

# SUPPORTING DECENTRALISED PLANNING IN TANZANIA

## INTRODUCTION

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**Country: Tanzania**

**Sector: Governance, Cross-cutting**

The Tanzania decentralisation, restructuring and the reform of local authorities attaches participatory planning as key approach to enhance and enforce its implementation and realisation. Opportunity and Obstacles to development (O&OD) approach is given prominence by its proponents for being multi-sectoral, multidisciplinary, inclusive and in line with national and the Millennium goals- MDGs, hence effective for improved service delivery.

The Mbulu experience however provides broad based advantages and disadvantages of O&OD while adhering to participatory planning as key to its strategic orientation toward the same and sustainable development. How will Mbulu achieve its local goals in line with nationally set benchmarks and MDGs? This case study looks at development trends in Mbulu and provides insights into how a remote rural district can improve service delivery through participatory planning not bound by any suggested approaches.

## CHALLENGE

The poverty reduction agenda in Tanzania goes hand in hand with the reform of the public sector, Decentralisation (D by D) and reform of the Local Government Authority (District Councils known as LGAs). As an overall framework, the reform agenda traces its developments since the 80's Economic Recovery Programs where the Civil Service Reform was the centre of attention. Subsequent developments since the 1994 government policy papers started mentioning local government reform as part of the retrenchment process of local government employees.<sup>1</sup>

This was followed by various studies that looked at linkages between local government and central government, and dialogues between the government and interested donors on local government reform (LGR). Budgetary allocation for the local government reform started in 1997 when the launch of the program was done under the Presidents Office (PO-RALG and now under the Prime Ministers office PMO-RALG). The first government policy paper on the reform of the local government was produced in 1998 followed by its implementation set up.

Main components of the reform are:

- **Governance:** To establish broad – based community awareness and participation, aimed at promoting principles of democracy, transparency and accountable government.
- **Restructuring:** To enhance the effectiveness of local government authorities (LGAs) in delivering quality services in a sustainable manner.
- **Finance:** To increase the resources available to LGAs and improve the efficiency in their use.
- **Human Resource Development:** To improve accountability and efficiency of human resource use at Local Government level.
- **Legal Component:** To establish an enabling legislation to support the effective implementation of local government reforms
- **Program Management:** To support the effective and efficient management of the overall reform program.

In order for these to take place, planning has been given a high priority to accompany the design, implementation and follow up in form of Monitoring and Evaluation. As part of enhancing the governance component, participatory planning was suggested to accompany the process and O&OD suggested as the best planning tool. It is claimed that O&OD was preferred due to its presupposed merits of multi-sectoral / multi-disciplinary approach, flexibility and the link with the national programs such as MTEF<sup>2</sup>, LGCDG<sup>3</sup>, the vision 2025 and MDGs.

<sup>1</sup> See the government policy papers since 1994. See Also the 2005 report by REPOA and CMI on Local Government Finances and Service Delivery in Tanzania. 2005. A Summary of findings from 6 councils – Bagamoyo, Ilala, Iringa, Kilosa, Moshi and Mwanza.

<sup>2</sup> Medium Term Expenditure Review

<sup>3</sup> Local Government Capital / Capacity Building Grants

The above components needed a joint sector wide approach in their implementation so as to make the reform agenda concrete and holistic and also for common strengthening of each sector.

However the planning tool and its application was mainly donor supported, thus it mainly covered districts with donor support and a few like Ilala in Dar Es Salaam with capacity for own resources to cover for planning costs. This means that not all districts are on the same level of executing the proposed planning process, the reform and the Decentralisation policy<sup>4</sup>. Planning is also associated with the district's qualification for different grants that are offered on condition for meeting set criteria's. Thus not having plans disqualifies the district from accessing the grants, development projects and processes in general. So it is important to plan in a participatory manner, involving communities and leaders together. Mbulu is among other districts that did not have donor funding for its planning process and thus had not conducted the planning in line with the set requirement.

Main goal of the assignment was to support the district and its development partners including non governmental (CSOs, PSOs and FBOs) actors to conduct the planning in a participatory manner and develop its integrated strategic plan based on village and ward plans.

Lack of participatory plans left Mbulu at cross roads on a number of fronts: one in terms of developing its strategic plan and in developing it from village and ward plans. At another level the district faced a dilemma where some donor supported projects had their village / departmental / sectoral plans in O&OD while the whole district lacked an integrated strategic plan. In the past and during SNV's projects implementation, Mbulu had done PRA but the plans have never been revised, were outdated and lacked most current information like population, new developments that have taken place etc. Some kind of harmonising the planning was needed and evident. However, the district did not have funds to carry out such an activity. Normal budget for a district to conduct O&OD ranges from 50 – 120 million Tanzanian Shillings!

In Mbulu we had to be creative to conduct the study. Through CBLGA program and in collaboration with SNV, Mbulu managed to collect from its overheads a total of 13 million while SNV made a contribution of 10 million. With 23m we jointly worked out a mechanism to conduct both the trainings and awareness sessions with all actor group, carried out the planning, including documentation of plans and the integrated district strategic plan.

This plan is however not a direct version of O&OD. This planning process took place after an evaluation of O&OD had taken place and the discussion about its usefulness or not was being carried out. It became an added value for the planning process in Mbulu and used the lessons and challenges identified in the evaluation. This opportunity guided Mbulu to change their approach, sharpened the focus in choosing the 'right' approach. After studying the evaluation report it was established that in principle there was no major difference between O&OD and PRA or other suggested planning approaches. It proved that each approach has certain good elements and some challenges as well.

Mbulu planning took a middle level approach where elements from some planning approaches were combined and designed to fit the planning process; incorporating and creating awareness on national and international requirements i.e. incorporating both the national vision 2025 and the MDG framework for poverty reduction and improved service delivery at lower levels of governance. It was interesting doing the exercise. It became one of the Aha Moments when we realised that YES we could DO IT, despite all odds.

LGA executives and councillors were excited also because the planning took place in line with other annual national planning processes and before the main assessment for acquiring grants. NGOs and PSOs were fully informed, included and participated in the process from its design, plan and implementation. Capable members from CSOs, FBOs and PSOs were selected and joined in with the district heads of departments as district facilitators. This was another **BIG AHA!!** for all: LGA staffs and non governmental actors to work together for a common goal for

<sup>4</sup> So far only 66 districts have had O&OD as part of the reform and decentralization process.

district development agenda. Also for facilitating, enhancing and paving way for an effective public private partnership and joint action approaches to take place practically in the district.

Prior to the planning process in Mbulu SNV had commissioned a study on Local Governance Barometer. (LGB) This exercise also became another enhancing element for Mbulu. It involved councillors, executives, NGOs, FBOs and PSO actors. The LGB exercise became an added value in the planning process with elements for strengthening joint action, sector wide approaches and public private partnerships among development actors in the district.

With such a broad mix of actors and collaborators the exercise broadened in approach and in analysis. The Planning took place, villagers participated organising for their own time, resources and availability. After the planning data analysis took place where integration of village plans into ward and district strategic plan took place, paving way for the district's qualification in the coming assessment for capital and capacity grants.

## METHOD

Main Activities implemented:

- Awareness raising on O&OD for executives and councillors
- Training of District Facilitators
- Training of Ward Facilitators
- Doing the planning
- Documentation and integration of plans in the district strategic plan

## OUTCOME

### Results of the Assignment:

Plans have been developed, integrated into ward and district plans and the district strategic plan is now in place. Village plans are documented and used as reference for implementation.

### Critical Success moments:

- Making it possible to carry out the assignment with less cost while satisfying all planning requirements.
- The working together of executives, councillors, CSOs, PSOs, FBOs and other development partners in the district made the exercise broad, inclusive, integrated and holistic. It in particular made the exercise easier at village level where NGOs and FBOs are strongly based and were represented.
- Documentation of the plans and integration in the district strategic plan was of utmost importance to Mbulu and to SNV to see it done, shared and disseminated. This is important especially when compared to districts that have been funded but have not compiled the reports, neither incorporating nor integrating them into strategic plans. Most such districts still have the raw data in handwritten form despite heavy funding for developing the plans.
- Ownership of development processes is more important than funding. Mbulu managed to carry out the exercise because of ownership and commitment of their own development process. This is revealed also in the allocation of funds for the process to take place.
- Professionalism and good working relations between staffs of SNV and the district is crucial in creating an environment for things to happen and to happen in the most practical way possible.

## IMPACT

- Some success stories are lessons as well so kindly refer to bullet 2, 3, 4 and 5.
- Apart from these the other lessons include non implementation of D by D in the district. While districts seem to struggle grapple with the policy, policy makers and decision makers at national level / regional level still hoard most roles on behalf of LGAs. Decentralisation has not in practice taken place!
- Information sharing between local and central government still needs harmonisation, for the above reason, districts have less information on what they are expected by national level ladders
- What after the reform period: way forward of the reform process still questionable, uncertain and unpredictable.
- SNV could strategically tap this period to upscale and promote its services and influence / sell the "Best Practices" for working with LGAs at national level based on own field experiences.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Implementation of development projects under decentralisation is more beneficial if community priorities developed during planning are given due attention. Unfortunately this is not the case. Budgetary allocations also do not make reference of the same; they come in lump some, below expectations and not in line with village plans and priorities. This is a major challenge to planning. It can be demoralising to staffs, citizens and other development actors. After so much cost in terms of time, energy and resources, it would be expected that budgetary allocations would at least pay some attention to some key areas of the plan. This is a challenge also to SNV as among key stakeholders and facilitators of the process.

After qualifying with such high scores a district expects that the central government will acknowledge their efforts and promote investments made by staffs, councillors and other actors.

Internal challenges to SNV:

To develop advisors competencies or hire ones with such competencies as to mitigate factors at lower micro to macro levels with sector wide approaches and complements clients and partners needs. Also match with other actors in development as current trends require.

Recommendations for Learning and Follow up:

1. The policy of decentralisation is important for local development both at social and economic levels: It should be implemented as expressed on paper and practice. It has proved effective, enhancing, empowering and practical in delivering required services.
2. Local Authorities have capacity and the will to carry out their functions once given an opportunity and mandate to do so.
3. Councillor's capacities have proved progressive stages of growth with CBLGA and in particular with SNV services. SNV exist strategy and future collaboration with the districts should take this into account.
4. High level advocacy is needed at national level in implementation of the decentralisation policy: SNV can take this role further in the future engagements with PMO RALG in particular, treasurer / ministry of Finance and other key sectors where we are engaged like education, water etc.
5. Cross cutting issues apart from women leadership programs, need more strengthening in future engagement and after CBLGA. Issues of representatives in access to services, and decisions making roles are becoming more and more crucial for local and national level development.