



# Striving for gender equality in local planning processes

## Learning from success in Rwanda

**Country:** Rwanda

**Project:** Striving for gender equality in citizen-oriented participatory governance

**Submitted by:** One Mainstreaming team (Anna Emil & Dieneke ter Huurne) and the Decentralisation and Good Governance programme (Dominique Habimana, Celine Mukamana, Tristan Powell)

***“Rwandan culture and patriarchal systems act as limiting factors for women. Men feel they have power over women and women also feel under men. Motivating women to participate is a challenge. It is important also to help men understand how to set a good example and treat women equally and with respect and consideration.”***

*Augustin NTAWUHIGIMANA, pastor of the local Kegeme Diocese church in Nyamagabe*

### Introduction

GIZ Rwanda is implementing a Decentralisation and Good Governance (DGG) Programme in cooperation with the Rwandan Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC). Within GIZ Rwanda, the One Mainstreaming Team acts as an in-house support and advisory structure for mainstreaming of gender equality, inclusion of people with disabilities, HIV and population dynamics in all GIZ programmes. Together, DGG and the One Mainstreaming team initiated a gender mainstreaming intervention in the Citizen-Centred Planning and Monitoring & Evaluation Process in 2014/15. The intervention was planned and implemented in Nyamagabe district in the South of Rwanda, where the DGG Programme supports the *Initiative pour la Participation Citoyenne (IPC)*. This association of five Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) intends to make local planning processes more receptive to citizen priorities. The cooperation between IPC and the local authorities has so far managed to build trust between CSOs and the local government and enabled numerous opinion leaders and ordinary citizens to influence local government plans. The success of the intervention shows from the fact that at least 80% of citizen’s priorities were taken into account in the local development plan of Nyamagabe district in 2016.

### Promoting Gender Equality

To foster good governance and assure quality of local development processes, it is essential to strengthen the role of citizens in the making, monitoring and evaluation of local policies. In Rwanda, a crucial planning and accountability instrument is the so-called Imihigo. This Rwandan-developed performance contract is drafted once a year by policy makers at all government levels. The Imihigo contains the plans of the administrative unit for meeting national priorities (e.g. in terms of infrastructure, agriculture, social programs) at their respective level. Because measurable targets are developed at the grassroots level, the Imihigo process allows for greater citizen participation and accountability in local development plans.

However, opportunities to participate in the development, monitoring and evaluation of Imihigos often differ for men and women – with women facing manifold barriers to participate in communal decision-making processes. As a result, local development plans may fail to address the different needs, priorities and aspirations of men and women and may reinforce existing inequalities and unequal power relations. With the support of DGG technical assistance, *IPC* therefore decided that gender equality should be a major focus in all the steps of the Citizen-Centred Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation Process project. By doing so, they recognized that promoting gender equality is essential to secure the success and the quality of the project overall.

The citizen-centred Imihigo process developed by IPC consists of six steps. For every step, IPC considered how it can be made gender-sensitive (and inclusive). As a step zero, IPC conducted a gender audit, to find out more about the attitudes towards gender roles in the community. This gender audit represented the baseline from which gender mainstreaming activities were designed and implemented. In order to make the approach replicable for other districts a table was drawn up containing all the steps and the necessary measures that were taken to make it gender-sensitive.

| STEPS of the citizen-centred IMIHIGO Cycle   | How it was made gender-sensitive and inclusive  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1. COLLECT CITIZENS' NEEDS</b><br/>IPC and district staff meet citizens and collect their requests/priorities in a participatory way.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Among the CSOs and district staff both men and women were selected as facilitators, for collecting citizen's needs.</li> <li>✓ IPC trained facilitators on gender equality, social inclusion and methodologies for ensuring equal participation.</li> <li>✓ IPC partners identified female opinion leaders who are already well-known and respected in the community and encouraged them to speak up for women's concerns.</li> <li>✓ Women were asked to lead meetings.</li> <li>✓ Meetings were organised at times and venues that suited women</li> <li>✓ During participatory community meetings, facilitators encouraged women and men to express their ideas; they recorded the requests/priorities in a disaggregated manner and captured which priorities received more female/male approval.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>2. SHARE CITIZENS' NEEDS WITH THE DISTRICT</b><br/>Citizens' priorities collected in step one are compiled and submitted to district authorities</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It was made sure that reports of compiled priorities were always presented in a disaggregated way indicating which priorities respond to specific requests/ priorities from men and from women.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>3. ANALYSE IMIHIGO CONTENT</b><br/>IPC sits with district to assess which and how many citizens' priorities were included in the final Imihigo. District staff is asked to give convincing explanations for those priorities not considered.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The ratio of women and men's priorities, which were included in the final Imihigo, were checked and analysed. The results were documented.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>4. PROVIDE FEEDBACK TO CITIZENS</b><br/>District and IPC meet citizens to explain final Imihigo and give reasons for priorities not considered.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ IPC made feedback meetings inclusive (women, men, youth, disabled) by organising it at times and venues that suited the different groups. Female opinion leaders were explicitly invited. Men and women were equally encouraged to give their views during the meeting.</li> <li>✓ Feedback-information on specific priorities raised by specific groups was given.</li> <li>✓ IPC organised special group meetings (e.g. meet in women groups) to share and discuss the content of the final Imihigo, prevailing issues and special benefits.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>5. MONITORING OF IMIHIGO</b><br/>At mid-term of the implementation phase IPC and district staff monitor the implementation rate of (selected) Imihigo objectives</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ When selecting/sampling the Imihigo objectives to monitor, IPC ensured that the implementation rate of priorities often favoured by women such as family planning, planting fruit trees, land consolidation and eradicating malnutrition are specifically looked at</li> <li>✓ Women and men were contacted who were already part of the planning process in order for them to deliver their opinion on the state of implementation</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>6. EVALUATION OF IMIHIGO BY CITIZENS</b><br/>District and IPC meet citizens to evaluate Imihigo together</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ During community meetings, special attention was paid to the encouragement of participation of women and other groups. Facilitators gave equal value to their views.</li> </ul>  |

## Impacts

**Short-term:** More women participated actively in the public discussions. They brought in new ideas and/or ensure greater priority was given to specific issues/concerns. At least 80% of citizen's priorities were taken into account in the Imihigo of Nyamagabe district in 2016. It changed women's perception of how their voices are valued and heard. Women felt empowered and gained more self-confidence by having their opinion valued by the community in the Imihigo process. Men who were supportive of women's participation were explicitly commended for their behaviour.

**Medium-term:** The Rwandan Gender Monitoring Office and UN Women found that Nyamagaba district scored significantly better on gender sensitivity than other districts. The Imihigo document includes both male and female priorities and is thus more responsive to all citizens. CSO and local government staff have been trained on issues of gender equality and their activities are more inclusive for women and men. There are more women in leadership roles at district level. Women's participation in the Imihigo process has encouraged them to participate actively in other decision making for a, such as water committees. IPC encouraged women to take on leadership positions, form saving and loan groups to improve their economic status.

**Long-term:** Societal norms concerning participation of women in decision-making processes are changing. Decision-making processes are designed in a gender-sensitive way. Women see themselves and are seen by others as essential contributors to decision-making on every level, in the family, the community and the country. This contributes to a more sustainable development and thus pushes Rwanda further towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Gender as a quality feature of our work

After pioneering the citizen-centred Imihigo process in Nyamagabe, GIZ supported IPC to extend it to two more districts in 2016. GIZ also supported IPC to organise annual workshops for district authorities on how to analyse their Imihigos on gender sensitivity. These workshops were praised by district authorities as extremely helpful and strengthened their commitment to gender mainstreaming.

Praise also came from representatives of the Gender Monitoring Office of the Rwandan Government and UN Women, after they visited Nyamagabe to assess the gender sensitivity of the Imihigo planning and accountability process. UN Women has recognized and cited Nyamagabe district as a best practice for gender sensitive planning and budgeting.

Most importantly, the Rwandan Ministry for Economy and Finance (MINECOFIN) has included the gender-sensitive citizen-oriented Imihigo approach in their recommendations for local planning and budgeting processes. The approach will be spread throughout Rwanda through government institutions such as MINALOC, the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) and the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA). This will ensure that other districts can easily follow Nyamagabe's example and benefit from the experience there. In 2017, five more districts have started to implement the same approach – three with support by GIZ and two with support of the World Bank.

## Gender and Results-Based Monitoring

IPC and the local government conducted a gender audit to know more about the opinions in the community on gender roles, the role of women in decision-making and the attitude towards women in official authority structures. The audit served as a baseline and thoroughly informed the design of the intervention making sure it fit the local context.

IPC recognised and appreciated the value of making the Imihigo process gender-sensitive. It strengthened their approach and made it more inclusive of all citizens. What became evident from the experience of this gender mainstreaming intervention was that the partners of GIZ's DGG Programme require further capacity development on gender-sensitive results based monitoring. As a first step, GIZ delivered a technical workshop

on how to collect, analyse and use sex-disaggregated data to inform gender mainstreaming and its monitoring and evaluation. This workshop will contribute to the partner's capacity to design gender-transformative programmes and promote gender equality in the long-term.

The process of gender mainstreaming in the Imihigo process was documented in a report by the One Mainstreaming team of GIZ and in a shorter and vivid "How to" document which provides all the necessary steps to replicate the approach. This document shall be distributed among stakeholders working on citizen participation thus promoting the spread of gender mainstreaming in local governance processes throughout the whole country.

## Cooperation

Everything related to the success of mainstreaming gender equality in the Citizen-Centred Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation Process, including informational awareness, the planning process and implementing of activities, was channelled through the umbrella organization IPC. This ensured that work was not duplicated, that citizens did not become overburdened by repeating or redundant activities and that all partners had the same understanding of gender equality and the activities needed to bring it about. CSOs that had most expertise on gender issues organised trainings for other CSO and local government staff. This way, the knowledge on gender equality issues was effectively spread and increased within the IPC network. It also ensured that all partners were committed to the objective of ensuring gender equality in the process.

Owing to the cooperation between CSOs and local government, planning has become more inclusive for different groups (women, people with disabilities, youth, etc.), the implementation of local plans has become smoother, the role of CSOs and citizens in the whole process became more pronounced, and ownership of results by citizens are also expected to have increased. In addition to that, the role of CSOs in national development became more visible and recognised by state actors.

## Voices of beneficiaries



**Annonciata MUKARUGABIRO** is an opinion leader and a representative of people living with HIV in her village. Before participating in Imihigo meetings, she was already active in conflict in resolution in the community. However, she never engaged with government authorities. Annonciata explained: *"Before participating in the meetings, I felt that my views and opinions were of no concern to the community... I thought that women were not supposed to speak publicly. But, after participating, I observed that expressing my opinions is good. I was astonished by the way my priorities were considered by men. It empowered me and made me increase my skills and also my self-confidence."*



**Augustin NTAWUHIGIMANA** is the pastor of the local Kegeme Dioses church in Nyamagabe. As a member of IPC, the church has been involved in the citizen-centred mechanism since 2015. They raise awareness of citizens and local authorities for the importance of citizen involvement and organize public dialogues between local authorities and villagers. Augustin is very proud of what has been accomplished in terms of gender equality: *"Women are now active. You can see them in meetings giving speeches and sharing their ideas. But also, they are now attending other meetings and initiatives and giving their opinion. I am proud that IPC was the first to be involved in such a participatory system in Nyamagabe."*