

THE OCTOBER 1994 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS REGISTRATION PROCESS

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Introduction

This study is a synthesis of research findings on the October 1994 Local Government Elections in Tanzania Mainland. The research findings are based on ten regions, namely, Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Kagera, Kigoma, Kilimanjaro, Mbeya, Morogoro, Mwanza and Ruvuma. The study focuses on the registration process. The October 1994 local government election has been described as a test case or a litmus test for the working of the multi-party system in Tanzania.¹ Tanzania has embarked on the bumpy road towards multi-party democracy which many believe provide a healthy environment for competition for candidates and voters.

Apparently, many people were curiously looking forward to the election. One of the peculiarities of Tanzania's democratization process is that it was introduced, organized and controlled by the ruling party, Chama cha Mapinduzi. This significantly impacts upon the democratization experience and the political landscape. Recent research has shown that the opposition parties are unable to articulate their policies, programmes and manifestos adequately to the masses. Further, the opposition parties do not address the socio-economic problems of the masses. They have some support in urban areas, but very little in the countryside, where the majority of the population live. Research has also shown that the parties are plagued with persistent weaknesses. The credentials of the ruling party are no better; but it is a question of the devil that one knows.² For these reasons and many others the October 1994 civic election provided a testing ground.

An editorial in *Wakati ni Huu*, 21-23 October, 1994 summarily refers to the registration exercise (*kuandikisha wapiga kura, kuteua wagombea udiwani na usimamizi wa zoezi kwa ujumla*) as merely a technical problem. The registration process has an important bearing on any constitutionally defined election exercise. It determines the success or failure of the whole election exercise. Commenting on the agonizingly slow speed of the registration of voters in the October 1994 local government election, an observant political scientist lamented: "*Watu wengi hawafahamu vituo vya kupigia kura kwa sababu Tume ya Uchaguzi haijaweka matangazo katika vituo hivyo wala kuvishirikisha vyombo vya habari binafsi na serikali katika kuwahamasisha wananchi.*"³

The implications of poor arrangements for the elections exercise proved damaging to the exercise. Initially the registration exercise was planned to take two weeks, 1 to 14 August 1994. "Reports from the regions showed a low turn out. The Electoral Commission extended the period for another two weeks, i.e. to 28 August. The results were still not encouraging. Reverend Kamara Kasupa, of NCCR-Mageuzi demanded that "the whole exercise should really be postponed to 1995. The number of people who registered to vote is alarmingly low. It appears that the voters have gone on strike."⁴ In Dar es Salaam Region matters were worse. The earlier registration exercise, conducted in August was nullified, and a new registration exercise started on 26 September 1994." The National Electoral Commission failed in the registration

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exercise. It had not made proper arrangements to pay the registration clerks, some of whom had abandoned their stations. The Commission did not educate the masses on the importance of the exercise.⁵ Thus it had to use army recruits to do the exercise. The point is that the registration process is not merely a technical question; it bears very heavily on the whole election exercise.

This study examines the registration process in view of research findings from ten regions. For convenience of analysis, the issues under review are clustered into two categories. First, the study examines registration procedures, estimated eligible voters registered during the first two weeks (1 to 14 August 1994) (planned for the exercise) and during the extension period; and in the case of Dar es Salaam the nullification and its consequences. Secondly, the study looks at complaints on the registration process, the nature of complaints, how they were resolved and constraints faced in the registration process.

Generally, registration rules stipulate that every citizen of the United Republic of Tanzania, aged 18 years or above has the right to register and vote as long as s/he is of sound mind and is not serving a criminal jail sentence. A person is disqualified from registering and voting if he has committed an offense connected with any election; if a death sentence is imposed on him/her by any court in Tanzania, or if she/he is under declaration of allegiance to some countries other than Tanzania. These regulations also instruct that no voter is allowed to register in more than one ward. Registration officers are instructed to make and maintain a register of voters for every ward showing the name of the voter, the number of the certificate of registration, his/her sex and residence address. These instructions stipulate the place and qualifications for voting. To vote at the ward where she/he registered, the voter is required to produce proof of identity and certificate of registration to the presiding officer or polling assistant as directed by the registration officer.

The District Returning Officer (District Executive Officer) is responsible for the overall supervision of the election process in his/her respective District. The District Returning Officer delegates the task of educating the electorate and recruiting registration clerks to the Assistant Returning Officer (Ward Executive Officer). Regarding the election procedure, the Assistant Returning Officer carries out the following responsibilities:

- (a) selecting the registration stations and determining their number;
- (b) advertising the vacancies for registration clerks;
- (c) arranging a meeting with all contesting candidates so that they can agree on the selected registration clerks;
- (d) supervising all electoral activities in the ward and ensuring security during the election process;
- (e) distributing the materials required for the exercise;
- (f) supervising the counting of votes;
- (g) announcing the results; and

(h) sending the results to the District.

The recruitment of registration clerks (within the respective wards) is done by the Assistant Returning Officer. Usually the post is advertised and applicants are required to have the following qualifications:

- (a) At least least Std. VII education;
- (b) ability to read and write well;
- (c) 18 years of age or above;
- (d) honesty;
- (e) pass an interview conducted by the Ward Executive Officer after receiving the application.

All these requirements, regulations, rules and procedures can be termed as the standard manual. Registration clerks should not be known cadres of any of the contesting parties. The situation on the ground did not always follow the standard manual. In Arusha region, "all the District Executive Directors in collaboration with the National Electoral Commission conducted seminars to all registration clerks." Apparently, the registration process went on smoothly but in Mbulu District party observers were absent from registration stations. Also, "some of the registration clerks were CCM leaders."⁶ In Dar es Salaam, there were no specific instructions from the region as such. All registration procedures adopted were those instructed by the National Electoral Commission. In Dar es Salaam, it was not clear what criteria was used to recruit registration clerks. It was alleged that during the first registration exercise, i.e. 1 to 14 August, the registration clerks were mostly picked or recommended by CCM Branch secretariat.⁷ In Morogoro, it was alleged that the registration clerks were selected by consulting CCM party only, thus they might have exercised favouritism.⁸ Such allegations were made in virtually all regions. Late reporting and absenteeism on the part of registration clerks were quite rampant.⁹ These constraints became more acute in Dar es Salaam, where the National Electoral Commission decided to use military recruits from the Tanzania Peoples' Defense Forces (Kunduchi Camp) to carry out the registration exercise during the repeat period. Officials in the wards did not give any explanation to this anomaly.¹⁰ However, other sources indicate that registration clerks in Dar es Salaam absconded because of non-payment or delays in the payment of their allowances.¹¹ The National Electoral Commission did not lay adequate arrangements to pay registration clerks promptly. In Ruvuma, "one of the main problems was delay in paying registration clerks and supervisors."¹² In Arusha, registration clerks complained bitterly that "they were not being paid as promised and that the registration allowances were too low."¹³ This was also true for Kilimanjaro, Mwanza urban and other places.

Another problem was the registration of some people who were not actual residents of the ward concerned. In Kariakoo ward in Dar es Salaam candidates from PONA were disqualified "because Kitwana Kondo, the CCM Candidate, complained that they were

neither residents of Kariakoo nor did they pay the development levy."¹⁴ This was also the case in Iringa where CCM was opposed in all wards.¹⁵ In Kwimba, where the registration stations were placed too far apart, some people registered in more than one station. It has been observed above that the October 1994 Local Government Election was the first under multi-party democracy. Uhuru, an organ of the ruling party concluded that the whole exercise was badly run from the start to the end. The registration process was plagued with intractable problems.¹⁶ Amongst other factors, poor organization of the registration process and the attendant problems accounted for low registration as Table No.1 demonstrates.

Table 1: Number of Registered Voters in Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, Kagera, Kilimanjaro, Mbeya, Morogoro, Mwanza and Ruvuma Regions.

Region	No. of Estimated Eligible Voters	No. of Registered Voters	No. of Registered Voters % of Eligible Voters
			From 1 to 30 August
Arusha	238,313	122,928	51.5
Dar es Salaam	736,527	169,237	22.9
Dodoma	488,008	301,763	61.8
Kagera	433,696	198,031	45.6
Kigoma	379,139	181,705	47.9
Kilimanjaro	303,171	104,566	34.4
Mbeya	341,338	196,458	57.3
*Morogoro	413,384		
Mwanza	413,394	220,303	53.2
Ruvuma	260,033	79,375	30.5

* In Morogoro figures for Kilosa District are missing.

The figures in Table No. 1 show quite clearly that the numbers of people registered for the October 1994 Local Government Election were low. Dodoma, Mbeya, Mwanza and Arusha each registered over 50 per cent of eligible voters. The remaining regions registered well below 50 per cent. Significantly too, these figures were reached because the registration period was extended. Indeed, if one wants to get the flavour of how really bleak the registration exercise was, there is the need to examine the figures before and after extension. On instructions from President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, the period for the registration exercise was extended from 14th to 28th August 1994. Registration figures throughout the country were deplorably low. By extending the period of registration it was hoped that the figures would show an improvement. This was not to be. Figures show that registration during the extension period, 14 to 28 August were also deplorably low.

Table 2: Number of Voters Registered During the Extension Period: Mbeya, Mwanza and Ruvuma (Districts)

Region/ District	No. of Estimated Eligible Voters (Estimates)	No. of Registered Voters During Extension Period	No. of Registered Voters % of Eligible Voters
Mbeya	57,670	6,057	10.5
Mbeya Urban			
Mbeya Rural	137,282	24,139	17.5
Mbozi	146,428	27,763	18.9
Mwanza	127,516	6,375	4.9
Mwanza Urban			
Ukerewe	38,300	10,356	27.0
Kwimba	247,568	82,679	33.0
Ruvuma	98,532	1,601	1.6
Songea Rural			
Mbinga	135,260	12,074	8.9
Songea Urban	26,244	2,593	9.8

For the other regions figures are incomplete. One is tempted to say that the registration exercise during the extension period did not really serve the purpose. According to Table 1 only Kwimba and Ukerewe Districts registered over 20% of the estimated eligible voters. Two districts, namely, Mbeya Rural and Mbozi, registered slightly over ten per cent. Songea Rural District registered less than two per cent. Songea Rural District registered less than two per cent. In Dar es Salaam the registration process was probably worse. A reporter in *Majira* wrote: "Since the new registration exercise commenced (after nullification) prospective voters have not been eager to register. They find the exercise a bother and there has been no explanation to the voters why the registration exercised was nullified in the first place.

It is undoubtedly clear that the registration process during the October 1994 Local Government Election left a lot to be desired. Some people have said that the exercise was a mockery of democracy. Evidence from research findings in ten regions bears that out. There are several reasons why the registration process proved inadequate. Research in Morogoro Region found out that there was general apathy and disenchantment on the part of the people. Prospective voters did not know beforehand who the candidates for the primary nominations were because the list of aspirants was released well after the registration process got underway.¹⁸ This disenchantment/apathy with the election exercise was compounded by non-observance of regulations on the part of authorities. Dar es Salaam women (through their CCM controlled organization, UWT) had pledged to come out in huge numbers to register and vote during the October civic election. Hon. Augustine Mrema, Minister for Home Affairs, before whom the pledge was made, exhorted the women to vote for candidates who understand the plight of women. Hon. Mrema argued that the liberation of

women is inextricably connected with the way that women would vote in local elections.

Grassroots leaders play an important role in channelling the views of the people to higher ranks.⁹ Local Government Election regulations set aside 30 per cent of all national councillors for women. In Kinondoni District, women who aspired for councillor seats (through UWT), were never called for the interview. Instead, the District UWT Secretary cohorts took the seats for themselves.²⁰ Some of the registration stations (which were supposed to be publicly displayed) were inconspicuous. This was true for almost all regions. In Lizaboni Ward, Songea Urban, the location of a registration station caused quite a stir. One of the registration stations was moved from the ward office to a bar. The bar happened to belong to UWT - a CCM organization. The stations were subsequently moved to a nearby primary school. Another major cause for poor registration in the registration exercise was that people have lost their confidence in local government generally. People do not apprehend the role of local councillors, since local councillors do not deliver...; public services such as clearing the streets, public toilets, primary education, health facilities, roads, etc. are either in very poor condition or non-existent altogether. Many prospective voters in Kilimanjaro "were unaware of what was happening; they did not see the benefit of electing local councillors."²¹ The single party syndrome played a part in the poor turnover of people to register to vote. This entailed and involved lack of serious competition. In many wards in Kilimanjaro CCM had no opponents and voters did not want to waste their time. In rural Districts, Moshi-Vijijini, Rombo and Same, women were much more interested in clearing their farm plots before the onset of the short rains rather than go to register, since CCM would win anyway. The system of preferential voting which CCM used vicariously put off many prospective voters. With the exception of Iringa Municipality where CCM encountered opposition in all wards, this clever strategy adopted by CCM" confused some people into believing that the election was over.²² In Dar es Salaam it was estimated that by Mid-October already 45 per cent of CCM candidates had won the election (without opposition) due to the preferential system of voting. In Kilimanjaro "many voters were confused by CCM's exercise to select candidates. When CCM members cast their preferential votes they did not find any reason to register a vote. Whereas in Arusha Municipality CCM was challenged in 10 (26.7% of all wards) out of 37 wards. CCM has monopoly over almost all the available sources of information; such as the state radio and newspapers like Uhuru, Mzalendo and Mfanyakazi. CCM has the resources, institutions and leadership that reaches grassroot levels. The opposition parties are unable to reach the masses at the community level, due to lack of adequate resources, manpower and equipment. These inadequacies proved to be a major drawback in terms of injecting viable competition in the local government election. We have noted above that opposition parties have attracted a very small percentage of followers. Many of the opposition parties do not have branch or District leaders. The few that exist have been appointed from the top. As such, the new parties had a daunting task to reach the masses of Tanzanian voters. Worst of all, the opposition parties had neither agenda nor manifestos. Many an opposition party candidate ended up personifying the whole election exercise. The National Electoral Commission bore the brunt of the accusation

of making the October 1994 Local Government Election a mockery of democracy. The opposition parties boast a larger share of the complaints.

Most of the complaints surrounding the October 1994 Local Government Election emanate from three sources. First, there are complaints caused by the glaringly mismanaged election process, procedures and regulations. Most of these have been attributed to the National Electoral Commission. Secondly, there are complaints originating from the inadequacies of the contesting parties. The opposition parties are largely responsible for these. For example, opposition parties did not have the requisite manpower to provide observers to all registration stations. During the October 1994 Local Government Election the candidates of the opposition parties were moving around from station to station because of lack of observers. Thirdly, many complaints too, have been caused by overbearing preponderance or what one might call the single party syndrome.

We have emphasized above that the National Electoral Commission bungled the registration process. The mechanisms set up to select registration clerks was faulty because some opposition parties complained of favouritism. The supervision of registration clerks was lacking; late reporting, absenteeism and even abscondment (especially in Dar es Salaam) were quite pronounced. Because of poor supervision in many stations, some voters registered in more than one station and others in stations other than those of their residence. Mobilization campaigns were generally lacking. The ruling party used the weakness of the opposition parties in mobilization. The National Electoral Commission did not make available important information on time. Again we have alluded to most of the complaints originating from the inadequacies of the opposition parties. Opposition parties entered into the ring from a position of weakness. CCM had ample resources in terms of manpower, leadership, institutions and finance. Further, CCM had monopoly over the state controlled radios and newspapers.

NOTES

1. *Wakati ni Huu*, 23-31 October, 1993.
2. See John C. Sivalon, "Political Transition in Tanzania. A Preliminary Investigation into Political Attitudes of Rural Tanzania", TADREG Working Paper Series, No. One, February 1994.
3. Prof. R. Mukandala quoted in *Wakati ni Huu*, October 4-11, 1994. "Many people do not know their polling stations because the Election Commission has not (yet) advertised those stations. The Commission has not even involved the mass media (private or state controlled) in mobilizing the people" (Translation mine).
4. Reverend Kamara Kasupa quoted in *Wakati ni Huu*, 23-31 October, 1994.
5. Mzalendo, October 30, 1994.

6. Dr. Amon A. Chaligha, "The 1994 Local Government Election Study: Arusha Region Report", p.7.
7. Max Mmuya, "Report on the Local Government Election study in Dar es Salaam", p.11.
8., "Local Government Election Study Report, Morogoro Region", p.19.
9. *Majira*, 5 October 1994. "Waandikishaji kutowahi vituoni limekuwa tatizo sugu. Wengi hufika vituoni saa 3.30, kuondoka saa 11.30. Mipango ya usafiri kwa waandikishaji ni mibaya".
10. Max Mmuya, "Report on the Local Government Election Study in Dar es Salaam Region", p.11.
11. *Mzalendo*, October 30, 1994.
12. Athumani J. Liviga, "The October 1994 Local Government Election in Mbeya and Ruvuma Regions", p.11.
13. Dr. Amon E. Chaligha, "The 1994 Local Government Election Study: Arusha Region Report", p.7.
14. *Rai*, October 13-19, 1994.
15. *Shaba*, October 4-10, 1994.
16. *Uhuru*, October 5, 1994.
17. *Majira*, October 5, 1994.
18. Max Mmuya, "Local Government Election Study Report: Morogoro Region", p.17.
19. *Mzalendo*, 2 October, 1994.
20. Max Mmuya, "Report on the Local Government Election Study in Dar es Salaam", p.10.
21. Dr. Amon E. Chaligha, "The 1994 Local Government Election Study: Kilimanjaro Report", p.7.
22. Dr. Charles P. Gasarasi, "Narrative Report on Local Government Election Study in Mwanza and Kagera Regions", p.6.
23. *Mzalendo*, October 16, 1994.