

Chapter 85

E–Government for Rural Development in Tanzania: As Reviewed

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the importance of developing rural areas with an emphasis on good governance and poverty alleviation through the use of electronic government in Tanzania. With such concern, the authors show that rural areas are as significant as the economy of most of the developing countries, including Tanzania. As such, putting sufficient efforts on rural development is unavoidable for rapid development. Further, the authors note how Tanzania improves its rural areas through the use of e-government, but efforts are constrained by the existence of poor Information Communication Technology service providers, ineffective policy, and unreliability of rural electricity. In order to address such shortfalls, the authors propose several solutions that could motivate the increase in the use of rural e-government and revise rural development policy.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Most of the populations' livelihoods in African countries including Tanzania depend heavily on the rural economy. In Tanzania, for example, about 85% of its population lives in rural areas and the economy of the nation mostly derived from rural comes with the proportions of 85%, 25% and 65% as employing active labor force, foreign earnings and source of industrial inputs respectively (Hella, Haug, and Kamile, 2011; Kisuus, Turuka, Mdoe, and Mlambiti, 1999; Kisuus, Mlowosa, and Mathias, 2010; URT, 2010).

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Such proportions justify how rural development would contribute significantly in reducing poverty if given a priority. However, the experience shows that good governance is the predominant condition which could influence the possibility of reducing poverty (Kisusu, 2008). This is a possible expression as poverty reduction cannot be attained easily when the country experience bad governance and this implies that addressing poverty is possible when good governance is well maintained favorably.

Although the economy of Tanzania relies on rural economy which is heavily based on small scale agriculture, strategies on how to develop rural areas is an issue which needs comprehensive outlook. Based on the trend, the rural gets insignificant weight even by many governments worldwide (Cooksey, 2013, Policy Forum, 2012a). As a result, life in rural is as miserable such that poverty is so rampant and in some cases even annoying. In this country, the situation is worse. For example, per capital income, per capital expenditure, mortality rates, morbidity rates, shelter, environment and illiterate rate are worse as compared to urban areas (URT, 2013). This could also be associated with the governance which experiences an alarming situation in rural areas. This is based on several indicators; among them is the existence of high corruption level, poor services delivery and human rights violation which humiliate a lot of smallholder farmers and pastoralists. In most cases, conflicts between farmers and pastoralists occur due to bad governance in rural areas, associated with biasness involving civil servants in rural areas (Cooksey, 2012a; United Republic of Tanzania, 1999a, Policy Forum, 2012b).

In an attempt to improve rural areas, the government of Tanzania managed to put a lot of financial resources with an assumption that it would help to reduce poverty through improvement of good governance in rural areas (URT, 2011, 2013). But, the result was not as expected. Consequently, the government of Tanzania realized that the successes were very minimal due to an ineffective communication between rural people and the government itself. As a result, citizens felt that they were abandoned by the governments. This is based on the fact that communication between the government and people in village and vice versa was not that much effective, thus creating a gap and consequently ended up expanding the gap.

In order to overcome such a gap of poor communication or informing citizens with needed information on time, the government of Tanzania was forced to adopt the use of electronic government popularly known as e-government in 2003 (URT, 2013). E-government was thought to be feasible and effective in the strategy to increase the development which involves the citizens, either in rural or urban centers. As a result of that, it was necessary for the government through Information Communication Technology (ICT) to dialogue with the people using electronic government (e-G). Others, including Mwachang'a (2013), define e-G as a utilization of online services to deliver government information and services to citizens. UN Publications (2005) also defined e-government as a transformation of public sector internal and external relationship through use of ICT. This means e-government is defined as a system where the government delivers services to its people electronically through ICT.

Due to the importance of ICT, many governments thought the livelihood of their people either in either rural or urban areas could reach optimal level when the required information reaches their people in time and vice versa. It is important, however, to ensure that the positive results of e-government spread worldwide. For instance, Backus (2001) reported that e-governance in developing countries efficiently increased the services delivery, reduced cost of delay, speeded up development, saved time and improved good governance in general. Again, in India, the use of e-government has substantially improved the livelihood of rural areas through the provision of good governance.

The impact of e-governance is also noted by several studies, as it was further reported by Raina (2011) that, e-government strongly supported the rural poor in Gyandoot-India through increasing benefit of strategies initiated to alleviate poverty. However, it was illustrated that the number of the poor who par-

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