

## Briefing paper I

# Exploring development and accountability: laying the basis for a local governance performance index in Tanzania

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To identify appropriate indicators for a local governance performance index (LGPI), we need to establish what local government is responsible for, and what matters most to citizens. Over two years this research has spoken to hundreds of citizens, local leaders, local officials and civil society organisations in two districts in Tanzania. This briefing paper summarises findings around the key questions of what ‘development’ means at the local level, who is responsible for it, and how local government can be held to account in practice. Findings are illustrated with selected quotes from interviews, focus groups and workshops, which demonstrate the challenges that need to be overcome to design and implement a performance index. The briefing paper then proposes indicators that could be used in these two districts to monitor the performance of local government.

### Key Messages

- Designing a local governance performance index (LGPI) requires deep contextual analysis of lines of accountability and blame in the delivery of public services
- Lines of responsibility for public services are highly blurred and contested in Tanzania
- A LGPI offers potential as a problem-solving tool for different actors to work together on local issues
- Evidence indicates that a LGPI should cover: Physical Infrastructure; Social Services; Land & Livelihoods; and Political Representation

## Methodology

In 2014, the University of Mzumbe, in partnership with the Foundation for Civil Society and INTRAC, launched a three-year research project to explore the viability and value of creating a local governance performance index at the district level in Tanzania. This research was funded by the UK Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Department for International Development (DFID).

A team of researchers from Mzumbe University carried out the research in two districts to offer a contrasting analysis from economic, geographic, social and political perspectives. Mvomero is rural, but not so isolated from centres of power; it is economically diverse and of mixed religion. Kigoma-Ujiji is urban and in the far west of Tanzania; political power lies with the opposition party, and it is predominately Muslim.

In each district (wilaya) the research team selected four different wards (kata); in each ward they selected one village (vijiji) or street (mitaa), giving four distinct research sites in each district, as well as the district level itself. Data collection combined field visits, semi-structured and unstructured interviews with key informants, focus group discussions, workshops with local government officials and civil society organisations, life histories, and survey work to build a cumulative understanding of local governance and service delivery.

Findings from the fieldwork were validated at district level, and triangulated through reference to existing research on local governance in Tanzania. Additional validation activities will be undertaken during the final stages of the project. For full details of the methodology, please refer to the working papers listed at the end of this note.



## What does development mean at the local level?

In Tanzania, perceptions and expectations about public services are tied to the concept of development (*maendeleo*). We found that development is commonly understood as the presence of ‘modern’ infrastructure and institutions, and the possibility of making a sustainable living:

*“Development occurs at two levels: at the individual level and the community level. Development is about having a high income (a lot of money), and having a good life, a good place to live (a house with iron sheets and electricity) and good infrastructure; especially roads.”*

Interview, female, Kigoma

*“Development is the shift from old traditions and customs to modern life. This includes for example playing the piano instead of the drums during *ngomas*, ending female genital mutilation, and going to the hospital instead of traditional healers.”*

Interview, female, Mvomero

*“Development is all about roads and hospitals. There are other villages which have roads and people live luxurious lives there. If you have roads in your village it will open the doors to development.”*

Interview, male, Mvomero

## What does accountability mean at the local level?

The concept of ‘holding local government to account’ requires clear understanding of what is meant by ‘local government’. Some participants in the research believed that this includes everyone up to the district level; others focused on village leaders and village officials on the basis that these are the people who are directly in touch with the citizens:

*“Who is the local government? From the district level down, VEO [village executive officer], councillors, village chairperson.”*

Participant, focus group with CSOs, Mvomero

*“Local government is the chairperson and the members of his/her governing committee.”*

Interview, female, Kigoma

*“Local government is the government within the government, which is elected by citizens in each location so as to deal with people’s problems and challenges. Local government has two categories, namely the urban authority and district authority.”*

Participant, focus group with local officials, Kigoma

It further requires clear understanding of what is meant by ‘accountability’. The research uncovered different perceptions, including accountability being a way of punishing people for not performing, a way to get the person to explain why they did (or didn't) do something, or as a way of putting pressure on them to act:

*“For example, the law requires village leaders to read revenue and expenditure reports every quarter but they do not do that, the idea of holding them to account will help to remind them to perform their duties.”*

Participant, focus group with males, Mvomero

*“Holding local government leaders to account is an action of punishment of those leaders who have failed to meet their responsibilities.”*

Interview, male street leader, Kigoma

## Who is responsible for development and public services?

So what role should local government, and therefore systems of local governance, be playing in bringing development?

### The Rules in Theory

Since 1999 the Tanzanian Government has been actively pursuing an incremental strategy which is referred to as Decentralisation by Devolution (DbyD). Decentralisation relies on the effective transfer of power, authority and resources from the central state. From relevant literature and interviews with key informants we mapped the local government system in Tanzania. Figure 1 attempts to capture the lines of responsibility and service delivery. We call this the ‘Rules in Theory’. It shows that the local government system in Tanzania has a bewildering array of layers, sometime running in parallel, and sometimes over-lapping, and sometimes officially defunct, yet still operational in practice.

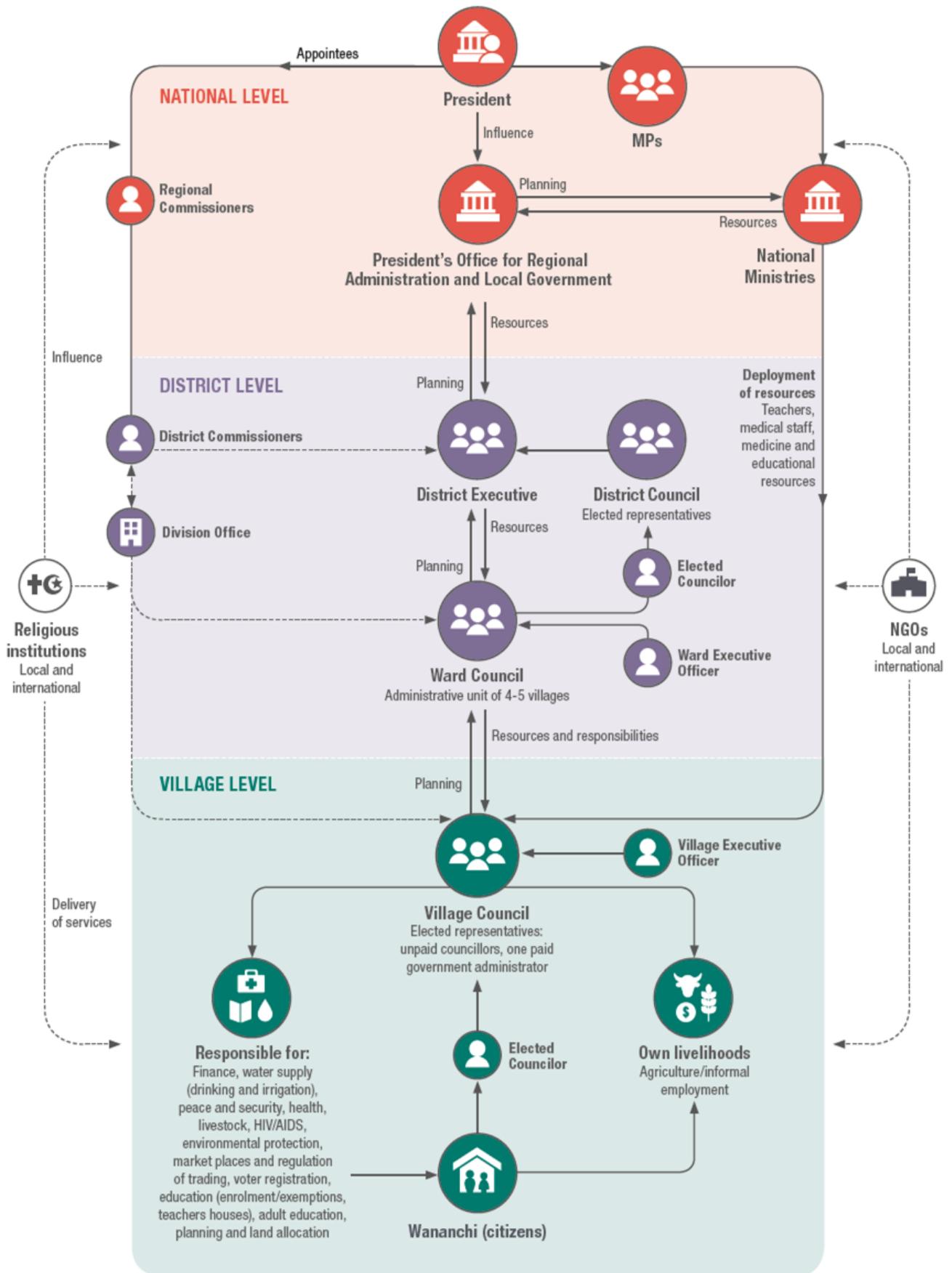


Figure 1: Delivery of public services in Tanzania

Figure 1 shows a central column with planning being driven from the village/street level through the citizens (wananchi) and their elected representatives. Plans are consolidated and sent upwards through the ward and district executives to the President's Office for Regional Administration and Local Government. This office coordinates with the President and relevant national ministries back down the chain. In addition to this, the President appoints Regional and District Commissioners.

The ward, village and street levels of government have high levels of responsibility placed on them, including peace and security, land allocations, social welfare and social service delivery, water, and environment.

Initiatives aimed at strengthening local government or tackling accountability from the local to national level often focus on the district. Yet, the district sits above many layers of official local institutions (Division-Ward-Village, and in some areas the sub-village designation of Hamlet and 10 cell (10 households)) before the individual citizen. The hamlet and the 10-cell are sub-village units, however the village is considered to be the lowest level of local government. These levels of government are often physically far removed from district administrations. There is also a blurring of lines of responsibility and accountability in some sectors in relation to the central and local government powers, particularly in health and education.

Religious institutions are also significant actors at all levels, playing influential roles in the delivery of public services, but also in shaping social norms and attitudes. The influence of NGOs are largely confined to the District and National levels, and their influence is far more marginal than that of the religious institutions at the village and ward levels.

## The Rules in Practice

One of our key findings from the data set is that there is confusion throughout the system. In both districts, we have found that elected representatives, officials and stakeholders are unclear about their own roles and responsibilities, as well as those of others within the various tiers of local government. As one citizen said:

*"Development requires taking out some levels in the leadership hierarchy. The hierarchy is composed of the Member (Mjumbe), the Street Chairperson (Mwenyekiti wa mtaa), the Village or Street Executive Officer (Mtendaji wa mtaa/kijiji), the Ward Executive Officer (mtendaji wa kata) and then the Ward Councillor. This long chain of hierarchy levels generates an environment subject to corruption rather than generating performance because all these people in the leadership chain are actually playing the same role."* Interview, male, Kigoma

As a result, citizens have little awareness of what they should expect of local government at any level:

*"To my knowledge, the role of a councillor is to lead people in all development issues such as road and hospital construction, water supply and so on. I don't know if this lady (elected councillor) was fulfilling her role as she was supposed to, because in Mziba there is no clean water, nor electricity, nor good road. I don't know anything about the MP of my area because I never saw him anywhere and I don't know what the responsibility of an MP is."* Interview, male, Mvomero

Further probing as to who is responsible for development revealed multiple lines of blame and accountability. There was a split into three levels:

### ➤ It is villagers/citizens who are responsible:

Decentralisation by Devolution (DbyD) includes the idea that participation will 'empower' citizens. This also supports Nyerere's concept of self-reliance, where participation is an obligation if one is to build a nation.<sup>1</sup> This self-reliance concept has led many villagers, as well as the local and central government, to believe that villagers are the ones who are responsible for bringing development through volunteer labour or financial contributions:

*"Villagers are the source of development. No one else can bring development within the village except villagers themselves. If we need a road, we will build it ourselves. If we need a school, we will build it ourselves. The government is not capable of bringing development to*

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<sup>1</sup> Green, M., 2014. *The development state: aid, culture & civil society in Tanzania*. Boydell & Brewer Ltd.

villagers. The government cannot do each and everything. Villagers are responsible to educate themselves and not wait for others to come and educate them. If we stay in that situation we will keep complaining that life is harder and that there is no development. I don't see any development in Kikeo because there is no activity that is undertaken by all villagers." Interview, female elder, Mvomero

"The only people who are responsible for bringing about development are the community members themselves. They have to work hard, so that the government can chip in to support them." Interview, male, Kigoma

➤ **It is village leaders (Village Executive Officer (VEO) and Village Council) who are responsible:**

At the village/street level service delivery and citizen representation functions appear blurred. Most officials and representatives are voluntary yet fulfil many functions across health, education, social services, justice and security, environment and livelihoods, but with very limited resources. Many citizens therefore look to village leaders when discussing who should bring development:

"The first person responsible for the development of the village is the Village Chairperson because we elect him with the aim of conducting development activities. He is supposed to properly represent the people at a high level because through his position he has the opportunity to present our problems at different high levels." Interview, female, Mvomero

➤ **It is local and national government that is responsible:**

Whilst citizens and village leadership are given, and give themselves, a central role in delivering development, there is an expectation that local government, MPs, and the President will play their part:

"The responsibility to reduce poverty lies with our leaders - councillors, MP and Ministers - because these individuals know a lot about peoples' problems. Thus, they are required to use all national resources properly and avoid fraud over government funds and embezzlement of funds." Interview, male, Mvomero

"The one who is responsible to bring development to people is the government because all source of revenues are owned by the government." Interview, male, Kigoma

## Who is responsible for holding local government to account?

As with responsibility for development, we found many different views on who should be responsible for holding local government to account. While many participants in the research believed that citizens should hold elected leaders to account, some felt that accountability should not always come from citizens. Indeed, we heard a range of opinions on where responsibility should lie, including: citizens, village councils, councillors, regional and district commissioners, political parties, religious leaders, civil society organisations, and employers of officials:

"The one who is responsible for holding local government to account is the citizen, because the citizen is the one who discovers the weakness of his/her leaders. After discovering or seeing a weakness, a citizen has the right to present it for action in the village meeting ... Citizens should report their councillors and MPs to the village office, ward office or district council offices. Citizens have full mandate to hold their leaders to account." Participant, focus group with village leaders, Mvomero

"The one who is responsible for holding MPs and councillors to account is the chairperson of the CCM (ruling party) because these leaders are under that political party." Participant, focus group with females, Mvomero

"The district commissioner (DC). Why the DC? Because he is a leader of all local government leaders such as councillors, ward executive officers (WEOs), Mtaa executive officers (MEOs)<sup>2</sup>, street chairpersons and street members of committees." Participant, focus group with males, Kigoma

There was recognition of the inter-dependency between different levels and functions when it comes to ability to perform:

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<sup>2</sup> The MEO fulfils the same functions as the Village Executive Officer, but is present in urban areas.

*“It is difficult for the councillor and MP to do good work or perform their duties and responsibilities well if the lower level (from Kitongoji level to village level) does not perform well.”* Participant, focus group with village leaders, Mvomero

*“We need to hold lower-level leaders like the village chairperson to account before holding councillors or MPs to account.”* Participant, focus group with females, Mvomero

The research also showed the need to distinguish between elected positions and appointed positions, and paid and unpaid positions. Civil servants felt that they were being watched over by many different people, so questioned whether citizens should also be holding them to account:

*“There are too many bosses who are supervising us... civil servants’ accountability is affected by availability of many supervisors who in one way or another have different opinions and decisions regarding resources. These bosses include ministers, permanent secretaries, regional commissioner, regional administrative secretary, district commissioner, district administrative secretary, members of parliament, councillors and the secretary of the leading party (CCM).”* Participant, Focus group with local officials, Kigoma

Elected representatives, on the other hand, could be held to account through the election process. However, the research also revealed concerns amongst citizens about taking action against elected representatives. Fear of reprisal, security, education, personal relationships, and power dynamics were cited as obstacles to such action:

*“It is like giving the local government leaders punishment. For example, if in a street there is a street chairperson selected by the citizens by voting and the citizens see that he/she does not meet his/her responsibilities, the citizens can hold this leader to account by refusing to vote for him/her again when it comes to another election.”* Interview, female, Kigoma

*“The system means is not easy to remove them once they are elected. The community keeps silence when the leaders do not do what they are supposed to do.”* Participant, focus group with CSOs, Mvomero

*“We are the ones who elect them but we don’t know how to hold them to account, we don’t know the procedure that we can use to hold them to account.”* Participant, focus group with females, Mvomero

This quote highlights a further challenge to the accountability system, which is the level of knowledge of citizens about how they can hold local government accountable and their confidence to do so. Mechanisms might exist in theory, with officials in focus group discussions outlining clear procedures that exist in law, but in practice people are not using them or they do not function:

*“Village leadership is answerable to the Village Assembly. Things are not moving because there is no accountability. The Village Assembly is not the platform to hold leaders to account and accountable, instead village’s leadership use them to give directives. There is no room for engaging in dialogue and discussion. Many leaders and civil servants are not delivering, and instead of citizens using the system and available room to demand for accountability they keep complaining and whining.”* Interview, Senior official, Unit in the Ministry of President’s Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PORLAG)

*“Our village chairperson used to call meetings but he does not appear in those meetings, how can we hold him to account, while he is not attending village meetings?”* Participant, focus with village leaders, Mvomero

## **What are the challenges in holding local government to account?**

Workshops, focus groups and interviews with officials, leaders, civil society organisations and citizens highlighted the many obstacles to accountability because of misunderstandings, mutual blaming and resource limitations.

### **➤ Politicians are not concerned with peoples’ problems:**

CSO participants in workshops claimed that politicians do not take action on problems facing citizens; it takes too long for politicians to visit citizens and to listen to their problems. Councillors were perceived as not taking peoples’ views seriously and not cooperating well with CSOs; they had more interest in getting big allowances than in developing their wards (constituencies). This mirrored views expressed at the village level also:

*“There is a need to hold local government (councillors and MPs) to account, because they don’t perform their duties properly (poor efficiency); for example, our MP has not been to visit us since we elected him even to give greetings. Our MP has confused us very much*

*because we see him go to the parliament but he doesn't come to visit us here; what things does he say in the parliament?"* Participant, focus group with males, Mvomero

*"The leaders can be told they are not doing their jobs in the village meetings. Some of the village leaders do not attend meeting and even when they attend, they don't take it seriously – they do not ask questions."* Participant, focus group with CSOs, Mvomero

➤ **Councillors and other representatives feel they are misjudged:**

In the same workshops involving CSOs mentioned above, councillors responded that they were being misjudged. Front line workers may not respect councillors as they feel they are responsible to central government, such as the Ministry of Health or Education. District officials said that they are answerable to the councillors; they work closely with councillors to ensure that they achieve their goals of bringing about development in their constituencies. Councillors feel that they deserve their allowances as they have many activities to deliver. They are aware that if their respective constituencies see no development they will be accountable for that. However, they often struggle to be effective because they do not get paid:

*"The council chairperson comes into the office twice a month and this is because they are not paid, but the Village Executive Officer and Ward Executive Officer come in every day... The councillors are supposed to be the supervisors of the VEO and WEO but we don't get our 350,000 TZs salary in time. It can take up to a year to get our money so it gets to the point that we come into the office but we are not happy and we cannot work effectively."* Participant, focus group with councillors, Mvomero

➤ **Distinguishing between representatives and politicians:**

Some participants, including councillors, said that there was confusion among the population in distinguishing between representatives and politicians. A politician was described as someone who cannot be trusted because they make promises to get elected (notably MPs). A representative is a person who works on behalf of the population and fights for the rights of the people that they live amongst (such as Ward Councillors and Village Councillors).

➤ **Lack of communication, openness, cooperation and togetherness:**

This was said to be a common cause of a lack of accountability. For instance, councillors reported poor communication and awareness among various stakeholders, while district officials and councillors blamed CSOs for lack of openness, cooperation and transparency. It was reported that CSOs sometimes bypass the village leadership when they bring citizen complaints to the district level.

➤ **No platform to bring together stakeholders:**

Participants said that poor accountability was caused by the absence of a platform to bring together representatives, the government and CSOs to share knowledge and experience. Strengthening the NGO desk at the district level could help with improving coordination and accountability.

➤ **Lack of important documents and knowledge:**

CSOs noted that many officials did not have access to necessary documents such as policies, magazines, leaflets and brochures. For example, they said that education coordinators had no information on national education policy and therefore were not aware of what it entailed:

*"Elected local leaders sometimes do not know their responsibilities and this has been due to absence of well-structured guidelines and strategies to bring about people's well-being, such as nutrition, health and education."* Participant, focus group with CSOs, Kigoma

➤ **Weak culture of reading:**

This was mentioned as an obstacle for accountability. CSOs said that they can send progress reports to district officials and respective ministries, but felt that little or no effort was made to read them.

### ➤ Financial ability versus accountability:

All participants made a connection between accountability and financial ability. Financial problems were reported as a big issue affecting councils, councillors, and CSO performance for many years. Resources are not always available to deliver on policies and promises made at the national level. District officials reported that the social welfare department has many activities and manpower but has only a budget of 1 million Tanzanian Shillings (approx. £360) per month.

Reliability, availability and timeliness of funds came up again and again with district officials:

*“In short, the proper procedure is not followed and as a result many activities lag behind. This results in the council falling into debts for project contractors who are not paid.”* Interview, local government official, Mvomero

*“There are key issues. One of them is that there have been times when budgeting was done but the revenue collection falls or comes short of projected amounts. This affects most of the operational departments which have their own funding sources like land and agriculture. Then there is a case of delay in funds from treasury and insufficient disbursements which may be dubbed crosscutting because it affects all departments i.e. operational and supporting.”* Interview, local government official, Mvomero

*“The disbursed funds from the government are not enough and neither the revenue collected from own sources within the council. Government funding is usually never enough and even when it is disbursed it is not on time to carry out activities as planned. The Government prioritizes several big spending projects, all to be done at the same time or within a short period of time. Also, most of them are politically motivated and sometimes not in the plan for the annual spending. The last financial year was one of the worst planning years. The government ran a census, national elections, national identity registration, voter’s registration and review of the constitution, which were all happening at the same time. I hope that such negligence in planning will never happen again.”* Interview, local government official, Kigoma

## Getting beyond blame: designing a locally-relevant performance index

We conclude that local governance has theoretical lines of accountability, but in practice these lines are very blurred. Blame for the lack of progress goes in all directions, by all actors - including some citizens who blame themselves for failing to deliver development activities. It is very hard to see how local government can be held directly to account for service delivery when the responsibilities of local government are far from clear. Therefore, the process of designing the Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) needs to consider these contested and blurred lines of accountability.

However there is a desire to address this. The research revealed consensus that local government should be accountable for its performance, and participants in the research welcomed the participatory process and the emerging findings. We therefore see potential in using a LGPI as a collaborative problem-solving tool, that helps to move from a list of complaints about problems that local officials and representatives have limited capacity to resolve, to a collective understanding between citizens and local government about where blockages lie, and what they can do together to overcome them.

The bottom-up, participatory research and reflection process collected perspectives of citizens and local officials about key areas of development and service delivery that matter most to them in their lives and work. This enabled us to draw out potential indicators for a prototype LGPI during the data analysis process which were categorised into: physical infrastructure; social services; livelihoods and resources; and political processes. These draft indicators were then further refined through interactive workshops and focus group discussions in both districts with representatives of the various levels of local government, civil society organisations, local politicians and citizens.

## Proposed indicators for use in a Local Governance Performance Index

### Infrastructure



Roads

**Potential indicators**  
Satisfaction survey (accessibility, quality) | % budget received by 1 January | % roads in good repair



Power

% public facilities with electricity/power source | Type of power source | Affordability of energy



Water

% sources clean and functioning for domestic use | % population with access to improved sanitation | % budget received by 1 January | Perception/experience of the service (clean, reliable, affordable)

### Social Services



Health

**Potential indicators**  
% exempted from payment | % budget received for health by 1 January | % staff vacancies | satisfaction (service/staff) | % births with trained attendant | Availability of health services | Mortality rates | malnutrition rates.



Welfare

Conditional cash transfers: coverage, selection process, impacts | Vulnerable children programmes | NGO/CBO coordination, monitoring | % NGO sent annual reports for last year.



Education

Enrolment, completion and pass rate | % staff vacancies | Average student/teacher ratio | satisfaction (households, staff) | extra contributions paid by households | % budget received by 1 January (District) | Number of early pregnancies | school infrastructure.



Justice

Satisfaction with peace and security | corruption perception.

### Livelihoods & Resources



Land

**Potential indicators**  
Incidences of land disputes | % village land use plans complete | Land use patterns



Agriculture

Production stats | Number of extension workers | Transport availability for extensions workers | Nutrition and Food Security for the poorest | % budget received by 1 January (Districts) | People's perception on service | Access to inputs | Availability of water for irrigation | Fishery Extension advice



### Political



Effectiveness

#### Potential indicators

Citizens perceptions: contribution to village planning last year/quarter; personal contact with local official; participation in village assemblies; perception on Members of Parliament job



Representatives

Ward Councillor: district budget agreement; effectiveness of village/street councils

% of women in non-special seats | Effectiveness of ward councillors.

## Next steps in the research

The final stage in the research project is to collect data on the indicators at the district level to produce a baseline for each district. This was done through perception surveys with citizens and frontline workers in April and May 2017, as well as gathering statistics and information from the districts. The results will be analysed and then shared with research participants in the two districts, including citizens, local government officers, elected officials and civil society organisations. The results will be validated in this way. We aim to work further with these groups to agree how the baseline and indicators will be used going forward to make the index a living tool for local accountability. The results will further be shared with government officials, civil society organisations and funders of governance programmes working across Tanzania to explore the implications of the results for broader governance programmes and initiatives.

## Further resources

Full information on the project can be found here: <http://www.chronicpovertynetwork.org/projects-1/2015/11/3/holding-local-government-to-account-can-a-performance-index-provide-meaningful-accountability>

This briefing paper draws on fuller data and analysis presented in three working papers:

- Mdee, A., R. Boniface, M. Daudi, E. Mdee, A. Mushi, F. Mtunga, P. Tshomba and S. Bridonneau (2017), '[Holding local government to account in Tanzania through a performance index: Exploring lines of blame and accountability in local service delivery](#)', April 2017, Working Paper 3, Mzumbe University.
- Mdee, A. and L. Thorley (2016b), '[Good governance, local government, accountability and service delivery in Tanzania: Exploring the context for creating a local governance performance index](#)', October 2016, Working Paper 2, Mzumbe University
- Mdee, A. and L. Thorley (2016a), '[Improving the delivery of public services: What role could a local governance index play?](#)', July 2016, Working Paper 1, Mzumbe University

Two short summary papers are also available:

- '[Holding local government to account in Tanzania](#)', Research Update, October 2016
- '[Holding local government to account](#)', Research Overview, July 2015

Additional resources will be made available at the end of the project.

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<http://www.chronicpovertynetwork.org/resources/2017/5/26/exploring-development-and-accountability-laying-the-basis-for-a-local-governance-performance-index-in-tanzania>

