

# TRADE UNIONS INTERNAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

**TUCTA Workshop**  
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*Dar es Salaam*

# Cont..

- “Civil societies (in Tanzania) are complex associational universes ... they contain *repression as well as democracy, conflict as well as cooperation*, vice as well as virtue; they can be *motivated by sectional greed as much as social interest*” (Siri Lange, Hege Wallevik, and Andrew Kiondo 2000)

# Democracy v.s governance

- Are democracy and governance one and the same?
- What do Trade Unions lack/need - democracy, governance or both?

# Democracy, a buzz word

- Roneu (1986) – specific political machinery of *institutions, processes and roles*.
- Democracy is characterized by seven institutions all of which must be present:
  1. Elected officials
  2. Free and fair elections
  3. Inclusive suffrage
  4. Right to run for office
  5. Freedom of expression
  6. Alternative information
  7. Associational autonomy

# Democracy, quantitative or qualitative?

- Democracy is quantified, what about quality?
  1. Elected officials – who runs, who votes?
  2. Free and fair elections – who judges it?
  3. Inclusive suffrage – under which criteria?
  4. Right to run for office – conditions?
  5. Freedom of expression – freedom after expression?
  6. Alternative information – who controls the channels?
  7. Associational autonomy – and the infiltrators?

# Democracy in Trade Unions

- Internal trade union democracy can be referred to as workers' democracy or democratic workers control
- Democratic workers control refers to the absolute control by the rank and file membership over all aspects of trade union life, including decision-making regarding leaders, policy, officials, activity, contacts, resources and alliances (Grossman, 2008:5; Naidoo, 1986:5).

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- This means that control within and over the trade union is to be exercised from the ground upwards, and is to be established through the following procedures and practices: a culture of participation, general meetings, elected leadership – especially from within the rank and file – and accountability downwards (Grossman, 2008).

# Democracy in Trade Unions

- Internally trade unions need quality democracy
  1. Democratic structure - Clear separation of powers, checks and balances and distribution of duties and tasks (Ref. Sectn. 17 of TUCTA Const.)
  2. Transparency
  3. Participation
  4. Accountability to the rank and file
  5. Ownership of the agenda (setting process)
  6. Internal mechanism of resolving conflicts –  
Section 14.8



# Why is internal democracy important?

- It promotes and facilitates unity within the trade union organization and as a result strengthens its bargaining position (Collins, 1994:33-34; Grossman, 2008:10).
- It secures voluntary support for the union as the rank and file believe that they are supporting the policies and decisions they have discussed and agreed upon,
- It allows the union organization to draw on all available skills and knowledge in order to establish the best policies (Collins, 1994:34-35; Grossman, 2008:10).

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- It is a source of legitimacy to the leadership, thus reduces the possibilities of disputes
- Democratic workers control (control from below) is significant for the development of internal leadership as well as to ensure organizational efficiency (Collins, 1994:34-35; Grossman, 2008:10).

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- Democratic structure therefore plays an important role in gathering the views of members, gaining a mandate from them and advancing their interests
- This starts from the principle that members should elect delegates rather than representatives (Fairbrother 1984:24). The key features revolve around ensuring that the delegates conform to the view of the members and report back on their activities.

# Are Trade Unions Naturally Democratic?

## Edwin Babeiya, 2011

- Trade unions in Tanzania have been to a great extent characterized by democratic elements such as participation and competition ...independent of controls from any political party

## Jonathan Bigger, 2013

- Trade unions are not as democratic as they could and should be. And have a tendency of bureaucratization and oligarchy

# What hinders democratic governance in Trade Unions?

- Personal interests involved in the struggle for positions
- Vertical accountability
- Lack of agenda ownership
- Belief in acting in lieu of theorizing
- Oligarchy
- Corruption and politicization of issues

# Lines of relationships – horizontal

- Relations between TUs and their members is that of benefactors and beneficiaries – more of activism for and not with the people
- Accountability to the donors – top-down organizations led by the elite

# Lines...vertical

- Contradictory features mark the relationship between unions and government
- On the one hand, workers continuously engage in struggles with the government as their main employer. On the other hand, a considerable number of trade unions have close relation to the government and/or the ruling party



**End**

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