

FORMATIVE PROCESS RESEARCH ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IN TANZANIA

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DOMESTIC WATER SUPPLY: THE NEED FOR A BIG PUSH

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The National Water Policy: Behind Targets

Accessibility to clean and safe water for every household has been seen for decades as a core element of basic needs and human rights. The Government of Tanzania (GoT) has endorsed the UN Millennium Development Goals, including the pledge to reduce by half by the year 2015 the proportion of people who do not have sustainable access to safe drinking water. The GoT's national strategy documents have included more ambitious targets.

In 1971 the GoT established a 20 year water supply programme with the aim of securing access for *every* household to safe and adequate water within a walking distance of 400 metres. By 1986 this had only been achieved for 42 % of the rural population and 65 % of urban households. The GoT formulated a new National Water Policy by 2002, and the targets from 1971 were incorporated in the Tanzania 2025 Development Vision. By 2003 water access as defined above was only achieved for 53 % of the rural and 73 % of the urban populations. In addition, there are concerns with the sustainability of current services as it is alleged that about 30 % of rural schemes are not fully functional.

Research Findings: Dissatisfaction with Domestic Water Supply

Our research indicates that there is high level of dissatisfaction with domestic water supply and that the specified targets may be too ambitious. A citizens' survey conducted amongst six councils (October 2003) showed that the water supply was far behind education and health services in the satisfaction rating. When asked which service is "most important to improve now", domestic



water was the priority. On average 70 % were satisfied with the primary education services and 36 % with the basic health facility (the dispensary), yet only 22 % of the whole sample expressed satisfaction with the water supply.

The citizens were also asked if they had seen any improvements in service delivery over the last two years. 85 % had seen improvements in primary education, 37 % in dispensary services, but only 20 % in the water supply. These responses are supported by other statistics. For example, for the six case councils, only between 0.3 and 2.0 % of total council expenditures are allocated to the water sector.

Variations Across the Councils Surveyed

There are some notable variations across the six case councils. For Iringa District Council (DC) 35 % expressed satisfaction with the water services and 36 % had seen improvements. For Bagamoyo DC, however, only 10 % were satisfied and 11 % had reported improvements. The remaining four councils obtained scores somewhere between, the satisfaction rating for water was 21 % for Mwanza City Council (CC), 20 % for Ilala Municipal Council (MC), 17 % for Moshi DC and 17 % for Kilosa DC.

The council management from all six case councils agreed that the domestic water supply is inadequate, but the challenges at hand are of rather different magnitudes. While the average distance to water for households in Mwanza CC was estimated to be 200 metres (m), the figures for the rural councils range between 400-800 m for Iringa DC, to 800 m for Kilosa DC and 400 m for Moshi DC. (Ilala MC and Bagamoyo DC did not have data). Mwanza CC, Ilala MC, Kilosa DC and Moshi DC reported that about 50 % of the population were served with piped water or wells. (Iringa and Bagamoyo did not have data on this).

These indicators do not say anything about the quality of the service provided. Was the water supply adequate, sustainable (without interruptions and breakdowns), clean and safe? Unfortunately, the case councils did not have reliable information about this. A proxy indicator used to measure the quality of water is the number of cases of waterborne diseases. The situation is alarming in Mwanza CC, with 162,825 cases of such diseases recorded for the year 2000, though this reduced to 109,007 cases two years later. Iringa DC has seen some improvements during the last years – down from 26,211 cases of waterborne diseases in 2000 to 13,900 cases in the year 2002. Kilosa DC reports a stable situation, with 20,200 cases (diarrhoea is prevalent) and 19,444 cases in 2002. Ilala MC reported only 67 cases for the year 2000 and although the number accelerated to almost 2,030 in 2002, this is much lower than for the other councils. (Moshi DC and Bagamoyo DC did not provide data).

Scope for More Community Involvement

The National Water Policy emphasises community driven development. It prescribes participatory planning and cost sharing in the construction, operation and maintenance of community based domestic water supply systems in the rural areas. For urban areas, commercialisation, cost recovery and outsourcing of municipal water companies are pursued. Similarly, the overriding objective of

the Local Government Reform is to restructure the Local Government Authorities so that they “*respond more effectively and efficiently to identified local priorities of service delivery in a sustainable manner*”.

The citizens’ survey reveals that 13 % of all the respondents are or have been involved in a Water Management Committee. This is a very high level of participation. Although it cannot compare with involvement in School Committees (28 %), there is a strong legacy of community involvement in water management. In comparison, 8 % reported participation in public works project committees, 9 % in primary cooperative societies/farmers associations, and 3 % in agricultural/livestock extension contact groups.

Moshi DC stands out for establishing well performing water committees. There are Water Users Associations in each village taking care of water supply services, including the collection of payment for water bills and maintenance. They also prepare monthly progress reports and report any major breakdown of the machinery to the District Water Engineer.

Policy Implications

To meet national and international targets, profound changes need to be seen in the way local governments deal with water. However, there is a potential trade-off between meeting national targets and standards on the one hand, and the needs to promote local council and community level decision-making on the other. Scarcity of finances and other resources tend to emphasise that trade-off. The National Water Policy and Local Government Reform Programme should work together on this issue and consider several complementary measures at the same time.

First of all, sector specific additional resources need to be mobilised. The success of the Primary Education Sector Plan (PEDP), based on national basket funds and earmarked grants to the councils, deserves to be copied. Top-down earmarking of funds and increased technical assistance to local councils for water development are needed. There should be closer national monitoring of the councils’ performance in reaching national targets.

Secondly, increased local autonomy in determining priorities and action plans are needed. The actual needs vary from one district to another, probably to a much larger extent for the water sector than for the primary education sector. For example, some councils need to prioritise increased accessibility, while others should emphasise improved water quality.

Thirdly, there is a potential for enhanced community mobilisation. The high participation in, and prevalence of, water management committees is a big asset for future development. The councils need to improve their participatory planning systems and their capacity to respond to the priorities made by democratic community structures. This requires capacity building for council staff and community committees.

Fourthly, the councils need to be more gender sensitive, since water collection is usually seen as the women’s responsibility. Domestic water supply is to a large extent a gender issue. The gender sensitisation component of the Local Government Reform Programme should include a component for improved water service delivery.

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Other Publications from the Local Government Reform Project:

Special Paper 16: *“Local Government Finances and Financial Management in Tanzania: Observations from Six Councils, 2002 – 2003”*

This special paper is an overview of local government finances and financial management in six councils: Bagamoyo District Council, Ilala Municipal Council, Iringa District Council, Kilosa District Council, Moshi District Council and Mwanza City Council. The data covers the period 2000-2003 and provides a reference point with respect to various dimensions of local government finances and financial management. The following topics are covered in the study: (a) the degree of fiscal autonomy; (b) methods of revenue collection; (c) financial management, including budgeting, accounting and auditing; (d) transparency in fiscal and financial affairs; and (e) tax compliance and fiscal corruption.

Project Briefs:

- LGR1** About the project
- LGR2** New challenges for local government revenue enhancement
- LGR3** Councillors and community leaders – partnership or conflict of interest? Lessons from the Sustainable Mwanza Project
- LGR4** TASAF – a support or an obstacle to local government reform
- LGR5** Fees at the dispensary level: Is universal access being compromised?
- LGR6** Low awareness amongst citizens of local government reforms
- LGR7** Citizens’ access to information on local government finances
- LGR8** Primary education since the introduction of the Primary Education Development Plan
- LGR9** Are fees the major barrier to accessing public health care?
- LGR10** Is the community health fund better than user fees for financing public health care?

These are available in printed form from REPOA, or you can download the documents from our website - go to Research Activities – Local Government Reform.