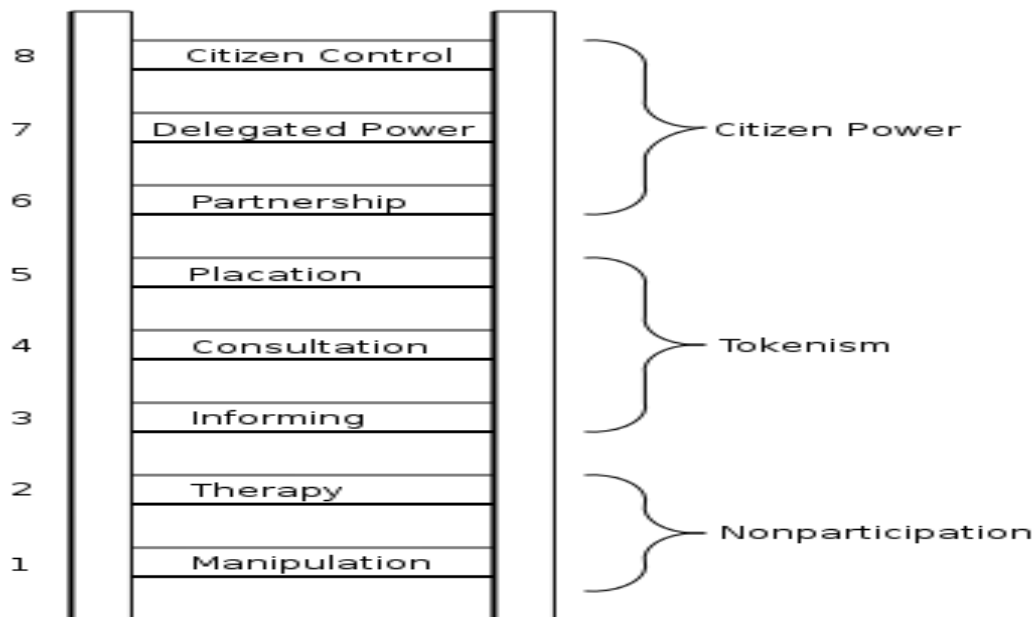
Similarly, Mathbor (2008:8) claims that 'the citizens can act in response to public concerns, voice their opinions about decisions that affect them, and take responsibility for changes to their community'. It is in this regard that Olumu and Wunsch (2004: 28) argued that: '... in many African societies, local people would take part in practically all activities within their community, including decision-making, cultural activities, farming, building and conflict resolution'

Like capacity, the participation of citizens or of community members can be taken as both a means and an end in the development planning process. According to Botes and Van Rensburg (2000:45), 'capacity as a means can contribute more to the achievement of objectives and targets of any organization while as an end; it gives power to people to follow their own development activities and projects'. In *Imibigo* performance, the citizens are both important actors and key beneficiaries of any achievements of *Imibigo*.

Participation itself may be defined according to the degree to which citizens are involved in the decision-making process (Arnstein 1969:217). Based on differing degrees of citizen involvement, Arnstein some time ago developed a classic model, using the image of a "ladder of participation" with eight levels indicating various degrees of citizens' power in the decision-making process (Arnstein 1969:217).

As is shown in figure 1 below, at the bottom of the ladder two rungs, marked manipulation and therapy, Arnstein categorized as non-participation. The middle rungs 3, 4 and 5, she identified respectively as informing, consultation and placation and belong to the category of tokenistic participation. Only at the top of the ladder, at rungs 6, 7 and 8, which correspond to partnership, delegated power and citizen control, and she classifies the relationship as one based on citizen power and ‘genuine’ participation. The higher up the ladder an instance of citizen participation can be placed and citizens make sure that their views will be incorporated into decision-making and will work to uphold the interest of citizens themselves (Arnstein 1969:217).

Figure 1: Eight Rungs on the Ladder of Citizen Participation



Source: Arnstein (1969:217)

As Arnstein pointed out the eight-rung ladder is only a broad interpretation and should not be taken too literally, or reflected on without nuance. However, it demonstrates the important steps of citizen participation and is a useful tool for assessing it in this study of Gicumbi District (Arnstein 1969:218).

What this model tells us is that citizen participation differs from public involvement. Citizen participation is broader than simple public involvement and requires: ‘...power sharing and influences over major decisions in a community’ (Andre et al. 2012). It is therefore located only at the upper rungs of Arnstein’s ladder (Arnstein 1969:217). Among the approaches used to promote public involvement, Rowe and Frewer (2005:251) mentioned some including ‘public communication, public consultation and public participation’.

For several authors like Thibault et al. (2000: 36), public involvement can be defined as ‘the action of taking part in collective decisions within an organization’ rather than ‘the sharing of power and decision-making with ordinary people as argued by Rowe and Frewer (2005:251). Citizen participation hence does go further up the ladder than merely taking part in decision-making within official accountability mechanisms coming into play, involving renegotiation of power relations in favour of citizens. Even though the ‘the participatory [to development planning] approach is no longer as fashionable as it was when it first started to be popular in the 1970s’ (Cook and James 1975: 234). We still consider citizen participation to be an important

step in the right direction in the context of *Imihigo* in Rwanda, with some qualifications which will now be discussed.

2.4 Constraints to Participation

Botes and Van Rensberg (2000:42) found that ‘selective participation and lack of interest in participating are among the factors that can make citizen participation problematic’. Also, Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) indicated that ‘financial resources and the level of citizen organization at local level are two major constraining factors to citizens’ participation’. In line with this, according to Botes and Van Rensburg (2000:41):

‘Participation is often constrained by funding limitations, rigidity, resistance of local and national bureaucrats, and the state’s inability to respond effectively to the felt needs of the populace. Government bureaucrats as the instruments of nation states are very much in a hierarchical mode of thinking which inhibits participatory development and undermines the people’s own governing abilities’.

However, even critics of participation; recognise that it is something positive in theory (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). And from a critical perspective, association especially with the ‘tyranny of participation’ approach, citizens’ participation in practice often does not function as a tool for liberation or for sharing of power as it is intended (Ferreday and Hodgson 2008:642). Instead, participation ‘is often considered by such critics as upholding existing power relations, and even hiding these power inequalities through adding on methods of participation to justify existing approaches to development policy and governance’ (Christens and Speer 2006: 11). This masking of unequal power relation, consequently, leads some to characterize what they call ‘the tyranny of participation as a problem in practice’ (Ferreday and Hodgson 2008:643).

Several authors like Christens and Speer (2006:11) argued that participation may have a role to play in development planning and policy, but only if it is carefully designed and cost. This means that, at local levels, as the literature suggests, practices of participation are often ‘entrenched in the politics and hierarchies of local society and communities’ (Christens and Speer 2006:12). When analysing the kind of participatory processes used during *Imihigo* in Gicumbi from 2009 to 2014, these considerations need to be borne in mind. Moreover, a critical approach to citizen participation can help to reveal how established authorities may try to manipulate or control how needs of citizens are defined, even without proper consultation or involvement, let alone full citizen participation.

2.5 The Concept of Accountability

Accountability is a ‘sister’ concept to participation, almost as difficult to define as participation, and to interpret in precise terms (Gibson et al 2005:13). According to Ebrahim (2003: 813), ‘accountability refers to the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority’. This quite narrow definition is also suggested by Fox and Brown (1998:12) who define accountability, as ‘holding individuals and organizations responsible for performance’. Similarly, Frederick and O’Brien (2005) found that: ‘... Accountability exists when there is a relationship where an individual or body, and the performance of tasks or functions by that individual or body, are subject to another’s oversight, direction or request that they provide information or justification for their actions’ (cited in Wouters et al. (Eds) 2015: 150).

A much broader definition of accountability comes from Macrae et al. (2002:48) and includes four elements: (a) ‘agreement of clear roles and responsibilities of the organization and its personnel, (b) taking action for which an organization is responsible, (c) reporting on and ac-

counting for those actions, (d) responding to and complying with agreed standards of performance and the views and needs of stakeholders’.

Even more broadly, Paul Samuel (1991:45) insists that ‘accountability is the driving force that generates the pressure for the key actor involved to be responsible for and to ensure good public service performance’. UNDP (2010:9) provides a useful approach which views accountability as being of many different types, including upward and downward, horizontal and vertical, hybrid and domestic, social and mutual.

In terms of operationalizing accountability, the concept usually involves at least two stages: The first is answerability and the second enforceability (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005 cited in McGee and Gaventa 2010: 4). Answerability ‘is the responsibility of duty-bearers to provide information and justification about their actions’, whilst enforceability requires: ‘...the possibility of penalties or consequences for failing to answer accountability’ (Goetz and Jenkins 2005 in McGee and Gaventa 2010: 4; World Bank 2007:1).

This definition of how accountability operates in practice is particularly relevant to the Rwandan context, where officials’ poor public performance often has direct consequences in terms of enforcement. There is a little tolerance for inefficient or corrupt public officials as it was in the speech of the President of the Republic of Rwanda addressed to Local leaders and other invitees. He said:

‘Imibigo is a performance contract between leaders and those you serve. Citizens will continue to hold you accountable. As leaders, you must put your words into action and walk the talk. As leaders, it is your responsibility to solve problems faced by citizens in an efficient and just manner. We must uphold a culture of accountability and questions should be asked about Districts that consistently perform poorly because these are symptoms of leadership problems’ (H.E Paul KAGAME, Speech on 12 September 2014 during the presentation of Imibigo evaluation report 2013-2014).

In general, accountability as a concept may help to analyse and understand how district officials view themselves in relation to local citizens. The aim is to identify forms of accountability that can be found in Gicumbi District during the period 2009 and 2014, and to relate these narrow and broader forms of accountability both to citizen participation, and to the *Imibigo* performance level of Gicumbi as a whole.

The accountability is not only defined but it is also interpreted. Gibson et al. (2005:12) offers a more useful interpretation of accountability and performance. Public officials’ accountability is interpreted as a key input for local government performance (Gibson et al. 2005:12). For Callahan (2006:256) too, ties between citizens and public officials are implied, since accountability is “for performance” and requires “result based on the trust”, and strong connections between local leaders and the governed. Trust and connections at local level between authorities and the governed are precious and scarce resources in any context, let alone in a post-genocide society like Rwanda.

The concept of accountability appears in *Imibigo* contract when the local authorities inform the public the projects and actions to be implemented and encourage them to participate in the *Imibigo* process. After the implementation, the evaluation is conducted to assess the level of performance. Therefore, the local authorities have the task to give feedback to the citizens about the achievements, the gaps and failures as well as possible measures to overcome those gaps and failures. The accountability helped the researcher to analyse and understand the relationship between accountability, citizen participation and performance in Gicumbi District.

2.6 Frameworks linking Citizen Participation and Official Accountability

In addition to the classical model of citizen participation expressed in the ladder of citizen participation, Timney has attributed several models to citizen participation in order to express various angles on the interactions between citizen and their government. He gives three forms such as active, passive and transitional (Timney, 1998 cited in Callahan 2007:1184).

Active participation requires that citizens are in control (Timney, 1998 cited in Callahan, 2007). In this paradigm, citizens own the process, articulate policy and public agencies and serve as consultants. Passive participation is at the other extreme, where the agency is in control and participation is merely a formality and with the transitional model, power and control are shared between citizens and agencies and the citizens' role, for the most part is advisory (Timney, 1998 cited in Callahan 2007: 1185).

Callahan (2007: 1186) summarizes (see Table 2) the various models in the public administration literature, specifically focusing on the roles of citizens and administrators, the managerial approach to citizens, the inherent dynamic in this approach and the method of interaction that results because of the relationship and dynamics.

Table 2: Administrator – Citizen Interactions

Administrator Role	Citizen Role	Managerial Approach	Dynamic	Method of Interaction
Ruler	Subject	Coercive	Authority	Government Control
Implementer	Voter	Representative	Trust	Voting
Expert	Client	Neutral Competence	Control	Compliance
Professional	Customer	Responsive	Passive	Consultative
Public Servant	Citizen	Facilitative	Engaged	Deliberative
Co-producer	Co-producer	Collaborative	Active	Partnership
Broker	Investor	Communal	Cooperative	Co-investing
Employee	Owner	Compliance	Conflict	Citizen Control

Source: Callahan (2007: 1186)

It should be noted that the above roles are not mutually exclusive. For example by paying taxes, a citizen is a subject and the tax administrator is an authoritative figure. But, if the same citizen goes to the administrator to pay fees for a service, he is a customer while the administrator becomes a service provider.

Citizen participation can result from the way that officials are accountable to their citizens. According to Rocha and Sharma (2008:4), 'Citizens' voice and accountability are one of the main component of governance and it is widely acknowledged that citizens as well as state institutions have a role to play in delivering governance that works for the poor and enhances democracy'. The capacity of people to practice their point of views may be taken as a key ingredient to control the setting of priorities including accountability and transparency (Rocha and Sharma, 2008; World Bank, 2004).

Consequently, the accountability brings up the trust of leaders vis-à-vis their citizens and raises the awareness and ownership, hence the level of participation likewise increases. Thus, the level of performance is high as well.

Conclusion

The concepts of both citizen participation and accountability in the *Imibigo* contracts seem to be closer to the narrow definitions we have found in the literature, than to more ambitious, all-inclusive definitions. This means that whilst local authorities are required to inform the public about projects and actions to be implemented and then to encourage them to participate actively in *Imibigo* implementation and evaluation processes, they are not necessarily required to involve the citizens in planning and selecting of priorities. After implementation, evaluations are supposed to be conducted in a participatory manner, to assess the level of performance. The local authorities do have the task of providing feedback and should be accountable to local citizens for both achievements, gaps and failures, and should come up with possible measures to overcome those gaps and failures in future. The possibilities for participatory planning, however, are not that clear. Chapter 3 will now provide more detail about how the *Imibigo* process is organised, implemented and evaluated in Rwanda.

Chapter 3 Contextualizing *Imihigo* Process in Gicumbi District

This chapter presents an overview of *Imihigo* in Gicumbi District. The first section describes generally *Imihigo* practice in Rwanda. The second section focuses on the main features of official evaluation and ranking of the process of *Imihigo* implementation in Gicumbi District.

3.1 *Imihigo* Process in Rwanda

Imihigo are contracts signed between the President of the Republic of Rwanda and the Mayor of District specifying what the respective institution sets itself as targets (MINALOC, 2010). According to the concept note on *Imihigo* planning, ‘the main objective of *Imihigo* is to improve the speed and quality of execution of government programs, thus making public agencies more effective and it is a means to accelerate the progress towards economic development and poverty reduction’ (MINALOC 2010:2).

Imihigo were introduced during the second phase of decentralization policy from 2006 to 2010². They were focused on administrative reforms, consolidation of national priorities progress with guidelines included in Vision 2020, enhancing downward accountability and on *Imihigo* as a tool of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation processes (MINALOC 2010: 1).

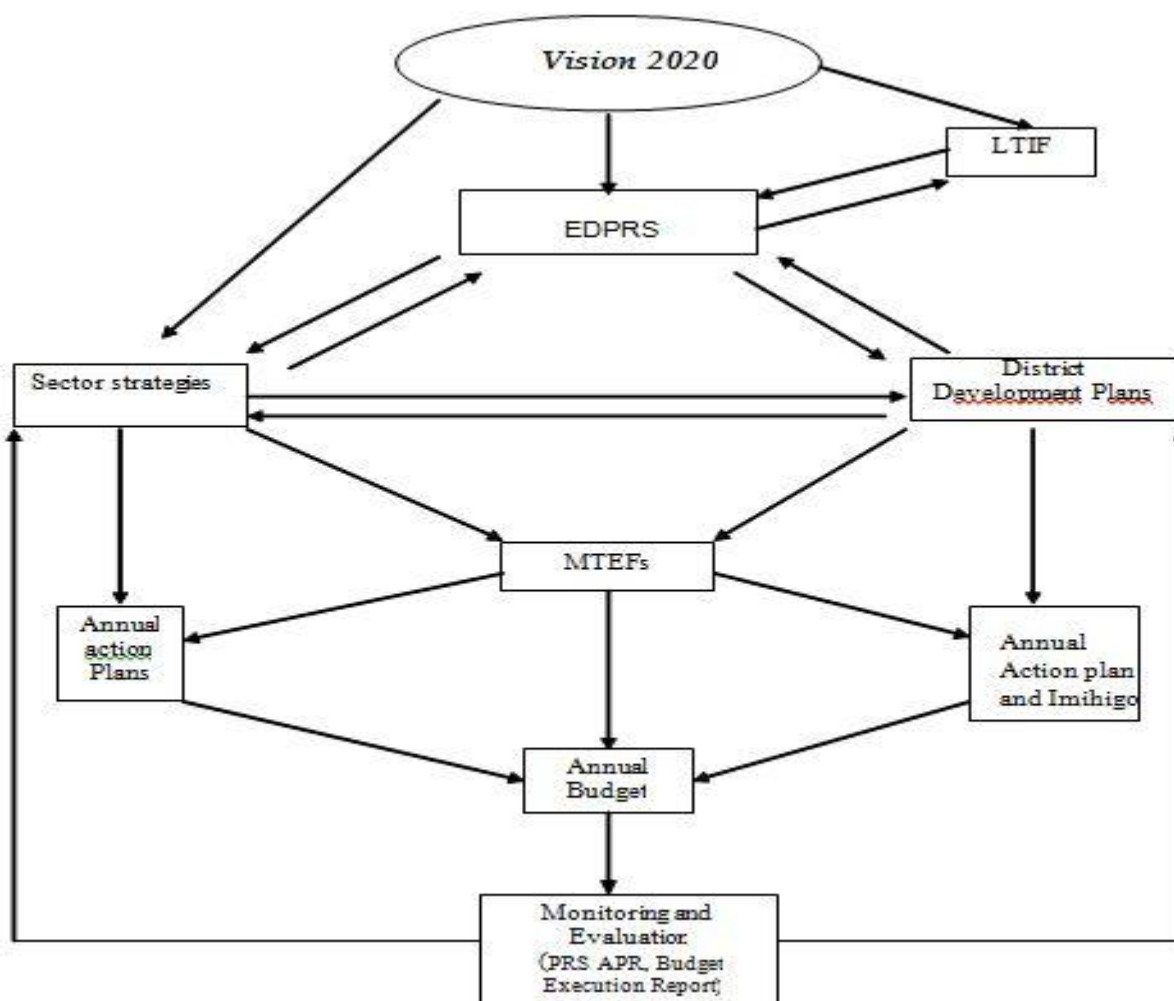
According to MINALOC (2010:2), *Imihigo* had several aims including: ‘(a) to speed up implementation of local and national development agenda, (b) to ensure stakeholder ownership of the development agenda, (c) to promote accountability and transparency, (d) to promote result oriented performance, (e) to encourage competitiveness among Districts, (f) to ensure stakeholders’ (i.e. citizens, civil society, donors and private Sector) participation and engagement in policy formulation and evaluation’. The *Imihigo* approach has different stages including preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

3.1.1 *Imihigo* Preparation

At the national level, *Imihigo* are prepared basing on four pillars: Economic and Social development, Governance and Justice. In this regard, each local entity defines its own objectives based on the quantifiable indicators set during the consultation with the sector ministries, taking into consideration national priorities as underlined in the international and national strategic documents (MINALOC 2010:9). The figure (2) below shows the template for *Imihigo* formulation taken from economic development pillar that may possibly be applied to other pillars like social, Governance and Justice).

²For more details, visit this website: <http://www.rwandapedia.rw/explore/Imihigo>, retrieved on 31 July 2015.

Figure 2: Overview of Rwanda’s planning and budget processes



Source: MINALOC (2010:9)

Imihigo planning calls for the ones involving in the process at Local governments and Provinces as long as the *Imihigo* are the result of a participatory process of identifying and implementing priorities from the grassroots to the national level as highlighted in the concept paper on *Imihigo* planning and evaluation (IRDP 2010:41; MINALOC 2010:7). In identifying priorities, each level displays its contribution of achievement of development goals and there are specific institutions or individuals responsible for validating *Imihigo* document (IPAR 2014:5). The table (3) shows who prepares and adopts *Imihigo* from Village to the District level.

Table 3 : Preparation and adoption of *Imihigo*

Level	Who prepares?	Who adopts?
Village	Village Executive Committee	Cell Executive Secretary
Cell	Cell Executive Secretary	Cell Council and Sector Executive Secretary
Sector	Sector Executive Secretariat agreed with Sector JADF	Sector Council and District Executive Committee
District	District JADF and District Executive Committee	District Council and Mayor of City of Kigali, Governor of the Province and Quality Assurance Technical Team

Source: MINALOC (2010:6)

Furthermore, *Imihigo* preparation process passes through different stages: Identification of national priorities by the Central Government, communication of national priorities to Local Government, identification of local priorities, and adoption and approval (MINALOC 2010:10). When identifying national priorities, the consultation of national and international planning tools is taken into account including MDGs, Vision 2020 and EDPRS2. Therefore, each Ministry sets its own indicators and identifies the national priorities to be implemented at local levels after checking available budgets to be transferred to Local Governments (MINALOC 2010: 11).

The presentation of the list of Central Government priorities are further communicated to Local Government through the planning and budgeting consultation in the presence of local leaders (MINALOC 2010:11). After this, the identification of local priorities takes place. In this line, District authorities consult their DDPs and hold consultative meetings with different stakeholders at Province and Kigali City, District, Sector, Cell and Village levels for discussing and consolidating emerging priorities and define their own objectives with quantifiable indicators, taking into consideration national priorities as underlined in the international and national strategic documents (MINALOC 2010:12).

3.1.2 *Imihigo* Performance Indicators

The performance indicators of *Imihigo* originated from national planning documents like EDPRS, Vision 2020. Through the consultation between Local and Central Government, each sector ministry share its own predictable indicators and targets to be achieved. Those indicators are presented per District. In principle, the indicators are quantifiable outputs from the consensus between central and local government (MINALOC 2010:13). It is in this context that each District set indicators, targets of its priorities from 2009 to 2014 by every pillar (Economic, Social and Governance and Justice). The table (4) shows some activities, stakeholders and indicators against which the *Imihigo* achievements are measured.

Table 4: Some key performance indicators

	ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	STAKEHOLDERS
1	Enhance agricultural development	Number of hectares of land consolidated Maize, Irish potatoes, wheat and Beans	MINAGRI, District
2	Construction of classroom and teachers houses	Number of constructed classroom and teachers houses	MINEDUC, District and Stakeholders
3	Connect household to electricity	Number of households connected to electricity	EWSA and District
4	Mobilize citizens to contribute to health insurance	% of adherent in Insurance health	District, MINISANTE, NGOs
5	Mobilize parents about the education of their children	-% net enrollment rate -% completion rate	District, MINEDUC
6	Resolve citizens complaints through monthly community assemblies	% of complaints resolved	District

Source: Our own construction adapted from Gicumbi District *Imihigo* performance 2012-2013.

Then, the *Imihigo* final document is presented to the District Council for approval. The next stage is for the Mayor of the District to sign and vow *Imihigo* on behalf of the citizens with the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the next step of the implementation.

3.1.3 Implementation of Imihigo

As stated above in the point (3.1.2), Local Governments set annual targets and define activities to achieve (MINALOC 2010: 11). The implementation of the planned and committed activities requires the participation of different stakeholders contacted during the planning step of *Imihigo*. These stakeholders may include local leaders, citizens, civil society and donors (MINALOC 2010:12). In implementing *Imihigo*, District uses, for instance, its own incomes from taxes, the transfers from central government, grants and donors funds.

Citizens can participate through different ways including either the community work - *Umuganda*- in planned actions such as the construction of infrastructures, for example, roads, schools and hospitals, etc. or their financial contribution to given activities. Further, the partners play the major role by aligning their socio-economic development programs and projects with defined Local Government priorities when financing and mobilizing the masses for taking part in any challenging issues. Donors contribute to the implementation of *Imihigo* when funding submitted different projects relating to the Local Governments priorities. In the point (3.2.1), the facts of the implementation of citizens were highlighted.

3.1.4 Imihigo Monitoring and Evaluation

The concept note on *Imihigo* provides that the monitoring exercise is carried out jointly by the Line Ministries funding the *Umuhigo* with District authorities, JADF and the Province to check out if the progress of what has been planned is really going well while evaluation is carried out by the Central Government from 2006 up 2012/13 to assess the achievements (MINALOC 2010: 12). The table (5) below shows the responsible organs and individuals for preparing, monitoring and evaluating in order to track the progress and evaluate the achievements of *Imihigo*.

Table 5: *Imihigo* Monitoring and Evaluation matrix

Level	<i>Imihigo</i> preparation	Monitoring	Evaluation
Village	Village Executive Committee	Village Executive Committee	Village Executive Council and Cell Executive Secretary
Cell	Cell Executive Secretariat	Cell Executive Secretariat Cell Council	Sector Council and Sector Executive Secretary
Sector	Sector Executive Secretary	Sector Executive Secretariat and Council	District Council and District Executive Committee
District	District Executive Committee agreed with District Joint Action Development Forum	District Executive Committee; District Council, Governor of Province or Mayor of Kigali City	On a year basis, the National evaluation team composed of the officials from the Central Government

Source: MINALOC (2010:13)

3.1.5 Imihigo Scoring and Grading System

Imihigo performance contract has scored and graded differently with two kinds of evaluation systems.

3.1.5.1 Previous evaluation of Imihigo from 2006 to 2013

Since 2006, *Imihigo* evaluation was previously carried out by the Central Government team made of representative of Sector Ministries and the leading institution was MINALOC. Because of the close relationship between MINALOC and local government officials, sometimes it brought the biases during the evaluation process where some weaknesses could not be highlighted because of shared responsibility among MINALOC and Districts. For instance, if MINALOC fails to make an advocacy and lobbying to MINECOFIN and the District fails, the evaluation of achieved can be fair. This was happened on the rehabilitation of the Gicumbi Hospital.

Note that, as per the evaluation report of the fiscal year 2012-2013, most of the District scored above 90% and Gicumbi was the last with 90 %. Districts performance for 2012/2013 was impressive, with an average score of 94% and Gicumbi ranked at the last position with 90% (MINALOC 2013:21). According to the same concept note (MINALOC 2010:15), the evaluation team scored and graded *Imihigo* performance as it is shown in the table (6) below.

Table 6: Imihigo Scoring and grading structure

Percentage (%) implementation of completed activities	Score
90-100	10
80-89	9
70-79	8
60-69	7
50-59	6
40-49	5
30-39	4
20-29	3
10-19	2
5-9	1
0-5	0

Source: MINALOC (2010:15)

Note that where there is no evidence, the activity is scored as not accomplished and gets a nil score (MINALOC 2010:15). When the scoring is complete; the scores is calculated according to the following structure to get a combined total score of 100%³ Economic 60%, 30% for Social and 10% for Governance (including Justice) (MINALOC 2010:15). According to the same concept note on *Imihigo* planning and evaluation, ‘activities under each pillar form a combined total score of 100 which is then adjusted to the equivalent weight of the pillar, for example, the economic pillar total score will be converted to a combined score of 60’ (MINALOC 2010:16). The table (7) below shows the grading of average of scores of *Imihigo* implementation.

Example: = Economic Score X 60
100

³ See the details on this website: <http://www.rwandapedia.rw/explore/imihigo>. Accessed on 23 September 2015.

Table 7: Grading of average of scores of *Imihigo* implementation

Administrative entities	Average score of implementation of <i>Imihigo</i> (%)	Grade and Traffic light rating
	90-100	Achieved
	50-89	Partially Achieved
	0- 49	Not Achieved

Source: MINALOC (2010: 16)

As it is explained in the concept note designed by MINALOC in 2010, green colour indicated that the activity was either accomplished or completed satisfactorily or will respect the time. Yellow colour designated that the target was not reached to a reasonable level; but that it is still possible to achieve the target if suitable actions and measures are taken and red colour showed that the target was impossible to be realised despite actions and measures; either because of internal poor management or external factors (MINALOC 2010:16).

3.1.5.2 New approach of evaluation from 2013-2014

After observing that the score and grade did not match with the socio economic transformation at District, the Government of Rwanda changed the evaluation system; hence, the independent panel was hired since the fiscal year 2013-2014. This evaluation introduces a new method in scoring and assigns weights based on the disparity in resources required to achieve a set target (IPAR 2014:13). That method is a balanced scorecard and takes into consideration the following elements:

‘The quality of documentation provided against which achievements are claimed, the accuracy of the information, the clarity (coherence) of the content (objective, output, baseline, indicators, targets, and achievements) of each item, as well as the extent to which the item is challenging in terms invested efforts and most importantly whether it contributes to local and national development goals’ (IPAR 2014:13).

The criteria for evaluation were set up for avoiding the subjectivity and attribute various weights as it is showed in the table (8). The criteria are based on the level to which the outcomes contribute to the realization of District and national development goals and each item was measured against these criteria and assigned scores in relation to its achievement status (IPAR 2014:14).

Table 8: Criteria for weighing *Imihigo*

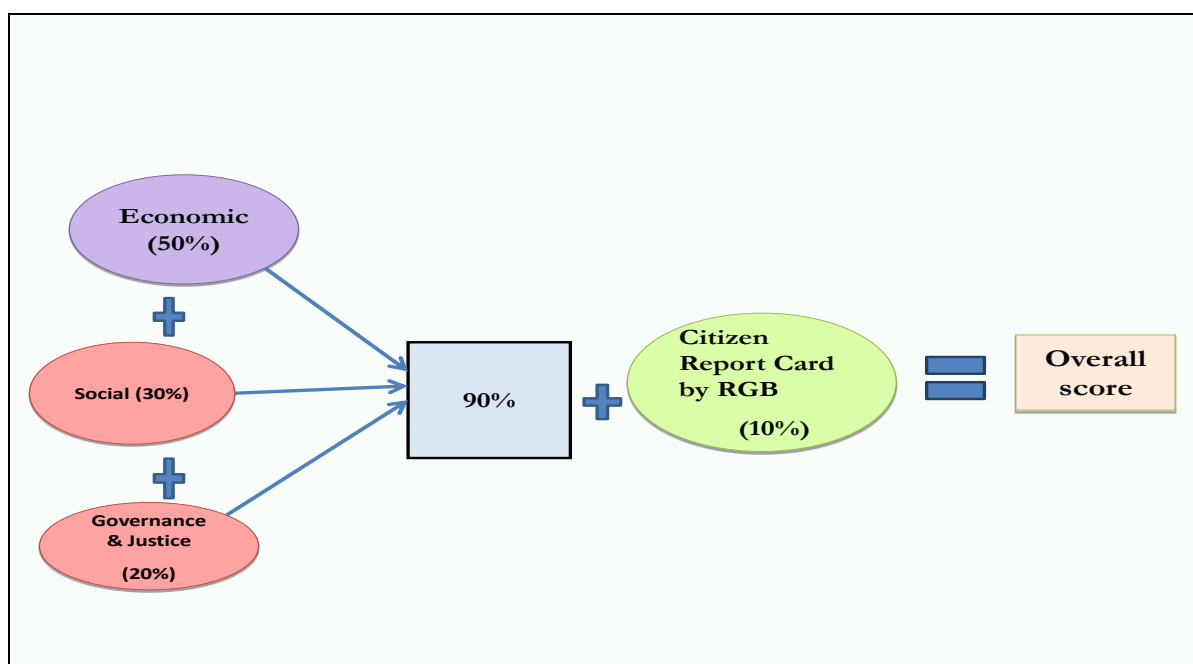
Criteria	Range in %	Explanatory notes
Extent to which <i>Imihigo</i> contribute towards achieving national development agenda (70%)		
Minimal	1-20	Minimal contribution to DDP and EDPRS priorities, requires negligible efforts, can be classified as routine activity, can be achieved in short period with minimal resources, and does imply specific skills and capacities.
Moderate	21-50	Reasonable contribution to DDP and EDPRS priorities. Its achievement requires reasonable efforts (time, financial resources, skills, mobilization...)
Greater	51-70	Greater contribution to DDP and EDPRS priorities. Its achievement requires significant efforts (time, financial resources, skills, mobilization...)
Availability of the documentation and quality of information provided (30%)		

Poor documentation and poor information	1-5	Provided documentation is insufficient or no supporting documents.
Partial documentation but with quality information, Relationship between measurements	6-19	Fair part of the documentation is provided with quality information.
Full required documentation and quality information,	20-30	Significant documentation is available and provide quality

Source: Adapted from IPAR (201:14), Final report of *Imbigo* Evaluation Fiscal year 2013-2014

Furthermore, the citizen satisfaction is also integrated in the balanced scored card as indicator of utility, effectiveness and impact (IPAR 2014:14). The balanced scorecard lastly reflects the results from the ‘citizen report card’⁴ carried out by the RGB and this is given 10 percent of the general performance mark as it illustrated below in the figure (3) below.

Figure 3: Balanced Scorecard



Source: IPAR (2014:15)

⁴ Citizen report card focuses on the extent to which citizens in different districts are satisfied by service delivery on following nine indicators: Education, Agriculture and Livestock, Local Government, Justice, Infrastructure, Health, Economic welfare, Land and Governance issues (IPAR 2013:12).

3.2 Main features of official evaluation and ranking of the process of *Imihigo* implementation in Gicumbi District

District of Gicumbi took into consideration the national and international priorities in *Imihigo* process when identifying local priorities from DDPs comprising the District priorities during the period between 2009 and 2014. The prioritized activities are first discussed with different District stakeholders including NGOs, civil society and private Sector for their common understanding and consideration. During this process, the District technicians benefit the technical assistance of the quality assurance technical team from Central Government institutions (MINALOC 2010:6). After the signing ceremony of *Imihigo*, District authorities communicate citizens the content of committed *Imihigo* for the implementation step forward.

3.2.1 *Imihigo* Implementation in Gicumbi District

Imihigo of Gicumbi District have been implemented through four ways: Firstly, the participation of the citizens through either community work or financial contribution. For instance, through ‘community work’, the citizens of Gicumbi District take part, in digging radical terracing, constructing 9 and 12 years basic education classrooms and paying health insurance as it is shown by the pictures below (1, 2, and 3).

Figure 4: Pictures of citizens of Shangasha during the community work



Source: Archive of the District (2012) available on Gicumbi website: www.gicumbi.gov.rw

The figure (4) above shows the picture of some citizens of Shangasha during the community works on 27 August 2012 with Governor of Northern Province and Mayor of Gicumbi digging steep slopes terracing and creating roads.

Figure 5: Picture of citizens of Byumba during the community work



Source: Archive of the District (2013) available on Gicumbi website: www.gicumbi.gov.rw

The figure (5) above shows the pictures of the citizens participating in the community works by constructing 9&12 Years Basic education on 29 July 2013.

Figure 6: Health insurance/Byumba Sector



Source: Archive of the District (2013) available on Gicumbi website: www.gicumbi.gov.rw

This figure (6) above shows the pictures of some citizens of Byumba Sector after getting their insurance health card in the Byumba health center, in fiscal year 2012-2013.

Secondly, the use of national budget allotted. The sector ministries and the Government agencies earmark the budget to the District for implementing the projects incorporated in *Imibigo*

of the District. Thirdly, *Imihigo* are implemented by District own revenues from taxes and duties. Fourthly, District of Gicumbi implements *Imihigo* donors fund as it is indicated in below table (9):

Table 9: Financial resources of Gicumbi District 2009-2014, in Rwandan Francs (B=Billions, M= Millions)

Sources	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Central Government Transfers	5 B	7 B	8.2 B	8.6 B	9 B
Government agency Grants	248 M	345 M	424 M	338 M	369 M
District own revenues	268 M	365 M	476 M	1.4 B	1.6 B
Donors fund	1 B	2 B	1 B	1 B	421 B
Total Budget	6,5 B	9,6 B	10.5 B	11,3 B	11,4 B

Source: Compilation from District council resolutions from 2009 to 2014.

It is very important to mention that the budget for every fiscal year covered the development projects and recurrent expenditures like salaries, for instance. As the table shows well, in the fiscal year 2009-2010 comparing with other years, the financial resources were insufficient for implementing the budgeted development projects. For example, the District own revenues were insignificant amount even for the following year up to 2012. But the District was ranked at the second position. It may be the result of well public fund management.

According to Rwanda decentralization policy (2012):

‘...For the Local Government to carry out decentralized functions effectively, they must have adequate and predictable flow of income. Local Government incomes will normally comprise of locally raised revenues (tax and non-tax revenue) and Central Government grants’⁵ (MINALOC 2012:18).

This was done in the implementation of fiscal decentralisation which is defined as the transfer of funds, resources to local government in order to implement the local development projects (Awortwi 2011:352).

As the table (8) shows well, the Government of Rwanda has kept increasing the transfers to the local government but still insufficient as long as the District was asked to implement development projects at the needed target and indicator. However, the trend is high because every year, the transfers to the local entities are increased. But, one can say that the financial constraint can be among of the various factors to the poor performance. Nevertheless, insufficient budget can not necessarily lead to poorly perform because the District with almost the same budget performed well like those we have in the table (1). For example, Bugesera had almost the same amount in those years, in 2009-2010, 6,6 billion Rwandan francs, 2010-2011, 9,5 Billions, in 2012-2013, almost the same, 11,4 Billions⁶ and there was no fluctuations in the performance. May be there were other factors that can be behind of that poor performance of Gicumbi District. Therefore, in the chapter 4, some of those factors will be highlighted by the local stakeholders.

⁵ Block grants are generally non-conditional while earmarked funds are conditional i.e. allocated to specific activities such as teachers’ salaries.

⁶For the budget of Bugesera District, retrieved on website: www.bugeseraDistrict.gov.rw. Accessed on 29 September 2015

3.2.2 District Evaluation Process of the Implementation of Imihigo

Before the evaluation was done at the District level by national team or external evaluators, District organized itself the evaluation of *Imihigo* at the lower level. It has become a culture that every fiscal year, the team made up of the Cell Executive Secretaries and the members of Cell Councils evaluate *Imihigo* at every Village and rank them. The Sector Councils and Executive Secretaries have carried out the evaluation of Cells and ranked them and finally the District with its stakeholders evaluated the Sectors and ranked them at a year basis and the evaluation is led by District Council and District Executive Committee. In Gicumbi District, all of these organs respectively evaluate the project, program and policy aligning with the government pillar being or having been achieved at Gicumbi sub-District entities using systematic and objective assessment techniques.

The results out of all sub-District entities showing the image of achieved and not achieved objectives are summarized and submitted to the organ which organized the evaluation. The evaluation report of *Imihigo* at Sector level are reported annually to the District Executive Committee for giving feedback on *Imihigo* at Sector level and ranking them. And the evaluation team at Sector level submits the evaluation report to the Sector Executive Secretaries for giving feedback to Cell authorities about the performance and those authorities have done it likewise and give feedback to the villages about their performance.

3.2.3 National Ranking of Imihigo Achievement

The national evaluation team or the external evaluator makes a comprehensive and detailed District *Imihigo* evaluation report including the District performance ranking for instance in the fiscal year 2013-2014 where Gicumbi District was ranked at 14th position resulted from the addition of the performance scores in Economic, Social and Governance(including Justice). But it scored lastly in the performance score for Governance and Justice at 69.3%⁷. After the District *Imihigo* evaluation exercise, District of Gicumbi is ranked basing on the achievements performance. In this regard, District authorities also have to give the feedback to the citizens and other stakeholders about the strengths and the weaknesses so as to improve the areas of weakness for the next *Imihigo*.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that *Imihigo* in Rwanda led to the development of the country in general, still there are cases in which they have been relatively challenged. For instance, in Gicumbi District, the process of *Imihigo* seems to remain theoretical rather than practical, because their evaluation between 2009 and 2014 came up with a lot of inconsistencies in their achievement. This has been shown by the dramatic variations in performance in the period stated above. In this perspective, the questioning arises about the factors behind these dramatic variations in *Imihigo* performance in this District during the period 2009-2014, the role of citizen participation and official accountability in this situation.

⁷ See the appendix 2: Results from the Scorecard for Economic, Social and Governance and Justice Pillars of Fiscal year 2013-2014

Chapter 4 Explanation of the dramatic variations in *Imihigo* Performance in Gicumbi District during the period 2009-2014

This chapter deals with the findings from the primary data collection. Therefore, the first point shows out the factors that influenced the inconsistencies of *Imihigo* performance. The second point analyses the role played by the citizen participation and official accountability in the performance differences of Gicumbi District during the period between 2009 and 2014.

4.1 Factors explaining the differences in *Imihigo* Performance in Gicumbi District

The differences in *Imihigo* contract were experienced by Gicumbi District during the period between 2009 and 2014 as follows: In 2009 and 2010, the District was ranked at the second position, 2010 -2011 the 27th position; 2011-2012, 25th, 2012-2013 the last position (30th) and 2013-2014 at the 14th rank. These remarkable inconsistencies were differently explained by local stakeholders within the District during the fieldwork when asked to give the factors about the inconsistencies.

In general, all of the respondents appreciated the idea of *Imihigo* as an excellent approach to speed up the local development meeting the decentralization policies. They even mentioned some achievements of *Imihigo* in Gicumbi like land use consolidation, one cow per poor family, construction of 9YBE classrooms, steep slopes terracing, and provision of water and electricity and feeder roads. But, most of them came back to the weaknesses and gaps they found in *Imihigo* process in Gicumbi District during the period from 2009 to 2014.

4.1.1 Factors behind *Imihigo* participatory planning

The *Imihigo* participatory planning was a problem in Gicumbi District between the period between 2009 and 2014. During the FGDs, citizens claimed that the district sets priorities and submit to them for implementation whereas they were not consulted. They said: ‘...*The District set priorities and submit to us for implementation whereas we did not participate and were not consulted*’ (FGDs, Shangasha and Byumba, on 24th and 27th July 2015). Globally, local authorities from District to Cell level showed out that in the planning of *Imihigo* there was no effective participation of either citizens or the authorities at the District level. As one of them pointed out:

‘...After the preparation of Imihigo at cell and Sector level, we submit them to the District. But at this level, no one of us even citizen representative (Council) is called upon to take part in Imihigo planning instead we are presented the final document containing priorities and targets on agenda. This may have been prepared by one staff in charge of planning, monitoring and evaluation in frank collaboration with Mayor of the District’ (Interview with Sector Executive Secretaries, Gicumbi, 15 July 2015).

Another key factor in participatory planning that may have caused the differences in *Imihigo* in Gicumbi is top down planning instead of bottom up at the District level. This was held by one woman who said: ‘... *Normally, we may be choosing our own priorities basing on our needs. But as we realize it, our Cell Executive Secretary comes with already prepared Imihigo document summarizing the cell priorities far different from ours. Then we implement*’ (FGD, Shangasha, on 24th July 2015). This one indicated that planning comes from the superior organs having wrongly defined priorities while this process might have started from the people themselves.

Furthermore, the former District Council member revealed two things on which variations of *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi at the stage of implementation are based. She asserted that first there was a lower ownership of planning of *Imibigo* at District level. Second, the planning of *Imibigo* does not refer to the needs of the citizens instead it refers to the national policies, programs and projects. As a result, in most of the cases, citizens are forced and even imposed to pay fines whenever they fail to implement the due activities. This situation mostly occurs during the failure to report on community work dedicated to constructing the nine and Twelve Year basic Education classrooms.

Besides, absence of sharing the information and teamwork spirit among District officials were mentioned as another factor in the participatory planning having contributed to the dramatic variations of performance of Gicumbi. This factor was far highlighted by one of the former District Councillor who said ‘...once we were having a department to department visit at District, curiously we requested *Imibigo* document 2011-2012 under implementation to one of the staff, surprisingly she did find any planning documents including *Imibigo*. She explained that the in charge of planning do not cooperate and do not share such documents’ (Interview with the former member of Gicumbi District Council, on 14th July 2015). This implies the indifference from the different staff of the District about *Imibigo*.

4.1.2 Factors behind confusing citizen participation

Most of respondents and participants raised globally the issue of citizen participation due to poor mobilization and hot issue-based selection of local authorities and limited financial means. Putting them together made the citizen participation very complex hence the inconsistencies of performance in Gicumbi. The interviewees generally pointed out that poor mobilization skill of local authorities affected the citizen participation in the implementation of *Imibigo* in Gicumbi. One of the interviewees explained:

‘...I could confirm that during the period 2009 and 2012, Local governments experienced a serious of fresh graduates who were appointed just after school. These ones having not experienced and even enough skills to mobilize people to the idea of Imibigo. Even these new authorities were not fully informed and trained about Imibigo. They acted in one way as technicians in the other as dictators. This ended in bringing about the misleading and disgust of the population. Really, in that period, the citizens needed wise leaders rather than technicians’ (Interview with District official, on 13th July 2015).

This factor was further noted by the staff working at Cell level: ‘... Just at the end of my secondary school, I was appointed to rule the Cell without having benefited any basic skills in mobilization and even the induction training to the tasks meant to accomplish. This affected the whole exercise ahead to me in terms of encouraging people to participate in the activities affecting their communities’ (Interview with the Cell Executive Secretary, on 16th July 2015). Several participants of FGDs mentioned that they suffered a lot from the authorities’ unwise orders given to them especially when they were asked to participate in not clearly defined development programs and projects. One of them from the FGD of female in Shangasha Sector stressed that:

‘... Our Cell Executive Secretary used to impose activities to implement without explaining their purpose to the population. Even when he did so, he failed to convince us. For instance, in fiscal year 2011-2012, he imposed us to grow wheat in our Cell because he had not given the clear reason for it, people resisted. Thereafter, we knew from the meeting with the Mayor when he visited us in January 2013, that wheat growing was one of District Imibigo contract’ (FGD, Shangasha, on 24th July 2015).

Other factor that came across in the interview with the local authorities was the limited financial means of the citizens of Gicumbi District. They all asserted that a citizen may be accurately mobilized, have a good mind set, led by able leaders and be literate but limited financial means can

prevent him from taking part in *Imibigo* contract process. This occurred so many times when it came to participating in *Imibigo* demanding financial contribution. For instance, contribution of the Community based health insurance, contribution to Construction of 9-12 basic education classrooms, buying soil fertilizers.

From this perspective, it is very important to indicate that, according to the Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey conducted by National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda from 2011 to 2014, Gicumbi is positioned at the second to have 55, 2% of poor people and 24.7% people with extreme poverty⁸. This factor influenced much the performance variations of Gicumbi District. This situation was showed out by all interviewed District officials that among the activities planned in *Imibigo*, there are some activities that should be implemented by citizens themselves and others on the budget of the District and the national budget.

In this case, during the period of 2009-2014, the citizens did not well contribute in the implementation of *Imibigo* because of the poverty. Not only the District officials confirmed this situation of limited financial means, but also all of the participants from the four FGDs emphasized on the factor. This remains a very deep and effective cause of differences in *Imibigo* performance of Gicumbi

4.1.3 Factors behind poor monitoring exercise

When carrying out the interviews and FGDs, there was a common view on the fact that the monitoring exercise of the *Imibigo* planned activities implementation was very poor between 2009 and 2014. The reasons for this situation were stated by local authorities and the participants of FGDs. The interviewees stressed that the poor monitoring exercise rooted from the weak coordination of the *Imibigo* activities by District authorities. One of the former District Councillors informed:

‘... in 2012, I and my colleagues used to receive the citizens’ petitions about for example, the contractors who abandoned the construction of health centers and cells offices and who even left the works under constructions without having paid the workers. When we reported this on behalf of the citizens to the District Executive Committee members, they often promised to make a follow up of the mentioned issues. However, as we remarked it so long nothing had been done’ (Interview with one former member of Gicumbi District Council, on 14th July 2015).

Citizens were not part of monitoring and evaluation of *Imibigo* of the District but represented through the Councils at each level of administration (District, Sector, Cell and Village) by the elected delegates. One of the official working at Sector level stated that the elected delegates have generally the low level of skills in terms of monitoring and evaluation and even some of them do not have enough ownership of *Imibigo*. This was further highlighted and confirmed by District official who insinuated that: *‘... one thing that I remarked during the period between 2009 and 2012, is that no regular and consistent monitoring was carried out at the extent that even the national evaluation team used to reach the District for the exercise while District evaluation team had not yet monitored the implementation of Imibigo at the lower local levels’* (Interview with one former member of Gicumbi District Council, on 14th July 2015).

Another factor that was mostly highlighted by many of our interviewees was evidence of self-interest of the District Executive Committee members. These ones spent most of their time in looking for where they could gain money in *Imibigo* planned activities. By this working envi-

⁸For more details, see NISR (2014) Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey Report (EICV 2011-2014), Kigali. Consulted on 12 August 2015. Available on this website <<http://www.statistics.gov.rw/publications>>.

ronment, the monitoring exercise became impossible because any one could not allow the supervision of any activities in which he/she would gain the profit.

In efforts to know more about the factors related to the poor monitoring exercise, the one of interviewed Sector Executive Secretary noted that during the period between 2009 and 2014, there were the issues of understaffing at Cell and Sector level and lack of operational funds for using in the transportation and communication. Our respondent from Sector level reported that one day at the meeting with District authorities, Sector Executive Secretaries were recommended to monitor the progress of *Imibigo* in their respective Sectors. This task was very hard and seemingly impossible because no facilities were availed in term of means of transport and communication.

4.1.4 Factors behind non-accountable authorities

During the interviews and FGDs, majority of respondents evoked the factors behind non-accountability of Gicumbi District authorities as the main causes for the dramatic variations in relation to *Imibigo* performance of the District between 2009 and 2014. In general, participants mentioned the factors such as bureaucracy of the District authorities, lower level of commitment and lack of trust and citizen unawareness of their responsibility to ask for the failure' explanations from their authorities.

Bureaucracy of the District authorities was highlighted by the member of JADF at District level when he said they have never seen any District authority meeting the population for giving the feedback to them about the performance of the District (Interview with JADF member, on 14th July 2015). He continued saying that if this happened; citizens would have been informed of the areas of weakness to improve on in *Imibigo* activities as far as they feel shocked when District poorly performs. The participant from the FGDs of Byumba Sector so far indicated: '*...May be District authorities discuss about the District performance situation at the end of every fiscal year with our representatives at District level who are supposed to inform us about the resolutions before the District authorities meets us*' (FGD, Byumba, on 27th July 2015). It seems that either Councillors or technicians at Sector and Cell levels keep the secret of the reasons for failure.

Lower level of commitment and lack of trust of District authorities in the citizens were another factor raised by the citizens during the FGD of Shangasha Sector. The participants stressed that the local authorities are not committed to the citizens. For example, when they are requested to advocate for them in terms of imposed *Umubigo* activity adjustment, they do not consider the citizens petition and insist on it. Moreover, they are very often unstable in their decision making. A woman participant confirmed:

'... during the farming season B 2012, the Sector agronomist delimited wheat crop farming surface to us, we made him know that it was not convenient wheat farming season instead beans and maize would better match the season. He promised to advance the petition to his superiors. What is possible is that he did not go there because after a short time, he came back with the imposition. We accepted growing wheat. After, he came again telling us to cultivate beans and maize. When the national evaluation team came to our Sector, we were ashamed because no wheat farming surfaces were found' (FGD, Shangasha, on 24th July 2015).

This working manner might cause in one hand the dramatic variations in the performance of the District. An unawareness of the citizens to ask for the failure' explanation from their authorities was also raised by FGDs participants as another surprising factor. The fact that citizens are unaware of their responsibility to address authorities on the failures of some *Imibigo*, authorities remained silent and found unreasonable to make accounts to the people. The gaps and other issues possible to affect *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi were not identified and overcome.

4.1.5 Other factors behind the dramatic variations in Imihigo performance

Dramatic differences in *Imihigo* performance in Gicumbi were not only caused by the above identified factors by using interviews and FGDs but also some discovered after checking unpublished documents and websites of the District at the District. The table (10) below summarizes the situation.

Table 10: Other factors having influenced the variations in performance of Gicumbi

Nº	Factors	Explanations
1	Poor management of the District affairs	Poor coordination of the District affairs. For example, poor communication between District and lower entities; Misuse of the allocated budget to the District. For example failing to pay contractors while the budget provided to them is kept at the account of the District.
2	Financial constraint	Budget constraint from Central Government Insufficient of District own revenues
3	Human resource management	Poor employees motivation (Lack of facilities, delay in salary payment, a few specialized trainings) High turnover rate of District employees
4	Over ambition in defining priorities and targets	Over confidence of District authorities in <i>Imihigo</i> planning. For example, in 2012 the District committed to build modern villages in one year.

Source: Our own construction, based on unpublished District documents

To sum up, the lists of factors highlighted above that influenced the inconsistencies of the performance of Gicumbi district are not exhaustive and cumulative. Perhaps other factors rather than these could be discovered and one or two can influence the inconsistencies. However, the majority of our respondents insisted on the crucial and preeminent role played by the low participation of the citizens and the absence of accountability of local officials in the variations of the performance of Gicumbi from the period 2009 to 2014.

4.2 Role of Citizen Participation and Accountability in the performance differences

After identifying local people explanations and related factors for the dramatic variations in *Imihigo* performance of Gicumbi, it is our concern in this point to determine what might have been the role of citizen participation and accountability as two key factors selected for special attention in such differences because from 2009 to 2014, each year presents its own specificity in terms of performance and ranking. There may be citizens and authorities played a vital role.

4.2.1 Role of Citizen Participation

From 2009 to 2014, citizen participation in Gicumbi is found to be changing year by year due to different situations and this affected much the District performance.

In the fiscal year 2009-2010, the District was ranked second out of thirty Districts of Rwanda in *Imihigo* achievements. This rank is visibly high and one may wonder how a District can achieve *Imihigo* at this extent without citizen involvement in the District *Imihigo* process. Different participants gave a common view about this ranking confirming that there was low level

of citizen participation in *Imihigo* process in Gicumbi despite the best ranking. For example, one of the interviewee revealed that ‘really, even if the District performed well, it was by accidents through what is called “Gutekinika” (reports manipulation).The District benefited much from the time when *Imihigo* evaluation was not yet standardized’ (Interview with District official, Gicumbi, on 13th July 2015) and one official further explained further that ‘the orator leaders were ones who performed well’. Because Gicumbi District had a public speaker Mayor, he used to convince the evaluators and got the best marks without physical achievements on field.

Moreover, the short survey of attitudes for the public conducted on twenty civil society and private sector elites, nine of them meaning 45% asserted that citizen participation in *Imihigo* process during that period was low while seven out of twenty equivalent to 35% declared very low the citizen participation and four being 20% did not answer to our question.

In the fiscal year 2010 to 2011, the District was ranked at 27th position. This time, respondents of the interviews, FGDs and mentioned that the citizens stood as implementers of the set *Imihigo* of the District but not as fully participants in the whole *Imihigo* process. This made them attribute the failure of the District to District authorities themselves. They did not accept any role in that failure as long as they did what they called to do. Besides, the short survey of attitudes for the public carried out on twenty civil society and private sector elites, eleven of them corresponding to 55% stated that citizen participation was low while five out of twenty equal to 25 % confirmed less high the citizen participation and four being 20% very low.

At end of the fiscal year 2012-2013, the District was ranked at the last position (30th). As we mentioned it above, the citizen participation in *Imihigo* in Gicumbi was very low hence the last position of the District. This is shown in the interviews, FGDs and short survey carried out. The participants of both FGDs from Byumba and Shangasha Sectors insisted on evident very low citizen’s participation and recalled:

‘...It is clear that our District ranked the last. It is a shame on us. May be the District authorities did not do their best to mobilize us in the achieving Imihigo because it is said that the District administration was re-shuffling but also the citizens did not implement some Imihigo demands. For instance, they resisted to wheat growing due to lack of interest and contribute to health insurance because of sudden reforms in health Sector such as unstable fixing amount of money to pay’ (FGDs, Shangasha and Byumba, on 24th and 27th July 2015).

The District was ranked at 14th rank in the fiscal year 2013-2014. This significant shifting of the District rank from 30th to 14th is the result of different factors including the enhancement of the citizen participation through District reorganization and election of new authorities of the District who aspired to involve citizens in *Imihigo* process to lift up the development of the District. This was highlighted by one of the current District Executive Committee members:

‘... To shift from the last position in Imihigo performance ranking to the present position, we performed well because we emphasized on giving voice and trust to citizens and other stakeholders in the District, managing well the District budget, strengthening participatory planning at all levels, improving on monitoring and evaluation process and instilling team working environment’ (Interview with current District authorities, Gicumbi, on 13th July 2015).

Furthermore, the idea of involving citizens in the *Imihigo* process especially in their preparation was supplemented by participants of both FGDs. A woman participant acknowledged: *‘... I remember that in 2013, in a meeting our leader explained deeply Imihigo process and encouraged us to set families Imihigo priorities to be included in our Cell Imihigo. We did so and he used to check up the implementation and evaluation in collaboration with our village leaders’* (FGD, Byumba, on 27th July 2015).

From the above identified levels of the role of citizen participation in variations in *Imibigo* performance of Gicumbi, it seems that there was in general the low citizen participation in *Imibigo* process hence the poor performance of the District during the period between 2009 and 2014. The reason advanced throughout our research is that citizens did not participate because of the leadership of the District itself. The District authorities did not pay attention to the citizens' capacity in achieving *Imibigo*. This is shown by the fact that when they started centering their *Imibigo* process to the citizen, the District *Imibigo* performance ranking changed positively, for example in 2013-2014.

4.2.2 Role of Accountability of officials

As it has been mentioned in above point (4.1), accountability of officials of Gicumbi played a crucial role in the performance inconsistencies. During our research we found out that between 2009 and 2014, Gicumbi officials felt never be responsible for giving feedback to the citizens and other stakeholders about *Imibigo* achievement trend. This would have allowed a space for the population to object on gaps and maybe seek together with their authorities for possible remedies and more increase participation zeal as far as the *Imibigo* accomplishment becomes the common goal for the District.

All respondents interviewed explained that no feedback on *Imibigo* achievement and ranking was given to the citizens of Gicumbi. Instead they recalled that only the feedback was given to the Councillors and Sector Executive Secretaries who then accepted not having met anymore the population for communicating the information provided from their superiors to their respective local population. This was noted by one of the Sector Executive Secretaries as follows: '... *We never met the population for the feedback because we were ashamed most of the time and this led to keep quiet for not being blamed by the population*' (Interview with Sector Executive Secretaries in July 2015). This was further clarified by the civil society and private sector elites that participated in a short survey where they indicated that the period within which District poorly ranked was characterized by lower level of official's accountability. The table (11) below summarizes the situation.

Table 11: Levels of accountability between 2009 and 2014 (N=20)

Fiscal year	Level	District rank	Surveyors/20	Percentage (%)
2009-2010	Low	2	14	70*
2010-2011	Low	27	12	60
2011-2012	Very low	25	13	65
2012-2013	Very low	30	13	65
2013-2014	High	14	17	85*

Source: Primary data from short survey.

According to table (11) above, the levels of accountability match with the District performance ranking in *Imibigo* achievements. However, it is found to be different in 2009-2010 where the District was ranked the second while the level was low as it was shown by 14 surveyors out of 20 equalling to 70 per cent. This was explained by one of the District authorities as it was the fact that *Imibigo* were not yet well standardized and the rank was given by accident.

Moreover, in 2013-2014, the level was high and the rank was improved as it was revealed by 17 surveyors out of 20 corresponding to 70 per cent. This was due to the fact that the new elected District authorities identified the issue and the consequence of not being accountable to the citizens and gave them voice and trust, hence the shifting from the last to 14th position. Therefore, the participants of FGDs confirmed that the local authorities did never approach them for discussing about the outcomes of *Imibigo* achievements as far as the rank of the District

used to be alarming. They went on explaining that if the feedback was made to them, there would have been change of mindset and perceptions on how to overcome the gaps to the best performance of the District.

Conclusion

This chapter firstly dealt with the factors that local stakeholders highlighted which influenced the dramatic variations in *Imihigo* performance in Gicumbi District during the period 2009-2014. The role of both citizen participation and official accountability were mainly given in the differences of *Imihigo* performance. Low levels of participation as well as accountability of officials were identified as key elements leading to the performance inconsistencies of the District.

Chapter 5 Citizen Participation and Official Accountability in relation to *Imihigo* Performance inconsistencies in Gicumbi District

This chapter returns to a more general level, to analyse the relationship between citizen participation, accountability and *Imihigo* performance inconsistencies understood through conceptual, theoretical and practical perspectives in the context of Gicumbi. This will be done by applying the frameworks presented in chapter 2 to the findings from the field for the influence of citizen participation and official accountability as well as performance management on *Imihigo* dramatic variations of the District performance rank over the period 2009-2014. This chapter is subdivided into three points: The first deals with the analysis of Arnstein's ladder framework and effects of citizen participation on *Imihigo* performance. The second then underlines the influence of accountability according to UNDP (2010), Goetz and Jenkins 2005 in McGee and Gaventa 2010: 4) frameworks on accountability in *Imihigo* process in Gicumbi and the third, analysis of performance management approach with the empirical finding by referring to Ohemeng.

5.1 Levels and effects of Citizen Participation in Gicumbi *Imihigo* process

As Arnstein (1969:219) observes '...When power holders limit the input of citizens' ideas merely to this level, participation rests just a window-dressing ritual'. This means that the citizen participation becomes passive as long as their ideas are not considered during the *Imihigo* process. Her framework gives an insight into levels of citizen participation and the ways they change upward within rungs. Arnstein (1969:220) notes that the ways the rungs are increased, and the levels improved, vary according to the purpose for which they are used. As indicated in chapter 2, the application of this framework in the context of this research is limited to the analysis of the levels of citizen participation in *Imihigo* process in Gicumbi.

Regarding the levels of participation and their application in District *Imihigo* process, one of the three levels of citizen participation presented in the framework that was mentioned in the case of Gicumbi District is tokenism level. The *Imihigo* process of Gicumbi does not allow full citizen participation. Because the citizens lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful (Arnstein 1969:217). This means that citizens slightly take part in *Imihigo* process after being informed of their purpose.

When the citizens provide their own views on the planned activities, they are not sure of their views consideration. Most of the time, their suggestions were not answered. This was proved by the respondents and the participants of FGDs who expressed that their views were not taken into account in the District *Imihigo* process while they willed to participate. Interviewees and FGDs further revealed that *Imihigo* process was managed by the District technicians who prepared and involved in all stages from preparation to evaluation excluding citizens' voice. All participants agreed to have seen citizens called upon to implement only the planned activities. In fact, the level of the participation in *Imihigo* process of Gicumbi is limited to the level of tokenism corresponding to the rung of informing on the ladder of citizen participation.

On the informing rung of tokenism level, Arnstein (1969:219) notes: '...Informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and options can be the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation'. However, in Gicumbi District, information is given after the planning stage and citizens have little chance to affect the activities set for their interest. The level of citizen participation analysed above was shaped by the way the District administration operated in *Imihigo* process during the period between 2009 and 2014. As noted and discussed in chapter two by Arnstein, the emphasis that is too regularly put on a one-way flow of information-from

officials to citizens-with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation was identified in *Imihigo* process of Gicumbi.

Results from tokenism level of citizen participation affect *Imihigo* process and their performance 'as long as without full citizen engagement, development achievements are unlikely to be sustainable' (Olomu and Wunsch 2004:28). In this perspective, effects are found in the process of *Imihigo* and the District performance. The participants of FGDs revealed the poor performance of the District. The application of *Imihigo* process by District authorities in relation to the citizens ignored the local people full participation. It arose from the interviews and FGDs that the citizens were not given chance to participate in preparation of *Imihigo* as provided in *Imihigo* planning processes. But they were only informed and asked to implement *Imihigo* planned activities.

The local authorities of Gicumbi ignored the preeminent role of citizen participation in the performance. Dhungel (2007:5) explained clearly where he mentioned that: '...Active participation of the citizens in the management and decision making process will offer an opportunity to improve organizational performance'. The district could involve and consult the citizens in the process of *Imihigo* to increase the ownership and commitment to implement *Imihigo* for achieving successfully the *Imihigo* activities.

5.2 Forms and influences of Official Accountability in Gicumbi *Imihigo* process

According to UNDP(2010:6), '...an upward form of accountability exists when there is the answerability of lower ranks to a higher-level authority, such as that of Local Government bodies to a national body while a downward accountability exists when it is of a higher rank to a lower level'. In Gicumbi District, official accountability of the District authorities to their citizens can be best described as upward. Although, citizens are really not given the feedback of *Imihigo* achievements, many participants acknowledged that their District authorities sent the explanations to the Ministry of Local Government and expressed their will to be provided with the *Imihigo* performance difference.

The answerability that is looked at as the obligation of government, its agencies and public officials to deliver and avail information about their decisions and actions and to explain them to the citizens, was not very evident in Gicumbi *Imihigo* process (Goetz and Jenkins 2005 in McGee and Gaventa 2010: 4). But, it happened from the interview with former Councillor who explained that the District authorities used to provide information on *Imihigo* achievements to the representatives of the citizens (Councillors at all levels) and lower local authorities (Sector and Cell Executive Secretaries) hoping it could reach the local people.

Indeed, in the fiscal year 2013-2014, the District Executive Committee members indicated that there was an initiative to explain to the population the reasons for the poor performance in *Imihigo* achievements. However, from FGDs, there was no evidence of the Mayor and his deputies' direct contact with the citizens of Gicumbi. This result into with what Gibson et al. (2005:12) interprets as explanation of part of disconnects and distrust of the citizens towards their government and agencies.

Upward accountability was found to be the key element that explained inconsistencies in *Imihigo* performance of Gicumbi. Almost all of the interviewees and participants of FGDs made allusion to the reasons of the influence (force or inputs in performance) of accountability in *Imihigo* process and achievements of the District. This influence in performance goes with the actual level of tokenism of Gicumbi citizen participation as judged by the participants that the majority of local people are least involved in *Imihigo* process. It is asserted within the thinking of different

academics that ‘At the very least, even if participation is no longer accepted as a “miracle cure”, it is argued that building the nation without citizen’s consultation and consent is always a danger’(Olomu and Wunsch 2004:28).

Lastly, there is no indication of citizen power in Gicumbi District *Imibigo* process. As stated in chapter 2, citizen power should be the means by which citizens can induce significant reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the prosperous society (Arnstein 1969:216). Different testimonies on citizen power in the case of *Imibigo* process in Gicumbi offered in point 4.1 above show that power is in hands of the planning unit at the District.

Also, there was no evidence of downward accountability in Gicumbi. As identified in chapter 2, local authorities should be answerable to the citizens for increasing connection and trust between two sides so as to collectively enhance performance because to efficiently perform duties given, it necessitates a force that drives the performer to act responsibly (Gibson et al. 2005:12). In case of failure, they should face enforceability (Goetz and Jenkins 2005 in McGee and Gaventa 2010: 4). Many expressions about local authorities’ accountability in the case of Gicumbi given in point 4.2.2 above reveal that between 2009 and 2014, it remained the monopoly of the local authorities and Councillors at all levels. No downward accountability on the *Imibigo* process was signalled from the District sub-entities authorities to their respective community members.

5.3 Analysis of Performance Management Approach with the empirical findings

Gicumbi District performed poorly during the period 2009-2014. As argued by Armstrong and Baron 1998 that the performance can be affected by the leadership factor where the absence of quality of encouragement, guidance and support provided by the managers lead to poor performance. We linked this with the arguments of Ohemeng (2014:110) who stated that lack of political commitment and seriousness, the lack of incentives and lack of training are barriers to excellent performance of the organisational institutions.

Therefore, we can confirm that Gicumbi district could not perform well with these gaps and barriers. As Ohemeng (2014:110) argued that with political commitment and seriousness, the leaders are closer to their citizens and meet their needs and expectations. In contrast, if the local authorities of Gicumbi District do not approach their citizens, involving them in the activities affecting their community life, the performance may be impossible. As a result, the reluctance comes in and citizens do not implement planned activities. Citizen participation and active model followed by downward accountability and remove the barriers related to leadership and individual factors and the constraints to performance, Gicumbi district could lead to best performance but because that the performance management and performance contract lack mainly the strong leadership of the district authorities, citizen of participation and downward accountability cannot take into consideration in all domains.

In brief, in Gicumbi District, citizen participation was at tokenism level- low citizen participation and there was disconnection and mistrust- upward accountability as result, inconsistencies in performance. The following chapter delivers general conclusions and policy recommendations for this study.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

This research has aimed to investigate the factors explaining *Imibigo* performance inconsistencies in Gicumbi District during the period between 2009 and 2014. Factors that influenced the performance inconsistencies identified by local stakeholders were examined in depth. The role of citizen participation and official accountability in *Imibigo* process was the main focus. This study brought together conceptual and theoretical frameworks on models of citizen participation with a framework on stages and types of accountability to analyse the extent to which citizen's participation and official's accountability influenced the dramatic variations of *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi between 2009 and 2014.

Local stakeholders' explanations about the dramatic variations of *Imibigo* performance concerned mainly a lack of participatory planning at District level, low ownership of District authorities, poor monitoring exercises and non-accountable authorities. This arose from interviews with local authorities, JADFs Members, District planning unit staff, Councillors, participants of FGDs with local people as well as a short survey of attitudes with civil society and private sector elites. The research found that the problem of non-participation was visible in the process of *Imibigo* in Gicumbi namely the preparation and monitoring and evaluation stages.

Other related factors besides citizen participation and official accountability were also expressed by local stakeholders and in unpublished documents as being reasons for the dramatic variations. These include very top-down planning processes, hot issue-based selection of local authorities, weak coordination of *Imibigo* activities, limited financial means of citizens, the bureaucracy of local authorities, poor management of the District and weak leadership of the District authorities, as well as over ambition in defining priorities and targets combined with financial and human resource constraints. These factors played in one hand a given role in performance inconsistencies of the District. On the other hand, the research discovered that citizen participation in *Imibigo* process is at the level of tokenism and is mainly passive. This can be asserted to have had much influence over the level of *Imibigo* performance in the District though some respondents were involved in *Imibigo* process.

The research also found that the participation was very low, at the tokenism level of passive involvement. This may have resulted in some of the dramatic variations of *Imibigo* performance. In preparation of *Imibigo*, while District planning unit staff got some of their priorities from local people for inclusion in the District *Imibigo*, but did not consider the majority of these proposals because the local authorities also had to tackle pre-set government priorities. Citizens were not invited to present their needs in a direct way, but were asked to list them in writing, and simply submit them to their respective authorities, who would pass them up to the District for further consideration. When the final document was approved, however, local citizens informed the researcher that their priorities were hardly included. This way of operating did not mean that citizens were truly involved in *Imibigo* preparation, beyond tokenistic inputs. Instead it reflected the priorities of Central Government and the District authorities, and a neglect of local needs.

Moreover, the research indicates that citizens were called upon to implement the above prepared *Imibigo* without being consulted about how this should be done. Therefore, citizens seemed reluctant and even force, such as threats of fines, were used at times to convince them to take part in implementation of set *Imibigo* activities, such as classroom construction, land use consolidation or paying health insurance contributions. As a result, in such a manner, very few activities were implemented and evaluated as having been participatory. The study suggests that this did negatively affect *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi, especially after 2009 and before 2014.

In addition, the research has identified that the official accountability in *Imihigo* process is mainly of the upward type, especially during the period 2010-2014. The research showed that local authorities used to be answerable among themselves up to high institutions of the government. Citizens were not given the feedback of the state of *Imihigo* achievements. This situation bred disconnection, distrust of citizens towards their authorities. Accordingly, this negatively affects *Imihigo* performance in Gicumbi. There is a contrast that was noted by some research informants, between this earlier period and more recent developments, which have improved *Imihigo* performance of the District during the fiscal year 2013-14 and thereafter. Some citizens did recognize the attempt to introduce new forms of downward accountability during this recent period. And perhaps as a result, in 2013-14, the District was ranked at 14th, significantly better than its previous 30th position.

The overviews from this research paper call for a given number of recommendations. The first is to strengthen citizen participation from tokenism to at least to partnership level on Arnstein's ladder of participation. Whilst achieving citizen power might take longer, through short-term periodic trainings of local leaders and citizen representatives, the importance of citizen participation and downward accountability in the organizational performance can be appreciated by leaders and local citizens alike. Regular and open follow-up meetings, to learn lessons from implementation, would also be helpful. This could further improve *Imihigo* in Gicumbi District and overall performance. To enable citizens to express their views in public hearings, rather than only being represented by elected councillors or submitting issues in writing, means they could discuss and prioritise their needs and interests, so that leaders could give more meaningful feedback on these priorities of their voters. This would bring the citizens and local authorities back into a closer engagement with one another, putting them on good terms and increasing the chances that the working environment becomes conducive to achieving *Imihigo* goals within the District, year on year.

Generally, the administration of the District should be systematically organized so as to work for interest of citizens, and evidence of disorder and neglect by management is likely to damage performance of the District in *Imihigo* achievements. District officials should perhaps be encouraged to ensure sure *Imihigo* goals are also in line with citizens' expectations whilst still meeting national set priorities. For the Government of Rwanda, the ranking system of *Imihigo*, might be improved yet further

In this respect, this research suggests that a downward accountability needs strengthening as well as continued upward accountability, both for the purposes of ensuring that local officials, whether elected or not, feel themselves to be responsible for their actions. Local authorities have to be close to the citizens and need to provide feedback so that communities feel more fully part of overall economic and social activities that affect them. Performance may need to be even more carefully assessed in future, through establishing supplementary mechanisms that assess both accountability of Local Government officials and participation by local citizens.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Guiding questions for Primary Data Collection

1. A Questionnaire for Local Authorities

1. What contribution do you think *Imibigo* has made for the development of your District?
2. What is your personal opinion and experiences about the pattern of *Imibigo* performance in Gicumbi District 2009-2014?
3. How do you think about the preparation, implementation and evaluation *Imibigo* of your District since 2009 to 2014?
4. Your District has poorly performed from 2009 to 2014. What do you think about that and which kind of problems did you face?
5. What other things, besides citizen participation, do you think can explain the inconsistencies in performance of Gicumbi District?
6. What role does the accountability of leaders play in those variations in the performance from 2009 to 2014?
7. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me about this study?

Thank you

1. B Focus Group Topics

1. What contribution do you think *Imibigo* has made for the development of your District?
2. Can you give some stories of *Imibigo* working well between 2009 and 2014?
3. Can you tell some stories of where *Imibigo* did not work so well between 2009 and 2014?
4. Do you think that citizens participate at every step of planning and implementing of *Imibigo*?
5. Your District has poorly performed from 2009 to 2014. What factors do you think are behind of that poor performance?
6. Do you think that the citizen participation and official accountability can play a great role in that poor performance?
7. How do you get information about *Imibigo* performance, and from whom do you get this information?
8. Would you have any suggestions how to improve *Imibigo* in the future?

Thank you

1. C Short Survey of Attitudes for Public

1. How do you judge citizen participation in *Imibigo* in Gicumbi District last year (2014)?
Excellent, very high, high, less high, low, very low
1 2 3 4 5 6
2. How do you judge citizen participation in *Imibigo* in Gicumbi District 2 years ago (2013)?
Excellent, very high, high, less high, low, very low
1 2 3 4 5 6

3. How do you judge citizen participation in *Imibigo* in Gicumbi District in 2009-10?

Excellent, very high, high, less high, low, very low

1 2 3 4 5 6

4. How has community participation been in *Imibigo* in the past 2 years?

Excellent, very high, high, less high, low, very low

1 2 3 4 5 6

5. How would you assess the accountability of 2013-2014 leaders in Gicumbi District?

Excellent, very high, high, less high, low, very low

1 2 3 4 5 6

6. How would you assess the accountability of 2009-2010 leaders in Gicumbi District?

Excellent, very high, high, less high, low, very low

1 2 3 4 5 6

Thank you

Appendix 2: Results from the Scorecard for Economic, Social and Governance and Justice Pillars

District	Performance Scores for Economic pillar	Performance Scores for Social pillar	Performance Scores for Governance and Justice Pillar	Overall district performance	
	Rate (%)	Rate (%)	Rate (%)	Rate (%)	Rank
Bugesera	76	71.7	73.8	74.38	13
Burera	72.3	73.5	72.9	73.38	20
Gakenke	76.2	69.6	75.8	74.15	15
Gasabo	71	71.9	73	71.64	28
Gatsibo	74.2	68.4	72.2	70.74	30
Gicumbi	76.1	74.8	69.3	74.29	14
Gisagara	75	77.7	69.5	75.12	7
Huye	78.4	75.7	71	75.68	4
Kamonyi	76.3	71.7	76.8	73.86	16
Karongi	77.1	68.9	76.4	74.59	11
Kayonza	77.3	70.7	76.2	75.17	6
Kicukiro	77.4	74.7	77.3	76.12	1
Kirhe	75	74.7	76.3	75.59	5
Muhanga	75	69.7	72.5	72.21	23
Musanze	70.1	74.5	72.2	71.73	27
Ngoma	78	70.7	74.2	75.85	2
Ngororero	77.8	77	72	75.7	3
Nyabihu	76.5	67.9	72.1	72.91	22
Nyagatare	77	76.2	72.7	74.7	9
Nyamagabe	75.7	74.7	74.1	73.31	21
Nyamasheke	76.7	74.7	75.5	73.68	17
Nyanza	77	74.7	74.9	75.11	8
Nyarugenge	75.4	73.7	75	73.48	19
Nyaruguru	76.1	74.7	76.2	74.68	10
Rubavu	76.2	66.6	71.7	71.81	26
Ruhango	74.9	67.7	75.4	72.09	24
Rulindo	76.7	62.8	73.6	71.82	25
Rusizi	77.5	73.7	75.5	74.54	12
Rutsiro	76.9	67.3	74.8	73.64	18
Rwamagana	71.4	70.7	70	71.6	29

Source: IPAR (2014:28).