

STRENGTHENING LOCAL LEVEL SERVICE DELIVERY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

the case of Bukoba District Council, Tanzania

Background

Bukoba District, one of the eight administrative Districts in the Kagera Region borders Lake Victoria in the North-western corner of Tanzania. It has a population of approximately 400,000 people. The mission of the Bukoba District Council (BDC) is *'to improve the living standard socially and economically for her community by delivering desired quality services by utilizing internal and external resources available, by abiding to principles of democracy, community participation and good governance to alleviate poverty by the year 2025'*.

Several factors restrict the Council's ability to provide adequate services to its citizens, the major ones being:

- Low own revenue collection. The Council's own revenue is only 3% of its total expenditures hence the District's high dependency on central government and donor funding.
- Insufficient leadership and management capacities in both Councillors and staff.
- Attitudinal idiosyncrasies. Staff members do not seem to be conscious of the impact of their work to the realisation of the mission of the Council. Staff do not take Councillors seriously as they perceive them as ignorant and staff tend to control them compromising the Councillor's oversight role. Councillors once elected seem to forget their promises to the electorate.
- The absence of a culture of transparency and accountability (both internal and external) is compromised with hardly any direct pressure or demand placed on the Council by the electorate including CSOs.

As the above challenges are not unique to BDC, the Government of Tanzania embarked on the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) to strengthen Councils to be effective instruments of social and economic development for improved quality, access and equitable



LGDCG funds are used to construct new classrooms

delivery of public services. In the LGRP, the Government in partnership with its Development Partners (World Bank, Governments of Netherlands, UK etc) established the Local Government Capital Development Grant (LGCDG) system through which discretionary funding flows to Local Government Authorities (LGAs) for provision of new and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and capacity building activities. A Council is assessed on a set criteria (Financial Management; Fiscal Capacity; Planning and Budgeting; Transparency and Accountability; Interaction between HLG and LLG; Human Resource Development; Procurement; Project Implementation; Council Functional

processes) by an external team and depending on its performance, qualifies to access the grants.

While recognizing the importance of democracy, transparency and accountability as critical success factors for sustainable development, the reform programme has so far mainly been working on the "supply" side for improved governance. SNV together with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has supported the programme in the development of the related instruments and capacities but also focussed on strengthening the "demand" side of governance, working with Councillors, Civil Society Organisations and local press clubs.

Cooperation between BDC and SNV

Bukoba District Council (BDC) and SNV entered into a cooperation agreement in October 2005 for the implementation of the Capacity Building Programme for Local Governance Actors (CBLGA) supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN). The agreement covered four key outcomes:

- Ensure that BDC qualifies for support under the LGCDG system and its capacities of overall management enhanced to internalise the restructuring process (LGRP)
- BDC's capacities enhanced to become more responsive and effective partner in Local Governance
- The political leaders capacities enhanced to hold the executive accountable
- Establish and maintain clear vertical linkages between levels of lower, and higher local government as well as to central government while adhering to good governance principles
- In addition, SNV has been working with Civil Society Organisations and Private Sector Organisations in the district and region to enhance their capacity for having dialogue with the local government and holding the local government accountable (e.g. investigative journalism, public expenditure tracking).

Key activities

Under this cooperation agreement, the following activities were carried out between BDC and SNV:

Training of Councillors

A baseline study for Councillors to identify their capacity gaps was carried out. This led to the design of appropriate interventions such as a basic training for all Councillors, a finance training for Finance committee members and a training for women Councillors to enhance their confidence and capacity to address issues they find important.

The objectives of the training for all Councillors was aimed at improving awareness of their roles and responsibilities in the district development process and broadening their understanding of the laws, regulations and guidelines that govern Councils' processes.

The Finance Committee was trained to enable it to make informed decisions on the amendment, approval of the Council plan and budget.

Women Councillors were trained to enhance their capacity of to fully appreciate their roles and responsibilities, at both district and ward levels whether as elected or selected representatives in the light of the mandate of LGA, and the Decentralisation by Devolution policy. The training also sought to increase the capacity of women Councillors to participate confidently in decision making processes of the LGA as well as equipping them with gender analysis skills.

Self assessment

This involved introducing the Council Management Team and some Councillors to Action Learning, engaging in a self assessment exercise using the LGCDG criteria. Through a round table discussion, SNV facilitated discussions on each assessment area. The discussions were modeled along the learning cycle: Experience (What is current situation?); Exposure and ownership (What is the problem?); Cause and Effect (Why it is like that and what are the effects?) and finally Planning (What will be done to address the root cause of the problem?).

Support to planning process

SNV provided backstopping support to the Heads of Departments in PlanRep (the Tanzania Local Government planning system) during the budgeting process. This included support to Heads of Departments to incorporate MDG targets in their plans;

Promoting linkages between BDC and non state actors

To improve communication and information flow amongst the Local Government Authorities, CSOs and PSOs on development issues, SNV facilitated dialogue amongst them leading to the establishment of the District Development Forum (DDF).

Impact

Councillors

As almost half of the 57 Councillors were new, the training equipped them with basic skills to play their role much more effectively. 'The training sessions have awakened us and now we fully appreciate that the development of our people in terms of projects solely lies on our shoulders. Smooth running of the Councils is our responsibility and more so the delivery of quality services to the people' noted women Councilor Amina.



Hon Councillor Amina contributing during the training

Councillors also understood their role better vis a vis the executive and this was ably demonstrated in the self assessment rounds where they asked critical questions to the District Executive Director.

The training for the Finance Committee came at the very moment when the finance committees were just about to pass the new financial year's plans and budgets. Benefit was evident at the budget meeting with Councillors asking focused questions contrary to previous sessions where they rubber stamped all staff recommendations.

Self assessment

- With the self assessment, BDC was able to proactively identify capacity and performance gaps and with assistance of SNV and LGRP addressed them in a structural manner through action plans and timelines. Self assessment clearly exposed failure to learn and reflect from past weaknesses hence repetition of same observations in the various external assessments and audit reports.
- The self assessment includes Councillors and creates a sense of ownership of the whole process and BDC no longer sees it as 'inspection from outside' where the tendency is just to meet the minimum requirements and revert back to old ways after the inspectors have left.
- Prime Ministers Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO RALG) has adopted the self assessment tool and recommended it to all LGAs nationwide.
- The self assessment enabled them to qualify for the LGCDG.
- The Capital Development Grant funds has been used to improve service delivery in the district as follows:
 - Improving the road network by 40,8km to previous impassable areas such as the fish landing sites of Malehe and Igabiro;
 - Construction of 6 offices for ward (3) and village (3) level leaders;
 - Construction of a Bus Stand and Market with proper sanitation;
 - Construction of a dam and 2 shallow wells and 9 water points;
 - Building an additional 110 classrooms in secondary schools enabling an additional 3,215 student progress into form one;
 - Construction of 39 pit latrines in schools;
 - Rehabilitation of the Kashenye Dispensary;
- The Capacity Building Grant funds have been used to provide additional training for staff members to enhance their skills. It has also been used for retooling with 3 computers and 2 laptops purchased.

Hence in the words of the Council Chairperson, Hon William Katunzi to SNV Director Annemiek Jenniskens and Regional Director ESA, Worku Behonegne: *"SNV has been assisting us ... so that we qualify for grants..... this enables us reaching the ultimate goal of improving service delivery to our people. For that reason we recognize you as direct contributors to the improvement of Council service delivery efforts and facilitators towards our vision".*

Promoting linkages between BDC and non state actors

Through the establishment of the District Development Forum (DDF), the Council has built positive relationships with the PSOs and CSOs. The DDF provides a mechanism for involving the PSOs and CSOs in the district development planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in line with the MKUKUTA (National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction).

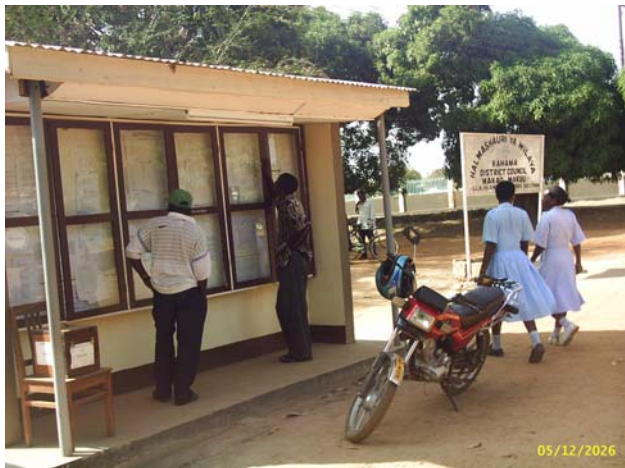
Critical success moments

The turning point in the relationship between SNV and BDC has been the realisation by the Council that SNV did not bring funds, but that our capacity support is critical in obtaining

government funds, and the realisation that the responsibility for improved performance is with the Council itself and not with the external agent.

Lessons learned

Capacity is the ability to perform a function successfully, which in the case of BDC is to provide basic services to its citizens. However fundamental is the aspect of accountability. Through the activities carried out between SNV and BDC the issue of enhancing accountability is addressed. Through the Councillors training, they became clear on their role and were able to exercise their oversight function on plans, budgets and staff. The LGCDG self assessment strengthened aspect of collective responsibility and accountability within the Council starting at departmental level to Heads of Department and in turn to the District Executive Director on one hand; Council Management Team to the Council on the other.



LGCDG results are posted in public notice boards

The next step is to strengthen the accountability between Council and Electorate. The LGCDG system provides for this opportunity as it is a requirement that the LGCDG results are public documents which should also be posted in public notice boards. The DDF now transformed into the District Consultative Committee would provide one such forum where the LGA can be taken to task on its performance in the LGCDG. By institutionalising the self assessment process, a Council builds on team work not only between staff and Councillors but also amongst staff themselves. All begin to have a common understanding of issues facing the Council and they no longer

compartmentalise them. For example lack of commitment on the issue of revenue collections has been due to the fact that most HoDs treat it as a secondary responsibility. They erroneously believe it is the duty of the treasurer and director.

In the context of Tanzania, with a political system that one could describe as a patrimonial system with emerging democratic tendencies, the direct link between district Council performance (mainly in terms of financial management) and the actual development budget available for the next financial year, proves to be a strong incentive for recognizing the need for capacity improvement as well as for Councillors to hold their administration accountable and therefore strengthens the democratic processes.

Future activities

In order to enhance on the gains made so far BDC and SNV plan the following activities:

1. Enhance accountability through application of Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) in the Water and Education sectors.
2. Extend the self assessment tool to all Councillors
3. Facilitate the full integration of the District Development Forum into the recently introduced DCC
4. Strengthen linkages between Regional level and BDC and as well as BDC and Lower Level Governments.
5. Continued integration of these lessons into future policies through the SNV's national advisor who is member of the technical support team of the Local Government Reform Programme.

SNV Tanzania is implementing the Capacity Building Programme for Local Governance Actors in 21 districts (17% of all districts) in Tanzania of which 13 are financed by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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