Networking of Civil Society Organizations in Northern Tanzania: Healthy Competition or A Struggle for Supremacy?

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Abstract

The functions and networking of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Tanzania aimed at promoting sustainable community development that are community-based. This study examined the current CSOs functions, networking and coalition status in Northern Tanzania, particularly in Arusha and Manyara regions. The study applied qualitative methods such as key informants' interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations in data collection. The triangulation of this methods enabled the researcher to acquire the information on their networking mindset, ideological and programming capacities. The findings revealed that sustainable CSOs functions are pegged on a healthy networking and coalition on community capacity building and democratically accepted criteria for choosing their priority in the delivery of social services, and designing financial management standards for checks and balances among financial managers and risks auditors. Therefore, CSOs networking is a base foundation for creating a healthy environment for individual CSOs to form a coalition with other stakeholders in social services delivery to the communities they serve. This is enabled through creativity and addressing critical issues within the society. Thence, such creativity expand their capacity to respond to people's demands with effectiveness. In promoting a healthy networking rather than competition or supremacy, it is suggested that all CSOs operating in an area should be registered under local government authorities (LGAs), and should have frequent meetings per year organized by LGAs as their hosts. The agendas for such meetings should be within the LGAs' goals, objectives and plans. This will increase a sense of attachment and ability to exchange resources, involvements, materials and personnel for good networking environment and coalition.

Keywords: *civil society, organizations, networking, competitions, Tanzania*

1. Introduction

The formation of civil society organizations (CSOs) globally was largely supported and funded by foreign multilateral and bilateral agencies, often for service and democracy preferment. These international agencies promote and provides financial and managerial support to CSOs in developing countries to enhance networking (Henjewele, 2017; Hulse et al., 2018). Traditionally, it is widely accepted that civil society organisations work within a political and social context (Doerfel & Taylor 2017). This is because politics and social attributes are potential for the development of democracy, cooperation, competition, resource development, poverty reduction, and social networking. Most commonly, CSOs

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are formed with special interest goals such as women issues, human rights, and environmental challenges (Castells, 2008). Their goals lie between public and societal spheres expressing organizational views and ideas. Ideas are expressed through debate to ensure stable interactions and networking between individuals, organizations and other social entities (Castells, 2008; Stein et al., 2011).

In Tanzania, there has been a tremendous growth of CSOs over the last two decades; and with the many on-going reforms as reported in Henjewele (2017), a total of 2,0605 active and operational CSOs have been registered in Tanzania. The registration considered both local and international organizations' objectives, purpose, scope, environment and the role they played. The civil society has played an important role in both service delivery and the development of democratic governance in the country (Shivji, 2006). Most preferably, CSOs complement the work of the government in providing social and economic services; lobbying and advocacy for particular causes; raising the voice of marginalized communities; and providing technical expertise and financial support (Stein et al., 2011; Henjewele, 2017; Hulse et al., 2018).

Initial estimates indicate that the CSO sector in Tanzania account for US$260m in expenditure, which is around 2.9% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Mhina, 2007; Henjewele, 2017). The workforce behind this expenditure is estimated at 331,000 people. The sector has also witnessed an impressive volunteer output as volunteers represent 75% of the entire social sector workforce in Tanzania; a percentage that is likely to be higher at the present (Kiondo et al., 2004).

Green et al. (2011) noted that in an increasingly globalized and competitive world, the need for collaboration and networking among CSOs is imperative. From resource dependency and competition point of view, networking brings organizations together, increases effectiveness, utilizes finite resources, and reduces competition (Stein et al., 2011). Hulse et al. (2018) explain that the development of networking in civil society has been stimulated by factors such as developments in communication technology, formalization, resources, degree of relations, and coordination. Moreover, for CSOs networks to function more effectively, several aspects like communication across vertical and horizontal dimension, creativity and consensus has to be performed (Appe & Pallas, 2018). This is because resources are scarce, and problems are many, while the ways of solving them are limited (Mome, 2012; Chaney 2020). In particular, interaction between and among CSOs are in terms of an exchange of resources, leaders, knowledge, skills and even tools. As in Stephen (2011), the exchanged resources can be either material or informational such as goods, money, emotional support, trust and influence.

The presence of CSOs to pursue aspirations for development and democracy for over the years have been faced by great challenges, frustrations and disappointments mainly arising from the lack of resources, time and freedom of

movement; and the lack of social, political and economic rights (Ndumbaro, 2007; Hulse et al., 2018). It is worth emphasizing that CSOs are facing serious threats today across the globe. The threats are greater in developing countries due to fragile democracies and poor economies in supporting CSOs due to change in regulations, and supervisions among and within CSOs (Nguyahambi & Chang'a, 2020). In solving the challenges, civil society networks influence organizations to engage in different policy sectors. Their engagement aims at involving and making civil societies participate in policy processes of sensitive issues such as human rights or security (Appe & Pallas, 2018; Hulse et al., 2018). However, the CSOs in these areas have remained as closed shops due to poor realization of their potentialities in sustainable community development.

It has been emphasized that the effectiveness of CSOs at all levels is associated with networks based on focused coordination and information-sharing activities, rather than competition (Castells et al., 2008; Stein et al., 2011; Hulse et al., 2018). In particular, Mome (2012) mentioned activities such as the protection of child rights, women rights and youth organizations as one of the prerequisites in policy processes from its formulation to evaluation of outcomes. Other initiatives are like the identification of accountability mechanisms and capacity gaps in policy processes (Henjewele, 2017). These initiatives are appropriate when CSOs have organizational skills; and are voluntary, self-governing, not for profit sharing, non-political, objective, and have founders (Table 1). These CSO characteristics are in line with the objectives of the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP II) that aimed at emphasizing involvement of stakeholders such as CSOs in socio-economic development (Stephen, 2011; Mome, 2012; Henjewele, 2017).

Table 1: Potentials Characteristics of Civil Society Organization in Tanzania

Organization	This means an established or permanent institution. This is demonstrated by a degree of organizational structure i.e., regular meetings and rules of procedures.
Voluntary	These are bodies that are formed freely, willingly, spontaneously by individuals, groups of people or organizations with an element of voluntary participation.
Self-governing	NGOs have their own internal procedures for governance but nonetheless operate within the laws of society as a whole.
Not-for-profit sharing	NGOs are not-for-profit sharing organizations. Profit and/or benefits accrued are not for personal or private gain by members or leaders.
Non-political	NGOs are organizations that do not seek political power or campaign for any political party.
Objective	This requires that the organizations are not self-servicing: they aim to improve the circumstances and prospects of a particular group, or act on concerns and issues which are detrimental to the well-being, circumstance or prospects of people or society as a whole.
Founders	NGOs can be formed either by individuals or organizations.

Source: URT, 2011

However, despite the recent mushrooming of CSOs in the country, little is known about how they interact or network with each other to reduce costs, avoid duplication, improve performance and strengthen their constituency as a group or movement. Cooperation among and within CSOs of the same characteristics would enable a delivery of good services within their geographic areas. Furthermore, it would reduce competition towards available resources to deliver the same services, hence improving efficacy among themselves as a result of reducing the duplications of services. Most of the CSOs in the study areas are national or international nature, and in most cases they are accountable in networking process. Networking process is very important administratively because it supports the collaboration of CSOs which may also influence policy makers and practice of CSOs networking in the country. This will assist the government in establishing an inclusive decision-making for sustainable community development at the local levels.

This paper seeks to understand factors for CSOs networking, methods used in promoting networking, and limiting factors for networking during this era of increased competitions under globalization. The concept behind this study is that, there is an intricate link between civil society and intermediary institutions' such as professional associations, religious groups, labour unions, citizen advocacy organizations: all of which give voice to various sectors of the society, and enrich public participation in democracies. Although the civil society is a third sector distinct from government and business; social-networking and competition are central in measuring the relationship among and between CSOs. The question about networks influencing political, social, cultural and even environmental issues is of theoretical and practical interest, thus making the word 'network' be a fashionable catchword.

The paper is organized in five sections. After the first section that introduced the subject matter on the prevalence of CSOs in Tanzania, the second section is devoted to methodology and the study area. The third section is on the results and discussion in context of whether the existing CSOs in Tanzania are networking or competing for supremacy. The fourth offers conclusions and recommendations.

2. Methodology

2.1 Data Collection

The study adopted the qualitative method, consisting mainly of critical assessment and analysis of views, opinions, attitudes and behaviours on CSOs competition over resources, factors for networking, and challenges facing them. Derived from the above, an interview schedule (thematically-based) for qualitative method was developed and administered as per the already defined research questions and objectives. However, deliberate efforts were made to interview government officials—both technical and political—to solicit views/opinions on policy and legal

scenes during the registration of CSO networks in the study area. In each district, a hierarchy of officials—like the DC, DAS, chairman of a council, director of a council, ward councillors and others—were interviewed. The interview was based on the types of CSOs operating in the areas, activities done, and sources of funds. In addition, the study used documentary evidence: it searched for some relevant policy and research documents which were studied and analysed in relation to the primary findings (Hay, 2005). The use of these methods ensured that the weaknesses of one technique is complemented by other techniques to achieve validity, reliability, and cross-validation.

The study involved a total of 5 CSOs and government officials operating in both Arusha (Karatu district) and Manyara (Babati district) regions. This is because the study subject matter—CSOs networking—cut across both networks and independent/self-existing CSOs as explained in the introductory section. The study chose a purposeful sampling of 5 CSOs and local government authorities (LGAs) following an experience gained in the field. This included specific sample characteristics capable of scientifically satisfying the objective of the study, including: What factors affect CSOs networking in Arusha and Manyara, and Tanzania in particular? How does increased competition limit CSOs networking? What methods are capable of promoting networking? Therefore, the study sample was not limited to mere CSO networks or self-operating CSOs. The purposefully selected CSOs had national and international coverage in their scope: three of them—namely Karatu Development Association (KDA), Karatu Village Water Supply (KAVIWASU), and Friends in Development (FIDE)—were local CSOs; while the other two—Farm Africa and World Vision—are international organisations although they have been domesticated. The choice of these CSOs was influenced by the activities they engaged in the areas—such as agriculture, environmental issues, social wellbeing (poverty, education and diseases)—which represent crucial issues that have direct impact on the lives of ordinary citizens in terms of poverty alleviation, economic growth, and good governance.

2.2 Data Analysis Procedures and Techniques
Data analysis in this study involved an analysis of daily preliminary data where information gathered through interviews were inspected, filtered and erroneous data were corrected without subjectivity. Interview questions were analysed through the daily interpretative analysis (DIA) method, which was done at the end of each day of interview (Patton, 1980; Hay, 2005). Notes taken during the interviews were reviewed and recorded, and a matrix report that summarized and interpreted the information obtained on daily basis was also written. Preliminary analysis was done to provide essential raw materials for the main data analysis as it helped to identify the major patterns, trends, as well as common themes. As per Coombes et al. (2009), data collected from interviews

and document analysis were categorized into themes such as competition, relationships, and methods of promoting networking; while sub-themes were categorized into how CSOs complement their dynamics on policy implementation. These themes and sub-themes were analysed in the form of content and are brought out in the following section.

3. Results and Discussion
3.1 Emerging CSOs for Networking
CSOs networking in Tanzania is increasingly being accepted as a working style between and among CSOs. The style emerged due to a paradigm shift in CSO discourse that shifted emphasis from working individually, which was dominant in the recent past, to a focus on networking in the performance of activities. This argument was stressed by Henjewele (2017) who stated the important characteristics of networking was to focus on an increased number of CSOs networking coalitions and meetings being established; common agenda being decided, planned and implemented; followed by team follow-ups and accountability. Practical examples on this emerging trend were witnessed from networking activities in coalitions formed by the Karatu NGO Network (KANGO NET), Association of Tanzania Water Supply Authority (ATAWAS), and the Development Actors Network in Babati (DANEBA). As stated by one respondent from ATAWAS:

> *"The increasing trend towards CSOs networking as experienced currently is different from the past. During the mushrooming of CSOs in our area, each used to work individually, but now they work together in the name of social interest to address community challenges."*

The above quote implies that, unlike in the past, the CSO sector in Tanzania is now creating more awareness on the need for increased networking relations to fulfil their social visions and missions. The mission contributed more towards achieving CSOs shift in operations from individual approach towards a networking style for society's wellbeing and development. Stein et al. (2011) observed the same situation in Mkindo Catchment in Tanzania whereby a shift from informal to various formal and informal interactions between the state, civil society, and the private sectors have assisted in the management and development of water resources. In addition, the observation was further verified by Kilian et al. (2004) who asserted that networks enable CSOs to map, describe and analyses formal and informal interactions to influence water management and governance at local level for community development.

An in-depth interview with one CSO leader in Karatu district showed that CSOs networking in Tanzania is subject to caution and resistance from within and outside the CSO sector. He insisted that, "*The idea of CSOs networking is being received cautiously, resisted or avoided by some stakeholders.*" Mome (2012) expressed the same by noting that the newness of the idea discourages networking between

and among CSOs. Moreover, Stein et al. (2011) affirmed that since networking within the CSO sector is still in its infancy, some fear that some ill-intentioned people may use the opportunity to destabilize the CSO sector for their own selfish interests. The findings of this study also revealed the same: that resistance against CSOs networking comes from people who in the past were alleged to benefit from the former system, which was relatively closed and personalized, to serve individual interests. This argument is supported by the findings presented in the report titled *Tanzania Governance Review*, published in 2008–2009, which asserted:

> Critics of civil society governance flag deficiencies in transparency, accountability, and integrity. Not all CSOs are equally open in networking and information-sharing. Numerous NGOs are, perhaps inevitably at this stage of the development of civil society in Tanzania, associated with one or two individuals rather than with a wider group. This personalization of CSOs can undermine solidarity and joint action (Policy Forum, 2011).

This implies that the level of engagement in CSOs networking remains low because networking is faced with challenges of acceptance, credibility, and reputation. Despite of the challenges, CSOs networking is still practical within the CSO sector in Tanzania, and it is slowly gaining momentum. In this regard, therefore, it should be acknowledged that CSOs networking in Tanzania is generally at a transition stage.

The study findings further revealed that there is a close relationship between the nature of CSO leaderships and acceptability of networking agenda within CSOs. Henjewele (2017) noted that a strong CSO leadership that is visionary and dedicated to the social interest of networking—partnership and common good development—is very important. It was clearly stated during focus group discussions (FGDs) that where such kind of leadership existed there has been support for CSOs networking as an active agenda within the CSO. However, where leadership is close-minded, narrow and self-centred, the networking agenda was not promoted as a mutual issue. This is similar to what Chaney (2020) observed in CSOs networking in India, whereby CSOs that lack an openness, participatory and social-centred features in their daily operations have failed to network with other CSOs to accomplished their mission. This statement was supported by one government official in Babati district during an in-depth interview who said:

> "*The CSOs networking is an issue of concern nowadays in community development. This is because it enhances resources mobilization among and between CSOs and the community at large*".

3.2 Nature of Interactions Between CSOs and the Government

Interactions between and among government and CSOs in this study have been seen in different perspectives. The relationships between CSOs and the government are both positive and negative, depending on the way the two work together (Appe

& Pallas, 2018). On the positive side, local governments (LGs) offer technical personnel to CSOs in various sector of development. The relationship between CSOs and the government was threatened by experts from LGs who demand per diems from CSOs, which is a burden to CSOs (Mome, 2012; Doerfel & Taylor, 2017).

As reported during FGDs held in Babati and Karatu districts councils, CSOs have maintained positive relationships among themselves, especially when they deal with similar types of services that are compatible in objectives. For example, when CSOs in the water service provision sector need to exchange equipment and experts between and among themselves, it was easy to cooperate. This situation was revealed in both districts where KAVIWASU exchanged equipment with other CSOs dealing with water services provision under the umbrella of ATAWAS.

Such cooperation among CSOs was even much stronger in the agricultural sector as observed during the field survey. For instance, some CSOs help with the production of agricultural products, while others deal with the marketing of products. In addition, others provide advisory experts on the ways of farming and how to sell their products at reasonable prices. For instance, while FIDE helps with production, Faida Market Link (Faida MaLi) helps with finding markets, while Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Tanzania (MVIWATA) guides and helps farmers to find good prices. To reduce the duplication of activities, one respondent advised that LG councillors should work close to CSOs to highlight citizens' priorities and needs. In addition, during in-depth interview some CSOs asked for a 100% tax exemption from the government, and that the government should set asides funds to supplement CSOs activities when they face financial crises as most of their funds are donor-dependent.

3.3 Factors Influencing CSOs Networking in the Study Area
There is an increasing emphasis for organizational networking both at national and international levels. The results from the respondents indicated a number of benefits that an individual CSO enjoys by promoting CSOs networking in performing its activities. One respondents from the Karatu district administrative office argued:

> *"CSOs networking enhances the chances for sharing ideas and experiences, which in turn strengthens the knowledge base of the group for more awareness. This means that CSOs encourage networking by developing interest to know each other closely, to share awareness on the kind of activities conducted by each one, and exchanging knowledge and experiences."*

During FGDs one respondent, aged 62, agreed that CSOs networking have benefits to both individuals and groups by saying:

> *"One of the benefit of CSOs is to strengthen individuals and groups within the area under CSOs services by sharing of resources. Another hidden benefit is the opportunity for individual CSO to access another CSO's platform to mobilize support for their agenda within the same people they are working with."*

This implies that there is now an increasing spirit for CSOs networking rather than competing in the sector, unlike in the past. Respondents underscored that the relative shift from CSOs' past behaviour of working more individually to a more cooperative stance has increased CSOs networking. The shift was observed in the study areas because of the high degree of transparency within the CSOs themselves, high knowledge of networking, and leadership skills. Mome (2012) contends that CSOs having staff with a high level of leadership skills are more likely to participate in a network than CSOs whose staff have low or no leadership skills.

The provision of expertise from district councils in social services delivery like health, education and environmental management has complimented the relationship among and between CSOs. During FGDs it was observed that technical personnel that were employed to deliver services within different CSOs had created a common knowledge and understanding on networking than competition. This was affirmed by the presence of networks between ATAWAS and KANGO NET in the study area whose organizations work together; and have developed a common voice in demanding their rights from the LGs in the districts. In this realm the government provides expert, capacity building through training, seminars and workshops. For example, the formation of ATAWAS as a water authority body in Karatu district strengthened KAVIWASU and other CSOs that deliver water services in the district to have common voices over water issues, and capacity building through sharing ideas during workshops, and exchanging tools and experts in the field.

During the FGDs, some respondents further added that individual CSOs support networking because it provides an opportunity to sharing strategic social working plan with others, which finally enables them to access support for common agenda in their plans as advised by the government. It is through CSOs networking that individual CSOs gain and builds up conviction of its own agenda through ideas gained from others. Furthermore, respondents argued that in networking with others, one could access an obvious chance to disseminate appropriate knowledge intended for a wider public by sharing it within the CSO network.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that limited sources for CSOs funding and the centralization of funding in the recent past is another intergroup reason that forces CSOs to promote networking in activity performance. Limited sources for funding are said to result from donors' decision to direct more funds to support the general budget, which means more money going to the government and less to the CSO sector. Appe and Pallas (2018) have noted that funds from donors may be withdrawn due to the lack of political will, budget constraints, competing interests elsewhere, corruption or lack of financial security; while at the same time there is no subsidy from the government. This claim was proved by a respondent from KDA who said:

"It is true, the government does not provide us with subsidy even though we are bankrupt. In a nutshell, we are partners in service delivery and the promotion of sustainable community development in this area."

This observation implies that there is a necessity for CSOs to strategize to operate under limited funding. Appe and Pallas (2018) affirmed that limited funding may lead to budget constraints in CSOs and thus shortened programs, as well as increased competition for resources between and among CSOs. These constraints in the study area led to the establishment of the Foundation for Civil Society (FCS) in Babati and Karatu districts as one source of funding for CSOs working in the area. The FCS allows multiple donors to channel their funds there to increase CSOs networking and avoid duplication. This means that CSOs that used to benefit funding directly from bilateral donors were now directed to compete for funds from the FCS. This was affirmed by one respondent in Karatu district:

"Consequently, some donors who previously worked individually with CSOs – which in a way divided their focus – now encourage them to apply from a single donor, namely the FCS, which built a spirit among CSOs to focus on commonality rather than diversity. This practice has nurtured the spirit of CSOs networking indirectly by bringing them together to a single funding service."

This statement implies that the FCS, as a single funding source, has to network with some CSOs whose mission looked closely similar or overlapping to increase the chances of obtaining funding from donors for sustainable CSO services in the areas. This has in turn encouraged support for more CSOs networking than the tendency to work individually.

3.4 Challenges of CSOs Networking in the Study Area

The findings revealed that there are a number of obstacles within and outside CSOs that work against their networking. These include incompetence or inability for joint working/performance within some CSOs, which results from poor internal organization. Respondents mentioned that joint and collaborative working involves specific skills, mindset and ability to achieve quality results. However, they observed that a number of CSOs do not have the ability to accomplish quality work, especially those at the grassroots levels. This is due to incompetent manpower, which is a result of the lack of a serious and well-established organizational setup with good leadership. Such CSOs are unable to carry out basic CSOs functions such as writing project proposals, and they mismanage donor funds.

Furthermore, poor time management featured as an obstacle leading to the failure of some CSOs to get involved effectively in CSOs networking. During in-depth interviews, one respondents said that although there may be a desire and efforts for some CSOs to network in performing various activities, this cannot be realized unless managements within the CSOs have basic skills in networking and proper capacity building, especially on the issues of time management and

accountability. Doerfel and Taylor (2017) affirmed that it is possible that some CSOs are left out or behind the current CSOs networking initiatives not because they do not subscribe to the idea, but rather due to the lack of basic skills and ability to engage in CSOs networking.

The lack of trust between and among CSOs in the study area is another obstacle in CSOs networking. Respondents claimed that there is no trust between and among CSOs whenever the idea or need for CSOs networking in performing their activities arises. This was supported by one respondents in Babati district commissioner's office, who stated:

> *"There are suspicions, mistrust and scepticism than appreciation of networking for better performance in the CSO sector in the area. Effective and sustained CSOs networking requires a basis of an established principle and trust among them."*

This implies that trust attracts commitment, foster alliance and assures credibility in individual CSOs. Appe and Pallas (2018) commented that strong networking spirit and mindset between and among CSOs is needed to realise these principles. The realization of principles will depend on creating a favourable environment that could lead to assured commitment to work together in achieving common agenda within the sector. As stated in Henjewele (2017), the objective of achieving common agendas enabled the establishment of the framework guiding CSOs networking in Tanzania.

The current policy, legal framework and working environment in Tanzania are complex, uncoordinated and associated with several weaknesses. According to Holma and Kontinnen (2020), the current policy and legal framework merely provides for the existence of FCSs which form only one type of CSO among various kinds of CSOs in Tanzania. Their findings revealed that the policy and legal scenes in Tanzania are silent on the issue of registering more than one CSO as one entity. This is hindered by the diversity of their objectives during the registration by either the Registration Insolvency Trustee Agency (RITA), Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Community Development (MGCSD), or the Ministry of Home Affairs. In this situation, although some CSOs may be the same in function and status, they may be registered under different interests, thus leading to legal conflicts.

The current financial regulations do not allow for the establishment of a joint bank account by an unregistered CSO coalition. This remains an obstacle when it comes to donors' requirements for funding CSOs network activities in the area. However, Henjewele (2017) has noted that given the experience whereby the government controls CSOs through policy and legal frameworks, the current silence of policy and legal environment on the coalition of CSOs may sooner or later be convenient for their functioning. In this regard, any CSOs would provide its report for operational purposes, unlike if there is a restricting policy and legal environment. Moreover, the study findings revealed that the current

NGO Act opens loopholes for government meddling with CSOs. Respondents argued that the current NGO Act allows the government to maintain a defensive position to justify interference with the freedom of CSOs. Such practices include government's use of force to dilute the spirit of strengthening CSOs through coalition, e.g., by building networks. The government do this on the excuse that it is carrying out its role of coordinating and supervising the activities of CSO. The observation on government interference was also noted by one respondent in Karatu district:

> *"It is agreed that the government's involvement in CSOs activities is very important; but this should not mean its intervention. As long as CSOs are doing what is in their constitutions, the government should allow space and freedom of expression for them to play their roles. Thus, the government should not interfere, restrict and frustrate them."*

The above findings imply that the existing NGOs policy and Act are not sufficient and favourable for the growth of CSOs networking. In particular, it limits CSOs from networking and carrying out their activities both diligently and effectively.

3.5 *Do CSOs Network or Compete for Supremacy in Community Service Delivery?*

In respect to the relationship between CSOs competition and networking, a general question was asked on the way the two phenomena relate to each other. The findings show mixed feelings: some were of the opinion that competition among CSOs is negative to networking, while others held the opposite view that competition was healthy for networking. Those who maintained that competition was healthy for networking argued that it enabled individual CSOs to be more accountable to the community as it called for creativity in addressing people's critical and burning issues. Such creativity, they argued, expanded the capacity of CSOs to respond to people's demands with effectiveness. During an in-depth interview, one respondent in Karatu district council argued:

> *"When society's interest is achieved, credibility goes to the whole CSO sector for accomplishment. Furthermore, when individual CSOs deliver effectively, they contribute to a positive image of the entire CSOs sector; rendering them more socially acceptable, and thus to thrive and flourish."*

On the other hand, respondents who claimed that CSOs competition limits CSOs networking argued that when individual CSOs compete, the spirit leans towards self-definition, self-identity and the struggle to become 'champions', while CSOs networking aims at a collegiality win-win. One respondent from KAVIWASU clarified this by saying:

> *"We need as many organizations as possible in every area that provides community services. The more the CSOs we have, the better we are in achieving the common goal of sustainable community development through their networking."*

This implies that bringing more than one organization on board and maintaining the behaviour of coalition will, first, build an individual recognition; and secondly, will enhance excellency in public service delivery through networking to achieve common public interests.

Moreover, the findings indicated that individual CSO competition promotes innovative and independent mindsets. Innovation is an important attribute for the thriving of a CSOs networking because it brings about new challenges, new ideas, and fast developments. This argument was clarified and affirmed by one of Tanzania's leaders of the World Vision, who said:

> *"Competition between CSOs in the CSOs networking builds independence of thinking and acting, which is changing operational relations from a traditional centralized and dominant 'internal board of directors' making decisions in a CSO, into a kind of 'reacting quickly' through a coalition set-up between and among CSOs. This facilitates smooth and efficient functioning from CSOs networking within a CSO coalition."*

This argument that CSO competition is useful in the thriving of CSOs networking in Tanzania challenges the alternative perception that CSO competition is likely to impact negatively on CSOs networking.

Another view from the respondents was that competition by individual CSOs can limit CSOs networking as it allows for 'divide and rule' in the CSO sector by providing loopholes for donors and the government to intervene in CSO agendas. This implies that competition operates to serve the interests of donors or the government rather than benefit CSOs, and hence the public. One respondents from Babati asserted:

> *"The danger of individual CSOs competition is when the competitor decides to be biased to his/her own interest rather than that of other CSOs and public interests. When competition reaches such extremes, there is a tendency for marginalization and side-lining of others. This is not healthy for CSOs networking and sustainable community development."*

The behaviours mentioned to be contrary to the spirit of CSOs networking include working more for self-benefits rather than seeking solutions to societal problems; hiding information rather than sharing knowledge for common benefits, and promoting 'closed' operations among members rather than transparency and openness. Hulse et al. (2018) supports this by arguing that "… when competition leads towards limiting others, underperformance within the CSOs sector is likely to occur because working individually leads to missing shared knowledge and experiences from others." Thus, when a competitor works alone for self-recognition, s/he misses the shared knowledge from others. Such a practice makes CSOs struggle for independence, which may affect the networking spirit. This is a warning to CSOs against any competition that attempts to sabotage the sector or conspire against CSOs networking. As argued earlier, CSOs should only engage in a positive CSO competition that is healthy for the promotion of CSOs networking.

As mentioned before, there are difficulties in creating CSOs networking coalition fund, and a trusted financial handling and management. This is an area where the study findings revealed a big challenge in promoting CSOs networking. So far there are no established and stable financial handling mechanisms that can be trusted. Current banking regulations do not allow the opening of accounts for unregistered organizations. Therefore, the idea of a loose, unregistered CSOs networking coalition presents a serious challenge when it comes to handling funding logistics.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has revealed that there are efforts to promote CSOs networking in Babati and Karatu districts in Manyara, Tanzania, to enhance the delivery of sustainable community social services. These efforts have led to the establishment of the Foundation for Civil Society (FCS) to facilitate the funding of cross-cutting activities between CSOs that have formed a coalition in the area. The foundation of the FCS has strengthened the CSOs networking coalition by investing in developing their networking mindset, perception, and building capacities among them. As noted earlier, a sustainable CSOs networking depends on capacity building in terms of leadership and designing financial management standards for checks and balances among CSOs.

Regarding whether competition among CSOs themselves is healthy in promoting networking or just creates a struggle for supremacy (which negatively affects CSO coalition), the findings indicated mixed feelings among the respondents. Some were of the opinion that individual CSOs competition has negative implications on CSOs networking, while others maintained that competition is healthy for CSOs networking as it creates a healthy environment for individual CSOs to compete in service delivery and become more accountable to the community it serves.

The study noted that leadership and members in the CSOs networking are investing heavily on efforts to mobilize funding to build coalitions from national to grassroots levels. These efforts involve creating awareness on CSOs networking among themselves, and mobilizing funding for their networking activities from potential donors. Though CSOs coalitions and individual CSO members sometimes seize these initiatives, there is a room for individual donors to set favourable conditions to individual CSOs for networking using ethical codes and conducts. The agreed CSOs ethical codes and conducts should contain enforceable and compliance penalties to build the reputation of CSOs from being mere 'job gaining' opportunities to CSOs working objectively for social empowerment and wellbeing.

In promoting a healthy networking rather than competition for supremacy, it is recommended that all CSOs operating in an area should be registered under LGAs with clear goals and objectives of service they intend to provide in the community. This will help to understand the mission and vision of each

individual CSO, which is the basic information for their networking and coalition. LGAs should be in the frontline to unite and build a common understanding for all CSOs by having frequent meetings to increase a sense of attachment; and encourage exchanging resources, experiences, materials, and personnel. All these initiatives will lead to the formation of an agency that will deal with particular issues of concern—such as land, women and children's rights—which are compatible with individual CSO goals/objectives through the establishment of control mechanism for interventions, giving CSOs training and seminars, as well as screening CSOs' objectives to align them with LGA activities and plans.

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