

Enhancing Citizen Participation for Development in Tanzania

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Abstract

The literature has repeatedly emphasized that citizen participation is requisite for good governance. Indeed, when citizens participate in various public activities, they can voice their demands, they can invite the government to respond to their demands, and they can keep government accountable. In other words, in the presence of citizen engagement activities, voices can be raised to keep governments accountable. While the literature has clearly established this link, less is known about the levels of citizen engagement in rural areas in developing countries like Tanzania; precisely areas where good governance is most needed to secure some progress along the developmental path and take the population out of poverty. Using an original dataset comprising of 1,265 respondents, we find that citizen participation in rural Tanzania varies across various types of activities. We also find that the participation rate for men is higher than that of women and that the participation rate for older people is higher than it is for younger ones. Given the fact that Tanzania's population is largely youthful, and women are slightly more than men, we recommend for the removal of barriers that women and youths face as far as their civic rights to participate in developmental activities is concerned.

Keywords: Citizens; Participation; Engagement; Governance; Democracy; Development

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INTRODUCTION

From the mid-1990s scholars and practitioners have repeatedly reiterated that good governance matters. The literature shows that good governance matters (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Zoido-Lobaton, 2000) and can in its turn be sub-divided into three streams. One stream of scholarships deals with what good governance is (Fukuyama, 2013) and how it'd be measured (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2011), another stream of scholarship investigates the dividends of good governance (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2013) and a third stream of research focuses on the causes of good governance (Kaufmann & Kraay, 2003).

Studies conducted in the first stream of scholarship noted that the notion of governance had become very popular and used to denote a variety of phenomena. In this regard Rhodes (1996) noted that the term 'governance' was used with at least seven different meaning namely "the minimal state, corporate governance, the new public management, 'good governance', socio-cybernetic systems, and self-organizing networks". While a similar observation could be made with regard to the term 'good governance', scholars such as Fukuyama have attempted to provide a clearer, less ambiguous definition of what good governance is by stating that it entails government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not (Fukuyama, 2003). And insofar as making rules, enforcing rules, and delivering services is what good governance is expected to secure, the measurement of the level of good governance should simply track how a government performs in each of these areas. But while some scholars have proposed a minimalistic approach to measuring good governance because, in their view, good governance in the end is just performance and results

(Rotberg, 2014); others have instead adopted a more holistic approach and suggested that the level of good governance should be measured by assessing not only the ability to deliver results, but how decisions are made, that is whether and to what extent the rule of law is respected, whether and to what extent government is accountable and the quality of regulations. The Worldwide Governance indicators represent the best example of this holistic approach to measuring good governance (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2009).

Studies conducted in the second stream of scholarship have generally advanced two claims. The first of which was that countries with higher levels of good governance, that is countries where the quality of government is higher, are richer and more literate, secure healthier and their citizens live long and display lower levels of income inequality (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2013). In other words, countries with higher levels of good governance are more developed. Yet, since this association in itself provide little to no indication as to whether these countries are more developed because they have better governments or have better governments because they are richer or are richer and with better government because of other unknown reasons, several studies posited that good governance is a cause of development. This was the second claim advanced in the literature (Mauro, 1995).

Studies conducted in the third stream of scholarship have attempted to identify the causes of the quality of government. Some scholars suggested that good governance depends on or rather reflects the capacity and the autonomy of the bureaucracy (Fukuyama, 2003), others have suggested that bad governance is a consequence of socio-economic backwardness (Moore, 2001), others scholars claimed instead that good governance has to do with institutional capacity and de-

sign, yet others pointed out that good governance is a result of evidence based decision-making (Kinyondo & Pelizzo, 2018), while a final group of scholars suggested that the success of good governance reforms and the proper implementation of a good governance agenda depends above all on political will (Pelizzo & Staphenurst, 2015). In this regard, Pelizzo & Staphenurst (2015) advanced three claims, namely that a) when political elites have the political will the good governance agenda is properly implemented, b) that political elites do not always have the political will to properly implement a good governance agenda and c) that citizens always have the means to make political elites embrace the good governance agenda and improve the quality of government. The research by Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman (2017) exemplifies what Pelizzo & Staphenurst (2015) had theorized.

Writing on West Africa Krawczyk & Sweet-Cushman (2017) noted that “local citizen engagement is especially important in West Africa, which struggles with issues of poor governance, undermining governmental legitimacy, institutional capacity, and ethics. To combat this, enhanced citizen participation in this region is viewed as an increasingly important aspect of democratic development. Citizen participation in local governance can improve the management of public resources, reduce corruption by increasing the accountability of public servants and political leaders, and have a positive impact on democracy by supporting the inclusion of marginalized groups, building civic skills and conceptions of democratic citizenship, and contributing to policy feedback and improved policy outcomes”.

Using an original dataset, compiled from responses to a questionnaire that was administered to 1,265 Tanzanian respondents, we are able to show whether, how and to what extent age, gender and

education levels affects citizens engagement in rural Tanzania. We believe these findings to be of some importance not only because they shed some light on a topic that has never been quite adequately investigated; it also provides reformers, policy makers, scholars and practitioners with some valuable insight as to what needs to be changed to promote citizen participation (in rural areas, and possibly, elsewhere) and to capture benefits thereof.

RESEARCH METHODS

The main aim while administering the questionnaire was to assess citizens’ awareness with Open Government Partnership (OGP) and citizen engagement in rural Tanzania. It should be noted that Tanzania has since July 2017 (right in the middle of conducting the present study) withdrew itself from OGP arrangement. Nevertheless, the study made use of quantitative data collected through a structured questionnaire. Questions were aimed at assessing respondents’ level of participation by various sub-categories such as gender, age and education.

The target population for this study was citizens above 18 in 10 wards of Mbogwe district. Wards were selected based on presence of OGP animators. It should be noted that since Tanzania just joined OGP as recent as in 2011, a decision was made to pick a local government jurisdiction where Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have been putting a lot of work in sensitizing OGP. Subsequently, Mbogwe District in Geita region was selected. The district was picked because it hosted the Chukua Hatua (literally translated as ‘take action’) project, which was jointly implemented by Oxfam and a local organization going by the name TAMA-SHA.

At present, Mbogwe district has 123 animators (40 females and 83 males), whose responsibility is to sensitize and coordinate OGP-related activities in the

district as well as liaising with district authorities. In general, the animators are trusted by citizens and are often approached for advisory support on OGP-related matters. Animators have also been working with journalists at regional and national level to open spaces for them to be heard and inspire others to act. They have also been in the forefront of ensuring that women and young people participate in various OGP-related matters.

Subsequently, a list of households in 10 wards was produced as computed from a list of households in each village based on village official statistics. Simple random sampling was then used in selecting respondents, taking into consideration the diversity of groups in households (age, gender, education qualification etc.). In the end, a sample size of 1,265 respondents was collected based on estimates of total population of around 192,753.

The sample was collected with 95% confidence level of computation. It is important to note that, based on statistical standards a sample size of around 400 respondents would suffice. However, more than 1200 were covered based on

the principle that, 'the larger the sample size, the lower the margin of error'.

Finally, collected data was interrogated mostly using descriptive analyses. This was done through tabulating frequencies and computing necessary averages to make sense of the data at hand. In addition, the Pearson Chi Square Test was used to probe the association of variables of interest. This was possible because most of variables in this study are categorical and the said test assesses relationships between two categorical variables.

Figure 1 below shows that 56% of the sample represented male respondents and the remaining 44% females. While not the accurate gender representation of the population, this result is fairly consistent with official statistics which puts women population slightly higher (51%) than that of men (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Furthermore Figure 2 depicts that selected respondents were by and large youthful with most them (78%) being between 18 and 49 years reflecting the population of Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014).

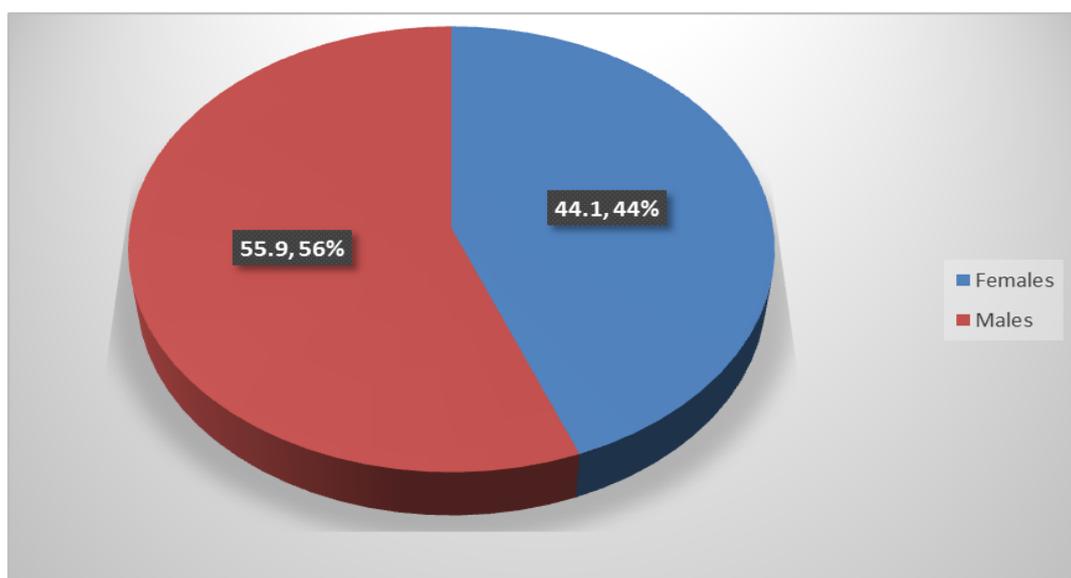


Figure 1. Sex Distribution of Respondents

Source: Survey Data (2017)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective of our analysis is to ascertain whether and to what extent Tanzanian citizens were actually aware of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). Awareness is crucial because as Yang & Shiang (2015) puts it, OGP opens a venue for public engagement and that “through public engagement, the efficiency and effectiveness of government can be enhanced, and the quality of decision-making can be improved by collective expertise and knowledge”. The answer, in this respect, is that by and large they were aware of it. In fact, 60.9 per cent of the 1265 surveyed in the course of this study reported to be aware of OGP. However, this average conceals, the fact that there was or rather there is a considerable cross-gender variation in the level of awareness. In fact, while 67 per cent of the male respondents reported to be aware of the OGP, only 53 percent of the female respondents indicated to be aware of the OGP.

Gender is not the only factor influencing the level of awareness with OGP. The percentage of respondents reporting to be aware of OGP increased as a func-

tion to age. In fact, while only 50.2 per cent of the 217 respondents in the 18-25 age group reported to be aware of OGP, the percentage increased to 54.7 per cent for the respondents in the 26-35 age range, it increased further to 66.8 per cent for the 36-49 age cohort and it reached 67 per cent among the respondents over 50. This means that older respondents and men were more likely to be aware of OGP than younger respondents and women respectively. That said, still more than 60 per cent of the respondents claimed to be aware of the OGP.

Being aware of OGP is one thing but understanding it is another. Thus, the study set out to assess the level of understanding of OGP among respondents. This was done by listing various activities and asking respondents to indicate which of these activities are good description of what OGP is all about. Findings in Table 1 below show that respondents have a widely diverse understanding of what OGP is. For 55 per cent of the respondents, OGP relates to officials going to work on time; for 25 per cent of the respondents OGP relates instead to the availability of farm implements. More women (16%) than men (9%) see voting as something

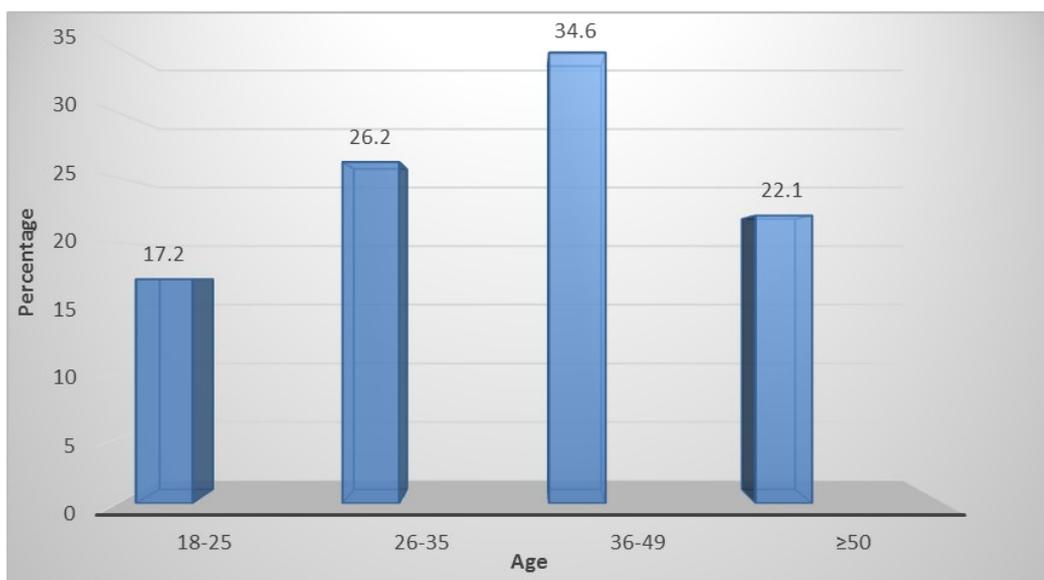


Figure 2. Age of Respondents
Source: Survey Data (2017)

that somehow has something to do with OGP. Surprisingly, only about 7% of respondents consider village meetings as something to do with OGP. This may either reflect limited space for the people to contribute during meetings or absence of regular village meetings.

Insofar as the openness of open government reflects not only how much the government is willing to disclose about what it does but also how much it allows citizens to provide input through input participation (see e.g. Fung & Weil, 2010), we asked respondents to provide an indication of whether they participated in the decision-making process. By asking such question we discovered that 758 or 59.9 per cent of our 1265 respondents participate or claim to participate in the decision-making process.

We then went on to ask them to provide an indication of how concretely they do participate in the decision-making process. This is important because citizen participation could improve the quality of democratic governance (Schuler, 2010) and also increase the quality of government (Yang & Shiang, 2015). Following collecting various responses, we found that 55.8 per cent of our respondents pro-

vide input by convening village meetings and that 10.69 per cent of them claim to be proving input into the decision-making process when voting. Interestingly 24.8 per cent of the respondents associated their ability to provide input in to the decision making with the fact that officials go to work on time and 5.67 per cent of the respondents equate the provision of input with the availability of farm implements (see table 2 for details). So, while two sets of responses, that is those concerning village meetings and voting, speak to the mode of participation, the other two sets of responses seem to suggest instead the issues on which respondents participate in the decision-making process.

We then attempted to assess whether and to what extent the level of local citizen engagement is affected by age, education and gender. Our findings, in this respect, are fairly consistent with what is reported in the literature. For instance, various studies like Osmani (2007), and Fung & Wright, 2003 have shown that contextual specificities such the way gender, age and education are traditionally perceived in a particular locality have a bearing on citizen participation. This is

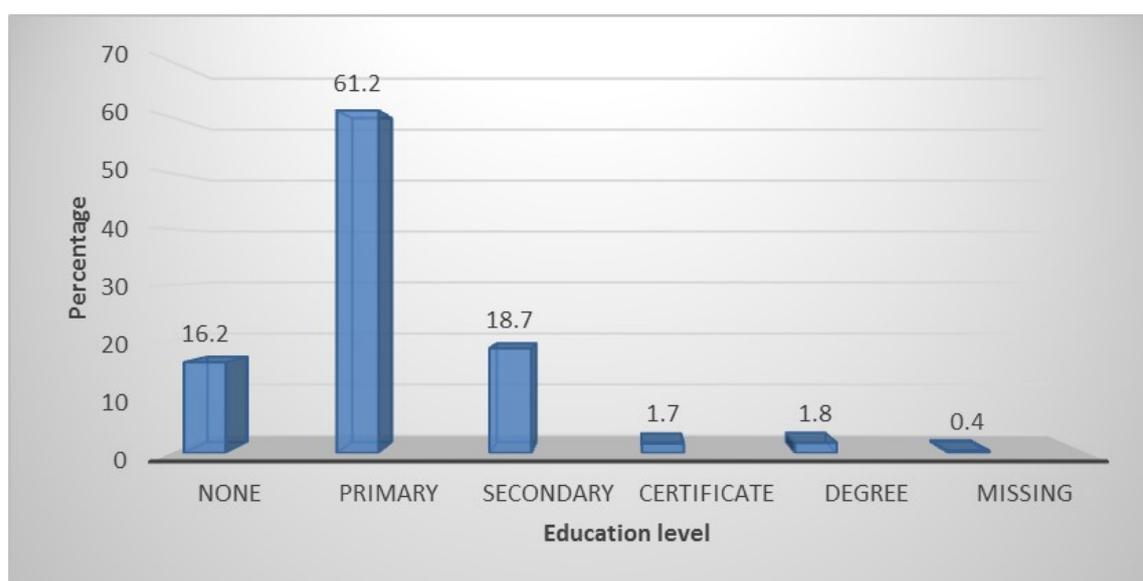


Figure 3. Education Level of Respondents

Source: Survey Data (2017)

precisely what we found. The results in Table 3 show that the level of engagement is higher for men (59%) than for women (41%). The Pearson Chi Square Test backs this result by showing that there is a positive and significant association between being male and partaking in civic engagement activities. This result cannot be positive as women, just like men, have unique capabilities (Sen, 1990) which if left unused decision-making may be undermined not only in terms of quality of

the decision-making process but also the quality of the decisions

Moreover, Table 4 below shows a positive and significant association between age and participation in civic engagement activities by respondents. This is backed by the fact that to the exception of those aged 50 or more, there is an increase in participation for each increasing age category. Indeed, even if there is a slight drop in the 50 plus age category, those participating in the category (23%)

Table 1. Understanding of OGP versus Gender

Source: Survey Data (2017)

Option(s)	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Officials going to work on time	288	409	697
	51.61	57.85	55.10
Voting	88	64	152
	15.77	9.05	12.02
Convening village meetings	39	55	94
	6.99	7.78	7.43
Availability of farm implements	143	179	322
	25.63	25.32	25.45
Total	558	707	1,265
	100	100	100

Table 2. Taking Part in Decision Making by Type of Activity

Source: Survey Data (2017)

Option(s)	Being part of Decision making		Total
	No	Yes	
Convening village meetings	251	446	697
	49.51	58.84	55.10
Voting	71	81	152
	14	10.69	12.02
Availability of farm implements	51	43	94
	10.06	5.67	7.43
Officials going to work on time	134	188	322
	26.43	24.8	25.45
Total	507	758	1,265
	100	100	100

are almost double those doing the same at age bracket 18 – 25 (12%). The implication is that the youth are either left out or are not interested in partaking in citizen engagement activities. This situation must be reversed because if younger segments of the Tanzanian population are unable or unwilling to participate in civic engagement activities, Tanzania will not be able to enjoy the benefit that it could otherwise derive from higher levels of participation in citizen engagement across all social and demographic groups.

A quick look on how respondents participated in citizen engagement activities shows that many of them (57%) attended village meetings (Table 5). This

was followed by decision-making through CSOs (14%), others (10%) and lastly through elections (8%). Again, village meetings prove to be key to participation meaning they must be promoted, and their regularity preserved.

It should be noted that on average, respondents participated in two (1081/758) decision-making opportunities. These are village meetings and decision through CSOs. This implies that just like for village meetings, CSOs should be accorded their rightful place in enhancing citizen engagement in Tanzania.

Table 6 below shows that while most of decision-making opportunities happened to take place in village meet-

Table 3. Participation by Gender

Source: Survey Data (2017)

Participation in Decision-making			
Gender	No	Yes	Total
Female	250	308	558
	49.31	40.63	44.11
Male	257	450	707
	50.69	59.37	55.89
Total	507	758	1,265
	100	100	100

Pearson chi2(1) = 9.2767 Pr = 0.002

Table 4. Participation by Age

Source: Survey Data (2017)

Participation in Decision-making			
Age	No	Yes	Total
18 – 25	124	93	217
	24.46	12.27	17.15
26 – 35	136	195	331
	26.82	25.73	26.17
36 – 49	140	298	438
	27.61	39.31	34.62
50+	107	172	279
	21.1	22.69	22.06
Total	507	758	1,265
	100	100	100

Pearson chi2(3) = 38.8087 Pr = 0.000

ings, slightly more men (83%) attended the meetings than women (78%). Similar trends can be seen in decision by ward committees (18% men and 8% women); the trend is more balanced when it comes to elections (12.22% men and 12.6% women). That said, a similar number of men and women (20%) claimed to have made decision through CSOs.

The evidence we have reviewed so far allows us to draw some conclusions. The first of which is that while most respondents are aware of OGP, it is not entirely clear whether they understand what it is. In terms of participation in the decision-making process, the responses do not provide an unequivocal picture of whether and to what extent respondents actually participate in the decision-making process, because while some of the responses provided some information about the mode of participation (village

meeting, voting), others seems to be more concerned with the topic or the issue on which a decision had to be taken. Third, respondents reported that they had participated in citizen engagement-activities and the analysis of this set of data also confirmed that village meetings and decision making by CSO are the most popular modes of citizen participation. Fourth one consistently finds that gender and age are significant determinants of decision making or participation in citizen engagement-activities. Specifically, older people have greater input than younger ones and males have more input than women. This was to be expected as Gant & Turner-Lee (2011), for instance, reported that internet penetration, the presence/absence of broadband access, the existence of a digital divide, and the unequal rate of broadband adoption across socio-demographic groups (may) constrain the ability of

Table 5. How did They Participate Exactly?

Source: Survey Data (2017)

Decision-making activity	Frequency	Percentage of Responses
Village Meetings	617	57.08
Various elections	91	8.42
Decision making through CSOs	151	13.97
Others	108	9.99
Total	1081	100

Table 6. Decision-making Activity by Gender

Source: Survey Data (2017)

Decision-making activity	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Village meetings	78.90	83.11	81.40
Various elections	11.69	12.22	12.01
Decision making by CSOs	20.45	19.56	19.91
Decision by Wards Committees	8.44	18.22	14.25
Others	14.61	15.33	15.04

some groups and individuals to actively engage in Open Government Initiatives.

Hence, the policy conclusion here is that to improve participation in citizen engagement activities and to enjoy the benefits that higher level of participation could generate the obstacles that prevent a fuller participation of young and female respondents should be removed. This is important since various studies like Marijn et al., (2012) have already clearly shown that there is no automatic correlation between the publication of data and its alleged benefits. It thus up to various open government stakeholders to ensure that all the concerned, in this particular case the youth and women, are not in any way left behind.

CONCLUSION

The literature has repeatedly emphasized that citizen engagement is requisite for good governance. When citizens participate in citizen engagement activities, they can voice their demands, they can invite the government to respond to their demands, and they can keep government accountable. While the literature has clearly established this link between citizen engagement and the promotion of good governance, less is known about the levels of citizen engagement in rural areas in developing countries—that is precisely in those areas where good governance is most needed to secure some progress along the developmental path and take the population out of poverty.

In this paper we have analyzed an original dataset on participation in citizen engagement activities in rural Tanzania. In doing so, we found that citizens in rural areas do participate in citizen engagement activities, that the rate of participation varies across the various types of activities, that the participation rate for men is higher than it is for women and that the participation rate for older people is higher than it is for younger ones. This is a big concern because while the Tanzanian

population is largely youthful; women are slightly more than men in Tanzania. Results therefore imply that citizen participation in Tanzania is limited to a smaller segment of population.

We thus conclude that age and gender are barriers to citizen participation in Tanzania. These barriers must be removed to promote good governance and development in rural Tanzania, and we hope that in the light of these findings policy makers and scholars in Tanzania and beyond will pay greater attention to what could be done to remove these barriers to citizen participation both in the country and elsewhere around the world.

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