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REVITALISING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS (NGOS) AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES (LGAs) ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN TANZANIA: THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

The growing problem of scarcity of resources particularly in developing countries and the demand for services by citizens has escalated the need for collaboration between NGOs and local governments to address this service gap left by local governments. Nevertheless, the collaboration between NGOs and local governments is engulfed by the constraints emanating from organisational and institutional contexts. Although some of these organisational and institutional constraints have been disclosed by the literature, overall the research which studies the combination of these constraints and the way they influence collaboration between the government and NGOs is scarce. This paper explored the relationship between NGOs and LGAs in service delivery in Tanzania and the way these constraints influence their relationship. The findings of the study shows that both formal and informal institutions including the attitudes and perception of the officials from both sides severely constrain the relationship between the two actors in service delivery and recommend the use of seminars, meetings and workshop as an instrument to improve collaboration.

Key Words: NGOs, Service delivery, Collaboration, LGAs, Tanzania

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The anecdotal evidence shows that the scarcity of resources: both financial and human resources constrain the governments to provide adequate public services to their citizens. The scarcity of resources and the growing demand of services have fuelled the need for cooperation between governments and NGOs in service delivery. Apart from that, engagement of NGOs in service delivery by governments has become more necessary not only because the NGOs carry some obligation to improve social welfare but also because NGOs operate in local areas and can easily recognise the needs of the local community (Wallevik and Schanke, 2006; Botha ,2018). Nevertheless, the mainstream literature shows that the relationship between the government and NGOs in many countries is tense. The two sides do not communicate about their needs and expectations. This makes it difficult to get in the way of a smooth and mutually supportive working relationship (Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN, 2008). Partially, the problem of poor communication is caused by the existing institutional framework which does not provide an enabling environment for the growth and effective functioning of NGO sector. Other factors include; lack of trust between both parties which is attributed by lack of willingness of government to appreciate the contribution of NGOs in public service delivery. Another factor is poor coordination and self-interest among the NGOs themselves. In order to guide the operation of NGOs in Tanzania, the government established NGOs policy in the year 2000 to allow NGOs to take part more efficiently and effectively in social service delivery. The goal of the policy was to provide favourable conditions for the operation of NGOs in service delivery. Despite the presence of the policy, the cooperation between governments and the NGOs is still thorny (Kukkamaa, 2008). Apart from that, some NGOs are denied of subsidies from the governments (RAAN, 2013). As a consequence, most of the NGOs operating at the

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local government level find it difficult to build a partnership with the local governments (AKDN 2008, Botha, 2018). The question is what goes wrong? How can we explain the factors impeding the relationship between NGOs and government? How do NGOs cooperate with LGAs in public service delivery in Tanzania? And what are the factors which can explain the effective collaboration of the two actors in service delivery? The remaining part of this article answers these questions. It first begins with the concept of NGOs and the analytical frame, the methodology and then the findings which are organised in three sections and finally conclusions and recommendations.

The concept of NGOs has been defined differently. For some authors, it implies non-profit, philanthropic organisations; for others, particularly in South Asia, it carries a more negative implication of high salary, donor funded organisations (Bano, 2008) while for others like World Bank it implies the private organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development (World Bank, 1994). In general, NGOs can be defined as organizations that are not part of the government, and yet are set up for public benefit and are established in the communities as part of the civil society to facilitate development and respond to the needs of communities (Siziba, 2014, Nkosi, 2015). The Tanzanian NGOs Act of 2002 defines it as a voluntary grouping of individuals or organisation which is autonomous, non-partisan, non-profit sharing organised at a local, national or international level, for purposes of enhancing or promoting economic, environmental, social or cultural development or protecting the environment, lobbying or advocating on such issue; or established under the auspices of any religious or faith propagating organisation, trade union, sports club, or community-based organisation but does not include a trade union, social club, sports club, political party, religious or faith propagating organisation or community-based organisation (URT, 2002). In this article, I will use this definition because am especially interested on how structure, autonomy and resources of the NGOs are disposed of and their effects on cooperation between NGOs and local government in service delivery.

This paper uses organisational science and institutional theories to explain the typology of factors which moderate the relationship between the government and NGOs in service delivery. The theory shows that organisations are a product of institutions but also institutions can influence the performance of the organisations. Formal institutions set rules, policies and laws which actors have to conform with while social institutions provides social rules and norms which govern the behaviour of the actors and the organisation. Organisation evolves successfully if they can adapt their forms, practices and identity into this requirement (Rodrigues & Child, 2008; Greve & Argote, 2015; Lameck 2017). Institutions provide constrains and opportunities for the actors to advance their interests but also the actors can interpret, manipulate or change the constraints and opportunities (Greenwood & Hinings 2006; Lameck 2017). This means that organisation set boundaries of behaviour between what is allowed or not allowed in a particular context (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). If organisations incorporate institutional rules within their own structures, organisations become more homogeneous, more similar in structure, over time (Scott, 1998; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002).

Therefore organisations evolve by adapting to prevailing systems, converging on established successful models, positioning themselves as far as possible at the centre of existing networks of power and privilege. In this view, change occurs where systems are shocked, not where actors choose to take action. If shocks destabilize the practices established such as technological disruption or social upheaval may cause institutional change which may change the position of the actors and some may find themselves better adjusted (Greenwood and Hinings 2006). Institutional perspective such as norms and values guide the actors to make strategic choices. This involves defining her identity and interest which are key determinant for negotiations with other organisations. This is because the determinants leads organisations to define the external constrains and opportunities which affect the position of the actors (Child, 1997; Rodrigues and Child, 2008; Lameck, 2017). The organisational theory element such as institutional influence, resources and interests define how the actors cooperate. Therefore policies, regulations and social norms set the framework within which organisations operate.

Organisations are shaped by histories and the institutions which are not only external constrains and opportunities but embedded within organisations. The relationships they form, whether in a contract or a looser agreement, create a new organisational framework within which these previous commitments are played out and new ones may emerge. Overall the institutional influences, organisational structures and the choice of strategies determine the relationship between the actors.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative approach with case study design. The study was conducted in Kigamboni District Council (KMC) in Tanzania which was selected as a case study. The choice of KMC was influenced by the fact that KMC is one of the oldest LGAs which has collaboration with NGOs in service delivery over the number of years but the quality and magnitude of services has not improved substantially but also the NGOs operating in the council do not set their service delivery agenda with local government. Therefore, the research began with a content analysis of relevant documents such as National NGOs policy, guidelines for planning and decision-making, weekly schedules and monthly reports of the meetings. The review of documents provided the analysis of the formal rules governing collaboration between NGOs and Local Government in Service Delivery. The completion of the review was followed with in-depth interview with 74 respondents to gain their insight concerning collaboration between NGOs and KMC in service delivery. Of these, 30 officials were the policy officers from the NGOs working in KMC and 54 officials were the policy and field officers working in the local government from different departments of KMC.

For the purpose of ensuring reliability, the interactive questioning of the same respondents and probing was used. Apart from that, the researcher did not only organise interviews with officials, but also reviewed important documents. Finally, the findings from the interviews were analysed using framework method and categorised according to the main themes of the research which are the task of policy officers and NGOs officials.

3.0 NGOs INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN TANZANIA

The current institutional and legal framework of the NGOs in Tanzania is a result of the amendment and the enactment of the NGOs policy of 2009 and the NGOs Act of 2002 (URT, 2002). The policy sets the objectives which is among other things; To provide an operational definition of NGOs; To provide a broad framework for legal and institutional arrangements to facilitate the operations of NGOs in Tanzania; To put in place registration procedures which are transparent, decentralized and which will facilitate better coordination of NGOs while safeguarding the freedom of association; To strengthen the relationship between the Government and the civil society; To enhance mechanisms for collaborative relations between NGOs, the Government, funding agencies and other stakeholders; To facilitate mechanisms for Government support to NGOs; To promote transparency, accountability and awareness among NGOs themselves, the Government and other stakeholders; To facilitate exchange and flow of information on NGOs activities in order to maximize utilisation of resource and also share experiences or research findings (URT, 2002).

In order to realise these objectives, the policy provides the number of mechanisms including establishment of the NGOs board and the ministry which is responsible for taking initiatives for coordination, publishing and updating NGO Directories information. The government is required to provide information relevant to NGO activities so as to promote a fair information exchange between the Government and NGOs. The National NGO Bodies, NGO Umbrellas individual NGOs, networks as well as NGO Resource Centers are given equal liberty to publish directories and produce publications of their constituents, clients and members but also the policy requires that all Local and International NGOs must produce activity reports and the reports must be made available to the public, National Bodies of NGOs, the Government and other stakeholders for use upon their request. All NGOs: both Local and International are required to make available annual financial and /or audited reports to the Registrar's Office and other stakeholders but also each NGO must have physical address, a sign post and whenever possible notice board displaying its activities (URT, 2002).

4.0 THE PRACTICE OF THE POLICY

The review of the policy and guidelines for NGOs was followed by the number of field interviews with local government and the NGOs officials to establish the practice of the policy. The results of the interviews were subsumed into the number of indicators of the policy practice as presented in the preceding sections below.

4.1 Awareness and recognition of the NGOs

The interviews with heads of departments from the local government in (KMC) show that the officials are aware of the existence of the NGOs policy but they are not conversant with the policy contents because the policy is written by central government and that it has not been fully internalised in the local government. On the other side, the NGO official's interview shows that they are aware of the policy but also the details of the policy. For example

82.6% of the respondents from NGOs who were interviewed shows that they are fully aware and conversant of the NGO policy. It is only 17.4% of the respondents who were not knowledgeable about the content of the NGO policy. To find out why the NGOs were knowledgeable on the policy than the government, the research further interrogated the NGOs director. The interviews with the Directors revealed that they were fully knowledgeable of the policy existence and contents because the NGO are required to adhere to the rules and regulations provided by the NGO policy but also they have taken initiatives to ensure that all NGOs staffs are trained concerning the policy and its contents. Therefore the results show that unlike local government staff, the NGOs staff were aware of the NGO policy contents.

Furthermore, the interviews with the heads of departments in Kigamboni Municipal Council and the NGO directors shows that the contribution of NGOs is fully recognised in service delivery as remarked by the Municipal head of department of the– environment , welfare and community development as shown in the quotation below;

“We recognise fully the significance of collaborating with NGOs in the service provider since they act as partners with the government in the process of service delivery but also the NGOs can penetrate the grass-root areas where the government cannot” (Environmental officer)

“The government recognises the significance of cooperating with NGOs since they reduce the burden to the government in service delivery since primarily the issue of providing services to the public are the government’s job but also they contribute to the development in the community, socially and economically” (Interview -Social welfare and community development officer)

Furthermore, the recognition of the NGOs is supported by the fact that NGOs are potential agents in service delivery and the LGAs find it necessary to collaborating with the NGOs to address service gap caused by meagre resources provided by government. These findings are similar to the findings of the study conducted by Lange *et al* (2000) and Botha (2018) who found that the NGOs are fully recognised as the potential force in the service delivery since the government have realised that they need assistance and they are incapable in their own in providing social services to the public hence the necessity of collaborating with the NGOs in the service delivery is inevitable.

4.2 Resources sharing

The research shows that sharing of the resources is one of the impetuses for the recognition of the NGOs as a potential partner in service delivery. In Kigamboni Municipal Council for example, the NGOs are recognised due to their involvement in different community based development projects. The research shows that 24% of the respondents recognise NGOs as an additional source of fund in service provision, 18% of the respondents remarked that involvement of NGOs in the provision of social services is what makes them popular and 12% responded that LGAs recognise NGOs involvement in social service delivery.

The researcher further interrogated the officials from Kigamboni Municipal Council to establish the potentials of NGOs as partner in resources sharing and the interviews revealed that NGOs are further recognised because of their technical expertise in project implementation as shown by the interview with heads of department of the Environment who argued through interviews that *“The NGOs have high technical expertise which facilitates the implementation of social and economic projects in the community.*

The interview also revealed that KMC cannot implement sufficiently development projects due to insufficient budget therefore the NGOs act as intercessors in implementing different development in the communities and promoting people’s welfare.

4.3 Institutions and Collaboration between KMC and the NGOs in Service Delivery

In this question the respondents involved in the study were required to explain how the policy enhances cooperative public service delivery between the NGOs and Local government in service delivery. The number of officials from KMC and the NGOs operating in KMC were interviewed. The research shows that the policy enhances effective cooperative public service delivery. Big number of the respondents confirmed that the policy provides guidance and effective mechanisms for the collaboration of NGOs and LGAs in service delivery as stipulated in the NGO policy. For example 48.6% of the total interview participants show that the NGO policy enhances effective cooperative public service delivery by facilitating a platform for LGAs and NGOs to gather their concern. In this case, NGOs and LGAs can collaborate smoothly since they gather their concerns but also it helps them to minimise the

negative attitude and perception they have towards each other while 31.1% of the respondents confirmed that policy enhances cooperation by making the identity of NGOs possible through registration of the operating NGOs and finally 12.2% of the respondents interviewed confirmed that the NGO policy enhances cooperative service delivery by stating clearly the responsibilities of government and NGO in service delivery.

Therefore from the findings it is conclusive that the NGO policy is very crucial in facilitating effective collaboration between LGAs and NGOs. This is further supported by specific interview quotations from different officials of KMC as shown in the quotation below;

“The policy act as a guidance for the NGOs operation but also it legalises the registration process which gives the NGOs formal recognition and the autonomy to perform their activities”.

To get more insights on the requirement for registration, further probing with officials were conducted The interview shows that the policy enhances cooperative service delivery since it facilitates the registration and provides the requirements for registration process of the NGOs. The head of department of social welfare and community development which is the department responsible for registration of the NGOs said that;

“Our department is responsible for the registration of NGOs that operate in Kigamboni Municipal Council and the requirement for registration of the NGOs is that the NGO should have the license provided by the ministry responsible but also must have clear mission, vision and objectives

Furthermore, the interview shows that the policy provides the responsibilities of NGOs and LGAs in service delivery. It provides the clear definition and division of responsibilities to facilitate the NGOs and the government to undertake their responsibilities without conflict as confirmed by the respondents who argued that, one among the mechanisms for effective cooperative service delivery is clear definition of the roles of each side. This helps to prevent misunderstandings between the parties and hence make them perform their roles smoothly. These findings are also consistent with the research by Lameck (2017) and Botha (2018) which shows that clear definition of roles and communication between the NGOs and local government improves the cooperation and the quality of service delivery by the NGOs.

4.4 Institutional Factors Undermining Effective Collaboration

4.4.1 Negative attitudes and information sharing

According to National NGOs policy, it is a policy that NGO must facilitate the exchange of information and regular dialogue among all parties to maximise utilisation of resources and minimize misunderstandings between the NGOs and LGAs in service delivery but also the NGO National Bodies and the ministry responsible for NGO coordination is required to take initiatives to publish and update NGO Directories information.

Nevertheless, the research shows that sharing and exchange of information between the government and NGOs in the service delivery is not effective. The HoD of health department in KMC argued that *“The exchange and sharing of information is not effective between LGAs and NGOs because NGOs are reluctant in disclosing and share information about their plans and budgets”*

These findings imply that the exchange of information is one-sided. These findings are similar to the research by Lange *et al* (2000) and Gooding, (2017) which show that lack of transparency is one of the factors which affect effective collaboration between the LGAs and NGOs. The absence of transparency between the parties reduces the level of trust which is a catalyst for effective relationship and hence affecting the quality of service delivered through partnership.

Furthermore, the interview with KMC officials and NGO officials shows that regular meetings is one of the major and crucial factors or strategy towards effective cooperative public service delivery since it provides a room for both NGOs and LGAs to gather their matters and concerns about their activities, problems and plans and hence minimize their differences.

For example, the interviews conducted with the HoD of the health department at KMC confirmed that regular meetings is a determinant factor for effective collaboration between the NGOs and LGAs in the service delivery but also the introduction of the networking system through meetings enhances effective collaboration as argued by one the social welfare officer:

“In Kigamboni we introduced a networking system of NGOs called (MTANDAO MWAMVULI) which is a networking system that gathers all NGOs of the same objective to work together in their activities, this helps towards the effectiveness of cooperation between the LGAs and the NGOs”

4.4.2 Negative attitudes towards collaboration

The interview with the director of the NGOs titled *AIDS SOLUTION KIGAMBONI (ASK)* shows that some of the local government officials have some bad attitude towards NGOs. He further remarked that;

“Some local government officials have a bad and negative attitude, therefore, it becomes difficult to cooperate with them and they also have a bad perception about NGOs. This is because may be they encountered some difficulties or challenges with some NGOs which make them perceive that all the NGOs are the same.

On the other hand the interview with local government officials especially heads of department in Kigamboni Municipal Council confirmed that negative attitudes is one of the factors which constrain the effective collaboration between the government and NGOs in service delivery. In addition, the leadership style and personal interest of the NGOs staff and the government leaders also affect the relationship between the parties as confirmed in the following quotation;

“Some NGOs are more concerned with their interests rather than community and public interests as it should be, the NGOs should operate and undertake their activities and operations to serve the community and provide social services on behalf of the government” (Interview, Environmental Officer)

Despite NGOs being fully recognise recognised, NGOs still face challenges in service delivery. The NGOs officials confirmed to have challenges in collaborating with NGOs as confirmed by the respondents from the NGOs who confirmed that they faced challenges in cooperating with LGAs while only a few of the respondents from the government confirmed that they faced difficulties in working with NGOs.

The findings also discovered that negative perception is among the problems that affect collaboration between the government and NGOs in the provision of services. The NGOs and LGAs have negative perceptions towards each other. This causes misunderstandings in the cooperative public service delivery. These findings are consistent with other findings by (Jelinek 2006; Gooding,2017 & Lameck 2017 & Bano 2019) which show that the NGOs had difficult time to mobilize and work with government officials for day today activities of the NGOs due to negative attitudes and perception. Therefore the role of NGOs in service delivery is often constrained by negative perception and attitudes which constrain the smooth cooperation of the NGOs and government in service delivery.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall conclusion is that the collaboration between KMC and the NGOs operating in the Council is not good. Although KMC recognises the existence of these NGOs and their benefits, it is not adequately aware about the contents of the national NGOs policy which is supposed to guide the collaboration between the two actors. One possible explanation is that the NGOs policy is developed by central government ministry and that the local government does not find it necessary to internalize it. On the other hand, the NGOs is aware about the policy and its content but also the NGOs is disposed of resources such as financial and human capital but they are not willing to disclose all their information to local government because of the negative attitudes. Therefore, apart from the formal institutions such as NGOs policy and the government structure particularly local and central government, the resources and the absence of effective communication between the parties severely constrain the effective collaboration. Therefore, seminars and workshops organised by the parties themselves can be greater instrument for improving collaboration.

First of all, the LGA officials should be made aware of the NGO official's policy because the awareness on policy will make the LGAs officials understand their role in the collaboration which can provide smooth and enabling conditions for the effective collaboration between LGAs and NGOs in public service delivery. Furthermore, the government should build the capacity for cooperative public service delivery since the capacity of NGOs and LGAs is among the veritable factors to improve collaboration in service provision between the NGOs and LGAs.

Moreover, the government should increase the awareness and the benefits of involving NGOs in service delivery but also the types of resources the NGOs are disposed of. This in turn will enable NGOs to work effectively in the communities respectively and finally to achieve their objectives fully. In addition, the government should improve mutual understanding between LGAs and NGOs through conducting regular meetings to discuss matters concerning improvement of their relationship in service delivery and settling their differences to avoid the negative perceptions which have been created towards each other.

Finally, the government should create smooth registration process of NGOs and reduce the rigid bureaucratic procedures which the NGOs have been lamenting on. The registration process of NGOs should be made friendly to attract many NGOs as possible to participate and assist the government in service delivery

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