

Differences in Tanzanian attitudes to nutrition and demanding their rights

Using audience segmentation to guide communication strategies

BBC Media Action wanted to understand how to communicate with different audiences in Tanzania to help improve their access to safe, affordable and nutritious food, by encouraging them to advocate for their needs, foster collaboration and ultimately encourage evidence-based policy-making.

In 2024, BBC Media Action conducted research to understand how different groups of Tanzanians consume food, their concerns around food affordability and how far they advocate for food availability, affordability and safety.

This briefing outlines five population segments based on key characteristics based on the study findings. It also profiles these segments based on their demographic characteristics and key information to inform communication strategies aimed at each population segment.

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Introduction

Tanzania faces complex nutrition challenges, with both acute levels of undernutrition and growing levels of obesity.[1] Multiple factors drive these challenges, including poverty, systemic inequities and marginalisation, increasing urbanisation, climate change, and culture and gender norms.[2]

To inform communication strategies to encourage Tanzanian consumers to advocate for safe, affordable and nutritious food, BBC Media Action wanted to understand what drivers and barriers encourage or prevent consumers from raising their voices on food-related issues. What are their preferred avenues and platforms for receiving information and connecting with other consumers and decision-makers on these topics? And how do these needs and preferences vary between different population segments?

Approach

The research used a mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach, comprising:

- **A nationally representative survey:** 2,500 people aged 18–80 from across 19 regions of Tanzania[3] answered structured questions on food security, food variety consumption, concerns about food availability, affordability and safety, any actions they had taken to improve their food environment, their demographic characteristics and media consumption and trust in information.
- **Qualitative research to deepen insights:** This comprised in-depth interviews with key stakeholders who influence the food environment and consumers, focus group discussions with male and female consumers of different ages, ethnographic research (observation) in households and with food vendors, and community mapping in urban and rural communities. This research aimed to deepen understanding of the varying food environments across communities, including existing opportunities, barriers and policies, and preferred and appropriate communication strategies to increase individual and community consumer voices on food issues.

Data analysis showed that Tanzanians vary in the way they look at the diversity of food they consume, their food insecurity (the challenges they face in accessing adequate food), their concerns around food affordability, and the actions they have taken to advocate for food availability, affordability and safety.

BBC Media Action triangulated the qualitative research and the quantitative survey findings to expand the profiles of different audience segments. Using cluster analysis, the research team to split survey respondents into five groups. Further analysis identified that these groups had different social and demographic characteristics, and media consumption patterns, which informed detailed profiles for each segment.

[1] World Food Programme. (2021) *Food insecurity in Tanzania: Statistics and trends.*

[2] Human Rights and Healthy Diet. (2022) *Human rights and development report: Challenges in food security in Tanzania*; Ministry of Health, Government of Tanzania. (2022) *Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey National nutrition survey report*: A comprehensive analysis of nutrition indicators in Tanzania.

[3] In selected regions in all administrative zones of Tanzania: Central (Dodoma and Tabora regions), Coast (Dar es Salaam, Mtwara and Morogoro), Northern (Kilimanjaro and Arusha), Southern (Mbeya, Njombe and Rukwa), Lake (Kigoma, Kagera, Shinyanga and Mwanza, and Zanzibar (Unguja South and Pemba).

Findings: Identified audience segments and their needs[4]

Figure 1: Consumer/audience segment profile overview

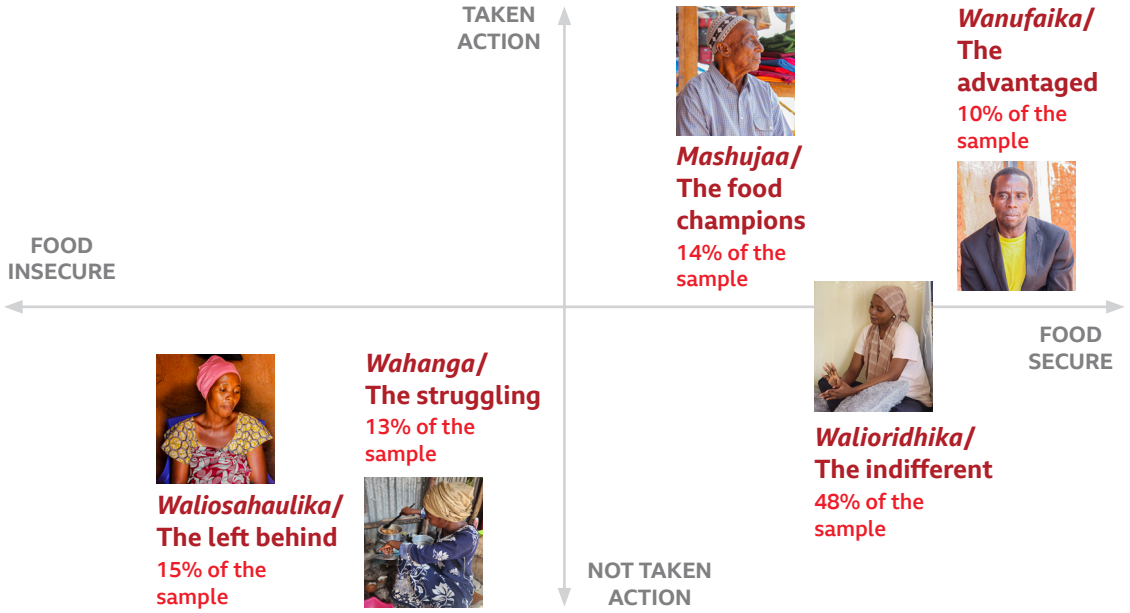


Figure 2: Consumer/audience segment profile summaries

Mashujaa/ The food champions	*Wanufaika/* The advantaged	*Walioridhika/* The indifferent	*Wahanga/* The struggling	*Waliosahaulika/* The left behind
• Third most food secure	• The most food secure	• Second most food secure	• Second most food insecure	• Most food insecure
• Highly concerned about the affordability of food	• Somewhat concerned about the affordability of food	• Highly concerned about the affordability of food	• Somewhat concerned about the affordability of food	• Highly concerned about the affordability of food
• Observe food diversity	• Observe food diversity	• Observe food diversity	• Food diversity is a challenge	• Food diversity is a challenge
• Knowledgeable about the laws and policies around food safety and quality	• See it as their responsibility to air their voice about food issues	• Majority have not taken action on food issues	• Majority have not taken action on food issues	• Majority have not taken action on food issues
• Majority have taken action on food issues	• Majority have taken action on food issues	• Prefer looking for alternative foods rather than to voice their concerns	• Fearful of being perceived to be criticising the government	• Lack the means to change the affordability, availability or safety of food

[4] Photos and names are used to illustrate the characters of each audience segment, but the real people in the photos may not exhibit the specified characteristics and the names used here are not their real names.

1. *Mashujaa*/The food champions

- Concerned about consuming healthy food, confident addressing the right authority about food quality and pricing
- 14% of the sample
- The third most food secure segment

Case study

Juma, aged 60, living in rural Shinyanga



> "I need to voice my opinion and adhere to the rules as otherwise I will suffer."

Juma is an educated food vendor living in a rural area. He consumes a diverse range of foods. Due to his role as a food vendor, he understands the laws and regulations around food safety, pricing and quality. He is also risk averse – he makes sure to sell safe, good quality food to avoid financial losses. At home, he shares the responsibility of deciding what to eat with his wife and other older women in the family.

Who are they?

- Mostly male (60% male compared with 48% of the overall sample)
- 55% rural (but less rural than the overall sample – 61%)
- The most educated segment (44% have secondary education or above, compared with 32% of the overall sample)
- 44% are in business
- 52% are from Dar es Salaam, Mbeya or Shinyanga

Food consumption

In any given week, the majority (67%) consume food from all nine food groups measured in this study.[5] One-third (34%) know at least one way to prevent malnutrition (in the middle of the range across all segments). They decide what to eat based on:

- The cost of food – 97%
- How healthy the food is – 92%
- Its availability in the local market – 83%
- When they last ate this food – 61%
- The types of food allowed in their culture – 51%

Concerns

This group is very concerned about the affordability of food (95%). They are also worried about the safety of food produced in Tanzania (70%) due to the possible overuse of chemicals. They check the expiry date and the quality of food they sell.

Confidence

Members of this group are confident to demand affordable food prices (81%) and safe food (83%). Among all segments, they have taken the most actions on food-related issues. Specifically, 85% have discussed safer foods with others in their community, and 88% have discussed the affordability of food, for example advocating for lowering maize prices by engaging with local leaders. A large majority (84%) of this segment see it as their responsibility to speak out about food shortages.

Communication needs

- Help them to understand the needs of more vulnerable population groups, including women, and how they can support them to meet their food safety needs
- Encourage them to spearhead community action, as they are already confident to take action
- Equip them with information on how to ensure food safety

How to reach them

This segment has most trust in the media, followed by central and local government and international food organisations.

- They consume radio and TV and have good access to media in general (24% own radio, TV and smartphones. This groups has the highest radio listenership among the segments
- They prefer news and sports media formats

[5] Cereals/grains; roots and tubers; pulses/legumes; nuts and seeds; milk and other dairy products; meat; vegetables; fruits; oil.

2. *Wanufaika*/The advantaged

- Prioritise eating healthy food and feel it important to raise food-related issues with local vendors
- 10% of the sample
- The most food secure segment

Case study

John, aged 45, living in urban Mbeya



> "I used to voice my opinion around food issues, but now I just raise it with my food vendor."

John has a secondary school level of education and earns a living by switching between farming and business. He is more food secure than people in the other segments. He is familiar with food regulations and sees it as his responsibility to speak up on food issues. However, he is less motivated to act on food-related issues than the food champions, as he believes businessmen have compromised local leaders in this field. He shares responsibility for deciding what food to eat at home with his wife and other older women in his household.

Who are they?

- Mostly male – 51%
- Skewed slightly urban – 52%
- Occupation – business and farming
- The second most educated segment (42% educated to secondary level or above)
- 60% are from Morogoro, Shinyanga, Tabora or Mbeya

Food consumption

In any given week, the majority (63%) of this segment consumes food from all nine food groups. One-third (35%) have some knowledge of at least one way to prevent malnutrition. They eat mixtures of different types of foods like makande (maize and beans), and feel they have a relatively balanced diet.

This segment believes a balanced diet cannot be achieved in a day. They decide what to eat based on:

- How healthy the food is – 87%
- The cost of food – 86%
- The availability of food in the local market – 81%
- The types of foods allowed in their culture – 65%

Concerns

This group feels that traditional foods eaten in the past are healthier than modern food, and is sceptical of modern technology and fertilisers. Members of this group believe that processed foods lack nutrients and they worry about the safety of food from other regions. They do not trust local leaders. This group is only somewhat concerned about the affordability of food (86%).

Confidence

Members of this group are confident in demanding affordable food prices (80%) and the most confident in demanding safe food (85%). They have acted on food issues before and prefer raising concerns with food vendors rather than with government leaders. Members of this segment see it as their responsibility to speak up about food issues – this is the group that has taken the second-highest number of actions on food-related issues.

Communication needs

- Provide platforms for members of this group to engage with local leaders on food-related concerns, with accountability mechanisms to follow up on agreed actions
- Build their understanding of the benefits of modern technology and fertilisers in improving food quality

How to reach them

They have some knowledge of food regulations. For example, John knows that the Tanzania Bureau of Standards has a duty to ensure the quality of factory-processed food. This segment is this most trusting of the media, and is the second most likely to access radio (80%), TV (63%) and social media (36%).

3. *Wameridhika*/The indifferent

- Highly concerned about the affordability of food
- 48% of the sample
- The second most food secure segment

Case study

Precious, aged 25, living in urban Moshi (Kilimanjaro)



> “I have got used to the food prices. I don’t have to make decisions around the household.”

Precious is a young woman living in an urban area. She knows which nutrients are in the different types of food she eats. She is happier with the current availability of food than members of the other segments. While she is highly concerned about the affordability of food, she prefers to look for alternative foods than voice her concerns. She also has less trust than other segments in the government’s ability to ensure food safety and she relies on her own ways of identifying whether food is safe.

Who are they?

- Mostly female (55%)
- The third most educated segment (32% are educated to secondary level or above)
- Mostly parents (81%)
- 24% are from Kilimanjaro and Shinyanga

Food consumption

This group is the second most food secure and the majority (63%) consume food from all nine food groups in any given week.

Members of this group decide what to eat by themselves. They decide what to consume based on:

- The cost of food – 97%
- The availability of food in the local market – 89%
- How healthy the food is – 86%
- The types of foods allowed in their culture – 72%

Concerns

89% of this group are highly concerned about the affordability of food. However, they are positive and believe that food availability and accessibility are better now than five years ago.

Confidence

83% of this group are confident demanding safe food – the second highest among the five segments.

This group is disengaged from local and central government and leaders. They feel leaders are less interested in the issues of young people. Two-thirds (66%) have never advocated on food issues.

Communication needs

- Help members of this group to understand the importance of raising their concerns, including by role-modelling how other people in this segment have successfully done this
- Create trustworthy platforms where they can engage with the relevant authorities on food issues
- Raise awareness of positive and practical nutritional coping mechanisms during times of food scarcity and financial challenges

How to reach them

Members of this group most trust central government to find ways to ensure food safety, followed by the media and local government.

Radio (accessed by 78% of members) is the best way to reach this group, but TV is also a strong option (accessed by 59% of members).

4. *Wahanga*/The struggling

- Most have not taken action on food-related issues due to fear of being seen as critical of the government
- 13% of the sample
- The second most food insecure group – they do not consume a diverse range of foods

Case study

Zawadi, aged 51, a rural farmer living in Kigoma region



> "I know I am not healthy; I want to eat better. A balanced diet is expensive."

Zawadi is a small-scale farmer who produces food for her household and to sell. She struggles with both the availability and the affordability of food. For example, she feels that food is more scarce now than five years ago. While she knows what food is needed for a balanced diet, she believes that is expensive. She says she consumes unhealthy foods because they are what is available and affordable to her.

Who are they?

- Mostly female – 56%
- Skewed rural – 66%
- The second least educated segment (19% have secondary level education or above)
- 46% are animal or agricultural farmers
- 38% are from Tabora and Kigoma

Food consumption

This group is the second most food insecure – only around one in three (32%) consume food from all nine food groups in any given week. They decide what to eat based on:

- The cost of food – 86%
- How healthy the food is – 72%
- Availability of food in the local market – 71%
- The types of foods allowed in their culture – 56%
- When they last ate the food – 46%

Concerns

Members of this group are worried about the safety of food from other regions, mostly relating to how it is preserved. They are generally trust local food production processes more than those in other regions.

In general, they are somewhat concerned about the affordability of food (65% express this).

Confidence

Members of this segment are the least confident about advocating on food-related issues – 31% are not confident to demand affordable food prices and 24% have no confidence to demand safe food.

People in this group do not speak out about their food-related concerns because they are afraid of being perceived as criticising the government. They also believe food challenges are a household problem that needs household solutions. Around three-quarters (76%) have never advocated for cheaper or safer food.

Communication needs

- Raise awareness among members of this group of anonymous and confidential ways of raising food concerns
- Help them to understand how food issues can be similar between households both locally and nationally, and highlight the need for collective efforts to address these challenges
- Show them ways to eat a healthy, balanced diet using foods that are locally available and affordable

How to reach them

This segment most trusts media and central government to resolve food-related issues. While this segment has the lowest levels of media access, radio is the best way to reach them (63% access radio).

Face-to-face communication would also be a useful way to reach the 13% of this group who have no media access.

5. *Waliosahaulika*/The left behind

- Highly concerned about the affordability of food
- 15% of the sample
- The most food insecure group, who struggle to consume a diverse range of food

Case study

Pili, aged 36 living in rural Pemba (Zanzibar)



> “It is not my responsibility; I can’t affect change.”

Pili is a woman living in a rural area who has no formal education. She represents the segment that faces the highest level of food insecurity and consumes the least diverse diet. While she attends village meetings, Pili lacks the confidence to air her views. She has never taken raised her concerns about food issues with the authorities because she believes that is not her responsibility, and that she lacks the means to change the situation.

Who are they?

- Mostly female – 58%
- The segment with the largest rural population – 74%
- The least educated segment (25% have not received a formal education)
- Mostly farmers (55%) who practise agricultural or animal farming
- The majority (59%) of people in this group are from Zanzibar, Dodoma or Mwanza

Food consumption

Members of this segment have the least food diversity of all segments – none (0%) consume food from all nine food groups in any given week. They also have the lowest level of knowledge about how to prevent malnutrition (44% have no knowledge).

They decide what to eat based on:

- The cost of food – 97%
- The availability of food in the local market – 81%
- The types of food allowed in their culture – 66%
- How healthy the food is – 64%
- When they last ate the food – 49%

Concerns

Not having enough food to eat is currently the biggest worry for members of this group, and they believe food scarcity has increased over the past five years. A large majority (85%) of them are very concerned about food affordability. Food safety is also very important to this group, and they do not trust food grown in other regions because they doubt it is stored safely.

Confidence

While this group’s reported levels of confidence to advocate for safe and affordable food are around average compared with other segments, members of this group prefer to discuss food challenges with close neighbours and friends, and they lack the confidence to voice their opinions in village meetings. The majority (69%) have never taken any action to raise food-related concerns with authorities as they do not see that kind of advocacy as their responsibility and they lack self-efficacy to change the situation.

Communication needs

- Build self-efficacy among members of this group to advocate for safe and affordable food by role modelling how people like them have successfully advocated for change
- Provide examples of alternative foods they can consume, focusing on available and affordable food combinations to create balanced diets

How to reach them

Members of this segment most trust central government to resolve food-related issues, followed by the media.

They have the second lowest levels of media access across all segments, although only 5% have no media access.

The best way to reach this group is through the radio (68% of them access radio). They have the lowest level of social media access of all the segments.

Conclusions and recommendations

This briefing has shown how BBC Media Action used data from mixed methods research to divide Tanzanian consumers into five segments, with varying levels of food security and varying abilities and motivations to address food-related issues. Each segment has different food-related concerns and challenges, and different levels of media access.

BBC Media Action used these findings to create a communication framework[6] with strategies to enable Tanzanians to raise their voices individually and collectively, to advocate for better food availability, affordability and safety.

Different strategies are needed to address the needs of each audience segment:

- ***Mashujaa*/The food champions** are the most confident group of consumers and the most likely to advocate for change so they can play an influencer role. In their position as vendors, they are knowledgeable about food-related policies and see the challenges first hand. Communication with this group should harness their relative advantage, and build their understanding of the needs of the more vulnerable segments and how they can support them to meet their food safety needs, including through spearheading community action. Communication can also include members of this segment as case studies and role models to inspire and inform other segments on how to take action.
- ***Wanufaika*/The advantaged** is the most food secure group. While many of them have taken action on food-related issues, they prefer to address concerns through food vendors rather than the government as they do not trust local leaders and government representatives. This group would benefit from platforms to discuss food issues, and signposting towards existing platforms to engage with local leaders and hold them accountable on any agreed actions. Communication should also provide members of this segment with updates on any changes that have been implemented.
- ***Wameridhika*/The indifferent** is the second most food secure segment, but its members are disengaged from local and central government and their leaders. This is the segment with the highest proportion of under 35s and its members feel that leaders are less interested in young people's issues. Communication should help members of this group to understand the importance of raising their concerns, including by role modelling how other people like them have achieved positive results. Members of this group would also benefit from trustworthy platforms where they can engage with the relevant authorities on food issues.
- ***Wahanga*/The struggling** are the second most food insecure group of consumers. Most of its members have not taken action on food-related issues for fear of being seen as critical of the government, and because they believe food challenges are household concerns. Communication with members of this segment should raise awareness of anonymous and confidential ways to raise food concerns. Communication with them should also build their understanding of the need for collective efforts to address food challenges as these issues are not unique to individual households, and the importance of holding power holders to account.

[6] For more details of the framework see https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/publications-and-resources/research/briefings/africa/tanzania/idrc-nutrition

- ***Waliosahaulika*/The left behind** are the most food-insecure consumers in Tanzania, who lack the self-efficacy to advocate for changes that would improve their nutritional situation. Communication with members of this group should aim to build self-efficacy in advocating for safe and affordable food by providing role models of people like them who have successfully advocated for change.
- **Radio** should be the main communication platform used to reach all audience segments, as it can reach most of them. Outreach activities are particularly important for the struggling and the left behind segments, who have lower levels of media access. Social media is an important channel to reach the food champions and the advantaged, who have the highest level of access to those platforms.

Authors: Kengah James, Kaushiki Ghose, Catharine Buckell and Jasmine Shio.

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Copy editor: Lorna Fray
Designer: Marten Sealby

Follow us on social media:

Registered charity number (England & Wales): 1076235
Company number: 3521587
Registered office: Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7481 9797
Email: media.action@bbc.co.uk
Web: bbcmediaaction.org

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