



**EMPOWERING FARMERS AT DISTRICT LEVEL THROUGH SOCIAL  
ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE  
CONTRACTS (IMIHIHO) IN RWANDAN AGRICULTURE**

***End-term Project Evaluation***

**REVISED DRAFT REPORT**



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## List of Acronyms

GPSA: Global Partnership for Social Accountability  
TI-Rwanda: Transparency International Rwanda  
SDA IRIBA: Services au Développement des Associations IRIBA  
CSO: Civil Society Organization  
WBG: World Bank Group  
FGD: Focus Group Discussion  
KII: Key informants' interview  
MINAGRI: Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources  
RAB: Rwanda Agriculture Board  
MINICOM: Ministry of Trade and Industry  
RGB: Rwanda Governance Board  
SAMI: Social Accountability Media Initiative  
FCDO: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office  
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization  
CRC: Citizen Report Card  
PEA: Political Economy Analysis  
PSTA: Strategic Plans for the Transformation of Agriculture  
CIP: Crop Intensification Program  
MINALOC: Ministry of Local Government  
MINECOFIN: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning  
RPPA: Rwanda Public Procurement Authority  
JADF: Joint Action Development Forum  
MoU: Memorandum of Understanding  
NISR: National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda  
LODA: Local Administrative Entities Development Agency  
GACC: Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition  
CDD-Ghana: Ghana Center for Democratic Development  
PDO: Project Development Objective  
RDDP: Rwanda Dairy Development Project  
DFN: District Farmers Network  
RCA: Rwanda Cooperative Agency  
RICA: Rwanda Institute for Conservation Agriculture  
NBR: National Bank of Rwanda  
BRD: Development Bank of Rwanda  
BDF: Business Development Fund

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project Background

Since 2017, TI-Rwanda in partnership with Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba, and with the financial support of GPSA/ World Bank, launched a 5-year project known as “Empowering Farmers at District Level through Social Accountability to Improve Performance Contracts (Imihigo) in Rwandan Agriculture”.

Implemented in Kayonza and Nyanza Districts, the **project overall goal** was to contribute to improving the effectiveness of public agriculture projects at the decentralized level in Rwanda by using social accountability tools to strengthen citizen participation in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of district performance contracts.

Specifically, **the project pursued a three-fold aim** of 1) enhancing the feedback and accountability mechanisms for gathering farmers' priorities and ensuring their integration in Imihigo; 2) strengthening cooperation between CSOs and government officials at the district level; and 3) sharing and integrating the lessons learned from pilot districts (Nyanza and Kayonza) into the agricultural sector policy design at the district and national levels.

As the project came to the end of its 5-year implementation period, and based on the project initial plan, TI-Rwanda has commissioned a project end-term evaluation to conduct a project final assessment.

### Evaluation objectives and questions

As the project has phased out, TI-Rwanda undertook this end-term evaluation with two objectives:

- Document key lessons that encourage learning, scalability and sustainability of achieved outcomes and how they can inform the government of Rwanda in agriculture related policy reforms.
- Contribute to learning and accountability by explaining how, if at all, the GPSA project contributed to results brought about by collaborative social accountability processes, and what the conditions were for this contribution to take place.

Moreover, the evaluation was expected to answer the following key questions:

- a) To what extent, in what circumstances, and for whom did the Project contribute to the intended medium and long-term results as per its Theory of Action and Results Framework?
- b) Did the results from the Project include any unintended results (positive and negative)? If so, what were the unintended results and what effect, if any, did they have on the Project Theory of Action and assumptions?
- c) Turning to the GPSA's Theory of Action, to what extent and how did the process of implementing the Project and achieving or contributing to the identified results align with the hypothesized path as described in the flower illustration of the

GPSA's Theory of Action? Are there instances of this Project's journey – from receiving the grant to contributing to long-term results – that do not align with the path described in the GPSA's Theory of Action and related assumptions? If so, what accounts for the divergence?

- d) In what ways, if any, is the Project or any of its components likely to be sustainable? The GPSA is particularly interested in sustainability through partial uptake of lessons and Project approaches by public sector institutions, WBG operations and strategies, development partners, among others.

## **Evaluation methodology**

By design the evaluation applied a mix-methods approach and used three data collection methods including a desk review, a semi-structured questionnaire, focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informants' interviews (KIs). The questionnaire was administered to 672 farmers selected from the project beneficiaries.

FGDs were conducted at the district level involving farmers' cooperatives leaders and farmers. A total of four FGDs with farmers in both districts and 10 FGDs with Leaders of farmers' cooperatives were carried out to collect the above mentioned data.

As for KIs, they were organized with relevant national actors such as MINAGRI, RAB and MINICOM, They were also conducted with the leaders of implementing partner organizations (Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba), the team leader at the World Bank/Rwanda and TI-Rwanda's M&E and Knowledge Management Officer. At local government level, the evaluation team held KIs with sector agronomist and the district director of planning.

## **Summary of key evaluation findings**

This summary presents key evaluation findings per each of the four evaluation questions as follows:

### ***The extent and circumstances, the Project contributed to the intended results***

The evaluation revealed that GPSA project put in place formal collaboration arrangements (multi-stakeholder compacts). In this regard, TI-Rwanda engaged with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) and with Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) which appointed government champions for this project. Additionally, TI-Rwanda signed collaboration MoUs with Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) and with both Nyanza and Kayonza district authorities.

In the same framework, the project established social accountability mechanisms through farmers, local leaders and other stakeholders. include farmers' groups and meetings (at village, cell and sector levels), district farmers' network, media network for Social Accountability, district agriculture forum, media awareness campaigns, radio talk

shows, agriculture imihigo week among others. The aim was to help farmers identify, prioritize and communicate their needs to local leaders for inclusion in district imihigo, and to facilitate the provision of feedback from those leaders on the fate of priorities submitted by farmers.

The evaluation revealed that use of those social accountability mechanisms set up by the project has contributed to increasing farmers' participation in the planning of agriculture-related district imihigo and enhanced farmers' ownership of agriculture imihigo project at district level. For instance, thanks to the social accountability mechanisms that the project created, the project significantly increased the number of functional imihigo feedback mechanisms in place and the number of farmers' priorities included in district imihigo planning. While the target number for functional imihigo feedback mechanisms was 15 by the end of the project, the evaluation observed that a total of 20 mechanisms were established. This implies an increase of 33.3% beyond the target.

As regards the number of priorities formulated by farmers and submitted to farmers' forum, while the target was 40 priorities, project beneficiary farmers in both districts were able to formulate and submit 141 priorities (i.e. an increase of 252.5% beyond the target).

In a similar vein, concerning the number of farmers' priorities included in district imihigo planning throughout the project life span, it emerged that 52 priorities were considered for the district imihigo while the target was 15 priorities (i.e. an increase of +246.6% from the project target).

In terms of medium and long-term outcomes, the evaluation showed that the project activities through established social accountability mechanisms contributed to improve the quality and quantity of agriculture productivity. In turn, the latter induced multiple changes associated with improvement of socioeconomic conditions of farmers' households and their respective community.

Regarding the **deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials**, the evaluation suggested that the cooperation and collaboration between key project partners was strengthened and consolidated through the project implementation and is most likely to carry on after the project phase-out. For instance, the number and quality of constructive dialogue meetings between CSOs and government - national/local increased by 60% beyond the project target, while the level of CSO inclusion and participation in the imihigo planning and monitoring processes increased by 15% beyond the target.

Similarly, the percent of joint actions taken in the imihigo planning and monitoring increased by 28% compared to the target. It was emerged that the number of instances in which the project participatory activities are coordinated with the commitments process, compared to the target has not changed, while compared to the baseline it

has increased by three instances (i.e. from one instance to four instances which are the cell, sector and district levels).

As far as sharing knowledge and lessons learnt, the evaluation noted that the project has achieved a lot in this regard. For instance there was an increase in the number of open data mechanisms on imihigo process and contents that are in place by 50%. It also emerged that the number of examples where learning from monitoring and evaluation has contributed to the improvement of the operational strategies of the project increased by 93.3%. Similarly, the number of knowledge products about political economy factors and dynamics that the project produces increased by 500% beyond the project target.

### **Unintended results (positive and negative) and effect on the Project Theory of Action**

While the evaluation has not come up with any project negative unintended impact, it noted a couple of positive unintended results: these include an increase of direct beneficiaries in the course of the project implementation and the establishment of a media social accountability network.

#### 1) The increase of direct beneficiaries of the GPSA project

At the project outset, project direct beneficiaries were 1,310 farmers (501 in Kayonza and 809 in Nyanza). By the end of the project, the number had raised to 7,476 farmers (i.e. 4,192 in Kayonza and 3,284 in Nyanza) whereby 51.1% were women. This increase came from the need expressed by district leaders who had picked much interest in the project. They thought that it would be much productive to give as many farmers as possible the opportunity to share their priorities for inclusion in district Imihigo. This unplanned but significant increase of project direct beneficiaries did not incur extra costs given that these beneficiaries mainly participated in non-costed activities such as farmers' meeting at village and cell levels for collection of priorities and related feedback.

#### 2) Establishment of the *media social accountability network*

In 2018, TI-Rwanda partnered with the Social Accountability Media Initiative (SAMI), powered by Agha Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communication. In the course of the partnership, TI-Rwanda introduced GPSA project to SAMI and requested them to support the establishment of media social accountability network in the framework of the GPSA project. In turn, SAMI picked interest in the latter project and offered the requested funding. As a result, the *media social accountability network* was set up by TI-Rwanda and Pax Press. The network brought together 10 media outlets both public and private (broadcast, online and print). Thanks to this network, involved journalists were instrumental in advocating for farmers' complaints (mainly those associated with their participation in imihigo process) and collecting as well as



disseminating project success stories in project-facilitated national stakeholders' advocacy meetings.

### **GPSA's Theory of Action, divergences against the flower illustration of the GPSA's Theory of Action**

This evaluation suggested that all critical assumptions that the project implementers had anticipated at the design phase were realistic and helped shape the project outcomes. It emerged that the willingness by the different stakeholders to pursue the desired goal, the World Bank funding, the partnership and collaboration through established multi-stakeholder compacts, the use of participatory approach in project implementation, the conducive political environment in which the project was implemented, as well as fairness, transparency and accountability in the implementation process have been vital in leading the project to achieved results.

Nevertheless, the evaluation suggests that other factors such as the legitimacy and credibility of project partners was key to the project success. However, it was found out that an immense but unanticipated factor came to hamper the planned course of the project implementation and its outcomes. This is the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Likely sustainability of Project components**

The evaluation found compelling evidence that project participants and stakeholders, to some extent, have ownership of the project approaches and outcomes. Such ownership serves therefore an indication of the likely sustainability of the project. The likelihood of the project sustainability lies in but is not limited to the following stakeholders' commitments and uptakes:

- 1) MINAGRI's commitment to advocate for replication of the GPSA approaches into other districts
- 2) Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) commitment to integrate the project approach into their existing platforms
- 3) World Bank's commitment to support TI-Rwanda in replicating its GPSA's social accountability Tools in World Bank's 'Commercialisation and De-Risking for Agricultural Transformation' Project in Rwanda.
- 4) FCDO's commitment to partner with TI-Rwanda in order to scale-up the project in three other districts of Rwanda
- 5) Nyanza District authorities' commitment to integrate social accountability tool into social protection programmes to enhance beneficiaries' graduation from poverty.
- 6) Farmer readiness and confidence to carry on the identification and articulation of their priorities for the purpose of influencing district imihigo and plans even beyond the project phase-out.

However, in order to ensure that the commitments made by stakeholders are effectively translated into actions, there is a pressing need for TI-Rwanda to follow up and make further engagement in this matter.

The evaluation also come up with a series of challenges that hampered the project implementation (mainly COVID-19 pandemic), lessons learnt. It also formulated some recommendations to address those challenges.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This document is a report of the end-term evaluation of a 5-year project known as “Empowering Farmers at District Level through Social Accountability to Improve Performance Contracts (Imihigo) in Rwandan Agriculture”. The project was implemented by Transparency International Rwanda (TI-Rwanda) in partnership with Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba, thanks to the financial support of GPSA/ World Bank. The report is structured in four core sections including an introduction, a description of the evaluation methodology, the presentation of findings, a conclusion and recommendations.

### 1.1. Background

Transparency International Rwanda (TI-Rwanda) is a Rwandan civil society organization (CSO) that was created in 2004 and registered as a non-governmental organization (NGO) in accordance with the law no 04/2012 of 17/02/2012 governing the organization and functioning of the national NGOs. TI-Rwanda's mission is to contribute to the fight against corruption and promote good governance through enhancing integrity in the Rwandan society.

Since its inception, TI-Rwanda has been implementing various projects aiming at promoting citizens' awareness of their rights and conducting evidence-based advocacy initiatives at local and national levels.

It is in this framework that since 2017, TI-Rwanda in partnership with Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba, and with the financial support of GPSA/ World Bank, launched a 5-year project known as “Empowering Farmers at District Level through Social Accountability to Improve Performance Contracts (Imihigo) in Rwandan Agriculture”.

In a bid to track the changes that the Project has brought about or at least contributed to, a series of evaluations have been conducted, since the project inception. Beside periodic activity reports, TI-Rwanda carried out a baseline survey in the beginning of the project (2017) and a mid-term evaluation study in 2019. Similarly, four related Assessments of Farmers' Satisfaction with their Participation in Imihigo. Case Study of Kayonza and Nyanza Districts were conducted in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. Data and information from these assessments and reports revealed encouraging evidence that the project was largely moving in the right direction despite some challenges faced.

### 1.2. Project Overview

The Project was implemented in a context of performance-based contracts “Imihigo” in the agriculture sector. The Imihigo have a strong focus on results which makes it an important tool for planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation processes as well as for accountability. Since 2006, the performance contracts have been used by the districts for setting local priorities, annual targets and defining activities to achieve them.

At implementation level, the selected priorities are allocated funds and contracts carried out. At this stage monitoring is done to ensure that the implementation process remains

on the right track. At the end of each fiscal year, each Imihigo is evaluated to establish whether the set targets were achieved or not.

Additionally, one of the 2012 National Leadership Retreat resolutions was to include findings of the Citizen Report Card (CRC)<sup>1</sup> as part of Imihigo evaluation criteria, giving it a weight of 10% along with other evaluation criteria. More generally the CRC includes a comprehensive review of Imihigo implementation reports and associated documents, field visits of Imihigo projects sampled from analyzed reports, as well as assessment of action plans across districts. This gives farmers room to participate in evaluating the district performance contracts in general and specifically those related to agriculture.

The project was initiated to contribute to bridging the gap of low citizen participation in policy planning, monitoring and evaluation of local and national plans with a focus on agricultural development area in Nyanza and Kayanza Districts. The overall goal of the project has been to contribute to improving the effectiveness of public agriculture projects at the decentralized level in Rwanda by using social accountability tools to strengthen citizen participation in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of district performance contracts.

### **1.3. Political Economy Analysis**

A political economy analysis (PEA) of the GPSA project conducted in 2020 was meant to identify the main institutional constraints and opportunities that lead different actors to support social accountability mechanisms in Agriculture, gather evidence about politically informed social accountability strategies in Agriculture sector that can lead to meaningful farmers' participation in policy planning, monitoring and evaluation of local and national agricultural development plans. It examined how well informal and formal agricultural structures enable farmers' participation in agriculture-related imihigo; determined factors that enabled farmers' participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs of the Strategic Plans for the Transformation of Agriculture (PSTA4); Identified the agricultural incentives that shape the behaviors of key actors in the agricultural value chain and assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of transparency and accountability mechanisms in place for monitoring agriculture development programs.

The study revealed that there were different structures in place, through which farmers were channeling their needs and concerns in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the agriculture-related Imihigo. To some extent, those structures were effective in channeling farmers' priority needs, providing feedback to farmers and enabling farmers to demand accountability on agriculture-related matters. However, the study also established that farmers

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<sup>1</sup> Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) conducts an annual governance assessment through the citizen report card tool (see <https://www.rgb.rw/1/research>)

were only informed about what the district vowed to achieve in the performance contracts “Imihigo” and what they should implement according to the district plans”.

With regard to factors that enabled farmers’ participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs of the Strategic Plans for the Transformation of Agriculture (PSTA4), the PEA showed that, policy reforms have considerably reflected the wishes of citizens and were easily implemented. For example, there has been a tangible transformation in keeping modern cows which led to the increase of milk production due to modern breeding, through the agricultural transformation made by the government, farmers were taught how to cultivate modern banana and fruits in order to increase their production, etc.

The report identified agricultural incentives that shaped the behaviors of key actors in the agricultural value chain. These incentives include agriculture finance, insurance, and subsidies among others. On the other hand, the Crop Intensification Program (CIP) helped farmers increasing agricultural productivity under PSTA II, mainly the production of food crops across the country, focusing on eight priority crops (maize, rice, wheat, beans, soybean, cassava, Irish potato, and banana).

However, the study showed that there were gaps in exercising transparency and accountability mechanisms in the monitoring of agriculture development programs such as issues of financial accessibility and quality of agro-inputs like pesticides, fertilizers, and veterinary drugs, irrigation machines with poor quality, delay in providing selected seeds to farmers, delay in availing fertilizers to farmers and lack of farmers involvement in price setting of their produce.

#### **1.4. The project objectives**

The project pursued three specific objectives as follows:

- Enhancing the feedback and accountability mechanisms for gathering farmers’ priorities and ensuring their integration in Imihigo;
- Strengthening cooperation between CSOs and government officials at the district level;
- Sharing and integrating the lessons learned from pilot districts (Nyanza and Kayonza) into the agricultural sector policy design at the district and national levels.

## 1.5. Project Beneficiaries

The project targets two major categories of beneficiaries: direct and indirect beneficiaries: The project's direct beneficiaries include farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI):

- In the beginning of the project, direct beneficiaries were 501 farmers and 809 farmers in Kayonza and Nyanza districts respectively. These farmers are involved in farmers' associations "Imbaraga", which are organized in structures from the cell level up to the national level. The project intended to empower these farmers to effectively utilize the institutionalized entry points of the planning cycle of the districts' agricultural through the use of social accountability tools. However, the evaluation team learned that during the implementation phase, the number of farmer beneficiaries rose to 3,284 farmers (men: 1,848, women:1,436, and youth are 281) in Kayonza district. They are structured into 124 farmers groups. In Nyanza District, the number of beneficiaries rose to 4,192 farmers (men: 1,804; women: 2,388), structured into 130 farmers groups.
- As far as MINAGRI is concerned, it is included as a direct project beneficiary; as it was anticipated that the Ministry will use the information generated to inform agricultural sector policy design and implementation.

The project's indirect beneficiaries include:

- 256,000 individuals and 189,000 individuals (farmers and their family members) in Nyanza and Kayonza Districts respectively, who primarily live on agriculture.
- Rwandan citizens who benefit from the success of the program from the scaling up of lessons learned aid the incorporation of citizen participation tools in sectoral strategies and policy making;
- The Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) and Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) that play major roles in ensuring effective citizen participation and thus would benefit from the activities of the project;
- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) and the Rwanda Public Procurement Authority (RPPA) would benefit from enhanced citizens' participation in public contract monitoring.

## 1.6. Project approaches

The Project intended to use social accountability mechanisms to increase the quantity and quality of farmers' involvement in the planning and evaluation cycles of the district performance contracts. It did this by consolidating the use of existing platforms such as the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) to ensure that the farmers' inputs are taken into consideration and that they are actively involved in the monitoring of the implementation of planned projects. Furthermore, the project established multi-stakeholder compacts and social accountability tools and processes to address the felt needs and concerns of the citizens. The multi-stakeholder compacts created in this project include collaboration MoUs with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources

(MINAGRI) and Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB), and with both Nyanza and Kayonza district authorities.

### 1.7. Project expected results

In line with the project specific objectives (see above), the project expected results are reflected in its three core components as follows<sup>2</sup>:

1. Increasing farmers 'ownership of agricultural projects
2. Deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials for insuring efficiency of agricultural projects
3. Sharing knowledge and lessons learnt

The implementation of the project was expected to result in the following intermediate outcomes/results referred to as components and related result indicators as in Table 1.

**Table 1: GPSA project expected outcomes and result indicators**

<b>Component 1: Increasing farmers 'ownership of agricultural projects</b>
<i>Result indicator 1.1: Increased quantity and quality of farmers priorities for the Imihigo planning process</i>
<i>Result indicator 1.2: Improved satisfaction of farmers with the planning and monitoring of agricultural projects planned in Imihigo</i>
<b>Component 2: Deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials for insuring efficiency of agricultural projects</b>
<i>Result indicator 2.1: Increased and meaningful cooperation between CSOs and district governments to engage citizens participation in planning and monitoring process</i>
<i>Result indicator 2.2: Social Accountability tools are scaled up to CSOs, local governments and line ministries</i>
<b>Component 3: Sharing knowledge and lessons learnt</b>
<i>Result indicator 3.1: Learning for increased results</i>
<i>Result indicator 3.2: Increased Knowledge about politically informed social accountability strategies</i>
<i>Result indicator 3.3: The capacity and ability of the 3 partners CSOs to work in coalition is strengthened</i>

**Source: adapted from the GPSA Project Paper**

To measure the extent of achieving these results, a set of quantitative indicators were formulated in the project paper as below:

- Number of functional Imihigo feedback mechanisms in place;
- Number of farmers' priorities included in district imihigo planning (per district);

<sup>2</sup>See GPSA Project Paper

- Number of planning and monitoring process (district/national/agricultural or other sectors) that have become more transparent and participatory in practice;
- Level of satisfaction of citizens on the implementation of planned projects in the imihigo;
- Number of priorities formulated by farmers and submitted to the farmers' forum;
- Level of satisfaction of farmers with the planning of agricultural projects planned in Imihigo;
- Number of joint actions taken in the imihigo planning and monitoring;
- Number of instances in which the project participatory activities are coordinated with the imihigo process;
- Number of public institutions that adapt the social accountability mechanisms to their context;
- Number of examples where learning from monitoring and evaluation has contributed to improvements of the operational strategies of the project;
- Number of knowledge products about political economy factors and dynamics that the project produces;
- Number of knowledge products about political economy factors and dynamics that the project partners and World Bank use to improve their strategies and operations;
- Number of the 3 partners CSOs joint meetings, peer learning and extent of joint planning, monitoring, advocacy and fundraising.

## 1.8. Project Theory of Action

Furthermore, the project was designed on the GPSA Theory of Action as a hypothesized way of anticipating what will happen if a series of intentional strategies are translated into concrete actions. According to Elena Aguilar<sup>3</sup>, *“developing a Theory of Action pushes us to prioritize and go deep with a few intentional strategies which is usually more productive than doing a whole bunch of things”*. In the actual project, the Theory of Action is stated as follows:

- Problem: low citizen participation in policy planning, monitoring and evaluation of local and national agricultural development plans in project targeted districts.
- So, if the multi-stakeholder compacts use social accountability tools and processes that were agreed upon under the project design to address the felt needs and concerns of the citizens;
- So that the capacity of the citizens to participate in policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is increased;
- Then, public service in the agriculture context would become more relevant, effective and efficient; citizens priority needs would appropriately be addressed; farmers' satisfaction with public agriculture projects would increase and eventually the citizens would attain development through agricultural facilitated development processes.

<sup>3</sup> Elena Aguilar (June 22, 2020). Developing a Theory of Action. Retrieved [20 May 2022] at <https://brightmorningteam.com/2020/06/developing-a-theory-of-action/#>



### 1.8.1. Project assumptions

For the project to be able to lead to the desired results and based on the project theory of change, TI-Rwanda and partners formulated six following assumptions:

- Willingness by the different stakeholders to pursue the desired goals;
- Availability of funding required to finance the various implementation activities;
- Partnership and collaboration;
- Participatory approach in project implementation;
- Favorable political environment;
- Fairness, transparency and accountability in the implementation process

### 1.8.2. Objectives of the evaluation

This evaluation focused on the entire implementation period and pursued the following two objectives:

- Document key lessons that encourage learning, scalability and sustainability of achieved outcomes and how they can inform the government of Rwanda in agriculture related policy reforms.
- Contribute to learning and accountability by explaining how, if at all, the GPSA project contributed to results brought about by collaborative social accountability processes, and what the conditions were for this contribution to take place.

### 1.8.3. Key evaluation questions

The evaluation was expected to answer the following key questions:

2. To what extent, in what circumstances, and for whom did the Project contribute to the intended medium and long-term results as per its Theory of Action and Results Framework?
3. Did the results from the Project include any unintended results (positive and negative)? If so, what were the unintended results and what effect, if any, did they have on the Project Theory of Action and assumptions?
4. Turning to the GPSA's Theory of Action, to what extent and how did the process of implementing the Project and achieving or contributing to the identified results align with the hypothesized path as described in the flower illustration of the GPSA's Theory of Action? Are there instances of this Project's journey – from receiving the grant to contributing to long-term results – that do not align with the path described in the GPSA's Theory of Action and related assumptions? If so, what accounts for the divergence?
5. In what ways, if any, is the Project or any of its components likely to be sustainable? The GPSA is particularly interested in sustainability through partial uptake of lessons and Project approaches by public sector institutions, WBG operations and strategies, development partners, among others.

## 2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This section focuses on the evaluation methodology. It describes the evaluation design, the study population and sampling, data collection methods, data analysis and report drafting and measures for quality assurance.

### 2.1. Evaluation design

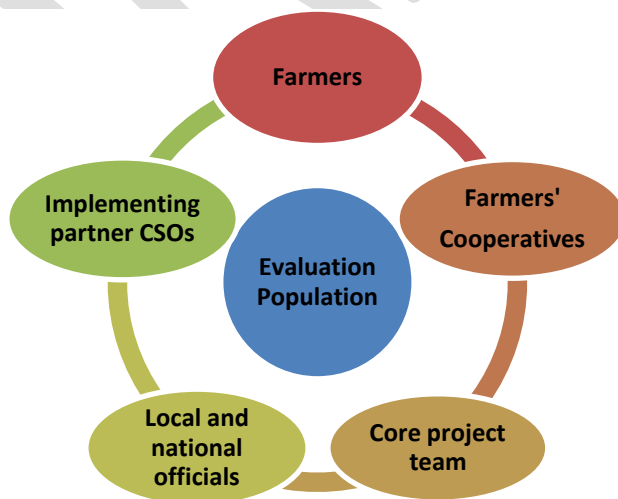
The end-term project evaluation primarily relies on a mixed methods approach that uses a causal/explanatory design with an outcome harvesting methodology. As explained in a GPSA Guidance Document <sup>4</sup>, it is defined as a methodology that collects (“harvests”) evidence of what has changed (defined as “outcomes”), and then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes<sup>5</sup>. While this methodology is basically qualitative, the evaluation also applied a quantitative methodology to document quantifiable project changes from the core project beneficiaries (farmers).

### 2.2. Evaluation study population and sampling

Core project stakeholders served as data sources for the evaluation. These included:

- Farmers (members of farmers cooperatives) in Kayonza and Nyanza Districts;
- Leaders of farmers' cooperatives in Kayonza and Nyanza Districts;
- Project implementing partner CSOs (Imbaraga, SDA-Iriba);
- Local government officials (sector and district levels) in Kayonza and Nyanza Districts;
- Core project team (TI-Rwanda, GPSA).

Figure 1: Project evaluation population



<sup>4</sup> <https://docs.google.com/document/d/10s-MvnDcftp9f0VxRHOR6zINSEmEFIZziPOCAS0ovnE/edit#>

<sup>5</sup> Idem

### 2.3. Sample size determination

The sample size (number of households surveyed) is calculated using the recommended and widely used formula below:

$$n = \left( \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} \right) = \left( \frac{445,000}{1 + (445,000 * (0.0387^2))} \right) = 666$$

n: Being the calculated sample size

e: Being the relative margin of error, for this end-term evaluation, 0.0387 is a relative margin of error.

N: Total population of farmers in Kayonza and Nyanza

**Table 2: Sample distribution of farmers in Nyanza and Kayonza Districts**

District	Population size	PPS	Sample size
Nyanza	256000	0.58	386
Kayonza	189000	0.42	280
Total	445000	1	666

While the initial sample size was 666 farmers, 6 extra individuals were added during the actual data collection. In fact, given that respondents were interviewed in their farms, it happened that some farmers were excited to request to also participate and some enumerators eventually included them. This therefore made the total number of respondents slightly exceed the targeted sample size. Such a sample size provided a base for meaningful comparison to undertake statistically valid sub stratifications that fall within acceptable confidence level.

In addition, five leaders of farmers' cooperatives were purposively selected from each of the two districts. Regarding local government officials, three sector agronomists/veterinaries and the director of planning were selected at each district level. Last but not least all project implementers (GPSA, TI-Rwanda, SDA-Iriba and Imbaraga) were considered in the evaluation.

### 2.4. Data collection methods

For the sake of both data collection and triangulation, this evaluation relied on four methods: desk review, semi-structured questionnaire, focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIs).

- **Desk review**

This method served in gathering information from the project evaluations (e.g. baseline), project results framework, and district Imihigo reports since fiscal year 2017/2018, some

national policy/strategic documents on agriculture, etc. It therefore helped collect a portion of data on quantitative indicators of the project. Additionally, this method was useful to review meeting reports and evidence of imihigo proposed by farmers, to name a few. Similarly, GPSA Theory of Action (World Bank, 2020) was also better explored for data analysis purpose.

- **Semi-structured questionnaire**

In order to quantitatively measure post-intervention changes against the baseline situation, the evaluation used a semi-structured questionnaire. It was administered to sampled farmers (project beneficiaries) from Nyanza and Kayonza districts. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of i) the core project evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and partnerships and collaboration), ii) the key evaluation questions, and iii) the project results framework. Questions focused on both the project process and outcomes (changes). For the sake of efficiency and data quality, a tablet-based questionnaire was used.

- **Focus group discussions**

We have mentioned above that an *outcome harvesting approach* was the core evaluation methodology for this end project evaluation. In this regard, we used FGDs to separately engage farmers, farmers' representatives, and local leaders (sector and district officials) in discussions aimed to collect their experiences and perceptions of the project process and achieved results, as well as factors that shaped the achievement or non-achievement of expected changes. In other words, FGDs helped qualitatively identify stakeholders' narratives of observed changes and helped establish the causal links between the project activities and the achieved outcomes. In this regard, FGDs were useful for the purpose of validating the GPSA's Theory of Action and the project assumptions. These discussions also served to collect information on lessons learnt from the project theory of change and on project sustainability. FGDs were conducted at the district level involving farmers' cooperatives leaders and farmers. A total of four FGDs with farmers in both districts and 10 FGDs with Leaders of farmers' cooperatives were carried out to collect the above mentioned data.

- **Key informant interviews**

Structures of agriculture governance in Rwanda involve various actors at local and national levels. Key informant interviews were organized with relevant national actors such as MINAGRI<sup>6</sup>, Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB)<sup>7</sup>, Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM)<sup>8</sup> and Rwanda Governance Board (RGB)<sup>9</sup>. KIs were also conducted with the leaders of implementing partner organizations (Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba), the GPSA team leader at the World Bank/Rwanda and TI-Rwanda's M&E and Knowledge Management Officer. At local government level, the evaluation team held KIs with sector agronomist

<sup>6</sup> Interview held with the director of planning

<sup>7</sup> Interview held with the Deputy Director General

<sup>8</sup> Interview held with the Director General of Trade and Investment

<sup>9</sup> Interview conducted with the Head of Research Department

and the district director of planning. Like for FGDs, discussions with key informants aimed to uncover local leaders, policy-makers and project team's perspectives of the project results, causal link and lessons learnt. These discussions, therefore, were instrumental in gaining insights as to whether or not and how the project's interventions eventually led to the expected results. Similarly, KIIs offered an opportunity to assess whether or not the project's underlying assumptions were valid. Moreover, KIIs helped get national officials' views on the project's relevance and sustainability.

## **2.5. Data collection**

Prior to data collection, enumerators were selected and trained to administer the questionnaire to farmers. The questionnaire was tested before its actual administration. As for desk review and facilitation of FGDs and KIIs, these tasks were performed by the team leader with the assistance of a note-taker.

## **2.6. Data analysis and report drafting**

The consultants hired an experienced statistician to support the design of the questionnaire in the open data kit (Kobo ToolBox) and in conducting quantitative data analysis. The statistician carried out data cleaning before running frequencies, tabulation and relevant cross-tabulation. Quantitative data were also analyzed against the baseline survey data and the project results framework as well as the evaluation questions. The consultants analyzed the qualitative data using thematic method and triangulated them with quantitative data. They were also responsible for report drafting.

## **2.7. Quality assurance**

The evaluation team took measures to assure the quality of the entire evaluation process, including:

- A workshop with TI-Rwanda and GPSA to review and validate the project's alignment with the GPSA's theory of action;
- Review of the inception report by TI-Rwanda and GPSA, including the planned methodology and evaluation tools;
- Triangulation of several methods and sources of data;
- Review of the draft report by TI-Rwanda and GPSA.

### 3. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from the end-term evaluation survey. It starts with a brief description of respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. Thereafter, it examines the project outcomes based on core evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, cooperation and sustainability) and the project's theory of action.

#### 3.1. Demographics

This section describes respondents' characteristics including district, gender, age, education and *ubudehe* category. The focus is put on respondents who participated in the quantitative component of this evaluation (survey questionnaire).

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by selected socio-demographics**

Variable	Response option	Frequency	Percent
Respondents per district	Nyanza	386	57.4
	Kayonza	286	42.6
	Total	672	100.0
Gender	Female	356	53.0
	Male	316	47.0
	Total	672	100.0
Age	18-24	12	1.8
	25-29	17	2.5
	30-34	53	7.9
	35-39	110	16.4
	40-44	149	22.2
	45-49	101	15.0
	50-54	74	11.0
	55-59	54	8.0
	60+	102	15.2
	Total	672	100.0
Highest education level attained	None	81	12.1
	Primary	423	62.9
	Vocational training	82	12.2
	Lower Secondary	57	8.5
	Upper Secondary	26	3.9
	Tertiary	3	.4
	Total	672	100.0
Current Ubudehe Category	Category 1	77	11.5

	Category 2	287	42.7
	Category 3	308	45.8
	Category 4	0	0
	Total	672	100.0

Respondents in this study are almost equally distributed across the two districts covered by GPSA project. They are 51.3% and 48.7% in Nyanza and Kayonza districts respectively. Concerning gender, the proportion of women is slightly higher than that of men (53% and 47% respectively). They are almost exclusively adult as over 95% of them are aged 30 and above. It is also worth noting that respondents are largely uneducated given that three quarters of them attained at most primary education. A few of them (around 10%) completed vocational training while a similar proportion attained at most secondary education. This is not surprising because the 2012 General Population and Housing Census shows that 85.7% of Rwandans had completed at most primary education and 25% of this population had no education at all (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), 2014a, p.19). It is also important to highlight that both Nyanza and Kayonza are mainly rural districts. According to NISR and MINECOFIN (2014b), *“the agriculture sector in rural areas was four times as large, in terms of the share of the employed population, as the agriculture sector in urban areas”* (p.50).

As far as ubudehe categories<sup>10</sup> are concerned, the data shows that close to a half of respondents (45.8%) are in category 3 (relatively well-off), while a similar proportion (42.7%) of respondents are in category 2. However, 1 in 10 respondents are in category 1. It is worth noting that cumulatively over half of respondents (54%) are in category 1 and 2 which constitute the poorest categories, unlike in 2018 where the cumulative proportion of respondents in these two categories stood at 48.9%. As will be discussed later in this report, this decline of socioeconomic status of some farmers could be largely blamed on effects of COVID-19. As stated by an official from LODA, citizens are allowed to appeal for ubudehe category review (both inclusion and exclusion) in case their socio-economic conditions have changed. In this context, it is assumed that COVID-19 has negatively affected the livelihoods of the poor families.

<sup>10</sup> Ubudehe categorization is a process of classifying households in social economic categories which are used , among other things, to track poverty levels and deliver selected social services to citizens.

### 3.2. Extent, circumstances and for whom the project contributed towards intended results

This section examines the extent to which the project in Nyanza and Kayonza districts has achieved its expected results. As earlier highlighted, these results are clustered into three components including: 1) increasing farmers 'ownership' of agricultural projects, 2) deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials for insuring efficiency of agricultural projects and 3) sharing knowledge and lessons learnt.

The first question that this evaluation was to answer is about the extent, circumstances and for whom the project contributed towards intended results. To answer this question, it is important to start by recalling that the core problem the project came to address was the low citizens' participation in policy planning, monitoring and evaluation of local and national plans with a focus on agriculture development area in Nyanza and Kayonza District. This led the evaluation team to collect farmers' views on the project relevance for them in terms of farmers' needs that the project came to address.

#### 3.2.1. Project relevance

The project relevance was examined in line with major farmers' priority needs that the project came to address and with the alignment of project goals with national governance and agriculture policies and strategies.

**Table 4: Key farmers' issues to which the project came to respond**

Key needs and priorities	Freq.	Percent
Low agricultural productivity	505	75.1
Food security issues	494	73.5
Limited consideration of farmers' priorities in national plans	407	60.6
Limited consideration of farmers' priorities in district imihigo	381	56.7
Limited access to market	373	55.5
Limited transport infrastructure for commercialization of agriculture produces	131	19.5
Other	50	7.4

Prior to the project inception, farmers in both Nyanza and Kayonza districts experienced critical problems associated with their agricultural occupation. The majority of them mentioned issues such as low agricultural productivity (75.1%), food security problems (73.5%), limited consideration of farmers' priorities in national plans and in district imihigo (60.6% and 56.7% respectively), as well as limited access to market for their produces. Close to 2 in 10 respondents also highlighted a related issue of limited transport infrastructure for commercialization of agriculture produces.



A thorough analysis of these issues allows putting them in two clusters. The first one encompasses issues associated with the quality and quantity of agricultural productivity and access to the market. The second cluster relates to the process of making decision on what needs to be produced, when and how, and who needs to be involved. More importantly, it is about who sets priorities for agricultural production and all related dynamics. Both clusters are definitely closely related given that decision-making involves power relations that are at the center of any economic endeavor.

The project that TI-Rwanda and partners implemented in the two districts was therefore relevant for farmers as far as the process of their economic activity is concerned. Farmers needed to play a role in setting priorities for both district agricultural plans and national development plans with the aim of achieving increased agricultural productivity both in quality and quantity. Rather than only achieve food security. Farmers also required having their produce sold at attractive prices. The farmers' quotes below substantiate the project relevance.

"Before the project came in, our felt needs were never considered for inclusion in the district Imihigo. Towards the beginning of a rainy season, we would simply be told by the sector agronomists what we would be farming yet we had our preferred enterprises. However, since the project inception, they started to increasingly engage us in village meetings to disclose our needs and mention our priorities. This gave us an opportunity to participate in decision making regarding what crops to grow. As a farmer, I am now aware that my participation in the Imihigo process matters" **(Farmer, Nyanza district)**

"Most of us were not aware of the Imihigo content or how Imihigo are prepared, rather we only got involved at the implementation phase. But currently, we are aware of the project activities and farmers' needs are collected at the individual level through members of cooperatives and individual farmers. After listing our needs, ranking sessions are organized and compiled reports are forwarded to cells, then sectors and finally to the district." **(Farmer, Kayonza district)**

"Before we joined the project, our farming aspirations were never considered for inclusion in the Imihigo at the district. It was mainly due to the fact that, as farmers, we did not know how we would get involved in the imihigo planning process and in national development plans at large. So were we left out. This means that we had to go by what the district decided for us to undertake in farming. However, the project has already made a great contribution in raising our awareness via community meetings with regard to our rights and roles in participating in development activities. When officials organize meetings in the agriculture sector, they now invite us and request that we come with farmers' representatives to hear their voices. This has resulted in many of our priorities to be heard and integrated in Imihigo at the district level." **(Farmer, Kayonza district)**

It is also worth highlighting that the project aimed to contribute to addressing farmers' concern about their priorities missing from the national agricultural plans. This is an

important concern since the national budgetary allocations are guided to a large extent by what has been approved as the national priorities for a particular fiscal year. The farmers' concern of inclusion of their priorities in the national plans is highlighted in the following quote from central government officials.

“In the past, many of the farmers priorities across the country were being left out in national plans. This was due to the fact that those priorities had not appeared in the district list of priorities. Consequently, when the districts were forwarding their respective agricultural priorities, such farmers needs would not be included. Nevertheless, the onset of this GPSA project sparked on a new approach whereby government and civil societies officials cooperate and sensitize farmers at lower levels through various forums like the JADF, sector meetings, cell meetings and finally village meetings for them to become aware of their right and method of participation in the imihigo process. This eventually resulted in many of the farmers priorities (like types of crops to grow, acquisition of irrigation machines and acquisition of crop drying materials) to become included in the district imihigo.”

**(Director of Domestic Trade Unit, MINICOM)**

Moreover, the project also came to address the need for increasing farmers' ownership of agriculture related projects. This was relevant because it would enable them to participate in the Imihigo process in their respective districts. The following quotes illustrate such a need.

Considering the then prevailing status of farmers' ownership of agricultural projects, the participation of farmers as primary stakeholders in agricultural production chain was very limited. They lacked means of voicing out their needs and priorities like inadequate farming skills, low agricultural productivity, lack of irrigation machines, lack of crop drying facilities and limited access to improved types of seeds. But when this project was launched, the status-quo changed whereby farmers got the opportunity to formulate their needs and priorities. Whatever is done, they are consulted through the various forums like meetings at village, cell and sector levels. I can firmly say that farmers' ownership of the project has now increased and this is commendable. **(Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank – Rwanda)**

Previously, we as farmers lacked ownership of agricultural projects since we never participated in the planning of what would be done in our area in terms of agriculture. But this GPSA project helped us to get involved and now we feel that we are truly part of the project. From the beginning of the project we had enough time to discuss with our partners including CSOs, private sector members dealing in farm inputs, local authorities at district, sector, cell and village levels, about the project and came to understand our responsibilities as farmers and the role of TI-Rwanda in empowering farmers at district level through social accountability tools to improve performance contracts “Imihigo” in Rwandan agriculture. The project activities were established in partnership with District agriculture forum members,

dealers, CSOs, CBOs, local authorities and agriculture groups at cell level.”  
**(Farmer, Kayonza district)**

Furthermore, farmers had a challenge of low agricultural productivity which they partly attributed to inadequate knowledge and skills in farming practices. They needed to improve on their farming practices in order to boost their agricultural productivity and so, this project came to address this issue as the following quote claims:

“I was growing various crops like beans, maize and Irish potatoes. I did not know how to make my soil very fertile in order for my crops to produce high yields. I was also planting many seeds in one hole thinking that I would be obtaining larger harvest. But to my disappointment, my harvests were ever very low. This project [GPSA] helped me because first of all I participate in decision making of which crops to grow in our area during a particular season, and we are trained on how to better grow them. My harvests have since increased and I am happy about this.” **(Farmer, Nyanza)**

In both districts, farmers also faced the problem of accessing farm inputs. This would adversely affect their ability to plant improved seeds and do their timely planting. But when the GPSA project came in, farmers voiced their concerns during the village, cell, and sector meetings and this issue was largely addressed, which the following quotes attest to.

“In many instances we used to get artificial fertilizers and seeds late. This affected the timing of our operations. The coming of this project helped in addressing this concern because as farmers, we now participate in the Imihigo process and point out such things as some of our priorities and they get addressed.” **(Farmer, Kayonza)**

“Our farmers were facing the challenge associated with delayed supply of improved seeds yet these are the ones they were supposed to be planting. This greatly affected their yields because of poor timing of the farming operations. However, through farmers’ participation in the Imihigo process, such issues have been addressed. **(Cooperative president in Nyanza)**

Some of us did not have a chance to access spraying machines, irrigation pumps, dam sheets, weeding machines and many others according to Nkunganire program as required by RAB because it is the one that prepares the harvest development **(Farmer, Nyanza)**

- **Project alignment with national agricultural policies and strategies**

Beside the project relevance for actual farmers' needs, the evaluation suggests that the project aim is in line with the National Decentralization Policy; the mission of which is "to build a highly effective and accountable Local Government driven by citizen centered governance for local social economic transformation" (Ministry of Local Government, 2021 [MINALOC], p. 16). The policy's overall objective is "to deepen and sustain grassroots-based democratic governance and promote equitable local development by enhancing citizen participation and strengthening local government systems (MINALOC, 2021, p. 16). To achieve this goal, the policy seeks to realize seven specific objectives, two of which include (1) to enhance and sustain inclusive citizens' participation in planning and budgeting processes and decision making; (2) to promote and entrench a culture of Integrity, precision, accountability and transparency in governance and service delivery" (MINALOC, 2021, p. 16).

In a similar vein, the project is in line with the National Strategy for Transformation (NST 1) whose economic transformation pillar objective is to "accelerate inclusive economic growth and development founded on the Private Sector, knowledge and Rwanda's natural resources" (Republic of Rwanda, 2017, p.2).

Moreover, the project reflects the aspirations of Rwanda's Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation (2018-24). This plan which is the core strategic document on agriculture sector commits to support farmer cooperatives and organizations. In this regard, it is stated that:

"support will focus on the establishment of effective, transparent, and accountable management systems, and building an entrepreneurship culture that encourages market-oriented production. Farmer organizations, including cooperatives, unions, and federations, will be strengthened and trained in management, organizational and business skills while support will be provided to increase member awareness and engagement. Farmer organizations' management capacities will be strengthened through training and the provision of temporary contractual management staff" (MINAGRI, p.42).

It is clear from the foregoing that the project – thanks to its goal and the various social accountability mechanisms that it established and facilitated to enhance farmers' participation in the district agriculture imihigo – fits well in the national policy framework and context.

### **3.2.2. Recruitment of project implementing partners and creating project multi-stakeholder compacts**

As earlier mentioned, the project was designed to contribute to addressing the problem of low citizen participation in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of district imihigo with a focus on agriculture imihigo. The first path to address this problem as per the project Theory of Action, consisted in identifying project implementing partners and setting up project multi-stakeholder compacts that use social accountability tools and processes that were agreed upon under the project design to address the felt needs and concerns of the citizens.

To that end, during the project design, TI-Rwanda as the lead project implementing agency identified and partnered with two project implementing partners. These are Imbaraga organisation (in Kayonza District) and Services au Développement des Associations – Iriba (SDA-Iriba). While the former was chosen as farmers' CSO, the latter was involved as a CSO whose interventions focus on citizen participation among other things. Additionally, the two organizations have been particularly working with farmers in their respective districts.

In the same context, TI-Rwanda engaged with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) and with Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) which appointed government champions for this project. TI-Rwanda and the two government institutions agreed that the latter institutions would cooperate with the former during the project implementation through information sharing, field visits and advocacy meetings. In a similar vein, they also agreed that on an annual basis, farmers' priority reports should be submitted to MINAGRI and RGB to inform their planning.

Additionally, TI-Rwanda engaged with both Nyanza and Kayonza district authorities to agree on cooperation terms for the project implementation. This engagement resulted into the signing of collaboration memoranda of understanding (MoUs). Another MoU was signed with Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB). As an implementing agency for MINAGRI, RAB agreed to collaborate with TI-Rwanda through districts and sector agronomists' participation in the project.

In the same framework, the project established other avenues for farmers and stakeholders' engagement in its activities to foster social accountability and farmers' participation in district imihigo. Such avenues include farmers' groups and meetings (at village, cell and sector levels), District Farmers' Network in Kayonza, Media Network for Social Accountability, District Agriculture Forum (Meetings with district stakeholders in the agriculture sector), media awareness campaigns, radio talk shows, agriculture imihigo week (Icyumweru cy'imihigo y'ubuhinzi) among others. These added on existing platforms such as village assemblies and cell assemblies (inteko z'abaturage) and Public Accountability Day.

### **3.2.3. Contribution to increasing farmers 'ownership' of agricultural projects**

As per the project Theory of Action it was expected that if the multi-stakeholder compacts use social accountability tools and processes that were agreed upon under the project design to address the felt needs and concerns of the citizens; then the capacity of the citizens to participate in policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation would be increased. This section assesses the extent to which through project social accountability tools, the project strengthened farmers' capacity to effectively influence the district imihigo planning and hence address their priority needs.

This section assesses the extent to which the project achieved its expected results and circumstances in which the change happened. It does so by looking at the following indicators:

- Building capacity for implementing CSOs
- Building capacity for local leaders, farmers' representatives and journalists
- Building farmers' capacity
- Influence of the social accountability mechanisms on farmers' ownership of the district agricultural imihigo process

#### **3.2.3.1. Building capacity for implementing CSOs**

At the beginning of the project, TI-Rwanda empowered the two CSOs both financially and technically. From a financial side, TI-Rwanda provided financial assistance to Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba to support project-related activities. As far as the technical empowerment is concerned, TI-Rwanda conducted training workshops with relevant staff of both CSOs to have them immersed with the theory and practice of citizen participation and social accountability tools.

For example, according to the TI-Rwanda's M&E coordinator, and project coordinators in Nyanza and Districts, in collaboration with the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC), Penplusbytes and the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), TI-Rwanda and GPSA project partners from SDI-IRIBA and Imbaraga, participated in the social accountability multi-stakeholder forum organized by SEND-Ghana held in Accra-Ghana from 27th to 28th February 2018. This forum brought together governments, civil society organizations, print and electronic media from Ghana and other African countries.

CSO officials who attended the forum advanced that the latter provided an opportunity to share experiences and best practices in social accountability practices, improve social accountability through new digital technologies, and influence policy to promote constructive engagement between citizens and government for better development

Lessons learnt from Ghana's experience in citizen engagement and social accountability mechanisms have been instrumental in innovatively creating social accountability mechanisms for GPSA project in Rwanda. Those mechanisms include media social accountability network, district farmers' network and district agriculture imihigo week and TI-Rwanda project farmers' groups.

### **3.2.3.2. Capacity building for local leaders, farmers' representatives and journalists**

Beside the capacity building for farmers and CSOs, after the project kick-off, the project has equally strengthened the capacity for local leaders, farmers' representatives and journalists from community media outlets. The latter include Salus Radio and HUGUKA Radio for Nyanza, and Izuba radio and Imvaho Nshya for Kayonza). In this regard, a one-day workshop on social accountability and citizen engagement was organized in each district. The training aimed to build their capacity on social accountability mechanisms and citizen engagement in local government development process with a particular focus on imihigo in agriculture sector.

In terms of the training outcome, the assessment found that this workshop raised participants' awareness of the relevance of a bottom-up planning of imihigo, the importance of providing feedback to farmers. In a similar vein, the training offered an opportunity to set up a framework for exchange and discussion between district staff and sector level farmers' representatives. More importantly, participants in the assessment claimed that through this framework, farmers were able to continuously monitor the implementation of priorities they submitted for inclusion in the district imihigo.

Moreover, the project fostered farmers' representatives' participation in dialogue and agriculture imihigo validation meetings at sector and district levels. For example, such validation and dialogue meetings were organized in different fiscal years (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). They brought together farmers' representatives and other project stakeholders including CSOs representatives, district authorities, and relevant national government officials (e.g. project government champions from MINAGRI, RGB). It emerged from this evaluation that farmers' participation in such meetings constitutes an important avenue for capacity building mainly in terms of voicing their priorities, conducting advocacy and holding local leaders accountable, thus enhancing social accountability.

### **3.2.3.3. Capacity building for farmers.**

Although the whole journey of farmers across the project activities contributed to shaping their attitudes and skills in participation in imihigo process, there are some specific

capacity building efforts that are particularly worth mentioning. These include farmers' awareness campaigns and workshops on social accountability mechanisms.

**Farmers' awareness campaigns:** According to interviewed farmers and TI-Rwanda project team, in the inception of the project, awareness campaigns were organized on 2nd-3rd and 4th-5th of October 2017 at sector level, in Nyanza and Kayonza respectively. Intended for farmers, the campaigns aimed to raise farmers' awareness on the project background, objectives, expected results, tools and approaches as well as the farmers' role in the project implementation.

In terms of the campaign outcomes, beneficiary farmers and the project team advanced that farmers clearly understood the project's relevance and their respective roles and responsibilities in its implementation. Farmers equally got aware of the relevance of their participation in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of imihigo and their right to demand accountability to their leaders. This was an important step to building a shared understanding among all stakeholders and to pave the way for further collaboration.

**Training of project direct beneficiaries (farmers):** After selecting project direct beneficiaries (farmers), the project team conducted farmers' training sessions intended for on project participatory approach in agriculture imihigo cycle, project social accountability mechanisms aimed to enhance inclusion of farmers' priorities in district imihigo and provision of feedback from local authorities. In this regard, the project team visited 9 sites in Kayonza and reached 880 farmers (572 females and 308 males). In Nyanza District, The team visited 8 sites and reached 800 farmers (520 females and 280 males) (TI-Rwanda, 2018; 2019).

Furthermore, through a participatory approach, these training sessions were used by farmers to identify problems which they were facing on a daily basis in their farming activities, identify their causes and propose solutions. It was also an opportunity for farmers to highlight existing opportunities in order to handle those problems and thereafter define strategies of interventions.

In addition, as part of these training sessions, beneficiary farmers were introduced to key government policies and programs on agriculture as well as district development strategies.

**Farmers' participation in district agricultural imihigo process:** The key problem that GPSA project came to address was low farmers' participation in imihigo planning and evaluation. The evaluation found that the project has to some extent contributed to shaping farmers' participation in the said imihigo process. Since the GPSA project inception, TI-Rwanda and its two implementation partners established several mechanisms (compacts) in Kayonza and Nyanza districts through which farmers identified, prioritized and communicated their agricultural priorities to district authorities for inclusion in district plans. The mechanisms in question include farmers' meetings at village and at cell levels to discuss their agricultural priorities for inclusion in district imihigo, workshops involving farmers' representatives, CSO representatives and sector/district



officials, radio talk shows, mobile awareness campaigns and “icyumweru cy'imihigo” (imihigo week).

Some of these mechanisms involved direct farmers' participation while others are indirect (e.g. workshops involving farmers' representatives, CSO representatives and sector/district officials). Furthermore, in order to enable farmers to get feedback from district authorities on farmers' priorities, the project also set up functional feedback mechanisms in addition to farmers' awareness campaigns and radio talk shows. They include 1) farmers needs tracking (from farmers' group level at the village/cell level to the district level), 2) validation meetings with district officials (at district level), and 3) feedback meetings. Table 5 outlines GPSA compacts in which respondents (farmers) participated.

**Table 5: Respondents' participation in project compacts**

	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Overall</b>
Farmers' meetings at village level	69.4%	79.7%	74.3%
Farmers' meetings at cell level	72.5%	72.5%	72.5%
Farmers' representatives' meetings with sector/district authorities	43.3%	57.0%	49.7%
Media-based activities (e.g. radio talk shows)	41.3%	48.1%	44.5%
Farmers' representatives' meetings with CSOs	35.1%	45.3%	39.9%
Meetings with members of district councils	32.6%	46.8%	39.3%
Accountability day	21.6%	18.7%	20.2%
Mobile awareness campaigns	21.1%	17.7%	19.5%
Icyumweru cy'Imihigo y'Ubuhinzi (Agriculture Imihigo Week)	5.3%	5.1%	5.2%

Physical and direct participation in social accountability mechanisms emerged as the most frequented by sampled farmers since the project inception. These include farmers meetings at village and cell levels (74.3% and 72.5% respectively). In other words, at least seven in 10 farmers participated in these two compacts. These are avenues that are geographically and socially closest to farmers.

Similarly, an important proportion of farmers participated in meetings bringing together farmers' representatives with local government officials at sector and district levels, with CSOs and with members of district councils. At least close to four in 10 respondents participated in these three mechanisms. These are mainly indirect participation activities whereby farmers are represented by selected fellow farmers.

Media-based social accountability mechanisms including radio talk shows and other broadcast programs (Isango Star, Izuba Radio and TV, Radio 10, KT-Radio and Huguka Radio) equally attracted the attention of over four in 10 farmer respondents to provide their agricultural priorities for consideration in district imihigo. These have an advantage of being not only instant but also not requiring farmers to move out of their households or

their farms. Furthermore, at least two in 10 farmers (respondents) participated in the accountability day and mobile awareness campaigns on participation in project activities, and on the COVID-19 pandemic (during the outbreak period). However, a very small number of farmers participated in Agriculture Imihigo week. According to the M&E officer at TI-Rwanda, the latter is a concept that started with the 2020/2021 fiscal year to enhance greater local leaders' ownership of the farmers' participation and social accountability in District agriculture imihigo process. The lower participation among farmers in this activity could therefore be explained by its newness.

From a gender perspective the survey shows that for most of social accountability mechanisms established by the project, the proportion of male farmers is higher than that of women. This challenges gender equality as far as citizen participation in governance and development processes is concerned. It calls for a thorough examination of factors that hamper women's participation in community and local government development structures.

- **Farmers' participation in imihigo process over the past three fiscal years**

**Table 6: Respondents' participation in imihigo process over the past three fiscal years (2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022) disaggregated by gender and by district**

	District			Gender		
	Nyanza	Kayonza	Overall	Male	Female	Overall
Being invited as a farmer to attend any meeting aimed at preparing agriculture district imihigo	34.2%	19.9%	27.2%	27.5%	26.9%	27.2%
Expressing an agriculture-related priority for inclusion in the district Imihigo	21.2%	23.2%	22.2%	23.0%	21.2%	22.2%
Implementing agriculture related imihigo planned at district/sector level	55.4%	32.4%	44.2%	46.1%	42.1%	44.2%
Participating in the evaluation of agriculture-related imihigo planned at district/sector level	9.3%	21.4%	15.2%	14.9%	15.5%	15.2%

In both districts, farmers' participation in the process of imihigo planning, implementation and evaluation for the last three fiscal years (2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022) has been low (below 40% for most of imihigo phases assessed). Participation was much lower in Kayonza district when it comes to being invited to attend meetings aimed to prepare agriculture district imihigo, and in implementing imihigo. However, when it comes to participating in the evaluation of agriculture-related imihigo, farmers in Nyanza District reported the lowest rate (9.3% versus 21.4% in Kayonza District). From a gender perspective, the evaluation survey does not suggest any gap as far as participation in imihigo process is concerned.

The observed low farmers' participation in agricultural imihigo process was largely blamed on the COVID-19 pandemic. As a matter of fact, following the COVID-19 outbreak in Rwanda in March 2020, the Government of Rwanda imposed lockdown and other confinement measures that restricted people's movement away from their households. Although agriculture-related activities carried on, most project activities, especially those involving physical meetings, came to a halt for a long time. This finding concurs with that from another recent study on farmers' satisfaction with their participation in imihigo in Nyanza and Kayonza Districts in the framework of the same project (TI-Rwanda, 2022). In fact, the study suggested that there has been a positive trend in farmers' participation in imihigo formulation between 2017/2018 and 2019/2020, which later declined between 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

Table 7 and 8 assess farmers' views on the extent to which the social accountability mechanisms created by the project induced farmers' ownership of the district agricultural imihigo process.

#### **3.2.3.4. Influence of the social accountability mechanisms on farmers' ownership of the district agricultural imihigo process**

Given that the project established social accountability mechanisms to enable farmers not only channel their priorities for inclusion in district imihigo but also get feedback from local leaders, the assessment examined farmers' perception on the extent to which using such mechanisms has shaped the way relevant issues were communicated, discussed and addressed. Table 7 presents respondents' views.

**Table 7: Perceived extent to which the project's social accountability mechanisms helped farmers discuss, express agriculture-related challenges and priorities, and find solutions through the Imihigo process**

Social accountability mechanism	Nyanza District			
	Large	Somewhat large	Small	D.K.
a) Farmers' meetings at village level	78.1	17.7	0.7	3.4
b) Farmers' meetings at cell level	74.4	20.1	1.0	4.5
c) Farmers' representatives' meetings with CSOs	73.2	19.6	1.8	5.4
d) Farmers' representatives with sector/ district authorities	72.8	19.5	2.1	5.7
e) Radio talk shows	72.2	16.8	3.9	7.1
f) Imihigo week	68.2	21.3	3.6	7.0
g) Mobile awareness campaigns	68.0	26.5	1.3	4.2

	Kayonza District			
	Large	Somewhat large	Small	D.K.
a) Farmers' meetings at village level	91.1	6.1	0.3	2.4
b) Farmers' representatives' meetings with CSOs	90.2	6.1	1.2	2.4
c) Farmers' representative meetings with sector/district authorities	89.0	6.4	1.8	2.8
d) Radio talk shows	87.5	7.3	2.4	2.8
e) Farmers' meetings at cell level	86.5	10.4	0.6	2.4
f) Imihigo week	82.6	12.2	2.8	2.4
g) Mobile awareness campaigns	79.8	15.6	1.2	3.4

The evaluation suggests high levels of perceived contribution of project's social accountability mechanisms to enhancing farmers' participation in and ownership of the agricultural imihigo process including planning, implementation and evaluation phases. For most of the mechanisms, the perceived contribution stands at least at 70% in both districts. However, farmers' in Kayonza districts reported higher levels of contribution (over 80%) than in Nyanza district. In a similar vein, farmers from both districts ranked Imihigo week and mobile awareness campaigns as contributing less to shaping farmers' participation and ownership than other mechanisms. One of the reasons could be associated with the fact that the two were introduced at later stages of the project compared to others.

Furthermore, in the two districts, physical meetings – both direct and indirect – scored slightly higher on perceived contribution than other mechanisms (i.e. radio talk shows, and mobile awareness campaigns).

Based on data from the project baseline survey, end-line survey and desk review, Table 8 depicts the project's effectiveness with regard to farmers' participation and ownership of imihigo process.

**Table 8: Summary of extent to which the project contributed to increasing farmers' ownership of agriculture imihigo projects (baseline vs endline)<sup>11</sup>**

PDO indicators						
Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline	Target	Actual/End line	Overall change	Difference from the target
PDO Indicator One: Farmers channel their priorities through Imihigo feedback mechanism using social accountability tools	1.1. Number of functional Imihigo feedback mechanisms in place	0	15	20	+20	+33.3%
	1.2. Number of farmers' priorities included in district imihigo planning (per district)	0	15	52	+52	+246.6%
<b>Intermediate Result (component one): Increasing Farmers' ownership of agricultural projects.</b> <i>The objective of this component is to increase farmers' participation in the planning (priorities-setting) phase of the district performance contracts "Imihigo" in Kayonza and Nyanza districts</i>						
Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline	Target	Actual	Overall change	Difference from the target
Intermediate Result indicator One: Increased quantity and quality of farmers priorities for the Imihigo planning process.	1.1. Number of priorities formulated by farmers & submitted to farmers' forum	0	40	141	141	+252.5%
Intermediate Result indicator Two: Improved satisfaction of farmers with the planning and monitoring of agricultural projects planned in Imihigo	2.1. Level of satisfaction of farmers with the planning of agricultural projects planned in Imihigo	73% in Nyanza and 38.6% in Kayonza (CRC 2015, RGB)	At least 80% in Nyanza and in Kayonza	36% in kayonza and 36% in Nyanza	-37% in kayonza and -2.6% in Nyanza	0.45% in kayonza and 0.45% in Nyanza

Table 8 is based on the project result framework with a focus on the increase of farmers' ownership of agriculture imihigo projects. Thanks to the social accountability mechanisms that the project created, the latter significantly increased the number of functional Imihigo feedback mechanisms in place and the number of farmers' priorities included in district imihigo planning. While the target number for functional imihigo feedback mechanisms was 15 by the end of the project, the evaluation observed that a total of 20

<sup>11</sup> Data are generated from the Project Baseline Survey, the endline evaluation and the Assessment of Farmers' Satisfaction with their Participation in Imihigo in Kayonza and Nyanza Districts.

mechanisms were established. This implies an increase of 33.3% beyond the target. As for the number of farmers' priorities included in district imihigo planning throughout the project life span, it emerged that 52 priorities were considered for the district imihigo while the target was 15 priorities (i.e. an increase of +246.6% from the project target).

As regard the number of priorities formulated by farmers and submitted to farmers' forum, while the target was 40 priorities, project beneficiary farmers in both districts were able to formulate and submit 141 priorities (i.e. an increase of 252.5% beyond the target). Concerning the level of farmers' satisfaction of farmers with the planning of agricultural projects planned in Imihigo, the assessment showed a significant decline of farmers' satisfaction at the endline stage. While the target was at least 80% in Nyanza and in Kayonza, satisfaction level stands at 36% in Kayonza and 36% in Nyanza, which implies a deficit of -37% in Kayonza District and -2.6% in Nyanza district from the expected change.

As earlier argued, since the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, especially in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 fiscal years there was a halt in citizen participation in public gatherings, which did not spare farmers' meetings for the purpose of imihigo planning. The same observation was equally made by the Assessment of Farmers' Satisfaction with their Participation in Imihigo Planning in Nyanza and Kayonza Districts (TI-Rwanda, 2022).

The inclusion of farmers' priority needs in the district Imihigo as a result of the project is equally illustrated by the following farmers' quotes:

In the framework of TI-Rwanda's project, we were able to formulate priority needs that we channeled to district authorities for inclusion in the district imihigo. One of them was about the need to have drying grounds for our crop. Out of the 31 drying grounds which we requested, a total of 15 were included in the district imihigo  
**(Farmers' cooperative leader, Nyanza District).**

Through trainings and facilitation of our meetings with local leaders, the project empowered us in identifying and communicating our priorities to leaders for inclusion in district imihigo. For instance, as farmers we discuss and identify our needs during the village meetings and we voice them out during cell meetings. Our cooperative leaders then forward our priorities to sector level where the sector officials compile the priorities from different cells and forward them to the district for consideration. From there we monitor the process by demanding feed-back on the fate of our priorities. I am happy that now district officials, through our representatives, CSOs and sector officials, have started providing feedbacks on which priorities were included in the district imihigo and which ones were not considered and why. The feedback eventually reaches us through our meetings at village and cell levels **(Farmer, Nyanza District).**

All in all, as earlier discussed and based on data from FGDs and KIs, the observed positive change in farmers' participation in the planning of district agriculture imihigo was mainly achieved due to the project interventions.

### 3.2.4. Deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials

One of the three project expected results was to deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials. The result is tied to a PDO indicator which reads as "Improved cooperation between CSOs and government authorities (national and district) in the Imihigo planning and monitoring processes". Other two related intermediate result indicators include 1) increased and meaningful cooperation between CSOs and district governments to engage citizens' participation in planning and monitoring process and 2) social accountability tools are scaled up to CSOs, local governments and line ministries. Table 9 outlines the extent to which the project contributed to achieving these two results.

**Table 9: Summary of extent to which the project contributed to deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials (baseline vs endline)<sup>12</sup>**

PDO indicators						
Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline	Target	Actual/End line	Overall change	Difference from the target
PDO Indicator Two: Improved cooperation between CSOs and government authorities (national and district) in the Imihigo planning and monitoring processes	2.1. Number and quality of constructive dialogue meetings between CSOs and government - national/local (per district)	1	15	26	+25	+60%
	2.2. Level of CSO inclusion and participation in the Imihigo planning and monitoring processes	30%	60%	69%	+39%	+15%
<b>Intermediate Result (component two): Deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials.</b> <i>The objective of this component is to strengthen the cooperation between CSOs and government officials for enhanced effectiveness of agricultural projects.</i>						
Indicators	Unit of Measurement	Baseline	Target	Actual	Overall change	Difference from the target

<sup>12</sup> Data are generated from the Project Baseline Survey, the endline evaluation and the Assessment of Farmers' Satisfaction with their Participation in Imihigo in Kayonza and Nyanza Districts.

<i>Intermediate Result indicator One: Increased and meaningful cooperation between CSOs and district governments to engage citizens' participation in planning and monitoring process.</i>	1.1 % of joint actions taken in the Imihigo planning and monitoring <sup>i</sup>	0	60%	88%	+88%	+28%
	1.2 Number of instances in which the project participatory activities are coordinated with the Imihigo process	1	4 (Village, Cell, Sector and District)	4	+3	0%
<i>Intermediate Result indicator Two: Social Accountability tools are scaled up to CSOs, local governments and line ministries.</i>	2.1 Number of public institutions that adapt the social accountability mechanisms to their context	1 RGB	2	3	+2	+50%

Table 9 shows that with respect to the PDO indicator compared to the targets, the number and quality of constructive dialogue meetings between CSOs and government - national/local increased by 60% beyond the project target, while the level of CSO inclusion and participation in the Imihigo planning and monitoring processes increased by 15% beyond the target.

As regards the intermediate result (component two) on deepening and scaling up of the cooperation between CSOs and government officials, the percent of joint actions taken in the Imihigo planning and monitoring increased by 28% compared to the target. Similarly, the number of instances in which the project participatory activities are coordinated with the commitments process, compared to the target has not changed, while compared to the baseline it has increased by three instances (i.e. from one instance to four instances which are the cell, sector and district levels).

Likewise, in relation to intermediate result indicator two (i.e. social accountability tools are scaled up to CSOs, local governments and line ministries), the evaluation showed that the number of public institutions that have adapted the social accountability mechanisms to their context has increased by 50% beyond the target (which was 2 institutions). At the baseline stage, there was only Rwanda Governance Board which used the Citizen Report Card as a social accountability tool. However, as a result of the project implementation, both Nyanza and Kayanza Districts are in the process of adopting the "Days of participation" social accountability tool. According to TI-Rwanda's M&E coordinator, in 2021, TI-Rwanda introduced this tool in both districts to



develop local leaders' and CSOs' capacity to enable them to promote citizen engagement at all levels through an interactive and creative approach.

It is worth highlighting that the project also enhanced CSOs' vibrancy with regard to citizen participation and advocacy for citizens' needs. Qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs also made this claim. First, the project activities involved CSO capacity building. Training workshops were organized in the beginning of the project, and along the implementation process to harmonize GPSA's approach/methodology of implementation. In this regard, Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba got empowered in terms of citizen participation, social accountability tools and how to elevate farmers' issues for advocacy.

Furthermore, through meetings with district officials, and those with farmer representatives, the project enhanced the vibrancy of CSOs in advocating for increased participation of farmers in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the Imihigo.

Similarly, CSOs were effectively engaged through the district agriculture forums and district farmers' priorities validation meetings in both Kayonza and Nyanza. Moreover, in partnership with Pax Press, a local NGO in the media sector, the project established a *Rwanda Media Network for Social Accountability* which helped in organizing community debates around agriculture issues, produce success stories and publish them in different media with an advocacy agenda. The following quotes from KIIs and FGDs substantiate project impact on CSOs' vibrancy and cooperation

Being a partner in the implementation of the GPSA project provided us an opportunity to involve farmers in advocacy process. We were able to raise farmers' awareness on the need for them to participate in the Imihigo process, and clearly sensitized them on their rights as citizens to be involved in all national development planning, implementation and evaluation processes (**Official, SDA Iriba**)

Through training sessions and active participation in project activities, our advocacy efforts on citizen participation in the country's development process at both local and national levels increased substantially. As a result, in our capacity as a project partner organization, we co-facilitated the process of bridging farmers and district leaders to channel farmers' priorities over the past 5 years. Today, farmers in our district have the capacity to participate not only in the district Imihigo process, but also in national development programs. I commend TI-Rwanda for prompting this partnership as it really facilitated our advocacy aspirations (**Official, Imbaraga Farmers' Organisation**)

- **Project contribution to strengthening cooperation between stakeholders**

The design of the project provided for participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of district Imihigo. This implied that for this approach to be effective, various stakeholders had to comprehensively cooperate, with each category of stakeholders undertaking specific roles. Participants' accounts below substantiate the project contribution in enhancing cooperation between project stakeholders.

We got our members to become involved in the project. The way farmers' needs and priorities were formulated and forwarded for consideration in the district Imihigo; the manner in which feedback was being done through the cooperation chain from district to Sector, then Cell and finally down to farmers was a well-coordinated linkage which strengthened our cooperation with other partners.”  
**(Cooperative leader, Kayonza)**

Through this project, we had a good partnership with Imbaraga organization, RAB and others. In their respective contributions, all project partners made a great effort in supporting farmers in different programs including advocacy, training programs, building infrastructures, etc. The partnership between farmers and the core project team has been effective in improving agricultural productivity. It has also served as a mechanism to build the capacity of farmers **(District official, Kayonza)**

We cannot hesitate to say how the project prompted cooperation among all project partners, this is to say cooperative leaders, CSOs, local leaders shaped the project results and impact whereby we benefited a lot from the project activities and resources. There is a lot we have learnt from our collaboration with key project partners, first of all, we learnt the importance of sharing ideas, economic growth, infrastructure development, self-awareness and supportive attitude towards those in need **(Farmer, Kayonza).**

Our collaboration and cooperation with local authorities has improved through imihigo planning, budgeting and implementation process. The good progress was made to reduce the gap between farmers and local authorities. We experienced a harmonious collaboration and cooperation with national policy-makers and this experience came as a result of the project activities particularly through imihigo planning, budgeting and implementation process.” **(President, Imbaraga Farmers' Organization)**

As a district authority, we have interacted with the project team, local authorities, CSOs, and cooperative leaders. There is an effective partnership between all

involved stakeholders and the project team from the start up to now. We look forward to a continued collaboration and support because more has to be achieved **(District official, Nyanza)**

To a large extent, farmers have improved collaboration and cooperation with national policy-makers such as RAB, MINAGRI, and RGB than before. For example, RAB provides advisory services and veterinary care when called to see farmers with sick animals and also helps to provide quality seeds. Moreover, it is now mandatory to have cooperative leaders confirm if you are eligible to access farming inputs and if they don't help, you can easily report them to the cooperative during the assembly of members or you go directly to the local leaders." **(Farmer, Nyanza)**

During this evaluation, the concept of cooperation was on the lips of almost everyone among the evaluation participants as in the preceding quotes. As argued above, cooperation and collaboration has been both a project strategy/approach and an outcome. As a project strategy, cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders, especially farmers' forums/cooperatives, CSOs, local and national public officials was integrated in the project as a way of bringing key partners on board to ensure that everyone plays his/her role towards achieving the project objectives. As a project outcome, the evaluation found that cooperation and collaboration between key project partners was strengthened and consolidated through the project implementation and is most likely to carry on after the project phase-out.

### **3.2.5. Sharing knowledge and lessons learnt**

The last but not least PDO indicator project expected result resided in sharing knowledge and lessons learnt. The PDO indicator was "lessons learnt (and shared) from project implementation on influence agricultural sector policy design and the Imihigo processes at the district and national levels". Three result indicators were tied to the intermediate result: 1) learning for improved results, 2) increased knowledge about politically informed social accountability strategies, and 3) the capacity and the ability of the three partners CSOs to work in coalition are strengthened. Table 10 presents the status of both the PDO indicator and the intermediate result.

**Table 10: Summary for the extent to which the project contributed to sharing knowledge and lessons learnt (baseline vs endline)<sup>13</sup>**

<b>PDO indicators</b>						
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Unit of Measurement</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual/ Endline</b>	<b>Overall change</b>	<b>Difference from the target</b>
PDO Indicator Three: Lessons learnt (and shared) from project implementation influence agricultural sector policy design and the Imihigo processes at the district and national levels	3.1. Number of open data mechanisms on imihigo process and contents that are in place	0	2	3	+3	50%
	3.2. Level of farmers' satisfaction with the implementation of planned projects in the district Imihigo	76.5 % in Nyanza and 59.6% in Kayonza (CRC 2015, RGB)	At least 80% in Nyanza and in Kayonza	28% in Kayonza and 28% in Nyanza	-48.5% in Kayonza and -31.6% in Nyanza	-52% in Kayonza and -52% in Nyanza
<b>Intermediate Result (Component Three): Sharing knowledge and lessons learnt</b>						
<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Unit of Measurement</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Overall change</b>	<b>Difference from the target</b>
<i>Intermediate Result indicator One: Learning for improved results.</i>	1.1. Number of examples where learning from monitoring and evaluation has contributed to improvements of the operational strategies of the project.	0	15	29	+29	+93.3%
<i>Intermediate Result indicator Two: Increased Knowledge about politically informed social accountability strategies.</i>	2.1. Number of knowledge products about political economy factors and dynamics that the project produces	0	2	16	+16	+700%
	2.2. Number of knowledge products about political economy factors and dynamics that the project partners and GPSA use to improve their strategies and operations	0	2	12	+12	+500%
<i>Intermediate Result indicator Three: The</i>	3.1. Number of joint meetings between the	0	20	23	+23	+15%

<sup>13</sup> Data are generated from the Project Baseline Survey, the endline evaluation and the Assessment of Farmers' Satisfaction with their Participation in Imihigo in Kayonza and Nyanza Districts.

capacity and the ability of the three partners CSOs to work in coalition are strengthened.	three partners CSOs, peer learning and extent of joint planning, monitoring, advocacy and fundraising					
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Table 10 suggests an increase in the number of open data mechanisms on imihigo process and contents that are in place by 50%. In fact, thanks to the project, three mechanisms were established while the target was to have two. Regarding the level of farmers' satisfaction with the implementation of planned projects in the Imihigo, the end-term evaluation shows that it stands at 28% in Kayonza and 28% in Nyanza, while the target level was at least 80%. It implies that the overall change in farmers' level of satisfaction is at -48.5% in Kayonza and -31.6% in Nyanza. Participants attributed the decline to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Concerning the intermediate result (Component Three) on sharing knowledge and lessons learnt, the assessment suggests that the number of examples where learning from monitoring and evaluation has contributed to improvements of the operational strategies of the project increased by 93.3%. According to the TI-Rwanda's project team, during the district agriculture dialogue in Kayonza, participants expressed the need to train cells' social and economic officers (SEDOs) on the new methodology of identifying agriculture priorities with the active engagement of farmers. Additionally, two recommendations were formulated and agreed upon during closing ceremony held on 24 March and 28 March 2022 in Kayonza and Nyanza respectively: 1) having district farmers' network as a district JADF member, 2) institutionalization of *Icyumweru cy' imihigo* (imihigo week) and District Agriculture forum (in Nyanza district).

It also emerged that the number of knowledge products about political economy factors and dynamics that the project produces increased by 500% beyond the project target. TI-Rwanda's project team informed that early 2022 the project used and disseminated the "Days of participation tool" as a social accountability tool designed to promote citizen participation, citizen centered governance. Similarly, the farmers' priorities report for the 2021/2022 fiscal year another knowledge product which the project produced and used to improve strategies and operations.

While the number of joint meetings between the three partners CSOs, peer learning and extent of joint planning, monitoring, advocacy and fundraising strictly increased by 15% when compared to the target.

All in all, both quantitative data and participants' narratives concur on the fact that the social accountability mechanisms established by the project contributed to increasing farmers' participation in district imihigo process.

### 3.3. Farmers' views on most significant changes induced by the project

As mentioned in the beginning of this report, the project objective is to contribute to improving the effectiveness of public agriculture projects at the decentralized level in Rwanda by using social accountability tools to strengthen citizen participation in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of district performance contracts.

This is in line with the final stage of the project Theory of Action which assumed that " [...], so that the capacity of the citizens to participate in policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is increased, then public service in the agriculture context would become more relevant, effective and efficient; citizens' priority needs would appropriately be addressed; farmers' satisfaction with public agriculture projects would increase and eventually the citizens would attain development through agricultural facilitated development processes".

Improving farmers' participation and ownership of district agricultural imihigo was not an end in itself. Although it is not clearly stated in the project results framework, long term results of the project would ideally consist, for instance, in better development outcomes at individual and household, community and national levels. They may also involve the government and stakeholders taking corrective measures informed by lessons learnt from the project, among many others. In this assessment, participants in both FGDs and KIs discussed what they deemed to be most significant changes that the project brought about. To some extent these changes relate to the spirit of the last pathway of the project Theory of Action.

Interviewed farmers indicated that project implementation resulted in several positive impacts including reduction of social distance between farmers and sector/district leaders; increase of farmers' awareness of their rights and confidence to participate in district and national planning; increased cooperation between farmers and local leaders; increased cooperation between farmers and CSOs as well as the increase of farmers' capacities to voice their priorities and demand accountability to leaders, among many others. Table 11 and 12 outline farmers' views on these changes.

**Table 11: Farmers' views on project most significant changes induced by the project**

Change	Frequency	Percent
Increase of farmers' awareness of their rights and confidence to participate in district and national planning	480	71.4
Reduction of social distance between farmers and sector/district leaders	400	59.5
Increased cooperation between farmers and local leaders	347	51.6
Increased cooperation between farmers and CSOs	308	45.8

Increased farmers' capacities to voice their priorities and demand accountability to leaders	279	41.5
Increased farmers' income	265	39.4
Increased quality of agricultural productivity	233	34.7
Improved household food security	227	33.8
Increased quantity of agricultural productivity	206	30.6
Improved community food security	185	27.5
Improved overall socioeconomic situation of farmers' households	83	12.3

According to farmers, the top five most significant changes that the project brought about include 1) increase of farmers' awareness of their rights and confidence to participate in district and national planning, 2) reduction of social distance between farmers and sector/district leaders, 3) increased cooperation between farmers and local leaders, 4) increased cooperation between farmers and CSOs, 5) increased farmers' capacities to voice their priorities and demand accountability to leaders. At least 40% of respondents (farmers) echoed the above 5 changes. Obviously, these are more tied to awareness, attitudes and behaviors than material outcomes (e.g., livelihoods). Changes in awareness, attitudes and behaviors are so important in mitigating the core problem that the project came to address: low farmers' participation in the planning and evaluation of district agriculture imihigo.

Other important changes include the increase of quantity and quality of agricultural productivity and hence that of farmers' income, the improvement of household and community food security and the socio-economic condition of farmers' households. These changes appear to be more tangible (observable, material) than the preceding top five ones which prove to be immaterial and probably harder to achieve. However, both categories of change are interlinked. For instance, the lack of positive change in awareness, attitudes and behaviors of farmers and stakeholders in the agriculture sector can impede the achievement of increased productivity, increased income, improved food security to name but a few. While Table 11 (above) looks at the project impact through an open-ended question, Table 12 (below) further explores other areas of the project impact through a close-ended question.

**Table 12: Project impacts (farmers' views)**

Question	Responses (%)			Perceived comparative project impact versus other factors (%)			
	Yes	No	DK	Superior	Equal	Inferior	DK
Did the project activities reduce the social distance between citizens (farmers) and members of sector and district councils?	92.7	3	4.3	83.3	9.2	0.1	7.3
Did the project activities improve local authorities' attitudes and behaviors towards citizen participation in the planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of district imihigo?	94.3	1.5	4.2	83.6	10.4	0.3	5.7
Did the project activities improve CSOs vibrancy with regard to advocating for inclusion of farmers' priorities in District imihigo and national plans?	91.5	3.7	4.8	83.2	11.9	0.4	4.5
Did the project activities increase the quality and quantity of your household agricultural productivity?	90.6	5.8	3.6	80.2	10.0	0.4	9.4

Overall, above 90% of respondents (farmers) approved the impact of GPSA project on selected aspects. The change of local authorities' attitudes and behaviors towards citizen participation in the planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of district imihigo emerged as the most highly rated impact of the project (94.3%). It is followed by the reduction of the social distance between citizens (farmers) and members of sector and district councils (92.7%). These two impacts are actually interrelated because the reduction of the social or vertical distance between farmers and local leaders may be a reflection of change in local leaders' attitudes and behaviors. Both changes are therefore so important not only as project impact but also as an indication of project sustainability.

To better comprehend the share of GPSA project contribution to claimed changes in comparison with other contributing factors, the evaluation sought farmers' views on this



particular aspect on four impact areas<sup>14</sup> as in Table 12. Although the evaluation is based on farmers' perception rather than on a regression analysis, it suggests that the vast majority of respondents (over 80%) ranked the contribution of the project interventions superior. This implies that farmers viewed this project as a major contributor to the changes they witnessed during the course of the project implementation.

Participants in FGDs and KIIs also highlighted the two aspects of project impact in the following words.

The social distance between citizens (farmers) and members of cell, sector and district executive committees was reduced due to the fact that every need and priority of the farmers were communicated first to the cell level and also to the sector, finally to the district level whereby the farmers were able to interact with their respective officials. The project also established mechanisms for local leaders to provide us with feedback on priorities we submitted to them. Now I can confidently assert that to a large extent, we [farmers] feel much closer to our leaders and so do they. **(Farmer, Kayonza).**

Through farmer's meetings at village and cell levels, workshops, the week of imihigo and radio talk shows, we have gained a similar understanding of what has to be done. This has brought harmony of work and approaching our leaders because everyone is now informed. Also, we are able to meet our leaders physically and this has reduced the previous communication challenges due to fear of leaders." **(Farmer, Nyanza).**

- **Increase of agricultural productivity and food security**

In Table 11, 90.6% of farmers (respondents) suggested that the project activities contributed to increasing the quality and quantity of farmers' agricultural productivity. Cumulatively, over 97% of respondents claimed that the project increased both the quality and quantity of agriculture productivity and improved food security (both at the households and community levels (see Table 11). The project therefore impacted the farmers as evidenced by the increase in farmers' capacity to have their needs or priorities integrated in the district agricultural imihigo and annual action plans.

It equally emerged from KIIs and FGDs that the project activities brought about some changes in farming practices that led to increase of agricultural productivity and eventually to improved livelihoods for many farmers' households. The said farming

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<sup>14</sup> 1) reduction of social distance between farmers and local leaders, 2) improvement of local authorities' attitudes and behaviours towards citizen participation in the planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of district imihigo, 3) improved vibrancy of CSOs in relation to advocating for inclusion of farmers' priorities in District imihigo and national plans, and 4) increase of the quantity and quality of your household agricultural productivity

practices occurred mainly through the consideration of farmers' priorities in district imihigo and through useful messages communicated to farmers via some of the social accountability mechanisms used in the project. The new farming practices that farmers embraced in the framework of the project include timely planting, utilization of improved seeds and fertilizers, irrigation, mechanization, terracing, harvesting and storing facilities, livestock insemination and vaccination among others. Stakeholders' narratives below substantiate this finding.

I really commend the project implementers because the integration of farmers' priorities in the district imihigo helped me turn to the use of improved seeds and fertilizers which in turn enabled me to increase my agricultural harvest. Today, I get more yield and the harvested produce is of better quality. I am happy about this. I am greatly benefitting from this project; my income level has doubled as a result of increased quantity and quality of productivity. This makes buyers pay my produces at better price **(Farmer, Kayonza)**

Productivity has increased in quality though in some areas farmers don't get desired produces due to less rain or flooding. Access to information through radio talk shows, meetings and workshops has helped to inform farmers about weather predictions and recommended timing of farm operations, better farming technologies and ways of identifying appropriate markets for their farm produces **(District Official, Nyanza)**

The project activities have enabled us to articulate our agricultural priorities and channel them to district authorities for inclusion in district imihigo and action plans. Similarly, thanks to this project interventions, farming practices have greatly changed. As a result, for instance, before joining the project, I used to get 4 tons per hectare, but now with the drying facility I can get 8T/ha. Likewise, our cooperative comprised of 365 members, we do farming on 138ha. We used to produce 40 tons /ha taken to the market, while the rest of production was wasteful due to lack of standard drying facilities. With the drying facilities acquired in the framework of this project, now we produce and take to the market up to 280 tons. Due to the drying facilities, our cooperative can secure contracts with maize factories. For instance, last year, we supplied 175 tons to EAX [East Africa Exchange] and our production was classified in the first grade **(Farmer, Kayonza District)**.

It is notable that farmers' households benefit from the project in terms of increase of quality and quantity of agriculture productivity and hence of income. The project taught us to do timely farming, to use improved seeds, to maintain good soil fertility, to irrigate farms during drought and to properly dry crops. I am now able to afford nutritious meals and afford my schooling needs for my children. I

also manage to pay “mutuelle” [community health insurance scheme] for my family **(Farmer, Nyanza)**

“Concerning the impact of this project and the ownership of the project to this people and lessons left by project, they are a lot of changes or impacts in a positive way where the project has changed the farming activities from local to improved seeds; from weather based to irrigation farming; local animal to improved breeds and so on. Therefore, all the support and training programs introduced show that there is a certain level of transformation which added value to their former way of practicing farming activities there is a high chance of sustainability of the farmers and hope for the future activities **(RGB, Head of Research Department)**

Farmers were previously practicing poor farming methods like planting poor seeds, not observing recommended spacing, and not instituting soil and water conservation structures in their gardens. However, they benefitted considerably from this project as it provided them with knowledge and skills about modern agronomic and animal rearing techniques. For example, timely planting of improved seeds, proper spacing plus timely weeding and integrated pest and disease management were key learned lessons in making rich harvest. Farmers were able to put into practice what they had learnt in addition to their implementation of their priorities that were integrated in district imihigo. This enabled them to realize increased productivity and eventually saw some changes in their livelihoods **(District Official, Kayonza)**

From the foregoing, it stems that the project activities through established social accountability mechanisms contributed to improve the quality and quantity of agriculture productivity. In turn, the latter induced multiple changes associated with improvement of socioeconomic conditions of farmers' households and their respective community.

### **3.4. Unintended results and effect on the Project Theory of Action**

One of the evaluation questions was to determine whether or not the results from the Project include any unintended results (positive and negative). While the assessment was not able to figure out negative unintended impact, it came up with two positive unintended one: 1) an increase of direct beneficiaries of the GPSA project and 2) the establishment of a media social accountability network.

#### **3.4.1. The increase of direct beneficiaries of the GPSA project**

At the project outset, project direct beneficiaries were 1,310 farmers (501 in Kayonza and 809 in Nyanza). However, by the end of the project, the number had raised to 7,476

farmers (i.e. 4,192 in Kayonza and 3,284 in Nyanza) whereby 51.1% were women. This increase came from the need expressed by district leaders who had picked much interest in the project. The reason behind was that it would be much productive to give as many farmers as possible the opportunity to share their priorities for inclusion in district Imihigo. This would increase and actually did, the representation of farmers in the project and better reflect their priorities in district imihigo. This significant increase of project direct beneficiaries was not planned at the project design phase. It is worth highlighting that the increase of project direct beneficiaries did not incur extra costs given that these beneficiaries mainly participated in non-costed activities such as farmers' meeting at village and cell levels for collection of priorities and related feedback.

### 3.4.2. Establishment of the media social accountability network

Since 2018, while the GPSA project was ongoing, TI-Rwanda partnered with the Social Accountability Media Initiative (SAMI), powered by Agha Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communication. The partnership involved a joint organization of a workshop with the purpose of enhancing advocacy communication skills with media in order to promote social accountability in Rwanda. In the course of the partnership, TI-Rwanda introduced GPSA project to SAMI and requested them to support the establishment of media social accountability network in the framework of the GPSA project. In turn, SAMI picked interest in the latter project and offered the requested funding.

As a result, the **media social accountability network** was set up by TI-Rwanda and Pax Press (a local media organization focusing on enhancing accountability and citizen participation). The network brought together 10 media outlets both public and private (broadcast, online and print)<sup>15</sup>. Thanks to this network, involved journalists were instrumental in advocating for farmers' complaints (mainly those associated with their participation in imihigo process) and collecting as well as disseminating project success stories in project-facilitated national stakeholders' advocacy meetings. It is worth noting that the network has remained active even after the project phase-out. It is currently involved in community debates organized with farmers in three districts (Kamonyi, Burera and Rubavu) under the project funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The latter project is a scale-up of the GPSA project.

To conclude, it stems from the evaluation that beside the results initially expected from the project, it also yielded at least two unintended positive effects. Nonetheless, to the

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<sup>15</sup> Broadcast: Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA), Radio & TVs , Flash Radio & TV , TV 10, Kigali Today (KT radio & KT Press) Izuba Radio & TV, Radio Huguka , Radio Ishingiro Radio Salus. As for newspapers they include, Igihe, The New Times, Imvaho Nshya, Umuseke, Nonaha.com, Bwiza.com, Umuringanews.com , Panorama and Intyoza

best of the evaluation team and based on the evaluation participants, the project did not bring about negative unintended outcomes.

### **3.5. Linking Project Assumptions with Achieved Outcomes**

The evaluation was also to assess the extent to which and how the process of implementing the Project and achieving or contributing to the identified results aligned with the hypothesized path. As a reminder, for the GPSA project to be able to lead to the desired results and based on the project theory of change, TI-Rwanda and partners had formulated six critical assumptions. These include 1) willingness by the different stakeholders to pursue the desired goals, 2) availability of funding required to finance the various implementation activities, 3) partnership and collaboration, 4) participatory approach in project implementation, 5) favorable political environment, and 6) fairness, transparency and accountability in the implementation process. This section assesses whether each of these assumptions justifies or not the observed project outcomes.

The evaluation found that many factors contributed to shaping the way the project achieved its results. Those factors are closely tied to the six project assumptions as discussed below.

- ***Willingness by the different stakeholders to pursue the desired goals***

TI-Rwanda and its implementing partners acknowledged the political willingness that both the central and local government stakeholders in the governance and agriculture sectors manifested from the beginning and throughout the project implementation. In the beginning, at the national level, TI-Rwanda was officially given high level focal persons (known as project champions) in Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) and in the Ministry of Agriculture and animal resources (MINAGRI). At the district level, TI-Rwanda and Nyanza district signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate the work on farmers' participation and social audit in the public procurement of agriculture infrastructure projects selected in Nyanza.

As far as Kayonza District is concerned, TI-Rwanda had already established partnership with district authorities in the implementation of other projects. This served as a strong foundation for collaboration and partnership in the framework of the project. The evaluation learned that the project offered an opportunity to strengthen the already existing ties between the two entities. Local government officials actively participated in the validation of farmers' priorities, district agriculture forums and committed to fully own the approach and actively animate the established platforms in the next years when the project is closed. Such a partnership and collaboration with national and local government officials has therefore been instrumental to the project implementation

especially the acceptability to engage farmers in the planning and evaluation of district imihigo.

Moreover, the partnership with the two implementing partner organizations played a role in making the project successful. In fact, the Imbaraga Farmers' Organization and SDA-Iriba had been operating in Kayonza and Nyanza districts respectively, and they were not novice in working with farmers.

- ***Availability of funding required to finance the various implementation activities***

TI-Rwanda acknowledged the availability of project funding and timely disbursement of the grant which contributed to the achievement of the project outcomes. It would not have been easy to engage with more than 7,000 farmers in both Kayonza and Nyanza districts, and a number of CSOs, media and district stakeholders, had the funding required not been available and timely.

In a similar line of thought, TI-Rwanda had conducted informative research on farmers' satisfaction with their participation in imihigo at the district level, the political economy analysis, a mid-term evaluation and the actual end-term evaluation. All these assessments could not have been possible without the availability of funds. Finally, it is thanks to the GPSA grant that the constructive advocacy dialogue meetings, coordination and planning meetings between the leading CSO and implementing partners were possible.

- ***Partnership and collaboration***

As highlighted above, the willingness from both the central and local government strengthened the partnership and collaboration with public institutions in the beginning to make farmers participation more functional and possible. Furthermore, through the created national and district agriculture forums, the project interventions enabled and strengthened partnership and collaboration between districts and other stakeholders in terms of addressing issues and obstacles for agriculture that were highlighted by farmers. For instance, some partners like the Rwanda Dairy Development Project (RDDP) committed to support the district to construct Milk Collection Points as one of the priorities identified by farmers in Kayonza district.

Evidence of partnership and collaboration was further discussed in the above point on the willingness by the different stakeholders to pursue the desired goals.

- ***Participatory approach in project implementation***

It was earlier highlighted that the project overall objective was to address low citizen participation in policy planning, monitoring and evaluation of local and national agricultural development plans in project targeted districts. The very nature of this project is therefore participative. To that end, the approach used was to design a farmers' priority

identification methodology which focused on ensuring farmers participation while, at the same time was easy to use and understand to ensure future use by both farmers and local government officials. The farmers' participatory approach was drafted, approved and tested with farmers themselves through workshops conducted to build their capacity on its use.

Furthermore, the social accountability mechanisms that the project established and facilitated were also in line with the project participatory approach. From farmers' meetings at village and cell levels (to identify and articulate farmers' priorities) to district validation forums and district officials' feedback forums; all this two-way chain of interactions between project stakeholders has been useful in leading the project to its achieved outcomes. The participatory approach has therefore eased the communication between partners and increased their ownership of both the process and the results.

- ***Favorable political environment***

The nature of the political environment in which any project operates is an important factor of the project success or failure. According to Irwin (2007, para 1), "projects typically do not fail due to technical reasons. Rather, they fail due to a project manager's inattention to the political environment". This evaluation revealed that the project was implemented in a largely conducive political environment. First and foremost, from a legal and policy perspective, the citizen participation in public affairs and development process is enshrined in the 2015 Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (art.48) and in key policy documents such as the National Decentralization Policy (MINALOC, 2021) and the National Strategy for Transformation (Republic of Rwanda, 2017). Several governance assessments conducted in Rwanda have revealed a low level of citizen participation in the planning and evaluation of district imihigo and in national plans at large (Never Again and Interpeace, 2016-2019). In 2018, following that research, the Ministry of local Government issued instructions calling upon all local government institutions/entities to fully engage citizens in the imihigo planning, implementation and evaluation process. This was in addition to the *Planning & Budget Call Circular* which is annually issued by the Ministry of Finance & Economic Planning, which also calls upon each institution to consult citizens in the process of identifying needs and priorities to inform the planning and budgeting. The project could take advantage of this high-level government instruction and the favorable political context it provided.

- ***Fairness, transparency and accountability in the implementation process***

The evaluation found that TI-Rwanda and the two project implementing partners demonstrated high level of professionalism in terms of effectively managing and efficiently using the resources allocated to the project. In the beginning of the project, TI-Rwanda conducted due diligence sessions to make sure that each implementing

partner had in place the required administrative, financial and governance systems to enable fair, transparent and accountable management of the GPSA grant.

Furthermore, as highlighted in the section on the project efficiency, on an annual basis, external audits have been conducted to ascertain the effective use of the funds. TI-Rwanda was allocating and disbursing funds as per the contract agreement established between the leading recipient (TI-Rwanda) and implementing partners (Imbaraga and SDA Iriba), but also subject to the provision of an annual action plan, budget and the submission of both the narrative and financial report by the implementing partners. This was also the case between TI-Rwanda and the World Bank. The practice of due diligence, periodic audits and regular submission of plans, budgets and activity reports have been strong mechanisms to ensure high level of fairness, transparency and accountability in the implementation process. These are core indicators of integrity and professionalism and hence a core factor of the project outcomes.

Moreover, it emerged from this assessment that another factor has equally contributed to the success of the project. This factor lies in the project implementing CSOs' familiarity with the project local context (agriculture sector and prior relationship with local leaders). In fact, both Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba have long experience in working with farmers and local leaders from Kayonza and Nyanza districts respectively. Their prior understanding of the agriculture sector and farmers' cooperatives as well as their established trust with those leaders have been vital to the success of the project. In this regard, at the project design phase, TI-Rwanda conducted a quick stakeholders' mapping in the two districts and eventually realized that both CSOs had a good reputation in the area and had established strong collaboration relationships with district authorities. In a similar line of thought, during the project kick-off events in both districts, local authorities were excited to continue partnering with these organizations, particularly of the GPSA project.

From the foregoing, it was observed that such strong pre-existing relationships conferred the two CSOs with legitimacy to bring about positive changes in these communities. The evaluation observed that this situation has partly enabled local leaders and farmers' participation in the project cycle, which thus constitutes a key project success factor. This may therefore be a learning point that the choice of credible partners in the project design stands a greater chance to ease the implementation phase and eventually contribute in leading to expected results.

To conclude this section, it emerged from this evaluation that all critical assumptions that the project implementers had anticipated at the design phase were realistic and helped shape the project outcomes. Nevertheless, the evaluation suggests that other factors such as the legitimacy and credibility of project partners was key to the project success. However, it was found out that an immense but unanticipated factor came to hamper the planned course of the project implementation and its outcomes. This is the COVID-



19 pandemic. This issue with some other challenges and gaps is later discussed in another section.

### **3.6. Likely Sustainability of Project Components**

Achieving sound outcomes is one thing, and sustaining those outcomes is quite another. Project results and impacts can make more sense when they are maintained after the project lifetime. However, it may not make sense for people to uphold any project legacy if they do not foresee how this will lead them to achieve their individual or institutional/organization aspirations and goals. The evaluation was also meant to examine ways in which the project or any of its components likely to be sustainable. Project sustainability was analyzed through partial uptake of lessons and project approaches by public sector institutions, World Bank Group operations and strategies, development partners, but also by farmers. Overall, the chance for the project sustainability is largely tied to motivation of stakeholders and beneficiaries in terms of actual and expected gains.

**At institutional and organizational level**, the assessment found that the project is likely to be sustainable given that some project and TI-Rwanda's stakeholders committed to uptake GPSA project lessons and approaches and integrate them in their interventions. In this regard, four examples are worth mentioning: 1) MINAGRI's commitment to advocate for replication of the GPSA approaches into other districts, 2) Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) commitment to integrate the project approach into their existing platforms, 3) World Bank's commitment to support TI-Rwanda in replicating its GPSA's social accountability Tools in World Bank's 'Commercialization and De-Risking for Agricultural Transformation' Project in Rwanda, and 4) FCDO's commitment to partner with TI-Rwanda in order to scale-up the project in three other districts of Rwanda.

#### **1) MINAGRI's commitment to advocate for replication of the GPSA approaches into other districts**

Dr Semwaga Octave, the Director General for Agriculture modernization in the MINAGRI, was the appointed government champion for GPSA project. During the project closure event on 28 July 2022, this official who attended it as the guest of honor, commended the project methodology and its achievements and hence committed to advocate for its replication in other districts countrywide.

#### **2) Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) commitment to integrate the project approach into their existing platforms**

Similarly, Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) has committed to integrate the project approach into their existing "irrigation and mechanization week" and "agriculture shop".

This commitment was made by Mr RUZIBIZA Emile, RAB's Head of Department of Land Husbandry and Irrigation Research and Technology Transfer during an interview for this assessment. In his words: "We have irrigation and mechanization week in which we explain to citizens more about irrigation and mechanization. We also have agriculture shop and make mobilization through direct meetings with farmers or through media. We have *Tera Intambwe Muhinzi* show and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Radio Huguka and Rwanda Broadcasting Agency (RBA). While engaging with farmers through different platforms, we really want to involve CSOs and use mechanisms established like those introduced by TI-Rwanda's GPSA project".

### **3) World Bank's interest in supporting TI-Rwanda in replicating its GPSA's social accountability Tools in World Bank's 'Commercialization and De-Risking for Agricultural Transformation' Project in Rwanda.**

Following the World Bank's experience with and lessons learnt from the GPSA project implemented by TI-Rwanda and given the opportunity for the World Bank to support the Government of Rwanda's Commercialization and De-Risking for Agricultural Transformation' Project, the World Bank's Regional Office expressed an interest in supporting TI-Rwanda and Rwanda's Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) to replicate GPSA social accountability tools into the project in question. For instance, one of the lessons that the World Bank learned from the project is that effective citizen participation in agriculture can be a real ingredient of transformation in agriculture<sup>16</sup>. As of the actual GPSA project evaluation, talks between the three partners (MINAGRI, World Bank, TI-Rwanda) towards the finalization of partnership arrangements were underway.

### **4) FCDO's commitment to partner with TI-Rwanda in order to scale-up the project in three other districts of Rwanda**

In October 2021, FCDO that was aware of TI-Rwanda's interventions in enhancing farmers' participation in agriculture imihigo at district level, paid a visit to TI-Rwanda and further discussed on its achievements. The discussions focused mainly on GPSA project for which FCDO picked interest particularly its integral approach of engaging relevant stakeholders. This conversation resulted in FCDO's commitment to support TI-Rwanda in replicating GPSA's project in three districts (Rubavu, Kamonyi and Burera). In addition to initial GPSA project design, the FCDO and TI-Rwanda partnership agreed to add a component of outcome-based approach to imihigo planning, implementation and evaluation. By the time of the actual GPSA project evaluation, the FCDO- TI-Rwanda's project had already kicked off.

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<sup>16</sup> Power Point Presentation on "Replicating its GPSA's social accountability Tools in World Bank's 'Commercialization and De-Risking for Agricultural Transformation' Project in Rwanda.

Furthermore, at local government level, the assessment found that the project social accountability tools are increasingly owned by local leaders and carry on using them after the project phase-out.

For instance, during this evaluation, public local leaders expressed their commitment to consolidate project approaches and impacts. For instance, ***Nyanza District authorities' commitment to integrate social accountability tool into social protection programs to enhance beneficiaries' graduation from poverty.***

In fact, in January 2022, an expanded district Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) in Nyanza District convened a meeting under the chairpersonship of the District Mayor, Erasme Ntazinda. It aimed to discuss the district development strategy (DDS). During the meeting, the GPSA project coordinator in Nyanza District was given the floor to share the project outcomes and phase-out strategy. Following the discussions on these aspects, participants commended the project achievements. For example, they appreciated the project approach to enhance farmers' participation in voicing their priorities for inclusion in district imihigo. Similarly, they expressed satisfaction on the role farmers played in the implementation agriculture imihigo related projects. As a result, both the District Council chairperson and the Mayor committed to replicate the project in social project programs to take up the challenge associated with low participation of social protection beneficiaries in the services they are entitled to.

In a similar vein, the evaluation team noted that local leaders were proud of what farmers and cooperatives achieved from their participation in the project especially through their active involvement in the planning and implementation of district agricultural imihigo. In fact, enhancing socioeconomic transformation of citizens is a core mission of local authorities especially in the context of political and administrative decentralization. Local government officials who were interviewed in this assessment therefore offered to carry on the project approaches as in the quotes below.

Contrary to the period before the project, local authorities are very willing to continue consulting farmers upon their priorities or needs during planning and budgeting. Should they fail to do so, the project has left us with enough capacity to engage them regarding our concerns (Cooperative leader, Kayonza).

Through GPSA project, farmers' representatives have manifested the ability to advocate for their concerns and they are role models in our community. Working with this committee is one of the strategies that will help us cope with drought that causes hunger in our area. They have demonstrated their ability in the preparation and implementation of agricultural Imihigo to resolve their pressing issues. We will continue to engage them more in agriculture planning, implementation and evaluation processes (Murama sector agronomist, Kayonza)

As far as implementing CSOs are concerned, they also expressed their commitment to carry on the advocacy for farmers' issues among others, using the avenues established by the project.

Yes, feedback meetings with farmers on expressed priorities for inclusion in district imihigo will carry on after the project phase-out. This will help in evaluation of the imihigo and setting imihigo priorities for the agriculture sector. We will be able to continue engaging local authorities, cooperatives and civil society organizations to voice their needs, priorities and concerns on agriculture issues for inclusion in district imihigo and in national plans after the project phase-out because they need each other's support, and they need advocacy to leaders (Chairperson, SDA-Iriba).

All in all, the evaluation results provide some indications of GPSA project sustainability. They suggest that the project can remain sustainable and continue to positively impact not only the farmers but also even other people in the country, by undertaking a number of strategies as revealed in the responses from FGD participants and KIs.

Local government officials actively participated in the validation of farmers' priorities, district agriculture forums and committed to fully own the approach and actively animate the established platforms in the next years when the project is closed.

**At farmers' level**, thanks to the GPSA project interventions, participating farmers, as individuals, acquired knowledge and skills not only about the relevance of their participation in all phases of district imihigo and in national plans. Interviewed farmers were quasi unanimous on their readiness and confidence to carry on the identification and articulation of their priorities for the purpose of influencing district imihigo and plans even beyond the project phase-out.

Furthermore, farmers indicated their commitment to sustain the new farming techniques and practices they acquired from the project, such as modern farming practices and influencing local government plans and imihigo. The following quote illustrate farmers' commitment in this respect.

As farmers, we are committed to keep convening meetings at village and cell levels to discuss our priorities for inclusion in the district imihigo, after the project phase-out. It should be noted though that a strong leadership team to steer this and keep the spirit high is needed. Local leaders and our cooperative leaders have to be tasked to convene these consultative sessions **(Farmer, Nyanza)**.

We [farmers] have fully participated in discussion on the project phase-out and we are ready to carry on our efforts to voice our priorities for the purpose of integration in district imihigo. I personally consider that the idea of arranging meetings at village and cell levels to discuss our priorities for inclusion in the district

imihigo will prevail because it has become a practice induced by the project **(Farmer, Kayonza)**.

From the foregoing, the evaluation comes up with compelling evidence that project participants and stakeholders, to some extent, have ownership of the project approaches and outcomes. Such ownership is therefore an indication of the likely sustainability of the project. However, in order to ensure that the commitments made by stakeholders are effectively translated into actions, there is a pressing need for TI-Rwanda to follow up and make further engagement in this matter.

### 3.7. Challenges and Gaps

While the project has been highly effective in achieving its objectives and inducing substantive changes among beneficiary communities, it faced several challenges and gaps which hampered the project delivery. The identified challenges concerning social accountability practices are noted below while challenges more specific to agricultural practices are stated in the annex at the end of the report.

1. **COVID-19 outbreak:** Following the reports of first cases of COVID-19 pandemic in Rwanda in March 2020, the Government imposed a total lockdown for some months and related confinement measures across fiscal years 2019/2020, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, thus hampering some project activities. They include field visits and monitoring activities, farmers' meetings at village and cell levels, feedback meetings with farmers, timely organization of district agriculture dialogue, conducting social audit to monitor public procurement process of agriculture projects, and conducting timely research/surveys, to mention but a few.

For instance, in the last fiscal year 2021/2022, the number of joint meetings reduced due to COVID-19 and its related instructions in terms of gatherings/meetings. From January 2022-March 2022 there was one physical project coordination meeting. In terms of mitigation measures, TI-Rwanda together with Nyanza and Kayonza district authorities organized a joint community awareness campaign aiming to raise awareness among farmers about COVID-19 and its prevention measures. The campaign also focused on increasing productivity in agriculture while fighting against COVID-19. The joint community awareness campaign brought together GPSA project staff, the department of health at the district level, the district agriculture unit and the media to produce a message that was disseminated through loudspeakers that circulated in all in 10 and 12 sectors of Nyanza and Kayonza respectively.

2. **“Hard versus soft projects” perception among some local government leaders:**

The GPSA Team encountered a challenge related to the wrong perception of soft project by some local government officials. When you bring in a project which is not going to produce or provide a concrete product or provide financial support in the district, it would take some time to explain the importance and contribution of the project to the socio-economic development of the district of intervention. Governance project are not always well perceived by some local leaders as they often consist in immaterial things such as attitudes and behavior change, citizen participation, social accountability among others. It thus takes time and energy on the part of the implementers to ensure that local leaders understand the project's added value from a socioeconomic perspective which appears to matter most for them. Different workshops were organized for local leader on the subject of accountable leadership and citizen participation, social accountability mechanisms and its importance in promoting good governance and promoting plans and policies that respond to citizens' needs. These have significantly helped the project address the challenge related to such a perception.

3. **Overwhelming number of farmers' priorities:** The farmers would formulate a number of priorities and for them they expected all to be included in the district imihigo. However, due to resource limitations at the district level it was not possible to include all the priorities. This would leave an implementation gap in the imihigo process as some of the prioritized needs would not be addressed and therefore leaving the farmers with unaddressed needs. This requires that farmers be empowered in prioritization exercise to enable them to choose the most pressing priorities. Nonetheless, given that the project enhanced feedback mechanisms on farmers' priorities submitted for inclusion in district imihigo, this increasingly helped mitigate farmers' frustration. On the other hand, advocacy efforts should be conducted to both local and national authorities to increase the budget allocated to agriculture sector in order to include more priorities from farmers.

4. **Farmer demographic diversity effect:** The selection of beneficiaries considered criteria such as being a farmer, belonging to a particular cooperative/farmer group and being a resident of that participating area (district/sector/cell/village). However, some farmers had physical disabilities, and this would affect their ability to carry out some of the recommended farming practices taught to them during the trainings. It is therefore recommended that this concern be taken into account in order for the project to be appropriately inclusive.

*“Some of the members of the farming fraternity in our district and indeed in our entire country are people with disabilities. They are faced with a*

*challenge of failure to adopt or apply a particular technology or technique because of the disability status. I think in recommending technological adoptions the project should consider the issue of persons with disabilities and devise tailored ways of enabling them to also adopt appropriately".*  
**(Farmer, Nyanza)**

### **3.8. Lessons Learnt**

Throughout the project implementation, stakeholders garnered lessons that informed course correction over the course of the project. They include the following:

- Farmers or citizens are willing to effectively participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation when they are well informed and empowered to get relevant knowledge and skills and given appropriate avenues to do so. This requires an effective use of the existing feedback and communication mechanisms including those established by the project, such as the agriculture imihigo week, the district agriculture forums with the involvement of farmers, to mention but a few.
- Project beneficiaries have an important role to play. Throughout the implementation of the project, the project team realized that it is very important that the district farmers network (DFN) should be represented in the Joint Action Development forum (JADF). It was observed that farmers' issues are well identified and explained by farmers themselves. Their participation in different platform with district leaders and other stakeholders contributed significantly to supporting and validating identified priorities and issues.
- The gathering of both farmers and local government officials strengthened their relationship and trust and facilitated the planning and formulation of policies and plans that systematically address farmers real needs.
- Engaging and collaborating with media is key to promoting farmers/citizens participation and the use of social accountability tools in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process. TI-Rwanda and its implementing partners realized that the media can play a significant role in elevating the voice of farmers. In this context and in partnership with SAMI (Social Accountability Media Initiatives), capacity building workshops were organized on citizen participation, social accountability and advocacy. A group of journalists was trained and organized in a Rwanda social accountability media network which later on played a significant role in documenting and elevating farmers' issues for redress as well as for policy and systemic change.
- Being farmer-centered is key to effectively address farmers' needs – implying that all strategies, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities

should be done in a manner that provide farmers with the opportunity to contribute their ideas, and to physically participate in planning meetings and feedback mechanisms. This ensures that every step in the project process is kept on the right track as there are always checks and balances in place.

- To effectively address farmers' needs, the approaches to be adopted ought to be inclusive in that the needs of vulnerable and/or marginalized categories of farmers are also considered. In other words, the strategies and approaches should consider the needs of special interest groups like women, youths, girls, disabled and other marginalized categories of farmers.
- The choice of credible partners for the project implementation and partners who are familiar with the local context of the project is of a paramount importance for the project success. The evaluation found that both Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba not only have long experience working in Kayonza and Nyanza districts respectively but also have built strong working ties with local leaders and communities. This has thus contributed to shape the receptiveness and participation of local stakeholders in the project activities.



#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall goal of GPSA project was to contribute to improving the effectiveness of public agriculture projects at the decentralized level in Rwanda by using social accountability tools to strengthen citizen participation in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of district performance contracts.

The actual end-term evaluation of this project aimed to 1) document key lessons that encourage learning, scalability and sustainability of achieved outcomes and how they can inform the government of Rwanda in agriculture related policy reforms, and 2) contribute to learning and accountability by explaining how, if at all, the project contributed to results brought about by collaborative social accountability processes, and what the conditions were for this contribution to take place.

Overall, the evaluation revealed significant increase of farmers' participation in the formulation of agricultural priorities for inclusion in the district imihigo. Thanks to the World Bank financial support, TI-Rwanda and its two implementing partner CSOs (Imbaraga and SDA-Iriba) established compacts through which farmers and their cooperative leaders, local leaders, relevant national public officials (MINAGRI, RAB, RGB) engaged in regular dialogue. Such dialogue platforms and social accountability tools were complemented by capacity building trainings that the project provided to farmers and local leaders on participatory approaches among other things. The project also enhanced collaboration not only between CSOs, but also between CSOs and public institutions and between local leaders and farmers.

The evaluation observed that through social accountability tools, farmers were able to identify and communicate their priorities to local leaders and the latter included the majority of those priorities in the district imihigo. More interestingly, those leaders provided feedback on the status of received priorities.

Moreover, the implementation of a more farmers-centered district imihigo has yielded benefits for farmers in terms of productivity and the resolution of various agriculture-related challenges.

From the foregoing, the evaluation therefore suggests that, to a large extent, GPSA project achieved its specific objectives. The latter consisted of 1) enhancing the feedback and accountability mechanisms for gathering farmers' priorities and ensuring their integration in Imihigo; 2) strengthening cooperation between CSOs and government officials at the district level; and 3) sharing and integrating the lessons learned from pilot districts (Nyanza and Kayonza) into the agricultural sector policy design at the district and national levels. Nonetheless, regarding the latter objective, it is important to note that the integration of lessons learnt remains at the commitment stage

(particularly from the side of government officials) and hence requires a further step to translate commitments into tangible actions.

Furthermore, the evaluation found that all the project assumptions have actually been instrumental in leading to the results that the project achieved. It showed that the success of the project would not have been possible without 1) the willingness by the different stakeholders to pursue the desired goals; 2) availability of funding required to finance the various implementation activities; 3) the partnership and collaboration with involved stakeholders, 4) the use of participatory approach in project implementation; 5) a favorable political environment; and 6) fairness, transparency and accountability in the implementation process. In addition to these enabling factors, the assessment revealed that the choice of credible project implementing partners- who are familiar with the local context and have strong working ties with local authorities- has equally been vital for the project success.

It is important to note that despite the project success, the evaluation came up with a series of challenges that faced the project implementation including COVID-19 outbreak. This pandemic impacted adversely farmers' participation in the planning of district agricultural imihigo. It also highlights major lessons learnt from the project design and implementation. Both challenges and lessons are therefore vital in informing the design of future similar and related projects.

Furthermore, the findings of the evaluation are to a large extent backed by those of previous project assessments namely the mid-term evaluation (TI-Rwanda, 2019), the political economy analysis (TI-Rwanda, 2020) and Assessment of Farmers' Satisfaction with their Participation in Imihigo. Case Study of Kayonza and Nyanza Districts (TI-Rwanda, 2022). Like for the end-term evaluation, these assessments revealed a progressive increase of farmers' participation in the planning of district agriculture-related imihigo, but the latest one highlighted how COVID-19 pandemic jeopardized this progression.

Although involved government institutions (MINAGRI, RAB, Districts) committed to uptake some of the project lessons, by the time of data collection for this evaluation those commitments were not materialized yet. Consequently, the main recommendation for TI-Rwanda is to follow up with those institutions to ensure that commitments are translated into tangible actions.

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## Annex: Identified challenges and recommendations for improving support to farmers

The discussions held with project beneficiaries in the farming communities in relation to this evaluation unearthed several challenges farmers face in their work. While beyond the Project to address, these challenges should nevertheless come to the attention of relevant authorities. This annex provides a summary of these challenges and proposes recommendations aimed at the relevant authorities.

**Limited agronomic skills among farmers:** The project identified a gap related to farming knowledge and skills dissemination up to individual farmers. Farmers are given various farming inputs as per their priorities, but they lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively and efficiently use them in order to realize their desired production results. It is one thing to get the right inputs but it is another thing to appropriately utilize them. In this regard, in terms of mitigation, the project advocated for farmers to get the required skills and knowledge which enable the modernization of their agriculture. In this context, districts in partnership with stakeholders organized trainings to empower farmers. For instance, farmers in Kayonza were trained on post-harvest processing, irrigation and cow vaccination. This was organized by Kayonza District as a response to farmers' priorities, whereby farmers had requested the district to increase their knowledge about use of medication for livestock.

⇒ **Recommendation:** RAB, MINAGRI, Districts should ensure farmers are equipped with basic knowledge of modern farming techniques

**Delays in accessing farm inputs:** At times, farmers experienced delays in getting farming inputs such as seeds and fertilizers affected the farming process and eventually the productivity. Such delays put the farmers at poor timing of their respective farming operations and consequently affected the yields. In terms of mitigation, as this issue has been raised by farmers in both Kayonza and Nyanza districts, the GPSA project team consistently brought the issue to the table for discussions with agriculture stakeholders during the district agriculture dialogue meeting, and the issue was progressively addressed with the implication of different stakeholders.

⇒ **Recommendation:** RAB and MINAGRI should strengthen the supply chain used to distribute seeds and fertilizers in order to solve issues of delays and improve the accessibility of irrigation equipment to farmers by advocating to more consolidation of land to leverage resources where it is possible, encourage more development partners to consider subsidizing irrigation infrastructure as well as government to increase the subsidies for irrigation infrastructure whenever it is possible as still farmers they are not able to pay their share.

**Limited access to finance services for agriculture:** Much as the project trained farmers in modern farming/agronomic skills/techniques, some farmers would fail to put into practice what they learned because they lacked the necessary finance to do so. In most

cases, the conventional financing institutions are not willing to provide financial credit to farmers due to the nature of cash-flows and risks involved in farming business/enterprises. This leaves the farmers without capacity to finance their farming operations and investments.

*"I wish I could be able to write a proposal! Those loan providers want a proposal but I don't know how to develop it. We farmers need to be assisted in accessing financial services to enable us to be able to pay for our agricultural expenditures."* **(Farmer, Kayonza)**

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** One mitigation measure for this concern is to build farmers' capacity in proposal writing and small-scale business management. In addition, MINAGRI, NBR, BRD, BDF and development and commercial banks must work together to see how agriculture loans become accessible and affordable. Considering the impact of the agriculture production to the national economy it will be helpful if NBR can provide some incentives to financial institutions that will finance at cheaper cost the farming projects. Other financial institutions can provide special consideration to this sector.

**Market access:** Farmers are concerned about losses due to the limited market and unfair selling price.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** All stakeholders (MINAGRI, RAB, MINICOM, RCA, Districts, Farmers cooperatives) must work together in order to link farmers to the markets and help them to negotiate a fair price where it is applicable.

**Ensuring continued farmers' participation:** The low rate of participation by farmers in Imihigo planning process related to agriculture and livestock at district level due to COVID-19 outbreak and related-contingency measures should be mitigated.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** All stakeholders operating in agriculture sector across the entire value chain (MINAGRI, RAB, MINICOM, RCA, Districts, Farmers cooperatives, CSOs) should develop more channels that can facilitate farmers' participation even in case physical meetings are restricted. It would be better to create active forums that can adequately represent farmers to ensure that their needs are well considered, or use of community radio and loudspeakers in case physical meetings are restricted.



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