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Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA)  
P.O. Box 33223, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania  
157 Mgombani Street, Regent Estate  
Tel: +255(0)(22) 270 00 83 / 277 2556  
Fax: +255(0)(22) 277 57 38  
Email: [repa@repa.or.tz](mailto:repa@repa.or.tz)  
Website: [www.repa.or.tz](http://www.repa.or.tz)

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## Local Autonomy and Citizen Participation in Tanzania: From a Local Government Reform Perspective

Amon Chaligha

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RESEARCH ON POVERTY  
ALLEVIATION

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**Local Autonomy and Citizen Participation in Tanzania:  
From a Local Government Reform Perspective**

**Amon Chaligha**

**Special Paper 08.26**



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157 Mgombani Street, Regent Estate  
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Fax: + 255(0)(22)277 57 38  
Email: [repa@repa.or.tz](mailto:repa@repa.or.tz)  
Website: [www.repa.or.tz](http://www.repa.or.tz)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	iv
List of Abbreviations.....	v
Preface.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Executive Summary.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
Methodology.....	2
Good Governance.....	5
Participation in Local Elections.....	19
Recommendations to Improve Citizens' Participation.....	21
Conclusion.....	23
References.....	25
Publications by REPOA.....	27

## List of Tables

Table 1: Participatory Approaches Applied in the Six Case Councils.....	13
Table 2: Attendance at Village and Ward Meetings .....	14
Table 3: Respondents Who Had Participated in Village and Ward Meetings, by Council .....	15
Table 4: Citizens' Perceptions of Influence in the New local Government Planning System.....	16
Table 5: Percentage of Respondents .....	17
Table 6: Reasons for Not Voting in the 1999/2000 Village and Ward Elections .....	19
Table 7: Percentage of Respondents Who Participated in the Last Local Elections, by Council....	20

## List of Abbreviations

CC	City Council
CD	Council Director
CIS	Community Information System
CSO	Community Service Organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DAS	District Administrative Secretary
DC	District Council
DED	District Executive Director
DIPLO	District Planning Officer
LGA	Local Government Authority
LGR	Local Government Reforms
LGRP	Local Government Reform Programme
LGSC	Local Government Service Commission
MC	Municipal Council
MD	Municipal Director
MEMA	<i>Matumizi Endelevu ya Misitu ya Asili</i> (Sustainable Management of Natural Forests)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
O&OD	Opportunities and Obstacles to Development
PEDP	Primary Education Development Plan
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PO-RALG	Presidents' Office - Regional Administration and Local Government
RAS	Regional Administrative Secretary
RC	Regional Commissioner
TASAF	Tanzania Social Action Fund
TzPPA	Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VEO	Village Executive Officer
WDC	Ward Development Committee
WEO	Ward Executive Officer

## **PREFACE**

The Formative Process Research Project is financed by NORAD as part of its support to the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) to closely follow the development of the LGRP. In consultation with the President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), the project is organized on a collaborative basis between the Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA), Dar es Salaam, Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), Bergen, and the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Studies (NIBR), Oslo.

The formative process research focuses on three dimensions of the Local Government Reform in Tanzania, namely:

- (1) Governance: local autonomy and citizen participation.
- (2) Finances and financial management: accountability, efficiency and local resource mobilization.
- (3) Service delivery and poverty alleviation: criteria of success and operational constraints.

This report analyzes data on 'Local Autonomy and Citizen Participation' from six case councils for the period 2000-2004. The report is written by Amon Chaligha from data collected from field visits, the 2003 citizen survey and informants from the case study councils. Data collection was organized by Erasto Ngalewa who also provided background information and reports. Ambrose Kessy, Florida Henjewe and Geoffrey Mwambe were responsible for collecting data from the case councils.

The report greatly benefited from initial comments and suggestions made by the formative study colleagues Odd-Helge Fjeldstad, Deo Mushi, Einar Braathen and Siri Lange. Useful comments and suggestions were also received from anonymous referees. Special thanks go to the Local Government Reform Team (PO-RALG) who made useful comments on formative data presented in debriefing meetings and the contact persons in the case study councils for their assistance and to the many people that we met during our field visits. Points of view in this report are not necessarily that of REPOA but that of the author. All possible errors made in this report also remain my responsibility.

Dar es Salaam  
March 2007

## **ABSTRACT**

The formative process research focuses on three dimensions of the Local Government Reform in Tanzania, namely: Governance: local autonomy and citizen participation; finances and financial management: accountability, efficiency and local resource mobilization and service delivery and poverty alleviation.

This report analyzes data on 'Local Autonomy and Citizen Participation' from six case councils for the period 2000-2004. The case councils are Bagamoyo District Council, Ilala Municipal Council, Iringa District Council, Kilosa District Council, Moshi District Council and Mwanza City Council. The data cover the period 2000-2004. The following themes are discussed in this report: (a) good governance; (b) accountability and transparency of local leaders to the community; (c) local government autonomy and citizen participation; (d) bottom-up planning; (e) participation in local elections. It appears that the key objective of decentralization i.e. to increase citizen participation in planning and implementation of development activities at the local level is yet to be realized. The major problem regarding governance in the six case councils was the lack of enough citizen involvement in formulating council plans. This undermines the ability of the councils to improve the welfare of poor people as envisioned under the Local Government Reform Programme.

Keywords: Tanzania, local government, citizen participation, autonomy, governance, accountability, transparency, bottom-up planning





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Local Government Reform (LGR) aims to promote good governance, and envisages a government that stays close to its people and implements policies that are prepared in close consultation with the people. Within the LGR framework, good governance is considered critical for the betterment of the quality of life of the people of Tanzania and local governments are tasked to ensure citizen participation in improving the welfare of their communities. Citizen participation also helps local governments to earn their legitimacy by encouraging transparency and accountability to their local population.

There are many consequences of poor citizen participation in local governance. This paper however limits itself to citizens' perceptions of their involvement in the planning process. The paper also looks at citizen participation by examining the perceptions of council staff of citizens' involvement in planning because this has a bearing on the willingness of local government bureaucrats to involve citizens and allow them to determine their own destiny as per the LGR programme. Furthermore, the perceptions of elected leaders of citizen involvement in setting their own governance and development agenda are scrutinized.

## Good Governance

In this study good governance refers to the existence of democratic norms accepted and nurtured by citizens and their government. The involvement of citizens in the development of rules and procedures (norms) is crucial. Hence, the government has to be close to its people by involving citizens in the development and implementation of policies and programmes that affect them in their localities.

A government that ensures citizen participation also ensures continuous accountability, transparency, legitimacy and trust. When citizens take an active role in determining and implementing projects their quality of life improves. Under such conditions, citizen participation can be perceived as a prerequisite for poverty reduction.

Consequences of the lack of citizen participation in determining their own destiny can impact upon citizens negatively. Citizens may feel ignored if they are not involved in formulating and implementing projects in their own communities. When they feel that their local authority does not involve them they may feel alienated. Good governance suffers under such circumstances, and democracy is also undermined.

## Accountability and Transparency of Local Leaders to the Community

Citizen participation in local decision-making processes, as envisaged in the LGRP promotes accountability as a precondition for good governance. Increased accountability and transparency in making community decisions regarding the collection and use of council finances is of paramount importance to ensure good governance at the community level. Accountability is here defined in terms of citizens being informed by their local leaders about actions taken on their behalf. When citizens are informed it is assumed they will be able to take corrective measures.

Citizen participation also ensures that government decisions and actions are taken in good faith because citizens are actively engaged in making those decisions. Hence, transparency builds citizen

confidence in their local government and enables them to invest their energies in efforts to improve their quality of life. In this context, transparency is perceived to mean enabling citizens to be aware of what their local government is doing.

Participation in local elections is also important to provide the necessary legitimacy to local authorities. A government that is perceived to be legitimate gains the trust of its citizens and therefore encourages them to participate in decisions and in executing programmes that affect their welfare.

### **Local Government Autonomy and Citizen Participation**

Local Government Reform, (LGR) aim to give local authorities more autonomy to make decisions regarding the welfare of citizens in their localities. Information generated from the six councils indicates that local authorities have not yet been fully empowered to perform their functions and discharge their obligations effectively. This pervasive control indicates a distrust of local authorities by the central government. The lack of trust by the central government also contributes to a lack of trust by local authorities that leads them to feel that they do not have to involve the local communities or to be accountable to them.

In this study there were numerous examples of citizen complaints of lack of accountability and transparency of local government leaders at all levels in within the six case councils. A main area of contention, according to village leaders interviewed and other informants in the case councils, was how the lack of local government accountability to local communities limited citizen response option for collective action. Many villagers and other informants complained that village assemblies were not convened in a transparent manner. For example, villagers would only hear that the village assembly had been held. This denied the villagers the opportunity to query issues that they did not agree with. Consequently, some Village Executive Officers (VEO) were said to write false meeting reports. Such tendencies undermine the integrity of the local authorities in the eyes of citizens.

Furthermore, according to the councilors interviewed in the six councils, local autonomy was limited because local authorities were denied the power to determine not only their own priority in areas of human resources (they lack power to hire and fire senior staff), but also that of revenue generation. Interviews with councilors and council officials revealed that all the six case study councils were unable to meet citizen demands and implement village plans because of lack of power to mobilize adequate finances.

### **Bottom-Up Planning**

Bottom-up planning is perceived as citizen participation in decision making in their respective localities. Generally, bottom-up planning is expected to increase popular participation in setting local plans and priorities. Citizens conceive their own projects and plans, which are implemented by them according to their needs and demands.

Concerns about inadequate participation and lack of local consultation in formulation of policies at the local level and in the entire policy-making process were raised in most of the case councils. Evidence collected from the six case councils suggest that instead of full citizen mobilisation and participation, the tendency had been towards top-down approaches.

Nevertheless, the LGR have succeeded to make local authorities to adopt some forms of bottom-up planning in the case councils. However, the depth of popular participation varied from one council to another depending on factors, such as the provision of economic resources in Ilala MC and Mwanza CC. In poor councils such as Kilosa and Bagamoyo DC, many of the plans identified had not been

implemented due to lack of resources. Participatory planning is further undermined by lack of proper guidelines for implementation. Guidelines prepared by the governance team under the LGRP had not yet reached officials at ward and village levels.

Furthermore, information from the case councils affirm that a system of participatory planning and budgeting has been designed, and PO-RALG has been trying to implement this system. Hence, about 40,000 elected grassroots leaders from 13 regions have been trained. However, according to officials interviewed in the case councils, seminars were held mainly for district officials and few councilors had been trained on the participatory techniques.

Findings on the participation of citizens in the planning process indicated that participation was brief and limited. In some councils like Ilala, Iringa and Kilosa, many interviewees said that village plans did not come from the grassroots. Rather they said the village plans were prepared by local leaders on behalf of the people and then sent to the Ward Development Committees. Such failures of local leaders to adequately involve citizens in the planning process undermined the leader's ability to mobilise people to assume responsibility for financing and managing their social services.

### **Participation in Local Elections**

Elections are important for democratic governance. It is through elections that leaders are placed in office by their citizens. Elections provide legitimacy to the leadership. Participation in local elections varied among the case councils. For example, Kilosa DC had the highest voter turnout (91.4%) in local elections while Ilala MC had the lowest (69.5%). Moreover, 4.8% of respondents in Ilala MC said they were not aware (not informed) about grassroots elections compared to only 1% of those surveyed in Iringa DC, Moshi DC and Mwanza CC, who said they were not informed about these elections. Voter apathy appeared relatively low, ranging from 3.8% in Ilala MC to 0.5% of people in both Iringa DC and Moshi DC.

### **Conclusions**

From the field interviews it can be observed that the current local government reform in the six case councils have not yet worked well enough to promote local autonomy at the grassroots level. Thus, for most of the case councils, participation beyond the village government level has not been well established to give all citizens full participation in the local matters that affect them. There is still lack of a clear mechanism for accountability of local government bureaucrats to their councils. This condition is exacerbated by the continued inability of councils to hire and fire senior council staff.

Bottom-up planning and community participation aim to raise the voices of the poor in determining their own destiny. Generally, the study has found out that the avenues for effective responses to the lack of voice are very limited in the case councils. The reforms have so far not been able to empower local communities to respond to the cases of lack of voice and power in their respective localities. Hence, most of the community complaints noted in this study are about lack of participation in policy formulation and implementation. Community leaders and citizens alike felt left out by the council leadership and the government in general. Findings indicate few citizens at the grassroots level had participated in the planning process.

The lack of citizen involvement in formulating council plans undermines the ability of the councils to improve the welfare of poor people as envisaged under the Local Government Reform Programme. For effective participatory planning at the local level, the central government needs to devolve real decision-making powers to elected councilors.



# INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Local government reform (LGR) aims to promote good governance, and envisages a government that stays close to its people and implements policies that are prepared in close consultation with the people. Within the LGR framework, good governance is considered critical for the betterment of the quality of life of the people of Tanzania, and local governments are tasked to ensure citizen participation in improving the welfare of their local communities. Citizen participation also helps local governments to earn their legitimacy by encouraging transparency and accountability to their local population.

Citizens may feel ignored if they are not involved in policy formulation and implementation, and, if they feel that the Government does not care about them, they may become discouraged with the political process. Under such conditions, citizens can hold negative perceptions of their government and, consequently, good cooperation with their leaders can be inhibited.

There are many consequences of poor citizen participation in local governance. This paper, however, limits itself to citizens' perceptions of their involvement in the planning process. The paper also looks at citizen participation by examining the perceptions of council staff of citizens' involvement in planning, because this has a bearing on the willingness of local government bureaucrats to involve their citizens in local governance and allow them to determine their own destiny. In addition, the perceptions of elected leaders/councillors of citizen involvement in setting their own governance and development agenda are scrutinised. Lastly, since such participation requires clear processes and procedures, this research assesses whether LGR has clear guidelines on bottom-up planning that are relevant and available to all levels of local government, namely, hamlet, village, ward and council.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the outcome of collaborative research between Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA), Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) and the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR). The research is financially supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) through the research programme Formative process research on the local government reform in Tanzania. Earlier versions of the paper were presented at the REPOA annual workshops in March 2004 and 2005. I wish to thank all my Formative Study Colleagues, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad, Deo Mushi, Einar Braathen and Siri Lange who made useful comments in the initial stages of the paper, to Ambrose Kessy, Florida Henjeweles and Godfrey Mwambe for their research assistance, and to Erasto Ngalewa for facilitating the study. Points of view are not necessarily that of REPOA, but that of the author. All possible errors remain entirely my responsibility.

## METHODOLOGY

Data for this study is derived from the 2003 Citizens' Survey (Nygaard and Fjeldstad)<sup>2</sup>, and from interviews with staff of local government authorities, such as District Executive Directors (DEDs), Municipal Directors (MDs), Council Directors (CDs) and District Planning Officers (DIPLOs), conducted during field visits to the six case councils: Iringa District Council, Ilala Municipal Council, Bagamoyo District Council, Moshi Rural District Council, Kilosa District Council, and Mwanza City Council. Other interviews were carried out with various local ('grassroots') elected officials at hamlet, village and ward levels. Council documents and other relevant documents from the Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment (TzPPA) research carried out by the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) were also reviewed.

Thus, two methods of data collection were employed. Primary data was obtained from in-depth semi-structured interviews in 2002, 2003 and the Citizens' Survey conducted in October 2003. Secondary data came from local contact person's reports from the six councils. The in-depth interviews involved key informants (actors in central and local government, civil organisations) who offered an informed perspective on the subject.

### The Six Case Councils

The data was collected from six local councils. Half of the case councils – Ilala Municipal Council, Mwanza City Council and Iringa District Council – have formally taken part in 'Phase 1' of the LGRP. The other three councils are Bagamoyo District Council, Kilosa District Council and Moshi District Council. The case councils were selected on the basis of the following criteria (see the *Inception Report*, 30 October 2002):

- variations in resource bases,
- rural-urban variations,
- degree of inclusion in the LGRP,
- degree of donor presence or support, and
- composition of political parties.

### Bagamoyo District Council

Bagamoyo is one of Tanzania's oldest towns situated 80 km north of Dar es Salaam in the Coast Region, along the Zanzibar Channel. The total area of the district is 9,842 square kms. Its population in 2002 was 230,000, comprising predominantly agriculturalists.

### Ilala Municipal Council

Ilala is one of the three municipal councils within Dar es Salaam City Council. Main economic activities include manufacturing industries, services, trade and agriculture. The total area of the municipality is 210 square kms, of which 20 % is rural area supporting agriculture. Its population according to the 2002 census was 638,000.

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<sup>2</sup> Hereafter, referred to as the Citizens' Survey

### **Mwanza City Council**

Mwanza is Tanzania's second largest city, 1,100 m above sea level, on the southern side of Lake Victoria in the northwest of Tanzania. It has fishing and other industries, but agriculture remains the most important economic activity. The total area of the city is 1,342 square kms, of which 900 square kms is water. Its population in 2002 was 266,000.

### **Iringa District Council**

Iringa lies 1,600 m above sea level in the Southern Highlands, along the main highway between Morogoro and Mbeya. It has experienced a substantial growth in agricultural production in recent years. The majority of the population (95 %) have livelihoods based on agriculture. Iringa Town has a separate municipal council, while the surrounding area is organised in Iringa District Council. The total area of the district (before it was split into two districts in 2004) was 28,457 square kms, and its population in 2002 was 246,000.

### **Kilosa District Council**

Kilosa lies in the Morogoro Region, 220 km west of Dar es Salaam. It was a centre for Tanzania's sisal industry until this industry collapsed in the 1970s. Central parts of Kilosa DC are economically depressed due to collapses in the sisal industry, and more recently, in the sugar industry, while areas located near the main roads to Dodoma and Iringa have experienced increasing economic activity. Total land area is 14,245 square kms. In 2002, its population was 490,000.

### **Moshi District Council**

Moshi is located about 800 m above sea level at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro in the north of the country. Moshi Town has a busy tourist industry and is the centre of one of Tanzania's major coffee growing areas. However, there has been a sharp decline in the revenues from coffee exports in recent years due to falling prices. Moshi Town has a separate municipal council, while the surrounding area is organised in Moshi District Council. The area of the district council is 1,713 square kms, and its population in 2002 was 402,000.



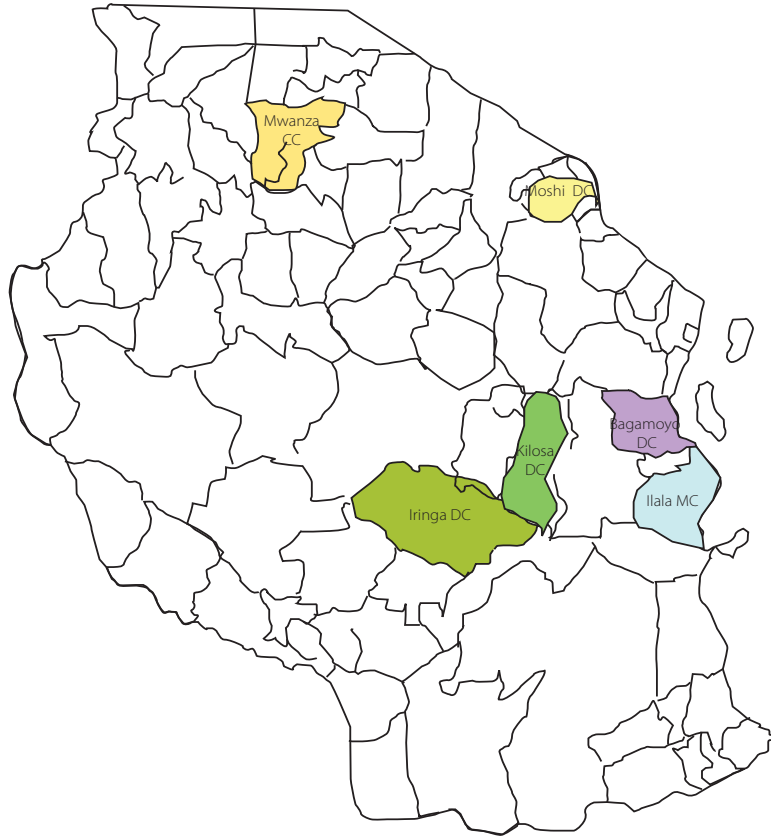
## Map of Tanzania Showing the Six Case Councils

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## GOOD GOVERNANCE

Local autonomy and citizen participation are important aspects of good governance, a critical ingredient in any democratic society. Article 145 of the Tanzanian Constitution states that Local Authorities are created in order to further the course of democracy in Tanzania by empowering citizens in their localities to determine their own destiny. However, Article 146 takes away some powers from citizens and vests them with the central government. Effective central government in Tanzania is, therefore, an imperative for good governance. As one eminent statesman put it, the key to a government's effectiveness is its:

*"...closeness to its people and its responsiveness to their needs and demands, and the means by which its decisions are made and implemented. That all government institutions must be rooted in and appropriate to the society to which they are applied."*

(Nyerere, 1999:2).

Democracy is thus a basic necessity to good governance.

Good governance refers to the existence of democratic norms accepted and nurtured by citizens and their government. Furthermore, in a democracy such a government should be run on *"publicly determined, predictable and increasingly routinized rules of the game."* (Amuwo, 2000:2). The involvement of citizens in the development of these rules and procedures is crucial, i.e., citizens must be actively engaged in the process for developing *"the rules of legitimacy, transparency, accountability and responsibility."* (Carlos, 2001:164). In short, citizens must participate in determining their own destiny.

Good governance therefore requires a *"... legitimate government, one that is properly put in place by the electorate themselves and that stays in close touch with people."* (Amuwo, 2000:2). This means that citizen participation is central to good governance in any society. Hence, a good government can only be close to its people if its policies and programmes are prepared with the involvement of the citizens, who are going to benefit from, or who are going to be affected by, those policies and programmes. Thus, projects or programmes relevant to any community must involve beneficiaries in their localities to guarantee a *"... necessary condition for both economic development and democratization."* (Carlos, 2001:164).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines governance as *"... the complex ensemble of mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and social groupings manage their interests and conflicts."*<sup>3</sup> In addition, the UNDP perceives governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the United Nations generally emphasises that good governance should entail participation, transparency, efficiency, and equity in the application of laws in any given country.<sup>5</sup> The World Bank reiterates this position by stating that Africa's development problems are caused by lack of good governance (state officials using their position for self interest rather than that of citizens). Hence, the World Bank concludes that poverty reduction efforts in Africa will only succeed when good governance take root.<sup>6</sup> From this perspective, governance comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences.

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<sup>3</sup> UNDP, 1996

<sup>4</sup> UNDP, 1997:2-3

<sup>5</sup> Beausang, 2002

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, 1994:2

A government that ensures citizen participation also ensures continuous accountability, transparency, legitimacy and trust. When citizens take an active role in determining and implementing projects their quality of life improves. Under such conditions, citizen participation can be perceived as a prerequisite for poverty reduction.

Consequences of the lack of citizen participation in determining their own destiny can impact upon citizens negatively. Citizens may feel ignored if they are not involved in formulating and implementing projects in their own communities. When they feel that their local authority does not involve them they may feel alienated and conclude that their government does not care about them. They may feel dejected, betrayed, disillusioned and discouraged. Good governance suffers under such circumstances, and democracy is undermined. In short, citizens feel marginalised when they are not involved in the governance of their localities.

### **Accountability and Transparency of Local Leaders to the Community**

Local government reform also aims to promote accountability of local leaders to their communities. Citizen participation in local decision-making processes, as envisaged in the reform, promotes accountability as a precondition for good governance. Increased accountability and transparency in making community decisions regarding the collection and use of council finances is of paramount importance to ensure good governance at the community level. Accountability in this study refers to the transparency, 'answerability', and 'controllability' (Gloppen and Rakner, 2002) of local government officials to their community. Thus, accountability is here defined in terms of citizens being informed by their local leaders about actions taken on their behalf.

Generally, local government leaders are considered to be accountable to their communities when

*"...they exercise their powers in a way that is transparent, in the sense that enables others to see whether all is done in accordance with the relevant rules and mandates; they are answerable in the sense of being obliged to provide reasons for their decisions and actions; and institutional checks or control mechanisms are in place to prevent mismanagement and abuse of power, and ensures that corrective measures are taken in cases where the rules are violated." (Gloppen and Rakner, 2002:31).*

Thus citizens should be able to take corrective measures because they are well informed. This is the essence of the local government reforms.

Citizen participation also ensures that local government decisions and actions are taken in good faith because citizens are actively engaged in making those decisions. Hence, transparency builds citizen confidence in their local government and enables them to invest their energies in efforts to improve their quality of life. In this context, transparency is perceived to mean enabling citizens to be aware of what their local government is doing.

Citizen participation is also said to inculcate a sense of ownership in local programmes and projects. A sense of ownership is required to ensure the sustainability of development activities, without which all invested resources would be a waste. The study, "Rural Grassroots Politics"<sup>7</sup> indicates that ownership may determine the success or failure of a programme, and hence, the success or failure of a particular group. Thus, projects which

*"...sprang from the initiative of the local people tended to do well while those which sprang from donors ceased to exist as soon as the donors wound up their activities in the locality or stopped giving aid." (Mushi, 2001:14).*

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<sup>7</sup> Mushi, 2001

Citizen participation is thus critical for democracy and sustainable development and the improvement in the quality of life of society.

Citizen participation for sustainable development is also in line with academic opinion, that development is a process by which people determine their own destiny. For scholars like Ake, development is:

*"...something that people must do for themselves. If people are the end of development, they are also necessarily its agent and its means."*<sup>8</sup>

Hence, participation becomes imperative for democratic governance and for sustainable development. Without participation, communities may never attain a better quality of life in their local areas.

In this study, local governance is perceived as a basic democratic process, which involves citizens in decision making to formulate and implement programmes aimed at improving their welfare. Citizens must therefore feel that their local governments are capable of making independent decisions that have citizen inputs, and that citizen inputs are reflected in council plans. Participation in local elections is also important to provide the necessary legitimacy to local authorities. A government that is perceived to be legitimate gains the trust of its citizens and therefore encourages them to participate in decisions affecting their welfare.

## **Local Government Autonomy and Citizen Participation**

Local government autonomy is necessary if citizens are to feel empowered to take their destiny in their own hands. Each level of government (local and national) should have the same status under the Constitution. However, it is difficult to talk of local government autonomy in a polity where local authorities derive their power and authority from the central government legislature (Tanzanian Parliament/National Assembly) rather than from the Constitution itself. Under this system, the status of local government is determined by its relationship with the central government. The Constitution places local authorities under the control of rules and procedures established by the National Assembly, so local authorities have no powers, except those granted by the laws establishing them<sup>9</sup>.) Thus, local governments are generally perceived to operate strictly under laws made by the central government, since it is the central government which proposes legislation passed by Parliament (the National Assembly). Therefore the constitutional status of local governments in Tanzania implies a high degree of control by the central government.

Local Government Reform, (LGR) however, envisage relations between the central government and local authorities to be characterised by consultations and negotiations with, and support from, central government ministries. According to the policy paper on local governments, *"...directive powers of Government vis-à-vis local councils are restricted to legal regulations with local government decisions."*<sup>10</sup> In practice, however, central government still appears to approve most of the important deliberations of local governments in Tanzania. This takes place through the offices of the District Commissioner (DC), the Regional Commissioner (RC), and, eventually, the ministry responsible for local government.

Information generated from the six councils surveyed indicates that local authorities have not yet been fully empowered to perform their functions and discharge their obligations effectively. This could be an indicator for a distrust of local authorities by the central government. Should there be such a lack of trust by the central government then this could also contribute to a lack of trust by

<sup>8</sup> Ake, 1996:125

<sup>9</sup> Goldsmith, et al, 1987:71

<sup>10</sup> URT, 1998a:viii

local authorities that may result in the local authorities feeling that they do not have to involve the local communities or be accountable to them. That is, local governments may also lack trust in central government and in communities that they are supposed to serve.

There were numerous examples of citizen complaints of the lack of accountability and transparency of local government leaders at all levels within the six case councils. A main area of contention, according to village leaders interviewed and other informants in the case councils, was how the lack of local government accountability to local communities limited citizen response options for collective action. Perhaps, people sensed that their capacity to respond to collective problems was limited when local governments were ineffective, and therefore unable to fulfill the needs and demands of the local citizenry.

Furthermore, weak grassroots governments also tend to exacerbate the lack of accountability. In many places, villagers and other informants complained that village assemblies were not convened in a transparent manner. For example, villagers would only hear that the village assembly had been held. This in a way denied the villagers the opportunity to query issues that they did not agree with. In some instances, village assemblies did not meet regularly. Sometimes Village Executive Officers (VEO) were said to write false meeting reports. These failures are indicative of poor governance that denies citizens the opportunity to determine their own destiny, as envisaged by the Local Government Reform. Such tendencies also undermine the integrity of the local authorities in the eyes of citizens if they are not stopped.

There are also a number of policy and legal requirements that seem to prevent local authorities from becoming accountable to local people. Indeed, most councillors and council staff interviewed as part of this research project responded that there was still considerable control over local government decision making. Such control was exercised through the grant system, which set minimum national standards requiring local authorities to frame their budgets according to guidelines and procedures as laid out by the central government. This observation was confirmed in interviews with the District Administrative Secretaries (DASs) in Kilosa, Bagamoyo and Iringa, who said that central government regulations, structures and directives had to be followed by local authorities. One senior central government District Officer said that:

*"...if we give them [local government] more autonomy, they would not work properly... there is a need to educate the councillors much ... more and more time is needed before the central government can withdraw..."*

It was also observed from interviews that the power of the local councils to hire and fire their own senior staff was still very limited. Vacancies for senior positions must be advertised through the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC), which conducts the interviews and carries out the selection process on behalf of councils. The City government in Mwanza complained of being frustrated by the LGSC in its effort to recruit a person for the position of an economist. The City was however able to resist a candidate that was not their choice, but was selected and being imposed by the LGSC. Consequently, the position remained vacant for a very long period, which affected city programmes. This situation is contrary to the Reform Agenda, which promotes the development of strong and effective local government institutions through the recruitment of sufficient numbers of qualified and motivated staff by the local authorities themselves.

Furthermore, according to the councillors interviewed in the six councils, local government authorities (LGAs) were denied the power to determine not only their own priority in areas of human resources, but also that of revenue generation. The recent abolition of the so called "nuisance taxes", such as crop cess and the Development Levy by the central government, without prior adequate consultation with local authorities, is a case in point. Consequently, interviews with councillors and council

officials indicated that all the six councils were unable to meet citizen demands and implement village plans because of the lack of reliable sources of revenue. It seems that the lack of fiscal and administrative autonomy (i.e., lack of power to mobilize adequate finances and to hire and fire senior staff) undermined the motivation and ability of councils to ensure effective citizen participation in the case councils.

However, the failure of local leaders to involve citizens in decision making also, undermined their ability to mobilise people to take responsibility for financing their social services. People in the six case councils remarked that due to the lack of participation in local government decision making process, there was a lot of resistance to paying local taxes, which further reduced the ability of the councils to meet the needs and demands of citizens.

The council staff interviewed also indicated that local authorities were only empowered at the local level in terms of the implementation of social service priorities set by the central government such as education, health, water etc. According to officials interviewed from all six case councils, the central government still set priorities for social services to be provided by the councils. This undermines the ability of councils to set their own service delivery priorities in accordance with citizens' demands as per village plans. Moreover, councillors and council employees in the case councils said that they had to follow central government priorities rather than those of the villages because the central government finances most of the public services provided by their councils. Village governments on the other hand lacked funds to implement their own village priorities

The Central Government intervention to abolish many local government taxes may have good intentions to foster good governance in light of the high level of poverty among the citizens and the alleged abuses inflicted on poor people by tax collectors. However, these intentions are complicated by the LGR which require local authorities to be more autonomous in revenue mobilisation, so as to enable them take on more and more responsibilities. Furthermore, the main reform goals with respect to local government financing are to:

*"...increase the resources available to Local Government Authorities and improve the efficiency of their use."<sup>11</sup>*

Thus, abolition of local government taxes undermines their fiscal autonomy and their ability to provide improved public services envisaged in the reforms.

It is, however, public knowledge that the Central Government is aware that the current financial arrangements are biased in favour of the Central Government. The Local Government Reforms are meant to correct this imbalance. The abolition of many sources of local government revenue must be followed by a different local government financing protocol. The policy paper on LGRs points out that

*"...it is crucial for the success of the reforms of both central and local government that sources and revenues are divided fairly, efficiently and transparently giving local governments realistic revenue sources. Those public revenues are increased and that these revenues are used to improve service delivery. The present system of allocating sources and revenues does not meet these criteria."<sup>12</sup>*

Hence, citizens may positively receive the abolition of nuisance taxes but unless alternative sources of funding are identified, the decentralisation of local governance, as espoused in the policy reform documents, will not be realised. This will be most detrimental, to the ability of local authorities to provide adequate quality public services, which is the main reason for the Local Government Reform.

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<sup>11</sup> URT, 1998b:A1

<sup>12</sup> URT, 1998b:22-23

The Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) in the case councils has, to some extent, brought changes to local autonomy. Councils have been empowered through workshops involving councillors and council staff. For example, some new forms of relationship between Central Government and the local authorities regarding human resources development and service delivery have been developed. However, these developments have not been enough to give full powers to local authorities to discharge their functions and ensure full citizen participation as envisaged in the reforms.

## **Bottom-up Planning**

Decentralisation aims to increase the accountability of local government to their local community. This kind of accountability is facilitated by bottom-up planning. In this regard bottom-up planning is perceived as citizen participation in decision making in their respective localities, or, in other words, planning from the grassroots level. Generally, bottom-up planning is expected to increase popular participation in setting local plans and priorities. Citizens conceive their own projects and plans, which are implemented by them according to their needs and demands. Therefore, bottom-up planning demands serious citizen consultation and participation in determining and implementing local plans and policies that suit local needs and priorities.

Concerns about inadequate participation and a lack of local consultation in the formulation of policies at the local level and in the entire policy-making process were raised in most of the case councils. It may be reiterated that inadequate citizen participation carries with it the risk that formulated policies and plans may push people towards impoverishment because their needs and aspirations are ignored except those of the leadership at council head offices.

It is a recognised fact that public policies play an important role in poverty reduction interventions, and can have a strong impact on reducing the incidence of poverty if they do not discriminate or ignore the poor. Therefore, the failure to integrate poor and vulnerable groups into the development process is a matter of serious concern.

Citizen participation at the grassroots level can be made possible through Village Assemblies, School Committees and Ward Development Committees (WDCs). The laws, (1982 and the revised edition 2000), establishing district and urban councils provides that the WDC is responsible for initiating and promoting participatory development in the ward, including formulating tasks or enterprises designed to ensure the welfare and well being of all residents of the ward.

How people and communities participate in policy formulation and in the governance of their country is thus critical for policy effectiveness and for enhancing local ownership and sustainability of programmes. As mentioned earlier, concerns about inadequate participation or local consultation in the formulation of policies and implementation at the local government level were raised by all six case councils visited. Inadequate participation carries the risk of alienating the intended beneficiaries of the policies and programmes. The LGRP was intended to correct this situation.

Indeed, information gathered on field visits to the six case councils suggests that people's participation was not given adequate emphasis. Rather, evidence suggests to the contrary, that instead of full citizen mobilisation and participation, the tendency had been towards top-down approaches. Moreover, even where villagers were involved, the tendency was partial involvement only i.e. collecting information or informing villagers of decision made by their government on their behalf. Some ward officials interviewed in Moshi DC commented that people were not fully involved in planning and in implementing their own projects, nor were they involved in the follow-up and evaluation of project activities in their local areas.

According to some of these officials, people in their respective wards were not involved in determining how much money was needed and required to be collected for rehabilitating classes under the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP)<sup>13</sup> projects, nor were they informed of how many people did or did not contribute and what actions were taken against those who did not contribute. These problems occurred despite the existence of school committees in their wards. Similar findings were made in the Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment TzPPA 2002/3<sup>14</sup> studies which concluded that a lack of citizen involvement in policy formulation had led some people to conclude that the government needed them only during election campaigns.

The field interviews in August 2003 indicated that participatory planning or bottom-up planning had been attempted in the case councils. The most popular approach has been the community information system (CIS) mentioned earlier, where information is either gathered from the community or is given to them by council officials. However, the depth of popular participation varied from one council to another depending on factors, such as the provision of economic resources in Ilala MC and Mwanza CC. In poor councils such as Kilosa DC and Bagamoyo DC, many of the plans identified had not been implemented due to a lack of resources.

According to one Ilala Municipal officer, participatory planning was introduced in July 2002 and this had led to improvements in budgeting procedures. For annual plans, Ilala Municipal Council received plan inputs-priorities by using Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O&OD) from the WDC on the basis of their three-year rolling plan. O&OD is a participatory planning tool designed by the President's Office-Regional Administration (PO-RALG) and Local Government to 'identify local priorities'. Heads of departments in Ilala MC prepared sector plans, taking into consideration WDC plans and the guidelines from the PO-RALG and the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS). These plans were forwarded to the Council Standing Committees for deliberation and approval. From there, the plans were submitted to the Regional Secretariat and discussed at a consultative meeting. Feedback was then presented to the Council's Finance Committee which approves the plans before they are forwarded to a meeting of the full council during which the Annual Budget Plan is approved. NGOs and donors are also invited to participate in the planning process. The approved budgets were announced in the local newspapers to ensure transparency and to inform citizens.

Similarly, in Iringa DC, participatory planning was used to identify citizens' priorities. According to the WEO for Ulanda Ward, plans are developed at the village level, which are then submitted to the ward. The WDC then scrutinises the problems identified by different villages to determine which problems are most pressing and common to all the villages. Then they integrate the priorities to formulate the single-year Ward Development Plan, which is subsequently submitted to the District Executive Director (DED).

Despite these examples of bottom-up planning, a finance official from Ilala perceived problems in prioritising. The WEOs, councillors, and representatives of CSOs and NGOs all took part. However, ordinary people were invited to the presentation of quarterly reports in the full council when decisions had already been made. Nevertheless, according to another municipal officials, villagers/citizens were supposed to be informed through meetings and seminars. Despite the good intentions, participatory planning now works 'fifty-fifty' only. These sentiments were also corroborated by a ward official, who remarked that the planning system was still in practice top-down rather than bottom-up as envisaged in the reforms. For this ward official, education priorities were still dictated from the sectoral ministry through the Regional Education Officer (REO) and the District Education Officer (DEO). This made implementation of programmes difficult since sometimes local priorities were ignored.

<sup>13</sup> The PEDP is a five-year plan to achieve universal basic (seven-year) education by 2006, nine years ahead of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target. As part of the plan, government abolished school fees in primary schools.

<sup>14</sup> Research and Analysis Working Group (2004) "Vulnerability and Resilience to Poverty in Tanzania: Causes, Consequences and Policy Implications. 2002/03 Tanzania Participatory Poverty Assessment (TzPPA): Main Report".



According to a councillor from Ilala MC, participatory planning means knowing what people want in their respective areas. However, sometimes even councillors were not informed on many activities carried out at the ward level. Problems were only identified by councillors in official meetings, and by that time, council plans had been approved.

Perhaps the major limitation of bottom-up planning according to a WEO from Ilala MC was that villagers only participated in planning through their Village Assembly. Village Chairpersons sat with their people to discuss their problems, which are then taken to the WEO. However, distance and a lack of transport facilities hindered people from attending WDC meetings. Another WEO (also from Ilala MC) concluded that very few changes were on the ground because directives were still coming from the municipal council headquarters instead of starting from the village, and flowing upwards to the ward and council, as the LGR dictates. The issue of meetings is also examined below in discussion of the results of the Citizens' Survey.

The District Administrative Secretary (DAS) of one council was also of the opinion that, in principle, participatory planning was good, but in practice, it was difficult to implement because the main stakeholders were not fully represented at the ward level. Furthermore, according to the DAS, this problem was exacerbated by the fact that local grassroots leaders are weak. Improvement in bottom-up planning is therefore only possible and feasible if all grassroots leaders are trained.

Similarly, in Moshi DC, implementation of bottom-up planning was practiced but was undermined by a lack of funds. According to a community development officer for Moshi DC, implementation of bottom-up planning was not encouraging due to a lack of funds to finance all the projects planned. Similarly, according to a Village Executive Officer (VEO) from Iringa DC, funding was also a constraint to participatory planning because people did not like to participate in projects that were not funded. In addition, a Moshi Councillor commented that participatory planning was low in the Moshi DC due to a lack of funds, but also because villagers were not fully involved. Village governments planned budgets and then read the plans to villagers without giving them room for challenges and contributions.

Kilosa DC had lengthy experience of participatory planning. According to a senior council official for Kilosa, bottom-up planning started with Irish Aid, which introduced step-by-step procedures for involving villagers in Irish-funded projects. Council officials in Kilosa had also received training on participatory planning. 9 teams of facilitators with 3 in each team, 117 villagers trained in total. All 39 villages were covered, and in each village 10 people were selected for the O&OD Committee after relevant training. The villagers received seven days of training and were then given eleven days to produce a village plan. However, feedback to the researchers was that participatory planning in Kilosa DC was constrained by a lack of funds and a lack of capacity to implement village plans.

Similarly, according to an official of the Urban Planning and Environment Committee in the Mwanza CC, the people of Mwanza were also involved from street to the council level. However, the main constraint had been the lack of funds to implement neighbourhood (*mtaa*) and village level plans which had frustrated citizens. The same sentiments were expressed by a councillor from Bagamoyo DC who opined that, because of a lack of funds, the council only respected the ward's plans if they fitted with the council plans.

In addition, participatory planning is further undermined by lack of proper guidelines for implementation. According to one Moshi WEO, participatory planning started in 2002. However, no guidelines for participatory planning had been given to the ward officials, hence, ward officials were applying their previous experience and college training. Guidelines prepared by the governance team on citizen participation had not yet reached officials at ward and village level.

Nevertheless, there were some positive sentiments from councillors that participatory planning had given people some confidence to believe that the system takes into account their issues, such as security, health programmes, education, etc. In prioritising, citizens were given chances to explain their areas of priorities, and councillors had a duty to explain about the use of the taxes collected from citizens. Moreover, according to one *kitongoji* (hamlet) leader in Iringa DC, planning had changed a lot because they had received training and had participated in planning for their hamlet (*kitongoji*). The hamlet committee made a plan for activities and then presented the plan to a hamlet meeting for discussion and approval.

It can thus be discerned from the experience gained from findings that planning system in the case councils indicate that there was little capacity for planning at local levels. The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) had been very successful in some councils, such as Ilala MC, Kilosa DC, Mwanza CC and Moshi DC. However, according to some respondents, bottom-up planning was still an ad hoc exercise which was carried out by a few experts that could not and did not reach all the people in the councils. Thus, the practice was still more top-down planning system than the intended bottom-up approach. According to some officials interviewed in Iringa, Kilosa and Mwanza, bottom-up planning was only possible if grassroots governments have money and expertise. However, council bureaucrats currently view bottom-up planning as an opportunity for villagers to prepare 'shopping lists' to be forwarded to councils which lack financial resources to implement recommended programmes. Table 1 indicates the participatory approaches used in the six case councils.

**Table 1: Participatory Approaches Applied in the Six Case Councils**

Council	Participatory Rural Appraisal	Community Information System (CIS)	Opportunities and Obstacles to Development
Bagamoyo DC	Applied	Applied	Not Applied
Ilala MC	Not Applied	Applied	Not Applied
Iringa DC	Applied	Applied	Applied
Kilosa DC	Applied	Applied	Applied
Moshi DC	Not Applied	Applied	Not Applied
Mwanza CC	Applied	Applied	Applied

Source: Councils' contact persons

On the other hand, it must be emphasised that the LGRP has brought a number of changes to the planning system. A system of participatory planning and budgeting has been designed, and PO-RALG has been trying to implement this system in all local authorities. For example, about 40,000 elected grassroots leaders from 13 regions have been trained in an effort to promote good governance<sup>15</sup>. However, according to officials interviewed in the case councils, seminars were held mainly for district officials and few councillors had been trained on the participatory techniques. In most of the councils visited, a number of seminars on good governance had been organised by the ministry responsible for local government and by LGR teams.

Furthermore, the O&OD planning model which is used by the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) to plan its projects seemed to be the major approach which citizens had come to understand. The legitimacy of this approach comes from the fact that TASAF projects are directed towards poverty eradication and the Fund has resources from the Government to implement local development priorities.

<sup>15</sup> URT, 2002

However, according to the Council Executive Directors in the six case councils, they use Community Information System (CIS) to gather information from the hamlets, the villages and wards. Most information is collected by Community Development Officers posted in different wards. The Ward Councillor also collects information from the community during Ward Development Committee (WDC) meeting and during meetings with villagers and passes this information to the council. CIS was intended to “facilitate higher levels of participation in which local people maintain significant control over the development process”<sup>16</sup> in their locality. Nevertheless, the CIS as used by various councils was a more passive form of participation where local people were mostly used for self-mobilization<sup>17</sup> especially to execute PEDP programs. Thus, ordinary citizens do not feel that they participate in the planning process but rather used to execute plans developed elsewhere.

Citizen participation in local governance is necessary for democracy to be nurtured and to grow. Participation is facilitated through bottom-up planning, which, as discussed earlier, is made possible through community meetings. Attending community meetings was therefore assessed in the Citizens’ Survey.

The Citizens’ Survey indicated that a larger share of people who had heard about the local government reform programme had also participated in village and ward meetings (see Table 2 below). This is an encouraging development because village plans and priorities are determined in these village meetings.

**Table 2: Attendance at Village and Ward Meetings**

(% of all respondents)

	Participated In Meetings %	Did Not Participate In Meetings %	Didn't Know %
Heard about LGR	49.2	50.3	0.5
Had not heard about LGR	35.7	62.9	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>57.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>

Source: Citizens’ Survey

The Citizens’ Survey as summarised in Table 2 above indicates that those who have heard about the local government reforms are also more likely to participate in community meetings. Thus, where as nearly half (49.2%) of all those who had heard about the reforms participated in meetings, while only 36% of those who had not heard about the reforms attended meetings where policy issues were discussed. But it is not certain whether those who went to meetings became more aware of the LGRP, or if the knowledge of LGRP urged them to participate.<sup>18</sup>

Citizen participation in community meetings varied across case councils. Table 3 indicates that, in Moshi DC, 44% of respondents that had heard of the reforms had attended community meetings, followed by Bagamoyo DC (35 %) of respondents). Only 25 % of respondents in Ilala MC and Iringa DC attended community meetings, who had also heard about the reforms. It can also be observed that Mwanza CC had more people (26%) attending community meetings although they had not heard about the reforms, compared with Moshi DC (20.5%) and Ilala MC (16.5%). Iringa DC had the lowest number of people (9.0%) attending community meetings without having heard about the reforms. For details see Table 3.

<sup>16</sup> Miltin,D &Thompson, J., 1995:235

<sup>17</sup> Pretty, J.N., Thompson, J.& Kiara J.K.,1995:8-14

<sup>18</sup> Formative Process Research, (2003).

**Table 3: Respondents Who Had Participated in Village and Ward Meetings, by Council**

(% of all respondents)

Council	Heard About LG Reform and Participated in Meeting		Not Heard About LG Reform and Participated In Meeting	
	Yes %	No %	Yes %	No %
Ilala MC	25.3	74.7	16.5	83.5
Bagamoyo DC	35.1	64.9	14.2	85.8
Kilosa DC	34.5	65.5	15.4	84.6
Iringa DC	25.0	75.0	9.0	91
Moshi DC	44.1	55.9	20.5	79.5
Mwanza CC	33.6	66.4	26.3	73.7

Source: Citizens' Survey

Many people who were interviewed in the six councils also expressed their good faith with the proposed bottom-up approach, especially in places where the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) system had been practiced. According to one council official in Iringa, the council did not effectively communicate with villagers prior to PRA. During field visits in both Iringa and Kilosa, council officials commented that PRA was an appealing practical approach that used local people to solve some of their problems. The PRA is more appealing to communities because it "demonstrates to, and reinforces within these communities, the breadth, depth and validity of their own understanding of their needs and priorities"<sup>19</sup>.

The PRA system seemed to be more practiced in rural areas such as Kilosa and Bagamoyo than in urban areas, such as Ilala and Mwanza. One reason that could explain this variation centres on the issue of geographical proximity of villagers. For example, it is difficult to plan in areas where inhabitants come from different areas and who have different priorities, as is the case in urban areas.

Findings on the participation of citizens in the planning process indicated that participation was brief and limited. In some councils like Ilala, Iringa and Kilosa, many interviewees said that village plans did not come from the grassroots. The village plans were prepared by local leaders on behalf of the people and then sent to the Ward Development Committees. For example, in Iringa DC, some informants alleged that at one point some village leaders wrote up minutes from village meetings that never took place and sent these fictional reports to the higher authorities. This example indicates that local people were not always involved in the planning or in decision making processes, even though this is claimed officially to be so.

The lack of involvement leads to lack of transparency and accountability which is also said to contribute to conflicts that increased citizen vulnerability and exacerbated material poverty at the community level. According to a council employee of the Kilosa District, the lack of transparency and participation resulted in land conflicts that, in turn, led to the destruction of property and loss of life in the district. In Kihesa Ward, Iringa District the water infrastructure was also said to have been destroyed; a consequence of which was also cited as a major stumbling block towards poverty eradication in the district (TzPPA, June 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Miltin, D. & Thompson J, 1995:240.

There were also instances where some villagers in Moshi District Council, Bagamoyo District Council, Kilosa and Iringa District Councils complained that village government officials misused their contributions by spending money on non-priority activities that had not been discussed in village assemblies and consented to by all the villagers. To overcome this problem, the villagers recommended that whenever planning and economic committees approved new projects, the entire community should participate and be informed of the decision and the details of the project costs be known before implementation. Their argument was simple: it is the people who contribute both money, labour and materials for completion of the planned activities, so it is only proper that they are also involved in approving the planned activities, including their financing and management modalities.

Efforts to develop bottom-up planning often take place within the framework of externally funded projects, for example, TASAF funded by the World Bank/Government, and Matumizi Endelevu ya Misituyu Asili (MEMA) funded by DANIDA. Such programmes are therefore isolated from the strategic planning of local authorities. For example, when funding is available in one council, local priorities may be re-directed to take advantage of the available funding without specifically taking into consideration the local priorities. Not surprisingly, people are more willing to participate in well-funded projects which produce immediate impacts, than in projects that do not have enough funds. In spite of all these challenges, many people have shown their interest to participate whenever mobilised to do so by local council officials.

It may also be pointed out that local government reforms have increased participation in programs initiated from below. The Citizens Survey<sup>20</sup> summarized in Table 4 indicates that a majority of respondents who had heard about the reforms believed they had more influence in the planning system proposed by the reforms than those who had not.

**Table 4: Citizens’ perceptions of influence in the new local government planning system**

% of all respondents

Description	Do You Think You Have Influence and Your Views Can Get Through in the New Planning System?			
	Yes %	No %	50-50 %	Don't Know %
Heard about LGR	53.5	26.8	13.3	6.4
Not heard about LGR	36.6	39.6	12.9	10.8

Source: Citizens’ Survey

Perceptions varied among councils on whether the reforms would lead to more popular participation in the planning process, as shown in Table 5. Thus, eight in ten (88%) of those interviewed in Mwanza CC who had heard about the reforms thought that the reforms would lead to more popular participation in the planning process. However, not having heard about the reforms in Mwanza did not make a big difference given that almost eight in ten (78.9%) of those interviewed also believed that the reforms would lead to more popular participation in the planning process.

Moshi District Councils also had a very optimistic population with 78.5 % of respondents who had heard about the reforms also believing the reforms would lead to more popular participation in the planning process. Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of those surveyed (63%) who had not heard about

<sup>20</sup> The Citizens’ Survey was conducted in October 2003. It covered 42 wards in the six case councils and 1,260 respondents in total.

the reforms in Moshi DC also believed that the reforms would lead to more citizen participation in the planning process.

**Table 5: Percentage of Respondents Who Thought that the Local Government Reform Would Lead to More Popular Participation in Planning Process**

Council	Heard About LG Reform			Not Heard About LG Reform		
	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Ilala MC	67.4	17.9	14.7	60.9	21.7	17.4
Bagamoyo DC	76.3	11.3	12.4	60.2	14.2	25.7
Kilosa DC	72.4	17.2	10.3	65.0	21.1	13.8
Iringa DC	71.6	22.7	5.7	59	23.8	17.2
Moshi DC	78.5	15.1	6.5	63.2	8.5	28.2
Mwanza CC	88.1	4.5	7.5	78.9	6.6	14.5

Source: Citizens' Survey

Opinions differed substantially between those who had heard and those who had not heard about the reforms in Iringa DC. Whereas 71.6 % of those who had heard about the reforms in Iringa DC believed that the reforms would lead to more citizen participation in the planning process, only 59 % of those who have not heard about the reforms thought that the reforms would lead to more citizen participation in the planning process. Therefore, more effort may be required to inform the residents of Iringa DC on the importance of the reforms and how they can lead to popular citizen participation in the planning process. For further comparisons among the six case councils, see Table 5.

Weakness in local mobilisation has led to some negative attitudes toward participatory planning in the case councils. Moreover, weak grassroots governments also exacerbated a lack of accountability. Reportedly, in many places, village assemblies were not convened in a transparent manner to the extent that villagers would hear of village assemblies only after the meetings had been held. This effectively denied villagers the opportunity to query issues that they did not agree with. Where village assemblies did not meet regularly, villagers were similarly denied the opportunity to influence local plans. Some grassroots leaders also voiced concern over their lack of participation in decision making. These indicators of poor governance, if not corrected, challenge the credibility of local leadership in the eyes of the citizens and further undermine the essence of local government reform.

Failure of local leaders to involve citizens in decision making undermined their (the leaders') ability to mobilise people to assume responsibility for financing and managing their social services. According to some councillors in Moshi Rural DC, the lack of participation in local government decision making process, led to a lot of resistance in paying local taxes including contributions for public services, such as education. However, council bureaucrats on their part alleged that this problem was compounded by some politicians who discouraged members of certain political parties from contributing money and labour for any public projects including health care, education, water and even roads, by arguing that it was the duty of the government to provide public services. Citizen mobilisation and participation becomes a political imperative under such conditions.

Lack of equitable representation of women also appeared to undermine citizen participation in

the case councils. It is reiterated that one of the most important elements of governance is the participation by different groups in the decision making process at the community level. According to community development officers and women councillors interviewed in all six case councils, there was poor representation of women in the high echelons of councils. Women councillors in Bagamoyo and Moshi DCs felt that women were not adequately represented at the district and community levels, hence their contribution to decision making process at the village, ward, and ultimately, council level was limited. Nevertheless, due to the constitutional quota system in local elections, more women were represented in village governments and their ideas were well respected.

## PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

Elections are important for democratic governance. It is through elections that leaders are placed in office by their citizens the introduction of multiparty politics has expanded the democratic space for more effective popular participation. A large turnout for voter registration and for voting on polling days in the 1995, 2000 and 2005 general elections suggests that Tanzanians no longer regard voting as a formality. In 1995 the number of registered voters for the whole of Tanzania was 8,929,969. The number of actual voters was 6,846,681 which equal to 76.7% of registered voters.<sup>21</sup> The number of voters almost doubled in the 2005 general elections. Hence, in the 2005 elections "15,919,749 Voters were registered out of 16,578,466 estimated Voters and this was equal to 96.03 percent of the target"<sup>22</sup> compared to 10,088,348 voters registered for the 2000 Presidential, Parliamentary and Councillor's Elections, equivalent to 97 percent of the estimated voters<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, out of the 16,401,694 registered voters for the 2005 elections, 11, 875, 927 voters, equivalent to 72.4 % turned out to vote.

In local government elections held in 2000, a total of 9,642,372 citizens registered for voting. The number of citizens who actually turned out on polling day was 6,877,152 equivalent to about 71%. This can be regarded as a high turnout. This was also reflected in the Citizens' Survey, where 81 % (1,023 out of the 1,260 people interviewed) of respondents said they had participated in the 1999 village, hamlet and neighbourhood elections, as well as the 2000 Ward Councillor elections. Table 6 indicates that only 16 % of the respondents were not interested in grassroots elections while only 11 % of the respondents said they were not aware of the grassroots elections.

Only a few respondents indicated other reasons for not voting, such as 'not interested in elections', political justifications, or 'vote does not matter'. This is a strong indication that people have started seeing the importance of practicing their democratic rights.

**Table 6: Reasons for Not Voting in the 1999/2000 Village and Ward Elections**

(number of respondents)

Description		Reason For Not Voting In The Last Ward Election (%)							Total
		Voted	Not Interested	Not Aware	Political Justification	Vote Does Not Matter	Below Age 18	Others	
Reason for not voting in the last village election	Voted	1,023	2	1	-	3	-	13	1,042
	Not interested	4	16	-	-	-	1	-	21
	Not aware	7	-	11	1	-	1	2	22
	Impeded from voting	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Political justification	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	4
	Vote does not matter	3	-	1	1	15	-	-	20
	Was below age 18	1	-	-	-	-	42	-	43
	Other	34	2	1	-	-	1	69	107
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,075</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>1,260</b>	

Source: Citizens' Survey

<sup>21</sup> URT, 1997:65.

<sup>22</sup> URT, 2006:38.

<sup>23</sup> URT, 2003:20.



Participation in local elections varied among the case councils, as shown in Table 7. For example, Kilosa DC had the highest voter turnout (91.4%) in local elections while Ilala MC had the lowest (69.5%). Moreover, 4.8 % of respondents in Ilala MC said they were not aware (not informed) about grassroots elections compared to only 1 % of those surveyed in Iringa DC, Moshi DC and Mwanza CC, who also said they were not informed about these elections. Voter apathy, i.e., respondents that did not vote because they felt their vote did not matter, was relatively low, ranging from 3.8 % in Ilala MC to 0.5 % of people in both Iringa DC and Moshi DC. Thus, there is still the need for more concerted efforts to ensure increased voter and civic education. Citizens must be made aware that in a democracy every single vote counts and that, therefore, every vote matters.

**Table 7: Percentage of Respondents Who Participated in the Last Local Elections, by Council**

Council	Voted	Did Not Vote						
		Reasons for Not Voting in the Last Village/Neighborhood Election						
		Not Interested	Not Informed About Election	Impeded From Voting	Had a Political Justification for Not Voting	My Vote Does Not Matter Anyway	Was Not Old Enough	Other
<b>Ilala MC</b>	69.5	3.8	4.8	-	1.0	3.8	2.9	14.3
<b>Bagamoyo DC</b>	82.4	2.4	1.4	0.5	0.5	1.9	4.8	6.2
<b>Kilosa DC</b>	91.4	-	1.4	-	-	0.5	1.4	5.2
<b>Iringa DC</b>	89.0	0.5	1.0	-	0.5	1.4	3.3	4.3
<b>Moshi DC</b>	81.9	1.4	1.0	-	-	0.5	5.7	9.5
<b>Mwanza CC</b>	81.9	1.9	1.0	-	-	1.4	2.4	11.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>82.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>8.5</b>

Source: Citizens' Survey

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION

Strengthening local participation is an imperative for successful implementation of the local government reforms. Furthermore, the participation of citizens in decision making and the implementation of programmes is the key for good governance in Tanzania. This study has indicated that participation in the six case councils was mostly exercised through community meetings and citizen contributions of their labour and money. Hence, if participation is to be strengthened, the Government should establish a comprehensive, supervision and monitoring mechanism to ensure that meetings to discuss community plans are properly held, so as to minimise citizen complaints that they are sidelined by council authorities. To achieve this, investments in capacity building at the local community level need to be increased. In addition, community awareness raising and the institutionalisation of participatory approaches to develop community plans should be a Government priority.

To guarantee full citizen participation in preparing community plans, the Government should establish clear and comprehensive guidelines on participation. Such guidelines should clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of both leaders and citizens at all levels from the hamlet/neighborhood (*mtaa*) level all the way to the district level. People's participation in making community plans should clearly be defined in such participatory guidelines, as the views of some informers were that these guidelines appeared to be lacking.

Furthermore, effective supervision and monitoring from higher levels of local governments to ensure that meetings are held is critical to ensure accountability and adherence to participatory procedures, including properly conducted meetings. In addition, leaders at all levels should be trained on their responsibilities as well as civic ethics and etiquette to ensure the proper conduct of their work. Citizens' complaints of power abuse were raised in some of the councils visited. Even councillors complained of lacking power to discipline senior local government officials, particularly those who used abusive language and those misusing council funds. The council's administrative autonomy to deal with such leaders should be guaranteed as implied under the local government reforms.

Citizens on their part should be empowered through civic education to enable them to demand accountability from their leadership. This means that citizens must know their rights and responsibilities in the planning process. Hence, guidelines on participation in making community plans need to be developed using simple language and be made available and accessible to citizens in all localities.

It was observed in this study that despite having institutional and legal mechanisms in place, people's participation in the formulation of council plans was still inadequate. People felt that poor plans and poor implementation was generally a result of their exclusion in their formulation, as well as in their implementation. There is a need to deliberately work towards changing people's mindsets and citizens' attitudes towards participation in policy formulation and implementation.

It is therefore proposed that the Government should revisit the whole process and strategise for people's local participation. This requires that the Government needs to establish, design and institute policy dialogue mechanisms to ensure that citizens participate in the decision-making process. In addition, the role of local leadership in policy formulation and implementation should also be clarified to avoid ambiguities that restrict citizen participation.

Political patronage is regarded as a constraint to citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of council plans and programmes. This was particularly perceived to be a problem in councils with a big opposition showing. In Moshi Rural District Council, for example, the council bureaucrats opined that opposition councillors discouraged their followers from making both

monetary and labour contributions towards the construction of additional classes under the PEDP programmes. One way of reducing political patronage is to design a system that makes all leaders accountable to citizens, irrespective of their political party affiliation. In this regard, powers to recall (dismiss) non-performing leaders should be legally prescribed to the citizens. Currently, citizens can recall leaders at the village level, but cannot recall their councillor even if they are not performing to their expectations. In addition, public hearings introducing local government plans and by-laws should be encouraged and formalised to promote accountability and transparency at the local government level. This will promote a sense of community ownership that will encourage citizens to take an active role in the governance of their local areas.

### **What Citizens Should Do**

In principle, communities should try to ensure that their local leadership is held accountable for its actions. This should be done formally through public forums such as hamlet, neighborhood (*mtaa*) and village assembly meetings. Hence, closer supervision of village governments by local authorities is an imperative that cannot be avoided to ensure that meetings are held as per the set rules and procedures to avoid circumvention of the participatory process by grass roots leaders.

## CONCLUSION

One of the objectives of the decentralisation reforms is to increase citizen participation in planning and implementation of development activities. This is based on the assumption that local government authorities are more responsive to local needs than central government.

From the field interviews it can be observed that the current local government reform in the six councils have not yet worked well enough to promote local autonomy at the grassroots level. Thus, for most of the case councils, participation beyond the village level has not been well established to give all citizens full participation in the local matters that affect them. There is still a lack of a clear mechanism for accountability of local government bureaucrats to their councils. This condition is exacerbated by the continued inability of councils to hire and fire council staff, including senior employees. Hence, councillors who represent citizens in their localities still lack power to instil discipline and productivity among senior council bureaucrats. The most they can do is complain and request the central government to remove them.

Bottom-up planning and community participation aim to raise the voices of the poor on the governance of their country and in determining their own destiny. This is the essence of good governance as espoused by local government reform. Generally, the avenues for effective responses to the lack of voice are very limited in the case councils. The reforms have so far not been able to empower local communities to respond to cases of lack of voice and power in their respective localities. Furthermore, with regard to the participation and representation of the citizens in policy formulation and implementation at the community level, i.e., the hamlet, neighborhood, village, ward and district levels, a lack of appropriate mechanisms to enhance their voice appears to be the main constraint.

Many of the community complaints noted in this study are about lack of participation in policy formulation and implementation. Community leaders and citizens alike felt left out by the council leadership and the government in general. One reason advanced for the non-involvement of villagers was a lack of capacity on the part of village leaders. Nevertheless, the competence of the village leadership is also questionable to the extent that even village assembly meetings are not frequently convened as stipulated in local government rules and regulations.

Moreover, the bottom-up planning which is supposed to start at the village level to the district level was still not well practiced. Findings indicate that few citizens at the grassroots level had participated in the planning process. Some had not even heard about the local government reform programme. Moreover, most of the councils visited had no long term planning in place, i.e., no clear council plans to meet the future challenges that councils may face during the developmental process. This may be the consequence of a lack of fiscal autonomy in most of the case councils. Planning requires adequate financial resources but most case councils lacked sufficient funds.

Thus, bottom-up planning in the six case councils faced a number of constraints. First, there was a lack of real commitment on the part of local implementers such as the Village Chairpersons, Village Executive Officers, Ward Executive Officers and Councillors. Local level planning had not achieved broad-based participation and only involved officials from local and regional councils to supervise and coordinate the planning process. In practice, local people were sidelined in this process as they did not have the necessary capacity to identify and prioritise their problems.

Secondly, there was a lack of clearly defined and legally binding guidelines for participatory planning i.e. involving popular participation at the local level. Thirdly, in all the six case councils surveyed, there were poor qualified/trained personnel for involving the community in local-level planning.

Fourthly, there was a lack of financial resources to cover the cost of organising and implementing participation (workshops, meetings, travel), which is often compounded by poor access to and between communities in sparsely populated rural areas.

For effective participatory planning at the local level, the central government needs to devolve real decision-making powers to elected councillors. Furthermore, the concept of local government autonomy will only make sense when the local authorities have independent and reliable sources of income. The current local government reform in Tanzania has a lot of good provisions for self-governance that are yet to be fully underscored at the village, ward and council levels.

It appears from the interviews conducted during field visits and those completed in the six case councils for the Citizens' Survey that the biggest problem regarding governance was the lack of citizen involvement in the decision-making process. The lack of citizen involvement in formulating council plans undermines the ability of the councils to improve the welfare of poor people as envisaged under the Local Government Reform Programme.

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| Brief 8  | Mawazo ya AZISE za Tanzania Kuhusu Uhusiano Wao na Wafadhili  | Brief 1 | Governance Indicators on the Tanzania Governance Noticeboard Website                                 |
| Brief 7  | Mawazo ya AZISE za Tanzania Kuhusu Uhusiano Wao na Serikali   | TGN1    | What is the Tanzania Governance Noticeboard?   |
| Brief 6  | Local Government Reform in Tanzania 2002 - 2005: Summary of Research Findings on Governance, Finance and Service Delivery                 | LGR 12  | Trust in Public Finance: Citizens' Views on taxation by Local Authorities in Tanzania                |
| Brief 5  | Children Participating in Research  | LGR 11  | Domestic Water Supply: The Need for a Big Push   |
| Brief 4  | Changes in Household Non-Income Welfare Indicators - Can poverty mapping be used to predict a change in per capita consumption over time? | LGR10   | Is the community health fund better than user fees for financing public health care?                 |

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| LGR 9 | Are fees the major barrier to accessing public health care?                        | LGR 4 | TASAF – a support or an obstacle to local government reform  |
| LGR 8 | Primary education since the introduction of the Primary Education Development Plan | LGR 3 | Councillors and community leaders – partnership or conflict of interest? Lessons from the Sustainable Mwanza Project |
| LGR 7 | Citizens' access to information on local government finances                       | LGR 2 | New challenges for local government revenue enhancement  |
| LGR 6 | Low awareness amongst citizens of local government reforms                         | LGR 1 | About the Local Government Reform project  |
| LGR 5 | Fees at the dispensary level: Is universal access being compromised?               |       |  |

