**IMPACT** The Tanzania Poverty Reduction Project , which ran from 2020 to December 2025, enrolled about 1.37 million poor households in five regions

# Opec-backed plan pulls 0.4m families out of poverty trap

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Tanzania Social Action Fund project director John Stephen speaks during a press conference in Karatu District, Arusha Region, on Monday. The event took place to announce the winding up of the $50 million Opec-funded Tanzania Poverty Reduction Programme, which was implemented in Mwanza, Njombe, Shinyanga, Geita and Simiyu regions. PHOTO I COURTESY

**Karatu.** At least 400,000 Tanzanian households have graduated from extreme poverty following the completion of a $50 million project funded by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and implemented by the Tanzania Social Action Fund (Tasaf).

The five-year Tanzania Poverty Reduction Project (TPRP), which ran from 2020 to December 2025, enrolled about 1.37 million poor households across 33 councils in five regions—Njombe, Arusha, Mwanza, Simiyu and Geita.

According to Tasaf, the households that graduated met set criteria, reflecting improved livelihoods, more stable incomes and better access to basic social services. The outcome represents a notable contribution to national poverty reduction efforts, particularly among vulnerable communities.

Speaking to journalists in Karatu on Monday during the official winding up of TPRP IV, Tasaf Executive Director Shedrack Mziray said more households are expected to benefit in the next phase of the programme.

"We expect to enrol more households under TPRP V, during which over 500,000 households will graduate. Discussions with OPEC on funding the new phase are ongoing," he said.

Mr Mziray cited data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showing that 26.4 per cent of Tanzanians lived below the basic needs poverty line in 2017/18, while about 10 per cent were classified as extremely poor.

"NBS is currently finalising a new poverty assessment, which will provide updated figures on poverty reduction trends," he said.

He noted that the project's initial phase reduced extreme poverty by about 10 per cent, creating a foundation for subsequent phases. Councils were selected based on limited access to social services and low development indicators, even in regions perceived to be resource-rich.

"Regions such as Mwanza, Simiyu, Shinyanga and Geita, despite being endowed with gold and other natural resources, still face deep inequalities at village level," he said, adding that similar challenges persist in food-producing regions such as Katavi, as well as Singida and Dodoma—though the latter has benefited from its status as the national capital.

Mr Mziray said Lindi and Mtwara were among the first beneficiaries under earlier phases of the OPEC-funded programme due to severe development gaps. He added that Zanzibar and Singida Region are expected to be included in the next phase, following positive feedback from Members of Parliament on the project's impact.

On financing, Tasaf Public Works and Infrastructure Manager Paul Kijazi said the project allocated Sh89.78 billion to infrastructure development, Sh3.218 billion to household income-generating activities and Sh11.968 billion to temporary employment under public works.

"This brings total programme spending to about $43 million, with the remaining $7 million covering operational, supervision and monitoring costs," he said.

Looking ahead, Mr Mziray said Tasaf plans to seek more than $100 million from OPEC to expand the next phase to additional regions, including Zanzibar's Unguja and Pemba islands.

"The upcoming phase will prioritise youth skills development, start-up support and greater use of technology in data collection and programme delivery," he said.

He said TPRP IV delivered measurable socio-economic gains while offering lessons for future poverty alleviation initiatives. The project focused on income generation, service delivery and the creation of productive community assets.

Key achievements included the construction and rehabilitation of classrooms, health facilities and water sources, reducing travel distances and improving access to essential services for millions of households.

"These investments have contributed to better health outcomes, improved learning environments and enhanced community well-being," Mr Mziray said, adding that the project also strengthened household resilience by supporting income diversification through non-agricultural self-employment, livestock keeping and other activities.

As a result, many beneficiary families reported higher incomes, improved food security and a stronger ability to meet basic needs. Women and youth played a central role, actively participating in decision-making, savings groups and leadership positions.

Recent assessments, he said, show that more than 200,000 households benefited directly from the project, with a response rate of 96.7 per cent. Gender equity outcomes were particularly strong, with women accounting for 56.5 per cent of participating household heads.

"Investments in dormitories, sanitation facilities and classrooms boosted girls' enrolment and retention, while contributing to a decline in early pregnancies," he said.

Despite the gains, Mr Mziray acknowledged challenges, including payment delays, planning gaps and unmet demand for water and health infrastructure. These underscored the need for improved planning, stronger institutional capacity and streamlined processes, particularly for savings group registration and local-level implementation.

Going forward, Tasaf plans to strengthen asset maintenance frameworks, expand coverage to underserved areas and deepen community participation, while prioritising climate resilience and local capacity building to ensure sustainability.

Mr Mziray said TPRP IV demonstrated the effectiveness of community-driven development in reducing vulnerability and promoting inclusive growth.

"With continued political commitment, strong partnerships and strategic expansion, Tasaf is well positioned to scale up successful approaches and further advance Tanzania's poverty reduction agenda," he said.

# Policy uncertainty threatens anti-drug trafficking gains

By Rosemary Mirondo
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**Dar es Salaam.** Tanzania's fight against human trafficking is at a critical policy juncture as the National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan expired in 2024, with no clear indication yet on whether it will be extended, renewed or replaced.

According to the 2024–2025 annual report on the state of human trafficking and efforts to combat it in Tanzania, the absence of a renewed policy framework risks undermining progress made in recent years, even as trafficking networks become more complex, adaptive and increasingly driven by technology.

The report, cited by Tanzania Relief Initiatives (TRI) chief executive officer and Tanzania Network Against Human Trafficking (TANAHUT) executive director Edwin Mugambila, notes that despite intensified prevention and enforcement efforts, the number of identified trafficking cases is projected to rise.

"This upward trend reflects a dual reality," Mr Mugambila said. "On one hand, it signals improved national capacity in victim identification, reporting and support—an expected and necessary phase in which stronger systems initially uncover more cases before longer-term reductions take hold."

On the other hand, he warned, the trend may also point to a genuine expansion of trafficking activities, particularly those facilitated through digital platforms. Online-enabled exploitation—especially targeting children—alongside trafficking for forced criminality, has emerged as a rapidly growing and difficult-to-detect threat.

"While institutional progress is evident, Tanzania's anti-trafficking response remains at a pivotal juncture," Mr Mugambila said. "The report underscores the urgent need for renewed policy direction through an updated National Action Plan, stronger legal and institutional frameworks, improved technical implementation and victim-centred services and enhanced inter-agency coordination that places survivor protection, recovery and rights at the core of the response."

> **Institutional progress is evident, but anti-trafficking response remains at a pivotal juncture**
>
> MUGAMBILA | TRI CEO

In recent years, the government has strengthened coordination through the Anti-Trafficking Secretariat (ATS), including extending its operational footprint to Zanzibar with the establishment of a new ATS office. Budgetary allocations to ATS activities have doubled over the past two years, a move that, while still insufficient to match the scale and sophistication of trafficking networks, signals growing political recognition of trafficking in persons as a national priority.

Further institutional reforms have sought to improve coherence across the Union. The creation of two deputy executive secretary positions within ATS—equivalent in rank to permanent secretaries—has established parallel leadership structures for Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, aimed at enhancing oversight, coordination and responsiveness across jurisdictions.

However, the report highlights a stark paradox confronting Tanzania's anti-trafficking efforts: as protection mechanisms improve and institutional capacity expands, more victims are being identified, even as traffickers exploit new digital tools and platforms.