

Assessing Women Empowerment in Tanzania: The Case of the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN)

Key messages

- Despite improvements in women empowerment within main domains of PSSN programme, which includes conditional cash transfers, public works, and livelihood enhancement programmes, men continue to dominate decision-making on major production issues
- Tanzania's Productive Social Safety Net programme has slightly increased women's participation in off-farm employment.
- While women participating in the PSSN programme were more satisfied with their leisure time, there is no sufficient evidence that the said leisure time increased at the expense of regular productive activities.

Introduction



This brief snapshot results from a study that examined the impact of cash transfers on household living standards, and on women empowerment in the period 2015–2017. The study adapts a Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) approach, and panel data sets to carry out a quasi-experimental assessment of the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) programme implemented by the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) on women's empowerment in Tanzania. Although the PSSN Programme is not primarily designed as a programme for promoting gender equality, findings indicate positive influences on livelihoods of female recipients and on improving gender relations.

This evaluation is based on panel data on the baseline and follow-up information

on treatment (TASAF beneficiaries) and control groups (non-TASAF beneficiaries) in ten districts in Tanzania mainland and one in Zanzibar.

A quasi experiment technique known as difference-in-differences approach and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The timing of data and the analytical method helped to remove both the potential bias in causal effects of the PSSN Programme due to unobserved selection factors and any omitted variables. In addition to the panel data, qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations.

Findings

Patriarchy survives in key decision-making in households

The study finds that for both the control or treatment group and for both rounds of survey, men made major decisions with respect to the type and timing of crops that households produced. This is shown in figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Inputs in decision-making on the food crops to cultivate

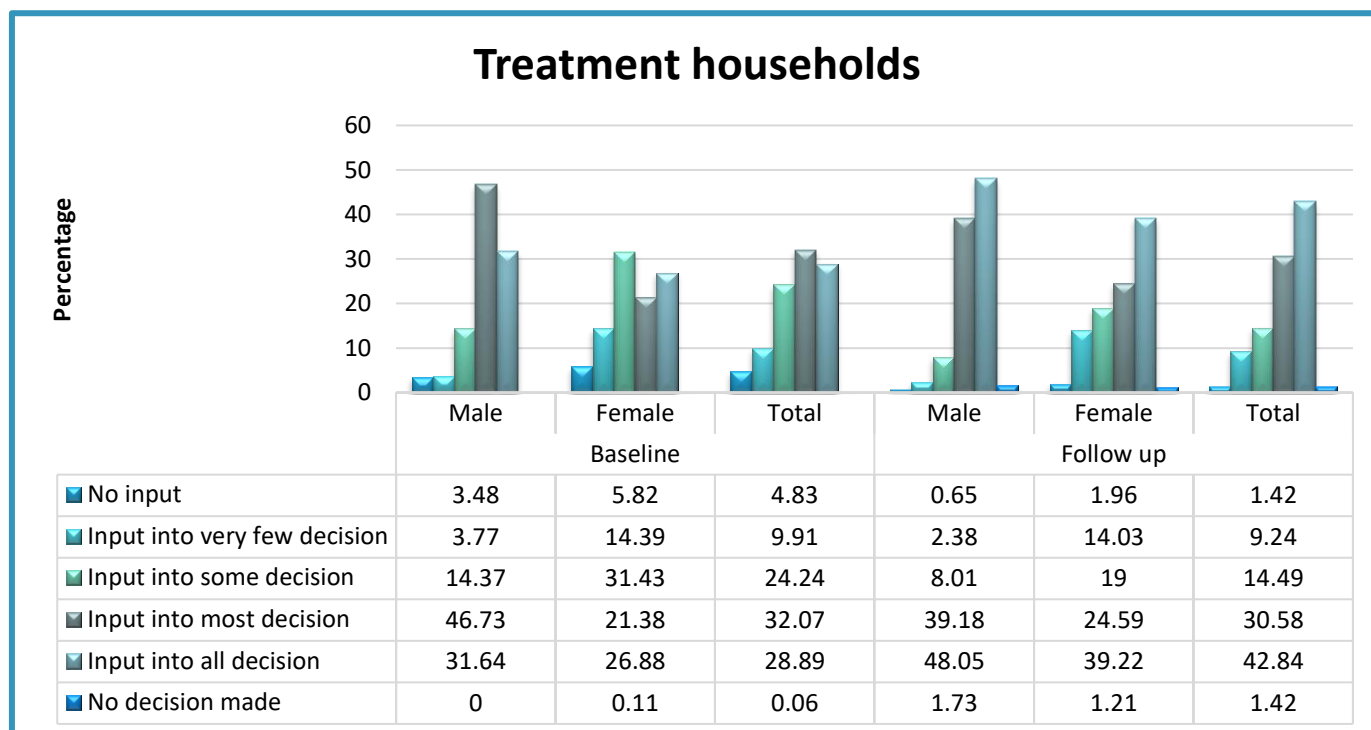
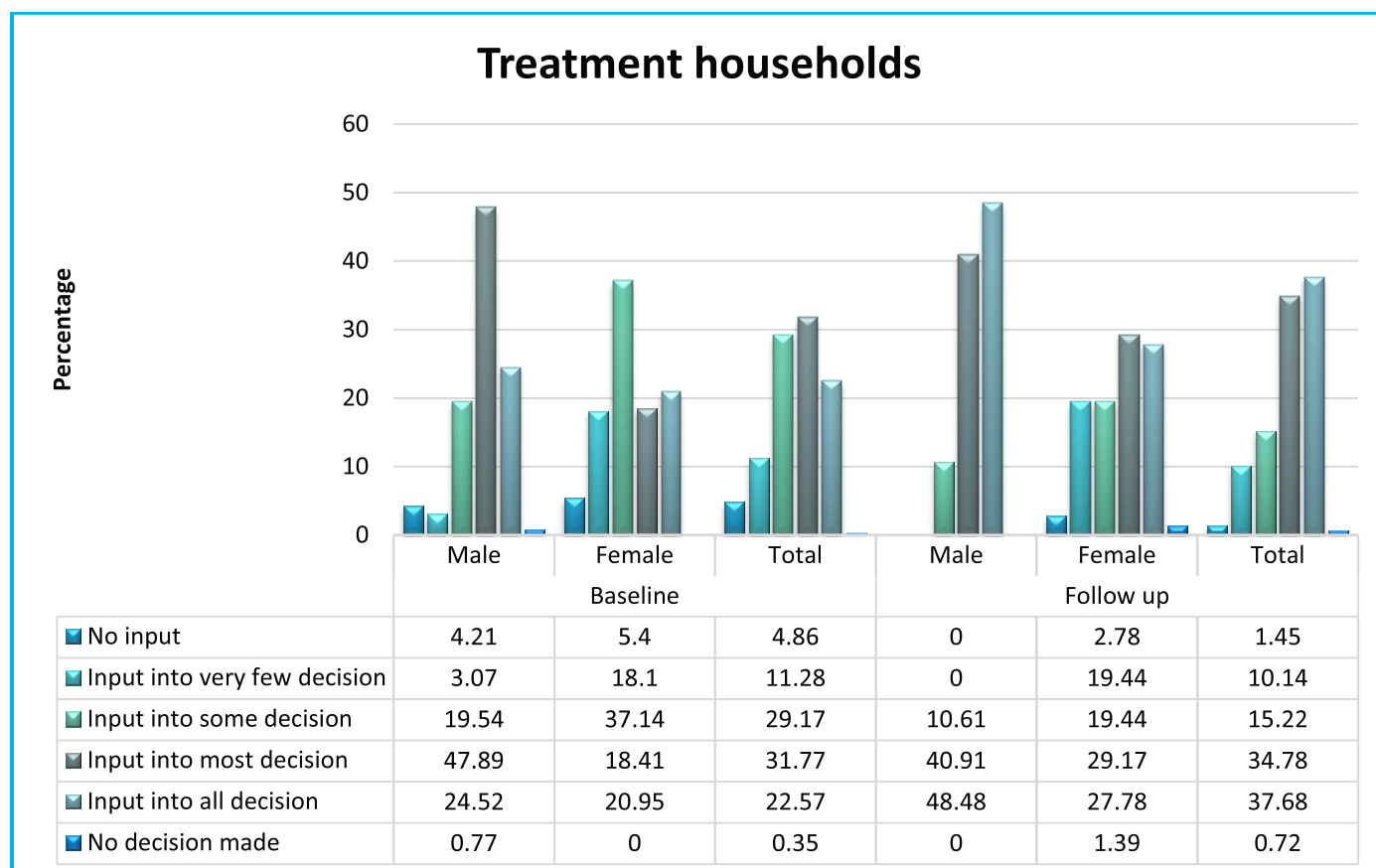
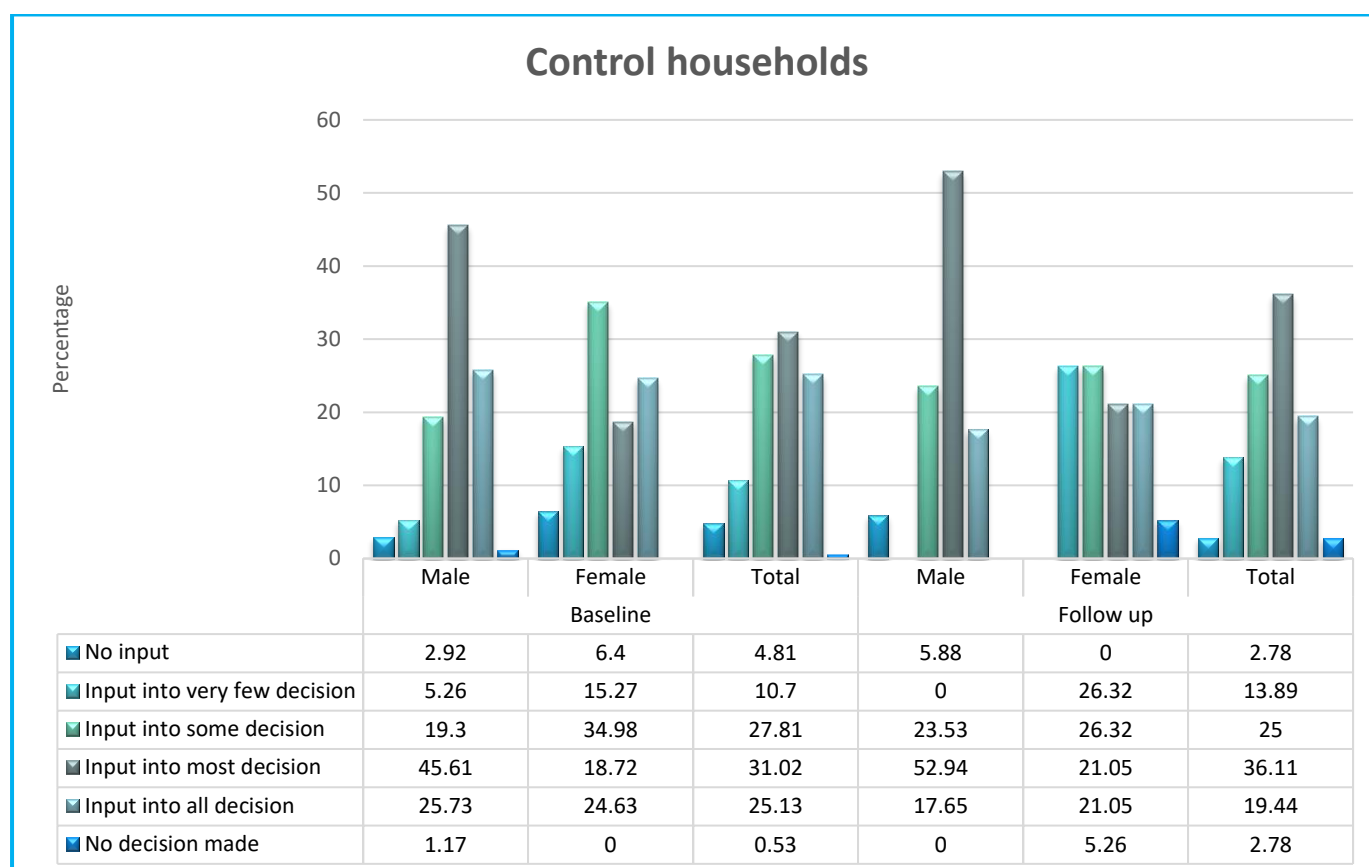


Figure 2: Inputs in decision-making on the cash crops to cultivate





PSSN increased women's participation in making decisions in some activities but not in others

On average, women who took part in the PSSN programme were more likely to participate in decision making over household livestock and other livelihood activities than those excluded from PSSN. However, this intervention did not produce statistically significant impacts on women's participation in decisions on crop farming, non-farm activities, wage and salary employment, savings or housing. This is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Impact of the PSSN programme on women's decision-making on production and income

Dependent variables	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]
	Food crop farming	Cash crop farming	Livestock	Non-farm activities	Wage & salary employment	TASAF	Fishing	Savings	House maintenance
Diff-in-diff*	-0.05	0.33	0.48	0.55	0.28	0.34	2.48	0.76	-0.10
	(0.21)	(0.56)	(1.88)	(1.35)	(1.05)	(2.95)**	(1.37)	(0.61)	(0.22)
Treatment	-0.04	-0.19	-0.12	-0.05	-0.06	-2.2	-1.188	-0.19	0.15
	(0.28)	(0.99)	(0.65)	(0.28)	(0.39)	(3.51)**	(0.67)	(0.87)	(0.56)
Time	0.29	0	-0.26	0.08	0.21	-2.3	-1.133	-0.41	-0.58
	(1.64)	(0.01)	(1.14)	(0.21)	(0.95)	(2.08)*	(0.66)	(0.34)	(1.57)
Observations	2,560	609	1,402	820	1,457	345	78	326	316

Note **Robust *t*-statistics are shown in parentheses.

The limitations on the empowerment of women beyond PSSN sphere in the households' decision-making processes could be attributed to religious, cultural or legal contexts affecting their lives. For instance, main religions in the country expect women to submit to their husbands as the latter are 'heads' of the households. Moreover, some of the cultures perpetuate male dominance over females as a norm in the society. Also, an important attribute is the existence of unfavourable legislations that are contradictory to and has precedence over gender-sensitive programmes.

The PSSN did not increase leisure time, but increased satisfaction with leisure time

The study also finds that beneficiary women were more satisfied with their leisure time than were the non-beneficiaries, even if leisure time did not increase. The programme would have increased women's leisure time only if it facilitated reallocation of their time from other activities to leisure. While the increase in leisure time was statistically insignificant, it does not rule out the possibility that the programme increased labour productivity, but beneficiary women decided to work more hours, keeping their leisure time constant, nor does it exclude the status quo case.

Conclusions and recommendations

The study concludes that the PSSN programme have increased participation of Tanzanian women in livelihood decisions within households particularly on TASAF-related activities, but social norms still limits the role that such interventions can play to enhance women's leadership in communities. Thus, the PSSN interventions in themselves are not a significant stimulant of change in gender relations regarding decision-making on production strategies and patterns.

It is recommended to the government to:

- Scale up the PSSN programme and increase the amount of funds transferred to the extremely poor households
- Explicitly make gender equality and women's empowerment strategic goals in development policies and community engagement plans
- Examine and address the broad-based constraints to women's empowerment through holistic approaches in all areas of social policy
- Include civic education as a key activity for the communities covered by PSSN programme to facilitate its buy-in by both men and women
- Identify through research the unintended negative consequences on women of PSSN interventions and find ways of reducing them
- Strengthen the capacity of the TASAF Programme to address deprivations through a holistic approach covering food, safe drinking water, sanitation, health, shelter, education and household energy



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