

# **HISTORY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM IN TANZANIA**

## **Introduction**

Local authorities were established in Tanzania over 100 years ago. Periods to be covered include the pre-colonial period, the colonial era, the period after independence up to 1972~ the period between 1972 and 1984 and the period between 1984 and 1998. The ongoing Local Government Reform Process dominates the period after 1998.

## **The Pre-Colonial Period -1884 -1918**

Before the colonial era and during the initial period of the colonial era, local communities were organized around chiefs in chiefdoms. Councilor elders who were their close advisors surrounded chiefs. In Kilimanjaro Region, for example, the Chagga chief was called MANGI, the Hehe called him MTWA and the Nyamwezi called him MTEMI. Besides these advisors, the chiefs had lieutenants who were known as sub-chiefs. Under the sub-chiefs, there were headmen. In geographical terms, chiefdoms were more or less equivalent to the current administrative units known as divisions, sub-chiefdoms were equivalent to the present day wards and headmen had a couple of villages to control. There were no districts or regions except tribal boundaries.

## **The Colonial Period**

When the Germans colonized the country, they set in clear Provincial District and Chiefdom boundaries. They abolished the chiefdoms and established the post of the District Commissioner (DC). But when the British were mandated to administer Tanganyika (now Tanzania Mainland) in 1918, they adopted a different approach. In the urban areas, they enacted the Township Ordinance (Cap.101) in 1920. Subsequently, urban local governments were established. In the rural areas the DC was retained. It was until 1926 that the foundation for an organized local government system was laid down following the establishment of Native Authorities (NAs) by enacting the Native Authorities Ordinance (Cap 72). With it, the chiefs were reinstated. In 1928 the colonial administration introduced provincial commissioners (PCs). Both the DCs and PCs were trained and experienced administrators who were assisted by District Officers (DO).

After World War II, the colonial administration set in motion a profound change in local governance. As a result the government passed the Municipalities Ordinance (Cap 105) in 1947 to replace cap 101. In the following year (1948), the Dar es Salaam Municipal Council was established. A few years later (1953) Local Government Ordinance (cap 333) was enacted to introduce the structure of local government

governance that lasted up to 1972. Both of these ordinances aimed at establishing self governing and democratic Local Governments Authorities throughout the country. A major feature of the local government authorities at that time was that they were not only closely related to the level of funds available but also reflected the felt needs of their residents.

### **The Period Between 1961-1972**

After independence in 1961, the government abolished the old NAs and created an entirely new structure of Councils covering the whole country. These LGAs were established more on political rather than on economic considerations. 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 enemies of the people as being poverty, illiteracy and disease. Some structures of implementation such as decentralized institutions were devised at various levels to try to execute strategies to achieve these goals. The central government, local governments and other institutions such as NGOs and Churches also ran schools, dispensaries and water schemes.

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; District Authorities on 30/6/1972 and Urban Authorities on 30/6/1973. 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 period between 1972-1984 (Decentralization Era)**

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 focus for rural development planning and implementation.

#### **Manifestations**

1. Urban Councils merged with neighbouring rural councils.
2. Government focus and emphasis was on "Rural Ujamaa Socialism".
3. There was big extension of Central Government Authority and control to village level (speeding up development). People had to realize and enjoy the fruits of independence.
4. Decentralization era culminated in deconcentration of the Central Government for all social services and economic development needs.

In the course of implementation of decentralization policy, the following problems emerged:

⚡ 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.

⚡ Genuine people's participation was almost impossible due to the absence of councils.

⚡ The relatively large distances between centers within a region and the difficulties of accessibility and communication bottlenecks made participation partially impossible,

• Sustainability of projects was difficult because of lack of democratically elected representation, empowerment and accountability.

As a result of the above mentioned problems, the following happened:

• Primary Schools lacked text books

• Buildings remained unmaintained

• No refuse collection and disposal particularly in urban centres

• Drains and sewers remained unblocked.

• Lack of Roads maintenance.

• Dispensaries lacked essential drugs.

• Representation of people greatly weakened

• Serious outbreak of cholera in many urban areas between 1976 -1980.

Generally, the outcome was that:

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

## **Government Intervention**

Cholera outbreak and other problems as described above prompted the government to set up an investigation team led by the late Shekilango which recommended reinstatement of urban local authorities.

### **Re-Establishment of Local Government Authorities**

Urban Councils Act No? restored Town and Municipal Councils on 1/7/1978. II of 1978.

## **Problems Faced**

1. Legally, urban authorities were not empowered to raise revenue of their own.
2. Whatever they collected, they did so as agents of the Central Government and all collections were

immediately and directly sent to the Treasury.

3. The new Town and Municipal Councils depended wholly on the Central Government for their finances.
4. Funds received from Central Government were insufficient and as such, no development projects were undertaken during this interim period.
5. Parks and Gardens in most urban authorities dried up.

### **Towards Reforming Local Government**

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 National Assembly. 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:

- ⚠ The human resource capacity and management was weak and this seriously constrained performance by Local Government Authorities.
- ⚠ Weak leadership and poor management of the councils.
- ⚠ Shortage of properly qualified, disciplined and committed personnel.
- ⚠ Shortage of revenue due to narrow tax base.

• Over-employment within the Councils.

• Lack of transparency and accountability in the conduct of Councils' business.

### **The Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP )**

The local government reform programme 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 policy paper was preceded by Reform Agenda (1996 -2000). 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:-

- (a) Letting people participate in government, at Local level and elect their leaders e.g. Councilors, Mtaa and Kitongoji leaders etc.
- (b) Bringing public services under the control of people through their local councils.
- (c) Giving Local Councils powers (Political devolution) over all local affairs.
- (d) Determining the appropriate and cost effective organizational structures for local government authorities.
- (e) Improving financial and political accountability.
- (f) Securing finances for better public services.
  
- (g) Creating a new local government administration answerable to local councils and to local needs.
- (h) De-linking local administrative leaders from their former ministries.
- (i) Creating new central -local relations based not on orders but on legislation and dialogue.
- g) To create good governance based on political and financial accountability, democratic procedures and public participation.

### **Areas to be Reformed**

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, PORALGRS Capacity Building and Programme Coordination.

### **1.The Democratic Dimension**

The Local Government Reform aims at decentralizing by devolution powers and the setting of the rules for councils and committees, the chairperson etc. This will include integration of the previously centralized or de concentrated service sector into a holistic local government system by installing councils as the most important local, political body within its jurisdiction. This will strengthen local democratic institutions, enhance public participation and bring control to the people.

### **2. Financial Decentralization**

This aims at giving Local Authorities more sources of revenue and enhances accountability in the expenditure of the revenue. The government has introduced unconditional and conditional block grants in sectors of education, health, roads, water and agricultural services.

### **3. Administrative Dimension**

This involves local government personnel integrating them in the local governments from ministerial subordination, and restructuring local government administration. Local governments will be able to recruit their own staff, organized in a way decided by respective councils in order to improve service delivery. The local government staffs are accountable to local councils. Each council will revisit its structure and functions to ensure that they reflect the needs and conditions in the area under its jurisdiction.

### **4. The Central - Local Relations**

The role of the central government and its agencies will be to formulate policies and guidelines, support and facilitation, monitoring and quality assurance and control within the frame work of the law. The minister responsible for local government will coordinate central-local relations and manage the interfaces with the sectoral ministries on matters relating to local government.

### **5. Service Function**

Decentralized public service to bring service provision and management to end users while increasing the services, quantity and quality. The Local Government Reform Programme has seven OUTCOME AREAS

1. Good Governance
2. Local Government Restructuring
3. Finance
- 4 . Human Resource development.
5. Institutional and Legal Framework.
6. President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government.
7. Reform Co-ordination.

### **Achievements in Local Government Reforms since 1996**

There have been some remarkable achievements since the reforms started in 1996 - 2004. These are:-

1. Democracy has been strengthened at the grass-root .

At all levels, election of political leaders at Village, Mtaa and Kitongoji level has successfully been conducted. Every level has a chairperson and a governing committee, which has been elected democratically. The most recent multiparty local elections were conducted nation wide in November 2004 for all the Vitongoji, Mitaa, and Villages in the country.

2. Restructuring of the Regional Administration

Up until June 1996, the regional level had what were known as Regional Development Directorates as independent government departments, headed by Regional Development Directors (RDDs). In June 1996, these were restructured into Regional Secretariats which are organized into five clusters, each headed by Assistant Administrative Secretary (AAS) under the overall leadership of the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS). The five clusters under each RAS are:

▶ Staff Function,

▶ Management Support Services,

▶ Economic Development Support Services,

▶ Physical Planning and Engineering Support Services,

## 3. Social Sector Support Services.

The Regional Secretariats are charged with the responsibility of backstopping the local government authorities within their areas of jurisdiction.

### 3. Amendment of Local Government Laws

Most of the outdated laws have been amended through Act. No.6 of 1999. The amendments focused on good governance, transparency and accountability. Other legislations are in the process of being amended.

### 4. Code of Conduct Regulations

The government has prepared and enacted codes of conduct for Councilors and the Staff of LGAs. Each one of them is bound to adhere to these codes of conduct.

### 5. Good Governance

There have been big achievements in the area of good governance. The Government has established some bench marks, through which different Councils are gauged on, and results show improvement in the scores.

### 6. Financial Management

On the aspect of financial management, there has been a lot of improvement, with the introduction of Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS).

### 7. Human Resource Improvement Benchmarking

An assessment made on human resource management, the trend has shown that, there has been an improvement in this area. The LGAs which have completed the reform process have determined their manning levels and effected retrenchments as well as recruitment of qualified staff where necessary.

### Conclusion

Since the Local Government Reforms started in 2000, there has been a commendable improvement in the functioning of the LGAs. The quality of services rendered is satisfactory. With time, autonomy to LGAs is more vivid, efficient performance by the staff is taking roots, resulting in good discharge of their duties, transparency and

accountability to the people and enabling the people to participate in planning and execution of local authority duties and responsibilities. The LGAs are still facing financial and human resources constraints. More improvement is desired to enable the LGAs to deliver services efficiently, effectively and responsively.