

# Influence of Local Elected Leaders' Roles in Promoting Community Participatory Development: A Case Study of Kidegembye Ward in Njombe District Council, Tanzania

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## **Abstract**

The study examined the influence of elected leaders' roles in promoting community participatory development. The study was undertaken at Kidegembye ward in Njombe district council. The study area was purposively selected because, in 2018, it ranked second nationally in terms of environmental sanitation and cleanliness. This resulted from collective community efforts to enhance cleanliness in the area. A total of 11 respondents were purposively selected for the study, including village leaders, women's groups dealing with handicrafts, and members of the school and health committee. A case study was applied to get insights regarding the influence of the elected leaders' roles in promoting community participatory development. Interview guide and observations were used to collect data. The findings revealed that elected leaders play some roles in influencing participatory development. The roles include community mobilization for construction infrastructures for education and health services at Kidegembye ward. However, no evidence was registered regarding the influence of leaders' roles in supporting community initiatives related to economic activities. This raised a question on the prevalence of effective community participation. If effective community participation could be in place, projects beyond the push

of the ministries would be enhanced. The study recommended that leaders play a part in social and economic activities. Likewise, the political party should establish mechanisms that can be used to assess the elected leaders' performance to improve their creativity in enhancing community participation for development.

**Keywords:** Local Elected Leaders' Roles, Participatory Development, Kidegembye Ward

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between leadership and participatory community development has been an area of interest for academicians and practitioners for a long time. Most studies regarding leadership and participatory development are reflected in various themes. The common themes include decentralization, governance, and civic engagement (Greco, 2004; Kesale, 2017). Civic engagement is linked to community participation for strengthening voices, accountability, and communication (Anselm et al., 2020). Thus, it is linked to decentralization approaches, which refer to transferring powers and responsibilities from higher to lower government levels closer to the community they serve (Cheema & Rondnell, 2007). The powers and duties are transferred to the organs operating closer to the community; social venues for community participation are enhanced. Civic engagement, governance, and decentralization are currently emphasized as essential development strategies and are highly linked with participatory development at the grassroots level. Thus, elected leaders' roles to influence participatory development are inevitable. The link between decentralization, civic engagement, and the roles of elected leaders lies in enhancing participatory development. Community Participatory Development refers to the improvement of the social and economic lives of the community resulting from their collective efforts. There is improvement in shelter, food, health, and security, expanding social and financial options and enhancing people's freedom (Todaro & Smith, 2006). These can effectively be realized when participatory community development at the grassroots level is enhanced. This is made possible through leaders effectively undertaking their roles to influence collective actions.

The participatory community development in the Tanzanian context has been reflected in different phases of the government. The fundamental efforts to engage the community in participatory development were visible in the first phase of the government of Tanzania, which started in 1967. The efforts are reflected in various policies, strategies, and declarations introduced in the first decade or so of the independence. Such efforts include but are not limited to the adoption of the Arusha Declaration in 1967, the African socialism policy (ujamaa) of 1977, independence and self-reliance, and Siasa ni Kilimo (URT, 1967; Nyerere, 1967; Jaimungal, 2019 & Mwabukojo, 2019). The policies and declarations were meant to enhance community engagement in the country's development. In the initial stages of the development, the Tanzanian leaders were aware that mobilizing the community efforts was a sine quo non-factor to enhance the country's development with minimum support from the other nations. In this perspective, the introduction of a self-reliance policy sought to encourage the mobilization of internal resources while reducing dependency on external sources. This marked socialism (Ujamaa) in Tanzania as unique from other countries (Jaimungal, 2019). The dependency was substantially discouraged because it would

perpetuate neo-colonialism and jeopardize freedom.

This development direction was a reaction to the perceptions among most leaders who focused on money as the primary means of development. Hence, the inadequate availability of finance due to the country's economic situation was perceived as an obstacle. In this perspective, the father of the nation clarified that dependency on money as the only means to development is relying on the wrong weapon. It was elaborated that poor people do not have money (Nyerere, 1967). That money would be an outcome of working hard (Ibid). The four development elements relevant to the Tanzanian societies were identified on this basis. The elements include people, land for agriculture, good policy (self-reliance), and good leadership (Ibid). Development outcomes will be realized when these elements are abundantly and effectively coordinated. This would enhance the availability of money for social and economic development, including establishing industries. Emphasizing the importance of rural development, the father of the nation pointed out that.

*Everybody wants development, but only some understand and accept the basic requirements for growth. The most significant requirement is hard working. Let us go to the villages, talk to our people, and see whether it is possible to work hard. It would be more appropriate for us to spend time in the village showing the people how to bring about development rather than going on many long and expensive journeys abroad in search of development money" (Nyerere, 1977, p. 32).*

The question remains as to what extent different leaders, including grassroots ones, play significant roles in mobilizing and encouraging community members to work hard. It is through effective engagement of people at the grassroots level that development can be realized.

In an attempt to effectively engage community members in the development process, in the 1960s, the government of Tanzania customized primary and secondary education to equip students with relevant skills beyond numeracy and literacy (Jaimungal, 2019). Among others, education focused on equipping students with agricultural skills. This meant to prepare children to effectively contribute to their respective societies in the rural areas, bearing in mind that agriculture was and remains the backbone of the country's economy. This was in line with the aspirations of the African Socialism and ujamaa village in the country, focusing on enhancing communal life. The village members were scheduled to work on typical farms for their expected benefits (Abraham & Robinson 1974). On this ground, leadership's roles in promoting community participatory development became vividly visible. Some of the commonly undertaken development initiatives during this era include the nationalization of significant means of production and distribution, the establishment of state farms, and the establishment of ujamaa villages and village farms (TANU, 1967). The emphasis in these endeavours was to reduce dependence by fortifying a self-reliant spirit.

Likewise, establishing the agricultural cooperative movements in the villages reflects community participatory development efforts. The cooperative movements in Tanganyika commenced in 1920 to promote agricultural produce (Maghimbi, 2010). The movement

magnified in size and quantity after the independence (Ibid). These were perceived as the instrument of rural development from the 1960s to the 1980s when nonagricultural cooperative unions cropped up (Rwekaza and Mhihi, 2016). By 1968, Tanzanian cooperative unions ranked first in Africa and third worldwide in terms of the size of the market share of exports. It contributed about 50% of the country's exports (Maghimbi, 2010). Impliedly, farmers benefited from their performance because they used to collect agricultural produce, market it, and sell it at more reasonable prices. Most of these initiatives operated in local government authority (LGA) settings. In this endeavour, rural development became the central focus as opposed to urban areas, which were perceived as an outcome of colonialism.

Nevertheless, the initiatives' outcomes were remotely realized compared to the set expectations. For example, although the government emphasized self-reliance in its initiatives, the efforts were more on what the government could do to the people rather than what people could do to enhance development. Thus, the initiatives focused on reducing donor dependency rather than citizens' dependency on the government (Maliyamkono and Manson, 2006)—the community empowerment for self-reliance needed to be more effectively accomplished. Likewise, in 1972, the government of Tanzania abolished the LGAs in the country to enhance the implementation of the ujamaa policy, in which villagization became the central focus for rural development. Abolishing of the LGAs led to deconcentrating, in which some powers and responsibilities were transferred from them to the organs of the central governments at the regional and district levels (Abraham and Robinson 1974). This, too, emphasized rural development, and hence, the urban plans were merged with the nearby rural areas to enhance planning (Max, 1991). Although the Local government was abolished, the villages were retained with a party supremacy focus. Thus, the development plans at the respective areas were planned and implemented at the town, district, and regional levels (Warioba, 1999). The organs for planning and executing the development plans were bestowed at the village, district, and regional development committees (Abraham and Robinson 1974). The deterioration of services in the late 1970s and early 1980s is, to some extent, attributed to the absence of the local government (Warioba, 1999). Impliedly, the planning and implementation organs at the village, district, and regional levels could have been more effective. What remains unexplored is the influence of the leaders in promoting participatory development under these development endeavours.

The abolishment of the cooperative unions subsequently followed the abolishment of the local government in the country. The unions in the country ceased to exist in 1976 due to their mala functioning (Maghinbi, 2010). The noted mala functioning included the proliferation of the unions, which needed more prerequisite human resources and, hence, led to misuse of finance. Likewise, complaints were raised about inadequate democratization in the unions (ibid). Thus, during the deconcentrating and abolishment of the unions, the tools for promoting participatory development needed to be fixed, leading to inadequate spaces for community participation. This led to deteriorations in social and economic services, including education, health environment, and sanitation (Max, 1991 & Warioba, 1999). This called for the re-establishment of LGAs in 1982, followed by the re-establishment of cooperative unions (Max, 1991; Warioba, 1999 & Maghimbi, 2010).

Although the two were re-established in the same period with the same focus on enhancing participatory development, special attention was given to the local government. The 11<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments of 1984 incorporated the establishment and purpose for establishing the local government in the country as enshrined in Articles 145 and 146 of the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977. Incorporating the local governments in the constitution provided legal protection for their existence (URT, 2005). The purpose of establishing LGAs is to create social venues for community participation in the planning and implementing the development plans at their localities (Article 146). However, being novices, the re-established LGAs faced several challenges, including conflicts between councillors and LGA staff, unclear demarcations of responsibilities between the central and LGAs, lack of LGAs' sources of revenues, and inadequate availability of qualified human resources (Max, 1991). Following these challenges, the government embarked on the Local Government Reform Programme in the 1990s (URT, 1996 & URT, 1998). The Reform focused on decentralization by devolution (D-by-D) to enhance people's participation in the realization of Article 146 of the country's constitution.

The Reform compelled the amendments of Local Government Laws (Act No. 1982, Act No. 8 of 1982, and Finance Act No. 9 of 1982) to incorporate decentralization by Devolution (D-by-D) elements. D-by-D areas include human resources, finance, politics, and changing central-local relations. To facilitate the D-by-D, Opportunities, and Obstacles to Development (O&OD), a community participatory approach was introduced in the early 2000s to realise the purpose (URT, 2007). Initially, O&OD, currently referred to as the conventional approach, was employed at the village and mitaa levels to identify and prioritize the community's needs. Through the LGA hierarchy, plans from the village and metal levels were consolidated at the respective ward before submission to the council. The plans from the ward level were compiled to form a part of the council-level plans. The flow of information in the planning process is shown in the structure of the local government (Figure 1).

Nevertheless, different weaknesses of the approach were identified. They include, among other things:- difficulties in accommodating community priorities into the council plan, lack of community support in the implementation stage, the exercise being time-consuming, lack of social preparation, and dependency on facilitation from outside the ward (JICA, 2008 & URT, 2019). This led to a failure to complete most of the community-initiated projects as the community ended up in the formulation of the projects while relying on government resources for implementation. For example, in 2017/2018, projects worth TZS 52,429,796,288 in 47 LGAs remained uncompleted. Likewise, in 2018/2019, projects worth TZS 77,509,365,805 in 81 LGA faced similar cases. The primary reasons were inadequate funds and ineffective community participation in project implementation (CAG 2019 & CAG 2020). Thus, the conventional O & OD needs to be more adequate to address development challenges associated with the community participatory development approach.

In the perspective that the improved O&OD came into existence to address the identified shortfalls of the conventional community participatory approach. Its focus was to enhance the realization of the community initiatives, prioritizing the community-financed initiatives. It starts with community participation at Mtaa (hamlets) and the village as a prerequisite

requirement for the planning process (Figure 1). The felt needs and problems of the respective society are identified. The analysis is made to assess community initiatives in such plans and submit them to higher levels of local government. The plan is incorporated into the council budget for activities outside the community's reach. Likewise, moral, technological, and financial support is provided to support the community initiatives (URT, 2019). The initiatives of the government of Tanzania to promote participatory development, especially in the local government authorities, have to be supervised by the elected leaders per respective laws. These include the Local Authorities Election Act, No. 4 of 1979, which determines the election of ward councillors; the Local Government (District Authorities) Act, No. 7 1982; and Urban Authorities (Act No.8, 1982). The Local Government (District Authorities) Act, No. 7 of 1982, deals with local government issues at kitongoji, village, ward, and district council levels. In this perspective, elected leaders at the grassroots level in District Authorities include Kitongoji (suburb) and the village chairperson. At the high level, the district council comprises councillors elected at the ward levels. Similarly, urban authorities comprise metal and ward. Thus, grassroots leaders of the council are made up of metal chairpersons, while the higher level includes councillors elected at ward levels, as depicted in Figure 1.

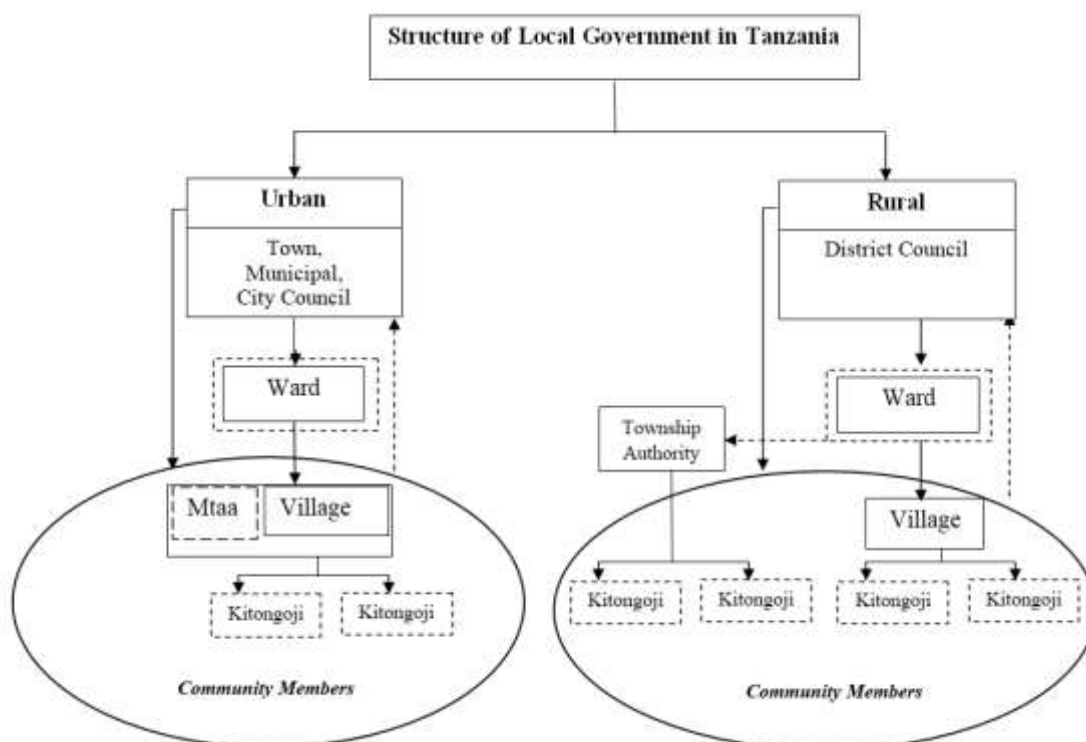


Figure. Local Government Organization structure as conceived from Local Government laws

The Elected leaders at the local government level reside at Vitongoji, Mitaavillage and ward levels. They have dual roles in enhancing community participation. The roles include holding community meetings and participating in higher organ meetings to represent communities' views. For example, vitongoji chairpersons hold meetings to deliberate community issues.

The vitongoji chairpersons are members of the village council in which community views are represented. Likewise, village chairpersons hold community meetings at village levels. The issues from village meetings are deliberated at the village councils and later at the Ward Development Committees (WDC), in which village chairpersons form membership. The councillors are the electors at the ward level. The elected councillor is the chairperson of the WDC, while other councillors, if any, at the ward level, form part of the WDC. All councillors from the ward level form the council of the respective local governments. By being close to the people, local government leaders are expected to develop strategies for establishing effective communication and engagement of all stakeholders in the development process (Turner, 2007).

Moreover, Mustafa (2008) argued that one of the roles of elected leaders in Tanzania is to promote participatory development in the local community. However, the influence of grassroots leaders in fostering participatory development and the sustainability of projects is scantily documented. Therefore, the study intended to add to the existing literature by bridging this knowledge gap.

## **2. Theoretical Perspectives**

Both participative leadership and Principle Agency Theory underpinned the study. The participative leadership theory was chosen because of the nature of the study, which sought to establish the roles of leaders in promoting community participatory development. Such development endeavours require a leader to create the necessary environment for community participation. Participative leadership is when leaders share their authority with hierarchically unequal people (Probst, 2005; Russ, 2011). Nevertheless, the impacts of effective community participation on development depend on the type of participation employed in the process. Some levels of involvement are meant for consultative or genuine participation. Active and two-way traffic communications are shared through effective participation, and a direction is jointly forged, making genuine community participation. However, the theory appears inadequate to cover the roles of leadership in promoting participatory development because it needs to show the mechanisms for enhancing ownership, enforcing accountability and enhancing the sustainability of the projects emanating from participatory development.

This prompted using the Principal-Agency Theory to supplement the Participative leadership theory. The theory was propounded by Jensen and Meckling in 1976. It deals with a cooperative relationship established when the authority of the principal grants to an agent to act on his behalf, and the principal's welfare becomes affected by the agent's decision (Wrights, 2001). It addresses the Agency issue in which the principal delegates work to the agent who performs the work. Therefore, it is concerned with resolving two problems that can occur in agency relationships. The first problem concerns when the desires or goals of the principal and agent conflict, when it is difficult or expensive for the principal to verify what the agent is doing, and whether or not the agent has behaved properly. The second problem is risk sharing, which occurs when the two prefer different actions because of the other risk preferences (Vibert, 2000).

The theory recognizes that the principal may have complete or incomplete information. In

cases of full details, principals will use behavioural contracts to monitor agents. On the other hand, with incomplete information, principals will monitor agents through hierarchy investment information systems (such as budgeting systems, reporting procedures, boards of directors, and separate layers of management) or market-related contracts based on the outcomes of agents' behaviour. However, the theory needs to clearly state how behavioural contracts and monitoring through hierarchy-related investment have contributed to aligning agents with the principal's goals. In this study, leaders are taken as agents of their respective communities. The theory was used to assess whether the community, because of participation, owned the outcomes of development and enhanced accountability.

### **3. Methodology**

The study employed a case study research design. The design was opted to get deeper insights regarding the roles of leaders in promoting participatory development. The interpretive research philosophy underpinned the study to capture more insights from the respondents. Thus, the qualitative research approach was employed in this study. In this perspective, the study applied subjectivism as it relied on exploring the people's understanding and experiences regarding the influence of local elected leaders' roles in promoting community participatory development. The study was undertaken at Kidegembye ward in Njombe district council. The study covered three villages, namely Image, Havanga and Kidegembye. The survey area was purposely selected because, in 2018, one of the villages in the ward (Kidegembye) held the top second position nationally in terms of environmental sanitation and cleanliness as per the assessment of the Ministry of Environment. Further, the ward had several community initiatives which attracted the development partner's support. The projects included modern toilets for primary school dispensaries.

A total of 11 respondents were included in the study. The limit of the sample size was determined by the exhaustiveness of information, leading to saturation where additional respondents could not contribute additional and valuable data. The purposive sampling was used in selecting the respondents because it focused on the informed respondents on the subject matter. The school and health committee members were purposively selected due to possessing rich information regarding the influence of the leaders' roles in promoting participatory development. Likewise, two members from the women's group and three village leaders were involved in the study. Based on the study's nature, an interview guide and observation list were used to collect data. The choice was meant to get a deeper understanding of the roles of leaders in promoting participatory development. Descriptive and content analysis were applied in analyzing the collected data.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

Data were collected and analyzed to assess the influence of elected leaders' roles in promoting participatory development in the study areas. Specifically, the study examined the impact of leaders' roles in sensitizing the community to promote participatory development and their support in the established community initiatives in three villages at Kidegembye ward in Njombe district council. The villages in this ward include Kidegembye, Image and



Havanga.

It was revealed that the village members at Kidegembye village frequently repaired primary school toilets due to the long-standing deteriorated infrastructures. However, it was later learned that the infrastructure was beyond repair. Therefore, through their grassroots leaders at the local level, decisions were made to construct new toilets. The arrangements were made to secure building design for toilets commonly used in primary schools at the district engineer in the respective council. In securing the building design from the council, they were advised to increase the number of restroom holes to cater to the students at the respective school. The construction started with the mobilization of the resources, which every member of the village society was supposed to contribute to TZS. 5000. Due to their roles, the elected leaders sought assistance from the councils to support the community initiatives. The council secured support from UNICEF. Thus, while mobilizing construction materials, UNICEF volunteered to support the community initiatives. In line with their targets, village members were required to increase the pit size and number of latrines (holes) per infrastructure to cater for the demand for the number of students in the schools. Thus, the number of bricks at Kidegembye increased from 20,000 to 40,000 to meet the demand. On the other hand, UNICEF supported industrial materials, including roofing materials, cement, tires, and toilet sinks, and met the construction costs. The project started in August 2015 and was completed in December 2016. The successful implementation of the project at Kidegembye village made other primary schools in the ward construct new toilets with both community-mobilized resources and the support of UNICEF. Thus, new toilets were built at Image and Makula primary schools and Havana primary schools in Havana village. The number of toilets and respective number of students in each of these schools are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of restrooms for male and female students per school

S/N	Name of school	Number of Students per School		Number of new Toilets (latrines)	
		Female	Male	Female	Male
1	Kidegembye Primary School	389	400	11	10
2	Makula primary school	143	141	9	7
3	Havanga primary school	142	125	8	8
4	Image Primary school	272	300	8	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>31</b>

Source: Field Data, 2020

The findings revealed that it was due to the influence and support of the leaders at the grassroots levels that the accomplishment of the construction of these schools was possible.

Like the community members, leaders in these villages made cash and in-kind contributions to enhance the achievement of projects. They also actively participated in resource mobilization and construction to encourage community participation. To enforce community participation, a fine of TZS. Twenty-five thousand were set for any person who, for unknown reasons, failed to participate in the project. This contributed to the successful mobilization of funds and the completion of 67 modern toilets (restrooms) in these schools. Each toilet room has the following facilities: tiles, a toilet sink, running water, and a door.

The successful completion of the construction of a total of 67 toilets (holes) motivated the village members to carry out similar projects at the dispensary level. In this perspective, 12 latrines were constructed and furnished with running water at Kidegembye and Image Dispensary. Each of these had six latrines. Like in the school-level latrine construction, this also involved mobilized community and UNICEF support secured in collaboration between grassroots elected leaders and the council.

Likewise, as a result of these notable achievements, Kidegembye village leadership extended the efforts by sensitizing the community members to build modern toilets. The community members seconded the idea, and the construction began in July 2016. Every household member constructed improved toilets with resources at grades B or C. Grade C has a restroom with a sink, while grade D has a modern toilet with flashing water. The case was different for the old and poor people. In such situations, vitongoji members mobilized resources to construct toilets for these groups of people in the respective villages. In addition, the village chairperson contributed sinks for the toilets. This indicates the influence of leadership in participatory service provision.

As a result, by 2018, 872 had completed modern toilets at either grade C or B. In 2018, the village held the second position nationally regarding environmental sanitation and cleanliness as per the Ministry of Environment's assessment. This is an indicator that leadership roles influence participatory social development. The findings align to establish LGAs as stipulated by Article 146 of the country's constitution (URT, 2005). The findings also align with the decentralization aspirations (URT, 1998) and the improved O&OD guideline (URT, 2019), which entrusts leaders to support community initiatives.

Apart from social service projects, during the field study, it was observed that women at Kidegembye village had organized into a group since 2005 for economic empowerment. The group comprises a total of 32 members for handicrafts work. The group makes buckets, sells them jointly, and shares the income at the end of every financial year. Plate 1 presents the women's group together with the buckets.



Plate 1. Women Group at Kidegembye village

**Source:** Observed during field Visit, 2020

However, since its establishment, apart from the support rendered by the community development officer in the form of education and guidance on operating the group, there was no other support provided by grassroots leaders. This indicates a need for deliberate and creative efforts of the leaders at the local level to deal with community development initiatives, especially those related to economic activities. The findings contradict the initial ideas for participatory development in which village members' farms were established for social and economic needs (Nyerere, 1967). Further responses on the failure to develop community initiatives for boosting economic activities revealed the need for creativity and mechanisms to account for their actions and inactions. It was emphasized that the local government leaders in the study area play little direct role in the group's effective functioning. One of the group members, in clarifying this argument, had this to say:

*We have been operating as a group since 2005. Except for the community development officer, the group needs support from our leaders in the area (one of the women group members, November 20200).*

This contradicts the improved O&OD, in which leaders are responsible for identifying and supporting community initiatives to sustain development efforts (URT, 2019). Likewise, it remains to be seen whether there is active and genuine community participation in identifying felt needs and means to address them. This is because if there were genuine community participation, there could be projects covering beyond social services to include economic

ones. This indicates the challenge facing local government in promoting participatory development. If the obstacles still need to be addressed, they might lead to concentration on social services and ignore economic activities. This would lead to income poverty, accelerating the problems in accessing social services, including education and health services. This would lead to community dependency on the government for social service provision. The findings are in line with Maliyamkono and Manson (2006), who established that despite the government's emphasis on self-reliance, it ended in reducing external dependency while culminating in people's dependency on the government. The findings are also contrary to the purpose of establishing LGAs, which focused on community participation as per Article 146 of the country's constitution (URT, 2005).

Similarly, the findings contradict the aspirations set by the decentralization policy in which grassroots leaders are expected to enhance people's participation in the development process, which comprises both social and economic development (URT, 1998). Generally, these weaknesses depict the inability of the leaders to enhance genuine participation as provided by the participative leadership theory. This contradicts the Principal-Agency Theory (Wrights, 2001), which emphasizes community participation for enhancing shorter route accountability for performance improvement. Effective community participation leads to a lack of ownership, accountability, and sustainability of the projects. In such a situation, the community, being the principal, will not be able to hold the Agents (leaders) accountable as their voices remain weak due to needing to be more informed (Anselm et al., 2020). The problem becomes more serious when the party as a principal needs functional mechanisms to hold elected grassroots leaders (agents) accountable for their roles. These are likely among the weaknesses that hampered the development efforts in the early years of independence. Thus, when such weaknesses still need to be addressed, they can detrimentally slow the speed towards fortifying the already achieved middle-income stage by hampering the progress in the social and economic development of the grassroots level and hence slow down the country's development.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The influence of leadership roles in promoting participatory community development is essential and a legal requirement as provided by the constitution of the country, policies and laws. The efforts for community participation in the country, apart from the recent phenomenon reflected in the country's constitution, policies and regulations, were perceived as a tool for development in the early years of independence independence. The efforts during the era were adopted in policies and declarations, including African socialism (ujamaa), villagization, independence, self-reliance and Siasa ni Kilimo. These are indicators of the leadership roles in the promotion of participatory development.

Similarly, the current study revealed that leaders at the grassroots level in the study area played some roles in enhancing community participation. The notable roles that influenced participatory development were associated with community mobilization to construct infrastructures for social services (modern toilets for schools and health). Thus, 67 modern latrines (rooms) were constructed for four schools. The chairpersons in each village

mobilized people to participate in kind and cash to accomplish the project. Every member contributed sh.5000 for the accomplishment of the project. Through local government, UNICEF supported the initiatives by providing industrial materials and meeting labour costs. The same exercise was extended to two dispensaries in which three toilets were built per dispensary with the community resource supported by UNICEF. The influence of leadership roles in the study area is also reflected in the efforts to sensitize households to construct modern toilets. In this perspective, 872 grade C and D toilets were built at Kidegembye village, making the village second national regarding environmental cleanliness and sanitation.

Nevertheless, the study found that leaders have little to do with community initiatives, which have little influence on the ministries. It was revealed that even though the women's group at Kidegembye has existed since 2005, until 2020, it had yet to receive support from leaders at grassroots levels. This indicates that their roles in education and health are more influenced by the constant pressures made by the respective ministries. Thus, they need more creativity to identify, establish, and support community initiatives for economic activities. It leaves doubt about the prevalence of effective community participation. Thus, it is recommended that the party develop mechanisms to enhance the roles of leaders at the grassroots level and report the progress to the party. This will stir the influence of the leaders in improving community participation in socio-economic development at the respective local government level.

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