

Civic Competence and Governance in Rural Tanzania
A Case of Karatu and Rombo Districts
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The study focuses on the civic competence of one category of civil society organizations at the grassroots, namely community-based organisations (CBOs). The mushrooming of CBOs in Tanzania is a result of the economic and political pluralism which emerged in the country from the mid 1980s and early 1990s. The theme of the study is premised on the assumption that CBOs are informed and driven by the quest for democratic governance practice. Thus, it was expected that CBOs would play a major role in influencing local governance processes. The thesis is based on a study of twenty four CBOs in two districts in rural Tanzania. In addition, forty eight local government officials who interact with the CBOs were consulted. Actions of CBOs meant to exert a consequential influence were treated as the independent variable while grassroots structures of governance and resulting responses to CBO influences were considered the dependent variable. This was a field survey study. The research methodology used both qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques of data collection. The sampling procedure was based on probabilistic sampling undertaken within stratified sampling. On data-analysis procedures, qualitative data was manipulated manually through content analysis, while quantitative data was analysed using the SPSS program to produce descriptive statistics.

Our hypothesis that CBO competence in local governance processes is weak was confirmed by the study. Research findings reveal that the political context is the most influential factor in CBO civic competence; secondly, that civic competence is inevitably political, and is explained by political context, thus making CBO impact in local governance processes more complex and problematic in emerging democracies like Tanzania. It is recommended therefore that as Tanzanian government policies and laws formally recognize CBOs as stakeholders in local governance processes, an enabling environment should be created and institutionalised.