

Variables Influencing the Re-election of District Councilors in Rwanda

Winifrida MPEMBYEMUNGU

Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA), Kigali, Rwanda.

Author E-mail: winimpembyemungu@gmail.com

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This paper is a result of a study which aimed to examine the variables influencing the re-election of local leaders in Rwanda. It specifically sought to ascertain the extent to which voters hold local elected leaders accountable for their performances while in office. The purpose of this paper was also to deepen and explore major challenges hindering the level of responsiveness of local elected councilors to the rights and needs of voters in the process to their re-elections. The study on which the current paper is based was conducted in the Musanze District, in Northern Province of Rwanda and the data for the investigation were collected using document analysis, interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The study found out that generally, when the incumbent is running, evaluations provide more useful information to voters and guide them deciding how they will vote and that retrospective evaluations provide insights into the job done by elected District councilors in order for voters to return the incumbents to office or not. As it could be difficult to explore all areas that shape local leaders performance, enabling a better assessment of incumbent competence in a single study, this paper focused on variables that matter for the wellbeing of citizens.

These variables include among others the economy, governance, living environment housing, education, social welfare, health and sanitation. The findings suggested that in Rwanda in general and in the Musanze District in particular, elections were the main instrument through which voters could hold District Councilors accountable and make sense of outcomes they observe when deciding whether or not to re-elect the incumbent. The results suggest that voters are using information about services rendered to finally re-elect good incumbents and punish those who were believed to be incompetent or ineffective. The paper argued that if an incumbent performed well voters became more likely to vote for them and less likely to do so if the incumbent performed poorly. The paper concluded that voters base their votes on their perceptions of the past performance of elected District Councilors while they were in the race.

Keywords: Local leaders, accountability, election, re-election, performance

INTRODUCTION

Following independence in 1962, Rwanda was structured and practiced in a highly centralized manner (Arthur, 2015). The country was ruled under two differing regimes and republics (first and second republic) both were unable to meet almost all the indicators/principles of good governance such as rule of law, participation, inclusiveness and accountability due to the dominance of ethnic and regional discrimination that characterized them (Obura, 2003). Rwandans have experienced throughout the two regimes a high level of political centralism, irrational obedience and the political culture of submission (MINALOC, 2012a). Until 1994, it looks like Rwandans were raised in situations where their leaders always knew what was good for them instead of asking

them to voice their needs. They were passive by standers, incapable of positively shaping their destiny.

In the aftermath of its violent history, Rwanda demonstrated political will to reverse that previous practice and ensure that there is meaningful citizen participation in public affairs (Colomba, 2013). Rwanda has taken various measures to promote good governance and, especially enhance citizen participation and the post-conflict policy was aimed at promoting national unity and reconciliation, prioritizing a culture of inclusion and mutual respect (Bangwanubusa, 2017).

After the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda was committed to progressively get the power closer to the citizens by involving them in decision-making and in

this regard it took decentralization as part of peace building transferring powers, functions, responsibilities and resources from the central government to local authorities or other sub national entities. Rwanda felt a need to encourage her citizens to be ready to work together, in order to put in place political system where the people's voice is heard and considered and where leaders are really accountable to the public (MINALOC, 2012b). In light of the global phenomenon of decentralization, Rwanda considers local government as vehicle of service delivery. The country conceives communities development as a dynamic process in which members of a given community analyze their environment, define their needs and problems, elaborate collective and individual plans to address them, and implement the plans using community resources complemented, where necessary, by resources provided by the central government (Kauzya, 2007). Apart from good service delivery, elections make a fundamental contribution to democratic governance and the right to vote and to hold those in office accountable at the ballot box is a necessary element of democracy (Disk, 2001). Decentralization critically alters the power structures by transferring political authority to the local government through the establishment of elected local leaders. In this regards, Rwanda considers elections as one of the indicators of accountability. At the district level, the focus of the study from which the current paper is drawn, citizens can personally know the candidates for local elections, can offer direct knowledge and information on the issues, and can communicate with elected leaders on a more frequent basis. In a bid to implement her vision and programme of decentralization, Rwanda organized elections at local levels for cell and sector councils in 1999. District level elections followed in 2000 and 2001 with new District level structures. Elections in Rwanda serve many functions, such as clarifying issues and policies, holding candidates to account, communicating information among candidates and voters, and offering choices about solutions to community problems to the general public (MINALOC, 2014). Even though a lot of studies have made significant headway in exploring various aspects of decentralization and accountability (Awortwi, 2011; Conyers, 2007; Robinson, 2007; Lok and Crawford, 2004; Crook and Manor, 1998), very few have examined the implementation of performance evaluation as promoting democratic accountability by sanctioning failure and promoting the selection of more competent local leaders. It is then against this background that the study was meant to answer the following questions:

To what extent do voters hold elected District Councilors accountable for their performances in office?
 What are the reasons why voters decide to extend elected District Councilors' tenure by voting for them?
 What are the challenges hindering the level of responsiveness of local elected councilors to the rights

and needs of voters in the process to their re-elections?

METHODOLOGY

The study from which the current paper is emanated used qualitative approach which involved in-depth probe and application of subjectively interpreted data (Russell, 2011). This approach was used in this study because qualitative methodology was a way to explore and understand social interaction and to find an in-depth explanation of what the respondents experienced. The study employed archival and library studies, in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (Denscombe, 2010). In utilizing data from research that was previously conducted, the researcher relied on MINALOC documentation and any book that would be helpful to better understand the impact of elections on accountability of local District Councilors. The target population in this study constituted of all newly elected councilors (25), all re-elected councilors (5), all outgoing councilors (3) at District level and ordinary citizens randomly chosen in Musanze District, Northern Province of Rwanda. The participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. The interviews were mainly focused on the performance of elected District Councilors with regards to basic services (Economy, Governance, living environment housing, education, social welfare, health and sanitation) and the influence of citizen in holding elected local leaders accountable for their likelihood to get re-elected. Questions during interviews revolved primarily around the objectives and hence the themes that emerged coalesced around the extent to which voters hold local elected leaders accountable for their performances in office, reasons why voters decide to extend elected local leaders' tenure by voting for them in an election as well as around the challenges hindering the level of responsiveness of local elected leaders to the rights and needs of voters in the process to their re-elections. The data from interviews with respondents were organized and cross-checked to find similar and diverging findings. Then key ideas were mapped, and main themes identified. The process adopted in the current study mirrored that described by Beck et al. (2003), who said that thematic analysis may be used to break data collected from interviews, reflections and focus groups into smaller units and grouped according to common themes. The language aspect was managed in a manner that ensured the quality of the data. Although the paper is written in English, both interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Kinyarwanda.

Conceptual clarifications

Conceptualizing accountability

From a human rights perspective, accountability is best

understood as the character of the relationship between two sets of actors: rights holders and duty bearers (Joshi, 2010). To make it clearer, (Yilmaz and Beris, 2008) say that an accountable relationship is one in which duty bearers (leaders, government departments, administrators and service providers) are obliged to account for and take responsibility for their actions. While rights holders (citizens or clients) are able to hold these duty bearers to account. Throughout literature, accountability is generally defined using the broadly accepted principal-agent model: accountability is seen as a relationship of power, where the less powerful 'principal' has the right to ask the more powerful 'agent' to explain his/her actions, and has the capacity to impose penalties for poor performance (Schedler et al. 2009). The report released by (World Bank, 2008) claims that the two types of accountability are vital complement to each other for an effective decentralization system: public accountability, where local leaders are held accountable by other elected or non-elected public officials, and social accountability where elected leaders are answerable directly to the citizens (World Bank, 2008). It is worthwhile to mention that both types act as. Public accountability offers figure of trustworthy, dutifulness, justice, clarity and attempt for improving and ethical qualification of public officials (Scher, 2010; Ejere, 2012), while social accountability mechanisms enable citizens, civil society organizations and communities to hold government officials and service providers accountable. Examples of social accountability mechanisms include: participatory planning and budgeting, public expenditure tracking, citizen monitoring of service delivery, lobbying and advocacy campaigns (Schillemans, 2008).

In developing countries like Rwanda, the purpose of enhancing accountability is to ensure that policy makers include the needs of poorer citizens in their policies, plans or budgets (Joshi, 2010). Accountability therefore requires both answerability and enforceability (Robit, 2002). To be accountable, politicians, civil servants and service providers must be answerable for their actions; they must explain or justify what they do and why they do it. Enforcement is the ability to oversee actors and apply sanctions when they give unsatisfactory answers (Robit, 2002). At local level, accountability is often seen in terms of service delivery (Boex, 2011). This author argues that the main concern of citizens is whether services are available, relevant and appropriate; or whether there is sufficient space and support for agricultural production and other economic development. Citizen's oversight of procurement process that provide a potent opportunity for eradicating corruption of local governments. Citizen involvement in the process, therefore, can be helpful in mitigating this risk. Citizens oversee the delivery of specific services in order to enable citizens to interact more effectively with the local government administration for service provision (idem).

In the context of this paper, accountability to local citizens for the use of resources has a direct bearing on whether or not local government responds to public interests, on whether or not the public is free for debate, whether or not the public expenditure is scrutinized and on whether or not the government performance is monitored (Devas and Grant, 2003). Therefore, specific mechanisms are to be designed to ensure that citizens and local leaders are able and willing to hold local governments accountable for their discretion.

Accountability and elections

Bratton, (2014) stipulates that where democracy goes, retrospective elections follow. In the same line of thoughts, scholars have amassed a remarkable volume of empirical research on achieving accountability through elections (Mbate, 2017; Smoke, 2015; World Bank, 2009; Christopher et al., 2007). Robinson, (2007) underlines that electoral competition induces accountability of elected leaders and articulates that regular elections provide an important accountability mechanism by allowing citizens to decide whether or not to extend the leaders' tenure. An interesting finding comes from (Green, 2005) and (Falleti, 2010) who suggest that elections are the cornerstone of any democratic system and largely perform the function of accountability as through elections; citizens elect the candidates that best represent their preferences, and through the possibility of reelection, hold them accountable.

The report by (World Bank, 2009) advocates that if local leaders plan to seek reelection, they should always have a strong incentive to remain in good graces with their constituents. The expectation is that citizens hold elected officials accountable for their behaviour and performance through elections (Aucoin and Heintzman, 2000). However, this will be possible if local governments introduce legal mechanisms empowering citizens to redress grievances or request explanations of municipal legislation.

Ayee, (2001) suggests mechanisms including (i) legislation empowering citizens to demand explanations and justifications from local governments; (ii) specific bodies and processes for citizen oversight; and, (iii) political culture for citizen oversight mainly through community-driven activities. In Tanzania, a study conducted by Alatas et al. (2012) confirms that elected leaders refrain from misappropriating contributions if they need to anticipate consequences of their choices for their reputations and future social interactions in the village. This finding is important, because it is the evidence that elected leaders are constrained by informal, bottom-up accountability pressures in their communities. Brender, (2003) analysis of local elections in Israel, revealed that voters punished mayors for poor fiscal performance. It is in this perspective that the current study is first and

foremost meant to explain the importance of accountability once put in practice ensures that the elected local leaders create a pool of competitive candidates seeking elective positions and thus increases the incentives for candidates to align their policies with the preference of voters in order to get reelected (Faguet, 2014).

According to Okekeocha, (2013), electoral competitions make leaders responsive and accountable because voters could switch their support from one leader to another if any is unsatisfactory. In democracies with free and fair election, the fear that the electorate could switch their support over to the opponents keeps elected leaders responsive and accountable to those who voted them into power and who can vote them out. In view of this, in a number of developing countries, including Rwanda, local people are being given political power to make decisions, elect their own mayors and councilors who are expected to be frequently responsible for government services and yield significant influence over their delivery. Therefore, electoral systems shape the incentives of both the elected leaders and the citizens and make the elected leaders more responsive to citizens' preferences (Lankina, 2008). In this view, elections are regarded as a sanctioning device that induces elected officials to do what the voters want.

This paper in line with (Bateson et al., 2006) who shed light on the impact of accountability on elections by arguing that elected leaders are accountable if voters can discern whether they are acting in their interest and sanction them appropriately, so that those incumbents who act in the best interest of citizens win reelections and those who do not lose them. Empirical studies demonstrate strong relationships between voters' evaluations of the incumbent's performance in office and his or her performance on election day (Kousser et al., 2007). As it is illustrated in some examples below, the logic behind this argument is that voters reelect incumbents for good performance or remove them from office for bad performance.

Link between local government and accountability and elections in Rwanda

Bringing the power closer to the citizens produces meaningful results, if elected leaders and voters at different levels feel constantly connected. In Rwanda, the postgenocide Government which is committed to good governance as a pillar of reconstruction and development considers accountability as a core dimension of governance and development (MINALOC, 2012a). The major purpose of decentralization process was for Rwanda to establish governance system that supports Local Government Authorities (LGA) to become sufficient and effective in provision of quality services to all people through their fully participation and responsibility for

monitoring, evaluating and controlling development activities for their sustainable development (Rwanda, 2016). Through this decentralization policy, the Government of Rwanda sought to empower its citizens by creating autonomous local entities capable of initiating planning, financing and executing devolved functions independently. Following a decentralization process from 2000-2015, Rwandan policies are now implemented through the following administrative levels in descending order of hierarchy: Province (intara), District (akarere), Sector (umurenge), Cell (akagari), and Village (umudugudu). The strong commitment to decentralized structures in Rwanda allowed district authorities to be able to function autonomously from the centre (Holvoet and Rombouts, 2008). They have control over their budgets (how funds are raised, allocated and spent), district development plans facilitating collaborative arenas for involving citizens in these processes. In addition, district authorities exercise administrative control of service delivery facilities (such as schools and hospitals) and make decisions around staffing issues. Rwanda has adopted a home-grown system based on results oriented management and on the Rwandan cultural institution. Performance contract (Imihigo) has been introduced across government, making each agency responsible for the delivery of agreed on targets (Asthana, 2003).

Since 2006, through the use of imihigo contract, the concept of accountability has explicitly shaped the initiated decentralized system (Versailles, 2012). Through the process of Imihigo contracts, citizens are able to express their views and priorities which inspire annual plans in every district and in results, districts are regularly monitored, evaluated and ranked (Mutagoma, 2006). Imihigo contracts are highlighted by IRDP, (2010) report as one of the home grown initiatives aimed at boosting the Results Based Management (RBM) in local and central government performance in Rwanda. In this paper, findings from different respondents were congruent that Imihigo were worthwhile. Most of respondents reported that imihigo has proven to be a real innovative and homegrown planning tool in post-genocide Rwanda. They added that through imihigo, citizens participate largely in implementation of priorities planned at local level. They went on saying that in many places, Imihigo persistently followed a top down approach leaving therefore limited room for citizen participation in both planning, process of action and evaluation phase.

Although imihigo contracts were converted into tangible benefits, services, and outputs that address the needs of citizens, their full and successful implementation encountered a number of challenges including inadequate skills in monitoring and evaluation, weakness in data management; limited resources competing against large expenditure needs; weak capacities in procurement planning by districts; and lack of expertise in managing the performance contract by the district leaders (MINALOC, 2012).

On the other hand, as reported in this paper, instead of genuinely letting citizens participate in the design of imihigo, local government gave instructions of what might be implemented. In addition, findings from Focus Group Discussions revealed that the culture of blind obedience persists, which implies that citizens did not question irrespective of whether they agreed or not. Similarly, it was reported that local leaders sometimes transferred to the population the pressure they were under, to meet imihigo objectives, by pushing people to undertake efforts that might not be within their capacity or among their top priorities.

The logic of performance contracts was often translated in terms of election. In all this course of action, a political process that seeks to make people the ultimate source of authority, elections are the most attractive aspect of accountability (MINALOC, 2012). It provides a space for inclusive productive dialogue and accountability where the voice of the people is heard and met by responsive authorities and service providers (Republic of Rwanda, 2013).

It is evident that local election voters are more knowledgeable of the issues facing local governments and will hold local leaders for their performance and vote based on the impact that performance has on the voters' welfare.

It came out in a number of interviews and discussions with participants in the study that voters, who have experienced an increased level of wellbeing, were more likely to support the leaders who were marked by a strong commitment to achieving defined development goals including among others improvements in, but not limited to education, health, water, sanitation, infrastructure and social welfare. The section below will extensively discuss the voters' perceptions of the performance of local leaders and variables influencing their reelection.

Factors influencing the reelection of local leaders

This paper broke new ground in the Rwandan voting literature by summarizing a number of factors that influence voters in evaluating incumbents' performance and vote accordingly. Important themes emerged from the data as the most important variables were related to: Economy, Governance, living environment housing, education, social welfare, health and sanitation. These variables were then analyzed to understand whether or not they can influence voters to re-elect incumbents.

Economy

The paper argued that in Rwanda elected District councilors were expected to efficiently and effectively utilize the limited financial resources to provide basic

services to citizens. Voters expected from them to demonstrate the ability in helping the District to productively invest in development projects and generate sufficient revenue even though the central government, donor agencies and sometimes non-governmental organizations provide funds to the District to specifically implement priority projects and programmes. It was evident that citizens appreciated a councilor who was planning priorities that reflect the needs they have expressed themselves. A great number of voters agreed that they were satisfied with being economically empowered and having financial autonomy as one citizen stated during focus group discussion:

"...I have developed the capacity to participate in all kinds of income generating activities that have helped me; my family and the community at large. My children go to school; I have bought cows that produce milk for home consumption. I also supply some to a milk collection center...."

Elected councilors commonly agreed that they constantly checked to ensure that budgets are effectively followed as planned focusing mainly on capital investments, asset management systems development, acceptable procurement procedures to avoid financial malpractices and corruption and all this for the sake of citizen development and poverty reduction. However, it was believed by local elected leaders that the right combination of knowledge, skills and experience were necessary for meeting increased demand for quality services in this area. Although the paper found that the central government recognized the need to recruit highly qualified and motivated staff that will be committed to facilitating local government performance, elected local leaders widely acknowledged training in relation to economy of the great importance although time was seriously limited for this activity. They reported that they needed improved competences in financial management, budgeting and auditing, procurement and contract management, project management, monitoring and evaluation, records management, as well plan preparation and revenue mobilization.

Governance

It emerged that voters viewed local leaders as ones whose primary duty was to provide basic services. The paper provided insights into the way local leaders enabled their voters to participate in the policy cycle process. Findings from FGDs provided ample evidence that voters rewarded elected local leaders for good performance and their choices were primarily dictated by judgments on priorities that elected local leaders were expected to address even though the objectives set by the political leadership of local leaders appeared to be a

microcosm of the political goal of the central government, which was to create a “better and powerful Rwanda”. Findings from focus group discussions revealed that voters were appreciating councilors who considered as customers and allowed them to get involved in designing, implementing and evaluating main development priorities namely Agaciro Development Fund, Construction of nine-year basic education schools, and contribution to the Teacher’s Motivation, Mutuelle de Santé, just to name a few. In the same vein, it emerged from interview with key informants that District councilors were appreciated when they were encouraged to actively participate in decision making structures at local level. It has been echoed by one informant that:

“.....Before 1994, asking citizens to hold leaders accountable could not work easily. There was a gap in interactions between citizens and leaders, citizens were not partners and owners of policy processes...Trust and confidence in leaders were totally lost for many Rwandans. Citizens were characterized by the fear of the leaders and the government they represented.....The reason why, in a bid to concretize its political will, the GoR put in place a series of mechanisms intended to ease citizen participation in the aftermath of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

For leaders, it is an opportunity to show that they are keen to protect and safeguard citizens’rights.”

Further, the present paper suggested that citizens appreciated District councilors who played a part in informing and facilitating them in the identification of project priorities. Findings revealed that information was a precious resource and accessing information regarding government policies and programs was an important pre-condition for fulfilling one’s responsibilities. Results from focus group interviews indicated that limited information had for citizens a negative impact on their level of implementation and ownership, which in turn jeopardizes the sustainability of the program that would be intended to be initiated. One citizen explained this as follows:

“.... We had initially resisted cutting down our banana plantations until our leaders come and started to explainFrankly speaking, we did not understand why until the mayor together with the councilor came and explained to us the benefits of the new farming method that the government was introducing.....”

Similarly, findings suggested that the information system was valuable as it was the opportunity of increasing the transparency of District councilors’ actions and thus the likelihood that citizens would use to inform their vote choice. The possible Channels that were identified by participants were Inteko z’ Abaturage (citizens’ assemblies), Umuganda (community work), Imihigo (performance contracts) and Ubudehe (social support).

Participants in this study clearly stressed the rationale of information and feedback in gradually empowering citizens at grassroots level with the aim of putting an end on blind obedience that prevailed in Rwanda for a long time. During focus group discussions, citizens emphasized that they get chance to constantly communicate with leaders they elected and had the opportunity to suggest solutions. A citizen from FGD concurred with the leader and said:

“.....We normally have channels through which, sometimes when a problem that is identified in the community exceeds the power of the Inteko y’ Abaturage, we call upon some members of the District Council to attend our next meeting so that they get to know the problem, propose solutions, or advocate on our behalf....”

In that way, participants in this study recognized efforts made by elected local leaders in getting closer to citizens. They mentioned cases where District I councilors attended community work (Umuganda), and actively participated during the meetings after that community work. Participants appreciated the action and specified that it was different from the past where they could see councilors when they came to campaign. One participant expressed this as follows:

“Sometimes councilors attend Umuganda and Inteko y’ Abaturage. After Umuganda, we meet and briefly reflect on some issues affecting our Village. During such meeting our councilors take advantage to inform us about some announcements that come from top leadership, for example MINALOC, MINAGRI, etc.....”

Moreover, elected local leaders themselves recognized that they conducted field visits to investigate some issues that were brought to their attention. From their oversight role, some councilors attended local meetings at cell level to get familiar with some local issues discussed in this forum. However, although councils were generally praised through the conducted interviews, the top-down communication, which participants referred to as “umwanya w’ amatangazo” (time for announcements) was criticized by a great number of citizens. A feeling of frustration was apparent due to the fact that citizens expected to use bottom-up communication as a way to voice concerns and views about public policies for advocacy purposes. A participant commented as follows:

“....Frankly speaking, Councilors are elected but do not do their job properly. First of all, they do not listen to us or seek our views. They only inform us like announcements. They should come to listen to our concerns, channel them to the right offices, and most importantly give us feedback ...“

It was also highlighted that of the reasons why citizens

may be dissatisfied with the job done by the council members is that their visits were not sufficient. Also the study findings revealed that to District councilors totally concurred that the number of field visits was not enough. Data reflected that councilors could assist local citizens by linking them to appropriate resources and plan their respective programmes. The elected councilors argued that they were expected to fully support the development of local citizens and to address in particular the poor living conditions and the ensuing problems for the citizens. They were unanimous that field visits could focus on educating citizens on health and wellbeing, and on fostering the importance of sending their children to school. However, the paper indicated the persistent problem that would be perceived by local leaders as a serious affront to their performance was that councilors were unremunerated while field visits often involved travelling costs. Findings from interviews with elected leaders expressed the view that it was difficult to organize visits due to limited financial resources that prevented them from planning regular visits to their voters. One elected leader said:

“.....The work of the councillor is voluntary and we are not paid a salary. It is only through assembly meetings that we get something small as our sitting allowance....we are faced with various challenges while addressing citizens’ concerns. The issue of transport facilitation allowances and even communication allowances should have an appropriate solution in the near future to allow us to organize regular visits to our constituencies.....”

It should also be noted that districts are so vast that it is hard for many citizens to walk long distances from home to places of meetings. Again, what emerged from the paper was that there were no clear channels of communication between councils at different levels. This means that a Councilor at the Cell level does not properly interact with a Councilor at the Sector level and the latter does not interact with the District Council member. This would reduce long distance citizen could walk to attend councilors within the district. Likewise, findings from key informants claimed that that low levels of civic competence would inhibit the ability of citizens to express their concerns meaningfully, and that leaders continued to dominate the decision-making process by sustaining unequal decision making practices.

Education

Education is crucial in shaping individual attitudes towards civic engagement (MINEDUC 2012). All elected leaders concurred that children needed to be educated properly so that they could actively participate in the governance of their country when they grew up. One of them said:

“....The role of schools and other educational institutions is also important in determining whether learners develop the capacity or otherwise to participate in governance today and tomorrow. An education system that promotes participation and critical thinking prepares the ground and plays an essential role in the capacity of citizens to participate in the governance of the country when time comes...”

Local governments, and in particular district councils, were expected to have the power to deliver primary and secondary education services in the district with overall control over services for which they are responsible. Their roles include inspection and supervision of public schools, funding, management of teachers, school administration and planning, and school construction. Nevertheless, there were certain genuine obstacles which confronted local leaders’ attempts to improve basic education. They include but not limited to lack of adequate funds to satisfactorily supply schools with teaching and learning materials, deterioration of school buildings as a result of shoddy a poor maintenance culture and ineffective supervision of students by teachers and parents. Therefore, interviewed elected local leaders vowed to increase considerably budgetary allocation for education and to correspondingly distribute educational projects to the area.

It emerged from the paper that apart from constructing schools and teacher’s accommodation, local elected leaders should collaborate to implement interventions such as capitation grant, school feeding programme, text books scheme, the provision of classroom furniture and reduction of school size. However, results from the FGDs indicated that recruitment of teachers was characterized by nepotism, making it difficult for deserving individuals to enter teaching profession. A teacher in one of the focus group discussions retorted quite emphatically that:

“.....Worst still when you graduate from KIE, and start carrying papers around, it’s not like you are not qualified, it’s not like your result is not good, it’s not like you don’t have what it requires, they deny you job because you do not know the big names that matter in the community. While going to submit my papers for the teaching position, I noticed that each applicant was accompanied by another person.....”

However, participants were unanimous in their belief that local leaders showed their willingness to speak out against corruption, especially in education. They said that in education the recruitment policy should be to attract qualified individuals with experience and qualifications suitable according to the position requirements, and extremely away from “Whom you know”, or ‘Where do you come from”.

Elected local leaders even recognized that the corruption

was not an exclusive phenomenon in education. Since the aftermath of the genocide against the Tutsis, Rwanda embarked on an ambitious program aiming at recovering from the ashes of this tragedy and efforts have been accomplished, particularly in fighting against corruption in all areas of life.

The paper predicted that corruption might have no efficiency effects, only redistributive ones. All respondents reported that the price of corruption was not measured in terms of millions of dollars stolen, but in terms of lack of hospitals, schools, roads and bridges, electricity, clean water, etc which would be built with those millions and certainly change the lives of the poor citizen. The findings were consistent and conclusive that corruption discouraged small business, entrepreneurs, and consumers who simply could not afford the cost of bribery and actions to reduce corruption were meaningful to voters and strongly affected the extent to which they hold local leaders accountable for the services they provided to poor citizens. Despite tremendous progress made due to political will, findings from the paper indicated that challenges to eradicate corruption still existed in the district under study. Therefore, elected local leaders were expected to put efforts and common understanding together to forge a way forward in tackling it. As reported by both elected leaders and voters, corruption was by its very nature difficult to objectively measure, although evaluations of corruption handling were relevant to voting choice of citizens. The paper suggested that elected leaders should put in place objective measures of anti-corruption sentiment that could reinforce incumbency advantage in determining voters' choices during the re-election. It emerged that providing information as well as encouraging community-based monitoring was largely appreciated in addressing corruption instead of putting more power in the hands of leaders for that purpose.

Welfare, health and sanitation

It emerged from the study that sanitation and hygiene played a vital role in preventive health care and in the fight against poverty in Rwanda in general and in the Musanze District in particular. In this area, the main results confirmed evidence that local councilors were expected to fulfill the main functions including:

- (1) To strengthen sustainable and innovative financial approaches and mechanisms for quality health care services.
- (2) To increase geographical accessibility to quality health care services including availability and affordability of quality drugs, vaccines and consumables.
- (3) To reduce incidence of communicable and child diseases, by improving promotion, prevention, care and treatment.

- (4) To strengthen reproductive health services including public awareness for responsible parenthood and Family Planning in order to reduce the population growth.
- (5) To reduce rate of chronic malnutrition.
- (6) To increase environmental health and hygiene conditions of population.
- (7) To strengthen institutional capacity at all health facility and administrative levels.
- (8) To make sure the local population has been oriented to use safe drinking water.
- (9) To ensure that latrines built in households and public areas such markets and churches with community input and assistance.
- (10) To ensure that hygiene is respected in restaurants, commerce centers and other public areas and
- (11) Train for collecting solid waste.

In the current paper, the problem of sanitation was multifaceted and required regular sweeping of streets in urban areas, collection, evacuation and disposal of solid and liquid household wastes, construction and management of abattoirs, construction of toilets and cemeteries to mention a few. The paper revealed that local leaders acknowledged the importance of proper sanitation and hygiene for human and economic development and spent a lot of their time sensitizing local citizen on guidelines in relation to sanitation and hygiene standards for toilet design, structure, location and condition, as well as for personal hygiene.

According to many respondents in the focus groups, the performance of local leaders on sanitation depended upon the effectiveness of activities and interventions that were devised by waste management departments in the area.

In addition, elected leaders acknowledged to have made exemplary progress in health system by ensuring that population had a health center that was able to receive patients per day for services including basic emergency care, antenatal care, normal delivery, post-partum care, family planning, pediatric care and nutrition, and routine clinics. This resulted into strengthening and reduction of preventable deaths. The paper found that plans for water provision have been developed, but the implementation was still an issue.

From the present paper, it could be identified that when citizens were more satisfied with their life, they were also more likely to cast their vote in favor of their incumbents who contributed to that end.

Conclusion

This paper set out to describe the variables that might influence the re-election of local leaders in Rwanda. It was based on the premise that citizens tended to vote out candidates who do not perform well. This paper advanced the argument that Rwandan voters are

“retrospective,” grounding their support in evaluations of local councilors’ performance. Findings largely validated that elected local leaders are likely to be reelected when they consult citizens on key issues affecting them, allowing citizens to voice their priorities for consideration in policy making. In this regards, accountability was promoted by the increase in political competition as citizens’ constantly escalated pressure on elected incumbents to deliver services in accordance with their performance contracts. Based on the findings, it could be concluded that the major variables that influence District councilors to be re- elected were associated with basic services that matter for local citizens’ wellbeing including economy, governance, education, welfare, health and sanitation. The heart of this paper was that citizens have the right to sanction the agent for failing to inform, explain or justify their decisions and actions with regard to duties they are expected to perform. It is worth noting that District councilors were willing to effectively fulfill their duties but were hampered by a numerous of factors including lack of enough skills, lack of transport and travelling allowances to reach remote areas, poor monitoring and evaluation, lack of citizen’s awareness of their direct participation to the “res publica” . In a similar vein, lack of adequate finances restricted local leaders’ visits to their electorates so as to collect their views and provide feedback. Equally salient, active participation of citizens requires awareness, capacity and interest on their part. Local participatory forums may be available, but people may be unaware of them, may not know how to access them or may be unable to use them due to lack of knowledge, poor access to advice, real or perceived intimidation, etc. In addition, some local leaders may be willing to make citizens participate but lack human capacity, it is recommended that systematic training needs assessments be conducted for all local leaders, especially new ones. It is recommended here that further studies should be conducted in other districts of the country to validate the findings of this paper.

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