

An assessment of women's participation in the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN): the case of Nachingwea district.

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PSSN-CCT (Productive Social Safety Net – Conditional Cash Transfer) is one of the most important components of the TASAF III (Tanzania Social Action Fund) programme that is implemented by the government of the United Republic of Tanzania in partnership with development partners. The programme started in 2013 and it is aimed at increasing income and consumption and improving the ability to cope with shocks among vulnerable populations while protecting children. PSSN-CCT uses a participatory approach where community members, including women, are involved in the whole project life. This study assessed the contribution of women toward the achievement of PSSN-CCT goals and objectives. In more specific terms, the study evaluated the use of stipends by women and the performance of female CMC (Community Management Committee) members. The study also examined the community's perception of women's participation in PSSN-CCT programme activities, the achievement of PSSN-CCT goals and objectives, and the factors affecting women's participation in this programme. This study was conducted in Nachingwea district and used both secondary and primary data, collected using data collection methods such as FGDs (focus group discussions), interviews and observations. The study collected data and information from various programme stakeholders including the District TASAF coordinator, Naipingo and Mpiruka local government officials, CMC members, community men and women, programme direct beneficiaries, and teachers and health workers in Naipingo and Mpiruka villages. The findings of this study indicate that the programme is achieving its objectives. Recipients abide to conditionalities as there is an increase in health visits, school attendance, and generally recipients use stipends wisely. Women are important for the achievement of PSSN-CCT programme goals and objectives in Nachingwea. Women spend money wisely compared and women that volunteer in the CMC are key in overseeing programme implementation at the community level. The community in Nachingwea have positive attitudes towards women's participation. The community understands that women are fellow community members; hence development practitioners need to involve them in order to fully realize community participation. However, the study found that structural and cultural factors act as disincentives towards women participation. Therefore, the study recommends that for women to participate effectively in the programme, TASAF management needs to ensure that the structural barriers that discourage women's

participation are overcome while promoting organizational arrangements that attract their participation. For the case of cultural factors, sensitization and empowerment programmes need to be conducted at the lower level so that more women become aware of the importance of participation in development programmes.