

Peer Review

Review of: "Evaluation of Nyumba Ni Choo: A National Campaign to Promote Improved Sanitation in Tanzania Between 2016–2020"

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The article examines a significant (SDG) concerning universal sanitation, showing progress from 43% to 72% coverage over five years. It highlights a model for achieving subsidy-free behaviour change at scale in resource-limited settings. The author uses mixed methods, combining SMS survey data (n=4,537) and interviews (n=58), to triangulate findings within MRC Framework and Theory of Change models. The study validates dual-audience targeting of households and officials as crucial for success. It identifies "social status/modernity" as a stronger motivator than health or disgust in the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach. While noting limitations like sampling bias and COVID-19 delays, the study provides evidence of effective national-scale sanitation behaviour change, demonstrating the efficacy of "modernity" messaging and offering insights on radio use and official roles.

Certain observations warrant attention: reliance on self-selected mobile users from GeoPoll overrepresents urban, educated, and wealthier populations, and small sample sizes of 21 households and 37 officials from successful regions limit generalizability. Results need contextualization, findings need clarification, and "plausible association" should replace "cause" where evidence is insufficient. The SMS survey risks misinterpretation and low completion rates, with insufficient analysis of disparities and a focus on toilet construction rather than use.

The article offers insights into driving national sanitation investment without subsidies. Despite its limitations, the transparency and results are great, and the study can be accepted with appropriate revisions.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.