

Vote Buying Mars Tanzania's Politics

*By Mike Mande**

Cases of corruption in Tanzanian politics are nothing new, but the October 31, 2010 general election turned into a circus due to numerous bribery investigations.

Official investigations revealed that campaign finance funds were used by wealthy candidates to pay the less affluent adversaries to pull out of the race, according to Edward Hoseah, general director of the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB), an enforcement institution designed to prevent corruption or to enforce the laws against it.

One of the investigations showed that Donald Kelvin Max, a parliamentary candidate for the Party of the Revolution (CCM-*Chama Cha Mapinduzi*) in the Geita constituency (a district in the Mara Region of Western Tanzania), allegedly sold his mansion in Mwanza for 100 million Tanzania shillings (US\$67,000) and gave some of the money to Exanfon Bitala.

In exchange, Bitala dropped out of the race at the last minute before the CCM selected its candidate. Max was chosen, ousting incumbent Ernest Mabina. According to Mabina, the issue has been reported to the CCM Secretary General Yusuph Makamba.

Post-Primary Bribery

In the Kinondoni District, in the Dar es Salaam region of Tanzania, Kassim Ramadhani Lema, a former counselor of the Mabibo Ward who was defeated in the CCM primaries by Makongoro Gonza, allegedly tried to bribe the CCM district committee with 20 million T Sh (US\$13,395), and the regional CCM committee with 30 million T Sh (S20,066). His intention was to be cleared to run for office even though he had lost the primary.

Songoro Mnyonge, then-publicity secretary of the CCM in the Kinondoni District, said that some members took the money, but then failed to influence the committee in favor of Lema.

“We were told to receive the money, but we did not agree with his move to appoint him. This is an internal matter within the Chama Cha Mapinduzi,” Songoro said, making it clear that matters concerning allegations of bribery are to be dealt with within the party. Songoro is now the current deputy mayor of the Kinondoni Municipality of Dar es Salaam.

Hoseah, talking to the Editors Forum in Tanzania days before the election, said that corruption and bribery cases involving members

of political parties connected to elections or politicians have grown about 31 percent annually since 2005.

While in 2005 only five cases were investigated and prosecuted, the number jumped to at least 135 cases in the 2010 general election. Almost 500 cases have been reported during the six-year period.

Election Expenses Act

So far, 40 political party aspirants for ward councilors or Parliament have been quizzed for corruption under the Election Expenses Act No. 6 of 2010 for allegedly offering money to voters. Some of them already have been brought to court and one was acquitted (former minister for Education and Vocational Training, Joseph Mungai, was charged with 15 counts of allegedly bribing voters).

Winfrida Korosso, assistant director of Public Prosecutions, says all cases investigated by the PCCB are handed to her office to determine if prosecution is needed. They are currently analyzing if more prosecutions need to be made in relation to the 2010 investigations.

Another vote-buying practice that authorities spotted as a new phenomenon in 2010 was the organization of soccer matches in the constituencies where candidates were running, where voters were offered cash in exchange for their votes.

“PCCB is investigating all these sports activities, both before and after the elections, and those suspected of bribing people in those areas will be first reported to the party, with a recommendation to drop the candidate before justice takes its cause,” Hoseah said.

In some cases, the CCM excluded indicted candidates from running for a parliament seat, including high-profile politicians such as Frederick Mwakalebela, former secretary of the Tanzania Football Association. He was indicted for allegedly giving the Mkoga village chairman, Hamis Luhanga, 100,000 T Sh (US\$66) to be distributed among 30 CCM members who attended a meeting at the chairman’s home. The charges were later dismissed.

A similar charge referred to a payment that was allegedly made to Mgongo village resident Gwiso Sanga. In that case, funds were to be distributed among 22 CCM members who attended a meeting in the village.

Paying for the Votes

The government also has begun trying those suspects who are accused of running a secret campaign that offers money to voters for their party's candidates.

In the worst wave of political scandals in recent years, 10 (so far) Chama Cha Mapinduzi legislative candidates countrywide have been indicted. As a result, the 2010 political cycle will elect members of Parliament (MPs) who are not really the people's preferred leaders, either because candidates bribed their way to the ballot or were bribed to drop out.

Hamad Rashid Mohammed, MP for the Civic United Front (CUF), the largest and strongest party on the Island of Zanzibar, says corruption scandals are frequently associated with the financing of political campaigns. He explains that financial pressures give politicians an incentive to accept payoffs, thus defeating the purpose of competitive elections in a multi-party democracy. He added that the problem stems from modern political parties that have lost ideological focus and are, instead, dominated by politicians who seek public positions to help their business interests.

"Corruption poses a serious developmental challenge," he said. "In the political realm, it undermines democracy and good governance by flouting or even subverting formal processes. Corruption in elections and in legislative bodies reduces accountability and distorts representation in policymaking."

The Tanzanian Government has recently decided to enact the Election Expenses Act 2010 to try to curb corruption in local politics and elections. The new law was passed and signed by President Jakaya Kikwete in October 2010, and provides regulations for the funding of the nomination process, establishes new controls for campaign funds and prohibits certain practices.

Parties continue to be allowed to receive funds from individuals, but they need to name the individuals who donated the money. The act also gives special powers to the Registrar of Political Parties, who will be responsible for the supervision of all election expenses incurred by a political party during the nomination process.

Despite the success so far, the PCCB has failed to deal with what is generally referred to as "grand corruption." Critics from non-governmental organizations, such as the Legal and Humanitarian Center, the Tanzania Media Women Association and the Tanzania Law Society, have all criticized the government for failure to address major cases.

Pressure Working

The pressure seems to be slowly working with the indictment of at least 13 individuals involved in a scheme to divert 157 billion T Sh (US\$104.5 million) stolen from the Central Bank's external payment account and given to bogus companies by using flawed or nonexistent records.

Tanzania is the least corrupt of the East African nations and on par with other Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states. Transparency International's East African Bribery Index 2009 and Corruption Perceptions Index 2008 rank Tanzania first among the East African nations and 102nd out of 180 worldwide, respectively.

Significant achievements made in the last few years are credited to a comprehensive set of anti-corruption regulations, as well as an institutional framework to prevent, detect and punish corrupt practices.

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