Decentralisation and Good Governance in Rwanda

THE CHALLENGE

The Government of Rwanda began its ambitious decentralization reform in May 2000. The major objective focused on strengthening local service delivery as well as improving citizen participation in governance processes. At the same time, decentralization is seen as an important effort to restore public cohesion, reduce poverty and improve citizen satisfaction and socio-economic well-being.

Guided by ‘Vision 2050’ as well as the National Strategy for Transformation 2017-24 (NST), the government of Rwanda is implementing the third phase of its decentralization reform. While progress was initially anchored on the territorial reorganization of decentralized state entities, challenges still persist. Notably, the responsibilities of districts to cater for the needs of their citizens are increasing. At the same time, the financial means available to them to fulfill these responsibilities are insufficient. The decision-making autonomy of districts to sufficiently incorporate the priorities of their constituencies is also limited.

OUR APPROACH

The Decentralization and Good Governance (DGG) programme is jointly implemented by GIZ and its Rwandan partners, including among others the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning as well as several civil society organizations (CSOs).

At the core of DGG programme is the support to partners in improving the districts’ ability to effectively, efficiently and transparently deliver public services to its 11.3 million (est. 2015) Rwandan citizens. This is achieved, on one hand, through technical advice on policy reform processes and guidelines that regulate service delivery. On the other hand, capacity building of both district authorities and CSOs aims to strengthen their ability to fulfill their responsibilities in a participatory manner. Critical to the advancement of the decentralization effort is also the ability of districts to generate and effectively manage their limited financial resources.

The programme provides technical advisory services through international and national long- and short-term experts, funding for capacity development measures as well as equipment to a certain extent.

The specific fields of intervention for the programme are:

- **Sector Decentralization**
- **Fiscal Decentralization and Local Public Financial Management (PFM)**
- **Citizen-State Relations**

In the area of Sector Decentralization, the programme focuses on creating the conditions for systematic sector decentralization, including supporting the establishment and capacity building of a steering structure for sector decentralization in Rwanda.

Through the Fiscal Decentralization and Local PFM intervention field, the programme supports the review and implementation of the legal framework and guiding policies for local revenue management as well as the assignment of fiscal responsibilities between central and local government. The main objective is to create the conditions for an increase in the share of financial resources over which districts have discretionary power.

The intervention field Citizen-State Relations focuses on creating instruments and frameworks for more citizen participation on local level to reach an improved and more citizen-oriented service delivery.
OUR IMPACT

GIZ is the lead development partner on Sector Decentralization in Rwanda. This includes the development of a systematic, context specific approach to sector decentralization including specific criteria which must be fulfilled to enable successful sector decentralization. The status of sector decentralization will be analyzed including a baseline study in 2019 to identify the main legal, policy, implementation and coordination challenges in Rwanda. A new technical working group for capacity development, sector decentralization and service delivery will be co-chaired by the DGG programme director. Through deep assessment of expenditure assignments undertaken in six sectors (Health, Education, Agriculture, Water and Sanitation, Housing and Settlement and Transport), policy and strategic discussions on functional assignments will be informed. For one sector, a sector specific decentralization implementation plan will also be developed.

Through the program’s contributions in the area of Fiscal Decentralization and Local PFM, the development of a legal framework establishing the sources of revenue and properties of decentralized entities is being supported. The Government of Rwanda is also being supported in the review of its intergovernmental fiscal transfer system, which includes processes and guidelines. Furthermore, in six functional sectors, expenditure assignments have been conducted successfully and concerned institutions are implementing the study recommendations. Also, currently being implemented are revised earmarked transfer guidelines. Finally, the programme provides technical support in the design and implementation of a computer assisted immovable property valuation system (CAMA).

Under the activities in the area of Citizen-State Relation, our programme fosters accountability as a value and common practice in local governance. This includes advance citizen participation in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of public policies on the local level. As a tool for accountability and transparency, the Imihigo performance contracts have been strengthened. Using the elements “filing”, “field visit” and “citizen perception”, a participatory evaluation of Imihigo in the districts of Nyamagabe, Nyamasheke and Nyaruguru was successfully conducted. To enhance participation and act as a catalyst to improve accountability further, a digital tool will be developed. This tool will provide information on local planning and budgeting processes. Furthermore, together with our partners Transparency International Rwanda, the operation of Citizens’ Concerned Committees fosters inclusive participation of citizens in 59 sectors and 11 districts. In the area of capacity building, in order to enable elected councilors at district, sector and cell level to effectively represent citizens, they are provided with workshops on roles and responsibilities. Additionally, the department of Local Government is provided with information with regard to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN).

Interviewing Emmanuel Nirwingiyimana, a resident of Murambi Sector in Karongi District, who single handedly built a 7km road in his community, at the Social Accountability Symposium, which explored how to enhance social accountability in Kigali (2019).

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.