Decentralisation in Tanzania

Introduction

In Tanzania, decentralisation is part of the effort being made by the government to improve delivery of services at the local level. This aim dates back to 1961 when the country gained independence. In the first few years of Tanzania’s independence, most services, such as health and education, were concentrated in a few urban areas, with the main goals being to serve the colonial residents (Max 1992). In response to this situation and to ensure the quality of social services for all the people the government of Tanzania undertook several initiatives to improve its administrative system. These initiatives involved a swing in the continuum representing on one hand centralisation and on the other decentralisation. This brought up the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) the aim of which was to strengthen the LGAs by granting them autonomy. Another pillar of this policy was enhancing community participation, to ensure accountability and a provision of services that matches demand.

This chapter provides an overview of decentralisation in Tanzania. It includes the LGRP and the bottom-up planning process—which is one outcome of the Reform. The following section gives an overview of decentralisation in the period between 1961 and 2000 just before the implementation of the LGRP. This LGRP is then described in more detail. The last section of this chapter describes the bottom-up planning, as presented in government documents.

Decentralisation between 1961 and 1998

*The first years after independence: from central to decentral*

Upon independence, Tanzania inherited the administrative system that was left by the British ruler. In this first period, the native authorities, district and town council which were the administrative structures of the colonial government, continued to function.
There was only one municipal council: Dar es Salaam, established in 1946 under the municipal ordinance 1946 (Cap.105). The Local Government Ordinance 1953 was retained as the guiding legislation with a few amendments to enable free civic elections based on universal suffrage (Shivji & Peter 2003).

In 1962 the government undertook the task of establishing democratic Local Government Authorities throughout the country (Max 1992). This led to the abolition of the so-called native authorities that were replaced by popularly elected district councils. The composition of the district councils varied from sixteen to sixty members, depending on the size of population and area (Shivji & Peter 2003: 8). Besides these elected members the councils had also appointed members. These members were appointed by the minister responsible for local government and did not exceed more than five (Max 1991: 32).

The main objective of the establishment of LGAs was to extend and improve the provision of public services across the country. The country was slightly developed by the British colonial administration, especially in the urban regions. Establishing LGAs sought to take decision-making closer to where people live. For this reason local authorities would receive autonomy and influence in the decision-making. Decisions of the local level would be integrated in a system of (national) policy making.

**1972: a de-concentrated system**

However, this intention did not bear fruit as since all decision-making powers were still concentrated at the central level (Oyugi 1988). In fact, decentralizing powers to the lower government institutions took a new direction and since 1965, the opposite direction has gained support. Powers were concentrated at the centre. According to Shivji & Peter (2003) in this phase the local government was perceived and treated as an implementing agency of the central government rather than a representative body of governance answering to the local needs. Both in governance and development the approach was top-down and managerial.

This strong centralised system did not stay for long. Ten years later, in 1972, the LGAs, as agencies of the central government, were abolished. The main argument was poor service delivery and mismanagement at the local levels. The LGAs were replaced by a system, referred to as ‘de-concentration’. This system had a strong regional administration, being in charge of the district administration. The system of de-concentration sought to give more local freedom for both decision-making and participation in matters that had a primarily local impact. But the practice did work as was hoped. Decision-making powers continued to be retained at the centre. And in fact, what was called decentralisation was a reform aiming at concentrating power at the centre (Eriksen et al. 1999). The abolition of the LGAs even meant that the last elected public bodies at the local level disappeared. The staff at the de-concentrated institutions that were put in place were appointed by the central government and their main task was to ensure that national policies were efficiently implemented.

Although the abolition of the LGAs was actually a change intended to increase people’s participation in decision-making, the institutional reality undermined this aim (Mushi 1978; Shivji & Peter 2003). In the de-concentrated system the district councils
turned out to be ‘rapid bureaucratic organisations dominated by central government officials’ (Max 1991: 88). The result was ‘a nation of peasants and bureaucrats’ (Feierman 1990) with bureaucrats firmly in charge (Eriksen et al. 1999: 58).

1982: the re-establishment of the LGAs
The de-concentrated system led to the deterioration of social and economic situation within the country. The government realised that the abolition of Local Governments Authorities (LGAs) was a mistake. As a result, in 1982 LGAs were re-established, with elements of both political and administrative decentralisation. The LGAs gained substantial formal autonomy. The reason behind this move was twofold. First, decentralisation was seen as necessary in facilitating the democratic participation in decision-making and implementation at the district, village and regional levels. Secondly, it was hoped that elected local councils would be more effective, both in tax collection and in mobilising people to participate in self-help activities (Eriksen et al. 1999: 59). To achieve this, formal responsibilities of service delivery and provision of public amenities was transferred to the local level.

The revived local government system could not meet the expectations of the people in terms of efficient and effective service delivery. The local government agencies failed to organise participation and responsiveness to local needs. This was partly caused by the inherited structures from the former de-concentrated system. The roles, functions and structures, the governance, finance, human resource capacity and management did not really change. Resources like manpower, expertise, equipment etc were retained at the regional level.

It is important to notice that, until this time, Tanzania has a one party system, with a structure of the party cascading down to the grassroots level parallel to that of the central government and local government. In line with the doctrine of the ‘supremacy of the party’ the party ‘interfered’ with the government in various ways, and on practically all levels. District commissioner and the regional commissioner positions were retained as these were the key party figures. The central government therefore continued to control the local authorities in various ways. Firstly, through the legal and financial framework, overall policies and guidelines, within which local councils must operate, were still in the hands of the central government. Secondly, through the collection of most local taxes, the paying of salaries for a substantial part of council’s staff and determining budget ceiling.

The Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP)
The failure of the revived local government system to produce the expected results, led to the government setting up a commission to undertake studies on the performance of the local government system and recommend on how it could be improved. The results of these studies led the commission to recommend the need to develop a new local government system which would respond to the existing socio-economic and global challenges. This conclusion was laid down in the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) that was established in 1996 and approved in 1998. The main objective of this programme is to strengthen Local Government Authorities and enable them to
execute their role more effectively and efficiently. The approval of this reform was gained after a series of consultations between the government and the donor community, in which some of the donors, such as the World Bank, pledged to assist the programme financially and technically. Increasing decentralisation was partly a response to the demand of these donors, as laid down in the Washington Consensus (Gore 2000). This Washington Consensus puts participation and decentralisation in the spotlight as an important means of development.

The guiding principle in the Local Government Reform Programme is ‘Decentralisation by Devolution’ (D by D). The main goal is to improve the performance of the public sector, to increase the accountability and to put a stop to mismanagement and waste. This is achieved by giving more powers, functions and resources to the people in the communities (Shivji & Peter 2003).

According to the LGRP the new decentralised local government authorities have to be:

1. **Autonomous institutions.** The local government authorities will be free to make policy and operational decisions consistent with government policies without undue influence from the central government.

2. **Cost effective in service delivery.** The local government authorities will be strong and effective by: possessing resources and authority necessary to effectively perform its roles and functions; having adequate number of appropriately qualified and well motivated staff who will be recruited and promoted exclusively on the basis of merit; providing necessary training and upholding professionalism in local government; and having capacity to operate efficiently and cost-effectively.

3. **Democratic institutions.** The leadership of the local government authorities will be chosen through a fully free and fair democratic process, extending to village Councils and grassroots level, in order to: facilitate the participation of the people in deciding on matters affecting their lives, planning and executing their development programmes; and foster partnerships with civic groups.

4. **Efficient in service delivery.** The raison d’être for the devolution of roles and authority by the central government, and the existence of the local government, will be the latter’s capacity and efficiency in delivering services to the people.

5. **Subsidiarity institutions.** Each local government will have roles and functions that correspond to the demands for its services by the local people, and the socio-economic conditions prevailing in the area. The structure of each local government will reflect the nature of its roles and functions.

6. **Politically accountable and transparent.** The local authorities will be transparent and accountable to the people. This will be the basis for justifying their autonomy from undue central government interference. Besides, local government leaders (Councillors) and staff will adhere to a strict code of ethics and integrity. In particular, leaders with high ethical standards will be elected to champion the cause of people’s development.

The principles of the local government reform as pointed out in the Policy Paper on Local Government Reform (1998) include:
• letting people participate in government at the local level and elect their councils;
• bringing public services under the control of the people through their local councils;
• giving local councils powers over all local affairs;
• improving financial and political accountability;
• securing finance for better public services;
• creating a new local government administration answerable to the local councils;
• de-linking local administration leaders and staff from parents ministries; and
• creating new central-local relations based not on orders but on legislation and negotiations.

In this context, local government authorities are thus holistic institutions, which are multisectoral units with a legal status (corporate body) operating on the basis of discretionary, but general powers under the legal framework constituted by the national legislation. They are expected to deal with most aspects of the society and be directly responsible for a wider range of sectors. The local government authorities are considered as having responsibility for social development and the provision of public services within their jurisdiction, facilitation of maintenance of laws and orders and issues of national importance such as education, health, water, roads and agriculture.

In line with the Local Government Reforms Programme, the role of central government institutions are confined to the:
• facilitation and enabling of local governments in their service provision;
• development and management of a policy and regulatory framework;
• monitoring accountability by the local government authorities;
• financial and performance audit;
• provision of adequate grants.

The LGRP resulted in various amendments to the Local Government Acts of 1982. These amendments stress the importance of the principle of good governance, called for democratically elected local leaders and increase transparency and accountability of the council to the people. Under the new law, local authorities are required to perform their duties efficiently and in a transparent manner. Other principles were translated into law in the form of binding guidelines. According to these guidelines, the Minister has the responsibility of coordinating and supervising the implementation of the Programme.

The implementation of the Local Government Reform Programme commenced in 1999. The districts were divided in three groups. The implementation of these groups would follow with one year intervals. The entire implementation process for each of the groups was planned for two years. So, the implementation of the reform process covered a period of four years in total to be completed in the entire country of Tanzania.

The reform programme envisages that more power is vested in the local government. According to Van Dijk (2008) this reform is expected to provide opportunities for local people to take the initiative and to formulate their own priorities. This suggests that local people are now empowered to make their own participatory plans and prepare development programmes that are relevant to their local needs and wants. Parallel to the decision making powers on what issues are to be addressed, the empowerment of the
local people will be sensible if the local people will have resources to implement such decisions.

The process of bottom-up planning

The policy of Decentralisation by Devolution (D by D) emphasises local autonomy and community participation. In this policy local autonomy is regarded as necessary for development: if citizens feel empowered they will take their destiny into their own hands, which will in the end contribute to the development of the community (Chaligha 2008). Community participation has a similar effect. Participation promotes accountability of the LGAs and ensures that the LGAs respond to the needs of the local population.

To reach the goals of the development agenda, as laid down in the Tanzanian Development Vision 2025, it was regarded as important that the planning procedure would really enhance development. In this sense, bottom-up planning is one of the main aspects of the Local Government Reform. The reform was expected to increase popular participation in setting local plans and local preferences. The underlying assumption was that citizens conceive their own projects and plans, which are implemented by them according to their preferences. Local communities have the information on the local needs. If these communities make plans to improve the local situation, and if these plans gain support, the chances that these plans are implemented, and really cause some kind of development, are considered higher.

It is important to note that this policy meant a seismic shift in comparison to the period preceding the implementation of the Local Government Reform Programme. In that period the planning process was basically top-down: government planners and economists, bureaucrats and donors were the main decision-makers. They were supposed to decide according to what the local communities needed, but in the end there were no safeguards, no real incentives to really take into account the local wishes. This approach resulted in many plans that were not realised and those realised were not sustainable because local communities did not support the decisions (The United Republic of Tanzania 2008, a paper by Prime Minister’s Office Regional Administration and Local Government).

In an effort to make community participation a reality, the government through the President’s Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) developed an ‘Opportunity and Obstacles to Development’ (O&OD) methodology to facilitate the bottom-up approach in planning (PO-RALG 2005). The methodology was developed in 2001 and its main concern was to reduce dependency and create a sense of ownership in the community plan. The methodology was expected to augment local involvement at the decisions that are relevant for their specific community, such as health and education services.

‘The O&OD Methodology is thus designed to promote community initiatives as well as to accelerate achievement of national goals in the Tanzanian Development Vision 2025. In the O&OD planning process, the sub-goals in the Vision 2025 become direct basis of setting specific objectives, under which planning items are identified such as opportunities, obstacles, interventions, costs and so on. Besides, the O&OD is intended to promote effective
and efficient allocation of Local Government Capital Development Grants (LGCDG) as clearly elaborated in the Planning Guidelines for villages and Mtaa that the O&OD is an essential methodology to identify community preferences for which the LGCDG is disbursed.’ (The United Republic of Tanzania 2006; PO-RALG 2004).

The O&OD methodology involves three levels of government: the grassroots level that formulates wishes and preferences, the village and ward level where local wishes are translated into a village and ward plan and finally the council level that decides upon the grants and funds. The following sub sections provide a description of the planning process in these three levels.

**Planning at Grassroots Level**

The planning process of the O&OD starts at grassroots level with the preparation of a village plan or a ward plan, depending whether or not the LGA is either rural (district) or urban. The O&OD methodology is a comprehensive and multi-sectoral process and enables community members and other stakeholders together at the village level to identify their development preferences and develop their village plan. Consequently, the O&OD methodology involves roughly eleven logically organised activities that enable community members to identify development preference in a logical framework. These activities are laid down in a manual, promulgated by the PMO-RALG.

The activities in this manual include first of all a selection and training of national facilitators. The role of the facilitators is to guide community members in the development of their grassroots plan. The use of facilitators is associated with the government concern that knowledge and skills of community members may be low to undertake the planning process on their own and develop sound and comprehensive local plan.

Often, the ‘facilitators’ are officials identified at council level and trained to be able to guide the process at community level. After training of the facilitator, the next step is ‘capacity building at local government level’ and ‘social preparation’. Basically these two steps involve conducting an extraordinary meeting of the village assembly to launch the entire process. The main objective of this meeting is to explain to the community members the purpose of the preparation of the plans and the use of O&OD. Furthermore, at this meeting the assembly is supposed to agree on a timetable for the entire process and other issues.

The next phase in the process is to collect data, discuss the goals of Development Vision 2025 and the question how these goals can be reached in the particular community in question. Discussions are conducted in smaller groups, taking place on the level of the mtaa (hamlet), and according to sex and age. Once groups are formed, the data collection begins. The primary data is collected using participatory tools such as a transect walk, drawing a village map, exploring historical timelines and the seasonal calendar, conducting an institutional analysis. In addition, the secondary data is also collected from village registers, files and institutions including health centres, dispensaries and primary schools (see the O&OD manual 2004).

The collected data is then discussed in groups first. The groups are guided by the Development Vision 2025, as a broad national policy guide. The national vision is the articulation of a desirable future situation and the plausible course of action needed to realise those goals. It seeks to actively mobilise the people and other resources toward
the achievement of shared goals. The main attribute of the Development Vision 2025 includes a high quality livelihood peace, stability and unity, good governance, a well educated and learning society and, a competitive economy capable of producing sustainable growth and shared benefits. These main abstract goals are translated into more specific attributes, designed as a guideline for the decision-making taken by the communities.

Table 4.1 Attributes of Vision 2025

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<td>1.</td>
<td>self sufficiency in food and security</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>universal primary education</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>gender equality</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>universal access to primary health care</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>access to quality reproductive health services</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>reduction in infant and maternal mortality rate by three quarters of current levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>universal access to clean safe water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>increase life expectancy to the levels attained by typical middle income countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>absence of abject poverty</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>desirable moral and cultural uprightness</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>absence of corruption and other vices</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>strong adherence to and respect for rule of law</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>a learning society which confidently learns from its own development experiences and that others and owns and determines its own development agenda</td>
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Source: The United Republic of Tanzania, Planning Commission 1998; PMO-RALG 2004

The groups develop draft community plans, based on the attributes of Development Vision 2025. In the rural areas the community plans are compiled by the village council into one village plan, which forms the input for the ‘ward plan’. In the urban areas, the mtaa (hamlets) wishes are directed to the ward plan without further consideration on an intermediate level.

Planning at Ward Level
The compiled village or mtaa plans are submitted to the Ward Development Committee (WDC). All chairpersons of the village government or the mtaa and ward are members of the WDC. According to Local Government Act No. 7 and 8 of 1982 the WDC is responsible for initiating and promoting participatory development in the ward, including formulating tasks or enterprises to ensure the welfare and well-being of all residents of the ward.

The Ward Development Committee (WDC) discusses the village or mtaa plans and provides the village council or the mtaa representative with technical advice to incorporate into the plan. After the village or mtaa plan is approved by the village or the mtaa it is then incorporated into one ward plan (comprising the plan of all villages or mtaa in that ward) and forwarded to the Local Government Authority (the district council level).
Planning at Council Level

Local Government Authorities have to decide on a council plan. In theory the LGAs are supposed to incorporate the preferences in the Village or Wards Plans into their respective council plan. This council plan is the framework for funding from the central government. The plan is actually an amalgamation of different plans, developed in the district. Each department at the council develops its sectoral plan. In the council plan these sectoral plans are combined.

Often, the planning and budgeting cycle starts when the national planning and budgeting guidelines are issued from the central government. These guidelines provide a performance review of the previous financial year and a summary of sectoral policies and areas which are accorded priorities within the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) and the Development Vision 2025. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs prepare the guidelines in close collaboration with the PMO-RALG. Alongside, PMO-RALG also issues planning and budgeting guidelines for the LGAs.

Apart from the general guidelines, some departments of the LGAs also receive planning guidelines from their respective ‘mother ministries’. Most of the departments at the LGA-level have one or more mother ministries at the central level. For example the health department has to deal with the Ministry for Health. The same goes for the department of education that has to deal with the Ministry for Adult Education, for Vocational Training and Secondary Schools at the same time.

The Council’s Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that each sectoral plan is in accordance with all the national guidelines. In this sense the director is expected to supervise the preparation of the council plan in order to make sure that the plan shows detailed costs of the planned activities and the priority of these activities is compatible with the national government’s guidelines.

The village or ward plans provide the information used in the sectoral plans. The preferences in the village or ward plans, for example with regard to health are incorporated into sectoral plan to form part of the council plan. Once all sectoral plans are developed, they are then combined into one council plan. The council plan is presented in three different council permanent standing committees for discussion and approval. The idea behind presenting the council plan to the permanent standing committees is to ensure that the plan has political support. In these meetings some activities may be cancelled, shaped and/or added to suit political interest.

The draft council plan is then submitted to the regional secretariat. The main role of the regional secretariat is to scrutinize the draft plan and budget to ensure that regulations, policies, government guidelines and directives have been adhered to. The secretariat will then send its advice and comment in writing.

Once the comments from the regional secretariat are incorporated, the council plan is then presented, discussed and approved by the District Council. This is the supreme decision making body in the Local Government Authority system. The approved council plan is then sent to the respective regional secretariat. The regional secretariat will combine the budgets from the amalgamated council plans from the region and submit
these budgets to the PMO-RALG. The total budgets are consolidated and submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to be incorporated into a national plan and budget. The national plan and budget is finally presented to the parliament for discussion and approval.

In a nutshell, the whole planning process, from the development of the village or mtaa plans to the ward plan, incorporation of these plans into council plan and finally decision-making at the national level, involves six different institutions on three layers of administration. The village and ward can be considered as the grassroots level, while the regional, ministerial and parliament are the central government levels. The council is the intermediate level: it is the highest decision-making body within the LGA, and functions as an intermediate between the local wishes and the national policies and guidelines. The entire planning procedure is shown in figure 4.1.

*Figure 4.1  The planning process*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village level</th>
<th>Formulate preferences (Village Plan)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ward level</td>
<td>Approve (Ward Plan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Council</td>
<td>Approve (Council Plan)</td>
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<td>Regional level</td>
<td>Scrutinise</td>
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<td>Ministries</td>
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