

# Contribution of Village Community Banks to Members' Livelihood Outcomes in Tanzania: A Case of Chang'ombe Ward in Temeke Municipality

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## **Abstract**

*This paper assesses the contribution of Village Community Banks (VICOBA) to members' livelihoods. Specifically, the paper examines the factors for membership in Village Community Banks and the contribution of VICOBA to the livelihood outcomes of members. The paper is based on a cross-sectional study whereby a sample of 224 respondents was drawn from the population using simple random sampling; 112 were members and 112 were non-members of VICOBA. Non-members of VICOBA were used as a control group. The method of data collection was a survey. The data were analysed by computing descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included calculating frequencies and percentages, while inferential statistics included means comparison. The results indicate that services offered by VICOBA were determinants of membership in VICOBA, which included access to loans, networking, receiving earnings, a lower interest rate, savings, and a source of capital. VICOBA contributed to livelihood outcomes variables such as net income and SMEs value of members as it showed a statistically significant  $P \geq 0.05$  meaning that members of VICOBA had higher net income and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) value compared to non-members. Also, livelihood outcomes such as TV set value, health service cost, and house value of members of VICOBA showed higher values compared to non-members as it showed statistics significant of  $P \geq 0.01$ . The findings conclude that there is a strong positive relationship between membership and livelihood outcomes. The study recommends that local district authorities, NGOs, and the ministry responsible for community development to promote members of the community to participate in VICOBA through developing appropriate policies as VICOBA has shown a tool for achieving livelihood outcomes and means of financial inclusion by enabling members to access capital at affordable costs.*

**Keywords:** VICOBA, Livelihoods outcomes, Members and Non- Members

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Village Community Banks (VICOBA) are seen as "bankable" micro financial organisations for enhancing the welfare of the poor in rural and urban regions, similar to other microfinance institutions (Kaberia and Allport, 2011). Due to its role in enhancing societal welfare, VICOBA have acquired several names around the world. For instance, they are known by several different names across the world, including "susus" in Ghana, "chit funds" in India, "tandas" in Mexico, "arisan" in Indonesia, "cheetu" in Sri Lanka, "tontines" in West Africa, and "pasanaku" in Bolivia (Rajpara, 2018). Poor people have had access to formal credit and savings organisations for many years. Customers who have historically been ignored by commercial banks now have a method to obtain financial services through cooperatives and development finance institutions (Minja, 2015).

Most African nations have a variety of MFIs, including VICOBA, whose involvement is crucial to effectively address the problem of reducing poverty and enhancing community wellbeing (Yahie, 2016). For instance, research done in Ghana by Obeng (2015) found that individuals, particularly the marginalised and disadvantaged, were gaining access to credit through VICOBA, which had a favourable effect on the beneficiaries' income levels and hence improved their standard of living. According to a study by Maina (2017), done in Kenya, microfinance has a favourable effect on family incomes and the susceptibility of rural poor families to poverty.

A study conducted in Tanzania by Kessy (2017) found that mothers who participated in the VICOBA programme reported greater savings and greater support for the education of their children. Additionally, better access to and affordability of health care services are caused by women and their families' increased income. Due to their improved ability to make decisions and networking possibilities, which included the sharing of knowledge about ethical business practices and social welfare, women felt more empowered. However, some studies have reported the negative contribution of VICOBA to members' well-being; notably, Lukwaro (2019) argued that noncompliance with VICOBA procedures by members has resulted in many VICOBA failing to operate effectively and thus failing to support members' livelihood outcomes. Similarly, research by Twamgabo (2016) found that VICOBA has not changed the lives of households owing to several reasons, including weak leadership, inability to repay loans on time, a lack of entrepreneurial skills, and bad financial management. In addition, a study by Ollotu (2017) revealed that VICOBA deals with a number of operational issues, including slow loan repayment to many defaulting members, low member education, funds embezzlement, and unethical

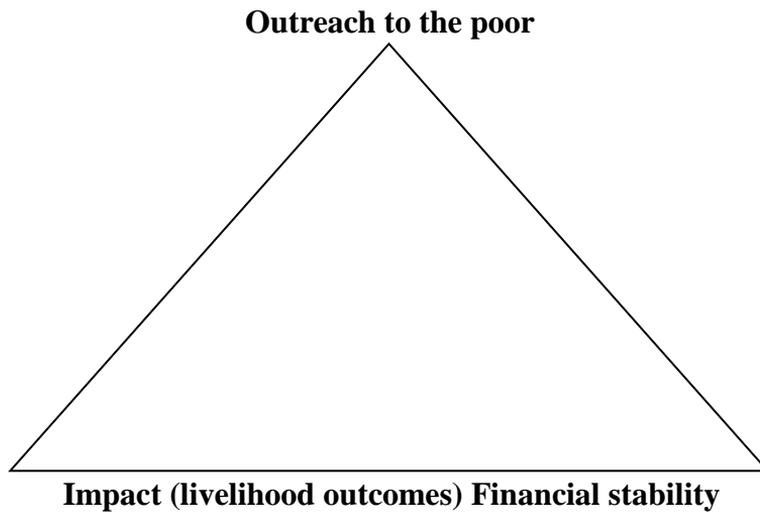
leadership, all of which put members' attempts to achieve livelihood outcomes in jeopardy. The Government of Tanzania and different stakeholders' promotion of VICOBA for financial inclusion and livelihood development contradictory findings call for additional research to determine the contribution of Village Community Banks to the livelihood outcomes of members and the community at large. Therefore, this paper explicitly looks into the factors that determine membership in village community banks and the contribution of membership to VICOBA on members' livelihood results to analyse the contribution of VICOBA to members' life outcomes.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

The study adopted the Triangle theory of microfinance; the theory states that any microfinance institution (MFI) must simultaneously manage the issues of outreach (reaching the poor in terms of both quantity and depth of poverty), financial sustainability (meeting operational and financial costs over the long term), and impact (having a discernible effect upon clients' quality of life). There are six components for gauging MFI outreach, according to Kalasa (2014), who argues that "outreach is the social value of MFI output in terms of depth, worth to users, cost to users, breadth, length, and scope". Niaz (2022) noted that sustainability refers to a programme's potential to continue to be profitable even if subsidies and financial help are discontinued. It accepts making enough profit to cover costs, even for MFI performance with less visible subsidies, such as loans being issued in hard currency with payback in local currency. The effect on the welfare of persons who use the financiers' services provided by the MFIs is the third angle of the performance triangle for MFIs.

The above explanations are justified by Figure 1. The relevance of the Triangle theory to the study is based on the impact of microfinance (VICOBA) on the members and the sustainability of its services to members. The microcredit provided by microfinance institutions such as VICOBA plays a vital role in promoting livelihood outcomes, particularly among poor households, and improving their livelihoods. On that aspect, this paper is confined to adopting this theory to assess the contribution of Village Community Banks (VICOBA) to community livelihood outcomes. Through services offered by VICOBA such as low interest rates, savings, and capital for business and social services, members of VICOBA boost the likelihood of improving their livelihood outcomes as the impact of their membership.



**Figure 1: Triangle of Microfinance Operation and Impact (Adopted from Zeller and Meyer (2002))**

## **2.2 Empirical review**

It has been reported by Magali and Clients (2022), that banks offer a variety of services, including soft loans, savings options, management training, and support for social and economic growth. A study by Ollotu (2017) examined how VICOBA affected Tanzanian women's economic growth and standard of living; the study concluded that around half of the respondents had joined VICOBA to get business finance before beginning to save. Many respondents who participate in VICOBA do so in order to improve their lives and frequently want more financial accessibility. A study by Massawe (2020), done in Tanzania, examined the results of VICOBA in improving livelihood among low-income earners in the Arusha District. According to the study's findings, VICOBA provided participants with the opportunity to learn entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, insurance services, raw materials, and financial capital. Research conducted in Kenya by Maina (2017), which evaluated the effect of microfinance on rural poor families' income and vulnerability to poverty, revealed that microfinance services increased members' income. The study further asserted that developing innovative microfinance institutions that are supportive of their role in clients' asset accumulation and wealth creation is necessary. Additionally, the study claimed that providing affordable financial services to the rural population remains a crucial part of development strategy. Kesanta (2015) conducted another research in Tanzania to examine the effects of economic empowerment on women's families and communities. The results showed that women-based micro-lending organisations had a favourable influence on the livelihoods,

health, and education of their offspring. According to research by Leo (2020), microfinance significantly aided in improving household livelihoods; one of the reasons being that farmers who used the technique committed just modest amounts of land, assuring food security for their families. On the other hand, research by Kitomari and Abwe (2016) investigated the reasons for VICOBA's demise in the Meru District Council; the study's findings showed that VICOBA's failure and collapse were caused by the following factors: income poverty, late payments, loan default status of the group members, lack of business education and entrepreneurship skills among the group leadership and members, poor start caused by the selection of wrong or uncommitted members, mistrust and improper financial management, and multiple group membership leading to failure to make loan payments and hence members migrate to other locations or hide because of the debt load. A study by Kitomari and Abwe (2016) showed that some of the VICOBA may not be regarded as sustainable sources of livelihood strategies since they don't give users the tools; they need to handle stress and shocks and recover from them.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Temeke Municipality in the Dar es Salaam Region of Tanzania. The area was selected due to the presence of many beneficiaries of VICOBA compared to other municipalities in the Dar es Salaam Region. The study adopted a cross-sectional design. The study population involved members of VICOBA and non-members were used as a control group, selected using simple random sampling. Two hundred twenty-four (224) members and non-members of VICOBA were involved, and the respondents were equally distributed. Members of VICOBA were 112 respondents, and non-members were 112 respondents; non-members were treated as a control group. The study applied the survey interview method of data collection, and the tool for data collection was a questionnaire. Data were analysed by computing descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages of variables for demographic characteristics and factors for membership in VICOBA; comparing means test was done to compute the differences in livelihoods outcomes mean value between members and non-members of VICOBA.

### **4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The socio-characteristics of the respondents were analysed using demographic variables, namely gender, age, marital status, level of education, number of people living in the house, and economic activities.

Table 4.1 shows that male respondents were the majority of the respondents 56.7% (127) compared to their counterpart female respondents who were 43.3% (97). The findings imply that there were more males ready to be interviewed than females. Another of the respondents' demographic characteristics was age. The findings in Table 4.1 show that the age group between 28–37 years composed the majority of respondents. The findings imply that the majority of the respondents, both members and non-members of VICOBA, were of the middle age group. Also, the respondents were asked to indicate their marital status, and the findings are presented in Table 4.1, which show that 34.8% were widowed, followed by 25.9% who were married, while the divorced were 25%. The findings imply that about 25.9% (58) of the total respondents in the study had their spouses, while 74.1% (166) of the total respondents in the study had no spouses due to reasons such as death, separation, divorce, and being single.

Last, but not least, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of education. The findings in Table 4.1 show that the greatest proportion (44.6%) of respondents had attained secondary education; 17.0% had attained college education; while the rest were either primary education leavers, adult education leavers, or those who had never attained any formal education. The findings imply that the majority of the respondents, about 92.4% (207), had formal and informal education. Lastly, the respondents were asked to identify their major economic activities. The findings for the question are presented in Table 4.1 and show that 33% (74) of the respondents were civil servants, while small business owners were about 21% and doing other economic activities. The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents in the study area were civil servants and others were engaging in various economic activities.

**Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographic characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	127	56.7
	Female	97	43.3
Age	18-27Years	49	21.9
	28-37Years	21	9.4
	38-47Years	110	49.1
	58 and Above	44	19.6
Marital Status	Single	13	5.8
	Married	58	25.9
	Divorce	56	25.0
	Widowed	78	34.8
	Separated	19	8.5
Education Level	Never Attended	17	7.6
	Adult Education	10	4.5
	Primary Education	59	26.3
	Secondary Education	100	44.6
	College Education	38	17.0
People Living in the House	1-5	41	18.3
	6-10	57	25.4
	11-15	44	19.6
	Above	82	36.6
Economic Activities	Farming	14	6.3
	Livestock	28	12.5
	Small Business	47	21.0
	Civil Servant	74	33.0
	Other	61	27.2

#### 4.2.1 Factors for Membership in Village Community Banks

Besides the above results, the study examined factors for membership in the village community banks among members of VICOBA. The results for determinants of membership to VICOBA are presented in Table 4.2. The respondents were required to rate their level of agreement with the determinants of membership in VICOBA. The questions were asked only to the members of VICOBA since they knew exactly why they had joined VICOBA. The findings are presented as follows.

The first determinant for membership in VICOBA was access to loans; 54.5% and 12.5% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed, respectively, with this factor. The rest disagreed with access to loans as a factor for joining VICOBA;

3% and others were not sure. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the majority of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed indicated that their membership to VICOBA were contributed by accessing loans through VICOBA.

Networking was another factor for membership in VICOBA under examination in this study. The findings in Table 4.2 indicate that 60.7% (68) of the total respondents agreed with the statement, and about 18.8% (21) respondents strongly agreed that networking was one of the factors for their membership in VICOBA. This means that the respondents were interested in joining VICOBA because they wanted to be connected with other people who could share views about opportunities.

The third factor that this study examined was receiving earnings; More than half of the respondents, about (58.9%) (66), disagreed that receiving earnings contributed to them joining VICOBA. The findings imply that receiving earnings from VICOBA was not a determinant of membership to VICOBA.

The fourth determinant under examination by this study was lower interest rate as one of the determinants of membership to VICOBA or not. Table 4.2 indicates that the majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed by 70.5% and 13.4% respectively, that a lower interest rate was one of the determinants of membership in VICOBA. This means that the respondents were interested in joining VICOBA because there was a lower interest rate when they accessed loans from VICOBA.

The fifth determinant for membership in VICOBA was saving money. The findings from Table 4.2 indicate that the majority of respondents (65.2%), agreed and 18.8% strongly agreed that saving money was one of the determinants for their membership in VICOBA. This means that respondents are interested in joining VICOBA to save their money in VICOBA through a saving scheme. Lastly, findings from Table 4.2 showed that the majority of respondents, (71.4%) agreed with the statement source of capital was a determinant for their membership to VICOBA; additionally, 17.9% strongly agreed that source of capital was the determinant for their membership in VICOBA. The findings imply that the majority of respondents (89.3%) agree that the source of capital is one of the determinants of membership in VICOBA.

The findings of the study discussed above are comparable to those of Kesanta (2015) who looked at the effects of economic empowerment on women, their families, and their communities. The results demonstrated that financial advantage for members, such as having access to loans, savings, and capital, was what drove membership in women-based microlending groups. The results also

suggest that most respondents felt that networking was one of the factors influencing participation in lending groups. A study by Ollotu (2017), which evaluated the effect of VICOBA on the economic growth and standard of living of women in Tanzania, produced conclusions that were similar to those of this study. The results showed that most of the respondents joined VICOBA to get capital for business and later save. Many responders call for more accessibility and sign up for VICOBA to make their lives better. Additionally, it was found that VICOBA members were persuaded to join the groups due to the following reasons: the financial services, the sense of community that brought them together to solve social problems, and the interest rates that were lower than those offered by other 19 financial institutions in Katondo's (2013) study of the impact of village community banks on households' access to food in the rural Morogoro District.

**Table 4.2: Factors of Membership to VICOBA**

<b>Determinants of membership ratings</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Access to loan	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	Disagree	3	2.7
	Neutral	34	30.4
	Agree	61	54.5
	Strongly Agree	14	12.5
Networking	Disagree	2	1.8
	Neutral	21	18.8
	Agree	68	60.7
	Strongly Agree	21	18.8
Receiving earnings	Disagree	66	58.9
	Neutral	23	20.5
	Agree	19	17.0
	Strongly Agree	4	3.9
Lower interest rate	Disagree	2	1.8
	Neutral	16	14.3
	Agree	79	70.5
	Strongly Agree	15	13.4
Saving money	Disagree	1	0.9
	Neutral	17	15.2
	Agree	73	65.2
	Strongly Agree	21	18.8
Source of capital	Neutral	12	10.7
	Agree	80	71.4
	Strongly Agree	20	17.9

#### **4.2.2 Contribution of Village Community Banks to Members' Livelihood Outcomes**

An independent sample test was used to determine the difference between livelihood outcomes by looking at the individuals who were members of VICOBA versus those who were not members. It was found that the net income of members of VICOBA was higher than the net income of non-members of VICOBA; the incomes were TZS 19,000,000 and TZS11,300,000, respectively. The findings were statistically significant at the  $p \geq 0.05$  level. The findings imply that members of VICOBA had higher income compared to their counterpart non-members; therefore, being a member of VICOBA increased the possibility of having more income. Another variable under examination was the value of small and medium enterprises established and owned by members of VICOBA had higher capital values compared to the small and medium-sized businesses founded by people who weren't VICOBA members as follows; for members of VICOBA the capital value of SMEs was TZS2,506,070, and non-members were capital worth of TZS896,000 and the findings were statistically significant at  $p \geq 0.05$ .

Assets such as TV sets and house values owned by members and non-members showed significant differences, as members of VICOBA own assets with higher value compared to non-members. Findings showed that an average of 70 out of 112 members of VICOBA own houses with an average worth of TZS17,155,755, compared to 67 out of 112 non-members with an average house worth TZS8,762,299. Also, members of VICOBA who own TV sets were worth more than non-members; the average TV set worth for members and non-members of VICOBA was TZS191,454 and TZS123,081 respectively. Both house and TV set assets were statistically significant at  $p \geq 0.01$ . The findings imply that members of VICOBA owned more TV sets and house assets than non-members. Lastly, the findings showed that members of VICOBA had spent more money on health services compared to non-members of VICOBA, as the results showed that the health services cost TZS1,532,877 and TZS854,443, for members and non-members respectively. The findings suggest that members of VICOBA were healthier than non-members in terms of spending on health services. The differences in health service costs spent by members and non-members were statistically significant at  $p \geq 0.01$  level.

The study's findings are connected to a study by Massawe (2020), which found that VICOBA services made it possible for members to own a variety of possessions, including cars, radios, furniture, better housing, food security, rising business profiles, income, and better educational opportunities for their kids. Research by Rutenge (2016), for instance, observed and discovered that

VICOBA members were able to get loans at low-interest rates, which allowed them to possess a variety of assets as a result of their membership in VICOBA. Additionally, the members have been able to enhance finance management at the home level, lessen the weight of avoidable losses caused by family resources, and foster social cohesiveness among one another. The majority of VICOBA participants, according to Ngalemwa (2015), enrolled in the programme to gain access to credit, and they admitted that their benefits met their expectations. Similar findings showed that VICOBA made it possible for them to possess different assets required for maintaining their way of life. In Kihongo's (2015) other study, it was determined that VICOBA projects are among the most crucial treatments for lowering poverty in emerging nations. The loans provided by VICOBA are often soft and inexpensive to the poor, and they are used to help them by enabling them to possess a variety of assets for the sustainability of their means of subsistence. Last but not least, research by Mochoge (2016) on the impacts of village savings and loans on rural women's livelihood outcomes among women groups in Kisii County, Kenya, showed that members who save with village savings and loans groups increase their likelihood of improving their livelihood outcomes as they manage to own various assets, build houses, and be engaged in various activities like livestock keeping.

**Table 4.3: Comparison of the Livelihood Outcomes of Members and Non-members of VICOBA**

Item	Member		Non-Member		F-Value	P-Value
	N	Mean (TZS)	N	Mean (TZS)		
Net Income	112	19000000	112	11,300,000	3.869108	0.05**
TV set	111	191454.23	99	123081.65	1.332993	0.010*
Radio	107	154003.76	112	167473.59	0.0043	0.145
Plots of land	111	1368917.59	104	925668.56	1.152448	0.071
House Value	70	17155755.8	67	8762299.63	0.196587	0.000*
Cost of Health Services	112	1532877.67	112	854443.61	0.010841	0.004*
SMEs Value	70	2506070	50	896000.02	1.305025	0.029**
Furniture	108	586629.19	104	477818.56	0.284505	0.111

\*=significant at  $P \geq 0.01$  and\*\* significant at  $P \geq 0.05$

#### 4.2.3 Theoretical linkage to the study

The linkage of Triangle theory to this study is based on how the VICOBA had impacted members in terms of livelihood outcomes compared to their counterparts who were not members of the VICOBA. The results from Table 4.3 showed that being a member of microfinance (VICOBA) improved members'

livelihood outcomes, such as net income, household goods, being able to afford health costs, and the value of SMEs compared to non-members of any microfinance group (VICOBA).

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

With regard to the factors for membership in Village Community Banks, the study concludes that services provided by VICOBA were the major determinants of membership. Concerning the contribution of membership in village community banks on members' livelihood outcomes, it is concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between membership in village community banks and the livelihood outcomes of members.

The study revealed that members of VICOBA had higher livelihood outcomes compared to non-members of VICOBA in the study area. The study recommends that leaders of village community banks should focus on providing better services to members as such services are drives for attracting community members. Lastly, the study recommends that Local Government Authorities (LGAs), NGOs and the ministry responsible for community development should promote community participation in VICOBA by developing appropriate policies. VICOBA have shown positivity in improving members' livelihoods and reducing income poverty by enabling members to access capital at affordable costs.

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