



Stakeholders' Participation in the Constituency Development Catalyst Fund Projects in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

With a focus on Tanzania's Dodoma Urban and Itilima constituencies, this study investigates the involvement of stakeholders in projects funded by the Constituency Development Catalyst Fund (CDCF). The study used a qualitative case study design, guided by stakeholders' theory. Interviews, focus groups, document reviews, and observation were used to gather data, which was then subjected to content analysis. The results demonstrate that while both constituencies had comparable patterns of participation during preliminary planning, they diverged during execution. In contrast to the instrumental perspective of stakeholders' theory, citizens' participation in the planning phase was restricted to voting for proposed projects rather than determining project needs. Participation took the form of contributions and involvement in CDCF committees during implementation. Participation levels varied: in Dodoma Urban, contributions from urban wards were lower than those from peri-urban wards and Itilima; similarly, CDCF committee participation was higher in Itilima and Dodoma Urban's peripheral wards than in its urban wards. According to the study's findings, CDCF participation is still low, which is in line with Arnstein's ladder's lower levels. Instead of just supporting proposals from street and village councils, it suggests reviewing policies and guidelines to allow stakeholders to actively participate in project identification.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to its potential to improve accountability, responsiveness, and community ownership in public decision-making, participation in development projects has emerged as a defining principle in the global development discourse (Mubita et al. 2017; Kamugisha, 2021; Ringo and Mollel, 2014). Many nations have implemented decentralised financing systems, such as Constituency Development Funds (CDFs), to give citizens more control over the distribution of resources and the selection of projects, in keeping with these participatory ideals. Based on the premise that devolved resources result in more context-specific and timely development outcomes, nations like India, Kenya, Ghana, Mongolia, Uganda, and the Philippines use CDFs to fund grassroots initiatives in areas like education, health, and water (Tsubaru, 2013; van Zyl, 2010). The Constituency Development Catalyst Fund (CDCF), Tanzania's version of the CDF, was established in 2009 to address enduring issues of bureaucratic delays, restricted fiscal discretion, and unequal distribution of development funds at the local level (URT, 2009; Mgani et al., 2020). The CDCF was designed as a catalytic fund to accelerate community development by giving constituencies more direct access to resources and encouraging self-help projects that cater to regional needs. This change was in line with worldwide trends where people are calling for better public fund management, accountability, and transparency (World Bank, 2006; Kimata, 2021).

CDF-like arrangements are still controversial despite these objectives. By giving legislators executive responsibilities that are typically reserved for government agencies, critics contend that placing funds under the direct influence of Members of Parliament (MPs) blurs the separation of powers (Christensen and Laegreid, 2014). This dual role puts oversight functions at risk and increases the likelihood of political manipulation, elite capture, and patronage. There has also been extensive documentation of concerns regarding inadequate checks and balances and limited accountability (Tshangana, 2020). Stakeholders' participation theory (Freeman, 1984) emphasises the need for stakeholders to influence decisions throughout the entire project cycle rather than just endorsing predetermined plans. These debates highlight deeper conceptual issues related to power dynamics, legitimacy, and voice.

The majority of research on the CDCF in Tanzania focuses on accountability arrangements, governance structures, and allocation mechanisms (Mallya and Kessy, 2013; Kinyondo and Pelizzo, 2019). Although these studies recognise the value of participation, they don't offer much empirical data on how citizens actually participate, especially when it comes to project identification, prioritisation, planning, and execution (Pambila and Kazaura, 2025). Furthermore, the majority of current research is quantitative, offering little qualitative understanding of how participation varies among socio-spatial contexts like urban, peri-urban, and rural constituencies (Thomas and Makwai, 2022). Furthermore, little research analyses whether CDCF participation is authentic, consultative, or merely symbolic using theoretical frameworks like Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation or stakeholders' participation theory. Understanding how institutional arrangements, political incentives, and community dynamics influence participation in CDCF processes is hampered by this theoretical gap. By analysing stakeholders' participation experiences in CDCF-financed projects in the Dodoma Urban and Itilima constituencies thought to have many informants, this study fills in these gaps. It focuses on how meaningful participation in project initiation, planning, execution, and resource allocation is made possible or hindered by policy and implementation practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

Stakeholder theory, which contends that organisations and public institutions must be governed morally and inclusively to address the values and expectations of all actors with a legitimate stake in organisational outcomes, serves as the foundation for this study. The theory, which was first presented by Freeman in *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, identifies, models, and directs how managers should take stakeholders' interests into account. It addresses the fundamental query of "who or what counts" when making decisions (Lin and Tom, 2018). In order to ensure legitimacy, accountability, and long-term sustainability, Constituency Development Catalyst Fund (CDCF) projects necessitate the integration of diverse community interests, making stakeholder theory especially pertinent. According to Dzomonda (2020), development outcomes remain elusive in the absence of effective stakeholders' participation, which has emerged as a crucial driver of sustainable development. Community members, political figures, constituency committees, and local government representatives must thus be acknowledged as legitimate stakeholders in CDCF implementation, as their opinions affect project selection, prioritisation, and oversight. Giving every member of society a "stake" is crucial for fostering social cohesiveness and collective responsibility, according to the theory's etymology. In his 1996 "Singapore Speech," Tony Blair emphasised that a stakeholder society guarantees equal opportunity and shared accountability for furthering the common good (Mansell, 2009). This is in line with the goal of the CDCF, which is to promote locally driven development by making sure that citizens are important partners in creating and maintaining constituency projects rather than passive recipients.

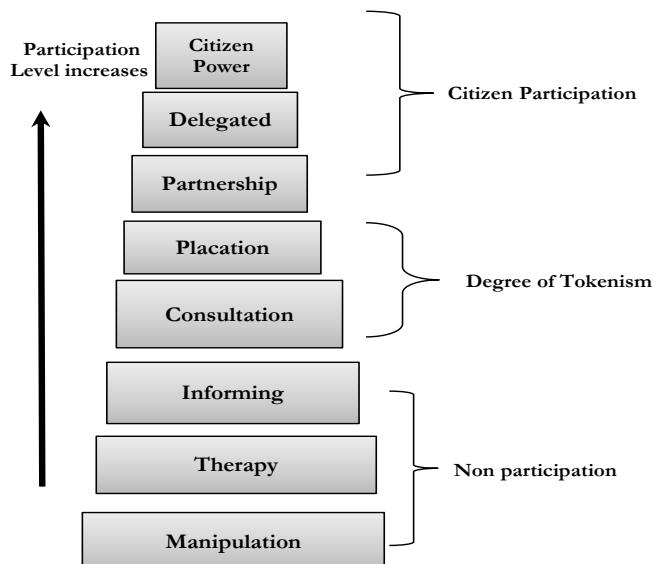
Stakeholder participation in rural development is complicated, though. According to Usadolo and Caldwell (2016), project implementation is difficult when juggling the disparate expectations of various actors. Decision-making procedures that take into consideration local priorities, cultural values, and various forms of knowledge are necessary for effective participation. The normative perspective, which sees stakeholder inclusion as an ethical duty, and the instrumental perspective, which sees stakeholder engagement as a tactic for enhancing project outcomes, are distinguished by Donaldson and Preston (1995). In the context of CDCF, both viewpoints are applicable. Participatory structures, like Ward Development Committees, Village Assemblies, and Constituency Development Committees, are required by the CDCF Guidelines to allow citizens to have an impact on decision-making and guarantee fund allocation transparency. By acknowledging community members as legitimate participants in local governance, these structures preserve citizenship rights according to the normative perspective. According to the instrumental perspective, inclusive participation increases sustainability, decreases conflict, and promotes project ownership. Blair (1996 in Mansell, 2009), emphasised that when people feel they have a stake in group efforts, they are more dedicated to societal advancement. Similarly, communities are more inclined to support long-term management and project maintenance when they actively participate in CDCF-funded initiatives. Stakeholder theory thus presents CDCF implementation as a stakeholder-based procedure based on shared accountability and cooperative decision-making.

Participation

In order for development to be effective, intended beneficiaries must actively engage in the planning, execution, and oversight of interventions. Communities become active partners instead of passive recipients

when they participate fully (Kamugisha, 2021; Naku et al., 2021). Additionally, it shows how power and accountability are distributed among social groups involved in the process of development (Rifkin and Kangere, 2016). According to Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, citizen power ranges from complete control to non-participation. In situations where citizens have no influence, manipulation and therapy are examples of tokenistic involvement. Public participation is made possible through informing and consultation, but there is no assurance that it will influence decisions. Placation has little power. Partnership, which is very important to CDCF, enables citizens and officials to negotiate and make decisions together. Stronger community authority is represented by delegated power and citizen control, which ideally appear in situations where local assemblies and CDCF committees collaborate on project management. Stakeholder theory's emphasis on meaningful, inclusive engagement is thus reinforced by Arnstein's model, which aids in determining whether CDCF-financed projects actually empower constituents or merely symbolise participation. Arnstein's model is summarised in detail in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Ladder of Community Participation



Source: Adopted from Everest-Phillip (2016)

CDCF and Decentralisation

Decentralisation is a well-known tactic for enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of local government administration. It developed as a reform tool to deal with the shortcomings of highly centralised public sector systems, which were frequently marked by low citizen engagement, ineffective bureaucracy, and poor responsiveness (Ahyaruddin and Akbar, 2016). Decentralization, especially Decentralization by Devolution (D-by-D), allows governance to be carried out closer to the people by transferring authority, responsibilities, and resources from the central government to Local Government Authorities (LGAs) (Mkoma and Rwekaza, 2021). Decentralisation's main goal is to encourage local development by giving people a chance to actively participate in decision-making. According to Norman (2009), decentralisation makes it possible for community members to take on more responsibility in governance by giving them the ability to choose their own

development priorities, create plans, and supervise their execution. As the second and more advanced stage of decentralisation, devolution gives local institutions the authority to plan, allocate resources, and manage operations in a way that takes into account the needs and goals of the community. By strengthening communities' ability to suggest, organise, and rank development projects, this framework helps ensure that projects are implemented successfully and inclusively. To enhance public service delivery and bolster LGA autonomy, the Decentralisation by Devolution (D-by-D) policy was implemented. Norman (2009) and Kamugisha (2019) state that the policy aims to empower local authorities by giving them control over financial resources, functional responsibilities, and decision-making authority. Nevertheless, practical difficulties have continued despite these goals, especially in cases where important stakeholders were not sufficiently involved in the planning and decision-making processes. The efficacy of decentralised development initiatives may be compromised by such constraints.

In line with the D-by-D tenets, the Constituency Development Catalyst Fund (CDCF) functions as a decentralised financing mechanism. The CDCF is intended to support community-based initiatives that address locally identified needs by directly distributing financial resources to constituencies. In order to uphold the idea of participatory development and guarantee that community opinions influence project priorities, the CDCF Act requires that project proposals come from citizens. Through procedures like Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O and OD), which allow communities to identify issues, establish priorities, and create development interventions in cooperation with local leaders, this requirement operationalises citizen involvement. By encouraging community involvement, improving local accountability, and bolstering citizen influence over development outcomes, CDCF implementation essentially reflects the fundamental goals of decentralisation. The CDCF supports locally driven development and advances the larger objectives of D-by-D by placing decision-making and resource allocation at the local level.

METHODS

Study Area, Design, and Sampling Approach

This study used a multiple case study design and an interpretive research approach, concentrating on two constituencies: Itilima and Dodoma Urban in Simiyu and Dodoma regions respectively. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the interpretive approach is suitable for investigating participant-constructed perceptions, experiences, and social realities. Because it allows for a thorough examination of modern phenomena in actual settings, especially when contextual factors are crucial to the investigation, a case study design was chosen (Yin, 2018).

Itilima Constituency is estimated to be 2,648 km², whereas Dodoma Urban Constituency is roughly 2,769 km². These constituencies were chosen because they actively participated in carrying out development projects funded by CDCF. Government reports state that the CDCF is distributed to all constituencies in order to support grassroots development projects, especially in areas like local infrastructure, health, and education (URT, 2020). The two constituents regularly carried out a sizable number of CDCF-supported projects hence were thought would provide a rich environment for analysing community involvement and fund management. Additionally, the constituencies were specifically selected to capture variations in contextual features like resource availability, demographic diversity, and urban-rural differences. By allowing for comparative insights,

this variation improves the analytical robustness of case study research (Stake, 2006). In terms of administrative capacity, population density, and socioeconomic dynamics, Dodoma Urban, which is primarily urban, is very different from Itilima. These variations offered a chance to comprehend how contextual elements influence community engagement and CDCF-funded project management. The selection of these constituencies was predicated on the idea that they would supply an adequate number of informed informants, committee members, and local leaders, thereby boosting the reliability and credibility of the study's conclusions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Two wards with CDCF-funded projects experience were selected from each constituency and their WDC members included in the sample. In Dodoma Urban, Matumbulu and North Kikuyu Wards were selected whereas in Itilima, Mwalushu and Mwamapalata Wards were taken onboard. The sample therefore constituted of twelve (12) CDCF members; six (6) from each constituency and WDC members as follows: Matumbulu - seven (7), North Kikuyu – six (6), Mwalushu – eight (8) and Mwamapalata – seven (7). All two categories of members were believed to have relevant knowledge and experience related to the Constituency Development Catalyst Fund (CDCF). On the other hand, convenient sampling was used to select other community members as follows: Dodoma Urban – eight (8) from Matumbulu and another eight (8) from North Kikuyu and Itilima – seven (7) from Mwalushu and eight (8) from Mwamapalata. Overall participants were thirty-five (35) from Dodoma Urban and thirty-six (36) from Itilima summing up to a total sample of seventy-one (71) participants. For qualitative inquiries that require information-rich cases capable of providing deep insights into the phenomenon under study, purposive sampling is widely recommended (Palinkas et al., 2015) although convenience sampling was also adopted to solicit community members.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

In-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and documentary reviews were used to gather primary data in two electoral constituencies. The CDCF Committee members, including members of parliament, district planning officers, council members, ward executive officers, and representatives from non-governmental organisations and civil society, and WDC members were interviewed. The total number of participants interviewed was forty (40) covering six (6) CDCF Committee members in Dodoma Urban, six (6) CDCF Committee members in Itilima, thirteen (13) WDC members from Dodoma Urban and fifteen (15) WDC members from Itilima. Additionally, sixteen (16) and fifteen (15) community members from Dodoma Urban and Itilima Constituencies participated in FGDs respectively. Each constituency had two focus group discussions (FGDs) one from each selected ward with participants ranging between 7 and 8.

Documentary review examined pertinent reports, guidelines, and literature pertaining to CDCF implementation in order to supplement primary data collection. While FGDs gave citizens a forum to discuss their experiences and opinions about taking part in CDCF-funded projects, interviews were used to gather in-depth information from members of the CDCF Committee. The validity and reliability of the results were strengthened by the selection of these groups, which guaranteed that data were gathered from key informants with strategic knowledge of CDCF management and community involvement. The data was analysed using qualitative content analysis. After transcription of audio recordings, the textual data was systematically edited, cleaned, and coded to enable meaningful interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles for research in order to ensure that the rights and privacy of the participants were protected. First, the researcher acquired an official introduction letter from Mzumbe University that would facilitate obtaining permission to conduct the study in school. Afterwards, the researcher sought written permission from the Dodoma Regional Office, Dodoma City Council, Simiyu Regional Office, and Itilima District Council. Participation in the study was absolutely voluntary, and the respondents provided their views without coercion. Prior to data collection, participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and any implications associated with their participation. Confidentiality was strictly assured in that all information from them would be used only for academic purposes. In addition, throughout the data collection process, the researcher ensured respondents' anonymity, privacy, and data security—that is, their identity and responses would not be accessible to unauthorized persons.

RESULTS

Three primary criteria, initiation, implementation, and monitoring and supervision, were used to guide the analysis of stakeholders' participation in CDCF-financed projects. Administrative irregularities that affect participation dynamics were also taken into account. In order to comprehend how stakeholders interact at various phases of the project cycle, these parameters were evaluated in the Dodoma Urban and Itilima constituencies. The following sections present the results for each criterion.

Project Initiation

Participation at the initiation stage of the project was found to be low in the Dodoma Urban constituency. The village or *MTAA* council identified the projects and tabled them to the general assembly. Voting for projects that had already been identified was the only way that citizens could participate. An interview with one of the participants from Dodoma Urban constituency gave the following explanation:

We use 'O and OD' to start the project, where the street general assembly receives project proposals from the street council. For instance, in Matumbulu, we prioritised things like roads, water, health, and education. The general assembly was shown these projects and asked to list their needs. Following the listing, voters selected the three most urgent projects, and then they cast additional votes to select one project to be implemented. For example, due to a classroom shortage at Hosea Primary School, residents decided to build a classroom. They started building, and the committee subsequently gave the project CDCF funding. Minutes of the meeting were observed (Interviewee No. MAT 7, Dodoma Urban, May 10, 2022).

Similar observation came from FGD in Dodoma Urban constituency where one of the group participants said:

MPs or local councils frequently decide on projects, and community members merely cast ballots on predetermined options (*FGD, Participant No. NKY 4, Dodoma Urban, 11th May, 2022*).

This suggests that citizens only chose from pre-identified options rather than helping to identify the projects. More extensive community participation was not possible due to time and money constraints. Itilima Constituency reported similar results. One participant mentioned this by saying that:

We have the opportunity to voice concerns at village meetings, but I'm not sure how the village council selects the projects they present to us. Even though we don't always agree with the projects, we still have to cast our votes (Interviewee No. MWL 3, Itilima, 20th April, 2022)

In contrast to the instrumental view of stakeholders' participation, which demands active involvement, both constituencies generally showed minimal participation in project initiation. This is classified as placation in Arnstein's (2007) ladder of participation. The results are consistent with those of Mgani et al. (2020), who noted that rather than using community identification, WDCs and CDCF committees screen and choose projects based on predetermined criteria. Moreover, the findings are consistent with Policy Forum and REPOA (2014), which found that citizens seldom have a significant chance to choose their own projects.

Project Implementation

There were notable differences in participation between urban and peripheral wards during the project's implementation. Participation in CDCF committees and material or financial contributions was minimal in the Dodoma Urban constituency as one respondent put it:

Urban ward residents don't always contribute to projects. Many people avoid attending meetings for street development because they are preoccupied with their own pursuits. Few people in the community take part (Interviewee No. NKY 1, Dodoma Urban, 12th May, 2022).

Supporting this argument, participant in the FGD in Dodoma Urban asserted the following:

Few community members do contribute to the implementation of the projects in our areas but good number of the community members are adamant to contribute to implement the projects. I do not know the real reason but in the meetings, very few people attend and the contribution is very small, (FGD, participant No. NKY 5. 13th May, 2022).

The North Kikuyu Maternity Ward project, for which CDCF provided TZS 33,612,800, is an example of low implementation participation. The project was neither started nor carried out by citizens, despite the fact that its goal was to lower maternal deaths. The members of the construction committee were chosen by the WDC. The majority of people declined to participate. On the other hand, peripheral wards had much higher participation rates. A respondent reported:

Sand, stones, and labour are among the materials that citizens contribute. They also make financial contributions when needed because CDCF funds aren't enough. Gender-balanced representation is ensured by the participation of citizens in the construction, procurement,

and reception committees chosen by village general assemblies (Interviewee, No. CDCF 4. Dodoma Urban, 17th May, 2022).

Similar response came from one the FGD conducted in Dodoma Urban constituency. One of the FGD participants had the following remarks:

In my experience citizens residing in the peripheral wards do contribute to the project implementation. Contrary, most of the ward found in the City Centre, do not have residents but businessmen who live in other places, so if are requested to contribute they are not willing to do so as they participate in contributing to the area they reside; but also, most of the businessmen at the city centre have the notion that the government has enough fund to implement fully the projects as they do pay taxes. So, most people in the City Centre don't contribute to execute development projects as they live in other areas and they believe that the government has enough money. (FGD, participant No. NKY 3. Dodoma Urban, 12th May, 2022).

The Itilima constituency showed similar trends. One participant mentioned this.

Citizens donated 60,000 shillings per household over the course of two phases to build five classrooms and one teacher's house, totalling 11,130,000 for roofing. Additionally, they donated \$600,000 to roof a teacher's home. The final roofing was funded by CDCF. Citizens contributed both cash and materials (Interviewee No. MWM 6, Itilima, 21st April, 2022)

As a result, the itilima constituency and peripheral areas had higher implementation participation. However, before joining CDCF committees, urban residents frequently demanded payment, which limited active participation. These results, which show some citizen control through contributions, are consistent with Arnstein's (2007) participation ladder. Mgani and associates (2020) and Mallya and Kessy (2013) also draw attention to cost-sharing and the propensity of urban residents to abdicate responsibility.

Project Monitoring and Supervision

The CDCF committees were principally responsible for monitoring and supervision; however, participation was limited due to financial constraints. One respondent from the Itilima constituency said this:

For effective project supervision, the CDCF Committee depends on the District Engineer. Due to a lack of facilities, the committee hardly ever keeps an eye on projects. To guarantee compliance, the engineer oversees every step. The council uses other funding sources, like its own revenue or OC, to provide engineers with allowances when they work in the field (Interviewee No. MWM 1, Itilima, 22nd April 2022).

This shows that even though CDCF committees are required to oversee and monitor projects, their involvement is minimal because of insufficient funding.

The Dodoma Urban constituency reported similar difficulties. One of the interviewed respondents posed:

Because follow-up is crucial, the committee visits and oversees CDCF projects. For example, the committee and council experts guarantee correct completion following the delivery of roofing materials. We ask the City Executive Director for assistance with fuel and allowances if CDCF funds are insufficient to cover supervision. Because multiple stakeholders, including engineers, leaders, and citizens, are involved, projects are carried out according to plan (Interviewee No. CDCF 1, Dodoma Urban, 10th May, 2022).

Lack of funding is a significant barrier in both constituencies since reliance on outside funding diminishes meaningful participation.

Administration general

Administrative irregularities were also found in the study. The Member of Parliament (MP) compromised the integrity and transparency of the project by acting as both an executor and a policymaker. Due to unclear community selection processes, the MP also had an impact on the choice of CDCF committee members. These results are consistent with those of Nzenzi and Gasper (2013), who discovered that MPs' dual responsibilities reduce accountability. Further, accountability is reduced by the fact that local authorities report to the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) rather than the relevant ministry directly.

Limited community participation in project identification and selection is another anomaly. MPs or local councils frequently decide on projects, and voters merely cast ballots on predetermined options. This finding is consistent with Policy Forum and REPOA (2014), which found that citizens seldom have a significant chance to choose their own projects. Freeman's stakeholder participation theory (Mansell, 2009), which emphasises active stakeholders' engagement for project success, is at odds with these findings. Construction committees carry out some monitoring (Mallya and Kessy, 2013), but participation is at risk if alternative funding is not available due to reliance on non-CDCF funding.

DISCUSSION

The study's conclusions show that stakeholders' involvement in CDCF-funded projects in the Dodoma Urban and Itilima constituencies is still restricted, uneven, and primarily procedural rather than substantive. When interpreted using the CDCF policy framework and stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson and Preston, 1995), the findings point to a number of institutional and behavioural barriers that prevent meaningful engagement throughout the project cycle. It was discovered that there was very little and mostly symbolic stakeholders' participation during the initiation stage. Rather than participating in a deliberative needs assessment or problem identification, communities often approved pre-established project options offered by village or street authorities. Even though the O and OD methodology and the CDCF Guidelines (URT, 2009) require widespread participation in defining local priorities, the observed practice is similar to Arnstein's (1969) "placation," in which citizens voice preferences but have little say over final decisions. This disparity highlights a mismatch between the instrumentalised role of community members limited to supporting pre-selected alternatives and the normative expectation of stakeholders' theory, which positions them as legitimate moral claimants. At this point, genuine involvement is further undermined by systemic limitations like time constraints, entrenched top-down planning, and insufficient resources for participatory forums.

Participation during implementation differed significantly depending on the situation. Particularly in Itilima, peripheral wards demonstrated comparatively high levels of community involvement through financial, labour, and material contributions. This reflected moderate ownership and was consistent with the instrumental dimension of stakeholders' theory, which connects participation with sustainability and group responsibility. On the other hand, Dodoma's urban wards continued to have low participation rates, with locals frequently requesting financial incentives before participating in project committees or helping with implementation tasks. This is consistent with the broader literature on decentralisation, which observes that urban populations involved in a variety of income-generating activities have lower levels of voluntary participation. Committee formation is compliant with CDCF regulations, but actual influence is still limited and frequently amounts to symbolic rather than substantive involvement. This result supports the claim made by stakeholders' theory that meaningful participation requires empowerment mechanisms rather than just inclusion. Constituency committees and district technical personnel, especially engineers, controlled the monitoring and supervision procedures. However, the frequency and efficacy of oversight activities were constrained by a lack of funding for logistical resources and supervision allowances. The CDCF's goal of promoting independent local project management is at odds with this reliance on outside resources. Furthermore, because of ambiguous supervisory responsibilities and inadequate institutional frameworks, community actors hardly ever participated in monitoring. According to Kinyondo and Pelizzo (2019), these circumstances not only reduce accountability but also increase the possibility of elite capture.

Participatory intentions are further undermined by administrative irregularities. MPs' dual responsibilities as project managers and legislators, which is a feature of the CDCF design, raise the possibility of conflicts of interest and concentrate decision-making authority among political players. In line with criticisms that CDF arrangements frequently promote elite dominance and patronage, their influence over committee appointments limits broad-based representation and decreases transparency (Tshangana, 2020). The normative and regulative aspects of stakeholder theory, which emphasise justice, legitimacy, and an equitable allocation of decision-making power, are undermined by these structural contradictions.

Overall, the findings show that there is still a gap between policy and practice. Although CDCF frameworks promote bottom-up, participatory development in line with decentralisation principles, their application in Dodoma Urban and Itilima Rural is still uneven and incomplete. The majority of stakeholders' engagement is procedural, with little citizens empowerment throughout the course of the project. Realising stakeholder-centred development and enhancing the legitimacy and sustainability of CDCF-funded initiatives requires strengthening participatory mechanisms, improving transparency in committee selection, and resolving logistical issues in monitoring.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

This study focused on engagement throughout the project cycle and looked at stakeholders' experiences in participating in CDCF-financed projects in the Dodoma Urban and Itilima constituencies. The results show that overall participation was low, especially during the initiation phase when residents were mainly limited to casting ballots on projects that village or MTAAs had already identified. The instrumental perspective

of stakeholders' theory, which stresses the active participation of all pertinent actors in decision-making to guarantee project relevance and sustainability, stands in contrast to this pattern.

The local environment had an impact on participation as well. Compared to peri-urban and rural wards, urban wards, which are distinguished by a broad range of social services, showed lower levels of citizen participation and contribution in CDCF committees. Additionally, stakeholders' effective control and involvement in project oversight were diminished by the heavy reliance on outside funding for monitoring and supervision in both urban and rural areas.

According to these conclusions, the study suggests changing the operational guidelines and policies governing CDCF projects so that stakeholders can actively choose and rank projects from the beginning instead of just supporting council proposals. In order to improve accountability, transparency, and meaningful participation, CDCF allocations should also include specific funds for supervision and monitoring. This will guarantee the successful execution of development initiatives and adherence to decentralisation principles.

Policy Implications

The study's findings on stakeholders' participation in CDCF-financed projects in Dodoma Urban and Itilima constituencies highlight critical policy considerations. Voting for pre-selected proposals was the only way for citizens to participate in project identification. In accordance with Tanzania's Decentralisation by Devolution (D-by-D) framework and the National Framework on Participatory Planning (NFPP), CDCF guidelines should be updated to guarantee that communities actively identify and prioritise their own needs.

MPs' dual responsibilities as executors and legislators compromise accountability. In accordance with the Public Finance Act (2001) and CDCF Operational Guidelines (2011), policies should set explicit criteria for choosing CDCF committee members and keep political oversight apart from project execution.

There were differences between urban and peripheral wards, and implementation was largely dependent on community contributions. According to the Community Development Policy (2015), policies should standardise cost-sharing models to guarantee fair participation.

Insufficient funds make supervision difficult. In order to improve adherence to standards in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act (1982), policies should set aside specific funds for CDCF project monitoring. The findings show that, participation has remained at the lower rungs of Arnstein's ladder. To empower communities and increase project ownership, policies should incorporate civic education and increase the number of citizens on committees.

LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Although there are a number of limitations to be aware of, this study offers valuable insights into stakeholders' involvement in CDCF-financed projects. The results' generalizability is limited because the study was limited to the Dodoma Urban and Itilima constituencies. Future research should incorporate a broader range of constituencies to improve comparative understanding because Tanzanian constituencies differ in socioeconomic traits, administrative capacity, and political contexts.

The study mostly used qualitative methods, which are subject to bias and subjective interpretation even though they are useful for documenting stakeholder experiences. It is possible that some responders, especially committee members and political actors, provided information that was socially acceptable. It is advised to use mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative evidence in order to increase the robustness of future research. Additionally, the cross-sectional design limited the study's ability to assess how participation changes over time or across different CDCF cycles. Longitudinal studies would offer more profound insights into the stability, evolution, or cyclical nature of community participation.

The evaluation of accountability and transparency mechanisms was also hampered by restricted access to some official documents, such as comprehensive committee reports. Future studies should examine power dynamics, institutional incentives, and the impact of MPs on participation outcomes using political economy or governance-focused methodologies. All things considered, addressing these limitations will strengthen understanding of participatory governance within the CDCF framework.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO KNOWLEDGE AND THEORY

By offering empirical insights into stakeholders' involvement in CDCF-financed projects in the Dodoma Urban and Itilima constituencies, this study advances knowledge. It illustrates how administrative arrangements and contextual elements, such as urban versus peripheral settings, influence engagement by looking at the initiation, implementation, and monitoring phases. The results demonstrate that although stakeholders' theory promotes active participation (Freeman, in Mansell, 2009), citizens' involvement is frequently restricted to voting on projects that have already been chosen, with little control over planning or supervision. Participation is further limited by administrative irregularities, MPs' dual responsibilities, and their dependence on outside oversight. The study highlights the need for changes to improve accountability, transparency, and meaningful engagement while reaffirming the applicability of stakeholder theory.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Mwigune Dino oversaw the research's conception and design, planned and carried out the fieldwork, managed data collection, carried out data analysis, and was primarily in charge of writing the manuscript titled "Stakeholders' Participation in the Constituency Development Catalyst Fund's Financed Projects in Selected Constituencies in Tanzania." Dr. Denis Kamugisha oversaw fieldwork, helped to refine the research proposal, offered methodological advice throughout the study, and offered critical reviews and intellectual input on data interpretation, manuscript preparation, and theoretical framing. Dr. Cliford Ringo made contributions to data analysis, methodological design, and research instruments validation. The final manuscript was reviewed and approved by all authors, who also take full responsibility for its contents.

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