

## Public information dissemination and its impact on force account implementation in Kalambo district council, Tanzania

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### Abstract

*The study assessed dissemination of public information and its impact on implementation of force accounts in Kalambo District Council in Tanzania. A cross-sectional design was employed in collecting data at one point in time with a mixed methods research approach which was used in an attempt to gain detailed information. A total of 145 participants which includes ward development committees, construction committees and community members were involved whereby 46 key informants were selected purposely based on their positions while simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 99 respondents from the community. The survey, interview, focus group discussion and documentary review method were used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistical analysis whereas qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The study findings revealed that information is not easily accessible to the public and a few shared information is not clear due to confidentiality and technical language. The findings also indicate that the public is unaware about the progress force account due to ineffective dissemination of information which leads to untimely completion of works and misuse of resources. The study concludes that there is inadequate information in the implementation of force account projects, thus resulting in poor support, acceleration of low value for money and lack of accountability due to poor public scrutiny. The study recommends that the government institutions should emphasise the use of authorised social and religious gathering in an attempt to raise awareness. Moreover, the selected committee must engage the public in decision making in order to improve transparency in implementation of projects.*

**Key words:** Force account, information dissemination, school infrastructure, transparency

## **Introduction**

Information dissemination involves sharing details, updates, and relevant knowledge so as to raise the public awareness and understanding of the implementation of force account. This helps the stakeholders to engage in the decision making process, foster transparency which results in efficiency in the quality-of works, timely completion of works, cost minimization and value for money in the construction of secondary school infrastructure projects such as workers houses, toilets, laboratories and class rooms (Mwishwa, 2022). According to Erkkilä (2020), information dissemination is one of the essential aspects in ensuring transparency, accountability and reducing unnecessary bureaucracy during the implementation of the project by embracing accessibility of information, openness and clarity in decision-making processes.

During the implementation of force accounts, public information dissemination constitutes an important tool for ensuring transparency. According to Erkkilä (Erkkilä, 2020), transparency refers to the ability of all interested parties to understand and know the actual process and means by which all activities are managed, performed and awarded. As one of the attributes of good governance based on the government perspective, transparency refers to carrying out the government business and implementation of force account in an open, easy to understand and explicit manner such that the rules made by the government, policies implemented by the government and results of governments' activities are easy to verify by the ordinary citizen (Johnston, 2006). Information dissemination which leads to transparency helps to prevent corruption, promote competition and build trust among the stakeholders.

The experience in the world shows that disseminating information to the public with regard to the implementation of force accounts was possible through different media. For example, Taiwan used various communication channels such as social media, public meetings, and press releases to disseminate project information that resulted in effective implementation of projects (Yen et al., 2020). In China, different means of disseminating information on projects influenced openness in the implementation of force account projects and maintained a system of responsibility and accountability as everyone knows who is responsible for the tasks assigned in projects (Liu & Wang, 2019). According to Mgimba (2022), information dissemination encourages the public participation especially in rural infrastructure projects and thus, improves timely completion of works and increases public trust. To ensure openness in Uganda during upgrading and expansion of Entebbe International Airport, the stakeholders were informed about using the traditional and official forms of managing communication, for example, the use of whistles, drums, public meetings, notice boards and formal reports on the projects, method that facilitated close monitoring for efficiency projects (Stephen, 2021). Thus, corruption was reduced and quality of works was improved in relation to price (Mbabazi & Mugurusi, 2019). The implementation of force account in the construction of infrastructure in Tanzania was introduced as a result of several reforms interventions such as the finance sector under the auspices of local government reforms of 1998. The financial sector reform within the context of local government reforms aims at improving the budgetary process, financial management

and procurement systems in order to enhance transparency and accountability in the use of public funds and improve service delivery in infrastructure development by decentralising the power in order to enhance local decision making. Such reforms resulted to the amendment of the Public Procurement Act of 2011 and its regulation of 2013 in 2016 but most of the procurement and construction activities were done before the noted reforms by the private entities through private tenderers, suppliers, contractors and consultants based on their knowledge, capacity and skills to perform the work, deliver services and supply goods. This process is known as outsourcing (Matto, 2021; PPRA, 2020).

The construction activities were implemented through a competitive method with the exception of few materials obtained in local settings like stones, bricks and water which were conducted by non-competitive methods to accommodate reasonable circumstances like emergencies (Mwishwa, 2022). The use of outsourcing mechanisms later experienced the challenges in implementing force account projects as supported by Shengeza (2018) in that outsourcing often seems to be the prolonged process, time consuming and more costly nature of procurement that led to failure in yielding tangible results. Therefore, force account was introduced as the remedy for the challenges where by the contracting works were executed using their own personnel and equipment so as to lower the cost by utilising the available resources, facilitating close monitoring for quality works and ensuring rapid response for any sign of risks (Mbabazi & Mugurusi, 2019). Moreover, the amendment of Public Procurement Act of 2011 and regulation of 2013 in 2016 emphasised the accessibility of project information by the public through an open media and adherence to the rules and regulations in obtaining building materials. This created awareness of the available prices among the stakeholders, which facilitated the public scrutiny as stipulated in clause 10(3) and 131(4b and 5) of PPRA of 2013.

## **Literature Review**

Yen et al. (Yen et al., 2020) conducted a study on disseminating information to the public in force account projects in Taiwan. The study found out that the use of various communication channels such as social media, public meetings, and press releases was effective in disseminating information to the public during the implementation of a force account project. The study emphasises the effectiveness of utilising various communication channels like social media, public meetings and press releases for effective information dissemination.

Liu et al. (Liu & Wang, 2019) conducted an empirical study on the public participation in Chinese rural infrastructure projects. Liu et al. found out that timely dissemination of information increased public participation and trust in the project. The major strength of this study is that it establishes a connection between timely dissemination of information and increase of public participation and trust. Such findings provide a foundational understanding which can inform the researchers on the dissemination of public information about the construction of infrastructure, particularly in the context of Kalambo District Council in Tanzania. The focus on careful

planning and management leads to an overemphasis on the top-down approaches by looking at the importance of the grassroots level of information dissemination.

Elias et al. (2018) conducted a study on the role of public participation in enhancing transparency and accountability in public projects implementation. Elias et al. found out that timely dissemination of information increased the public participation and trust in the project. The major strength of this study is linked with timely information dissemination in an attempt to enhance the transparency, accountability and public trust.

The study by Komba et al. (2019) on public participation and its influence on transparency in force account projects in Tanzania found out that the public participation led to a more transparent process of information dissemination during the implementation of a force account project. The study by Komba et al. demonstrated the main weakness in that it did not thoroughly explore the effectiveness of different communication channels.

Misonge et al. (2016) found out that the use of various communication channels, including the public meetings, radio and newspapers was effective in disseminating information to the public during the implementation of a force account project in Tanzania. The weakness of this study was attributed to the fact that it did not consider the specific challenges or cultural factors which could impact on information dissemination.

The scholars attempted to show the impact of information dissemination to the public but little is known about how this information is accessible and understandable to the public through the languages used and the extent to which the media are available or accessible to the public. The issue of implementation of the force account and informing the public, carefully provide valuable insights that complement the research on the public information dissemination. The intersection of these areas led to more effective execution of infrastructure projects in Kalambo District Council, thus ensuring that both internal processes and external communication are aligned in an attempt to achieve better outcomes.

Despite the initiatives made by the government of Tanzania in the implementation of the mechanism of force account by introducing rules, regulations and guidelines, the problem of inefficiency and poor service delivery still exist (Mkhize et al., 2022). For example, the Controller and Audit General report of 2020/2021 revealed a loss of Tanzanian shillings that amounts to 255.61 billion as a result of poor management and an inadequate public involvement for both finished and unfinished projects that used force account (URT, 2022b). In the case of Kalambo District Council, the CAG report of 2021/2022 revealed lack of clarity in the implementation of projects which used force account whereby 53.7 million were paid without any notes and contracts specification from inspection and acceptance committee contrary to the regulations (URT, 2022b). Likewise, the studies which were conducted by Mwandikile (2020); Lusupi (2020) and Matto (Matto, 2021) revealed that effective force account implementation requires the careful planning and open management, adequate resources, supportive regulatory environment and clear performance criteria in attempt to ensure that the project delivers value for money and achieve the desired outcomes.

Therefore, in order to curb the noted gap, this study was conducted in an attempt to show clearly how information dissemination can be used as an important tool for effective transparency with regard to the implementation of force account in the construction of secondary school infrastructure in Kalambo District Council. The information dissemination was carried out by assessing how information is accessible to the public in order to determine how the information is shared to the intended public. It was also carried out by evaluating how the public is actively involved in the decision making process and how the public meetings are conducted in order to disseminate the information to the public. By addressing the noted gap, transparency which facilitates accountability, trust and value for money will be attained by adhering to the quality of works, timely completion of works and cost minimization.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by Functionalism Theory by Emile Durkheim in 1893 which was further elaborated by Talcott Parsons in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Functionalism Theory which was coined by Parson in 1951 views the society as a complex whole which comprises the part that complements one another to enhance solidarity and cohesion of the entire system (Verma & Truhlar, 2020). It, therefore, sees the society as a social system of interconnected parts that work together to achieve the goals and balance of the whole. It further implies that the government local leaders have various roles that end up contributing to the wellbeing of the rest of the public. In relation to the case of force account which was introduced by the government in the implementation of the project, the functionalist perspective emphasises the interconnectedness of the society which focuses on how information dissemination influences the community participation in the community activities and decisions. The society will be regarded as functional if the rest of its parts complement one another but it will, at the same time, be seen to be dysfunctional if any of its parts is working by disregarding other parts (Gonze et al., 2020). The society is perceived as a set of actions and interactions among human beings. Such actions and interactions form a continuous process of the functionality. Thus, the units within structure function to maintain structure (Parsons, 2017).

It is worthy to highlight that structural functionalism are two sides of the same coin that can be reflected from both dimensions interchangeably (Harper, 2011). This implies that you cannot have structure without function and there is no function without structure whose consequences and reciprocal rationalisation happen to be and fact are (Geerlings et al., 2020). For instance, the accessibility of information by the public regarding the construction of projects using force account embraces openness and clarity in decision-making processes. This implies that the projects' progress is seen by the public and it allows effective ways to enforce the laws and government actions are open for public scrutiny. This allows the public to challenge and question the decisions made by the government institutions in the implementation of works. The information dissemination assists the public in fulfilling their priorities which enhance smooth running and success of the projects. This implies that the force account projects

are conducted openly by involving the public through open information whereby the public voices and opinions are given priority.

Giving priority to public voices and opinions facilitates the support and trust, accountability and tracking project progress which result in the value for money in the project implementation. Furthermore, information dissemination ensures proper transfer of information which helps to maintain a system of responsibility and accountability. This is possible since everyone in the public knows who is responsible for the tasks assigned in project and he/she is well informed about the procurement procedures and flow of funds and price offer, something which can reduce the problems such as corruption, delays, poor quality and cost inefficiency in the service delivery systems in relation to project implementation. Therefore, successful project implementation within the community is pre-conditioned by shared information and, therefore, failure to adhere to information sharing may lead to the failure of projects implemented using force accounts. Such failure is what Functionalist Theorist calls dysfunctional structure in the implementation of projects.

## **Research Methods**

The study was conducted in Kalambo District Council in Rukwa Region particularly in two wards, namely Mnamba and Lyowa. Mnamba and Lyowa Ward were selected to represent rural and sub-urban characteristics respectively. The selection of the area of the study was based on its strategic importance in Rukwa Region where infrastructure development is critical to the improvement of connectivity and economic growth. The district has been implementing significant infrastructure projects under the force account system, thus making it a relevant case for examining the impact of public information dissemination. Mnamba and Lyowa Ward were chosen because they represent the diverse geographic and demographic characteristics within the district, thus providing a comprehensive view of how public information dissemination varies in different contexts. The referred wards also have ongoing or recently completed infrastructure projects in schools, thus offering a timely opportunity to assess the effectiveness of information dissemination and its influence on project outcomes. Their selection allowed for a focused and representative analysis which can yield insights which are applicable to other similar areas within and beyond the district.

The study employed a cross-sectional research design. Despite the limitations encountered in using this design in terms of establishing causality, it helped to capture valuable information within a relatively short period and at a specific point in time (Ridder, 2017). The design was preferred during the interviews, filling of questionnaires and focus group discussions because it is cost-effective and less time consuming. The limitation of cross-sectional research design in establishing causality affects the interpretation of results by making it difficult to determine whether one variable causes another variable or not. Since the data was collected at a single point in time, it was challenging to establish the sequence of events, thus leading to uncertainty about which variable appeared first. This temporal ambiguity along with the potential influence of confounding variables implies that any observed relationships were merely correlations

rather than causations. As a result, a researcher was cautious about drawing conclusions in an attempt to determine whether the findings suggested associations rather than definitive cause-and-effect relationships.

The study employed a mixed research approach. The qualitative approach helped the researcher to obtain the answers to questions in the interview and focused group discussion, which facilitated collective in-depth understanding of the study through probing (Akinyode & Khan, 2018; Dawadi et al., 2021; Ngozwana, 2018). The quantitative approach facilitated the collection of data from a large number of participants through the survey. The findings obtained were generalised to a wider population. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods provided a more nuanced understanding of the research methods used in attempt to establish the validity and reliability of the research results. The qualitative data provided in-depth insights into the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders, thus revealing the underlying factors and contextual details which could not be captured by quantitative data alone. By integrating both approaches, the study validated the findings across different data sources in order to enhance the robustness of the results and offer a richer and more complete picture of how information dissemination affects the implementation of force account. This combination helped to address the research questions more effectively by triangulating the data, thus improving reliability and ensuring a more holistic understanding of the phenomena being studied.

The construction committee, ward development committee (WDC) members and community members were selected to represent the target population of 17459 (URT, 2022b) from Lyowa and Mnamba Ward in Kalambo District Council. The target population was selected from two selected wards in order to represent the portion of members and those who meet the characteristics under investigation as stipulated by Casteel and Bridier (2021) and Willie (2022). Mnamba and Lyowa District were selected in order to get 46 key informants from the construction committee and WDC based on their position and experience and 99 respondents from the community members.

Purposive sampling technique was employed to obtain the key informants based on their experience and positions in an attempt to gain appropriate and useful information about the force account. Simple random sampling technique was employed in an attempt to select the respondents from the community. The technique in question ensures equal chance of being selected in the data collection during survey in order to reduce bias (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Mishra, 2016; Obilor, 2023). The combination of both simple random and purposive sampling technique allowed for a balanced approach to data collection. Simple random sampling was used to ensure that the selected sample represented a broad and unbiased cross-section of the population, thus enhancing the generalizability of the findings. This technique helped in obtaining a representative sample for quantitative analysis. Purposive sampling, on the other hand, targeted the specific individuals or groups who had relevant expertise or experience related to dissemination of public information and implementation of force account. This approach was essential for obtaining the detailed and context-rich qualitative insights. By integrating both purposive and random sampling technique, the study benefited

from the strengths of each method, thus achieving both broad representativeness and depth of understanding.

The sample size used was 99 from the community and was obtained through Taro Yamane Formula of 1967. The sample size was calculated from the target population of 17459 from which Lyowa Ward had 6,026 people and Mnamba Ward had 11,433 people (URT, 2022) at a 10% margin error. The rationale for choosing a 10% margin error in the Taro Yamane formula was to balance precision with practicality. A 10% margin error allows for an estimate which is reasonably accurate while keeping the required sample size manageable. The referred margin error was chosen due to the fact that the researcher needed not only to make decisions with confidence but also to consider the time, cost and availability of respondents. Sample size stroke the compromise between the desire for precise results and resources available for conducting the study.

Yamane formula is presented as follows: -

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

Where by,

$n$  = Sample size,

$N$  = Target population 17459 and,

$e$  =Margin error (0. 1)

$$n = \frac{17459}{1+17459(0.1^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{17459}{1+17459(0.01)}$$

$$n = \frac{17459}{175.59}$$

Therefore, the total sample size of the community was 99.

To ensure adequate data collection, the survey, interview, focus group discussion and documentary review method were used. In survey method, the questionnaire tool with a set of closed-ended questions presented in a likert scale was used for gathering the primary quantitative data from the community. The study employed the semi-structured interview method to gain individual in-depth information as supported by (Deterding & Waters, 2021; Rutakumwa et al., 2020). The interview which was guided by open-ended questions allowed the probing among the members of the construction committee. The sessions took almost 20 to 30 minutes based on the individual's ability to express his/her feelings and opinions.

Moreover, the study used focus group discussion method which was guided by open-ended questions to collect the primary data from members of WDC. The focus group discussion sessions took 45 minutes to an hour. To facilitate data collection task, four groups from official members of WC were created whereby two groups with seven



participants each were created from Lyowa Ward and two groups with six participants each were created from Mnamba Ward.

Documentary review was also adopted to facilitate secondary data collection. The guidelines, rules and regulations, payment sheets, minute records and reports were reviewed in order to capture the intended information related to how the work was done by considering transparency. According to Tight (2019), the researcher can use authentic existing published and unpublished documents, hard copy or soft copy documents to facilitate the work of research. Moreover, the regulations constitute one of the procurement guidelines for carrying out the works for force account of 2020, PPRA of 2011 and PPRA Regulation of 2013. The documents were selected based on their relevance to the research topic, which focused on the guidelines, regulations and records which are directly linked with the implementation of the force account in Tanzania. Such documents were analysed by reviewing their content systematically in an attempt to extract relevant information and involved the comparison of their content based on the observed practices which revealed the discrepancies, consistencies and areas for improvement. The noted discrepancies, consistencies and areas for improvement formed the basis for the study conclusions and recommendations for improvement of the implementation of force account, which adheres to transparency aspects.

The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data were analysed through a descriptive statistic using frequencies which were converted into percentages and, later, presented in the tables and charts in order to facilitate easy interpretation. According to MacFarland, (2014), descriptive statistics can be numerical or the data easily convert into numbers. To facilitate easy analysis, the statistical package for social software version 29.0 was used and summarised based on sub-objectives arranged in Likert scale as per Rensis Likert (1930).

The qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The analysis was done by coding, editing and summarising the data. Specifically, the tape-recorded data from interview and focused group discussion were transcribed into written notes for easy reading and understanding, which were done through intensive reading and re-reading of the data in order to identify the key concepts and recurring patterns. The concepts were labelled using specific codes that represented different ideas, actions, or meanings. Once the coding process was complete, the codes were grouped into broader categories based on their similarities or relationships. From such categories, the themes were derived by looking for overarching patterns or insights that connected the categories, thus capturing the essence of the data in a more abstract and conceptual form. Such themes helped in interpreting the data and drawing conclusions related to research questions.

The validity and reliability of the data were enhanced through proper selection of representative groups, proper recording and analysis of data and triangulation whereby multiple data sources or methods were used to cross-check findings. The reliability of the data was also guaranteed through clear and consistent coding procedures during the content analysis. Peer debriefing or review was utilised in attempt to minimise the researcher's bias and ensure the accuracy of interpretations. Additionally, the study

maintained a detailed audit trail, documentation of every step of the research process in attempt to allow for replication and transparency. Pre-testing of the data collection instruments was conducted to refine the questions and procedures, thus improving both validity and reliability.

Confidentiality and informed consent were maintained for ethical consideration. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, several steps were taken. The respondents were assured of the protection of their identities and responses which will solely be used for research purposes. The personal identifiers were removed from the data during the initial processing phase. The unique codes replaced any identifying information in attempt to link the responses without revealing respondents' identities. Access to data was restricted to authorised research personnel and the data were stored physically and digitally in order to ensure their security. Additionally, the findings were reported in aggregate form to prevent any individual respondent from being identified.

## Results and Discussion

### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents constitute a vital aspect as they provide the researcher with the overall picture of the kind of respondents that he/she is dealing with. Such characteristics help to determine the understanding positions of the respondent's opinions, thoughts regarding the study topic by considering how their involvement brings transparency and positive effects in the implementation of force account projects. Moreover, they justify the representative of the sample from the study area (Laurie, 2017). Under this section, the study focused on the gender, age, education background, marital status and occupation. This study involved 99 respondents with various backgrounds as presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Gender	%	Age	%	Education	%	Occupation	%	Marital	%
Male	79.2	20 - 35	56.6	Primary	50.6	Farmer	26.2	Single	9.1
Female	20.8	36 - 45	29.3	Secondary	30.6	Civil servant	8.1	Married	67.7
		46 - 55	13.1	Tertiary	18.8	Business	57.6	Widow	16.2
		56 > 1				Others	8.1	Divorced	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>

Source: Field Data (2023)

The aim of looking at the gender distribution was to determine the roles and relationships between men and women in the specific population. Gender perspectives create a unique social role and relation between women and men. The role of male and female in the society differ from one society to another (Bonham, 2017; Tobias, 2018).

The gender of the respondents constitutes social implications in shaping the attitude, perception, and actions of an individual. Being a man or woman is a social construction which affects the way an individual acts in social interaction, including the perception in the construction of community infrastructure. For instance, when the male gender was more actively involved in project management, their responses highlighted different issues or priorities compared to the female gender which was less represented.

The age of the respondents gives a picture of the availability of the information provided and presented for public consumption. Age also gives meaningful and dependable information on the effectiveness of the implementation of force account in the construction of secondary schools' infrastructure. The age of 20 to 35 happened to occupy 56.6% of a bigger number of respondents who were easy to accept the changes and who had rich information. Being informed about the project that use force account mechanism they are likely to participate in decisions in order to share their experiences and knowledge with regard to implemented projects. This was supported by Mwandikile, (2020) in that the age between 20 and 35 participate in the development activities because they have access to information and they are rich in sources of information on the effectiveness of using force account to implement projects. In the same vein, the majority of participants aged between 20 and 35 years were likely to influence the data outcome by reflecting on the perspectives and experiences of a relatively young and possibly more technologically adept demographic. This age group might have different views on the public information dissemination and implementation of force account compared to older or younger age groups. Their responses may highlight the focus on the modern communication methods, digital tools or innovative practices in infrastructure projects. Consequently, the findings might emphasise the issues or preferences which are pertinent to this age group and which potentially overlook the needs or viewpoints of other age cohorts.

Education is an important factor in an individual's life as it influences the pattern of thinking, reasoning and judgement (Katz et al., 2017). The findings of the current study show that the majority of respondents (50.6%) had primary education. This implies that most people who are involved in decision making in today's society have preliminary knowledge which can facilitate their level of decision making and easy capturing of information since they know how to read in Kiswahili which is used as a tool for communication in Tanzania. Kiswahili also facilitates awareness and easy communication. Therefore, with the majority of participants having primary education, the data outcome was likely to be influenced by the focus on basic understanding and practical experiences rather than complex theoretical or technical insights. This education level might imply that the participants provided the responses based on the straightforward, hands-on experiences in public information dissemination and implementation of force account rather than detailed analysis or advanced understanding. Their feedback might reflect the common issues faced at the grassroots level and highlight the areas where additional education or training could improve the practices and outcomes.

The response for businessmen occupation accounted for 57.6% because the businessmen are much more aware of the implementation of force account. The awareness of the implementation of force account is associated with self-interests in procurement activities. Ramirez and Lepez, (2023) maintain that the reality is created and shaped by their interactions, hence the society respects how they deal with issues. This implies the interested group will understand the project better compared to other groups in the society because the interested group will be eager to be informed about the project process. With regard to marital status, 66.3% of the respondents constituted married people whereas 16% of the respondents' constituted widows. Although the development activities involve all groups of people in the community, the married group seems to have more interests in the development activities. Jacobs (1993) revealed that the development should consider the needs and participation of the entire community whether married or unmarried, with or without children. According to Jacobs, having schools and other social infrastructure in the community areas fosters social connections and strengthens communities. Being involved in business, the majority of participants are likely to influence the data outcome by providing the perspectives and concerns which are centred around the economic impacts, procurement processes and project implementation from the commercial viewpoint. Their responses may emphasise the practical aspects such as cost, efficiency and market opportunities which are related to public information dissemination and implementation of force account. This focus could highlight how the business interests intersect with infrastructure projects by skewing the findings towards economic considerations and practical implications rather than broader or purely technical issues.

### **Force Account Information Dissemination to Public in Kalambo District Council**

The study sought to investigate the information dissemination to the public with regard to the use of force in the construction of secondary school infrastructure in Kalambo District Council. The findings of the current study focused on information accessibility, how information was shared to intended public, how the public is involved in decision-making processes, and assessment of other active public meetings routine. If the noted aspects will be well addressed, the aspect of transparency in the implementation of projects using force accounts will be significantly enhanced.

### **Information Accessibility to Public**

Effective implementation of force account requires transparency which can be attained through the information dissemination to the public using various media such as notes board, public meetings and sessions which would enhance awareness among the stakeholders. The findings in Figure 1 show that 56 (56.6%) respondents strongly disagreed with the fact that information about the force account projects are easily accessible to the public, 35 (35.4%) respondents disagreed, 2 (2.0%) respondents agreed and 6 (6%) respondents strongly agreed. Generally, 92% of the respondents opined that there is lack of information accessibility about the force account projects to the public whereas 8% of the respondents agreed with the fact that information about the force account projects is easily accessible to the public.

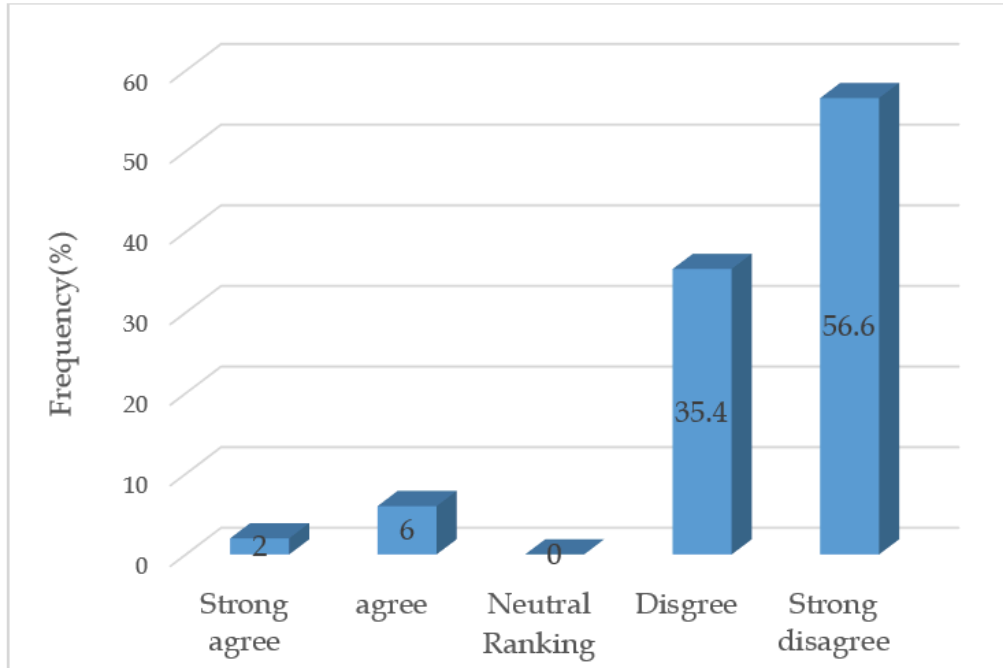


Figure 1: Information accessibility

Source: Field Data (2023)

During the interview, it was very surprising that even the implementers of the projects had little understanding of the force account that they attend in their day-to-day activities. This was revealed when one of the members of the construction committee was asked about the meaning of force account. During the interview, of the members of the construction committee had the following response with regard to the meaning of force account:

It is my first time to hear about the word “force account”. It is a new thing to me. I have never heard such a word and the language is not understood to me. Therefore, I have nothing to comment on it (Interview with the member of the construction committee, October, 2023).

The above verbatim quote suggests that even relatively minor details are not comprehended or easily accessible. This implies that the detailed information about the force account projects is not effectively disseminated to the public. The study findings further reveal that the report regarding force account projects should be disseminated in accordance with the regulations that govern the implementation of force account. However, the findings suggest that the dissemination process is not effectively handled, thus leading to limited understanding and accessibility of information among the public. During the FGD, one of the members of WDC from Ward B, had the following comments regarding information accessibility on force account implementation.

The procurement documents are not disclosed to the public in order to know the expenditure and price of materials before and after

purchasing the material. We are advised to observe confidentiality all the time so that unauthorised people may not access the information. However, I understand that it will facilitate timely and effective decision making for the project (FGD with members of WDC from Ward B, October, 2023).

Apart from the aspect of confidentiality and other bureaucratic processes in accessing the information, even the available information is still difficult to understand by ordinary members of the community due to technicalities which are characterised by the professional terminologies. Such terminologies limit the level of understanding as revealed by one member of the construction committee in the following verbatim quote during the interview:

It is true that the committees have the responsibility to inform the public about the progress of the project but what is to be communicated is somehow very difficult because the language used is technical. For example, the word “force account” is easy to pronounce when translated from English to Kiswahili. Even though this information is put on the notes board, it still needs to be translated and elaborated by experts in general meetings (Interview with members of construction committee, October, 2023).

The overwhelming majority of the respondents perceive that the public has limited access to information about force account projects, thus indicating lack of transparency and potential hindrance to stakeholders’ awareness and engagement. This observation is also supported by Tan et al. (2020) in that poor level of information sharing in the construction projects affects the efficiency of implementation, which results in delays of material and decisions. The problem is associated with confidentiality and technical use of language which should be addressed in attempt to improve the communication strategies. This suggests that relevant project information is easily accessible to the public through appropriate channels such as public meetings, and it is important to prioritise clear communication and dissemination of information about force account projects. The usage of appropriate channels will ensure easy understanding of the content of the reports and sharing of information with the public. Improving the clarity and accessibility of information can foster the public trust and participation in force account projects, thus contributing to their successful implementation and positive outcomes as elaborated by Lusupi (Lusupi, 2020). According to Lusupi, the availability of information and effective sharing of information among the stakeholders facilitates the proper implementation of projects that use force account.

### **Information Sharing with Intended Public**

The shared information can be clear and easily accessible but it cannot produce the planned results if it does not reach the intended public. The community members who constitute the main beneficiary of the school infrastructure should be informed

about force account implementation in attempt to contribute their ideas and express their priority, thus facilitating community support and trust. The findings in Table 2 show that 56 (56.6%) respondents strongly disagreed with the fact that information about the implementation of force account is shared to the intended public, 28 (28.3%) respondents disagreed, 12 (12.1%) respondents agreed and 3 (3.0%) respondents strongly agreed.

**Table 2: Information sharing with intended public**

Ranking	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	3	3.0
Agree	12	12.1
Neutral	0	0
Disagree	28	28.3
Strongly Disagree	56	56.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field Data (2023)

Generally, 84.9% of the respondents disagreed with the fact that information is shared with the intended public whereas 15.1% of the respondents agreed with the fact that information is shared with the intended public. This implies that the majority of the respondents perceive that the information does not reach the intended public. This indicates a gap in communication and it potentially hinders the stakeholders’ awareness and participation, thus resulting in poor performance in the implementation of force account in construction projects. The study findings further reveal that the information is not regularly provided to the intended public and when it is provided, it tends to fulfil political intention. One of the members of the construction committee had the following opinion regarding information sharing with intended public:

The projects which are constructed in this ward are only seen during the initial stage. We do not know when and where the projects originate. Sometimes, we only hear some rumours and other grapevine from the mere people who are not part of committee or community members. The community leaders are urged to inform the community and committee about the contribution of local materials. However, it is very unfortunate that the project which involves the payment of labourers is just introduced without involving both the community and committee (Interview with the member of construction committee, October, 2023).

The challenges of information dissemination to unintended public limits the public awareness, trust and participation, thus resulting in unsuccessful project outcome. Lusupi (Lusupi, 2020) and Biramata (2014) asserted that the availability of effective information facilitates a proper execution of force account activities and it provides the right to the public to know and question the information provided. Ignoring the intended public is also contrary to regulation 168 of 2013 which insists on

the community participation in the implementation of the projects by fully involving the community and resident local leaders in the implementation of force account. It requires the beneficiaries of the projects to know the progress of the project. The institutional theory asserts that whatever is done must be well understood by the community (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The study findings indicate that the information shared was not easily accessible to the intended public, something which makes it challenging to achieve the desired project results. According to Biramata (Biramata, 2014), reliable, timely and available information to the intended public ensures effective project implementation and decision-making. Stephen, (2021) further argues that transparency in the construction process should include clear and accessible information for the intended public, which constitutes the beneficiaries of the projects. It is crucial to adhere to regulatory requirements by involving the intended public and project implementers in an attempt to enhance transparency, public engagement, and ultimately, the success of force account projects.

### **Public Involvement in Decision-Making Processes**

Being informed about force account implementation is a prerequisite for meaningful engagement as it is impossible to engage in a decision when you are not well informed. In this perspective, the researcher wanted to understand the extent to which the public is informed in order to facilitate active involvement in the decision-making process. The information promotes accountability in the implementation of projects that use force account since the public is informed and it understands the issues at hand, options being considered, and potential impacts of decision. The findings in figure 2 indicate that 37 (37.4%) respondents strongly disagreed with the fact that the public is actively involved in the decision-making process related to force account, 24 (24.2%) respondents disagreed, 30 (30.3%) respondents were neutral and 8 (8.1%) respondents strongly agreed.

Generally, 61.6% of the respondents had the notion that the public is not actively involved in making decisions related to the force account projects whereas 8.1% of respondents agreed with the statement. The findings of the current study are contrary to the PPA section 168 which encourages the public participation in an attempt to increase scrutiny, trust and utilisation of local know-how.



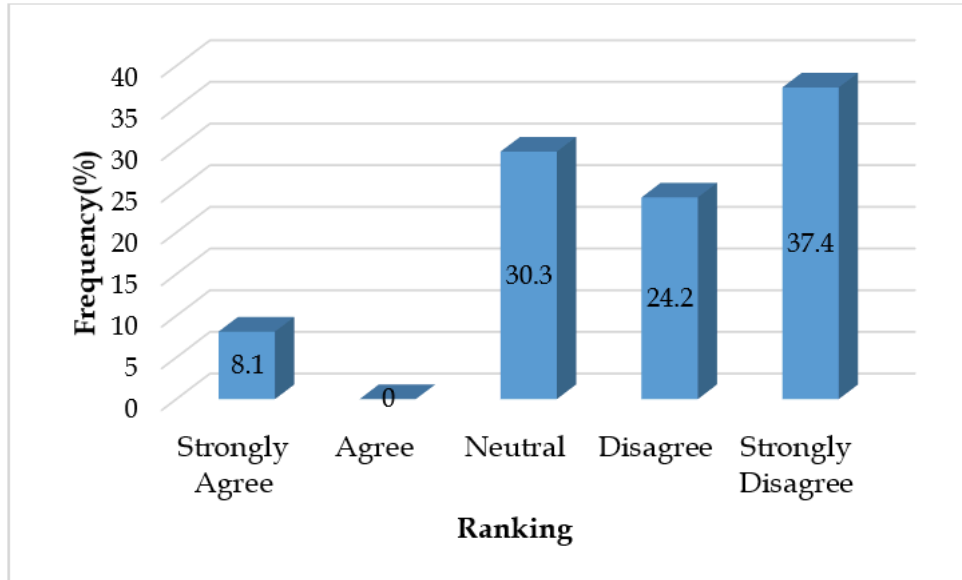


Figure 2: Public involvement in decision-making processes

Source: Field Data (2023)

In the same vein, the study findings indicate that the public was unaware about the projects which were implemented in their area. It is revealed that the leaders were not informed about the plans and progress of the projects, thus resulting in the projects’ failure or delays due to poor support. One of the members of WDC from ward A had the following opinion regarding to public involvement in decision-making processes during FGD:

Laughing is not always a sign of happiness. What I want to say is that involvement of the public in the decision making process which is related to the force account process is a paradox. I am a development stakeholder in this village and ward in general but there are no other issues that I am involved in apart from fundraising and receiving directives from the top leaders in an attempt to contribute through manpower. I also do not have any information from any ordinary community member who has ever been involved in decision-making regarding what you call a force account project. It is a challenge so to speak (FGD with members of WDC from ward A, October, 2023).

Based on the above verbatim quote by one of the members of WDC, it is evident that information is not accessible to the public, something which discourages engagement in the decision making process. Apart from the direct public engagement in decision making, it is expected that the representatives are informed enough in order to help the community to be aware of the progress of the projects. Despite being informed, the representatives hardly inform the public with regard to progress of the project. This limits the information from reaching the general public. As a result, the decisions lack support and legitimacy from the community. During the FGD, one of the members of

WDC from ward A, had the following comment regarding public involvement in decision-making processes.

What matters is to implement force account projects in the manner that they have to be implemented and completed on time and not otherwise. Our office has the leaders who represent the whole public. We are sure that whatever is decided will be represented by the leaders from that community (FGD with members of WDC from ward A, October, 2023).

Generally, the findings indicated that the public is not actively involved in the decision-making processes due to lack of information. Instead, the decisions are made through representatives who also face the challenge to give the feedback to the public regarding what was decided. The representatives represent their interests and thoughts. According to Elias et al. (2018), limited information dissemination to the public hinders effective public participation due to lack of awareness, trust among the public and it results in insufficient mechanisms for feedback and grievance redressal. Komba et al. (Komba et al., 2019) argued that improved information dissemination promotes meaningful engagement in decision making in force account projects. To ensure proper performance, clause 17.3 of guidelines emphasises on the dissemination of the weekly or monthly progress reports to all stakeholders for the purposes of project monitoring and being informed about the issues that need prior attention and guidelines for carrying out force accounts of 2020 (PPRA, 2020). It is clear to encourage accountability and discourage poor performance in the absence of information.

### **Public Meeting Routine**

Public meeting facilitates information dissemination and, hence it creates awareness among the members of the community. The researcher sought to know whether the public meetings are convened in order to inform the public on the progress of the projects or not. The findings which are presented in Figure 3 show that 57 (57.6%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that public meeting routine was not followed, whereas 34 (34.3%) respondents disagreed with the statement. This entails that 91.9% of respondents revealed that there were no public meetings which were conducted to inform the stakeholders about the progress, financial reports and feedback of the project contributions as opposed to 8.1% of respondents who reported that public meetings are convened.

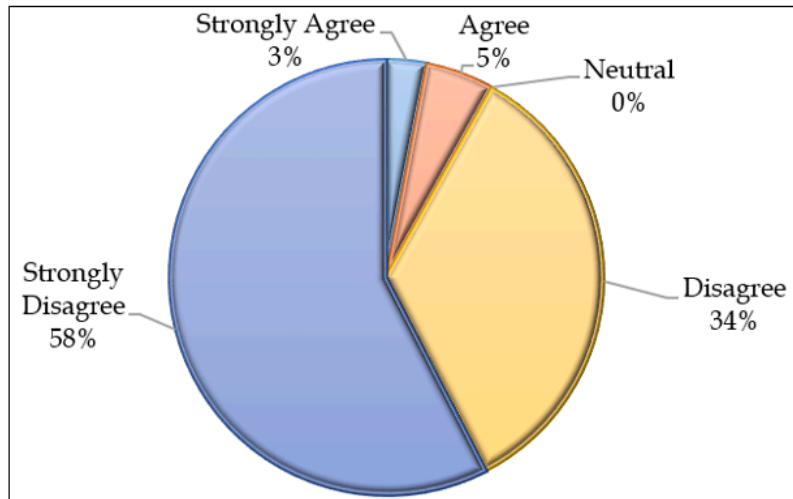


Figure 3: Public meeting routine

**Source:** Field Data (2023)

The majority of the respondents revealed that the project implementers have not effectively utilised the public meetings as a means of informing the public about the progress of the project, financial reports and soliciting feedback on the contribution of projects. The absence of public meetings for such purposes may lead to lack of transparency, limited public awareness and reduced opportunities for public participation and input through open dialogue with the public.

Similarly, during the interview sessions, the members of the construction committee reported that there are no meetings which are conducted to inform the stakeholders about the progress of the project with regard to financial reports expenditure and feedback on the contribution of the projects. During the interview, one member of the construction committee from village C had the following observation with regard to public meeting routine:

There are no meetings which are purposely done to inform people and the public at large about the progress of financial reports and feedback on the contribution from the community. As the members of the construction committee, we do not have the mandate to conduct the public meetings. We experience the interested few persons who ask anything concerning the construction projects. However, the leaders invite us in a few occasions when they need to elaborate some issues in public meetings (Interview with member of construction committee from village C, September, 2023)

Based on the above verbatim quote, the study findings reveal that there is limited effort in engaging the public actively and providing them with relevant information, thus eroding the public trust in the government. Such a situation also leads to a decline in public support and it creates opportunities for resource misuse due to

ineffective check and balance from the public. To address these issues, it is crucial to enhance public engagement through regular public meetings and ensure the dissemination of progress reports in order to keep the public informed, thus fostering accountability and public support while reducing corruption and mismanagement of the resources. According to Yen et al. (2020), the use of appropriate channels to inform the public enhances timely communication and makes the leaders more proactive in handling public concerns and risks in projects.

### **Conclusion**

Drawing from the findings on information dissemination about force account to the public, the study findings show that the problem of confidentiality, technical language and reluctance of the people to attend the meeting and read the notes board hinders the process although there are many channels to share the information. The members of the construction committee are not aware of their responsibility and limits, as they are interfered with by the district procurement management team. They also have no room to convene the public meeting so as to inform the public about things which are difficult to understand due to technical vocabularies. The findings also show that the community members are unaware of the force account due to inadequate information among stakeholders, thus resulting in untimely completion of works and ineffective decision making regarding the project. Therefore, inadequate information among the stakeholder hinders proper decision-making and transparency and it creates the room for corruption during the implementation of the projects that use the mechanisms of force account.

### **Recommendation**

The study recommends that the information about force account projects should easily be accessible to the public in an attempt to stimulate public participation, transparency and accountability. The study also recommends the use of numerous communication channels such as social media and public meetings which constitute an effective way of disseminating information on the process of implementing force account projects to the public. To ensure effective dissemination of information to the general community, the familiar language, Kiswahili in this context, or ethnic community language should be employed. The use of familiar language in the training will enhance quick understanding of how to deal with technical works among the members of the construction committee. The project decisions must originate from the grassroots rather than higher government authority and, where possible, the directives from the central government should be communicated well and designed for community understanding.

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