

# The Effects of Village Community Banks (VICOBA) on Economic Empowerment of Women in Tanzania – A Case of Temeke Municipality

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**Abstract:** The study examines the effect of VICOBA on economic empowerment of women in Temeke Municipality specifically in two wards which are Temeke and Yombo Vituka. The main objective were to assess the effects of VICOBA on women's economic empowerment in Tanzania and Temeke Municipality, to identify major challenges facing women's participating in VICOBA which hinder improvement of their standard of living, to identify economic activities catalyzing business expansion by VICOBA to the women's members group, to find out factors influencing share availability into VICOBA on women's members group. The study used descriptive research design, and sampled 140 respondents which included VICOBA members and leaders in Yombo Vituka and Temeke Wards. The researcher used surveys, looking at documents, and questionnaires with interviews to gather data for the study. They then used special software for social science to analyze the results. The results also revealed that 85% of the people surveyed found the low credit rate strategy helpful, especially for VICOBA members in the group. This strategy helped them by allowing them to build houses, pay their electricity bills, rent, school fees, and other expenses related to school. The findings further indicate that there is a link amidst women's economic empowerment and the VICOBA groups. The study shows that Vicoba groups are dealing with different problems inclusive of, shortage of entrepreneurship skills, insufficiency trust among VICOBA members, poor business environment, and some members disappearing before paying the loans. The findings show that such problems can be overcome by facilitating of entrepreneurship skills, development of stable market for domestic products, and microfinance like VICOBA should put more emphasized to its member to invest more in business activities in order to promote their economic empowerment at larger scale.

**Keywords:** Village Community Banks (VICOBA), Economic Empowerment of Women.

## 1. Introduction

VICOBA is a micro-finance institution founded by a group of up to thirty people who get together once a week to discuss lending money to each other and saving shares, according to Magesa et al. (2014). They consist of a chairperson, an accountant, and a secretary as their leaders.

The notion of "women's empowerment" involves enhancing

the ability of women to make wise decisions in life and access opportunities to fully develop their capabilities. Women's empowerment, as an economic, political, and sociocultural writ, seeks to challenge the hierarchical order based on gender, which has led to the subordination and marginalization of women, with the aim of enhancing women's overall well-being. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 5) prioritize women's empowerment, recognizing it as a critical development objective for nations and the global community (Chen, and Tanaka, 2023).

The process of empowerment include women learning how to organize themselves so they may be autonomous, self-assured, and confident in their ability to exercise their independent right to make decisions. They also learn to control the resources that will help challenge and even eradicate the subordination of women in society. This includes having access to healthcare, education, political engagement, economic power or revenue generating, and rights (Duflo 2012; Kabeer 2005).

Women's economic empowerment is supported by numerous international agreements, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Mexico (1975), and various International Labor Organization protocols on gender equality. The largest yearly conference on gender equality and women's empowerment organized by the United Nations, the 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), was taken place this year from 11 - 22 March under the priority theme, "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective". UN Women advocates for women's economic empowerment in accordance with these, as well as the mounting evidence that gender equality plays a major role in promoting economies and sustainable development. UN Women (2020).

Globally micro-finance likes Village Community Bank (VICOBA), Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) extra, was born out of uncertainties about the government

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capacity to provide economic credit and subsidies to low-income households living below the poverty line. This was because both the donors and the government believed that the majority of the poor required low-cost credits at lower interest rate (Haji, 2013).

By reason of the advancement of agricultural productivity by small farmers, this was seen as a way to promote economic and social development. Donors established credit unions that were pioneered by Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen model which was developed in Germany in 1864 (Haule, 2015; Lucas & Akkoro, 2016). Some sources date the history of micro finance back to the mid- 1800s, when theorist Lysander Spooner 1850s was writing about the advantages of small loans to farmers and business owners as a means of rescuing a community from poverty. However, the concept did not really take off for global community development until the end of World War II.

The first VICOBA establishment in Africa took place in the year 1991 in Niger. They were referred as “women in the move” (mata masa dubara) by Kitomari and Ambwe (2016). Their focus was on women’s obtain monetary services specifically micro insurance, credit and savings. Monetary services provided by VICOBA are meant to support businesses that are generating revenue. The formal sector excludes a large number of women (Kessy *et al.*, 2017; Magesa *et al.*, 2014).

VICOBA were introduced in Tanzania by CARE International, a non-governmental organization in 2000. They were first launched in Zanzibar by the Jozani-Chwaka Conservation Project and later on, other conservation and community livelihood support initiatives in Tanzania mainland and Pemba Island copied it. (Lushakuzi *et al.*, 2017). According to Vodacom (2019), VICOBA initially aimed at promoting the development of women, it is estimated that, in Tanzania there are around 50,000 VICOBA groups with the capital of 1.5 trillion Tanzania shillings and about 4.4 million clients. According to Kessy *et al.* (2016), argues that VICOBA serves the greater part of the women in Tanzania who are outside the formal financial sector like banks.

Tanzania’s government acknowledged women’s economic empowerment, particularly in light of gender and development goals. The government upholds that women’s contributions to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty are crucial because they manage people’s well-being and work in the home, which enables communities and the country to deal with the current survival crisis (Grown & Sen, 2013).

The 1992 Tanzania Women's Development Policy acknowledged equal rights in property ownership and the distribution of financial resources for raising living standards. Economic activity should benefit both parties equally, and the policy places a strong emphasis on freedom of participation. The policy did state, however, women have relatively low standing in terms of economics, society and decision making. (URT, 1992).

This policy clearly shows that, the government mandated that each local government authority put aside 10% of the benefit to provide low credit, with 4% going to women, 2% to disabled people, and 4% to young people. This was and still is intended to empower women economically and improved their economic

welfare. (URT, 2013).

Temeke Municipal Council planned to fasten up with the others in the countries with relation to women issues on economic welfare, by empowering women to participate fully in economic activities. Temeke Municipal Council successfully provided loans totaling 8,958,410.247.00 during the fiscal years 2018/2019, 2019/2020, and 2020/2021. These loans benefited 514 people, including 323 women, 114 youth, and 77 people with impairments. These loans are distributed in a four, four, two ratios, with 4 percent going to women, 4 percent to adolescents, and 4 percent to individuals with disabilities. Temeke Municipal Council granted loans to around 136 women in various economic groupings, including VICOBA, during the fiscal years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. Temeke Municipality (2021).

For families, communities, and nations to thrive socially and healthily, women must be empowered. The full potential of women may be realized when they lead safe, contented, and productive lives. Bringing their abilities to the workforce and being able to bring up children who are jolly and healthiness. They can also support sustainable economies, improve societies, and advance humankind as a whole. Jasson (2014).

#### *A. Statement of the Problem*

Enhancements in women income and well-being are essential components of sustainable development. Rakodi (1999), sustainable development happens when women’s are able to achieve a degree of well-being that allows them to handle shocks and recover from them. Even though the government worked to empower women by offering Women Development Fund loans, and establishment of microfinance policy in Tanzania its impact on women's economic well-being fell short of expectations when compared to the government's and non-governmental organizations' efforts to improve women's welfare. As a result, the economic situation for women remains in a poor condition.

VICOBA supposedly to support livelihood and help to promote economic empowerment of women but sometimes this is quite contrary to what many women expect. Microfinance like VICOBA primarily does not reach to the countryside/ urban area to render economic growth to women, rather some women face the shock of their life time after VICOBA's rob them from every penny they have, and dig them into a deep grave of poverty.

Numbers of scholars and many literatures about VICOBA both at the global arena to the national level are numerous; however, there is a lack of similar understanding on VICOBA contribution on economic empowerment of women at the local government level. Mecha (2017), claims that the distribution of microcredit to the women is very important for promoting their economic empowerment especially to poor women in the village as its support income generating activities (IGAs). Never the less, the most impoverished among the poor women are not profiting since most of these women are unable to pay back their loans, which causes them to forfeit the small amount of money they borrowed. Therefore, micro credit is not a solution for promoting their economic empowerment.

Mwanga (2016), assessed women's economic empowerment who participated in VICOBA, in the Tanzanian district of Siha. The study found that women were given more influence by microfinance institutions like VICOBA, on capital and asset acquisitions, access to business education. This research on the roles of VICOBA centered on economic empowerment of women. Example Medard and Chale (2020).

VICOBA have largely mushroomed in Tanzania, but the question remains on the impact and effects in regards to empowering women economically. This study looks at the effects of micro financing (VICOBA) at Temeke Municipality, to find out whether or not micro financing has made any changes in the economic wellbeing of women in this Municipality.

The research used two wards which are Temeke, and Yombo Vituka. These wards are mostly squatters, and majority of the population are poor, involving in small businesses such as street vendors, among them many women are house wives, single mothers or divorcees. Women in Temeke Municipal Council mostly join VICOBA for a wrong motive because they want to get money to hand out and squander in different sermons, so as to be seen by their fellow women as potential members in their own community, or just for show off but not really use the loan for the investment purposes to improve their economic wellbeing. In order to close the identified gaps, this study aims to gather specific data regarding the effect of VICOBA on women's economic empowerment in Tanzania at Temeke Municipal.

### *B. Research Objective*

1. To identify economic activities catalyzing business expansion by VICOBA into women members group.
2. To find out factors influencing share availability into VICOBA on women member's groups.

## **2. Literature Review**

Women's empowerment in East African nations was assessed by Miedema *et al.* (2018), based on their health, well-being, and capacity to realize their potential. Social assets, views, gendered attitudes, and involvement in household decision-making were the specific variables that were being analyzed. However, the political and legal aspects of women's empowerment were not taken into account in the study. Shakya (2016), evaluated the contribution of microfinance to increasing women's participating in leadership roles and domestic decision-making in Nepal. Whilst Wanjiku and Njiru (2016), investigated the impact of MFIs on the economic and social empowerment of women in Kenya.

Mlowasa (2014), carried a study on the effect microfinance plays in promoting women's economically in Arusha Tanzania. Discovered that while offering low credit rate it resulted to, increasing savings, raising living standards, lending money, offering shares, and imparting entrepreneurial skills are all factors in the growth of VICOBA. Women's status in the community improved thanks to microfinance policy loans, moving them from substandard living situations to better ones. This is equaled compounded with Majenga *et al.* (2014), argued

that women should join VICOBA in order to conveniently support their businesses and obtain microcredit.

Village Community Banks (VICOBA) is a significant financial instrument that affects the nation's low-income workers' decision to save. These microbusiness entrepreneurs rely more on VICOBA to help them raise the money they need to grow their companies. Also, some households depend on VICOBA to cover their basic necessities including food and shelter, therefore, the contribution of VICOBA to lives of low-income earners looks to be quite substantial. Due to adverse events that may arise as a result of loan default risk, not all small businesses view the contribution of a VICOBA loan as an appropriate instrument for them to increase their capital fund or to prolong their business operations. (2019, Kinisa).

According to Lwanga-Ntale (2018), Village Community Banks provide a wide range of services, including cheap loans, savings alternatives, management training, and social and economic development. Typically, VICOBA facilities provide their first loan to a member after three months of savings deposits. The member is required to repay the first loan within three months and the second loan within six months. The initial loan amount is typically three times the member's savings. For example, a member with 50,000 shillings in savings can get a loan for 150,000 shillings. Other criteria influencing the amount offered include the account balance and previous loan repayment rates. Other criteria influencing the amount offered include the account balance and previous loan repayment rates. A study also discovered that access to microfinance services through VICOBA results in good changes in people's life, such as increased business acumen and decision-making skills. Furthermore, microfinance programs have been attributed with promoting healthy gender roles, with female VICOBA members getting more respect and worth as their economic condition improves.

Mukhooli (2015), showed that, there is a basic connection between VICOBA and the eradication of poverty for women. The latter are dependent on the impoverished women obtaining financial resources or control over them. Previously deployed programs did not achieve positive outcomes because the people for whom they were presumably poorly intended were not included. Based on the fundamental need approach, this study recommended that government programs aimed at reducing poverty be redesigned, if not completely reorganized.

Berhanu *et al.* (2021), opined that a significant percentage of Ethiopian households had access to food security as a result of using microfinance services. Furthermore, research carried out in Tanzania's Mvomero District by Kimathi (2015), concluded that women owners of small businesses benefited from and had access to microfinance services, but they also encountered many obstacles in doing so. As a result of these findings, various academics have suggested that microfinance institutions create more logical, alluring, and accommodating terms when lending money to small businesses.

Ole Kinisa (2019), evaluated the effects of VICOBA on reducing poverty in a study carried out in Manyara, Babati. Descriptive statistics and linear regression analysis were used to analyze the data from descriptive research that included a

sample of 112 members from 25 VICOBA. According to the report, the majority of VICOBA run out of money because they are unable to collect debts from its members. The firm's success is being hampered, particularly in the area of fund management, by elements including a lack of discipline and a decline in trust among executives. The principal reason behind this inadequate handling of finances is the non-repayment of VICOBA loans.

According to the analysis, VICOBA, which gathers funds from loans taken out by members, may be able to survive for a very long period. Additionally, the study discovered that the availability of collateral security within the group is the primary cause of such loan repayment. In order to make up for this loss of confidence, the collateral security will be utilized to reimburse the loan amount if the member fails to make payments on it. It was therefore contended that the VICOBA, having failed to obtain the required number of loans from its members, would be in a precarious financial situation, which could result in significant losses or perhaps the group's dissolution.

### 3. Methodology

The researcher used a mixed method approach in this study, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Through interviews, the researcher can obtain more detailed descriptions and understanding of the topic being studied. The application of qualitative research methodology makes this feasible. The quantitative research approach aims to address the who, what, when, where, and sometimes how questions by using numerical data on the topics under study. Applications of the mixed method approach are the result of the need to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data in order to provide more accurate and reliable insight into the topics under consideration. Additionally, by identifying patterns and generalizations in addition to comprehensive understanding of participants viewpoints, mixed techniques offer a more comprehensive picture.

The study population comprised women residing in Temeke ward, with a total population of 10,917, and Yombo Vituka ward, with a total population of 39,781, as reported by the Census (2022). And non-VICOBA who works as a community development officer in the Temeke and Yombo Vituka wards of the Temeke Municipality, which are the intended wards. The precise sample was chosen based on the deadline, the number of employees in the municipality, and the challenges of accommodating every employee. As a sample size, 140 participants were included in the study. In this study, the sample size was determined using percentages. 10% of the population is the sample size for descriptive study; however, if the population is small, then 20% of the population is needed (Gay & Diehl, quoted by Jero, 2015).

There are 50,698 women in total in this study. Temeke ward has 19 VICOBA group, and Yombo Vituka has 21 VICOBA groups which in total is 50, ten groups include 15 numbers, thirty VICOBA groups have 10 people in each group, and the other ten have 9 people in each group this means the total number of women in VICOBA groups in both two wards is 540. Consequently, the study aims to investigate 692 populations,

with a sample size of 140 respondents, as indicated in table 1, drawn from the target population of 692 individuals. The sample size is calculated using 20% of the population size of women who belong to VICOBA groups, Community Development officers, and women who do not belong to VICOBA groups. This study selected respondents for both VICOBA members and non-members in Temeke Municipality using both non-probability sampling (purposive sampling) and probability sampling technique (stratified sample). Only women who were residents of Temeke and Yombo Vituka wards were chosen. These methods was employed because of time constrains.

The study's data included both qualitative and quantitative information. Descriptive statistics data analysis was used to examine numerical data obtained from closed-ended questions. Further data analysis was conducted using the data array produced by the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) computer program. Features for descriptive statistics in SPSS Version 17 make it easier to compare different responses and give a clear image of response rates. After the data had been cleaned, coded, and categorized based on each research variable, descriptive analytical techniques like percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. Using Pearson correlation, the relationship between the study variables was ascertained. Since tables are user-friendly and offer response frequencies and respondent percentages, they were utilized to present the data.

Table 1  
Sample size

S.No.	Respondents	Target population	Sample Size
1.	Women group leader	50	10
2.	Women group member	540	108
3.	Non women group	100	20
4.	Ward community development officers	2	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>692</b>	<b>140</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

### 4. Empirical Results

Data on the demographics of VICOBA women borrowers. Although data were collected from 140 respondents who were women mainly owning VICOBA, 120 participants effectively provided data were analyzed in this study, 20 participants provided data which hard errors such as incomplete, poor hand writing and others did not return the questionnaire. Therefore, the percentage of responses was 86% which it is acceptable for data analysis.

#### A. Gender of the Respondents

Each respondent was a woman; these were mainly beneficiaries from the VICOBA and had knowledge about the VICOBA. Most of them were conducting business as a result of the loans they had acquired from the VICOBA. These women were 120. The women participants were selected randomly from those who had acquired the loan from the VICOBA. Therefore, they had enough experience about the loan and they could participate effectively to the study.

### B. Age of the Respondents

Table 2 shows that most of the individual answering 44 (36.67%) were between the age group 42 to 49 and 34 (28.33%) were at the age group of 34 to 41. This is the age group that composed young and mature adults who were aware about how to use the loan accessed from the VICOBA effectively. Above 50 years were only 12 women who were the beneficiaries.

Table 2  
Respondents age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18- 25	08	6.67%
26- 33	22	18.33%
34- 41	34	28.33%
42-49	44	36.67%
50- above	12	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

Findings from Table 2 demonstrate that most of the individuals who accessed the loan were mainly adult women aged 42-49 years old. However, the young women also accessed the loan from the VICOBA. Few elderly women over fifty years of age accessed the loan. This study's findings are consistent with those of Dawit (2014), who discovered that as women's ages climbed, they obtained more experience and knowledge about various family issues. This experience provided them with a greater grasp of how to make decisions about their lives, families, and communities, ultimately leading to economic empowerment.

The study's findings are also similar with prior research by Rehman et al. (2015), who discovered that age had a significant impact on women's empowerment. Furthermore, Ringkvist (2013), in a study in Burma discovered that age appears to have an effect on the economic empowerment of women. The study also concurs with Restuta's (2015), the result was 14% of the women who responded were between the ages of 16 and 25, 32% were between the ages of 26 and 35, 43% were between the ages of 36 and 45, and 11% were beyond 45. Additionally, Nnko's (2016), study found that most active participants in economic activities are between the ages of 28 and 47 and are also affiliated with women's organizations.

Table 3  
Marital status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	24	20%
Married	44	36.67%
Widowed	10	8.33%
Divorced/ separated	42	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

Regarding the respondents' marital status, 24 (20%) were single women, these were relatively young women who had plans to start business and be entrepreneurs. They wished to change their economic welfare of their families. This group involved women with moderate education they had acquired from secondary level with assistance of knowledge and skills they had acquired from entrepreneurial trainings.

The second group was of married women who were

44(36.66%). This group involved majority of the respondents who were mature adults who had families and children and as a result they had a lot of responsibilities to support economic needs such as need to provide food, school fee, shelter, treatment and so forth. These married women seriously needed this VICOBA to start businesses or which could allow them to make a living. Among the respondents were also widowed women who were 10(8.33%).

This kind of respondents involved the women whose husbands died and therefore they had a responsibility of raising their families. Seeking for a VICOBA was to get capital to start an entrepreneurial activity so as to earn a living and improve the socio-economic life of their families through having the capacity to cater for the basic necessities include food, shelter, clothing, health services, school fees and so forth which they believed having such needs could improve the economic status.

The last kind of the respondents involved were the divorced or separated women. This group involved 42(35%) women who were also loans beneficiaries from the VICOBA at small interest rate. These women had also acquired children during their marriage but after they 39 separated, they were left with many responsibilities of supporting their children to improve on their lives thus looking for access to the loans from the VICOBA. Findings from this study relate with those Debora (2013), despite the fact that the majority of women in these groups were married, several studies on these groups revealed varying marital statuses. According to a research by women in the group varied in terms of their marital status: slightly more than one-third (35.1%) were married, less than a quarter (23.4%) were single, and 19.1% were divorced. 5.3% were widowed, and 17% were separated. Due to their numerous financial obligations, including covering their children's tuition and other household expenses, the majority of women joined the group (Haule, 2015).

Table 4  
Respondents' occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Business (self-employed)	84	70%
Employed	18	15%
Unemployed	18	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

Data in Table 4 presents respondents' occupation. Most of the respondents were self-employed or doing businesses. This group involved 84(70%) women who were VICOBA beneficiaries who had acquired capital from the VICOBA to do business and as a result they were already conducting some business activities of which they were earning some income. The second group involved the 18(15%) employed women. These were either employed in the government or in other people's companies but they had also joined VICOBA to boost their economic life.

The study also involved the 18(15%) who were unemployed. These women were not doing any form of business. Still, there is a lack of connection between the literature on career and entrepreneurial growth and the literature on their start-up aspirations, knowledge, abilities, etc. The findings are similar

with those of According to a research by Enambora (2011), members of women's VICOBA work in a variety of occupations, including petty business, cultivation, and both petty and cultivation. As per Kihongo's (2005) findings, women's in VICOBA groups engage in basic economic tasks such as woodworking, meat processing, animal husbandry, and batik dyeing. Members of women's groups engaged in a range of occupations, including farming and ranching (Nnko 2016).

Table 5  
Education level

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	42	35%
Secondary	48	40%
College	22	18.33%
University	08	6.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

Questionnaires concerning respondents' educational attainment included the following: 42(35%) had primary education, followed by the secondary level who were 48 (40%) respondents. 22(18.33%) respondents had college education while 08 (6.67%) respondents had university degree education. The respondents' educational distribution outlines how these women encountered business obstacles due to low education. The findings are supported by those of Addai (2017), which showed that the level of education had major role to play on economic empowerment of women's. In addition to that, Ollotu (2017), came up with similar outcome also found out that the loan from VICOBA is very crucial in promoting women livelihood, he suggested further that, their effects was due to the level of education among women themselves.

The findings also are similar to those of Alene (2020), who showed that, the following factors are important in understanding women entrepreneurs: education, prior business experience, access to information, funding, and training, government backing, and property ownership. The findings made a number of intriguing observations. A number of factors, including age, education level, marital status, credit limit, and number of training sessions, had a major impact on women's economic empowerment. The results, however, were at odds with a study conducted in 2014 by Bera, who discovered that prior business experience had no appreciable impact on women's economic empowerment.

### C. Requested amount

Respondents were asked how much money they request in total.

Table 6  
Loan requested amount

The amount requested in (000)	Frequency	Percentage
50,000-100,000	24	20%
200,000-500,000	44	36.67%
600,000-1,000,000	34	28.33%
More than 1,000,000	18	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 6 results reveal that 24 (or 20%) of the respondents

asked the VicoBA for 50,000–100,000 Tanzanian shillings. The majority of the respondents, 44 (36.67%), asked for between 200,000 and 500,000. 18(15%) respondents asked for more than one million shillings, whereas 34 (28.33%) respondents asked for between 600,000 and one million shillings. This study reveals that 80% of the respondents requested the minimum amount which was enough capital to start their micro business. Lwanga-Ntale (2018), states that Village Community Banks offer various services such as easy loans, savings options, and training in management, as well as social and economic development. Typically, VICOBA facilities grant the first loan to a member after three months of making savings deposits. The member must repay the first loan within three months and the second loan within six months. The initial loan amount is usually three times the member's savings. For instance, a member with savings of 50,000 shillings can receive a loan of 150,000 shillings. The amount offered is influenced by other factors such as the balance in the account and the repayment rate of previous loans. A study also found that access to microfinance services through VICOBA leads to positive transformations in people's lives, including improved business acumen and decision-making skills. Additionally, microfinance programs have been credited with bringing about positive changes in gender roles, with female VICOBA members gaining increased respect and value due to their improved economic status.

A study by Miled et al. (2022), indicated that women used their credit on income-generating activities. They jointly used their income to start new business and expanded on the existing ones. Women used their credit for income-generating activities as the loan amount climbed. Together, they expanded the already-existing business and launched other ventures using their earnings. Members with larger credit borrowing volumes had higher economic empowerment scores. Higher levels of economic empowerment were more likely to be attained by women who received more credit than by those who did not. Microfinance loans have the potential to gradually improve the relative income status of the impoverished in emerging nations. The results of this study are consistent with those of a study conducted in Pakistan by Khan and Noreen (2012). They discovered that women's economic empowerment was significantly impacted by the credit provided by microfinance institutions. This result is also consistent with the findings of Ringkvist (2013), and Loomba (2017), who found that women's economic empowerment was positively impacted by the loan obtained through microfinance and its efficient use.

### D. Length of Accessing a Loan

How much time did it take to get the loan from VICOBA, from the date you applied for?

In this study, several respondents were question regarding the duration for one to acquire the loan. Out of the total 120 respondents, 42(35%) indicated that they accessed loans within six to twelve weeks. Furthermore, 34(28.33%) respondents said that they accessed loans within four to six weeks. Likewise, it was found that 36 (30%) respondents accessed loans after 12 weeks (12). Surprisingly, this study reveals only small

percentage of the total respondents' equivalent to 8 (6.67%) respondents received loans within one to three weeks. Data show that most respondents received loans from six weeks and above. There was no delay for women borrowers to access loans and in certain cases the procedure require more time to obtain the loan depending how much they required.

Table 7  
Length of loan access

The length for loan receiving	Frequency	Percentage
1-3 weeks	08	6.67%
4- 6 weeks	34	28.33%
6- 12 weeks	42	35%
Above 12 weeks	36	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

The results are comparable to those of Mwankuga (2018), who showed that VICOBA Temeke Municipal Council in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, aims to empower women, adolescents, and people with disabilities (PWDs) economically by giving them more voice, confidence, and opportunities, needs to encourage the formation of VICOBA which inclusive of all kinds of people which is provided to the most vulnerable groups as loans with small interest rate. Even though such VICOBA is privately managed, the government's involvement is important in regulation of their activities to ensure that the VICOBA is of all people, managed by the people irrespective of age, gender, disability and so forth.

In a 2015 study titled Youth Voices in Tanzania, conducted by the British Council in Tanzania, more than fifty percent of young people expressed dread about not realizing their aspirations, and about twenty-five percent listed financial stability as one of their top concerns. These groups have a high rate of poverty and dependency, which has led to a very low level of engagement in political and governmental activities. (Mwankuga, 2018). Therefore, formation of VICOBA is a way forward or solution towards such beliefs, fear and perception. It is a partly solution towards their financial constraints.

#### E. Purpose for Accessing the Loan

In order to identify the purpose for accessing the loan from the VICOBA by the respondents, the query posed was this: What was the purpose of requesting for the loan you received? The results bellow were the replies from the respondents.

Table 8  
Purpose for loan request

Purpose for loan request	Frequency	Percentage
For starting business	62	51.67%
For improving existing business	22	18.33%
Both starting and improving the existing	20	16.67%
For other reasons	16	13.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 8 data shows that sixty-two/62 (51.67%) of the respondents said they wanted the loan to start a business or engage in entrepreneurial activities; twenty-two/22 (18.33%) said they wanted it to improve an already-existing business; and twenty/20 (16.67%) said they wanted it to help them run two

different kinds of businesses. Sixteen respondents/16(13.33%), on the other hand, stated that their primary purpose for obtaining the loan was for other purposes, such as paying for school supplies or medical care.

Through interview, one of the interviewees said the following:

*"We had this notion of opening VICOBA previously, but it moved slowly since we had insufficient funding at a time, but later we managed to open. Later on, we managed to secure Tanzanian shillings 2 million as a loan, and we topped up to buy our materials, now we make liquid soaps, candles and batiks"*

Women use their credit for income-generating activities when loan amounts rise. Together, they use their earnings to launch new ventures and grow their current ones. Members, who borrowed considerable quantity of money, secured better economic empowerment index. Compared to women who received less credit, those who obtained more credit are more likely to reach a higher level of economic empowerment. The findings are consistent with Kinisa (2019), suggested that with loans from VICOBA helped women's to improve their level of income, not only that it help in increases their business expansion as well as sales volumes of their business ventures. This is equaled compounded with Majenga et al. (2014), argued that women should join VICOBA in order to conveniently support their businesses and obtain microcredit. VICOBA increase access to loan for the clients at favorable condition, it can be the use of group collateral, charge small interest rate or flexibility in loan processing. (Akaro & Lucas 2016). Therefore, the easy accessibility of VICOBA loans helps to promotes and improves the livelihoods of the clients, in addition to that VICOBA helps to promote the culture of saving and solidarity among the members of group. Rutenge, (2016).

#### F. Advantages of Being VICOBA Membership

Fifty percent of VICOBA members have opted for savings and loans, indicating that the majority of people join the VICOBA in order to save money and obtain loans. 23.7% gain business expertise from the VICOBA, and 23.3% increase their productivity.

Table 9  
Advantages of being VICOBA member

Advantages of VICOBA	Frequency	Percentage
Loan and Savings	60	50%
Business knowledge	31	26.7%
Expanding Production	29	3.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

The findings are similar with those of Kinisa (2019), Village Community Banks (VICOBA) is a significant financial instrument that affects the nation's low-income workers' decision to save. These microbusiness entrepreneurs rely more on VICOBA to help them raise the money they need to grow their businesses. Also, some women's depend on VICOBA to cover their basic necessities including food and shelter, therefore, the contribution of VICOBA to lives of low income earners looks to be quite substantial. Due to adverse events that



may arise as a result of loan default risk, not all small businesses view the contribution of a VICOBA loan as an appropriate instrument for them to increase their capital fund or to prolong their business operations.

### G. Effects of VICOBA LOAN on Economic Empowerment of Women

In order to assess the effects of VICOBA loan on women, respondents were asked the following question; how has the business help you on your needs? The results are presented as follows in the Table 10.

Table 10  
Effects of VICOBA loan on economic empowerment

Effect of the business on economic empowerment	Frequency	Percentage
Construction of the house	18	15%
Purchase of daily food	26	21.67%
Paying school fees	18	15%
Paying bills such as electricity, water	12	10%
Paying rent	18	15%
Payment of health services	16	13.33%
Others	12	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

Findings in Table 10 show the effects of VICOBA loan on economic empowerment of women. For example, 18(15%) stated that they used the profits obtained from conducting the business opened with the VICOBA loan to construct their houses, 26(21.67%) used the profit to purchase food for the family, 18(15%) to pay school fees, 12(10%) to pay bills such as electricity and water, 18(15%) to pay house rent, while 16(13.33%) to pay for health services while 12(10%) for other needs. These findings are the same to the findings of Berhanu *et al.* (2021), revealed that a significant percentage of Ethiopian households had access to food security as a result of using microfinance services.

Jaafar and Alwazni (2019) opined that microcredits had a favorable impact on Malaysia's monthly budget for food consumption, assets, education, other expenses, and asset acquisition. According to Al-Mamun *et al.* (2014), the microcredit package in Malaysia encouraged women clients to take charge of their households, attain financial stability, take charge of their resources, increase their mobility, and become more knowledgeable about the law. The results of Magali's (2013), study, which employed a logistic regression model and the t-test to examine the effects of Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOS) on loan borrowers, are also consistent with these findings. According to the findings, 73.5% of borrowers were able to improve their household's standard of living since food intake and nutritional status had an impact on social and economic well-being.

The results of the study done by Chipindula and Mwangi (2015), also indicated that through VICOBA rural women had been economic empowered, who previous were economic disempowered because of the lack of financial services controlled by themselves. Women gained respect and self-worth from the community as a result, which helped them develop a sense of social worth. Women and their families were

also able to overcome embarrassment and increase their self-efficacy by being given the freedom to own resources, which increased confidence and improved couple communication. Women also changed the economic effects by taking on part of the household chores, which improved their ability to solve marital problems.

Findings are also consistent with Microfinance Theory (Yunus 1999), which proposes three complementary and opposing paradigms of microfinance: financial self-sustainability, poverty reduction, and female empowerment. According to the financial self-sustainability paradigm, contracting microfinance initiatives inevitably empowers women economically. Microcredit is considered in the poverty alleviation paradigm as a technique of improving well-being by lowering household poverty and vulnerabilities. Women are the target category because they are perceived to be poorer than males, and women are more inclined to spend earned income on family needs. Microcredit, according to the feminist empowerment paradigm, promotes women's social and economic difficulties.

## 5. Conclusion

The study shows that access to finance has enabled women to engage in a variety of income-generating activities. Income-generating activities have enabled women to meet their household needs and improve their economic standing. Women's contributions to household welfare boost their valuation/appraisal, which appears to lessen marital tensions and so increase economic empowerment.

VICOBA loan has also considerably assisted women's endeavors to produce income and supplement income for those who are employed by providing soft modest loans. As women say, creating income-generating activities for women helps to alleviate the problem of subordination and improves women's positions. It can be argued that the VICOBA loan has been very focused on ensuring women's access to credit in order to meet their financial needs by supporting their income-generating activities. Women's educational levels played a crucial role in their economic emancipation.

The findings mainly support women's perceptions about the importance of microcredit in promoting women's empowerment. In general, VICOBA has contributed to women's strong economic growth, better family situations, and improved children's health, growth, and wellbeing by granting loans to women. Recommendations Microfinance institutions, such as the VICOBA, should encourage women to engage in income-generating activities, they should be taught business management skills and be aware of market trends, as their business is dependent on market conditions. VICOBA LOAN coordinators, in partnership with the government and other stakeholders, shall enable loan facilitation and the development of stable markets for domestic commodities produced by women. Additionally, it is recommended that there is need to strengthening entrepreneur's capacity through trainings on different business activities this will enable effective development of their businesses and thus effective use of the loans obtained from the VICOBA.



This will help women to develop competitive businesses, thereby advancing women's economic empowerment. Women in the study area identified two major challenges: a lack of skills and a lack of market opportunities. Furthermore, VICOBA should be promoted by the government, VICOBA and microfinance institutions, and other stakeholders to improve people's livelihoods and contribute to women's economic empowerment. Women's participation in VICOBA loans leads to higher economic contributions, freedom of mobility, asset ownership, income and savings control, and decision-making involvement.

Never the less, this study face number of limitation, as the researcher employed a tiny sample size, thus only one district of Temeke did not provide the opportunity to observe changes and represent what was going on in other districts, but a longitudinal study design could have produced something new. Not only that, areas for Further study more research is needed to better understand the nature and characteristics of microenterprises established by women borrowers for poverty reduction. There is also a need to investigate the effectiveness of microenterprises founded by female borrowers in reducing income poverty.

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