

SNOBS 2012 in Tanzania

(Sikika)

1. Introduction

1.1. Socio-Political Context

Tanzania is an East-African country with an estimated population of about 46 million people in 2012. It is one of the world's poorest economies with a GDP per capita of 1700 USD (PPP).¹ In 2007, the World Bank estimated that 88% of all Tanzanians are living on less than 2 US Dollar a day.² The literacy rate in 2010 was 73% and the life expectancy at birth amounted to merely 57.4 years.

After its independence from British colonial rule in the early 1960s, Tanzania followed a socialist model with a one-party state up to the mid-1980s. But when the economy turned downward, the administration under President Ali Hassan Mwinyi initiated economic and political reforms that led the country into a multiparty democracy in the early 1990s. Although the dominating party won about 60% of all votes during the 2010 general election, the opposition parties could slowly increase their political influence over the past two decades. Freedom House categorized the country as 'partly free' in 2012.

The Tanzanian government is a two-tier system with a central and a local government. There are 30 regional administrative offices, but they serve only administrative purposes without political representation or decision-making. The sub-national level which was surveyed is the Local Government Authority (LGA) which is an autonomous part of the Tanzanian government. The 148 local governments are either urban authorities (city, municipal and town councils) or rural authorities (district councils). The latter incorporate small towns (township authorities) as well as village councils.³

1.2. Decentralization Policy

The Tanzanian Government's intention to reform the local government system through decentralizing functions and finances and the devolution of political decision-making powers dates back to the late 1990s. Henceforth, public services were restructured according to the subsidiary principle. This means that the lowest government level that is capable of effectively

¹ Note that the data are in 2012 US Dollar.

² Note that the data are in 2005 international prices.

³ See details at <http://www.pmoralg.go.tz/menu-data/about-us/history/History%20of%20Local%20Government%20In%20Tanzania.pdf>.

performing a particular function takes precedence over higher government levels which should only provide support to overexerted units. The goal of the reform programme was to accelerate equitable socio-economic development, public service delivery and poverty reduction across the whole country.

The policy areas of the first Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) brought changes to the legal framework, fiscal relations among government units (both vertical and horizontal), and to administrative and political structures. In 2009, the LGRP II was designed to learn from previous lessons by adjusting ministries' interactions with lower government levels. Another challenge is to empower the Local Government Authorities (responsible for an entire council) and Lower Local Government Authorities (LLGA) (responsible for wards or villages) as primary and accountable lead actors of the development process.

A key issue of reassigning functions according to the subsidiary principle is to ensure that communities meaningfully participate through demanding good governance in form of transparency and accountability. The existing legal framework provides citizens with avenues to jointly identify development priorities through the Opportunity and Obstacle of Development process. Village Assemblies are another pathway through which citizens can demand explanations from their leaders. These participatory institutions formally exist at the LLGA level, but their effective consolidation into LGA plans and budgets constitutes another challenge to the reform process.

2. Survey

2.1. Sampling Method

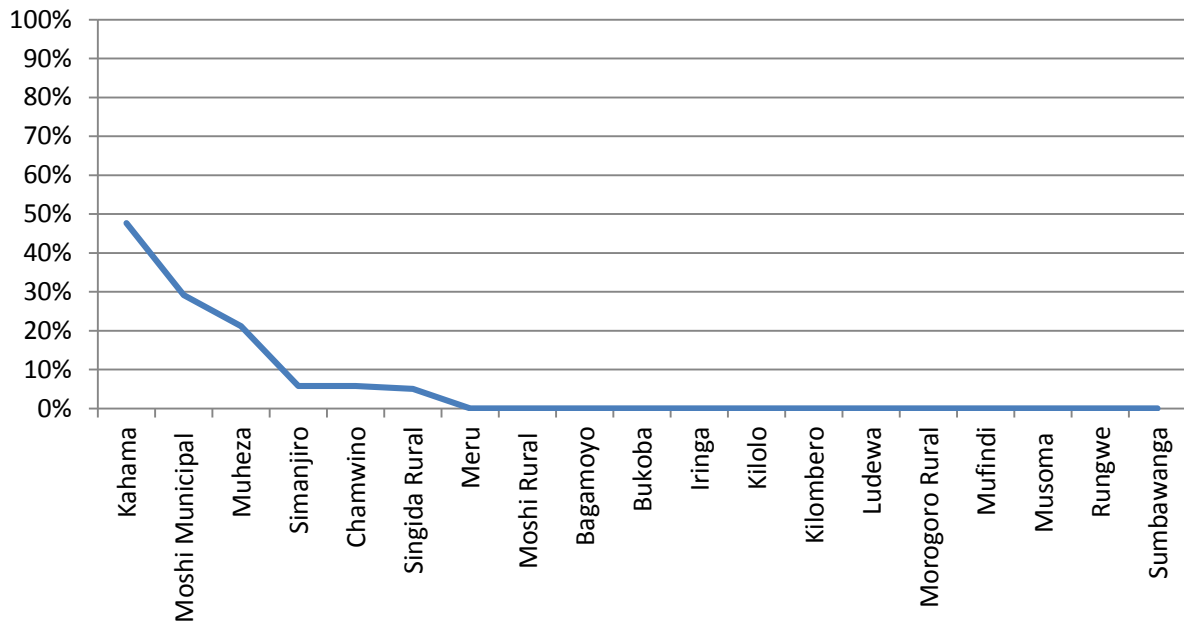
To assess access to information and opportunities for civic participation, 19 randomly sampled districts were surveyed in 2012 including Bagamoyo, Bukoba, Iringa Rural, Kilolo, Morogoro Rural, Kilombero, Kahama, Uyui, Moshi Rural, Arumeru, Moshi Urban, Ludewa, Mufindi, Rungwe, Muheza, Musoma, Chamwino and Sumbawanga.

The scope of the survey covered the councils as well as two schools and two health facilities in each district.

2.2. Overall Results

At first sight, the overall scores of the surveyed districts are gloomy as 13 of the 19 districts (68%) did not avail any of the requested budget documents. Because the researchers were instructed to appear as ordinary citizens, the local government authorities did not show interest to cooperate. In most cases, their requests were rejected straightaway or the researcher was referred to another office leading him or her into a bureaucratic maze. Some

Total SNOBS Score by District



were explained that the documents cannot be given to people coming from outside the respective district.

Overall, questions regarding the 'budget execution' stage scored best with 10 percent followed by 'reporting/audit' of 6 percent. The poorest performance shows the area concerning 'budget formulation' which scores merely 3 percent. This means that citizens are not able to meaningfully influence the local governments' budget proposal before it becomes an act of law.

Information was made partly available concerning the services delivered by SN Government and on avenues for citizen participation like complaints and suggestions. Another area which performed better than others is the information on estimates for the budget year and beyond within the enacted budget. This also includes information on linkages to policy goals and financial performance targets.

Areas that indicate consistent lack of information are debts, expenditure arrears, and contingent liabilities, which would be expected on a balance sheet with assets and liabilities. But this information was not included in the requested budget documents.

The survey also shows that budget information is not availed at the service delivery level. This is not surprising as the providers themselves are only passively involved in the budget process. They simply lack the requested information and, therefore, keep referring the requests to the local government authority.

2.3. Best Practice

There are also some few positive exceptions like Kahama district, which achieved remarkable 48 percent of the total score. The main reason for this outstanding result is the local authority's willingness to share the produced budget information with the public: the district has a public library and documentation centre.

The provided information on procurement is extensive and available to the public as the sub-score of 92% shows. Also, the sub-scores of the enacted budget (63%), audit process (78%) and year-end-report (52%) contain significant information. However, information on service delivery (29%) and the budget formulation process (29%) scored poorly compared with the other areas.

SNOBS Results of Kahama District by Section

Section	Percentage
Section 3: Budget Execution	68
<i>Procurement</i>	92
<i>Enacted Budget</i>	63
Section 4: Reporting / Audit	47
<i>Audit</i>	78
<i>Year-End-Report</i>	52
<i>Service Delivery</i>	29
Section 2: Budget Formulation	29
Total Score	48

2.4. Discussion

Due to the skewed distribution of results, the Sub-National Open Budget Index of 6 percent overstates the general performance as the arithmetic mean is prone to the few positive outliers (such as Kahama district). Instead, the median (0%) gives a more realistic picture: budget information is generally not accessible.

Positive exceptions like Kahama (maximum score) indicate the potential that is to be exploited. Sub-national governments in Tanzania produce a substantial amount of useful information; the problem is that there is no culture of sharing essential budget documents with ordinary citizens who want to participate in public affairs to hold their local government effectively to account.

The survey also revealed that the consultation with a representative selection of the public during the (annual) budget formulation stage is an area with potential for improvement. The Tanzanian budget formulation process does provide citizens with the opportunity to participate in the Opportunity and Obstacles to Development process in which communities determine priority areas in line with the nation's strategic development plan. These priorities are to be reflected in 3-year-development plans that guide the budget formulation of each year. If this process is implemented correctly, it allows citizens significant, but more indirect, participation at the strategic level (with priorities that won't change significantly every year). The SNOBI score, thus, slightly underestimates the situation because it only considers annual participation in the budget formulation process.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

In Tanzania, access to budget information and citizen participation is rather the exception than the rule. The researchers were often treated as malevolent outsiders who may cause disturbances if information was availed to them. Thus, there is a culture of mistrust and secrecy surrounding the sub-national budget process and requests were bluntly rejected or got trapped in a bureaucratic maze.

However, the survey also found out that the quality of produced budget information is recognizable due to the extensive application of templates that are provided by the Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO-RALG). Thus, there is great potential to improve the national scores if sub-national government can be convinced to share the produced information with the public.

Councillors usually receive the executive's budget proposal late giving them little time to scrutinize the estimates before their approval. This undermines their ex-ante oversight role as they cannot meaningfully assess if the monies are earmarked according to citizens' priorities. Civil Society can team-up with the local legislators and advocate the introduction of by-laws which guarantee free and timely access to budget information. This process should be complemented by educating citizens on how to access and use budget information to actively participate in public affairs.

The Tanzanian government is aware of the existing gap between the community and their local government. To bring citizens closer to the development planning process, the participatory Opportunities and Obstacles to Development Process (O&OD) has been introduced to foster bottom-up planning. However, these processes are conflicting with top-down government programmes that render O&OD a toothless exercise. But these procedures can be strengthened if local governments take them more seriously. With their ability to organize large meetings, CSOs can also promote the facilitation of public hearings where important budget documents are discussed in public.