

- There are fewer organizations associated with Islam than those linked to the main churches, although BAKWATA, the government-supported Muslim umbrella organization, has assumed a role in promoting projects that can obtain international donor funding.
- Many but not all of the CSOs are initiated and dominated by men. However, women's groups associated with churches and mosques, the main political party (Chama cha Mapinduzi) or NGO interventions are also common.
- In such a donor-driven and aid-dependent context, the assumed boundaries between CSOs, NGOs and FBOs are blurred and the different types of organization have similar development aims and activities. Most of those involved in NGOs are religious adherents. FBOs do not appear to be especially close to the poor or to have a special religiously informed view of development.
- The view of CSOs as partners or sub-contractors of government also blurs relationships between government and civil society.
- It is difficult to assess (a) whether religious values lead to different developmental outcomes, or (b) FBOs' contribution to the achievement of development objectives. This is because
 - there are few institutional settings in which religious values are not influential
 - the funding available to CSOs, including FBOs, is either for intangibles (HIV/AIDS awareness) or is short-term.

Donor support has been central to the evolution of the civil society sector, including FBOs: capacity building and criteria for accessing funding favour those organizations that fit an international template, determine which

organizations are active (those that succeed in obtaining funding) and largely determine their activities (those for which funding is available).

In donor-driven and aid-dependent contexts, the assumed boundaries between religious and other civil society organizations are blurred, different types of organization have similar development aims and activities.

Implications

Implications for donors, government and FBOs include

- Donors should re-assess their support to the formation of a civil society sector with shallow roots in Tanzanian society, especially if it is at the cost of improving government capacity.
- Donors should re-consider the use of competitive bidding processes for short-term grants for donor-specified activities, because the civil society characteristics they encourage are not always desirable and they appear to encourage activities that do not necessarily meet the highest priority needs.
- In contexts of high religious adherence and aid dependence, FBOs do not appear to have distinctive approaches to development, so there may not be grounds for prioritizing them in allocating funds for local development activities.
- FBOs should appreciate the potential outcomes of increased compliance with standard requirements and donor dependence for their independence and distinctiveness.



Religions and Development Research Programme

Development, civil society and faith-based organizations in two Tanzanian rural districts

Introduction

In recent years, interest in faith-based organizations as development actors and partners has increased. However, systematic evidence on their supposed advantages (and possible disadvantages) is lacking. In addition, it is not clear whether they have different characteristics and approaches, with different (especially more pro-poor) outcomes, from secular civil society organizations (CSOs).

This study examined the position and role of religious organizations within a wider range of CSOs at the local level engaged in activities related to HIV/AIDS in two rural districts in Tanzania: Magu (relatively prosperous, largely Christian) and Newala (remote, poor, largely Muslim).

Its aim was to assess whether faith-based organizations play a significant and distinctive role in development, especially compared to the activities of other civil society organizations and their outcomes and impacts. Such comparisons are not straightforward: the boundaries between state and civil society, and between religious organizations and other development actors, are not clear-cut.

Background

During the period of one party rule in Tanzania, few autonomous civil society organizations were permitted. However, the conditions for growth were established by the early 1990s, following economic and political liberalization. Since then, a 'civil society sector' has been aggressively promoted through international spending and targeted programmes.

Civil society organizations are imagined to be close to the poor and therefore better at implementing development activities than government; they are also thought to play an important role in democratization. The sector is, however, a recent, largely externally-driven phenomenon superimposed on previously existing social and religious organizations. Today, larger CSOs are mostly branches of international NGOs; the majority of CSOs are small and revolve around a founding person or small group of people.

Social organizations such as burial societies, home associations and cultural groups pre-date independence in Tanzania. With the Arusha Declaration in 1967, the country's first president Julius Nyerere ushered in a one-party state model in which all independent, productive and

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Further information

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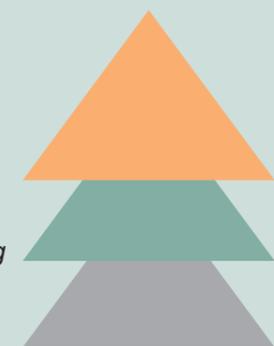
The research was carried out as part of the Religions and Development Research Programme, based at the International Development Department, University of Birmingham, and the University of Dar es Salaam. Maia Green is at the University of Manchester and Claire Mercer at the London School of Economics. Simeon Mesaki has recently retired from the University of Dar es Salaam. Photos courtesy of Claire Mercer.

Findings from a study of the HIV/AIDS-related activities of civil society organizations in two rural districts in Tanzania imply that

- Donors should re-assess their support to the formation of a civil society sector with shallow roots in Tanzanian society, especially if it is at the cost of improving government capacity.
- Donors should re-consider the use of competitive bidding processes for short-term grants for donor-specified activities, because some of the outcomes are undesirable.
- In contexts of high religious adherence and aid dependence, FBOs do not appear to have distinctive approaches to development, so there may not be grounds for prioritizing them in allocating funds for local development activities.
- FBOs should appreciate the potential outcomes of increased compliance with standard requirements and donor dependence for their independence and distinctiveness.



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private organizations were brought under the control of the ruling party, then TANU (the Tanzania African National Union), subsequently renamed the CCM (Chama cha Mapinduzi). These included civil society institutions such as trade unions, co-operatives, and women's, youth and parents' organizations. Today, these social groups continue to exist: their distance from the state and the role they play in the lives of individuals and local societies varies.

Religious institutions managed to retain some degree of autonomy during the one-party era. The traditional Christian churches (especially Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican) established educational and health facilities during the colonial period. From the outset and through the period of one-party rule, many were closely aligned with the state (for example through state subsidies for mission schools). They continue to have a major role in service delivery (e.g. 13 per cent of dispensaries, 22 per cent of health centres and 40 per cent of hospitals in 2006). In addition, they and other churches have established projects or organizations for other development purposes. Only the largest of these organizations can raise significant funds from their own and their parent churches, enabling them to take some independent initiatives. Although significant in national terms, their facilities are thinly and unevenly spread over the country. Provision of educational and health services by Muslim organizations is mostly small scale.

The research

The study in Tanzania was part of a wider international comparative study of the activities and performance of religious or faith-based organizations (FBOs) and 'secular' non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aimed at understanding whether and in what ways religious organizations have distinctive characteristics, adopt distinctive approaches to development and achieve distinctive outcomes.

It aimed to identify the reality of civil society evolution and engagement in development activities in typical Tanzanian districts. Rather than focusing on a few prominent FBOs and NGOs, therefore, the research was carried out in



Condom distribution in Magu District 5

two contrasting districts: largely Christian Magu in the north west of the country (Box 1) and mainly Muslim Newala in the south west (Box 2). These are representative of the majority of places in rural Tanzania that have not benefitted from long-term large-scale missionary activity. Some of the churches operate a few primary schools, kindergartens and dispensaries in these districts (especially Magu), and many mosques have *madrasas*, but there are no large health or education facilities run by religious bodies in either – most services are government-provided. However, both districts have been influenced by recent attempts to develop a 'civil society sector', with massive donor support.

Box 1: Magu District

Predominantly agricultural Magu District is situated approximately 50 km east of Mwanza, Tanzania's second biggest city, located at the hub of the East African regional economy centred on Lake Victoria. The district has a population of over 400,000, with 37 per cent living below the poverty line in 2000/01. The majority population of the district are Sukuma, although there is considerable in-migration from neighbouring northern regions of Tanzania.

The majority of residents are affiliated to a range of Christian churches, the largest of which is the Roman Catholic Church, which has been present in the region since the 1890s. Other Christian denominations are also present, as well as many smaller Pentecostal churches.

Magu's relative prosperity and proximity to Mwanza means that it has large numbers of CSOs, ranging from the development organization of the Catholic Diocese (CARITAS) and parish groups to newly established advocacy organizations. A civil society umbrella network (MACSONET) was established in 2007 and in 2009 had 56 members.

The research

- analyzed the characteristics and roles of civil society organizations in the two districts, distinguishing between faith-based and other kinds of organizations
- explored the ways in which externally driven initiatives influence the activities of local organizations and actors
- identified the links between civil society, government and so-called development activities.

Box 2: Newala District

Newala is a sparsely populated district with fewer than 200,000 inhabitants situated in the south of the country along a poor road several hours from Mtwara Town. It has long been peripheral economically, depending on exports of cashew nuts and unskilled male labourers, who migrate for several years to the urban areas of Masasi, Mtwara or Dar es Salaam. The proportion of the district population living below the poverty line in 2000/01 was 43 per cent.

Newala is a largely Muslim district, with few churches and their associated social facilities. It was peripheral in development terms until NGOs were encouraged to establish operations in the southern region in the 1990s. The largest development intervention was a Finnish participatory development project. The NGO scene was dominated initially by the Newala Development Foundation, a District Trust Fund run by members of the Newala elite resident both locally and in Dar es Salaam. The district had no secondary school until the Foundation established one in 1989. The district CSO umbrella, NEWNGONET, had 22 members in 2009, up from 11 in 2003.

A preparatory visit in April 2009 to conduct preliminary meetings with a range of stakeholders from the CSO sector, including representatives of FBOs, and relevant government officials, was followed by a main data collection phase in the two districts under study. The research methods used were qualitative, employing interview and observation techniques with CSOs, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and FBOs, local residents, religious leaders and local government officials. The researchers aimed to speak to as many representatives of active CSOs and faith institutions as possible, including religious leaders and attendees of many churches and mosques. Selected CSO activities were observed, including a condom-distribution exercise by Magu Youth Development Network in Magu and an anti-HIV/AIDS stigma workshop conducted by Newala NGO Network in Newala.

Findings

Tanzania's new NGO policy (2002), based on the idea of a specific role for civil society in national development, was explicitly designed to foster the promotion of networks of CSOs at the district, regional and national levels linked to the



Stigma workshop

government structure. The result is a civil society sector operating in a range of activities categorized as developmental because they fit within current policy frameworks and not necessarily because of local demand. Other forms of indigenous civil society (such as dance societies, rotating credit groups, burial societies and home associations) have waxed and waned since at least the early 20th century, but rarely fit contemporary CSO models.

The research in Magu and Newala found that

- CSOs are mostly small, and almost entirely dependent on external donors, with much of the funding stream in the five years prior to the study linked to
 - HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, disbursed by the Global Fund and PEPFAR through TACAIDS (Tanzania Commission for AIDS), or
 - Welfare support for Most Vulnerable Children (poor children and orphans), especially USAID funding distributed through PACT (an American NGO) to CSOs via District Councils.
- By 2009, most CSOs in the districts studied (including FBOs) saw these as their key areas of work, even though many had been established to undertake other activities. Supply-driven funding has led to
 - increased numbers of CSOs that comply with a standard organizational template
 - competition between CSOs for small grants to undertake similar activities
- While formal registration is required to access funds, no expertise in the relevant area (HIV/AIDS or MVCs) appears to be required. Where specialist knowledge or skills are needed, implementation tends to be sub-contracted to other organizations or local authority staff.