



**Engagement between Policy Forum, Mama misitu campaign
and the President's Office Regional Administration and Local
Government (PO-RALG)**



8 November 2016 in Dodoma

Opening

Mr. Israel Ilunde the facilitator opened the event by giving a brief introduction of the schedule of the day/event. He then acknowledged the presence of PO-RALG (Directors) and Policy Forum members. This was followed by self-introduction of the attendees.

Mr. Bakar Khamis Bakar the Policy Forum Board Chairperson gave the opening remarks whereby he mentioned the objective of the event which is to learn about the activities done by Policy Forum together with PO-RALG. He further said that the meeting is also crucial for strengthening the relationship between PF networks and PO-RALG in order to improve their engagements. Therefore, the event should be used as a platform to steer constructive methods which will strengthen the engagement between two parties for the great good of the public.

Mr. Sebastian Kitiku, Head of Social Service Delivery at PO-RALG provided a brief report on the study they did which assessed the level of understanding of local government officials in assuming two roles/agendas;

1. Revenue collection.
2. Oversight roles.

The findings were not pleasing in the sense that 70% of the councilors were standard seven leavers, 25% had completed ordinary level education and 5% were advanced level and high learning leading to inability to assume their roles in revenue collection and oversight. In this regards, PO-RALG approached Policy Forum during their Quarterly meeting asking for assistance in producing simplified Swahili version of three local government documents namely: Local Government Development Grant Guide, M and E System and Annual Assessment Tool, in order to guide LGA officials in performing their functions. This was the beginning of a great relationship between Policy Forum and PO-RALG which brought us here today where we are going to learn what PF together with PO-RALG has done so far and what challenges/obstacles have been faced.

Presentation on Access to Information at Local Level

Presentation done by Anna Stainsby from Policy Forum

Anna highlighted the objective of the study which she said was motivated by the desire to understand the use of the PO-RALG circular No. B.25/307/10 of 2nd November 2012 on “Mamlka za Serikali za Mitaa Kutoa Taarifa Mbalimbali kwa Wawakilishi wa Asasi zisizo za Kiserikali (AZAKI)”.

Policy Forum organized its members and started discussion with the Prime Minister's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (now the President's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government) on how the circular on access to information was used by its members. The prior discussions between CSOs and PO-RALG resulted to the issuance of a circular that require LGA officials to make available a set of documents to CSOs in their areas. The survey therefore, was carried to assess whether the issued circular by PMORALG has had any significant contribution towards access to information. It also assessed the level of understanding of this circular by local government officials.

Overall findings present a mixed picture on the effectiveness of the circular. In some places it seems to be so effective while in others the story is different. Findings indicate that, some CSOs have not used the circular because they trust in the relationship that they have built with their respective LGAs. For these CSOs it has been difficult to assess whether the circular is effective or not. Perhaps, this can be another case study to explore further. These best practices can be used to influence other actors (both LGAs and CSOs) to emulate in their localities. But again, in those places where the circular has been in use there are still challenges experienced. Bureaucracy has been mentioned as one of the core challenges.

It was also reported that some of the duty bearers are afraid of releasing the information unless they get permission from district executive directors. It was noted that despite the circular, some LGA officials are still reluctant to share information with CSOs. Sometimes it is hard for CSOs to obtain the required reports from the district council fearing that CSOs might use the report against them.

Recommendations

The study recommends that LGA officials should cooperate with CSOs by enhancing accessibility to key information as required by the PO-RALG's directive. There is also a need for the government to find ways of orienting their officials so that they can objectively carry out their day to day activities. Furthermore, since it is the PMO-RALG that issued the circular to the LGAs, it is important that the office (now PORALG) makes follow up to see implementation of the same. It has been noted that in most of the places that the circular was used to seek information from the LGAs, CSOs were able to get the requested information. It is thus recommended that other CSOs make use of this circular when they access information from their own authorities. CSOs should think of working closely with the LGAs so that they are able to get the support that they might need as they implement their programs. Furthermore, CSOs should be more creative and increase their efforts in disseminating the circular in their areas of operations.

Presentation on Policy Forum's Experience in Social Accountability Monitoring.

Presentation done by Gwamaka Mwakyanjala from Tanzania Natural Resource Forum/Mama Misisitu Campaign.

Title: Improving Forest governance in ensuring that Citizens Benefit

In his presentation he said that Tanzanians are heavily dependent on the forestry resources for their livelihoods—by trading wood and non-wood forest products. However, most of the forests and woodlands including the majority of the Forest Reserves are not properly managed as the rate of deforestation, resource depletion and degradation is alarming. According to NAFORMA (2013) report, Tanzania is losing nearly to 372,816 annually. Deforestation in Tanzania could cost the national economy US\$3.5 billion, between 2013 and 2033 on current trends, highlighting the importance of investing in the forestry sector to alleviate poverty and boost growth.

Challenges

Limited investment in the forest sector; SAM processes in Lindi and Nachingwea districts uncovered substantial increase in incomes from forests but nothing is ploughed back to support the forest department to deliver training/follow up to village Government.

Limited access to pertinent information; LGAs in Kilwa and Lindi could not avail required information during SAM processes.

Challenges of ensuring harmonization of roles, priorities and linkages between MNRT and PO-RALG continues to plague forest management; The relationship between TFS and Local Governments remains strained with several DFOs claiming that their involvement in planning is tokenism.

Incoherence laws; TFS and LGAs issuing harvesting licenses on forested village lands contrary to Village Land Act of 1999.

Increased conflicts over land use; competitions among the sectors escalating conflicts.

Leadership and governance problems; cumbersome process for termination of corrupt and dishonesty village leaders.

Lack of funds is also a problem. Money located for forestry reserves at local level does not reach the intended party.

Recommendations

Regarding Limited investment in the forest sector; LGA should allocate some percentage of the funds generated from forestry/ provide OC to the forest department to carter for monitoring/mentoring to the village committee

Regarding harmonization of roles between MNRT and PO-RALG; introduce clear guidelines on the division of labour between DFOs and DFMs that instil a system of checks and balances using the translated and disseminated MNRT/PORALG MoU as a starting point

Incoherence laws; MNRT, PO-RALG, and Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Human Settlements Development (MLHSD) collaborate to review and amend any legislation that prevents villagers from being the custodians of all trees on village lands

Increased conflicts over land use; Invest in land use planning.

Build capacity of the village council in the management of funds e.g. Nanjilinji village generated 452,142,754 by Dec 2016 which has never been audited. Who has the role to audit village resources??

Plenary Discussion

Questions and Comments

- What is the role of PO-RALG to Policy Forum and vice versa? The roles should be clarified.
- Policy Forum should identify the existing structure of the government especially that at regional level because they are very involved and capable of assisting on disseminating the information to the local authority.
- Experience shows that CSOs are better creating citizens awareness on different policy issues. Therefore, CSOs should consider conducting more citizens awareness programs/campaigns in order to reach out to a large population.
- What is the name of the Circular?
- It would be good if PF follows up on other circulars. Same goes to Mama Misitu, there is still a lot to do in raising awareness on Government Forest Reserves.
- What is MJUMITA?
- Is there a possibility of PF to use the SAM tool in other sectors?
- CSOs requested for PO-RALG's assistance in strengthening the Circular's ability to access information. In many cases most of the CSOs are faced with the challenge of failing to

obtain information from the LGA officials even after presenting the circular. PO-RALG's role to PF's activities is to provide or assist in pushing the local government officials to provide information to the ordinary citizens.

- PO-RALG to review the current circular and issue a new one that updates the list of documents that should be available to CSOs.
- Is it possible to come with other means of disseminating information perhaps through seminars and so forth instead of relying on the Circular? PF may consider using other avenues in accessing information such as seminars, full council meetings instead of solely depending on the Circular.
- Are there any initiatives taken by PO-RALG to prepare local government officials to assume their responsibilities.

Responses to questions and comments

- It was responded that the survey was only conducted to Policy Forum members only before and after the issuance of the circular. However, Policy Forum will consider conducting a larger survey as recommended.
- Circular no. BA.254/307/01 issued on 2nd November 2012 was displayed for the attendees. The role of regional government in the activities of PF was acknowledged and it was informed that the Regional secretariat offices were required by PMO-RALG to disseminate the circular to districts.
- SAM tool is used by most of PF members who work in various sectors such as education, agriculture and so forth.
- MJUMITA stands for "Mtandao wa jamii wa kusimamia Mimitu"
- Our advocacy is for the government to sustainably manage forest resources to benefit the citizens because it is still a big problem at the moment.

Discussion- Way forward

- It was advised that PF should make use of the existing structure, so their engagement with PO-RALG should also involve/start at the regional level. This will be a platform for learning for the regional authorities and PF in terms of knowing the number of CSOs working in the region.
- PF should also do constant follow up on the use of the circular and the same should apply to other projects/programs.
- The role of PF to PO-RALG is to supplement and compliment their efforts towards accomplishing their duties and responsibilities. So what do you think should be done to help strengthen the relationship between PF and PO-RALG is what matters. I propose

that PF should assist in capacity building and awareness creation through advocacy. PF can do assessment and point out areas in which the government needs to change or do more based on reliable and valid evidence. What can also be done is formalization of agreements made between PO-RALG and PF to enable follow-up. PF can also help the PO-RALG to meet with higher level authorities face to face in order to come with tangible solutions.

- PF and PO-RALG to work together in simplifying the three LG documents namely: Local Government Development Grant Guide, M and E System and Annual Assessment Tool.
- Permanent Secretary should be provided with the findings of the survey on the use of the Circular.
- The management of PO-RALG should be provided with the report of the session so that they share the information and work on the action plan.
- There should a memorandum of understanding to formalize the agreements.

Closing remarks

Mrs Susan Chekani encouraged PF to look into other sector such as free education, laws, transportation and so forth. More research should be done in these areas in order to help the government achieve its goals. She urged PF to make use of government communication platform such as TBC which has free spots to air different educational programs. It should also reward or acknowledge efforts made by citizens to improve livelihood.

Semkae Kilonzo thanked the invited guests and assured them that they will work on their proposed recommendations. He also thanked the PO-RALG management for agreeing to meet with them within a short notice.