



Research Report 11/1

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# **Creating Space for Child Participation in Local Governance in Tanzania:**

## Save the Children and Children's Councils

By Meda Couzens and  
Koshuma Mtengeti

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RESEARCH ON POVERTY  
ALLEVIATION

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*Calling us in meetings is hard.  
Do you think they can take our opinion?*

Female 16 years, Temeke

*Working with local government creates attention in society on our rights which in turn makes the society listen to us... This shows our importance in the society and proves that we are the today's nation and not tomorrow's nation.*

Male 14 years, Temeke

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# List of Abbreviations

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| AC      | African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)   |
| CC/CCs  | Children's Council/Children's Councils                          |
| CDO     | Community Development Officer                                   |
| CRC     | United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)     |
| DC      | District Commissioner   |
| DED     | District Executive Director                                     |
| JCURT   | Junior Council of the United Republic of Tanzania               |
| LG/LGs  | Local Government/s  |
| LGA     | Local Government Authority                                      |
| UNICEF  | United Nations Children's Fund                                  |
| MCDGC   | Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children          |
| MKUKUTA | Tanzanian National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty |
| MKUZA   | Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty           |
| NGO/s   | Non-Governmental Organisation/s                                 |
| REPOA   | Research on Poverty Alleviation (Tanzania)                      |
| TMC     | Tanzania Movement for and with Children                         |
| URT     | United Republic of Tanzania                                     |
| WEO     | Ward Executive Officer  |
| ZACA    | Zanzibar Association for Children's Advancement                 |

# Executive Summary

## **The Child's Right to Participate**

Children's right to be heard – or the right to participate – is one of the core rights of children. It is internationally and nationally recognised and protected. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (AC) both protect the right of children to be heard, and Tanzania has ratified these two important international instruments. At the national level, the Tanzanian Law of the Child Act 2009 recognises that children have the right to participate in all decisions concerning them. Thus, the right applies to all contexts of a child's life, including family, school and the wider community. Children, therefore, possess the right to participate in how their communities are governed by local authorities. Making the right to participate effective, however, is challenging because of the deep-seated views held by adults with regards to the low or limited status and capacity of children.

The National Strategies for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA on the Mainland, and MKUZA on Zanzibar) further indicate that, amongst other things, child participation is a tool to achieve good governance and state accountability. In accordance, the Tanzanian national government has shown its commitment to institutionalise child participation in governance by creating the Junior Council at national level. The government has also undertaken to extend the councils to lower administrative levels around the country. This legislative and policy position has not been, however, matched by an equally committed implementation, although efforts are currently underway (with assistance from UNICEF) to draft a national strategy on child participation.

## **Study Objectives**

The current study focuses on the participation of child-led organisations – children's councils (CCs) supported by Save the Children – in local government processes. The main objectives of the research were to establish how the children's councils function, whether they engage with local authorities, what has been the impact of such engagement, and what factors facilitate or inhibit such collaboration. The research was undertaken in the hope that some of the lessons learnt will help children, local governments and interested organisations to set up child-led organisations which can contribute meaningfully to the running of their communities.

## **Methodology**

This research was an exploratory qualitative study. Focus group interviews took place with members of children's councils in three research sites: in Dar es Salaam (Temeke district), Zanzibar (Mjini Magharibi) and Lindi (Urban and rural). Semi-structured interviews were also held with children who were not members of the councils, as well as with Save the Children officers, local government officials, and representatives of the Ministry for Children, Gender and Development. Additional documentation was collected to complement the data gathered through interviews. Ethical clearance was obtained and the researchers ensured the confidentiality of the participants.

## **Principal Findings**

### ***Structure and Functioning of the Councils***

The ways in which the three children's councils were created varied; in Lindi and Zanzibar the government contributed to the process whilst in Temeke it did not. A constant element was the involvement of Save the Children as an organisation able to sustain the process financially and through its expertise. Although initiated by adults, the children's councils are child-run organisations; children have taken full ownership. The members of the councils are elected by children; adults may occupy advisory positions. All children (persons below the age of 18) may become members of the councils, and seats are reserved for most vulnerable children if they are not elected in the normal course of the elections. The councils do not have permanent funding and they fundraise for each activity. The most consistent source of funding has been Save the Children. Local authorities have also supported the councils financially, but on an inconsistent basis arguing the lack of available funds. To the credit of the government, children reported consistent logistical support by local authorities.

Children identified adults as significant actors in the functioning of the councils. Four main adult roles were identified by this research: adults as partners in the creation of the councils; adults as advisors; adults as supporters in the functioning of the councils; and adults as gatekeepers. The most significant adult role for the functioning of the councils is played by the councils' guardians. Most often these guardians are appointed from amongst local government officers, thereby creating a formal link between the children's councils and the local governance structures. Depending on the status achieved by the councils, the guardian is appointed by the local government or is elected by children. Their role is complex, ranging from advice to the children's councils, facilitation of their meetings and advocacy on behalf of children with other local government structures. Despite several positive aspects regarding the appointment of the guardians, some concerns were raised by children. They referred to some guardians lacking interest in the councils as well as a lack of accountability mechanisms for the guardians, which resulted in abuse of power on occasions.

### ***Engagement with Local Government***

The study identified a number of ways that local government officials interacted with children's councils, including:

- Provision of advice or logistical support;
- Supervision of elections;
- Capacity building and training in children's rights;
- Occasional invitations to the councils to attend local government meetings;
- Addressing of children's requests to assist in solving problems related to children;
- Acting as intermediaries between councils and external organisations;
- Joint organising of events; and
- Occasional consultation with the councils in making decisions pertaining to children.



### ***Impact of the Children's Councils at the Local Level***

The impact of the children's councils is significant. They have made children's problems more visible at local government level through their lobbying and advocacy. Local government officials have been made more aware of the challenges faced by children and, as a result, children's access to services has been facilitated. The consistent link between the local government and children's councils has also made communication between the two much easier, and the councils' access to information held by the local governments is facilitated. Occasional consultations with children do occur, and the collaboration between local governments and the councils results in enhanced protection of children. The association of the councils with local government has worked to legitimise them in the eyes of the community as valid child representatives and their intervention has led to local governments accepting their responsibilities towards children.

### ***Challenges faced by the Children's Councils in their Participation in Local Government Processes***

Interviews with participants revealed some serious challenges in the participation of the councils in local government processes. There is a lack of clear guidance for guardians on how to perform their function regarding the councils, and this has led to tension at times between guardians and the councils. Children are not always taken seriously and there are suspicions on behalf of children that some local officials may use the councils to gain political capital. Some children felt that their councils were marginalised by officials who gave priority to other matters, while some guardians perceived some council members to be arrogant. This might suggest the need for memorandum of understanding between the councils and the guardians, which lays down the rules of conduct for both parties. The lack of capacity within local governments to deal with children's matters was also seen as a challenge.

Traditional views regarding the subservient position of children in Tanzanian society was identified by all categories of respondents as a barrier to the meaningful engagement of the councils with local governments. Consultation with children is a very rare occurrence, which contrasts with the eagerness of children to involve adults in their work, and the view expressed by guardians that children should be consulted in decisions affecting them. Of concern was that the support granted by local governments to children's councils was often dependent on the personal commitment to children's causes by the official in charge. Although this has produced isolated positive results, it defeats the purpose of institutionalising child participation, which assumes a generalised commitment to the councils by local governments around the country. Another warning signal is the events-based approach to child participation by local governments, rather than a constant and sustained initiative.

### ***Factors that help or hinder collaboration***

Factors facilitating the collaboration between councils and local authorities included:

- The availability of financial and moral support from NGOs;
- A good relationship between children and high-ranking district officials;
- The positive attitude towards citizen's participation by officials;
- The clarity of roles and responsibilities of adults in relation to the councils;
- The commitment of local officials to create councils;

- The existence of an official specifically responsible for children's issues;
- The supervisory role of the district council; and
- Local governments taking responsibility for children's issues.

Other factors associated with good collaboration were the participation of local governments in the setting up of the children's councils and a high frequency of meetings between the two entities.

Among the factors inhibiting the collaboration between children's councils and the local governments, respondents mentioned the following:

- Lack of funds;
- Lack of political will to allocate a budget for child participation ('high-ranking officials tend to ignore it'); and
- The attitude of adults (both parents and officials) which tends to equate child assertiveness with unruly behaviour and 'egoism'.

Traditional views which perceive children as unable to contribute to adult decisions are another barrier to child participation. All adult respondents indicated this as a barrier. The confusion regarding the coordination of the councils also creates challenges in developing relations between local governments and councils.

To improve the collaboration between the councils and the local governments, respondents offered a number of suggestions:

- A better understanding by the children's councils of the role of the local government and its functions regarding the accommodation of child participation;
- Better awareness by local officials of children's rights;
- Education in children's rights for parents and community members;
- The councils to be invited to contribute to adult local government meetings;
- The need to balance adult support and the independence of the councils; and
- Increasing the opportunities for children and officials to work together.

The role of Save the Children in supporting the councils deserves special recognition. Save the Children has provided training and capacity building to the members of the councils; assisted the councils in drafting essential documents, such as the constitutions; and provided financial support and safe spaces for children's meetings. Save the Children has been a resource organisation for both the councils and the local governments. Despite such strong support for the councils, the organisation's representatives have emphasised that the councils do not 'belong' to Save the Children and the government should take more responsibility for their functioning.

## Conclusions

The councils are genuine child-led organisations, which establish their agendas independently of adult intervention. They are empowered organisations which are able to interact with local governments directly, without constant adult mediation from Save the Children. The councils have earned the respect for their independence by both local governments and Save the Children. It is commendable that local governments have accepted a certain degree of responsibility towards children's councils, agreeing to provide the guardianship of the councils and logistical support. The guardians are easily accessible to children, which facilitate frequent communication. One concern is, however, that these officials are generally low-ranking in the local hierarchy, and thus have limited power to influence decision making or advocate for children. This suggests that in order to acquire sufficient leverage at local level, the councils need to establish closer ties with higher ranking officials who have the power to drive the development process and raise the profile of the councils. The participation-friendly approach of the officials who came in consistent contact with children suggests that knowing more about children and their capabilities could result in a more inclusive decision making at local level.

More needs to be done by the local governments to support the children's councils. An over-reliance on Save the Children for supporting the councils endangers the councils' sustainability should this organisation decide to cease programs in particular local government areas or change its intervention focus. Lack of clear delineation of responsibilities in supporting the functioning of the councils between local governments and Save the Children has sometimes caused confusion for the councils and the adults involved in their support. This needs to be addressed and the result be brought to children's attention. To stimulate local government's financial responsibility towards the councils, advocacy by guardians and the councils should be directed at the District Executive Director in order to secure funds for the functioning of the councils.

Children have consistently indicated the need for adult support and guidance, and they welcomed the opportunity to work with the councils' guardians. There have been at least two notable benefits to this relationship: a fluid relationship with local governments and recognition of the councils as legitimate representatives of children in their communities. However, some of the pitfalls in the relationship between the guardians and the councils suggest the need to develop accountability mechanisms for the guardians. The Regional Administration Act 1997 could be a starting point and the guardians could be made to report to the District Commissioner on how they perform their functions (section 14(3)(b) of the Act). A prerequisite would be, however, the clear establishment of guardians' duties, which should be incorporated into their job description. The results of this research confirm findings elsewhere that a confrontational approach to the relationship between child-led organisations and governments is less successful than a consistent dialogue. Thus, any system of accountability should be developed in a sensitive manner so as to avoid any antagonism between councils and their guardians.

Study data clearly indicate that children's councils contribute to service delivery to child constituencies by local governments. The councils identify children in need and link them up with government (and non-government) service providers. Through their knowledge of children's problems, the children's councils may serve as tools to monitor the implementation of children's rights at local level. The councils should be made aware of section 95(1) of the Law of the Child Act 2009 which states that members of the community have a duty to report on children's rights infringements and the local governments have a legal obligation to investigate such allegations (section 94(7)).

Their contribution to the fulfilment of statutory duties by local governments indicates that children's councils can be involved in certain municipal decision-making processes that are commensurate with children's age, maturity and understanding. The age of children should not be an excuse for their blanket exclusion from all decision-making processes. It would be possible, for example, through consultation with the councils, to establish the matters under the jurisdiction of local governments to which children could contribute.

Unfortunately, so far the councils have not achieved a status which guarantees that they will be consistently consulted or involved in local government decision making. Most often the contact between the two entities is initiated by children, which indicates that the local governments may not consider it worthwhile involving children in their work. As suggested by one child respondent, perhaps a way to make the councils a valued actor at local level would be for the national government to take the lead and increase their commitment to child participation. Reviving the Junior Council and giving it a meaningful role in policy making would be important initial steps

What is clearly positive is that children's councils have more leverage with local authorities than individual children, and thus have more chances of succeeding in advocating for children's needs.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations emerged from the findings of the study:

*For the government (local and central)*

- Enhance the understanding of children's rights by local government officials, parents and communities;
- Undertake an assessment of local government powers concerning children in order to establish which decisions should involve children;
- Create mechanisms for involving children in decision making that affects them at local level, taking into consideration the evolving capacities of the child. These mechanisms should be developed in collaboration with children and NGOs with experience in facilitating child participation in local governance. In designing such a system, the decision has to be made whether child participation at local government level will be incorporated into current adult structures or a new structure created. The current research has not elicited sufficient information on the suitability of involving children in adult meetings or adult structures. Thus no recommendations can be made in this regard. The position of the children elicited by this research is that they are in favour of being included in adult meetings. However, a decision can only be made after careful consultation of all stakeholder and careful consideration of pros and cons of any suggested approach;
- Ensure that children have sufficient access to information. In creating mechanisms for child participation, LGs need to consistently provide children with relevant information so they can form their views and keep children informed of the outcomes of their contribution;

- Develop an accountability framework for the guardians of the councils;
- Institutionalise the children's councils so that participation is not left at the discretion of officials;
- Revive the support for the Junior Council at national level to increase the impetus for supporting the councils at local government level.

#### *For children's councils*

- Improve the understanding by children of the functions and competencies of local government authorities;
- Develop follow-up mechanisms so that the outcome of children's contribution is monitored;
- Stimulate the council guardians to act as children's advocates within the local structures;
- Broaden the contact with local government officials so that the councils become more visible and they do not rely exclusively on the guardians to promote the councils;
- Create links with senior local officials, where such links do not exist, who may influence decisions at local level and promote the prioritisation of children's interests, including child participation;

#### *All stakeholders*

- Create opportunities for local governments and adults generally to work together with the councils. As an experienced NGO, Save the Children could perhaps initiate this process by suggesting ways in which cooperation could materialize;
- Obtain a balance between the involvement of the adults in the functioning of the councils and the independence of the councils. Developing an accountability mechanism for the guardians of the councils should contribute to achieving this;
- Clarify the roles of local governments and Save the Children in supporting the councils. A tripartite consultation – children's councils, local governments and Save the Children – could perhaps clarify this aspect and facilitate more effective functioning of the councils.

The most significant policy recommendation of this research is the need for the government to fast-track the institutionalisation of child participation in local governance, which means, more specifically, extending the councils throughout the country and providing clear guidance on the place which the councils are to occupy, the involvement of adults, and the responsibility of the government and civil society in their operation.

# Introduction and Background

This study focuses on child participation at local government level. The main purpose of the research is to explore a model of child participation in local government as developed by Save the Children in Tanzania. The ultimate aim of the research is to identify and present the characteristics of children's councils which enable child participation at the local level and which can be replicated around the country.

Tanzania is in process of reforming its local government structures and adapting domestic laws to international instruments ratified by Parliament, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990 (AC). Both Conventions guarantee children the right to participation – article 12 of the CRC and article 4(2) of the African Charter – and create the obligation for state parties to make the rights of children effective.

Facilitating child participation is, therefore, a national and international obligation for Tanzania. Research worldwide – reviewed in depth below – indicates the benefits of involving children and young people in decisions affecting them. If an adequate space is created for children to participate, they offer meaningful input. There is increasing recognition that children can participate successfully in decision making not only in their immediate environments such as their families and schools, but also in their communities both at local and national levels.

However, research indicates that children's issues are still marginalised in Tanzania. Amongst the potential causes of this situation are:

- The assumption that investing in general development benefits children;
- Lack of awareness of the impact of policies on children; and
- Children being perceived as the responsibility of the household and not of the government.<sup>1</sup>

This marginalisation of children's issues can only be addressed if children are given "greater priority in the political economy", an issue which can only be achieved by raising the profile of children on the public agenda.<sup>2</sup> One way of achieving this is by supporting the active participation of children in their communities, thereby facilitating children's initiatives to advocate on their own behalf.

An enabling environment is needed for this participation to take place. Local authorities are the state bodies in closest proximity to children. Therefore, they are the first port of call in addressing some of the problems which confront children, and one of the forums which should accommodate their voices. However, the potential of local government authorities (LGAs) to address matters relating to children is neither fully realised nor adequately studied.<sup>3</sup> In the context of increased decentralisation of governmental functions around the world, including in Tanzania, more and more emphasis is placed on the role of local authorities in realising children's rights. It is essential, therefore, that children are not neglected in the process of decentralisation and that a strong case is made for child participation at local level.

<sup>1</sup> REPOA (2008a) at 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* at 1.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF and African Child Policy Forum (2006) contains a survey which refers to children's voices being heard at local governmental level, but it does not explore this participation. Research and Analysis Working Group (2008) includes child participation issues, but does not focus on participation in local governance.

This paper focuses on the model of community participation developed by Save the Children. The research has targeted both children and adults (NGO and local authority representatives) with a view of obtaining their insights into how best children can contribute to local governance. The study was carried out in three locations: Dar es Salaam (Temeke District), Zanzibar (*Mjini Mgharibi*) and Lindi (Urban and rural). The locations were chosen so as to gather data from communities with different socio-economic backgrounds and with different degrees of success in the implementation of the Save the Children model.



## Research Problem

This research explores the involvement of child-led organisations in local government processes in Tanzania, as experienced by children's councils supported by Save the Children. The essential issue to be explored is whether and how children and their organisations participate in the decision-making process at local government level.

This research is especially useful given the intention of the Government of Tanzania to scale up child participation in Tanzania.<sup>4</sup> A study of the Save the Children experience provides insight into the successes and the problems connected to the participation of child-led organisations in municipal processes.

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<sup>4</sup> One of the researchers has been involved in the drafting of a national strategy for child participation in Tanzania. The strategy is work in progress.





# Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to describe and analyse a model of child participation in local government in Tanzania by conducting research into the children's councils (developed by Save the Children) and their collaboration with local governments in Dar es Salaam (Temeke), Zanzibar (Mjini Magharibi) and Lindi (Urban and rural). The aim is to determine the characteristics of this model which facilitate the participation of children in local governance.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How do children's councils function?  
The research examines who initiated the councils; what is the involvement of adults; how the councils are constituted; what are their structures; and what are the factors facilitating and inhibiting their work.
2. Do children's councils engage with local governments and what has been the impact of this engagement?
3. What are the factors facilitating and the challenges to the participation of children's councils in local government processes?

# Legal and Policy Framework for Child Participation at Local Government Level

This part discusses the right to participation and, very briefly, the role of local governments in respect of children in Tanzania.

## 4.1 The Right to be Heard:<sup>5</sup> General Aspects

The right to be heard, the focus of this study, is protected by article 12(1) of the CRC and article 4(2) of the AC. It means that children have the right to express their views freely in all matters concerning them, and to have those views taken into account and given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.<sup>6</sup> The very general formulation of article 12(1) of the CRC – the article most often referred to as a basis for a child’s right to participate in decisions concerning him/her – indicates that the right of the child to be heard applies to all circumstances where a decision concerning the child is made. The right, therefore, applies to relevant decisions made in the child’s family, their school, the wider community (local, national and international), as well as through judicial or administrative procedures.

This study focuses only on participation in local government decision making. However, to establish the extent to which children may contribute to decision making at local government level, one needs to establish whether the local government has the legal mandate to make any decisions regarding children. This is an analysis which needs to be conducted in the context of each country. The international position is that local governments should contribute to implementing children’s rights and ensuring their protection. All government structures, including local authorities,<sup>7</sup> have the obligation to protect and promote children’s rights, including the right to participation. The CRC Committee has on numerous occasions stated that the best interests of children have to be taken into consideration in policy decision making at all levels, including local authorities.<sup>8</sup> UNICEF encourages the creation of a “local system of governance committed to fulfilling children’s rights”<sup>9</sup> by promoting child-friendly cities, i.e., communities where the CRC is implemented by the local government.<sup>10</sup> The reason for advocating this framework is the growing responsibility of local authorities in the well-being of their citizens as a result of decentralisation in many countries around the world.<sup>11</sup>

Creating mechanisms for ensuring that the voices of children are heard at local government level is all the more important because children cannot take part in elections, which are generally reserved for citizens aged 18 years and over. This age limitation applies both to voting in elections and running for elected office. This means that children do not have a direct influence in the selection of their community leadership and that, formally, children are not able to confer a political mandate. Article 12(1) of the CRC rectifies this situation by recognising that children have the right to be heard in a variety of settings, including their communities, and, implicitly, their leadership structures, the local government authorities.

The practical ways in which child participation at local government level can take place is not prescribed in the CRC and it is left at the discretion of those implementing this article. Children may participate at local government level either as individuals or as members of a children’s

<sup>5</sup> See Thomas (2009).

<sup>6</sup> Based on Lansdown (2001) at 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Riggio (2002) at 49.

<sup>8</sup> Price-Cohen (2005) at 373-379. See also extracts from concluding observations of the CRC Committee on the situation of Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, and Belarus.

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF (2004) at 1.

<sup>10</sup> The model can be equally applied to rural communities.

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF (2004) at 1.

group, as is examined by this research. Importantly, because children have special needs when it comes to participating in decisions concerning them, the decision-making process needs to be adapted to accommodate them.

Child participation is “the very essence” of the process of creating communities where the rights of children are respected.<sup>12</sup> There are compelling reasons to develop child and youth participation at local government level. Children may advocate for their own interests as governments or adults sometimes fail to consider children’s best interests in decision making.<sup>13</sup> The quality of decision making concerning children is enhanced by their participation. As put by the Committee on the Rights of the Child:

The views expressed by children may add relevant perspectives and experience and should be considered in decision making, policy making and preparation of laws and/or measures as well as their evaluation.<sup>14</sup>

Child participation is also an essential protective tool.<sup>15</sup> In addition, child and youth participation have benefits for children and young people as well as for the community.<sup>16</sup>

Despite being an internationally and nationally guaranteed right, child participation faces several barriers. “Traditional attitudes towards youth”<sup>17</sup> and adults’ attitudes – such as presumptions of incompetence or lack of experience, and/or fear of losing power over children and youth – pose a challenge to the implementation of this right.<sup>18</sup> Other barriers to participation include “organisational structure and institutional resistance”.<sup>19</sup> Involving children at local government level requires changes in the dissemination of information, structures and decision-making processes.<sup>20</sup> Autocratic leadership does not foster youth participation, which can also be hindered by adult rejection of youth participation.<sup>21</sup> Research also warns against manipulations of youth participation to suit those in power.<sup>22</sup> The Committee on the Rights of the Child also emphasises the dangers of tokenism and manipulation of child participation:

The Committee urges States parties to avoid tokenistic approaches, which limit children’s expression of views, or which allow children to be heard, but fail to give their views due weight. It emphasizes that adult manipulation of children, placing children in situations where they are told what they can say, or exposing children to risk of harm through participation are not ethical practices and cannot be understood as implementing article 12.<sup>23</sup>

In many cases, such as the situation in this study, children’s participation at local government

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* at 8.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations (2004) at 271.

<sup>14</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), para. 12.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations (2004) gives as examples the vulnerability of children exploited by adults or institutionalised children.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* at 274 – 279. Participation produces better decisions and outcomes; participation promotes the well-being and development of children and youth; participation creates commitment and understanding of democracy and human rights; participation protects young people; young people want to participate.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid* at 271.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid* at 284.

<sup>19</sup> Tsegaye (2006) at 43-44.

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF (2004) at 8-9.

<sup>21</sup> Tsegaye (2006) at 44-46.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid* at 49.

<sup>23</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), para. 132.

level is facilitated by non-governmental organisations. While this is a positive aspect because it facilitates the partnership between the government and the NGOs, the government has the main responsibility for creating an environment where child participation can take place. As put by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:

It is important that Governments develop a direct relationship with children, not simply one mediated through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or human rights institutions. In the early years of the Convention, NGOs had played a notable role in pioneering participatory approaches with children, but it is in the interests of both Governments and children to have appropriate direct contact.<sup>24</sup>

## 4.2 Child Participation at Local Government Level: The International Experience

As mentioned above, the focus of this research is on child participation at local government level through child-led organisations. Thus most of this section discusses international experiences on collective participation. Before proceeding with a description of a few success stories, it is necessary to emphasise that child-led organisations – children’s councils in this case – are not the only manner in which child participation at local government should or could take place. The Committee on the Rights of the Child warned that “these structures for formal representative participation in local government should *be just one of many approaches to the implementation* (emphasis added) of article 12 at the local level, as they only allow for a relatively small number of children to engage in their local communities”.<sup>25</sup>

Although the formation of child-led organisations should be promoted and supported,<sup>26</sup> this should not result in the exclusion from participation of children who are not involved in these structures.<sup>27</sup> Promoting child participation through child-led organisations should not result in an excessive focus on child leaders and the marginalisation of the participatory skills of all children and young people.<sup>28</sup>

The following paragraphs describe several successful models of child-led organisations from India and Brazil.

The *Bhima Sangha* is a union of child workers created in 1990 in the state of Karnataka, India, with the support of Concern for Working Children (CWC), a local NGO. In 2004, this organisation involved 13,000 children. *Bhima Sangha* has been created to enable working children to act collectively and contribute to decision-making processes affecting them. Acting collectively, children gained access to services otherwise not accessible on an individual basis (such as healthcare) and started advocating for the protection of child workers’ rights. More recently, the *Bhima Sangha* has moved from an ad hoc intervention to consistent involvement in decision making at village level. The accommodation of such involvement has been facilitated

<sup>24</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003), para. 12.

<sup>25</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), para. 127.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid* para. 128.

<sup>27</sup> An easy example is that of very young children who lack the ability of understanding matters such as representation or have not attained a stage in their development where they can be involved in such structures. These children too have the right to participate in decisions concerning them, but these formal structures are perhaps not an appropriate avenue. It was suggested that these children should be involved through their parents. See Bartlett (2005) at 37-38.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations (2004) at 286.

by the creation by the CWC in 1995 of local task forces, which function alongside the local government structures. The task forces consist of elected village representatives, local government officials, representatives of children and their parents, and a representative of the CWC. The president of the task force is also the president of the relevant local government structure. This ensures that child-connected matters raised at task force meetings are later discussed in the relevant local government structure.

CWC and *Bhima Sangha* have also created together the *Makkala Panchayats*, the children's councils, which run in parallel with the adult local councils. This process has marked the widening of the focus of *Bhima Sangha* from a primary focus on promoting the interests of child workers to promoting the interests of all children at local level. Children sitting on the *Makkala Panchayats* are elected; places are reserved for girls, working children, children in school and disabled children.<sup>29</sup> In the *panchayats*, children discuss the issues which affect them, which they want to raise with the task force. Children elect a '*Makalala mitra*' or 'friend of children' who protects the rights of children and supports children's advocacy efforts by acting on their requests.<sup>30</sup> Through *Makkala Panchayats* children have lobbied with the government for infrastructure development. For example, children lobbied for schools in three local areas. They established the number of children, the location of the schools and selected their managers. After the schools were built, children were involved in their monitoring. In other local areas, children lobbied successfully for foot bridges and water taps.<sup>31</sup>

Children also engage in research which they use to support requests which they direct to the local government. For example, after the first *Makkala Panchayat* elections, children have conducted a local survey of all persons below the age of 18 in their respective areas. The information so collected was used by children to establish their strategies and their lobbying with the local government structures.<sup>32</sup> Amongst the notable outcomes of children's participation in these *panchayats* are the building of a new school and a change in the attitude of the local government who started taking children's demands more seriously and started to respond to their concerns.<sup>33</sup> The positive aspects of *Makkala Panchayats* are that they are an ongoing structure, as opposed to a once-off process, which creates opportunities for children's input to be made at local government level; the connection with the task force ensured that children's input is fed into a decision-making forum at local level.<sup>34</sup>

Another example of a successful child-led organisation is the *Bal Sansad* (Children's Parliament) in Rajasthan, one of the poorest Indian states.<sup>35</sup> The *Bal Sansad* was created in 1993 by a social work research centre (SWRC) with the aim of informing children about political processes and allowing them to participate in matters concerning their lives. The members of the *Bal Sansad* are elected from amongst children in schools. The elected members form a parliament, which contains two parties. Children are trained in policy formulation, running free elections and the importance of exercising the right to vote. Parliamentary sessions take place once a month and during these sessions children make plans about their further actions. The sessions are open to

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<sup>29</sup> O'Kane (2003) at 21.

<sup>30</sup> O'Kane (2003) at 21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* at 22.

<sup>33</sup> Williams (2004) at 27-32.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid* at 41.

<sup>35</sup> Wyness (2001) at 201.

anyone. Child MPs are assisted by adult secretaries (employees of the SWRC), and they talk to parents about the importance of education as well as check school attendance by children and teachers. They are also expected to attend village committees and inform about problems facing children. Although the main focus of the *Bal Sansad* is connected to school, children are encouraged to look beyond that scope, to the issues facing children in the wider community. For example, a liquor store opened on the way to a village school which caused girls to drop out of school. During a meeting with the village leaders, the Bal Sansad members persuaded them to move the store outside of the village. Another successful action pertained to a school which was closed for political reasons. As a result of Bal Sansad lobbying local leaders, the school was re-opened.<sup>36</sup>

Another successful participatory experience is the Children's Participatory Budget Council (CPBC) in the city of Barra Mansa, Brazil. The creation of the CPBC was the result of an initiative of the municipality to engage children in municipal processes. Although the initial selection of members of the child secretariat created within the municipality was done by adults, based on a competition, the members of the CPBC were subsequently elected by children from amongst children between the ages of 9 and 15. The main objectives of the CPBC were to encourage the participation of children in municipal processes and to establish children's councils where children could discuss issues concerning them. Importantly, children were allocated a certain budget from the municipality, which they could use for child-related matters. Children received training in budget management, such as prioritising expenses and drafting projects. Some of the achievements of the project include preparing children for participation, equipping children with the knowledge necessary to control and monitor public expenditure, and allocation of the budget entrusted by the municipality to the CPBC. For example, the CPBC allocated money for repairs to schools, school equipment, improved playgrounds, sanitation, environment projects and dentist cabinets.<sup>37</sup>

A few features of these organisations deserve emphasis. The members in all three organisations are elected. In the cases of *Makkala Panchayats* and *Bal Sansad*, although their initial focus was relatively narrow – child workers and education respectively – the engagement in community matters has broadened the sphere of interest and action of these organisations to include all issues affecting children. Adults play a significant support role in the formation and the support of these structures. Bal Sansad and the CPBC were adult-initiated, while the *Makkala Panchayats* were the result of collaboration between children and adults. While the *Bal Sansad* and *Makkala Panchayats* have autonomy from local authorities, the CPBC functions within the local government. The type of support most often given by adults consists of training, capacity building, advice, and, in some cases, financial support.

In terms of interventions within their communities, child-led organisations have achieved some notable outcomes. They give children more negotiation and bargaining power in relation to authorities.<sup>38</sup> Many child led-organisations are more successful in advocating for children's interests than adults. As put by one child, “[w]e have been able to influence our local governments and are involved in planning for our villages. Now we have found solutions that did not seem possible before we had our own organisation and link structures”.<sup>39</sup> All three

<sup>36</sup> Bernard van Leer Foundation (1999).

<sup>37</sup> Guerra (2002).

<sup>38</sup> O’Kane (2003) at 42.

organisations have managed to influence local government processes, either by obtaining services for children or by managing a portion of the budget of a municipality. They are a space where children can express their views freely. They have a significant educative role, educating children and adults about children's rights.<sup>40</sup> They are also places where children learn about democratic processes and prepare to become active citizens.

A common feature of all three organisations is their good relationship with the local government. In a comparative study of five types of child-led organisations in South Asia, Williams found that confrontational methods of engaging with authorities, such as demonstrations, protests and petitions, have been less successful in persuading the government to implement policies pertaining to children. Organisations which have moved beyond a confrontational relationship with the authorities have been more successful in influencing municipal processes.<sup>41</sup>

In all three cases discussed above, mechanisms were in place for children's concerns to be heard at local level. There are certain advantages to the institutionalisation of child participation or having structures which accommodate child participation in adult-run local government structures. Institutionalisation guards against changes at political level – if a child-friendly politician is removed, the structures created to accommodate children's voices should then continue to function.<sup>42</sup> As indicated by Williams, one-off contacts with decision-makers (such as demonstrations or addressing them as problems occur) are time consuming. Once the particular problem raised is addressed, the channels of communication between children's organisation and the decision-makers tend to close. When the next problem occurs, the channels of communication have to be re-created, and given the reluctant attitude of some adults, this might be a frustrating process.<sup>43</sup>

Amongst the factors facilitating the participation of child organisations in policy processes, Williams identifies:

- The 'receptivity and sympathy' of authorities;
- The support of NGOs;
- NGOs promoting a participatory approach in their support for children's organisations;
- The good name acquired by some child-led organisations which facilitated their dialogue with authorities; and
- A clear focus of the child-led organisations in creating a space for policy dialogue with authorities.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Nagaraj Kolkere, Founder President Bhima Sangha, 1996 as cited in O'Kane (2003) at 43.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid* at 8.

<sup>41</sup> Williams (2004) at 43.

<sup>42</sup> Bartlett (2005) at 37-38.

<sup>43</sup> Williams (2004) at 40.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid* at 44.

Amongst the factors hindering the participation of child organisations in local policy processes, the same author mentioned:

- Adult and cultural resistance to the idea of child participation;
- The danger that the leaders of children’s groups will become more and more involved in advocacy, and lose touch with what is experienced by children at ground level; and
- The fact that children grow out of the age categories enabling them to be members of child-led organisations also means that there is a constant need for selection and training of new members.<sup>45</sup>

### **4.3 Child Participation in Local Government in Tanzania**

Child participation in decisions concerning children is not a new idea in Tanzania. It was acknowledged in President Nyerere’s *Education for Self-Reliance* (1968), which advocated for the involvement of children in productive activities and related decision-making processes as a tool of developing self-reliant, critical and inquiring young people. Unfortunately, no structures or policies had been created at that time to give more details about how Nyerere’s vision of child participation should be implemented.

More recently, the right of children to participate in decisions concerning them has received statutory recognition in section 11 of the Tanzanian Law of the Child Act 2009 which reads:

A child shall have a right of opinion and no person shall deprive a child capable of forming views the right to express an opinion, to be listened to and to participate in decisions which affect his well-being.

The formulation of this section is wide enough to make the provision applicable to local governance, in matters concerning children. This overarching endorsement by the government of child participation at local government level is confirmed by a set of policies and other initiatives reviewed below.

To establish in what matters children can participate at local government level, it is necessary to identify what decisions concerning children local governments in Tanzania can legally take. Local governments can do anything that is not prohibited by law or is under the jurisdiction of central government.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid* at 45.

<sup>46</sup> REPOA (2007a) at 5.



## The Structure of Government in Tanzania

For an understanding of the structures within which the participation of children and their organisations can take place at local government level, it is necessary to briefly outline the different structures of the government in Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar.

In Mainland Tanzania, the highest executive organs are the President and the National Government. The national legislative organ is the National Assembly. These central government organs have jurisdiction over the entire territory of Tanzania. Tanzania Mainland is divided in 7 zones (Zanzibar constitutes one zone), which are further divided into 26 regions (5 in Zanzibar). The regions are headed by Regional Commissioners appointed by the President. The regions are divided in 139 districts councils and municipal town councils. The executive officials at district level are the District Executive Director (DED) and the District Commissioner (DC). Both officials are appointed by the President. The DED is an integral part of the local government and has control over district funds. The DC is a representative of the central government at local level and as such is not a part of the local government. Lower units of local government are the wards, whose executive official is the Ward Executive Officer (WEO), and the mtaa (streets) in urban areas and villages in rural areas, whose executive official is the Village Executive Officer (VEO).

In Zanzibar, the national executive power is shared by the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar and its president. Zanzibar constitutes one zone of Tanzania, which is further divided in 5 regions headed by Regional Commissioners. The regions are sub-divided into 13 districts headed by DCs and DEDs, 141 wards where the executive power is exercised by councillors. The wards are divided into 355 shehias, where the executive power is exercised by the Shehas.

Few legal provisions regarding local authorities and children currently exist in Tanzanian law. A 1994 report of the Law Reform Commission of Tanzania (LCRT) pointed out a few areas, such as childcare facilities,<sup>47</sup> community education<sup>48</sup> and enforcement of compulsory school attendance of the children enrolled.<sup>49</sup> Part VIII (Support services for a child by the local government authorities) under the new Law of the Child Act 2009 contains more provisions regarding the responsibilities of local governments towards children. The local government authority has a duty “to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child within their area of jurisdiction”.<sup>50</sup> The official responsible for fulfilling this duty is the social welfare officer, assisted by any other officer as determined by the LGA.<sup>51</sup> LGAs have the duty to assist in the reconciliation between children and their carers,<sup>52</sup> to keep a register of the most vulnerable children (MVC) and give them the necessary assistance,<sup>53</sup> to provide assistance and accommodation to children who seem lost, abandoned or seeking refuge,<sup>54</sup> and investigate, together with the police, any cases of violation of children’s rights.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>47</sup> The Law Reform Commission of Tanzania (1994) at para. 96. It refers to the Day Care Centre Act 1981 (para. 98).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid* at para. 100 citing sect. 118(2) of the Local Governments (District Authorities) Act 1982.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid* at para. 81 citing sect. 118(2)(i) of the Local Governments (District Authorities) Act 1982.

<sup>50</sup> Section 94(1).

<sup>51</sup> Section 94(2).

<sup>52</sup> Section 94(3).

<sup>53</sup> Section 94(5).

<sup>54</sup> Section 94(6).

<sup>55</sup> Section 94(7).

The limited provisions with regards to children in the current statutes are supplemented by the following policies:

- *The Guidelines and Services for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) 1994* state that village governments/wards/streets are responsible for keeping records of orphans and for designing mechanisms to protect their property, draft by-laws to protect the interests of these children, and guide those who are willing to support children and orphans.<sup>56</sup>
- *The National Costed Plan of Action for Most Vulnerable Children 2008* indicates that local government authorities must collaborate with the central government in ensuring the protection of most vulnerable children.
- *The National Guidelines for Community-based Care, Support and Protection of Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2004* create obligations for supporting vulnerable children. Child participation is one of the operational areas of these Guidelines. This approach is also present in the *National Policy on HIV/AIDS 2001*.<sup>57</sup>
- *The Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labour* establishes the roles of local actors in combating child labour.<sup>58</sup>
- *The Youth Development Policy 2007* – which defines youth as people between 15 and 35 years of age<sup>59</sup> – requires local governments to integrate youth development issues at all levels.<sup>60</sup> The Policy recognises that there is a lack of participation of youth in decision-making bodies. The Policy vows the state's commitment to create mechanisms to accommodate youth participation at all levels, including local government.<sup>61</sup>
- The more recent *Child Development Policy 2008* reinforces the government commitment to promoting child participation by recognising that, according to their evolving capacities, children have the right to participate in decision making at community level. The Ministry for Community Development, Gender and Children (MCDGC) is entrusted with monitoring the implementation of children's participation rights.

From the above paragraphs, it follows that Tanzanian local governments have fairly wide powers with regard to children's matters. In all these areas of jurisdiction, local governments should involve children when making decisions affecting them.

Tanzanian legislation recognises the importance of citizen participation in local governance,<sup>62</sup> and children as citizens should not be excluded from this participation. Participation in governance has an important role in poverty alleviation. The Tanzanian National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) – popularly known by the Swahili acronym, MKUKUTA<sup>63</sup> –

<sup>56</sup> REPOA (2007b) at 7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid* at 16.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* at 28.

<sup>59</sup> The National Youth Development Policy defined youth as persons aged 15-24 years but the 2007 Policy extended the age range to 15-35 years.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* at 23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid* at 14.

<sup>62</sup> Pact Tanzania (2006) at 30 (referring to sect. 20 of the Local Government Laws (amendments) Act 1999).

<sup>63</sup> United Republic of Tanzania (2005) at 31.

identifies good governance and accountability as tools against poverty.<sup>64</sup> Amongst the strategies to achieve good governance and accountability is the focus 'on increased participation and representation of women, children, youth, people with disabilities and other vulnerable persons in all governance structures.<sup>65</sup> In Zanzibar, the Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUZA)<sup>66</sup> envisages an increase in the number of vulnerable people (women, youth, children and people with disabilities, according to para. 25) in decision-making bodies,<sup>67</sup> support for civil society to participate in democratic decision making,<sup>68</sup> and 'inclusion and participation in decision making'.<sup>69</sup>

As far as children's participation at local government level in Tanzania is concerned, the approach taken by the Tanzanian government seems to be the institutionalisation of child participation by supporting the creation of child-led organisations. In 2002, the government created the Junior Council which represents children's views at national and regional levels,<sup>70</sup> with the intention that similar structures will be created at ward and district levels. The success of this undertaking has been challenged by the CRC Committee, which expressed concerns that the Junior Council has not been accommodated in decision making at national and local level.<sup>71</sup>

Research conducted with *individual children* (and not with child-led groups, as conducted in this study) in Tanzania does not indicate a successful implementation of children's participation rights at local government level. A recent study revealed that only 23% of a sample of 509 Tanzanian children had their opinion taken into consideration by local government, while 46% never had their views considered.<sup>72</sup> This is an indication that despite government commitments, the right to be heard is not respected for most children. Children wanted to contribute to decisions concerning education, support for vulnerable children (including orphans and street children), infrastructure development, water conservation, environment, child abuse and exploitation.<sup>73</sup> When asked what expectations they have from the government, 39% mentioned better education facilities and more teachers; 38% mentioned care for vulnerable children; and 35% wanted respect for children's rights and children's opinions.<sup>74</sup>

A 2005 study on the participation in political processes of five child-led organisations in Dar es Salaam showed that child-led organisations had access to public meetings where state representatives were present and matters of public interest were discussed.<sup>75</sup> These organisations were also invited to participate in public festivities connected to children, and some were requested by authorities to prepare documents presenting children's views on certain matters. However, some of these organisations found it difficult to address state authorities due to bureaucracy and the marginalising attitudes of adults. The organisations which were more

<sup>64</sup> Alongside growth and reduction of income poverty and improved quality of life and social well-being. See *MKUKUTA* at 23.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar (2007).

<sup>67</sup> *MKUZA* at 92.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> There are plans to extend these councils to district, ward and village levels. See URT (2006) at 20.

<sup>71</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006), para. 29-30.

<sup>72</sup> UNICEF et al. (2006) at 34.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid* at 42.

<sup>75</sup> Larsson (2005).

successful relied mostly on personal contacts. Importantly, the child-led organisations initiated the contact with the state organs, which indicated that there was limited interest by the authorities to receive input from child-led organisations.

A recent study<sup>76</sup> focusing on children's views of education and their role in society found that when asked who listens to them, children 'overwhelmingly' indicated their families and relatives and informal interactions. Children did not mention being listened to by local government authorities. The study referred briefly to *baraza*, a 'semi-formal assembly convened in some schools',<sup>77</sup> as a forum for children to make their views heard within the school environment. But the study found that most of the schools examined did not have *baraza*, and in schools that did the selection of representatives appeared to be done by teachers. Interestingly, the children who most strongly mentioned that their school listened to them were pupils in a school in Shinyanga where there was an active children's parliament.

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<sup>76</sup> Research and Analysis Working Group (RAWG) (2008) at 24.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid* at 25 n 17.

# Methodology

The research has been designed as an exploratory, qualitative field study. It is an in-depth analysis of the children's councils in three communities in Tanzania, with the aim of identifying the characteristics of the Save the Children model which facilitate child participation in local government processes. The scarcity of information with regards to child participation in local governments justifies the exploratory character of the study.

## *Study Locations*

The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam (Temeke district), Lindi (Urban and rural)<sup>78</sup> and Zanzibar (*Mjini Magharibi*). Temeke district has a population of 771,500 (1,027 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>); 29% of the population live below the poverty line and 11% of children are orphans.<sup>79</sup> Lindi district has a population of 41,549 (165 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>); 18% of the population live below the poverty line and 11% of children under 18 years are orphaned.<sup>80</sup> Mjini Magharibi has a population of 391,002.<sup>81</sup>

The choice of these study sites was informed by preliminary discussions with Save the Children, who indicated that some children's councils were more active than others. Based on this information, the researchers selected two active councils (Temeke and Lindi) and one less active council (Mjini Magharibi). Data that reflected both successful and less successful implementation of the same conceptual model elicited more lessons on how to efficiently promote and support child participation at local government level.

## *Data Collection*

A case study approach has been adopted to describe and explain the functioning<sup>82</sup> of the children's councils and their relationships with local municipalities. This choice of methodology is justified by the 'availability of a special case that seems to merit intensive investigation'.<sup>83</sup> Applying this methodology has enabled the researchers to use a wide range of data collection methods and verify the data through triangulation, as described below.

Six focus groups were held with members of the children's councils in Temeke, Lindi and Zanzibar. In total, 48 children participated. The children represented 16 Temeke wards, 18 Lindi wards and 9 shehias of *Mjini Magharibi*.<sup>84</sup> The ages of the participating children ranged between 10 and 16 years, which reflected the ages of children involved in the councils. Although children as young as six years of age are involved in children's councils, the age limit for the participation in this research was slightly higher because of the complexity of the topics discussed. The researchers ensured gender parity within the group as well as representation of vulnerable children (orphans, disabled children, child labourers, street children, out-of-school children or other categories of vulnerable children as identified within the sites). Purposive sampling was used for the selection of vulnerable children, using the vulnerability category as the criterion. Non-probability quota sampling was applied to select the remaining children; the characteristics which guided this selection were gender and age.

<sup>78</sup> The Lindi district children's council consists of children from urban as well as rural areas.

<sup>79</sup> RAWG (2005) at 104-108

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> National Bureau of Statistics, URT (2003).

<sup>82</sup> Rubin & Babbie (2005) at 440.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid* at 441.

<sup>84</sup> A number of wards had two representatives who participated in the focus groups.

Eight interviews were conducted in each site with individual children. These children were not members of the council. The sample included orphans, disabled children, child labourers, street children and out-of-school children (one child in each category) as well as three other children who were selected randomly. The age limits mentioned above and gender parity were applied to the samples.

Four Save the Children officers involved in setting up or supporting the children's councils were also interviewed. A purposive sampling method was used in this case in order to identify the respondents with most knowledge and experience in supporting children's participation. In addition, interviews were conducted with an NGO representative in Zanzibar, a UNICEF Child Participation Officer and an ex-UNICEF Child Participation Officer.

A fourth category of respondents were the representatives of local municipalities. Purposive sampling was again employed so as to identify the respondents with the richest knowledge on the topic. In total, six local government officials were interviewed. Three officials from the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children (including the Director of the Children's Department) were also interviewed in order to obtain more information about the relationship between the children's councils and state authorities, especially at national level.

The focus group discussions as well as the interviews with individual respondents were conducted using interview guides. Separate interview guides were drafted for each category of participants. This allowed the adaptation of questions to the profile of each respondent group. For example, the interview guide for the members of the children's councils focused on matters pertaining to the organisation of the councils and their functioning, as well as on their work with local governments and their impact in decision making at local government level. The interview guides for the children who were not members of the councils focused on assessing the visibility and impact of the councils and whether the councils were representative from the perspective of this group. The interview guides for the Save the Children officers focused on the formation and the functioning of the children's councils and the support given by this organisation to the councils. The interview guide for local government officials focused on the role played by the municipality with regard to children's rights and respondents' experience of child participation in municipal processes.

To supplement information obtained through the focus groups and interviews, written materials were collected from children and Save the Children. These included: constitutions and work plans of the children's councils; previous evaluations of the councils, election training materials, pictures and PowerPoint presentations pertaining to the work of the councils and their collaboration with Save the Children.

### ***Data Analysis***

The researchers used thematic comparative analysis.<sup>85</sup> The themes emerged from the data.

Ensuring the validity of the results was done using a criterion developed by Kvale as cited by Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy – “validity as craftsmanship”.<sup>86</sup> This is ensured by a thorough evaluation of data and by conducting a “negative case analysis”. Once a certain relationship has

<sup>85</sup> Dawson (2002) at 115-117.

<sup>86</sup> Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) at 63.

been established by the researcher, he/she must return to the data and search for negative cases – cases which might contradict the relationship as initially established by the researcher.<sup>87</sup> For example, the report presents data indicating that in some areas children's councils have good relationships with the local governments, whilst in others the relationship is precarious. Similarly, some children have presented adults as significant barriers to child participation whilst others have emphasised the adults' enabling role.

The second method used to ensure the validity of the research findings was data triangulation, i.e., using two (or more) data sources to obtain information to answer the research question. If data from different sources confirm a certain finding, this increases the validity of the results.<sup>88</sup> As described above, the current study collected data from three sources: children, NGO representatives and government officials.

To further ensure the reliability of the results the researchers adapted the interview schedules so that the interviewees were only asked questions relevant to their experience. The risk of unreliability in data collection and analysis was also reduced by only two researchers being involved in analysis.<sup>89</sup>

### ***Approvals for the Study***

The researchers contacted the Tanzanian Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) to obtain research clearance. They were informed that research clearance was not necessary given that the study was associated with REPOA. The researchers also obtained ethical clearance from the National Institute of the Medical Research (NIMR). General ethical principles such as voluntary participation and informed consent, no harm to participants and anonymity/confidentiality were respected.<sup>90</sup> All participants were required to sign a consent form, which are safely stored with the data. Parents, guardians or caretakers of the children engaged by the researchers were also required to sign a consent form agreeing to the participation of the children in the study.

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid* at 65.

<sup>89</sup> Options suggested in Rubin et al. (2006) at 183.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid* at 71-80.

## 6.1 Functional Aspects of the Children's Councils

### *The Creation of the Children's Councils*

There is a certain degree of overlap between the initiatives which led to the creation of children's councils. In 2002, a group of children involved in the preparations for the UN Special Session on Children suggested the creation of a permanent body to represent the interests of Tanzanian children. Their initiative was supported by various NGOs,<sup>91</sup> UNICEF and the MCDGC. The Junior Council of the United Republic of Tanzania (JCURT) was thus created. It was envisaged that the council would establish offices in every ward, district and region in Tanzania.<sup>92</sup> Various NGOs were co-opted in the initiative of extending the children's councils throughout Tanzania, and, according to a Save the Children representative, local government authorities were instructed to collaborate with these NGOs for the creation of CCs in their respective areas.

The parties involved in this initiative entrusted the support and coordination of the JCURT to the Tanzanian Movement for and with Children (TMC).<sup>93</sup> According to MCDGC officials, the TMC lost momentum as the coordinator of the JCURT. As put by an ex-UNICEF officer, "too much depended on the commitment of the adult support". Currently, according to MCDGC representatives, the ministry coordinates the JCURT and its meetings.

The lack of coordination in the setting up of the councils across the country resulted in the different parties engaging in promoting child participation independently, without a co-ordinating mechanism.<sup>94</sup> Save the Children supported the formation of children's councils at district level in the areas where this research took place. The Temeke council started in 2001, before the governmental initiative, as a joint project of Save the Children and UNICEF. In Temeke, the LGAs became involved in the functioning of the municipal children's council in 2002, at the children's request. The Lindi children's council was created in 2007 as a joint initiative of Save the Children and the Municipal Council. In Zanzibar, the creation of the councils took place during 2007-2008 through the collaboration of Save the Children, the Zanzibar Association for Children's Advancement (ZACA) and Ministry of Labour, Youth, Women and Children's Development. The children from Temeke assisted in the setting up of the councils in Lindi and Zanzibar by sharing their experiences and helping with the election process.

Two important conclusions emerge from the above findings on the establishment of the children's councils. First, the CCs are adult-initiated structures over which children have taken ownership. Children argue that as the only child-led organisation available to them in their areas, the councils are essential for children to share their concerns and make their voices heard:

<sup>91</sup> Such as Save the Children (UK), Plan, World Vision Tanzania, *kuleana*, NNOC, YCIC, KIWOHEDE, ZACA (ZNZ), Dogodogo Centre, TENMET, Hakielimu, East and Southern Africa Network of Religions for Children.

<sup>92</sup> Section 1.4 of the Constitution of the JCURT.

<sup>93</sup> Tanzanian Movement for and with Children (background document obtained from UNICEF). This is an alliance comprising the Tanzanian government, NGOs, UNICEF and individuals committed to working for the improvement of children's lives.

<sup>94</sup> Data obtained from the MCDGC indicates that at the end of 2009, not all districts had junior/children's councils. The reasons, as indicated by a MCDGC representative are 'financial constraints; [lack of] prioritisation by district - it is not a priority in some of the districts to form CCs; lack of awareness of the importance of the right to participate as well as children rights in general in the certain districts'. Currently, the MCDGC in partnership with UNICEF are working towards reviving the Junior Council and preparing a participation toolkit which could be used to improve the capacity of children's groups to participate actively in their community.



Children's councils are much better compared to these organisations [child-focused NGOs], because the children's councils are the forum whereby the children meet in the absence of the elders/adults and discuss freely matters that face them on a daily basis. (Male 12 years, Lindi)

Second, there is support for creating children's organisations from both government and civil society organisations. As indicated above, the local governments have been partners in setting up children's councils in their jurisdictions.

### **Structure**

Children's councils are set up at ward and district levels. At street level, all children participate in elections to form a ward council; representatives of the different ward councils form the district council. Boys and girls are elected in equal numbers.<sup>95</sup> These representatives attend various meetings and disseminate the information to children in their respective wards and villages.

Children's councils are run by elected *children* office bearers, such as a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer. However, adults may be elected or appointed to advisory positions (see the Advisory Committees or the guardians of the CC).

The Central Committee, functioning at district level, distributes information to the wards and takes minor decisions for the council. It consists of the following members:

- Chairperson, who is also the chairperson of the children's district council, and a vice chairperson;
- Secretary, who is also the secretary of the children's district council, and a vice secretary;
- Treasurer and vice treasurer;
- Two most vulnerable children;
- Two members of the advisory committee; and
- Two special members.

The Central Committee is in charge of preparing the agenda for the general meeting and is a link between the children's council and the municipal council. All major decisions are taken, however, by the General Assembly, which consists of all child members of the children's councils in the district.<sup>96</sup> Each district CC has an Advisory Committee, which advises the councils on all matters before a decision is made. In Lindi, two of the members of the Advisory Committee are District Development Officers who have been elected in this capacity by the children themselves and can be fired if they do not perform their functions adequately.

<sup>95</sup> The Temeke district council has 24 boys and 24 girls. Lindi district council has 35 boys and 35 girls. In Zanzibar, shehia children's council has 12 girls and 12 boys.

<sup>96</sup> Children who are not members of the council can participate in the General Assembly but they cannot vote.

Children's councils in Temeke and Lindi function based on constitutions,<sup>97</sup> which were drafted by children following the model of the JCURT constitution. In December 2003, the JCURT approved guidelines for the creation of councils at regional and district levels.<sup>98</sup> These guidelines provide that the establishment of the CCs around the country should be made by the LGA in collaboration with NGOs and children's groups. The guidelines indicate CC members are elected. The guidelines institutionalise the relationship between local governments and the children's councils by providing that the District Commissioner is part of the District Guardian Group. The guidelines also state that children are the decision makers and adults can be appointed by children only to advisory positions.<sup>99</sup>

### **Membership**

Only persons below the age of 18 years may become members of the children's council. The members are elected every two years and elections are run based on materials prepared by Save the Children. Local government officials supervise the elections and provide capacity building to the elected children. As related by a Save the Children officer, election is the most democratic manner of selecting the council's members and gives all children an opportunity to be candidates for membership. Children embrace this position and some are proud of being able to select their leadership. However, there are cases where the members of the CCs have been selected by adults. This has negative implications for children's representation and their accountability to other children:

Since these children were chosen by their parents they didn't take the feedback of the meeting to other children in their respective areas. (Male 13 years, Temeke FGD)

According to the children interviewed, the criteria for being elected include literacy, good behaviour, being outspoken, and being informed on children's rights. To be elected, children also need to have a sense of responsibility towards other children. Children use an inclusive approach to membership; children with disabilities as well as other vulnerable children are represented. Reserved seats are ensured for vulnerable children if they have not been elected in the general election process.

The researchers observed that in certain meetings involving CCs, the councils were represented by young people who had already reached the age of 18. As a Save the Children officer noted, elections for CCs need to be better planned so that CCs cater for their intended constituency – children.

### **Functioning**

Children draft work plans, which establish their priorities for certain periods. Tasks are allocated according to the work plan and follow up on each issue is made.

Generally, children try to find solutions for their problems during ward meetings. If this cannot be achieved, children take the issues to local government officials at municipal/district level (Temeke) or to Save the Children (Lindi). The decision-making process within the councils is

<sup>97</sup> The CC in Zanzibar does not have a constitution.

<sup>98</sup> Save the Children (2007) at 5.

<sup>99</sup> See section 11.2 of the Constitution of the JCURT. Interestingly, although the mentioned section indicates that the General Meeting of the JCURT appoints the members of the Advisory Committee (the majority of whom are adults), there is little choice for children in terms of who should be appointed on that Committee, since the section indicates further who 'shall be appointed by the General Meeting'.

democratic and based on voting. Minutes are taken of meetings. The frequency of the meetings varies with the councils. In some wards, the meetings take place once a month while in others children meet every week. If the matter identified in the community requires allocation of funds, children draft a budget which is presented to the guardian of the council and, from there, submitted mostly to Save the Children and occasionally to the LGA.

### **Funding**

Children's councils do not have a permanent budget and, thus, children need to identify sources of funding for each of their activities. Children have expressed concerns about the inability of the CCs to reach their objectives due to the lack of consistent funding, which might affect the sustainability of the councils. As one child from Lindi said, 'The question is how are we going to assemble ourselves without any funds?'

Children identified two major sources of funding for their councils: Save the Children and the LGA. However, some activities are also funded through member contributions. According to the children interviewed, most often the money comes from Save the Children.<sup>100</sup> LGAs indicate that the lack of resources prevents them from supporting the CCs. This was confirmed by LG representatives who argued that there is no local government budget allocated specifically to children (or child participation).<sup>101</sup> All LG officials interviewed considered the lack of funds a barrier to the collaboration between CCs and LGAs. When funds have been secured by LGAs, it has been dependent on individual commitments to the councils and did not have a consistent nature:

[T]he previous District Commissioner supported [T]he councils to a large extent because he had the power to influence the District Executive Director to allocate a special budget for these councils. (Save the Children officer in Lindi)

In Temeke district, the budget drafted by the children's councils is sent first to the LGA not the funder.

The budget for funding purposes must pass through the municipality first even if they are not the ones that are going to fund the activities. They are the ones who link us with other organisations, so when it comes to funding, we cannot skip them. After all, they are in a better position of understanding the funding agencies more than we do. (Female 15 years, Temeke FGD)

It seems quite problematic that even if the LG is not the funder of the plans drafted by children that these plans still have to be submitted to the LG first. While children have considered this a positive aspect, mentioning that the LG have better knowledge of potential funders for children's plans, the concern raised by this procedure is that children's initiatives might be blocked, delayed or controlled by the LG.

More generally, there seems to be a lack of clarity regarding the roles of each organisation involved in supporting children's councils:

The central government must intervene to make sure that there is a clear coordination on children's councils. Right now in Zanzibar we don't know who is coordinating the children councils between Save the Children, ZACA and the Government etc. (LG representative)

<sup>100</sup> 'We come up with a budget and present it to the ward council, after which they end up at Save the Children for funding.' (Temeke)

<sup>101</sup> More recently apparently one of the municipalities has initiated an MVC budget.

Although the government has committed to support the CCs, no formal obligation exists for the government to fund the councils. The constitution of the JCURT, upon which the constitutions of individual CCs are based, mentions the following sources of income:<sup>102</sup> donations from individuals and organisations; other contributions in money or in kind from individuals and companies; investments and shares; and other legal sources. There is no mention of the government being a contributor to the financial survival and functioning of the councils. This raises questions as to the commitment of the government to support these forums of child participation. In the absence of other financial resources, the lack of direct government funding poses a threat to the sustainability of the councils.

According to MCDGC representatives, the central government allocates funds to the district community development, women and children offices. However, the manner in which these funds are spent remains at the discretion of the District Executive Director:

...the Ministry is allocating 7.2 million Tanzanian Shillings for every district (the department of community development, women and children), though the money goes to the district general funding account, so it can be used for any issue, not necessarily children and women. It depends on the wisdom of the DED.

This suggests that for resources to be allocated to the CCs, advocacy and lobbying should be directed to the offices of the DED. The councils' guardians should support this action. It should be prioritised by the councils as one of the important conditions for their continued functioning.

However, while the lack of funds may be a serious challenge to the functioning of the councils, it should not be assumed that it is an insurmountable barrier. As discussed below, the support provided to the CCs by LGAs is much more complex than mere financial assistance, and some forms of support do not require financial investment. It is essential therefore that the lack of funds does not become a standard excuse of the LGs in relegating their duties pertaining to the creation and support for the CCs.

### ***Purpose of the Council***

The purpose of CCs and their objectives are intrinsically connected to the issues which children perceive to be the challenges they experience. Important issues mentioned by the children participating in the study included:

- dropping out of school because of a lack of money;
- child labour and low school performance;
- parents neglecting to take their children for vaccination;
- parents not allowing their children to participate in the meetings of the CCs because of their lack of knowledge on children's rights;
- abuse of children by parents (especially step-mothers); and
- alcohol abuse by parents.

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<sup>102</sup> Section 15.

Many of these challenges are connected to parental attitudes. This explains the emphasis which children place on the education of parents and other community members on children's rights and their needs, as later indicated in this report.

The most important objectives of the CCs, as identified by the respondents:

1. *To be forums where children become informed and express their views*

Children's councils are spaces where children can express their views and where they find information about issues concerning them within the community:

We want all children to be involved in village issues concerning them, as well as ward and district level so that children can understand what is being done for their benefit. (Male 14 years, FGD Lindi)

2. *To help children acquire legitimacy as important actors at local level*

Through CCs, children can prove their collective worth to the community and gain legitimacy:

We also want to demonstrate to the public that children can participate in making key decisions in the community. (Male 12 years, FGD Temeke)

3. *To contribute to child protection by acting as representatives of children's interests at local level and advocating for their prioritisation*

Children's councils may enhance the protection of children's rights by making children's needs more visible and by advocating for the prioritisation of children's interests:

Children are a silent majority. In the council, they can make their voice heard...many rights are infringed because they can't explain their rights properly. (Save the Children representative in Lindi)

4. *To facilitate the access of children to services available within the community*

Children's councils already act as bridges between children in need and the services available for them:

Therefore, we do take the responsibility of taking the orphans who are out of school to the schools so that they can benefit from the support given to the other orphans in schools. (Male 12 years, FGD Temeke)

5. *To educate communities on children's rights and help create child-friendly communities*

Children's councils see as their core function to educate children and adults about children's rights and responsibilities. There is a strong indication in children's answers that they see education on children's rights as an empowerment tool necessary for protecting their interests:

Every child to know his/her rights. For example, there was a time when a boy was told to go to school and his sister to remain at home, washing dishes. This is not good because every child has a right to education. (Male 12 years, FGD Lindi)

6. *To contribute to creating child-friendly communities and child-focused leadership*

To ensure that their district and region are places where children's rights are respected, children want to change the attitude of some adults – especially parents – who create barriers to children using their rights. For some children, the work of the CCs contributes to creating a generation of future leaders more sensitive to children's issues:

We want to build the capacity of children so that they can properly understand their rights and their position when they grow up. This will help create a better future for other children and if they are going to be leaders they will be leaders who are child-sensitive and can take care of children. (Female 16 years, FGD Temeke)

7. *To monitor the implementation of children's rights at local level*

8. *To act as peer support for children in need*

**The Role of Adults**

A multitude of adults were identified by children as significant for the functioning of the councils, including Save the Children officers, parents, teachers and LGA officers. The involvement of adults is an essential feature of the CCs. A few adult roles have emerged from this research:

1. *Adults as partners in the creation of the CCs*

This research indicates that adults in Save the Children and the LGA officers contributed to the creation of the councils.

2. *Adults as advisors*

Save the Children and LGA officers are called on to provide guidance and advice but cannot make decisions for the CCs. A special category of adults involved in the work of the CCs are the guardians who offer mentorship and support to the CCs.

The presence of such guardians is required by the constitution of the JCURT.<sup>103</sup> A guardian may be a person or an institution that deals with children or a person with qualifications and reasonable contribution to community development.<sup>104</sup> At district or regional level, a community development officer (on the Mainland) or an officer who deals with women and children (Zanzibar) may be appointed by the CCs to act as an advisor of the council, if those persons are qualified and able to give such advice.<sup>105</sup> The respondents in this study indicated that, depending on the level of the CC, the guardian may be a community development officer (CDO), a ward executive officer (WEO) or the District Commissioner (DC). Notably, although the constitution of the JCURT allows for the appointment of civil society representatives or members of the community, in all sites the guardians seem to be appointed from amongst the LG officials. This is a position endorsed by children and Save the Children:

Save the Children supported the idea being very much aware that in order for children to access the best support and access to GoT officials in their daily activities, they needed to ensure that adults and officials have a role. (Save the Children representative)

<sup>103</sup> Section 16.

<sup>104</sup> Section 18.2.

<sup>105</sup> Section 16.5.

The level of children's involvement in the selection of the guardian varies with the sites. In Temeke, the guardian was appointed by the LG while in Lindi the guardian was elected by children from amongst local government officials.<sup>106</sup> This indicates that the CC in Lindi has achieved a higher status in their relationship with the LG.

The role of the guardians is complex. According to the interviewees, the guardians should ensure that the CCs exist in the area of their jurisdiction. They also act as facilitators for children's active participation in the councils and facilitators of their meetings. They fulfil an advocacy role with other LG officials, in order to ensure the recognition of the CC by these officials.

There are both positive and negative aspects regarding the appointment of LGA officials as guardians of the CCs. Some of the positive aspects include:

- creating a consistent link between the LGAs and CCs;
- making adult advice available to CCs;
- creating opportunities for officials to work with the CCs and understand children's capabilities; and
- giving legitimacy and increasing the credibility of the CCs within their communities.

However, some negative aspects have been emphasised by children. Sometimes, the LGA officials lack interest in children's work, resulting in tokenistic attention to CCs and attempts to undermine the CCs. Another concerning aspect is that, although the appointment of the guardians seems to be an essential requirement for the functioning of the councils, no accountability mechanisms are in place to hold the guardians responsible.<sup>107</sup> As one child in Lindi said, "The ward executive should be warned about their [guardians', other officials'] acts of neglecting the children's concerns".

### *3. Adults as providers of support for the functioning of the councils*

Save the Children and LG officers support the activity of the CCs by providing funds and logistic support or by linking the CCs with potential donors. Save the Children has provided capacity building, including training children on self-evaluation and the running of democratic elections. Teachers, parents and LGA officials assist with the running of the councils' meetings. In Lindi, teachers support the councils by keeping school children informed about the activities of the CCs and distributing letters to that effect.

### *4. Adults as gatekeepers*

Parents' and teachers' permission to be involved in CCs plays a decisive role in children's participation in CCs.

Parents are primary actors of the children's council. They do play an important role, especially by allowing their children to participate on the children councils. (Female 16 years, FGD Temeke)

<sup>106</sup> In this second site it was also stressed that children have rejected an initial appointment suggested by the LG and had the power to fire their guardian if he/she was not performing his/her functions adequately.

<sup>107</sup> As a child in Lindi said, 'My opinion is that the ward executive should be warned on their [other officials'] acts of neglecting the children's concerns.' (Female 14 years, FGD Lindi)

They [teachers] do have an understanding of our existence and they do provide permission for us to participate in the council. (Female 13 years, FGD Temeke)

In general, adult support to the councils is not sufficiently coherent. It is not always clear, for example, when the CCs should approach the LGs and when Save the Children. For instance, it seems that in areas where Save the Children is present, children's councils prefer to address this NGO rather than the LG. This might be due to Save the Children being more accessible to children and less formal. However, the achievement of many of the objectives of the CCs depends on the collaboration with LGs. Thus developing the collaboration between LGs and CCs is essential.

The involvement of Save the Children has been crucial for the work of the CCs. Save the Children has driven the process of setting up the councils and, more importantly, the organisation has provided consistent support to CCs. However, for a sustainable development of CCs throughout the country, LGs need to take more responsibility. Save the Children is not likely to remain in the current sites indefinitely and cannot undertake to support the creation of the councils around the country. Although the collaboration between LGs and Save the Children is a positive approach,<sup>108</sup> more clarity should exist on what type of support should be provided by LGs and what type of support is expected from NGOs.

None of the CCs in this research function independently of adult support. Children's councils depend, to different degrees, on their LGAs and Save the Children. Children do not perceive as oppressive the relationship with these adult organisations, but rather a partnership which enables their functioning. The relationship seems more open and direct with Save the Children than with the LG. This raises various questions about the commitment of LGs to perform their roles regarding the CCs. The dependency of the CCs on adults is not necessarily a negative aspect. As indicated in this research, by having the opportunity to collaborate with children, the LG representatives learn more about children and their capacities, an aspect which might improve the partnership between children and LGAs in the long term. The downside of this dependency is that the absence of committed adults might lead to the councils not being set up or working effectively.

## **6.2 The Engagement of Children's Councils with Local Governments**

The collaboration between LGs and CCs is a fundamental element for the functioning of the councils, the importance of which is underlined in the constitution of the councils. As one Save the Children representative remarked:

The Lindi children's council's constitution itself declares that Ward Executive Officers are the guardians of the children's council at ward level, the Community Development Officers are the overseers, and the District Commissioner is the district guardian of the council. Therefore, the set up itself – the structure, the constitution – facilitates the collaboration between children's council and the local government. Also the way in which children's councils organise their activities together with municipality and the reporting of each of their activities to the Ward Executive Officer makes them work closely. (Save the Children Representative in Lindi District)

<sup>108</sup> This collaboration allows for the two structures to complement each other's capacity.



Children themselves believe that they should be involved in making decisions at community level. They indicated that they have a good understanding of the child-specific problems within their communities, which, if considered by LGs, will improve the quality of decision making pertaining to children:

Children should be given the chance to participate in finding solutions to various problems existing in their communities...We are in a better position to understand the pain and the feelings of children as we are children. (Female 16 years, FGD Temeke)

In practice, the engagement between the CCs and the LGs occurs in the following ways:

1. *Local government officials provide the CCs with advice*

As discussed above, an essential feature of the CCs is the appointment of LG official as the guardian of the council. Children in all three sites mentioned contacting the CDO, WEO or Sheha/assistant Sheha (in Zanzibar) for advice and involvement in the CCs' meetings.

Before we make any decisions we take the action plan to the children's council guardian at the municipal level and when our guardian reads and accepts our action plan, she takes that forward and we can write letters to the children's organisations asking for funds for the implementation of the activities that we have planned. Here we can say our recommendations have been considered. (Male 15 years, Temeke FGD)

This indicates the importance of the collaboration between LGs and CCs in the functioning of the councils. One concern is raised, however, as the respondent indicated that children's initiatives need the approval of the council's guardian. While the guardian might have useful feedback and might be able to contribute to improving children's initiative, the danger is that the guardians might abuse their position and control children's initiatives. While this issue was not raised by the children themselves, it is worth pointing out that it is a departure from the constitution of the councils and might have potentially dangerous consequences for the genuine participation of children.

2. *Local government officials provide CCs with logistical support*

Children in both Temeke and Lindi, areas where CCs are active, confirm that LGs provide logistical support. Children's councils contact LG officials when they need venues for their meetings and, generally, the venues are provided. Other types of assistance include calling children for meetings as "they [LGs] are the ones who can easily get the children from the local areas"; photocopying, election materials and bus fares.

3. *Local governments ensure election supervision, capacity building and training on children's rights, and facilitate the meetings of the CCs*

The presence of LG officials in CC meetings is deemed essential by some councils:

Whenever we have a meeting, the WEO and Street office in-charge must be there. If WEO is not around the street officer in-charge or any parent should be there. If they are around, [they] should attend otherwise we will not conduct a meeting. (Male 12 years, Lindi FGD)

#### 4. *The CCs invited to attend LG meetings*

Invitations have been rather isolated occurrences. They were reported only by children in Lindi:

Mtama Ward in the Miyogeni Village where I live, they normally invite us because I live close to that village and I go there to represent the Council. (Male 13 years, Lindi FGD)

For example, in March the former District Commissioner decided to invite the children's council from Lindi District to the district meeting and four advisers of the children's council presented the recommendations from other children and the municipal council promised to work on our recommendations. (Male 15 years, Lindi FGD)

A Save the Children representative mentioned that in Zanzibar "if there is a meeting or forum that requires children to attend, the District office will invite a few children to participate in that activity".

#### 5. *Children require the assistance of LG officials in solving problems pertaining to children*

There are numerous occasions in which such requests for support have been made. They mostly relate to the re-integration of children in schools, support for vulnerable children and access to anti-retrovirals. This involves advocacy by LG officials on behalf of children; in some cases, it involves the guardian taking up the matter with other officials. Children rely on their council guardians to pursue the matters they raise with higher positioned LG officials:

If it's at the ward level, we organise a meeting of ward representatives plus other children who are not in the council in order to get their views. After reaching a consensus we forward it to the Ward Executive Officer who will take it to the district level and other places. (Male 15 years, Lindi FGD)

A child in Lindi mentioned, for example, that a ward executive officer invited the CC members to a meeting with the residents so that the council could be introduced to parents. As a Save the Children officer mentioned, "[i]n some places, ward officials collaborate very closely with CCs, for example, attend their meetings, take issues forward into their reports or visit to district HQ".

However, children's requests for assistance are not always successful:

We took them [MVC, orphans and out-of-school children] to the ward executive officer and explained their problems, and he promised to help them. It took time and we did not see any help given to them and we took another initiative of taking them to a certain school and asking the head teacher to help them and the head teacher agreed and they are studying in that school right now. (Male 14 years, Lindi FGD)

#### 6. *Local governments act as intermediaries between the CCs and external organisations*

For example, children in Temeke mentioned that correspondence to/from external organisations (including Save the Children) as well as budgets are submitted first to the LG before going to the intended organisation. This situation is not present in Lindi or Zanzibar.

#### 7. *Children's councils and LGs collaborate in organising events for children*

In both Temeke and Lindi, children stated that their involvement is actively sought by LGs in organising events for children, such as the Day of the African Child.

## 8. *Local governments consult children in making decisions pertaining to matters affecting them*

Only three such consultations were mentioned by study participants. A children's guardian in Temeke mentioned a consultation involving children on matters which should be prioritised by the LG. Children's council members had to choose between toilets, food and clothing, and they chose toilets. On another occasion in the same district, children were asked what could be done by the local government to improve children's lives. In this context, children complained about exam dates. The matter was taken up by the LG with education officials and the dates for exams were changed. Interestingly, in both cases the recommendations made by children were followed.

In Lindi, the CC was invited to a high level LG meeting, where children made recommendations for some of the problems experienced by children:

Apart from the meeting of District Consultative Council (where the District Commissioner, District Executive Director, and Heads of Departments attended) [there was no other consultation]. In this meeting, children were invited to submit their recommendations on various problems which are facing them. The children's council sat as a general assembly and wrote their recommendations and presented them in the meeting. They made recommendations on early pregnancy, malaria, vaccination, etc. (Save the Children representative, Lindi)

It is not certain to what extent the recommendations made by children in Lindi have been taken into consideration or acted upon by the local leaders.

### **6.3 The Impact of Children's Councils<sup>109</sup>**

One of the aims of the CCs, as suggested by children, is to enable their participation in matters concerning them at community level. This aim is given further support by the constitution of the JCURT, according to which one of the functions of the CCs is:

To develop and strengthen strategies for child participation in all matters pertaining to children affairs in all levels from the family level, community level, **local government level** [emphasis added], national level and international level.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>109</sup> These refer only to LG-connected outcomes. However, this research indicates that the community impact of the CCs extends beyond LGs. The members of the councils reported assisting other children by mobilising funds, offering psycho-social support to children in need and encouraging parents to access primary healthcare (vaccination). From a children's perspective, the main impact made by the CCs is the education of children and parents on children's rights. Children as well as adult respondents pointed out the positive impact which the participation of children in the CCs has on children as individuals. The involvement in children's councils equips children with the skills necessary to participate in community activities and engage with adults. Children's confidence has increased and they can engage easily with adults; they are conducting their own meetings and have started to produce a change in the attitude of communities towards children. Local government representatives in both Temeke and Lindi have noted a difference between the participation at local government level of children members of the CCs and children who are not members. LG representatives mentioned that children involved with the CCs are better equipped for participation at local government level because of their rights awareness and assertiveness. The participation in the councils has also increased the sense of responsibility of the members towards other members of their community. According to a LG representative, the members of the councils 'also feel responsible to help other children who are in need'.

<sup>110</sup> Section 4.1.

This research indicates a few positive outcomes of children's engagement with LGA officials:

1. *Children's councils have made children's issues more visible at LG level through advocacy and lobbying*

This results in LGs who are better informed about the needs of children in their jurisdictions.

Yes, it helped, because before the council the government did not know some of the problems facing children but now they know. However they have not started working on solving our problems and fulfilling our needs. (Male 16 years, Lindi FGD)

The [children's] council has made the government understand that there are children in their areas. The government has yet to give priority to children's needs but at least they are recognising the existence of the children in their areas. (Female 16 years, Temeke FGD)

The educational role which the CCs' intervention has on LG officials regarding children's matters was confirmed by a Lindi LG representative who stated that:

The participation raised awareness in both children and the local government: on the one hand the local government understood more the needs of the children and on the other hand children understood more their rights and their position in the local government.

However, while the CCs have been successful in raising awareness of the LGs in terms of children's problems, the members of the councils in both Temeke and Lindi have acknowledged that that this awareness has not led to the prioritisation of children's needs by the LGs.

2. *Local governments are aware of children in need, and, as a consequence, children have easier access to services*

Children's councils identify children in need and refer them to the relevant service providers. The LGA representatives in Temeke and Lindi mentioned that "CCs have assisted local government to identify children who are living in a difficult environment".

All categories of respondents involved in this study mentioned as one of the main achievements of the CCs the re-integration into formal schooling of children who have dropped out of school. The support provided by the LGs in this process has been essential.

You find [that] these children took their fellows to the local government offices so that they can get help for going back to school without paying the direct cost. (LGA representative, Temeke)

In our ward, with the assistance of the community development officer, we managed to recruit a primary school student who was over the normal age to start primary school. Through our efforts, the candidate started a special primary school crash program (MEMKWA). (FGD, Temeke)

Importantly, children who are not members of the CCs confirm the positive outcomes of the collaboration between CCs and LGs in terms of facilitating access to services by children:

[F]or example, when I wanted to rejoin school the children's council leaders introduced me and my intention to the ward executive. So, I am of the opinion that our interests are well represented. (Male 14 years, Temeke, In-depth interview)

### 3. *The communication between children and LG officials is easier*

The quasi-official status of the CCs enables children to have easy access to high-ranking officials in the LG:

*The fact that the District Executive Officer is their guardian facilitates the meetings between children and this official, as well as meeting with other high government officials, the acquisition of information and the creation of a good network.  
(LGA representative, Temeke)*

In Temeke and Lindi, the two active councils involved in this research, children mentioned often calling on LG officials to help with various issues pertaining to children. This could involve access to schooling, protection of vulnerable children, providing venues for CC activities, assistance with elections or with facilitating the meetings of the CC. While some challenges do occur (discussed below), the generally positive attitude of children suggests an ease of communication between the CCs and the officials. As described by children in Lindi and Temeke:

*We went to the Ward Executive Officer, the officer called the Ward Councillor and the head teacher from their school to see how they could help them [the children in need]... On the event of the African Child Day, we talked to the District Commissioner, who promised to get assistance soon so that those children could be able to go to school.*

*Once we have problems we call the community development officers and discuss with them to find the solution.*

This contrasts sharply with the situation before the CCs were created. According to a 13 year-old member of a CC from Lindi:

*They [LGAs] used to chase us from the football ground. They used to tell us 'you kids, we're going to break your legs'. But now things have changed.*

### 4. *Children have easier access to information from the LGs*

Members of the council in Lindi mentioned, for example, that they asked the LG to provide information on teenage mothers and this information was provided. Children in Temeke obtained information about orphans and other vulnerable children from LGs, who maintain records of such children.

### 5. *The CCs are occasionally consulted by the LGs*

As indicated in part 6.2 point 8 above, participants referred to three situations where the CCs were consulted on matters regarding children by LG officials.

6. *Better protection for children may be ensured through the collaboration between CCs and LGs<sup>111</sup>*

Children in Lindi reported that when one of the members of the CC fell pregnant, the matter was brought to the attention of the Ward Executive Officer, who pursued the matter in order for the perpetrator to be held accountable. Although the attempts of the WEO were not successful, children saw it as a positive aspect that their problems were taken seriously by the LG official.

7. *The collaboration with the LG legitimises the CCs as valid representatives of children in their communities*

Children in Lindi and Temeke stated that the collaboration with the LG resulted in a better response to the work of the councils by both adults and children. As related by children:

[W]orking with local government creates attention in society on our rights which in turn makes the society listen to us...Before the establishment of the children's council we were not getting this opportunity at all [the opportunity to stand in front of the adults and explain children's problems]. Therefore we really thank the municipality that right now we can be listened to. This shows our importance in the society and proves that we are today's nation and not tomorrow's nation. (Male 15 years, FGD Temeke)

They help us to call the people whenever we have meetings. When they call the people they respond positively because local government leaders have the power over people. This is very helpful to us. If we try to call the people for ourselves they might ignore us or not listen to us. (Male 16 years, FGD Lindi)

According to a child in Temeke, being connected with the LG has also gained the CCs more publicity and assisted them with networking.

8. *Local governments have accepted their responsibility towards children*

In the words of a Save the Children representative, the presence of CCs in communities has “led to the acceptance of child participation as a concept, and responsibility of LGAs [towards children]”.

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<sup>111</sup> Save the Children materials consulted for this research confirm this conclusion. Children in Azimio Ward in Temeke District have created, together with the ward office and ward police officers, a system of reporting child abuse which they brought to the attention of children.

## 6.4 Challenges Encountered by the Children’s Councils in their Participation in Local Government Processes<sup>112</sup>

### 1. *The absence of clear guidelines for council guardians in performing their duties*

In many instances children complained about the manner in which the guardians perform their roles. Complaints ranged from children not being taken seriously to LG officials abusing their position as guardians of the councils, for example, making decisions for the councils or taking financial advantage of the involvement with the councils:

We only choose her to be our guardian and not our decision maker. She doesn’t have the power of doing anything without consulting us. One day she told one of our fellow children’s council members that she will dismiss him from the council, and she completely forgot that we are the ones who had put that member in that position through our votes. (Female 16 years, FGD)

### 2. *Children’s participation not being taken seriously*

One child believed that their involvement with the LGs is just window-dressing:

[E]verything is displayed in their calendars...those seminar days and other things concerning the children are disclosed on their calendars to just please their Directors. (Female 16 years, FGD)

This view is shared by an NGO representative:

But in reality they [children] are not participating. They are used by the local government to cover themselves so that they can be seen as involving children in their activities. (NGO representative)

Another child mentioned that the ward executive officer does not share the schedule for municipal meetings with the CC but gives it to his child. This prevents the CC members from attending LG meetings. This attitude is confirmed by a Save the Children officer, who mentioned that when invitations for events are sent to officials for distribution to children, the officials send their children instead of those for whom the invitations were intended.

Children in both Lindi and Temeke feel that they are marginalised. They complained about their views not being taken into consideration, LG officials not attending CCs’ meetings when invited to do so, or waiting for very long to meet with officials, only to be told that the meeting cannot take place “because important people are coming”. As put by one child:

[C]alling us in meetings is hard, do you think they can take our opinion? It’s hard for them to work on our opinions... they don’t consider them’. (Female 16 years, FGD)

This is indicative of the lack of genuine commitment to child participation on behalf of some officials. When children are not taken seriously, there is a lack of trust in LG officials, which affects the collaboration between LGs and CCs:

<sup>112</sup> Please note that the researchers have removed any information from the direct quotations in this section any information which might lead to the identification of the interviewee. In this manner the researchers try to avoid creating any tensions between the participants, which might be detrimental to their future collaboration.

...ward councils are not cooperative. If you send a letter to invite members to a meeting, what they do is bring their children to the meeting and not the children's council members. And they don't even notify the members about the letter or invitation....But nowadays we do take the letters directly to the invited person. (Male 14 years, FGD)

Some of the members are not respected, taken seriously. For example, we wanted to conduct a meeting in Q ward. We wrote a letter to the WEO informing him of our visit and the intended meeting but when we got there we did not find anyone because he did not share the information. It is only when we got there that he started to call people. This thing did not make us happy. (Female 16 years, FGD)

### *3. The concern that the councils are used by local politicians to acquire political capital*

Some children are suspicious that their councils are used by LG officials "for their own benefits", and for political capital or even financial gain:

Another thing we don't like is when it comes to the issue of signing when we take money, let's say for a meeting. They only want us to put our signature and leave other columns empty for them to fill what they want. They may fill many days, or fill a different figure of money compared to what they gave us. (Female 16 years, FGD)

Frankly speaking, they did not call the meeting with a purpose of amending some sections in our constitution, but just a means of gaining personal benefits in the form of allowances. (Male 16 years, FGD)

### *4. The reluctant attitude of adults in general and LG officials in particular to assist the councils*

One of the main challenges to the functioning of the councils is the attitudes of adults, such as parents and government officials. As children related:

90% of the problems are brought by parents. When we face them asking for permission for our fellow members, some parents do not understand and never agree. (Female 16 years, FGD)

When we need some assistance from the government we experience bad responses which discourages us to the extent that we feel like not proceeding with the plan to help other children. (Male 14 years, FGD)

Although many positive aspects have been mentioned by children in their interaction with LG representatives, children in both Temeke and Lindi have experienced the reluctance of officials to work with the CCs.

On the same example of being mistreated by government officials...in our street/ward we planned to assist orphans but we faced a tough experience: the officials didn't even accept our greetings or want to listen to us. (Female 15 years, FGD)

The government officials chased us away claiming that our presence bothers them...if we want to stay and wait for the community development officer to come, then we have to wait for her under the tree outside the office. But we didn't lose hope... we went back to the same office about three times until we succeeded in conducting the election. (Female 14 years, FGD)



In some cases, a distinction was made between the attitude of the guardians and other officials working for the LG. A Save the Children representative mentioned that the obstructive attitude came from a person from LG office but not from the guardian. As put by a child in Temeke:

Sometimes you may find the ward secretary responds to you with abusive language; sometimes you find the chairperson who responds to you in a good manner.

In Zanzibar, the experiences of interaction between the CC and LG representatives were described by children mostly in positive terms. A significant weight was placed by children on the personal charm of their council guardian. A factor which needs to be considered is that the Zanzibar CCs have not started working on children's issues in their communities. This has reduced the opportunities of children raising demands or formulating requests addressed to the LG.

The attitude of the local officials can be a significant barrier to forming a children's council:

...he told us that he doesn't need a children's council in his municipality. Until now, X municipality does not have a children's council. (Male 16 years, FGD)

To help them, we wanted to assist them in forming the council. We prepared everything and Save the Children assisted on the budget issue. After all the preparations, in return we only got abusive language from the Z Municipal Director. For that reason, we didn't manage to fulfil our mission of helping children to form their council. (Female 16 years, FGD)

##### 5. *Tensions between the councils and LG officials*

In Temeke there seems to be some tension between the members of the CC and the LG officials. Two community development officers (one at district level and one at ward level, who was also the guardian of the council) mentioned that the 'arrogance' of the members of the council is a challenge to the collaboration between the CC and the LG. One of the respondents mentioned that "[t]hese children can't respect adults and sometimes they can shout to adults" while another mentioned that "some of them appear undisciplined with egotistical behaviour and challenge local government leaders, parents and other community members". Children see their assertiveness in a different light:

We don't understand about the work plans of our area, the community income, infrastructure, etc. Although we are the part of the society, we are not aware of anything and if we ask they said we are making noise. (FGD Temeke)

A community development officer in Lindi expressed a view which is more accommodating of children's developing assertiveness than the one expressed by his colleagues from Temeke:

...supporting and listening to them makes them feel valued; it creates the courage to talk, to ask and actively participate in discussion etc. which helps us explore a lot of information from them and learn to understand them.

The insufficient capacity of the LG to deal with children's issues might also be a cause of some of the challenges experienced by the CCs in their collaboration with the LGAs. In Temeke and Lindi there are no specially designated officials or structures to address children's issues:

It is a challenge. It is only the community development department...and their capacity is challenging. It is very low to be honest. (Save the Children representative)

They have no special training on how to take care of children and how to handle children matters/issues. Right now their main duties are to guide the meetings, to cross-check the minutes of the meetings, and to advise children on various matters. (Save the Children Representative)

The MCDGC representatives confirmed that in some districts LGs lack "awareness on the importance of the right to participate as well as children's rights in general".

#### 6. *Traditional views regarding the position of children in society*

All categories of participants – children, Save the Children officers, LG representatives – mentioned as a barrier to the CCs' participation at LG level the traditional views regarding the position of children in the Tanzanian society. Traditionally, children have been seen as lacking the knowledge and maturity which entitles them to be heard and listened to by adults and to contribute their views to decisions concerning them.

Other partners think that by giving children space to decide and make decisions, they become arrogant and lose their traditional manners and disrespect elders. (Save the Children representative)

Children are not consulted when the local government makes decisions which concern them. The reason behind this is that in Zanzibar there is a traditional tendency [to think] that a child can't give any important information to adults. Children have their childish views which can't have any impact on the adults' decisions. They have no tangible information, they have no concrete views and vision, so why should they participate in the decision-making process? (LG representative)

These traditional views penetrate the mentality of the LG officials, who expect children not to question adults. A positive aspect though is that some of the LG officials acknowledge this:

No we are not consulting them; there is a sense that children know nothing, so we cannot involve them. When we need to make decision over them they cannot decide themselves. The society ignores children and we are the part of the society and from the society so you find all of us ignoring children. (LG officer, Lindi)

Amongst the causes of negative adult attitudes, this research revealed the lack of confidence in children's abilities, lack of understanding of child participation and children's rights, and misconceptions about the activities of children's councils. This suggests that more needs to be done to publicise the work of the councils amongst adults.

## 7. *Limited opportunities for children to make their voices heard*

Consultation with children in matters affecting them is rare. An overwhelming number of children in all three sites indicated that the councils are not consulted in matters concerning children. This lack of consistent consultation with children has been confirmed, with the exceptions mentioned in section 6.2, by Save the Children officers and four out of six LG representatives in all sites. This contrasts with the inclusive approach taken by children, reflected in their requests for advice which they often address to the CC guardians. It also contrasts sharply with the consensus amongst the LG officials, who expressed their support for child participation at local government level. One LG representative indicated that “[i]t is important to involve them, because there are a lot of things about them we don’t know”, while others mentioned that participation is important for children’s sense of belonging to their communities and as a means of informing children.

In cases where consultation takes place, children feel that their opinions are not listened to as the LGs do not act on children’s recommendations. As one child remarked:

...if children go to visit X local government with problems, the official listens to them without any problem. So I can say sometimes they do listen to children. But the issue is how do they handle that matter: are they going to solve that problem or leave as it is? (Male 15 years, non-member)

Being listened to but not heard is a challenge against which the Committee on the Rights of the Child warned: “appearing to ‘listen’ to children is relatively unchallenging; giving due weight to their views requires real change”.<sup>113</sup>

## 8. *Lack of financial resources*

Lack of financial resources to support CCs and their activities was identified as a problem in the functioning of the councils by both children and all six LG officials interviewed.

After the 2006 elections the municipality stepped aside from helping us and asked us to find another sponsor because they can’t sponsor us anymore. They also said to us that if we want our things to go properly and smoothly, we have to find an organisation which will sponsor us. All the years when we faced them with our problems, the answer was the same: ‘We don’t have budget for that until next year’. (Female 16 years, FGD)

## 9. *Over-reliance on personal commitments of local officials to support the functioning of the councils*

A concern stemming from the interviews with children and Save the Children representatives was the fact that the level of support granted to children’s councils was dependent on the personal commitment of the LG officials. The level of influence of the LG official who supports the council seems to be important for the leverage of the CCs. As one CC guardian, who is also an LG officer, in Lindi mentioned:

...because the District Executive Officer is their guardian, children can easily have a meeting with him as well as other high government officials and get information and have a good network.

<sup>113</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003), para. 12.

Children in different wards within the same districts reported different levels of responsiveness on behalf of the CC guardians; some were very supportive while others showed reluctance to collaborate with the CCs.

#### *10. An events-based approach to child participation on behalf of authorities*

Another concern stemming from interviews with both children and LG representatives is what it appears to be an events-based approach to child participation, rather than a constant and sustained initiative. A few children have mentioned children's festivals as either their achievements or an avenue to produce an impact at local level or, with appreciation, a good thing done by the government.

Our involvement is not sufficient; it's only during some occasions like the African Child Day. One time they came to find out our priorities. (Female 14 years, FGD)

The Municipality does not invite us to their meetings. Let's say in a year they have 20 meetings and they only invite us to participate in one meeting, and that is the one concerning African Child Day, because they need our opinions which they normally use during that day and nothing else. (Male 15 years, FGD).

LG representatives also mentioned the organisation of festivals as one of their ways of supporting child participation. While there is no doubt that public gatherings and events have their own importance in promoting children's agenda, a sole focus on events by both children and LG might lead to a sidelining of consistent and systematic forms of participation with a lasting impact on the life of children in the community.

#### *11. Formalism in the relation with local governments*

Another potential challenge is that, in some cases, connecting to the LGs is a fairly formalised process:

If the local government is in need of anything from the children's council it has to pass through the ward office and vice versa. (Female 16 years, FGD Temeke)

If you want to get good cooperation from the ward executive, you must have something in your hand, like an approved budget; and you go there telling them 'I have this and this' and then you will have the support, otherwise you are going to get little cooperation. (Male 15 years, Temeke)

This very formal approach to collaboration might discourage children to request the support of the LG. Perhaps more child-friendly ways of engaging with children and more supportive ways of dealing with their concerns should be investigated.

## 6.5 Factors Facilitating and Inhibiting the Collaboration between Children's Councils and Local Governments

The factors facilitating the collaboration between CCs and LGAs identified by this research are:

- The availability of financial and moral support from NGOs;
- A good relationship between children and high-ranking district officials;
- General attitude towards citizen's participation by LGs;
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities of adults in relation to CCs;
- Commitment of the LG to create CCs;
- Existence of an official in charge specifically for children's issues;
- Supervisory role of the district council; and
- The LG taking responsibility for children's issues.

The involvement of LGs in setting up the CCs seems a factor which facilitates the collaboration between children's councils and LGs. In the words of Save the Children officers:

The involvement of the local government officials during the establishment of the children's council does facilitate the close collaboration between the councils and the local government. (Save the Children representative in Lindi)

It is just because these children's councils were established by the government and that is why there is collaboration...Therefore it is the sense of ownership from the government which makes the collaboration to be there. (LG representative, Zanzibar)

Perhaps during the establishment process the LG representatives have the opportunity to understand children and to correct some of the misunderstandings regarding their capacity.

The commitment of LG officials to children's matters makes the work with the government worthwhile and provides children with motivation to continue with their activities:

My WEO does a very good job with the children's council. He likes to be very close to us. He calls us and reminds us when we stay silent for a while without doing anything. (Male 12 years, Lindi FGD)

Whenever we arrange a meeting for the children's council he always provides support. He finds someone and gives him money to walk around announcing the meeting. When he sees us silent for a while without doing anything he phones us to know what is going on. (Female 14 years, Lindi FGD)

One LG official mentioned that the frequency of the meetings between LG officials and the CCs facilitates the collaboration between the two entities. Another LG official suggested increasing the frequency of meeting between LGs and CCs as a means to improve the collaboration between the two. Easy access to officials in responsible positions also facilitates the relationship between the two:

There is an impact. Children can now easily participate in some government issues and have information on government issues compared to the previous time. The fact that the District Executive Officer is their guardian [for the district children's council] means that children can easily have a meeting with him, meet with other high government officials and get information and have a good network. (LG representative and guardian of CC, Lindi)

Exposing children and adults to opportunities of working together facilitates the collaboration between them:

The participatory approach we used during the formation of these councils was also a positive factor for the collaboration. (LG representative, Temeke)

Amongst the factors inhibiting the collaboration between children's councils and the LG, LG representatives mentioned: the lack of funds, lack of political will to allocate a budget for child participation ('high-ranking officials tend to ignore it') and the attitudes of adults (both parents and LG officials) which tend to equate child assertiveness with unruly behaviour and 'egoism'. Traditional views which perceive children as unable to contribute to adult decisions are another barrier to child participation (all adult respondents indicated this as a barrier). The confusion regarding the coordination of the CCs also creates challenges in developing relations between LGs and CCs.

The central government must intervene to make sure that there is a clear coordination on children's councils. Right now in Zanzibar we don't know who is coordinating the children's councils between Save the Children, ZACA, and the Government, etc. (Zanzibar Community Development Officer)

## **6.6 Participants' Recommendations for Improving the Collaboration between Children's Councils and Local Governments**

According to children, there is a need for better understanding of the role which the local governments play in accommodating child participation and a better understanding of children's rights by officials. As put by a child in Temeke:

There is a necessity to call a general meeting between children's councils and local government and discuss openly the problems faced by both sides during interaction and take the findings of the meeting to the municipal council to be discussed and provide the solution to the problem. (Female 16 years, Temeke FGD)

Several children mentioned the need for education on children's rights for their parents and the community at large in order to achieve a better functioning of the CCs. Save the Children representatives also stressed the need for LG officials to be aware of children's rights and take responsibility for respecting their views. Similarly, the MCDGC representatives recommended awareness-raising about the JCURT/CCs amongst decision makers such as the 'DED, District Commissioners (DC), Regional Commissioners (RC) and Regional Community Development Officers (RCDO)' and to advocate 'for the prioritisation of children's rights and especially the right to participation'.

Children across the three sites indicated their strong desire to be involved in local decision making and justified this due to their knowledge of the problems facing them. Children's views are that they should be invited to attend adult LG meetings:

Children must be given a chance to participate in every local government meeting. This will make the decisions of the local government to be child-friendly and consider both parties: the children and the local government officials. (Female 16 years, Temeke FGD)

I would like...ward officers to involve us in their meetings and participate in decision making so that we can know what has been discussed. (Male 14 years, FGD Lindi)

When there is any meeting, children should be invited to express their views. (FGD Zanzibar)

Children supported the idea of having a local government official entrusted with guiding the children's councils, confirming therefore that children feel the need to collaborate closely with a trusted adult:

I think a children's council patron and matron positions have to be established on the local government officials' team. They will handle all matters concerning the children. (Female 13 years, Temeke FGD)

Children need adult protection in fulfilling the mandate of the CCs. Children acknowledged that the collaboration with adults results in better outcomes:

Assisting MVC was done with assistance from both the parents and the community development officials. We worked hand-in-hand with the teachers at schools to assist disabled students as well as the deaf as their teachers are more knowledgeable on the needs of these children because they can speak to them. (Female 15 years, Temeke FGD)

The need for adult support was also emphasised by Save the Children officers, who suggested the designation of LG officials whose main mandate should be the support for CCs and follow up on how children's issues are solved:

The government must establish officials to look after these councils. They should make follow-ups on the children's problems and find out the best solutions for them. There should be a close relationship between these government officials and children. The government officials must be dedicated to that task; it should not be one of their tasks, but their main/sole task. (Save the Children representative in Lindi)

While acknowledging the need for adult support, children also noted the need for balance between the adults' powers and their independence. Children in Temeke resented the CC guardians who were trying to impose their decisions in the running of the councils and asked that "the government and different organisations, they should give the children more room to solve their own problems". (Female 16 years, Temeke FGD)

An LG official suggested that more meetings between children and officials as well as more funds will improve the collaboration between LGs and the CCs:

Having many meetings in a year with all children stakeholders plus the children from the councils and enough funds to support all the participants, this will improve the collaboration between children councils and the local government. (LG representative, Lindi)

A Save the Children representative indicated that the LG taking ownership of the CCs would be a factor improving the relationship between the LGs and CCs as well as a means of ensuring the sustainability of the councils:

To scale up these children's councils... it is as if they are dormant and everything has been left on the hands of Save the Children. When Save the Children slowed down a bit, the government went for a sleep. The understanding of the government and the community at large is that these children's councils are owned by Save the Children. So, it has to be made clear that Save the Children is here just to support the councils, but the main responsibility of making sure that these councils are sustainable lies with the government and the community at large. (Save the Children representative in Lindi)





# Save the Children and the Children's Councils

Save the Children has played an essential role in the creation of the councils, as indicated above.

The support offered to the CCs by Save the Children has been diverse and consists of training and capacity building (on matters pertaining to children's rights and responsibilities, elections, and evaluation of the CC), assistance in drafting the CC constitution, financial support or provision of space for child-initiated activities. Save the Children fulfils an advisory and facilitation role with regard to the CCs.

Save the Children also acts as a resource organisation for both the CCs and LGs. For example, children in Lindi and Temeke indicated that upon identifying various children in need, they took those cases to Save the Children for a solution to be found. Save the Children has also provided a space for children to meet and hold their meetings. Save the Children has also been called on by the LGs to support CC activities. For example, Temeke Municipal Council requested help for supporting the issues signalled by children from the CC.<sup>144</sup>

Despite the complex support offered to the CCs, Save the Children representatives made it clear that the CCs do not 'belong' to the organisation and that LGs need to take more responsibility for them. Save the Children tried to pursue this commitment towards creating a strong link between CCs and LGs by encouraging the CCs to work consistently with the LG representatives. For example, Save the Children agreed to support financially some activities presented by Azimio Ward Children's Council (Temeke District). In order to qualify for support from Save the Children, the CC had to present the minutes of the CC's meetings to the Ward Executive Officer and the report on activities to the WEO and CDO. In this manner, Save the Children contributed to creating opportunities for CCs to work with LG representatives in order to construct a stronger partnership between the two entities.

In Zanzibar, Save the Children seems to be acting as an advocate for ensuring the permanence of CCs' participation in LG meetings:

Save the Children in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare have planned to incorporate children in the District meetings each quarter and this will take off by March 2010. (Save the Children representative, Zanzibar)

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<sup>144</sup> Save the Children Azimio Ward Children's Council: Bringing about changes for children (on file with the researchers).



# Discussion

The most substantial data presented in this report have been collected from Temeke and Lindi, as councils with a rich community involvement. While the opinions of the respondents from Zanzibar have been equally valuable and insightful, they contained little information in terms of the practical aspects of their involvement with the LGs, because the councils have not yet taken off the ground.

## *1. The organisation and the functioning of the councils*

As indicated by the data above, the CCs are child-led organisations that facilitate the participation of children in their communities. All councils analysed in this study have been initiated by adults – Save the Children and LGs. However, members of the CCs from Temeke have assisted the adults in starting the councils in Lindi and Zanzibar by facilitating elections and conducting training meetings for elected children. Children in Temeke and Lindi are in control of the councils and the adults only perform the intended advisory and supportive roles. The autonomy of the councils manifests itself in various ways. For example, children initiate activities which are based on what they perceive to be the needs of the children in their community, rather than these activities being influenced by an adult agenda. The CCs seem to have a free-flowing relationship with the LGs, which takes place without the mediation of Save the Children. This indicates that the CCs feel sufficiently able to interact on an equal basis with an adult body in a position of authority without constant adult mediation. Although the occasional tensions which occur between the CCs and the LGs (see the case of Temeke CC) might hamper the effectiveness of the collaboration between the two, they are also an indication of children's critical approach to the position of the councils and the role of adults in this regard. Importantly, the autonomy of the CCs is accepted by many LG officials who agree to interact or assist the CCs at various levels. Children themselves claim this autonomy and demand it to be respected – see for example the outrage of the children in Temeke at attempts by guardians to have decisions imposed on the CC or the membership of the council being influenced by adults.

## *2. The relationship between the councils and the local governments*

One of the most important conclusions emerging from this study is that, generally, the LGs acknowledge their responsibility for supporting the CCs as representative organisations for children and have taken steps to comply with that obligation by agreeing to be the guardians of the CCs and supporting children in a variety of ways. The LG officials interviewed were unanimously in favour of child participation at LG level. The fact that the LG officials working in close contact with children have acknowledged the benefits of involving children in decision making might indicate that more awareness of children's capabilities could result in a more inclusive decision making at local level. Thus, the CCs need to increase their visibility at LG level and create ties with other duty bearers. Creating a relationship with officials in decision-making positions could help in gaining the CCs more weight at local level.

This commitment to child participation by LGs has not always been acted upon by the authorities. There are numerous challenges which children have signalled in their relationship with LG officials. Also, concerns have been raised by Save the Children officers that LGs have not taken sufficient responsibility for the councils. Representatives of the MCDGC acknowledged that there is insufficient support – financial, technical and moral – for the CCs and this inhibits the collaboration between them and the LGs. Although the support by the LGs was acknowledged in many cases, the data suggest that the CCs have a closer relationship with Save the Children than with the LGAs, despite the fact that the latter provide the guardians of

the councils. While the support from Save the Children has been essential, especially for building the capacity of the CCs, an over-reliance on Save the Children might be detrimental to the sustainability of the councils. There is a danger that if Save the Children moves out of particular areas or changes its focus, the CCs might be deprived of their main structure of support. Also, where the creation of the CCs is left to NGOs, then areas where NGOs that are interested in child participation do not exist might be deprived of the benefit of having a CC if the LGAs don't take the initiative to support the creation of CCs. For this reason, it is essential that the LGAs take more responsibility in supporting the CCs. It could be suggested that Save the Children assist, within the limits of their availability, to build the capacity of the LGAs in supporting the CCs.

A facilitating factor with a decisive influence for the relationship between the CCs and LGs is the individual commitment of LG officers to support the CCs. While it is a positive sign that certain LG officials support and facilitate child participation, it is insufficient and unsustainable to rely on personal commitments in order to facilitate the realisation of a right of children. Relying on personal commitments leaves a great degree of discretion to LGs and might put the realisation of the right to participate in jeopardy. What is required is more clarity in terms of what the LGs, including the guardians, should do.

A connected matter is the influence of the quality of the relationship between the CCs and LGs and the outcomes of the councils. Interviews with children from Temeke indicated a tension between the CC members and the guardians of the councils. A Save the Children officer noted that "in Lindi, the CC guaranteed invitation to every stakeholders' consultative councils to discuss district budget and plans, but, in Temeke, the CC seems to be purposely excluded from the above, which may reflect a not so good relationship between some of the leaders, councils' advisors and CDOs there." This has been confirmed by interviews with children. As Williams pointed out in the South Asian context, a confrontational approach to the relationship between child-led organisations and local authorities has proved less successful than consistent dialogue. This is confirmed by this study which shows that children in Lindi, for example, had more opportunities to contribute to local decision making by being invited more often in government meetings than their Temeke counterparts.

Perhaps one strategy to raise the profile of the CCs at local level is to revive the JCURT at national level and consistently involve it in decisions regarding children. If the national government takes the lead and makes the national Junior Council a functional structure, the LGAs may well follow suit and increase their commitment to child participation. As put by a child from Zanzibar:

I would like to suggest that the central government should be a good example in protecting children then local government would also pay more attention on children matters.  
(Male 14 years, non-member, Zanzibar)

A last concern in the context of the relationship between the councils and the LGs is the division of responsibilities with respect to the functioning of the councils between Save the Children and the LGs. An LG representative in Zanzibar mentioned that there is confusion between Save the Children, ZACA and LGs in terms of who should be coordinating the CCs. Children in Temeke and Lindi signalled inconsistent practices of submitting budgets or presenting children in need either to LGs or to Save the Children. In the interest of a more effective functioning of the councils, these aspects should be clarified between those who ensure the support base of the councils.

### 3. Working with Adults

An essential feature of the functioning of the councils is the involvement of adults. As discussed in part 6 above, adults play different roles in respect of the council. The central adult figure in the functioning of the councils is the council's guardian, who is an advisor to the CC and an intermediary between the CCs and the decision-making processes at LG level. It is a positive development that the guardianship of the councils has been entrusted to officials who are accessible to children and with whom children can come in regular contact. However, as CDOs or WEOs, the low level of these guardians within the LG might impact on the standing of the CCs. These officials might not, for example, have the level of seniority required to 'push' the children's agenda and most likely they are not the decision makers on the issues raised by children. This suggests that the role of the guardians as advocates for children in their jurisdiction needs to be scaled up so that children's interests are adequately represented. The CCs should also make use of their official ties with high-ranking officials, i.e., the District Commissioner who is the guardian of the CC at district level. Children in Lindi mentioned a good relationship with the DC, which is reflected in invitations of children to attend LG meetings and even allocation of funds for children. No mention of such a relationship was made in Temeke, where children reported no invitations to LG meetings and a lack of financial support from the LGs. It could therefore be suggested that the CCs should work towards creating close ties with duty bearers in higher positions, who have the power to drive the development process at local level, keep officials accountable on how they perform their duties in respect of the councils, and raise the profile of the councils in the community.

Apart from being a requirement of the JCURT Constitution, the guidance of an adult in the running of the councils is deemed necessary by children themselves. This is reflected in the many responses elicited by this study which indicate that children access various forms of support from their guardians, often being satisfied with the outcomes. Importantly, in all cases in this study, the guardians were LG officials, although, as pointed out earlier, this is not a strict requirement of the JCURT Constitution. This is a positive development and indicative of the acknowledgement by the LGs of their obligation to take responsibility for child participation. It is also a premise for the sustainability of the CCs once Save the Children changes its focus or relocates to other areas.

The CC guardian is the administrative structure through which children's voices can be heard within the decision-making structures of LGs. In a few cases children reported that they raised matters with the guardian, who was tasked to take the issues further. The same approach was successfully employed in India, where the *Makkala Panchayats* appointed the *Makala Mitras*. The formal relationship between the CCs and the guardians indicates an attempt to institutionalise child participation. This creates a consistent contact between the LG and the CC which is beneficial for the CC in the long run. As argued by Williams,<sup>115</sup> consistent contacts between children's organisations and LGs lead to better outcomes in South Asia because the link between the two entities does not need to be re-created every time an issue arises that requires collaboration.

<sup>115</sup> Williams (2004) at 27-32.

The benefits of this collaboration are already visible if one compares the participation experience of the CCs with that of the child-led organisations studied by Larsson. Although both types of organisations had difficulties in contacting LGs because of bureaucracy and marginalising attitudes, the relationship between the CCs and LGs is much more fluid. Children participating in CCs referred repeatedly to their calls for advice or support addressed to their guardians, which often resulted in positive outcomes. The CCs have achieved a quasi-official status as representative organisations for children. As children themselves mentioned, their association with the LGs legitimises them as representatives of children in their community. This status is recognised by the LG officials interviewed, who indicated their unanimous support for CCs as representative organisations for children. This support from authorities might be one of the pillars of the CCs' sustainability.

Whilst the relationship with the CC guardians has often been presented by children in a favourable light, a few concerns emerge in respect of the accountability of the guardians. Children indicated situations whereby the guardians tried to impose decisions upon the councils, failed to send invitations for meetings or passed the invitations to their own children, were invited but did not attend CC meetings, or even refused to collaborate with children. Some attempts have been made by children to hold the guardians accountable, but these had limited success:

In our ward, our ward executive officer when we inform him about the meeting, he always says that he will come to the meeting. Then he is late and when you ask him why he did not appear in the meeting, he always has an excuse that he had an emergency... (Male 12 years, FGD)

These concerns indicate the need for a more formal accountability for the council guardians towards both children and the LGs. Along the same lines, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child calls for mechanisms “to counter the risks of manipulation or tokenism” in child participation.<sup>116</sup> The provisions of the Regional Administration Act 1997 could be used to develop a framework for holding the guardians accountable for the performance of their duties. According to the Act, one of the functions of the District Commissioner is to ensure the compliance of all persons and authorities with the documents pertaining to local government (sect. 14(3)(b)). This provision could be the starting point of a system of accountability for CCs' guardians. However, for such a system to work it is necessary for the functions of the guardians to be very clearly established and made part of the job description of the relevant LG officials. The sensitivity of creating such a system of accountability should be acknowledged. Traditional attitudes regarding the subservient position of children in society, acknowledged by both adults and children as barriers to the participation of the CCs at LG level, will need to be taken into account when designing such a system. As mentioned by a Save the Children officer, creating and using accountability mechanisms should be done “in a polite manner” and “not lead to personality clashes and children and adults getting ‘hurt’ ”.

#### 4. *Funding*

The funding of the CCs is an unresolved matter. Repeated reference was made by children, LG representatives as well as Save the Children officers to the lack of funds by the LGs as a reason for the councils not being supported financially by the LGs. Indeed, in many instances, the

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<sup>116</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), para. 129.

activities suggested by the CCs were supported financially by Save the Children. Unfortunately, the Constitution of the JCURT does not mention the government as one of the consistent financial contributors to the functioning of the CCs. This might be an indication of the low priority given to child participation and of the low level of political influence achieved so far by the CCs. Surprisingly, although financial resources were indicated by LG representatives and children as barriers to the functioning of the CCs, there seems to be a lack of involvement or contact between the CCs and the DED, who has control over district funds. Advocacy and lobbying of the DED by and on behalf of the CCs by the guardians and children themselves might be an avenue to secure more funding for the CCs in the future.

Whilst cash contributions from the LGs might be scarce, the LGs provide, as repeatedly mentioned by children, essential logistical support – sending and receiving letters, providing venues for children’s council meetings, calling for meetings, assisting with photocopying, etc. This form of support occurs on an ad hoc basis rather than in a systematic manner. Noteworthy is, however, the fact that the absence of financial resources is not perceived by children as an insurmountable barrier. Children continue to engage in activities which require limited amounts of cash, such as peer support.

Perhaps a distinction should be made between budgets enabling the functioning of the CCs and budgets for the implementation of the initiatives suggested by children. In the opinion of this study, relegating the duties to support the functioning of the CCs negates the commitments to child participation assumed by the GoT. However, supporting financially the activities suggested by children might be a political call. The example of CPBC in Brazil indicates that with adequate support children can successfully manage budgets assigned for children’s matters at local levels.

##### *5. The Impact of Children’s Councils*

There is evidence in this research to suggest that the CCs have assisted the LGs in realising the rights of children at local level. There are numerous examples in this research where children in Temeke and Lindi have facilitated access to basic services such as education, health or protection services to those in need. By identifying children in need and connecting them to the relevant services, the CCs assist the LGs in performing their statutory functions regarding the protection of children and their rights.

The identification of children in need shows that the CCs contribute to monitoring children’s rights at local level and holding LGs accountable for the situation of children in their communities. As put by a child from Temeke, “[p]articipation also helps to follow up on the extent of implementation on the issues that we have agreed together”. This monitoring role which the CCs play finds support in section 95(1) of the Law of the Child 2009, which states that the members of a community have a duty to report to the LG infringements of children’s rights, and the LG has the legal obligation to investigate such (section 94(7)). As members of their community, the CCs could use this provision in order to bring violations of children’s rights to the knowledge of LGs.

The contribution which the CCs have so far made in the implementation of children’s rights and the monitoring of this implementation at local level alleviates concerns that children do not have the necessary capacity to be involved in LG processes due to the inherent complexity of the public administration. The LG officials interviewed acknowledged that one of the reasons for

children not being invited to attend LG meetings is their alleged lack of capacity to comprehend adult matters. Although the participation in decision making of the CCs has been extremely reduced, children have found avenues to contribute in areas where their capacity has not been contested. This is an indication that regardless of the complexity of the matters raised by local governance, there are LG functions or areas of material jurisdiction where children's participation can be easily accommodated. The simple fact that governance is a complex matter should not be used as an excuse to exclude children from participation in processes which are commensurate with their age and maturity.

This research indicates that the CCs have increased the visibility of children at LG level. Compare, for example, the results of the study on children's perceptions of education and their role in society,<sup>117</sup> whereby children did not seem to have mentioned being listened to by the LG, with the many accounts of children in this study of them contacting LG representatives and being given the required assistance. However, the CCs have not achieved a status which guarantees their consistent involvement in decision making at LG level. This is inconsistent with the role which the CCs play in fulfilling the mandate of the LGs. The interviews with children indicate that they still react to the individual problems of children rather than contribute to the local decision making on a consistent basis.<sup>118</sup> Children are very seldom consulted by LGs in their decision-making processes, although isolated consultations have been reported in both Temeke and Lindi. Most often, the contact between the CCs and LGs is initiated by children through their requests for various forms of assistance or information. Children in Temeke reported that they have never been invited to attend LG meetings, while a few children in Lindi mentioned that they have been invited to LG meetings at various levels, most notable being an invitation from the District Commissioner. This indicates perhaps that the LGs do not see it worthwhile involving the CCs in decision making, although children across all three sites indicated their desire to be involved in adult meetings in order to have their say. This analysis should not be interpreted as advocating for child participation at LG level through participation in LG meetings. Such participation has its own difficulties such as the timing of the meetings which might clash with school timetables or the level of language or complexity of information. Although children seemed in favour of participating in adult meetings, the current research has used the incidence of children being invited to attend LG meetings as an indicator of the interest which the LGs have in obtaining children's input.<sup>119</sup>

Building a relationship with the LGs is not the final aim of the councils, but the means to bring about positive change for children. Similar to research done by Williams in South-East Asia,<sup>120</sup> this study confirms that children organised in CCs have more bargaining power at LG and community level than individual children. For example, the Azimio Ward CC organised, with Save the Children support, some activities to assist hearing impaired children in one school in Lindi, while children in another three schools called on the CC to approach the LG and their school for solving the problems they are experiencing. Another example is that of children in Lindi coming to report to the CCs corporal punishment to which they have been subjected at home. In Lindi, children who were not members of the CC strengthened this by relating that CCs protect their

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<sup>117</sup> See n 3 above.

<sup>118</sup> This is an indicator which Williams (2004) associates with the maturity of a child-led organisation.

<sup>119</sup> A comprehensive analysis of the interest of LGs in engaging child-led organisations is made by Larsson (2005).

<sup>120</sup> See Williams (2004).

rights and they assist children in need to access basic necessities. These findings tie in with the results of the study on children's perceptions of education and their role in society, which indicated that children in one school where the interests of children were promoted by a child-led organisation felt better listened to in the formal school setting.<sup>121</sup>

At the end of this analysis, the researchers would like to stress that the results and the recommendations contained in this report should not be interpreted as suggesting that CCs are the only legitimate way of child participation at LG level. As stressed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child stressed child-led organisations are only one of the many ways in which child participation can take place:

However, these structures for formal representative participation in local government should be just one of many approaches to the implementation of article 12 at the local level, as they only allow for a relatively small number of children to engage in their local communities.<sup>122</sup>

The efforts to encourage the formation and support the functioning of the CCs should not detract from efforts of encouraging all children – whether CC members or not – to participate in various forms at LG level.

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<sup>121</sup> See n 3 above.

<sup>122</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009), para. 127.





# Recommendations Emerging from the Study

## *For the Government (local and central)*

- Enhance the understanding of children's rights by LGs. The LGs officials should be trained in children's issues and making by-laws pertaining to children. Education on children's rights should be extended to parents and communities in an effort to change the traditional views that children cannot contribute to adult decision making.
- Increase the protection for children's participation rights. A good starting point would be for the LG to screen all their functions to assess what decisions within the powers of LGs affect children. This will give the LGs a clearer picture of the issues in which they should involve children. This exercise could be undertaken with the participation of children so that complete transparency of the process is achieved.
- Create mechanisms for involving children in decisions affecting them at local level. In creating such a structure or system, consideration needs to be given to the evolving capacities of the child. These mechanisms should be developed in consultation with children and NGOs with experience in facilitating child participation in local governance. In designing such a system, a decision has to be made whether the child participation at LG level will be facilitated within the current adult structures or new structures created. This research has not elicited sufficient information on the suitability of involving children in adult meetings or adult structures. Thus no recommendations can be made in this regard. The position of the children elicited by this research is that they are in favour of being included in adult meetings. However, the opinion of this study is that a decision can only be made after careful consultation of all stakeholders and careful consideration of the pros and cons of any suggested approach.
- Ensure that children have sufficient access to information. In creating mechanisms for child participation, LGs need to consistently provide children with relevant information so they can form their views and keep children informed of the outcomes of their contribution.
- Develop an accountability framework for the guardians of the CCs.
- Invest greater funds to support the CCs. The government should consider taking responsibility for the budget, but mechanisms will be also required to ensure that the independence of the councils is not affected.
- Take more responsibility in the functioning of the CCs.
- Institutionalise the CCs so that participation is not left at the discretion of officials.
- Revive the support for the Junior Council at national level to increase the impetus for supporting CCs at LG level.

## *For children's councils*

- Better understanding by children of the functions and competencies of the LGAs.
- Develop follow-up mechanisms so that the outcome of children's contribution is monitored.

- Stimulate the CC guardians to act as children's advocates within the LG structures.
- Broaden the contact with LG officials so that the CC is more visible and the CC does not rely exclusively on the CC guardians to promote the councils.
- Create links with senior LG officials, where such links do not exist, who may influence decision making at local level and promote the prioritisation of children's interests, including child participation. The DED was not mentioned, for example, by children although he is a key official in respect of resource allocation at LG level.
- Organise elections for the CCs in a timely way so that only children are members of the CCs. By overcoming delays in elections for membership on the council, children who have reached the age of 18 years will not have to serve on the council for a longer period of time than that necessary to ensure the continuity of the council.

#### *All Stakeholders*

- Create opportunities for LGs and adults generally to work together with the CCs. As an experienced NGO, Save the Children could perhaps initiate this process by suggesting ways in which cooperation could materialise.
- Obtain a balance between the involvement of the adults in the functioning of the councils and the independence of the CCs. Developing an accountability mechanism for the guardians of the CCs should contribute to achieving this outcome.
- Clarify the roles of the LGAs and Save the Children in supporting the CCs. A tripartite consultation – CCs, LGs and Save the Children – may improve coordination and facilitate more effective functioning of the councils.

## Emerging Policy Conclusions

A number of policy conclusions emanate from this study.

- Efforts to promote child participation and its acceptance by communities need to be intensified to deal with the numerous barriers identified in this study.
- Mechanisms to accommodate child participation at local level need to be created. While the CCs are forums whereby children can voice their opinions, often these opinions are not sought by officials. As this study shows, cases where the voices of children's councils have been heard depended on the discretion of individual officials. The benefits of child participation require that the participation of children not be left at the discretion of officials but be institutionalised at LG level.
- The role of guardians needs to be clarified. Their job description should contain very clear specifications of their duties related to the children's councils. For such an approach to be effective, an accountability framework needs to be developed. As suggested in this report, the District Commissioner should take charge of monitoring the performance of all council guardians.
- A clearer demarcation of the duties of all stakeholders regarding the children's councils is necessary and this should be brought to the attention of the children.
- The government should take more responsibility in supporting the CCs financially and a budget needs to be allocated for their support. However, mechanisms will be required to ensure that the greater involvement of the government does not negatively impact on the independence of the councils.



# Suggested Research

Traditional perceptions about the role of children in society have been identified as one of the barriers for children's participation at LG level. A study focusing on these traditional perceptions and solutions to achieve attitudinal and behavioural change among adults should be undertaken.

A further issue which emerges is whether the presence of children's councils inhibits the participation at LGA level of children who are not members of the councils or who are members of other child-led organisations. A few questions arise in this regard, for example:

- Would LGs have the obligation to support other child-led organisations in the same way they support the CCs?
- Are there reasons to prefer supporting the CCs to the detriment of other child-led organisations?

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REPOA's research agenda is concerned with poverty and its alleviation. Our objectives are to:

- develop the research capacity in Tanzania;
- enhance stakeholders' knowledge of poverty issues and empower them to act;
- contribute to policy dialogue;
- support the monitoring of the implementation of poverty related policy;
- strengthen national and international poverty research networks, and forge linkages between research(ers) and users.

It is our conviction that research provides the means for the acquisition of knowledge necessary for improving the quality of welfare in Tanzanian society.

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