

Country Brief

Tanzania

Electoral autocracy

COUNTRY INDICATORS

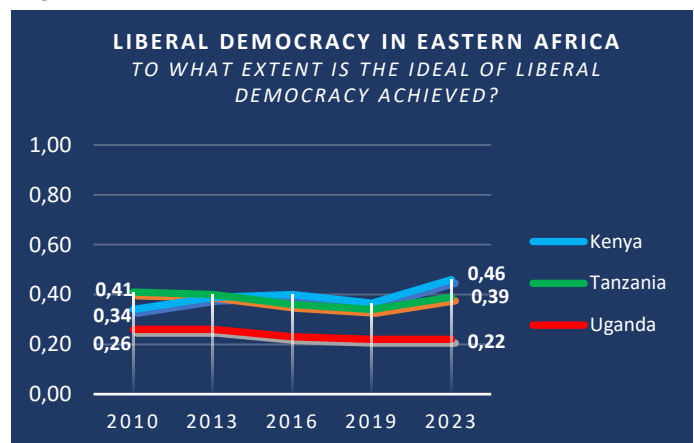
Population: 67.775 million (WB)
Urban population: 36% (WB)
Urban population growth (annual): 5% (WB)
Access to water: 61% (WHO-UNICEF)
Access to electricity: 39.9% (WB)
Mortality rate, under-5 (per 1,000 births): 49 (WB)
GDP (current US\$): 61.498 billion (WB)
GDP per capita, PPP (current Int\$): 2,933 (WB)
Presence of Violence: Islamic State (2020) (UCDP)
Global Freedom Status: Partly free, score 34 (FH)
Human Development Index: Low (0.549), rank 160/191 (UNDP)
Local Government Association: [Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania \(ALAT\)](#)

Decentralisation

Tanzania is a unitary state, that is divided between mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, which has a separate government. After being abolished in 1972, local governments were re-introduced in 1982 through the enactment of several acts, which went concurrently with the amendment of the Constitution in 1984. In 1997, the Local Government Reform Program, with its subsequent funding mechanism, the Local Government Development Grant, was introduced to improve the access and quality of services provided by subnational governments and was aimed to promote democratic, accountable, and autonomous local governments, with wide discretionary powers and a strong financial base. This Program had been the main vehicle for operationalising the national government's decentralisation policy. In 2018, however, the Local Government Development Grant was discontinued due to a lack of resources (SNG-WOFI Tanzania, 2019).

Tanzania is divided in 169 districts, which constitute the main unit of local government. There are two types of districts: Urban districts (34) and rural districts (135). The urban districts, which are classified as either municipalities (19), town councils (15) and cities (3), are then divided into wards and *mtaa* (neighbourhoods) (3939) (SNG-WOFI Tanzania, 2019). The 133 rural districts consist of 2682 villages and 64691 *vitongoji* (hamlets, the smallest unit of a village). Within Zanzibar, there are 4 urban authorities: 3 town councils on

Figure 1

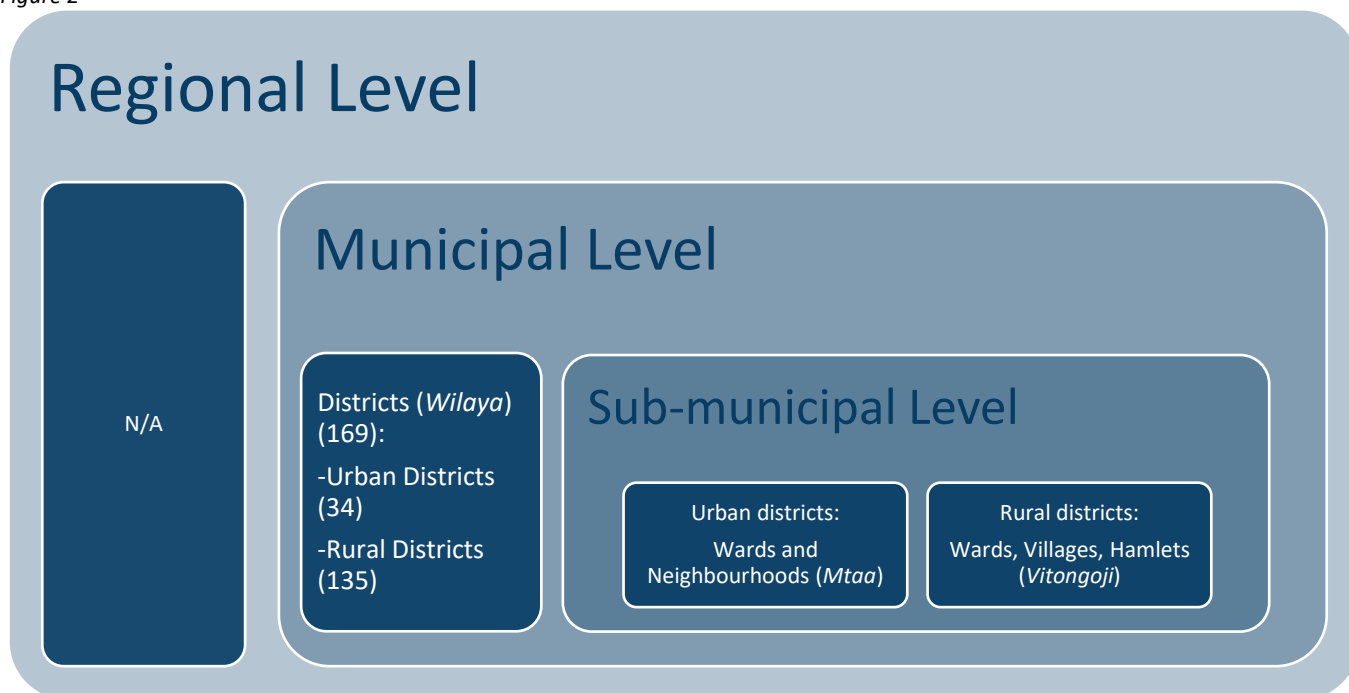


Source: V-Dem Institute (2024)

Clarification: The liberal principle of democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. The liberal model takes a 'negative' view of political power insofar as it judges the quality of democracy by the limits placed on government. This is achieved by constitutionally protected civil liberties, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that, together, limit the exercise of executive power. To make this a measure of liberal democracy, the index also takes the level of electoral democracy into account.

Pemba and 1 municipality on Unguja. All rural authorities are covered by the 7 rural district councils (CLGF, 2018).

Figure 2



Source: SNG-WOFI Tanzania (2019)

Districts & Urban/Rural Councils

Districts are the main units of local governments in the country. Depending on the setting, the districts are either urban or rural, which, in turn, are divided into smaller governance units (see Figure 2). The urban and rural district councils are composed of members elected from each ward within the district, MPs with constituencies within the district, and women appointed in proportion to the elected seats of the council. The council executives (mayors or chairpersons) are indirectly elected by the other councillors (SNG-WOFI Tanzania, 2019).

The Village Council (VC) is the village’s executive body, which consists of a group of 15-25 members democratically elected by the Village Assembly (VA). The VA, in turn, consists of all villagers above the age of 18 and is the highest decision-making body at the village level. The VA meets every quarter and holds the VC to account. There is a gender quota stipulating that one-fourth of the VC’s members should be women (Sutz et al., 2019).

Local Autonomy

Mandates

Local governments are responsible for consolidating local services and empowering citizens to participate in social and economic development. In particular, urban and district councils are mandated in their area of jurisdiction to maintain peace, order, and good government; promote social welfare and economic well-being,

as well as social and economic development in line with national policies; regulate and improve agriculture, trade, commerce and industry; enhance the health, education, and the social, cultural and recreational life of the people; relief poverty and distress; as well assist and ameliorate life for the young, the aged and the disabled or infirm. In addition, local governments coordinate and supervise the implementation of plans for economic, industrial, and social development in their respective areas (SNG-WOFI Tanzania, 2019).

Table 1

Main Sectors	Local Government Responsibilities
1. General public services	Public buildings and facilities; Salaries and administration costs; Civil Status register
2. Public order and safety	Facilitation of maintenance of law and order; Police; Fire protection
3. Economic affairs/transport	Roads (maintenance, construction, lightning); Transport; Ports; Airports; Agriculture, forests, fisheries; Local economic development and promotion; Trade and industry; Tourism
4. Environmental protection	Refuse collection and disposal; Environmental protection
5. Housing and community amenities	Construction and renovation; Housing; Town planning; Gas Service; Electricity; Water supply and sanitation; Cemeteries and crematoria; Slaughterhouses; Consumer protection
6. Health	Primary care; Hospitals; Health Protection
7. Recreation, culture & religion	Theatre and concerts; Museums and libraries; Parks and open spaces; Sports and leisure
8. Education	Primary, secondary, and adult education
9. Social protection	Kindergarten and nursery; Family welfare services; Welfare homes; Social security Housing subsidies and benefits

Source: SNG-WOFI Tanzania (2019)

Local Government Finances

Local governments are not able to create taxes besides those allocated to them by the central government. Local governments do have the ability to levy taxes, fees and charges. These include the council property tax, a tax on crop cession, a tax on forest produce cession, a guest house tax, a service levy, among others. Most of these taxes are, however, difficult to collect and the main source of revenue are transfers from central government, which represent about 90% of total revenue (SNG-WOFI Tanzania, 2019).

Budgets

Local government budgeting and expenditure are subject to national government control, which gives direction as to how local governments should spend their revenues, and whose approval is required before local authorities can incur any expenditure. This applies even to expenditure areas financed through a local authority's own revenue, where a prescribed percentage has to be used for various specific purposes (Siddle, 2019). This limits the capacity of local government to initiate and implement local projects.

Local Democracy

State of Election

In Tanzania the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party has remained in power since independence in the 1960s. Like many other countries, Tanzania's democracy has been trending in a negative direction (see Figure 1), not least due to the authoritarian leadership of President John Magufuli who cracked down hard on critics, the press, civil society and political opposition between 2015 until his death in 2020. This trend is reflected in V-Dem's Clean Elections Index (see Appendix 2), which sees a significant drop during Magufuli's time in

power. After his death, however, the position was handed over to Vice President Samia Suluhu Hassan, who became Tanzania’s first female chief executive. The Constitution vests a lot of power to the Executive.

Elections of local government leaders are held every five years alongside presidential and parliamentary elections under the first-past-the-post system (CLGF, 2018). Local elections are characterised by low turnout. The next general election is set for 2025.

Electoral Outcomes

Table 3

Elections	2010	2015	2020	2025
Voter turnout				
Female Members of Parliament (MPs)				
Female District Councillors	35%	34% (978)		
Female Ward Councillors, elected	2%	5%	6,6%	
Female Village Councillors				
Female Mayors	N/A	Urban: 11% Rural: 2%		
Male Mayors				

Source: MRALG correspondence with CLGF and Gender Links (CLGF, 2018)

Women’s representation

Legislative affirmative action has done much to ensure women’s representation in local government in Tanzania. There is a legal requirement that women must occupy at least one-third of ward representatives, and one-fourth of village council seats. The prescribed special seats have increased the number of women councillors to 978 in 2015 across all authorities. Following the 2015 election, 34% of councillors were women, down on 35% following the 2011 election (CLGF, 2018). Tanzania was recently ranked 48th in a global assessment of women’s political representation in local government (UN Women, 2021).

Tanzania’s legislative framework, with a solid implementation of gender quotas, holds great potential for more inclusive and participative decision-making. However, participation by women in local government bodies remains low, largely due to socio-cultural norms that dictate gender roles (Mtasingwa et al. 2023). Sutz et al. notes that “in practice, women remain largely absent from decision-making” (2019, p.5).

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About ICLD

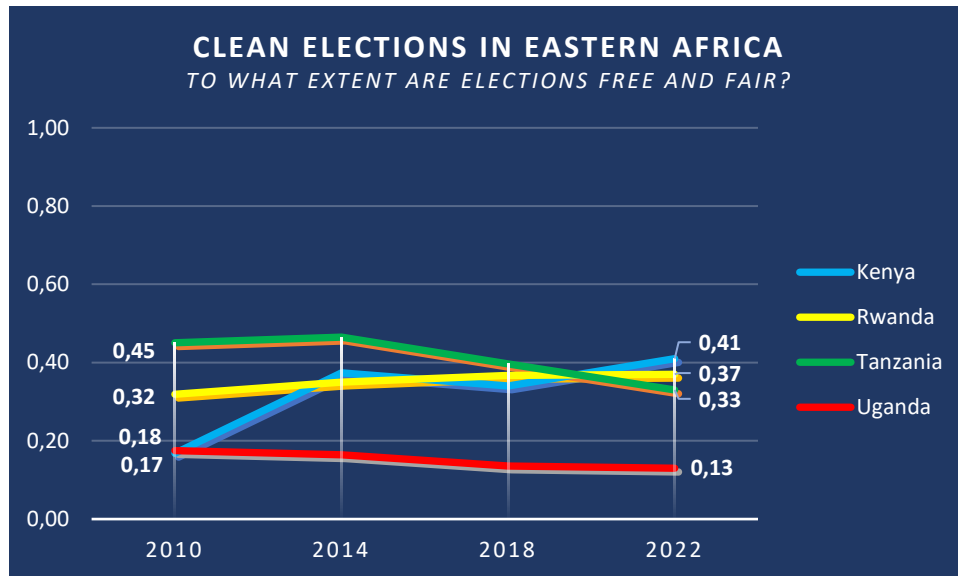
The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is part of the Swedish development cooperation. The mandate of the organisation is to contribute to poverty alleviation by strengthening local governments. This Country Brief is part of a publication series that investigates the state of decentralisation and local democracy in countries where ICLD programmes operate.

This Country Brief covers events up to September 2023.

Appendix 1: Clean Elections Index

Research Question: *To what extent are elections free and fair?* (Low to High; 0-1)

Clarification: Free and fair connotes an absence of registration fraud, systematic irregularities, government intimidation of the opposition, vote buying, and election violence.



Source: V-Dem Institute (2022)

Appendix 2: Corruption Perceptions Index

Clarification: CPI measures how corrupt each country's public sector is perceived to be, according to experts and businesspeople.

