Summary

Introduction

On the scale between central and decentralised systems, the emphasis for the institutional design of Tanzania leans more towards decentralisation. This is laid down in acts and policy papers. The reason for decentralisation was prompted partly by the idea that sustainable local development depends on community participation. In an effort to realise participation in the bottom-up planning process the government introduced the Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O&OD) methodology. The O&OD methodology is a participatory community planning process to empower the people on the basis of bottom-up approach and positive thinking.

The success of this bottom-up planning process depends on the extent to which the local government reform has created the institutional arrangements that facilitate the process. This study attempts to answer the following research question:

To what extent do the government institutional arrangements in Tanzania facilitate or impede participation for local development and what improvements can be made?

This research question breaks down into five specific questions. First of all: to what extent is there development in the infrastructure of primary facilities? The main objective of this question is to establish the extent to which there is really development at the local level. The aim of the answers to the following three questions is to examine the influence of the bottom-up planning process for this local development. These questions are: to what extent do the local people participate in the bottom-up planning process? To what extent does the bottom-up planning process contribute to local development? And finally: what factors facilitate or impede participation for local development? As the central research question also aims at formulating recommendations for improvement, the last sub question is: what improvements can be made to improve participation for local development?

Theoretical framework of the study

The reform of the local government structure in Tanzania is guided by the principle of Decentralisation by Devolution. The main idea of decentralising is to transfer government responsibilities to lower units of government. The essence of this is that the lower
units of government, which are closer to the people, will have access to local information and therefore, are in a good position to make decisions that are relevant to local needs and involve the local people in the process. However, in any system of government there is always a certain degree of decentralisation. The properties that determine the amount of decentralisation are related to legal limitations and obligations, fiscal strings, oversight arrangements and possible influence with regard to the appointment of personnel.

Although the policy paper and the central ideology intend more decentralisation, the institutional framework in Tanzania has many centralist characteristics. First of all, the local government authorities are legally bound by the regulations of the central government. The local government authorities have only limited discretion over resources to implement their own wishes. The bulk of funds the local government authorities can spend is allocated by the central government. The local government authorities have very limited ability for collecting local taxes that would finance their autonomy. And finally with regard to the personnel: it is striking that many of the staff members of the local government authorities are actually appointed by the central government.

The current institutional framework in Tanzania is the legacy of many attempts to change the relationship between central and decentral governmental bodies. The main goal was to enhance participation of local communities. This resulted in quite different policy choices. In 1962 the local government authorities (LGAs) were introduced, while in 1972 these decentral authorities were abolished and replaced by deconcentrated institutions. In 1982 the LGAs were re-introduced. The institutional changes were further strengthened by the policy papers on local government reform in 1998. The reform is guided by the principle of Decentralisation by Devolution (D by D). One outcome of the reform, as a strategy to enhance participation, is bottom-up planning. The bottom-up planning process aims at involving the local communities in the decision-making process. The main idea is that the central government has to support local initiatives, as this would result in a decision that is supported by the local communities themselves. The expectation is that the local communities will thus be more willing to contribute to and to maintain the infrastructural investments.

To assess whether or not this bottom-up planning process is really contributing to development, two policy areas have been selected. These policy areas are primary health services and primary education. Both are social services that cannot be realised by local communities without external support. Chapter 5 provides a brief history of the provision of health and education services and the delivery system during the reform. It also demonstrates the importance of infrastructure in the delivery of both primary health and primary education.

Chapter 6 describes the theoretical framework of the study. The focus of the research is on the bottom-up planning process as a strategy to enhance participation for local development. The theoretical framework looks at the bottom-up planning process from two main aspects. The first aspect is based on the theory of Decentralisation by Devolution (D by D). In this theory, the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) are considered to be autonomous institutions that are responsive to local wishes. With the
autonomy, it is envisaged that LGAs have discretion over resources in order to respond to needs as expressed by the population.

The second aspect took into consideration the effects of the links with the possible actors. These links might threaten the functioning of the bottom-up planning process. The first link was the central-local relationship. The LGAs depend on the central government for technical and financial support. It is, therefore, expected that this relationship will influence the bottom-up planning process. The second link is the relationship between the district council and the lower local government structures. It is expected that this relationship will influence the planning process as the district council has its own sources of information to collect directly from the facilities involved. A third threat to the success of the bottom-up planning process is the relationship between community members and development partners. This relationship is considered important as it could ensure easier implementation of the local wishes. As such, local development can be taken for granted as a result of the bottom-up planning process. In general, the three links provide alternative explanations for development of the facilities involved, without using the bottom-up planning process.

Empirical study

The expectations have been tested in a case study. The cases are selected on two levels: first a selection of the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) and second a selection of the primary facilities within the respective LGAs. The selection of the LGAs was based on their involvement in the first phase of the roll-out process of Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O&OD) methodology. This led to the selection of three LGAs from one region to facilitate data collection: Morogoro District-Urban, Morogoro District-Rural and Kilosa District.

In every LGA the two primary facilities were selected: one primary school and one primary health facility. The selected facilities were those that were considered ‘successful’ by the district council officials in the sense that there was development between 2005 and 2008. This selection criterion makes it easier to assess whether or not the bottom-up planning process did contribute to this development. This led to the selection of six cases: Kingorwila Dispensary and Mlimani Primary School in Morogoro District-Urban; Tawa Health Centre and Ngerengere Primary School in Morogoro District-Rural; and Kidodi Health Centre and Malowelo Primary School in Kilosa District. In the empirical research the planning process was reconstructed with regard to these facilities, using various methods: documentary review, information from archives, direct observation, individual interviews and group interviews. These cases are then described in a similar way describing every step in the bottom-up planning procedure.

Comparison and analysis

Chapter eleven presents the analysis and comparisons of the study. This chapter attempted to answer the research question. The first attempt to answer this question is by establishing the extent to which there is development at the local level. Some cases (i.e selected primary facilities) are better developed compared to others in the district. The
level of development can be examined using the two indicators: the increase of the three infrastructural aspects (i.e., building, equipment, and staff) in the period between 2005 and 2008, and the extent to which they meet the national minimum standards.

The analysis of the six cases shows that development of the local facilities is rather low. Some aspects of infrastructure have not increased and most of them do not meet the national minimum standards. Despite low development of primary facilities, there are variations between the cases. The cases can be divided into three categories: more developed, moderate developed, and less developed. On the basis of the score on this level it is possible to evaluate the influence of the bottom-up planning process or other factors that contribute to development.

Participation in the bottom-up planning process and its possible contribution to local development

As stipulated in local government reform, the primary means of achieving local development is through the bottom-up planning process. The bottom-up planning process is supposed to enhance participation for local development. The second step in the analysis is to examine the participation of the people in the bottom-up planning process and to assess the extent to which this contributed to local development.

The study shows that participation of the local people in the bottom-up planning process is poor. People are not aware of preferences contained in their village or ward plan and they also do not make use of the plan. This indicates that local people do not see the relevance of the bottom-up planning process on their local needs.

Participation from the local people in bottom-up planning process transcends the understanding and the use of the respective plan. It also involves the question of whether or not the district council takes the preferences expressed in the village plan into account when deciding upon the allocation of funds. After all, participation in the bottom-up planning process would be useless if the voices of the people are not taken into account. The comparison of the six cases indicates that local preferences contained in the village plan are poorly taken into account by the district council. The links between local preferences in the village plan and the development interventions of the district plan are not clear. This indicates that the basis for preparations of the district plan is not the local plan developed through bottom-up planning process. Apparently the district uses other sources of information and other criteria to decide upon the development of the facilities.

Overall, participation of the local people in bottom-up planning process including poor consideration of local preferences at district level is not able to explain local development. The analysis of the six cases shows no links between the understanding and concerns of the local people and the local plans, there are also no links between the local plans and the district plan. However, we still see development at the local level, which even occurred at various levels. Therefore it is still relevant to examine the possible contributing factors to this local development.

How did local development happen?

The study shows that local initiatives and external financial support contribute to local development. The two factors seem to stimulate each other. The descriptions of the six
cases show that sometimes, local initiative attracts development partners to directly support local development. On the other hand, external financial support motivates the local people to take the initiative and to participate in local development as well as monitoring the process. The positive impact of the relationship between local initiatives and external financial support for local development is due to the fact that external support is often directed to actual preferences of the local people.

The cases illustrate that both local initiatives and external financial support are good explanations for the development that occurred in the selected cases. It appears that in some communities the members are more active and more resourceful than in others. The success of development is affected by the involvement of educated people that have influence on the administration of primary facilities and know how to obtain funds to realise their wishes. Likewise, some facilities are located in areas with more opportunities for external financial support, for instance in an urban and economically active area. These areas attract both capable people to take initiative and make it easier to convince Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) to contribute.

Possible explanations for the failure of the bottom-up planning process

The interim conclusion is that there is willingness to participate in improving the local facilities, but that the bottom-up planning process, as it is carried out, is not capable of attracting this motivation from the local communities. The failure of the bottom-up planning process to facilitate participation for local development is contributed by the way the process is carried out. In theory, district plans are supposed to be developed on the basis of the preferences of the local people expressed through the bottom-up planning process. The intention is that by involving the local people in the bottom-up planning process and the development of programmes that are relevant to local needs, will create a sense of ownership.

However, the planning process does not sufficiently encourage the local people to participate in local development. Community members have no confidence that the planning process will address their needs. Even when they participate, they do not take it seriously. The facilitators of the bottom-up planning process are the council officials working in the lower local government structure and they are trained by officials at council level on how to carry out the process and achieve the expected results. In this regard, the guidance of the facilitators to the planning process is directed towards collecting local information that fulfils the wishes of official at the district council. After all, the local plans are vague and sometimes do not reflect local needs.

In practice the contents of the district plan is mainly based on district officials’ knowledge of the local situations, collected through other means. The district officials use other sources of information, parallel to bottom-up planning process to collect this information. These mechanisms include the facility plans and the frequently used reporting systems. These mechanisms are not participatory and therefore contradict the philosophy of bottom-up planning process.

Compared to the bottom-up planning process, which provides opportunity for all the community to participate, both facility plans and reports are developed by people involved in the administration. Note that the staff in the lower local government structures
is actually employees of the district council. In that regard the district officials will pay more attention to these other sources of information compared to the information collected through the bottom-up planning process.

The fact that district staff ignores wishes expressed through the bottom-up planning process is due to the central government’s oversight and control. The LGAs depend on government transfers for more than 90% of their budget. Most of these transfers are accompanied with detailed guidelines and directives. The response to the central wishes expressed through guidelines and directives is checked through the planning process. After all, the planning process involves scrutiny at the district level and the regional level before it is forwarded to the central government for further scrutiny and approval. So the entire procedure is aimed at complying with these guidelines and directives instead of trying to respond to local wishes.

The detailed guidelines, directives and instructions leave limited room for local government discretion. As a result, LGAs are merely implementers of the national programmes and directives. This contradicts the overall philosophy of Decentralisation by Devolution (D by D) and in particular the ideas of the bottom-up planning process. The local preferences seem only to be considered if they comply with central wishes.

To avoid the risk of remaking the plans, the district staff is very keen to respond to central wishes. As a result, they more or less ignore the preferences expressed by local communities. This attitude is worsened by the fact that there is almost no downward accountability. There are no mechanisms that enable the local people to hold the local government staff accountable. On the contrary, the employees that facilitate the bottom-up planning process are employees of the district council and the civil servants that work at the district level are employed by the central government. These ties between the staff of both district and central government impede the willingness to respond to local needs. After all, decisions for their transfer and increase in salaries are made by the central government. There are also indications that local government staff were still assigned duties directly from their respective sectoral ministries. In other words, the sectoral ministries appear to have not yet devolved their roles and staff to the district governments. Consequently there are more incentives for the local government staff to respond to the central wishes than to the local wishes.

Conclusion and recommendations

The main conclusions of the study and recommendations are presented in chapter twelve. This research affirms that the government institutional arrangements do not support the bottom-up planning process to enhance participation for local development. The reasons are first of all, poor adherence to the local government reform policy. This is why the following recommendations are brought forward for consideration:

- Give the local people the opportunity to make their own choices without influence from either the central government or the district council.
- Let the local people develop strategies to implement their local needs. In other words, avoid strategies imposed from above, which might not be honoured by the local people.
- Strengthen the downward accountability mechanisms.
• Honour as much as possible the local wishes by basing the decision-making at the district on the local plans.
• Harmonise the reporting system.
• Reduce the strings attached to the budgetary allocation system to give the LGAs financial autonomy.
• Let the LGAs have adequate control over own staff. In other words, give the LGAs the power to recruit their own staff and plan for the development of their career.

There is even doubt as to whether or not there will be meaningful participation if these recommendations are carried out. The main problem is that the district council is still far from the local communities. Therefore, the research concludes with two more recommendations:
• Extend devolution to the lowest structures of government.
• Harmonise the local government structure and the central government structure into one government structure.