

ALIGNMENT OF IMIHIGO AT LOWER ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITIES WITH APPROVED IMIHIGO AT DISTRICT LEVEL: A STUDY OF 15 DISTRICTS



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- Rwanda -



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Foreword

Imihigo, or performance contract, is one of Rwanda's home grown solutions for accelerated development. The system of Imihigo enhances Rwanda's decentralization, ensuring that local leaders are accountable and that they achieve annual targets they set themselves. It is an important mechanism for implementing national and local development strategies in order to improve the lives of citizens.

This research follows on from Never Again Rwanda's 2018 research entitled "Local Government Imihigo Process: Understanding the factors contributing to low citizen participation". The study at hand, supported by Ikiraro cy'Iterambere through Palladium, aims to understand the process of bottom-up alignment, or lack of it, between Imihigo developed by Sub-District Local Government entities (Village, Cell and Sector) and the finalized District Imihigo which are signed between Mayors and the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Citizen participation, although not the explicit focus, is nonetheless at the heart of the research. A truly bottom-up process of Imihigo alignment from the Village to the District level would imply that concerns of community members inform Imihigo at each layer of local administration. Lack of alignment may not only compromise the aim of efficient and effective decentralization, but also inhibit citizen participation in processes which are supposed to assist their development.

We hope that the findings and recommendations of this study are useful in informing policy changes to improve the process of Imihigo development at all levels of Local Government, so that the targets set accurately reflect the needs of local citizens in a context-specific manner, and officials at Sub-District levels are motivated to implement Imihigo targets which they themselves have identified as important and relevant.

The process of development requires cooperation between stakeholders from all sectors and at all levels of society. We hope that this research will be a valuable contribution towards the inclusive development path that Rwandans have embarked on.

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About Never Again Rwanda

Never Again Rwanda is a peacebuilding and social justice organization that was born in response to the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi. It is guided by a vision of a nation where citizens are agents of positive change, working together towards sustainable peace and development. Never Again Rwanda's mission is to enhance citizens' capacity to analyze the root causes of conflict and facilitate dialogue among peers in order to generate ideas and activities that work towards sustainable peace and socio-economic development. Driven by creative and critical-thinking citizens, Never Again Rwanda aims to empower especially young people and ordinary citizens and to give them opportunities to become active and engaged citizens.

Executive Summary

All Government administrative entities, from the Village level to Ministries, are required to develop their Imihigo (performance contracts) and to have them evaluated. Members of the public service also develop Imihigo with their managers or heads of institutions. District Imihigo are derived from District Action Plans, delineating priority activities and targets which are used as performance measures.

Imihigo of Government Ministries are signed between the President of the Republic of Rwanda and respective Ministries, while District Imihigo are signed between the President and each District Mayor. In their respective institutions, Government Ministries and Mayors commit themselves to achieve a set of goals within a given timeline (Never Again Rwanda [NAR], 2018).

The aims of Imihigo include: speeding up the implementation of local and national development agendas; ensuring stakeholder ownership of the development agenda; promoting accountability and transparency; promoting result-oriented performance; encouraging competitiveness among Districts; and ensuring stakeholders' (i.e. citizens, civil society, donors and private sector) participation and engagement in policy formulation and evaluation (Rwanda Governance Board [RGB], 2014).

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) is the leading coordination institution of Imihigo. This mandate is exercised in close collaboration with other members of the National

Imihigo Coordination Team which are: the Strategy and Policy Council in the Office of the President, the Government Action Coordination Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC). The Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA), in collaboration with MINALOC, coordinates the preparation of Sub-District Imihigo by issuing detailed guidelines and timeframes for preparing Imihigo.

There is no specific policy on Imihigo. However, there is guidance from different policies such as the Decentralization Policy and the Results Based Management Policy. These policies are complemented by other national frameworks and guidelines, such as the National Strategy for Transformation, the Planning and Budgeting Call Circulars, concept notes in the form of guidelines issued by MINECOFIN, MINALOC and LODA, and sectoral strategies.

The Decentralization Policy is explicit on the process of Imihigo planning, which follows through the existing Local Government structures from Village to District level. The spirit of the policy envisages a systematic bottom-up process where Imihigo at each Sub-District entity are consolidated at the next layer in the administrative hierarchy up to the District level.

However, the MINECOFIN concept note establishes two distinct but complementary processes of formulating Imihigo: one at the District and another at the Sub-District level. In practice, it is these processes that are implemented.

Problem Statement

A number of studies (such as NAR, 2018; NAR, 2016; RGB, 2014; RGB, 2018a; RGB, 2018b; Transparency International Rwanda, 2019; Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities, 2017) have been conducted on Imihigo. However, there is no comprehensive information about the Imihigo planning process and the extent to which the priorities at lower administrative levels (Village, Cell and Sector) are reflected in the final and signed District Imihigo. Anecdotal information suggests that the link between Sub-District Imihigo (that is, Imihigo prepared at the Village, Cell and Sector levels) and District Imihigo is minimal or non-existent. This implies that the targets and priorities at Sub-District levels are less likely to be integrated into the final approved District Imihigo.

Understanding the process of integrating Sub-District targets into District Imihigo is critical for ensuring that information flow is streamlined and that District Imihigo are a reflection of community perspectives and experiences. Government policies and actions that have been designed based on input from local citizens' needs are more likely to be realistic, community-owned and sustainable. A bottom-up planning approach would most importantly strengthen transparency and accountability, and nurture a culture of openness on the part of duty bearers on one hand, while strengthening ownership on the part of rights holders on the other hand.

To comprehend the above stated problem, this research was designed with the objective of examining how priorities at lower administrative levels (Sub-District) are transmitted and imbedded into the final and approved District Imihigo. The objective was to be achieved by responding to the following key questions:

- To what extent are Imihigo at lower local administrative levels (Village, Cell and Sector) incorporated into the approved District Imihigo?
- What existing best practices, approaches or tools have been successful in transmitting and aligning targets and priorities at lower local administrative levels with the District Imihigo?
- What challenges constrain the alignment of District Imihigo to Imihigo at lower local administrative levels?
- What are the existing gaps and bottlenecks in the transmission of information between decentralized levels of Local Government and how do they affect the final approved Imihigo?

The study also aimed to draw recommendations for relevant Government institutions and other stakeholders, as proposals to improve the alignment of Imihigo between different layers of Local Government.

Methodology

The overall study approach was qualitative and participatory. It was conducted in fifteen Districts, geographically distributed across the whole country (four Provinces and the City of Kigali). Three Districts were sampled in each Province with the exception of the Southern Province and the City of Kigali; where four Districts and two Districts were selected respectively. The sampling method was based on the number of Districts in each Province, where the Southern Province has more Districts (eight) while the City of Kigali has the smallest number of Districts (three).

Another sampling criterion was the Districts' performance in the 2017/2018 National Imihigo Evaluation Report (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2018). For the Eastern, Western and Northern Provinces, one District with the highest score per Province was selected while two Districts with the lowest scores were selected. In the Southern Province and the City of Kigali, Districts were evenly distributed according to the highest and lowest performance in the 2017/2018 Imihigo evaluation.

Overall, the study had 450 respondents: 116 key informants at the national and District levels and 334 participants in focus group discussions (FGDs) at the Local Government level.


The literature review, key informant interviews, and FGDs were the main data collection methods. Interviews and FGDs were conducted in accordance with semi-structured guides, which assisted in teasing out relevant information from informed participants.

Key Findings

Alignment of Imihigo of lower administrative entities with the final approved district Imihigo

This research found that, contrary to the process proposed in the National Decentralization Policy, the process of developing District Imihigo is distinct from the process of developing Imihigo at Sub-District levels.

At the District level, most Imihigo that involve big infrastructural projects are derived from both the Central Government and sectoral Ministries. Local leaders informed our researchers that these pre-set targets are usually accompanied by earmarked budgets for their implementation. District Imihigo are also partly derived from bottom-up citizen consultation through the planning and budgeting process.



At Sub-District levels, the approach for developing Imihigo is mainly top-down. Priorities to be included in Sub-District Imihigo are transmitted from higher authorities, namely Districts as well as the Government through MINECOFIN, MINALOC and LODA. Sub-District Government authorities play mainly an implementing role.

Given that these two processes are separate, and that Sub-District Imihigo are only developed after the District Imihigo are finalized and approved, the transmission and embedding of Imihigo priorities identified at lower administrative levels (Sub-District) into the final and approved District Imihigo is weak and almost nonexistent. The current process of Imihigo development at District and Sub-District levels does not cater for the possibility of Sub-District Imihigo feeding into District Imihigo.

The 2019-2020 MINALOC guidelines state that planning of Imihigo at Sector, Cell and Village levels should focus on activities that have not been considered in either the District Action Plan or in the District Imihigo, and which respond both to the national priorities and the needs of citizens expressed during the planning process (MINALOC, 2019). While this appears to empower Sub-District entities to develop their context-specific Imihigo, it does not support alignment between Sub-District and District Imihigo. Further, Sub-District entities do not have

budgets to implement any activity apart from those approved by the Districts, and therefore, their own targets are limited to those which do not require budgets, such as mobilization of citizens.

A compounding issue is the lack of understanding and consistency regarding the process of developing Sub-District Imihigo among local administrative authorities as well as citizens. Some study respondents think that Sub-District level Imihigo result from the same Local Government planning and budgeting process from which District Imihigo are eventually drawn, while others believe that Sub-District Imihigo rely entirely on the approved and signed District Imihigo.

While it could be argued that the integration of citizens' priorities in District Imihigo through the planning and budgeting process results in some degree of alignment with priorities at Sub-District levels, this study identified serious issues with the citizen consultation process. Most significantly, the common practice is for citizens to choose their priorities from among those on a list of pre-determined targets which are aligned to District priorities. A lack of genuine and meaningful citizen consultation in the planning and budgeting process results in District Imihigo that are not aligned to citizens' needs.

Tools that facilitate local leaders in alignment of Imihigo

The study identified tools that facilitate the planning and alignment of Imihigo from the Sub-District to the District level. They are: the Household Imihigo Planning Template developed by Districts, the Monitoring and Evaluation Information System developed by LODA, the Integrated Financial Management Information System developed by MINECOFIN, and the Community Score Card initiated by civil society organizations (CSOs).

Gaps and challenges in aligning Imihigo from lower administrative entities (Sub-District) with District Imihigo

This study identified the following gaps and challenges which hinder effective bottom-up alignment of Sub-District Imihigo with approved District Imihigo:

- **Policy framework on Imihigo:** There is no specific policy on Imihigo; rather, Imihigo development is guided by fragmented provisions in different policies such as the Decentralization Policy and the Results Based Management Policy, complemented by Ministerial guidelines. Moreover, the policies and guidelines are inconsistent and conflicting.

For example, provisions in the Results Based Management Policy and the MINECOFIN concept note are not consistent with the spirit of the Decentralization Policy. As a result, policy and decision makers disregard the process outlined in the Decentralization Policy.

- **Overwhelming top-down approach and power asymmetry between Central and Local Governments:** Most Imihigo targets are formulated at the Central Government level and replicated at the District level, making it practically difficult to align Sub-District Imihigo with District Imihigo. Moreover, some of the Central Government driven Imihigo are in some instances introduced to Districts without taking into account the specificity of each District. Asymmetry in power between Government Ministries and Districts as well as other Local Government entities undermines the efficiency, performance, independence and legitimacy of Local Governments. There is no strict mechanism to ensure that decisions made during joint Imihigo planning reflect Local Government priority needs and priorities. This power imbalance means that bottom-up Imihigo alignment is very difficult to achieve in practice.

- **Mismatch of priorities at Sub-District and District levels:** Although citizens ostensibly identify their key priorities, which are channeled to Districts through the planning and budgeting process, respondents in this study revealed that only a few priorities from Sub-District Imihigo make it to the District Action Plans from which District Imihigo are derived. There is no standard practice for measuring the extent to which citizens' priorities formulated through the planning and budgeting process are considered in the District Imihigo. Similarly, District Councilors, who approve the District plans, budgets, and Imihigo do not have specific guidelines or quotas of how much they should consider from priorities submitted from Sub-District levels in this process.
- **Lack of fiscal and financial decentralization:** Some Central Government (sectoral) institutions are reluctant to decentralize either their interventions or budgets. This is an impediment to the independence of Local Governments to set and meet their own targets based on local priorities.
- **Delays in issuing the Imihigo guidelines:** Delays in receiving guidelines as well as limited knowledge about participatory planning tools were noted as challenges that affect proper

alignment of Imihigo from Sub-District to District levels. Delayed release of guidelines means that the staff in charge at Sector, Cell and Village levels are required to meet the deadlines through a rushed process. As a result, these guidelines, particularly at Sub-District levels, are not always respected; templates are not used consistently or systematically due to unreasonable time limits.

- **Role of development partners:** Participation of Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) members is still low, especially in integrating their interventions in Districts' Imihigo. Levels of participation vary and depend on many factors. Only a few JADF members are active and participate meaningfully compared to the total number of JADF members per District.
- **Imihigo guidelines vis-à-vis planning tools:** Respondents to this study revealed that some MINALOC and LODA guidelines are inconsistent with the District Development Strategies, and local leaders find it difficult to harmonize the inconsistencies. Additionally, the guidelines are very technical, making them appropriate only for planning experts but not for officials at Sub-District levels.

- **Capacity gaps:** The capacity of both lower local governance structures and citizens is a key factor in effectively filtering priorities identified at each layer of the local administrative entity to the next level of local administrative entity. Yet, there is clearly a capacity gap and it is particularly acute in rural and remote areas, and in poor and illiterate communities.
- **Incentive gaps:** Citizens have low incentives to participate in local governance processes, given that their concerns are generally not taken into consideration. A lack of tangible gains resulting from participation along with low levels of trust and confidence in local leaders are disincentives which prevent citizens from engaging with leaders at the Sub-District levels.
- **Representativeness gap:** Limited interaction of elected representatives (Council members) with their respective constituencies on the one hand, and between elected representatives and bureaucratic staff on the other hand, is a considerable bottleneck for direct citizen participation in Imihigo planning.

Recommendations

Below are some of the key recommendations proposed, based on the study findings.

1. MINECOFIN:

- Should adopt a legal and policy framework that, among other things, establishes consistency, standardizes consideration of Sub-District priorities in the final approved District Imihigo, and clearly defines the powers and relationships between Sub-District entities, Districts and Central Government institutions in elaborating Imihigo.
- Should implement a tailor-made capacity building program and provide guidance, including on technical skills, financial resources and tools. This would ensure that sectoral institutions and Districts have a better understanding and capacities as well as effective and efficient systems to implement the fiscal and financial decentralization aspirations.

2. MINALOC:

- Should revise the Decentralization Policy to ensure it is consistent with the proposed Imihigo policy reforms and realistic practices of developing Imihigo.

- Should establish monitoring and evaluation standards and mechanisms to ensure that priorities set at Sub-District levels have been considered in the final approved District Imihigo.
- Should adopt strategic capacity development interventions, including coaching and mentoring for local leaders, both Executives and Councilors, at all levels of Local Government structure.
- Should increase the technical staff at the Cell level to enable them to adequately support the Sector and Villages in meeting local priorities. The technical staff will help to balance the demands arising from the Villages and citizens, and requirements such as collection and management of socio-economic data.
- Should adopt a more flexible approach of allocating Imihigo priorities to Sub-District entities and design a more flexible household Imihigo template that accommodates more individually set citizen needs.
- Should establish clear vertical and horizontal communication channels with Districts as well as Sub-District Local Government entities to ensure that they are updated about all stages and processes of developing Imihigo.

3. MINECOFIN and Districts:

- Should provide operational budgets for local Councils and facilitate special groups established at the District, Sector and Cell level to increase interaction with their constituencies, specifically in collecting constituencies' priorities and providing feedback on considered priorities as well as reasons for dropping certain priorities.

4. MINECOFIN, MINALOC and LODA:

- Should adopt a framework of preparing joint guidelines on Imihigo as well as planning and budgeting. This will help to clarify roles and responsibilities, and ensure that Sub-Districts are complying with the guidelines and using the relevant tools.



- Should reflect on the current Imihigo preparations and the templates used in the process of developing Imihigo to ensure that templates are context specific and flexible to use, bearing in mind that some targets may not necessarily be relevant to all Sectors, Cells or Villages.
- Should review the existing Sub-District planning and budgeting processes, embed Sub-District Imihigo development within the existing planning and budgeting process at the Sub-District levels, and establish standards of incorporating Sub-District priorities in the final District Imihigo.
- Should partner with Local Governments in the collection, consolidation and definition of citizens' priorities, and ensure that consolidated priorities are effectively reflected in the final approved District Imihigo.
- Should collaborate with and support Local Governments in strengthening the capacity of local leaders and Councilors to effectively and efficiently formulate Imihigo.
- Should support Local Governments in providing feedback through diverse communication channels on which citizens' and Sub-District Imihigo have been considered in the final District Imihigo, and provide reasons why certain priorities have not been considered.

5. CSOs:

- Should collaborate with Local Governments and other stakeholders through JADF to develop or customize tools for effective Imihigo development. Tools may include templates for consolidation of issues at different levels of the Imihigo development process, as well as for joint monitoring and evaluation of compliance.



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Acronyms

CSC:	Community Score Card
CSO:	Civil society organization
DC:	District Council
DDP:	District Development Plan
DDS:	District Development Strategy
FBO:	Faith based organization
FGD:	Focus group discussion
GoR:	Government of Rwanda
HE:	His Excellency
HH:	Household
JADF:	Joint Action Development Forum
KII:	Key informant interview
LODA:	Local Administrative Entities Development Agency
MEIS:	Monitoring and Evaluation Information System
MINALOC:	Ministry of Local Government
MINECOFIN:	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
NAR:	Never Again Rwanda
NGO:	Non-governmental organization
NISR:	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NST1:	National Strategy for Transformation
P&BCC:	Planning and Budgeting Call Circular
P&BCC1:	First Planning and Budgeting Call Circular
P&BCC2:	Second Planning and Budgeting Call Circular
PPIMA:	Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy
RGB:	Rwanda Governance Board

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Adopted in 2006, Imihigo is credited with the speedy and quality delivery of the national and local development agenda. It has its roots in traditional Rwandan culture where it was the backbone of performance management for many centuries. It was understood and used for leaders and warriors to define their strategic goals and objectives, committing themselves to the fulfillment of these goals at the highest level and reporting to their supervisor and the community. Performance rewards included, among other things, the appointment to senior positions, receiving cows and land grants, public recognition for bravery, and respect (Rwanda Governance Board [RGB], 2014).

Traditionally, Imihigo included an element of evaluation done through a public ceremony, where the leaders and warriors were given a chance to inform the community about their achievements. At the ceremony, successful contenders were publically praised for their achievements or allowed to chant their bravery before the community leader, and the King at the highest degree, describing in lyrics all their exploits (RGB, 2014).

On its transformation journey in the aftermath of the Genocide against the Tutsis, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) reintroduced this cultural practice as a performance management tool. All Government Ministers, all the District Mayors, and the Mayor of the City of Kigali, sign a performance contract, "Imihigo", with His Excellency the President of the Republic of

Rwanda on behalf of their Ministries, agencies and citizens at large. The Ministers and Mayors commit to deliver on a set of agreed activity targets to be achieved and evaluated annually (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda [NISR], 2018).

All Government administrative levels, from the Village level to Ministries, are required to develop their Imihigo and to have them evaluated. At the District level, Imihigo are a subset of a District's Action Plan outlining priority activities which are used to measure development progress. District Action Plans are designed to locally contextualize Central Government priorities in order to address the needs of the local population (Institute of Policy Analysis and Research, 2015). In line with the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), District Imihigo are aligned to the three pillars of economic transformation, social transformation, and transformational governance.

The aims of Imihigo include to speed up the implementation of local and national development agendas; to ensure stakeholder ownership of the development agenda; to promote accountability and transparency; to promote result-oriented performance; to encourage competitiveness among Districts; and to ensure stakeholders' (i.e. citizens, civil society, donors and private sector) participation and engagement in policy formulation and evaluation (RGB, 2014).

Signing Imihigo is one of the key strategies for realizing Rwanda's Decentralization Policy, launched in 2000 and revised in 2012. The Decentralization Policy demands a greater level of accountability, and Imihigo has proven to be effective in providing that level of accountability in implementing national development programs.

1.2. Problem Statement

Studies about Imihigo have portrayed Imihigo as a useful tool for performance management and an effective approach towards socioeconomic transformation (see Never Again Rwanda [NAR], 2018; NAR, 2016; RGB, 2014; RGB, 2018a; RGB, 2018b; Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace, 2010; Institute of Policy Analysis and Research, 2015). These studies have focused mainly on citizen participation and Imihigo performance. However, the planning process and the extent to which the priorities identified at lower administrative levels (Village, Cell and Sector) have been reflected in the document of District Imihigo have not been studied. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the link between District targets and Sub-District Imihigo, especially at the Village and Cell level, is minimal or non-existent. This implies that the targets and priorities at Sub-District (Village, Cell, and Sector) levels are less likely to be integrated into the final approved District Imihigo, or simply, that Sub-District Imihigo are alien to the overall District Imihigo.

Moreover, while Imihigo are evaluated every year, the alignment between Imihigo at the Sub-District levels and District Imihigo has not been deeply analyzed because this has not been the focus of the current

Imihigo evaluation practices. In the context of this study, alignment refers to the process of developing Imihigo, in which the Imihigo of lower level administrative entities (Village, Cell and Sector) are consolidated, analyzed, and integrated into the final District Imihigo that are signed between each District Mayor and the President of the Republic of Rwanda. The essence of the study is to ascertain whether a bottom-up relationship or link between Sub-District Imihigo and District Imihigo exists.

Understanding the process of integrating Sub-District targets into District Imihigo is critical for ensuring that information flow is streamlined and that District Imihigo reflect community standpoints and experiences. Government policies and actions that have been designed with the intention of focusing on inputs from local people's needs are more likely to be realistic, community owned and sustainable if the process of integrating their (citizens') views and experiences is operational and effective. Bottom-up planning would therefore strengthen transparency and accountability, and nurture a culture of openness on the side of duty bearers as well as strengthen ownership of rights holders. This promotes efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

In view of the above, this research examines the extent to which the priorities at lower administrative levels (household, Village, Cell and Sector) are gathered, transmitted and reflected in the finalized District Imihigo. Further, the study identifies challenges and gaps in collecting, consolidating, analyzing, prioritizing, transmitting, and integrating Imihigo at Sub-District levels into the final approved District Imihigo, and finally, draws recommendations for improvement.

1.3. Research Objectives and Questions

Research questions and corresponding objectives were designed to guide in exploring the process of aligning identified priorities at lower local administrative levels with approved District Imihigo.

1.3.1. Research objectives

The **overall objective** of this study was to examine the extent to which priorities at lower administrative levels are gathered, transmitted and integrated into the finalized and approved District Imihigo.

Specifically, the study intended to achieve the following **specific objectives**:

1. Analyze the extent to which formulated Imihigo at lower levels of administrative entities (Village, Cell and Sector) are included in the final approved District Imihigo;
2. Document existing best practices, approaches or tools used in collecting, consolidating, analyzing, prioritizing and transmitting Imihigo at each administrative level up to the District level;
3. Identify challenges and bottlenecks that constrain the alignment of District Imihigo to Imihigo developed at the lower administrative levels; and
4. Draw policy recommendations for the Government and other stakeholders to address the identified challenges and gaps.

1.3.2. Research questions

On the basis of the above objectives, this study sought to answer the following main research questions:

- a) To what extent are Imihigo at lower local administrative levels (Village, Cell and Sector) incorporated into the approved District Imihigo?
- b) What challenges constrain the alignment of District Imihigo to Imihigo at the lower local administrative levels?
- c) What existing best practices, approaches or tools have been successful in transmitting and aligning targets and priorities at lower local administrative levels with the District Imihigo?
- d) What are the existing gaps and bottlenecks in the transmission of information between decentralized levels of government and how do they affect the final approved Imihigo?

1.4. Imihigo Regulatory and Policy Framework

1.4.1. Regulatory framework

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) coordinates the process of Imihigo preparation and ensures that strategic interventions agreed upon during the annual planning and budgeting process form the basis for Imihigo priorities. This is done in close collaboration with other members of the National Imihigo Coordination Team, including the Strategy and Policy Council in the Office of the President, the Government Action Coordination Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC). MINALOC and the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA) coordinate the preparation of Sub-District Imihigo and issue detailed guidelines and timeframes for conducting the exercise which should be in line with the national roadmap.

Ministries, Government agencies and Districts are budget institutions responsible for formulating, implementing, and regular monitoring of Imihigo, while the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) is responsible for evaluating Imihigo.

1.4.2. Policy framework

There is no specific policy on Imihigo. However, there is guidance from different policies such as the Decentralization Policy and the Results Based Management Policy. These policies are complemented by other national frameworks, such as the NST1, guidelines issued by MINECOFIN, MINALOC and LODA, and sectoral strategies.

a. Decentralization Policy

The Decentralization Policy (MINALOC, 2012) was the first policy to outline the concept of Imihigo. It recognizes Imihigo as a bottom-up planning and performance management framework, and recognizes that Imihigo as a concept must shift base to households. The arrangement is hailed in the policy as realistic and inclusive. The policy emphasizes putting in place mechanisms for strengthening planning functions in the Local Government system in order to enhance evidence-based planning and bottom-up needs identification, especially through Imihigo, Umuganda (monthly community service), Inteko z'Abaturage (citizen assemblies), and priority setting.

It is worth noting that, although sectoral service functions are still parallel and have not been integrated with Local Government systems, the policy recognizes Imihigo as an important tool which is able to facilitate the Local Government system to deliver through a well-networked Local Government structure. The policy recommends sector Ministries to be provided with sufficient guidance on decentralization and how

to effectively integrate into the Local Government system for more cost-effective service delivery.

Concerning fiscal decentralization, the policy projected that, effective from financial year 2012/13, no more inter-entity transfers would be allowed and all funds for activities to be implemented in Districts would be transferred directly to Districts. This decision was appreciated for helping to streamline inter-governmental relations and bring Local Governments and sectoral Ministries to the same planning and budgeting table.

b. Results Based Management Policy

According to the Results Based Management Policy (Ministry of Public Service and Labour & Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning [MINECOFIN], 2015), results based or focused performance contracts must be designed in a way that allows fast tracking of the delivery of interventions and achievement of aspirations enshrined in the annual and medium term national strategies. The policy suggests two forms of administering results based performance: a) institutional (individual institution) Imihigo, and b) joint Imihigo (which are jointly executed by institutions).

For individual institution Imihigo, each institution is required to sign with its supervising body the performance contract outlining the key results and targets expected to be achieved over the year. These Imihigo encompass all activities from the single action plan of the institution together with support activities not reflected in the single action plan.

Joint Imihigo are supplementary to individual institutions' Imihigo, particularly for institutions where it is applicable. Joint Imihigo are prepared

annually to ensure that institutions, including the private sector, can work jointly to achieve national objectives and strategic results, as outlined in the national development framework, which may not be apportioned wholly to a single institution.

The policy requires institutions that play a primary role in the delivery of strategic results to sign joint Imihigo (Second Level Imihigo), in order to coordinate and collaborate in the execution of joint Imihigo activities. These institutions are collectively held responsible and accountable for the delivery of the results under each joint Imihigo. The MINECOFIN concept note highlights exports, urbanization, and job creation among the key areas of joint Imihigo.

MINECOFIN releases detailed guidelines on the formulation, management, implementation and evaluation of joint Imihigo.

c. National Strategy for Transformation

The NST1 (Government of Rwanda [GoR], 2017) is a seven-year development program designed to replace the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2. It aims to transform the country towards high living standards in accordance with Vision 2050 (GoR, 2017, p. vi). The NST1 prioritizes transformation in three pillars, namely, economic, social, and governance.

Imihigo is highlighted as one of the key mechanisms for delivering the NST1 in the following terms: "The delivery of NST1 will be undertaken through annual plans, budgets and imihigo (performance contracts)" (GoR, 2017, p. 30). Equally, the NST1 underlines the role of the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) in the elaboration and implementation of Imihigo.

The NST1 was on multiple occasions cited by local leaders as one of the main reference documents for Imihigo development at the Local Government levels. For instance, a civil society organization (CSO) member representing District development partners through their coordination framework, JADF, acknowledged the use of the NST1 as a tool that aids the planning and prioritization process. The following quotations present the NST1 as a key tool in the Local Government Imihigo process. To emphasize the role of the NST1 in Imihigo formulation, respondents to this study had the following to say:

...We select urgent activities in the National Strategy for Transformation 1; in the District Development Strategy we select what is urgent from there as well. (JADF Coordinator)

Currently we are in the NST1. We estimate how many activities we have to implement every year such that by the end of seven years we will have accomplished those activities. (Vice Mayor in charge of Economic Development)

d. MINECOFIN concept note

The MINECOFIN concept note (MINECOFIN, 2015) provides guidelines that must be followed in the preparation of Imihigo. Imihigo should clearly follow the annual planning and budgeting process as set out in the annual planning and budget calendar established by the Organic Law on State finances and property.

The concept note requires Imihigo preparation at District level to have more engagement of the citizenry, with a robust communication plan that culminates in the Mayors' presentation and signing of Imihigo before the citizens. The purpose of this is to reignite the spirit of Imihigo ownership as critical to its delivery.

According to the concept note, Sub-District level Imihigo should comprise community-specific priorities (targets set from citizens' priorities) as well as key cross-cutting national priorities such as: addressing school dropout, increasing subscription to the community based health insurance scheme, maintaining security, addressing malnutrition and promoting hygiene and sanitation. Citizens are expected to lead in identifying relevant issues and priorities for them, while MINALOC identifies a number of issues that are of national importance to be integrated in the Sub-District Imihigo.

e. MINALOC guidelines

To ensure effective implementation of Imihigo at the Sub-District levels, the Ministry of Local Government issues guidelines every fiscal year. These guidelines serve to provide underlying principles and key priorities, as well as mechanisms for the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of Imihigo at Sub-District levels.

Specifically, the 2019/2020 fiscal year guidelines (MINALOC, 2019) state that preparation of Sub-District entities' Imihigo is to be driven by the country's socio-economic development imperatives and the specific needs of the citizens. The guidelines outline the guiding principles and set priorities for Imihigo at the Sub-District and household levels.

The guidelines state that the planning of Imihigo at Sector, Cell and Village levels should focus on activities that are not considered in either the District Action Plan or in the District Imihigo, and which respond to the national priorities and the needs that have been expressed both by respective entities and by the citizens during the planning process.

f. Planning and Budgeting Call Circulars

Every year, MINECOFIN issues two Planning and Budgeting Call Circulars (P&BCC). The first Planning and Budgeting Call Circular (P&BCC1) outlines the role of each of the main stakeholders (Districts, citizens, development partners, Cabinet and Parliament) in planning and budgeting for each fiscal year.

The P&BCC1 (2019) covering the fiscal year 2020/2021 requires budget institutions, including Districts, to align their plans with the broad objectives of the Vision 2020 and Vision 2050 blueprint. It also recommends the NST1, the District Development Strategies (DDSs) and the City Development Strategy to be the main reference documents for identification of priorities.

Budget institutions are also required to prioritize deliberations adopted at different high-level fora such as the National Leadership Retreat and National Umushyikirano Council, as well as Presidential pledges relevant to the budgeting institution.

The P&BCC1 emphasizes the need to strengthen the link between planning, budgeting and Imihigo planning processes. It is therefore worth noting that planning, budgeting and Imihigo processes should not be regarded as separate but rather as interlinked processes. Imihigo priorities and targets should be selected from the priorities agreed upon during planning and budget allocation.

g. LODA guidelines

Every year, LODA issues supplementary guidelines to the P&BCC1 for Local Government budget agencies. LODA takes the lead in developing these guidelines in close partnership with MINALOC and MINECOFIN (Local Administrative Entities Development Agency [LODA], 2020).

The guidelines require all Districts to make the budget planning a participatory process with greater citizen participation and engagement. The process starts with Districts informing Sub-District administrative entities on P&BCC1 for Local Government and soliciting their early commitment in its implementation.

Furthermore, LODA provides monitoring templates for a participatory planning process. These templates, among other things, require information on public feedback meetings at local level and consideration of citizens' priorities collected during P&BCC1. They also require identification of new citizens' priorities for P&BCC1, aggregation of Villages' priority lists to one Cell-wide priority list, submission of Cell-wide priority lists to the Sector, aggregation of Cell-wide priority lists to one Sector-wide priority list, submission of Sector-wide priority lists to the District, and entering Sector priorities into the online Monitoring and Evaluation Information System (MEIS).

The District is also required to organize consultative meetings with JADF, private sector representatives, National Women's Council, National Council of Persons with Disabilities, National Youth Council, CSOs, and other stakeholders to discuss the first draft of the District's priorities and projects.

h. District Development Strategy

The DDSs, previously District Development Plans (DDPs), are six-year development program documents designed to act as tools for planning and coordinating interventions across the District to ensure improved living conditions of the population (Bugesera District, 2019, p. 1). The DDSs are developed through a comprehensive citizen consultation process, and citizens' views are always considered in the DDSs.

Local leaders mentioned DDSs as a key document that guides them in Imihigo planning, along with the NST1. However, they revealed that the DDS has an added advantage as it brings out the unique development plans for specific Districts, unlike the NST1, which guides generalized development across the country.

The DDS is composed of development activities that Local Governments have planned over time for the District to achieve the required development. You understand we merge the three sources: the ideas expressed by citizens, the activities in the District Development Strategy, and those from the NST1. (Vice Mayor in charge of Economic Development)

2. Methodology

The overall approach to the study was qualitative and participatory. It solicited the views of different stakeholders about the development process of Imihigo at lower administrative levels, and the extent to which the information and priorities generated at lower local administrative levels (Sub-District) are transmitted and integrated into the finalized District Imihigo.

2.1. Target Districts and Participants

The study was conducted in fifteen Districts sampled from four Provinces and the City of Kigali, meaning that sources of data were geographically distributed across the country. Local administrative leaders, particularly at Village, Cell, Sector and District levels, as well as other relevant informants, participated in this study. Specifically, participants to this study were the following:

- Members of District Executive Committees
- Executive Secretaries of Sectors
- Executive Secretaries of Cells
- Village leaders
- Members of District Councils
- Members of Sector Councils
- Members of Cell Councils
- JADF members
- Community members (selected opinion leaders)
- Representatives of CSOs
- MINECOFIN
- MINALOC
- Rwanda Governance Board (RGB)
- NISR
- LODA

Opinion leaders at Village level and administrative leaders from the Village up to the District level, as well as representatives of national Government institutions and CSOs, shared their personal experiences and information concerning the Imihigo development process, with a focus on the extent to which lower level priorities are selected, transmitted and integrated into District Imihigo.

2.2. Sampling Procedures

The principle of sample size representativeness was not considered in the sampling of participants, because sample size representativeness is not consistent with the principles of the qualitative research paradigm. Instead, what matters is data saturation and the extent to which the selected participants are characteristic of

the community, as well as inclusiveness of in-depth viewpoints of different categories of respondents at different levels.

This is why the sampling procedure was, among other factors, based on the general principle of equitable representativeness. In this case, three Districts were sampled in each Province, with the exception of the Southern Province and the City of Kigali where four Districts and two Districts were selected respectively. The sampling method was based on the number of Districts in each Province: the Southern Province has a bigger number of Districts (eight) while the City of Kigali has the smallest number of Districts (three).

Another sampling criterion was the Districts' performance in the 2017/2018 National Imihigo Evaluation Report (NISR, 2018). For the Eastern, Western and Northern Provinces, one District with the highest score per Province was selected, while two Districts with the lowest scores were selected. In the Southern Province and the City of Kigali, Districts were

evenly distributed according to the highest and lowest performance in the 2017/2018 Imihigo evaluation.

Within each District, two Sectors were selected on the basis of rural-urban divide i.e. one urban or semi-urban Sector and one rural Sector was chosen.

At the Cell and Village level, two Cells were selected from each of the chosen Sectors (total of four Cells per District), while two Villages were selected in each Cell, resulting in a total of eight Villages per District.

At the national level, representatives of both Government institutions and CSOs were selected on the basis of their expert knowledge according to the positions they hold in their institutions, as well as the relevance of their institution's mandate to the objectives of the research.

2.3. Sample Size

On the basis of the above sampling procedure, the total number of participants in this study was 450 (116 key informants at the national and District levels, and 334 participants in the focus group discussions [FGDs] at the Local Government level). Twenty-nine per cent of the total respondents were female. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs.

Location	Gender	KIIs	FGDs	General Total
15 Districts	Male	70	236	306
	Female	33	98	131
	Subtotal	103	334	437
National Level	Male	13	0	13
	Female	0	0	0
	Subtotal	13	0	13
Total No of respondents		116	334	450

Table 1: Distribution of study respondents

2.4. Methods and Tools of Data Collection

2.4.1. Documentary review

A comprehensive review of Imihigo plans within the sampled Villages, Cells, Sectors, and Districts was conducted. In each District, the 2017/2018 Imihigo were reviewed from the Village level to the District level to establish the vertical linkages, strengths, and weaknesses/gaps. A review of other relevant documents and materials was also conducted. Some of the documents reviewed included but were not limited to:

- Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda
- Decentralization Policy
- Results Based Management Policy
- Prime Minister's instructions establishing JADF
- P&BCCs
- MINECOFIN concept note
- MINALOC guidelines
- LODA guidelines
- Sector Strategic Plans
- District Imihigo and evaluation reports
- District, Sector, Cell and Village Imihigo 2017/2018 of some sampled Districts
- NST1
- Other relevant reports produced by the GoR, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs

2.4.2. Key informant interviews

A semi-structured interview guide was used in conducting interviews with key informants. Key informants were identified through a purposive sampling procedure. The purposive sampling technique facilitated gathering in-depth information from individuals with specific experience and expertise on the research subject matter.

As such, KIIs were conducted in each study District with members of District Executive Committees, District Councilors, Sector Executive Secretaries, Sector Councilors, and JADF members.

Additionally, KIIs were organized at the national level, primarily with respondents from institutions that are relevant to Imihigo, namely MINALOC, MINECOFIN, RGB, NISR, and LODA.

The semi-structured interview guide enabled the interviewer to promptly probe spontaneous questions on the basis of the interviewees' responses, hence allowing for an in-depth understanding of the research subject matter.

2.4.3. Focus group discussions

In total, 45 FGDs were organized in 15 Districts. Three FGDs of between six and eight participants were organized in each District on the basis of homogeneity of respondents as follows:

- One FGD with Cell Executive Secretaries and Councilors
- One FGD with Village leaders
- One FGD with opinion leaders at the Village level (opinion leaders representing citizens).

The homogenous composition of FGDs was intended to reduce any inhibitions among participants and to enable interviewers to detect the level of emerging consensus around the interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation, to make comparisons, and to analyze patterns across participating groups. Three FGDs were conducted in each District. The first FGD was conducted with Cell Executive Secretaries and Cell Councilors, the second discussion was conducted with Village leaders, and the third FGD was conducted with opinion leaders.

2.5. Quality Control Measures

For the purpose of assuring quality, the following measures were adopted:

- Researchers worked closely with Never Again Rwanda (NAR) in reviewing the terms of reference, the scope of the assignment, the methodology and the data collection tools. The process not only helped in building the consensus on each stage of the research, but also strengthened ownership of the research outcomes.
- Prior to commencing the research project, the research team, in collaboration with NAR, developed a research protocol for securing approval from RGB and a research visa from NISR. The two institutions granted authorization on the basis of the proposed methodology and tools.

2.6. Data Analysis

In order to preserve the highest quality of data, the KIs and FGDs were audio recorded and transcribed to produce 116 transcripts. The transcripts were then cleaned, coded and loaded onto Atlas.ti version 8.4 (Friese, 2019) from where data was analyzed. Consistent with Braun and Clarke (2006), six steps of thematic content analysis were followed: Becoming Familiar with the Data (transcription and translation of data); Generating Initial Codes (organizing data into segments that are more meaningful in relation with the research questions); Searching for Themes (grouping together closely related codes to form themes); Review of Themes (further review to see whether themes make sense vis-à-vis the research questions; detecting and cleaning any duplications); Defining the Themes (analysis of each theme to understand how they relate to each other and also selecting salient quotations for the write-up); and finally, Writing the Report.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

The research team considered a number of ethical issues as required by research ethics. Informed consent or assent, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality were a prerequisite to secure interviews with all respondents in this research. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study so as to freely decide in a conscious and deliberate way whether to participate or not. In order to protect the participants' privacy, the researchers assured participants in the study that their names would not be mentioned in the findings and that their views would be exclusively used for the research.

2.8. Limitations of the Study

In some cases, District focal points failed to get a full range of opinion leaders who could voice their perceptions and concerns. Contrary to the research methodology, there were isolated incidences where opinion leaders were mixed in the same discussion groups with the Cell Executive Secretaries and Councilors. This was an oversight on the part of District contact persons. However, the impact of this deviance on the study findings is negligible.

Audio-visual recording was one of the tools used for collecting and capturing data. However, some respondents, especially at national level, were not comfortable with audio-visual recording.

On the basis of the purposive sampling methodology, most respondents were by design male since they held specific positions. District focal points that facilitated the process of interviews and FGDs were advised by the research team to respect the gender balance but this was only possible with FGDs of opinion leaders.

3. Alignment of IMIGO at Lower Administrative Entities With the Final Approved District IMIHIGO

To understand how Imihigo at lower local administrative levels (Sub-District) are aligned with District Imihigo, the study probed the processes of preparing and adopting Imihigo at both the District and Sub-District (Sector, Cell and Village) levels as well as at household level. This process and the resultant observations and conclusions allowed exploration of the alignment between Sub-District Imihigo and District Imihigo, with particular focus on the extent to which Imihigo targets at the Sub-District levels are integrated in the final District Imihigo.

3.1. General Overview of Imihigo Planning Process

The Decentralization Policy clearly sets out the process of Imihigo planning, which should start at the household level and flow through the existing structures of local government from Village to District level. The spirit of the policy envisages a systematic bottom-up process, where Imihigo of lower Sub-District entities are consolidated at each next layer in the administrative hierarchy up to the District level.

Figure 1 demonstrates the process of formulating Imihigo, as provided in the Decentralization Policy.

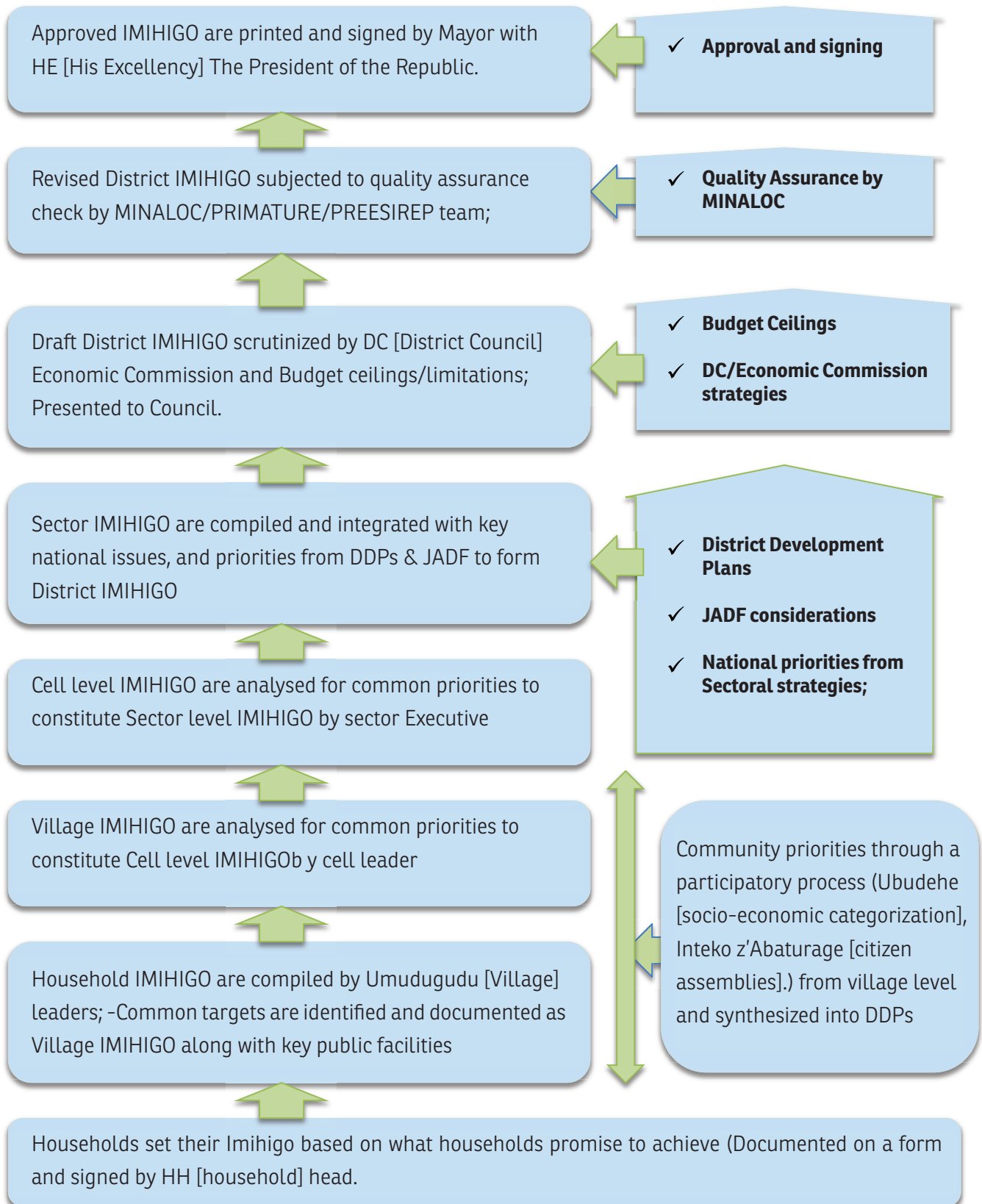


Figure 1: IMIHIGO: A Bottom-up Planning and Performance Management Tool (Ministry of Local Government, 2012)

As seen in Figure 1, the Decentralization Policy assumes that the Imihigo development process starts with Imihigo which are firstly created by individual households and then consolidated upwards through local administrative entities to the District level.

Household Imihigo are supposed to be signed by the heads of households and compiled by Village leaders. Common targets from households are identified and documented as Village Imihigo. Village Imihigo are analyzed by Cell leaders to extract common priorities that constitute the Cell level Imihigo, and the same process is replicated to constitute the Sector level Imihigo.

According to the policy, Sector Imihigo are compiled and integrated with key national issues, and priorities from DDPs (now DDSs) and JADF, to form the draft District Imihigo.

The process proposed in the Decentralization Policy is not consistent with the current practice of developing Imihigo. In practice, Local Government Imihigo are developed through a mixture of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The sub-sections below discuss the process of developing Imihigo at both District and Sub-District levels, and draw conclusions about the alignment of Sub-District Imihigo with District Imihigo.

3.2. Imihigo Development Process at the District Level

District Imihigo are generated through both top-down and bottom-up approaches. The P&BCC1 issued annually by MINECOFIN contains comprehensive guidelines on inclusive planning and budgeting, indicates key national priorities, and recommends consultations with various stakeholders and development partners such as CSOs, NGOs, faith based organizations (FBOs), and the private sector. The P&BCC1 urges budget agencies (Districts) to collect citizens' priority needs, which, together with the Central Government targets, inform the draft District Action Plans and their respective budgets. In line with the P&BCC1 guidelines, the District Imihigo planning process begins with the development of the drafts of District Action Plans and budgets.

Once drafts are ready, MINECOFIN issues the second P&BCC (P&BCC2) as feedback on the draft action plans and budgets, announcing the budget ceilings for each budget agency to finalize its annual action plan and budget for final approval by the Parliament.

3.2.1. Top-down approach

Planning at the District level is informed by the GoR's long and medium term development aspirations as reflected in national long-term strategies and policies such as Vision 2020/2050, the NST1, the five

year DDSs, Presidential pledges, and deliberations adopted at national fora such as the National Leadership Retreat and National Umushyikirano Council. Local leaders admitted that most Imihigo that involve big infrastructural projects are allotted by Central Government and sectoral Ministries. Local leaders informed this study that these targets are usually accompanied by an earmarked budget for their implementation. This was equally confirmed by a respondent from MINALOC who, in an interview, stated that:

The final version of District Imihigo reflects two main things: targets set at national level and targets identified from the grass roots level – local realities are considered. Also, DDSs are the main source of Imihigo because they feed into planning. (MINALOC representative)

3.2.2. Bottom-up approach

As discussed in sub-section 3.1, the Decentralization Policy envisages a bottom-up approach of developing Imihigo, which has never been implemented as conceived. Instead, the P&BCC provides an alternative

process which caters for a bottom-up planning and budgeting process that feeds into District Imihigo. The spirit of the P&BCC as well as MINALOC and LODA guidelines requires that citizens identify three most pressing needs across the three pillars of social welfare, economic development and good governance, as stipulated in the NST1 (GoR, 2017, p. viii). Citizens' priority issues should then be transmitted to the Cell level, where the Cell Council further analyzes them and prioritizes three pressing needs from all the Villages to forward to the Sector. The same process should be replicated at the Sector and finally, the District should make the final prioritization, keeping in mind the available budget and in consideration of priorities from the Central Government.

3.3. Imihigo Development Process at Sub-District Levels

At Sub-District levels, the approach to Imihigo development is mainly top-down. The process of developing Sub-district Imihigo can only start once District Imihigo have been approved and subsequently signed between the Mayor and the President of the Republic of Rwanda. District Imihigo are approved only when the planning and budgeting process has been completed and the national budget law passed by Parliament. The Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of one District stated:

We start to prepare Imihigo after we have developed and secured the budget, because you cannot commit to execute any performance target before securing funding for its implementation. You would otherwise get into the implementation of Imihigo and then you realize that you don't have the funds. (District Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation)

Local leaders who participated in this study explained that Imihigo is transmitted from the District, while the Sub-District plays mainly an implementing role. In the same vein, local leaders expressed frustration, claiming that sometimes there is discrepancy between what was earmarked, what was required to be implemented, and the reality on the ground.

Confirming the existence of top-down approach at the Sub-District levels, a respondent in an FGD of Cell Executive Secretaries and Cell Councilors responded to a question regarding their role in the preparation of Imihigo as follows:

Honestly speaking, we are not the ones who prepare Imihigo. ... Instead, we implement Imihigo. Imihigo come from above. Even though citizens' views are collected and approved by the Councils, I don't think these views are even considered at the rate of 50%. Imihigo come from above (District) and when they come, they are distributed among the Sectors. We share the numbers (targets) that are given to us. When we arrive at the Cell, we distribute them amongst the Villages to be implemented. (Respondent in FGD of Cell Executive Secretaries and Cell Councilors)

A study by NAR (2018, p. 38) reported similar findings, where a predominantly top-down approach is used in formulating Imihigo.

MINALOC commits to ensuring that strategic priorities set during the annual planning and budgeting process, together with the identified local community needs, are the basis for Imihigo priorities at the Sub-District levels. Similarly, consultations with different stakeholders and consideration of citizens' priorities are central in all Imihigo concept notes and guidelines.

However, the consistent practice is that both MINALOC and LODA guidelines list a number of priorities from which Sub-District and household Imihigo targets should be based. For example, the 2019/2020 MINALOC guidelines set Imihigo priorities for Sub-District entities¹ and households² (MINALOC, 2019).

Generally, the planning and budgeting process is independent of the process of developing Imihigo at the Sub-District levels. Sub-District Imihigo can only be formulated after District Imihigo have been approved and signed between the Mayor of the District and the President of the Republic of Rwanda. This implies that citizens' priorities do not feature in Sub-District Imihigo unless they have already been incorporated in the approved District Imihigo through the planning and budgeting process.

3.4. Interaction between District Imihigo Process and Sub-District Imihigo Process

Figure 2 illustrates the process of developing District and Sub-District Imihigo, as well as the interaction between District and Sub-District Imihigo. The information in the figure is based on the interpretation and analysis of existing secondary data including the MINECOFIN concept note, MINALOC guidelines, and LODA guidelines, as well as feedback from KIIs and FGDs.

¹The guidelines suggest the following Imihigo targets for Sub-District entities: availability of Early Childhood Development Centre in each Cell; a Model Cell per Sector and one Model Village per Cell; creation and maintenance of road networks between Cells and neighboring Sectors; tree plantation in the households, in schools and health facilities' premises; greening and beautification; land consolidation, use of improved seeds and agricultural inputs and Girinka (one cow per poor family); mobilization to increase school enrollment, ensuring zero drop-out and eradication of illiteracy; continue to promote hygiene and sanitation at household level; graduation from extreme poverty; eradication of malnutrition and stunting; collection and management of socio-economic data at Sector and Cell levels.

²The guidelines list the following priorities for household level: health insurance, decent latrines with bathroom, paved house (cement or traditional), clean bedroom with mosquito net, water harvesting system with either water tank or underground pit, erosion control with terracing and tree planting, animal sheds separate from human living place, kitchen garden and fruit trees, family planning, saving account, improved cooking stoves, Umuganda (monthly community service) booklet, malnutrition-free children with 100% school enrolment and zero drop-out, domestic violence-free family and striving to graduate from poverty.

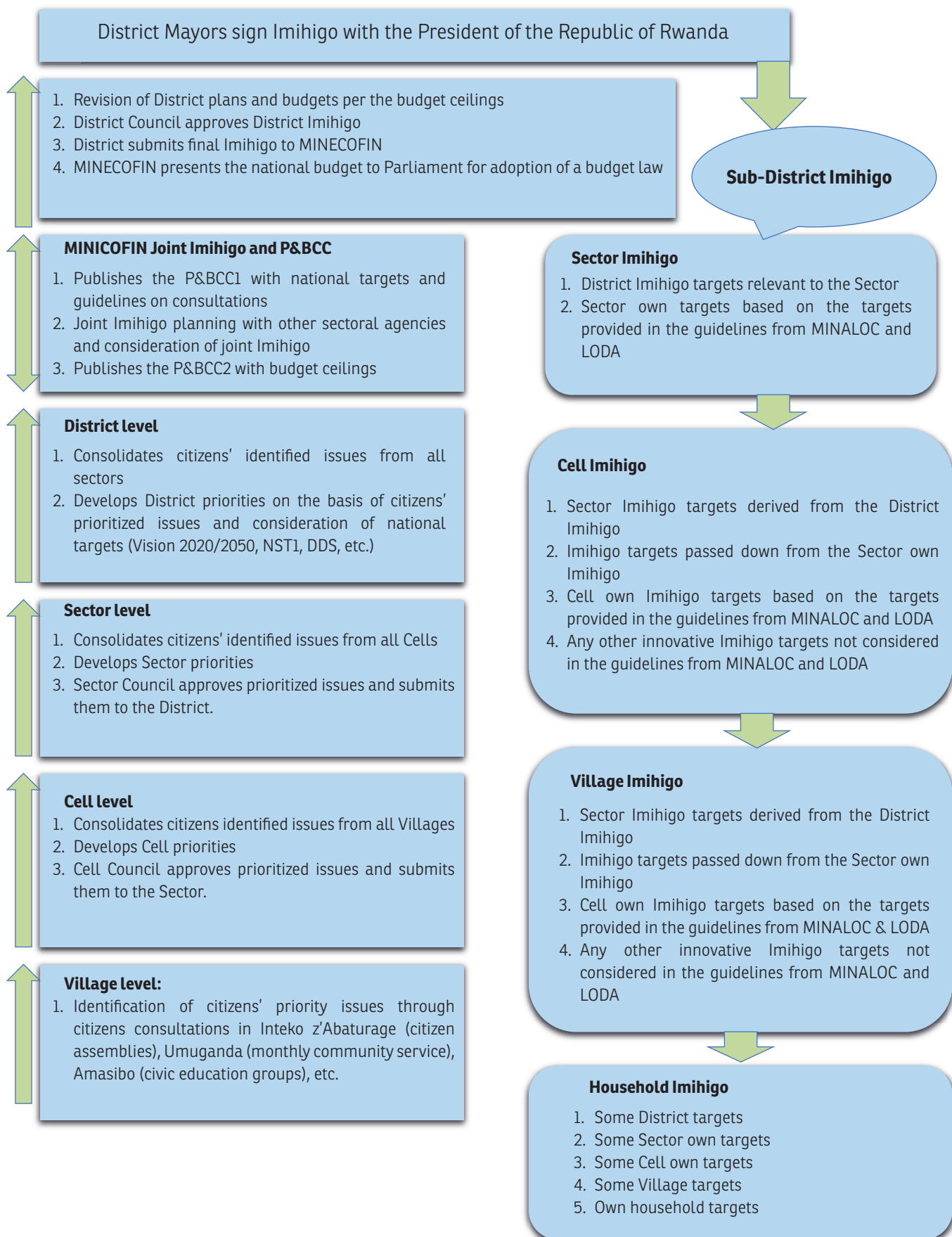


Figure 2: Interaction between District Imihigo and Sub-District Imihigo as described by respondents

As Figure 2 shows, the extent to which information generated through the lower layer administrative entities is included in the final District Imihigo is weak and almost nonexistent for the following reasons.

The process of developing District Imihigo is distinct from the process of developing Sub-District Imihigo. District Imihigo are in practice derived from a planning and budgeting process combined with targets set from Central Government and sectoral agencies. On the other hand, Sub-District Imihigo result from District Imihigo and priorities listed in the MINALOC and LODA guidelines. Consequently, the process does not cater for a possibility of Sub-District Imihigo feeding into District Imihigo.

In practice, once the District Mayor has signed Imihigo with the President of the Republic of Rwanda, District Imihigo, together with priorities set by MINALOC and LODA, quickly trickle down to Sectors, from Sectors to Cells, from Cells to Villages, and finally to households. Relevant stakeholders are always invited to a meeting at which District Imihigo are presented. A participant in an FGD explained the process as follows:

(...) When Imihigo are received (by Sector), we are invited to a presentation to discuss them. This is not intended to change them, but to add some specific Imihigo targets that are relevant to our reality, such as targets about sanitation. Our experience is that there is a fixed day called "Imihigo day"; there is also "Imihigo room" where we meet. The Sector invites us [Executive Secretaries of Cells] and local partners and other stakeholders who have some role in relation to Imihigo, e.g. Youth Council, Women's Council, opinion leaders, representatives of persons with disabilities, representatives of the Private Sector Federation, directors/head teachers of schools, etc. Then, we are presented the Imihigo. Participants are asked to comment/give opinions, with no intention of changing the set Imihigo, but to gather additional Imihigo that are specific to our area. (Respondent in FGD of Cell Executive Secretaries and Cell Councilors)

Both the MINALOC and LODA guidelines emphasize the role of citizen consultation and participation in consolidating Sub-District Imihigo. However, the practice of providing pre-determined Imihigo to Sub-District level entities implies that Sub-Districts have limited or no chances of identifying their own priorities. This practice undermines the spirit of the GoR, as exemplified in the Decentralization Policy, of empowering communities to identify their own priorities. Equally important, it does not take into consideration the specific socio-economic and geographical context of all Districts, as it assumes that “one size fits all”. Inconsistencies in the policy framework and a lack of clear and specific participatory mechanisms for developing Sub-District Imihigo are among the key contributing factors to this gap.

The assertion in the MINALOC guidelines (MINALOC, 2019) that “...Strategic interventions agreed upon during the annual planning and budgeting process as well as the identified local communities needs form the basis for Imihigo priorities setting” implies that the planning and budgeting process feeds into the Sub-District Imihigo. However, this has not been implemented in practice for two main reasons. Firstly, as suggested in the MINECOFIN concept note and MINALOC and LODA guidelines, Sub-District Imihigo can only be formulated on the basis of District Imihigo which have been approved and signed. This is because most Sub-District Imihigo projects depend on District budgets, which are earmarked from Central Government. Secondly, the timeframe for planning and budgeting comes before the calendar for developing Sub-District Imihigo. Moreover, there has not been a deliberate practice to align the planning and budgeting process with Imihigo prioritization at the Sub-District levels.

The 2019-2020 MINALOC guidelines indicate that:

Planning of Imihigo at Sector, Cell and Village levels will focus on activities that have not been considered neither in the District Action Plan nor in the District Imihigo and which respond both to the national priorities and the needs that have been expressed by respective entities and the citizens during the planning process. (MINALOC, 2019)

This is a progressive concept that empowers Sub-Districts to prepare their context-specific Imihigo, but it is inconsistent with the idea of aligning Sub-District Imihigo with District Imihigo.

At household level, each household is required to have a notebook or a booklet containing the targets to be achieved every year. Like the Villages, Cells, and Sectors, households’ priorities are provided in the MINALOC guidelines, with some flexibility of adding specific household targets beyond those delineated in the guidelines. However, apart from household targets that are already assigned, individual household targets are never consolidated at the Village level. This implies that there is no alignment between household Imihigo and Village Imihigo, apart from the targets that trickle down to households.

This study observed some inconsistencies and misunderstanding of the process of developing Imihigo, particularly at Sub-District levels. While it

was very clear that the annual planning and budgeting process is deliberate on generating the District Action Plan and budget from which District Imihigo are derived, respondents demonstrated confusion and misunderstanding about the process of formulating Sub-District Imihigo. Some thought that Sub-District level Imihigo result from the planning and budgeting process, while others understood that Sub-District Imihigo rely entirely on the approved and signed District Imihigo. Misunderstanding of the process on the part of those responsible for planning Imihigo is a potential risk to effective consultations and may negatively affect the intended outcomes of Imihigo.

The Decentralization Policy proclaims a bottom-up alignment process of Imihigo from the household to the District level (see Figure 1). However, this process has never been implemented in practice because it is inconsistent with Local Government planning realities. For example, Sub-District entities cannot commit to their own Imihigo targets because they do not have budgets to implement any activity apart from those approved by the Districts. With the exception of Imihigo targets that do not require budgets, such as mobilization, the Decentralization Policy unrealistically places heavy responsibilities on Sub-District entities, yet they are not empowered with sufficient resources, either technical or financial, to undertake bottom-up planning.

Furthermore, the processes of formulating District Imihigo and Sub-District Imihigo are established as distinct (but complementary) according to the

MINECOFIN concept note. In contrast to the process outlined in the Decentralization Policy, which is not implemented, the MINECOFIN concept note more closely reflects reality and is therefore implemented in practice.

While it can be argued that alignment exists because Sub-District Imihigo are mainly derived from District Imihigo, and District Imihigo are partly based on citizen consultations, this line of argument is equally contested because of the way the citizen consultation process is managed, as discussed in the following sub-section.

3.5. The Impact of Citizen Consultations on the Final Approved District Imihigo

The discussions and respondents' feedback discussed in sub-section 3.4 above demonstrate a process through which a bottom-up planning and budgeting process feeds into the final District Imihigo. In addition to the emphasis placed on citizen consultation in all Imihigo planning documents, such as the P&BCC, MINECOFIN concept note, and MINALOC and LODA guidelines, respondents to the study explained that citizens are consulted during the planning and budgeting process, and that their proposed priorities filter through Sub-District administrative entities, to be finally submitted to the District for consideration in the District plans and Imihigo. A Vice President of a District Council acknowledged these processes in the following terms:

For District Imihigo to be approved by the District Council and to be signed between the Mayor and the President of the Republic, we start with citizens' views (priorities). Citizens' views are collected from the Village, then filter to the Cell, and are sent to the Sector level, and the Sectors identify key priorities that are sent to the District. Also, Imihigo are based on the District Development Strategy, which was developed through the consultative process that started from the Village level. We then consider the Government of Rwanda's seven-year program, Vision 2020 or 2050 and choose what we can be able to implement in a specific year. Then the District Council identifies what can be achieved in a specific year. (Vice President, District Council)

To put the above findings into proper context, the study probed the practice of collecting, consolidating, prioritizing, approval and consideration of citizens' priority issues by reviewing relevant documents used in the process. The 2019 data from five Districts of Muhanga, Burera, Ruhango, Karongi and Rusizi

was reviewed. Apart from Muhanga District, which provided both hard copies and data generated from the MEIS, the four remaining Districts only provided data generated from MEIS.

Due to the homogeneous nature of the data, analysis was narrowed down to two illustrative examples of Muhanga and Rusizi Districts.

a. Muhanga District

For Muhanga District, data was analyzed from the following Sub-District entities:

1. Cyeza Sector, Nyarunyinya and Kivumu Cells.
2. Nyamabuye Sector, Gitarama and Remera cells.

Districts issue templates with pre-determined Imihigo priorities in three pillars of economic transformation, social transformation and transformational governance, from which citizens select their main priorities (see Annex 1). Templates are completed at each Village and approved by the Cell Executive Secretary. Each Village report is sent to the Sector level without consolidation, prioritization or any modification. The Sector Executive Secretary sends the same Village reports to the District in raw form.

In total, citizens from the above mentioned Sectors and Cells raised 27 issues (8 in economic transformation, 9 in social transformation and 10 in transformational governance). Of the 27 issues raised, 12 issues were considered in the final approved District Imihigo (5 in economic transformation, 8 in social transformation

and none in transformational governance). Annex 2 provides an example of issues prioritized by citizens which the District considered in the final Imihigo.

b. Rusizi District

For Rusizi District, data was analyzed from the following Sub-District entities:

1. Kamembe Sector, Kamashangi and Gihundwe Cells.
2. Rwimbogo Sector, Muhehwe and Karengwe Cells.

Contrary to Muhanga District, Rusizi District did not have duly signed hard copies of citizens' identified priorities. This was a common experience with the three other Districts that were analyzed. Information in Rusizi was provided at the District level. It was extracted from the MEIS.

In total, 12 issues (2 in economic transformation, 5 in social transformation and 5 in transformational governance) were consolidated at the District level from the above-mentioned Sectors and Cells. Of these issues, 5 were considered (2 in economic transformation, 3 in social transformation and none in transformational governance).

General Observations

- (1) While all respondents to this study acknowledged that consultation meetings are organized with citizens, it was noted that the process of consultations is controlled by providing citizens with a pre-existing set of Imihigo priorities. The

process is designed in such a way that outcomes from citizen consultations are well aligned with the existing District Imihigo targets. As a result, most if not all issues prioritized by citizens, such as health insurance, universal education (zero drop-out), and tree planting, were already aligned to District priorities. This is done by issuing templates with pre-determined Imihigo targets from which citizens have no other choice but to choose from those suggested. This highly controlled approach is preferred in order to achieve a balance between the pressure of meeting Government targets, mostly passed down in MINALOC and LODA guidelines, and the demand by the GoR to ensure that citizens are consulted, which is also a requirement by the GoR. Striking a balance between these two competing commitments is difficult, and the applied strategies do not necessarily lead to meaningful consultation outcomes.

- (2) The process of consolidating citizens' priorities is not consistent with the feedback from respondents, or the P&BCC requirement of involving both Executive Committees and Councils at all administrative levels from Village up to the District (MINECOFIN, 2017). Particularly, the following inconsistencies were noted:
 - Citizens' priorities were not consolidated and prioritized to generate Cell and Sector priorities respectively. Village reports were compiled at the Cell level, passed on to the Sector level and finally to the District level.

- The Village reports were prepared by Village committees and approved by Cell Executive Secretaries. What is clear is that reports were not approved by Cell and Sector Councils as claimed.
- Reports in the MEIS have consolidated issues for Sectors and Cells with projected budgets.

(3) Similarly, much emphasis seems to be placed on feeding the MEIS. Consequently, most Local Government entities do not have reports that are duly signed by Councilors who are supposed to approve them. As a result, some Local Government leaders either use informal methods of collecting citizens' priorities such as phone calls, or they identify these priorities themselves and feed them into the MEIS.

(4) Four of the five analyzed Districts did not have duly signed copies of citizens' priorities at the Sector and Cell levels. This gap raises critical questions about the credibility of information recorded in the MEIS. For example, it is incomprehensible how citizens in Rusizi District raised only two issues in the economic pillar. Some respondents revealed that fear of scoring poorly in Imihigo influences their choices. Local leaders select few and easily-achievable Imihigo to ensure a high score during evaluations.

(5) Citizens' priorities under the governance pillar were least considered in the final District Imihigo. For instance, only two of the five analyzed Districts had considered one governance target each, while the remaining three had no single target on transformational governance from Sub-District consultations. Analysis of Districts'

Imihigo indicates a consistent pattern in which targets in transformational governance focus on institutional capacity development. As a result, citizens' priorities could not be aligned with the District targets, and were subsequently omitted.

(6) The amount of reports generated from all Villages creates a huge task for District technicians to review, consolidate and prioritize. Moreover, some reviewed Village reports were written in unreadable handwriting, raising questions of whether District technicians are willing to spend time reviewing them. These reports are also provided in soft copies and computed in the MEIS. This was equally noted as a critical challenge, especially for officials of Villages and Cells in rural areas who cannot easily access computers.

(7) The capacity and interest of a District Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation to engage citizens is critical to the success of collecting and considering citizens' priorities. Irrespective of the challenge that templates are already designed to collect specific information, District planners are key players in determining what to consider and how to align citizens' priorities with the District Action Plans and Imihigo.

Overall, the current planning and budgeting process does not provide sufficient space for meaningful consultations and consideration of citizens' priorities. Citizens are only required to reproduce the priorities already set in the guidelines established by MINALOC, rendering the process flawed in terms of effective and meaningful citizen participation in which citizens' original ideas should be the basis of meaningful consultations.

Additionally, lack of feedback to citizens is considered one of the critical impediments to citizens' participation. Feedback practices vary in terms of depth of information provided and types of tools applied. All Districts provide feedback, mainly through formal structures at the District and Sector levels. Districts invite all Sub-District entities, CSOs, Councilors, representatives of National Councils (youth, women, and persons with disabilities), JADF, private sector, FBOs, and opinion leaders, and present to them approved Imihigo.

There is no systematic and consistent method used to provide feedback. In some Districts, feedback was provided through radio show programs, display of approved Imihigo at the District and Sector offices, staff meetings, citizen assemblies, and/or multiplication and distribution of fliers to Village leaders and Cell Executive Secretaries. The panels (or posters) were also found pinned up in public places especially at Cell, Sector and District offices. In some Districts (such as Muhanga and Gatsibo), CSOs assist in producing feedback materials and also help organize feedback meetings within the community. Some Districts have innovative ways of providing feedback. For example, Huye District extracted one of the Imihigo on infrastructure development, and developed a roadside poster describing a specific Imihigo target to be realized by constructing a road.

Despite the above efforts, feedback on Imihigo was highlighted as one of the key areas for improvement. The study noted that, while LODA provides specific and comprehensive guidelines on feedback mechanisms, most of the guidelines were not implemented. In

particular, feedback in almost all Districts was mainly about approved Imihigo and as a means of passing down Imihigo for implementation. The most critical gap is the lack of direct feedback to citizens regarding the reasons why their priorities are not taken into consideration in the final Imihigo. A key informant from RGB made the following comment:

When Imihigo are approved, they are not shared with citizens on what has been considered. Feedback does not filter through to the citizens. Yes, they display them at the District, and it is true that Districts and Sectors have Imihigo rooms. But then, when do citizens go to the District since services have been decentralized to the lower level? There is need to devise other means or mechanisms of disseminating Imihigo with a focus on what was considered, what was not considered and why they were not considered. Also, the Councils represent citizens and yet they are the ones who approve Imihigo. Unfortunately, there is a challenge that citizens are not informed. (Representative of Rwanda Governance Board)

Another respondent had this to say:

The persistent challenge is limited feedback on what citizens identified as their priorities and the underlying reasons why selected priorities were not considered. At least, a citizen should have information about what happened, to the point that even when one thinks about it, he/she will have hope that because this priority was not considered this year, it will perhaps be considered next year. (JADF President)

Participants in FGDs revealed that even when feedback is provided, citizens are mostly not satisfied with the quality of feedback. The general practice is that direct feedback to citizens is provided at the time of soliciting their views for the next planning and budgeting cycle. This strategy is not popular because it comes too late when citizens have already despaired and the time allocated for identifying issues to be discussed is not sufficient. Respondents in FGDs considered the process to be flawed and simply implemented as a formality.

Generally, limited understanding of when to provide feedback and what type of feedback to provide, diversification of feedback tools, and absence of clear timelines for providing feedback are the key factors limiting effective feedback to citizens.

Limited direct feedback to citizens is counter-productive to the long-term ambition of keeping citizens engaged in the planning, budgeting and Imihigo processes. Citizens feel empowered when given opportunities to express their views on public policy matters. Consideration of citizens' priorities is a critical incentive for keeping citizens engaged in participatory processes. When this incentive is lacking, citizens lose a sense of ownership and interest in staying engaged. On the other hand, feedback about what authorities have not considered in the plans and budgets, along with the underlying reasons for not considering citizens' priorities, empowers citizens with the feeling that they are considered as critical stakeholders in their development. This was underscored in an interview with a representative of a CSO in the following words:

The excitement of citizens in contributing ideas is not the same when their ideas were not considered. Some people will think that their views are not given any importance. Sometimes, citizens' expectations are overly ambitious and they think that issues raised can be addressed overnight. And when citizens are raising their issues, you note that they are sincerely concerned about those issues. (Representative of CSO)

4. Tools That Facilitate Local Leaders in Alignment of IMIHIGO

Tools entail instruments that aid the process of organizing different steps leading up to the implementation of a program or intervention (University of California, Berkeley, n.d., para. 1). This section discusses the different tools that local leaders use in the Imihigo process from the household to the District.

4.1. LODA Guide and Templates

In line with the P&BCC1, LODA has developed a guide with relevant tools to facilitate Districts and lower administrative entities on how to give feedback, with a focus on the consideration of citizens' priorities, as well as how to identify citizens' priorities relevant for their future planning (LODA, 2018). The guide provides the feedback report structure for different local administrative entities and offers a number of templates in annexes to facilitate the planning and feedback processes.

In addition to the report structure, LODA provides annual templates that capture, in more specific terms, information on planning and feedback. The templates

require each level of administrative entity (Village, Cell and Sector) to collect, consolidate and identify a maximum of three priorities. The templates require local administrative entities to capture the following information as the basis for providing feedback:

- Project identified in participatory planning
- Priority name
- If the project was considered in the Fiscal Year District Development Budget
- Reasons if the project was not considered
- If the project is still a priority
- If the project idea can be implemented through a community approach
- Whether the project should be considered as citizens' priority for the coming fiscal year
- Additional information or remarks

As noted in sub-section 3.5, these templates are not used at all levels of administrative entities. The emphasis on using the template in the MEIS, as well as the duplication of templates, could be one of the reasons why templates are not consistently and systematically used.

4.2. Household Imihigo Planning Template

Study participants, including local leaders and ordinary citizens, named the household Imihigo planning template as one of the tools that facilitates the planning process. The household Imihigo planning template details a list of all possible Imihigo at the household level. The District conveys the household planning templates to the Village leaders who distribute them to citizens. These templates guide citizens in the selection of which Imihigo they will implement that year. The household's Imihigo planning templates are filled in two copies. The household remains with a copy while also reserving a copy for the Village leader.

The household planning template is credited with ensuring that all the vital needs at the household level are not forgotten, while also facilitating the monitoring and evaluation process at the household level. However, such a template reduces flexibility on the choices of the citizens. Moreover, it has less flexibility in accommodating context specific issues and priorities. One of the Cell Executive Secretaries revealed that:

There is a form that is planned for the household. It comes from the District level; they are the ones that give us the form and we distribute it at the Village level and they also pass it on to the households. (Cell Executive Secretary)

4.3. Monitoring and Evaluation Information System

The MEIS is an electronic-based comprehensive monitoring and evaluation tool that was designed and is managed by LODA. The MEIS is primarily used for storing information from Sub-District entities. Through the MEIS, project details of Local Government Imihigo are readily available. For example, one can access information regarding what the project is about, where it is being implemented, and the progress of implementation among other parameters (LODA, n.d.). The MEIS has in-built templates with specific indicators that enable close monitoring of approved Imihigo, and can generate automated reports (see Annex 3).

The key informants alluded to the MEIS as one of the tools that has brought about optimum information storage for Local Government Imihigo. Local leaders are able to track the progress of Imihigo from the Cell level up to the District level. Through this system, one can assess the level of alignment between Sub-District Imihigo and approved District Imihigo.

We make hard copies of Imihigo but also insert these approved priorities in the Monitoring and Evaluation Information System every year. This in a way enables Central Government and others to check and be able to know in a certain Sector or Cell what was planned. (District Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation)

Another Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation was quoted as follows:

By the way, LODA requires all the ideas that have been raised at each Cell to be put in the MEIS. This makes it possible to store all the ideas that have been raised by the citizens. (District Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation)

4.4. Integrated Financial Management Information System

The Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) is an electronic-based management information system designed and currently managed by MINECOFIN. The overall objective of IFMIS is to automate the execution and accounting processes for effective public financial management (MINECOFIN, 2020).

The P&BCC requires local leaders at the District level to submit their plans through IFMIS and LODA's MEIS, to facilitate Ministries with consolidated information for the budgeting process. The IFMIS and MEIS come with numerous Imihigo planning templates that are filled and uploaded in both systems. These systems ensure coherent Imihigo planning. According to the 2018-2019 P&BCC1, below is a list of planning templates that have to be filled (MINECOFIN, 2017):

1. Strategic Issues Papers: summarizes the rationale for selected priorities regarding the NST1
2. Participatory Planning Feedback Template
3. Participatory Planning Monitoring Process
4. Sector and Cell Priorities
5. Project Profile documents
6. Ongoing project assessment forms
7. Capacity Development Plans
8. Operation and Maintenance

However, these templates may change from year to year. For instance, the 2018-2019 P&BCC1 (MINECOFIN, 2017) required submission of the participatory planning feedback template as one of the requirements for submitting the approved plans in the IFMIS, but this requirement is missing in the 2019-2020 P&BCC1 (MINECOFIN, 2018).

Due to the fact that in most cases these templates change from one year to another, Local Government staff are not well versed with them. During interviews, local leaders referred to the templates as instructions. One key informant said:

There are instructions together with formats. They [instructions and formats] give you guidance. For example, they elaborate on what is required in social affairs or economic development. These formats are available at the District level. They have instructions that should be followed in the selection of priorities. (Sector Executive Secretary)

Another respondent explained:

After the release of the first Planning and Budgeting Call Circular, there are forms that come from the District to the Sector. The form requires us to solicit citizen ideas from the Village and Cell. The District brings a form that you fill and others that you first take to the Cell and Village. (Sector Executive Secretary)

4.5. Community Score Card

The Community Score Card (CSC) is a tool that was initiated in 2011 through the Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project, and is being implemented with the support of Norwegian People's Aid in partnership with seven national CSOs (Konsult Life Science, 2018). By design, a CSC is a user-friendly tool that facilitates citizens to go through an empowerment process by actively participating in problem identification and collectively addressing problems with duty bearers.

Past research, including NAR (2018) in a study assessing citizen participation in the Imihigo process, has credited the CSC as an effective tool for improved citizen participation, accountability and transparency between citizens and local leaders. It offers citizens and duty bearers a friendly space to evaluate service delivery and jointly agree on service priorities that need to be improved. Similarly, during this study, local leaders cited the CSC as one of the tools that facilitates alignment of Imihigo across the different levels of Local Government up to the District, especially in selecting and prioritizing citizen's concerns.

A member of civil society, when asked to reveal some of the tools they use in alignment of Imihigo, had this to say:

Taking an example of Gatsibo and Nyagatare Districts, from the Village level, we have what we call the Community Score Card. The Community Score Card helps us solicit, compile and prioritize citizens' ideas based on the most urgent needs from the Village to the District level. It means the ideas originate from the lowest level up to the District. (Representative of CSO and JADF member)

Indeed, available evidence from other KIIs in this research affirms the CSC as an important tool in the Imihigo alignment process in Local Government from the Village to the District level. However, the CSC is currently used in only eight Districts, and within those Districts the PPIMA project is implemented in few selected Sectors. Similarly, the CSC is not a statutory tool and therefore relies on the goodwill of District leadership to be effective.

Generally, while some tools to facilitate the Imihigo planning process are developed by LODA, respondents to the study revealed that these tools are not consistently used. Respondents acknowledged that the MEIS was used consistently because it is mandatory. It was recommended that authorities responsible for Imihigo should design templates that capture the views of citizens and put in place mechanisms of tracking whether collected views are aggregated into the MEIS.

5. Gaps and Challenges in Aligning IMIHIGO From Lower Administrative Entities (Sub-District) With District IMIHIGO

The research identified a number of serious gaps and challenges that hinder the bottom-up alignment of Imihigo from household to District level.

5.1. Policy Framework on IMIHIGO

There is no specific policy on Imihigo. Instead, there are fragmented provisions in different policies, such as the Decentralization Policy and the Results Based Management Policy, complemented by Ministerial guidelines. Moreover, the policies and guidelines are often contradictory. For example, provisions in the Results Based Management Policy and the MINECOFIN concept note are not consistent with what the Decentralization Policy suggests as practice. As a result, the process suggested in the Decentralization Policy is disregarded by Local Government entities. The Results Based Management Policy discusses only two aspects of Imihigo: institutional Imihigo and joint Imihigo, while MINECOFIN introduces a two-tier system of developing Imihigo: District and Sub-District Imihigo. Many areas are left open to be addressed by guidelines. The absence of a specific,

all-encompassing policy on Imihigo, together with an outdated Decentralization Policy, were highlighted among the key reasons leading to inconsistencies in Imihigo development by Local Government authorities. Similarly, the issuing of separate guidelines by MINALOC and LODA for Sub-District Imihigo was judged to be a duplication, which creates extra responsibilities for Sub-District staff.

5.2. Overwhelming Top-Down Approach and Power Asymmetry Between Central and Local Governments

Most Imihigo targets are set at the Central Government level, making it practically difficult to align Sub-District Imihigo with District Imihigo. While there are consistent efforts to consult with relevant stakeholders, such as Sub-District entities, development partners and citizens, integration in Districts' Imihigo of issues emerging from citizen consultations is very limited. Moreover, some of the Central Government driven Imihigo are in some

instances introduced to Districts without taking into account the specificity of each District, such as crop suitability, use of fertilizer, or required infrastructure projects such as construction of feeder roads. One Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation highlighted that the top-down approach permeates all management culture in local governance structures. He recalled how, after the District had prepared and approved the Imihigo plan, provincial level authorities insisted that other items be incorporated, even though they were not budgeted for. Council members were not even given an opportunity to discuss the removed items with their respective constituencies. This not only compromises the well-established framework for planning, budgeting and Imihigo preparation, but it also makes it complicated for Councils to fulfil their mandate, such as providing proper feedback to their constituencies. This was expressed by one of the study participants in the following terms:

In my view, I think citizens should be the ones to set Imihigo targets that they can achieve by themselves, not just bringing Imihigo from the top for citizens to implement. When citizens choose what they will realize in the next year, the Village leader can also set targets of what he/she will deliver to his citizens. What I set as an Imihigo target should be my own declaration: that, for example, I will achieve 100% health insurance coverage next year,

all citizens in the Village will have toilets, etc. Because I will be the one to set those targets, I will invest all my efforts to achieve them. (Respondent in FGD of Village Leaders)

Additionally, asymmetry in power hinders the efficiency and performance of Local Governments. Power asymmetry between Ministries and Local Government authorities seriously undermines the independence and legitimacy of the entire system of local governance. Tokenism of meetings hampers the way priorities are highlighted and implemented without feedback. There is no strict mechanism for ensuring that decisions made during joint Imihigo planning reflect the needs and priorities of local administrative entities and their constituencies. Power differentials between sectoral Ministries and Districts can frustrate the latter, preventing them from asserting which priorities should be considered and how these priorities should be implemented.

Indeed, respondents to this study confirmed that there are imbalances in consultation between Districts and Ministries in deciding which joint Imihigo targets should be incorporated in District Imihigo, and the roles and responsibilities of each party. Respondents familiar with the Imihigo development process revealed that joint Imihigo are not based on consensus and constructive feedback. They complained that in most cases, sectoral Ministries have a bigger voice in deciding what they want to be done and how they want it done, irrespective of the reality on the ground. To elaborate on this issue, one of the Directors of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation at the District explained the situation as follows:

I'm not afraid to say this: some [institutions] set Imihigo without providing their budgets. We are the ones who commit to these Imihigo; we are the ones who are exposed when we emerge the best or the worst, but these other Imihigo targets from Ministries take most of our time that we would be using to focus on citizens' priorities, because we spend more time on issues beyond our control. That's why there are lots of Imihigo targets at the national level yet all these institutions want these Imihigo to be realized in one year at the District level. (District Director of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation)

5.3. Mismatch of Priorities at Sub-District and District Levels

This study observed that improved citizens' participation in identifying their most pressing priorities, which are channeled through the Sub-District administrative entities, is not commensurate with the amount of issues considered in the final District Imihigo. Respondents perceived that only a few priorities of citizens raised at Sub-District levels are integrated into the District Action Plans which are the basis of District Imihigo. This was mainly attributed to the fact that most of the earmarked

Central Government budget is already allocated to macro level priorities that are implemented at District level. The top-down nature of identifying priorities means that citizens' issues are often overlooked.

A limitation cited by respondents was the absence of benchmarking and standardized practices for measuring the extent to which citizens' priorities, which should filter through the planning and budgeting process, are considered in the District Imihigo. LODA provides templates to document citizens' priorities resulting from their participation at Cell and Sector level, but this information is not well integrated into the District Imihigo. As a result, Districts lack a systematic and standardized procedure of adopting targets from priorities emerging from Sub-District entities.

Similarly, whereas Councils at Sub-District levels are supposed to approve all citizens' priorities through the local administrative hierarchies, District Councilors who approve the District plans, budgets and Imihigo do not have specific guidelines on the extent to which they should take into consideration priorities emanating from Sub-District levels. Moreover, special groups, such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities, have no established framework of ensuring that the priorities of their interest groups are considered. In the absence of benchmarking standards such as quotas, the process relies heavily on the goodwill of the District leadership to consider priorities from Sub-District levels. Therefore, there is no guarantee that priorities identified through the Sub-District processes will be considered, or of the extent to which they will be considered.

5.4. Lack of Fiscal and Financial Decentralization

Fiscal and financial decentralization remains weak, which limits the full realization of the intended outcomes envisaged in the Decentralization Policy. Some Central Government (sectoral) institutions are still reluctant to decentralize their interventions and their respective budgets. Respondents to this study revealed that there are incidences where sectoral institutions decentralize activities but retain their budgets. Sectoral institutions claim that Districts do not have the required capacities to monitor and report on allocated finances. Respondents at the District level revealed that this practice leads to a number of challenges and frustrations, including delays or poor execution of Imihigo activities, which impacts negatively on the Districts' Imihigo performance evaluations.

5.5. Delays in Issuing the Imihigo Guidelines

Delays in receiving guidelines at Sub-District levels and limited knowledge about participatory planning tools were noted as challenges that affect proper alignment of Imihigo from Sub-District to District levels. Delays in issuing guidelines require the staff in charge at Sector, Cell and Village levels to meet the deadlines through a rushed process. As a result, these guidelines, particularly at Sub-District levels, are not always respected; templates are not used consistently or systematically as required due to unrealistic timelines. Hence, local leaders may choose to guess data, which they sometimes report over the telephone. One respondent put it this way:

There is one thing that should be rectified: I think planning, budgeting and Imihigo preparation should be done well ahead of time. For example, if we are implementing Imihigo of fiscal year 2019-2020, we should have a draft Imihigo for 2020-2021 at least by December this year so that everything is not rushed. It should be a well thought through process at least six months before Imihigo are adopted. I think that can help to address the gap where people rush through the process and do things that they have not clearly reflected upon. (Respondent in FGD of Cell Executive Secretaries and Cell Councilors)

5.6. Role of Development Partners

The Prime Minister's Instructions establishing JADF provide in Article 3 the mission of JADF as a forum and a tool to ensure sustainable socio-economic development and improved service delivery at the District level. Both MINALOC and LODA guidelines place emphasis on consultations with relevant development partners in the planning, budgeting and Imihigo formulation processes. Commitments by development partners (NGOs, CSOs, FBOs, and the private sector) are mostly made through JADF. However, JADF members' participation is still low,

especially in integrating their interventions in District Imihigo. Levels of participation vary and depend on many factors. Few JADF members are active and regular participants compared to the total number of JADF members per District. This affects learning and experience sharing which could inform a better process of aligning Imihigo from Sub-District to District levels.

Consultations with development partners (JADF members) are mostly at the level of providing inputs on already developed District plans, budgets and Imihigo. Some JADF members who commented on this challenge revealed that lack of a proper coordination mechanism between JADF members and Local Government from the early stages of planning, budgeting and Imihigo preparation was the main contributing factor to this gap.

5.7. IMIHIGO Guidelines Vis-à-Vis Planning Tools

Respondents to this study revealed that some guidelines are inconsistent with the DDSs, and that local leaders find it difficult to harmonize the inconsistencies. It was further mentioned that, even at the household level, Imihigo booklets are sometimes not readily available to ordinary citizens. This affects the timelines for planning and collecting citizens' targets at the Village level. Moreover, the Imihigo planning process is not fully understood by citizens. Respondents in FGDs felt that the guidelines are very technical and only ideal for planning experts. They are not simplified for Cell staff or other stakeholders at Cell and Village levels such as Cell Councilors and Village leaders, making the whole process complicated for them.

5.8. Capacity Gaps

The lack of capacity of both lower local governance structures and citizens is a key factor hindering priorities identified at each layer of Local Government from filtering up to the next local administrative entity. The capacity gap is particularly large in rural and remote areas, and in poor and illiterate communities. Such communities lack sufficient awareness of their rights and duties, as well as essential civic knowledge and skills, to fully understand and engage in the complex processes of local governance planning, budgeting and Imihigo preparation.

Capacity to interpret and analyze the guidelines, particularly on the part of citizens, Village leaders, Cell officers and Cell Councilors, is still basic. Because Imihigo are designed under the results based approach, it appears that not every individual at Sub-District levels has the capacity to analyze the Imihigo cycle and articulate what, for example, is an "impactful" priority need. Indeed, in most communities, citizens tend to focus on individual concerns as opposed to community driven priorities. Participants in an FGD of opinion leaders disclosed that:

The problem is mainly in the Village. Village leaders in urban areas are more literate because most of them come from educated backgrounds. However, this is a big challenge in rural areas. There, people are elected mostly on the basis of their means (financial), not necessarily on the basis of whether they know how to read and write. For example, a person may have a small grocery shop with let's say

eight cows and sometimes with good ideas. However, it is not clear whether this person has a good understanding of explaining these things (planning, budgeting, Imihigo). (Respondent in FGD of Opinion Leaders)

All these are challenges - communication challenges. (Respondent in FGD of Cell Executive Secretaries and Cell Councilors)

The same challenge was stressed in an FGD of Cell Executive Secretaries and Cell Councilors as follows:

The challenge we experience in receiving ideas from the Villages is that sometimes, these ideas are badly written with poor handwriting that you cannot read. Also, it is difficult to have these ideas all at once. At the Cell level, we are required to provide reports in soft and hard copies. Writing reports on the computers is difficult because sometimes there is no electricity at the Cell offices. Almost all Cell offices in our District do not have electricity, and yet they require us to submit reports in soft and hard copies. That will require you to travel to Rubengera where you can access electricity. You will sit there and sometimes they will not facilitate you. They also tell us to send reports by emails. Our work place has no Internet.

5.9. Incentive Gap

The use of incentives can and does stimulate the interest of citizens, Local Government officials, and external organizations in planning and implementation. When applied appropriately, incentives can effectively sustain the participation of committed participants or motivate those that need to be prompted (Tang, 2005). In the same vein, lack of incentives for both citizens and Local Governments can be an impediment to citizen political participation. A lack of tangible gains resulting from participation leads to low levels of enthusiasm and demoralizes citizens from actively participating in the Imihigo planning process.

Lack of time and willingness to participate, as well as low levels of trust and confidence in local leaders at Sub-District levels, are reported to be significant disincentives preventing citizens from engaging with leaders at the Sub-District levels. Low levels of confidence in local decision makers is partly explained by the fact that priorities raised by citizens are repeatedly neglected in District Action Plans and Imihigo, meaning that no budget is allocated to them. Without any budget earmarked at the District level, and having no budget of their own to address local issues, Sub-District entities frequently find themselves unable to take any action to solve these problems.

The study found that local leaders at Sub-District levels demonstrate the goodwill of addressing the needs prioritized by community members under

their responsibility. However, because Sub-District entities are not budget entities, they have no budget to address community-specific prioritized issues such as construction of small bridges connecting Villages or purchase of iron sheets to construct houses for the poor. Instead, they rely heavily on District plans and budgets, and assume the role of mobilizing citizens to address some of the issues. This does not always build trust with citizens, who expect results from duty bearers.

Failure to address issues raised by citizens is an impediment to keeping citizens engaged in the planning and Imihigo formulation processes. The expectation of marginal or zero benefits resulting from participation, accompanied by visible opportunity costs such as the loss of daily wages; distraction from employment, farming and small business; and time away from children, all create disincentives that hinder citizen engagement in Local Government participatory processes. As a result, Sub-District officials are skeptical about promoting participation because they perceive that participation creates various complexities in the process of local planning and decision-making. This was emphasized by a respondent in a FGD of Cell Executive Secretaries and Councilors as follows:

(...) Let's take an example of my Cell; we have been raising the issue of constructing a tarmac road linking us with the District office for three successive years. When we went back this year to collect their [citizens'] views, they raised the same issue and complained that the road was repeatedly raised as an issue, and what was the assurance that it would now be

included in District Imihigo? The District should ask us to document what it will be able to implement, otherwise citizens mistrust us because we are lying to them. (Respondent in FGD of Cell Executive Secretaries and Cell Councilors)

5.10. Representativeness Gap

Limited interaction between elected representatives (Councilors) and their respective constituencies on one hand, and between Councilors and bureaucratic staff on the other hand, is a considerable limitation on the direct participation of citizens in Imihigo formulation.

There are expectations that, since Councilors are elected citizens' representatives, they should be in a position to enforce effective participatory planning and budgeting processes by setting criteria such as number of issues considered from lower levels of administrative entities, or citizen participation as prerequisite for approving plans, budgets and Imihigo.

However, respondents revealed that citizen representation in planning processes through elected Councilors was not effective. This was largely attributed to low capacities and limited time allocated to the functions of the Councilors. Councilors are overwhelmed, and perform unpaid and voluntary duties without stipends for transportation or accommodation when they intend to engage with their respective constituencies.

The limited involvement of elected representatives in District and Sector governance processes creates loopholes in horizontal as well as downward and upward accountability.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

The “extent to which Imihigo at lower level administrative entities (Sub-District) are transmitted and imbedded in the District Imihigo” was the key question at the heart of this study. The study concluded that Sub-District Imihigo are not transmitted at each higher administrative layer to the District, as outlined in the Decentralization Policy. On the contrary, the District Imihigo are developed first in time, while Sub-District Imihigo are derived in part from the targets outlined in the approved and signed District Imihigo.

The study confirms that the development of District Imihigo is systematic with a consistent approach across all the Districts. The process is based partly on targets set from priorities emerging from consultations with Sub-District entities, development partners, and citizens during the planning and budgeting process, and partly on consideration of national targets.

On the other hand, Sub-District Imihigo are developed based on approved District Imihigo, which include Central Government targets and priorities identified from consultations with citizens, as well as on MINALOC and LODA guidelines. This process as currently applied does not cater for a possibility of systematic bottom-up alignment of Imihigo from Sub-District to District levels.

Moreover, the fact that there is a list of pre-identified priorities for inclusion in Sub-District Imihigo as suggested in both MINALOC and LODA guidelines implies that Sub-District Imihigo have limited

opportunity of aligning with District Imihigo. The MINALOC guidelines in fact provide for a process which completely contradicts the goal of Imihigo alignment, as can be seen from the following:

The planning of Imihigo at Sector, Cell and Village levels will focus on activities that have not been considered neither in the District Action Plan nor in the District Imihigo and which respond both to the national priorities and the needs that have been expressed by respective entities and the citizens during the planning process. (MINALOC, 2019)

The study further revealed a clear distinction between District and Sub-District Imihigo planning processes, with different coordination and guiding frameworks issued by different Ministries: MINECOFIN and MINALOC respectively.

Generally, the findings could not establish the existence of a clear process of alignment between Imihigo at Sub-District levels and Imihigo at District level. District Imihigo emerge from the planning and budgeting process and not from Sub-District Imihigo, since Sub-District Imihigo come into existence only after District Imihigo have been approved and signed.

6.2. Recommendations

In view of the findings, gaps and challenges highlighted in this report, recommendations are proposed which target specific institutions with the relevant mandates and capacities to implement the proposed recommendations, as highlighted in the table below:

Responsible institution	Proposed recommendations
MINECOFIN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="464 573 1441 831">1. Should adopt a legal and policy framework that, among other things, establishes consistency and standardizes consideration of Sub-District priorities in the final approved District Imihigo. The framework should address the gap of hierarchical power imbalance and ensure that joint Imihigo are developed on the basis of consensus between Districts and Central Government. <li data-bbox="464 875 1441 1290">2. Should adopt a policy framework or specific guidelines that clearly establish the relationship between Local Government planning and budgeting, Sub-District Imihigo, and District Imihigo. Such a policy should require the consideration of Sub-District priorities in the planning and budgeting process at District level. This could be realized by enforcing a specific quota that should be considered from the issues resulting from consultations with Sub-District entities, development partners and citizens during the planning and budgeting process. The policy framework or guidelines should establish a clear monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure that all Districts comply with the set quotas. <li data-bbox="464 1335 1441 1547">3. Should put in place strategies for implementing the Fiscal and Financial Decentralization Policy in a manner that empowers Districts to fully implement the targets set in Imihigo. Adopted strategies should result in more fiscal freedom of Districts so that they can increase their focus on local priorities as opposed to those of Central Government. <li data-bbox="464 1592 1441 1886">4. Should provide a tailor-made capacity building program, as well as guidance and leadership, including on technical skills, financial resources and tools to ensure that Districts have capacities as well as effective and efficient systems to implement the fiscal and financial decentralization aspirations. Capacity building and coaching should particularly focus on building consensus and understanding of the best approaches to implement joint Imihigo planning.

MINALOC

1. Should revise the Decentralization Policy and ensure it is consistent with the proposed Imihigo policy reforms and realistic practices of developing Imihigo.
2. Should establish monitoring and evaluation standards and mechanisms to ensure that priorities set at Sub-District levels have been considered in the final approved District Imihigo.
3. Should, in line with the Local Government capacity building strategy, adopt strategic capacity development interventions including coaching and mentoring for local leaders, both Executives and Councilors, at all levels of Local Government structure. The capacity development program should, among other things, empower local leaders with skills and confidence to monitor and ensure that standards of balancing national targets with priorities established through consultative processes at the Sub-District levels are complied with.
4. Should increase the number of technical staff at the Cell level to enable them to adequately support the Sector and Villages in meeting local priorities. The technical staff will help balance the demands arising from the Villages and citizens, and requirements such as collection and management of socio-economic data.
5. Should adopt a more flexible approach of allocating Imihigo priorities to Sub-District entities and design a more flexible household Imihigo template that accommodates citizens to set more individual targets.
6. Should establish clear vertical and horizontal communication channels within District as well as Sub-District Local Government entities to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are updated about all stages and processes of developing Imihigo.
7. Should reinforce feedback mechanisms by implementing joint guidelines and by facilitating local Councils and other elected representative bodies of special groups to regularly interact with their constituencies, in order to enquire about their needs and priorities and provide them with feedback.

MINECOFIN and Districts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Should provide operational budgets for local Councils and facilitate special groups established at the District, Sector and Cell levels to increase interaction with their constituencies, specifically in collecting constituencies' priorities and providing feedback on considered priorities as well as reasons for certain priorities not being considered.
MINECOFIN, MINALOC and LODA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Should adopt a framework of preparing joint guidelines for Imihigo development as well as planning and budgeting at District and Sub-District levels, apportion their roles and responsibilities, and ensure that Sub-Districts are complying with the guidelines and are using the relevant tools. 2. Should reflect on the current Imihigo preparations and the templates used in the process of developing Imihigo to ensure that templates are context specific and flexible to use, bearing in mind that some targets may not necessarily be relevant to all Sectors, Cells or Villages. 3. Should review the existing Sub-District planning and budgeting processes, embed Sub-District Imihigo development within the existing planning and budgeting process at the Sub-District levels, and establish standards of incorporating Sub-District priorities in the final District Imihigo. 4. Should adopt monitoring and evaluation of compliance with established feedback mechanisms to ensure compliance and advise where gaps exist. Similarly, the role of Councilors in providing feedback should be reinforced by facilitating them as elected representatives to provide feedback, particularly about citizens' priorities that are not considered in the District Action Plans and Imihigo. 5. Should put in place enforcement mechanisms for existing Local Government planning frameworks, including monitoring the implementation of jointly developed guidelines as well as application of relevant Imihigo planning, feedback and monitoring tools. 6. Should motivate best performing Districts that consider priorities from Sub-District entities as well as best performing Sub-District entities.

CSOs

1. Should collaborate with Local Governments and other stakeholders through JADF to develop or customize tools for effective Imihigo development. Tools may include templates for consolidating issues at different levels of the Imihigo development process, as well as for joint monitoring and evaluation of compliance.
2. Should partner with Local Governments in the collection, consolidation and definition of citizens' priorities and ensure that consolidated priorities are effectively reflected in the final approved District Imihigo.
3. Should collaborate with and support Local Governments in strengthening the capacity of local leaders and Councilors to effectively and efficiently formulate Imihigo.
4. Should support Local Governments in providing feedback through diverse communication channels on which citizens' priorities and Sub-District Imihigo have been considered in the final District Imihigo, as well as which priorities have not been considered and why.

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8. Annexes

8.1. Annexes 1: Example of Filled Template for Collecting Citizens' Priority Issues at Village Level

AKARERE: MUHANGA

Umudugudu: Rusave

Akagari: Nyarunyinya

Umurenge: Cyeza

Akarere: Muhanga

IBITEKEREZO BIKENEWE MU GUTEGURA GAHUNDA Y'IBIKORWA BY'AKARERE UMWAKA 2018-2019

No	IBYICIRO	
1	<u>UBUKUNGU (5)</u>	
	Bugizwe n'ibi bikurikira: Ibikorwa remezo (imihanda, amashanyarazi, amazi meza, imiturire, ubuhinzi n'ubworozi, inganda, ubukerarugendo...)	1)hifujwe amashanyarazi 2)kugezwaho amazi meza 3)kunoza gahunda y'ubworozi inka ziterwa intanga 4)hifujwe guhabwa umuhanda cyakabiri ndusu
2	<u>IMIBEREHO MYIZA (3)</u>	
	Igizwe n'ibi bikurikira: Ubuzima, Uburezi, Kurengera abatishoboye, gufasha abafite ubumuga, Umuco, Imikino n'imyidagaduro, Isuku)	1)hifujwe kugezwaho ivuriro hafi y'abaturage 2)kunoza service zitangirwa kwa muganga
3	<u>IMIYOBORERE MYIZA (2)</u>	
	Igizwe n'ibi bikurikira: Ubuzererezi, amakimbirane mu miryango, Gutanga servisi nziza, gukemura ibibazo by'abaturage, Ubukangurambaga bugamije guhindura imyumvire y'abaturage, Uburinganire bw'umugabo n'umugore, Itangazamakuru,	1)hifujwe ko inzego z'ubuyobozizi zirushaho kwita kubibazo by'abaturagezitanga service nziza

8.2. Annex 2: Citizens' Priorities Considered in Final District IMIHIGO - Muhanga District

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION		
DISTRICT IMIHIGO TARGETS	CITIZENS' PRIORITIES	PRIORITIES CONSIDERED IN DISTRICT IMOHIGO
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agricultural production for priority crops (rice, Irish potatoes, maize...) increased from 613 to 630 Tons on average 2. Increased cash crops (e.g. coffee, vegetable...) production from 300 to 370 Tons 3. Increased animal productivity (insemination & vaccination of cows) 4. Increased productive jobs through entrepreneurship and business development 5. Improved riding quality and level of service for road network (feeder road developed) 6. Accelerate urbanization to facilitate economic growth 7. Forest coverage maintained and increased (agroforestry, forest cover increased, fruit trees...) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved road network 2. Timely provision of improved seeds, fertilizers... 3. Cow insemination 4. Insurance for livestock and farming/harvest 5. Construction of modern small selling point 6. Trees planting & forest protection 7. Increased coffee plantation 8. Forming cooperatives 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved road network 2. Timely provision of improved seeds, fertilizers... 3. Cow insemination 4. Trees planting & forest protection 5. Increased coffee plantation

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

DISTRICT IMIHIGO TARGETS	CITIZENS' PRIORITIES	CITIZENS' PRIORITIES CONSIDERED IN DISTRICT IMIHIGO
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased coverage and delivery of core social protection programs (direct support, Vision 2020 Umurenge Program, housing for genocide survivors...) 2. Extremely poor households have increased access to complementary livelihood development services for economic empowerment (Girinka [one cow per poor family], provision of small livestock...) 3. Access to health services increased (health infrastructure increased, Mutuelle de sante [health insurance]...) 4. Maternal, child and infant mortality reduced (i.e. delivery at health facilities, family planning, improved services) 5. Increased education infrastructure (i.e. new classrooms, pre-primary classrooms constructed, latrines) 6. Increased access to adult literacy 7. All students in primary and secondary school complete the year of learning 8. Increased household access to electricity 9. Increased access to clean drinking water 10. Increased access to improved settlement from 0 to 33 households on average target of high risk zone (Relocation of households in high risk zone, Integrated Development Project model village established) 11. Increased participation in sports (i.e. new sports facilities created at cell level, monthly mass sport at sector level) 12. Family cohesion strengthened (i.e. Umugoroba w'Ababyeyi [parents' evenings], reintegration of children from orphanage centers into families increased) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased connectivity to electricity 2. Increased clean water access 3. Support to vulnerable persons 4. Zero drop-out (universal education) 5. Health insurance (Mutuelle de sante) 6. Need for health post 7. Decent settlement 8. Sport, culture and leisure 9. Improved sanitation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased connectivity to electricity 2. Increased clean water access 3. Support to vulnerable persons 4. Zero drop-out (universal education) 5. Health insurance (Mutuelle de sante) 6. Need for health post 7. Decent settlement 8. Sport, culture and leisure

TRANSFORMATIONAL GOVERNANCE

DISTRICT IMIHIGO TARGETS	CITIZENS' PRIORITIES	CITIZENS' PRIORITIES CONSIDERED IN DISTRICT IMIHIGO
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved governance, service delivery and accountability in local government (institutional capacity for service delivery & accountability developed, modernized civil registration, Ndi umunyarwanda) 2. Improved access to quality justice (justice delivery, Itorero at village level) 3. Increased District own revenues generation capacity from 1,200,365,848 Rwf to 1,600,000,000 Rwf. (increased own revenues, accountability & Public Funds Monitoring enhanced) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sensitizations for mindset change 2. Peace building, conflict & citizens' issues resolution 3. Resolution of family issues 4. Fight delinquency 5. Sensitizations on government programs 6. Construction of Village office 7. Parents' evening operationalization 8. Improved communication 9. Capacity building for Inshuti z'umuryango (friends of the family) 10. Timely information sharing 	<p>NONE WERE CONSIDERED</p>

8.3. Annex 3: Consolidated Citizens' Priorities in Meis Template (Sector and Cell Priorities)

Province:	Western	District:	Rusizi	Sector:	Kamembe	Cell:**	Kamashangi
PILLARS/Inkingi	Sector/Urwego	Project / Priority name	Output/ Ikizagerwaho	Baseline/ Intangiriro	Activities to Deliver output / Ibikorwa	Estimated budget/ In-gengoy'imari ikenewe	Cells' contribution to the budget/ Uruhare rw'Akagali
PILLAR I: Economic Transformation/ Iterambere ry'ubukungu	Agriculture						
	Infrastructure	Gutaunganya umuhanda w'ibarabara rya gatanu ari nyabagendwa	umuhandanda w'ibarabara rya gatanu uzaba ari nyabagendwa	Terracement tarakozwe hasigaye kuwutunganya neza ukaba bagendwa	Gutunganya ibarabara rya 5 hashyirwamo amapave g'imonyi kgo ube nyabagendwa	800,000,000	
	Environment and land	Kubakira ruhurura ya Ntemebiti ndetse na Kadasomwa	Ruhurura zibungabunzwe	Ruhurura zihari kandi ziteje umutekano muke kubera abana bazigwamo	Kubakira ruhurura 2 ziri mu Kagali ka kamashangi		
	Etc.						

PILLAR II: Social Transformation/ Iterambere ry'imibereho myiza	Education	Kubaka ubwiherero ku kigo cy'ishuri cya GSI Kamembe	Ubwiherero bwuzuye kandi bukoreshwa	ahakubakwa ubwiherero haraturunganyijwe	Kubaka utwumba 12 tw'Ubwiherero muri GSI Kamembe	5,000,000,	imisanzu y'ababyeyi, imiganda ndetse n'imisanzu ya banyirukiko	
	Health							
	Water and sanitation							
	Social protection	Gusanira ndetse no kubakira abatishoboye bo mu kiciro cya mbere cy'ubudehe batuye mu nzu zisa na Nyakatsi	Imiturire ijyanye n'igihe	Ibibanza birahari kandi nabubakirwa nabo barahari, hagkorera mu nyubako ituzuye	Kubakira imiryango 18 itishoboye			
	Etc.							

PILLAR III: Transformational Governance / Imiyoborere myiza n'ubutabera	Justice	Guhugura Komite z'abunzi kubashakira ibikoresho	Imikorere myiza ya Komite z'abunzi	abunzi barahari kandi basanzwe bakora uretse ko bakeneye amahugurwa yihariye	Guhugura abunzi, Kubaha ibikoresho ndetse no kubakurikirana mu mikorere yabo		
	Security	Kunozwa imikorere y'ironde ry'ijoro	Umutekano ucunzwe neza kandi utanga icyizere	ironde risanzwe rihari ariko ntirikora kin-yamwuga	kunozwa imikorere y'ironde, guhugurwa abanyerondo ndetse no kubaha ibikoresho by'akazi k'ironde	5,000,000	Imisanzu y'abatuye turage ndetse n'inkunga z'abafatanyabikorwa
	Imiyoborere myiza	Kurangiza inyubako y'Akagali ka Kamashangi	Inyubako y'Akagali yuzuye bityo gakorewe ahantu huzuye	Inyubako irahari kandi ikorerwamo n'ubwo ituzuye bwose	Kurangiza inyubako y'Akagali ka Kamashangi	5,600,000	Imisanzu y'abatuye turage ndetse n'inkunga z'abafatanyabikorwa
* After prioritization at Sector level, the same format is to be used and the Cell name should be left blank							
Prepared by	Approved by						
Date:	Date:						
Signature	Signature						

8.4. Annex 4: Data Collection Tools

A. Introduction to participants

Hello, My name isconducting research on 'The extent to which Lower Local Administrative Level are aligned with the Approved District Imihigo in Fifteen Selected Districts in Rwanda' on behalf of Never Again Rwanda (NAR). NAR is a peace building and social justice Civil Society Organization. The overall objective of this research is to examine how priorities at lower administrative levels are transmitted and imbedded in the finalized District Imihigo.

I will be the moderator in our discussion and also present with me here is who will be taking notes and recording the discussion. We assure you that our discussions will be confidential and we will not refer to anyone by name or refer to any specific village, cell, sector or district when writing the report.

Do you have any questions before we start? I request that we agree on some ground rules for our discussions (e.g. respecting opinions)

B. Informed consent form

RESEARCH TITLE: "STUDY ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH LOWER LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL ARE ALIGNED WITH THE APPROVED DISTRICT IMIHIGO"

1. Invitation to participate in the Study:

You are being requested to take part in a research entitled "STUDY ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH LOWER LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL ARE ALIGNED WITH THE APPROVED DISTRICT IMIHIGO". The main objective of this study is to examine how imihigo priorities at lower administrative levels are transmitted and imbedded in the finalized District Imihigo.

The organization commissioning the study is Never Again Rwanda (NAR) working with full authorisation from both the Rwanda Governance Board and the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. Before agreeing to be part of this research, please read and/or listen to the following information carefully. Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Feel free to ask questions if you do not understand something.

2. Description of the Study:

If you participate in this study, you are asked to let us know whether you are comfortable answering our interview questions here and now or whether you would propose a different venue and/or time.

3. Risks and Inconveniences:

Should you feel uncomfortable to answer some of the questions related to imhigo in this interview, you can do any of the following:

- You can choose not to answer certain questions;
- You can choose to stop the interviews, or

- You can seek further information from NAR researchers or offices.

4. Benefits:

This study may not benefit you directly but by answering, you may contribute to improve the strategies for developing and implementation of imihigo in Rwanda.

5. Confidentiality:

Any and all information obtained from you during this research will be confidential. Your privacy will be protected at all times. You will not be identified individually in any way as a result of your participation in this research. The data collected however, will be used by NAR in developing the report. Only ideas will be considered and shall not be attributed specifically to anyone in the report.

6. Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences on you. If you begin to participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences.

7. Financial (or other) considerations:

No payment will be made for your participation in this study.

8. Other considerations and questions:

Please feel free to ask any questions about anything that seems unclear to you and consider this research and consent form carefully before you sign.

Authorization

I have read or listened to the above information and I have decided that I will participate in the "STUDY ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH LOWER LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL ARE ALIGNED WITH THE APPROVED DISTRICT IMIHIGO" described above. The Research team have explained the study to me and answered my questions. I know what will be asked of me. I understand that the purpose of the study is to expand the evidence base for improving the process of designing and implementing imihigo. If I don't participate, there will be no penalty or loss of rights. I can refuse to answer some questions and/or stop participating at any time, even after I have started. I understand that this interview will take about 45 minutes to complete.

My signature or fingerprint below indicates that I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____

Name of participant _____

N.B. Moderator should establish rapport with the participants at this stage so as to make them feel comfortable.

May we please commence our discussion?

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH CELL EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES AND COUNCILORS, VILLAGE LEADERS, AND OPINION LEADERS

1. May you tell us your role in the formulation of Imihigo (at household, village and/or cell level)? If you are not involved in Imihigo formulation process, please give reasons why?
2. What processes are used in the preparation and consolidation of your household, village and cell Imihigo?
3. In your experience and understanding, how and to what extent do you think the household and village Imihigo are incorporated/considered in the Imihigo at the cell, sector level? Please explain.
4. In your own view and experience, do you think the approved and signed Imihigo at the district level are informed by Imihigo from the village, cell and sector level? Please explain.
5. Are there guidelines for consolidating Imihigo from the house hold level to the district level? If yes, do you think the guidelines are followed/ respected in practice? Explain.
6. Do you think these guidelines are specific and affirmative on the inclusion of citizens' identified priorities in district Imihigo?
7. In your own view and experience, what type of priorities at lower administrative levels is mostly considered in the approved district Imihigo?
 - a) Types of Priorities at Village level considered in District Imihigo
 - b) Types of priorities at cell level considered in District Imihigo
 - c) Types of priorities at sector level considered in District Imihigo
8. What mechanisms exist through which the lower level administrative units and the local community receive feedback on decisions made at District level (regarding what Imihigo priorities are approved, what is not approved and why)?
9. Based on your experience, what can you cite as the existing best practices in the Imihigo process at village and cell level in terms of the following:
 - a) Planning
 - b) Integrating priorities at lower local administrative levels into the approved District Imihigo
10. In your view, what challenges are encountered in preparing and transmission of community priorities at village and cell level to cell/sector/ District level?
 - a) Preparing
 - b) Transmission of priorities to sector/ district
11. In your view, how can the Imihigo process at District be improved to reflect the priorities of lower level administrative units (village and cell)?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SECTOR AND DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES AND RELEVANT KEY INFORMANTS FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

1. How are Imihigo planned at Sector and/or District levels to ensure that they incorporate the priorities/needs of local community members?
 - a) At Sector level
 - b) At District level
2. What are the criteria/guidelines for selecting the final approved District Imihigo?
3. In your opinion, do you think the guidelines are clear on how Imihigo formulated at lower administrative entities (household, village, cell, sector) should be considered in the finalized district Imihigo? Please, explain.
4. With explanation, at a scale of 0 – 5, to what extent do you think the priorities at each lower administrative level (village, cell and sector) are included in the approved district Imihigo? Please, provide at least 3 examples of citizens' identified priorities that were integrated in the final District Imihigo for 2018/2019 fiscal year for the following levels:
 - a. Types of identified priorities at house hold, village level included in District Imihigo;
 - b. Types of priorities at cell level included in District Imihigo
 - c. Types of priorities at sector level included in District Imihigo
5. What mechanisms exist through which the lower level administrative units and the local community receive feedback on decisions made at District level (regarding what priorities are approved, what is not approved and why)?
6. Based on your experience, what can you cite as the existing best practices in the Imihigo process at all local administrative levels (village up to the District) in terms of the following:
 - a) Planning variable
 - b) Linking priorities at lower local administrative levels to the District targets
 - c) Integrating priorities at lower local administrative levels into the approved District Imihigo
7. In your view and experience, what challenges are encountered in integrating Imihigo of village, cell and sector into the final approved District Imihigo?
8. In your view, how can Imihigo process at District be improved to reflect the priorities of lower level administrative units (household, village, cell sector)?

8.5. Annex 5: List of Respondents at Local Government Levels

No	Districts	KIs			FGDs			Total KIs & FGDs
		M	F	S. Total	M	F	S. Total	
1	Nyagatare	4	2	6	21	2	23	29
2	Gasabo	5	1	6	12	6	18	24
3	Kicukiro	6	1	7	14	8	22	29
4	Nyanza	6	3	9	12	9	21	30
5	Huye	4	2	6	11	12	23	29
6	Burera	4	4	8	23	7	30	38
7	Muhanga	3	3	6	19	4	23	29
8	Ruhango	4	2	6	14	6	20	26
9	Rusizi	6	1	7	17	7	24	31
10	Karongi	5	2	7	17	6	23	30
11	Rulindo	5	2	7	15	8	23	30
12	Musanze	6	2	8	16	6	22	30
13	Rubavu	4	2	6	14	5	19	25
14	Rwamagana	4	3	7	15	8	23	30
15	Ngoma	4	3	7	16	4	20	27
	G. Totals			103			334	437



- Rwanda -

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