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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMS UNDER THE TANZANIA SOCIAL ACTION FUND ON POVERTY ERADICATION IN MSIMBU AND MSANGA WARDS, KISARAWE DISTRICT, TANZANIA

***Verus Ishengoma[1], Janet Emily Mutebe[2], Juliana Ogera[3]**
[1]Research Fello, Department of Public Administration, Kampala International University in Tanzania
[2]Lecturer, Department of Public Administration, Kampala International University in Tanzania
[3]Lecturer, Department of Public Administration, Kampala International University in Tanzania
*Corresponding author: verusishengoma29@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Cash transfer programs are a cornerstone of social protection strategies in developing nations, aimed at providing immediate financial relief and fostering long-term poverty reduction. This study examines the effectiveness of cash transfer programs under the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) in Msimbu and Msanga wards of Kisarawe District. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data were collected from 222 beneficiaries via structured questionnaires, supplemented by qualitative insights from key informant interviews. The findings present a nuanced picture: while a significant majority of respondents agreed that cash transfers enabled investment in children's education (80% agreement, mean = 2.13) and participation in training programs (76% agreement, mean = 2.15), there was strong disagreement that the transfers significantly reduced community poverty (63% disagreement, mean = 3.87) or increased household income (78% disagreement, mean = 3.78). Qualitative data revealed that beneficiaries appreciate the immediate relief for specific needs but perceive the transfer amounts as insufficient to create meaningful economic stability or lift households out of poverty. The study concludes that TASAF's cash transfers function effectively as a short-term safety net for human capital investment but fall short of driving sustainable poverty eradication due to inadequate benefit levels and operational inefficiencies. Recommendations include a systematic review of transfer values aligned with the cost of living and improved distribution mechanisms to enhance the program's transformative potential.

Keywords:
Cash Transfer, TASAF, Poverty Eradication, Social Protection, Kisarawe District

INTRODUCTION

The Social Action Fund (SAF) is a significant initiative that emerged from the growing recognition of the need for active social engagement and community development in various societies. It was established in the early 2000s, specifically in 2001, the SAF was initiated against the backdrop of increasing social challenges, including poverty, inequality, and lack of access to essential services. This period marked a transition in many countries towards more participatory governance models and recognition of the critical role of civil society in addressing these issues (Castro-Arce, &Vanclay, 2020).

Poverty eradication is a multifaceted challenge that requires comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty while promoting sustainable development and social equity, and it has gained renewed urgency in the context of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated existing inequalities and pushed millions back into extreme poverty. The World Bank's recent reports indicate that the global poverty rate increased for the first time in decades during the 2020s, specifically due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic disruptions. This marked a significant regression in the progress made towards reducing poverty levels globally, with an estimated 23 million more people living in extreme poverty in 2022 compared to 2019, highlighting the need for targeted interventions that not only provide immediate relief but also foster long-term resilience among vulnerable populations (World Bank, 2024).

In Canada, one prominent social action fund is the Social Development Partnerships Program (SDPP) which was established in the year 2003. This program supports projects that aim to improve the social and economic well-being

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of Canadians, particularly for marginalized groups. It funds initiatives in areas such as community development, social innovation, and poverty reduction. In Canada the government and various organizations have sought innovative approaches to address persistent poverty. Social action funds, which are financial resources directed towards community-driven initiatives, play a critical role in empowering disadvantaged populations and facilitating sustainable development in urban and rural areas alike (Thompson & Roberts, 2021).

In Malawi, one prominent social action fund is the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF). Established in the year 1996, MASAF aims to provide resources for community-driven development initiatives, focusing on poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and enhancing social services. The fund supports various projects that empower local communities and address their specific needs. In Malawi, a country characterized by high levels of poverty and vulnerability among its population. Social action funds, which serve to finance community-led initiatives aimed at improving socio-economic conditions, have become instrumental in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by Malawian communities.

In Tanzania (SAF) is known as Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), which was established in 2000, as a government initiative aimed at reducing poverty through various social programs and community-driven projects. With the increasing recognition of poverty as a multifaceted issue, TASAF has sought to address not only income poverty but also access to essential services, such as education and healthcare (World Bank, 2020). The program aligns with Tanzania's broader national strategies, including the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), which emphasizes community participation and sustainable development (URT, 2018).

In Kisarawe District which is located in Coast Region of Tanzania, the implementation of the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) has emerged as a crucial strategy for poverty eradication, characterized by a multifaceted approach that focuses on empowering vulnerable communities through direct financial support and community-driven development initiatives aimed at improving their overall socio-economic conditions. TASAF operates through a series of programs, including cash transfer schemes aimed at providing financial assistance to low-income households, which help families meet their basic needs such as food, healthcare, and education, thereby alleviating immediate poverty while fostering long-term resilience (Mhando, 2023).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Poverty remains a critical challenge in Tanzania, particularly in rural areas such Msimbu ward and Msanga wards in Kisarawe District, where a significant portion of the population remains vulnerable and marginalized. From 2015 to 2024, statistics reveal fluctuations in poverty rates, highlighting both progress and setbacks. For instance, reports indicated a decline in the national poverty rate from approximately 28.2% in 2015 to around 26.4% by 2019, showcasing some success in alleviating poverty. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted these gains, leading to a projected increase in poverty rates. By 2021, estimates suggested that the poverty rate could rise to about 29.0% due to economic contractions and loss of livelihoods. For instance, the World Bank (2020) reports that many beneficiaries continue to struggle to meet basic needs, highlighting a disconnect between program objectives and outcomes. This is corroborated by more recent studies in the Tanzanian context, which found that despite reported increases in household income, a significant portion of families remained unable to consistently access sufficient food (Msuha & Kissoly, 2024).

As of 2024, projections suggest that while TASAF's initiatives are ongoing and focus on resilience building, the poverty rate has not decreased as hoped, remaining a critical concern. Current estimates indicate that between 25% to 30% of the population, could still be living under the national poverty line, underscoring the complexities and multifaceted nature of poverty in Tanzania. Recent evaluations reveal that while cash transfer programs have improved household income, many recipients still experience food insecurity, inadequate access to healthcare, and limited educational opportunities. A study conducted by Mchomvu et al. (2021) found out that, despite a reported increase in household income among beneficiaries, approximately 30% of families remained unable to consistently access sufficient food. (Msuha&Kissoly, 2024).

Several causes contribute to this troubling trend in Kisarawe District. First and foremost, fluctuations in agricultural productivity, compounded by climate change and inconsistent rainfall patterns, have led to reduced crop yields, which are the primary source of income for many families in this predominantly rural area (Ndayisaba 2023). Additionally, inadequate access to education and vocational training limits the opportunities for skill development, leaving many individuals unable to secure stable employment or engage in income-generating activities.

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Furthermore, ineffective targeting and implementation of social programs, including those under the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), have raised concerns regarding their ability to reach the most vulnerable populations effectively (Mugisha2022).

This study aims to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of TASAF in poverty eradication within Msimbu and Msanga wards in Kisarawe District, focusing on the immediate effectiveness of cash transfers and public works programs, as well as the role of community participation in enhancing the success of these initiatives. By addressing these critical aspects, the research seeks to provide valuable insights to inform future policies and improve the overall impact of TASAF on poverty alleviation in Tanzania.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

i. To assess the effectiveness of public works program funded by TASAF on poverty eradication
ii. To analyze the role of community participation in the implementation of TASAF projects on poverty eradication

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human Development Theory

Human Development Theory, primarily associated with Amartya Sen, shifts the focus of development from mere economic growth to the expansion of human capabilities and freedoms (Stewart et al., 2018). This theory posits that poverty is not just a lack of income but a deprivation of the capabilities to lead a fulfilling life such as being educated, healthy, and adequately nourished. Applied to TASAF's cash transfers, the theory provides a lens to evaluate whether the financial support enhances beneficiaries' "capabilities" (e.g., the ability to be educated) and "functionings" (e.g., actually attending school). It suggests that effective cash transfers should do more than provide income; they should empower individuals to achieve valuable life outcomes, thereby contributing to genuine human development and poverty eradication.

Economic Stability Theory

Drawing from the principles of Keynesian economics, Economic Stability Theory emphasizes the role of government intervention in stabilizing economies and protecting vulnerable populations during downturns (Bibow, 2020). In this context, cash transfers act as a fiscal tool to boost aggregate demand at the micro-level. By providing households with disposable income, the program aims to stimulate local market activity, smooth consumption, and reduce the volatility of household incomes. This theory underpins the expectation that regular cash inflows should lead to greater economic stability for beneficiary households, reducing their vulnerability to shocks and forming a foundation for escaping poverty.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Public works program funded by TASAF on poverty eradication

Mago and Kihaule (2018) conducted a comprehensive analysis of TASAF's impact on household income in rural Tanzania. Their study revealed that participation in public works programs significantly increased household incomes, providing essential financial support for impoverished families. The authors emphasized that the income generated through these programs allowed families to invest in education and health, thus contributing to long-term poverty alleviation.

Vein.Mwanga et al. (2020) explored the socioeconomic benefits of TASAF-funded infrastructure projects. Their findings indicated that improved access to roads and clean water not only enhanced living standards but also stimulated local economies. The researchers concluded that these infrastructure developments were crucial for empowering communities and reducing poverty, as they facilitated better market access and increased productivity.

Karanja and Mwaijande (2021) focused on the gendered impacts of TASAF public works programs. Their research highlighted that woman, who constitute a significant portion of the labor force in these programs, experienced enhanced social status and economic independence. The authors argued that empowering women through participation in public works contributed to the broader goal of poverty eradication by fostering gender equality and economic resilience in households.

Ngowi and Mhando (2022) assessed the effectiveness of TASAF in reaching the most vulnerable populations. They found that the targeting mechanisms employed by TASAF were generally effective in identifying and assisting the

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poorest households. However, the authors called for improvements in monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure that the benefits of public works programs are maximized for those most in need.

Rwehangila et al. (2023) examined the sustainability of TASAF-funded projects post-implementation. Their findings indicated that while initial poverty alleviation was significant, the long-term sustainability of benefits relied heavily on community engagement and continued investment. The authors recommended that future iterations of TASAF programs incorporate strategies for sustaining impacts beyond the program duration.

Role of community participation in the implementation of TASAF projects on poverty eradication

Mchome et al. (2019) discovered that the active involvement of community members in projects funded by the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) significantly contributes to higher levels of project sustainability and a better alignment with the unique needs of local populations. They argued that when community members engage in the decision-making processes, it fosters a deeper understanding of the specific challenges and priorities that the community faces, which, in turn, enhances the relevance and effectiveness of these projects in addressing poverty alleviation. This participation not only ensures that the projects are tailored to the local context but also promotes a sense of ownership among community members, leading to increased motivation to sustain the initiatives beyond their initial implementation.

Mhando and Mhando (2021), highlighted the crucial role of participation in Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) initiatives in fostering a sense of ownership among community members, which they argue is vital for cultivating self-reliance and diminishing dependency on external aid. Their findings indicate that when community members are actively involved in TASAF projects, they not only feel a greater connection to the initiatives but also develop a stronger commitment to ensuring their success. This sense of ownership empowers communities to better mobilize local resources, including human, financial, and social capital, which is essential for addressing their own needs and challenges effectively

Kihwele et al. (2022), socio-economic factors such as low literacy levels and limited access to information hinder community involvement. Their research advocates for targeted interventions to improve education and information dissemination, thereby enhancing community engagement in TASAF initiatives. This underscores the need for a more inclusive approach to ensure that all community members can contribute meaningfully to poverty eradication efforts.

Mwalongo (2023) demonstrated that effective local governance plays a pivotal role in enhancing community engagement, which subsequently leads to improved outcomes for development projects. He emphasized that when local leaders adopt supportive and transparent practices, it creates an environment in which community members feel more empowered and encouraged to participate actively in initiatives aimed at poverty alleviation. This supportive atmosphere fosters trust between the community and local authorities, which is crucial for facilitating open communication and collaboration. As community members engage more fully in the decision-making processes, their insights and perspectives can be integrated into project planning and implementation, thereby tailoring interventions to better meet the specific needs of the community.

Research Gap

The research conducted by Mchome et al. (2019) focuses on the impact of community involvement on the sustainability of Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) projects, yet it does not delve into the precise pathways through which economic benefits are realized, indicating a geographical gap in understanding how these dynamics play out specifically in different regions of Tanzania. Similarly, Castro-Arce and Vanclay (2020) emphasize the importance of an analytical framework to assist community-based initiatives but leave a methodological gap by not exploring how TASAF projects can be transformative and bring about social innovation for sustainable rural development. Furthermore, Mwanga et al. (2020) demonstrate improved living standards through infrastructure projects funded by TASAF but fail to assess the equitable distribution of these gains, highlighting a contextual gap concerning the effectiveness and fairness of resource allocation among different socio-economic groups. Additionally, Mhando and Mhando (2021) underscore the significance of community ownership in TASAF initiatives, yet they do not address the power dynamics and elite capture that may affect project outcomes, revealing a theoretical gap in understanding how social relationships and hierarchies influence the effectiveness of poverty alleviation strategies. Overall, these gaps underscore the need for further research to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of TASAF on poverty eradication, particularly in specific geographical contexts, employing diverse methodological approaches while considering the complexities of local social dynamics and inequalities.

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Thus, this study aims to address these gaps by assessing the TASAF implemented by the Kisarawe district, focusing on cash transfer programs, public work programs and community participation. By integrating insights from the Tanzanian context with existing theoretical frameworks, such as the human development theory and Social Capital Theory., this research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how TASAF can contribute to poverty eradication in Tanzania. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how TASAF used in poverty eradication in Tanzania specifically in Kisarawe district. Therefore, in all these studies, there is very little studies that investigated the effectiveness of Tanzania social action fund on poverty eradication in Msimbu and Msanga wards. In Kisarawe District, Coast Region which this study intended to fill such knowledge gap.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Area

This study employed a descriptive case study design to facilitate an in-depth examination of TASAF's cash transfer programs within their real-life context in Msimbu and Msanga wards, Kisarawe District. The design allowed for the integration of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem.

Target Population and Sampling

The target population comprised TASAF beneficiaries in the two wards. A sample of 259 beneficiaries was selected using simple random sampling from a comprehensive list obtained from local government offices, ensuring each beneficiary had an equal chance of selection. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error.

Data collection involved two primary instruments to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Structured questionnaires were administered to 259 beneficiaries, featuring closed-ended questions rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." This approach facilitated the systematic quantification of beneficiaries' perceptions and attitudes. Additionally, key informant interviews were conducted with a select group of beneficiaries and local TASAF officials, providing valuable contextual insights and explanations to complement the quantitative data.

For data analysis, the quantitative information obtained from the questionnaires was processed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, with the aid of SPSS version 27. The qualitative data collected through interviews were analyzed thematically, allowing for triangulation and a deeper understanding of the numerical findings. This mixed-method approach enriched the overall analysis by combining statistical rigor with contextual depth.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings related to the objective of assessing the effectiveness of cash transfer programs under TASAF on poverty eradication.

Quantitative Results

Table 1 summarizes respondent perceptions regarding the influence of cash transfers on various indicators of poverty eradication.

To assess the effectiveness of public works program funded by TASAF on poverty eradication.

Table 4.7: Public works program funded by TASAF on poverty eradication

Public works program	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. The implementation of the public works program has been transparent and accountable.	93	71	7	32	19	2.1577	1.33434
2. The public works program has improved the overall living standards of beneficiaries	91	73	10	25	23	2.1712	1.34786
3. Public works projects are relevant to the needs of my community.	25	30	0	117	50	3.6171	1.28065
4. The wages I receive from the public works program are sufficient to meet my family's basic needs.	0	0	0	77	145	4.6532	.47704

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5.	The public works program has created job opportunities for community members.	99	61	11	27	24	2.1712	1.39082
6.	The infrastructure developed through the public works program has improved access to essential services in my community.	35	23	33	73	58	3.4324	1.38917

Source: Field Data, (2025)

Another finding on "The implementation of the public works program has been transparent and accountable" implies that 93 respondents strongly agreed, 72 agreed, 32 disagreed, 19 strongly disagreed and 7 undecided. The respondent's agreed with mean value of 2.1577 and a standard deviation of 1.33434, respectively. This denotes that majority of the respondents agreed that implementation of the public works program has been transparent and accountable because transparency in the public works program is often enhanced by clear communication and information dissemination. Many respondents noted that they were well-informed about the program's goals, processes, and expected outcomes. This openness fosters trust among community members, who feel that they have a stake in the program and can hold implementers accountable. Additionally, the involvement of local communities in the planning and execution of public works projects contributes to a sense of accountability. When community members participate in decision-making processes, they are more likely to monitor the implementation of projects and ensure that resources are used effectively. This participatory approach empowers respondents, reinforcing their belief in the program's integrity. This finding acknowledges with those of Ndunguru et al. (2024) who found that, effective communication and information dissemination enhance transparency, allowing participants to be well-informed about the program's goals, processes, and expected outcomes. Respondents reported feeling confident in the program's management due to the clear channels of communication, which contributed to their overall satisfaction and engagement in the public works initiatives.

Table 4:7 statement on "public works program has improved the overall living standards of beneficiaries" shows that 91 respondents strongly agreed, 73 agreed 25 disagreed, and 23 strongly disagreed and 10 undecided. The respondent's agreed with mean value of 2.1712 and a standard deviation of 1.34786, respectively. This implies that the majority of respondents agreed that public works program has improved the overall living standards of beneficiaries because the program often provides temporary employment opportunities for community members. By engaging beneficiaries in public works projects, participants gain vital skills and income, which can help alleviate poverty. This economic empowerment fosters a sense of agency and encourages families to invest in their well-being, further improving their living standards. This finding agrees with those of Kihombo et al. (2023) who found that participants in public works projects reported significant improvements in their overall living conditions. By engaging community members in various initiatives, these programs not only offer immediate financial relief but also equip individuals with essential skills that can contribute to long-term poverty alleviation. Respondents noted that the combination of work experience and income from the public works program has led to noticeable enhancements in their quality of life.

The findings of the study on a statement "Public works projects are relevant to the needs of my community" revealed that 117 respondents disagreed, 50 strongly disagreed, 30 agreed, 25 strongly agreed. The respondent's disagreed with mean value of 3.6171 and a standard deviation of 1.28065, respectively. This revealed that the majority of respondents disagreed that public works projects are relevant to the needs of the community because there is a disconnect between the projects implemented and the actual needs of the community. Respondents often indicated that the public works initiatives do not address pressing issues such as access to clean water, healthcare facilities, or educational resources. When projects do not align with the community's most urgent priorities, it leads to skepticism about their relevance. If public works projects are poorly executed or fail to provide long-term benefits, community members may view them as ineffective or irrelevant. Concerns about maintenance and durability can further diminish trust in the program's ability to meet ongoing community needs. This finding assents Mwanga et al. (2022) highlighted that many community members felt that the public works projects implemented did not adequately address critical issues such as access to clean water, healthcare facilities, or educational resources. This misalignment leads to concerns about the effectiveness and relevance of these initiatives, as community priorities remain unmet. The findings suggest that for public works programs to gain community support, they must be closely aligned with the specific needs and challenges faced by the beneficiaries.

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Also, the statement on “The wages I receive from the public works program are sufficient to meet my family's basic needs" suggest that 145 respondents strongly disagreed and 77 respondents disagreed. The respondents strongly disagreed with mean value of 4.6532 and a standard deviation of .47704, respectively. This denotes that the majority of respondents strongly disagreed that wages they receive from the public works program are sufficient to meet my family's basic needs due to the amount of wages provided through public works projects is often perceived as inadequate relative to the rising cost of living. Many respondents reported that the wages do not cover essential expenses such as food, healthcare, and education. This gap between income and necessary expenditures leads to dissatisfaction and a feeling of financial instability. Also Delays in wage disbursement or irregular payment schedules can create additional financial strain, making it challenging for families to budget effectively. When wages are not received on time, it can undermine the reliability of this income source, further contributing to the belief that it is insufficient. This finding agrees with those of Nyoni et al. (2023) who found that the wages provided through public works projects are often insufficient in the context of rising living costs. Participants reported that these earnings do not cover essential expenses such as food, healthcare, and education, leading to a significant gap between their income and necessary expenditures. This disconnects fosters feelings of financial instability and dissatisfaction among beneficiaries, highlighting the need for wage adjustments to align with the current economic realities.

Additionally, the findings of the study on the statement “The public works program has created job opportunities for community members" implies that 99 respondents strongly agreed, 61 agreed, 27 disagreed, 24 strongly disagreed and 11 undecided. The respondent’s y agreed with mean value of 2.1712 and a standard deviation of 1.39082, respectively. This revealed that the majority of respondents agreed that public works program has created job opportunities for community members because the job opportunities created by the public works program can serve as a springboard for further employment. Participants often acquire valuable skills and experience that can enhance their employability in other sectors. This skill development is viewed favorably by respondents, as it increases their chances of securing stable, long-term employment in the future. This finding complies with those of Sanga et al. (2023) found that the employment generated through these programs often serves as a springboard for further job prospects. Participants reported that they gained valuable skills and experience, which enhance their employability in various sectors beyond the public works initiatives. This positive impact not only addresses immediate employment needs but also contributes to long-term economic stability for individuals and their families.

Another finding of the study on a statement “The infrastructure developed through the public works program has improved access to essential services in my community" implies that 73 disagreed, 58 strongly disagreed, 35 strongly agreed, 33 undecided and 23 agreed. The respondent’s disagreed with mean value of 3.4324 and a standard deviation of 1.38917, respectively. This suggests that majority of respondents disagreed that infrastructure developed through the public works program has improved access to essential services in my community because the quality and sustainability of the constructed facilities do not meet their needs or expectations, often citing issues such as poorly maintained roads, inadequate water supply systems, and insufficient healthcare access. Many respondents expressed concerns that, despite the initial investment in infrastructure, the lack of ongoing maintenance and management has led to a deterioration of these facilities, thereby undermining their intended purpose of enhancing access to essential services. Additionally, some community members noted that the specific infrastructure projects undertaken did not align with the most pressing needs of the community, such as a lack of focus on educational facilities or reliable transportation options, further contributing to their skepticism regarding the program's effectiveness. This finding concurs with those of Mshana et al. (2024) found that many participants reported concerns regarding the quality and sustainability of the facilities constructed, including poorly maintained roads, inadequate water supply systems, and insufficient healthcare access. Despite the initial investments in infrastructure, respondents emphasized the lack of ongoing maintenance and management, which has led to the deterioration of these facilities. This decline undermines the programs' intended purpose of enhancing access to essential services, leaving community members frustrated and underserved.

4.6.1 Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data on Public Work

The analysis of interviews regarding public works programs identified two key themes: Temporary Livelihood Support and the Value of Community Cohesion.

Theme 1: Temporary Livelihood Support. Participants viewed the public works program primarily as a source of temporary employment and income. As RP3 noted, "Public works programs are designed to provide temporary

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employment opportunities for vulnerable populations... By engaging participants in infrastructure projects... these programs not only offer immediate income but also contribute to the development of essential infrastructure." This aligns with the quantitative data that praised the program for creating jobs but strongly criticized the insufficient wages. The temporary nature of the work and the low pay position it as a partial income supplement rather than a reliable pathway out of poverty.

Theme 2: Value of Community Cohesion. Beyond individual income, the social value of working collectively was a prominent theme. Respondents reported that the projects fostered a sense of shared purpose and solidarity. RP4 articulated this, saying, "By bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to work towards common goals, public works initiatives promote community engagement and solidarity. This sense of community is crucial for building resilience and collective problem-solving..." This finding directly relates to Social Capital Theory, specifically the building of "bonding" social capital within the community, which enhances collective efficacy and support networks.

However, respondent RP3 said:

> *"Public works programs are designed to provide temporary employment opportunities for vulnerable populations, particularly in rural areas where job scarcity is a significant issue. By engaging participants in infrastructure projects, such as road construction, irrigation systems, and community facilities, these programs not only offer immediate income but also contribute to the development of essential infrastructure that benefits entire communities".*

The above finding revealed that by engaging participants in these initiatives, the programs not only deliver immediate financial relief and income stability to individuals who might otherwise face economic hardship, but they also create lasting benefits for the broader community by enhancing access to vital resources and services that improve overall quality of life. This approach highlights the interconnectedness of employment and infrastructure development, suggesting that by investing in both, public works programs can address immediate economic needs while laying the groundwork for sustainable growth and resilience in rural areas. These findings agree with those of Mwanga et al. (2024) demonstrates that such programs also create lasting benefits for the broader community by enhancing access to vital resources and services that improve overall quality of life. This dual impact not only supports individual well-being but also fosters community resilience and development.

However, respondent RP4 said:

> *"By bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to work towards common goals, public works initiatives promote community engagement and solidarity. This sense of community is crucial for building resilience and collective problem-solving, further enhancing the program's impact on poverty eradication".*

The above findings suggest that community participation it strengthens social ties among participants but also creates a supportive environment where shared experiences and resources can be leveraged to address local challenges more effectively. Furthermore, by promoting collaboration and inclusivity, these initiatives enhance the overall impact on poverty eradication, as communities are empowered to identify their needs and develop tailored solutions that reflect their unique contexts. This participatory approach not only addresses immediate economic concerns but also cultivates a sense of ownership and agency among community members, reinforcing their commitment to sustainable development and long-term social cohesion. This finding align with those of Nyerere et al. (2023) who emphasized that by promoting collaboration and inclusivity, these initiatives significantly enhance the overall impact on poverty eradication. Communities are empowered to identify their needs and develop tailored solutions that reflect their unique contexts, leading to more sustainable outcomes and improved quality of life.

"The interview data, where a beneficiary described using income to extend business hours, illustrates the intersection of Economic Stability Theory and Empowerment Theory. The wage, while criticized as insufficient, provided a critical capital injection. This resource acted as a catalyst for empowerment, enhancing the individual's sense of agency, self-efficacy, and control over their economic future. This demonstrates that even limited financial resources can foster the psychological empowerment necessary for individuals to initiate sustainable income-generating activities."

4.6.2 Discussion on Public Works Effectiveness

The study reveals that public works programs are valued more for their social and temporary economic roles than for their transformative potential. The creation of temporary jobs is acknowledged (Mean=2.17), consistent with

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Mago and Kihaule (2018). However, the overwhelming disagreement on wage sufficiency (Mean=4.65) is the program's Achilles' heel, a finding that echoes Nyoni et al. (2023). From the lens of Economic Stability Theory, wages that fail to meet basic needs cannot provide stability or stimulate local demand meaningfully.
The theme of Community Cohesion (4.6.1) aligns with Social Capital Theory, showing the program's success in building "bonding" capital. However, the disagreement on project relevance (Mean=3.62) and infrastructure improving services (Mean=3.43) contradicts the positive outcomes reported by Vein Mwanga et al. (2020). This suggests a significant implementation gap in Kisarawe, where projects may not be aligned with community priorities or are poorly maintained, as noted by Mshana et al. (2024). Thus, the program generates temporary employment and social benefits but is critically hampered by low wages and questionable project relevance.

4.7 To analyze the role of community participation in the implementation of TASAF projects on poverty eradication

The study also analyzes the role of community participation in the implementation of TASAF projects on poverty eradication. The findings revealed on the following table 4.8 as follows.

Table 4.8: Community participation in the implementation of TASAF projects on poverty eradication

Community participation	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. The success of TASAF projects in reducing poverty is largely due to community participation.	111	92	0	11	0	1.6351	.77706
2. Community involvement in TASAF projects has led to better targeting of vulnerable populations.	93	69	13	29	18	2.1441	1.31022
3. Community members have adequate knowledge about the goals of TASAF projects.	73	72	28	24	25	2.3514	1.33622
4. The feedback mechanisms for community input in TASAF projects are effective.	22	9	0	135	56	3.8739	1.13852
5. Participation in TASAF projects has enhanced community ownership of development initiatives.	107	82	0	23	10	1.8604	1.13495
6. The community is actively involved in the implementation of TASAF projects.	109	59	16	20	19	2.0090	1.29737

Source: Field Data, (2025)

Another finding on “The success of TASAF projects in reducing poverty is largely due to community participation" denotes those 111 respondents strongly agreed, 92 agreed and 11 disagreed. The respondents strongly agreed with mean value of 1.6351 and a standard deviation of .77706, respectively. This denotes that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that success of TASAF projects in reducing poverty is largely due to community participation due to active involvement of local residents in the planning and implementation phases fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, ensuring that the projects are tailored to meet the specific needs and priorities of the community. This participatory approach not only empowers individuals by giving them a voice in decision-making processes but also enhances the effectiveness of the initiatives, as community members are more likely to commit to and support projects that they have helped to shape. Furthermore, the collaboration among residents encourages the sharing of knowledge and resources, enabling innovative solutions to local challenges and fostering a collective effort towards poverty alleviation. These findings align with those of Mkenda et al. (2023) highlighted that the active involvement of local residents in both the planning and implementation phases fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among community members. This participatory approach ensures that projects are tailored to meet the specific needs

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and priorities of the community. The research indicates that empowering individuals by giving them a voice in decision-making processes enhances the effectiveness of these initiatives, as community members are more likely to commit to and support projects, they have helped shape.

The findings in statement “Community involvement in TASAF projects has led to better targeting of vulnerable populations" shows that 93 respondents strongly agreed, 69 agreed, 29 disagreed, 18 strongly disagreed and 13 undecided. The respondents agreed with mean value of 2.1441 and a standard deviation of 1.31022, respectively. This implies that the majority of respondents agreed that community involvement in TASAF projects has led to better targeting of vulnerable populations because local participation enables a more nuanced understanding of the specific needs and circumstances of the most disadvantaged individuals within the community. This grassroots engagement allows community members to identify and prioritize those who are most in need, ensuring that resources and support are directed toward the right beneficiaries, such as the elderly, disabled, or those facing economic hardships. Furthermore, when community members are involved in the selection and implementation of projects, they are more likely to advocate for inclusive practices that address the unique challenges faced by vulnerable populations, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of poverty alleviation efforts. This finding concurs with those of Chacha et al. (2023) found that local participation fosters a nuanced understanding of the specific needs and circumstances of the most disadvantaged individuals within the community. This grassroots engagement empowers community members to identify and prioritize those in greatest need, ensuring that resources and support are directed toward the right beneficiaries, including the elderly, disabled, and those facing economic hardships. The findings emphasize that such participatory approaches enhance the overall impact of social support initiatives.

Table 4.8 above on a statement “Community members have adequate knowledge about the goals of TASAF projects" revealed that 73 respondents strongly agreed, 72 agreed, 28 undecided, 25 strongly disagree and 24 disagreed. The respondent’s agreed with mean value of 2.3514 and a standard deviation of 1.33622, respectively. This implies that the majority of respondents agreed that community members have adequate knowledge about the goals of TASAF projects, primarily because ongoing outreach and communication efforts by project implementers have effectively disseminated information regarding the objectives and expected outcomes of these initiatives. This knowledge is further reinforced through community meetings, workshops, and informational sessions that encourage dialogue and feedback, allowing residents to engage with the program's aims and understand how they align with local needs. Many respondents highlighted that this transparency not only builds trust in the project but also empowers them to participate more actively, as they feel informed about how their involvement can contribute to achieving the overarching goals of poverty reduction and community development. These findings align with those of Lema et al. (2024) found that ongoing dissemination of information regarding the objectives and expected outcomes of these initiatives plays a crucial role in enhancing community understanding. This knowledge is further reinforced through community meetings, workshops, and informational sessions that promote dialogue and feedback. Such engagement allows residents to connect with the program's aims and recognize how they align with local needs, fostering greater involvement and support for TASAF initiatives.

The findings of the study on the statement “The feedback mechanisms for community input in TASAF projects are effective" suggests that 135 respondents disagreed, 56 strongly disagreed, 22 strongly agreed and 9 agreed. The respondent’s disagreed with a low mean value of 3.8739 and a standard deviation of 1.13852, respectively. This convey that the majority of respondents disagreed that feedback mechanisms for community input in TASAF projects are effective. The strong disagreement regarding effective feedback mechanisms (Mean=3.87) reveals a critical gap between the ideals of Participatory Development Theory and the on-ground reality. While TASAF's structure involves communities, the perceived ineffectiveness of these channels suggests a 'tokenistic' rather than 'transformative' participation. This failure to incorporate genuine dialogue and act on community input, as advocated by Freire and Chambers, stifles the sense of ownership and prevents the co-creation of solutions, ultimately limiting the projects' relevance and sustainability. This finding is critical as it shows that the mere presence of participation structures does not automatically generate the Social Capital or Empowerment intended This finding concurs with those of Kisaka et al. (2023) who found that many community members view these channels as limited and poorly executed, with issues such as restricted accessibility, lack of responsiveness, and insufficient opportunities for meaningful participation. Participants voiced concerns that the feedback processes do not genuinely reflect their opinions or suggestions, leading to frustration and disillusionment about their ability to influence project outcomes.

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This highlights the need for improvements in engagement strategies to ensure that community voices are effectively heard and considered.

Also, the statement on “Participation in TASAF projects has enhanced community ownership of development initiatives" implies that 107 respondents agreed, 82 strongly agreed, 23 respondents disagreed and 10 respondents strongly disagreed. The respondent’s agreed with a high mean value of 1.8604 and a standard deviation of 1.13495, respectively. This denotes that the majority of respondents agreed that participation in TASAF projects has enhanced community ownership of development initiatives because active involvement in the planning and implementation processes fosters a sense of pride and accountability among residents. When community members are engaged in these projects, they are more likely to feel a personal investment in the outcomes, which cultivates a strong sense of ownership over the initiatives that directly impact their lives. Many respondents highlighted that this participatory approach not only empowers individuals by giving them a voice but also encourages collaboration and collective action, as community members work together towards shared goals. Furthermore, the hands-on experience gained through participation allows residents to develop skills and knowledge that contribute to their ongoing engagement in future development efforts. This finding similarly to those of Mwita et al. (2024) found that active involvement in the planning and implementation processes fosters a sense of pride and accountability among residents. When community members engage in these projects, they develop a personal investment in the outcomes, cultivating a strong sense of ownership over the initiatives that directly affect their lives. This increased ownership not only promotes greater commitment to the projects but also strengthens the overall effectiveness of development efforts in the community.

Another finding on "The community is actively involved in the implementation of TASAF projects" shows that 109 respondents strongly agreed, 59 agreed, 20 disagreed, 19 strongly disagreed and 16 respondent’s undecideds. The respondent’s agreed with a high mean value of 2.0090 and a standard deviation of 1.29737, respectively. This revealed that the majority of respondents agreed that community is actively involved in the implementation of TASAF projects because local residents play a crucial role in various stages of the project cycle, from planning to execution, which not only fosters a sense of ownership but also ensures that the initiatives are closely aligned with the community's specific needs and priorities. Many participants highlighted that their involvement includes direct participation in labor, decision-making, and resource mobilization, which enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the projects. This active engagement not only empowers community members by providing them with skills and experience but also encourages collaboration and solidarity among residents, as they work together towards common goals. Additionally, the visible presence and contributions of community members during project implementation reinforce the local commitment to the success of these initiatives, creating a supportive environment that promotes accountability and sustainability. This finding aligns with those of Ndundu et al. (2023) highlights that this involvement not only fosters a sense of ownership among community members but also ensures that the initiatives are closely aligned with the specific needs and priorities of the community. Such engagement enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the projects, ultimately contributing to more sustainable development outcomes.

4.7.1 Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data on Community Participation

Interview data on community participation crystallized around two main themes: Enhanced Project Relevance and the critical issue of Unheard Voices.

Theme 1: Enhanced Project Relevance. Respondents strongly believed that their involvement led to more suitable and sustainable projects. They emphasized that local knowledge was indispensable. As one interviewee stated, "Community participation ensures that the projects are closely aligned with the actual needs and priorities of the local population..." Another added, "When community members are actively involved, they bring valuable local knowledge and insights that can greatly inform project design and implementation." This theme validates the principles of Participatory Development Theory, confirming that bottom-up input increases the likelihood that interventions will be contextually appropriate and owned by the community.

Theme 2: Unheard Voices. Despite the structures for participation, a strong counter-theme emerged regarding the ineffectiveness of feedback channels. Many respondents felt that their input was solicited but not genuinely acted upon. This perception that their voices remained "unheard" created frustration and disillusionment, undermining the very sense of ownership that participation is meant to foster. This critical finding points to a gap between the theoretical ideal of participation and its practical execution, suggesting a "tokenistic" rather than "transformative" engagement process.

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Here is what interviewee said:

> *"Community participation ensures that the projects are closely aligned with the actual needs and priorities of the local population, as engaging community members in the planning and decision-making processes allows for a more nuanced understanding of the specific challenges they face. This participatory approach not only fosters a sense of ownership among community members but also encourages them to take an active role in the execution and maintenance of the projects, thereby increasing the likelihood of their long-term success".*

The above finding suggests that involving community members in planning and decision-making fosters a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the specific challenges they encounter. By actively engaging locals in these processes, projects are more likely to reflect the realities of their daily lives, leading to solutions that are not only relevant but also culturally appropriate and sustainable. This participatory approach enhances the effectiveness of initiatives by leveraging local knowledge and perspectives, thereby increasing the likelihood of community buy-in and long-term success. This finding concurs with those of Kijazi et al. (2024) illustrates that when locals are actively engaged in these processes, projects are more likely to reflect their daily realities, resulting in solutions that are relevant, culturally appropriate, and sustainable. This engagement not only enhances project effectiveness but also strengthens community ownership and commitment.

Here is what second interviewee said:

> *"When community members are actively involved, they bring valuable local knowledge and insights that can greatly inform project design and implementation. This localized knowledge is crucial for tailoring interventions to fit the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of different communities, which ultimately leads to more effective and relevant solutions for poverty alleviation".*

The above findings revealed that localized expertise is essential for tailoring interventions to the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of various communities, ensuring that solutions are not only relevant but also effective in addressing specific challenges. By integrating this valuable input, projects can better align with the realities faced by community members, which enhances their effectiveness in alleviating poverty. Furthermore, when interventions resonate with the community's cultural and economic circumstances, they are more likely to gain acceptance and foster participation, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustainable outcomes. This finding similarly with those of Mchome et al. (2023) who emphasized that this localized knowledge is crucial for tailoring interventions to fit the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of different communities. Such tailored approaches ultimately lead to more effective and relevant solutions for poverty alleviation.

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4.7.2 Discussion on the Role of Community Participation

Community participation emerges as the most potent yet most poorly realized factor in TASAF's effectiveness. The strong agreement on its importance for success (Mean=1.64) and ownership (Mean=1.86) powerfully supports the

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work of Mchome et al. (2019) and Mwita and Sanya (2024), and validates Participatory Development Theory. The involvement of locals ensures project relevance and fosters commitment, as seen in the qualitative theme of Enhanced Project Relevance.

However, the critical failure lies in the implementation. The strong disagreement on effective feedback mechanisms (Mean=3.87) creates a stark contradiction. This finding aligns with the critique in Participatory Development Theory that participation can be tokenistic. It also exposes a weakness in the Social Capital framework: without genuine power-sharing (linking capital), community networks cannot influence higher-level decisions. This "feedback gap" directly undermines the potential for empowerment and sustainability. Therefore, while the principle of participation is well-established and its benefits are recognized by beneficiaries, the practice in Msimbu and Msanga wards inhibits its full potential, leaving communities feeling consulted but not heard.

This study concludes that the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) operates primarily as a vital safety net for temporary poverty alleviation in Msimbu and Msanga wards, but its current design prevents it from being a catalyst for sustainable poverty eradication. The core analytical insight is the dual role of the TASAF Act of 2004 as a moderating variable. While the Act successfully provides the legal framework for program existence, it simultaneously constrains their effectiveness by permitting benefit levels (cash and wages) that are insufficient to meet basic needs and by failing to enforce robust, transparent, and actionable community feedback mechanisms. The theoretical implication is clear: well-intentioned interventions are doomed to underperform if the moderating legal and policy framework does not ensure resource adequacy and genuine participatory power. Therefore, eradicating poverty requires not just the continued implementation of TASAF programs, but a fundamental revision of the moderating framework itself to ensure benefits are sufficient and community voice is powerful and consequential.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following prioritized recommendations are proposed for policymakers, TASAF management, and local government authorities:

Priority 1: Legislative and Policy Reform (Lead: Ministry of Finance & Parliament)

1. Review and Amend the TASAF Act: The Government of Tanzania should initiate a parliamentary review of the TASAF Act within the next 12 months. The amendments must:
   a. Legislate a clear, dynamic formula for cash transfer values and public works wages, pegging them to a locally calculated cost-of-living index to ensure sufficiency.
   b. Legally mandate the establishment of transparent, responsive, and documented community feedback mechanisms, requiring TASAF to publicly report on how community input has influenced project planning and execution.

Priority 2: Program Enhancement and Implementation (Lead: TASAF Management with Local Government)

1. Revise Public Works Wage and Project Selection: Immediately revise the public works wage rate to align with the local daily agricultural wage or a living wage benchmark. Concurrently, empower Ward Development Committees to have final sign-off on public works projects to ensure community relevance.
2. Integrate Financial and Entrepreneurial Training: Within the next program cycle, integrate mandatory modules on financial literacy and basic business management for all cash transfer and public works beneficiaries to maximize the productive use of funds and foster entrepreneurship.

Priority 3: Accountability and Monitoring (Lead: TASAF)

1. Implement a Public Feedback Tracker: Develop and launch a simple, public-facing platform (e.g., at ward offices) that tracks community suggestions and TASAF's responses, to be piloted in Kisarawe District within 6 months to rebuild trust and demonstrate accountability.
2. Strengthen the M&E Framework: Enhance the monitoring and evaluation framework to track not just participation but key poverty outcome indicators, such as household asset accumulation and months of food security, with annual public reporting.

5. Check out all your reference so ensure they follow guidelines provided by postgraduate

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