

# The Readiness of Village Leaders for Development Challenge: Evidence from Mwanga District Council

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Received: Oct. 21, 2018    Accepted: Feb. 20, 2019    Online published: Mar. 12, 2019

doi:10.5296/jpag.v9i1.13799    URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/jpag.v9i1.13799>

## Abstract

There have been several initiatives by the government of Tanzania to facilitating local development since the attainment of independence in 1961. To quicken the process, the idea of enabling local people to be the agents of their own development was advocated through decentralization by devolution, which aimed at empowering grass root communities through their local democratically elected leaders to plan and implement their own development activities. Village leaders who have a mandate of engineering the process of development have been identified as a key catalyst towards development success. With regard to their importance as far as community development is concerned, this paper wanted to find out as to what extent village leaders were prepared in terms of their education level and training programmes to be the source of local development. Using the two cases of Kigonigoini and Kwakoa in Mwanga district, it was found that village leaders were not well prepared and were of low capacity because of their low level of education and the absence of training programmes made them more blunt in engineering local development.

**Keywords:** village, village leadership, local development

## Introduction

Like other developing countries in Africa, Tanzania is striving to get out of extreme poverty which has been persistent among to millions of people, especially in rural areas. Many rural areas are featured with absence of fresh drinking water, poor access to quality health services and poor education services. There have been countless of efforts by the government of Tanzania at all levels to facilitate local development through the involvement of local people. As one of the strategies, Decentralization by Devolution's policy was adopted to empower people at the grassroots to be the pioneers of their own development through their own administrative structures. In emphasizing the need for decentralization to facilitate local people development, Ngwilizi (2001), in his paper on Decentralization in Tanzania, argued

that;

“the Government of Tanzania is fully committed to devolving power, resources and equipment to the sub-district and sub municipal entities to ensure that people at the grassroots level are enabled to bring and sustain their own social and economic development”, pg6.

The vision of decentralization by devolution is clearly stated in the Local Government reform Program II, as to have:

“Autonomous and empowered LGAs as the primary and accountable lead actors of socioeconomic development, public service delivery and poverty reduction in their areas of jurisdiction” (LGRP II 2009, page 4).

National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (MKUKUTA) I and II of 2005-09/10 and 2010-2015 respectively are also other policies which are directed to the heart of poverty reduction through community development. In this National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction I and II, the importance of local community through their local authorities is highly emphasized. It is believed that local community through their own local leaders know better their local environment and their demands, therefore at any stage of development their involvement is inevitable. Under this aspect, village leaders through their legitimate authorities derived from the existing laws are expected to be the catalyst of facilitating local development. However, to what extent these village leaders are acquainted with relevant skills and knowledge on how to facilitate development within their jurisdiction is still a puzzle. This study intended to unveil as to what extent village leaders were prepared to lead their people in the path of development. The specific objectives of the study were;

- i. To assess the level of education of village leaders at Kigonigoni and Kwakoa Village;
- ii. To find out availability and attendance to training programs by village leaders; and
- iii. To determine the relationship between education, leadership experience and their ability to plan, mobilize and monitoring development projects.

Generally, this paper wanted to answer the following questions; what are the levels of education among village leaders? Are there any training programmes to village leaders? What is the relationship between leader’s experience and their ability to plan, mobilize and monitor development activities?

### **Village Government in Tanzania**

The legal existence of villages in Tanzania is of recent years whereby in the early 1970s a village was recognized as an area of administration for development. As presented by Cannon Lorgen, 1999 in his experience of villagelization, people started to live in recognized and organized Villages in Tanzania as a result of adoption of Ujamaa policy which emphasized on people to live together to work for their wellbeing. The process of villagisation of 1972-74 resulted in the creation of development and Ujamaa villages. In 1975, the Villages and Ujamaa Villages (Registration, Designation and Administration) Act, No. 25 of 1975 was passed to provide for the administration of the villages (REPOA, 2008). However, following the enactment of the Local Government Act of 1982, a village is recognized as one of the

important governance structures in the Local Government (District Authorities) Act No. 7 of 1982. For an area of households to be recognized as a village it needs to obtain a full registration by the registrar who must be the minister responsible for the regional and local government authorities and as according to REPOA (2008), they are more than 10,000 villages in Tanzania.

A village government in Tanzania is made up of two important organs that is, village assembly and village council. A Village assembly is a supreme organ made up of all villagers who have attained the apparent age of 18 years old. It is from this organ where village leaders are elected to form village council. A village council is an executive organ made up of not less than 15 members and not more than 25 members. It is vested with power with respect to all the affairs of the village. Marx (1991) argues that a village council is there to oversee the day to day activities in the village through making decisions on matters concerning the village on behalf of the village assembly. Members of the village council includes the Village chairperson, Chairpersons of five Vitongoji (hamlets), Village Executive Officer who is the secretary to the village council and other members who are to be elected from the village general assembly. In the course of discharging their functions, village councils in Tanzania use a committee system. Each village council is made up of three standing committees which are finance, economy and planning committee, Defense and security committee and Social services and self-reliance committees (Marx 1991). Depending on the needs that will be deemed so fit, any other committees will be formed with the same aim of bringing wellbeing to people.

### **Village Leadership in Tanzania**

Tanzania, is known as one of examples of the well-functioning democratic states, Village governments in Tanzania are made up with democratically elected leaders. The election process is clearly described in the Local authorities (Election) Act of 1979 as amended time to time, whereby a general election for local authorities is called after every five years. To be elected as a village chairperson one must be a permanent member of the village with 21 years of age and above, having a sound mind, not having ever been sentenced in any police force law and must be a member of any political party in the village etc. (Section 39 and 40, Local Authorities Election Act 1979). This applies also to hamlet chairpersons whereby a village is made up of a number of hamlets, at most five. On the other hand, village council members are elected by the village assembly whereby Section 58 of the District Authority Act No. 8 of 1982 provides for the qualifications for a person to be elected by the village assembly to be a council member.

According to the act, a person need to attain the apparent age of twenty one years old, being a member of a household within the village and is ordinarily resident in the village, being able to read and write in Kiswahili or English and he/she has a lawful means of livelihood. The village Executive officer, who is a public servant employed by District Executive Director is also a village leader who is the secretary to the village council. He is not elected by the villagers and therefore he or she is directly accountable to the District Executive Director who is the employer. Therefore, one can make a conclusion that village government leadership is made up of political and administrative leadership.

## Village Leadership and Local Development

Leadership has been defined as the process of influencing an organized group toward accomplishing its goals (Rauch & Behling, 1984). It is the process whereby one (leader) influences people (followers) in a determined manner towards achieving a common goal. There are several definitions of leadership given out by several scholars with different focus, however, in any way it can be defined leadership is not a position, a leader is not a manager who says “Go”, rather a leader says “ Let’s go”, and leadership is the function of a leader, followers and the situation (Richard et al; 2006). Village leadership is the kind of leadership that exists in the village and in decentralized and democratic state; village leadership is the one which has been elected and appointed by the people in the village. These local leaders play a vital role towards community success they are the ones who oversees the general welfare of the people through influencing and facilitating different development activities through having community participation. Ozor and Nwankwo, 2009, page 64) noted that:

“...the approach to rural community development is always through local leaders who not only act as pioneers of projects, but also help in influencing and motivating their people to act”.

In this context, local leaders, particularly village leaders are very important in providing a clear vision towards achieving the desired development and hence poverty reduction. Describing the importance of leadership in local governance Kauzya, 2005, argues that:

“Leadership is the engine that powers local governance and service delivery. Without it, corporate governance arrangements cannot operate effectively and ultimately public services suffer.

It is through these local leaders where different development projects are designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. Because local leaders are regarded as an engine towards an improved living standard of their people, local leaders need to be of certain capacity when it comes to designing, implementing and monitoring development activities. Babu and Pinstup-Andersen 2007, argue that in the poverty reduction process, managers and local leaders’ capacity are very important in ensuring successful management of all activities directed towards poverty reduction. It is obvious that local leadership has an important role to play in the success of the people that they lead. Being the engine of local development, local leaders require a certain level of capacity in ensuring that the dream of local development is achieved.

Okoli and Izueke (2013); in their study on local government leadership, wealth creation and poverty reduction in Nigeria; argues that local government authorities need to have such a strong leadership with different kinds of skills, broad scope and future focus. In many developing countries, the majority of people lives in extreme poverty and the only way that they can get out of such an embarrassing condition is to have effective leaders who know exactly what they are doing through having such relevant ability to lead their people toward realizing their goals.

In describing the importance of strong leadership as a sharp tool towards successful

development in local areas, Kauzya (2005) argues that:

“To be a competent local leader, one must have a composite capacity of knowledge, skills, values, character and attitudes”. He also argues that “Local governance leadership needs to have deep rooted values of integrity, respect for diversity, and service to the public, self-denial, and professionalism.”

Kauzya believed that any shortfall of these values will act as a block towards realizing the intended dream. A clear visional leadership in a certain institutional framework operating in a particular cultural environment is very important towards poverty reduction.

Depoele (2010) in his paper on local development strategies in the European Union, the case of LEADER (listening to the voice of local citizens and increasing their participation) in rural development argued that local development is a function of three important components that is, local resources, economic activities and actors. According to him, such actors like leaders and other stakeholders must be acquainted with good level of education, knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the development process. He continues to argue that such actors must play a big role in planning and implementing all activities geared towards local development.

In a study on changing leadership and rural power structure, Mozumdar et al., 2010 found that, among other factors, education level was one of the criteria for a person to become a successful village leader. People with a good level of education were highly preferable to those with little or no education. This provides a room for one to argue that such changes might be influenced by the truth that people want leaders who can lead them towards the successful development processes. A good education level also was found necessary by Park and Wang, 2010 in their study on Community-based Development and Poverty Alleviation in China, where there were greater relative gain for richer households in villages with highly educated leaders.

King and Palmer (2007), in their work on skills development and poverty reduction: a state of the art review showed that there is great link between trained skills and poverty reduction among people in different parts of the world. In their arguments they provided that, for successful implementation of poverty reduction strategies, frequent training geared towards sharpening skills is paramount. From this angle it is valid to argue that the process of poverty reduction in any society together with other factors, it is influenced by well educated, skilled and knowledgeable leaders who also have got relatively good leadership experience.

As it was argued by Verma (1994), the ultimate goal of having decentralization is to facilitate development to all people the majority of whom live in villages. In this case a genuine leadership is vital to stir the struggle towards attaining a better life at the village level. The importance of local leadership towards improvement of living standards of people has drawn attention to several scholars all over the world. Hyun Han et al; (2013), in the 2012 Modularization of Korea’s Development Experience: Village Leaders and their Community Activities 2013 report showed that the success of the villages was a result of having such self-devoted leaders but also who were skilled and knowledgeable. The report explains the importance of having such educated leaders who can plan and inspire villagers towards

successful accomplishments. It argues that having elected leaders among villagers is not enough, but frequently training and exposure all over the nation visiting successful projects to learn is very important. In these villages during the 1970s Samuel Undong (New Village Movement) special training institutes were established to impart those self-volunteering leaders with desired skills and knowledge that they could be of good help to the community, and a lot of successes were recorded with this kind of leaders.

The lesson which can be learnt from this experience in Korea is that village leaders are of great importance when it comes to attaining the desirable outcomes of success and prosperity of the people they lead and therefore such leaders need to be acquainted with necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate planning and implementation of development projects. Besley et al., 2011, in their study titled “Do Educated leaders matter?”, found clear evidence that there is a good linkage between growth and educated leaders whereby leaders with a good level of education were seen performing better than less educated ones. Education, together with working experience, was also found important to village leaders in facilitating their performance in a study conducted by Mwakasangula et al (2015). In this study, which intended to unveil the position of village leadership in promoting good governance in Tanzania, it was found that village leaders with at least secondary level of education and with experience, were performing better than those with no or with low levels of education.

### **Analytical Framework**

After a critical review of available literature, education, frequent training, values, attitude and exposure have been pointed out as important characteristics of local leaders to be the engines of development. However, many studies have concentrated on education to all people as a tool of empowering them to fight against poverty. Basic education that helps someone to know how to read and write has been pointed out as being not enough to build someone’s capacity to cope with day-to-day lifelong changes. It has been argued that:

It is no longer sufficient to have a sound initial education: one must continue to acquire new knowledge and skills to benefit from the new opportunities that advances in science and technology bring, and to cope with the difficulties of life in world of change (Power and Maclean, 2011).

Based on this fact, it is very important also to have leaders whose level of education is not only basic education that is to know how to read and write, but with the highest level of education. In this paper, education, training and leadership experience will be regarded as the village leader’s requirements for successful development. Though no attempt has been made to see what level of education for leaders is good for facilitating development in their organization, for this paper education level was measured from primary, secondary, college (certificate), to university level. For training, the availability of training on specific skills and knowledge in leadership, planning, and monitoring development activities will also be studied. Leadership experience was measured in terms of how many years a leader has served in the village with the assumption that the higher the experience the higher the ability of the leader to influence development activities. Leader’s influence on development activities was measured by their ability to initiate, plan, monitor and mobilizing community towards

attaining their development.

This is in accordance with the functions of village council functions provided in the Local Government (District Authorities) Act, 1982 which, among others includes to initiate and undertake any task, venture or enterprise designed to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of the residents of the village; plan and co-ordinate the activities of and render assistance and advice to the residents of the village engaged in agricultural, horticultural, forestry or other activity or industry of any kind; encourage the residents of the village in undertaking and participating in communal enterprises. So in this case, education, training and leadership experience were independent variables while ability to plan, mobilize and monitor the implementation of development projects as dependent variables.

## **Methodology**

### **Study Approach**

The purpose of this study was to assess the readiness of village leaders towards development challenge. It aimed at looking on how they are prepared in terms of their levels of education and attendance to different training programs in improving their performance. Also the study wanted to find out the relationship between leader's working experience and education level towards their ability to plan, mobilize and monitoring development projects. In this case, it used mixed design starting with the descriptive statistics to describe leader's level of education, years of experience as village leaders and the availability and attendance to different training programs. This was followed by qualitative study to get individual leader experiences regarding their readiness and abilities towards development challenges.

### **Study Area**

Two villages, which are Kigonigoni and Kwakoa in Mwanga District council, Kilimanjaro, were selected from Jipendea division. Kwako village has an estimated population of 2500 people whose main economic activities include crop cultivation and livestock keeping together with small business. On the other hand Kigonigoni village has an estimated population of 2000 people who engaged in crop cultivation, livestock keeping and small businesses. The two villages were randomly selected based on their significant differences economically and socially. Though there is no any specific data on the economic levels between two villages, Kwakoa seem to be somewhat developed looking at the nature of life people lives, kind of houses built and a day to day increase of interactions exists between people as compared to Kigonigoni. In that case, Kwakoa is ahead of Kigonigoni when it comes to levels of development.

### **Population and Sampling**

The purpose of this study was to examine the readiness of village leaders towards development challenge. In that case, the population of this study included all 42 village leaders (20 from Kigonigoni and 22 from Kwakoa) in the two villages. The village leaders include village chairpersons, village executive officers and village council members. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 key informants who are two (2) village

chairpersons, (2) village executive officers and six (6) council members who had served as council members for more than one tenure. Among the six council members two (2) were from Kigonigoni and four (4) from Kwakoa village.

Using simple random sampling, a total of twenty (20) committee members were selected ten (10) from each village out of 42 members. The researcher obtained a sampling frame from each village and by using lottery method and without replacement a sample was chosen. The timing of the study was from July to August 2014 prior to the Local Government Election with the purpose of conducting a study to leaders who had served their full time of leadership tenure.

### **Data Collection**

Closed ended questionnaire was used to collect data with regard to gender, education level, availability of training and attendance together with years of experience. Also the questionnaire comprised four Likert scales rated from agree, strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree; the scales were used to measure leader's understanding in planning, mobilizing and monitoring development activities. To have in depth understanding of some key issues, interviews were used whereby all village chairpersons, village executive officers were interviewed together with 6 village committee members served two tenure and above as village committee members.

### **Data Analysis**

This study used both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. In qualitative data analysis, collected data through interviews were transcribed and coded. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to explain individual leader experiences on the existence, participation and the nature of the training offered to them. Qualitative data will be presented in the form of summary narratives, and verbatim illustrative quotes were used to substantiate explored findings.

In quantitative data analysis, researcher started with the Shapiro-Wilk test to check assumptions of normality required by other statistical tests used in this analysis. From the test, the p-Value was greater than 0.05 meaning that the data were normal distributed. However, Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive methods of frequencies and percentages. In determining the relationship between education, leadership experience and their ability to plan, mobilize and monitoring development projects, multiple linear regression was used. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis whereby specific themes were identified. In addition, some of the identified themes were supported by direct quotation, which were quoted from respondents.

### **Study Findings and Discussion**

This part provides the findings from two villages. Finding in this part shows education, availability of training and working experience of village leaders as successful factors towards community development and hence poverty reduction. Kigonigoni Village In this village, 15 leaders were included in the sample size, that is, one village chairperson, village executive officer and 13 members from different village committees. Out of 15 leaders, 53.3



percent were males and 46.7 percent were females.

### **Education Level**

From the study, it was found that leaders at Kigonigoni village had different levels of education starting from primary education and secondary education. Findings show that, 26.7% of leaders had secondary (ordinary level) education and 73.3% had primary education. On the other hand findings from Kwakoa village showed that 60% had primary education and 33.3% had secondary education. It was found that only the village executive officer had college education whereby he had graduated with a certificate in local government management.

These findings show that, many leaders who form village government have low level of education as the majority had just received primary education level. According to literature, primary education is very low level of education which provides a person with minor basics (Woltring, Constantine, and Schwarte 2003). Mostly primary education in Tanzania prepares a person for just elementary knowledge of knowing how to read and write. As it was provided by Power and Maclean (2011), elementary education is no longer enough to prepare an individual to take full advantage of existing opportunities. Checking the relationship between education level of a leader and their ability to plan, mobilize people and monitor the implementation of development project, it was found that there was a good relationship between the education level and the ability of a leader to plan, mobilize people and monitor the implementation of development projects. Leaders with secondary education were found to be more familiar with development activities. Using multiple linear regressions, it was found a significant impact with a p-Value of 0.001 for Kigonigoni and 0.002 p-Value for Kwakoa. This gives a justification that education specifically secondary education matters a lot to a leader as it was also concluded by Besley et al; (2011) in their paper titled, do educated leaders matter?.

Looking at the two villages, Kwakoa which looks more developed than Kigonigoni, 33.3% of their leaders have primary education level compared to Kigonigoni which have only 26.7% of leaders with at least secondary level of education. This provides clear picture on the nature of leaders exists in many villages in Tanzania who are conferred with local development process.

### **Leadership Experience**

Leadership experience matter when it comes to the ability of a leader to design, manage and monitor development project. A study by Mwakasangula et al. 2015 argued that experience matters a lot when it comes to having competent leaders who can mobilize the community towards successful implementation of development activities. Though literature is silent on specific number of years that can be used to describe a competent leader, empirical evidence shows that leaders who have served for at least more than 2 years may be regarded as having experience. In this study, it was found that 75% of leaders at Kigonigoni had experience of more than five years, meaning that they had been re-elected for a period of more than one term. Only two (2) council members were found to have served more than two terms at

Kigonigoni village. In Kwakoa village study findings shows that 66.6% of leaders had an experience of more than 5 years and only four (4) council members had an experience of more than 10 years. In this study it was found that all village chairpersons were serving for their first term as village leaders. Checking the relationship between leader's experience and their ability towards planning, mobilizing and monitoring development activities in the village, it was found that those with a good level of experience that is from five years and above demonstrated a better understanding on planning, monitoring and managing development activities.

Findings from Kigonigoni showed that 53 percent of the leaders who had experience of more than five years, had ability to plan and mobilize their fellow citizen towards development activities in the village. From a multiple linear regression between experience and the ability to plan, mobilize and monitor the implementation of development activities, it was found that there is significant impact with p-Value of 0.001 between leaders with experience of more than five years and their ability to plan, mobilize and monitor the implementation of development activities. The same was found in Kwakoa village where there was a significant impact with a p-Value of 0.001 to leaders with experience of more than five years.

When interviewed, a village chairperson from Kigonigoni who has served the village for 4 years since he was elected noted that:

*"It is my first term here as a leader, but I am very lucky to have a good number of experienced people around me who have been working closely to assist in performing my duties. Our Village Executive Officer has many years of working experience; he really knows a lot when it comes to village administration."*

Leadership experience is vital when it comes to ability the ability of a leader to organize and mobilize people for development activities. During the interview, one participant from Kwako village testify ability of some village council members who have served for more than one term that they know much on how to deal with people. It was found that the ability of a leader to plan, organize and mobilize people for development activities is highly influenced by his experience. This is in line with the study of Mwakasangula et al. 2015, who found leadership experience as an important element for successful leadership process.

### **Availability and Attendance to Training Programs**

Woltring et al., 2003 in their study does leadership training make a difference, found that there was positive impact of training towards shaping and sharpening leader's ability. This study wanted to find out if there were any training sessions provided to village leaders and to see how many have ever attended those trainings. The findings showed that in all villages no any training was offered to village leaders since they had been elected.

It was found that the only village executive officers from two villages had had an opportunity to attend one training program. The village executive officer of Kigonigoni attended one training program which was organized by a nongovernmental organization called MIFIPRO (Mixed Farming Improvement Project) in 2007, which was intended to impart skills on best agricultural practices. On the other hand a village executive officer of Kwakoa village had

attended one training program, which was organized by the district executive officer of the previous district he was serving. According to him, such training helped a lot to improve his leadership skills and approach to the extent of being able to perform his duty more independently

It was the interest of the researcher to know, what were their views with regard to the absence of any training related activity? One respondent from Kigonigoni argued that;

*“No any specific training we have received since we came into power; we just work based on own understanding. It is true, we need training; we need to know how best we can lead our people”*

Another respondent said that:

*“The government is talking about big results now, but we don't know how to get there, they just sat and initiate things without telling us how we can work on them forgetting that we are at the grassroots where many people are poor”.*

Big result now is a newly announced strategy by the government aimed at attaining outstanding results in different sectors like education, health and agriculture. This statement provides a room for one to conclude that village leaders are working in isolation different from what it is preached about decentralization by devolution.

Explaining the need for training, the village chairperson argued that it is very important for new leaders to be exposed to different training programmes so that they will be aware of what they have to do. Showing his concern, one of the respondent from Kwakoa village argued that:

*“The government should not expect too much from us; they have done nothing to make us better leaders, we just receive orders from them to do several things; Sometimes we fail not because we don't want to make them better, but we don't know what to do; they need to train us at least once a year. Taking us to successful villages to learn will also help”.*

The importance of training on various leadership issues is important as through these leaders are exposed into different aspects for their better performance. The importance of leadership training cannot be under estimated as it helps to build leaders ability in fostering development process. Arguing on the importance of training to leaders, different scholars showed that without frequent leadership training leader's effectiveness won't be realized and therefore we should not expect much from them (Allen and Lachapelle 2012; Willis and Stoecker 2013; Woltring, Constantine, and Schwarte 2003; Young and Dulewicz 2009). The importance of having trained leaders was stated during the interview with one of the respondents from Kwakoa who testified how their village executive officer have been active in facilitating development activities in their village by saying that, their village executive officer stands as a pillar for their success because he knows a lot of things.

Giving an example on how village leaders failed to successful manage the Kilimo Kwanza subsidies which came in the form of National Agricultural inputs Voucher System (NAIVS),

one of the council member from Kigonigoni said that:

*“Despite the fact that, so many things interfered the whole process of identifying and managing the beneficiaries of the vocha, if we, the village leaders were well trained and full involved this process could have been so successful.*

The village executive officer of Kwakoa who was seen to be so accepted by his fellow leaders by the way they used to paint to him as a successful factor for their village, argued that the government should think of having some induction courses for new elected leaders and it should not end there, but some other training programs including taking leaders to successful villages to learn, should be encouraged so as to realize the vision of having development at grassroots level.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The importance of village leaders in Tanzania is highly underestimated and they are seen as people of little or no importance. They are not paid and not provided with working tools. It is as if they are operating in the zone of isolation, something that is against the so called decentralization by devolution policy. For development to almost 80 percent of Tanzanians who live in villages, competent and well-motivated leaders are very important. The government should allocate some funds through local authorities so that these leaders can be exposed to different learning activities and at the same time provide them with some allowances so that it may also attract competent people to join the village leadership. Again, civic education is important to citizen to help citizens understand the essence of having multiparty system, that it is not a way of creating enmity rather a good forum for them to exercise their political right and bring alternative opinions for development.

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