

Briefing paper 2

Can locally-developed indicators catalyse more responsive local government? Findings from the research

Rachel Hayman, Anna Mdee and Patricia Tshomba

August 2017

In 2014, the University of Mzumbe, in partnership with INTRAC and the Foundation for Civil Society (FCS) set out to research the viability and value of creating a local governance performance index (LGPI) at the district level in Tanzania. This briefing paper summarises the process of identifying and refining a set of indicators which were used to generate baseline data for subsequent use in the participating districts of Mvomero and Kigoma-Ujiji. It provides recommendations for stakeholders on how the findings could be translated into action to improve accountability and performance in local governance.

Key Messages

- A LGPI offers potential as a problem-solving tool for different actors to work together on local issues, overcoming weaknesses in many existing accountability initiatives
- A facilitated process - grounded in political and structural realities rather than theories - to explore perceptions between citizens, civil society, politicians and civil servants might strengthen the prospects for more responsive local government
- The use of the indicators should be embedded in local practice in these two districts to test further the potential of this process, then their use should be reviewed over time to test its impact

Selecting the indicators

The research team drew up a provisional list of indicators from the [Phase 1 research data](#) gathered from citizens and local officials over 2015-16. Phase 2 of the research focused on refining this long list of indicators (see figure 1) in a participatory way within the districts through workshops and focused group discussions.













We asked two sets of questions:

- Which of these indicators are the right ones? Do they capture important elements of local governance and service delivery, and also aspects of inclusive access to services? What is the potential impact of the LGPI?
- What data is available? Can it be accessed and shared? If it is not already available, how will it be gathered and shared?

While indicators could have been designed more efficiently in the capital by the research team, this project deliberately sought to use a process that reflected the real political and structural conditions in the districts. It required: the research team to shift their own thinking and give voice to the local participants; tensions to be overcome between stakeholders within research activities; embedded assumptions to be challenged; and careful negotiation around tendencies to blame and mistrust. The process of refining the indicators therefore took time, but it was time well spent. As one participant in Kigoma said, *“These researchers are serious on the issue we discussed here, since last month I met with them and most of the questions you find on indicators were there in phase one as the facilitator said.”*



Figure 1: Proposed indicators for use in a Local Governance Performance Index

	Potential indicators	
Infrastructure	 Roads	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	% 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	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	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.

The chosen indicators aim to respect three principles:

- as much as possible indicators need to link directly to factors and issues that come under the responsibility of local government;
- indicators should draw attention to issues of inclusion, e.g. political representation of women, or access of the poorest to social services;
- data can be gathered in relation to the proposed indicator within the scope of the project, and within the means of local institutions after the project ends, i.e. drawing on data that is already routinely collected.

Infrastructure

Phase 1 of the research found considerable citizen interest in the state of roads and transport infrastructure. Whilst central government is responsible for major roads, local government responsibility covers smaller local roads, which are unpaved and susceptible to degradation. Therefore, indicators in this area relate to citizen perception of road quality and accessibility, as well as District Council figures on the state of their roads:

“I expect my village leader to promote the construction of good road in order to encourage the presence of public transport from Vitonga village to town because there is too many people in this village who suffer from the issue. That’s why some of the pregnant mother deliver the babies on their way to hospital. But when they build a transport route from Vitonga to Morogoro, I believe that problem will be solved.” Interview, male, Mvomero

In relation to electricity and other power, the main measure for local government relates to the connections for public institutions, with further indicators of the proportions of different power sources, and the affordability of energy sources.

Local government have clear remits in relation to drinking water provision. Statistics on the state of District level access to clean water and improved quality should be available, and can be cross-checked against a perception survey of citizens on the safety, reliability and affordability of water.

In many areas of infrastructure, the local government is dependent on receiving centrally-allocated resources, hence the inclusion of indicators on the receipt of funding by mid-point of the financial year:

“The central government keep telling people that they are working on and ensuring people have clean and safe water. But the fund they provide is so little. People’s perception is that the district has money.” Interview, District Water Technician, Mvomero

Social services and justice

Four areas of social service provision emerged as critical from Phase 1 of the research: health, welfare, education and justice. Data revealed high levels of public dissatisfaction with health, education and social welfare services, as well as frustration at the level of funding received from central government:

“I am disabled. I have a big family, a wife with six kids. With my situation, I think it was a duty for the village government to register me to benefit from the TASAF money. (...) Other families, who have only one kid, got that money. Even people with no family got it. I find it unfair. Our village government is not performing well, because it leaves some poor villagers behind.” Interview, male, Mvomero

In developing indicators, again it was necessary to disentangle which components of these services local government were responsible for, recognising that some services are implemented directly by central government and that there are other non-state actors involved in service provision. For health, education and social welfare, indicators combine a mix of district data and perception surveys of citizens and frontline workers. This should provide an indication of capacity of local service delivery, inclusion and outreach.

The area of justice is complex. For example, policing is not the responsibility of local government, but peace and security at community level is. Community level courts also operate in co-operation with local government structures. For these reasons, indicators are restricted to citizen perceptions and experiences of local courts,

peace and security, and of corruption. Such indicators should provide a starting point for tackling local justice challenges. In the Phase 1 research, concerns about legal redress, corruption and police performance were high:

“Among community leaders, a certain member is corrupted and he seems to be close to VEO. I am now worried no development will take place in our community. Community leaders need to work for the community because they were selected to serve the community. If they are corrupted, then them being in service is wrong.” Interview, female, Kigoma

Livelihoods and resources

All land is ultimately under the control of the central state, but land legislation devolves land planning and allocation responsibilities to local and village government. Land disputes, as well as confusion caused by the complex land ownership system, emerged as a major source of tension in Phase 1:

“Most of occupants have no title in Kigoma Municipal and this has been a result of corruption and poor governance of land department.” Interview, male, Kigoma

Therefore, collecting data on the number of officially recorded land disputes could be a useful starting point for further problem-solving discussions. Additional indicators cover the percentage completion of village/street land-use plans, and data on land use patterns.

In relation to livelihoods, local government does hold some responsibility for local economic development, for example employing agricultural and fisheries extension workers. In addition to district data, a perception and experience survey of citizens can also reveal access to inputs (such as the government voucher scheme) and the availability of water for irrigation. In this area, adaptation of indicators to the local context is important, as is recognizing local poverty dynamics and social tensions. For example, tracking the size of land holdings over time might highlight where land grabbing is taking place.

Political issues

Indicators of political processes relating to governance are divided into two: effectiveness; and the nature of the representatives. The effectiveness of political actors can be ascertained by a perception survey of citizens, which covers citizens’ own engagement in political processes as well as the performance of village leaders, councillors and members of parliament. The perceptions of elected representatives’ own performance and capacity can also be obtained.

Phase 1 data also demonstrated that elements of inclusion can also be probed, for example in exploring the percentage of women representatives elected outside of those reserved for women, or the representation of other marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities or youth.

From indicators to a baseline and beyond

The final step in the research process was to collect a baseline set of data, which can be used by the Districts to initiate the next step in a conversation. There are three key sources of data:

1. Citizen perception survey relating to all the indicators set out in Figure 1. This was limited to 100 randomly selected respondents from our original villages/streets in this initial phase in order to pilot and progress the research. However, the sample should be bigger in later iterations to ensure statistical validity.
2. Front-line worker survey using a purposive sample of front-line personnel in different areas of local government. It is envisaged that such a survey could cover all workers in later iterations.
3. Collection of existing District Council, ward and village data for the 2015/6 year. This first baseline allowed us to assess what information exists in relation to the baseline, highlighting some significant gaps.

The baseline data are presented in a straightforward set of tables using a simple traffic light system to indicate the scale of results (see Working Paper 4 for the full data).

Will these indicators and data lead to an improvement in services?

Ownership of the baseline data, and its use going forward, lies with the districts and their citizens. Phase 2 data collection revealed considerable enthusiasm for this process and its prospects for creating more transparency and accountability between citizens and local government:

“All indicators mentioned directly touch the life of the Vitonga people, and bring a clear picture of what we need. If these indicators are made public it will help to improve services and hence bring development.” Participant, focus group with local officials, Mvomero

“Openness will help in improving social services because silence will have been broken and people will have the reason to speak up. Also those who are in a position to provide services will know that all their actions are all open and being monitored by the public.” Participant, focus group with males, Kigoma

“Having the indicators will be like the baseline to use in their meetings, stressing services which could be provided by the district office ... At present there is no baseline to work from to ask and they just discuss each matter as it comes.” Participant, focus group with CSOs, Mvomero

While participants recognised the potential of the indicators and baseline as a problem-solving tool, they were also realistic about the leadership required to adopt and implement this system.

Recommendations

The research partners are working with local and national stakeholders to promote uptake of this system. In the first instance this will involve presentation of the baseline to the citizens and stakeholders of the District in an accessible Swahili form, with a view to promoting an ongoing process of collective problem-solving.

For citizens

Citizens are considered here as all of those residing in the two Districts, and also includes the volunteers who represent both citizens and the state at the hamlet and village levels. This includes Village Councillors and Village Chairpersons and those who play community service roles through religious and other collective activities. At this level the state and citizens intersect, and it is difficult to separate them. The information within the index could offer a common framework for discussions about where responsibility lies for service delivery, thus breaking the deadlock in the cycles of blame. Village and street councils could gain more clarity over their responsibilities, and use this information as a means to articulate problems and gaps.

For district officials and representatives

The index provides an opportunity for collaborative problem-solving. It should not threaten the District leadership, but reveal to them where problems and gaps lie. The District Council (executive and elected representatives) should lead this process, working closely with other actors. Without the leadership of senior politicians and council officers, and a commitment not to manipulate the data in the index for political purposes, the LGPI will not work as a problem-solving tool.

For national government

We do not recommend that this index be used to compare the performance of different local governments, although we recognise that it could be used in this way. Such an approach risks increasing the pressure for districts to manipulate the index, rather than using it as a problem-solving tool. However, we do believe that an index of this nature could be used in other districts, with the process replicated and adapted for other contexts.

For civil society organisations

The research shows that CSOs were not visible in these two districts at the ward/village/street level, and that CSOs operating in these districts have quite embedded perceptions – often shaped by external donor agendas – about the responsibilities of citizens and local leaders in relation to accountability that connect more with the ‘rules in

theory' than with what is possible in practice. Along with district officials, the CSOs that were involved in the research went through a process of mutual blaming for lack of transparency and accountability. CSOs need to reflect on their roles, and work with local government and other non-state and citizen actors to use the index as a tool of collaborative problem-solving, and as a framework for shared data collection and reflection.

National CSO bodies could undertake a proactive initiative to use the LGPI in governance programme work, for example by supporting CSOs that have been involved in the project in Mvomero and Kigoma-Ujiji to continue the process of collaboration with local government around the index. This could be tracked over a period of time as an innovative approach to good governance with the prospect of a significant story of change. This could be undertaken in collaboration with Mzumbe University.

For donors

Tanzania is host to many donor-funded social accountability and governance initiatives. While thinking about performance indexes has moved on during the lifetime of this research, the desire for improving governance through citizen engagement remains extremely powerful in donor programming.

What we learned from this research was the importance of getting back to basics in listening, observing and interrogating the daily realities of local governance. And then doing it again through feeding back and validating, to then build up the next phase of the research. The process seemed to open up a valued space for participants to question and challenge in the first instance, and then to identify ways forward which they could agree on.

This research provides valuable insights for donors about the assumptions upon which many accountability and governance initiatives are premised. We do not recommend that this index be scaled up through donor funding; it can only have impact as a process within the districts themselves. However, donors could find sensitive ways to support local and national actors and stakeholders to continue to pilot and test this index.

Further resources

Full information on the project can be found at: <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. and P. Tshomba (2017) '[Designing a Local Government Performance Index \(LGPI\) – a problem-solving approach in Tanzania](#)', August 2017, Working Paper 4, Mzumbe University.
- 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

Short summary papers are also available:

- '[Exploring development and accountability: laying the basis for a local governance performance index in Tanzania](#)', Briefing Paper 1, May 2017
- '[Holding local government to account in Tanzania](#)', Research Update, October 2016
- '[Holding local government to account](#)', Research Overview, July 2015

