

Citizen participation in local development projects is significantly higher in Rwandan districts that use performance scorecards, according to a study assessing the Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy project.

The study found that 66% of citizens in districts using performance scorecards reported involvement in development initiatives, compared with 40% in districts where the tool is not used. The PPIMA project is implemented by civil society organizations with support from Norwegian People's Aid and seeks to strengthen citizen engagement, governance and accountability.

Rwanda introduced its citizen participation framework in 2009 as part of broader efforts to promote inclusive governance. The approach begins with assessing public perceptions of service delivery and enables residents to identify needs and priorities through performance scorecards. The scorecards are submitted to local leaders to guide planning and implementation.

The findings were discussed during a meeting held Dec. 17, 2025, that brought together civil society representatives, government officials and development partners. Participants said the results show measurable progress but highlighted gaps that still need to be addressed.

Performance scorecards are currently used in 19 districts. Stakeholders said the tool has improved communication between citizens and authorities and increased awareness of community priorities, though implementation remains uneven.

Mupiganyi Appolinaire, executive secretary of Transparency International Rwanda, said governance systems that exclude citizens often create conditions for corruption and mismanagement of public resources.

"When citizens are not involved, the consequences are well known," he said. "Corruption increases and public resources are not properly managed. When citizens participate, public officials know they are being monitored."

Appolinaire said more than 1.5 billion Rwandan francs would be needed to scale up the scorecard system nationwide, calling the cost a necessary investment in accountability and public trust.

Prof. Nzahabwanayo Sylvestre, director general of the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace, said some development projects fail to reflect citizens' real

needs because communities are not adequately consulted during planning.

“Many projects consume large amounts of money but do not address what people really need,” he said, attributing the problem to limited citizen input. He added that while participation has improved, it has not yet reached desired levels and requires continued collaboration between government and civil society.

Participants also noted that responses to citizens’ requests remain low in some areas, contributing to community dissatisfaction.

Kubana Richard, director of civic education and volunteerism at the Ministry of Local Government, said it is encouraging that citizens are increasingly raising development-related concerns rather than personal disputes.

“They are focusing on services and community development, and leaders are responding,” he said, adding that full participation has not yet been achieved.

Gatsibo District Mayor Gasana Richard said local authorities have made progress in listening to citizens but face financial constraints. He said limited budgets can delay projects such as road construction, sometimes creating the perception that citizen concerns are being ignored.