



ddlgn

SDC Network

Democratisation, Decentralisation  
and Local Governance

LEARNING PROJECT

Actors of local democracy – opening up the perspective

WITH WHOM AND HOW TO ENGAGE MORE IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

PRACTICAL RESEARCH

## Case study 2: Insights on customary and informal authorities in Iringa Region, Tanzania

Iringa/Bern, February-April 2015

### **SUMMARY**

This work explores the role of customary and informal actors in governance processes in Tanzania. The report draws on findings emerging from qualitative data collected in February 2015 in nine wards in two districts in Iringa region and one ward in Morogoro region. The case study is embedded in a larger DDLGN learning project entitled “Actors of local democracy – opening up the perspective”. In Tanzania, the traditional chieftaincy structure was formally ended after independence and no longer plays a significant role in everyday governance processes. The analysis thus focuses on other customary and informal actors such as clan leaders, village elders, religious authorities and self-help groups that mediate the relationships between the state and citizens.

### **Key findings**

Findings from this research suggest that in this region the **traditional chieftaincy structure does not to play a significant role** in everyday governance processes and is no longer able to deploy authority across large areas. This finding was confirmed by limited interviews in Morogoro region about the Waluguru chieftaincy. However, evidence gathered shows that **other authorities relying on customary or informal norms and sources of authority** such as clan leaders, village elders, religious authorities or self-help groups mediate the relationships between the state and citizens.

The case study reveals that in Iringa such informal authorities play a role in governance processes at a low tier, in other words they are **most influential at the village level and below**. This can be explained by the relatively strong presence of the Tanzanian government at higher governance levels (ward, district and region).

The role as **restrainer or driver** a particular customary or informal authority may play largely depends on leadership and timing. Individual local authorities may have a different role regarding different public policy issues. The study identified a **number of different roles** played by customary or informal authorities, including representation, leadership, conflict mediation, information brokering, legitimisation and mobilisation.

**Legitimacy** is often the basis for the engagement of customary and informal actors in the eyes of specific communities. Yet, other groups such as youth may contest the legitimacy of those actors to play a role in local governance processes: they are often **grey-haired and unelected men, upholding customs and traditions**.

Citizens need **social capital and the relevant network** to access and use informal governance mechanisms. Hence, the existence, the adaptation or the disappearance of informal governance is affected by factors that reconfigure networks, such as **migration or urbanisation**.

The **intersection between the formal and informal systems, at which customary authorities operate, is blurry** because it depends on the unregulated practice of authorities, citizens and informal intermediary actors themselves in a given context. Moreover, invisible and hidden dimensions of power make a clear delimitation of the formal and informal difficult.

**Informal and formal governance** are perceived as **continuum** rather than as competing systems. Citizens interview often argued that they consider informal actors as a first step because of lower costs, lacking government capacities, the perception of a just and durable solution as well as confidentiality.

### **Implications and recommendations**

Findings from this case study suggest that SDC should **not try to directly engage** informal intermediary actors on a programme basis or in a programme management scheme. Among other reasons, this is because the programme logic is not well adapted to the relational process involved in working with informal and customary authorities.

Furthermore, as a donor organisation, SDC generally does not work directly at the **governance level where informal authorities become particularly relevant**. According to data collected, in Tanzania these authorities are most relevant at the village and sub-village level. The research team considers it important for SDC to continue to strengthen the formal governance system to improve public service delivery.

However, the case study also reveals that **local governance is not limited to state institutions**. A plurality of different actors is engaged in producing governance. In order to influence governance through programmes one has to **take into account the whole range of actors**, including informal and customary ones such as village elders, clan leaders, religious authorities or self-help groups. The question then is to **analyse their specific roles** in a given community and to assess whether they are drivers or restrainers of social change in given public policy areas.

To inform these reflections, **local context analyses are essential**. This case study illustrates that in terms of informal actors contexts differ even in the wards of the same district. These very local contexts should then be placed within the frame of a more **systemic analysis that looks at relationships of power and influence at different scales**. This

implies specific analyses (e.g. political economy and power analysis) that should be oriented towards making tacit knowledge about informal governance explicit. Furthermore, the analysis should be anchored within implementing NGOs, Tanzanian think tanks and research institutes.

While some are already implicitly doing it, SDC project partners should consider informal authorities such as village elders, clan leaders, religious leaders or self-help groups as **intermediary actors** in governance processes. Based on thorough understanding of the ward and village context, informal authorities could be **associated in particular if they have been identified as drivers of change** regarding the governance issues at stake, **or if there is a possibility of them turning into restrainers**. This is one way to take into account the fact that a plurality of different actors is involved in producing local governance.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This case study research has been conducted within the frame of the DDLGN learning project entitled “Actors of local democracy – opening up the perspective”. The issue of working more politically on local democratic governance, and with a wider range of actors, has been raised through the DDLGN in several contexts. The important role of “unusual intermediaries” has also been suggested in earlier learning projects. Based on this significant demand from its members, DDLGN initiated a learning project in 2014.<sup>1</sup>

As first step, the learning project mapped SDC’s existing experience with a series of “unusual actors” on the basis of a questionnaire and a series of follow-up interviews with Swiss Cooperation Offices (SCOs). Then, it identified actors SCOs think SDC should work with more, and highlighted a number of issues requiring further reflection.<sup>2</sup> Several clusters of actors were identified, including:

- “Traditional and religious authorities” – non-state institutions that often have considerable authority and informally influence democratic governance processes<sup>3</sup>
- Legislative branches of government at different levels (parliaments, regional councils)
- Youth, young political activists, youth wings of political parties, student unions
- “Not-like minded” actors, who may block or work counter to democratic governance initiatives, such as certain armed groups or business interests
- More constituency-based, even if not registered, civil society organisations

The information collected in 2014 in the mapping exercise shows the importance of several types of actors with “invisible” or “informal” power.<sup>4</sup> By this we understand actors or spaces that are part of the (local) political context but are not imbued with formal legal local government authority. Our findings suggest that there is a wish among DDLGN members to both understand better the spaces and processes through which “informal authority” is claimed, negotiated and reinforced and what role these authorities play in local democracy and governance processes. The term local refers to the lowest sub-national levels of governance in different countries.

In a second step, a series of case studies were conducted in order to deepen the reflection in a more contextualised way. Three countries were selected for case study research, based on a) their interest in knowing more about the way traditional or informal authority influences governance and b) geographical distribution. In all three cases, notions of “tradition” constitute important political capital, though this is mobilised in different ways. The case studies conducted and planned are:

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<sup>1</sup> Please also refer to DDLGN (2014) *Learning Project on engaging with “thus far less targeted” actors in local democracy: Concept Note*. The learning project is implemented for SDC’s DDLGN through a partnership between HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, swisspeace and the Institute of Development Studies and research institutions in the countries covered. This report is authored by Lukas Krienbuehl (swisspeace), Rose Aiko (REPOA), Martina Santschi (swisspeace) and Dr. Cornelius Simba (University of Iringa) with valuable inputs by SDC Tanzania.

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to DDLGN (2014) *Learning Project on engaging with “thus far less targeted” actors in local democracy: Actor Mapping: Synthesis & Analysis*.

<sup>3</sup> The exact nature of these institutions varies considerably from context to context.

<sup>4</sup> Our understanding of different kinds of power and the spaces through which they operate is informed by the “power cube”, see <http://www.powercube.net/>

- Macedonia. December 2015. Focus on religious authorities in informal governance.
- Tanzania. February 2015. Focus on traditional authorities in informal governance.
- Mongolia. March 2015. Focus on homeland associations in informal governance.
- Fourth case study to be confirmed and conducted in summer/fall 2015.

The present report summarises the findings from the second case study research in Iringa Region in Tanzania – conducted jointly with REPOA, a researcher from University of Iringa and swisspeace. The report also presents preliminary reflections on implications for DDLGN. The case studies aim to a) analyse both the constitution of informal authority, its legitimation, and how this kind of authority is influenced by and influences on-going processes of democratic governance and b) identify ways SDC could engage in order to strengthen the accountability and inclusivity of these authorities and the associated governance spaces and processes. Overall, the case studies seek to provide answers to the following questions:

- What is the role of thus far less targeted actors with regard to local democratic governance and in particular with regard to citizen participation, social accountability and inclusion?
- What is the role of these actors in influencing public policies that enable – or hamper – local democratic governance?

General reflections based on all three case studies, including in Macedonia and Mongolia, as well as practical guidance are forthcoming in autumn 2015. In Tanzania, the chosen focus was “informal and customary authorities at the local level” that mediate governance processes. This is based on the question of the SCO in Tanzania whether such authorities play a key – yet overlooked – role in local governance. The information in this report is based on exploratory and empirical research conducted by the research team, as well as secondary literature.

The research starts from the assumption that a plurality of actors is involved in producing local governance. In that regard, our findings suggest that in order to influence governance through programmes one has to take into account the whole range of actors, including “unusual” informal authorities. The roles of informal and formal actors may overlap and it is not always easy to disentangle roles or relationships. Yet, interactions between state and informal actors are an everyday part of democratic governance processes in many contexts, including Iringa. The aim therefore is to analyse the specific roles of such informal authorities in a given local context and to assess whether they are drivers or restrainers of social change in specific public policy areas.

## **2. SETTING THE STAGE**

### **2.1. Informalities in Tanzania**

Academic literature recognises that in many parts of the world local democratic governance functions – including service delivery, dispute resolution, representation and electoral politics – are influenced or mediated by local informal authorities that operate wholly or partly outside formal structures of the state. In some places, they may even substitute the state by providing services that the government is not providing or is providing ineffectively<sup>5</sup>. Such

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<sup>5</sup> Piper & von Liers, 2014.

informality in local governance may closely be related with clientelism (personal aspects), but also corruption (material aspects), both of which relate to the lack of responsiveness and accountability of political decision-making and are widespread in Tanzania<sup>6</sup>.

The state in Tanzania has a comparatively strong presence, even in remote areas. Yet, research shows that informal authorities still fulfil intermediary functions between the local government and especially rural communities. They are relevant to the extent that they can foster or hinder development efforts<sup>7</sup>. For example, the Afrobarometer survey shows<sup>8</sup> that generally in Tanzania “traditional rulers”<sup>9</sup>, in the literature commonly comprising elders, customary leaders, chiefs or headmen, are less contacted than local government to solve problems of citizens, but are only marginally less trusted. Compared to other countries in the region, “traditional rulers” appear to have a less important role in governance in Tanzania. This is usually explained by the fact that the government ended the formal existence of administrative chieftaincy shortly after independence to fight tribalism<sup>10</sup>, in an effort to build a national socialist identity. At the same time, a number of chiefs were integrated in government and administrative ranks. According to the Afrobarometer, religious authorities are more often contacted than local government. The literature also acknowledges that systems of informal rule sometimes exhibit characteristics that are profoundly undemocratic and exclusive, especially in terms of leadership selection but also in terms of age and gender<sup>11</sup>. Previous research in Tanzania has identified a number of informal governance actors mainly related to specific sectors such as water or land governance.

## **2.2. Informalities in the water and land sectors**

In water management, research findings show the continued existence of informal authorities and institutions based on customs, traditions, norms and beliefs. They have not been recognised by the state, but are adapting to changes in the formal system.<sup>12</sup> On one hand, the state has laid out a framework for issuing statutory legal titles to water for irrigation purposes as well as rules for its management. On the other hand, many small farmers are unable to obtain or do not possess any legal titles to water and are not organised in Water Users Groups. For example, an analysis of the Rufiji river basin shows that at the national and regional levels the institutional set-up of the state is dominant.<sup>13</sup> At the lowest tier, informal arrangements usually prevail. Down to the ward, formal institutions are key. Yet, below that level informal water user groups, customs and elders often mediate the use of water for irrigation. Informal institutions often work alongside the Water User Groups, which are necessary to claim water rights according to law. The interface between formal and informal water governance systems is therefore at village or sub-village level. Research shows that ignoring informal set-ups may lead to the lack of acceptance and failure of “modern” institutional reforms. Ignoring these customary arrangements may have negative

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<sup>6</sup> Aiko, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Boesen, 2007; Lutz & Linder, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Both the first and second round of data gathered is available for Tanzania, see Logan, 2008. 28% of respondents said they have contacted “traditional rulers” to solve a problem or get advice; 43% have contacted local officials. 55% of respondents said that they trust “traditional rulers”, whereas 60% trust local government.

<sup>9</sup> Given the strong association in Tanzania of the term “traditional” with the colonial chieftaincy system and tribalism, we will refrain from further using this term in the report and rather speak of customary and informal authorities.

<sup>10</sup> Eckert, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Logan, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Lecoutere, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Sokile et al, 2005.

consequences for the majority of the villagers who rely on them.<sup>14</sup> Village elders are found to flexibly combine rules and practices of the two systems, while women and poorer farmers often end up resting their case against more powerful local actors in both systems.<sup>15</sup> Research also identifies overlaps between informal and formal authorities, for example regarding water rotations in the dry season.<sup>16</sup> The persistence of informal authorities may be explained by the flexible and negotiated nature of such authority structures and the benefits of institutional pluralism to many citizens.

Tanzania has seen increasing competition over arable and grazing lands. Conventional wisdom suggests that modernisation and migration have made traditional authorities irrelevant to resource management. However, research found a persistent use of customs and informal authorities alongside modern government processes in matters of land allocation, access to land and forests.<sup>17</sup> Studies in Iringa showed that most small-holders in rural areas rely on land rights rooted in customary law, coupled at times with attempts to get some sort of formalised recognition (at least at the lowest administrative level).<sup>18</sup> Forms of land tenure depend on various factors such as the status of the population (indigenous/"first comers" or recently migrated populations often called "guests"), age and gender. Few women hold land titles.<sup>19</sup> Informal authorities play a crucial role when it comes to settling land conflicts, ensuring the legitimacy of customary land titles and witnessing the formalisation of land titles. Those functions have partially been recognised by the Village Land Act of 1999. The conflict settlement mechanisms outlined in statutory law are seldom used by citizens. Beyond the fact that there is a lack of knowledge about the laws and procedures, the role of informal authorities depends on local practice regarding land ownership.<sup>20</sup> Locally, customary rights are deemed as secure as formalised titles to land. To retain customary land titles, a visible use of land or investments are usually necessary. This represents a huge problem for pastoralist immigrants such as Masai communities, including in Iringa. Land conflicts between farmers and pastoralists are often found to have a huge local conflict potential.<sup>21</sup>

### **2.3. Socio-political context and local governance in Tanzania**

Tanzania has experienced a transition from a socialist one-party system to multiparty politics and a liberalised economy. Political parties were legalised in 1992 and the first multi-party elections were conducted in 1995 in an attempt at democratisation from above led by the ruling party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM).<sup>22</sup> The CCM has remained in power since then. Although the country has experienced economic growth in recent years, it has mainly benefited Dar es Salaam but had very limited impact on poorer populations in rural areas. Youth employment remains high. Although the country has not been directly affected by armed conflict since independence, violent tensions along religious lines and over land have been increasing in recent years. In 2015 both a referendum on a new constitution, boycotted by the opposition, and general elections will take place.

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<sup>14</sup> Maganga et al. 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Lecoutere, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Sokile et al, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Cleaver & Franks, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Stein & Askew, 2009; Odgaard, 2003

<sup>19</sup> Odgaard, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Kironde, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Odgaard, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Chama Cha Mapinduzi stands for Party of the Revolution in English.

In the governance sector, despite the political transition, the structures of the state dominated by CCM were not fundamentally altered. Several public reforms were pushed through since 1998 by the government including on local government with several legal amendments (1999; 2006).<sup>23</sup> Villages in rural and Mitaa (neighbourhoods) in urban areas, as well as Vitongoji (street/hamlet) in both areas are meant to further the presence of administration below ward level, but have remained without much competences. Decentralisation in Tanzania has been portrayed as a process of devolution of decision-making. Nonetheless, local governments remain heavily dependent on the district, region and central levels.<sup>24</sup> Tanzania has improved service delivery in various sectors, but public services continue to suffer from a lack of capacities, resources as well as from unequal access and the prevalence of corruption. Despite the use by the government of participatory planning tools such as “Opportunities and Obstacles to Development” (O&OD), priorities appear to be defined at the central government level.<sup>25</sup> The current governance system operates more as a tool for top-down administration and instruction rather than representation and participation.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the Swiss Cooperation Office’s involvement in the governance sector, it is aligned with the Tanzania National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty. As one of the three main strategic thematic areas, SDC’s governance domain aims to strengthen citizens’ and CSO engagement to increase the performance of government bodies as well as to strengthen peaceful means to deal with conflicts.<sup>27</sup>

#### **2.4. Context in Iringa**

Iringa is one of the 30 administrative regions of Tanzania.<sup>28</sup> It lies in the south-western highlands of Tanzania and is a productive agricultural area. It also comprises a large protected area, the Ruaha National Park, and semi-arid lower lands on its north-eastern fringes. The region has a total of 5 districts, two of which were covered in this research. The following table shows the administrative subdivisions in Iringa region for clarification purposes:

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<sup>23</sup> ARD, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Rosenberg, 2012. Braathen et al. 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Fjeldstad et al. 2010

<sup>26</sup> ALAT, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> SDC. 2014.

<sup>28</sup> See also map in appendices

Table 1: Subnational tiers of governance

<b>Administrative divisions in Tanzania</b>	<b>Case study example Urban divisions</b>	<b>Cast study example Rural divisions</b>
Region	Iringa Region	
District	Iringa Municipality	Iringa Rural District
Wards	E.g. Gangilonga or Nduli	E.g. Kalenga or Ifunda
Sub-ward	<i>Mtaa</i> : e.g. Wilolesi, Lugalo B ( <i>neighbourhood</i> )	<i>Village</i> : e.g. Mibikimali or Ifunda village
Sub-village/sub-Mtaa	<i>Kitongoji</i> ( <i>street</i> )	<i>Kitongoji</i> ( <i>hamlet</i> )

Iringa is culturally still strongly associated with pre-colonial history marked by a powerful kingdom called Uhehe comprising mainly the Hehe people (Wahehe in Kiswahili)<sup>29</sup>. Iringa, as fertile agricultural area, has been a land of immigration from other regions. Although the Wahehe still form the largest ethnic group, other farming populations such as the Wangoni (originating from Ruvuma) and pastoralists including Masai have migrated to Iringa for decades. In the 1970s the region was particularly affected by the socialist forced “villagisation” policy of relocating people in newly found socialist villages which deeply affected the land tenure patterns and social organisation.<sup>30</sup> Today, agriculture remains the main economic activity in Iringa.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This case study is based on interactions with some 130 persons, in the form of semi-structured one-to-one interviews, group discussions and informal exchanges.<sup>31</sup> About 40% of people interviewed were women. Over ten days in February 2015, a four-person research team spoke with elders, religious leaders, influential and wise (qualification used by respondents) people, ward and village/Mtaa executive officers and chairpersons, Vitongoji chairpersons, NGOs, district officials, self-help groups, citizens, chiefs and clan leaders. The research was inductive and exploratory in nature, following a series of guiding questions that had been agreed with the SCO in Tanzania. We used three distinct methodologies to select interviewees to balance possible bias: we conducted interviews with key informants (e.g. government officials, elected representatives or NGOs) and used both accidental and snowball sampling. This means that on the one hand we randomly selected people in the street in the wards covered (accidental sampling) and, on the other hand, we asked all interviewees who they could recommend for additional interviews (snowball sampling).

<sup>29</sup> After the defeat of Chief Mkwawa against German troops in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the colonial rulers both German and later British relied on newly appoint non-local administrators and wahehe chiefs for administrating the region. See Gewalt. 2005; Eckert, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Daley, 2005; Odgaard, 2003.

<sup>31</sup> The list of interviewees is not published, because the data has been anonymised due to the delicate nature of some of the information shared.

These selection techniques are commonly used in qualitative research and fit the exploratory nature of the case study.

The focus was put on 9 wards in two districts in the Iringa region (Iringa Rural District and Iringa Municipality) and one ward in Morogoro Rural District selected for specific characteristics by the research team namely:

- Rural wards in highland, mainly agricultural area: Mseke, Ifunda, Nzihi, Kalenga
- Rural wards in lower semi-arid area with both pastoralists (including Masai) and farmers: Migoli and Izazi
- Peri-urban ward close to Iringa town yet agricultural: Nduli
- Urban wards in Iringa Municipality: Gangilonga, Kihesa
- Remote rural ward in SDC project region Morogoro: Kinole

The selection of Iringa as case study region was done in close cooperation with the SCO in Tanzania. Although Iringa is not a project region of SDC, the choice was based on the assumption that “traditional authorities” potentially still play a role in governance in this historical stronghold of Uhehe chiefs. Within that region the 9 wards were then selected considering different characteristics (rural, urban and peri-urban areas, semi-arid and fertile agricultural areas). Due to the fact that Iringa is sometimes portrayed as special case in Tanzania when it comes to traditional authorities, the research team also selected, as a limited control case, one ward in the SDC project region of Morogoro in close cooperation with an SDC partner organisation.

Our findings build on these empirical settings. Beyond possible methodological and selection bias, the case study shows that one cannot make generalisations about how informal authorities operate across localities, and more so for traditional ones, even within one region or district. In other words, there are neither systematically defined arrangements that link them with formal institutions nor any consistent system that recognises them as intermediaries of the communities. By focussing on a limited number of wards, our strategy was to analyse and understand the role of informal authorities in a contextualised and situated approach. That being said, having triangulated our findings both with key informants in Dar es Salaam, Iringa, Morogoro and Switzerland as well as with secondary literature, we think that these findings are relevant inputs for a more general reflection.

Our research could not expand into topics of corruption and clientelism. While we consider these very relevant issues when analysing governance in Tanzania, the limited duration of data collection and the sensitivity of the topic informed our focussing on the informalities related to intermediary authorities in governance.

Whereas in Macedonia access to most interviewees was enabled through “informal capital”, meaning that organising interviews boiled down to knowing someone who knew the potential interview partner, in Tanzania the research team arrived in targeted wards and villages without prior notice, sometimes also stopping at random households or markets along the way. Yet, the first courtesy visit was usually paid to ward or village officers to whom we presented the authorisation letters from the district authorities. Although the entry point was often the formal administration, the team managed to largely avoid the control some officers wanted to exert on the selection of individuals we interviewed. We consistently insisted that interviews with citizens or elders, for example, should not be conducted in the presence of officials. Most interviews were done in Kiswahili and were translated into English either

during the exchange itself or afterwards. Most interviews were conducted by a group of two researchers, of mixed gender and nationalities. We took notes during the interviews, and these were later jointly discussed and analysed looking for emerging key themes and patterns.

#### 4. KEY INSIGHTS FROM RESEARCH

The key insights rely on data from the ten wards covered as presented in chapter 7.

##### 4.1. Do chiefs play a role in local governance and are there other informal authorities?

###### Role of chiefs in Iringa and Morogoro

Chiefs do not seem to play any significant role in local governance in the localities covered in Iringa. This region was sometimes labelled as “an extreme case” when it comes to the present role of traditional authorities. Yet, our research does not provide evidence that, for example, late chief Abdul Adam Sapi Mkwawa who died in early 2015 played an informal intermediary role in local governance processes, although he was known and respected by most people interviewed including non-Wahehe respondents. For some years, he had formal influence on governance processes in his role as ward councillor in Kalenga, as had his father as speaker of the national assembly.

As cultural identification figure, the late chief was still seemingly associated with a certain capacity to informally influence and mobilise citizens when it comes to electoral politics. Both CCM and the opposition party Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) seemingly have made considerable efforts to get the chief's support and relate to the cultural heritage of Uhehe. This was also the main explanation for the presence of president Kikwete at the burial of the late chief in 2015. In Morogoro, as limited control case, the chieftaincy system around the chief of the Waluguru still exists too, but the influence seems limited to his clan and home village of Kinole where he takes on various intermediary roles between citizens and the local government (mediate public assemblies, resolve land disputes, consultations with the administration). However, his influence as chief does not seem to be different or more extensive than that of other influential elders and clan leaders in rural areas elsewhere.

###### Informal authorities

In order to get a well-rounded picture of the different intermediaries who mobilise, influence and connect people around local governance issues, we asked our informants who citizens would contact besides the local government institutions regarding public issues. The questions targeted in particular customary and other informal sources of authority. The following list summarises the responses provided when discussing informal authorities:

- Elders (wazee) and clan leaders
- Wise/trusted persons including people with experience, who know the area or are successful businessmen
- Religious/spiritual leaders
- Informal self-help groups (women and youth in particular)
- None – only relate to the government

### Legitimacy of informal authorities

One essential question when reflecting about informal authorities is about their credibility and acceptance as intermediary actors between citizens and local government. The case study shows that leadership, power structures and the individual stance of informal intermediary authorities on specific issues are factors that enable them to play various mediating roles in local governance. Compared to many local administrative staff, who are not from the area where they have been appointed to, informal authorities can usually rely on their good local network, their understanding of who is who and of the different issues people in the community face. While legitimacy is often the basis for their engagement, other people and actors may contest their legitimacy to play a role in governance processes. It is important to note that to access and use informal authorities such as village elders or clan leaders, citizens need a certain social capital and the relevant network. This implies that people who recently migrated to a locality, for example, will hardly have access to informal governance.

### Reasons for using informal governance

When asked why people are using informal mechanisms rather than the governmental ones, respondents recurrently highlighted several reasons. We found evidence that the role of informal authorities is stronger in rural than in urban ones, hence these reasons were cited more often in rural areas. They include:

- Costs: interviewees underlined that getting something from the local administration will always cost, whereas getting help or advice from village elders, for example, is free of charge.
- Government capacities: the role of informal authorities is often explained by the lack of capacities of the local government. Many respondents argued that they go to people who care and can help.
- Just solution: when it comes to disputes between citizens for example, informal authorities are more trusted to be able to find a “just and sustainable” solution. Local administrations or courts, on the other hand, will just tell who is right and who is wrong.
- Confidentiality: as long as an issue remains in the informal arena, people expect full confidentiality which is deemed very important in rural communities. Once a citizen enters into the formal governance system, people in the locality will know about it.
- Freedom of expression: many citizens only trust state institutions to a limited extent in the wards covered. Some people hence expressed fear to voice critical issues towards the government, so they would rather get an informal authority person as intermediary.

#### **4.2. Informal authorities perform a range of governance functions**

Our analysis confirms what was already suggested by the mapping exercise of the learning project: different kinds of informal actors can play different roles at different times. The actual role played is dependent on a number of factors including leadership, personality, power relations, interests, capacities of formal institutions etc. Using the analytical frame proposed by Piper and Von Lieres, we note that the informal authorities we examined may work as

“diplomat”, “educator” and/or “captor”.<sup>32</sup> The main governance areas and functions identified in this case study are natural resource management (mainly land), information sharing, dispute resolution, public participation and mobilisation, security and social services. One general finding is that, if in these areas services are provided by the government, are accessible and affordable such as in wealthier urban areas, citizens will rather relate to the formal system. The lower the governance capacities, the more informal authorities and mechanisms are favoured.

On the basis of our research, we identify several roles played by informal authorities in local governance (above and beyond such roles as, for example, upholding customs or providing spiritual guidance). They are summarised in the table below.

*Table 2: Roles of informal authorities*

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Information broker	Intermediary communication point in information flow; pass along messages; feedback provider towards citizens and local government	Elders receive the draft constitution from Vitongoji chairpersons to disseminate information
Representation	Representing and participating in consultations and meetings on behalf of the community	Priests and/or elders invited for consultations before official meetings at village level
Leadership	Leaders of a membership-based organisation	Informal market association with an elected leadership to deal with local government or resolve disputes among sellers
Conflict mediation	Mediate local disputes within the community; finding common ground	Elders or clan leaders solve disputes between citizens including land conflicts, e.g. about demarcation or customary titles; priests and sheiks resolve disputes between family members
Legitimising participation and mobilisation	By publicly stating support, legitimising citizens' participation	Politicians using elders and clan leaders to mobilise citizens during electoral campaign visits

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<sup>32</sup> Piper and von Lieres. 2014.

Mobilising citizens	Raising awareness among community and motivating citizens to act/participate	Priest convincing his congregation not to contribute to a secondary school building anymore; Masai leader educating his community not to take water from pipes illegally
Providing state-like services	Provide public services that the local governments are usually expected to provide but are unable to do so	Women self-help groups pooling money for social security purposes (school fees, costs due to illness or death)

### 4.3. Intersection of formal and informal systems

#### The interface is blurry

When analysing the intersection of formal and informal systems, it is important to note that individuals may have several overlapping sources of public legitimacy: as member of a village welfare committee or as elected Kitongoji chairperson, for example, but also relying on various informal and customary sources of legitimacy. This can also change over time: some of the influential elders were ten-cell leaders<sup>33</sup> in the past, or had been political leaders in other capacities, and still derive legitimacy from their past work for the government. Furthermore, many respondents particularly in rural settings were lacking knowledge or had contradictory information when it comes to the governance system, administrative processes and roles of chairpersons and executive officers, including how they link up with informal authorities. The terms elder, wise, trusted or influential person was often used by respondents interchangeably. The intersection between the formal and informal systems is further blurred because it depends very much on the unregulated practice of authorities, citizens and informal intermediary actors themselves in a given context. Moreover, invisible and hidden dimensions of power make a clear delimitation of the formal and informal difficult. Finally, the existence, adaptation and disappearance of informal systems depend on larger developments such as migration or urbanisation which will impact the way informal authorities are used and what role they play.

#### The intersection at the very local level

The intersection of the formal governance system with informal mechanisms to address individual and public issues is to be found at a quite low governance tier in the wards we covered. The influence of informal authorities therefore seems to be mostly restricted to the lowest level of governance meaning village/Mtaa level and below. This can be explained by the historically deep penetration of the one-party state structures in Tanzania which reached down to the ten-cell leaders. We found little evidence of informal authorities playing an intermediary governance role at district or regional level, although some leading regional religious figures might have such roles.

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<sup>33</sup> During the one-party system, this was the lowest level of political organization within CCM. It formally no longer exists.

### There is a continuum rather than parallel systems

What is striking is that many respondents have very similar expectations of leadership be it formal or informal: namely that they expect leaders to help and solve their problems. Hence, many respondents saw informal authorities as the first step and the government authorities as the next step of one governance continuum. Very few depicted two contradictory systems, although some respondents especially in urban areas argued that they would always go straight to the local administration or elected representatives.

#### **4.4. Informal authorities as restrainers or drivers of change**

Informal authorities may be restrainers or drivers of change independently of who they represent (community, neighbourhood, clans, families, religious denominations etc). It largely depends on leadership and may change over local context, issue and time. The role of restrainer or driver in regard to local governance and development is complex, because the overall assessment of a category of informal authority may or may not correspond to the reality in specific villages. Village elders, for example, may be drivers for developmental change, but also have the influence to passively resist development activities, if they feel excluded or do not see the benefits of a government initiative for their community. Whereas regarding water and land, a leader of Masai herders appeared as driver because he wanted to find sustainable solutions to natural resource management, his view expressed on maternal health went against public health policies. Assistant chiefs in Kinole village in Morogoro explained that a brand new market stall constructed for smallholder farmers was not being used at all in a neighbouring village, because it was poorly located. District authorities did not care to consult with them.

The norms and power relationships perpetuated by informal authorities should be carefully assessed since they might be incompatible with democratic processes or certain governance issues. Informal intermediary roles may also be based on corruption and clientelistic networks as negative externalities, which should not be trivialised. It is important to state that the research captured only certain layers of informality and did not address questions of corruption. The question therefore is what positive or negative role informal authorities are playing regarding which governance issue? What impact does that role have on the relationship between the state and citizens at local level?

## **5. IMPLICATIONS FOR DDLGN**

### **5.1. Are informal authorities relevant for SDC?**

In socio-political contexts such as Iringa in Tanzania government institutions are often not consolidated. The institutional model of governance (i.e. one that focuses only on formal institutions and their relationships) therefore has its limits. It does not account for the great deal of informality, including informal but often legitimate actors performing specific governance roles at the local level. The case study findings suggest that the plurality of actors should be at the heart of reflections around local governance, given that governance is also produced at the margins of the state at the interface between the formal and the informal.

The level of governance targeted is important to consider: At the policy level, as well as at national, regional and district levels, informal authorities are probably not relevant enough to

be systematically considered in Tanzania. However, at the level of governance which is most accessible to citizens (i.e. village, Mtaa & Kitongoji) informal authorities should not be ignored, because of their role in mobilising people for development and getting access to communities in rural areas. Besides official representatives, informal authorities are important entry points in many localities. Moreover, they can be drivers or restrainers in governance processes as shown by evidence from Iringa and Morogoro. Hence, one key implication is that a purely institutional approach of governance is less promising than a “pragmatic approach” which starts from the governance reality. It should give room to consider the other, informal side of the coin of institutional governance. Asking the question about how to engage with unusual informal actors is the next step.

## **5.2. Analysis of lowest governance level matters**

To inform reflections, local context analyses are essential: when dealing with local democratic governance processes, data collected illustrates that in terms of informal intermediary actors ward, village or Mtaa will differ. The roles of informal authorities may also vary depending on the issues at stake. However, this focus on specific local contexts does not mean that analysis should look at them in an isolated way. It is important to understand relationships at different levels. Informal authorities, as other governance actors, are sometimes part of “bigger” institutions and may have multiple identities. Informal authorities both influence and are influenced by the actions of institutions such as political parties, religious institutions or business associations that operate at other scales.

This finding implies to:

- a) use analytical tools, in particular power analysis and political economy analysis (at least a lean version) to reveal the relevant informal and formal power structures and actors in specific wards, but not to claim that knowledge gained is necessarily valid in other districts or regions;
- b) explicitly pay attention to informal authorities in actor and stakeholder mappings done during the project management cycle;
- c) rely on the local community for identification and not just on official representatives, although they usually have to be the first point of contact in a ward;
- d) link that analysis to the other levels of governance and power;
- e) rely on in-country research institutes and think tanks to retain knowledge while systematically building on tacit knowledge within SDC implementing organizations.

SDC's DDLGN should hence continue its reflections about approaches and integration of existing methodologies – adapted and broken down to the local context – in order to account for governance realities at the local level and make them accessible for implementing partners.

## **5.3. About engaging informal authorities**

Our analysis suggests that SDC should not try to directly engage informal intermediary actors on a programme basis or in a programme management scheme, because the programme logic is not well adapted to the relational process involved in working with informal authorities. Moreover, SDC as donor is not directly working at the governance level where informal authorities become particularly relevant in Tanzania according to data collected, i.e. at the village level and below. It is however important for SDC to continue to

strengthen the formal governance system to improve public service delivery, either through direct work with state authorities or through its non-governmental partners that work directly at the governance level where informal actors become especially relevant.

Based on thorough understanding of the ward and village context, governance and issue-based programming should consider informal authorities such as elders, wise persons, religious leaders or self-help groups as intermediary actors. This relates in particular to the implementation phase of programmes by implementing partners, if informal authorities have been identified as drivers of change regarding the governance issues at stake. This engagement is particularly relevant if such intermediary actors could turn into restrainers if not taken into account. This should not amount to ignore that informal authorities also reflect local power structures and exclusion patterns – many informally influential people are unelected, elderly men, but may appear as legitimate in the eyes of (some) community members. Furthermore, their linkages from the local up to national level need special attention to better understand their powers and agendas in governance.

Thus we suggest that such associating engagement is reasonable and feasible, if:

- a) implementers are aware of the roles of informal authorities in the specific wards and villages as well as within the wider context; a reflection within DDLGN on how this is best done is needed
- b) some communication channels have been established and relationships are fostered with informal authorities (visit, inform, invite)
- c) intermediary roles of informal authorities correspond to the project reality (role as mobiliser, legitimiser, information broker etc...) and impact governance
- d) power structures are analysed and understood on the horizontal (local) but also vertical (link to other levels) axis (including risk awareness of involving informal authorities)

The overall impression gained during data collection is that Tanzanian NGOs working in the regions have a good understanding of informal authorities in their project areas. Yet, one NGO representative explained that donors are not interested in the topic of informal authorities except in regions where many Masai live. Hence, launching a discussion about how partners engage and consider informal authorities in governance work is useful. The message emitted that governance is not seen through a purely institutional lens is important for the success of governance programming. Moreover, the concentration (and even relocation) of successful NGOs to Dar es Salaam may imply that the knowledge of local contexts cannot be taken for granted. On the other hand, civil society organisations located in the regions often lack resources and capacities.

It is important to state that involving informal authorities (e.g. elders, clan leaders, religious authorities, informal self-help groups) may also make them vulnerable. Becoming more engaged with political and/or developmental activities may put them at risk of being used by different actors, including political parties and government officials. Therefore involvement of informal authorities should be voluntary and be compatible with SDC rules and principles.

## **6. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The chieftaincy system in Iringa and in Morogoro does not seem to play a role in everyday governance processes and is no longer able to deploy authority across large areas. Compared to other countries in eastern Africa, the strong presence of the state in Tanzania

and the formal end of their rule after independence reduced their role. Only as cultural identification figures do they play a role as the electoral fight around the late chief in Iringa shows.

Yet, evidence gathered also shows that other authorities relying on customary and informal norms such as clan leaders, village elders, religious authorities or self-help groups mediate the relationships between the state and citizens. Due to the strength of the state, informal authorities mainly appear to play a role in governance processes at the lowest tier, namely at village level and below. Who exactly informal authorities are and what specific roles they play in governance processes in a given locality cannot be generalised: they can be clan leaders, village elders, religious authorities, self-help groups or any other form of informal authorities performing a range of functions. This applies to the analysed wards in Iringa and might be true for the whole of Tanzania. Yet, such informal authorities have been observed in all wards covered. This finding underlines the need to know what is going on in localities where programmes are implemented. The case study indeed illustrates that local governance is not limited to state institutions. A plurality of different actors is indeed engaged in producing governance.

As bilateral donor, SDC is not directly working at the governance level where informal authorities become particularly relevant in the wards covered. It is important for SDC to continue to support the formal governance system to improve public service delivery. Nonetheless, governance and issue-based programming by SDC project partners should consider informal authorities such as village elders, clan leaders, religious leaders or self-help groups as intermediary actors in governance. To inform these reflections, localised context analyses are essential. In a second step this knowledge should also be placed within the frame of a more systemic analysis that looks at relationships of power and influence at different scales. Based on such thorough understanding, informal authorities should be associated in particular if they have been identified as drivers of change or may turn into restrainers regarding the governance issues at stake.

This case study should not be seen as the end product of the learning project, but aims at making an important evidence-based contribution to reflections within the DDLGN in the future.

## 7. APPENDICES

- Data from the case study
- Acronyms
- Map
- Bibliography
- List of categories of respondents

### Data from case study

#### a. Rural wards in Iringa highland agricultural area

##### Key features

Four wards were covered in the fertile rural highland area. It constitutes the heartland of the Iringa region and historically of the Uhehe kingdom. It is dominated by crop and vegetable farming including some large-scale agriculture scheme. Mseke and Ifunda wards lie southwest of Iringa town along the main road to Mbeya and have roughly 15,000 and 12,000 inhabitants respectively. Kalenga and Nzihi with 7,000 and 15,000 inhabitants respectively are located in the northeast of Iringa town towards the Ruaha mountain range<sup>34</sup>. This area is inhabited by Wahehe and other populations, who have migrated from other parts of the country to the region since decades. Some cattle-breeding exists, but is less prevalent due to extensive agriculture.

##### Informal authorities in Kalenga, Nzihi, Mseke and Ifunda

When inquiring about “traditional authorities”, many respondents answered that they are a relic of the past. As explained above<sup>35</sup>, given the strong association of the term traditional with the precolonial and colonial administrative chieftaincy system, we therefore asked about “informal authorities”. Wise persons, elders (wazee in Kiswahili), clan leaders, religious authorities as well as self-help groups were frequently reported to influence the way citizens and local government interact. This was not only acknowledged by citizens, but also by government officials. As one district officer for Iringa Rural District put it: the state prefers to engage with formal governance actors, but it needs to collaborate with all stakeholders. The formal sphere is indeed small compared to the informal. Influential people such as elders are able to passively resist government efforts, several officers explained, as in the case of the development of an irrigation scheme in Kalenga ward. Because different types of informal authorities command a lot of respect in communities, even the local government has to reach out to the relevant ones to get their buy-in and make development work. Administrative officers in several villages in the four wards stated as well that they invite for example “influential and wise individuals” to official meetings to get their advice. Nonetheless, the understanding of many local government officials (including executive officers, ward councillors, village and Kitongoji chairpersons) interviewed was very top-down. From them, their task is to collect and pass on information to the higher governance levels and to inform

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<sup>34</sup> Census 2012. National Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>35</sup> See chapter 2

or “instruct” people about what has been decided, involving informal authorities in that process if necessary.

In many of the villages in the four wards, people argued that elders, “wise persons” and clan leaders (those identities often overlap) are often contacted when it comes to land management and disputes, for example between an owner and a tenant, or if someone grabs land in the village. Elders in particular also hold a central role as witness regarding land property and land issues. In Ifunda, one elder explained that their role also depends on the relationship between village officers and elders. He argued that the local administration would also misuse elders to redistribute land even if these proceedings do not correspond to customary titles. When interviewing young petty traders, they agreed that elders are very useful to solve conflicts or address public issues, but disagreed with their role in land management. By tradition young people often do not own land, cannot sell it without family consent and face unemployment according to them.

In several localities, respondents also explained that local officials would always invite people to public meetings who would not challenge them, rather than to invite the really influential people. In Nzihi ward, one elder explained that the government will only involve the ones that are not too critical. Yet, “wise people”, respondents argued may also take over a mediating role in assembly meetings even though they have no formal function. On the other hand, in a remoter village in Ifunda near a rural bar/shop where public information is often shared through the female owner, several inhabitants asserted that officials do not understand many of the problems faced by the community, because they do not involve “wise people who know”. Different type of informal authorities (both men and women) including religious authorities, are obviously also regularly consulted regarding marital and family issues.

When discussing about the reasons for the role of informal authorities, respondents gave several answers. In Ifunda ward, some interviewees said that officers are no good mediators. For that reason people try to solve their problems “on their own”, e.g. a dispute between herders and farmers due to cattle destroying fields. Citizens therefore try to solve disputes first within families or the neighbourhood if they know each other, and then through informal authorities. One poor woman also explained that it is better to have elders involved rather than just the family which will always be the one of the husband and solutions may be biased, whereas officials are too far away. Informal authorities are also very much used, because the village authorities cannot help and are not trusted, several respondents explained. Addressing “wise persons”, elders and other informal authorities is much cheaper and ensures confidentiality. Regarding conflict resolution, officials will just decide who is right and who is wrong without finding a permanent solution – unlike an informal, trusted mediator. However, most interviewees agreed that if an issue cannot be addressed successfully in the informal realm, people would try to go to the local administration and if needed to court. In some villages in Mseke and Kalenga wards, yet, both younger and elder respondents said that the Kitongoji chairperson, an elected representative, is the main interaction point between citizens and the administration, with people consulting informal authorities only when they cannot get what they need from the state. The Kitongoji chairperson is in particular able to refer citizens to the right officer at village or ward level.

The water system is mainly considered as a government’s responsibility with people directly complaining to the government about broken water systems and the lack of drinking water due to increasing population in most villages covered. In Kalenga, where an irrigation system

has been built by the Koreans, nobody is able to mediate the escalating conflicts about access to scarce irrigation water. Problems such as illegal water fetching and diversion at night cannot be solved neither by informal authorities, nor the village chairman nor government officers. Some accused newly arrived immigrants as the main cause for trouble. Others saw the growing number of users and limited irrigation water especially during the dry season as main source of conflict. Still others noted how strong family ties have hindered a sustainable solution of the disputes. More generally, customary arrangements and informal authorities seem not to play any effective role in managing water distribution and irrigation in the four wards in question.

### Uhehe chieftaincy

In Kalenga, the historical capital and fortress of the Uhehe chiefs, the historical Uhehe heritage is asserted by many respondents including elected councillors and government officers. Chiefs were ruling kingdoms before colonisation and were formally recognised and used for administrative purposes by the British colonial rule. The Uhehe history and culture is celebrated in a museum run by the Ministry of Tourism. Uhehe chiefs including late chief Abdul Adam Sapi Mkwawa, who died in February 2015, have been buried outside this museum. When asked about the influence of the late chief, interviewees argued that although he had no influence on how citizen engage with the state recently, that might have been different when he was a CCM ward councillor in Kalenga. His father was even speaker of the national parliament for many years in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The late chief no longer lived in Kalenga, but in Iringa town. Although known by many people, his recognition and influence remains strongest within his clan mostly. His clan is in fact trying to uphold the historical heritage by celebrating for example an annual Wahehe day. One official interviewed had consulted him regarding public issues as relative of the same clan, according to customary procedures. There seems no longer to be a working chieftain hierarchy in the villages covered. As one elder and member of the chief's clan explained in Ifunda, up to the 1970s there used to be meetings with the chief to discuss Wahehe welfare but also celebrations on the "chief day". These have disappeared since then. Although chiefs did not vanish with the end of their formal existence after independence, even in a perceived "extreme case" such as Iringa, the chief had not played any notable role in local governance in Kalenga or other wards with the exception of his own clan, similar to powerful elders in other clans.

Electoral politics are one important exception. The late chief had been used for electoral purposes: both opposition parties and CCM have tried to appeal to the cultural identity which the Wahehe chief continues to represent, several respondents including politicians explained. Some interviewees in Nzihi argued that the political positioning of the chief was important to influence and mobilise communities to some extent. The presence of president Kikwete in February 2015 at the burial ceremony<sup>36</sup> of the late chief is mainly explained by electoral purposes, especially because at one point the late chief positioned himself in favour of CHADEMA. CCM has allegedly tried to win the chief back since then. One should note that Iringa is a fierce political battleground given that CHADEMA holds the constituency seat

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<sup>36</sup> The Citizen. 2015.

for Iringa municipality in the national assembly and won many Vitongoji, village and ward chair positions in recent local elections in late 2014.

### Self-help groups

Self-help groups, another form of informal authority, are fairly widespread in the four wards, notably among women. In most villages covered in this study there were such small-scale self-help groups to work together for business investments and compensate for the absence of basic social security. One important reason is that microcredit loans appear to be difficult and expensive to get. On the other hand, bigger farming cooperatives, for example, often have a bad reputation for fund misuse. Although self-help groups produce public goods (social security, loans, security), respondents explained that self-help groups are not used as intermediaries between members and the state. In Ifunda and Mseke security was also reported as a public issue which brings together citizens to act in informal groups for example to counter petty thieves or fight robbery given that the police is perceived as not helpful. The groups have arrangements for compulsory weekly contributions. Money collected is pooled in a common fund and disbursed depending on needs (funeral costs, school fees, medical treatment, investment) through a variety of distribution systems: by agreement of all members, rotational systems or depending on the winner of a weekly game. When asked about the reason why people need to have these groups, one respondent in Mseke ward explained that many people are poor. There are also immigrants from other regions which do not have family in the area they can rely on. In this changing context, self-help groups are taking over the role of basic social security.

One of the reasons for their existence expressed by informal group members is to get loans for small business investments without using the formal credit and loan system. It often remains inaccessible and too expensive for poor populations. Therefore, such groups are widespread in market environments. Rural markets are usually built by the government which rents out stalls to sellers. In Ifunda village, sellers elected an informal market leadership which is responsible for solving disputes and discussing issues with the local government in the name of market sellers. In Nzihi ward, several informal youth groups have been formed to do business (tomato transport; construction). Those young men were much more critical about informal authorities, especially elders, but also about the local administration because they did not receive any help. Young workers argued that it is better to get a formal paper from the state rather than an oral promise from an elder. Yet, those groups have not registered and remain in the informal sector. Some were also complaining that NGOs just set up offices in Dar es Salaam rather than be present in villages where beneficiaries live.

### Sharing the new draft constitution

In one village in Nzihi ward, the village executive officer was distributing five copies of the draft constitution to each Kitongoji chairperson when the research team arrived. The ward had received the copies from the central government. In that village, several elders, both clan leaders and successful farmers/business people described as wise by several respondents, were identified as informal authorities. Some of these influential persons are also members in village committees. They are reported to educate community members about e.g. farming techniques or business issues, but also to settle disputes. Although these elders had not yet received the draft constitution from their Kitongoji chairperson, they were absolutely convinced that they will get a personal copy. Several elders explained that they would read

the draft constitution and then educate their family, neighbourhood and community about the content and tell them their opinion about the draft during informal discussions. The village and ward officials confirmed that to communicate and mobilise people, including about the new draft constitution, they have to rely on “trusted and accepted elders”. Some of the influential elders are also invited for consultations before village meetings with Vitongoji chairpersons or before public Vitongoji or village assemblies. In that sense, elders, as informal authorities, are mediating the participative interaction between the state and citizens in this village.

#### **b. Rural wards in Iringa lower semi-arid area**

##### Key features

Two wards were covered in the north-eastern fringe of Iringa Rural District which consists of lower semi-arid flat lands. Both Migoli and Izazi wards are situated near the Mtera dam but experience water scarcity. They are inhabited by roughly 10,000 and 5,000 inhabitants respectively<sup>37</sup>. The region is populated by Wahehe and other groups such as wangoni farmers from Ruvuma region, as well as pastoralists including Masai herders living “on the other side of the road” as one official put it.

##### Informal authorities in Migoli and Izazi

As in the other visited wards, most respondents would argue that “wise people”, elders, clan leaders or religious authorities are the informal authorities who influence governance processes. In Izazi, government officials noted that informal authorities are important because they are brokers of information between the community and the government and *vice versa*. In Migoli, people easily could tell who the “wise old man” is in the village. He soon appeared in the village court building where the research team was sitting. The elder asserted that people in his community in Migoli would always try to solve issues in the informal realm first, often consulting him before they would refer to village officials. Regarding the source of legitimacy and trust, he argued that he has been around for a long time and people would know him for wise advice. This was confirmed by other respondents. Citizens also know that their case will not be exposed publically when getting advice in the informal realm. The local government in Migoli ward would also inform or involve elders regarding several public issues, e.g. when a new development project is being launched. Religious authorities’ role, several respondents explained, is mainly restricted to family and marriage problems. They not only include priests and sheiks, but also the elders of each congregation. A teacher of the main secondary school of Migoli also stressed that people will go to him to get information and advice about how to best engage with the village or ward administration. In Izazi, people referred to grand-mothers (wabibi) as influential authorities because they know the area best and are known for their helpful advice on many issues.

One specific area mentioned several times is land management: elders in particular act as witnesses and mediators when it comes to customary land rights. They would also share their knowledge about village boundaries based on customs, for example, with the official village land committees which can allocate village land. In Migoli, most land conflicts are rather small in scale. They occur within families and clans or because citizens are illegally

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<sup>37</sup> Census 2012. National Bureau of Statistics.

building houses. As in many other places visited, although customary land rights are respected locally, customary titles are not secure enough if the government wants to facilitate large-scale land investment or build public infrastructure. For this reason, when it comes to land, people in rural areas secure first traditional land titles and then try to get some sort of formalised recognition (get an official paper) although the official titling process is far too expensive, cumbersome and lengthy for most citizens, interviewees confirmed in all rural wards visited.

Government officials, including village officers and ward executive officers, veterinarians, agricultural extension officers and teachers in public schools are recruited by the district administration. As with many public jobs, government officers do not necessarily come from the ward or even the region they are working in. Therefore, they may not know the local power dynamics well when newly appointed. All respondents confirmed in Migoli and Izai that if citizens have a problem or issue, they first go to “trusted wise people” in the family, clan or neighbourhood. Only if informal authorities cannot help, will citizens engage with government officials (or if still necessary go to court). However, very few expressed a contradiction between informal and state authorities. Instead, most seem to perceive them as complementary or as different steps in a governance continuum.

#### Conflicts between herders and farmers

One of the salient local conflicts is between farming villagers and Masai herders, who allegedly cut plastic water pipes which bring water from a natural well to the village in order to water their cattle. Conflicts between herders and farmers are most intense during the dry season or during drought. Several respondents in the village expressed great hope in one traditional Masai headman, age-set leader and healer, who was just elected as opposition candidate as official Kitongoji chairman of his Masai hamlet in the 2014 local elections. He has been a traditional leader long before being elected as official representative and was mediating conflicts between families in his community, regarding cattle-related conflicts between Masai and farmers, but also educating his community about the consequences of alcoholism which hinders development. Traditional Masai leadership is not based on hereditary mechanisms but leaders in each generation are chosen by community elders. When talking to the Masai leader, he explained that calling in the police will not solve problems, it is better to educate and advise his people. In his new function as elected representative, he is invited to ward meetings and as Masai leader he can then credibly pass on information to his community. He underlined that the overlap of legitimacies as leader is pivotal: as traditional leader he is accepted by the community, as elected leader he is recognised as counterpart by the local government. Previously, it was not the case. On other topics such as health (including maternal health), the Masai leader was strongly criticising “modern” state policy, which shows that depending on the issue at stake, both informal and formal authorities may be restrainers or constrainers of change.

Related to natural resources, one respondent associated the ongoing conflicts between herders and farmers in Migoli with the lack of government services, because unlike in the past, extension offices for agriculture or veterinary offices no longer reach smaller settlements. Citizens therefore lack knowledge about best-suited techniques and just increase the surface for cultivation and cattle-breeding. Masai pastoralists in the region do not possess any land titles, often not even for housing plots, because they traditionally “just go wherever they want”. For that reason, the Masai leader in Migoli asserted that Masai

always lose when farmland is allocated customarily. This is the reason for conflicts between farmers and herders. In Izazi, pastoralists are separated from farmland by a road. One government officer argued that in Izazi there are not many conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, because there is still enough land to be shared.

### **c. Peri-urban ward in Iringa municipality**

#### **Key features**

Nduli ward is located within Iringa municipality, about 10 kilometres outside of town. Hosting the airfield, Nduli ward with about 8,000 inhabitants has nonetheless a very rural and agricultural character. The ward was previously a rural ward but has been recently incorporated into the municipality. One well-informed informant explained that the re-composition of districts is very common and mainly a political issue. In Nduli, the public life seems to be strongly dominated by CCM. It was one of the few places where people recurrently referred to party members and structures when asked about wise and influential people in governance processes.

#### **Informal authorities in Nduli**

One businessman explained that in Nduli CCM looks for influential people and convinces them to join the party to make sure that they will not mobilise communities for other parties or interests. This respondent himself was a CCM member. Clan leaders, elders or religious authorities reportedly only play a role in sharing public information within their communities according to government officers. An elected CCM councillor explained that the ward will always invite 3 religious leaders of the different denominations, 3 teachers and 3 wealthy influential people when they have official ward meetings. When interviewed, a pastor confirmed these consultations. Yet, invitations are only shared on very short notice. If he attends, he would pass messages to his congregation on the following Sunday. For example, the ward repeatedly asked for contributions for the secondary school, but the school never was improved. The local religious authority plays a central intermediary role between his community and the local government. During mass he would explain to his community, for example, that people should no longer contribute to the secondary school for nothing. However, because he is trusted as spiritual leader, the pastor explained that he has to be very careful about not getting entangled in the political game. If an official meeting is only about politics, he does not attend.

### **d. Urban wards in Iringa municipality**

#### **Key features**

For comparative purposes, the team decided to cover urbanised settings as well. Iringa municipality covers the mainly urban areas of the main town of the Iringa region. The two wards covered by the study lie within the city. Gangilonga ward with about 10,000 inhabitants is a rather wealthy area (including the Mtaa Wilolesi, where the ward headquarter is located) but with poor neighbourhoods on its fringes (including Mtaa Lugalo B). The second ward of Kihesa is a bustling but poorer area with roughly 18,000 inhabitants<sup>38</sup>. In the urban setting,

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<sup>38</sup> Census 2012. National Bureau of Statistics.

many people were not at home during the days because they are employed or are doing business. For that reason, most people interviewed were actually working or conducting business.

### Informal authorities in Kihesa and Gangilonga

In comparison to rural areas, less people in urban areas acknowledged the role of informal authorities such as elders, clan leaders or “wise persons” in dealing with public issues. Quite a substantial number of citizens interviewed in the two visited wards asserted that if they need public services they will just walk to the relevant municipal, ward or Mtaa office. Many issues and needs are channelled through the formal governance system. One poor family which migrated from Njombe to Iringa explained that if they had an informal leader in their clan and next of kin who they could be of assistance to them, they would not go to the government for support. But since they do not have that network in Iringa, they asked the Mtaa chairperson for help. Several officers and chairpersons in Gangilonga also claimed that they do not have to involve elders, clan leaders or respected persons in any process or for any issue. Generally, informal intermediary actors seem to play a lesser role, because in urban areas citizens can access and afford formal governance. Land ownership as well appears to be far more formalised than in rural areas.

In terms of communication and outreach, one officer in Gangilonga ward explained that the ward sends out letters with announcements from the ward regarding development issues or public meetings to the religious authorities of all denominations in order to reach more people through sheiks and priests. One Mtaa chairperson asserted that she would contact and involve elders to make sure that a project develops successfully. In the case of this Mtaa chairperson, it is interesting to see that the sources of legitimacy overlap. Before being elected in 2014, she was both a Mtaa council member (Mjumbe) and an NGO ambassador in her neighbourhood to fight domestic and gender-based violence. At the time, she was specifically selected by the NGO as influential, wise person respected in her community. For that reason, people trusted her according to her own analysis. In the poorer Kihesa ward, both ward and Mtaa officers as well chairpersons acknowledged the role of informal authorities. They explained that informal authorities can tell things that are widely accepted and take decisions that are acceptable for the community. Some clan elders in Kihesa, for example, know their area and community best. For that reason the administration can rely on such influential clan leaders to solve land problems or to deal with security issues (including identifying petty thieves in the area). One influential person often referred to in Kihesa is an elder clan leader, whose family owns a lot of plots. He is seen as “first comer” because his clan has lived in the area for generations. He was also a ten-cell leader in the past, which is another reason why he is consulted by the local government.

In urban areas, influential people also comprise of religious authorities, university lecturers or wealthy business people which are consulted by the local government for advice. Citizens consult them too as intermediaries to get access to government officials or advice (regarding court cases, land issues, information and access). It is important to note that in Kihesa for example respondents did not agree on who they go to if they have a specific issue or need they cannot deal with in the family. Some favour informal authorities in particular clan elders, others the formal Vitongoji chairpersons. Arguments expressed in favour of informal authorities even in urban areas are that their help is for free, that they keep issues confidential and that they have a reputation as wise and experienced mediators who are able

to find sustainable solutions. The same respondents would argue that elected Mtaa chairpersons, who are political parties representatives, either do not care about citizens' request or act for own benefits. Policemen and government officers are indeed reported to ask for money to become active. Informal authorities such as elders cannot always help because if they complain to the chairperson they may also face challenges, one woman noted. In general, given the proximity of formal institutions, it appears that people do less refer to informal authorities in urban compared to rural areas.

One high-ranking politician in Iringa acknowledged that when politicians go on campaign in a village or Mtaa, they will not only use party structures but always get in touch with the most relevant informal authorities in order to mobilise communities, be that a clan leader, an elder, a religious leader or an influential businessman. In this regard, one respondent acknowledged that the municipality sent out letters to churches and mosques in order to mobilise the population for the Prime Minister's visit to Iringa in February 2015.

The late Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa was known in urban areas too, but is not deemed to have any influence on people's lives or governance processes. His role is only seen in terms of cultural heritage and his influence limited to a few chieftain clans, at most, according to respondents who were asked about the chief.

### Women self-help groups

Self-help groups are one recurrent form of informal institutions, which are mainly initiated and led by women. Male membership in such groups is almost non-existent and there is a general opinion among the female members that men are not only unmotivated, but also do not make good members (they cannot be trusted). One respondent even acknowledged that she would not tell her husband about loans she receives from her group in order to secure it for business investments. Such self-help groups at times also receive small loans from formal NGOs. As one ward officer acknowledged, although they are not officially registered these self-help group are important for the administration as well, because they contribute to social services, including in case of death in the family or sickness. Groups not only pool financial resources to help, often through weekly contributions by members, but also provide reciprocal support in terms of labour if needed, several female members explained. One reason for the widespread existence of such self-help groups are previous negative experiences with microcredits (e.g. stories about threats from lenders if loans are not repaid). A second reason is the weakened family networks that are no longer strong enough due to migration, especially in urban areas. However, all interviewees confirmed that self-help groups do not act as intermediary between the administration and members, nor voice concerns in public meeting as group. Poorer citizens seem to participate less in such groups, because they cannot make any weekly contributions several interviewees argued.

### **e. Rural ward in SDC project region Morogoro**

#### Key features

As point of comparison, the research team stopped for a series of interviews in Morogoro region which lies within program focus of SDC. The main entry point was an SDC partner, MVIWATA, a national network of farmer groups with headquarters in Morogoro. Staff members explained that when you plan to start a project it is important to meet and consult the elected and government officials, but also relevant informal leaders in order to "smooth

relations with communities”. Masai societies, for example, are led by their traditional leaders even the ones who migrated to other parts of the country. In other communities, informal authorities including clan leaders or elders may also be influential. In order to compare with evidence from Iringa, we selected the remote rural ward of Kinole in Morogoro Rural District, where MVIWATA has a large market project. Kinole has about 12,000 inhabitants and lies in a relatively remote, mountainous area. Kinole is also home to chief Kingalu of the Waluguru, one of the larger ethnic tribes in Morogoro.

### Waluguru chieftaincy

The chief and his family lives on a hill above Kinole just between the water tank and the electricity transformer for the village. When asked about the chief’s role in governance, the assistant chief and sub-chiefs argued that the chief plays a crucial role in mediating and resolving land conflicts. As with the examples of elders in Iringa, people would come to the chief for advice and mediation when there are land conflicts. If they cannot find a solution, however, such a case is then taken to the next, formal government level. Whether or not to seek the chief’s help in resolving land conflicts is seemingly a matter of personal preference and convenience. There is no rule that requires people to start with the chief. Similar to other informal authorities, he happens to be a trusted and revered elder in the area where he lives. The chief and his assistants, it is believed, know the land boundaries well. Besides, the chief can be accessed easily by the villagers in the place where he lives. However, the chief has no power when it comes to land allocation.

When the government decided to demarcate farming land and forest reserve land, the first meeting with government officials was held at the chief’s place. The community at a village assembly then decided that the chief should represent the community to delimit the village forest area. The chief also seems to play a mediating role during public assemblies in the village when there are strong disagreements between citizens. The clan members asserted that the chief has responsibility over all Waluguru, in Morogoro region up to Dar es Salaam. He is the traditional, spiritual leader and rainmaker. He does not seem to have a formal, e.g. role in party politics, but his predecessor was a magistrate at a government court. Both chief and sub-chiefs within the clan have clear succession rules. They also explained that people come from the mountains and travel far distances to have their conflicts settled by the chief if referred to by a sub-chief. They also claimed that the chief is much more powerful than the local administration. Similarly to other influential people in Iringa, the chief and his clan is only trusted if citizens perceive them as helpful, wise and fair according to several respondents. In his village of Kinole around the market, people confirmed that the chief was influential and respected even in public meetings and might be consulted by the local officials such as village or Vitongoji chairpersons, in a similar way as clan leaders and wise people elsewhere. However, when asking randomly selected people in neighbouring villages about the chief’s role outside Kinole, one Mluguru on the road to Kiroka did not even know that a chief existed. Others knew about him, some had even visited his residence, but did not think he had any influence on governance or people’s lives. Respondents did not seem to believe that people would travel to Kinole, from other parts of Morogoro, to consult him. He is at most seen as part of a cultural heritage.

## Acronyms

CHADEMA: Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Party for Democracy and Development)

CCM: Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution)

CSO: Civil society organisation

DDLGN: SDC's Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance Network

O&OD: Opportunities and Obstacles to Development methodology

SCO: Swiss Cooperation Office

SDC: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

## Map



Map of Tanzania with wards covered in Iringa Region encircled in red. Copyright: FDFA

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**List of categories of respondents**

- Citizens (including men and women of different age)
- Elders, clan leaders
- Other informal influential people
- Members of self-help groups
- Business people, traders, petty traders
- Religious authorities
- NGO representatives
- Ward and village executive officers
- Ward councillors; village and Mtaa chairpersons
- Members of village and Mtaa councils (wajumbe)
- Vitongoji chairpersons
- District officials
- Academics
- International experts