

Local Government Reform Programme

Background and introduction to LGRP

On attaining independence in 1961, the then government of Tanganyika abolished the Native Authorities established in 1926 vide Native Authorities Ordinance (Cap 72), and created an entirely new structure of Councils covering the whole country. Hitherto (1961) there were only 17 Councils, but by 1972, this number had risen to 68. These Councils were composed of elected Councilors with a small number of appointed members. No provision was made for elected bodies below the Districts or Town Council, thus narrowing the scope of democratically elected local governments. Tanzania has had clear policy objectives regarding overall development. Ever since independence in 1961, the government identified three key developmental enemies as being poverty, illiteracy and diseases. Some structures of implementation such as decentralized institutions were devised at various levels to fight the above enemies. The central government, local governments and other institutions such as religious sects participated in the provision of social services, such as education and health care.

In the course of time though, local government authorities fell out of favour with both their residents and subsequently the central government. Reasons for this were many and varied, including:

1. Expansion of services with meager financial resources to fund them.
2. Lack of qualified personnel.
3. Gross mismanagement of funds collected and granted by Central Government.
4. Little or no capacity to maintain and run a lot of infrastructure constructed by the Central Government.
5. Council Officials and Councilors lacked the necessary experience and technical know how to run and manage local authorities.
6. Relationship between local authority staff and councilors was always sour on account of Councilors' refusal to take part in campaigns for tax collection, fight over sitting allowances, demands for special treatment e.g. offices and vehicles for personal use, high influence when awarding contracts, etc.
7. It was at this period, that there was serious decline of council revenues, since the government had abolished two major local taxes, namely the local rates in 1969 and the produce cess in 1970 and Central Government was unable to compensate the Councils. This led to poor performance by the Councils.

As a result, local authorities were abolished in 1972. They were replaced by a direct Central Government rule, in a policy popularly known as "decentralization". At the time of their abolition, there were 66 rural/district Councils and 15 urban Councils in Tanzania.

The Decentralization Era 1972-1984

Institutionally, the government switched from partnership to direct management of the development process and provision of social services. A number of committees were established in the villages, wards, districts and regions, as vehicles for people's participation and Regions became the primary drivers of rural development planning and implementation.

Manifestations

1. Urban Councils merged with neighbouring rural councils.
2. Government focus and emphasis was on "Socialism and Self Reliance".
3. There was big extension of Central Government Authority and control to Village level.
4. Decentralization era culminated in deconcentration of the Central Government for all social services and economic development activities.

The implementation of decentralization policy, led to the following problems:

1. Government expenditure increased tremendously, bureaucracy extended to villages and regions and districts were not allowed to tax and raise their own revenue. All funds for recurrent and capital investment came from the national budget.
2. Genuine people's participation was almost impossible due to the absence of elected representatives.
3. The relatively large distances between centers within a region and the difficulties of accessibility and communication bottlenecks made participation difficult,
4. Sustainability of projects was difficult because of lack of democratically elected representation, empowerment and accountability.

Generally, the outcome of all this was that: .

- The standard of living of the people was falling,
- Social and economic services deteriorated due to high operations and maintenance costs as shown above,
- School enrollment started to decline and literacy rate increased.

These problems prompted the government to set up an investigation team led by the late Shekilango which recommended reinstatement of urban local authorities. Subsequently, these were re-established in 1978 vide Act No. 11 of 1978.

Problems Faced

1. Urban authorities were not empowered to raise revenue of their own but only as agents of the Central Government.
2. The new Town and Municipal Councils depended wholly on the Central Government for their finances.
3. Funds received from Central Government were insufficient and as such, no development projects were undertaken during this interim period.
4. Parks and Gardens in most urban authorities dried up.

Introduction of the Local Government Reform

In 1980, the Ruling Political Party (CCM) ordered the Government to revive the Local Government System in the whole country. In 1982 legislations; Acts No.7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 were enacted by the Parliament. Constitutional amendments of 1984 that reinstated power to the people through sound Local Governments under Clauses

8, 145 and 146 reinforced this change. Local Government elections took place in 1983 and Acts No.7 and 8 reintroduced rural and urban Local Government Authorities respectively effective from January 1984. In early 1990 the Government embarked on Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP). Political reforms followed in 1992 when Tanzania re-introduced Multi-Party Democracy.

The Period between 1984 -1998

The reintroduction of LGAs raised hopes for an improved performance through greater involvement of citizens. These hopes were however not realized due to a number of reasons. The anticipated improved performance in service delivery as well as development initiatives through broad-based public involvement was not being achieved as anticipated. Several studies were carried out to establish reasons for this failure, and the following were identified as being some of the underlying reasons:

1. The human resource capacity and management was weak and this seriously constrained performance by Local Government Authorities.
2. Weak leadership and poor management of the councils.
3. Shortage of properly qualified, disciplined and committed personnel.
4. Shortage of revenue due to narrow tax base.
5. Over-employment within the Councils.
6. Lack of transparency and accountability in the conduct of Councils' business.

The Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP)

The LGRP was formulated and implemented by the government in order to address the problems which constrained the performance of the local government authorities as mentioned above. Through the programme, the government intends to strengthen local authorities and transform them to be effective instruments of social and economic development at local level. This has been addressed by the government in "A Local Government Reform Policy Paper" of 1998. The main goal (long-term) of LGRP is to contribute to the Government's efforts of reducing the proportion of Tanzanians living in poverty. Its purpose is to improve quality, access and equitable delivery of public services, particularly to the poor. These must be provided through reformed and autonomous local authorities.

The reform aims at:

- Letting people participate in government, at Local level and elect their leaders e.g. Councilors, Mtaa and Kitongoji leaders etc.
- Bringing public services under the control of people through their local councils.
- Giving Local Councils powers (Political devolution) over all local affairs.
- Determining the appropriate and cost effective organizational structures for local government authorities.
- Improving financial and political accountability.
- Securing finances for better public services.
- Creating a new local government administration answerable to local councils and to local needs.

- De-linking local administrative leaders from their former ministries.
- Creating new central -local relations based not on orders but on legislation and dialogue.
- To create good governance based on political and financial accountability, democratic procedures and public participation. The ongoing Local Government Reforms can generally be classified into two types, namely Systemic and non Systemic Reforms. Systemic reforms address the issues of Fiscal Decentralization, Legal Harmonization and Human Resources Autonomy, while non systemic ones refer to Governance, Restructuring, PORALG/RS Capacity Building and Programme Coordination.