

**Popularising Policy and Influencing Change through Action Research,
Advocacy and Creative Communication**

Colloquium: Livingston Club Hotel, 12-14th August 2002-08-11

**Speech Made in Opening the Colloquium, by the Bagamoyo District
Commissioner, the Honourable Grace Mesaki**

Dear Participants, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to Bagamoyo town, a town of history, culture and tourism.

I would like to thank HakiKazi Catalyst for inviting me to become part of this unique gathering. From the briefing I have received, you will be doing important and exciting work. Popularizing policies using user-friendly techniques and influencing change through action research, creative communication and advocacy is an important part of the development process.

Over the past few years, civil society organisations have demonstrated significant capacity to work together with government, to stimulate and strengthen popular participation in policy issues. Informing people about the policies that effect their lives is a critical first step in this.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania continues to promote the formulation of policies that focus on equity, inclusiveness and livelihood priorities. The government states its intention in the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), for example, to continue to seek fuller representation of the poor and other stakeholders in the implementation of monitoring and evaluation the PRS, and in its subsequent revision.

I consider that there are three critical dimensions to strengthening participation in policy formulation and implementation.

- At the first level are activities geared towards developing an understanding of the policy in question and its relationship to the sustainable livelihoods of the people the policy intends to serve

- The second level is the organisation for participation in policy processes. The government needs partnership with other stakeholders to promote fuller involvement of every citizen.
- The third level is gathering feedback to help inform policy makers about what works and what does not. Through feedback all citizens are able to participate in the policy formulation process.

While the government has a primary responsibility in all three levels, the collaboration of Civil Society, including the private sector, enriches policy formulation that is sensitive to the diverse needs of different communities.

HakiKazi's Director has outlined the objectives of the workshop in his welcome. The focus is on:

- Providing an opportunity for civil society organisations and policy makers to interact and exchange ideas
- Generating analytical tools related to policy that can enable all stakeholders to bring to the attention of policy makers, the implications of grassroots experiences, and the possible alternative futures they offer.
- Using these tools to produce a manual or guidelines which can readily be used by all stakeholders engaged with popularising policy issues
- Creating a bridge for interaction between like minded organisations, working at micro level with those working at macro and global level, to generate knowledge about policies.

I would like to remind you, that government is with you in this endeavour. Representatives of various ministries are amongst the participants for the duration of the meeting, as we seek to collaborate in seeking policies which respond to and build upon the priorities of ordinary citizens.

I would also like to draw to your attention, the importance of feedback. Popular engagement with policy issues is not simply about communicating policies downwards and outwards in an accessible way. It is also about upstreaming the messages back to policy and decision makers. Thought needs to be given to the different horizons of that feedback whether it is to household, community, district, national or international level. Thought needs to be given to communicating a clear message, and how to sustain the

channels of communication so the processes of policy formulation are systematically improved. Please include these concerns in your deliberations

Lastly, as HakiKazi has said this colloquium should not be the end of the process. There is an on-going need to create more opportunities to formulate learning programmes, participatory research initiatives and continuous policy feedback.

So much for words, the priority now is deeds. I am impressed with the range of stakeholders who have gathered here for this colloquium, and ask you now to commit yourselves fully to meeting all its objectives. Alongside many in government, as well as other sectors of the community, I await with interest to see the fruits of your discussions. Hence, without further delay, I have great pleasure in declaring the colloquium open.