

Article:

Language: English

Published: October 28, 2024

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Performance contracts: opportunity to increase cooperation between local leaders and environmental officers through their respective institutions in Rwanda. Case of Gisagara district

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Abstract

Performance Contracts called “Imihigo” in Kinyarwanda language are an approach introduced by the Government of Rwanda to improve leadership practices and strengthening performance management in Rwanda Governance System. The objective of this research was to assess the level of cooperation between local leaders and district partners through environment related performance contracts. It has been conducted among local leaders and partners of Gisagara district located in Southern province of Rwanda. 128 respondents including 72 local leaders and 56 respondents from districts partners have participated in this research. Findings revealed that performance contracts increase the level of awareness, participation and cooperation to solve environment related issues among stakeholders in Gisagara district. In fact, 91.4% of respondents confirmed that they know at least one or more than one performance contract related to environment in Gisagara district. 46.43% of respondents from district partners informed that they have contributed in the identification of performance contract related to environment, while 66.07% have participated in the execution of activities linked to those performance contracts. The level of cooperation between district partners and local leaders during various phases of performance contracts depends on various factors: institutions’ mandate, capacity, power and commitment to contribute on the performance contract. In addition to the improvement of cooperation between local leaders and district partners, it has been concluded that performance contracts approach support to hold public officials and district partners accountable, through the setting and achievement of goals (“Imihigo”). The increased focus on performance contracts of public officials and partners helped Rwanda to achieve impressive rates of economic growth, rapidly improve infrastructure, and increase health and wellness outcomes for its citizens. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen involvement and cooperation between stakeholders during performance contracts process for sustainable development.

Keywords: Performance Contracts, Imihigo, Local leaders, Environment, Environmental Officers, Joint Action District Forum

1. INTRODUCTION

Performance Contracts called “Imihigo” in Kinyarwanda language are an approach introduced by the Government of Rwanda to improve leadership practices and strengthening performance management, from local level to national level in Rwanda Governance System. The objective of this research was to assess the contribution of this approach in the improvement of cooperation between local leaders and environmental officers for sustainable development. Gisagara district was taken as “the case study”.

1.1. Historical background of Performance Contracts “Imihigo” in Rwandan society

“Imihigo” is a Kinyarwanda word with roots in the term “guhiga”, meaning the setting of goals upon which “guhigura” (evaluation) will be necessary at a future point (Rugira, 2011). “Imihigo” is the plural Kinyarwanda word of “Umuhigo”, which means to vow to deliver. In the modernday Rwanda, Imihigo practice was adopted as a means of planning to accelerate the progress towards economic development and poverty reduction. Imihigo has had a strong focus on results which has made it an invaluable tool in the planning, accountability and monitoring and evaluation processes. In 2006, Imihigo (known also as performance contracts) was introduced to address this need. Since its introduction, Imihigo has been credited with improving accountability and quickening the pace of citizen centred development activities and programs. The practice of Imihigo has now been extended to ministries, embassies and public service staff (Kayinamura, 2016). Imihigo are a home-grown solution and a tool for accessing progress towards national development aspirations (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2020). The program was based on a pre-colonial tradition called Imihigo, where individuals or communities would publicly promise to complete certain tasks, sometimes set by the king or another leader. If the individual or group achieved their goal, the community celebrated their success; if they failed to follow through, they faced public humiliation (Ndahiro, 2015; World Bank, 2018).

Under the modern Imihigo program, mayors would devise action plans based on the national development agenda in consultation with the local community, and then make public commitments to implement them. The agreements were codified in contracts with the national government. After pioneering the system with district mayors, the President planned to spread the program through all levels of government, from high-level central government officials down to local leaders at the village level. The Imihigo program had several ambitious aims, including to:

- Speed up implementation of the local and national development agenda
- Ensure stakeholder ownership of the development agenda
- Promote accountability and transparency
- Promote results-oriented performance
- Encourage competitiveness

- Ensure stakeholders' participation and engagement in policy formulation and evaluation
- Instill a culture of regular performance evaluation (Government of Rwanda, 2010)

Imihigo were designed as a Rwandan approach to performance management, as described in a policy note published by the minister of local government in 2006: *“The Imihigo approach shares many characteristics with results-based management tools. First, each Imihigo identifies a set of clear priorities. Second, each Imihigo presents a set of specific targets backed by measurable performance indicators. Third, each Imihigo undergoes a well-defined process of performance monitoring and evaluation. Fourth, each Imihigo constitutes an efficient accountability mechanism and an incentive for local government leaders and their population to implement the decentralization policies and to meet local and national development targets”* (MINALOC, 2006; Ndagijimana, 2020).

1.2. Performance contracts related to environment in Gisagara district during the fiscal year 2022/2023

Reference made to Gisagara district performance contracts Fiscal Year 2022/2023 (Akarere ka Gisagara, 2022), environment related performance contracts are classified in the following sectors: energy, water and sanitation, urbanization and rural settlement, environment and natural resources and human security issues.

- 1) Increased connectivity to electricity (Energy sector):** The Outcome 5 of Gisagara district performance contracts Fiscal Year 2022/2023 stipulates the increased connectivity to electricity. According to this performance contract, 8 new productive use areas should be connected to electricity. Stakeholders in this performance contract are REG (Rwanda Energy Group) and the District (Akarere ka Gisagara, 2022).
- 2) Increased clean water connection to productive use areas (Water and sanitation sector):** The Outcome 6 is related to the increased clean water connection to productive use areas in Gisagara district. 8 new productive use areas should be connected to clean water in the Fiscal year 2022/2023. Stakeholders in this performance contract include LODA (Local Administrative Entities Development Agency), World Vision and the District (Akarere ka Gisagara, 2022).
- 3) Increased sustainability and profitability of forestry management (Environment and natural resources sector):** The Outcome 8 predicts the increased sustainability and profitability of forestry management in Gisagara district. According to this performance contract, 1700 new Ha of land should be covered by agro forest trees, while 120 of new Ha of land should be covered by woodlots. In addition, 5000 macadamia trees should be planted by male and female eligible beneficiaries. Stakeholders in this performance contract are REMA (Rwanda Environment Management Authority) and the District (Akarere ka Gisagara, 2022).

4) Increased Hygiene facilities in households (Sector of human security issues): The concerns of Outcome 15 of Gisagara district performance contracts Fiscal Year 2022/2023 were related to hygiene facilities in households to be increased:

- 500 Toilets in poor conditions to be rehabilitated for eligible vulnerable households headed by male and female and
- 11 toilets to be constructed for male and female headed households.

The district and MINALOC (Ministry of Local Governance) are stakeholders in this performance contract (Akarere ka Gisagara, 2022).

5) Increased number of households connected to electricity and reduced biomass usage for cooking (Energy sector): The 17th Outcome stipulates the increased households connected to electricity, while the 18th Outcome stipulates the reduced biomass usage for cooking. The target is 1629 new female and male headed households with on-grid electricity connections, 2.500 new female and male headed households with off-grid electricity connections, 3300 female and male headed households equipped with improved cooking stoves and 320 female and male people supported to be equipped with cooking gas kits. EDCL (Energy Development Corporation Limited), EUCL (Energy Utility Corporation Limited), REG (Rwanda Energy Group), private companies, district and sectors are stakeholders in this performance contract (Akarere ka Gisagara, 2022).

6) Increased number of households connected to clean water (Water and Sanitation sector): The Outcome 19 is related to the increased access to clean drinking water. The target in the fiscal year 2022/2023 was 300 new female and male headed households with clean water connections and 616 public water taps operational (Akarere ka Gisagara, 2022).

1.3. Stakeholders in the achievement of performance contracts

According to Ndagijimana (2022), District performance contract/Imihigo result from consultative meetings from households where citizens, council at al level, JADF members are expressing their needs/priorities and analyze them where District consolidate the needs compare to the available budget but also link them to national priorities under strategic documents such as Vision 2050, NST 1 and District Development Strategy, as well as Action Plan. The Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) as a multi-stakeholder platform comprised of representatives from the public sector, private sector and civil society plays a big role in performance contracts. In fact, JADF was put in place to facilitate and promote full participation of citizens in the decentralized and participatory governance and improve service provision processes (Official Gazette n°29bis of 20/07/2015; Rwanda Governance Board, 2024, MINALOC, 2012).

The mission of JADF is " *to ensure a sustainable socio-economic development and improved service delivery for Rwandan communities through active participation, dialogue, and accountability by sharing information, effective coordination of stakeholders' interventions in decentralized entities*". JADF members come from institutions and organizations operating at District level including public, private, local and international NGOs, Faith-based

organizations and other development partners (MINALOC, 2010; MINALOC, 2012; MINALOC, 2016).

1.4. Research questions

1. What is the level of awareness on environment related performance contracts among local leaders and district partners in Gisagara district?
2. What is the level of participation of local leaders and district partners in the process of environment related performance contracts?
3. At which level local leaders cooperate with district partners for the achievement of environment related performance contracts?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Study Design

This study adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches to assess the level of cooperation between local leaders and district partners through performance contracts. Open and closed questions were used to assess the level of awareness on environment related performance contracts, as well as the level of participation and cooperation of local leaders and district partners in the process of environment related performance contracts in Gisagara district.

2.2. Study Population

According to (Grinnell and Williams, 1990), study population is the totality of the persons or objects with which a study is concerned. The study population was local leaders from village level to district level in Gisagara district and partners of this district located in Southern Province of Rwanda.

2.3. Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The sample size was 128 respondents including 72 local leaders in Gisagara district and 56 officers from district partners. The randomly sampling method was applied to reach respondents. During the data collection procedures, we have chosen respondents from various categories of persons, especially those contributing to the implementation of environment related performance contract activities. Purposive sampling method was used to select 15 key informants for this study. This sample included 3 leaders at the district level, 4 field officers of local and international NGOs partnering with Gisagara district, 3 officers of public institutions working in environment sector, 2 environmental officers at the sector level and 3 leaders from respectively the sector, cell and village levels.

2.4. Data Collection Tools and Methods

2.4.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a set of questions designed to generate the data necessary for accomplishing the objectives of the research. The questionnaires were designed and then

translate in Kinyarwanda to facilitate those respondents that could not understand English.

2.4.2. Interviews with Key Informants

This was mainly targeting key informants such as local political leaders, land officers, community development officers, among others. Their views, observations, and experiences with regard to the research problem were sought. Face to face interviews were carried out with respondents who participated in the study as key informants.

2.5. Data Processing and Analysis

Data have been organized in a meaningful patterns for the purpose of presenting them in more comprehensive form. This phase involved analysis of raw data through tabulation and conducting statistical procedures on the collected data. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis have been used. Data from the questionnaires were processed using SPSS and EXCEL software. The results were compared to those that resulted from the analysis of interview data. From this comparison, conclusions were drawn.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Level of awareness on performance contracts related to environment among local leaders and partners in Gisagara district

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by whether they have information about performance contracts related to environment in Gisagara district

		Information about performance contracts related to environment in Gisagara district			
		Yes		No	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Categories of respondents	Local leaders	61	84.72	11	15.28
	District partners	56	100	0	0
Total		117	91.4	11	8.6

Source: Primary data

Respondents were asked whether they know any performance contract related to environment in Gisagara district. 117 respondents (91.4%) including 61 local leaders (84.72% of all local leaders) and 56 respondents from district partners (100%) have confirmed that they know at least one or more than one performance contract related to environment in Gisagara district. In order to know whether what the respondents have said about awareness on performance contracts related to environment in Gisagara district is true, they were asked to show the known performance contract related to environment in Gisagara district. Their responses to this question are recorded in the Table below (Table 2):

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by the known performance contract related to environment in Gisagara district

Performance contract	Frequency	Percent
Performance contract related to the increased connectivity to electricity (Energy sector)	97	75.78

Performance contract related to clean water connection to productive use areas (Water and sanitation sector)	82	64.06
Performance contract related to sustainability and profitability of forestry management (Environment and natural resources sector)	75	58.59
Performance contract related to Hygiene facilities in households (Sector of human security issues)	104	81.25
Performance contract related to households connectivity to electricity and use of cooking technologies to reduce the use of biomass (Energy sector)	94	73.43
Performance contract related to access to clean drinking water (Water and sanitation sector)	102	79.69

Source: Primary data

As presented in the table above (Table 2), the most expressed performance contract to be known by respondents is the performance contract related to Hygiene facilities in households (Human Security Issues) expressed by 104 respondents (81.25% of all respondents), followed by Performance contract related to access to clean drinking water (Water and sanitation sector): 102 respondents corresponding to 79.69% of all respondents. A considerable number of respondent has also expressed to know Performance contract related to the increased connectivity to electricity (Energy sector) (75.78% of all respondents), Performance contract related to households connectivity to electricity and use of cooking technologies to reduce the use of biomass (Energy sector) (73.43% of all respondents), Performance contract related to clean water connection to productive use areas (Water and sanitation sector)(64.06% of all respondents) and Performance contract related to sustainability and profitability of forestry management (Environment and natural resources sector) (58.59% of all respondents).

Almost the same results on the awareness with regards to performance contracts related to environment were observed through the interview with key informants. In fact, all key informants revealed that they know more than one district performance contract. Despite targets of the performance contract were not exactly known, they had the general overview on performance contract. *“Me, I know that we have to collaborate with district leaders to increase the number of households with access to clean drinking water. This is a performance contract”*: declared one of key informants from district partners’ institutions in this performance contract.

3.2. Participation of respondents in the process of performance contracts related to environment in Gisagara district

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by steps of performance contracts related to environment in Gisagara district in which they have participated

Categories of respondents		Identification of the performance contract		Proposition and design of performance contract		Performance contract related activities		Performance contract monitoring and evaluation	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Local leaders		42	58.33	23	31.94	65	90.28	48	66.67
	District partners	26	46.43	15	26.78	37	66.07	31	55.36
Total		68	53.12	38	29.69	102	79.69	79	61.72

Source: Primary data

The Table 3 shows that 58.33% of all respondents of the category of local leaders made known that they have participated in the phase of identifying the performance contract. The small proportion of this category (31.94%) revealed that they have participated in proposition and design of environment related performance contracts. The high proportion of Local leaders (90.28%) testified that they contribute in the execution of activities linked to environment related performance contracts. However, the proportion of respondents intervening in monitoring and evaluation is reduced, compared to those contributing in the execution of activities linked to environment related performance contracts. 66.67% notified that they have ever participated in monitoring and evaluation of environment related performance contracts.

On the hand of respondents from district partners, 46.43% informed that they have contributed in the identification of performance contract related to environment, while 66.07% have participated in the execution of activities linked to environment related performance contract. However, only 26.78% respondents from the category of district partners have confirmed that they have contributed in the proposition and design of performance contracts related to environment in Gisagara district.

Reference made to the interview with key informants, it has been observed that participation of district partners for identification, design, execution, monitoring and evaluation of performance contracts depends on their mandate, capacity, power and commitment to contribute on this performance contract. It is in that way that some institutions and organizations are particularly consulted before the design of various performance contracts. *“We were consulted to define the number of houses and toilets that we should construct or rehabilitate for vulnerable households”*: confirmed 2 respondents from NGOs collaborating with district in this performance contract.

3.3. Level of cooperation between local leaders and district partners for the achievement of environmental related performance contracts in Gisagara district

Table 4: Points of view on the level of cooperation between district partners and Local leaders during identification of performance contracts

Level of cooperation	Frequency	Percent
Very high	27	21.09
High	32	25.00
Moderate	54	42.19
Low	11	8.59
Very low	4	3.13
Total	128	100,00

Source: Primary data

Table 4 shows that 42.19 % of respondents confirm that the level of cooperation between district partners and local leaders during *identification* of performance contracts related to environment is moderate, while 25% of respondents, 21.09% of respondents, 8.59% and 3.13% of respondents have respectively rated the level of cooperation as high, very high, low and very low.

Table 5: Points of view on the level of cooperation between district partners and local leaders during the proposition and design of performance contract

Level of cooperation	Frequency	Percent
Very high	25	19.53
High	38	29.69
Moderate	43	33.59
Low	14	10.94
Very low	8	6.25
Total	128	100,00

Source: Primary data

Table 5 shows that 33.59% of respondents confirm that the level of cooperation between district partners and local leaders during the proposition and design of performance contracts related to environment is moderate. 29.69% of respondents, 19.53% of respondents, 10.94% and 6.25% of respondents have respectively rated the level of cooperation as high, very high, low and very low.

Table 6: Points of view on the level of cooperation between district partners and local leaders during the execution of performance contract related activities

Level of cooperation	Frequency	Percent
Very high	51	39.84
High	48	37.50
Moderate	24	18.75
Low	5	3.91
Very low	0	0
Total	128	100,00

Source: Primary data

Based on data presented in the table above (Table 6), 39.84% of respondents are in the position of confirming that the level of cooperation *between* environmental officers and political actors during the execution of activities associated to environment related performance contract is very high.

This proportion is followed by the position of 37.50% of respondents confirming that the cooperation is high and 18.75% certifying that the level of cooperation is moderate. Only 3.91% judged this level of cooperation to be low, while any respondent has revealed to consider the level of cooperation as very low.

Table 7: Points of view on the level of cooperation between district partners and local leaders during monitoring and evaluation of performance contracts

Level of cooperation	Frequency	Percent
Very high	28	21.88
High	35	27.34
Moderate	45	35.16
Low	13	10.16
Very low	7	5.47
Total	128	100,00

Source: Primary data

Based on findings of research, the positions of respondents regarding the cooperation between district partners and local leaders during monitoring and evaluation of environment related performance contracts are the following: 35.16% confirm the cooperation level to be moderate, while 27.34% and 21.88% declared respectively the level to be high and very high. 10.16% of respondents proclaimed that the level of cooperation between district partners and local leaders during monitoring and evaluation of environmental related performance contracts is low. Only 5.47% of respondents confirmed the level of cooperation to be very low.

Based on interviews with key informants, it has been observed that the level of cooperation is very high during the execution of activities related to performance contract, because it is during this phase that the district is in the strong need of partners. It is almost the same during the phase of monitoring and evaluation, whereby external evaluators consult those partners and their beneficiaries. The phase of identification and design of performance contracts seem to be “very bureaucratic”, as expressed by some key informants. *“They consult reports of previous years, key documents and ask few persons and then, design performance contracts. It is in that way that you will see that almost all districts have the same performance contracts”*: revealed one key informant.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Performance contracts approach called “Imihigo” has strongly contributed on the improvement of cooperation between local leaders and environmental officers through their respective institutions. In fact, from the phase of identification of performance contracts to design,

execution of planned activities, monitoring and evaluation phases, local leaders are called to collaborate with various stakeholders. On the same way, performance contracts have been the good opportunity for district partners to realize their mandate of contribution on socio-economic development and well-being of local communities.

Findings of this research revealed that performance contracts increase the level of awareness, participation and cooperation to solve environment related issues among stakeholders in Gisagara district. In fact, 91.4% of respondents have confirmed that they know at least one or more than one performance contract related to environment in Gisagara district. 46.43% of respondents from district partners informed that they have contributed in the identification of performance contract related to environment, while 66.07% have participated in the execution of activities linked to environment related performance contracts. The level of cooperation between district partners and local leaders during various phases of performance contracts depends on various factors: institutions' mandate, capacity, power and commitment to contribute on the performance contracts.

In addition to the improvement of cooperation between local leaders and district partners, performance contracts approach support to hold public officials and district partners accountable, through the setting and achievement of goals called "Imihigo". The increased focus on performance contracts of public officials and partners helped Rwanda to achieve impressive rates of economic growth, rapidly improve infrastructure, and increase health and wellness outcomes for its citizens. Therefore, it is recommended to strengthen the involvement and cooperation between stakeholders during performance contracts process for sustainable development.

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