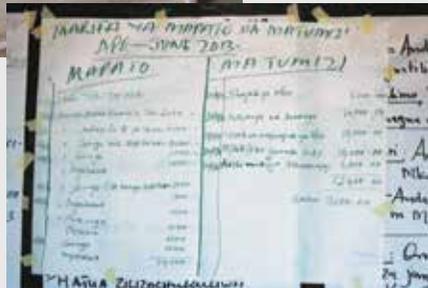


## The context

As access to information is a cross-cutting issue, SULGO has built on experiences from other activities such as the Public Expenditure Tracking Systems (PETS) which have been implemented in conjunction with the Civic Education Teachers' Association (CETA) in Handeni district over 2012–2013. In order to track the use of public resources or the quality of social service provision, access to information is crucial for village communities.



## German Development Cooperation

The Support to Local Governance (SULGO) programme is a cooperation between the governments of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Federal Republic of Germany. It is implemented by the Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO–RALG) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The overall aim of the programme is to improve access to public services for citizens through stronger local governments. It has been implemented since 2008, with the current phase running since November 2010.

### Contact information:

PMO–RALG

P.O. Box 1923

Dodoma, Tanzania

Tel. +255-(0) 26-2322848/2321607

Fax +255-(0) 26-2322116/2322146

GIZ

Support to Local Governance (SULGO)

325, Isimani Road, Upanga

P.O. Box 1519

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Tel. +255-(0) 22-2150761/2152028

Fax +255-(0) 22-2153249

All products can be downloaded from the following websites:

<http://www.sulgo.or.tz>

<http://www.pmoralg.go.tz>

## Democracy needs informed citizens

SULGO  
better lives through better services



### Improving access to public information

In 2012–2013, SULGO piloted measures for improving access to information in Handeni District in order to increase accountability and transparency. The aim of the initiative is to enable local authorities to perform their duties with a strong sense of obligation to the citizens with whom they also maintain a good relationship. As part of this undertaking, good examples and best practices will be shared with other local authorities in Tanzania.

## An informed society for a strong democracy

Although a lot of information found with district authorities is of interest to the public, it is neither published nor available on demand for ordinary citizens. This information might be concerning:

- ▶ Village income and expenditure.
- ▶ Annual development plans.
- ▶ Decisions and resolutions of full council meetings.
- ▶ Implementation of development projects or approved projects for the financial year.

As a result, village residents are deprived of pertinent knowledge related to their development. Consequently:

- ▶ It is never clear which official documents have to be published; when, where and how.
- ▶ Public access to information is never prioritised.
- ▶ Processes of information distribution are not well-organised.
- ▶ Formats and channels for information distribution are not consumer-oriented.
- ▶ Most village officials do not know which information has to be communicated to the villagers.

SULGO identified mandatory duties of LGAs as far as furnishing information to the public is concerned, based on laws, regulations, government guidelines and circulars, and general good governance standards.



## Synergising experiences

Against a range of ideas and experiences from PMO-RALG, civil society groups and other development partners, SULGO and the Handeni District Council studied the list of mandatory publications and compared it with current practices related to publishing information and other processes as well as staffing, responsibilities, resources and finances. The partners were then able to identify the challenges faced by LGAs when attempting to fulfil their access to information obligation.



In this context, SULGO and the Handeni district officials:

- ▶ Reviewed existing formats used for information distribution.
- ▶ Identified bottlenecks in the distribution of information at village level.
- ▶ Identified awareness gaps concerning information distribution.
- ▶ Assessed potentially stronger incentives needed for council staff to make information available.



## The results

The review resulted in an improvement in information distribution by:

- ▶ Making existing formats for announcements more user-friendly and explaining their relevance to the citizens and, through this, strengthening responsiveness and accountability with regard to development projects at the village level.
- ▶ Making decision-making of authorities more transparent by publishing the resolutions of the Full Council.
- ▶ Improving the distribution of information on physical and non-physical projects as far as financial figures and the status of implementation for each village is concerned.
- ▶ Making templates for Village Council Meeting minutes more user-friendly.
- ▶ Developing processes and standards of mainstreaming the dissemination of documents.

The following measures have also been adopted:

- ▶ Improved access to information for Ward and Village Executive Officers with a 'learning and sharing event' held every two months. This event has become a regular forum for the distribution of information.
- ▶ A new structure of the District Monitoring Team has been introduced to serve as a hub for information collection and distribution.
- ▶ Public notice boards in the villages are now more frequently used.
- ▶ Village Communities are being empowered to demand for access to information.



These best practice examples have been incorporated into PMO-RALG's review of information duties.