

# Local Governance Attitude Survey

A Proposal for a Daraja Research Project  
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## Introduction

Local government that responds effectively to the needs and priorities of the local community is a long way from being achieved in rural Tanzania. District officials are accountable to an elected council, which is supposed to ensure that the interests of citizens are always taken into account. However, the reality is that electoral democracy is still emerging, accountability pressures on councillors between elections are very weak, and there is little local scrutiny of government plans or performance by either the media or civil society. As a result, local government responds more to the interests of central government than to the local community, and in many cases doesn't face much accountability pressure at all.

Daraja aims to address this in three ways. First, Daraja will build the capacity of the community, civil society, the media and elected representatives to scrutinise local government plans and performance and hold local government to account. Second, Daraja will promote opportunities for the community to make their needs and priorities clear to local government. And third, Daraja will work with national government and donors to promote policies that reinforce rather than undermine the accountability of local government to the wider community.

What do ordinary citizens think of local government in Tanzania: open or unresponsive, fair or heavy handed, honest or corrupt? And what do government officials understand their responsibilities to be?

The research project described in this proposal is a survey of the attitudes of different groups in society towards local government. It builds on earlier qualitative research conducted for Daraja<sup>1</sup> on this topic and incorporates methodological approaches and tools from studies undertaken by Afro-barometer and REPOA<sup>2</sup>.

## What issue will this study examine?

Local attitudes and expectations regarding local government can have a big influence over how responsive local government is to the wider community. For example:

- If community members do not expect their interests to be taken into account, why would they bother to tell local government what their priorities are?
- If local government officials see themselves as servants of higher government rather than of the local community, whose interests are likely to get priority?

An earlier qualitative research project for Daraja<sup>1</sup> found widespread evidence of attitudes working against responsive government. In particular, the study and some follow up investigations at district level tentatively identified the following prevalent attitudes:

### *About Us - Introducing Daraja*

Daraja is a new organisation, working in rural Tanzania, aiming to make local government responsive to the wider community. Our name, Daraja, comes from the Swahili word for bridge. This reflects our approach of bringing the community, local government and other institutions together. We are registered as a charity in the UK (No. 1116346) and are in the process of registering in Tanzania.

We aim to:

- *Work with local government*, so they are better able to respond to the community;
- *Work with the community*, so they can hold government to account;
- *Bring government and community closer together.*

Daraja's founding director has 8 years' experience in rural development, research and advocacy in Tanzania, and a Masters degree in Development Management from the University of Manchester. As such, the ideas behind Daraja are informed by development theory and grounded in the reality of rural Tanzania.

- Village government is perceived as an extended arm of district government rather than a separate layer of representation and decision making.
- Village government is perceived as having a strong executive function, and is expected to carry out this function forcefully, even exploitatively.
- Corruption by village government officials was reported as widespread, expected and even perceived as acceptable.
- Local government officials (at village and district levels) perceive it to be more important that they respond to the demands of higher levels of government than to the priorities of the community.
- Scrutiny and challenge of government officials at any level by the community, civil society and even elected councillors is not perceived by officials, citizens or councillors as acceptable.
- Community members and their representatives are not perceived as having the right to access information on government plans and budgets or performance.

This study will use quantitative methods to test these tentative findings from earlier qualitative research, and to understand attitudes to local governance more broadly.

### **How will it work in practice?**

This study will involve surveys of four different groups in Njombe district to assess their attitudes towards local governance: community members, village government officials, elected councillors, and district government officials.

The steps involved in the study are as follows:

- Step 1: Develop suitable questionnaires for each of the four groups, based on tools used for previous surveys by Afro-barometer and REPOA.
- Step 2: Use random sampling to identify 1000 community members, 20 village government officials, 20 elected councillors and 10 district officials as respondents in the survey.
- Step 3: Data collection from the identified respondents.
- Step 4: Data entry and statistical analysis.

### **How will we use the findings?**

The findings will be used in three ways. First, they will provide valuable data for Daraja to plan its future interventions: what attitudinal challenges will Daraja need to overcome? Second, the data will form part of a baseline for Daraja's work in Njombe district, to be compared to data from similar surveys following Daraja's intervention. Third, the data and findings will be published for use by other actors working in a similar field.

### **How much will the project cost?**

It is estimated that it will be possible to conduct this study for a cost of £800, including all the costs for data collection and analysis as well as publication.

### *How can I help?*

Daraja is looking for people who are able to cover some or all of this cost. If you are interested, please contact our coordinator, Ben Taylor ([bentaylor@daraja.org](mailto:bentaylor@daraja.org)), who will give you more details, or speak to the person who gave you this information sheet.

<sup>1</sup> This earlier study was qualitative research undertaken for a Masters Dissertation entitled *Coordinating Rural Responses to HIV/AIDS: Tanzania's Decentralised Approach* (Taylor, 2006). This is more widely available in summary form as *Tanzania's Decentralised Approach to HIV/AIDS Governance: A Case Study from Ludewa District* (Taylor, 2006), published by HakiElimu as Working Paper 06.X – see [www.hakielimu.org](http://www.hakielimu.org). The ideas were then developed further in a situation analysis paper for Daraja, *The village, district and national context for interventions to improve the responsiveness of local government in rural Tanzania: A situation analysis* (Taylor 2006).

<sup>2</sup> See the Afro-barometer / REPOA surveys, available from [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org), and also the Formative Process Research Programme on Local Government Reform in Tanzania (available from [www.repoa.or.tz](http://www.repoa.or.tz)).