CBEL Journal of Multidisciplinary Research
Vol. 1 No. 1 (2026): ISSN (Online): 3108-8848
DOI: https://doi.org/10.66313/ff8yb642
Present but Not Heard: Factors Shaping Women's Participation in Community Decision-Making and Strategies for Change in Pemba, Tanzania



Present but Not Heard: Factors Shaping Women's Participation in Community Decision-Making and Strategies for Change in Pemba, Tanzania

Violeth Amoni Chonya*, Ernest Daimon Haonga, Adam Matiko Charles, Burdensia Ivo Haule, Denis Flavian Malele & Mahamudu Hassani Mayola
The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy

*Corresponding author: violeth.chonya@mnma.ac.tz

ORCID
Violeth Amoni Chonya https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6037-7554

Article History
Received: 2026-02-20
Revised: 2026-09-20
Accepted: 2026-10-25
Published: 2026-10-30

Keywords
Women's participation
Community decision-making
Gender norms
Local governance

How to cite:
Chonya, V. A., Haonga, E. D., Charles, A. M., Haule, B. I., Malele, D. F., & Mayola, M. H. (2026). Present but not heard: Factors shaping women's participation in community decision-making and strategies for change in Pemba, Tanzania. *CBEL Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 1*(1), 91–102. https://doi.org/10.66313/ff8yb642

Abstract
The purpose of the study was to examine the factors shaping women's participation in community-level decision-making in Pemba, Tanzania, and identify strategies for enhancing it. A concurrent mixed-methods design was used in four districts. A questionnaire was administered to 327 adults selected through multistage sampling, alongside 20 key informant interviews and 20 focus group discussions. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, multiple regression and thematic analysis. Respondents agreed that women's voices are valued and that legal systems are supportive, yet also that discrimination and limited access to decision-making platforms constrain women. Supportive cultural norms (β = .29), recognition of discrimination (β = .18) and supportive legal systems (β = .17) significantly predicted women's empowerment and leadership participation (R^2 = .20). Women often attend meetings without influencing decisions, depend on husbands' approval and fear social backlash, while laws remain weakly implemented. The cross-sectional, perception-based design limits causal inference, and the sample was relatively well educated. Authorities should institutionalise inclusive meeting procedures, enforce gender-responsive policies, engage men and religious leaders as allies, and invest in sustained leadership development and visible women role models.

INTRODUCTION

Women's participation in decision-making is widely recognised as a cornerstone of democratic governance and sustainable development. Women contribute substantially to household welfare, economic production, natural resource management and community development, yet they remain under-represented in leadership and



governance structures at local, national and international levels (UN Women, n.d.). Their participation matters for outcomes as well as for fairness: where women hold local decision-making positions, public investment tends to reflect the priorities women express, such as drinking water and other basic services (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004).

International and regional frameworks have made women's participation an explicit policy goal. Target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making (United Nations, 2015), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women obliges states to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life (United Nations, 1979), and the African Union's Agenda 2063 treats gender equality as a prerequisite for development (African Union Commission, 2015). Progress has nonetheless been uneven, and in many countries women's representation remains low, particularly below the national level (Inter-Parliamentary Union & UN Women, 2025).

Tanzania has demonstrated commitment to gender equality through constitutional provisions, special seats for women and national gender policies. Even so, women hold only 27.9% of senior and middle management positions (National Bureau of Statistics & Office of the Chief Government Statistician, 2025), and gender norms in rural Tanzania continue to shape who makes decisions, even as they slowly change (Badstue et al., 2021). Studies of local government authorities show that quotas can increase the number of women on local committees without necessarily giving them influence over decisions (Makalanga, 2025; UN Women, 2024). In Zanzibar, women remain under-represented in most leadership positions (Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, n.d.), and women leaders report socio-cultural expectations that make leadership harder to attain and sustain (Bachilula et al., 2022; Kalumanga et al., 2023).

Pemba Island is an important setting in which to examine these dynamics. Women contribute significantly to agriculture, seaweed farming, fisheries, trade and community development, and community-level structures shape decisions about resource allocation, service delivery, conflict resolution and development planning. Yet women's presence in these structures does not necessarily translate into influence, and strong cultural and religious traditions shape who speaks and whose views count. There is limited empirical evidence on which factors most strongly shape women's participation at the community level in Pemba, how women experience these constraints, or which strategies communities consider effective.

Women's Participation in Decision-Making

The literature distinguishes clearly between presence and influence. Agarwal (2001) describes a continuum from nominal participation (membership only) and passive participation (attending meetings without speaking) to active and interactive participation, in which women express opinions and shape decisions. Cornwall (2003) warns that participatory spaces can reproduce gender hierarchies unless attention is paid to whose voices are heard, and recent work shows that local governance structures often remain procedurally exclusionary even when women are formally included (Azizuddin & Shamsuzzoha, 2024). In this study, participation is understood as women's attendance at, voice in and influence over community decisions.

Factors Influencing Participation

Several factors shape women's participation. Role congruity theory explains that because leadership is associated with stereotypically masculine traits, women are perceived as less suited to leadership and evaluated less favourably when they lead (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Socio-cultural norms that assign domestic responsibilities to women and public leadership to men restrict participation, and studies in Ghana and Zanzibar show that patriarchal traditions shape who is considered a legitimate leader even where policies promote equality



(Bachilula et al., 2022; Bawa & Sanyare, 2013). Women's control over resources strengthens their agency and bargaining power (Kabeer, 1999), and their autonomy in household decision-making is closely linked to education, income and family relations (Bitew et al., 2024). Participation is also negotiated within households: attendance at meetings may depend on husbands' approval and on whether domestic work can be shared (Agarwal, 2001; Kahsay et al., 2021). Finally, legal and policy frameworks provide an enabling environment, but their effect depends on implementation and on accompanying changes in social norms (Kalumanga et al., 2023; Makalanga, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by Liberal Feminist Theory, which holds that women and men have equal capacities and that gender inequality arises from unequal access to opportunities, resources and positions of authority (Tong & Botts, 2018). From this perspective, women's limited participation reflects discriminatory practices and institutional barriers rather than lack of ability, and can be reduced through legal reform, equal opportunity and capacity building. The theory has been used to analyse women's participation in local decision-making in Tanzania (Makalanga, 2025). Because it gives less weight to informal norms and household relations, the study also draws on Social Role Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and on Agarwal's (2001) analysis of participatory exclusion. The conceptual framework treats women's empowerment and leadership participation as the dependent variable, and legal and political systems, discrimination and gender bias, socio-cultural norms, access to decision-making platforms, household and male support, and access to education and resources as independent variables (Table 1).

Table 1. Study variables and how they were examined

Variable	Quantitative measure	Qualitative exploration
Women's empowerment and leadership participation (dependent)	Mean of five items (F1–F5); α = .69	KIIs and FGDs
Legal and political systems	Item B7; regression predictor	KIIs and FGDs
Discrimination and gender bias	Item B4; regression predictor	KIIs and FGDs
Socio-cultural norms	Item B2; regression predictor	KIIs and FGDs
Access to decision-making platforms	Item B8 (descriptive)	KIIs and FGDs
Household and male support	Item B9 (descriptive)	KIIs and FGDs
Access to education and resources	Item B3 (descriptive)	—

Note. KII = key informant interview; FGD = focus group discussion; α = Cronbach's alpha.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to: (i) assess community perceptions of the conditions shaping women's participation in community-level decision-making; (ii) determine the influence of legal and political systems, discrimination and gender bias, and socio-cultural norms on women's empowerment and leadership participation; and (iii) explore the experiences of women and other stakeholders in order to explain these patterns and identify strategies for enhancing women's involvement.

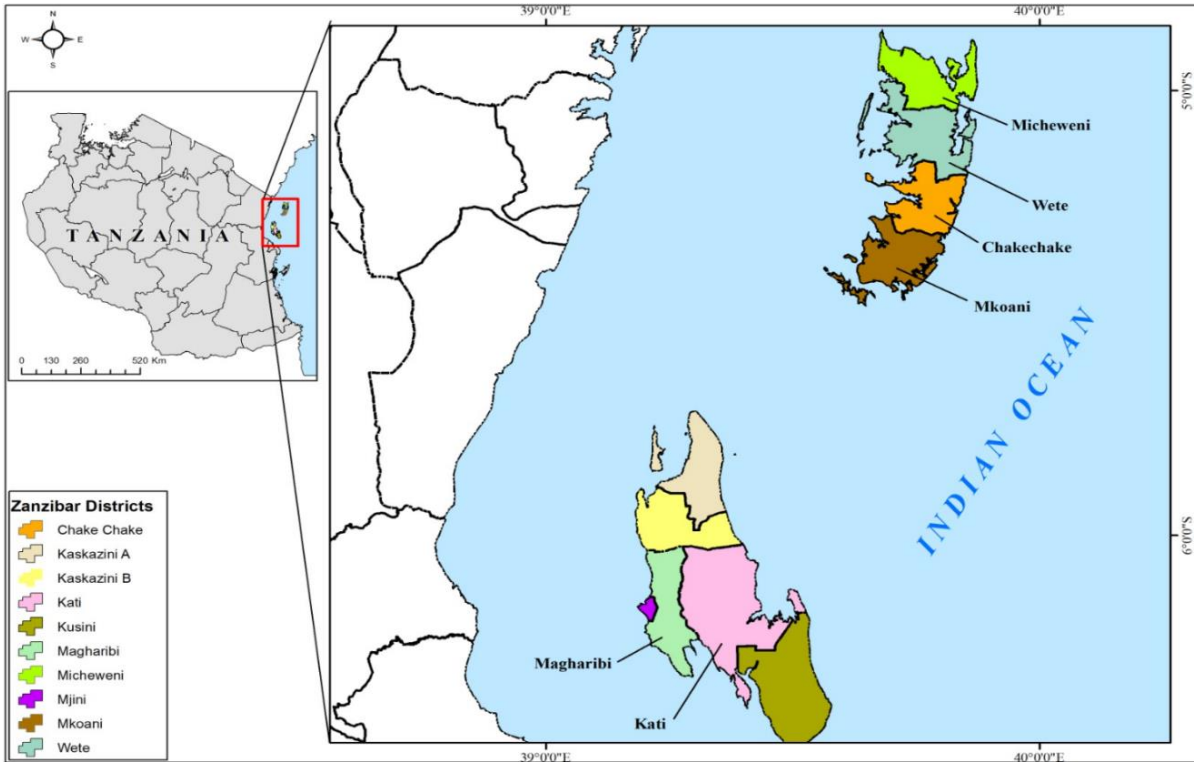
METHOD

Study Area

The study was conducted on Pemba Island in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, located approximately between latitudes 4°52′ and 5°26′ S and longitudes 39°35′ and 39°55′ E. Pemba is predominantly rural, with

livelihoods based on subsistence agriculture, fishing, seaweed farming and small-scale trade, and it has higher poverty levels and lower access to services than Unguja and Mainland Tanzania. Community decision-making, particularly in shehia leadership, religious institutions and local committees, is often dominated by men. The study covered Wete and Micheweni districts in North Pemba Region and Chake Chake and Mkoani districts in South Pemba Region (Figure 1), purposively selected to capture variation in socio-economic conditions, institutional presence and exposure to gender equality initiatives.

Figure 1. Location of the study districts in Pemba, Zanzibar



Source: MNMA, Pemba – Department of Arts and Social Sciences

Research Design

A concurrent mixed-methods design was adopted, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and integrated at the interpretation stage (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative strand measured perceptions and estimated the influence of selected factors, while the qualitative strand explained these patterns through participants' experiences and generated locally grounded strategies.

Population, Sample and Sampling

The target population comprised women and men aged 18 years and above in the four districts. A multistage sampling strategy was used: districts were selected purposively, and respondents were selected through stratified random sampling within shehias (the lowest administrative units) to ensure representation across sex, age and occupation. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula, $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$, with an estimated adult population of 300,000 and a 5% margin of error, giving a target of 399 respondents. A total of



327 respondents completed the questionnaire (82.0%), the shortfall reflecting accessibility constraints and refusals during rural fieldwork.

For the qualitative strand, 20 key informant interviews (KIIs) were held with purposively selected community leaders, women leaders, representatives of non-governmental organisations and local government officials. Twenty focus group discussions (FGDs), five per district with 8 to 15 participants each, were segmented by gender, age and stakeholder type (women, men, youth and elders) to encourage open dialogue.

Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was developed in English, translated into Kiswahili and administered face to face by trained research assistants to accommodate varying literacy levels. The sections used in this paper covered demographic characteristics, ten statements on factors influencing women's participation (B1–B10), and five statements measuring women's empowerment and leadership participation (F1–F5), such as "Women in my community are empowered to take on leadership roles" and "Women in my community feel confident in their ability to lead". Statements were rated on a four-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). An open-ended question asked respondents to recommend strategies for increasing women's participation. KIIs and FGDs followed semi-structured guides on access to decision-making spaces, discrimination, cultural expectations, household support, legal awareness and strategies for change; sessions lasted 45 to 90 minutes, were conducted in Kiswahili and were audio-recorded with consent. Fieldwork took place between July and October 2025, and entry into each community was facilitated by local leaders.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and ordinary least squares multiple regression with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics version 29. The dependent variable was the mean of items F1–F5 ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.62$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$). The three predictors were single items: legal and political systems (B7), discrimination and gender bias (B4) and socio-cultural norms (B2). Item means were interpreted against the scale midpoint of 2.5. Multicollinearity was assessed using tolerance and variance inflation factors (Hair et al., 2019); homoscedasticity was checked with the Breusch–Pagan test, independence of residuals with the Durbin–Watson statistic, and robustness with heteroscedasticity-consistent (HC3) standard errors. Qualitative data were transcribed, translated and analysed thematically in NVivo 14 following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases, with coding organised around the conceptual framework while remaining open to issues raised by participants.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval and research permission were granted by the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar through the Second Vice President's Office in July 2025. Participants gave verbal informed consent, participation was voluntary, data were anonymised at the point of collection and stored securely, and qualitative excerpts are identified only by data source and district. Findings were shared with communities through feedback workshops.

RESULTS

Respondents' Characteristics

Table 2 summarises the characteristics of the 327 respondents. The sample was balanced by sex, and most respondents were aged 36 years or above and married. More than nine in ten had post-primary education, and civil servants and business owners were the largest occupational groups, indicating a sample that was better educated than the general adult population of Pemba.

Table 2. Respondents' demographic characteristics (n = 327)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Sex	Female	166	50.8
	Male	161	49.2
Age (years)	18–25	38	11.6
	26–35	53	16.2
	36–45	147	45.0
	46 and above	89	27.2
Education	Primary	24	7.3
	Secondary	69	21.1
	Diploma/certificate	109	33.3
	University	125	38.2
Occupation	Civil servant	117	35.8
	Business owner	80	24.5
	Student	59	18.0
	Farmer	57	17.4
	Other	14	4.3
Marital status	Married	194	59.3
	Divorced	60	18.3
	Single	45	13.8
	Widowed	28	8.6

Source: Field data (2025).

Perceptions of Factors Influencing Participation

All item means lay above the scale midpoint (Table 3), indicating moderate agreement. Respondents most strongly agreed that women's voices are valued in community decision-making and that legal and political systems support women's participation in leadership. At the same time, they agreed with statements describing barriers: that discriminatory practices prevent women from participating, that the lack of women in leadership positions is a major issue, and that women face challenges in accessing decision-making platforms. Agreement that men support women's leadership was comparatively modest. The results portray a context in which women's leadership is acknowledged in principle and formal systems are seen as supportive, yet discrimination, under-representation and barriers to access are also widely recognised.

Table 3. Perceptions of factors influencing women's participation in decision-making (n = 327)

Statement	*M*	*SD*
Women's voices are valued in community decision-making processes (B5)	3.08	0.90
Legal and political systems in my community support women's participation in leadership (B7)	3.04	0.83
Cultural norms in my community support women's involvement in leadership roles (B2)	2.87	0.83
Women's participation in decision-making leads to better community outcomes (B10)	2.86	0.96
Discriminatory practices prevent women from participating in decision-making (B4)	2.83	0.96
Women in my community are encouraged to participate in decision-making processes (B1)	2.81	0.95
Women have equal access to education and resources needed for leadership roles (B3)	2.81	0.90
Men in my community support women's participation in leadership roles (B9)	2.79	0.96
Lack of representation of women in leadership positions is a major issue in my community (B6)	2.74	0.93
Women in my community face challenges in accessing decision-making platforms (B8)	2.66	1.01

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree. *Source:* Field data (2025).

Factors Predicting Women's Empowerment and Leadership Participation

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 323) = 26.29$, $p < .001$, and explained 19.6% of the variance in women's empowerment and leadership participation ($R^2 = .196$, adjusted $R^2 = .189$). All three predictors were significant (Table 4). Supportive socio-cultural norms had the largest effect (β = .292), followed by discrimination and gender bias (β = .180) and legal and political systems (β = .173). Because the discrimination item is worded as a barrier, its positive coefficient means that respondents who more strongly acknowledged that discriminatory practices hold women back also rated women's empowerment and leadership more favourably. Tolerance values (.93–.95) and VIFs (1.05–1.08) indicated no multicollinearity, the Breusch–Pagan test showed no heteroscedasticity ($p = .60$), the Durbin–Watson statistic was 1.84, and all effects remained significant with HC3 standard errors.

Table 4. Multiple regression of women's empowerment and leadership participation on selected factors

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*	*p*	95% CI for *B*	VIF
(Constant)	1.399	0.158	—	8.87	< .001	[1.089, 1.709]	—
Legal and political systems	0.128	0.038	.173	3.39	< .001	[0.054, 0.203]	1.05
Discrimination and gender bias	0.115	0.033	.180	3.52	< .001	[0.051, 0.179]	1.05
Socio-cultural norms	0.218	0.039	.292	5.65	< .001	[0.142, 0.294]	1.08

Note. $N = 327$. Dependent variable: mean of items F1–F5. $R = .443$; $R^2 = .196$; adjusted $R^2 = .189$; $F(3, 323) = 26.29$, $p < .001$; *SE* of estimate = 0.554. *Source:* Field data (2025).

Qualitative Findings on Barriers

Thematic analysis of the KII and FGD data identified six themes that help explain the quantitative results.



Presence without influence

Across all districts, women reported that they were often present at meetings but participated passively:

> *"Women attend meetings, but they are rarely given the chance to speak. Decisions are usually made by men." (KII, Micheweni)*

> *"We sit in meetings, but our opinions are not taken seriously. Sometimes decisions are already made before we speak." (FGD with women, Micheweni)*

Leadership as a male domain

Discrimination was a dominant theme in all four districts. A key informant in Mkoani explained that men often view leadership as their exclusive domain, so women's contributions are dismissed or ridiculed, and women in a Chake Chake FGD said that women leaders are judged more harshly than men and that their mistakes are remembered for much longer.

Domestic expectations and cultural norms

Traditional gender roles were repeatedly cited as a barrier. In Wete, a participant noted that women who attend meetings are criticised because they are expected to remain at home, and an FGD in Mkoani described how domestic responsibilities restrict women's engagement in leadership, which is regarded as a secondary role for women.

Dependence on household and male support

A key informant in Chake Chake noted that women's attendance at meetings often depends on their husbands' approval and that some women are prevented from taking part. A mixed-group FGD in Wete observed that without men's support, women are likely to remain silent or absent.

Laws that exist on paper

Participants acknowledged laws and policies supporting women's participation but described limited awareness and weak implementation. A key informant in Micheweni remarked that although such laws exist, little has changed in everyday practice, and men in a Chake Chake FGD observed that cultural norms tend to outweigh formal policies.

Fear of criticism and social backlash

Women reported that fear of ridicule or gossip reduced their willingness to speak:

> *"Some women fear speaking because they will be criticised later. Silence feels safer." (KII, Mkoani)*

Strategies Proposed by Participants

Participants proposed five locally grounded strategies. First, *creating deliberately inclusive decision-making spaces*, such as dedicated agenda time or rotating speaking roles: "If meetings are structured so women are invited to speak, more women will participate. Silence is not lack of ideas, it is lack of opportunity" (KII, Micheweni). Second, *addressing discrimination through awareness and accountability*: "If leaders are held accountable for excluding women, discrimination will reduce" (FGD with men, Wete). Third, *engaging men and household decision-makers as allies*: "If men are involved in discussions about women's leadership, resistance reduces" (KII, Chake Chake). Fourth, *building women's confidence and leadership skills*: "When women practise leadership in groups, they gain courage to speak in public meetings" (FGD with women,



Mkoani). Fifth, *increasing visible women role models*: "When women see other women leading, they believe they can also participate" (KII, Micheweni).

DISCUSSION

This study examined the factors shaping women's participation in community-level decision-making in Pemba and the strategies that could enhance it. The descriptive results reveal a gap between acceptance in principle and inclusion in practice: respondents agreed that women's voices are valued and that legal systems are supportive, yet also that discrimination, under-representation and barriers to access persist. Women's accounts of attending meetings without being heard correspond to Agarwal's (2001) nominal or passive participation and echo evidence that participatory and local governance spaces can remain exclusionary even when women are formally present (Azizuddin & Shamsuzzoha, 2024; Cornwall, 2003; Makalanga, 2025). Measures that count women's attendance or seats are therefore likely to overstate their actual influence.

Supportive socio-cultural norms were the strongest predictor of women's empowerment and leadership participation. This is consistent with Social Role Theory: where community norms accept women in public roles, the incongruity between being a woman and being a leader is reduced and women's leadership is more readily recognised (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The qualitative themes of leadership as a male domain and of domestic expectations show the converse, and are in line with evidence that gender norms in rural Tanzania change only gradually (Badstue et al., 2021). Legal and political systems also had a significant, though smaller, positive effect. Formal frameworks therefore matter, but the "laws on paper" theme indicates that their influence is limited by weak implementation, consistent with studies in Ghana and Zanzibar (Bawa & Sanyare, 2013; Kalumanga et al., 2023).

The positive coefficient for discrimination and gender bias should be interpreted with care. It does not suggest that discrimination increases participation. Rather, respondents who recognised that discriminatory practices hold women back also tended to view women's leadership positively, suggesting that awareness of discrimination forms part of a gender-equitable outlook. This is consistent with gender-transformative approaches that treat critical awareness of unequal norms as a starting point for change (Cookson et al., 2025; Guthridge et al., 2022). Because the three factors explained about one fifth of the variance, other influences, such as education, income, time burdens and household relations (Bitew et al., 2024; Kabeer, 1999), also matter, as the qualitative findings on male approval and fear of backlash confirm.

The strategies proposed by participants map closely onto the barriers identified. Inclusive meeting procedures address presence without influence; awareness and accountability measures target discrimination; engaging men addresses household dependence; and confidence-building and role models respond to fear of backlash. This correspondence suggests that communities in Pemba recognise the mechanisms of exclusion and favour practical, procedural changes alongside longer-term change in norms. The findings support Liberal Feminist Theory's premise that women's exclusion stems from unequal opportunity rather than lack of ability, while showing that formal equality is not enough where informal norms continue to govern who is heard.

Limitations

The cross-sectional design does not permit causal inference, and the data rely on self-reported perceptions. The predictors were single items, and the reliability of the dependent variable scale was modest (α = .69). The sample was better educated than the general adult population of Pemba, which may limit generalisability. Future research should use longitudinal designs to assess the effects of leadership development and gender-



transformative interventions, model a wider set of determinants with validated multi-item measures, and conduct intersectional analyses by age, education, marital status and socio-economic status.

CONCLUSION

Women's participation in community-level decision-making in Pemba is shaped by social, cultural, household and institutional factors. Supportive cultural norms were the strongest predictor of women's empowerment and leadership participation, followed by recognition of discrimination and supportive legal and political systems. Yet women often attend community meetings without influencing decisions, depend on household and male support, and fear social backlash, while supportive laws remain weakly implemented. Enhancing women's participation therefore requires moving beyond representation and legal provision to transform the norms, procedures and power relations that determine whether women's voices are heard.

Recommendations

Drawing on the findings and the strategies proposed by participants, the study recommends that: (i) the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar and local government authorities strengthen monitoring and accountability for gender-responsive policies, including indicators of women's substantive participation in community decision-making; (ii) shehia and local government structures institutionalise inclusive meeting practices, such as convenient meeting times, dedicated agenda time for women's contributions and participatory facilitation; (iii) community dialogues engage men, elders and religious leaders as allies in promoting women's leadership and shared household responsibilities; (iv) government and development partners invest in sustained leadership programmes that combine training, mentorship and peer networks; and (v) communities raise legal awareness and publicly recognise women leaders to provide visible role models.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank The Mwalimu Nyerere Memorial Academy for funding this study and the Second Vice President's Office of Zanzibar for granting research permission. We are grateful to the regional and district authorities in Pemba for facilitating fieldwork, and to the community members, leaders and other stakeholders who generously shared their time and experiences.

References

African Union Commission. (2015). *Agenda 2063: The Africa we want* (Framework document). African Union.

Agarwal, B. (2001). Participatory exclusions, community forestry, and gender: An analysis for South Asia and a conceptual framework. *World Development, 29*(10), 1623–1648. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(01)00066-3

Azizuddin, M., & Shamsuzzoha, A. (2024). Women leadership development in local governance in South and Southeast Asia: A critical analysis. *Southeast Asia: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 24*(1), 40–52. https://doi.org/10.1108/SEAMJ-06-2023-0052

Bachilula, J. L., Dachi, H., & Boniface, R. (2022). The lived experiences of women leaders at the University of Dar es Salaam and the State University of Zanzibar. *Tanzania Journal of Population Studies and Development, 29*(1), 116–130.

Badstue, L., Farnworth, C. R., Umantseva, A., Kamanzi, A., & Roeven, L. (2021). Continuity and change: Performing gender in rural Tanzania. *The Journal of Development Studies, 57*(2), 310–325. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2020.1790534



Bawa, S., & Sanyare, F. (2013). Women's participation and representation in politics: Perspectives from Ghana. *International Journal of Public Administration, 36*(4), 282–291. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2012.757620

Bitew, D. A., Getahun, A. B., Gedef, G. M., Andualem, F., & Getnet, M. (2024). Determinants of household decision making autonomy among rural married women based on Ethiopian demography health survey: A multilevel analysis. *BMC Women's Health, 24*, Article 216. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-024-03058-3

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2004). Women as policy makers: Evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India. *Econometrica, 72*(5), 1409–1443. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0262.2004.00539.x

Cookson, T. P., Carlitz, R., Berryhill, A., & Fuentes, L. (2025). Gender-transformative action, social norms and economic empowerment. *European Journal of Politics and Gender, 8*(3), 562–582. https://doi.org/10.1332/25151088Y2024D000000022

Cornwall, A. (2003). Whose voices? Whose choices? Reflections on gender and participatory development. *World Development, 31*(8), 1325–1342. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(03)00086-X

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review, 109*(3), 573–598. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573

Guthridge, M., Kirkman, M., Penovic, T., & Giummarra, M. J. (2022). Promoting gender equality: A systematic review of interventions. *Social Justice Research, 35*(3), 318–343. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-022-00398-z

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Inter-Parliamentary Union & UN Women. (2025). *Women in politics: 2025* [Map]. IPU and UN Women.

Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change, 30*(3), 435–464. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00125

Kahsay, G. A., Nordén, A., & Bulte, E. (2021). Women participation in formal decision-making: Empirical evidence from participatory forest management in Ethiopia. *Global Environmental Change, 70*, Article 102363. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2021.102363

Kalumanga, V. E., Nyange, T. M., Wende, M. L., & Mahena, L. (2023). Status of gender and top leadership positions: Influencing impediments in Zanzibar, Tanzania. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies, 14*(1), 112–135.

Makalanga, L. (2025). Participation of women leaders in local decision-making structures in Tanzania: A case of Dodoma Urban and Bahi districts. *Journal of African Politics, 5*(1), 34–50. https://doi.org/10.58548/2025jap51.3450

National Bureau of Statistics & Office of the Chief Government Statistician. (2025). *Gender dimensions of Tanzania's labour market*. NBS and OCGS.

Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar. (n.d.). *Zanzibar gender equality profile*. https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/zanzibar_gender_equality_profile_final.pdf

Tong, R., & Botts, T. F. (2018). *Feminist thought: A more comprehensive introduction* (5th ed.). Routledge.

United Nations. (1979). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. United Nations General Assembly.



United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). United Nations General Assembly.

UN Women. (2024). *Strengthening meaningful participation, leadership and economic rights for women and girls at the local level in Tanzania: Abridged version*. UN Women Tanzania Country Office. https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/04/strengthening-meaningful-participation-leadership-and-economic-rights-for-women-and-girls-at-the-local-level-in-tanzania-abridged-version

UN Women. (n.d.). *Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation*. Retrieved October 25, 2026, from https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures

Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper and Row.