

Challenges of Improving Performance and Responsiveness in the Public Service:

A Perspective from Civil Society

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Key Messages

- ◆ Building a public service that is accountable, responsive, service-oriented and free of corruption is a foundation for good governance, improved social well being, reduced poverty and/or increased income
- ◆ The public service alone cannot reform itself
- ◆ We need to involve citizens more in the reform processes
- ◆ Partnership with civil society is crucial
- ◆ Let's move from rhetoric to actions
- ◆ It can be done, play your part

MKUKUTA and Public Service

- ◆ *The National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA) recognizes Governance and Accountability as being the most significant of the three main clusters identified in achieving growth and reduction of poverty.*

The seven goals to be achieved in this cluster are:

- ◆ *Structures and systems of governance as well as the rule of law to be democratic, participatory, representative, accountable and inclusive*
- ◆ *Equitable allocation of public resources with corruption effectively addressed*
- ◆ *Effective Public Service framework in place to provide foundation for service delivery improvements and poverty reduction*
- ◆ *Rights of the poor and vulnerable groups are protected and promoted in the justice system*
- ◆ *Reduction of political and social exclusion and intolerance*
- ◆ *Improve personal and material security, reduce crime, and eliminate sexual abuse and domestic violence*
- ◆ *National cultural identities to be enhanced and promoted*

All these goals generally seem to aim at creating a public service that is effective, efficient, responsible and accountable to the general public.

Public Sector Reforms

- ◆ *The Government has initiated various reforms*
- ◆ *Overall objectives of these reforms have been to put in place a lean, efficient, cost effective, corruption free public sector that empowers and responds to the needs of the people*
- ◆ *The Public Service Reform Programme, for instance, aims to provide the public service with the capacity, systems and culture for client orientation and continuous improvement of services.*
- ◆ *The Local Government Reform Programme aims at creating decentralized local government institutions which will empower citizens to have more control on matters related to their own development.*
- ◆ *Similarly, all other reforms aim at improving service delivery and responsiveness in the particular sectors such as public financial management, legal sector, education sector, health sector, etc.*

The Big Question

How are these reforms contributing to improvement in service delivery and poverty reduction?

Views of the People SURVEY 2007

- ◆ *According to a survey conducted in March / April 2007 throughout Mainland Tanzania, more people appear to be worse off now than three years ago.*
- ◆ *In all income groups, including the least poor, more people perceive falling rather than rising living standards*
- ◆ *Most Tanzanian adults consider the cost of living to be a major problem (particularly the cost of food).*
- ◆ *The majority of farmers, pastoralists, and fishers report that they receive virtually no support from the state, and would like much more support from the Government in improving access to inputs for production and for loans/credit.*
- ◆ *The state of the nation's roads also emerged as a critical constraint on economic activity and poverty reduction efforts in rural areas.*

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Roads

- ◆ *70% of the respondents in rural areas, 57% in other towns and 41% of Dar es Salaam residents considered the condition of roads a major problem.*
- ◆ *Only 28% perceived improvement in road quality over the last three years while 47% reported deterioration.*

Education – Availability of Textbooks

- ◆ *80% of primary school pupils aged 7-14 years said that there were not enough textbooks. The textbooks are in shorter supply in rural areas but even in Dar es Salaam 61% of pupils were dissatisfied with the supply of textbooks.*

Health

- ◆ *Two thirds Of the adults who had used health facilities, cited the cost of medical treatment and drugs to be a major problem. 44% complained about the availability of drugs. 42% rural residents complained about access to health facilities*

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Participation in Public Affairs

- ◆ *Only 22% of rural and 18% of urban adults reported participation in local level planning exercises. In Dar es Salaam, the situation is even worse with only 7% of the adults reporting participation.*
- ◆ *53% of the respondents were of the opinion that citizens publicly expressing their views made any difference while 39% thought that government officials do not listen to what people say.*

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Popular Knowledge and Opinions on Politics and Policies

- ◆ *About one third of the sample said they were not very interested in politics or economics. Of the 86% of the respondents who offered an opinion, 81% believe that foreign aid mostly benefits government officials, and 64% of respondents strongly agree with this view.*
- ◆ *A majority of respondents offered favourable opinions on the performance of the most senior government officials and Members of Parliament. Over 40% of respondents also saw improvements in the performance of local government officials, councilors and village government and the police.*

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Corruption and Accountability

- ◆ *40% of respondents offered no opinion about the extent of corruption. Of those who did, 70% perceive petty, grand and political corruption to be very or quite common in Tanzania.*
- ◆ *About 43% of the respondents thought corruption affected their lives, business and politics.*
- ◆ *The police and the legal system stand out as the most corrupt services in public perception.*
- ◆ *In general, urban perception of corruption in public sector is more negative than rural perceptions, and better-off citizens perceive significantly higher incidences of corruption than poorer respondents.*

Emerging challenges and Issues

- ◆ *Vertical versus horizontal accountability*
- ◆ *Changing the Culture and Attitude of Public Servants*
- ◆ *Lack of Competition*
- ◆ *Too much emphasis on funding*

Improving Performance and Responsiveness

The Case for enhanced citizen participation

- ◆ *Client Service Charters*
- ◆ *The Use of Service Delivery and Perception Surveys*
- ◆ *Public expenditure tracking systems*
- ◆ *Complaints Handling and Feedback Mechanism*

The Role of Civil Society in Improving Public Service Performance and Responsiveness

- ◆ *What is needed is partnership and not partisanship*
- ◆ *Governments need to work with citizens in ensuring performance improvements and the establishment of more responsive systems.*
- ◆ *There is a worldwide consensus that a strong civil society and strong governments are mutually reinforcing prerequisites for a more responsive and effective public service.*
- ◆ *In collaborating with Civil Society organizations, governments are enabled to create enough pressure on the public service to change attitudes, cultures and become more accountable and responsive to the people.*

The Role of Civil Society in Improving Public Service Performance and Responsiveness

- ◆ *In Tanzania, if the responsibility of disseminating the contents of the client service charters for the various MDA was given to civil society organizations, majority of the citizens would have known their rights and responsibilities in relation to services delivered by the various public institutions. That would have greatly changed the quality of service and their level of responsiveness.*
- ◆ *The same applies to conducting service delivery and perception surveys. Civil society organizations are more independent in carrying out the surveys and can communicate the results to citizens in a language that can easily be understood by people and therefore create debate for improvement of the services.*
- ◆ *A good number of civil society organizations in Tanzania have developed enough capacity to undertake public expenditure tracking surveys and some have actually carried out a number of surveys in the country. The challenge faced by them is the difficulty to obtain relevant information*

Conclusion

- ◆ *The best and probably only way of improving performance and responsiveness of the public service is to ensure it is truly accountable to its people*
- ◆ *Efforts in public service reforms should aim at creating systems and structures for practical accountability*

Conclusion

- ◆ *When we can solve the issue of practical accountability to citizens, we will not only have solved the heart of the public service reforms - but we will have laid the twin foundations for democracy and economic development that are necessary for our Mkukuta goals of growth and reduction of income poverty on one side, and improvement of the quality of life and social well being of our people on the other side on a foundation of a well governed and accountable public service.*

Conclusion

It can be done, play your part

I thank you for your attention