



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# HOUSEHOLDS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN RWANDA

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### ABSTRACT

Currently, Rwanda is engaged in a process of poverty reduction. It is in this context that the country considered its development in its Vision 2020. The study ascertained households' perception towards the role of local government in community development in Rwanda. In order to meet the objective of the study, a total of 322 respondents comprising household's heads participation in community development programmes and non-participation in community development programmes were selected through stratified random sampling technique participated in the study. Descriptive statistics were utilized in realizing the objective. Results reported that the general performance on Good Governance the majority 45.3% count the number of respondents that select the top choice(Good) while the general performance on Service delivery, Accountability, Capacity Building, Health and Women Empowerment the Top score is the same as the very Good score respectively.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, the importance of local government is a function of its ability to promote sense of belongingness, safety and oneness among the people. Whatever is the mode of government; local government has been essentially regarded as the path to, and guarantor of, national integration, administration and development (Arowolo, 2005). Local government is the product of decentralized administration (Orewa, 1992). Decentralization refers to the arrangement by which the management of the public affairs of a country is shared by the local government which is given sound range to raise funds and to use its means to provide a collection of socio-economic services and establish programmes to enhance the benefit of those residents in its area of authority. The role of local government is to guide, to rouse, to encourage and to organize the transformation of the district, in an environment of uncertainty, competing interests and fragmentation (Jones, 1995). Local government is effectively community government which dependent upon the strength and resourcefulness of its local communities. It can play a potentially strong role in developing social capital, particularly if it adopts a participatory approach to governance (Reid, 1997).

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The core role of local government must become one of enabling the process of communities deliberating on choosing and achieving their preferred futures (McKinlay, 1999). According to Taylor (2007), Local Governments control people participation in community development through the imposition and internalization of performance culture that require a good partnership. Local government should identify and analyse the local sustainable development issues in formulating and implementing action plans to address increasing issues. It plays a significant role in providing the best services to the community to achieve productivity and sustainability and generally improve the quality of life (Hardev, 2007). Local government always gives a big view to the community to involve in a decision-making process as it is important aspect for the community to create a good environment (Boland, 2011). Community development programs initiated and controlled by local governments are often involved in modifying and improving government services and policies (Roberts, 2004). The role of the government should be to motivate local initiatives that improve community wellbeing (Samuel Z. Bonye *et al.*, 2011). Government of Rwanda has applied the Community Development Policy with the primary objective of safeguarding the effective and sustainable participation of the community in its own development, in order to achieve poverty reduction and autonomy based on sustainable use of available resources (MINALOC, 2013). It is rooted in a broad

understanding of citizenship that sees people as having a right to influence and participate in the decisions that affect them and to have their experiences and views listened to and acted on (Lee 2003). Community development is focusing on the active involvement of people in the issues which affect their lives, encourage, empowerment, self-help and the sharing of skills, knowledge and experience (Karen Jones, 1995). Community development may be viewed as a means for mobilizing communities to join state or institutional initiatives that are aimed at alleviating poverty, solving social problems, strengthening families, fostering democracy, and achieving modernization and socio-economic development (Campfens, 1997). It was highlighted by Gilchrist and Taylor (2011) that community Development is concerned about the learning and change, both at individual level and to develop the collective capacity. In Rwanda, Community development denotes to the capacity of individuals to take action to improve their own lives over liberalization, participation, and mobilization for change; and the capacity of the community to take collection action through solidarity, social networks, social capital, group capacity building and organizational strength. Currently, Rwanda is engaged in a process of poverty reduction. It is in this context that the country considered its development in its Vision 2020. Rural development has therefore become a major concern that Local government designed policies to increase living standards of rural people through education, health services, transport facilities, clean water, income generating activities. Lack of these indicators for development causes underdevelopment and poverty. Nevertheless, in spite of the role of government in community development, little is known about households' perception towards the role of Local Government in community development in Rwanda in general and in Gasabo District in particular. Hence, the current study attempt to assess households' perception towards the role of local government in community development in Rwanda.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study Areas

The study was carried out in Gasabo district, Rwanda in 2015. The District has 9 sectors located in rural zones such as Bumbogo Gikomero, Jabana, Jali, Kinyinya, Ndera, Nduba, Rusororo and Rutunga. While six sectors are located in urban zones which are Kacyiru, Kimihurura, Kimironko, Gisozi, Gatsata, Remera. According to the Rwandan census of 2012 (National Institute of Statistics Rwanda, 2014) the population in Gasabo district is projected at 530,907. The district's landscape area is 581.5 square kilometers of which 90 percent represent rural area. The main economic sector in Gasabo District is agricultural sector which provides the major proportion of employment to the Rwandan population. The current study then examined households' perception towards the role of local government in community development in Rwanda using primary data collected through interview schedule.

### Sampling Units and Data Collection

The basic information for analysis was found from primary data collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. A total of 322 households' heads were randomly chosen and interviewed. Both rural and urban sectors were purposively selected in Gasabo district.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interpretation, discussion and assessment of the data were carried out in relation to the objective of the study.

### Gender of Respondents Vs Sector of respondents

**Table 1. Gender of Respondents Vs Sector of respondents**

Gender of Respondent	Sector of respondents		Total
	Rural	Urban	
Female	100 (31.1%)	39 (12.1%)	139 (43.2%)
Male	123 (38.2%)	60 (18.6%)	183 (56.8%)
Total	223 (69.3%)	99 (30.7%)	322 (100.0%)

Source: Field survey 2015

Table 1 reports that a total number of household heads, 322 were interviewed in both Rural and Urban sectors of Gasabo District. The table 1 reports also that 183 (56.8%) households were male respondents while 139 (43.2 %) were female respondents. The table 1 displays also that in Rural Sectors, 223 (69.3%) households were interviewed while Urban sector 99(30.7%) households were interviewed.

### Measurement of perception on Performance of Local Government in Gasabo District

Due to the nature of the data being presented the study using an instrumental in evaluating the respondents' perceptions. Current study adopts a Likert scale for the assessment of respondents' perceptions with individual items in which five response alternatives were Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair and Poor (Likert,1932).

#### Q1. How would you evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Good Governance?

Item	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	18	5.6
Very Good	128	39.8
Good	146	45.3
Fair	27	8.4
Poor	3	0.9
Total	322	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

The household heads were asked "how would you evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on good governance personally evaluate excellent, very good, good fair and poor with each statement. Table above summarizes the responses as 146(45.3) percent having good, 128(39.8) percent having very good, 27(8.4) percent having fair, 18(5.6) percent having excellent and 3(0.9) percent having poor.

#### Q2. How would you evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Accountability?

Item	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	19	5.9
Very Good	137	42.5
Good	128	39.8
Fair	37	11.5
Poor	1	0.3
Toal	322	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Q2. There were 137(42.5%) of the 322 respondents who chose Very Good, 128(39.8%) of the respondents who reported Good, 37(11.5%) of the respondents who indicated Fair,

19(5.9%) of the respondents who chose Excellent while only 1(0.3%) reported with score Poor.

**Q3. How would you evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Service Delivery?**

Item	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	18	5.6
Very Good	138	42.9
Good	132	41.0
Fair	33	10.2
Poor	1	0.3
Toal	322	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

We asked household heads “please state to what extent you personally evaluate excellent, very good, good fair and poor with each statement how the general performance of the Gasabo District on Service delivery”? For 5-point scales on statement top box is Very Good, which generates a score of 138 (42.9%), second is Good score of 132(42%), third a score 33(10.2%), fourth is Excellent a score of 18(5.6%), while lastly a score of 1(.3%) is Poor.

**Q4. How would you evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Capacity building?**

Item	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	16	5.0
Very Good	136	42.5
Good	121	39.8
Fair	45	11.5
Poor	4	0.3
Toal	322	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

How evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Capacity building, the majority 136 (42.5%) count the number of respondents that select the top choice (Very Good), 121(39.8%) count the number of respondents that select the choice (Good),45(11.5%) count the number of respondents that select the choice (Fair),16(5%) count the number of respondents that select the choice (Excellent) and 4(.3%) count the number of respondents that select the choice(Poor).

**Q5. How would you evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Health?**

Item	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	9	2.8
Very Good	142	44.1
Good	135	41.9
Fair	32	9.9
Poor	4	1.2
Toal	322	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The study findings display that up to 142(44.1%) of the respondents score Very Good with the statement that “How would you evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Health” and 135(41.9%) score with Good. Though, up to 32(9.9%) score Fair with the statement,9(2.8%) of respondents score with Excellent while 4(1.2%) of respondents score Poor. Regarding how participants evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Women’s Empowerment, responses were scattered arbitrarily depending on perceptions. Majority of the respondents 154 (47.8%) score Very Good, 112(34.8%) of respondents score Good,34(10.6%)

score Excellent,21(6.5%) score Fair and only 1(0.3%) remained Poor.

**Q6. How would you evaluate the general performance of the Gasabo District on Women’s Empowerment?**

Item	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	34	10.6
Very Good	154	47.8
Good	112	34.8
Fair	21	6.5
Poor	1	0.3
Toal	322	100

Source: Field Survey, 2015

**Conclusion and Policy Implications**

For the assessment of respondents’ perceptions with individual items in Likert scale which five response alternatives (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair and Poor) results reported that the general performance on Good Governance the mostly 45.3% count the number of respondents that select the top choice (Good) while the general performance on Service delivery, Accountability, Capacity Building, Health and Women Empowerment the Top score is very Good score respectively. According to the findings, the current study implies that the households appreciated the role of local government in community development. Government of Rwanda has applied the Community Development Policy with the primary objective of safeguarding the effective and sustainable participation of the community in its own development, in order to achieve poverty reduction and autonomy based on sustainable use of available resources. These findings are universally consistent with prior studies and it appears that the role of local government in community development are more important in poverty reduction. Based on findings of the study there is a need that the Local Government of Rwanda should take higher strategies to put mechanisms that will increase citizen participation to community development activities. The Local Government has also to adopt better accountability system which results in boost in organizational performance.

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