

Enhancing climate change adaptation capacities in Local Government Authorities: the case of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Abstract

Local Government Authorities (LGAs) play a crucial role in human development in terms of public infrastructures delivery and service provisions. This is even more evident in the vulnerable contexts, such as sub-Saharan cities, where the lack of or the inadequate access to the essential resources and services drastically affects the livelihood strategies and outcomes for a rapidly growing number of people. This assumption is confirmed by the increased participation of LGAs' in recent decision-making processes in the framework of the international development agenda.

The paper reflects about the implementation of an action-research development project whose objective is to enhance LGAs' capacities to design climate change (CC) adaptation measures in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), assuming their crucial roles as agents of change. The paper deals with the institutional context complexity within which the project faces its challenges in designing a capacity-building action using the "positive thinking" (PT) approach for the evaluative research. The approach proposes a learning process that goes beyond the identification of gaps, needs and problems and investigates a specific situation starting from the success than from failure. It suggests to look at those cases in which the expected problems/gap did not occur or were addressed successfully by the community in the real context of the intervention.

Aiming to identify and make explicit existing LGAs' positive practices and to capitalize their strengths the research detected positive cases of CC adaptation measures successfully implemented by the LGAs in Dar es Salaam, formulated explanations for such successes by identifying the specific mechanisms that make them possible and significant, as well as the role played by the institutional and no-institutional actors.

The results of the evaluative research answer the following questions: What could we learn through positive thinking approaches in development interventions where theories in use are sometimes unable to cope with the complexity of the specific contexts? It is possible to detect "positive cases" to learn from? Could this learning offer a new understanding of the situation, strengthening or undermining the assumptions of the intervention and helping to (re)design the capacity-building action planned by the project?

Key words: *positive thinking, local government authorities, adaptation to climate change*