Introduction

Tanzania is one of the most stable countries in East Africa. However, it still faces important political, and social challenges, including the marginalisation of youth and women, and pockets of poverty. Politics, criminality and land are viewed as the major sources of localized conflicts in Tanzania. Moreover, across many regions, localised conflicts often lead to regular outbreaks of violence, destruction of property, and a general sense of insecurity. The southern region of the country has also seen an increase of violent extremist attacks over the past years. And the semi-autonomous archipelago of Zanzibar has a history of contentious and often violent elections, and during the general election of October 2020, the leading opposition party claimed killings of 9 citizens and detention of their leaders including a presidential candidate.

Between February and March 2021, several of Tanzania's high level public servants and political leaders passed away: Maalim Seif, a presidential candidate in the Zanzibar general election of 2020; Chief secretary Ambassador Kijazi; and most notably President John Magufuli, who passed away on 17 March. After the death of Magufuli, Vice President Samia Suluhu Hassan, took over, becoming the first female president of Tanzania. The new president has signaled that freedom of media and efforts to fight COVID-19 are among her top priorities. Recently, she formed a special experts committee to advise the government on the pandemic response.

Data collection and analysis

Data for the second conflict snapshot report for Tanzania was gathered from 25 to 31 January 2021, in Tandahimba and Mtwara Urban districts. This report was prepared by the Search for Common Ground (Search) Tanzania team, with support from Search’s COVID-19 Response Programming Team and Institutional Learning Team. For more information on the data collection methodology and tools used by Search for Common Ground for this research, click here. This report is part of a series of regular conflict snapshots aimed at providing quick and actionable answers to a set of specific questions. The previous report for Tanzania can be found here.

To cite this report:

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5. VAGNEWS, "Tanzania Orders Reopening of Media Houses Closed Under Magufuli", April 2021
Update: COVID-19 Measures and Impact on Conflict

The government of Tanzania stopped reporting COVID-19 cases in May 2020 and so far has not resumed sharing statistics related to the pandemic. Over the past reporting period, schools were open, mass gatherings were allowed, standard prevention measures were not mandatory except in health centers and airports, and the government mandated COVID-19 testing for international visitors and travellers. The government allowed freedom of worship, only requiring hand washing in worship centres (churches and mosques).

After the passing of President Magufuli, Vice President Samia Hassan took over as President. During her inaugural speech, she said she has formed a committee of experts that will advise her on the status of COVID-19 in the country and the necessary steps to take. The committee submitted a detailed report to President Samia on 15 May 2021, calling on the government to pave the way for the use of COVID-19 vaccinations in the country (through the COVAX programme) and proposing a list of measures to help Tanzania combat increases in COVID-19 infections. According to the committee, any potential vaccination program in Tanzania must be voluntary and must prioritise health care workers, frontline workers, those in the tourism and hospitality industry, the elderly (above 50 years), vulnerable groups with underlying conditions, and travellers. President Hassan announced on May 15 that the government will review whether or not to administer the COVID-19 vaccination.

COVID-19’s Impact on Social Cohesion & Trust

Trust in COVID-19 information in the media is dropping, while informal information sharing increased, possibly indicating higher circulation of rumours and misinformation

The most preferred channels to access information about COVID-19:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of those who listen to these stations, people trust the information shared about Covid-19:

- Trust (mostly, very much)
- Trust it at lower levels (rarely, somewhat)
- Do not trust it

Reduced trust is likely due to the government’s insistence that COVID-19 disappeared as well as continued restrictions on the media to report on COVID-19. Meanwhile, in many communities, there are still rumours about COVID-19 related deaths.

Men trust our media partners’ COVID-19 information more than women. In Tanzania, men tend to have greater access to media in general and to radio programming in particular, particularly at the household level. Therefore, since men are able to access information more consistently than women, they might have higher trust levels in COVID-19 related information.

Young people trust COVID-19 related information on our partner radio stations more than adults and elderly people. Higher trust levels among youth is likely because our partner radio stations specialise in youth programming and tend to attract a young audience.

The vast majority of respondents share information about COVID-19 with family and friends. Lack of official data and very limited reporting by the media is likely motivating people to share COVID-19 related information informally and consequently this may lead to increased circulation of misinformation and rumours. As the Tanzanian media has started reporting on COVID-19 more openly these past weeks, it will be important to follow how that impacts on the trust in information and on information-sharing.

6. Under this project, Search for Common Ground Tanzania has partnered with two local radio stations in Tanzania, Pride FM and Newala FM.
An increase in needs related to COVID-19 is associated with a decrease in levels of trust in the government’s pandemic response and in COVID-19 actors.

Compared to the first report, there has been an increase in the percentage of respondents who requested services from the government, most likely indicating increased needs. This could be explained in part by a deterioration in people's economic situation.

45% of respondents (or a member of their household) have fully or partially lost the main source of income during the pandemic.

Health and freedom of movement remain the top requested services (both up from round 1). Despite the government’s denial that the virus is a major problem in Tanzania, it seems many citizens may be suffering from COVID-19 and this is likely the reason for increased health-related service requests. Yet, the government has associated these health symptoms with pneumonia or breathing problems rather than the virus.

Out of those who requested support from any service provider:

- Highly satisfied and satisfied: 60%
- Somewhat satisfied: 29%
- Not satisfied: 3%
- Never received a response: 9%

Looking at the two top-requested service providers, respondents are more satisfied with services provided by the government than by community members.7

Overall satisfaction levels increased compared to the first round, for the categories noted above. Increased satisfaction is likely driven by the decrease of the number of respondents not getting a response.

Levels of satisfaction are higher among women than men: In Tanzania, women tend to utilise health and other social services more than men.8 Additionally, many men often refuse to wait for services at service centres, which might be why they are less satisfied with services compared to women. The increase in women’s satisfaction level could possibly be explained by the fact that during the first round, the government had restricted certain public services (e.g. schools), and women as primary users of those services were more affected by these measures, hence leading to an increase of satisfaction now.

Levels of satisfaction among young people (18-34 years) remains the lowest, although this is a notable increase from the first report. Adult and elderly respondents continue to have much higher levels of satisfaction. This is a notable increase for adults and elderly (35+).

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7. This is contrary to the other five countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Palestine, Uganda, and Yemen) where we conduct this research, where satisfaction with governmental services consistently scores lower than services provided by non-governmental actors. See here for the other country reports: https://www.sfcg.org/working-together-against-corona/.

Respondents’ trust in Government:

Despite this being a relatively high level of trust in the government’s response efforts, it is a slight decrease from the first report. A decrease in trust is likely due to widespread rumours about unreported COVID-19 related deaths that the government refuses to acknowledge.

Respondents’ trust non-governmental actors working on COVID-19.

This decrease in trust may be influenced by the government’s various COVID-19 related restrictions and regulations, including restrictions on pandemic-related reporting and the requirement of non-governmental actors to receive government approval for any COVID-19 interventions.

Horizontal cohesion has improved these past months but political polarisation remains a risk in a fragile political climate

Compared to the first report, horizontal cohesion has improved for all indicators that we are measuring, including an increase in the value respondents place on collaboration across divides as well as increased actual collaboration across divides. However, there are notable distinctions, for example interaction between religious groups was greater in this round than interaction between supporters of different political groups. These trends are likely a consequence of the recent parliamentary and presidential elections that were fraught with tension and accusations of not being free and fair.

More respondents value collaboration across religious groups, than across political divides, both up from the first round. Political divides tend to be more salient than religious divides in Tanzania, and perhaps even more so during the time of data collection which happened not long after the elections end of October 2020.
Muslims and Christians value collaboration with the other group:

interact with someone from another group (religious or political) over the past three months, whether in person or virtually.

Interaction across divides notably increased from the first report. Higher levels of interaction might be due to increased engagement during the electoral period.

While respondents tend to value collaboration across divides and actual interaction levels are high, feelings of safety are lower in comparison, demonstrating that collaboration and interaction are actually quite fragile and do not correlate to horizontal cohesion on their own. Reduced feelings of safety might be reflective of the overall political context during data collection but might also include additional factors. For instance, interaction might be happening out of necessity or circumstance.

When looking at gender dynamics:

Overall, there is a lower rate of women respondents who report feeling safe when interacting with the opposite sex, compared to men.

Next Steps For COVID-19 Response Efforts

Response providers should prioritize improving access to timely and credible information, particularly given the heightened risk of increased misinformation and rumours

- As the new president plans to prioritise media freedom and COVID-19 response, it is critical that those involved with pandemic response create effective communication strategies. Response providers should work to increase confidence by tapping into communication channels that citizens already trust and have access to, while working to strengthen the credibility of existing communication channels that reach large audiences (i.e. government channels, private outlets, etc.). Our respondents note television, radio, and social media as top sources for information on COVID-19.
• Additionally, informal information-sharing is very high, and since timely and accurate information is limited, this kind of information sharing is likely contributing to the proliferation of misinformation and rumours. Pandemic response providers should work with trusted community leaders and influencers as a way to disseminate information and mitigate rumours. For instance, training religious leaders to disseminate accurate information using their respective platforms, can be a good strategy to reach members of the community more directly. Additionally, training frontline workers to lead various dialogue platforms (e.g. town hall meetings), including those that target women, youth, and other demographic groups, can help ensure equal access to information for different groups.

Response providers should ensure holistic approaches to strengthening horizontal cohesion and integrate strategies that improve feelings of safety for groups and individuals when interacting across divides for COVID-19 response

• We measure a variety of indicators to assess levels of horizontal cohesion. When we examine all indicators together, we can begin to piece together an accurate picture of what is happening. Lower feelings of safety (78%), compared to high levels of valuing collaboration (82%), as well as high levels of reported interaction (92%), might be an indicator that horizontal cohesion can easily break down or even of potential tension and violence. Stress factors, such as an electoral period, the pandemic or its socio-economic consequences, can exacerbate feelings of unsafety when interacting across divides, and response providers should pay close attention to these trends. Diversifying pandemic response efforts by integrating trusted community leaders who represent different political and religious groups, can help increase confidence when groups are interacting. Moreover, any response efforts that include interaction between groups should integrate conflict-sensitivity planning to avoid doing harm.

Response providers should anticipate increasing needs as COVID-19 related service requests continue to rise at notable rates

• We have seen second and third waves of COVID-19 proliferate around the world, often with more force than first waves. During the first round of data collection, only 31% of respondents requested COVID-19 related services, compared to 63% during this round of data collection. Additionally, health-related services are among the top requested services for both rounds, including an 8% increase from Sept ’20 to Jan ’21. While statistical information on COVID-19 remains limited in Tanzania, increasing health requests could indicate rising case numbers. Moreover, as the context continues to shift in terms of increased access to information and the prioritization of COVID-19 response efforts, response providers should prepare for increased COVID-19 cases, increased service requests, and growing information needs among concerned citizens.

9. Our first snapshot only asked respondents about service requests made to the government and not other response providers. This second survey asked respondents about all providers, which is reflected in the 63% average. Additionally, 48% of respondents requested services from the government during this round of data collection.