Dear Readers,
Welcome to the last newsletter for the year 2019. We are thankful to God for all efforts that we have put in protecting and defending the Human Right Defenders and all the partnership and members collaborations that has enabled us to reach more HRDs in Tanzania. The following are highlights of key events and activities that have transpired here at Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition in the last quarter.

Firstly, I would like to highlight on our country’s Local Government Elections that were conducted in November 2019. For the aim of Civil Societies and Human Right Defenders to participate fully in the elections, 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto was developed and disseminated to all election parties under the coordination of THRDC.

Secondly, I am very delighted to acknowledge the urge of CSOs to Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) to take relevant steps to address challenges affecting CSOs under the Tax Regime in Tanzania. More than 120 CSO Directors met in Mwanza during Mid – October 2019 in their Annual Reflection Meeting and were able to discuss key issues that affect the country’s operations. Their theme was “Taxation of Civil Society Organizations and their Contribution to National Development: Unattended Misconception and Policy Dilemma”.

Unlike the previous years, this last quarter members of the coalition declared to have raised their confidence after the 8th AGM. This is a very great achievement to the Coalition and all Human Right Defenders in the country.

Enjoy your reading!

WORD FROM THE NATIONAL COORDINATOR
CSOs HAVE BEGUN SERIOUS ENGAGEMENT IN ELECTIONS

An Election is a process, it is a life process.

Civil Societies have now begun to make serious engagements in elections processes. It has been known that CSOs have been fully involved and greatly contributed to the country’s election. And through this involvement in 2015, for the first time in Tanzania, CSOs were able to express their wishes and needs in writing under one document; The 2015 CSO’s Election Manifesto. This manifesto aimed at ensuring that Tanzania was going to have peaceful elections and ensuring that competent leaders are elected for the betterment of our nation. It also expressed CSO’s expectations on the general election and the wishes of all Tanzanians toward the elections and after elections.

However, mid-2019, CSOs jointly evaluated the 2015 CSOs Election Manifesto and developed a new Election Manifesto for the 2019/2020 Elections.

Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) decided to coordinate the preparation of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) election manifesto for the 2019 Local Government Elections and 2020 General Elections. The document was developed as we were heading towards two major elections which are expected to be conducted within a period of one year. Towards the end of November 2019, our nation conducted its Local Government Elections which will later be followed by the General Elections in 2020. These elections are in the 6th Phase, that follows the 2015 general election that put into power the 5th phase government under President John Pombe Magufuli.
The CSOs’ Election Manifestos have been prepared in joint efforts of Civil Society Organizations in Tanzania as guidance to citizens, election candidates, political parties, the government, and other election stakeholders, to enhance focus on the process of a free, fair and peaceful election.

Any development is known to be conducted in stages, and so was the Election Manifesto. The development of the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto was in the following stages:

1. The first stage involved the review of the 2015 manifesto and the empowerment session on the role of CSOs in elections.
2. The second stage involved a discussion on issues to be captured in the 2019-2020 election manifesto. Both the first and second stages will involve about 100 CSOs from both Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar.
3. The third involved a team of at least 15 CSOs thematic representatives to compile and write the 2019-2020 CSOs manifesto at Bagamoyo. The document was later reviewed by a team of CSOs Directors selected from different thematic groups and other experts in areas of economics, information technology, and human rights.
4. The fourth stage involved launching the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto and conducting campaigns to raise awareness to different election stakeholders and the public in general. The Coalition conducted the launching event on the 28th of September 2019.
However, it never only ended at the launching. The 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto under the coordination of THRDC was disseminated to all political parties in Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar. THRDC further disseminated the documents to the Zonal Coordinators of all 11 zones of the coalition, so that they may give to all members of the election in their areas so as to reach the interior areas.

DISSEMINATION OF THE 2019/2020 CSOs ELECTION MANIFESTO TO POLITICAL PARTIES IN TANZANIA MAINLAND AND ZANZIBAR

A group photo of the high table participants during the launching of the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto

Mzee Joseph Butiku, Chairperson of the Nyerere foundation, giving his remarks during the launching of the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto

A group photo of some CSO members that attended the launch of the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto

THRDC’s Advocacy Officer, Mr. Leopold Mosha giving few copies of the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto to the Political Party Leader of the ACT – Wazalendo party in Tanzania Mainland on behalf of the coalition

THRDC’s National Coordinator, Mr Onesmo Olengurumwa (left) giving a short preview of the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto to Ms. Mariagoreti at the THRDC’s Resource Centre.
A group photo of the THRDC representatives together with the leaders and members of ACT-Wazalendo party during the dissemination process of the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto.

A group photo of THRDC representative together with the CHADEMA leaders in Zanzibar disseminating the 2019/2020 CSOs Election Manifesto.

The Civil Society Local Government Election Barometer is now in progress, with the aim of identifying the participation rate of CSOs during the election. This marks as a way to monitor the space of civil societies in the democratization processes in the country, given the current shrunk civic space.

TRA URGED TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES AFFECTING CSOs UNDER TAX LAWS IN TANZANIA

Civil Society Organizations have urged the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) to take relevant steps to address challenges affecting CSOs under the Tax Regime in Tanzania. CSOs Directors have addressed this during the 5th CSOs Directors Annual Reflection Meeting in Mwanza.

More than 120 CSOs Directors are meeting in Mwanza for two days (13th-14th October 2019) in their Annual Reflection Meeting to discuss key issues affecting their operation in the Country. This is the 5th Annual Directors Reflection meeting and the major theme this year is “Taxation of Civil Society Organizations and their Contribution to National Development: Unattended Misconception and Policy Dilemma”. This is a continuance of discussions and observations from the 2018 CSOs Directors Forum, where it was observed that there are many challenges, which affect CSOs as well as the need to address them effectively. Some of these challenges include; CSOs’ lack of knowledge about tax laws, issues of compliance with the laws governing CSOs and the issue of acquiring charitable status.

With this backdrop, the Directors Forum under the Coordination of THRDC has exclusively dedicated the 2019 CSOs Directors Forum to the general awareness and compliance of tax laws.

In addition to the current challenges in complying with Tax laws, CSOs are also facing another challenge in tracking their contribution to national development. CSOs have been doing a very commendable job in different thematic areas including defending human rights, advocacy in different fields and also a provision of social services in our communities. However, despite the fact that a lot is being done, it has remained very difficult to track their contribution to national development.

Therefore, in this year, CSOs Directors Reflection Meeting will provide an avenue for discussion on how to track and record the contribution of CSOs in the national development.

The main objective of this years’ meeting is to bring together CSOs Directors to strategize on how to improve CSOs’ compliance with practical
The Government and TRA have been congratulated due to an unprecedented increase in tax collection. On the 3rd of October 2019, the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) reported to have recorded an amount of Tshs. 1.767 Trillion for the month of September 2019. According to TRA, the amount collected for this one month of September is equivalent to 97.20 percent of Tshs. 1.817 Trillion, which was the target for the month.

CSOs’ contribution to National Development is undeniable. Due to this contribution, CSOs have requested therefore that its high time for the sector’s value to be officially recognized in the National Development Plans, Reports and Strategies such as Tanzania Development Vision 2025 specifically the National Five-Year Development Plan 2016/17– 2020/21 with the theme “Nurturing Industrialization for Economic Transformation and Human Development”.

Aspects of the Tax Laws of the country. Other objectives include: Providing a forum for civil society sector self-reflection with the view to improve CSOs’ internal governance and compliance with the national tax laws; To familiarize CSOs Directors with Tax Laws and how to effectively comply with them, and share experiences on the way compliance with tax laws is observed in various organizations.
CSOs Directors and other invited guests listening attentively to the moderator during the session of the 5th CSOs reflection meeting.
By recognizing the role of NGOs in development, the government of Zanzibar has decided to put NGOs under the president’s office in order to ensure easy coordination. The registrar of NGOs in Zanzibar, Mr. Ahmed Khalid informed CSO directors that, the NGOs formalization process started from grass root level and for that factor, they have been trying to join the members of the sector. The two governments have been having a listening ear on all issues concerning the Civic sector Directors and other contributors giving their contribution and recommendations concerning the taxation on civil societies in Tanzania.
“Remember, teamwork begins by building trust. And the only way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability.” --Patrick Lencioni
The Annual General meeting (AGM) is an important event that is usually scheduled to be conducted at least once per year for every organization. It gives its members, the general public and the committee a broad overview of the organization’s current directions, financial health and confirms its purpose.

On 16th November, THRDC held its 8th AGM meeting for its members. Currently, the coalition consists of 200 active members at the moment. During the AGM, the Coalition succeeded to bring together over half of all the members, that is 105 members succeeded to attend the meeting. However, 10 members were able to communicate on their absence with apology for not attending the AGM, but were active in knowing the updates of the coalition. This is a great achievement that verifies that most members are active in the coalition.

During the THRDC-AGM, the members together with the board members and THRDC staffs / secretariat was able to know the welfare and the members, and the coalition in general. In addition to the success of the coalition, THRDC received a clean audit sheet upon the year 2019 which is a great achievement that will enable proper sustainability of the coalition. More confidence and reliance to the coalition due to the clean sheet received from the auditor.

Several matters were aroused during the meeting, members achieved to lay down their recommendations for the year 2020 so as to enable proper implementation of the coalition’s goal.