

**Community Participation in Development Planning in Decentralized  
Governance: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects from a  
Tanzanian Perspective**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Decentralization has been emphasized in both developed and developing countries including Tanzania (Work,2002) and there have been attempts at decentralization for more than two centuries around the world. Community participation has become more important and increased over the past thirty years, but there has been mixed feelings on its importance, achievements and impact on community development, because of the uneven outcomes of the process in different parts in the world as well as within countries.

This study examines the experience of community participation in decentralized governance by analyzing Tanzanian perspectives and using Bunda district as a case study by consulting community members in two villages, Kunzugu and Kun'gombe in the District, and various technocrats from the ward level to the national level. There is also some discussion of the evolution of decentralization, the forms that it has taken in Tanzania from its independence to date and their impact, including various negative and positive factors which have influenced the implementation of decentralization and their contribution to the enhancement of community participation in development planning in local government.

Based on these findings, it is concluded that after about fifty years of attempted decentralization in Tanzania, there is a positive trend away from deconcentration towards devolution in administration. However, more effort, commitment and political will are needed to ensure that objectives of decentralisation by devolution are reached. Moreover, there is clear evidence that decentralization is important in supporting community participation in development planning and the enhancement of social service provision at the grassroots level. However, community participation in development planning cannot stand alone. Thus, the introduction of community participation must go in parallel with support for policies, reforms and strategies to enhance it; proper organization at the grassroots level; unity and strong local community leaders; and systems to ensure transparency and accountability, community empowerment and awareness. This would significantly contribute to effective community participation across the country.