Resource governance and community participation: Making hydrocarbon extraction work for Tanzania

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Abstract

Recent discoveries of natural gas in Tanzania have generated optimism and reignited hopes for socio-economic transformation. While extractive companies have not yet announced their investment decisions, the government has anticipated future activities by putting in place institutional, policy and legal frameworks to ensure that there is a stable basis for the development of the subsector. These measures aim to ensure a vibrant level of industrial development. However, it is not clear whether they will be sufficient to enable Tanzania to avoid the fate that has befallen some other resource rich African countries, namely the resource curse. Hence it is imperative that Tanzania finds a way to prevent potential adverse effects from becoming realities that eventually turn into a resource curse. This paper considers the role and significance of active community participation in natural gas decision making and governance processes. The paper draws on government documents for the energy sector and forty-four semi-structured interviews conducted between July 2016 and February 2017 with community members, religious leaders, local government officials, central government bureaucrats, civil society organisations and political representatives in Mtwara, Lindi and Dar es Salaam. The paper argues that active community engagement in decision-making and governance processes is as important as economic participation. This calls for a re-think of local content policy and regulations to ensure that communities not only participate in natural gas value and supply chains but also have the opportunity and capacity to influence decisions about how they participate and benefit from extractive resources.