

Chapter 7

Decentralization and Local Governance in Tanzania: Theories and Practice on Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

Decentralization, local governance, and sustainable development are still exploratory, despite an increased importance in facilitating development of citizens. In facilitating development, many challenges remain in designing a more decentralized and governance mechanisms that are inclusive and can facilitate sustainability. This chapter addresses the problem of how to support decentralization and local governance on sustainable management of projects. Existing research in decentralization and local governance tend to focus on finding out how levels at which decisions are made facilitate sustainable development. However, there is little evidence that researchers have approached the issue of inclusion and exclusion, power, power relations, and dynamics as well as strengthening decentralization and local governance with the intent of enhancing sustainable development. Consequently, the aim of this chapter is to provide an overview on how the decentralization and local governance in local government can be supported to enhance sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Tanzania is a democratic unitary republic with both a central government and a devolved government of Zanzibar which has autonomy for non-union matters ((Wakwete, 2007). Article 145 of the Constitution of United Republic of Tanzania gives recognition to local government and is supported by the Local Government (District Authorities) Act 1982 and the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act 1982.

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On the Tanzania mainland, there are three types of urban authority: city, municipal and town councils. In rural areas there are two levels of authority; the district councils with the township authorities, and the village council. On Zanzibar, urban authorities are either town councils or municipalities, while all rural authorities are district councils (URT, 2014).

In mainland Tanzania there are 26 regions, 40 urban councils and 132 rural district councils, whilst on Zanzibar there are five regions, four urban authorities and seven rural district councils (Mustafa, 2009). LGAs exist for the purpose of consolidating local services and empowering the people to participate in social and economic development. Local authorities are mandated to maintain law, order and good governance; to promote the economic and social welfare of the people in their jurisdiction; and to ensure effective and equitable delivery of quality services to the people (URT, 2014).

Local Government can be defined as a sub-national, semiautonomous level government discharging its functions in a specified area within a nation. By definition, Local Governments are the level of government that are closest to the people and therefore responsible for serving the political and material needs of people and communities at a specific local area (Wakwete, 2007). Such areas could be a rural setting or an urban setting, a village, a town, a suburb in a city or a city, depending on the size. Local Governments have both political and economic purposes (URT, 2014). Politically, Local Governments being the levels of governments closest to the people are suitably situated to provide a way for ordinary citizens to have a say on how their communities are governed. Local Governments provide opportunities for democratic participation of citizens in matters that affect them directly. They facilitate closer interaction between citizens and elected representatives (RTI, 2010). Economically, Local Governments provide basic services that affect people in their area of jurisdiction. Being close to the people, Local Governments are supposed to know better the needs of the local area and not only what the people can contribute but also how to engage them in economic activities (URT, 2014). There are two-tier systems of government: the Central Government and Local Governments. 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 (*ibid*).

Decentralization refers to the transfer of decision making from the central level to sub-national authority. The aim is to transfer power and resource to a level that is closer, better understood and more easily influenced by local people (RTI, 2010). This should result in gains in efficiency and appropriateness of service delivery as well as better governance and greater accountability. By creating the conditions for more inclusive and transparent operations, decentralization enhances citizen participation in local governance, allowing communities to take responsibility of their own development. Furthermore, there is greater chance of achieving economic growth if institutions provide for popular participation, local leadership and the decentralization of authority. Of all government services, those provided by local government most directly affect the day to day lives of individuals. Decentralizing governance enables people to participate more directly in governance process and can empower people previously excluded from decision making (Popic, 2011). Decentralization within the context of democratic developmental states must reflect these ideological and structural dimensions. Most typically, local governments and other sub national authorities are seen as carrying the State mission and mandate as they are part of the overall project to achieve economic and social development. Therefore, state performance in terms of achieving national targets (poverty reduction) has to be filtered through the lenses of the decentralized spheres of government (Wakwete, 2007). In Tanzania local government espouses the philosophy of sustainable ways to meet the socio-economic need of the people and improve the quality of life, particularly targeting the

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