

## Maintenance Culture and Practices of Government Staff Housing Units in Longido District, Arusha-Tanzania.

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the maintenance culture and practices of government staff housing units in Longido District, focusing on the Namanga Border area. The study employs a descriptive research design, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data gathered through structured questionnaires and interviews with government staff, maintenance personnel, and officials. Key findings revealed that most residents lack familiarity with maintenance policies, which limits their engagement in upkeep activities. Additionally, the majority perceive current maintenance protocols as ineffective, citing delayed responses and lack of preventive measures. Chronic underfunding further exacerbates these challenges, as budget allocations consistently fall short of requests, leaving essential repairs and proactive maintenance measures unaddressed. The study underscores the importance of a well-rounded maintenance framework that includes policy awareness, adequate funding, and effective procedural practices. Key recommendations include improving policy awareness, revising maintenance protocols to prioritize regular inspections and preventive measures, aligning budgets with actual needs, and incorporating resident feedback. By fostering a proactive maintenance culture, these measures aim to enhance living conditions for government staff and protect public investments in housing assets.*

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## 1. Introduction

Government-provided housing for public sector employees plays a critical role in ensuring the stability and welfare of its workforce. These housing units are not only a means of providing essential shelter but also contribute to the efficient functioning of government services by securing a reliable and satisfied workforce. In many regions, including Longido District in Arusha, Tanzania, government housing is essential for supporting employees stationed in remote or high-need areas, where private housing options may be limited (Abdullah, Razak, & Rashid, 2015; Adenuga, Odusami, & Faremi, 2017). However, the sustainability and quality of these housing units are increasingly compromised due to inadequate maintenance practices, limited resources, and often, an ineffective maintenance culture.

The issue of maintenance in government staff housing has become increasingly pressing, particularly in areas like the Namanga Border within Longido District, where limited resources and infrastructure pose unique challenges. A significant portion of these government housing units is in disrepair, with deferred maintenance leading to deteriorating living conditions, low employee morale, and ultimately affecting the productivity and retention of government staff (Abubakar & Aina, 2019; Afolabi et al., 2022). The lack of a structured and proactive maintenance culture has been cited as a core reason for this deterioration, underscoring the need for comprehensive policies that promote long-term asset management and improve housing conditions.

Research has shown that maintenance culture plays a pivotal role in the longevity and functionality of public housing facilities. Without it, housing structures are subject to rapid decay, ultimately leading to higher repair costs and resource waste (Ajayi, 2010; Ahmad & Hassanain, 2011). Unfortunately, in many cases, maintenance policies remain reactive rather than proactive, with repairs often being addressed only after significant damage has occurred. This not only escalates costs but also leaves occupants in unsuitable and sometimes unsafe conditions, which affects their quality of life and work performance.

Furthermore, government maintenance policies and protocols are often constrained by bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of funding, and insufficient accountability mechanisms. Inadequate budget allocation and funding inconsistencies mean that requests for essential repairs frequently go unaddressed, creating a cycle of neglect that worsens over time (Ali & Rahmat, 2009; Ayoola, 2016). When maintenance is continuously underfunded, it fosters a culture of neglect, where both government staff and managers become accustomed to living with substandard housing conditions rather than striving for improvement.

The existing maintenance culture in Longido District reflects a broader trend observed in other developing regions where government staff housing is often left to deteriorate due to insufficient maintenance practices and weak policy implementation. Studies by Dimoso & Andrew (2021) and Kitole, Tibamanya, & Sesabo (2023) suggest that enhancing maintenance awareness and ensuring proactive maintenance practices are key to improving living conditions and sustaining the value of public assets. Such improvements are particularly crucial in government housing, where poor conditions not only affect employees' lives but also undermine public resource management.

This study aims to evaluate the current state of maintenance policies, protocols, and resource allocation concerning government housing units in Longido District, with a

focus on identifying the specific challenges that contribute to the degradation of these housing units. By exploring the effectiveness of existing maintenance practices, this research seeks to highlight gaps in the maintenance culture and suggest actionable solutions for improvement. The ultimate goal is to foster a sustainable maintenance culture that enhances living conditions for government employees while protecting public investments in housing infrastructure.

Therefore, addressing the maintenance needs of government housing units in Longido District is vital for ensuring employee well-being and improving service delivery. By examining the existing practices and identifying areas for policy and procedural enhancements, this study contributes to the broader conversation on public sector housing management and offers insights into creating a robust, proactive maintenance culture that can serve as a model for similar regions. Therefore, this study investigates the maintenance culture and practices of government staff housing units in Longido District, focusing on the Namanga Border area.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

The management of maintenance in government housing has been a critical area of study, with numerous researchers identifying key factors that impact the effectiveness of maintenance practices. One of the most frequently cited issues is the lack of proper policies and the need for clear maintenance guidelines. Abdullah, Razak, and Rashid (2015) argue that establishing a strong maintenance culture requires a clear understanding and awareness of maintenance policies among users. Their findings indicate that when staff and occupants are unfamiliar with these policies, maintenance practices tend to be poorly executed, leading to deterioration in building quality. Awareness and comprehension of maintenance guidelines are thus foundational to fostering proactive and effective maintenance.

Study by Adenuga, Odusami, and Faremi (2017) in public hospital buildings in Lagos, Nigeria, highlights additional challenges related to resource allocation and bureaucratic hurdles. They discovered that inadequate funding and bureaucratic processes often prevent maintenance teams from addressing issues promptly, resulting in further deterioration of facilities. These findings underline the need for streamlined processes and consistent resource allocation to ensure timely maintenance. This resource issue is not unique to hospitals but extends to government housing, where delays in maintenance response can significantly affect the living conditions of residents.

In public buildings, a well-established maintenance culture is vital for prolonging the life of structures and improving user satisfaction, as observed by Afolabi et al. (2022). Their study in Ibadan demonstrated that proactive maintenance practices can increase the longevity of facilities and lead to greater user satisfaction. Afolabi et al. emphasize the importance of training for maintenance teams, which aligns with Ayoola's (2016) conclusion that skill enhancement among staff can positively impact maintenance outcomes. This focus on training underscores that maintenance culture is not just about policy but also about equipping personnel with the skills necessary to perform high-quality work.

Further studies by Gambo (2012) and Matindi (2012) underscore the impact of maintenance culture on residential buildings, stressing that appropriate maintenance practices can significantly enhance the performance and quality of housing units. Gambo's research particularly highlights the adverse effects of neglect on residential

buildings in Nigeria, linking poor maintenance culture to structural decay and declining resident satisfaction. Matindi's work in Kenya supports this finding, showing that a proactive maintenance culture can mitigate many of the issues associated with housing degradation and improve residents' quality of life.

Insufficient funding and mismanagement are common obstacles to effective maintenance, particularly in public housing. Komu (2011) examined public housing in Tanzania and identified these as central challenges that exacerbate the deterioration of facilities. Echoing this, Lee and Yoo (2000) maintain that without adequate funding, it is nearly impossible to implement maintenance policies effectively. Their study points out that limited resources often lead to deferred maintenance, which over time compounds issues and leads to further disrepair. This lack of resources is a recurring issue that continues to compromise maintenance efforts in government housing, underscoring the importance of reliable funding mechanisms.

Additionally, the correlation between maintenance practices and resident satisfaction is well-documented. Lekan et al. (2021) explored maintenance management practices in low-cost housing estates and found a direct relationship between maintenance effectiveness and resident satisfaction. Their research indicates that when maintenance practices are properly managed, residents experience higher satisfaction levels, which positively impacts their quality of life. This finding aligns with broader literature suggesting that a solid maintenance culture directly contributes to the well-being and morale of residents.

Osuizugbo and Olusanya (2023) affirm that a strong maintenance culture is essential for effective management of government housing units. They argue that policy timeliness, resource allocation, and the accuracy of maintenance procedures are crucial to keeping residents satisfied and protecting public investments. By addressing these factors through targeted policies and training programs, government housing can achieve more sustainable maintenance outcomes, ensuring that facilities remain in good condition and that residents enjoy a better quality of life. This holistic approach to maintenance management is critical for achieving long-term success in government housing projects.

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

The effectiveness of maintenance policies and procedures is essential to ensuring the durability, functionality, and quality of government housing units. This framework is built upon three core components: policy adequacy, resource allocation, and procedural effectiveness. Together, these elements support a proactive maintenance culture that enhances residents' living conditions and protects public investments.

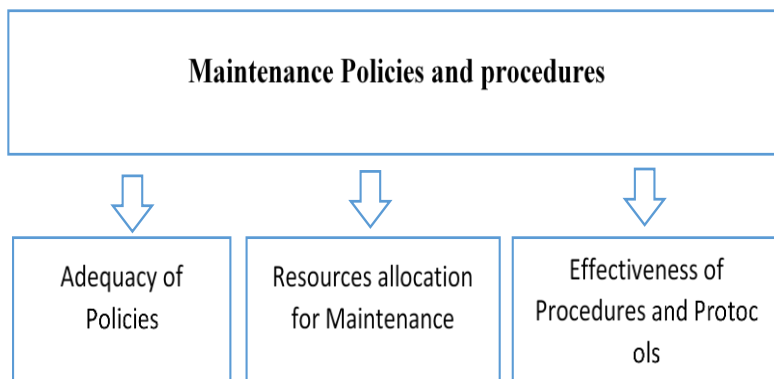
The first component, policy adequacy, refers to the comprehensiveness and relevance of maintenance guidelines. Effective policies should outline clear standards for addressing the specific maintenance needs of government housing units, including structural upkeep, sanitation, and safety requirements. This component ensures that maintenance policies are tailored to meet the unique demands of both the housing units and their occupants, thereby supporting a structured and consistent approach to upkeep.

Resource allocation is the second pillar of the framework, emphasizing the timely and appropriate distribution of financial and material resources. Adequate funding and access to materials are crucial for implementing maintenance policies effectively. Insufficient or delayed resources can disrupt scheduled maintenance activities, leading to deferred repairs and declining housing conditions. Ensuring that resources are

available and equitably distributed enables maintenance teams to address issues promptly, maintaining high-quality living conditions and avoiding costly future repairs. The third component, procedural effectiveness, pertains to the practical application of maintenance policies and protocols. This involves the clarity and precision with which guidelines are translated into actions, such as scheduled inspections, routine repairs, and preventive maintenance. Procedural effectiveness ensures that all maintenance tasks are completed on time and that issues are addressed before they become larger problems. This element is essential for sustaining the functionality of housing units and reducing long-term maintenance costs.

Together, these three elements—policy adequacy, resource allocation, and procedural effectiveness—form a dynamic framework that fosters a proactive maintenance culture. Such a culture encourages regular upkeep, reduces the likelihood of major structural issues, and supports an environment in which residents feel safe, satisfied, and valued. In this way, a well-rounded approach to maintenance not only improves the quality of life for occupants but also safeguards public investment by prolonging the lifespan of government housing assets.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



### 3. Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive research design to explore the maintenance culture and practices of government housing units in Longido District, specifically focusing on the Namanga Border area. The descriptive approach was ideal for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of existing maintenance policies, resource allocation, and resident satisfaction. The study aimed to assess the current state of maintenance practices, thereby identifying areas for improvement.

Data collection involved structured questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires, composed of closed-ended questions, were distributed to government staff residing in the housing units to gather insights on maintenance policies, resource adequacy, and their satisfaction with housing conditions. Additionally, interviews with maintenance personnel, housing managers, and government officials provided qualitative insights into the challenges and successes of current maintenance practices. Purposive sampling was employed to select a sample of 131 respondents, including key informants who play significant roles in housing maintenance. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics, while qualitative interview data were analyzed thematically to reveal patterns in maintenance culture and practices.

Ethical considerations were rigorously upheld in the study. Approval was obtained from relevant authorities, and participants were informed of the study's purpose, ensuring voluntary and informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, allowing participants to withdraw at any time without consequence. These ethical measures fostered a trustworthy environment, enabling a thorough assessment of maintenance practices and helping to develop recommendations for improving resource allocation and cultivating a proactive maintenance culture.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

The demographic data indicates a fairly balanced gender distribution among the 94 respondents, with 53.2% male and 46.8% female, suggesting a diverse representation in terms of gender. Age distribution shows that the largest age group is 26-35 years, accounting for 31.9% of respondents, followed by those aged 36-45 (26.6%) and 46-55 (21.3%). This age range suggests that most respondents are in their mid-career phase, which may influence their expectations and experiences with housing maintenance. Additionally, the data shows that a significant majority of respondents (69.1%) are married, potentially indicating a need for housing policies that consider family living conditions.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	50	53.2%
	Female	44	46.8%
Age	18-25	10	10.6%
	26-35	30	31.9%
	36-45	25	26.6%
	46-55	20	21.3%
	56 and above	9	9.6%
Marital Status	Single	20	21.3%
	Married	65	69.1%
	Divorced/Widowed	9	9.6%
Education Level	Primary	15	16%
	Secondary	30	31.9%
	Diploma	25	26.6%
	Bachelor's Degree	20	21.3%
	Master's Degree and above	4	4.3%
Employment Status	Permanent	60	63.8%
	Contract	20	21.3%
	Temporary	14	14.9%
Length of Residence	Less than 1 year	10	10.6%
	1-3 years	40	42.6%
	4-6 years	25	26.6%
	More than 6 years	19	20.2%

Source: Field data (2024)

In terms of educational background, the majority of respondents have achieved secondary education (31.9%) or hold a diploma (26.6%), while 21.3% have attained a bachelor's degree and only 4.3% have a master's degree or higher. This educational

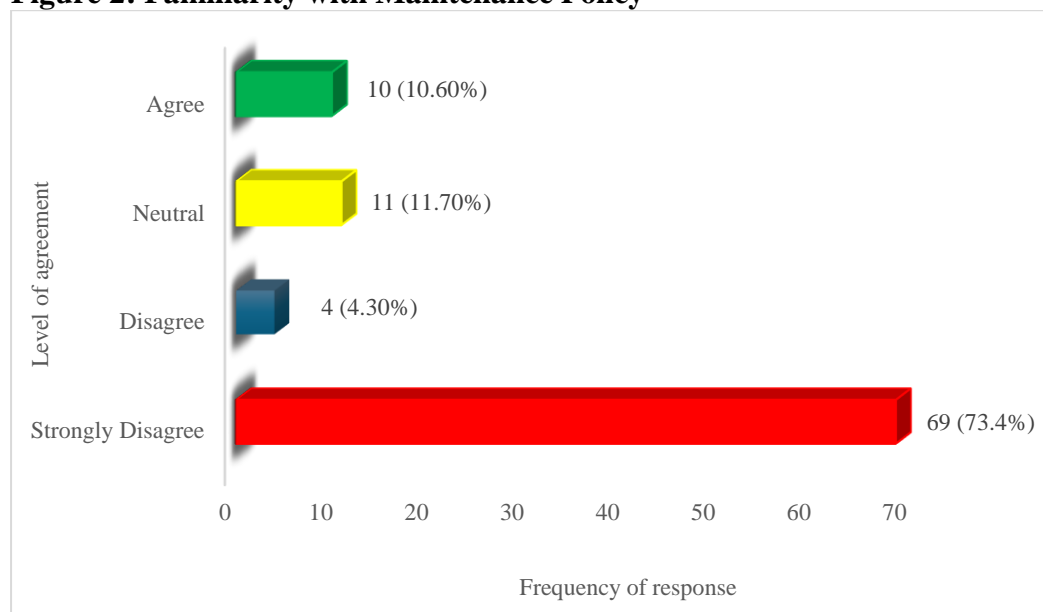
spread suggests a workforce with a moderate level of formal education, which may influence their understanding and expectations regarding maintenance policies and housing standards. Employment status data reveals that 63.8% of respondents hold permanent positions, with 21.3% on contract and 14.9% in temporary roles. The high percentage of permanent employees indicates a relatively stable workforce that may rely on long-term housing support and maintenance in these government units.

Length of residence data shows that 42.6% of respondents have resided in government housing for 1-3 years, with a smaller proportion (20.2%) having lived there for more than six years. This distribution reflects a mix of newer and longer-term residents, which could impact perspectives on maintenance effectiveness and the perceived quality of housing. Overall, the demographic characteristics highlight a diverse group of respondents, with stability in employment and a significant proportion of mid-career individuals, which provides a nuanced understanding of housing maintenance needs in this population.

#### 4.2 Adequacy of Maintenance Policies

The data in Figure 2 indicates a high level of unfamiliarity with maintenance policies among the respondents. A substantial 73.4% of participants strongly disagreed with the statement that they are familiar with maintenance policies, suggesting a significant gap in awareness or communication regarding these policies. This lack of familiarity may hinder effective participation in maintenance practices, as employees are likely unaware of their roles, responsibilities, or available resources for upkeep, which can lead to neglect and poor maintenance standards. Only a small percentage of respondents (10.6%) agreed that they were familiar with maintenance policies, while 11.7% remained neutral. The low levels of agreement suggest that current efforts to disseminate or communicate these policies are not effectively reaching most staff. The neutral responses may indicate some awareness among certain employees but likely insufficient understanding or engagement with the policies in place.

**Figure 2: Familiarity with Maintenance Policy**



Source: Field data (2024)

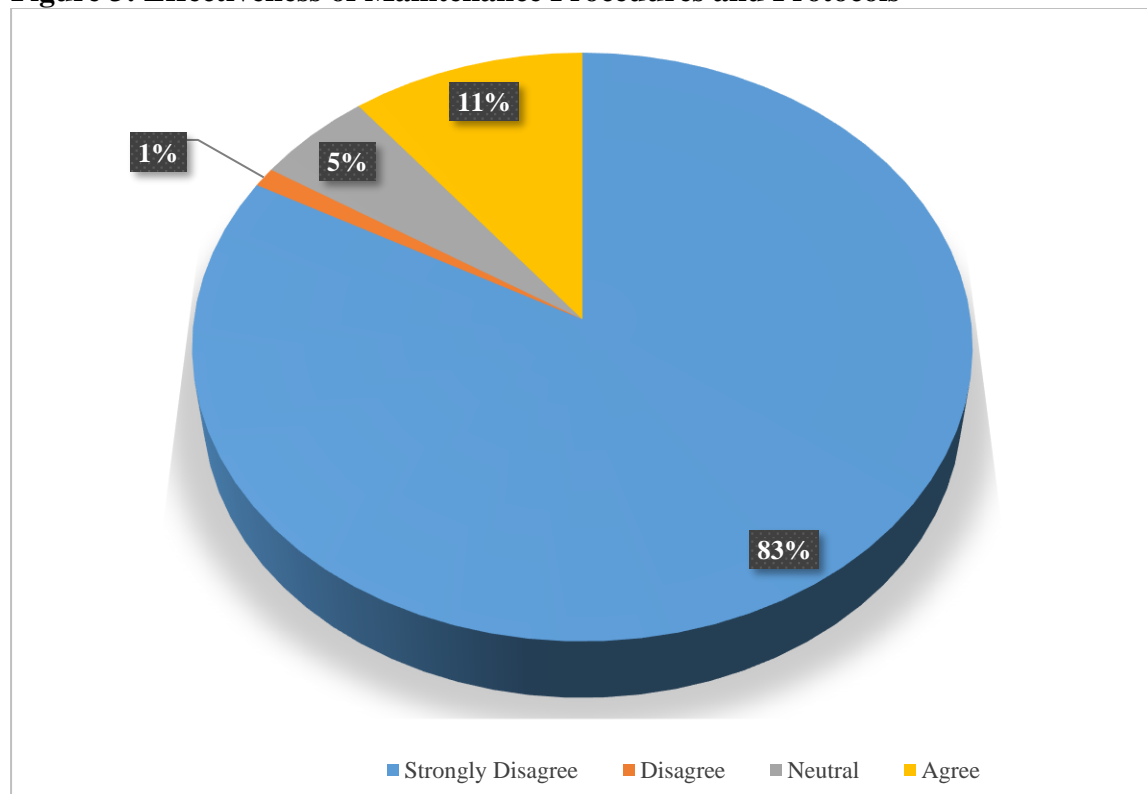
Overall, these findings highlight a crucial need for improved policy communication and training to increase familiarity with maintenance protocols. Without adequate awareness, government staff may lack the guidance needed to contribute to a proactive maintenance culture, ultimately impacting the quality and sustainability of housing conditions.

### 4.3 Effectiveness of Maintenance Procedures and Protocols

Figure 3 reveals a high level of dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of maintenance procedures and protocols among respondents, with 83% strongly disagreeing that current practices are effective. This overwhelming disapproval suggests that existing maintenance protocols are failing to meet the needs of government housing occupants, potentially due to inefficiencies in the implementation or lack of systematic monitoring. Such a perception of ineffectiveness may stem from delayed responses to maintenance issues, inadequate inspections, or the absence of preventive maintenance measures.

Only a small portion of respondents (10.6%) agreed that maintenance procedures are effective, while 5.3% remained neutral. The minimal levels of agreement and neutrality imply that the positive experiences with maintenance are limited to a minority, with the majority perceiving the system as ineffective or inadequate. The single respondent who disagreed rather than strongly disagreed underscores the widespread sentiment of dissatisfaction.

**Figure 3: Effectiveness of Maintenance Procedures and Protocols**



Source: Field data (2024)

These findings underscore the need for revisiting and strengthening maintenance protocols to ensure timely, responsive, and preventive actions in government housing units. Addressing the gaps in maintenance procedures could improve resident satisfaction, enhance housing conditions, and help foster a proactive maintenance culture.

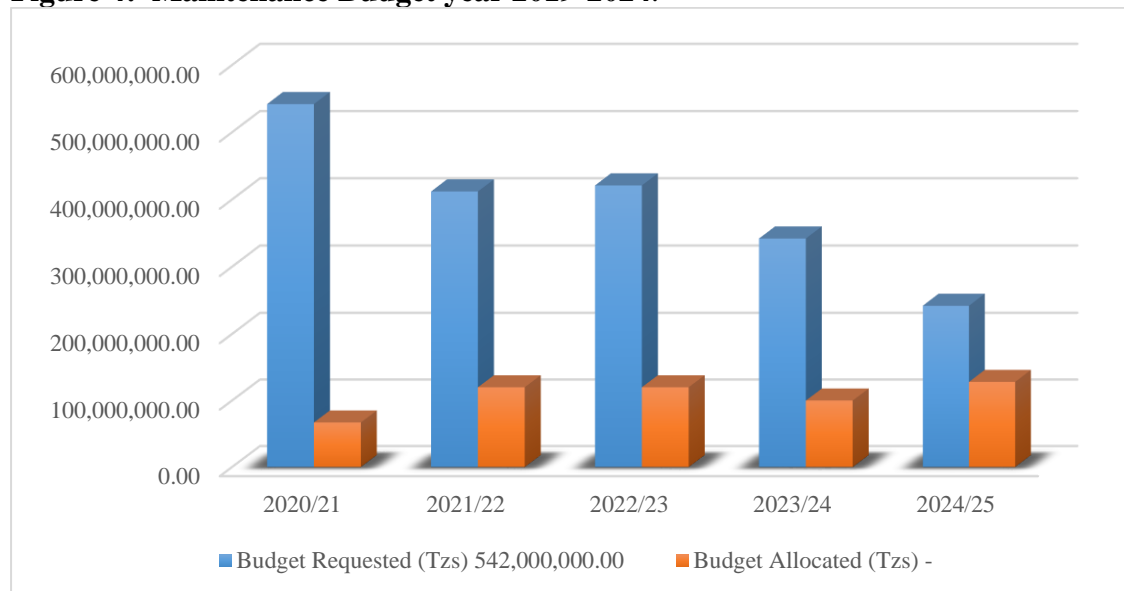


#### 4.4 Existing resource allocation for maintenance practices

Figure 4 presents the budget trends for maintenance from 2019 to 2024, highlighting significant discrepancies between the requested and allocated amounts each year. In 2019/20, no allocation was made despite a request of TZS 542 million, indicating a complete lack of funding that year. In the following years, while funds were allocated, they consistently fell far short of the requested amounts, ranging from only 12% to 30% of what was deemed necessary. For instance, in 2020/21, only TZS 67 million was allocated against a request of TZS 542 million, representing just over 12% of the needed budget.

Over the years, the requested budget gradually decreased, perhaps reflecting adjustments due to anticipated funding limitations. Despite this reduction in requests—from TZS 542 million in 2019/20 to TZS 242 million in 2024/25—the allocations remained insufficient to meet even these reduced requests. In 2024/25, while the requested budget dropped significantly to TZS 242 million, only TZS 128 million was allocated, covering about 53% of the required amount but still not meeting the full demand.

**Figure 4: Maintenance Budget year 2019-2024.**



Source: Field data (2024)

This pattern of chronic underfunding likely contributes to the reported ineffectiveness of maintenance procedures and protocols, as insufficient budget allocations impede timely repairs and necessary preventive maintenance. To improve the maintenance culture and housing quality, addressing these budgetary shortfalls is essential to enable comprehensive, proactive maintenance practices.

#### 5. Discussions

The results of this study provide essential insights into the maintenance policies, protocols, and resource allocations for government staff housing units in Longido District, with specific reference to the Namanga Border area. The findings reveal systemic issues, particularly in policy awareness, protocol effectiveness, and resource allocation, which collectively impact housing quality and government staff satisfaction. These challenges align with observations in similar studies on maintenance culture and

resource management in public housing across other regions (Komu, 2011; Gambo, 2012; Ayoola, 2016).

A striking 73.4% of respondents indicated a lack of awareness of maintenance policies, suggesting a critical gap in the dissemination and communication of these policies. Studies by Abdullah et al. (2015) and Adenuga et al. (2017) emphasize that maintenance awareness is vital for effective building upkeep, as it empowers staff to understand their roles in the maintenance process. The low familiarity with these policies likely contributes to inefficiencies in addressing maintenance issues and may foster a negative perception of the maintenance process (Lee & Yoo, 2000). Improving communication channels and ensuring accessible policy information could mitigate these issues, aligning with recommendations from the existing literature on enhancing maintenance culture (Dahunsi, 2019).

An overwhelming 83% of participants expressed dissatisfaction with current maintenance procedures, indicating a perceived ineffectiveness in the protocols. This dissatisfaction highlights possible implementation and monitoring gaps, a concern similarly observed by Straub et al. (2010) and Lee et al. (2019) in their studies on public housing maintenance. Ineffective procedures can lead to delayed repairs, further deterioration of housing conditions, and a negative feedback loop that perpetuates neglect and disrepair. Regular inspections and inclusive feedback mechanisms, as suggested by Edmond & Lam (2010), could be implemented to improve procedural effectiveness by accounting for staff and occupant needs in real-time.

The findings on budget allocation reveal a significant discrepancy between requested and actual funding, with only 12.4% of the requested budget allocated for maintenance in the 2020/21 fiscal year. This chronic underfunding poses severe challenges for timely and effective maintenance, leading to a deferral of necessary repairs and, consequently, accelerated building decay. This aligns with the findings of Segun & Ado-Ekiti (2017), who identified similar funding shortfalls in Nigerian public housing estates. A regularized funding framework could foster a proactive maintenance culture, ensuring that resources are available to support continuous upkeep (Rajeev et al., 2018). The current maintenance culture and inadequate housing conditions significantly impact staff satisfaction and well-being. As shown by Osuizugbo & Olusanya (2023) and Ugwe & Nwoji (2018), poor maintenance in public housing can contribute to reduced morale and productivity among residents. The state of disrepair in government housing units in Longido District likely leads to ongoing stress for residents, hindering their work performance and quality of life. Addressing these issues could have long-term benefits, including enhanced employee morale, accountability, and pride in government housing facilities, as suggested by Afolabi et al. (2022) and Ayoola (2016).

The findings underscore the urgent need for policy revision, improved communication, and resource alignment to foster a more effective maintenance culture within public housing. Initiatives such as routine maintenance inspections, regular feedback loops with residents, and adequate budget allocation for maintenance activities could transform housing conditions and improve employee satisfaction. The government should prioritize these measures, as effective public resource management directly contributes to staff welfare and the sustainability of public assets (Dimoso & Andrew, 2021; Kitole & Sesabo, 2024).

Therefore, this study highlights significant shortcomings in the maintenance policies, procedures, and funding allocations affecting government staff housing in Longido District. Enhancing policy awareness, optimizing maintenance protocols, and ensuring adequate resource allocation are essential steps toward sustaining public housing infrastructure and supporting the well-being of government employees.

## **6. Conclusion and recommendations**

The findings of this study highlight significant challenges in the maintenance culture and practices within government housing units in Longido District, particularly in the Namanga Border area. One of the primary issues identified is the lack of familiarity with maintenance policies among residents, with the majority of respondents indicating minimal awareness of these guidelines. This lack of engagement with maintenance policies creates a disconnect that hinders effective participation in maintenance activities. Additionally, most residents perceive the current maintenance procedures and protocols as ineffective, suggesting that there is an absence of systematic, proactive practices that would otherwise improve housing conditions. The combination of limited policy awareness and perceived ineffectiveness in protocols reflects broader systemic issues in the management of these housing units.

Underfunding further compounds these challenges, as the persistent budgetary shortfalls have left essential repairs and preventive maintenance measures unaddressed. The analysis revealed that allocated budgets consistently fall far short of requested amounts, making it difficult to maintain housing units to an adequate standard. This chronic underfunding not only impacts the quality of life for residents but also threatens the long-term sustainability of government housing assets, as deferred maintenance accelerates deterioration over time. These findings underscore the urgent need for a well-rounded approach to maintenance management, emphasizing adequate funding, proactive practices, and effective communication.

Addressing the low familiarity with maintenance policies requires focused efforts to enhance policy awareness and communication. Government agencies should implement regular training sessions and workshops to educate housing occupants and maintenance staff about maintenance guidelines and responsibilities. Clear and accessible materials that outline these policies should be made available to all residents, fostering an environment where staff are informed and more engaged with the maintenance process. When residents understand maintenance policies, they are more likely to contribute positively to the upkeep of their living environment.

Strengthening maintenance procedures and protocols is also essential. Revising and standardizing procedures to ensure regular inspections, scheduled preventive maintenance, and clear channels for reporting issues can improve the effectiveness of maintenance operations. Additionally, equipping maintenance staff with the necessary training for proactive upkeep and inspections will enhance the overall quality and responsiveness of maintenance practices. These procedural improvements are critical for establishing a maintenance culture that prioritizes prevention and timely intervention.

Adequate funding is a cornerstone of effective maintenance, and budget allocations must be aligned more closely with actual needs. Increasing the budget for maintenance activities would enable timely repairs and proactive measures, which can prevent minor issues from developing into costly problems. Establishing a dedicated maintenance fund

within the housing budget could help ensure a more stable financial base, reducing reliance on annual budgets and promoting long-term sustainability.

Incorporating resident feedback into maintenance planning can provide valuable insights into specific areas needing attention and help tailor efforts to meet the actual needs of the housing units. Periodic surveys or meetings with residents can be used to gather feedback, allowing housing managers to address common issues and improve resident satisfaction. Engaging residents in this process fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the upkeep of their living spaces.

Monitoring and evaluating maintenance outcomes is crucial for continuous improvement. Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess maintenance protocol effectiveness, budget utilization, and resident satisfaction can guide data-driven adjustments in maintenance practices. Regular assessment will enable housing managers to identify gaps, adjust strategies as needed, and ensure that maintenance efforts align with residents' expectations and housing standards. By implementing these recommendations, government agencies can cultivate a proactive maintenance culture, thereby enhancing the quality of life in staff housing units and ensuring the longevity of these public assets.

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