

Why women succeed in local politics

The role of the informal to access leadership positions in Tanzania

Annie Francis SNV Tanzania



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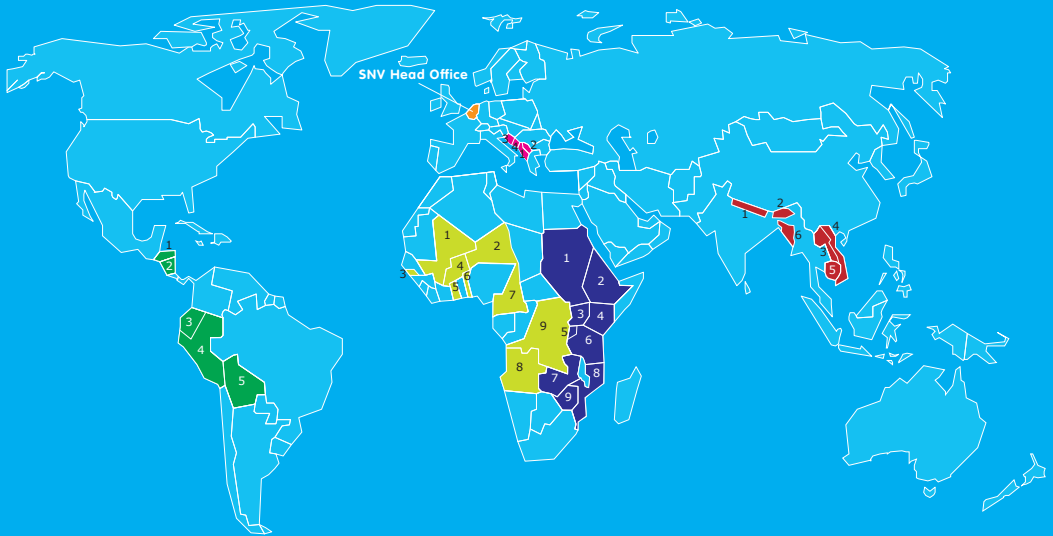
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Abstract

Local government reform in Tanzania focuses on good governance and decentralization to strengthen decision making at the district level of government. The figures show that women are seriously under represented as District Councillors. The research investigated the informal factors in the life history of a group of 11 elected women councillors in Northern Tanzania, which contributed to their success in politics. The informal factors were: a history of community activism and leadership; having a supportive family and exposure to positive role models. Findings reveal that there is an interaction between the formal party selection process, and those informal factors. They have a major impact at two key moments in the formal process: decision to stand and opinion poll in villages. Although having a supportive family and positive role models played a part in contributing to political access, the main factor to emerge was long history of community involvement, activism and leadership which contributed to being known, respected and accepted as a candidate to the extent of transcending those norms and values which militate against women leaders.

1 Introduction

It has been widely accepted that bringing decision-making closer to the people, whereby decisions, which are made, are based on needs and priorities of the local community will result in improved pro-poor service delivery, although recent thinking tends to question this assumption (Devas and Grant, 2003). In Tanzania, as in many other East African countries, local government reform programmes, which promote decentralisation to district and lower levels of government, are in place. Crook (2003) suggests that if decentralisation is to play a role in improved service delivery, then accountability mechanisms at all levels must be strengthened in order to achieve this goal. So far such decentralisation involves decision-making power moving from men at national level to men at district and lower levels. In Tanzania

local authorities are strategically positioned to contribute meaningfully to poverty reduction through effective and equitable service delivery, and as women constitute more than 50 % of the population and are indeed the main users of key services it is logical that they should take their place in democratic decision-making structures at that level.

Increased involvement of women in the political decision making process is both desirable and necessary; women can help to influence the allocation of scarce resources to benefit men and women. The economic conditions of men and women continue to differ, consequently women must have the opportunity to defend and promote the interests of women and bring their perspective to decision making. Whilst reserved seats may give women increased presence, questions about their accountability and legitimacy defuse their impact. The democratic aspect of a political system will be strengthened and legitimacy of decisions taken increased as women achieve equal access to decision making processes at local and national levels.

1.1 Tanzanian context

The Government of Tanzania has ratified the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW], it subscribes to the Beijing Platform for Action, and by signing the SADC Gender and Development Declaration in 1997, it has committed itself to having women occupy at least 30% of positions in political and decision-making structures by 2005. The Government also supports the Millennium Development Goals of which one is to 'promote gender equality and empower women'. The Tanzania National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty 2005-9 highlights gender inequalities as an impoverishing force, and efforts are being made to engender the goals. Of particular importance is the 1997 constitutional reform, which guaranteed 15% of parliamentary seats, and 25% local government seats for women. Subsequently, a constitutional amendment in 2000 increased the quotas to 33% in Local Government and 20% in Parliament in order to achieve the aim of '30% of positions occupied by women by 2005'. This will take effect in the 2005 General and Local Authority elections. In order to achieve these goals, affirmative action by implementing a quota

system is in place in Tanzania. This ensures that women are appointed to 'special seats'¹ on a quota system at all levels of government. Currently there are 48 'special seat' female Members of Parliament (MPs) in Tanzania, and 12 (5.1%) elected women MPs out of a total of 231 elected MPs. Out of the 5 MPs, elected by the House of Representatives of Zanzibar, 1 is a woman, and there are 2 women out of 10 Presidential nominees. When all categories are considered then women constitute 21.3 % of the members of parliament

The President of Tanzania himself recognises that 'affirmative actions are at best temporary measures to remedy inequalities in a socio-economic and political system'. The 'special seat' councillors do not have a mandate equal to those 'elected at the ballot' councillors, and the rights they do have can be denied them. Women 'special seats' do not have a clearly defined constituency apart from 'women', and are not perceived as having the same legitimacy as the women who are elected e.g. they have the right to call a meeting with women in any ward, they only have to inform the ward councillor but he/she sometimes refuses to allow the meeting. One respondent of the questionnaire indicated that she was able to work freely on 'women's issues' but if she discussed classroom construction, for example, the villagers said they should wait for the 'real councillor'.

The 'special seat' policy is designed to ensure that women are present in national and local government, also presuming that they gain experience in order to proceed to stand in elections. Although not within the scope of this research, it would be interesting to consider whether these women proceed to stand or not, they may be more comfortable as selected councillors with a more or less 'guaranteed' position, and less risk of exposing themselves to the possibility of failure. Meena (2003) suggests that special seats are a subtle mechanism to prevent women from participating in competitive politics, in that the pressure is off the parties to nominate women to stand in the constituency. Indeed the percentage of women elected to parliament in Tanzania has decreased since the quota system has been in force, from 7.5% in 1961 to 2% in 1985 [when quotas began] reaching to 5% in 2000 (Meena 2003).

1 Women are selected by their party, and if the council has several parties represented following the elections then the special seats are allocated proportionally.

1.2 The research question

Despite policies being in place, and stated commitment to gender equality and representation in decision-making, women remain drastically under represented in parliament, district councils and village councils in Tanzania. Data shows that the numbers of women who are elected as MPs, District Councillors and Village Council members continue to be very low.

The research question is based on the premise that while women are hugely under represented in leadership positions in Local Government in Tanzania, some women do stand for positions and succeed to be elected. *What are the informal dynamics which influence women's access to leadership positions as district councillors?*

Research has been undertaken on the factors, which prevent women from putting themselves forward, and from failing to succeed even when they do. A study undertaken in 65 countries by the Inter-parliamentary Union (Norris and Inglehart 2000), found that balancing time demands, and cultural attitudes hostile to women's participation in politics, were highlighted by women politicians as the top two barriers to running for office. This research proposes to turn the issue around to focus on those who have succeeded. It will augment the hypothesis that in reality it is the informal mechanisms, which contribute substantially to success in politics rather than reliance on the formal democratic processes.

Chabal (1999) refers to the porous boundaries of politics and suggests that there is no separation of the personal and the political in Africa, these are interdependent and have to be unravelled in order to understand the political processes. If this is so, then informal dynamics must indeed play a key role in enabling women to access leadership positions in comparison to, or in combination with, the formal democratic process. Unless these informal processes are identified and taken into account, capacity strengthening approaches, which focus on the formal, will not have any impact. It is anticipated that this research will enable identification of strategies for assisting women to vie for and succeed in accessing leadership positions.

The hypothesis:

The research is based on the hypothesis that women who succeed to be elected to positions as district councillors do so because of informal factors in their life history:

- holding leadership positions in community groups, or in the community in general
- having a supportive family background, either their own or their husbands, including relatives involved in politics.
- exposure to positive role models at various stages in their lives

If women are elected to councillor positions due to informal factors then women councillors that are elected members of district councils in this study should have a history of active involvement in community groups, especially assuming leadership positions, have received relevant support from family members and been exposed to positive leadership role models.

It is important to note that similar informal factors may be found to enable men to succeed to become councillors, and a comparative study in the future may reveal this. However the scope of this study is to highlight factors which may have particular relevance for women, and which may merit further research.

2 Case study

The research took place in Arusha, Manyara and Kilimanjaro Regions in Northern Tanzania. These three regions comprise the area of operation of both SNV Northern Portfolio and the Arusha team of the Local Government Reform Programme. A scan revealed that there are 11 elected women councillors in the area, comprising 3.2 % of the total number of councillors. The term 'elected women councillors' means women who have stood as candidates for election as Ward Councillors, and succeeded, for a particular political party in the Local Authority elections. The research involved all those 11 elected women councillors.

The research was conducted in partnership with the Arusha team of the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP). SNV Northern

Portfolio and the LGRP work in partnership on specific activities relating to capacity strengthening of the local authorities.

3 Research methodology

3.1 The main research question was addressed by considering the following questions

- Do women councillors have a history of involvement in different types of community groups, and in particular have they held leadership positions in them? Have those groups encouraged their women leaders to go into politics?
- Do family relations and political connections influence women's access to leadership positions? Do women mobilise these connections? Are the connections used actively to assist the women or are they passively tolerant of her political ambitions?
- Do women councillors have positive role models at various stages of their lives? Are they inspired by them? What impact have they had on the women?

3.2 Field research

- The field research was conducted together with a representative of the Arusha team of the LGRP. This proved to add credibility to the research on the part of the councillors; they know the LGRP so they felt motivated to participate in that their concerns might be addressed in the future. It was also very useful in terms of translation and interpretation as all discussions were conducted in Kiswahili.
- Short face-to-face individual interviews were to be conducted with each councillor using a prepared questionnaire. The purpose was to elicit basic information about their backgrounds. However the councillors did not know English and the researchers overlooked translating the questionnaire, so it was completed in each group by proceeding together through each question, translating and clarifying. This method proved useful in stimulating discussion on particular issues, particularly around the area of support from family.

- The research involved collection of qualitative data through facilitated discussion in groups. This involved a sample of 11 women councillors divided into 2 groups. A list of key issues [Annexe 1] was used as a checklist throughout the group discussions to ensure the kind of information required was collected. The discussions involved one day per group and were conducted in Kiswahili. Information was gleaned using 'action learning' methodology to elicit a natural history path focussing on each member of the group telling her life story. This method involved noting questions during the story, and asking key questions once it was told. Other members of the group contributed their shared experiences during the questioning. This method proved useful in eliciting important nuggets of information, which might not have emerged otherwise.
- Additional interviews were held with two special seat councillors, both of whom aspire to be elected in 2005 and with one councillor's family members.
- A literature review for familiarisation with the current situation was carried out

4 Research findings

The informal factors which enable women to succeed to political positions cannot be discussed in isolation from the formal processes; it would appear that it is an interaction between the two which leads to successful vying for position in the Council. Consequently it is necessary to elaborate first on the formal democratic process. Given that the CCM,² the ruling party in Tanzania is predominant, and that the entire sample of councillors interviewed entered the political arena through CCM, it is their selection process, which was in place in the 2000 elections,³ which is described.

2 Chama cha mapinduzi

3 New procedures will be implemented in 2005 election

4.1 Political party process: A background

In order to stand for election one has to be a party member. In the 70's it was almost automatic to be a member of TANU⁴ then CCM, and for those who wished to go into higher learning institutions, it was compulsory. Consequently it was found that the older women councillors had been members for more than twenty years. Since the multi – party era this is no longer the case, party membership is nowadays truly voluntary.

An individual wishing to stand must complete a form to be returned to the party at ward⁵ level by the stated deadline. The various application forms are discussed at the ward CCM Political committee. Comments on the applications may be made at this point. They are then sent to the district CCM committee, which selects candidates to go forward to the next level - The Regional Executive, which scrutinises the list plus comments from lower levels and can either select one person to go forward, or can select two but recommend one.⁶ It should be noted that during this process there is a parallel process within the party for selection of women candidates for the special seat positions, and some women declare an interest in both.

At an early stage in the process there is an opinion poll where the various CCM contenders travel from village to village to present themselves to the broad CCM membership, a vote is taken which gives an idea of which is the preferred candidate. The outcome is taken into account during the formal CCM discussions.

The party process appears to be an open and democratic one for both men and women, given that the process is transparent, involves the party at several levels, and the decision is taken at the district level. However it is also true that women face numerous constraints, not the least of which is the tendency of the men to regard the 'special seats' as providing sufficient space for women, so they need not take up a man's place on the council. The CCM selection committees are

4 Tanganyika African National Union

5 Councillors are elected at ward level, and depending on the district a ward can comprise 2-10 villages.

6 If there is no candidate from another party, no election is held, the CCM candidate becomes the councillor.

mainly men, and in all the cases in the research sample the women were competing with male candidates to be selected. What then contributed to the party selecting a woman?

4.2 The findings

From the research sample it transpired that all of the women were long-term party members, some being active in the CCM as chairperson of the ward branch for example. Being known within the party in your own right is clearly important and the main route for women is through the UWT⁷, the women's wing of the CCM. All the women in the research group were not only members of UWT but were active as leaders at various levels, ward, district, and region. In fact the party would be wary of and unlikely to select a woman who had not been active in UWT, as women are supposed to be interested in women's affairs.

Although it is considered that the 'special seats' are a stepping-stone to being a ward councillor, this is not necessarily the case. Two respondents indicated that women view the special seats as a way of entering politics, getting experience and of building a support base and said 'no-one prefers to be special seats'. However, nine of the respondents had not taken this route and in fact looked down on these councillors. This raises questions as to whether the special seat provision is in fact divisive and dis-empowering.

In considering the informal factors at play, it is clear that it helps women to have a family member active in the party. Nine respondents had CCM members in the family; four had family members holding key positions. The woman is more likely to be known to the CCM decision makers, and she also gets credibility by virtue of being married to or related to a CCM official or elected representative. One of the women indicated that her husband had been an MP and was currently a DC⁸ and so she was well known. Further investigation could reveal to what extent the women mobilise these contacts for advice, funds or campaign strategies or whether the contacts, simply by virtue of their existence, smoothen the route.

7 Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania

8 District Commissioner

Although the CCM is male dominated, women do have room for manoeuvre in the formal processes. Chabal (1999) indicates there are a range of registers on which political actors can draw. It is evident that the main formal register which women aspirant can utilise is the UWT. Whereas the more informal registers open to them include family connections which can either be actively mobilised or from which they derive a measure of legitimacy.

I would argue that the formal and informal factors within the party processes are not sufficient to ensure access to political position. There are two key moments where informal factors outside the party come into play:

- The first is at the moment of taking the decision to stand. All but one of the women were approached to stand, it had not been their ambition.
- The second moment is during the opinion poll, 'kura za maoni', in the villages. The women travel round with other male contenders to assess their chances

My hypothesis indicates a number of informal factors could be at play: activism/leadership in the community; supportive family and role models.

4.3 Activism / leadership in the community

The issue of activism is defined as being either a member of various formal community groups; such as church, women's groups, school board, village committees, economic and self-help groups or as being a health adviser, moneylender, or problem solver on an individual basis. All of the women councillors in the sample had a long history of being involved in the community, and explained their activism, as 'I wanted to be close to other women and work with them on development'. [See Table (a)] Indeed their motivation and interest was to help women, and activism was initially in women's groups of various kinds. This should be considered in conjunction with active membership of the UWT as above, which also contributes to being known by the women in the community and plays a role in women being approached to stand for the council and gaining acceptance from women and to some extent men. Community activism was seen as important 'I attend all the weddings, all the funerals' one councillor stressed.

Table (a)

Type of community groups	Number of councillors who had been members
Religious based	10
Social [choir, self help]	9
Economic [women's group, SACCOS]	9
Political [village committee, village council]	9

In identifying leadership, the research considered being chairperson, secretary, and treasurer of groups and it emerged that all of the women had a history of leadership. In several cases from school days 'I was selected as Head Girl' 'I was a prefect'. Others were in leadership positions at different levels; village, ward, district and region. One councillor became village council chairperson in 1987, probably one of the first and certainly one of the few in Tanzania. Others have been in leadership positions in parish groups, women's groups, and workers organisations [Table (b)].

Table (b)

Types of leadership positions held	
Member of regional ALAT [Association of Local Authorities Tanzania]	Treasurer of parish x 2
AFNET [NGO against Female Genital Mutilation] activist	Village chairperson
Chair of CCM ward level	Secretary of 'kigango' [parish group]
Chair of UWT regional level	Treasurer of 'kigango'
Chair of UWT district level	Health worker in village
Secretary of UWT district level	Board of 'Olesipi' NGO
Member of board of directors of Legal & Human Rights organisation	Vice chairperson of council x 2
Member of board of secondary schools x 2	Assessor industrial court
Guarantor	Assessor regional housing tribunal
Zone secretary of RAAWA [workers organisation]	Chairperson of women's section in northern diocese
Member of Tanzania Labour Party [TLP] General Assembly	Chairperson of TLP at regional level

Activism and leadership in the community contribute to women's success in standing for council in several ways. Through being active in their youth and adult life, women gain self confidence, they learn skills in working and communicating with a range of people, and they learn leadership skills. 'Being chosen as a timekeeper at school helped

me to feel confident and that I could do things'. This contributes to their being able to present themselves to the party and to the community during the opinion poll, and of course during the campaigning process.

Community activism contributes to taking the step to stand for election and to succeeding in the subsequent processes. In this sample, 10 of the 11 councillors were approached and persuaded to stand for the council. Only one indicated that 'I decided to take the forms so I went to the party to find out if women can stand, they said yes so I took the forms' and part of her motivation was to help fellow women who she saw 'having a difficult life, a lot of problems' but she also wanted 'to check to what extent I was valued in the community'. The other councillors were clear that they did not think of being councillors, they were approached by UWT colleagues, by village officials, or by women in the community. These 10 all went through a process of being persuaded to stand, they all proceeded to check with various sectors of the community whether there was support before making a decision 'I didn't want to try and fail, I wanted to be sure of succeeding'.

Our findings reveal that through the years of activism each woman had acquired a certain image in the community, 'I was known as 'mama maendeleo (development)', and her capabilities had been recognised and appreciated not only by the women but also by men even in areas where women are traditionally not accepted as leaders, 'they [pastoralist male leaders] decided to support me because they saw me as someone who helped them' and who 'defended their rights in land disputes'. Norms and values in the pastoralist community⁹ dictate that women cannot lead, especially not lead men, however it appears that a strong and active community presence can counteract this. A woman can succeed if she has a good reputation on development, if she shows her knowledge of and ability to deal with the men's priorities [land, livestock] and if she takes the time to build alliances with key men. A pastoralist woman is more acceptable than

9 Women have the same status as children

non-pastoralist as the men can exploit her knowledge to promote their interests, whilst controlling her through cultural norms¹⁰.

Having leadership skills and having a good image in the community further contribute to success during the opinion poll part of the formal process. This step very much influences the selection of candidate at the end of the day. How do women secure the majority of votes against male contenders at this point? They present themselves as focussing on the development issues which will appeal to both men and women. One councillor indicated 'I promised all these things without knowing what was possible, but I have done my best and have achieved most of them'. This underscores Chabal's (1999) argument that the legitimacy of a politician is based on responding to the expectations of her followers in the local community, short-term achievements are more important than long-term ambitions. Whereas Chabal (1999) suggests that short term gains are bribes, contracts and other financial benefits, we would argue that where women are concerned these are not the expectations. The added value of women lies not in 'deals' but in extending her caring role in the community to assist with their development priorities.

What is in it for the community to select the woman? It appears to be very much based on a belief that she can deliver, she can make a difference in terms of development. She has to be stronger than the man at this point to overcome the norm of seeing men as effective leaders. If the individual has to be seen in connection with her community and if her credibility is linked to her ability to deliver then she has a chance of being elected in comparison to a male candidate who is perceived as unable to deliver

It can be argued that all these factors are at play for men and women, but in order for a woman to overcome the traditional norms and values she has to have extra added value over the men. She has to have proved herself already in the community, firstly by complying with the expected role of wife and mother, but much more importantly by being a tried and tested community leader. All of the women were selected as the candidate in preference to men, and according to

10 She would respect that as a woman she can't attend traditional leaders meetings, even is she is a councillor

them this was because they had established their reputations as strong and capable and the community saw them as serious about development rather than seeking a position for the status it would bring.

It is worth pointing out that none of the women interviewed were highly educated although all had at least Std 7 education, none were particularly wealthy but again not the poorest in the community. Six had been employees, two in the teaching profession, whereas the rest were in farming or small business activities. One was in larger scale business inherited from her father. None were able to continue in employment once becoming councillors.

4.4 Supportive family background

In this research family was construed as immediate family [husband, parents, and children] and also the extended family network. Most of the women had sought views of their husbands when they were considering standing for election and got the encouragement they needed. One husband stressed that it should be a joint decision of husband and wife. Most also indicated that their husbands and children were proud of them and would help them campaign. [See Table (c)] This was important as standing for the council and succeeding both have an impact on the family. All of the women indicated that they faced a lot of abuse and insults from men when they started on the process e.g. 'dume jike- masculine woman'. They indicated that although there is initial support for them to stand, when it transpires that they have a serious chance some of the support disappears and the insults and rumour mongering begin. Women also contribute to this. The result is a loss of friends and loss of confidence. Trust and support, especially from the husband, are then crucial. Rumours can undermine the marriage, given that councillors spend a lot of time out of the home. Political party members are aware of this and approach the husband for his support if they have a woman candidate they really want.

Table (c)

Husbands level of support	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	No answer
Husband is proud	8	1	0	2
Husband encourages	7	3	1	0
Husband helps campaign	6	1	0	4

As previously indicated, in order to gain the necessary acceptance from the community as a political candidate, women should be seen to fulfil their traditional role as wife and mother. To some extent those women who extend their 'caring' role to the community by being advisers, taking people to hospital etc are confirming their role. We would argue that their chances of being elected are higher, as the payback for the community is an extension of the caring role in bringing development to the community. However continuing to fulfil the family role is a challenge to the woman councillor. With increased demands on her time juggling the responsibilities becomes difficult. The full support of the family becomes critical here as the consequences can be dropping out of politics or divorce. Councillors, as do any women in Tanzania wishing to be active outside the home, rely on housemaids. Loots (2001) notes that women tend to stand for office later in life than men and that this can be attributed to the conflict with the family role, which diminishes when the children become adult. Indeed most of the respondents were over forty-five on entering politics [see Tables (d) and (e)]

Table (d)

Age range of councillors	Number of councillors in range
35-40	2
41-50	4
51-60	0
61-70	5

Table (e)

Number of children	Total number of children of all councillors	Average per councillor
Under 18	27	2.45
Over 18	41	3.72

4.5 Role models

The hypothesis posed is that role models contribute to women's success; meaning that in their lives they have admired and even emulated particular women. This proved to be more complex than anticipated to tease out. For example who ascribes the role model? One councillor indicated that her mother had been very encouraging and supportive of her from early days, and that same mother was a respected 'adviser' in the community. The councillor explained that the community saw her 'just like her mother' and so sought her advice on their problems. It can be said that her mother provided a strong role model, and indeed mentor during her early years. The IULA (1997) report highlights the importance of the informal transfer of experiences through role models and mentors when young, and suggest that this is quite common for men, less so for women. The role models often don't exist for them. However role models may have an unconscious influence, which cannot easily be articulated. Respondents mentioned fathers being councillors or leaders, and their mothers or other female relatives being active in community groups. The research did not manage to delve further into the extent these could be considered role models.

In another case the councillor gained credibility amongst men in a pastoralist community by virtue of her connection to three influential men, she was educated by a widely respected politician, her father had been a 'legwanan' or traditional leader, and her husband was a District Commissioner. Other councillors indicated that their fathers had been leaders in the community; one indicated her father had been a councillor, another had been village leader, and another had been a prominent businessman. It was the perception of these women that the community was willing to support them by virtue of their connection with these men. One woman explained that although she was young when her businessman father died, she was encouraged by the family to take over the business and then by her councillor brother to also become a councillor. The community appears to give credibility to these women by virtue of their connection with leaders and ascribe them legitimacy as leaders, which over rides traditional norms and values. It may be that the women absorb the idea of being a leader as something possible for them by virtue of leadership being within the family. This poses a less conscious role model and indeed role models assist in different ways.

5 Conclusion

The research shows that the hypothesis is substantiated in that there is a clear interaction between the formal and informal factors in the selection and election process for Councillor positions, and it is the informal dynamics, which play the key role in enhancing women's chances to succeed at various points in the process.

The formal party selection processes are in theory open to all, but essentially male dominated whether within the party or the community. The research shows that women make use of both the formal and the informal processes as appropriate. The main route to formal acceptance being membership of and activism in the political party, especially in the women's section [UWT] where is more possible to move into leadership positions than in the party mainstream. This also helps to confirm women's legitimacy as representing women's interests both within the party and to a portion of women in the community. A key informal factor within the party processes is women candidates' connection with male party leaders from which they can derive legitimacy, and also active support in being guided through the system, and being defended or promoted within the Party.

Acceptance in the wider community is crucial and requires women to exploit the informal routes by being very active in a range of community activities, particularly as leaders. This is perceived as extending their traditional caring role, which is acceptable and even desirable if it will result in benefits to the community. Activism and leadership create confidence and allow the necessary skills to develop in women, but in addition create a certain image of them [mama development] which results in them being approached. It helps them to be better known in the community and enhances their chances in the opinion poll during the formal process. The research shows that women derive legitimacy from both men and women in the community by virtue of being seen to be respected and capable leaders who can represent their interests as councillors. The payback for the community of going against traditions, norms and values, by approving a female leader is that she will fully utilise her caring role to better serve their interests. Consequently the aspiring female councillor must identify the issues close to the hearts of the men in

the community, often land issues, and campaign on those. To appeal only to the women on their issues is not sufficient to ensure success.

Women who do 'deliver' continue to be elected, in the sample one was completing her third term and four their second term. Two who had moved from special seat to ward had temporarily held the ward position upon the death of the councillor, and then succeeded in being elected. This was attributed to having been tested by the community and approved. Respondents who are vying for ward in 2005 stressed the importance of building a reputation on general development issues and indicated that 'if you only work on women's issues [as a special seat councillor] you won't get anywhere'.

Additional factors which were found to contribute to women's success in the political arena include family support, whether moral or material. Women entering the ring face a range of reactions from not being taken seriously, to insults and even physical abuse. For most this comes as a shock, and the support of husbands and other family members is important to enable women to cope with it. Secondly, being active in politics has consequences for family life from spending less time at home, to the husband feeling undermined by his wife's status. Family support is again an important factor in ensuring the outcome is neither divorce nor giving up politics.

The research has identified informal factors contributing to success for women entering politics, but how to translate these into strategies which will enable more women to succeed will be a challenge. Is it realistic for more women to have connections within a Party, or to make time to be sufficiently active in the community? The research has raised further interesting questions, which if addressed could lead to enhancing women's chances, for example, the issue of 'special seats' for women as a disempowering factor requires investigation, should they be abandoned? Can they be more effectively used as a short term measure? In addition, a comparative study of informal dynamics in men's success in politics in relation to those of women could shed more light on successful strategies for women. Or could they?

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Annex 1: Checklist of issues for the group action learning discussion

Methodology:

Use of action learning in a group setting whereby an individual tells life history and others note down and ask questions when she has finished. The checklist was used to ensure the information was gained.

Childhood:

Did parents encourage her to do things?
Did her teachers encourage her?
Did she perform well in primary school?
Was she a class leader?
Did she belong to groups?
Did she admire her women teachers? Why?

If secondary education and beyond...

Did her parents encourage her to go to secondary?
Did she perform well in secondary?
Was she a prefect or similar?

Adulthood:

Was she active in village/community activities?
Was this important to her?
Did she initiate activities?

How did she come into politics?

Did she decide to run for election?

Did her family/friends/women's group suggest it? [see list below]

- Husband
- Children
- Members of political party
- Friends
- Former classmates
- Church Members
- Women's organisations
- Others

What kind of support did she receive to embark on her campaign?
[see list below]

- Financial Support
- Logistic Support
- Technical Support (speech writing, etc.)
- Mobilization of potential electorate
- Comprehension of Employer
- Human Resources support

Who provided that support ?

What did she think were her strengths to be a candidate ?

- Education Level
- Reputation in her profession
- Reputation in her religion
- Activism in Women's Associations
- Economic Power
- Self Confidence
- Experience in Leadership
- Family Affiliation
- Others

What difficulties she faced while campaigning ?

- Family members resistance
- Financial problems
- Cultural factors
- Family responsibilities
- Others (being under political pressure, fearing to fail)

How these difficulties were overcome ?

The following were used as direct questions to the discussion group of councillors:

Why do you think you succeeded to be elected?

Who do you represent as a councillor?

Do you think women feel you can represent their interests?

Why did you engage in politics?

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Annie Francis
SNV Tanzania
afrancis@sntanzania.org

With assistance from:
Susana Chekani
Local Government Reform Programme
Tanzania

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

Dr. Kuyperstraat 5
2514 BA The Hague
The Netherlands
T +31 70 344 02 44
F +31 70 385 55 31
www.snvworld.org