

# What Can People Know? Access to Information in Tanzania

Findings of a nationwide opinion poll



REDET

# WHAT CAN PEOPLE KNOW? ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN TANZANIA

HakiElimu and REDET<sup>1</sup>  
May 2006

## 1. Introduction

What can people know and find out in Tanzania? What information can they get? Where do people go for information? What is their experience of seeking information? Is it easy or difficult? Is it useful?

These are some of the questions addressed in this report. It provides findings of an opinion poll on access to information in Tanzania. The poll was undertaken by Research and Education for Democracy (REDET) of the University of Dar es Salaam, in collaboration with HakiElimu. The field work was done in September 2005, shortly before the national elections.

What people think lies at the heart of democracy and development. Historically, public opinion has served as a force for change. A system of governance that understands the values, convictions and attitudes of its people may be better placed to address their interests. Opinion polls can be an effective method for providing ‘reality checks’ – valuable feedback of people’s views of the actual state of governance and services, and of their priorities.

Citizen participation is fundamental to making government work, and enabling citizens to hold their leaders accountable. But it is difficult to participate effectively without information. Two examples illustrate this point: One cannot make good choices on the use of resources without knowing how much money is allocated in the budgets, how much was actually disbursed, and what the policies say about how it should be used and who gets to decide. Farmers who know the market prices of fertilizers and crops in different locations will be better able to maximize their income than those who don’t.

Access to information improves decisions. It allows citizens to make informed choices about the administration of their economy, implementation of policies, investments in their livelihood, and the equitable provision of social services. It increases citizen awareness of their rights and obligations, as well as their capacity to evaluate the performance of their leaders and hold them accountable.

President Jakaya Kikwete has often emphasized accountability to citizens. For example, in his address to the Association of Local Authorities in Tanzania (ALAT) in Dodoma in February 2006, he noted:

“Without accountability, our Councils will be completely unable to adequately fulfill their responsibilities and will not meet our citizen’s expectations.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This study was conducted by Research and Education for Democracy (REDET) of the University of Dar es Salaam, led by Professor Rwekaza Mukandala, with support from Dr. Laurean Ndumbaro and Dr. Bernadeta Kilian. The final report was written by Aika Kirei and Rakesh Rajani, and reviewed by Kajubi Mukajanga of HakiElimu.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by HakiElimu. Full speech in Swahili accessed through [www.tanzania.go.tz/hotuba1/hotuba/060216\\_-\\_mkutano\\_alat\\_dodoma.htm](http://www.tanzania.go.tz/hotuba1/hotuba/060216_-_mkutano_alat_dodoma.htm)

The benefits of an informed and aware citizenry are similarly demonstrated by the principle of Client Service Charters (CSCs), which have been introduced by the Government of Tanzania in all ministries. These are essentially ‘contracts’ between citizens and public service providers that detail the service provider’s promises in terms of quality and timeliness of delivery, and outline the rights and obligations of the ‘client’. Clear and openly stated responsibilities of this type for both parties can help establish standards for services and information delivery, and a benchmark against which performance can be measured. Thus a citizen who is aware of these public commitments knows what to expect, as well as demand accountability.

However, developing a concept is one thing, but putting it into practice is another. The use of CSCs in practice in Tanzania is said to be low. They also do not address the local government level, where most people live. Recent studies<sup>3</sup> have shown that access to information continues to be difficult despite the commitments in the CSCs. The HakiElimu, LHRC and REPOA (2005) study, for example, showed that half of requests were not responded to despite persistent follow-up, and even where basic information was obtained, it took on average 31 days to do so.

Government obligation to provide information notwithstanding, access to information is a two-way street: not only should it be *provided*, it needs to be *demand*ed. This requires a citizenry that is concerned and active, as well as a legal instrument that obliges public officials to divulge information in response to citizen demands. Citizens in Tanzania have a constitutional right to information (Article 18), but this is not codified as a specific legal entitlement that elaborates access to public information. This means that public institutions can exercise discretion and constrain access since provision is not enforceable under law.

In this context, what is the actual situation as it is experienced by people? This report presents findings of a nationwide opinion poll, the first exercise of its kind in Tanzania, on accessibility of information. Its sampling is done in a manner to provide a generally reliable picture of the situation throughout mainland Tanzania, covering both rural and urban areas.

Among several key objectives, the poll sought to ascertain the extent to which the Tanzanian public is informed of, and involved in, the policies, practices and programs that affect their daily lives. It sought to know the people’s views on the need for an access to information law in Tanzania.

This report is organized in three sections. The first outlines the methodology used to collect data, as well as the characteristics of the sample. The second presents the key findings of the study. The third section outlines the main conclusions, policy implications, and suggested ways forward.

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<sup>3</sup> See IDASA (2004) *Research on Citizen’s Access to Information and its Use for Greater Government Accountability and Responsiveness* (prepared for DFID, Tanzania) and HakiElimu, Legal and Human Rights Centre and REPOA (2005) *Access to Information in Tanzania: Still a Challenge*.

## 2. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to assess the public awareness and opinion on access to information in Tanzania; its relevance to their daily lives and role in the future. It also sought to gather public opinion on the value of introducing a law in Tanzania that would require government institutions to make its information public. Other subjects this poll addresses include an examination of the means and sources through which citizens access information, the extent of public demand for information, the level of public participation in local decision-making processes, and the level of knowledge of various public policies and laws among Tanzanians. The poll questions were short, precise and close-ended so as to ensure attentiveness and enable analysis.

The poll was conducted in Kiswahili. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents. Each respondent was informed that their responses would remain anonymous and would not be used for any other purpose other than this study, so as to encourage openness and safeguard confidentiality.

The opinion poll was conducted in September 2005. It covered all 21 regions of Tanzania Mainland. A total of twenty one (21) districts were randomly sampled for the study, one from each region. In rural districts, two villages from each rural district were selected, and in urban districts, the poll sampled two streets from each urban district. In each of the 21 districts, a total of 50 respondents were randomly selected, 25 from each village/street. Therefore, a total of 1,050 respondents were interviewed. The study employed a three-level, multi-stage sampling that included the district, village/street and respondent levels. The sample selection at each stage was random, through the use of a table of random numbers. A list of sampled districts is included in this report as Appendix 1.

The sample was equally divided between males and females. Similarly, about 40 percent of villages/streets were drawn from the urban setting and 60 percent from the rural setting, representing the urban-rural diversity of the Tanzanian population. Furthermore, in order to more accurately reflect the wider population, the sample included respondents from varying age categories, economic status, and levels of education. Approximately 55 percent of the sample was between 26-45 years old, and 63 percent have primary education. Also 67 percent of the respondents live on less than a dollar a day. Tables in Appendix 2 provide these data.

Under the principle of equal probability of selection, a small, random sample that is carefully selected may be representative of the wider population. This principle is based on the Central Limit Theorem that provides that the average characteristics of a sample that is sufficiently representative of a population will remain more or less similar as the sample size increases. This means that this study's sample size of 1,050 respondents may be considered large enough from which to draw basic conclusions about public opinion and the level of public awareness on access to information in Tanzania.

The opinion poll was commissioned by HakiElimu and carried out by Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania (REDET) of the University of Dar es Salaam, which also compiled, tabulated and analyzed the data. Missing values, which means those questions that were not applicable to the respondent, were removed from the final analysis in order to present a more accurate understanding of the reported data. The basic findings were cross-checked against the data by HakiElimu, who also edited this report.

The main findings and implications of the opinion poll are presented and discussed below.

### 3. Key Findings

#### 3.1 Means of Accessing Information

The first set of questions assessed the means through which citizens across the country access information on various public matters, the frequency with which they seek information, and the type of information that they generally request. Overall, 79 percent of the respondents (758) said that they have a means (or a tool) of accessing information, as shown by Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Access to information by gender and rural/urban divide**

(actual number of respondents in brackets)

| Response     | Overall                      | Female                      | Male                        | Urban                       | Rural                       |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Yes          | <b>78.5%</b><br><b>(758)</b> | 75.9%<br>(369)              | 81.2%<br>(389)              | 90.5%<br>(332)              | 71.2%<br>(426)              |
| No           | <b>21.5%</b><br><b>(207)</b> | 24.4%<br>(117)              | 18.8%<br>(90)               | 9.5%<br>(35)                | 28.8%<br>(172)              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(965)</b>  | <b>100%</b><br><b>(486)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(479)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(367)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(598)</b> |

The findings show that more men (81 %) than women (76%) have the means to access information. The urban/rural gap is wider, with 90 percent of urban residents able to access information, as compared to 79 percent of rural residents. This trend is also reflected in the fact that, of the 21 percent of respondents who reported that they do not have any means of accessing information, women (57%) and rural inhabitants (83%) compose the largest portion, surpassed only by those respondents with low-level education (primary education and below) who constitute 94% of that population. This is of critical significance, as these groups are also most susceptible to poverty and economic shocks due to fewer opportunities and lower access to public information and services.

However, as compared to previous years, access to media has increased significantly. The poll showed that overall only 24 percent of women did not have access to any type of mass media in 2005, as compared to 70 percent in the 1999 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey<sup>4</sup>. This can be attributed to the recent expansion of both state and private media in Tanzania.

Mass media is by far the most important means by which people access information. Of the three main types of mass media, radio continues to be the most accessible as shown in Table 2 below. However, newspapers and TV are also accessed by significant percentages of the population:

**Table 2: Means of accessing information**

| Means        | Respondents              | Percentage |
|--------------|--------------------------|------------|
| Radio        | 803                      | 76.8%      |
| Newspapers   | 313                      | 29.9%      |
| Television   | 203                      | 19.4%      |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,319<sup>5</sup></b> |            |

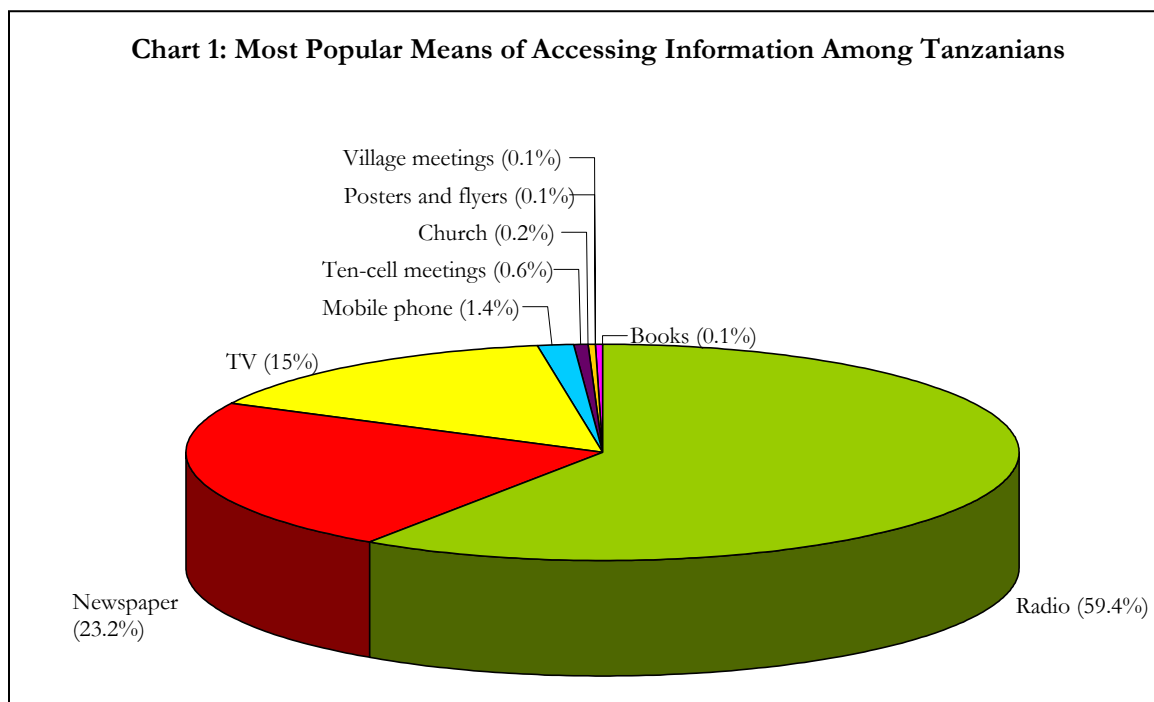
<sup>4</sup> National Bureau of Statistics (1999), *Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey*, Dar es Salaam.

<sup>5</sup> Total is more than number of respondents since some had access to multiple means. The total for radio slightly exceeds total reported as having access to any means, probably because of differing interpretations of the meaning of access to information among respondents.

This data is consistent with the findings of the recent 2004-05 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS)<sup>6</sup>, which found that, on average, 65% of the population listened to the radio at least once a week, 22% read the newspaper at least once a week, and 17% watched television at least once a week. The TDHS also found that the radio was the most commonly-owned item within households. This demonstrates that the most effective means of communicating with the majority of Tanzanians is through radio, most likely due to its affordability, portability, and low maintenance costs.

In terms of the frequency with which the respondents make use of their radios and televisions, the majority stated that they listened or watched between two to four times a day, while more than 40 percent of newspaper readers revealed that they read only one newspaper a week.<sup>7</sup> The regularity of use of a source of information is important in determining how much value is attached to information and the concept of being informed. There is a slight difference in the extent to which the respondents listen to radio, read newspapers and watch television based on one's gender and residence as shown in Tables 12, 13 and 14 in Appendix 3.

Apart from the three main ways of information, a few respondents (3%) identified other additional means of accessing information, including mobile phones, public rallies, churches, and books and pamphlets. Chart 1 below presents the respondents' general means of accessing information, inclusive of these additional means:



It appears that, after the three most common modes, the next popular means of accessing information is the mobile phone. Access to mobile phones appears to be growing fast in Tanzania. Four major mobile phone companies were operational in 2005, with increasing national network coverage and reported number of subscribers of several millions. Mobile phones are therefore increasingly likely to become a significant means of accessing information in Tanzania, though voice call charges remain relatively expensive. Notably, the internet was not

<sup>6</sup> National Bureau of Statistics (2005), *Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey 2004-2005*, Dar es Salaam.

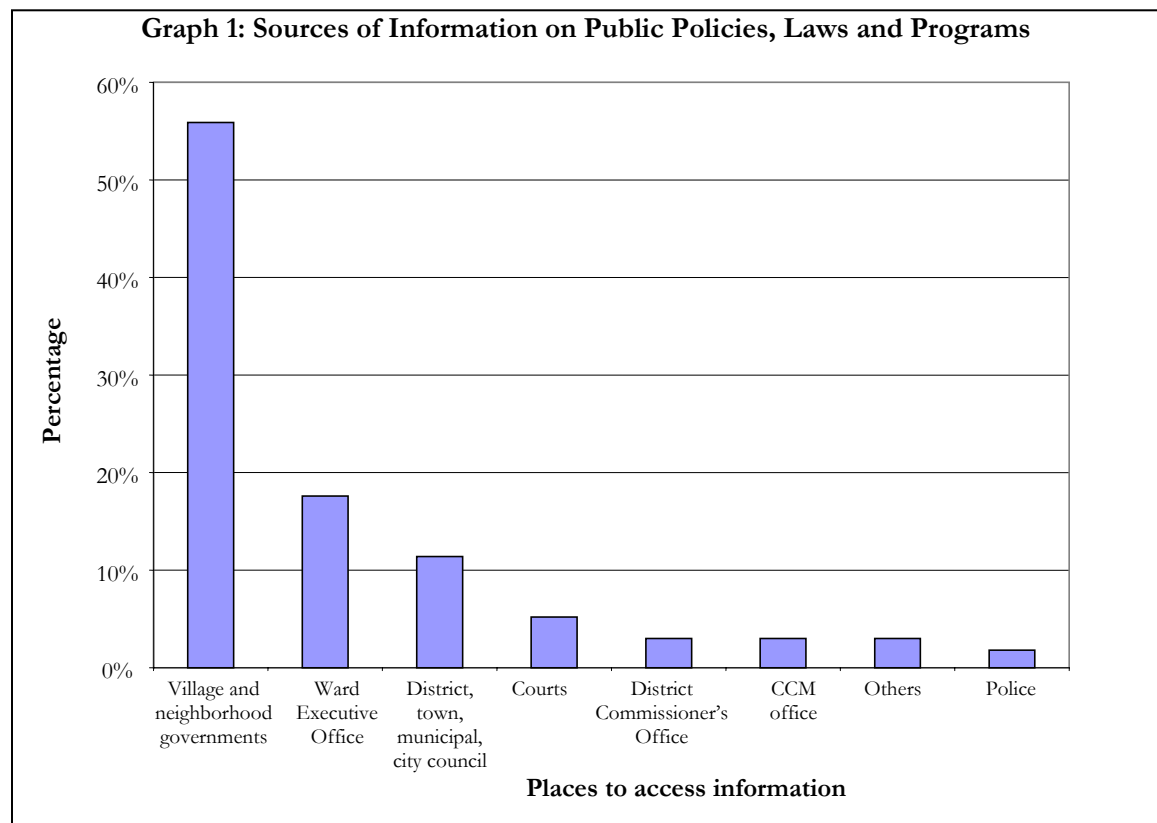
<sup>7</sup> These data should be treated with caution, as people may exaggerate how often they access media sources.

mentioned as a significant means to access information, despite its recent growth in the country. This is likely to be due to the high cost of computers and their need for constant electricity supply. Public notice-boards that are increasingly reported to be used to post key Government information were also not mentioned as an important means for accessing information. This may be due to the lack of such notice-boards, or the information on them not being updated or being presented in a form that is difficult to understand.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that mass media are the most significant forms of accessing information in Tanzania. Moreover, they imply that pamphlets and flyers, commonly referred to as *'vipeperushi'*, may not be an effective way of informing the public.

### 3.2 Sources of Information

A significant 55 percent of the respondents reported knowing of an office or specific place where they could obtain information on government laws, policies and programs. Of these, more than half identified the village and neighborhood government offices as the places to obtain information on government policies, laws and programs. A further 18 percent of the respondents mentioned Ward Executive office. Other offices that were mentioned included the District Commissioner's office (3%), CCM office (3%), Courts (5%) and the Police (2%).



Government offices were cited as a source of public information far more than any other category. This seems to indicate that the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and other non-governmental sources in providing public information is not widely known or effective, and that the number of people served by these other sources is very limited.

Knowledge of sources of information is one thing, but what is more significant is the extent to which information from these sources is accessed. Interestingly, only 14 percent of the respondents reported that they had sought information from a government office in the last year,

while 86 percent of the respondents revealed that they had not requested any type of public information. The large difference between those who identify government offices as a source of information and those who actually seek information may indicate that actual access is much more difficult, the information available is not valuable or that public interest/demand is low.

When this data is further disaggregated by sex and location, the following picture emerges:

**Table 3: Respondents who have visited a Government Office to request information**  
(actual number of respondents in brackets)

| <b>Requested information from a Govt. Office</b> | <b>Urban</b>                | <b>Rural</b>                | <b>Male</b>                 | <b>Female</b>               |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Yes  | 12.2%<br>(47)               | 14.6%<br>(92)               | 17.7%<br>(91)               | 9.6%<br>(48)                |
| No   | 87.8%<br>(337)              | 85.4%<br>(537)              | 82.3%<br>(422)              | 90.4%<br>(454)              |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>100%</b><br><b>(384)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(631)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(512)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(502)</b> |

More males than females reported to have visited a government office to request information, while slightly more respondents in rural areas than those in urban settings reported the same. This may partly indicate that rural residents may need to rely more on government than urban residents who have greater access to alternative sources. These differences notwithstanding, the main finding here is that more than four fifths of all groups did not access information from government offices.

Less than one fifth (19%) of the respondents reported seeking information from NGOs. This compares slightly favorably with overall government, but is still low.

**Table 4: Seeking Information from NGOs**

| <b>Response</b> | <b>Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Yes             | 194                | 19.4              |
| No              | 801                | 80.6              |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>998</b>         | <b>100</b>        |

Overall, these findings show that Tanzanians in general are not exercising their constitutional right to seek public information, and that access to information remains a challenge, despite reforms to expand it. When respondents were queried as to their reasons for not seeking information from public offices, the following explanations were provided:

**Table 5: Reasons for not Seeking Information from Government Offices**

| <b>Reasons</b>            | <b>Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| I prefer not to           | 247                | 28.3              |
| I know I will not get it  | 98                 | 11.2              |
| I don't know where to ask | 232                | 26.5              |
| I didn't have a problem   | 165                | 18.9              |
| I am too busy             | 40                 | 4.6               |
| I don't have a reason why | 35                 | 4.0               |
| Other reasons             | 57                 | 6.5               |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>874</b>         | <b>100</b>        |

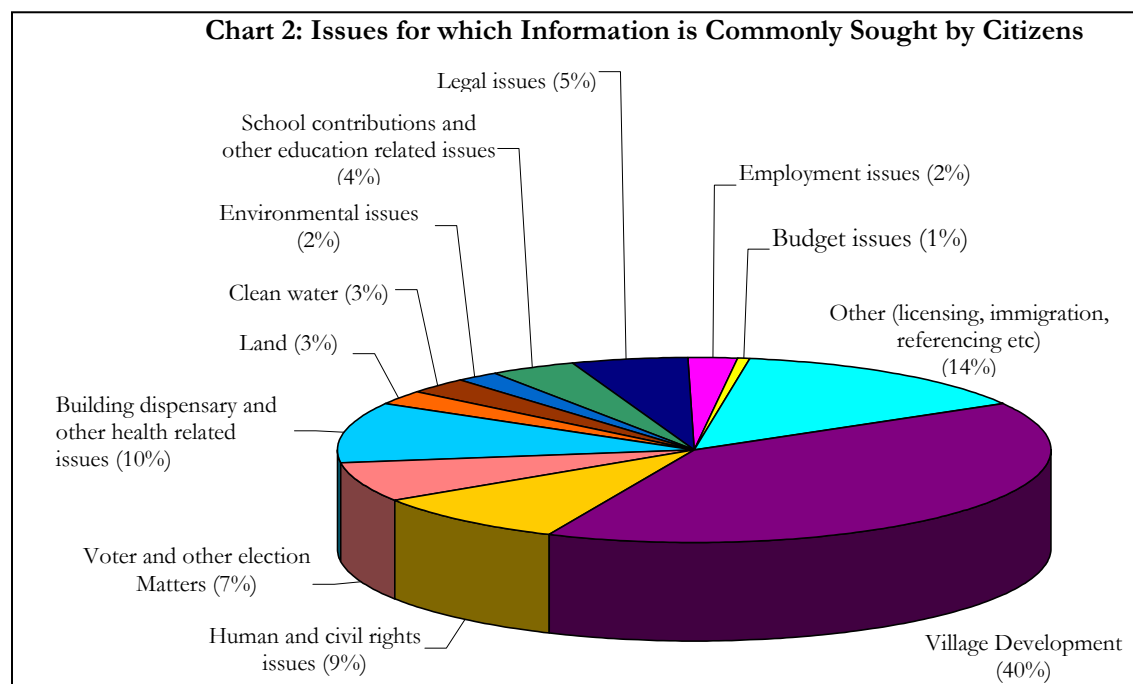


Other responses, although only from a few individuals, include: people are generally not used to requesting information; requesting information is “a man’s responsibility”; the village government has insufficient authority; and I am afraid to request for information. Nevertheless, as Table 5 indicates, the main reason for not seeking information is the lack of demand (need, interest, time) and less than 40 percent attribute it to supply problems (don’t know where to go, knowledge that I will not get it). Interpreting this data presents a challenge. At face value it implies that most citizens are ‘apathetic’ and ‘do not care’, though the factors that condition these attitudes are not clear. The authors of the Afrobarometer 2001 on popular perceptions of Tanzanians speculate as follows:

“...Tanzanians exhibit high levels of patience with the process of both economic and political reform. They appear to recognize that things may get even worse before they get better...Tanzanians express extremely high-levels of trust in each other as well as in their political institutions. In this regard, they differ from people in most other parts of the world and in other parts of Africa.” (Chaligha, A., Mattes, R., Bratton, M., Davids, Y. D., 2002)

Although Tanzanians have a high-level of trust in their political institutions, a significant percentage of respondents (10%) do not trust the responsiveness of Government to their requests or needs. This response appears to be based more on the respondents’ perception of Government’s response to their requests for information, and not on their actual experience of seeking information in the last year. Citizen confidence in non-governmental institutions may be even lower, as 33 percent of respondents stated that, from their experience, it was very difficult to obtain information from NGOs, faith organizations, and the private sector.

Information was sought on the following types of issues:



The three most common issues for which the respondents tend to seek information are village development, health-related matters, and human and civil rights issues. This gives an indication citizen’s interests and concerns.

The findings indicate that a small segment (14%) of citizens is eager to follow-up on government plans and activities geared at bringing about development in their respective areas. Despite the

low percentage, of those who sought public information in government offices, a large majority (85%) reported being able to get the information that they had sought. Again interpretation of this data poses a challenge. At face value it indicates that for those who seek it, information is largely available. As such supply of information may be less of a problem than is often assumed. At the same time, however, it may indicate that citizens are knowledgeable about what is available, and therefore only seek what they are likely to get.

Time taken to access information is an important factor because long delays can discourage people from doing so. Table 6 below shows the findings disaggregated by rural/urban residence and governmental/non-governmental sources:

**Table 6: Time Taken to Obtain Information**

(actual number of respondents in brackets)

| <b>Time</b>  | <b>Rural respondents</b><br>(information from<br>Government institutions) | <b>Urban respondents</b><br>(information from non-<br>government institutions) | <b>Overall<br/>Government<br/>Institutions</b> | <b>Overall non-<br/>governmental<br/>institutions</b> |
|--------------|---|--|--|---|
| 1–3 hours    | 63.6%<br>(28)   | 51.7%<br>(45)  | 55.7%<br>(73)                                  | 47.6%<br>(101)  |
| 4–7 hours    | 9.1%<br>(4)   | 4.6%<br>(4)  | 6.1%<br>(8)                                    | 19.8%<br>(42)   |
| 1–2 days     | 6.8%<br>(3)   | 10.3%<br>(9)   | 9.2%<br>(12)                                   | 17.5%<br>(37)   |
| 3+ days      | 20.5%<br>(9)  | 33.3%<br>(29)  | 29.0%<br>(38)                                  | 13.2%<br>(28)   |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(44)</b>  | <b>100%</b><br><b>(87)</b>   | <b>100%</b><br><b>(131)</b>                    | <b>100%</b><br><b>(212)</b>                           |

Findings show that just over half (56%) were able to obtain the information they had sought in less than three hours. However, in 29 percent of cases, it took more than three days to obtain information from government. It also appears to take a little longer to obtain information in rural areas, but fewer rural inhabitants reported it taking more than a day. These responses should be treated with caution, since no further analysis was made of the type of information requested or of what might constitute a reasonable amount of time required to obtain the information.

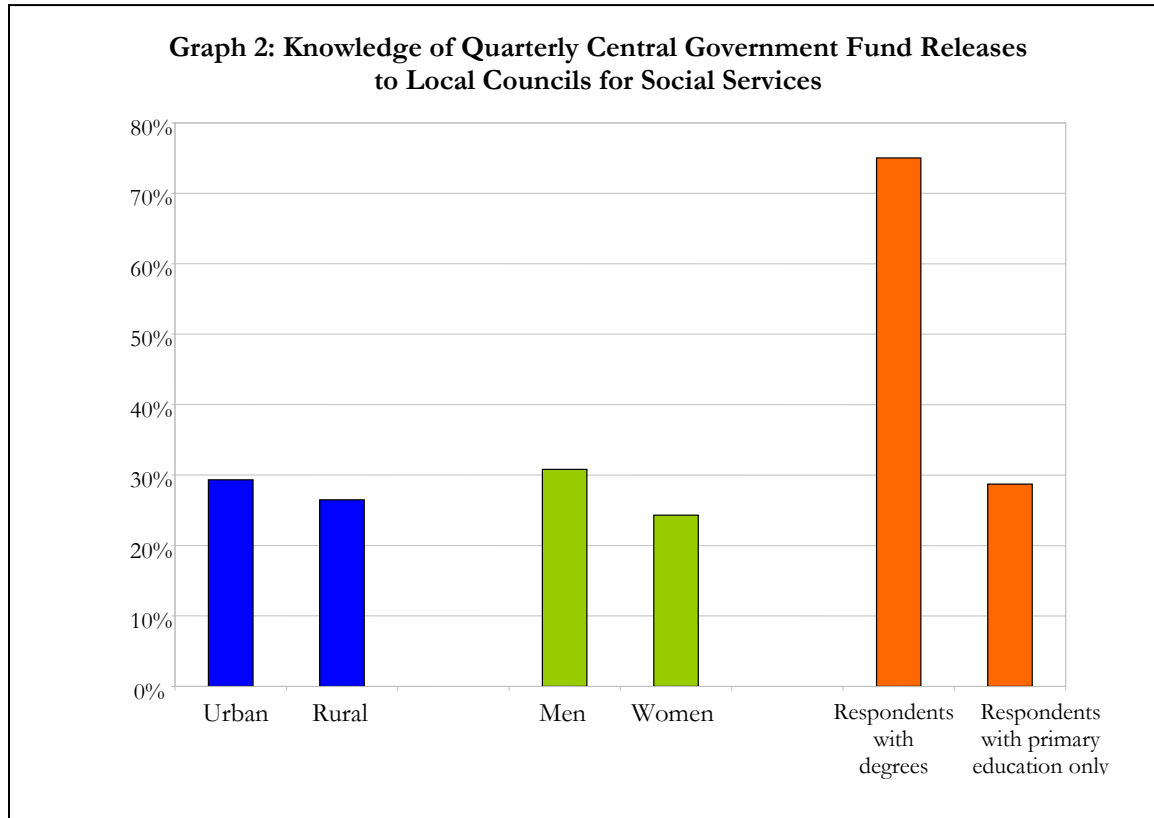
No significant differences are reported between Government and non-governmental institutions in time taken to obtain information. This is interesting since it is often assumed that government is more bureaucratic and less efficient than non-governmental entities. In fact, about one-third of respondents reported that it is very difficult to obtain information from both government and non-governmental institutions. Similarly, there was only a marginal difference between those who considered it easy to obtain information from government (15 percent) as compared to non-governmental entities (16 percent). When asked directly, 40 percent of respondents said that there was no difference in accessibility of information from governmental and non-governmental institutions.

### **3.3 Knowledge of Specific Government Policies and Programs**

A set of questions were asked to gauge people’s knowledge about quarterly releases of funds from the central government to local councils. These funds are allocated towards important services such as health, education, water and roads. Information about these fund transfers is

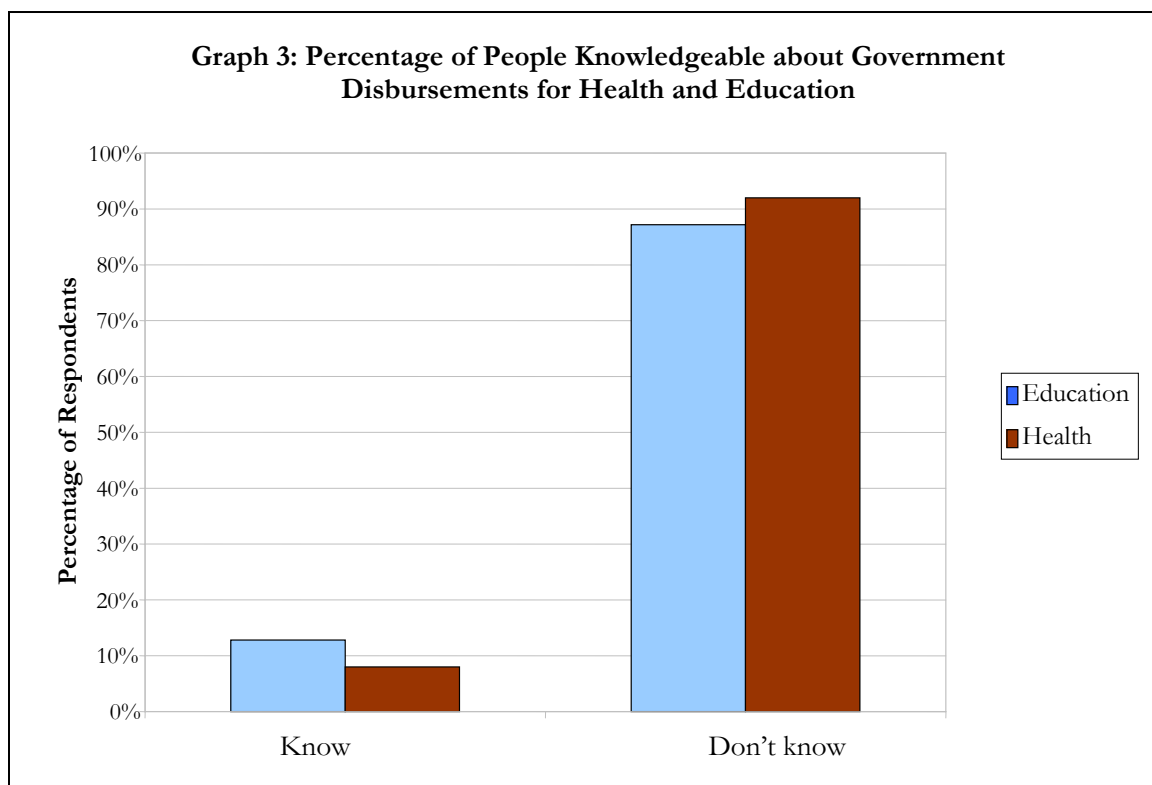
reported in several newspapers and is contained in circulars that are meant to be posted in public places and discussed in local government meetings.

However, the poll found that a large majority (73%) of respondents said that they did not know that the central government disbursed funds to local councils every three months. Graph 2 below disaggregates the data by sex and rural-urban divide:



Slightly more urban (29%) than rural residents (27%) are informed about the quarterly release of funds from the central government to local councils. Moreover, more men (31%) than women (24%) are knowledgeable about these disbursements. However, these differences are not particularly large. In contrast, level of education is a more significant factor. Respondents with degrees were more knowledgeable about financial transfers (75%) as compared to those with primary education only (29%).

The lack of information is more pronounced when respondents are asked about amounts of funds released to education, health and road sectors in their respective councils: Only 13 percent and 8 percent of the respondents said that they knew of the amount disbursed by the central government to their councils for education and health services, respectively, as shown in the following graph:



These findings show that, with exception of highly educated people, the large majority of Tanzanians do not know about the existence of these transfers, let alone the specific allocations for health, education or other sectors. Financial transparency at the local level, which is a core objective of ongoing local government reforms, is far from being realized in practice. As a result, most people are not in a position to follow-up on the use of these funds, to contribute ideas on their optimal use at local level, or to monitor their effective management.

This may be explained in part by the lack of demand factors as discussed above, or reluctance by local government authorities to make this information regularly available. In any case, these findings demonstrate that more work is needed to make information about financial transfers widely known, and to present information in a manner that is both easy to access and understand.

In contrast, more respondents were aware of where to obtain information about the revenue and expenditure of the service units, such as schools, dispensaries/health centers and village government. Just over half (54%) reported ability to access information at this local level. Among those who knew, sources included the school head teacher's office and members of school board, the Ward Education Coordinator, a ward councilor, and other village government officials. It could be argued that availability of information at this level is more meaningful than district aggregates, since it is more relevant to know, for example, how much money my school gets than the education budget for the district. However, the inability to link district and service delivery level information makes it difficult to assess whether intra-district allocations are made in a fair, equitable or complete manner.

Interestingly, with regards to financial records, more respondents knowledge of where to obtain school financial records (54%) than village government records (48%) and health (22%). These data, presented in Table 7 below, show knowing where to obtain information on health funding is particularly problematic. The relatively higher levels of information available about education

may be an indication of specific attention to public disclosure of funds in the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP), the promotion of school committees and related civil society activity to promote the same. In contrast there does not appear to have been a similar initiative in health. This may also explain why health-related issues were reported as the second most common reason for which respondents visited Government institutions to request information.

**Table 7: Respondents' Knowledge of Sources of Information about the Revenue and Expenditure of Schools, Health Centres and Village/Neighborhood Governments**

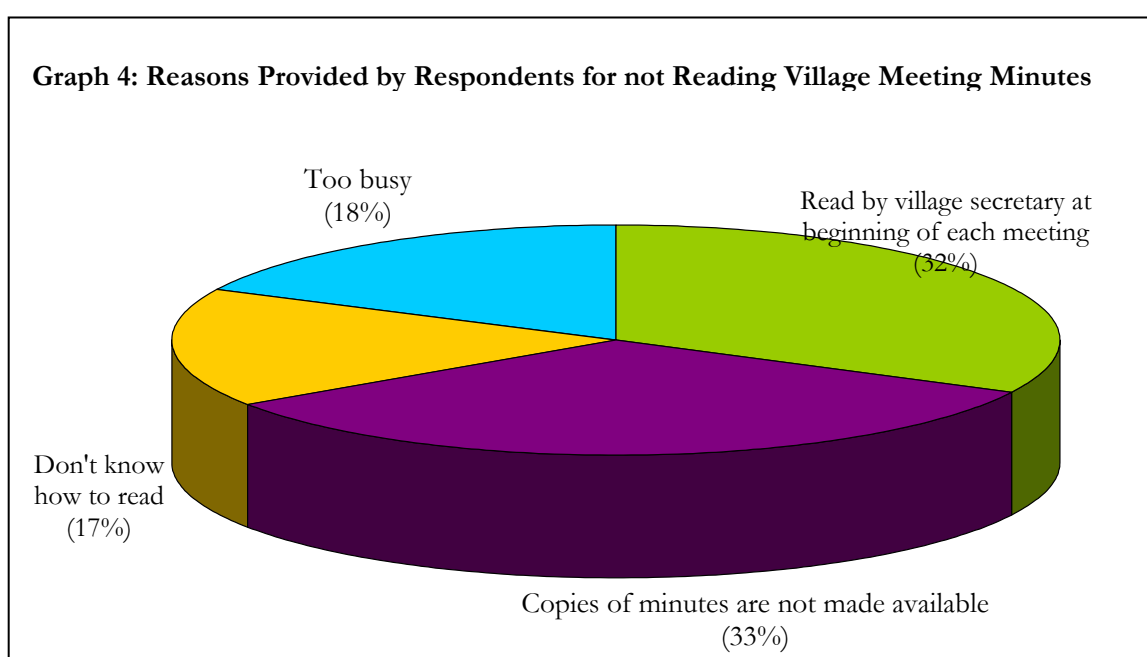
(actual number of respondents in brackets)

| Response          | Schools                      | Health Centres               | Village/Neighborhood Governments |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Knowledgeable     | 54.0%<br>(565)               | 21.9%<br>(229)               | 48.8%<br>(510)                   |
| Not knowledgeable | 46.0%<br>(481)               | 78.1%<br>(817)               | 51.2%<br>(536)                   |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100%</b><br><b>(1046)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(1046)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(1046)</b>     |

### 3.4 Participation in Village/Mtaa Meetings

Village/mtaa assembly meetings are important avenues for people to express their views and concerns on issues affecting their lives. They are open to all adults, and as such provide a forum where direct democracy can be realized, and where accountability and transparency in village government activities can be enforced. About 56 percent of respondents reported that they had attended the last village assembly meeting. Additionally, more than half of all respondents reported that their last general meeting was held in the year 2005. This shows that, in many places, village general assembly meetings are held as required.

The less than half who had not attended village meetings provided several reasons for not doing so. These included: being away on travel (25%), being busy (23%), not informed (20%), sickness (9%), not interested (3%), and husband attended (2%). Graph 4 shows reasons given:



Furthermore, meeting reports (minutes) are important records that show deliberations and decisions made. Availability and accessibility of minutes is important because they also provide participants with the opportunity to assess the extent to which agreed decisions have been implemented. The poll found that almost two-thirds (64%) reported that minutes were available. However, only one-third (34%) reported to have read village meeting minutes at least once.

Moreover, a clear majority of respondents (67%) percent have not been able to read the minutes even once. Several reasons were given for the lack of initiatives to access the minutes, including: the minutes are read by the village secretary at the beginning of each meeting (24%) and so there is no need for them to read them again; copies of the minutes are not made available, (24%); I am too busy (13%); and I don't know how to read (12%).

The study also sought to find out whether issues of revenue and expenditure are discussed at the village meetings and the importance placed by the community on their discussion. In response, 57 percent of respondents said that village government revenue and expenditure were discussed at their village meetings, and 66 percent indicated that they find this discussion at the village's assembly useful. However, about one-third of the respondents (33%) were of the opinion that this discussion is not useful at all.

**Table 8: Usefulness in Discussing Revenue and Expenditure of Village Government**

| Usefulness        | Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------------|------------|
| Very useful       | 445         | 65.8       |
| Not useful at all | 221         | 32.6       |
| Don't know        | 11          | 1.6        |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>677</b>  | <b>100</b> |

These findings raise questions about the extent to which financial data is discussed in a manner that is meaningful to citizens. It may be interesting to assess whether the discussion of revenue and expenditure is sufficiently detailed to be relevant and whether it addresses issues of 'value-for-money' expenditure. The quality of such discussion was beyond the scope of this study.

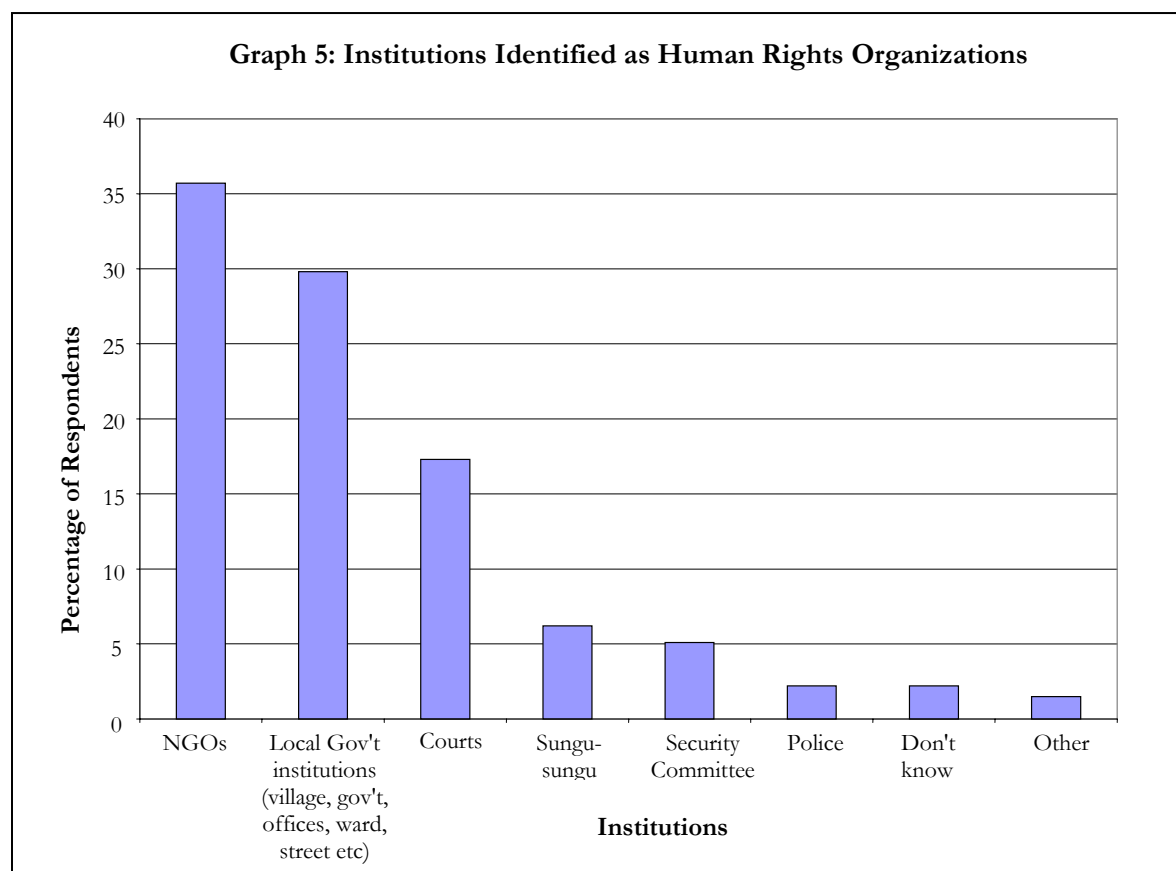
### 3.5 Presence of Human Rights Organizations

The presence of organizations that protect human rights in various areas is important, not only for increasing citizens' knowledge about their rights but also in acting as a deterrent to potential human rights violations and abuses. Respondents were asked to mention if there were any human rights organizations that they know to operate in their area. Over 70 percent of respondents said that there was no human rights organization active in their area.

Usually human rights work is characterized as being championed by CSOs, and is often seen as curbing the excesses of the State. It is therefore interesting, as Graph 5 shows, that a significant percentage (54%) of those who reported presence of human rights organizations in their area identified various government institutions as playing a role of protecting human rights. This may be the result of lack of understanding of the meaning of human rights, or that some government entities are playing the role of safeguarding human rights.

Another 36 percent mentioned NGOs and CBOs. Some of the organizations mentioned included: WAMATA, CWT, CHAWATA, ANGAZA, World Vision, Business Association,

TULEANE, CONCERN, Lindi Women Paralegal Aid Centre, Pride Africa, Orphan Protection Association, Kivulini and MANGONET.



### 3.6 Is an Access to Information Law Needed?

Given the importance of citizens' access to information, the poll set out to gauge respondents' opinion on whether or not a law should be passed to compel government officials to release information affecting citizens whenever requested. A large majority (84%) of respondents were of the opinion that Tanzania should have a firm legal basis to access information based on the following reasons:

- it a citizen's right to access public information (18%);
- it will ensure accountable leadership, good governance and transparency (18%);
- it is important/useful for citizens to know about issues that concern them (17%);
- it will help to speed-up development (9%).

For the 14 percent<sup>8</sup> that opposed the introduction of a law, the most commons reasons were that:

- did not give any reasons (37%);
- public information does not concern us and belongs to Government (17%);
- it is not going to help or change anything (14%);
- it is not important to make Government information public (10%);
- some government information is not for public consumption/secret (7%);
- we do not have enough education (4%); and
- the problem is not the law, but bureaucrats (3%).

<sup>8</sup> 2.1 percent of the respondents say they did not know.

## 4. Conclusions and Policy Implications

This poll was conducted nationwide and is based on the responses of 1,050 randomly selected Tanzanians. The findings show that a large majority of Tanzanians (79%) have the means to access information through mass media (radio, television and newspapers). However, many Tanzanians are still not aware or informed about the policies, laws, practices, and programs that shape their daily lives. There are several potential explanations for this disjuncture. Printed material such as pamphlets, circulars used to convey public information regarding policies, budgets and programs are not as effective as mass media. Information is conveyed in exceedingly technical language that makes it difficult to access and understand.

Observations from the poll show that a significant proportion of respondents, 45 percent, do not know where or how to access information on the policies, laws, and programs of the Government; and that 86 percent of respondents have not sought to access public information from Government in the last year. The most common reason provided by respondents for not requesting information was simply that they prefer not to, with the general sentiment being that the information belongs to the Government and is not appropriate for public consumption. However, of those who reported requesting public information from Government, 84 percent of respondents were successful in obtaining information from Government. This may mean that people are aware of what is available, and are only likely to ask when they are likely to obtain information.

Contrary to perceptions among some, civil society organizations are not better at providing information. The general opinion, shared by more than 40 percent of the respondents, is that there is no difference between government and non-governmental institutions in relation to the accessibility of information, despite the fact that both sides advocate for and promote the principle of transparency.

This may perhaps be the reason why 84 percent of the respondents believe that an access to information law should be introduced in Tanzania. The next most common set of suggestions put forward by the respondents was for sources of information to be brought closer to communities, in terms of simplification/popularization, communicating through the working language of the community, and establishing identifiable one-stop access points.

Overall there are no simple explanations for the poll findings. Nevertheless, the image that emerges is of a largely unchallenging and unengaged public. This is confirmed by the poll responses that public information is Government “property”, and that there is no importance in citizens accessing this information for they are not supposed to get involved in Government matters in the first place. People can only assess access and performance in relation to their expectations of what Government and other institutions ought to do. At the same time the underlying level of basic trust and expectations among many Tanzanians of their governance system may affect their information seeking and follow-up actions. Or as authors of the Afrobarometer 2001 put it: “[Tanzanians] may ... be drawing sophisticated distinctions between well-meaning institutions and their disappointing performance...”<sup>9</sup>

The upshot of this is that while strengthening the supply side of information is needed, the harder challenge is to understand and deepen public demand for information. This is perhaps the most fundamental challenge to Tanzania’s evolving democratic culture today.

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<sup>9</sup> Chaligha, A., Mattes, R., Bratton, M., Davids, Y. D. (2002): *Uncritical Citizens or Patient Trustees? Tanzanian’s Views of Political and Economic Reform*, Afrobarometer Paper No. 18, 2002



This study provides a useful base for further work and reflection. The following next steps are proposed for consideration:

1. A Government led review and revision of its information and communication policies, in partnership with civil society, which will also involve considering the practicality of introducing an access to information law.
2. Strengthening and enhancing the role and capacity of village/mtaa governments in providing information, as it appears that it is the most commonly referred to and relied upon institute at the local level.
3. Popularize and publicize Client Service Charters as an instrument for producing greater accountability and responsibility on behalf of both public institutions and citizens.
4. Greater use of radio in sharing public information, and in the discussion of the value of access to information.
5. Finalize translation of this report into Swahili for broader distribution and place it on the websites of the organizations that implemented the study.
6. Distribute this study widely among Government and others for discussion of the findings, possible causes and potential solutions; hold public debates on the same.
7. Further analytical work on the dataset of this study to understand some of the potential contradictions in the findings, complemented by further qualitative work to better understand motives for citizen expectation and actions.
8. Leading CSO networks to reflect on these findings and explore development of a code of conduct to foster transparency and information sharing.

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## Appendix 1: List of Sampled Districts

| <b>Districts</b>     |              | <b>Region</b> |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Dodoma Rural      |              | Dodoma        |
| 2. Arusha Urban      |              | Arusha        |
| 3. Rombo             | (urban ward) | Kilimanjaro   |
| 4. Korogwe           | (urban ward) | Tanga         |
| 5. Mvomero           |              | Morogoro      |
| 6. Kisarawe          | (rural ward) | Pwani         |
| 7. Temeke            | (urban ward) | Dar-es-Salaam |
| 8. Lindi Urban       |              | Lindi         |
| 9. Masasi            |              | Mtwara        |
| 10. Namtumbo         | (rural ward) | Ruvuma        |
| 11. Iringa Urban     |              | Iringa        |
| 12. Chunya           | (rural ward) | Mbeya         |
| 13. Manyoni          |              | Singida       |
| 14. Urambo           | (rural ward) | Tabora        |
| 15. Sumbawanga Rural |              | Rukwa         |
| 16. Kibondo          |              | Kigoma        |
| 17. Shinyanga Rural  |              | Shinyanga     |
| 18. Muleba           | (rural ward) | Kagera        |
| 19. Ilemela          | (urban ward) | Mwanza        |
| 20. Musoma Urban     |              | Mara          |
| 21. Babati           | (rural ward) | Manyara       |

## Appendix 2: Demographic Profile

**Table 9: Age Distribution**

| Age Category | Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| 18 – 25      | 190         | 18.2       |
| 26 – 35      | 306         | 29.3       |
| 36 – 45      | 272         | 26.1       |
| 46 – 55      | 143         | 13.7       |
| 56 – 65      | 81          | 7.8        |
| 65+          | 52          | 5.0        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1044</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Table 10: Education Levels**

| Education levels     | Respondents | Percentage |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|
| Madrassa             | 12          | 1.1        |
| Adult Education      | 12          | 1.1        |
| Primary Education    | 653         | 62.5       |
| Secondary Education  | 161         | 15.5       |
| High School/Colleges | 29          | 2.8        |
| University Education | 4           | 0.4        |
| No formal Education  | 165         | 15.8       |
| Others               | 10          | 1.0        |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>1045</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Table 11: Levels of Income per Day**

| Income Levels (Tshs) | Respondents | Percentage |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|
| 0-500                | 515         | 49.6       |
| 600-1,000            | 181         | 17.4       |
| 1,100-2,000          | 150         | 14.5       |
| 2,100-3,000          | 70          | 6.7        |
| 3,100-4,000          | 39          | 3.8        |
| 4,100-5,000          | 25          | 2.4        |
| More than 5,000      | 44          | 4.2        |
| Don't Know           | 14          | 1.3        |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>1038</b> | <b>100</b> |

## Appendix 3: Use of Means to Access Information

**Table 12: Listening to Radio**

(actual number of respondents in brackets)

|                         | <b>Female</b>               | <b>Male</b>                 | <b>Rural</b>                | <b>Urban</b>                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| More than 4 Times a Day | 26.6%<br>(102)              | 33.9%<br>(142)              | 28.8%<br>(133)              | 32.6%<br>(111)              |
| 3-4 Times a Day         | 44.0%<br>(169)              | 42.7%<br>(179)              | 34.4%<br>(159)              | 55.4%<br>(189)              |
| Twice a Day             | 29.4%<br>(113)              | 23.4%<br>(98)               | 36.8%<br>(170)              | 12.0%<br>(41)               |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100%</b><br><b>(384)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(419)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(462)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(341)</b> |

**Table 13: Watching Television**

(actual number of respondents in brackets)

|                         | <b>Female</b>              | <b>Male</b>                 | <b>Rural</b>               | <b>Urban</b>                |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| More than 4 Times a Day | 19.4%<br>(18)              | 17.3%<br>(19)               | 17.5%<br>(7)               | 18.4%<br>(30)               |
| 3-4 Times a Day         | 50.5%<br>(47)              | 53.6%<br>(59)               | 32.5%<br>(13)              | 57.1%<br>(93)               |
| Twice a Day             | 30.1%<br>(28)              | 29.1%<br>(32)               | 50%<br>(20)                | 24.5%<br>(40)               |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100%</b><br><b>(93)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(110)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(40)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(163)</b> |

**Table 14: Reading Newspapers**

(actual number of respondents in brackets)

|                         | <b>Female</b>               | <b>Male</b>                 | <b>Rural</b>                | <b>Urban</b>                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| More than 4 Times a Day | 19.0%<br>(27)               | 19.3%<br>(33)               | 9.9%<br>(13)                | 25.8%<br>(47)               |
| 3-4 Times a Day         | 26.8%<br>(38)               | 34.5%<br>(59)               | 19.8%<br>(26)               | 39.0%<br>(71)               |
| Twice a Day             | 47.2%<br>(67)               | 38.6%<br>(66)               | 54.1%<br>(72)               | 33.5%<br>(61)               |
| Never Reads             | 7.0%<br>(10)                | 7.6%<br>(13)                | 15.3%<br>(20)               | 1.6%<br>(3)                 |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>100%</b><br><b>(142)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(171)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(131)</b> | <b>100%</b><br><b>(182)</b> |