This October, Mayor Jeanine Niwumuremyi completed a year at the helm of Musanze District, the agricultural engineer joined from Rwanda Agricultural Board where she spent years working with farmers. Mayor Niwumuremyi told Rwanda Dispatch she switched positions but her work has remained, to support people develop, but as mayor she cares for every aspect of life for her people.

Accelerating development is part of the district's performance contracts 'IMIHIGO' how are you doing this?

Imihigo is an important tool indeed, when you're aiming at certain targets that you have even committed formally or publicly it gives you more strength to achieve them. Imihigo as a development tool in Musanze as well as other districts has accelerated development and His Excellency President Kagame emphasized this mechanism which speeds-up progress when people commit and work with others to reach their targets.

Through the use of Imihigo we have set goals every year and achieved them, leading to aim higher while looking at every aspect of citizens' development starting with social welfare, good governance, service delivery, infrastructure development, electricity, water and the general economic development of our district.

What are Musanze's experiences using performance contracts to pull citizens out of poverty?

There is a lot of interventions we have undertaken for example we set targets to create new jobs from rural to urban areas, new jobs for the youth, through VUP programme and this is as good as giving people money. We ensure financial services are working well to provide loans to citizens to undertake small income generating activities that will raise people's welfare. We support the most vulnerable build them houses, toilets, repair, provide farmers with agricultural inputs like fertilizers, seeds and advise them to increase productivity.

With our district's tourism potential we encourage and equip residents with skills to exploit opportunities in tourism, for example artisans who have started shops selling tourists art objects and souvenirs.

What is the role of your development partners?

We work with different stakeholders to achieve our development agenda, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, faith based organisations and citizens in general. The high rise structures coming up in our city are built by partners like GOICO, local and international hotels are servicing our tourists, and Gorilla Research Centre are among other development initiatives that we forge together with our stakeholders.

This region is known as a top tourist destination, are you developing any new attractions?

Tourism in Musanze has focused on Gorillas but we have many attractions that needs developing and some are in the pipeline like mountain climbing which we are working with Enabel to complete and we in the process of creating an artificial lake near the city.

We are developing Lake Ruhondo and the numerous caves in the district as touristic attractions. Virunga National Park, the home to the popular Gorillas has many more attractions that people need to know, there is a beautiful landscape, the volcano mountains, wild animals like Buffalos, reptiles, insects and birds of different species some that are endemic to the park. The park is also historical where our liberation struggle was fought, all are being considered for development.

What are you doing to attract new investments?

Musanze has established strategic partnerships in countries like China, Netherlands and on the national level there is RDB which supports us to attract investments. We have had investors coming from Netherlands and the Chinese are supporting us to build IPRC Musanze in Nyakinama and we have a list of other foreign investors in the hospitality sector.

We have a new master plan to be launched soon, it will help improve investment opportunities and pave way for the industrial park we are developing in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade where 164 hectares have been reserved for industries, and we are developing Agakiriro ka Musanze.

Musanze town has been designated among secondary cities, what are you doing as the district to make this a reality?

In fact as second city [laughs], we can’t neglect the development and potentials of

Musanze, to have a sustainable city we are building more infrastructures like a road network to be used by tourists, investors, travellers and citizens to improve their activities. Among roads we want to construct is one from INES to Kinigi which will be nearer to the park, we want to link internal roads from hotels to the main road and install road lighting. We are also in the process of revamping the airport and expand it so that our guests can come directly to Musanze.

Electricity and water is another area we are investing to make them accessible to a larger portion of the population, investors and all strategic locations. Currently we working on a new water supply that will avail over 6,000 m3 to the city and the suburbs.

Where do you see Musanze in the next five years?

I see Musanze with residents who are developed, farmers as our baseline who are commercial farmers after they have enough in their homes. I see developed citizens in terms of money, hygiene, good housing, informed farmers and generally a citizenly that exploits the available opportunities and a more developed tourism sector.

Who is the mayor of Musanze and what are your experiences?

I am Jeanine Niwumuremyi, born here in Kimonyi Sector in Musanze District where I also started my education and graduated from the University of Rwanda in Butare. I am an agricultural engineer with a masters in development studies. Previously, I worked in the coffee sector before joining Rwanda Agricultural Board as head of the Western Province and had been transferred to the office in the Northern Province when I was elected mayor.

I love people and was lucky to work in the agricultural sector interacting with farmers. My profession twinned with my nature. The same I have found in my current position which requires to love people if you are to achieve any meaningful transformation for the people.

Thank you.