

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Decentralisation by devolution in Tanzania: Reflections on community involvement in the planning process in Kizota Ward in Dodoma**

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**This paper provides a discussion on Decentralization-by-Devolution (D-by- D) in planning process in Tanzania a focus being on Kizota ward in Dodoma. The paper provides findings on how grassroots level is involved in preparing the three years strategic plan and its implications towards solving socio-economic problems at grassroots level. The study employed a combined research design where case study design and mini –survey designs were used. Questionnaires, In-depth interviews and intensive documentary reviews were used for data collection purposes. The findings from the Kizota ward in Dodoma municipality revealed that although the government has done a commendable work in implementing D-by-D, its contribution in planning process at grassroots level is still minimal and ineffective. The mitaa residents were not involved in the planning process; rather they were involved in the implementation of the centrally made plans that did not include their priorities.**

**Key words:** Decentralization, devolution and grassroots involvement.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Decentralization is highly linked with local government system and has been practised in the country in varying degrees since colonial times. Historically, the concept of decentralization has never been a new concept in countries across the globe. The term attracted attention in the 1950s and 1960s when British and French colonial administrations prepared colonies for independence by devolving responsibilities for certain programs to local authorities. In East Africa, decentralization has equally become a buzzword following what is perceived the failure of the top down approaches to development and demand for new approaches on decentralization came to the forefront of the development agenda alongside the renewed global emphasis on governance and human-centered approaches to human development in the 1980s. Discourse on decentralization in the 1980's associated decentralization with increased citizen's participation in decision making process (URT, 1998). Today both developed and developing countries like

Tanzania are pursuing decentralization policies (URT, 2000).

Soon after independence that is from 1961 to 1980, Tanzania like many other developing countries set out ambitious social and human resources development plans including programmes generally aimed at the eradication of poverty, ignorance and diseases in a matter of two decades. It was during that period Tanzania in 1972 adopted numerous top-down policies including, Socialism-Arusha Declaration (1967) and the decentralization policy (1972), which focused on decentralizing key authorities and functions of government from the centre to the grassroots level so as to enable community to participate in decision making. The policy reflected Nyerere's strong conviction that people must be directly involved in shaping the decisions that affect their lives. The policy manifested itself in different two major forms: deconcentration and devolution. During the deconcentration period, rural development was centrally coordinated and managed at the district and regional levels (Max, 1991).

Tanzania has always seen decentralization as an ideal approach to rural and urban development (Ngwilizi,

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2001)<sup>1</sup>. While central government administrative structures improved through these decentralization initiatives, actual participation by the rural and urban populace in the development process was not realized. This type of decentralization was more of deconcentration than devolution of power through local level democratic organs. Tanzania's ongoing administrative, political and economic reforms of early 1990's demanded effective decentralization in which the involvement of the people directly or through their democratically elected representatives is given paramount importance. These reforms include the civil service reform which started in 1992, which aims to achieve a smaller, efficient and effectively performing public service (Mmari, 2005). Following civil service reforms, in 1984 the Local Government system was re-introduced, followed by its reform in 1996, where it was accompanied by the Decentralization by Devolution policy. The policy shifted from the former centralized system to the decentralized local governance system (Max, 1991). For that matter, the local government Reform was used as a driving vehicle of Decentralization by Devolution (D-by-D) policy to strengthen the local government authorities with the overall objective of improving service delivery to the public (Ngwale, 2005). Thus, the transfer of power is made through transferring power of the decision making, functional responsibilities and resource from central government to local government authority (URT, 2006).

However, there have been cases including lack of involvement of stakeholders in planning process, on the side of the human resources involved in the process (Shukuru, 2006; Repoa, 2005). This paper aims at exploring the extent in which D-by-D has been implemented in planning process at the grassroots level with concentration on people involvement in planning process. That means to see the extent to which individuals at grassroots level are involved in the preparation of the strategic plan and see whether the human resources at the grassroots' level have the capacity to undertake planning process.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: CONCEPTS, FORMS AND THEORY**

Countries across the globe have opted for a decentralised policy for diverse reasons. For Tanzania, the aim was to bring government closer to the people since in a decentralized system the decisions about resource allocation and services should be more responsive to local needs, usually because local people can be directly involved in decision making or indirectly

influence those decisions.

While decentralization and devolution may occur at the same time, it is quite possible to decentralize administrative functions without devolving the power to make meaningful decisions (Fisher, 2007). The author (Fisher, 2007) further pointed out that in real devolution, those to whom responsibilities are devolved should be allowed to make a real input in setting up of objectives, rather than being expected to meet objectives set by others. "Real input" does not necessarily entail completely devolved decision-making, but it implies some genuine possibilities of affecting outcomes, as well as a willingness on the part of those devolving authority to modify their objectives. According to Fisher (2008), meaningful devolution relocates not only administrative functions, but also the power to make decisions and set objectives. However, decentralization policies are part of vigorous initiatives to support rural development (Fisher, 2008).

Moreover, Warioba (1999) pointed out that decentralization refer to those tasks and activities which are not done or executed from the centre. Warioba (1999) proceeded by pointing out that decentralization is divided into two main components:- Deconcentration - refers to delegation of authority by the central government to the field units of the same central government department, that is giving decision making power to civil servants in the regions, districts or/ and village (Warioba, 1999). This form of decentralization is sometimes referred to as administrative decentralization (Warioba, 1999). It is the delegation of authority from the higher to lower echelons within the bureaucracy, taken as a basis for development and change. Devolution refers to transfer of decision making power and much policy making powers (especially development and social service policy) to elected local representative authorities or units or to autonomous public enterprise. This model of decentralization is sometimes referred to as political decentralization. Devolved local authorities have the power to make laws of local nature and raise revenue needed to meet development with very minimum interference from the centre (Warioba, 1999).

Although most authors seem to link devolution with the transfer of power to the local authorities, yet what happened in Tanzania is the transfer of authority from the central government to the local government, enabling the later to pursue all matters regarding social, economical and political development which were formerly being done by the central government. For example, before devolution the mandates to determine collection of revenue on various agricultural products were vested on the central government but after the reforms which paved a way for devolution the mandate has been shifted to the local government authority up to the village level<sup>2</sup>. Hence

<sup>1</sup> A paper submitted by Hon. Hassan Ngwilizi, MP., Minister of State, President's Office (Regional Administration and Local Government) to the UNCDF Conference on Decentralisation and Local Governance in Africa, Cape town, 26 - 30 March, 2001)

<sup>2</sup> See Article 146 (1) of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania

it can be narrated that decentralization by devolution means transfer of authority- functional responsibilities, and resources to all Local Government levels. This is geared towards making them largely autonomous, democratically governed and deriving legitimacy through service they deliver to people in accordance to grassroots level dwellers' priorities as communicated to government decision-makers. From the definition it can be reiterated that the focus of the law and regulations governing decentralisation by devolution focused on Mtaa level (in case of urban authority) and village (in case of rural authority) due to the fact that these are the lowest level of authorities within the structure of local government hence making it possible for the participation of the people at the grassroots.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The main issue in this study was to explore the implementation of planning process at the grassroots level. Although Decentralised planning process requires involvement of stakeholders in process, there have been cases for non-involvement. This study intends to look into the manner in which community is involved and identify their implications.

### Conceptual model

#### *Community involvement in planning process*

At the national level, planning guidelines are issued to Prime Minister's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government as well as Regional Secretariats. The main role of these institutions is to coordinate planning at LGA. After receiving planning guidelines either from the ministry responsible with planning/PMO-RALG or regional secretariat, Local Government authorities communicate them to the wards. Furthermore, ward submits the same guidelines to *mitaa*. In this regards, during meeting through the use of O and OD *mitaa* priorities are identified and included in the plan. *mitaa* plans are submitted to ward level. The ward compiles the *mitaa* plan and submits to the respective LGA. At this stage, LGA compiles all wards plans and submits to the national level and copy to Regional Secretariat and PMO-RALG. At the national level, all LGAs' plans are integrated to form a national plan. The issue is to what extent this process is reflected in Kizota Ward planning process.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This section presents procedures used to generate outcomes. It includes sources of data, collection methods, sampling procedures and sample size. The data were collected at Kizota ward in Dodoma municipality. Methods of data collection and instruments used were interview, observation, documentation and questionnaires.

## Sampling procedures and sample size

In this study, units of inquiry included all residents of Kizota Ward in Dodoma Municipality. There were a total 30 Wards in the Municipality. Kizota was selected for study due to the fact that despite being one of the oldest ward in Dodoma, it faces numerous problems such as water, roads, trench and sewage system, hence a need to realize peoples' involvement in planning process. There are six *Mitaas* consisting of 16,432 people at Kizota wards in Dodoma Municipality. However, 44.36% of this population are children aged between 0 - 15 years; hence the population of the study was about 7289 residents (URT, 2003). Out of it, a sample of 729 persons was drawn, which is 10% of the total population aged 15 years and above. The sampling procedures based on proportionate stratified sampling – where by Kizota residents were grouped into their respective 6 *mitaa*; random sampling was used in selecting a total of 729 respondents in total out of 7289; and Purposive sampling<sup>3</sup> was used to gather information from the selected key units.

## STUDY FINDINGS

This part provides study findings. It includes findings on people's involvement in the strategic planning, human resources utilisation in the planning process at local government level and achievement attained to mention but a few.

### Involvement levels in preparing the three years strategic plan

Community involvement at the planning process is essential for successful implementation of the process. Moreover, it matters the level of involvement. At the same time involvement of the officers is much more crucial.

### Community involvement level

Findings shown in Figure 1, 2 and 3 summarize responses collected through questionnaire on community involvement in preparing three years strategic plan. Findings revealed that 52.2% respondents said that there was no involvement in planning process.

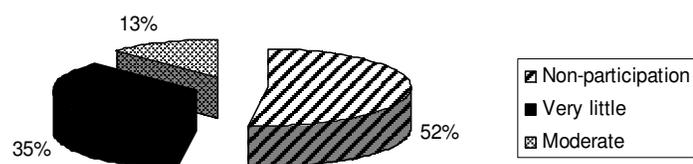
Also, 80% of *mitaa* Executive Officers had the same view. On the other hand, 35.3% residents asserted that the extent of community involvement in planning process was inadequate. Moreover, the same table shows the summary of the findings from the interviewed Municipality staff who indicated that about 66.7% of them had the view that community involvement in planning process was moderate and it was in most cases made through involving their representatives (councillors). The

<sup>3</sup>By virtue of their positions and functions, Municipal Director, Municipal Planning Officer, Municipal Treasurer, Municipal Engineer, Community Development Officer, Human Resource Officer and Education Officer, *Mtaa* executive officers and ward executive officers were purposively included in the sample;

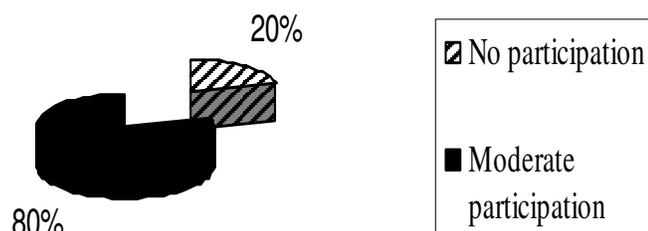
**Table 1.** *Mitaa* social and economic problems.

Response by <i>Mitaa</i> respondents	Frequencies	Percent
Lack of passable roads, trenches, nearby Health facilities and Market	238	38.8
Too much contribution by <i>mitaa</i> 's residents for running primary school education	64	10.4
Lack reliable clean and safe source of water	33	5.4
Transport problems	39	6.4
High unemployment level, absence of nursery school	76	12.4
Price level of various commodities, e.g. electricity	30	4.9
Environmental pollution, lack of dump problems concerning HIV/AIDS	84	13.7
Security issues and lack of teamwork spirit in solving socio-economic problems	24	3.9
Poor performance of Local Government Authority	6	1.0
Lack of <i>mitaa</i> projects and sites for conducting businesses	20	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>100.0</b>

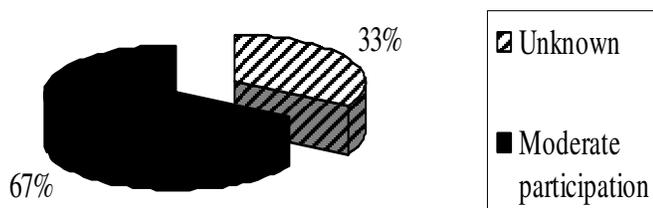
Source: Field data (2008).



**Figure 1.** Level of community involvement in preparing three years strategic plan (%); response by *Mtaa* respondents. Source: Field Data (2008).



**Figure 2.** Level of community involvement in preparing three years strategic plan (%); response by *Mtaa* Executive Officers.



**Figure 3.** Level of community involvement in preparing three years strategic plan (%): Responses from interviewed municipal staff WEOs.

was not practicable due to shortage of funds and time constraints.

In addition, findings gathered from *mitaa* minutes for meetings held in the respective *mitaa*, financial contributions for building secondary schools was the dominant agenda at all *mitaa*. Findings tally with findings by Cooksey and Kikula who pointed out that there were numerous problems related to bottom-up planning such as unmotivated and untrained staff, lack of transport facilities and poor communication (REPOA, 2007). Also it pointed out that most of such funds were spent basing on national level and donor prioritizing (REPOA, 2007).

Furthermore, the findings from this study coincide with the study conducted by Chaligha and colleagues (REPOA, 2005). However, these findings are contrary to planning guidelines for village and *mitaa* that are aimed at enhancing bottom-up planning as a way of accommodating communities' identified needs in preparation of Municipality's plans and budgets (URT, 2004).

Although ministries had to some extent decentralized functions and devolved powers to LGAs, Dodoma Municipality failed to decentralize its planning functions to LLGL. The findings revealed that there was insignificant community involvement in planning process at grassroots community. In most case planning was undertaken by few experts who did not include residents' priorities, hence leaving many problems unsolved.

This is reflected in Table 1 which shows responses from *mitaa* residents collected through questionnaire on *mitaa* socio-economic problems. As from the table, 38.8% respondents pointed out lack of passable *mitaa* roads, trenches, nearby health facilities and market as major socio-economic problems facing their respective *mitaa*. Besides, 3.3% of them mentioned lack of *mitaa* project and sites for conducting businesses as *mitaa* socio-economic problems facing their ward. Also, 1% asserted that poor performance of Local Government was a source of problems.

respondents asserted that direct community involvement

**Table 2.** Achievements made by involving the grassroots Community in planning process in percent.

<b>Response by <i>Mitaa</i> residents</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Unknown	169	27.5
Some of the community problems have been solved	13	2.1
Increase in the availability of service, e.g. Secondary education	149	24.2
Cultivates good relationship between residents and <i>mitaa</i> residents	10	1.6
No any achievement	248	40.3
Cleanliness of the <i>mitaa</i>	26	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data (2008).

**Table 3.** Respondents views on grassroots involvement in solving the problems in percentage.

<b>Response by <i>Mitaa</i> residents</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Unknown	26	4.3
Solving residents complaints	168	27.9
Realizing development of <i>mitaa</i> (In areas of increasing ownership, accountability, efficiency, improvement and sustainability)	304	50.4
Development and the spirit of working together	105	17.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field data (2008).

### People involved in planning process

According to the study, 80% *mitaa* executive officers argued that there was no involvement because there were no detailed *mitaa* plans and 20% of them had views that Economic, Planning and Finance committee was involved in planning process. Generally, findings correspond with the study conducted by Chaligha and colleagues (REPOA, 2005). They revealed that the depth of implementation of bottom-up planning in the studied council differed from one council to another (REPOA, 2005). Also in most cases, it was undertaken by few experts who did not reach people (REPOA, 2005). They considered it to be top-down rather than bottom-up. Findings confirm that community involvement in preparing the *mitaa* plans was still minimal.

### Human resource utilization in the planning process

98.7% respondents revealed that they had never been trained in relation to community involvement in planning process. Only 1.3% respondents pointed out that they were trained in matters related to community involvement in planning process. On the other hand, all MEOs confirmed that they had attended training twice and were equipped with opportunities and obstacles for development (O & OD) methodology. Results are similar to those from Kikula (2005) as well as Chaligha and colleagues (REPOA, 2005). On the basis of these findings, the study substantiates that there was no

training provided to *mitaa* residents on community involvement in planning that would afford them an opportunity to be fully involved in planning process. Hence, most *mitaa* residents stayed idle for most of the time, implying poor utilization of human resources.

According to Table 2, 40.3% respondents argued that there was no any achievement made as a result of involvement of community in planning process. 27.5% of them were aware of achievements that resulted from community involvement in planning. However, 24.2% respondents stated that community involvement in planning process has lead to an increase in availability of services such as secondary school education. Thus, there are no remarkable achievements related to community involvement in planning process because most of their priorities and problems remained unattended.

The study revealed that there was insignificant community involvement in planning process at the grassroots community. As a result, the respondents saw it as ineffective with no or little realized positive implications to grassroots community. However, respondents argued that implementing community involvement in planning process would lead to an increased in ownership of projects, accountability, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency in running such projects.

According to Table 3, 50.4% respondents had views that community involvement in planning process would result in realizing development of the *mitaa*. In relation to it, they pointed out that it would lead to an increase in ownership, accountability, sustainability, improvement, effectiveness and efficiency in running the established

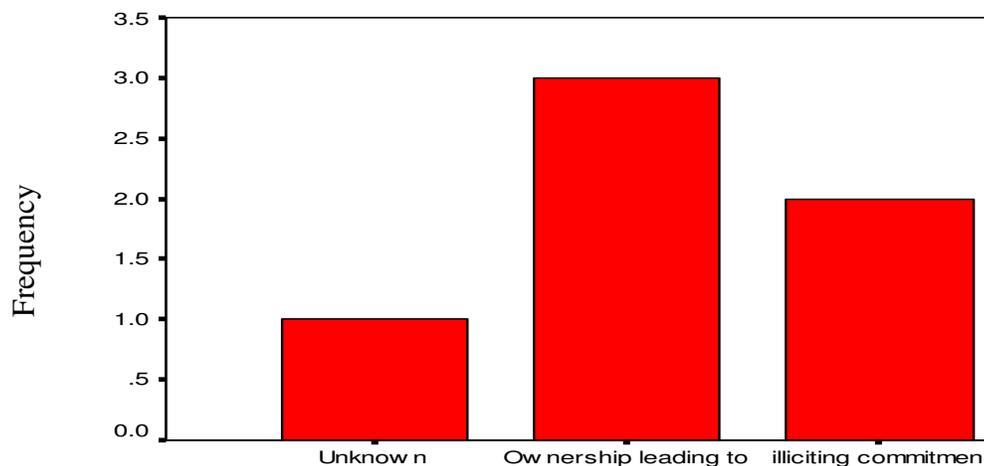


Figure 4. Views of the municipal staff and WEO. Source: Field data (2008).

Table 4. Suggestions on improving involvement of grassroots community in planning process in percent.

Response by <i>mitaa</i> residents	Frequencies	Percentage
Workshop, meeting and training on involving <i>mitaa</i> residents	16	2.9
Grassroots level be consulted during planning process	71	13.0
Planning should start at <i>mitaa</i> level to include <i>mitaa</i> priorities	119	21.8
MEOS and <i>mitaa</i> residents be trained on participatory planning	107	19.6
Government should allow bottom up planning	187	34.3
Disbursing money directly to <i>mitaa</i> level for project implementation	45	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data (2008).

projects. Also, under such a situation, projects would be established in accordance to residents' needs and its use will reflect value for money. Moreover, 27.9% respondents argued that involvement of *mitaa* residents in planning process would help to solve residents' complaints and problems, hence, contributing to poverty alleviation.

However, 4.3% respondents were unaware of possible implications of involving *mitaa* residents. The study corresponds with the findings by Braathen and colleagues (REPOA, 2005). Also, Figure 4 presents municipal staff and Executive officer view elicited through interview. The findings in Figure 4 shows that 30% respondents claimed that grassroots community involvement would lead into community ownership of the project and hence, its sustainability. The study substantiates almost one third of the respondents had views that community involvement at the *mitaa* level would bring about positive implications.

#### SUGGESTIONS ON IMPROVING INVOLVEMENT OF GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY IN PLANNING PROCESS

Table 4 shows responses related to suggestions concerning

the ways of improving the involvement of people at Low level of Local Government in planning process.

According to findings on Table 4, 34.3% respondents pointed out that in order to improve community participation, the Government should emphasize on bottom-up planning. Also, about 21.8% respondents explained that in order to improve it, planning should start at *mitaa* levels including their respective *mitaa* priorities. Moreover, 19.6% respondents suggested that for improving the community involvement in the process, MEOs and *mitaa* residents should be trained on participatory planning. In the same vein, Local Government Authorities should allocate funds for projects and running the offices because currently no funds are allocated for the same. For example in case the service is associated with writing letters, *mitaa* residents were required to buy ruled papers for the same. According to findings collected from MEOs revealed that LGAs should allocate funds at *Mitaas* level for both running offices and implementing various projects.

Also, MEOs, WEO and municipal staff suggested that the government should change the manner in which it allocates funds. More funds should be allocated according to grassroots priorities.

Moreover, 2.9% respondents mentioned workshop, meeting and training in community involvement on planning as ways of improving community involvement in planning process. Thus, in order to improve community involvement in planning process, the government should frequently train MEOs and *mitaa* residents on the same. It should allocate adequate funds for running offices and implementation of projects that reflect the priorities of grassroots community. It is through community involvement in planning process and disbursing adequate funds for the projects would contribute to poverty alleviation.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study justifies that, currently the contribution of D-by-D in planning process at the grassroots level is minimal and ineffective in *mitaa* of Kizota ward within Dodoma Municipality. The failure resulted from inability of the council to involve the community in planning process that would include their respective priorities. Moreover, the study revealed that there has been poor utilization of human resource at the grassroots level because the council failed to engage *mitaa* residents in productive ways. Also, council plans were in all cases prioritized over *mitaa* plans, hence leaving most of the *mitaa* socio-economic problems unsolved. Hence, there is a need to institute community involvement in planning process as they would lead to an increased ownership of projects, accountability, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of the process. The study concurs to a great extent with other studies conducted in Makete and Ludewa in Iringa region where it was found that community involvement was being hindered by irresponsiveness of the councils in creating an enabling environment (TREECARE, 2005).

Despite the fact that D by D among other things calls for community involvement in deciding matters affecting their livelihoods including planning and setting their priorities, the study noted numerous gaps as the *mitaa* residents were not involved in the planning process; rather they were involved in the implementation of the centrally made plans that did not include their priorities and as a result, efficiency in implementation becomes minimum. Moreover, utilization of the human resources available and their competence was also noted to be insignificant. In that regard, it is recommended that councils should ensure that they effectively involve the community in setting their priorities and develop their own plans – involve them in the planning process through utilization of the available human resources at the grass root levels.

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