Bridging the Socio-Informational Divide for Poverty Reduction in the North 'A' District, Zanzibar

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Abstract

Information inclusion has direct impacts on the reduction of poverty. This is even more apparent with rural environment. Failure to consolidate information with strategies for poverty reduction produces severe negative consequences. In Zanzibar, the non-involvement of information professionals in the implementation and review of the PRSP (2010/11 – 2015/16) is believed to be one of the main causes of government failure in achieving the poverty reduction goals. This paper, therefore, is explores the concept of information divide in the execution of poverty reduction strategies in the context of rural Zanzibar. It is based on a study that was carried out to achieve the following specific objectives: to assess the comparable level of education of small-scale fishermen and farmers of different genders in the North 'A' District; to examine the range and accessibility of information resources by farmers and fishermen of different genders; to identify the link between socio-informational exclusion and poverty; to identify the challenges small-scale fishermen and farmers face; and to suggest measures that could be introduced to fight poverty through information inclusiveness. The study was a case study and employed mainly a qualitative method, using interviews to collect data. Essentially, the study's analysis of the poverty problems in Zanzibar sought to detail the socio-informational gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and use the findings to make a number of recommendations.

Key words: Information, library services, socio-informational divide, poverty reduction, Zanzibar

1. Background and rationale

Zanzibar is an autonomous partner of the United Republic of Tanzania. According to the Population and Housing Census (2013) Zanzibar had a population of about 1.5 million with a growth rate of 3.1 percent and a population density of 412 per square km, which is the highest in Africa. Out of the total population, 40 percent live in urban area and the remaining 60 percent live in rural areas. The North 'A' District is the third most densely populated after Zanzibar Urban and West Districts, respectively. There are about 42,000 inhabitants scattered

along 40 sq. km with five electoral constituencies and 38 *shehias*. The headquarters of the district is Mkokotoni Township.

2. Achieving the Goal of Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger in Zanzibar

According to the Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction, commonly referred to as MKUZA using its Kiswahili acronym (2007), the agricultural sector has remained the dominant sector of the economy as 40 percent of the population of Zanzibar depends on it for their livelihood. The share of agriculture in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at 25 percent in 2002, declined to 21percent in 2003 and slightly rose to 23 percent in 2004. Recent data was not obtained. Overall, the declining GDP share of agriculture could be explained partly as a consequence of the rising contribution of other sectors, particularly trade, transport and tourism. The same source identified North 'A' District as the second poorest district of the Zanzibar archipelago, after Micheweni in Pemba.

3. Social-Informational Inclusion

Social inclusion is an area of public concern which has always been high on many governments' agendas, but the role of libraries and other information centres in this area has not always been clearly defined. The availability of a large section of society who are called the "information poor", the "information have-nots", the "information disadvantaged" the "information underprivileged" and the like, has been an increasingly unsettling issue for the information society throughout the world. Yu (2009) observes that within the broader academic community the issue has become a focal point of research in multiple disciplines, such as communication studies, library and information studies, and sociology and Ethics.. Yu (2009) further opines that in most studies, the socio-economically disadvantaged groups are taken for granted as the information poor.

Social inclusion, according to Train *et al*. (2000), implies the right of every citizen to be included fully in the society, a notion which is akin to the public library service ethos that the public library should be equally and universally available. Train *et al*. (2000) analysed what constitutes social exclusion in all its forms, and ultimately suggested that, all libraries should be secure, risk free, social places that are welcoming to all; caring, helpful, supportive places where people meet on equal terms; and above all, meeting places for individuals and ideas, shaped by and shaping the community.

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4. Role of Information on Poverty Reduction

Research at the University of Reading conducted by Cris Garforth *et al.* (2010) shows that material poverty is often associated with exclusion of sources of information and communication. In his monumental three volumes analysis of the Information Age, Manuel Castells (1998, 2002) predicted that Information and Communication Technologies (lCTs) and the ability to use and adapt them will be the most critical factors in determining wealth and power in our time (Warah, 2004). Information is, therefore, an essential tool for enabling people to understand the different options available before making decisions. People who are often disadvantaged in society need information to empower them. The information they need must be specific with regard to its availability and applicability. It must also be provided at the right time, to the right person and at a reasonable cost.

5. Study Rationale

Zanzibar launched its first comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy (ZPRP, commonly referred to as MKUZA by its acronym in Kiswahili) in May 2002. The ZPRP was the first medium-term programme for implementing the country's Vision 2020. It was an operational plan with strategies aimed at mobilising and utilising domestic financial resources, both public and private, and a framework for attracting external resources to support prioritised expenditure plans. It focused on reducing income poverty, improving human capabilities, survival and social well-being and containing extreme vulnerability.

Subsequent reports for the implementation of ZPRS confirms that poverty in Zanzibar is largely characterised by higher poverty incidence in rural than in urban areas. Various measures have been taken to reduce poverty, but seldom is information placed among the alternatives. Although there is a solid policy framework for the general poverty reduction strategies, as well as sustained and strong relationship between the national and local communities, there is less emphasis placed on the role that information provision can play in poverty alleviation. Bridging the informational gap, it seems, has not been given the consideration it deserves in many government strategies. Despite policy documents giving a good signal of the need for poverty strategies programme to originate from local communities, less emphasis was placed on the provision of information to empower the local communities and help fight against rural poverty. Therefore, it is essential to conduct a study

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that provides empirical evidence on the current information gap and how information provision can accelerate the achievement of poverty reduction in rural Zanzibar.

6. Methodology

This study was carried out in the Northern 'A' District, Zanzibar. A case study design was chosen because of the presence of a large number of agricultural fields and fishing landing sites across Zanzibar. The design was also deemed appropriate because it enabled the researchers to concentrate on specific issues of interest and to identify various interactive processes at work which could otherwise remain hidden when a survey method is deployed. The study employed mainly a qualitative method with some quantitative aspects integrated. The interview was main method for data collection. The qualitative method was used because it was deemed appropriate to provide in-depth understanding, a holistic picture of the problem based on individual respondents on the study. It was also used based on the researcher's assumption that most of the small-scale fishermen and farmers found it difficult to grasp questionnaires having dropped out of elementary school at lower levels.

The North 'A' District was particularly chosen because it is considered to be the second poorest district (after Micheweni in Pemba) according to the MKUZA report (2012). Moreover, it was within easy reach. The district was also selected because it was considered to have the highest percentage of people engaged in subsidiary farming and fishery activities in Zanzibar. The population of the study comprised all small-scale farmers and fishermen who trade their business in the North 'A' District. The researchers interviewed them until a theoretical saturation was met at 72 respondents. The sample size also included eight librarians as key informants.

7. Results of the Study

This section presents, interprets and discusses the data derived from the interviews schedules. Apart from the narrative presentation that also integrates verbatim transcription, data is also presented in tables showing frequencies and percentages.

8. The Range and Accessibility of Information Services in North "A" District

The second objective of the study was to examine the range and accessibility of information resources by farmers and fishermen of different genders in the North 'A' District.

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9. The Range of Information Services

The importance of information as a vital resource for national development is unquestionable (Odini, 1993). Based on this fact, respondents were asked to comment on the range of sources of information within the district. They provided multiple responses as Table 1 illustrates:

Table 1: Range of Sources of Information in the North 'A' District, Zanzibar

Range of sources of information	No of responses	Percentage %
Telephones services	52	81
Radio broadcasting	31	43
Television broadcasting	23	36
Traditional announcements (upatu)	7	11
Outdated newspapers	5	8
Book boxes (school)	4	6
Internet services	4	6
Posters	3	5
Leaflets	2	3
Public meetings	2	3
Mobile loud speakers	1	2
Games and bonanzas	1	2
School dramas	1	2
Campaign clothes	1	2

Table 1 shows that telephone services (including and especially mobile/cell phones), radio broadcasting and television broadcasting, traditional announcement (upatu), outdated newspapers, book boxes (in schools), internet services, and posters were deployed at to varying degrees as sources of information. It can be observed from Table 1 that even those respondents who did not possess a telephone set acknowledged its importance and was widespread.

The study further found that most of the Zanzibar FM radios and some from East Africa and beyond were obtained at varying degrees of clarity. The ZBC was claimed to be the most

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accessible radio and the Radio Aboud was the least. About six local and community radios stations were accessible and about four cable television networks were also widely accessible. Accessible radios that were cited by the respondents (apart from the ZBC) included *Noor FM*, *Radio Adhan*, *Radio Iman*, *Radio Istiqama* and *Tumbatu Community FM* radio. Some of the International radios cited include *Radio China International, BBC, Sauti ya America*, and *Radio Berlin*. Among the televisions cited were *ZBC*, *TVT*, *ITV*, *Star TV*, *TV Aboud*, *TV Mlimani, East Africa TV* and *Channel 10*. *Citizen TV* and *KTN* of Kenya were also accessible.

With the opening of various tourism hotels and restaurants and the extension of electricity services to the remotest areas of the district, television and radio broadcasting were accessed almost everywhere. The situation was quite similar to the regional ICT development report. Indeed, AISI (2002) reports that radio programmes were the most powerful means of information dissemination in rural Africa. The researchers found that radios were most widespread because they could also use alkaline batteries. Radio programmes could be used to create greater awareness of the information society, hence serving as a tool for media practitioners, especially radio broadcasters to engage with various groups in debating on the role of information in the development process. However, as Odini (1993) puts it, despite this rather wide coverage, there is still the need to improve access to information by various user groups and to ensure the information was available at the right time and in an appropriate form.

10. The Accessibility of Information Services

Sixty-four respondents (32 farmers and 32 fishermen) were asked about the accessibility of information materials available. They provided multiple answers as indicated in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Accessibility of information services among respondents (N=64).

Information accessibility	No of responses	Percentage
Have mobile phones	49	77
Own radio sets	19	30
Own home television sets	6	10

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Use internet Services	4	6
Own computer	3	5
Have access to library Services	3	3
Have fixed telephone lines	1	2
Pay Television	1	2
Daily Newspapers	1	2

Table 2 indicates that the best tool accessed by rural population was mobile phones (77%) followed by the radio (30%) and home television sets (10%). Fixed telephone lines, pay television services and daily newspapers were all accessed by only two percent of the respondents. Although fixed telephone lines could be explained by having been replaced by cheap mobile phones, further clarifications from respondents revealed that pay TV stations could not be accessed based on their monthly subscriptions which were generally beyond the ordinary citizenry's size of pocket and buying newspapers was considered a wastage of money. The researcher understood that there was not a single library establishment in North 'A' District, as in any other district of Zanzibar apart from the Central Library at the Zanzibar town and the Chake Chake Library in Pemba. The findings of this study concur well with Ng'ang'a (1998) who observed that attempts made in many countries in Africa towards development tended to neglect rural areas in the process of industrialisation and this posed a serious problem such as the acceleration of rural-to-town migration.

11. Comparison of Access to Information Services between Farmers and Fishermen

The study also sought to compare the accessibility of information services among farmers and fishermen and the results are shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Comparable Accessibility of Information services

Information accessibility	Among Farmers (N=32)		Among Fishermen (N=32)	
	No of responses	Percentage (%)	**No of responses**	Percentage (%)
Have Mobile phone	19	59	23	72
Own radio set	8	25	11	34

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Own Home Television set	4	13	2	6
Have access to library services	2	6	2	6
Own Computer	2	6	1	3
Use Internet services	2	6	0	0
Pay television	1	3	0	0
Have Fixed (Telephone) Line	1	3	0	0
Read Daily Newspapers	1	3	0	0

Table 3 reveals strange results in that although more fishermen owned mobile phones (72%) and radio sets (34%) compared to farmers (59% and 25%, respectively), it was the farmers who most had computers (6%), had television sets (3%), consulted library services (6%) and read newspapers (3%) compared to three percent for the use of computers and zero percent for the rest of information media among the fishermen. The two groups drew level (6%) on the use of the internet. According to Ng'ang'a (1998) this scenario could not have emerged had information on the rural folk and their needs been taken into account, hence the importance of libraries and other information centres in to enhance sustainable rural development.

These findings imply that mobile phones and the radio are the most widely accessed informational materials among the rural populations of Zanzibar. The two media enjoyed the widest coverage and this makes them an effective mode of disseminating information. More telephone messages and radio programmes could be broadcast on important issues such as credit facilities, education, primary health care, agriculture, nutrition, and HIV/AIDS. In addition, as suggested by (AISI, 2002) although not captured in the present study, brochures and posters should be distributed widely to strengthen such programmes.

This scenario places libraries (and other information units) in an advantageous position as they can help bridge the information gap. Libraries still have a vital role to play in collecting, storing and disseminating information. However, in many countries where they are few, there is an even more pressing need to collaborate with other information providing organisations to achieve the desired effect. Such collaboration would effectuate wider dissemination of relevant development information. Libraries could collect such information from those organisations and disseminate it.

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12. Gender differences in Accessing Information Services

The information tools presented in Table 4 were distributed fairly between farmers and fishermen and between different fields or landing sites. However, the divide between females and males was rather wide.

Table 4: Gender-based Access to information services (N=64)

Information accessibility	Male (N=39)		Female (N=25)	
	No. of responses	Percentage %	No of responses	Percentage%
Have Mobile phone	31	79	12	48
Own radio set	14	36	5	20
Own Home Television set	6	15	0	0
Have Fixed Telephone Lines	1	3	0	0
Own Computer	3	8	0	0
Use Internet services	3	8	1	4
Pay television	1	3	0	0
Library Services	2	5	0	0
Daily Newspapers	1	3	0	0

Table 4 indicates that the best information source accessible by female respondents were mobile phones (48%) followed by radio sets (20%) compared to 79 percent and 36 percent for the same materials accessed by male respondents, respectively. Perhaps based on their roles as housewives, rural women neither owned home TV sets, fixed telephone lines, nor computers, and neither did they access on their own budgets, pay TV programmes nor purchased daily newspapers. Another explanation which may be given to this wide gender-based access information gap could be psychological. According to Xie, Bao and Morais (2000) gender has been identified as a factor that influences information search and other meaningful consumers behaviour constructs. According to the authors, females are usually more subjective, intuitive, comprehensive and relational processers of information whereas males are usually more logic, analytical, selective and item-specific processers. Despite these psychological differences the overall accessibility of information was not encouraging even with male respondents, as Table 4 illustrates.

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13. Reasons for Inadequate Utilisation of Information Services

The researcher also sought to find out why the respondents were not adequately utilising the information services to improve their products. Asked why they did not use library services, 37 (57.8%) of the respondents said that they did not understand how the library could help them and 21 (33.8%) said that there were no public libraries in their vicinity. Five (7.8%) respondents said that they had long completed school and were in no need of going back to school. One (1.6%) respondent declined to comment. One farmer from Mto-wa-maji rice field was one of those who said they were not ready to go back to school:

> *I am not prepared to go back to school. If there is any new farming method the government would like to initiate, the government can send its extension officers to the field to demonstrate. But nobody can persuade me to abandon my work and go back to the classroom after so many years. Sorry! I am not prepared for that.*

Information professionals were asked to comment on the lack of information materials in North 'A' District. They said that the government concentrated on establishing school libraries first and thus the establishment of community libraries remained a responsibility of local communities. One respondent from the central library said:

> *You know the government cannot build libraries everywhere. We know that we are obliged to help local communities with books and other reading materials, but don't forget that this government is poor. If there comes no help from donors, the government cannot by itself initiate a library project. Don't forget also that if the government established a project in one community, other communities will cry foul.*

Similarly, another librarian from the Central Library (Zanzibar Library Services [ZLS]) said that there was already a community library project which was established by local community at Jongowe village. The respondent said that "ZLS will help the community with reading materials and technical training when the project is completed." Another officer of the Central Library said: "If a particular community comes forwards with a project and has secured fund, the ZLS will help with the technicalities."

When asked to comment on the state of library service provision in the district, most of the

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librarians acknowledged the importance of district libraries, but said that they did not have enough funds to execute the projects. These responses imply that the Central Library was not in a position to implement library projects in rural areas but could to assist only if local communities took the initiative.

14. Link between Socio-Informational Exclusion and Poverty

The third objective of the study was to identify the link between socio-informational exclusion and poverty in the words of the respondents. Asked about the link between the provision of information services and the reduction of poverty, most of the farmers and fishermen claimed that they could not see the connection. However, when asked why most of them had mobile phones, they said that the electronic gadget had developed into a very effective marketing tool. In this regard, one fisherman from Matemwe landing site said:

In addition to its usual usage as a mode of communication, mobile phones have become good marketing tools. Sometimes, if we are not satisfied with the market prices, especially during evenings, we use our phones to contact potential buyers elsewhere… With these phones, at least we have alternative markets within our hands.

Fishermen from other areas provided similar responses, although those at Mkokotoni claimed that "marketing with telephones is effective only during tourism peak seasons."

When the same question was asked to Central Library employees, they said that there was a strong connection between the provision of information and the reduction of poverty. One such officer explained:

Those local citizens who can connect with the outside world through various media have more opportunities to discover the market trends and are more likely to improve their product and, thus, increase the poverty reduction speed, compared to those who only depend upon traditional means of production and distribution. Those who directly take their product to a wider market are more likely to get a better price than those who only sell their product locally.

It was further understood that some fishermen used the mobile phone to contact purchasing officers in the tourism industry, especially when they had caught certain types of fish that

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were highly prized in the tourism industry such as crabs and lobsters

The study also sought to find out from the information professionals how the poverty problems can be linked to information exclusion. Different responses given by different respondents have been summarised below:

(i) Rural population will fail to get appropriate market prices if they continue facing difficulties in getting important information in a timely fashion and in an appropriate format.

(ii) Rural population will fail to apprehend the meaning of information if it is only disseminated in the written form as that would make it difficult for the rural dwellers with low or no literacy skills to access it;

(iii) Extension (agricultural) officers and field workers will only have little impact if they have little access to information on their areas of interest and if they could and when they were unable to access current research findings from their local information units.

The respondents further reported that if such situations continued unabated, then the farmers and other rural entrepreneurs could fail to act on potential opportunities towards poverty reduction and would most likely remain impoverished.

15. Challenges small-scale fishermen and farmers face in North 'A' District

The respondents were also required to identify the challenges they faced in their fight against poverty and information exclusion. The results are presented in tables 5 (a) and (b) below:

Table 5 (a): Challenges identified by small-scale fishermen

Challenges	No of responses	Percentage (%)
1. Outdated fishing gears	13	41
2. Lack of information about outside markets	9	28
3. Low market price outside the tourism peak seasons	6	19
4. Frequent interference from the fisheries	5	16

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authority and environmental activists		
5. High taxes levied by the district council's representatives	4	13
6. Rough seas at times	1	3

Table 5 (a) indicates that the greatest challenge the fishermen faced was outdated fishing gears (41%) followed by lack of information on external markets (28%) and low market price of fish catch outside the tourism peak seasons (19%). Other challenges identified include frequent interference from fisheries and environmental activists (16%), high tax levied by the district council representatives (13%) and rough seas at times (3%). It is encouraging to note that the respondents remembered to cite lack of relevant information (at 28%) as the second biggest challenge they faced. In an ideal situation, you would have expected them to cite only income and production issues, as they did with the rest of the challenges. Similar challenges were identified by farmers, as demonstrated in Table 5 (b):

Table 5 (b): Challenges identified by small-scale farmers

Challenges	**No of responses**	**Percentage (%)**
1. Low purchasing power of local residents	11	34
2. Long distance from production sites to market places	7	22
3. Poor road conditions	6	19
4. Unqualified extension officers	4	13
5. Lack of local agricultural information centres	3	9
6. Lack of irrigation schemes and infrastructure.	1	3

Table 5 (b) indicates that the greatest challenge farmers faced was the low purchasing power of the local residents (34%) followed by long distance from production sites to the market place (22%) and poor road conditions (19%). Other challenges identified include unqualified extension officers (13%), lack of local agricultural information centres (9%) and lack of irrigation schemes and infrastructure (3%). Unlike fishermen, information-related challenge

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was cited as the penultimate least challenge (9%), which only topped lack of irrigation scheme and infrastructure (3%). This implies that fishermen are less knowledgeable with the power of information on poverty reduction.

16. Suggestions of Respondents

The fourth and final objective of the study was to suggest measures that could be introduced to fight poverty through information inclusion. Various levels of respondents were requested to suggest measures that they thought would promote inclusion and assist in reducing poverty. The following are summary of suggestions made by respondents:

17. Suggestions of fishermen

Small-scale fishermen made multiple suggestions on fighting poverty through information inclusion. Table 6 indicates the suggestions of small-scale fishermen on poverty reduction through information inclusion:

Table 6: Suggestions of fishermen (N=32)

Suggestion	No of responses	%
Remove the District Council's levy	10	31.2
Provide fishing gears for free	7	21.9
Intervene to fix market prices	5	15.6
Identify fishermen's aspirations	5	15.6
No comment	4	12.5
Establish mobile libraries	1	3.1

Table 6 indicates that most of the fishermen (31.2%) would like the government to remove the district council's and constituency levies from the local markets. Their second suggestion was to be given fishing gears for free-of-charge, as recommended by seven (21.9%) fishermen followed by five suggestions made for either the need for government intervention in setting prices for their catch or the need for government to identify fishermen's actual requirements and aspirations. Four respondents declined to comment and one recommended for the ZLS to establish mobile libraries. It can be observed from the recommendations that none of the responding fishermen was concerned about information provision. This strongly

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implies that the respondent did not value the power of information in fighting poverty.

18. Suggestions of farmers

Small-scale farmers were also requested to make their suggestions to fight poverty through information inclusion. Table 7 indicates the suggestions of the small-scale farmers on poverty reduction through information inclusion:

Table: Suggestions of farmers (N=32)

Suggestion	No of responses	%
The ZLS should extend services to the remotest possible areas	9	28
The ZLS and the party (CCM) should organise agricultural information through exhibitions in rural areas	6	19
Provide special current awareness services, and document delivery services to rural citizens	5	16
No comments	5	16
Involve agricultural extension officers when developing new approaches of disseminating agricultural information to the farmers	4	12.5
Establish rural agricultural information centres	2	6.3

Table 7 shows that nine (28%) farmers suggested the Zanzibar Library Services (ZLS) should extend their services to the remotest areas and six (19%) called on the ZLS in collaboration with the ruling party, CCM, to disseminate agricultural information through exhibitions in rural areas. Five (19%) respondents called for the provision of special current awareness services, and document delivery services to rural citizens. Five (16%) others had no comment. Four respondents (13%) suggested involving agricultural extension officers when developing new approaches to disseminating agricultural information to the farmers. The remaining two (6%) farmers suggested establishing rural agricultural information centres.

Comparing the recommendations of the fishermen and the farmers, it appears that the farmers

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had a better understanding of their information needs than the fishermen. This conclusion is based on the quality of suggestions made by each category of respondents. Whereas 15 (46.9%) farmers acknowledged the role of the ZLS in information dissemination, no fishermen appreciated the centrality of such a role. Similarly, whereas most suggestions of the farmers were on information dissemination, only a handful of suggestions of the fishermen were minutely related to information access and usage. Unlike the fishermen's, the suggestions also indicate that the responding farmers also appear to identify development initiatives with the ruling CCM and few could distinguish between the party and its government.

19. Suggestions of Information Professionals

Information professionals were also requested to provide suggestions on the subject of information inclusion. Table 8 below indicates the suggestions of the information professionals on the subject:

Table 8: Suggestions of Information professionals (N=8)

Suggestion)	No of responses	%
Speed up opening of library services branches in all districts across Zanzibar.	3	37.5
Abolish all forms of closed access to information such as the 30 year rule archives closure period	2	25
Allow free flow and flexibility in disseminating information.	1	12.5
The local communities should identify themselves with the libraries as a source of information and education in relation to poverty problems	1	12.5
Incorporate local citizens before adapting to new technology	1	12.5

The information professional also made suggestions to fight poverty through information inclusion. Five suggestions were made which included speeding up the opening up of library services branches in all districts across Zanzibar (37.5%); abolishing all forms of closed access to information such as the 30-year rule archives closure period (25%); allowing for

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free flow and flexibility in disseminating information; the local communities to identify themselves with the libraries as a source of information and education in relation to poverty problems; and brining local citizens on board before adapting new technologies (all suggested by single respondents each). It is encouraging to note that all of their suggestions were concerned about information provision and dissemination. However, these suggestions added little value as they were made by information specialists because of their specialisation and responsibilities.

20. Relevance and impact of the study to MKUZA II

This paper has attempted to summarise the role of information inclusion on poverty reduction and to discuss the relevance of libraries and other information centres to the policy and practices of poverty reduction in Zanzibar. This paper argues that attempts to reduce poverty have much to gain from information inclusion. Two groups of small-scale producers (farmers and fishermen) were interviewed to assess the degree of awareness of their inclusion and propagate the role of information inclusion on poverty reduction. A number of challenges pertaining to the access and use of information sources and resources by small-scale farmers and fishermen were identified. These challenges attest to the truism that information inclusion has much to offer to achieve the poverty reduction goals in terms of providing unbiased, right information from a wide range of studies of national economic policies and practices.

The Zanzibar Poverty Reduction Programme (2010/11-2015/16) provides a right mechanism for preparing, maintaining and disseminating systematic reviews of the effects of information interventions, policy and practice. The quality of MKUZA reviews and their periodical reports depends upon how information is collaborating in the process, especially on the side of inclusion and exclusion criteria which must be considered by reviewers when doing their periodical review. This is essential to ensure systematic reviews deliver what they promise, that is high quality reviews of the existing and emerging evidence in poverty reduction. If the idea of information inclusion proposed in this paper is not adhered to, the achievement of the millennium goals (especially the reduction of abject poverty) is likely to fail. On the contrary, when it is applied thoughtfully and carefully it can provide valuable insights that could translate into groundbreaking results. The study is, therefore, relevant to the realisation of goals and objectives of the Zanzibar Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (2010/11-2015/16/ MKUA II).

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21. Conclusion

The study was conducted to examine the extent to which the socio-informational divide hindered the objectives of poverty reduction in Zanzibar and to suggest strategies to reduce poverty through information inclusion. The study has come up with significant findings regarding bridging the socio-informational divide in Zanzibar's poverty reduction in the rural areas. It is apparent from the study that poverty reduction measures demand that rural people get access to the information they need in forms that they can understand. However, although libraries and other information providers are known to be good agents of social change, the findings show that they were not identified as adequate partners in the fight against poverty as the respondents were not aware of the role and significance of information in poverty reduction. These findings correspond well with the study objectives and adequately answer the research questions. The study, therefore, concludes that without addressing the information needs of rural dwellers, other development efforts may fail to achieve their potential impacts. Indeed, if such circumstances persist, realising the goals of poverty reductions could be defeated.

22. Recommendations

Although many of the recommendations of the study were originally proposed by the respondents, they were edited with some additions and corrections for clarity. Many other suggestions of the respondents were either repetitions or were irrelevant to the objectives of the study.

22.1 Recommendations on poverty reduction

In view of the findings of the study, which are presented and discussed above, the study makes various recommendations as outlined below:

- Reviewing the existing Zanzibar Poverty Reduction Strategy (ZPRS, 2010) to incorporate information inclusion;
- Improving entrepreneurial skills of small-scale fishermen and farmers; and
- Opening up new markets for small-scale fishermen and farmers.

Recommendations on information inclusion

- Opening up local branches of library services to at least district levels;
- Establishing current information awareness services for poverty reduction;
- Establishment of mobile library and information user educational services; and

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- Carrying out periodical information, exhibitions and displays in rural areas.

The researchers believe that the implementation of these strategies with their linked activities would ultimately help to reduce poverty faced by small-scale fishermen and farmers, who make up the majority of residents of the North 'A' District, Zanzibar.

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