Indexing local governance performance in Tanzania: Unravelling the practical challenges of data, indicators and indexes

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Abstract

Is it possible to create an index that tracks local governance performance, as a tool for civil society, citizens and central governments to hold local government to account and improve local service delivery? For many researchers and practitioners working on improving local governance would be desirable and useful. However, creating an index is a contested and complex process. Indicators of governance and performance are approximations of the concepts they represent and can obscure nuanced understandings of the data on which they are based, and the contexts in which they operate. This article presents action research on the creation of a local governance performance index (LGPI) in Tanzania, which deployed a context-based problem-solving approach. It reflects the necessary trade-offs in index design in order to produce a tool that is locally meaningful, avoids gaming of indicators and drives the process leading to enhanced capability in local governance.

Keywords:
Local governance, performance indicators, accountability, Tanzania, LGPI.
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Acknowledgements

This project 'Holding local leaders and local service provision to account: the politics of implementing a local governance performance index; (ES/L00545X/1)was funded by the UK Department for International Development / Economic and Social Research Council Poverty Alleviation Research Programme from 2014-17.
Thanks for the work of coalition of researchers and practitioners who inputted to this process including Imran Sherali of Foundation for Civil Society, Tanzania, Dr Rachel Hayman of INTRAC, and Dr Andrew Coulson of Birmingham University working with stakeholder reference groups (made up of local government office holders and civil society representatives) in each District. Thanks to our wonderful team of research assistants: Renatus Boniface, Mikidadi Daudi, Erast Mdee, Florian Mtunga. This paper is dedicated to Erast Mdee who passed away suddenly in November 2022. All local contributors are anonymous but we extend our thanks to them.

1.0 Introduction

The aim of building state capability is integral to international development discourse and enacted in recent decades through frameworks of 'good governance' and new public management. During this period, the use of indicators and indexes of indicators to track and incentivise 'performance' against targets gathered momentum has been critical. At the global level, international targets such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide platforms for shaping policy narratives, guiding action and creating new spaces for old dynamics of power, negotiation and leverage. The production of a plethora of indicators and indices has become a central component of the development industry. However, the business of measuring and defining development, and of what constitutes 'good performance' in this regard remains contested. Whilst the World Bank claims that the global levels of extreme poverty had reached their lowest ever in 2017, Hickel (2017) highlights that such 'facts' depend on the specific measures chosen and that these have shifted over time. Complex societal issues, such as gender-based violence, are overly reduced and simplified through reductive quantification (Merry, 2016) and the background data on which assessments are made may be far less robust than their seductively colourful infographics suggest (Jerven, 2013).

The dominance of New Public Management (NPM) and externally-influenced 'good governance' institutional reform as mechanisms for improving institutional and

state capability are now increasingly questioned (Andrews, 2015b, 2015a; Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock, 2013, 2017a; Booth, 2012; Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2015; Buntaine, Parks & Buch, 2017; Grindle, 2004, 2007; Levy, 2015). Some evidence suggests that rather than driving improvements in governance and performance, top-down indicators encourage gaming and a distorting of actions to focus on producing the indicator rather than improving institutional capability. Andrews et al. (2017) detail a wide gap between policy adoption of the kind that might show up as indicators in indices of governance and local implementation capacity of those same policies. They argue that *isomorphic mimicry*, whereby policy and institutional reforms mimic 'best practice' in form, but lack the systemic capability and/or the local political will to support implementation. They label this phenomenon a *capability trap*.

This paper explores if a local governance performance index (LGPI) could act as a meaningful tool for reflecting on *and* guiding the actions of local governance stakeholders, whilst avoiding a capability trap. For decentralisation to function effectively in enabling local government to oversee and facilitate progressive social and political accountability (albeit in partnership with other actors), some research suggests that wider knowledge of local governance performance may encourage citizens to become actively engaged and to hold decision-makers to account (Capuno & Garcia, 2010; Farrington, 2010; Sujarwoto, 2012). Governance indicators at the local government level are promoted as

tools for ensuring compliance to generally accepted forms of operations within institutions and are used tacitly as a tool of social pressure to applaud or shame performance in public governance and to drive change within institutions (Kelley & Simmons, 2015).

This specific objective of this paper is to reflect on the attempt to design and apply a Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) in two districts in Tanzania, using a context based and problem-solving approach. This approach consciously responded to the emerging critique of good governance and institutional reform. The design process tried to create an index that enabled institutional capability building through active problem solving with local institutions, drawing on the principles of problem-driven iterative adaptation, and avoiding incentivised gaming of externally selected indicators (Andrews et al., 2017b).

The paper has *four* sections. In section two, we examine the literature on indicators and indices of governance performance at national and local levels. Section three presents a detailed methodological description of our action research process, and section four outlines how the prototype LGPI was tested with local baseline data. In the final section, we reflect on the lessons learnt and implications of attempting to develop relevant and practical context-based indicators for tracking local governance performance.

2.0 Literature: Indexing performance in (Local) Governance –possibilities, practices and consequences

An index, for our purpose, is a tool that combines several indicators to assess abstract concepts such as poverty, development and governance. For example, the Human Development Index combines indicators on literacy levels, life expectancy and income per capita. Indicators are themselves proxies for broad complex concepts; e.g. literacy levels can be deployed as an indicator of education. Indicators for specific parts of the concept can be combined to produce a score, ranking or qualitative assessment, and an index is formed from the aggregation of a set of indicators. Indexes are an attractive quantitative tool, particularly for making 'quick and dirty' comparisons between units and in tracking change over time (Foa & Tanner, 2012).

Indicators thus act as proxy representations of institutional performance, conditions and context, and hence their constituent assumptions require examination and scrutiny. Recent studies (i.e., Chabbott, 2015; Jerven, 2013; Merry, 2016; Merry & Wood, 2015) demonstrate how indicators can take on a life of their own, dominating processes and debates, rather than drawing attention to the phenomena behind them. Jerven (2013) also highlights the critical limitations of the data behind many influential indicators.

Work at the macro level has produced a range of indices that attempt to approximate governance performance at

the national level, examples include, the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), Open Budget Index, Afrobarometer and World Governance Indicators (De Renzio & Masud, 2011; Farrington, 2010; Langbein & Knack, 2010). Such indices have their limitations such as a pragmatic conceptual universalism and a minimalist approach to citizen participation, but do provide one possible route into issues of metrics and measurement of complex and nuanced local contexts (Farrington, 2010). The Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), for example, is a composite index constructed by combining underlying indicators in a standardized way to provide a statistical measure of governance performance in African countries. The IIAG assesses progress under four main conceptual categories: safety and rule of law, participation and human rights, sustainable economic opportunity and human development, and provides data on governance elements ranging from infrastructure to freedom of expression and sanitation to property rights. Proponents argue that the index is an example of expert-based that 'objectively' measures governance assessments. However, critics (i.e., Gisselquist, 2014; Rotberg, 2014) counter argue that the index does not measure *how* governance works. Specifically, that it lacks citizen engagement, deploys universalist criteria, the data is patchy and often of poor quality (Farrington, 2010) and that over time the correlation between performance on the index and performance on delivery of public services is weak (Wild, Booth, Cummings, Foresti, & Wales, 2015).

A similar critique is made of the World Governance Indicators, (WGI) insofar as, "*they are*

largely normative, encompassing policy preferences" (Rotberg, 2014, p. 514). As Andrews (2008) notes, the WGIs are centred on a "*one-best-way*" model that assumes a definite (but actually unproven) connection between particular prescriptions of good governance and development outcomes (also Andrews, Hay & Myers, 2010). The critique of the sub-indicators of the WGI suggest they are ill-suited to comparisons over time and between countries; they are analytically biased; that the correlated errors in the various data sources distort the reported results; they are conceptually inadequate; and calculation is insufficiently transparent (Andrews et al., 2010; Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2007; Sundaram & Chowdhury, 2012).

At sub-national levels, literature review suggests a very limited number of local governance performance indexes. Once example is a local government composite index from a pilot study from the Philippines combining three equally weighted categories of indicators covering (1) public services needs and capacity, (2) expenditure prioritisation, and (3) participatory development (Capuno & Garcia, 2010). Another is an NGO-led local government 'barometer' created using a collaborative approach with local stakeholders to generate an assessment of performance combining measures of public service delivery, participation in decision-making, and transparency on public expenditure (Bloom, Sunseri, & Leonard, 2007). At the regional level there is an example of an index calculated using four indicators: 1) engagement in regional networks, 2) diversity and synergies across the instrument mix, 3) robustness and adaptability in instrument design,

and 4) broader fiscal, administrative and democratic support (Morrison, 2014).

Most prescient for this study is the work of Lust et al. (2016) and da Cruz and Marques (2017). The LGPI detailed in Lust et al (2016) uses a methodology focused on citizen experience of service delivery at the local level, which is assessed through comprehensive household survey modules. Their work details a pilot application of their approach in Tunisia and draws on the Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) used in Vietnam. Da Cruz and Marques (2017) draw on a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) methodology to guide the construction of composite governance indicators using objective quantitative and qualitative indicators as part of a participatory and engaged process with relevant stakeholders. Both of these methodologies have heavy local resourcing implications for data collection, which is a critical issue for the sustainability and scaling of such mechanisms (ibid).

The use of an indicator or target necessitates simplification of complex and integrated political processes. There is a danger that the creation of an index will promote only a narrow public gaze on the index headlines or component indicators rather than attention to the wider processes of change that they seek to represent. Bevan and Hood (2006) warn that such attempts at measurement and target-setting in the UK context led to a 'gaming' approach by local government and politicians. Hence, quantitative targets and indicators can distort service delivery and accountability, with focus driven to the target itself, rather than the processes and relationships behind it.

There is, therefore, a need to consider carefully the extent to which a local governance performance index might be useful to different actors and stakeholders, whose voice it represents, what the results will signify, how they might be used, and ultimately whether it will have stimulate the necessary actions for better governance and improved service delivery.

After extensive review of the literature (see Mdee & Thorley 2016a, 2016b) the research team selected a problem-driven iterative adaptation approach (PDIA) (Andrews et al., 2013, 2017b) to guide the research. With such an approach, locally defined and meaningful performance indicators are suggested as a means to elucidating, negotiating and solving particular issues, and should evolve as situations change. PDIA aims to create an embedded and context-specific process of institutional learning and experimentation, responding to the *actually existing* patterns of practice and interaction. It has four constituent elements:

"(i) aims to solve particular problems in particular local contexts, as nominated and prioritized by local actors, via
(ii) the creation of an "authorizing environment" for decision-making that encourages experimentation and "positive deviance, which gives rise to
(iii) active, ongoing, and experiential (and experimental) learning and the iterative feedback of lessons into new solutions, doing so by
(iv) engaging broad sets of agents to ensure that reforms are viable, legitimate, and relevant—that is, are politically supportable and practically implementable" (Andrews et al., 2013, p. 237).

These four principles therefore guided the action research process in the two Districts.

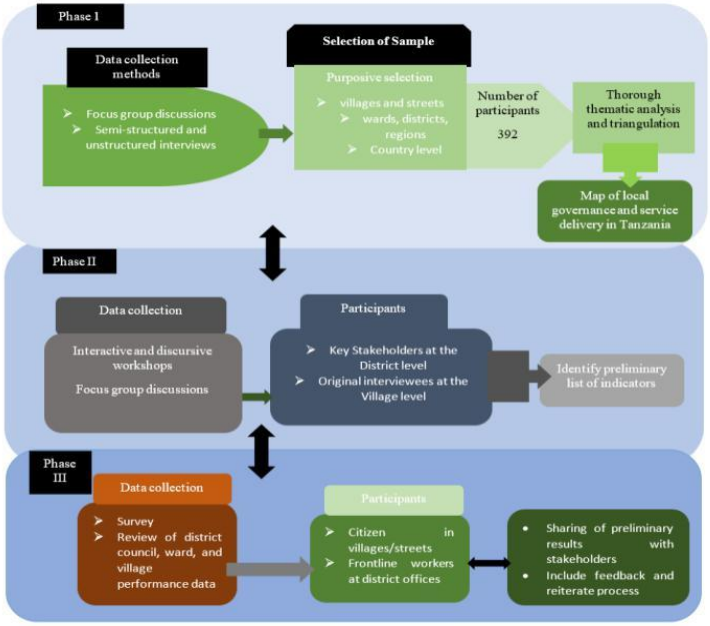
3.0 Method: Building a contextualised local governance performance index (LGPI) in Tanzania

We set out to research the viability and value of creating an LGPI at the district level in Tanzania. Two starting assumptions were agreed: (1) that an index/set of indicators should reflect the *actual* local context rather than a normative set of principles such as 'participation' or 'transparency', and (2) that the index/set of indicators be of a scale and nature that enables regular data collection and tracking by local stakeholders. Building on the body of existing research and practice on accountability in public services in Tanzania (Mdee & Thorley, 2016b), the exercise was designed as a collaborative investigation between Tanzania academics, two District Councils (and associated street and village councils), civil society organisations and elected representatives.

The process of creating and testing an LGPI started by questioning the relationship between institutions of local governance, notions of good governance and performance, and the potential indicators that might make a comparative judgment of local governance performance possible (Mdee & Mushi, 2020).

The research had three phases: 1. A process of collaborative engagement to define the nature of local governance performance and to assess lines of accountability and responsibility for service delivery; 2. Creating and testing an index through the selection of locally meaningful indicators with engaged stakeholders; and 3. Collecting a baseline data set. Figure 1 captures the three stages of the process.

Figure 1: Methodological process taken in developing LGPI



3.1 Phase 1- Defining local governance- lines of accountability and blame

In order to understand how local governance works in the two districts, we began a process of mapping local service delivery, accountability and governance from the individual citizen up to the national level. The methodology in this phase was based on an ethnographic approach, using multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources to trace lines of accountability for the delivery of public services and the quality of local governance (Mdee, 2017). Questions in interviews and focused group discussions were semi-structured or unstructured guided by the aim of elucidating how local governance works in practice. Data and analysis were iterative, so themes arising in the data were explored through further data collection. Thematic analysis (the process of identifying what is emergent from the data) was done through discourse analysis and triangulation.

This process began with selecting four villages (Vijiji) in four wards in each district, purposively sampled to cover different characteristics of the district (see full details in Mdee et al., 2017). We then tracked upwards through layers of government to the Ward ("*Kata*") and then the District ("*Wilaya*"), Region ("*Mkoa*") and Nation ("*Taifa*"). At each level, data collection encompassed purposively selected actors engaged in accountability, governance and service delivery. Table 1 provides an overview of the data collection in Phase 1 process, which gathered more than 392 interviews from all levels of government.

Table 1: Phase 1 data collection

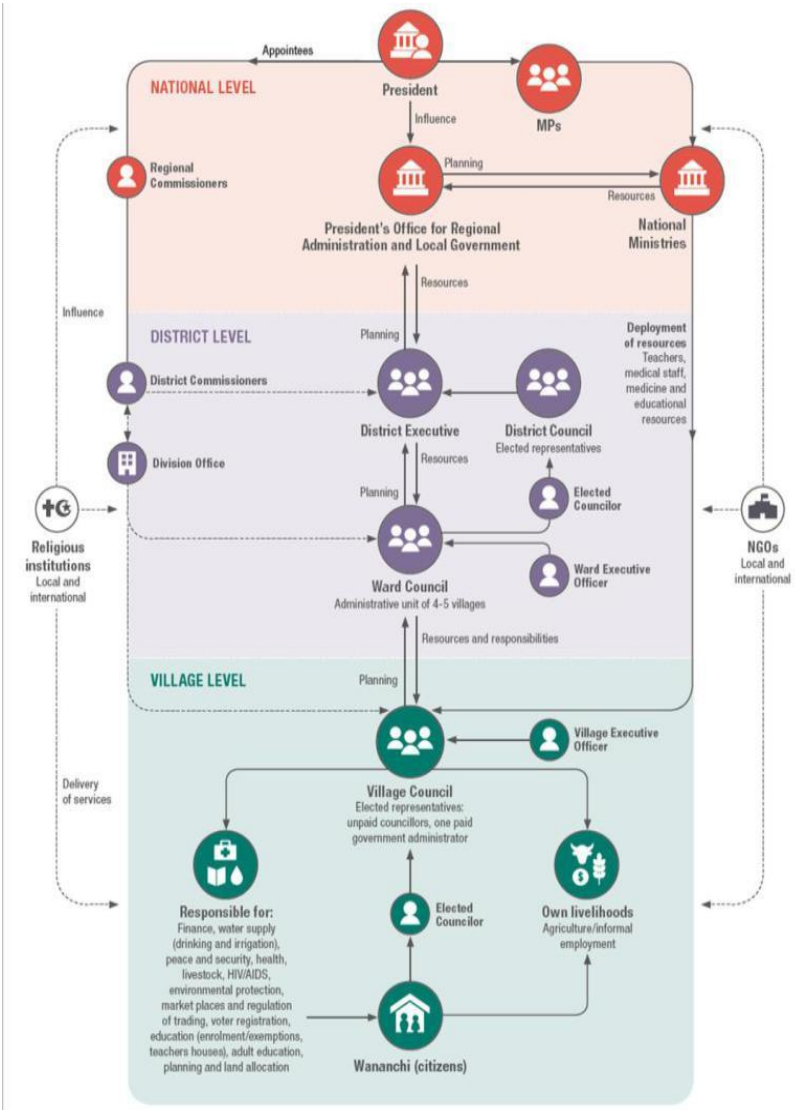
Level	Sampling	Methods	No.
Wananchi (citizens)	Purposive-disaggregated by age, gender and wealth	Life-history Semi-structured interviews Service experience survey	20 in each ward (80 per District) 312- total
Frontline workers, e.g. Teachers, Health workers, Extension staff, CSO staff	Key informants	Semi-structured interviews Village mapping	5 in each ward (20 per District)
Village government (Village Executive Officer (VEO), Village Chair and Councillors	Key informants	Semi-structured interviews Village mapping Focused group discussions	5 in each ward (20 per District) 1 in each ward
Ward (Ward Executive Officer (WEO) and Councillors)	Key informants	Semi-structured interviews	4 wards in each District
District-Executive and Civil society representatives	Key informants	Semi-structured interviews FGD Collaborative action research discussion	10-15 per District 1 per District

		establishment of a working group	
Region	Key informants	Semi-structured interviews	3 per region
National- MPs, representatives of national ministries, civil society representatives	Key informants	Semi-structured interviews	15- Local Government, Health, Education, Agriculture, National NGOs Academics

From this data, we were able to map the system of local government: how it was supposed to work in theory and how it was working in practice. Figure 2 maps out 'rules in theory' showing clear and decentralised lines of accountability and resource flows (Mdee et al., 2017).

Results from Phase 1 revealed a large gap between how local governance should work in theory and how it works in practice. Accountability for performance in the delivery of public services in these two districts is very complex, and there is a confusion about roles and responsibilities. Extensive expectations are placed on the village/street level by the central and district governments under decentralisation. Blame for the lack of progress goes in all directions, by all actors, including some citizens who blame themselves for failing to deliver development activities.

Figure 2: Structure of governance and service delivery in Tanzania (the theory)



Different stakeholders (citizens, village and district leaders, local officials, civil society organisations, frontline workers) have disparate views about who should be responsible for the development, about what the local government is responsible for, and about how elected and appointed local government actors should be held accountable for their performance. Working based on 'rules in theory' (that is, how local government and accountability *should* work) alone is unlikely to bring about significant changes in performance at the local level because of many obstacles throughout the system. These obstacles include systemic obstacles (e.g., limited resources, lack of infrastructure and information) as well as individual obstacles (e.g. ingrained perceptions, fears of reprisal). The results of this phase are not the focus of this paper and are discussed extensively in Mdee et al. (2017) and Mdee and Mushi (2020).

The process of designing a meaningful Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) thus needs to consider these contested and blurred lines of accountability and multiple operational obstacles. Our interactions in Phase 1, suggested a strong desire to address this problem from across multiple actors and levels. We, therefore, saw the potential in using an LGPI as a collaborative problem-solving tool, that helps to move from a list of complaints about problems that local officials and representatives have limited capacity to resolve, to a collective understanding between citizens and local governments about where blockages lie, and what they can do together to overcome them.

The research team used a thematic sorting process of the large data set generated in Phase 1. This was done through a collaborative workshop over two days. All team members read the whole data set (transcripts from interviews) and then sorted interviews to highlight discussions around particular components of service delivery. The aim was to produce a long list of potential indicators related to service delivery under the headings of physical infrastructure, social services, livelihoods and resources, and political processes as summarized in Table 2. The interactive research process then led the research team to return to the districts (wards, villages and citizens) to refine the long list of indicators through a discursive and interactive process and to then test a shorter list of indicators through baseline data collection (Mdee & Mushi, 2020).

Table 2 Summary of indicators categories identified in phase 1

Index component				
Infrastructure	Roads	Power	Water	
Social	Health	Welfare	Education	Justice
Livelihood	Land/ natural resources	Farming	Livestock	
Political	Effectiveness		Representation	

3.1 Phase 2- refining the indicators and gathering baseline data

The aim of phase 2 was to refine the long list of indicators and gather baseline data through sharing and triangulating phase 1 findings. This was achieved by stimulating a collaborative and engaging dialogue with actors from the district council (DC), civil society organizations (CSOs), councillors and citizens.

A series of interactive and discursive workshops with reference groups of key stakeholders was convened in phase 2. Additional focused group discussions (FGD) and interviews also took place in the villages with a purposive sample of the original interviewees, selected to cover representation of age, gender and livelihood. The overall purpose of this consultation was to refine the long list of indicators of local governance to a shorter list on which baseline data could be gathered.

The process asked two fundamental sets of questions:
Which of these indicators are the most effective?
Do they capture important elements of local governance and service delivery and aspects of inclusive access to services? What is the potential impact of the LGPI?
What data are available? Can they be accessed and shared? If they are not readily available, how will they be gathered and shared?

The final analysis and selection of indicators was made during the multi-stakeholder forums conducted at a district level. Hence, data collection and analysis were run as a concurrent process as detailed in Mdee, Tshomba and Mushi (2017).

Table 3 outlines the data collection process for the initial phase of narrowing down the indicators.

Table 3 Data collection process in Phase 2

Level	**Sampling**	**Methods**	**Numbers**
District – elected councillors & MPs	Key informants	Interactive workshop	1 in each district (9-10 individuals in each)
District – officials	Key informants	Interactive workshop	1 in each district
District – civil society representatives	Key informants	Interactive workshop	1 in each district (numbers: 9 & 10)
Village – community respondents (citizens and village leaders)	Purposive, diversity of age, religion; disaggregated by gender Two locations in each district (4 sites in total)	Focused group discussions	1 male; 1 female; 1 village leaders (3 FGDs in each village/street)

The interactive discussions to refine the indicators were based on three principles:

1. As much as possible, indicators link directly to the responsibility of a local government. For example, the provision of electricity services as a whole is not in the remit of a local government. However, the extent to which water and electricity are available within public institutions such as schools and health centres does relate to the powers of the local government.
2. Ideally, indicators can also draw attention to issues of inequality, for example, political representation of women, or access of the poorest to social services.
3. Data can be gathered in relation to the proposed indicator within the scope of the project, and within the means of local institutions after the project ends.

4.0 Results- Testing the LGPI

The results of these interactive workshops and additional interviewing produced a range of specific component indicators under four constitutive elements of the LGPI Physical Infrastructure, Social Services, Livelihoods and Resources, and Political Effectiveness and Representation.

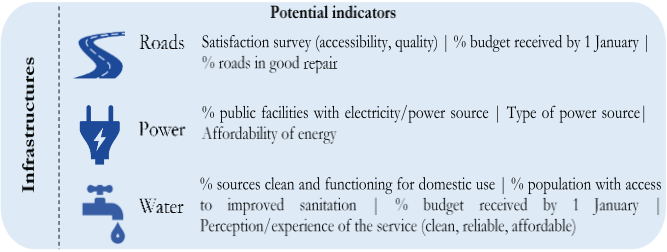
4.1 Physical Infrastructure

Phase 1 of the research found considerable citizen interest in the state of roads. Whilst the central government is responsible for major roads, local government is responsible for smaller local roads, which are unpaved and susceptible to degradation. Therefore, indicators in this area relate to citizen experiences of road quality and accessibility as well as District Council assessments on the condition and extent of their roads. We also recognize the challenge for local government relating to whether they receive centrally allocated resources for road building by the mid-point of the financial year.

In relation to electricity and other power sources, the main measure for local government relates to the connections for public institutions, with further indicators on the proportions of different power sources, and the affordability of energy sources (see Figure 3).

Local governments have clear remits in relation to drinking water provision but are still dependent on the central budgets for resource allocations. Therefore, understanding what proportion of the budget is received by the mid-point of the financial year indicates how much resource a local government has to act. Statistics on the state of district level access to clean water should be available and can be cross-checked against an experience survey of citizens on the safety, reliability and affordability of water.

Figure 3: Potential indicators of Infrastructure



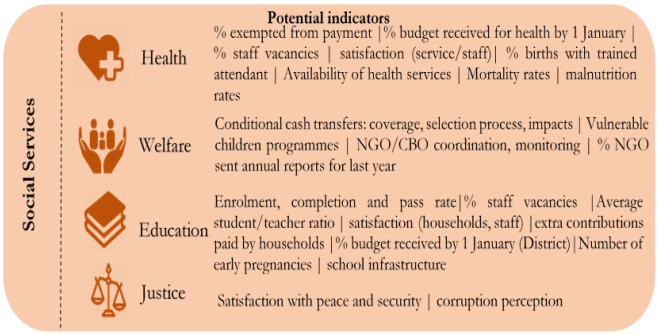
4.2 Social Services

Four areas of social service provision emerged as critical from Phase 1 of the research: health, welfare, education and justice (Figure 4). Again, it was necessary to disentangle which components of these that local government are responsible for. In all of these sectors, some resources are received from the central government for local government to use for implementation. However, other initiatives are implemented directly by the Ministries or National Agencies either through the central or donor funds. In addition, many other actors are also engaged in the provision of these services.

For health, with a focus on the local government role in this, the percentage of the budget received by the mid-point of the financial year, the level of staff vacancies, and the satisfaction of frontline workers give important indications of the capacity of local service delivery. District Councils are already expected to collect data on other indicators relating to service quality and inclusion, including mortality rates, the percentage of births attended by a trained attendant and availability of services among others.

In addition, the percentage of those exempted from payment for health services (and registered through the Community Health Fund) could also be an indicator of inclusion and outreach on the part of a local government.

Figure 3: Potential indicators of Social Services



In education, the Ministry of Education remains responsible for staff recruitment. However, local government can track the percentage of staff vacancies, facilities available in schools, as well as pass and completion rates disaggregated by gender and potentially by income group. The satisfaction of frontline staff can also be tracked. Citizen satisfaction with education services can also be tracked, and particularly the issue of extra contributions required for school attendance.

The area of justice is complex. For example, policing is not the responsibility of local government; however, peace and security at the community level is. Community-level courts also operate in co-operation with local government structures.

For these reasons, indicators are restricted to citizen perceptions and experiences of local courts, peace and security, and corruption. Such indicators could provide a starting point to localized discussions, for example on the performance of local courts, and particular challenges to peace and security for example, the noted violence between pastoralists and farmers in one district.

Debates concerning land and livelihoods in Tanzania are central to public discourse, but for the LGPI, we have to select indicators that relate to local government remit (see Figure 5).

All land is ultimately under the control of the central state, but land legislation devolves land planning and allocation responsibilities to local and village government. Land disputes are also a major source of tension that emerged in Phase 1 of this research. Therefore, collecting data on the number of officially recorded land disputes could be a useful starting point for further problem-solving discussions. The percentage completion of village/street land use plans also falls in the remit of the local government. Data on land use patterns could also be useful for tracking trends.

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In relation to livelihoods, the local government does hold some responsibilities for local economic development and employs agricultural extension workers. Therefore, indicators of their capacity are important, including whether they have access to transport. Further areas include what percentage of the budget is received by the local government from the central government, and what data are collected on agricultural production. An experience survey of citizens can also indicate the levels of support to agriculture, such as the government voucher scheme, and the availability of water for irrigation. This set of indicators requires adaption to the livelihoods in the local context, and to recognize dynamics of poverty. For example, tracking the size of land holdings over time might highlight where local land grabbing is taking place. Adaptations of such indicators are required to take account of the variation of livelihoods patterns in particular localities. Additional indicators could also relate to the collection of local taxation from registered businesses.

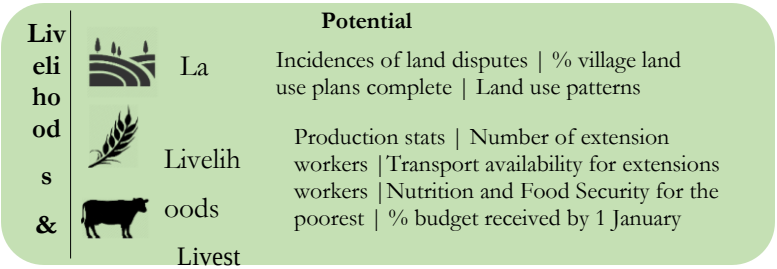

Figure 5: Potential indicators of Livelihoods and Resources

4.4 Political Effectiveness and Representation

Indicators of political processes relating to governance are divided into two: effectiveness and the nature of the representatives (see Figure 6). The effectiveness of political actors might be approximated through an experience survey of citizens, which differentiates between actors such as village leaders, councillors and MPs.

The perceptions of the elected officials themselves as representatives can also be obtained, for example, how satisfied they are with the processes, the budget received from central government and with the performance of frontline workers. Do they believe themselves to be effective?

Elements of inclusion can also be probed, for example in exploring the percentage of women representatives elected without being special seats (those reserved for women), or the representation of other more marginalized groups among political representatives for example persons with disabilities or youth.

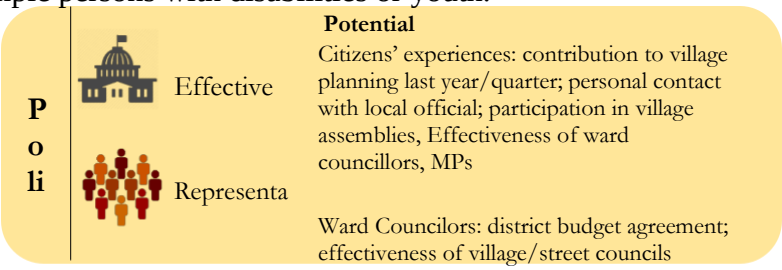

Figure 6 Potential indicators of Political Representation and Effectiveness

4.5 Phase 3- Testing a baseline

The sustainable operation of the LGPI process cannot be based on an expensive (externally financed) data set, as this will be a major impediment to its collection and use. Therefore, in this design process, the LGPI should begin with the data that are already available in the districts, wards and villages and where necessary use a simple survey of frontline workers and citizens to fill the gaps.

There was some concerns from stakeholder reference groups as to the reliability and trustworthiness of the existing data sources.

> *"We appreciate the way you have introduced us to the activities of the last phase of this project and we have understood. These indicators can measure the performance of local government. I am doubtful whether we will find a reliable 'person or institution' who will have the ability/capacity to bring us 'true' information – data that are not manipulated!" (Male FGD)*

However, the reference groups confirmed that data should be available in some form for all the indicators shortlisted in Phase 2:

> *"Directors of departments are at the ward level and going to their offices, the information can be accessible … At the village level, it is different. They have all the information and you can access it any time it is needed*" *(*Participant in a reference group).

However, there is also the recognition that the set of indicators can act as a baseline and starting point for problem-solving,

> *"Having the indicators will be like the baseline to use in their meetings, stressing services which could be provided by the district office … At present, there is no baseline to work from to ask and they just discuss each matter as it comes"* (CSO FGD).

Participants also indicated that strong leadership will be required for the index to be adopted and implemented,

> *"When our councillor or MP sees these indicators, I believe it will help him wake up and do something. From the indicators, I believe that when seen by our MP or councillor these indicators will help to give them a starting point on the way to bringing development in our village. For me, I think these indicators should be put on the radio and in newspapers, which will help to remind our leaders. I say this because they have not been visiting us in our village" (Female FGD)*
>
> *"Making these indicators public is not a problem, but the challenge comes from our leaders, especially councillors and MPs who fail to come to visit us" (Male, FGD).*

The outcome from Phase 2 was a refined set of indicators on which data could be sought to create a baseline. More critically, the process again revealed the need to work on mechanisms for collaborative problem-solving, and that the refining of the indicators had also met a secondary need of at least making public the starting assumptions of different stakeholders. There remains a high level of distrust and blame between different stakeholders within the system (particularly between the local government and NGOs), but again it points to the potential of the LGPI to perform a role in making visible lines of blame and accountability to begin a collective process of problem-solving.

Our original intention had been to collect the baseline at an earlier stage and attempt to repeat the process at least once (after one year) to understand processes of change. However, the dynamics of an election year in Tanzania, and the contested nature of blame and accountability, meant that the initial process took much longer than anticipated. As a project, we could have designed and created a set of indicators quickly and easily in a workshop in Dar-es-Salaam, and then simply collect data on them, without the complexity of an iterative process in the districts. However, such a process would not then have the potential to stimulate a collaborative problem-solving process.

There were three key sources of data for the baseline index:

1. Citizen experience survey relating to the indicators shortlist across the 4 index components. This was limited to 100 randomly selected respondents (from our original villages/streets) for this initial phase to pilot and progress the research.

This number was purely to test the index. However in regular use the sample should be calculated to ensure statistical validity.

2. Frontline worker survey using a purposive sample of frontline personnel in different areas of local government. It is envisaged that such a survey could cover all workers in later iterations.
3. Collection of the existing data from District Councils, wards and villages for the 2015/6 year. This first baseline allows us to assess what information exists in relation to the baseline.

The baseline data from these three sources were gathered in April 2017 and were presented back to our stakeholders reference groups as simple descriptive statistics. We applied a Likert scale system to communicate the results. Table 4 presents an example of the social services citizen experience survey, and Table 5 shows baseline district government data to specified indicators. It is not the intention of this paper to present and analyse the baseline data presented here, rather our purpose is to elucidate the process through which they are obtained and examine the dilemmas and decisions that need to be faced in order to generate them. These data require ownership within the districts themselves. We observed the stakeholder reference groups take ownership of these data and the baseline results were translated into Swahili and shared widely.

Table 4 Sample overview of citizen experience survey on social services in District 1

SOCIAL SERVICES	Very Happy	Somewhat Happy	Neutral	Not very Happy	Not at All Happy	Not Applicable	TOTAL
How happy are you with the service received from your health centre/dispensary	3	17	23	32	24	1	100
Do you have to travel more than 5km/ 1hour to the health centre		16 (yes)		84	(no)		100
Are you registered with the CHF/TIKKA?		19 (yes)		81	(no)		100
How happy are you with the TASAF process of identifying the poorest in your area?	5	12	14	15	26	28	100
How happy are you with the TASAF poverty reduction goals?	4	20	18	12	19	27	100
Do you pay extra school contributions?		39	(yes)	61	(no)		100
How happy are you with School Feeding Programs-		1	3	11	15	70	100
How happy are you with the school performance (tutors, education)?	8	28	34	21	8	1	100
How happy are you with the neighbourhood crime watch/street guards?		2	7	8	17	66	100

How happy are you with the local police?	11	27	24	18	13	7	100
How happy are you with the local court?	10	18	24	18	16	14	100
Do you or someone you know have ever pay a bribe (or give a gift) in the last 12 months to access services?		27 (yes)		73 (no)			100

Table 5: Sample District Council Data from District 2

NB: This table covers data provided by District Officials- gaps are where the data do not currently exist. This research cannot verify the source data on which these figures are based.

INDICATORS	Year 2017	Comments
PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE		
% budget for road received by 1 January	38.00%	
% in good repair	19%	
% of road network in district	100%	
% public facilities with electricity/power source (Health/Education under district control)	25%	
% household with access to electricity	15%	
% sources clean and functioning water	74%	
% population with access to improved sanitations	33%	
% budget for water received by 1 January	1.70%	Total km is 531 per DC
SOCIAL SERVICES		
% health budget received for health by 1 January	75%	
% staff vacancies	46%	
% births with Trained Birth Attendant	91%	
% population contributed to CHF	6.30%	
% villages with TASAF Programme	56%	
%population trained on the use of TASAF	10%	
% girls enrollment (lowest quintiles school)	Primary School : 83% Secondary School: 52.52%	
% girls Pass rates (Pass in national exams- std 7 and form 4)	Primary School:69.5% Secondary School: 46.39%	
% drop out of children	Primary School: 0.28% Secondary School: 3.5%	
% staff vacancies in education	Primary School: 0% Secondary School: and 1.7%	There are extra teachers for Arts subjects for the secondary schools
% education budget received by 1 January	Primary School: 43.8% Secondary School: 12.5%	
Number of early pregnancies	Primary School:6 % Secondary School 31%	
% (NGOs/CBOs) who have sent in annual reports for last year	NGOs : 95% CBOs: 15%	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES		
Number of Incidences of land disputes	154=2%	
% village land use plans complete	59%	
% land owners with certificate of land occupants	70%	
Number of agricultural extension workers	115	
% citizens with access to inputs (voucher schemes)	63.40%	
% lands with irrigation system	39,99%	
Number of milk collection centre	6	
Number of fish experts/extension workers	2	But 5 are functionning
POLITICAL		
% of women in non-special seats	6%	
• Effectiveness of ward councilors.	Moderate	Need capacity building

5.0 Discussion and implications: Applying a IPDIA approach to indicators and indexes

Problem-driven iterative adaptation is not a revolutionary approach within international development. It builds on previous decades of debate on the deficiencies of 'blue-print' development approaches that assume external and universal frameworks as effective drivers of change (Bond & Hulme, 1999; Korten, 1980; Toner, 2003; Toner & Franks,

2006). Our research builds on these foundations and therefore offers some insights into their practical application.

In this section, we outline our insights into a complex, adaptive and politically engaged process of addressing local governance performance, as against the principles of PDIA (Andrews et al., 2013). This is not a neat production line where the end result can be a tidy set of indicators and a pretty set of infographics. This was a rough, realistic local negotiation.

We suggest there are three important implications from our analysis: *Local definition of the problem,* Pragmatic, legitimate and meaningful data-policy interactions and Working on the 'authorising environment' and active experimentation. Each of these is discussed below.

5.1 Local definition of the problem

A locally accepted definition of the state of local governance necessitates an exploration of the gap between policy/responsibility in theory and actual capability in practice. Our multi-scalar ethnographic process created a dataset based on conversations on the nature of multiple levels of government performance in service delivery. It was exposed to shared scrutiny how different actors blamed each other for the failure and through this, it became possible for divergent actors (e.g. local government employees and civil society activists) to understand their mutual working constraints. The process of iterative feedback between data and analysis (through repeated interviews, focus group discussion and an active stakeholder working group at the District level) created a robust means of triangulation and shared understanding of the complexity and nuance of local governance performance. This was a necessary step before the process of selecting potential indicators that can act as markers of collective problem-solving.

5.2 Pragmatic, legitimate and meaningful data-policy interactions

New indicators and indexes require data, and data have significant associated costs (da Cruz & Marques, 2017). Through the lens of PDIA, these data also have to be politically legitimate and practically accessible. Hence, we made very conscious decisions to begin from the existing data and to conduct relatively small and simple experience surveys for the baseline dataset. The team that collected the baseline data worked alongside local government officials and civil society organisations to build collective capacity and understanding of the dataset. In this way, the data produced reflect the institutional capacity of stakeholders to generate, manage and apply data in locally meaningful ways.

5.3 Working on the 'authorising environment' and active experimentation

The interaction of multiple local stakeholders was intentionally targeted at understanding the acceptability of a local governance performance index and creating a set of indicators that had both local political and institutional acceptability, but that would also form a working component of problem-solving.

An authorising institutional environment has to provide the opportunity for collaborative problem-solving among local stakeholders, with the LGPI serving as an entry for discussion and not for distributing blame. Engaged, confident and enabling leadership is a critical part of this. Our experience showed that acceptability and understanding of the LGPI was an emergent property of the interactions that formed its design. The collection of baseline data was interactive and in close collaboration with the local stakeholders and is being used by them to inform resource allocation and decision making. Over the longer term, it is envisaged that an annual review of indicators and collection of baseline data would inform continued local institutional developments.

At the national level, such locally built indicators must not be used to compare the performance of other local governments, although we recognise that there is a tendency and a desire to do so. Ranking across the complexity of many local government areas does not offer strong insight for directed local action (Van Roosbroek & Van Dooren, 2010). However, this risks increasing the pressure for districts to focus on how to use the index for political ends, rather than focusing on problem-solving through it. It is rather, the iterative, locally driven process of creating governance indices that could be adapted and replicated in other contexts.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper offers a methodology for working through the complex process of building context-based governance performance indicators. SDG 16 encourages countries to measure their governance performance to achieve stronger effective, inclusive, participatory and democratic institutions. Yet, such international push has resulted in the adoption of standardised and generalised indicators that are subjected to multiple and competing interpretations and fail to take into account the actual capability of local institutions.

Rooted in an ethnographic approach to research, the paper elaborates a holistic, problem-driven, iterative and context-based approach adopted in developing indicators for two districts in Tanzania. The project was implemented in three phases, each phase feeding unto the next and reiterated to ensure consistency and to build trust among research participants and stakeholders. We have underscored that this is not a prototype for indicators, but the goal is to promote the need for problem-driven iterative approaches especially in countries and contexts where the gap between internationally adopted policies and implementation capability in practice continues to widen. In addition, we conclude that local government performance indicators need to be incremental, realistic, pragmatic, feasible and context-based and focused on building the capability of local government over the longer term instead of subjecting them to a standardised external rubric of measurement.

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This article was received in June 2021. It was revised in September 2021 and approved for publication in June 2022.