Accountability and Transparency at the Grassroots Level: The Experience of Tanzania

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Introduction

It is fashionable today to hear that it is necessary to have good governance as a means to development. Good governance as prescribed by the advocates includes several elements such as rule of law, constitutionalism, the observance of human rights, regular free and fair elections, accountability and transparency, among others. It is believed that the combination of these elements creates a conducive atmosphere for the conduct of government business that is pro-people, and one that is likely to accelerate the development process. Many developing countries are at different stages of trying to have these features in place. Tanzania too is trying. There have been different reform programmes and projects including Local Government Reforms, Public Service Reforms, Financial Sector Reforms as well as Legal Sector Reform. Further there are efforts to make the government more efficient through e-government.

In this paper I am going to look at two of the elements above – transparency and accountability at the grassroots level. These two terms are inextricably linked. As they will be defined in this paper, one cannot have one without the other. For an institution to be accountable it has to be transparent and if an institution is transparent it is likely that it is accountable as it has nothing it wants to hide. The linkage between transparency and accountability is therefore 'natural'. The paper starts by looking at the history of local governance in Tanzania from the pre-colonial era up until Independence, then it looks at the two concepts of transparency and accountability. After that it looks at Tanzania's experience and in this section it is divided into the period when there was a one-party state in Tanzania and the post-1992 period. After that there is a conclusion.

History of Local Governance

The Earlier Years

Local governance structures in Tanzania have a long history. Different scholars would want to start the history at what point they believe these structures started to operate but the fact is that such structures, like those related to administration in human communities, were there since man formed communities. The most common way of classifying these structures has been the dichotomization into pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. Mukandala (2000) notes that the structure of grassroots institutions of governance in pre-colonial era was partly determined by society's socio-economic and political systems. He divides them into four types. First, in the tribute-paying state systems the structure was highly centralized from the village to the king, with King's representatives at each of the lower levels. Villages were under chiefs who represented the king. The second type includes much of the larger population of Tanzania. These evolved local systems of governance that were tied to kinship structures and led by village leaders. These leaders were assisted by other clan elders. But as time went on, as a result of socio-economic and political struggles, the kinships grew. This led to the emergence of many small states.

A third type was based on the age-cohort system as was the case with the Maasai. The age-groups system within a well established village settlement constituted the main structure of governance and socio-economic and political decisions. Finally, for the few hunting societies, the key institution was the hunting band which was made of independent hunting families. Each family made its own decision, and in most cases a skilled hunter emerged as a key and influential person in socio-economic and political decisions that pertained to the hunting group. Briefly, the structure of grassroots governance during pre-colonial period was very diverse and depended on the society's socio-economic and political structure.

Grassroots Institutions of Governance During the German Period

When the Germans arrived in Tanzania they found societies being governed in these different diverse structures of governance: from those highly centralized structures that tied the individual peasant families and villages with a central state authority, to those that exercised independent family decisions. Colonial state was thus established over such societies that were characterized by diverse structures of governance. The result of this was restructuring and harmonization of the pre-colonial structure in accordance with the colonial state interests. Colonialism, being a form of domination did not spare the structures of governance it found on the ground. It thus required the destruction of the colonized peoples' socio-economic and political system and the institutionalization of the structures that would favour the colonial state and the legitimization of colonial rule. This basically referred to the destruction of the colonized peoples' grassroots forms of governance, and in its place, the establishment of governance institutions of rule which would perpetuate foreign rule and interest.

In the coastal areas and at the grassroots level the Germans put in place the so-called *akidas*". Below them were "*jumbes*". According to Kimambo (1969: 202) the offices of the *Akida* and *Jumbe* were found in the coastal regions where the sultan of Zanzibar had employed them in his administrative structures. These *Jumbes* were essentially village headmen who were hereditary and unpaid, who received compensation from tribute and services rendered by their constituencies. The *akidas* on the other hand, supervised the territory of several *jumbes*; they were paid officials and did not necessarily belong to the ethnic group they administered. Kimambo (ibid.) further notes that this represented a very serious and significant transformation of governance at grassroots level. Some of the fortunate villages and communities had their traditional rulers selected as *jumbes* or simply headmen "*mnyapara*". But many had foreign *jumbes*, and some of the people were appointed as *jumbes* simply because they claimed to be traditional rulers. In this case the *jumbes* found legitimacy through the colonial state. They were answerable to the *akida* and sustained their position by their efficient execution of the colonial interests over the local village population.

The impact of this reorganization to the grassroots, village and ward governance was firstly that the country experienced a uniform and imposed system of administration. Secondly, the system did not respect local institutions of governance as well as their democratic and diverse character. Thirdly, it established a new class of hereditary rulers at the local level in the name of "*jumbes*" in areas where hereditary rule has been non-existent. Fourthly "foreign" rulers were established in a number of villages and this became the basis for the future non-democratic practices in grassroots governance. However, the Germans modified slightly the local administration in the post *Maji Maji* era. The district officers were given greater freedom in running the local affairs of their districts so as to enable them to deal with local grievances more effectively. By the end of the German rule, it was very clear that the set-up of village, ward and district level government was against peoples' form of governance as traditional leaderships was literally replaced by a different type of leadership. During the war period and after the defeat of the Germans between 1916 and 1918 the administrative structure was not so clear. Traditional leaders somehow gained power as a result of the vacuum. But at the same time in some of the areas the *jumbes* and *akidas* consolidated themselves.

Grassroots Institutions of Governance: The British Period

During the British administration and with the mandate from the League of Nations, they retained much of what they found on the ground for about three years. This was mainly because they were in the process of setting out their administrative system. Some leadership positions were changed; Mukandala (2000:15 - 16) remarks that most of the leaders were not changed as stated above, the policy emphasis was on efficient administration and qualities of leadership. This was initial set up a background for a new policy that focused more on centralized tribal administration. Ruling through tribal administration would therefore allow for efficient and inexpensive administration through their leaders (peoples). This was in principle a departure from the German system". In actual fact the British created further confusion in their quest, first to establish traditional rulers, secondly to find those who met their criteria, and thirdly, to amalgamate the area of jurisdiction for each of the administrative authority. This created some illegitimate

claims and usurpation of power by ambitious people who claimed to be traditional leaders. It also brought back into power some traditional leaders who had previously been deposed. Some groups of people did not like the move, while in some other cases the process rejuvenated claims of tribal entities. Up to 1925 the choice of the British government concerning administration of the colony was however not clear. The native chiefs were in fact not independent rulers; they were merely delegates of the governor, whose representative was the Provincial Commissioner. To address these problems the British government under Governor Donald Cameron came out with the Native Authority Ordinance of 1926 that set out the principle of indirect rule. The principle, as was stated in the Native Administration Memorandum No., 1, was adopted so as to ensure the survival of tribal traditions and institutions. It was a principle of ruling through native chiefs who were regarded as an integral part of the machinery of the government with well defined powers and functions recognized by government and by law.

Indirect rule through native authorities was in actual fact not aimed at increasing the local population democratic participation but rather their integration in the colonial rule while the native councils and courts were established to maintain law and order, and the economic interest of the colonial powers. The British colonial government made sure that the "tribal chiefs" and rulers and their sons were provided with education so that they become good and obedient salaried employees of the government. Thus members of the chiefly families were among the first prominent educated elite after WWII.

The Post-Independence Structures

The post-colonial state, while not abolishing the inherited local government structure, initiated many changes which had the effect of integrating it thoroughly in government and ruling party structures and processes. According to Kamugisha (1979) the Independence constitution did not recognize local governments as territorial areas separate from the district. The organizational structure placed local governments below district administration. This galvanized the local governments, central government and the party to work as a single system but with asymmetrical power relations, with the party

on top followed by the central government and lastly local government. The Local Authority Ordinance that had provided for 38 local authorities was revised in 1962 to repeal the sections that established Native Authorities.

The local government ordinance of 1962 also repealed the African Chiefs Ordinance of 1953. All chiefs were stripped of their powers and their roles abolished completely. Periodic elections were also introduced for councilors. In addition to the above, the post-colonial government initiated a combination of measures aimed at enhancing peoples' participation parallel to local government structures and initiatives. These changes included mobilization programmes and tinkering with government *and party* structures at the grassroots. A committee system was created to provide the necessary avenues for participation and to enable the local leadership to translate the people's enthusiasm into solid achievement. Development committees were set up from the village to the regional level in order to spearhead and coordinate local development activities as well as to create avenues for local participation in decision making.

Further, in 1963, the old village headmen were removed, and village councils amalgamated into larger village development committee. By the end of 1963, 7,500 Village Development Committees had been created as the exercise went hand in hand with the state's idea of collectivizing so that development programmes can benefit many at a go. Each committee was to be responsible for drawing up plans for development of the village over which it had jurisdictions. It was to be the main source of self-help initiative and mobilization of local labour force for such tasks as road construction, brick making, etc. Once its plans had been formulated, the Village Development Committee was to send them to the district authorities for scrutiny, processing and incorporation into a development plan for the whole district.

The District Development Committees, which were formed in the same year, had the responsibility to review, coordinate and arrange priorities of all proposals received and form a master plan for the district which was to be sent to the Regional Development Committee for final approval and implementation. Further reforms were introduced after

the Arusha Declaration. For example, during 1969, Ward Development Committees (WDCs) were created to replace the Village Development Committees. Among other things, the WDC would deal with "organization of national building works, developing villages, schools and other projects initiated by the people" (Levine, 1972: 329). *The ruling political party, TANU, was made part and parcel of local government system*. The local government election Act No. 50 of 1965 decreed that all councilors had to be TANU members. Their candidature for election as councilors had to be scrutinized and approved by the Party District Executive Committee. The District Party Chairman was to be the ex-official chairman of the district council. In July 1969, the Division Executive Officers were replaced by Divisional Secretaries of TANU. *These were to be the party and government heads in their areas.* Before taking up their posts, they had been trained for nine months at National Service camps, at the Party Ideological Kivukoni College in Dar es Salaam, and at an Agricultural Training Institute.

TANU, the ruling party, was supposed to operate within these committees. The commissioners were to chair the meetings of the development committees which included civil servants, elected TANU officials, and TANU District councilors. The TANU ten-house cell system had been introduced in 1964 as "organization for mobilizing the people to carry out the many development programmes in conjunction with the Village Development Committees and later the Ward Development Committees". As one official statement puts it, "potentially the most important role of the cell leader was to act as the mobilizing agent for self-help and other development schemes" (Nyerere, 1968). The ten-cell leaders were to be members of the TANU annual branch conference and of the Village Development Committees or, later, the Ward Development Committees. Indeed, one reason for the abolition of the Village Development Committees in 1969 was to introduce a large Ward Development Committee whose boundaries coincided with party branch and local authority boundaries for more effective and smooth mobilization of the people for development.

Participation remained elusive. In 1967, the president directed that there must be an efficient and democratic system of local government, so that the people make their own

decisions on the things which affect them directly, and so that they are able to recognize their own control over community decisions and their own responsibility for carrying them out (Nyerere, 1972: 2). The existing institutions then, had among other things, failed to ensure peoples effective participation. These institutions remained, at most, centrally controlled institutions. Finally, in 1973, Nyerere categorically complained that while progress was made in seizing power from the hands of capitalists and traditionalists, the fact should be faced that to the masses of the people, power is something still wielded by others (Nyerere, 1972:2). In 1972 Local Governments were abolished, to be replaced by Decentralized Administration. Despite the replacement, the goal of attaining popular participation was never realized. Otherwise said, and in relation to the goal of this paper, there was neither real transparency nor accountability. These two will be discussed further in another section below.

Local government was legislatively reintroduced in 1982 but effectively in January 1984 under the Local Government (District Authorities) Act No. 7 of 1982, and the Local Authorities (Urban Authorities) Act No. 8 of 1978. Act No. 7 of 1982 empowers the minister concerned with local governments to recognize a village government and township authority even if it does not meet minimal prescribed qualification. The minimum prescribed qualification is 250 and 5000 households for village government and township authority, respectively. The district council is composed of councilors elected from the wards within the district. The ward formed the local governments' electoral constituency. The minister concerned with local governments retained powers to vary the boundaries of wards, and increase or decrease the number of wards in local authorities. Once again powers are at the centre. While this did not arouse controversy in the old days of one party system, things have changed in the era of multiparty system. Desperate members of a party in power may be involved in gerrymandering in order to secure political advantage.

The 1982 pieces of legislation sought more rather than less party-state-control over villagers and their organizations. The chairperson and secretary of village assemblies and the village council were the chairperson and secretary of the party branch. Everything

emanating from the village level of even council had to be approved by the minister, if it was not initiated by him. The councilors, as already noted, were elected at the ward level, above the villages. Consequently one tends to agree with Ngware and Haule (1993) when they argue that the weak institutional and organizational structures of local government are partly due to the non-integration of the village governments into the local government structure due to the party's dominance at the village level.

Local governments are not autonomous. They are under strict control by the party and the central government. Central government control is exercised in several distinct ways. These include statutory instruments such as orders, notices, rules, directives and regulations that central authorities are authorized to issue. Second, local authorities are required to obtain central government approval for their decisions. "Subject to approval" clauses in the laws mandate this. Third, central government is supposed to control and influence local authorities through supervision and inspection of their activities. Fourth, central government has appellate powers over decisions made by or involving local authorities. Under these powers local authority decisions can be reversed. The fifth method is through financial controls as pointed out above. Finally, central government control is exercised through the right to appoint the Chief Executive officers of local authorities.

The main objective of local government according to the constitution is "consolidating and giving more power to the people… shall be entitled and competent to participate, and to involve the people, in the planning and implementation of development". (URT, 1977). Their major responsibility was that of enhancing democracy at local level through involving people in planning and implementation of development programmes in their particular localities. This is a task which the previous decentralized administration had failed to accomplish.

Accountability

Accountability means to 'give an account' of actions or policies, or 'to account for' spending and so forth. Accountability can be said to require a person to explain and justify – against criteria of some kind – their decisions or actions. Accountability also requires that the person goes on to make amends if something is found to be amiss. The need for oversight emanates from the fact that *vertical or public, accountability* (i.e. being answerable to stakeholders outside of the elected or otherwise decision makers) is a necessary component of any public management system. While various formal rules supporting good governance may be in place internally as defined in the gospel of good governance, some actors in the system comply with these rules. Without a functioning system of public accountability, horizontal, or internal, accountability is weakened in such areas as budgetary outcomes are compromised in terms of fiscal discipline and effective and efficient spending. Vertical accountability is a function of the institutional arrangements within the implementing agency.

This is the supply side of vertical accountability. In order for accountability to come about, there should be an active demand side as well - stakeholders outside of the elected/appointed bodies, who have an active interest in the information provided and who take meaningful steps to make the public officials answerable. The institutional arrangements within local (and even central) governments should supply information and provide meaningful access and generate the necessary will to demand an effective voice in budget formulation and implementation.

For political scientists, an examination of accountability should begin with the question of how to control the exercise of power. Because the exercise of power can lead to abuses, there is the need to domesticate and control the use of power by subjecting it to certain procedures and rules of conduct. According to Schedler (1999), the three dimensions - enforcement, monitoring and justification of which accountability embraces turns political accountability into a multifaceted enterprise that copes with a variety of actual and potential abuses of power. Thus, in one sense, accountability means answerability for a person's action or behaviour in the exercise of authority (Moncrieffe, 2001; Dwivedi, 1994). Indeed, in the study of politics, accountability is viewed as the

ability to determine who in government is responsible for a decision or action and the ability to ensure that officials are answerable for their actions. Accountability therefore means holding elected or appointed officials entrusted with public mandate and organizations charged with managing public functions answerable for specific actions or activities to the citizens from whom they derive their authority. It then becomes 'the obligation to explain, justify, or answer questions about how resources have been used and to what effect' (Trow, 1996:310).

Romzek (2000) offers the most comprehensive framework for analyzing types of accountability relationships. She identified four basic types: professional, administrative, legal and political. The last three are the types that are commonly found in elected local governments in most developing countries and these will direct the study. Political accountability system reflects a situation where the individual or agency has substantially more discretion to pursue relevant tasks and the review standards, when they are invoked, are broad and weighty (Huisman and Currie, 2004). Political accountability relationships encourage officeholders to be responsive to the concerns of key interest groups such as the electorate. On the other hand, administrative and legal accountability systems are reflected in work arrangements and established judicial frameworks that allow individuals to base their decision-making and actions on internalized laid down rules and procedures (Dwivedi, 1994; Olowu, 1999). Moncrieffe has further distinguished between the Ex-ante and Ex-post facto forms of accountability. The former is based on the concept of representation. As O'Donnell observed, 'representation entails accountability: somehow representatives are held "liable" for their actions' (O'Donnell, 1996:100).

The Ex-ante type works on the principle that in order to act effectively in the citizens' interest, public officeholders must know what the interest of the people is and act to satisfy that interest (Moncrieffe, 2001:27). Whereas it is difficult to define precisely the interest of the citizens, the obligation to discharge basic social responsibilities – welfare needs for the electorate remains clear. One objective that defines ex-ante accountability is the guarantees of rights and freedoms of the citizens. In democratic polities, citizens' ability to monitor performance of their representatives largely depends on their access to

information and knowledge of the activities of the elected. These can be bolstered by independent media and the judiciary. In order to keep power from running wild, established mechanisms must support citizens' participation in discourses of policy choices and their outcomes (Schedler, 1999). Consultation and the use of feedback mechanisms will assure the citizens that their interest will reflect in policy decisions (Moncrieffe, 2001). However, developments in some nascent democracies in Africa and Latin America where authoritarian practices continue to manifest in both local and national governance create difficult conditions for disciplining holders of public office because of their extreme loyalty to the regimes.

Accountability: Leaders-Led Dimension

There are many ways in which the people can use to hold their leaders accountable. This accountability can be looked at from the points of view of political, legal, moral and administrative types. These are the types that one comes across in most political systems. Table 1 below summarizes these:

Table 1: Choosing Tools of Accountability

ENDS	MEANS (TOOLS)
Legitimacy of decision makers	Constitutions, electoral system, bureaucratic systems of representation, letters of appointment, formal delegation of authority, standing orders,
Moral conduct	Societal values, concepts of social justice and public interest, professional values, training or induction programmes
Responsiveness	Public participation and consultation, advisory bodies, public meetings, freedom of speech
Openness	Parliamentary questions, public information services, freedom of information, laws, public hearings, green/white papers and annual reports

Optimal resource utilization	Budgets, financial procedures, parliamentary public accounts committee, auditing, public inquiries and participation, formal planning systems
Improving efficiency and effectiveness	Information systems, value-for-money audits, programme guidelines, appraisals, feedback from public

Modified from: Hayllar M. R. (1991) "Accountability: Ends, Means and Resources", Asian Review of Public Administration Vol. 3(2): 10 – 22.

Transparency

Transparency is the active disclosure of information by an organization allowing external actors to monitor the internal workings or performance of a government organization (Curtin & Meijer, 2006). Transparency as it is used in governance literature implies, among other things, watching government from the outside. One element nearly all transparency definitions have in common is that transparency refers to the extent to which an organization reveals relevant information about decision processes, procedures, functioning and performance (Wong & Welch, 2004; Curtin & Meijer, op. cit). This is comprised by the following perspective and components:

- An inward perspective: one can monitor an institution from 'the outside'.
- A component about the active disclosure of information by government organizations.
- Allowing external actors to assess its internal workings or performance.

The general transparency of the local public institutions refers to three key elements: **openness** towards citizens, **decisional transparency** towards citizens and **mechanisms of accountability** and responsibility. The first element, o*penness*, means here openness towards the public at large about a public institution's structure and functions, fiscal policy intentions, involving ready access to reliable, comprehensive information on the institution's activities. Public authorities, according to their competencies, are obliged to

ensure the correct information of citizens upon public matters, but also in personal problems. The problem is of higher importance in the context of local governments and local representatives because the very idea of their mandate is the concern with matters of local community or society. This we could consider as a first component of transparency. As a second element we could talk about is *decisional transparency* towards citizens - a democratic government must offer to citizens the opportunity to understand its operations and participate in making decisions on local public issues. A third component of transparency could be the *mechanisms of accountability and responsibility*: people holding representatives accountable for their actions through control institutions and holding them responsible by means of not re-electing them if they find that they have not lived to their expectations. Indicators of transparency are numerous and this paper does not have the pretension of offering an extensive list. At the higher levels, say district council level, there are such indicators as (1) information brochures (publicly accessible ones) about the structure, composition and functions of the public administration, published by the institution or by NGO's; (2) existence of a separate public relations office for public at large besides the one that is meant to keep relations with media and other institutions/organizations); (3) meetings with the mass media and the existence of a newspaper published by the local government about decisions; (4) systematic appearance in newspapers of local decisions; (5) public meetings with citizens; (6) efficiency, transparency and responsibility in the preparation, execution and control of the budget; (7) usage of public funds through the process of public acquisitions. Some of these can be applicable to the lower levels of village, hamlet and street. Some are not that applicable, such as public meetings.

Whether transparency of government will lead to higher levels of trust or not, is discussed heavily throughout the literature. A widely shared opinion exists that transparency will lead to an open culture in government that benefits us all (Hood, 2006). It is ultimately seen as 'something good' which will eventually increase citizen trust in government (Brin, 1998; Oliver, 2004). On the other hand, some other scholars argue that a greater degree of transparency generates the possibility to (unjustly) blame the government time and time again. Bovens (2003) warns about this 'dark side of

transparency': when people can see everything behind the scenes of government this could lead to demystification of government. A fault by government can always be construed and if citizens, media and politicians use transparency for their own gain with no restraints, this could result in 'politics of scandal'. As a result, transparency could contribute to political cynicism and citizen trust in government might even decline. Nonetheless, the effect of transparency on trust remains disputed and although some studies have been carried out, the amount of empirical research on this topic remains limited (Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006). If there is research on this relationship, causal mechanisms can only be assumed.

Tanzania's Experience at the Grassroots: 1961 to 1992

In theory, one can say that the lower the administrative ladder one goes, the less opaque and complex are the structures of an organization – and specifically the structures of government. At the lower levels there are fewer activities, there are fewer decisions made and less resources to be allocated, but also fewer actors converging at a point vying for resources. This seems to be the case with the Tanzanian lower levels of government – the village, hamlet and street levels. The issue of transparency therefore should not be that complicated. But the stakeholders need to be aware and need to demand some things from the leadership.

As it has been discussed above, during the single party system the grassroots levels had more of party leadership than was that of the government per se. The party had the ten-cell leader (balozi) who happened to play the roles of government and those of the party. Above was the village level in which again the party had its representative and who did both party and government work.

When one looks at accountability at this level during the single party system, what becomes a reality is that the concept of party supremacy as well as the presence of party structures all over brought about a situation where party leaders were seen as infallibles and nobody was to question or doubt their actions. The party was *the* institution and its

actions (through its operatives) were beyond reproach in some way. The people at these levels would know, for example, of misuse of power and property but they would not bother make follow up because of the notion that the party was 'always right'. It was politics in command.

Apart from this situation arising from the supremacy of the party, the strategy deployed in the development agenda also censored efforts to call leaders to account. The state was authoritarian; it was not easy for one to ask questions, and more so at the lower levels. People were made to be submissive and docile. The economic situation that obtained from the mid-1970s onwards made things worse because the state controlled the flow of resources, goods and services including consumer goods. At some point, for example, people were required to show voter registration cards in order to get coupons for buying such commodities as sugar. This shows, in the first place, that people were disenchanted with the system and there was apathy. In such a situation it would not be for the interest of any voter to challenge the leadership. People were more concerned with where and when they would get the basic needs like what they would eat, what they would wash with and so on, than wanting any party/government leader to be accountable.

Experience after 1992

1992 marked the return to multi party politics in Tanzania. The change of the system implied also the liberalization and opening of the political space for such other organizations as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) of different types to operate in a freer way than it was before. New parties were registered, new CSOs came up to add to those which came up in the dawn of the political and economic reforms; and communities started to organize themselves in a different way. Individuals were inspired to speak by seeing that CSOs and other organizations were mobilizing people for different reasons – political, economic, social and cultural.

The demand for good governance by the donor community added to the need for transparency and accountability. Aid tied to some credentials in good governance made

the government agree to the fact that the two qualities were necessary and desirable for accelerated development – after the other way round of development first and good governance later had failed.

The liberalized political space led to more media outlets. Television and radio stations multiplied. Newspapers of national, regional and local coverage emerged. Generally people were getting more informed and they were ready to demand things they would not during the pre-1992 era. Reforms in government, including Local Government Reforms were also on the cards. Issues of participation, accountability and transparency were discussed in many fora. Such requirements as the one for leaders of local government institutions/units to post information on income and expenditures, to advertise for vacant posts transparently, council meetings to be accessible by interested members of the public and so on are actually making inroads towards more transparency and accountability.

Some CSOs and research institutions, such as REDET sought and got funds to conduct civic education programmes. These programmes helped many people when it comes to awareness and political competence of some kind with regard to rights and obligations. The issue of accountability and transparency featured quite prominently. While CSOs can be the one means through which the people can be informed and represented, at the grassroots level they have not been that effective. In fact the most active civil society organizations in Tanzania are those organized in the major urban areas and those with national coverage. The local ones are not that organized and they most of the times interested in other than the politics in local government. Furthermore, the local civil society organizations may not have the expertise to challenge the local government bureaucracies. But they remain one of the avenues through which (civic) education, information and empowerment can come through to the people.

School curricula changed too in favour of more informed citizens. The then Political Education subject in primary and secondary schools which was more propagandistic than civic education was replaced by Civics at both levels. The contents imparted knowledge

about people's rights and obligations as well as many other aspects that citizens need to be aware of such as human rights, democracy, constitutions and rule of law.

Finally, there are elections through which the electorate can throw unwanted leaders out of the elective posts. The post-1992 elections have involved multiple political parties. At these lower levels, opposition political parties have had a wider participation because of the lower costs involved when it comes to resources, coverage area and knowledge the electorate have of the candidates as well as the candidates' knowledge of the voters.

When all these are combined, a different Tanzanian, even at the lower levels, was taking shape. While they may not know much about the national-level policies, priorities and debates, many Tanzanians are aware of the needs of their local areas and they know that they need to pick good and committed leaders. However, corruption must be factored here as this curse is and has been observed at all levels during electoral processes.

What does this imply when it comes to accountability and transparency at the grassroots levels? Certainly, the post-1992 period increased the possibility of the grassroots levels having more transparent and accountable governmental institutions and leaders; people have been more vocal when it comes to public issues such as those concerning levies, budgets and public expenditure, development projects and so on. The presence of some opposition leaders at these levels and some of whom replaced CCM candidates is a signal that even in elections the people have had choices – and they decided to choose those whom they believed would be accountable and transparent.

Conclusion

The general assessment of Local Governments' accountability to the people in Tanzania indicates that they are not. The arguments rally around several facts. Firstly, it is said that

local governments invariably take orders from the President, the Ministers, Regional and District Commissioner and even Divisional Executive Officers. So, in order to make local governments accountable to the people they the powers of the central government officials should be curtailed. Secondly, the appointed officials like the Executive Directors are also said to be not accountable to the people but rather to their appointing authorities. Electing them, it is said, would make them more accountable to the people. Thirdly, accountability channels are also said to be not that clear. At the beginning of this paper I noted that the lower one goes the less complex and dense structures, activities and decisions are. The said unaccountability mentioned above falls more at the District/Municipal/Ward levels. For the hamlet, street and village levels, these problems are not really as applicable. These levels are different and they have a better chance of being more transparent and accountable than the higher levels.

Tanzania is implementing a Local Government Reform Programme. The programme aims at making sure that Tanzania's local government system is properly set in order that it can cater for the needs they have been created for – increasing participation, accountability and responsiveness. All these will make Tanzanians part and parcel of the entire planning, implementation and evaluation processes in the search for 'development'. The search for these qualities through the Decentralization by Devolution is but a show of resolve that our local governance structures are transparent and accountable. The bottom-up approach embedded in this arrangement points to the desire to have accountability and transparency from the lowest levels up. There is evidence that now the people at these lower levels are better informed, they participate more and they get better feedback from their leaders at the grassroots level than when there was a single-party regime. Political parties, research institutions, and CSOs need to be encouraged to do more in order to make our citizens more competent when it comes to participating in local politics. This is all about the much chanted ownership – that when the people own the processes of planning, implementing and even evaluation, there is likely going to be faster pace to development

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