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Country Dialogue Report for Tanzania

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Chapter 4

4. The Planning Framework

4.1 The Current Planning Process: The Steps at Village, Ward and District Levels

4.1.1 The Current Steps and Activities in Planning

The District Planning Process is reported to start from the sub-village (Kitongoji) moving upwards to the Village Government, Ward Development Committee and finally to the District Full Council which makes final decisions.

There is no difference in the planning process between Mbeya region and Arusha. Both regions plan from the villave level moving upwards to the District council as shown in Fig. 2 below.

Fig 2: Planning Flow Chart Showing Different Planning Stages (Levels)
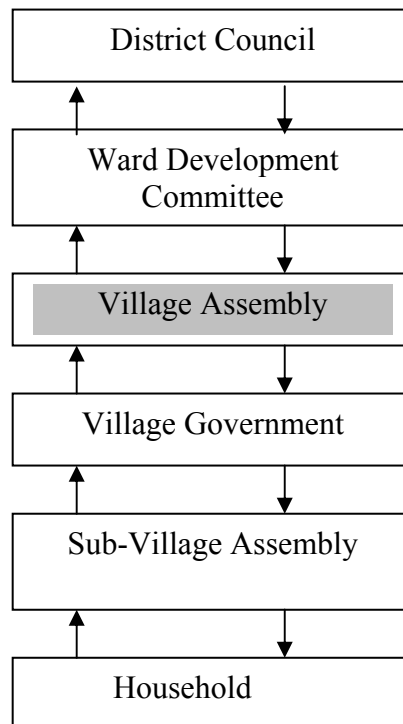
The above defined structure has existed for more than two decades and consists mainly of three committees which are instrumental in development activities at the local level. These are:-
(a)   The Finance and Planning Committee
(b)   Social and Economic Services Committee
(c)   The Security and Defence Committee

Of interest to know was the "process" of the planning, that is how the "*plan*" is actually prepared at the grassroot before it moves to the higher levels. While in some places the planning process is well described by the fact that there are village assemblies that

consist of all villagers of over 18 years of age, males and females; in some places the process is still undefined.

Where the planning process is well defined, new ideas normally emerge from different planning committees. After discussing thoroughly, the agenda is then tabled to the meeting for discussion. The consensus reached in village assemblies culminates into identification of key problems and solutions and ultimately the formulation of projects. It is important to note here that some of the ideas taken on board by the village planning councils originate from informal group discussions, for example, during taking beer/local brew. In such gatherings some important issues of concern are raised, discussed and finally taken on board.

Deliberations of the village assembly are then forwarded to the Ward Development Committee where the village chairpersons and the Village Executive Officers (VEO) are members. As mentioned above, in places where the planning process is not well defined, the issue of participation is still questionable. This is a problem in most sub-urban areas where non-involvement of the stakeholders in the planning process appears to be a common phenomenon.
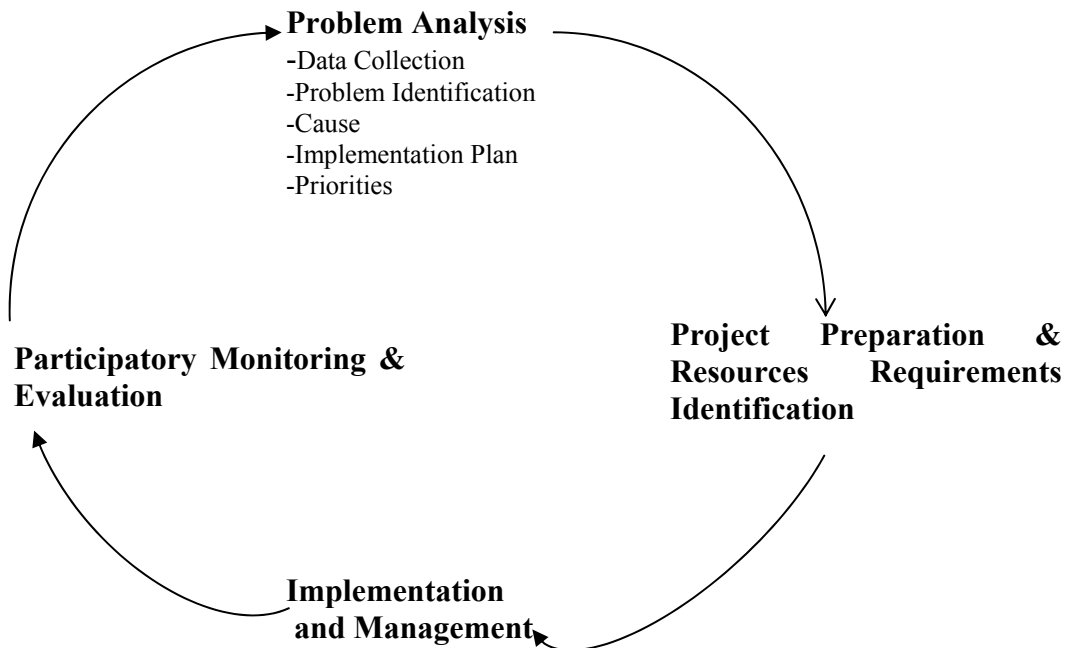
In Mbozi District where *Tanzakesho Programme* is operating, the planning cycle in the programme areas has the following stages (Fig 3).

(i)   Problem identification
(ii)   Preparation of projects and resource requirements
(iii)   Implementation and Management of projects
(iv)   Participatory Monitoring and
(v)   Participatory evaluation

Stages (i) and (ii) have been carried out in a participatory manner in all the wards where *Tanzakesho* operates. In view of the strong participatory nature of the Tanzakesho *Planning Cycle,* the District authorities are planning to adopt the system in preparing all ward plans *(Mpangokata).*

In Arumeru district the planning process is conducted in a participatory manner in one division. It uses the *Participatory Rural Appraisal* (PRA). This approach which is a catalyst in the planning process has started being used in three (3) wards namely, Olkokola, Oldonyo Sambu and Olturiment. The aim is to use this method in the planning process in the whole district. The main constraint that limits this goal being attained is the lack of financial resources and technical expertise.

Fig 3: The Proposed Planning Cycle at a Local Level: TANZAKESHO Model

Problem Analysis
-Data Collection
-Problem Identification
-Cause
-Implementation Plan
-Priorities

Project Preparation & Resources Requirements Identification

Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation

Implementation and Management

4.1.2 The Proposed Steps and Activities in Planning for Sustainable Development

The important and necessary steps in planning for sustainable development are:-
* ❖ To involve the community from the household level in formulating projects for sustainable development
* ❖ To use the available local resources in developing projects for sustainable development

The Sub-Village Level
* ❖ To discuss the problems at the sub-village
* ❖ To prioritise and analyse the problems that are within their limit
* ❖ To submit their suggestions to the village according to their importance

Village Level
* ❖ To receive development plans from different sub-villages
* ❖ The village to access its resources in relation to the needs of the sub-villages
* ❖ To hold the village assembly
* ❖ To accept projects according to their importance and linkages with other projects
* ❖ To prepare the implementation and supervision timetable
* ❖ To prepare resource requirement and budget

Ward Level
* ❖ To receive projects from the villages
* ❖ The WDC discusses and analyses the village projects
* ❖ To accept projects taking into consideration the district guidelines
* ❖ To prepare implementation timetable
* ❖ To evaluate the projects

❖ To submit suggestions to the District

District Level
- ❖ To receive suggestions of projects from different wards
- ❖ To improve and to merge the projects which are similar or depend on each other
- ❖ To prepare budget
- ❖ To discuss in the district council meeting the suggested projects
- ❖ To authorise projects that have been suggested for that year.

4.2 Participation in Planning and Decision Making

We have pointed out above, that planning starts at the Sub-Village (*Kitongoji)* where all residents who are 18 years and above participate in generating ideas and preparing a sub-village plan. However, the process of getting a Sub-Village plan was not very clear. Three people, namely the Chairperson and 2 other persons who are appointed by the Chairperson form the Sub-Village committee. The committee is then responsible for forwarding the plan to the Village Government.

The Village Government, constitutes 25 members. Out of which 30% are women. The village government then compiles the Sub-Village plans into a village plan. In the Village Government the sub-villages are represented by their respective chairpersons. The compiled village plan is then tabled to the village assembly for endorsement and approval before it is submitted to the Ward Development Committee (WDC). All Village Government Chairpersons are members of the WDC. The WDC then compiles all village plans, into a Ward Plan which is then endorsed and submitted to the District Council.

This planning process is more so in the rural areas where mobilization and sensitisation appears to have made a positive impact. In the urban areas, the situation is different because participatory approach is not practiced. Leaders of the urban dwellers are reluctant to initiate mobilization and sensitisation activities because they fear to be held accountable and/or responsible by the more knowledgeable urban people. The urban residents are more knowledgeable; they know their rights and cannot be manipulated easily. Since the urban local government leaders are aware of the status of the people they lead, they do not encourage interaction with them reportedly in order to hide their dubious activities thus protecting their personal interests.

Ownership, accountability and transparency are almost absent in the urban areas and therefore participation is suppressed. This is mainly the problem with urban grassroot and urban middle level e.g. at district as well as regional levels. The urban higher level category/group is to a greater extent free from this bottleneck.

Apart from the *"Tanzakesho planning system",* the traditional planning system exhibits very low participation in practice. This is the major weakness of the system. However, its strength lies in the fact that *it operates in a well-defined structure and it has already some basics of community participation in place.* As such most stakeholders were of the opinion that despite weaknesses in the traditional planning system, it is still the best so far. This is because it provides a clear and convenient opportunity to all eligible members of the village to participate fully in both the planning process and decision making process. Some improvements are certainly required to make it truly participatory.

4.3 Strengths, Weaknesses and Linkages of the Current Planning Process

Stakeholders were also requested to identify weaknesses, strengths and linkages of the current planning framework. The following were the main areas of strengths and weaknesses of the system and how the local planning system is linked to the higher level (Table 5 & 6).

Strengths of the Current Planning Process

Table 5:   Observed Strengths of the Current Planning Process

	Observed Strengths	Mbeya Respondents	Arusha Respondents
(i)	The efforts have started to strengthen: "Participatory Approach" in planning	✓	
(ii)	The top-down planning approach is less costly, less bureaucratic and easy to implement	✓	
(iii)	The top-down approach minimizes political wrangle	✓	
(iv)	To a lesser extent there is some degree of grassroot participation. For example people are involved in formulating their own by-laws		✓
(v)	There is local resource contribution in different projects		✓

Table 6:   Observed Weaknesses of the Current Planning Process

Sn.	Observed Weaknesses	Mbeya Respondents	Arusha Respondents
(i)	The grassroot and/or target population is not fully participating in the planning process. This is partly because officials (experts) at district as well as regional level have the tendency of preparing the plans for the people, instead of improving the grassroot planning capacity and let them prepare the plans on their own.	✓	✓
(ii)	The current planning process takes too long to be accomplished thus delaying the key decisions	✓	
(iii)	It encourages unsustainable projects and programmes	✓	
(iv)	In some cases, particularly where the top-down approach is practised, ideas are imposed from the top	✓	
(v)	Many projects do not consider stakeholders' priorities	✓	
(vi)	The planning system does not consider the existing and/or available resources	✓	✓
(vii)	The spirit and/or tradition of voluntary services is disrupted	✓	
(viii)	Poor project management after its commencement	✓	
(ix)	Participation in the current planning system does not take into account the gender balance		✓
(x)	Poor education background among members of the local communities		✓
(xi)	The leadership does not produce and submit reports such as income and expenditure reports in time		✓
(xii)	Political interests override economic interests in many of the projects		✓
(xiii)	Most of the promises made at higher level i.e. district, regional as well as national levels are not fulfilled e.g. promises on road construction and land distribution		✓
(xiv)	Donor dependent projects		✓
(xv)	Many projects targeting (benefit) the minority, crowding out the majority		✓
(xvi)	Poor monitoring and evaluation		✓
xvii)	Many projects are not implemented in time		✓

Planning Linkages

The linkages between the local planning level and higher planning levels are evident mainly through the following channels:-

- Through feedbacks which are sent by the higher authorities to the local level although in most cases they are delayed and sometimes not sent at all.
- Through the material support and expertise delivered by district authorities to the local levels.
- Through notifying higher authorities on e.g. natural calamities
- Through participation of some members of the village government in higher level meetings.

Through the assistance which is provided by the district councils to the villages e.g. equipment, expertise, etc.

Through the existing vertical planning system when the grassroot (village) plans are submitted to the ward and later on to the district councils

These are examples of existing linkages between villages and higher planning levels. Such linkages are said to strengthen the relationship and communication between different planning levels, particularly when the grassroot level gets feedback through their representatives.

4.4 Constraints Towards Planning for Sustainable Development

Several factors were pointed out as constraints to planning for sustainable development. The most critical ones are discussed in the following sub-sections:-

4.4.1 Planning Capacity

The planning capacity at both local and district level was reported to be low, inadequate or completely lacking. The capacity referred to by stakeholders was that of human resource, finance, institutional framework and infrastructure. The human resource deficiency was reported to be observed at the level of education of the leadership, the community and entrepreneurs. This situation has given room for political interference and for leaders being less accountable. Most of the leaders have very poor knowledge and expertise in preparing projects, budgets and in conducting project evaluation.

The problem of financial capacity was referred to weak resource base and the inability to exploit the available local resources. This weakness is particularly serious during plan implementation. Many of the good plans and projects have tended to fail due to inadequate funds.

The institutional capacity problem is due to lack of effective coordination, sudden changes in the organizational set up of the government, slow implementation of the reform process and frequent staff transfers. On the other hand, weakness in the infrastructural capacity is explained by the lack of the necessary working equipment.

In the planing cycle itself, the areas which were identified to have serious capacity problems were, *project preparation/formulation, implementation management, monitoring and evaluation, and budgeting*. These areas are still very weak. They need to be strengthened if the designed projects are to be sustainable.

A total of five broad areas were identified as deficient in capacity in the planning cycle. These areas are summarized in table 9 below:

Table 9: Capacity Building Demands in the Planning Cycle

Sn	Areas requiring capacity building
(i)	Project formulation and how to budget the required resources at the following levels: district, ward, village levels (Technical know-how)
(ii)	Project implementation and management, in terms of resources, finance, education at district, ward and village levels
(iii)	Project monitoring and evaluation – district, ward and village levels (Technical know-how)
(iv)	Mobilization of the community so that they have the knowledge of identifying their needs, problems that surround them, analyse and find solutions (knowledge).
(v)	Empowerment of women involvement in planning, implementation and decision making so as to increase efficiency in different activities and projects

4.4.2   Rhetoric and Community Participation

The preaching on *bottom-up planning* has been going on for many years. In practice the *top-down approach has been dominant.* This is because most planners were/are trained in top-down approach. They are used to the approach and they believe in it.

In discussing with planners who advocate top down approach, the following arguments were presented as to why they thought the *"top-down approach"* was superior to the *"bottom-up approach"*.

(a)   It is less costly

(b)   It reduces conflicts between the technical staff and politicians of the respective area in the district. The main issue here is that because of non-participatory nature of planning, there are no promises made or false hopes built to the community.

(c)   It provides an opportunity of dealing with only critical issues/needs/problems of the community *(Planners assume that they know all the needs and problems of the community).*

(d)   It is possible to implement only those projects, which are economically viable, socially desirable and environmentally friendly.

(e)   It is easy to defend the proposed projects in all the committees of the Council.

Probably there are many *"planners"* in Tanzania who share the above ideas. We have no reason not to believe the presence of such planners all over Tanzania because the above facts were given by the planners themselves. It is probably high time that two critical decisions were made in respect of local level participatory planning:-

(a)   that courses on participatory planning were conducted for all planners and sector heads

(b)   that an official declaration is made that participatory planning is the approach to planning in Tanzania. For the declaration to be effective, a law needs to be enacted and passed to ensure its enforcement.

If these two decisions are not made, planning for sustainable development will be like the old Swahili saying which reads **"kumpigia gitaa mbuzi"** (playing a guitar to a goat).

4.4.3 By-passing the urban population in participatory planning for development

When discussing with the business groups in Mbozi and Rungwe, a concern was raised regarding their not being involved in the planning process. They feel more informed about national development issues than the rural sector because of their advantage of access to both electronic and print media. And yet their contribution to planning for development is practically nil. They argued that if this was done, they were sure of increased efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in the implementation and management of plans.

Guided Participation

There are donor supported projects which are brought into the country as pre-manufactured projects. These are in form of ideas and technical assistance. They are defined as projects which have been started in a participatory manner when in the actual sense they have started under the banner of *"guided participation"*.

4.4.5   Changes in Government Policies and Set up

Changes in government policies and set-up have also an impact on planning for sustainable development.

Other constraints in Planning for Sustainable Development which were identified by stakeholders during consultations are summarized in Table 10 below.

Table 10:   Constraints in Planning for Sustainable Development

Sn.	Constraint
1.	Unbearable and excessive poverty
2.	Lack of support from decision makers
3.	Community not knowing their right in participation during planning for development
4.	Politicians' interference in the plans for sustainable development
5.	Difficulties in promoting development in villages
6.	Lack of resources
7.	Lack of enthusiasm from the technocrats due to lack of incentives
8.	Lack of capital
9.	The weather condition
10.	Lack of adequate skills and knowledge
11.	Low technology
12.	Inadequate infrastructure
13.	Laws that do not take into consideration the stakeholders' interests
14.	Policies that do not take into consideration the stakeholders' interests
15.	Corruption
16.	Tough/difficult conditions from donors
17.	Lack of political will
18.	Culture and habits that are not good and gender discriminating
19.	Inadequate information about plans (research)
20.	Unavailability of inputs that are of good quality
21.	High cost of production compared to crop prices
22.	Lack of reliable market for selling crops that are produced within the district
23.	Low government budget
24.	Poor coordination in development plans

4.5   Strategies for Planning for Sustainable Development

During the interviews and particularly during the stakeholders' workshops in Mbeya and Arusha, stakeholders suggested different strategies for sustainable development. These suggestions are presented in tables 11 and 12 below.

Table 11:   Proposed Strategies for Sustainable Development in Mbeya Region

Sn	Strategy	Regional Secretariat	Mbozi District	Rungwe District	Mbarali District
1.	Provision of education/knowledge to the village community and the officials	✔	Agreed with the report		Agreed with the report
2.	Improving policies and targetting them at participatory planning	✔			
3.	Alleviating poverty through *"Ward Plan" (Mpangokata)* whose ultimate goal is to alleviate poverty by involving the community	✔		✔	

Table 12:   Proposed Strategies for Sustainable Development in Arusha Region

Sn.	Strategy	Regional Secretariat	Ng'iresi Village	Oloitushula Village	Lekitatu Village
1.	Participation/involvement of the beneficiaries in problem identification and implementation of the solutions		✔	✔	
2.	Ensure that there is adequate resources required for implementation of the plans		✔		
3.	Work on realistic and implementable plans		✔		✔
4.	Elect good leadership. A need to specify a limited leadership term e.g. 10 years		✔	✔	
5.	Organize training for the beneficiaries		✔		
6.	A planning system must be clear and understandable				✔
7.	A need for implementation time frame (framework)			✔	✔
8.	A need for mobilization and sensitization of the communities				✔
9.	There is a need to fully involve people in preparing their development plans	✔			
10.	Ensure sustainable utilization of existing resources	✔			
11.	The government needs to pass a law which nullifies any development plan/strategy which is not participatory	✔			
12.	Development plans should not fully depend on foreign assistance	✔			
13.	We need to have experts of different talents and/or professions	✔			
14.	The central government needs to allow the lower levels e.g. district councils and villages to collect some of the taxes so as to improve their financial capacities	✔			

There is very little similarily in the identification of strategies for sustainable development planning in the two regions. What appears rather similar conceptually is strategy 1 and 2 in Mbeya region and 5, 9 and 11 in Arusha region. Generally, the outlook towards strategies for sustainable development planning appears to be quite different within communities and between communities.