

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA**

**IN THE DISTRICT REGISTRY OF DODOMA**

**AT DODOMA**

**LAND APPEAL NO. 104 OF 2019**

*(Originating from Application No 36 of 2017 of the District Land and  
Housing Tribunal for Iramba at Kiomboi)*

**DANIEL ZEBEDAYO .....APPELLANT**

**VERSUS**

**ISHENGA VILLAGE COUNCIL .....RESPONDENT**

**JUDGMENT**

*Date of Last Order: 17/09/2021*

*Date of Judgment: 17/09/2021*

**A. Mambi, J:**

In the District Land and Housing Tribunal of Iramba at Kiomboi the Appellant (**DANIEL ZEBEDAYO**) unsuccessfully sued the respondent (**ISHENGA VILLAGE COUNCIL**). The dispute involved the land that was used by the ISHENGA VILLAGE to build a dispensary/health centre. The appellant sued the respondent claiming that the land belonged to his clan. The District Land and Housing Tribunal made the decision in favour of the respondent.

Aggrieved, the appellant lodged this appeal basing on three grounds of appeal. One of the appellant's ground was that the DLHT erred in law by not recording the opinion of the assessors.

Parties made very brief submission. The learned Counsel for the appellant Mr Bembela addressed this court that the procedure at the District Land and Housing Tribunal were tainted by irregularities since the opinion of the assessors were not recorded.

In response, the respondent Counsel briefly submitted that, the he has also observed the same irregularities involving the opinion of the assessors.

Before I considered all grounds of appeal and submission by both parties, I have realized some irregularities at the trial Tribunal. Both parties have submitted that the trial tribunal chairman did not invite the assessors to give their opinion. In other words the tribunal proceedings were tainted by incurable irregularities. In regard with my view, the key issue is whether the trial tribunal was tainted by irregularities. I have gone through the records from the Trial Tribunal and observed that the proceedings and judgment of the Tribunal was tainted by irregularities and that, in my view, jeopardized justice to the appellant and even the respondent. My perusal from the records of the District Land and Housing Tribunal show that the Trial Tribunal Chairman failed to properly address himself to the legal principles governing assessors. The records do not show the assessors gave their opinion and if they did so there is nowhere their opinion were recorded. Indeed even the respondent

conceded and admitted that the tribunal failed to consider the opinion of the assessors.

It should be noted that the question of the opinion of the assessors is the matter of law. Before I address the importance of the opinion of the assessors I wish to highlight the relevant provisions of the law that deal with the opinion of the assessors. Indeed the composition of assessors and how to deal with their opinion are envisaged under 23(1) and (2) of the Land Disputes Courts Act, Cap. 216 [R.E. 2019] provides that;

*“23 (1) The District Land and Housing Tribunal established under section 22 **shall be composed of one Chairman and not less than two assessors.***

*(2) The District Land and Housing Tribunal **shall be duly constituted when held by a Chairman and two assessors who shall be required to give their opinion before the Chairman reaches the judgment.**”*

I also wish to refer Regulation 19(2) of the Land Disputes Courts (The District Land and Housing Tribunal) Regulations, 2003 that are made under the main Act. That regulation provides that;

*“Notwithstanding sub-regulation (1) **the Chairman shall, before making this judgment, require every assessor present at the conclusion of hearing to give his opinion in writing and the assessor may give his opinion in Kiswahili.**”*

The above cited provisions of the laws are clear that the involvement of assessors are necessary and they must give their opinion at the conclusion of the hearing and before the Chairman composes his Judgment. In my considered view, the role of assessors will be meaningful if they actively and effectively participate in the proceedings before giving their opinion during trial and before judgment is delivered

It is clear that the Trial Tribunal records do not show if the Chairperson recorded the assessors' opinion apart from just writing his judgment and making his own decision. Indeed the position of the law is clear that the Tribunal Chairman must record and consider the assessors' opinion and in case of departure from the assessors' opinion he/she must give reasons. The records show that the Hon Chairman under the proceedings did not show if he recorded the opinion of the assessors or if the opinion were read to the parties. In my considered view, the role of assessors will be meaningful if they actively and effectively participate in the proceedings before giving their opinion during trial and before judgment is delivered. The Court in **TUMBONE MWAMBETA vs. MBEYA CITY COUNCIL, Land Appeal No. 25 of 2015 CAT** at Mbeya (unreported) which cited the case of **SAMSONNJARAI AND ANOTHER vs. JACOB MESOVORO, Civil Appeal No. 98 of 2015** (unreported) had this to say:

*"in determining an appeal which originated from the District Land and Housing Tribunal whereby, the Court said, even if the assessor had no question to ask, the proceedings should show his name and*

*mark "NIL" or else it will be concluded that he/she was not offered the opportunity to ask questions and did not actively participate in the conduct of the trial. The failure of actively and effectively participation of assessors during the proceedings it was declared by the court that the trial a nullity for miscarriage of justice and ordered a trial de novo"*

See also **ABDALLAH BAZAMIYE AND OTHERS vs. THE REPUBLIC**, [1990] TLR 44.

It is trite law that the chairman of the Tribunal is bound to observe Regulation 19 (2) of the Regulations (supra) which require the assessors present at the conclusion of the hearing to give their opinion in writing. The proceedings must reflect that the opinion of the assessors were read before the parties and subsequently recorded. However, in the purported proceeding of the Tribunal do not show if the opinion of the of assessors who were present during the conclusion of the hearing were read and recorded. The records also show that, the opinion of assessors were not put in writing at the conclusion of the hearing. The implication of such omission (non-involvement of the assessor) was clearly addressed by the court in **TUMBONE MWAMBETA case (supra)** at page 16 where it was held that;

*"...the omission to comply with the mandatory dictates of the law cannot be glossed over as mere technicalities....the law was contravened and neither were the assessors actively involved in the trial nor were they called upon to give their opinion before the Chairman composed the judgment. This cannot be*

*validated by assuming what is contained in the judgment authored by the Chairman as he alone does not constitute a Tribunal. Besides, the lack of the opinions of the assessors rendered the decision a nullity and it cannot be resuscitated at this juncture by seeking the opinion of the Chairman as to how he received opinions of assessors..."*

*fatal and usually vitiates the conviction."* [Emphasis added].

Having observed those irregularities as moved by the parties, this court needs to use its discretionary powers vested under the legal provisions of the law. Indeed this court is empowered to exercise its powers under section 42 and 43 of the Land Disputes Courts Act, [Cap. 216 R.E. 2019] to revise the proceedings of the District Land and Housing Tribunals if it appears that there has been an error material to the merits. Indeed section 43 (1) (b) the Land Disputes Courts Act provides that;

*"In addition to any other powers in that behalf conferred upon Supervisory and the High Court, the High Court (Land Division) (b) may in any proceedings determined in the District Land and Housing Tribunal in the exercise of its original, appellate or revisional jurisdiction, on application being made in that behalf by any party or of its own motion, if it appears that there has been an error material to the merits of the case involving injustice, revise the proceedings and make such decision or order therein as it may think fit".*

The underlying object of the above provisions of the law is to prevent subordinate courts or tribunals from acting arbitrarily, capriciously and illegally or irregularly in the exercise of their

jurisdiction. See **Major S.S Khanna v. Vrig. F. J. Dillon, Air 1964 Sc 497 at p. 505: (1964) 4 SCR 409; Baldevads v. Filmistan Distributors (India) (P) Ltd., (1969) 2 SCC 201: AIR 1970 SC 406.** The provisions cloth the High court with the powers to see that the proceedings of the subordinate courts are conducted in accordance with the law within the bounds of their jurisdiction and in furtherance of justice. This enables the High Court to correct, when necessary, errors of jurisdiction committed by subordinate courts and provides the means to an aggrieved party to obtain rectification of non-appealable order. Looking at our law there is no dispute that this court has power to entail a revision on its own motion or *suo moto*. The court can also do if it is moved by any art as done in this matter at hand.

Looking at the records, I am of the settled mind that this court has satisfied itself that there is a need of revising the legality, irregularity, correctness and propriety of the decision made by the trial Tribunal.

It is clear that failure to involve the opinion of the assessors by the Chairman in his decision and proceedings caused miscarriage of justice. I wish to refer the decision of court in **Fatehali Manji V.R, [1966] EA 343**, cited by the case of **Kanguza s/o Machemba v. R Criminal Appeal NO. 157B OF 2013**. The Court of Appeal of East Africa restated the principles upon which court should order retrial. The court observed that:-

*"...in general a retrial will be ordered only when the original trial was illegal or defective; it will not be ordered where the conviction is set aside because of insufficiency of evidence or for the purpose of enabling the*

*prosecution to fill up gaps in its evidence at the first trial; even where a conviction is vitiated by a mistake of the trial court for which the prosecution is not to blame, it does not necessarily follow that a retrial should be ordered; each case must depend on its particular facts and circumstances and an order for retrial should only be made where **the interests of justice require it and should not be ordered where it is likely to cause an injustice to any party...***"

I am well aware that an order for retrial should only be made where the interests of justice require it. In my considered view, there is no any likelihood of causing an injustice to any party if this court orders the remittal of the file for the trial court to properly deal with the matter immediately. The Tribunal should consider this matter as priority and deal with it immediately within a reasonable time to avoid any injustice to the appellant resulting from any delay. It should be noted that all appeals that are remitted back for retrial or trial de novo need to be dealt expeditiously within a reasonable time. Having observed that the proceedings at the Tribunal was tainted by irregularities, I find no need of addressing other grounds of appeal.

For the reasons given above, I nullify the proceedings and judgment of the Tribunal in Land Application No 36 of 2017 and the decree made thereto. This matter is remitted to the District Land and Housing Tribunal to be freshly determined. Given the circumstances of this case, this court orders the mater be heard *de novo* by the same the District Land and Housing Tribunal but chaired by a different Chairperson.

If the parties are interested to proceed prosecuting their case, they should all be summoned to appear within reasonable time.

No order as to the costs.

Order accordingly.

**A. MAMBI, J**

**JUDGE**

**17. 09.2021**

Judgment delivered in Chambers this 17<sup>th</sup> day of September 2021 in presence of both parties.

**A. MAMBI, J**

**17. 09.2021**

Right of appeal explained.

**A. MAMBI, J**

**17. 09.2021**