

THE GIRINKA IN THE TRADITIONAL RWANDA

The word Girinka itself, (may you have cows) is a greeting model which is more like a blessing upon those you meet. The program is in itself therefore, symbolic of giving back value to Rwandans by giving them the most prized belonging in their tradition. In Rwandan culture, cows have always been symbols of wealth, social status; but also the best gift that one can give to another and source of nutrition i.e., milk and blood cake, meat but also hides for house decoration and carpets; the horn was used to store seeds. On weddings, dowry is paid in cows by the groom's family to the bride's family.

REINVENTING GIRINKA PROGRAM IN THE POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA

Girinka Program is a Home Grown Solution that emerged from the 2006 National Umushyikirano Council (NUC) as a pro-poor program to help poor families improving their welfare. The program is inspired by the Rwandan Culture. Girinka goes back in the annals of Rwandan history 17th century as a social protection measure especially in favor of children instituted by the King Mibambwe. The concept of Girinka was first introduced by King Mibambwe Gisanura (+ 1660), who decreed that "no Rwandan child was ever to lack daily milk again while others had plenty". Since then, Rwandans have given cattle to one another, or milk to those in need. Girinka program was revived by President Paul Kagame who in 2006 initiated the program after seeing the extent of malnutrition and stunting among Rwandan children.

THE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

According to MINAGRI, the program was set up with the central aim of reducing child malnutrition rates and increasing household incomes of poor farmers. These goals are directly achieved through increased access to, and consumption of milk, by providing poor households with a heifer. The program is crucial to addressing the fundamental needs of those parts of the country that are critically food insecure¹. Thus, the Program reduces poverty through dairy cattle farming and improving livelihoods through increased milk consumption and income generation. Also at the helm was improving agricultural

¹ (<http://www.minagri.gov.rw/index.php?id=28>)

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productivity through the use of manure as fertilizers which would lead to improving soil quality and reducing soil erosion through the planting of grasses and trees²

THE PROGRAM SETUP

The Girinka program consists of giving cows to poor families in a bid to eradicate malnutrition through milk consumption, increasing crop productivity and household incomes through milk sales. The program is crucial to addressing the fundamental needs of those parts of the country that are critically food insecure. Girinka is coordinated by the [Rwanda Agricultural Board \(RAB\)](#), an agency of the [Ministry of Agriculture \(MINAGRI\)](#). RAB is responsible for the selection, certification and distribution of cows, the management of the centralized budget and donations of both money and cows, the training of beneficiaries in animal husbandry as well as program monitoring and evaluation.

A focus on a decentralized approach means that each of Rwanda's 30 districts is responsible for effective implementation of the program. The beneficiaries selection process starts at the Village level under the principles of Ubudehe program, whereby the local community meets facilitated by the village (umudugudu) leader, draws up a list of who qualified to receive a cow, then the list is taken by the umudugudu leader to the cell and sector level.

Each district has a RAB focal person who liaises with sector and district vet officers, selection officers, local administration and the Girinka program coordinator who are also involved in local level implementation, including distribution of cows, beneficiary training and informing farmers of the benefits of working with milk collection centres and milk processing factories. **Monitoring and evaluation is done in partnership with local government units such as *umurenge* (sector), *akagali* (cell) and *umudugudu* (village)³.**

²(JOSEPH MUDINGU., *Girinka.pdf* Girinka Programme transforms livelihoods, reconciles communities ON http://www.minagri.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/SUCCESS_STORY/article_about_Girinka.pdf_consultedon_12/11/2016)

³ See details on <http://www.minagri.gov.rw/index.php?id=28>

Before and after a beneficiary receives a cow either directly or via the 'pass on' system, the RAB coordinates support in primary animal care through training, veterinary services, artificial insemination, fodder seeds and plant materials for animal feeds as well as vaccination against diseases. The aim of this aspect of the program is to equip families with the animal husbandry skills to care for the cow themselves with the support of district and sector veterinary officers.



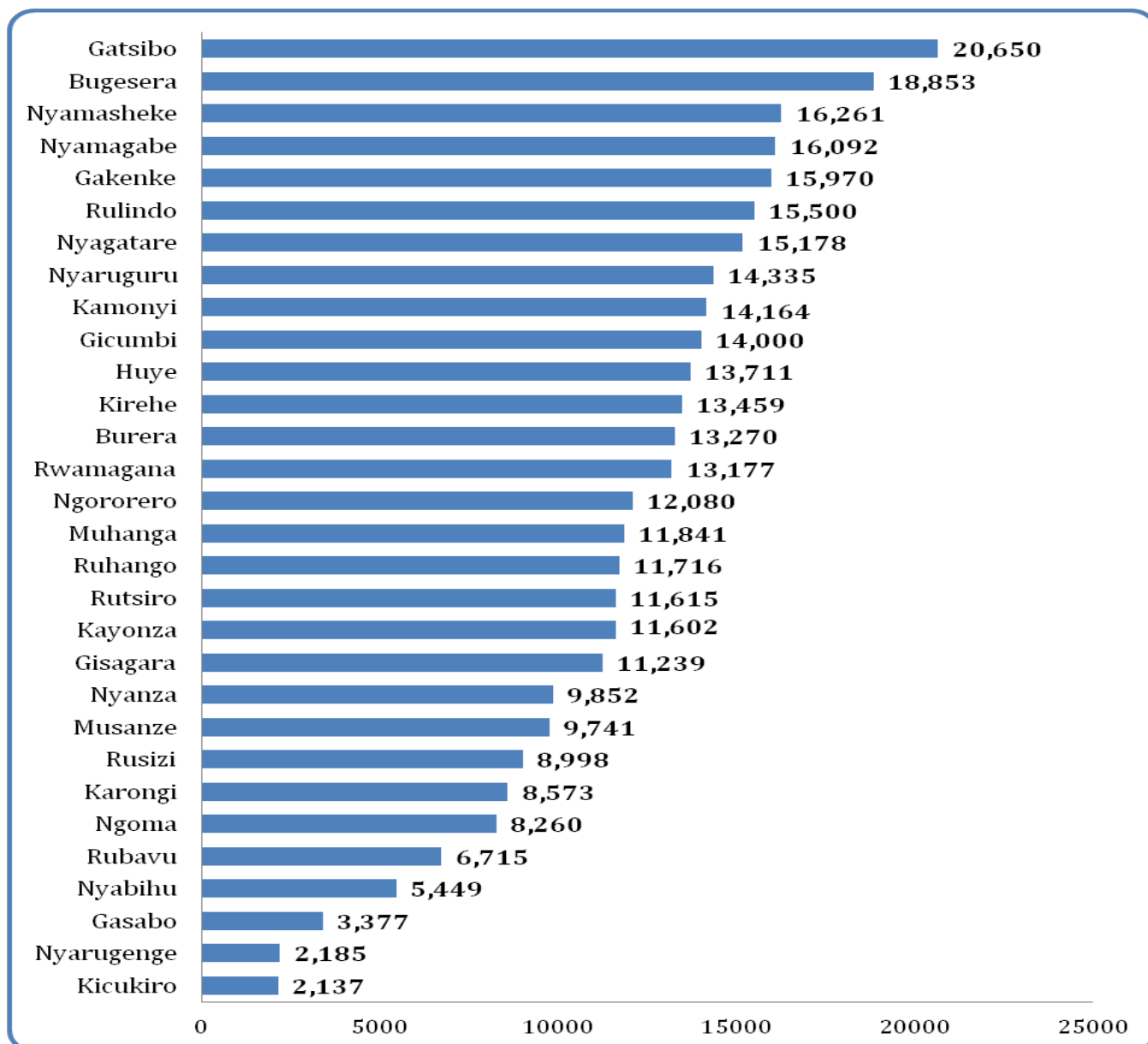
Picture 1: Citizens receive cows from Girinka program

THE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

Since its inception in 2006, Girinka program has been implemented in all 30 districts by the Government of Rwanda, Private sector, Civil Society Organisations, and Non Government Institutions through giving cows to poor family to support them improve their socio-economic welfare. All along the implementation process, Girinka program has proven to be a veritable success despite some challenges encountered. Latest figures from the Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) show that Girinka initiative has so far provided cows to over 259,087 families while the target is 350,000 families by 2017 and this implies a gap of about 100,000 cows that have to be provided.

For the Girinka program to be effective, each district of Rwanda has been assigned the target number of cows to be distributed for the period from 2016 to 2017. Next graph presents the Girinka targets per district.

Graph 01: Target number of cows to be distributed per district by 2017



Source: Data from RAB

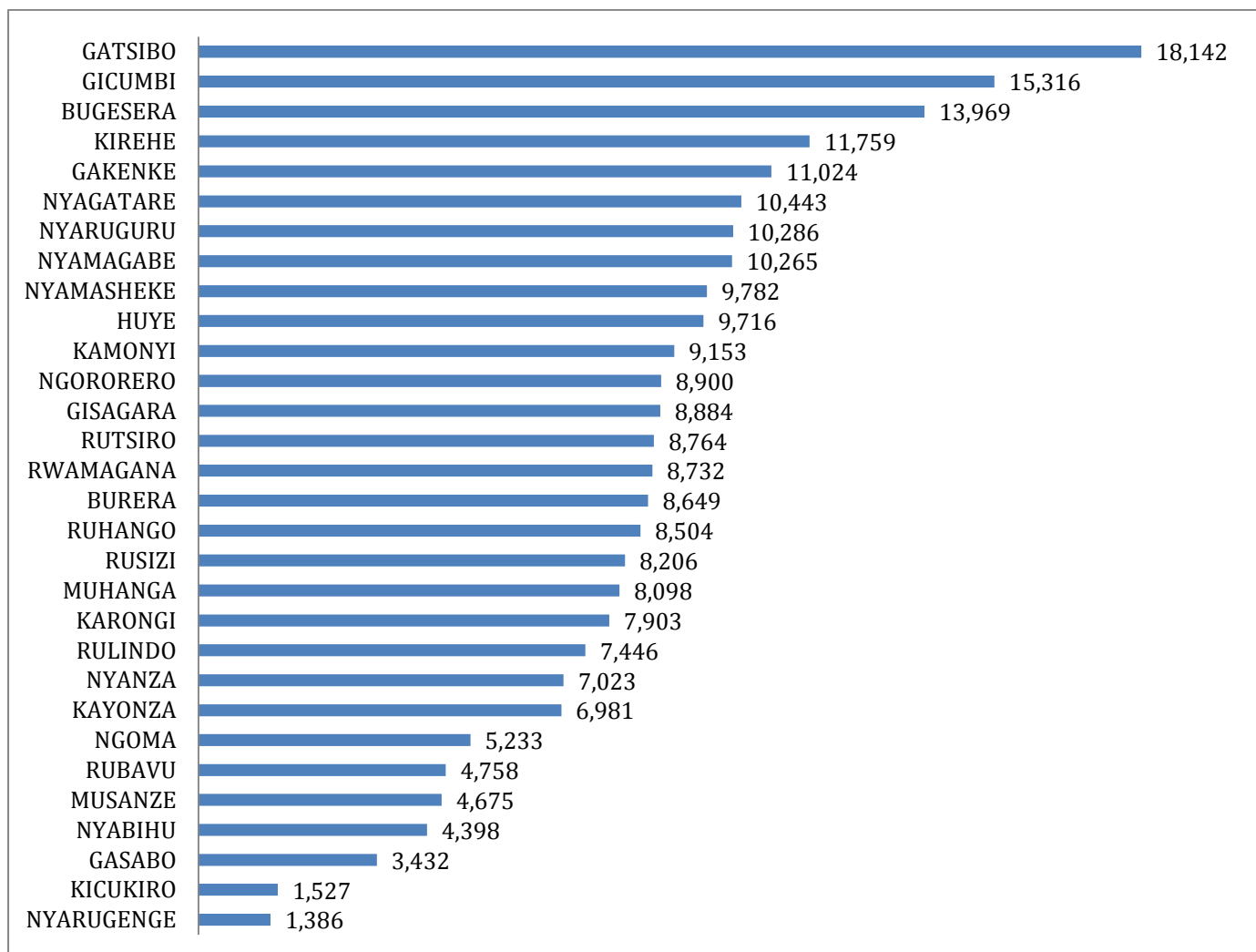
From the graph 01 above, it is evident that districts with highest target number of cows are: Gatsibo (1st with 20,650), Bugesera (2nd with 18,553), Nyamasheke (3rd with 16,261), Nyamagabe (4th with 16,092) and Gakenke (5th with 15,970), it is worth noting that except the CoK, all the four provinces are represented.

The five districts with the lowest target numbers are: Kicukiro (30th with 2,137), Nyarugenge (29th with 2,185), Gasabo (28th with 3,377), Nyabihu (27th with 5,449) and Rubavu (26th with 6,715). Apart from Rubavu and Nyabihu of the Western Province, the rest of districts with the lowest target numbers are of the CoK where the agriculture and live stock activities do not prevail and where there are fewer virtual Girinka beneficiaries.

In fact, the spatial distribution of the Ubudehe categories reveals the prevalence of Category 1 households in the Western Province (29.1%), the Category 2 households in the Eastern Province (26.3%), the Category 3 households in the Southern Province (26.5%) and the Category 4 households in the City of Kigali (57.6%)⁴. Nevertheless, the above data should not be misread. Each district has its own target of cows to be distributed and the pace may differ from one district to another due to different reasons. The next figure shows the number of cows distributed per district from 2006 to 2016.

⁴MINALOC, Revised ubudehe categories are out, published on April 28, 2016 on http://www.minaloc.gov.rw/index.php?id=469&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=461

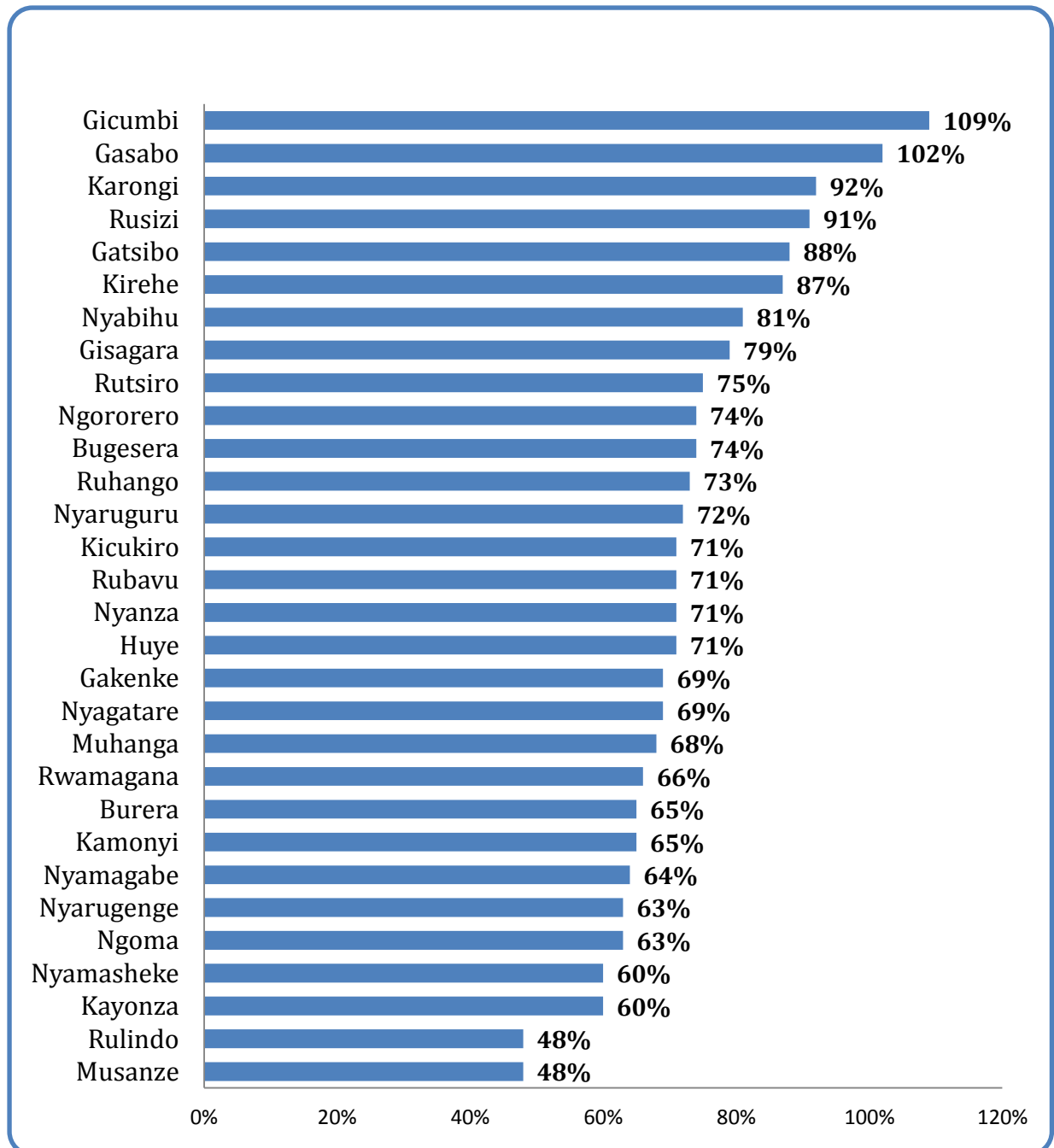
Graph 02: Cows distributed per districts from June 2006 to June 2016



Source: Data from RAB, deep assessment report

As indicated in the graph above, Gatsibo district in the Eastern province counts the highest number of cows distributed (18,142), followed by Gicumbi district in the North province with 15,316 cows. The district with the lowest number of cows distributed is Nyarugenge in the CoK with 1,386 cows distributed. During the period of ten years (2006-2016) of the Girinka program implementation, with an exception of Gicumbi district of the Northern Province, all the districts that received a great number of cows are of the Eastern and Southern provinces.

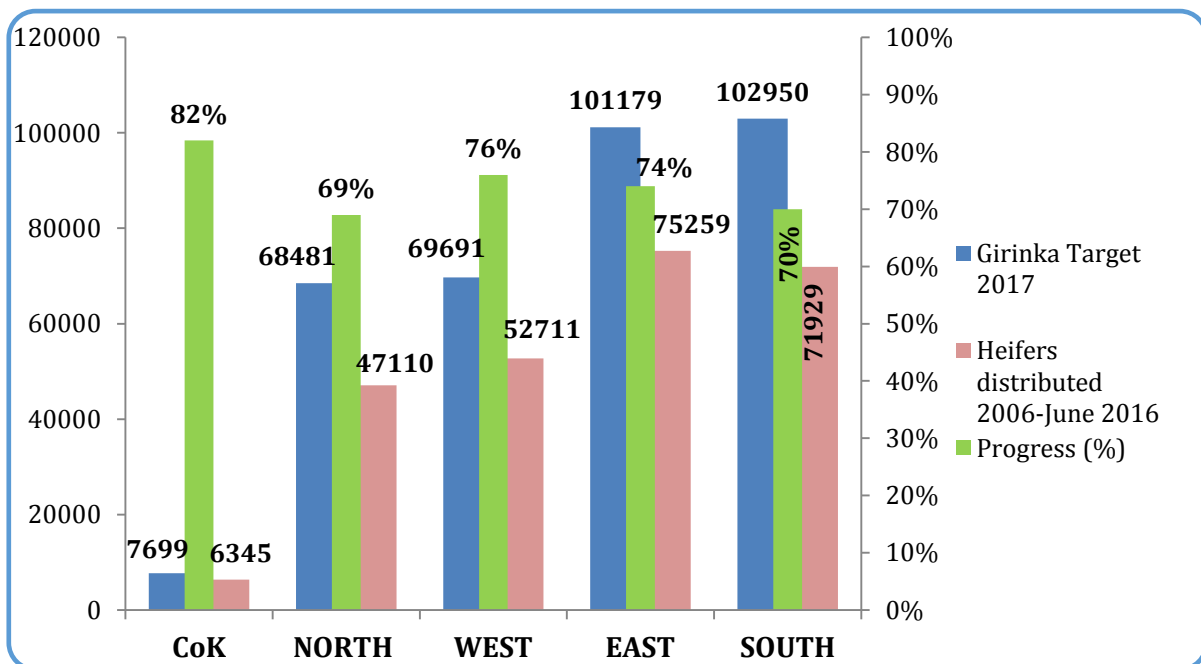
Graph 03. Girinka program progress achievements (%) for each district from 2006 to 2016



Source: Data from RAB/Girinka Program Coordination Unit, deep assessment report

The above graph provides progress achieved by each district in attaining its Girinka target from June 2006 to June 2016. As data show, on one hand, Gicumbi (1st with 109%), Gasabo (2nd with 102%), Karongi (3rd with 92%), Rusizi (4th with 91%) and Gatsibo (5th with 88%) are the five districts which have attained higher percentages of achieved targets. On the other hand, Rulindo (30th with 48%), Musanze (29th with 48%), Kayonza (28th with 60%), Nyamasheke (27th with 60%) and Ngoma (26th with 63%) are the districts with lowest percentages of targets attained. Data gathered from the Girinka program coordination enabled not only to assess the progress in achieving the Girinka target at district level but also helped to summarize the Girinka status per province/CoK from 2006 to 2016.

Graph 04: Summary of Girinka program status per province/CoK from 2006 to 2016



Source: Data from RAB/Girinka Program Coordination Unit. Deep assesment report

For each province and the City of Kigali, the graph above provides three elements of progress in Girinka program implementation from June 2006 to June 2016. Those are: the number of heifers distributed, Girinka program target number of cows to be distributed by 2017 and progress vis-à-vis target. Thus, in as far as the number of heifers to be distributed, the Southern Province comes first with a total of 102,950 cows to be distributed; the Eastern Province is the second with 101,179 cows to be distributed; the Western Province is the third

with 69,691 cows to be distributed. The Northern Province and the City of Kigali are respectively the fourth and the fifth with 68,481 and 7,669 cows to be distributed.

As indicated in the above graphs, a total of 253,354 cows have been distributed countrywide from June 2006 to June 2016 against the target of 350,000 by 2017 which is a progress of 72.3%. When comparing the achievements to the target, the best performer is the CoK (82%), the second best performer province is the WEST (76%) followed by the EAST (74%) and the SOUTH (70%) while the NORTH comes last (69%).

Comparing to what has been achieved and the target, there are still 27.7% of cows that need to be distributed. As indicated by the Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, the Ministry has currently involved Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the selection of the Girinka beneficiaries to fast track the process. Note also that the cows distributed through Girinka come from various sources, including the government contribution, partners including the Private Sector and Local initiative as well as beneficiaries passing on calves to other needy citizens.

The effort is being put in passing cows to other needy people and engaging the districts to mobilize partners to support the program. The Ministry has also embarked on serious mobilization efforts to ensure that citizens with means donate a cow, or money to buy a cow.⁵ To date, the Government of Rwanda and many stakeholders from both public and private sector have contributed to Girinka program by providing either money or cows. The table below provide details on the origin of cows distributed from 2016 to November 2016.

⁵ The New Times published on October 04, 2016.

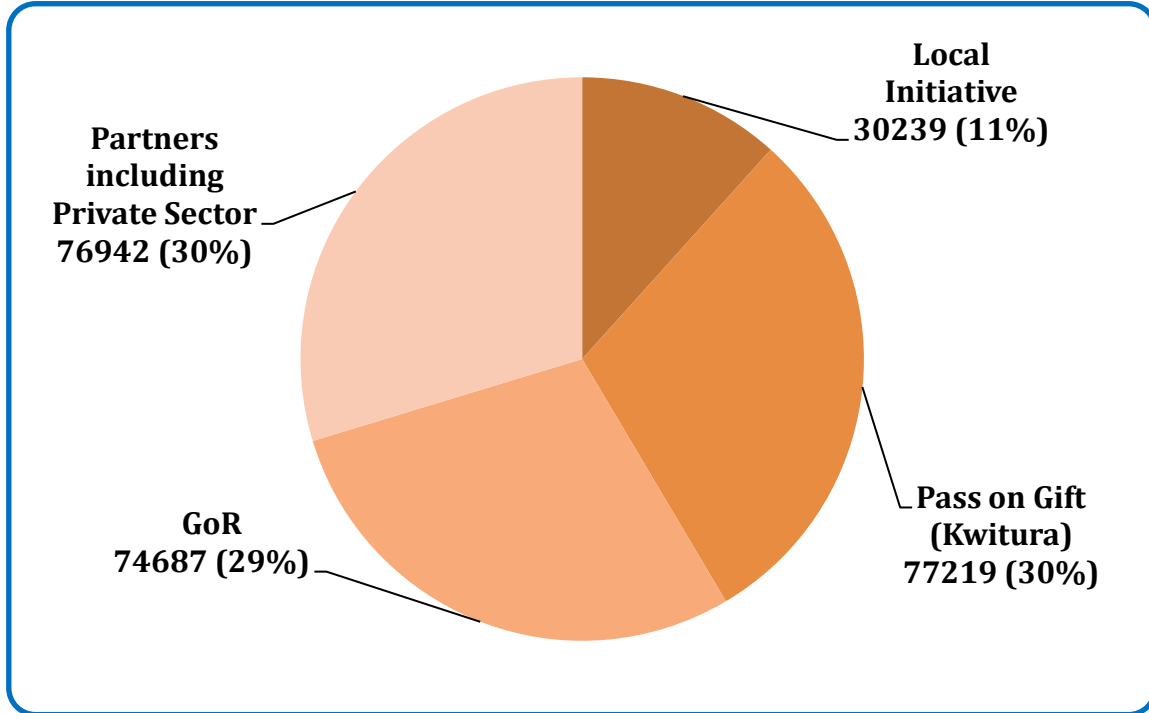
Table 01: Origin of cows distributed from 2006 to November 30th, 2016

Fiscal Year	Government of Rwanda	Partners including Private sector	Local Initiative	Pass on Gift (Kwitura)	Total
2006	5 007	2 848	-	-	7 855
2007	9 116	5 437	41	1 386	15 980
2008	9 430	11 305	2 000	3 811	26 546
2009	9 885	8 822	3 142	4 218	26 067
2010	10 256	5 190	2 553	6 257	24 256
2011-2012	8 013	8 156	4 983	9 884	31 036
2012-2013	8 147	8 499	4 599	11 269	32 514
2013-2014	5 237	9 052	6 903	12 353	33 545
2014-2015	3 383	7 595	3 077	13 062	27 117
2015-2016	4 392	9 094	2 160	13 352	28 998
2016-2017	1 821	944	781	1 627	5 173
Total	74,687	76,942	30,239	77,219	259,087

Source: Data from RAB, 2016.

As indicated in the table above, a total number of 259,087 cows have been distributed countrywide from June 2006 to 30th November 2016 against the target of 350,000 by 2017 which is a progress of 74, 02 %. Different national and international stakeholders including the Government, Private sector, Local initiative, Development Partners, have actively participated in this achievement as indicated in the graph below.

Graph 05 : Contribution of different stakeholders in Girinka Program



Source: Data from RAB, deep assessment report.

THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM SO FAR

Girinka program is one of the Home Grown Solutions that is having significant and quick impact on the beneficiaries' households and the community in general. Since its inception in 2006, Girinka program has provided more than 259,087 cows to a cumulative number of 259,087 Rwandan poor families' virtually helping around 1,085,785 lives.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The number of cows distributed in the framework of Girinka program contributed to increase milk production by 89% from 372,619 liters in 2010 to 706,030 liters in 2015⁶. Increase in milk production has also helped to reduce malnutrition in the country and contributes to fighting against poverty in households. The Girinka program has the potential to contribute to crop production and household income. For crop-dairy farmers who are the

⁶Data from MINAGRI/RAB, deep assesment, see also <http://www.umuseke.rw> visited on of 24/08/2016.

Majority in Rwanda, livestock is a source of very much needed fertilizers considering the insufficiency and the cost of inorganic fertilizers. As well, in some households, you could find that after giving out the first calf, some households may sell one cow to purchase a piece of land. Girinka program is thus a productive asset and also improve the livelihood of a farmer⁷.

“In 2006 before I was given a cow from the Girinka program, I had nothing only a small plot given to me by the government (Umudugudu). Right now, I own 10 hectares of land for farming and I've recently added 4 more acres of pine plantation to my collection” said proudly Uzabakiriho Gervais from Gicumbi District, one of the Girinka program beneficiaries. *Thanks to Girinka program.*

Uzabakiriho is a successful farmer/business man who built himself a nice family home and employs over 10 permanent workers⁸. Countrywide, there are plenty of similar cases where Girinka beneficiaries graduated from poverty and started business which in return offered employment opportunities to others especially to young people; thus contributing to the achievement of the EDPRS II target and the Vision 2020.

SOCIAL IMPACT

Girinka program also contributes to improve food security and has health outcomes. According to the 2015 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerable analysis findings, 80% of all households are food secure and 20% are food insecure⁹. The Girinka program has a social cohesion component; furthermore, those who pass on a calf to the next designated beneficiary are deemed to have been bound in lifelong friendship; the gifting of a cow creates a special relationship between the giver and the recipient. For centuries the cow has been considered a symbol of prosperity in Rwanda and was the currency of most socio-economic transactions before colonization. In some areas such as Kitazigurwa Integrated Development Program (IDP) in Rwamagana District, neighbours share the common cowshed.

⁷ Mutarutwa, p53.

⁸ Joseph Mudingu, Girinka program transforms livelihoods, reconciles communities, (WWW,minagri.gov.rw)

⁹<https://www.wfp.org/.../rwanda-comprehensive-food-security-and-vulnerability-analy>.

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GOVERNANCE IMPACT

The way citizens of a given locality (umudugudu) sit together with their leaders and decide on who should be the Girinka beneficiaries, indicates Citizens' participation in government political and socio-economic programs. Girinka program also contributes to environment protection the more grasses or trees are planted to feed those cows; as well, cows' manure increasingly produce biogas and electricity for Rwandan households.