

ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: THE CASE OF OROMIA REGIONAL STATE.

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Abstract

The study title is the assessment of community participation in local development projects a case of Oromia regional state. The main objective of the study was to evaluate the importance of community participation in development projects at local level and the study was guided by two specific objectives which were to examine the roles of local community participation in development projects at local level, to find out the level to which citizens are involved in decision making process concerning development projects.

The researcher employed descriptive study type of design. Four methods of data collection were used which are questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion and documentary review. Whereby data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively uses SPSS 20. Multi stage sampling, cluster, purposive and simple random sampling was employed to select 410 respondents and 40 interviewed key informants.

Findings revealed that community participation was low influenced by socioeconomic factors, political-cultural factors also not understanding the roles of communities in participation. It was also revealed Communities were contributing financially, few were contributing through labor and materials hence it was concluded that citizen's response towards contribution to

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development projects being poor. The study revealed that citizen involvement in decision making is very low and citizens are not aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities.

The study concluded community participation is very crucial because it creates awareness among stakeholders on how funds are being used and get to decide on their wellbeing, also when communities participate transparency and accountability of the leaders increases hence having projects of quality standards. The study recommended that, there is a need to involve the community to a greater extent in decision making and development project, increase degree of trust to citizens, education and seminars to local leaders concerning community participation should also be considered.

Key words: community, participation, local, development projects.

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Community participation in development activities is the process by which individuals, families or communities assume responsibility for their own welfare and develop a capacity to contribute to their own and the community development; it is an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development (Oakley&Marsden,1999). Marsland (2006), community participation in international development discourse is commonly used to refer to the involvement of local people in decision making process and evaluation of development projects, and is associated with empowerment and the respect for also the use of local knowledge.

Efforts to involve citizens more directly in processes of development are inspired ,and underpinned ,by the view that to do so makes for better citizens, better-or more certainly more widely accepted decisions and better governments.

Ainul (2011) further argued that information flow to the public on planning processes of projects is an important aspect necessary towards achieving Projects' goals. Globally, participation of the public in management of projects has been viewed to act as a bridge between community

members and other stakeholders whose interest and welfare are vested in such projects. In certain situations, differences arising from projects' participants due to misunderstanding can be easily reconciled by adequately involving local community members. Accordingly, Bell (2001) emphasized that full involvement and participation of the public at all levels of project planning and implementation is not negotiable.

The objective behind public participation in any aspect of development is to facilitate the involvement of those who are potentially affected by or interested in making a decision (USAID, 2009). Effective project management practices mainly involve the participation of community members in processes of identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The most widely accepted and adopted strategy for ensuring people's participation in local development is decentralization and there is, perhaps, no other institution close enough like local government to provide the scope and platform for people's participation in their own development.

The emphasis on the concept of participation is also reflected in the Constitution of Ethiopia. The Constitution shows a strong recognition of the importance of participation in achieving the much sought social and economic development in the country. It declares the establishment of devolved local governments as a milestone for promoting mass participation, local democracy and well-being of communities through provision of a wide range of social and economic services.

In Ethiopia, public participation is currently a political principle of the constitution and it is an important factor in the second growth and transformation plans (GTP II) all aspect of project management and sustainability. Ethiopia, in the last two decades, has implemented comprehensive and cross-cutting political and administrative programs intended not only to institute but more so to spread and deepen the culture of decentralization. The main reason for this has been to ensure grassroots participation in decisions that affect their physical well-being and socio-economic development. Therefore, this study sought to investigate public participation in Local development projects in oromia regional state.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The definition of participation in development has often been located in development projects and programs, as a means of strengthening their relevance, quality and sustainability. In an influential statement, the World Bank Learning Group on Participation defined participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank, 1995). From this perspective, participation could be seen in the level of consultation or decision making in all phases of a project cycle, from needs assessment, to appraisal, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.

Participation is generally taken as a core value in community development. While community development has for a long time been recognized as a beneficial process, the importance of participation within community development has been insufficiently stressed. This is partly due to the lack of a clear interpretation of development, and, therefore, of the key constituents of effective development. The need for new paradigm to address this deficiency was highlighted by the UNDP in its Human Development Report, 1994. The UNDP's paradigm: "Puts people at the Centre of development; regards economic growth as a means and not an end; protect the life opportunities of future generations as well as the present generations".

In any developing country, projects are the backbone of local development. Development projects are undertaken to improve the livelihood of the community. Effective management of development projects depends primarily on proper project selection, project design, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, values, norms, social belief and opinions of the local people which are affected directly or indirectly by development interventions should also be considered. Otherwise, sustainability of development projects may generally be questioned (Khwaja, 2004).

Despite the long-lived intention by the government to enhance participation, in many parts of Ethiopia participation is still inadequate. Involvement of people in the development process usually results in lack of ownership and sustainability of development programs. This often causes the communities to lose interest in these programs, which in turn increases dependency on

government resources. A number of questions need to be addressed to make participation effective, among them include the capacity of people to participate and their preferences in participation. With ongoing local government reform, there is an indication that, people's participation in all planning and implementation might become a reality. Nevertheless, the local authorities and people are not capacitated in this effort (Khwaja, 2004).

In many local communities most citizens do not participate in decisions that affect their daily lives, and there is often a lack of trust between citizens and local officials. A crucial bridge over this gap is the use of suitable strategies and tools to encourage citizens and local officials to work together regularly, increase their knowledge of each other, and develop trust (Bray, 1996).

The lack of effective structures for people's participation has been a major constraint upon more widespread development. People's participation in their own projects has not yet attained the acceptable levels that qualify to imply full participation (Rural Communities Impacting Policy, 2002). Therefore, this study sets out to assess the participation of community in local development projects and intended to answer the following basic research questions.

- What are the roles of local community participation in development projects at local level?
- To what extent are citizens involved in decision making process concerning development projects at local level?

1. Research Methodology

2.1 2.1 Description of the Study Area

Oromia is one of the 9 National Regional States and two City Administrations of Ethiopia, its average estimated area is about 363,375km², accounting for about 34.3% of the country's total area. Oromia is the largest National Regional State in Ethiopia in terms of population size and areal coverage.

The Region occupies central position of the country. Oromia: shares common boundaries with all national regional states except the National Regional State of Tigray, characterized by diverse relief features, and it is a Region of great geographic diversity with altitudinal ranges extending from less than 500m to over 4300m above sea level.

In 2005 E.C (July, 2013), Oromia Region had about 32,085,210 populations, according to 2007 population and housing census result. Similarly, in 2006 E.C, total population of the Region is 32, 976,586 (females 16,367,942). About equal female and male proportion (50%), The most populous Regional State in Ethiopia, accounting for more than 1/3rd of the country's total population, About 86.6% live in rural areas and 13.4% live in urban areas, About 47.6% of the population is under 15 years (48.1% males and 47.1% females), 49.2% ranging between 15-64 years (48.4% males and 50.1 females) and 3.2% above 65 years (3.5% males and 2.8% females) according to 2007 Population Census result.

Research design

In order to clearly examine the topic of research, descriptive method of research was used. This method of research was preferred because a researcher was able to collect data to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of study. Descriptive research determines and reports the way things are and also helps a researcher to describe a phenomenon in terms of attitude, values and characteristics (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). According to Orodho (2003), descriptive case study is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. The study seeks to administer questionnaires to a sample of individuals.

Target Population

Dencombe, (2007) defines a population frame as “an object list of the population from which the researcher can make his or her selection of the sample.

The survey target population will be the community members who are living in oromia regional state. The target population will either be the fully displaced or partially displaced persons because of development projects of their locality.

Sample and sampling procedure

To get the determined sample size, multi – stage sampling design is used. As a result, initially all zones, including self-administrative cities are categorized in to five clusters based on their

geographic location. Then, nine zones are proportionally to all clusters, are purposively selected for the sample selection

In the second stage, from the selected zones, 16 sample woredas and 6 towns are purposively selected two Kebeles in which development projects were developed or built selected purposively from each woredas/districts selected and 10 household respondents are selected from each kebeles as a sample using simple random sampling technique from the name list of households in their respective kebeles. In general 410 respondents were selected.

Purposive sampling was used to select 40 key informants from district/woreda officials, municipality officials and local council officials who were interviewed. In addition, five focus group discussions were conducted in each cluster, East Harergihe, West Arsi, South West Shoa, Jimma and Oromia Special Zone.

Research instruments

The study used well pre-tested questionnaires containing questions which comprised of open ended and close ended questions, interview and Focusgroup discussion which incorporate some 8 – 12 participants.

Data analysis

After data cleaning, the data was coded and entered in the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20). Data analysis procedures used involved both quantitative and qualitative procedures and the results of data were presented using frequency distribution tables, bar graphs and pie charts.

2. Results and Discussion

Demographic profiles

The researcher collected data using questionnaires, interview and focus group discussion and entered results as already indicated in chapter three. The community respondents were selected from the nine zones of the region, according to the selection criteria. A total of 410 respondents filled in the questionnaires.

Age of the respondents

The table 4.1 below illustrates the five age categories that were used by the researcher to gather the information. The age distribution of the respondents varied from 20 and above 60 years. Of these respondents, 18(4.4%) fell between 20 to 29 years. 130(31.7%) were between ages 30 to 39 years, 120(29.3%) of the respondents were between 40 to 50 years, 116(28.3%) were between 50 and 60 years while 26(6.3%) of the total respondents interviewed were above 60 years of age. The fact that there is no equal representation in age group in the sample makes any generalization about age influence on community participation impossible. Regardless of this however, all respondents revealed a positive attitude towards community participation irrespective of age group.

Table 4.1 Age of the respondents

Age of Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-30	18	4.4	4.4	4.4
30-40	130	31.7	31.7	36.1
40-50	120	29.3	29.3	65.4
50-60	116	28.3	28.3	93.7
> 60	26	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	410	100.0	100.0	

Source; *survey 2017*

Sex distributions of the respondents

As can be seen from table1 of the total respondents, 312 (76 %) were male while the remaining 98(24%) were female. Therefore, the number of male is greater than female by three fold and this clearly confirms the current not curbed gender gaps found at the higher education institution of the country. However, the study considered feeling of both sex so that the responses is the combination of both.

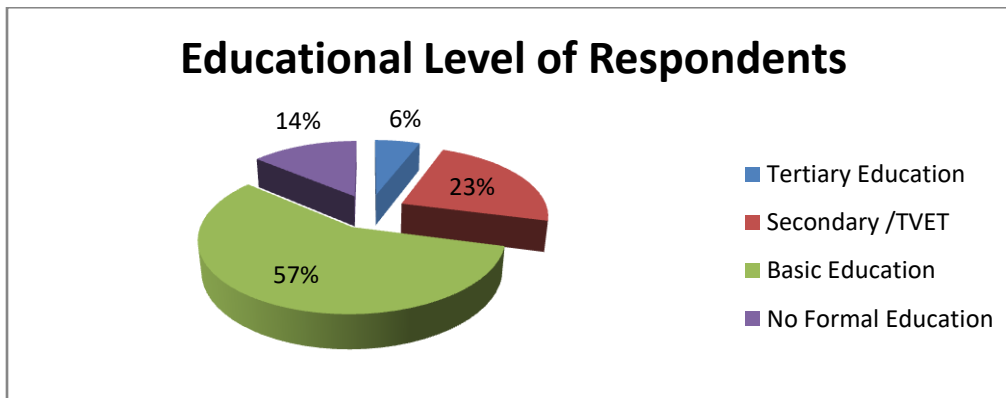
Table 4.2, Sex distribution of Respondents

Sex Distribution	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	312	76.1	76.1	76.1
Female	98	23.9	23.9	100.0
Total	410	100.0	100.0	

Source; *survey 2017*

Level of education

Education is a powerful tool for successful understanding and utilization of information and participation on development projects emphasis is on the formal Education but not informal Education. The analysis of educational background of the respondents are shown in figure 2 below which revealed that 24(6%) of the respondents have obtain tertiary education, 95(23%) have also obtained Secondary /Technical or Vocational education, 234(57%) have basic education and 57 (14%) had no formal education.



Source; *survey 2017*

Figure 4.1 illustrates the marital status of the community respondents. The researcher noted that this variable also contributes to poor participation by the community. As reflected in figure 5.3 that 23 percent of the total sample reported that they are not married. Another 46 percent of the total sample stated that they are married. 19 percent of the total sample indicated that they are widowed. Moreover, 12% of respondents reported that they were once married and due various reasons they were divorced, particularly as they were juvenile, according to their statements.

Table 4.3 Marital status of the respondents

Marital status of the respondents	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Married	94	23	23	23
Not married	188	46	46	69
Widowed	78	19	19	78
Divorced	50	12	12	100
Total	410	100.0	100.0	

Source; *survey 2017*

Distribution of respondents according to the length of period live4d in the area

The finding indicates that 160 respondents, representing 39% of the total sample population reported that they had been living in the area for less than 10 years and 148(36%) of the respondents replied that they had been in the area from 11-20 years the remaining 102(25%) reported that they had been in the area for more than 20 years. This simply implies that the respondents were permanent residents of the area of study. This points that the data collected from them is relevant and valid.

Table 4.4 Distribution of respondents according to the length of period lived in the area

Length of periods	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 5	40	10	10	10
5-10	120	29	29	39
11-20	148	36	36	75
>20	102	25	25	100
Total	410	100.0	100.0	

Source; *survey 2017*

The roles of local community participation in development projects at local level

Understanding of the community participation in development

The first objective of the study was to evaluate whether some of the principles of participation are understood and considered in projects activities. The findings of the study indicate that there are different perceptions and understanding about community participation amongst community members in oromia regional state. Intellectuals, people with little education and those that participated in development activities had a better understanding of community participation than those at the grassroots levels who never participate in any development initiatives.

The finding indicates that 23 respondents, representing 27% did not comment. This shows that there is still a proportion of the community that do not understand about community participation in development. Then twenty seven (27) respondents representing 31 percent stated that community participation is the process whereby community members participate in decision-making process in development. Theron (2005) agrees that community participation means the process of empowering people by developing their skills and abilities so that they can negotiate with the rural development systems and can make their own decisions. Ten (10) respondents which were 12% view community participation as a course where the community members are involved in designing the projects. These were mainly drawn from those respondents with high education levels and also understood the project life cycle. However twenty six (26) respondents which were 30%, view community participation as a course where most of the community members are actively involved in project implementation.

Response of the community towards participation in development projects

The findings about Response of the community towards participation in development projects as indicated in figure 4.2 shows that 49(17%) respondents agreed that there was a positive response from the community in development projects that are established in their locality while 371(83%) of the respondents indicated that citizens take the government call for them to participate in development projects negatively, For example the ongoing laboratory construction in the wards secondary schools. Citizens' response towards participation can be improved if

strategies will be put in place to facilitate effective community participation in development projects.

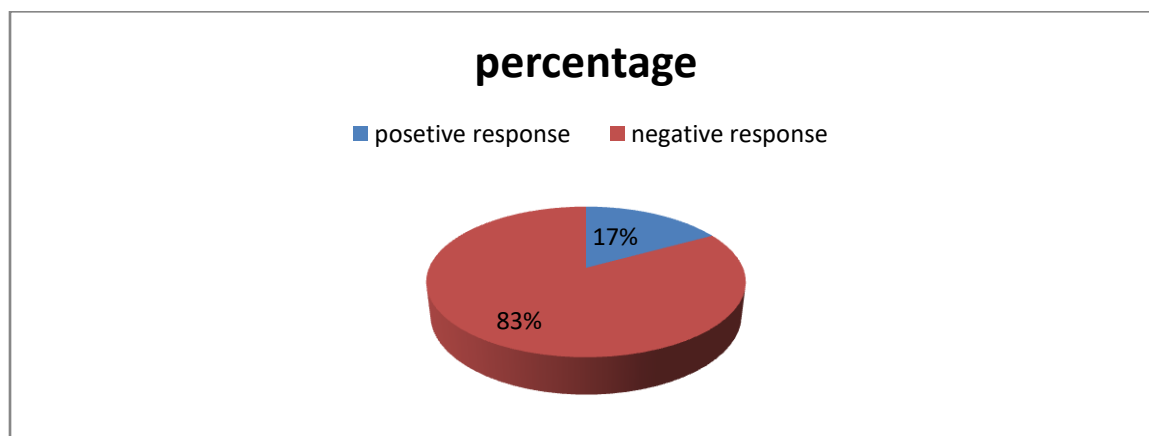
Interview with project officers, kebele councilors and questionnaire provided to the respondent's community members revealed that most citizens respond negatively when they are told to participate in development projects hence do not contribute in development.

As few respondents commented that

" reasons that cause citizens to have a negative response towards participation were low income, poor communication between citizens and their representatives he continued by saying that explained that sometimes leaders announce a call of meetings in few houses and not informing others, mismanagement of public funds influence citizens to respond negatively towards contributing in development projects".

Findings also revealed that fearful behavior developed among the communities contributed by threatening situation imposed by kebele leaders, politician, tradition leader, was the negative attitude which most of local people had in their mind. Also kebele leaders and councilors were powerfully ruling their people to the extent that harsh language was common, which made citizens fearful and thus resistant to attend the ward meetings.

Figure 4.2:Response of the community towards participation in development projects



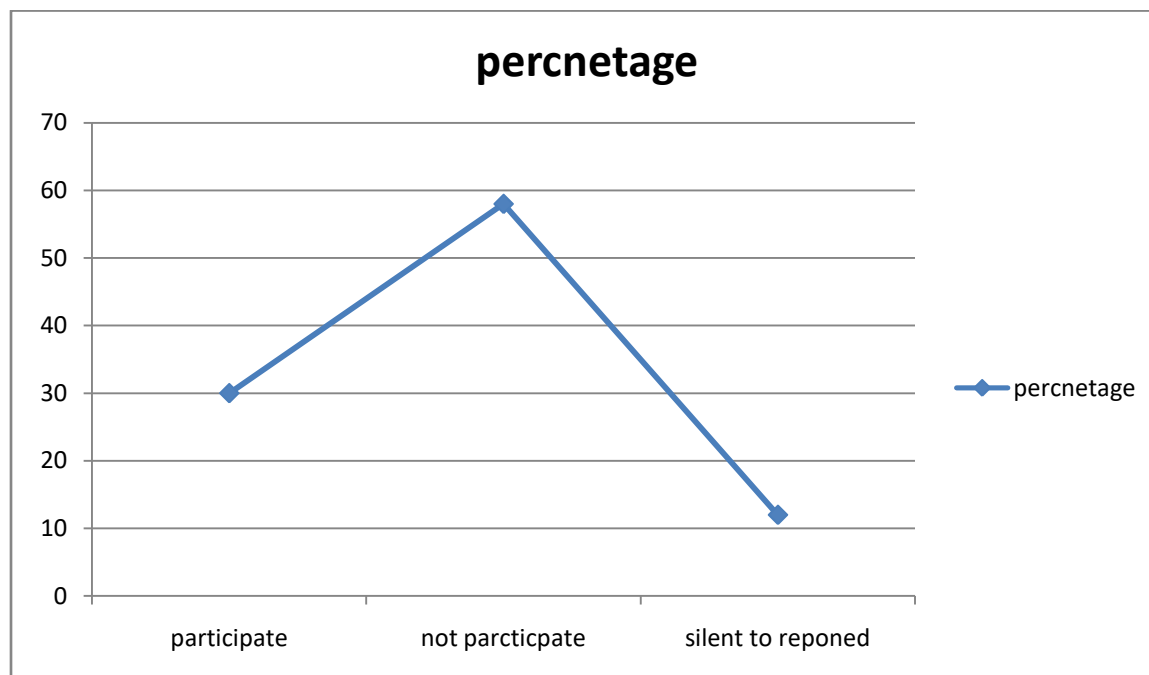
Source; *survey 2017*

The level of voluntarily participation in development projects

Respondents were asked to point out if they participate in development projects **voluntarily or not**. Findings shows that 123(30%) of the respondents **voluntarily** participate in development projects in terms of different contributions, while 238 (58%) of the respondents do not participate **voluntarily** in development projects. This shows that still a large number of citizens do not participate in development projects in their locality and the reasons they stated is that, we are forced with the kebele managers to participate and being influenced by reasons like lack of trust to their leaders, lack of accountability and transparency to the side of leaders, ignorance among citizens also misuse of public funds done by leaders. as it was declared from focus group discussion only those who are politically affiliated and sometimes the community leaders were invited to participate. The remaining 49 (12%) were silent to respond this question; this indicates that almost they are not participating.

However, Raid (2000) appeals that democratic policies states that community activities are not considered to be the special vicinity of the knowledgeable few perhaps, the same elite leadership who always run community affairs, but is the business of everyone in the community.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of level of participation in development projects



Source; *survey 2017*

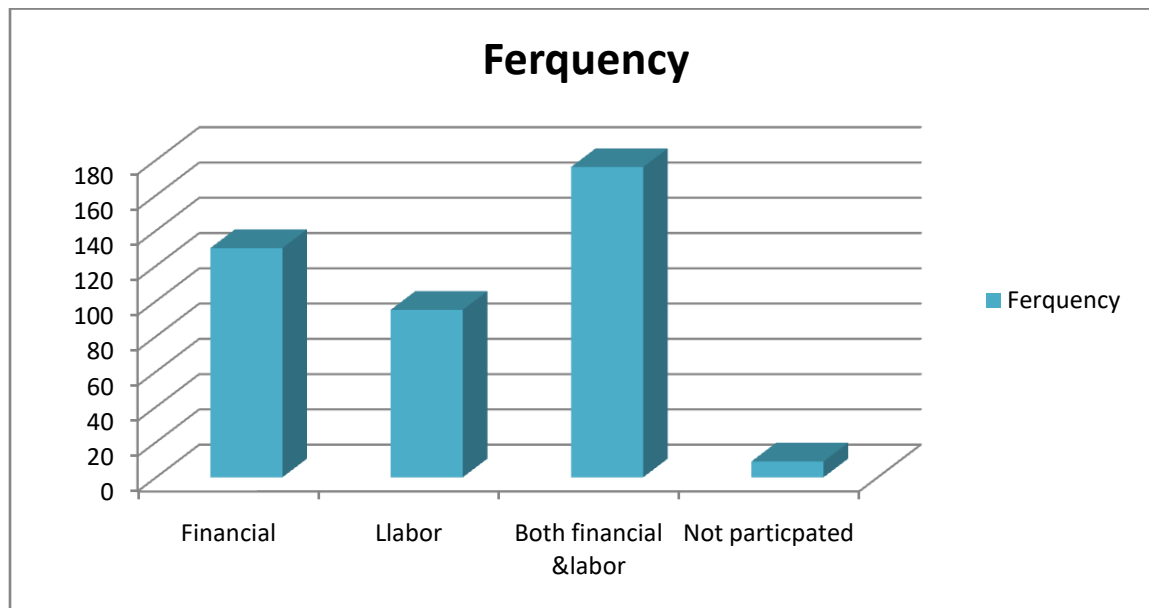
How citizens participation in development projects

Interview with woreda and kebele officers, councilors and the questionnaire which was given to local citizens revealed that some people think that the government is supposed to meet all costs for development projects.

Also they are reluctant to contribute labor and even not to participate in making decisions concerning which projects are to be established in their locality. This implies that ample time is needed to educate communities on the roles of citizens in development projects. Sufficient and clear information to the communities is one of the factors influencing participation. Findings also show that 130(32%) of the respondents participate in terms of financial contribution 95(23%) participate through labor while 176(43%) in both financial and labor and the remaining 9(2%) do not contribute.

From the focus group discussion some of those who are reposing participated said that, we are either penalized or unrested with the local administrators if we don't participate either financially or with labor.

Figure 4.4: Means of participation in development projects.



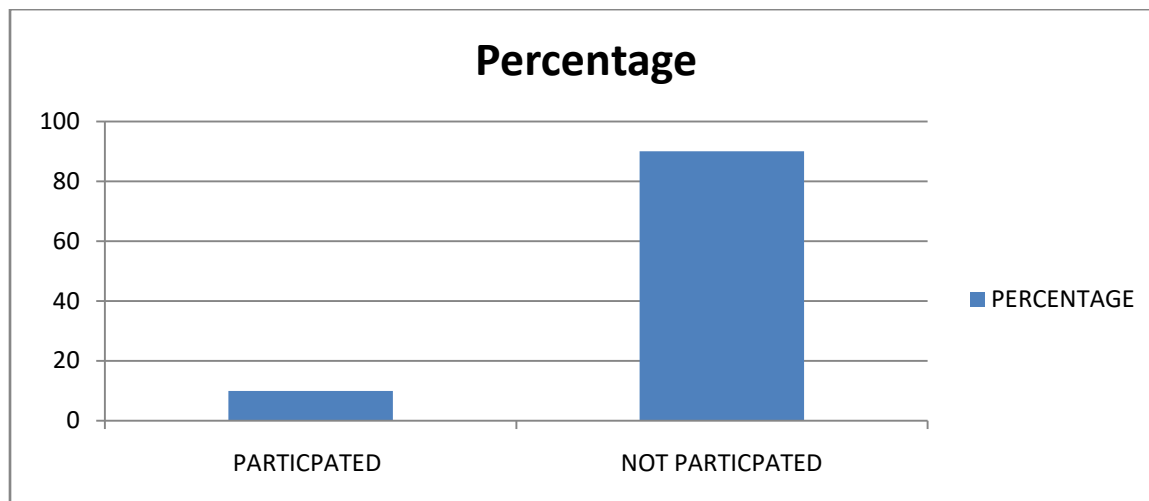
Source; *survey 2017*

Public involved indecision making process concerning development at local level

Respondents were asked if they are involved and participate in decision making process which is their statutory right.

The findings of this research shows 41(10%) of respondents explained that they are involved and they participate in decision making process while the other 369(90%) of the respondents pointed that they do not participate in decision making process. It is important for citizens to participate in decision making process because together with their leaders they can plan on what projects to be established in their localities, where are the funds going to be generated also when are the projects going to start be in use. But findings revealed that leaders announce for meetings concerning development projects but citizens attendance is very low as the development project executive officer pointed out that because of most projects were developed in towns citizen tend to say they are busy wherever they are told to attend in meetings and only few attend. This gives a room for unaccountable leaders to misuse the public funds hence delay of projects accomplishment and even poor standard of the projects.

Figure 4.5: Participation in decision making process



Source; *survey 2017*

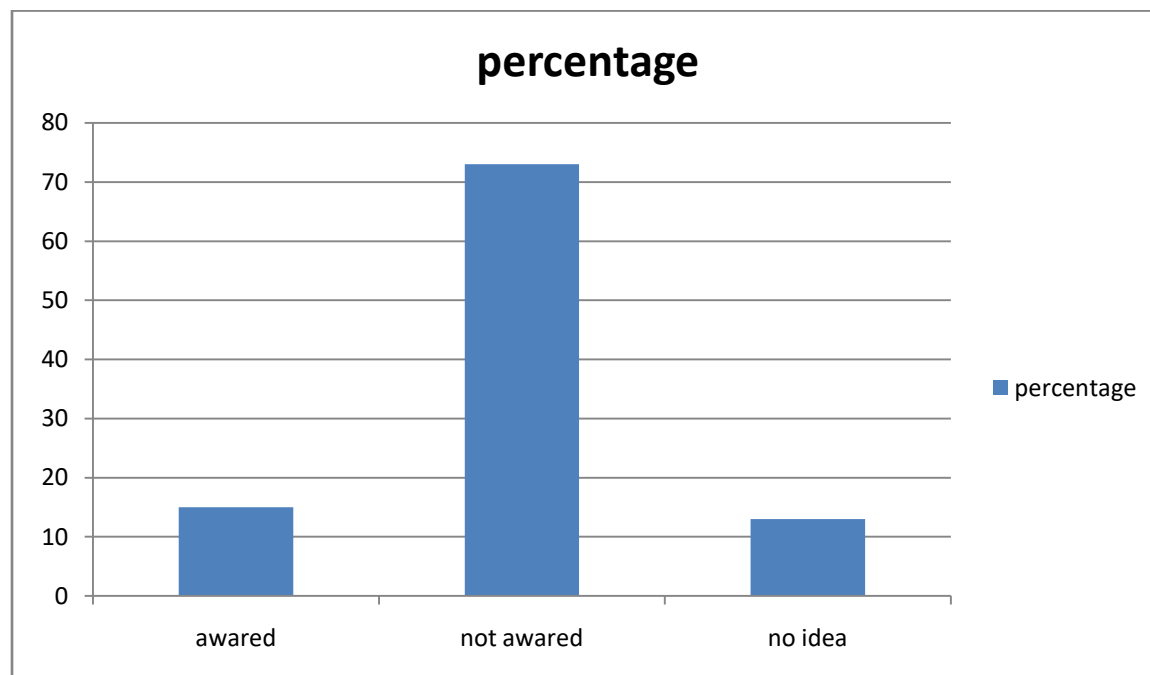
Awareness among citizens about their roles and responsibilities in project participations

Results shows that 62(15%) of the respondents pointed out that they are aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities concerning development in their localities and 295(72%) pointed that

they are not aware of their roles and responsibilities while the other 53(13%) completely have no idea about awareness on roles and responsibilities.

Findings focus group discussion revealed that citizens are not given seminars of awareness of their roles and responsibilities. The reason behind being failure of local leaders to raise awareness to people on their roles and responsibilities, lack of confidence of local leaders because citizens are not satisfied with revenue collection and expenditure reports presented to them, so by doing so would result in disclosing information before the people. However the findings from the interview of the officers shows that, the reasons that cause people not to be aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities being unwilling and ignorance among citizens which cause people not to find information and be curious of what is going on in their societies even agree with decisions that their leaders make, miscommunication between leaders and the local community, poor leaders who fail to find better means of educating citizens on the importance of participation, and lack of project related information to citizens is also raised as one of the reasons on the focus group discussion.

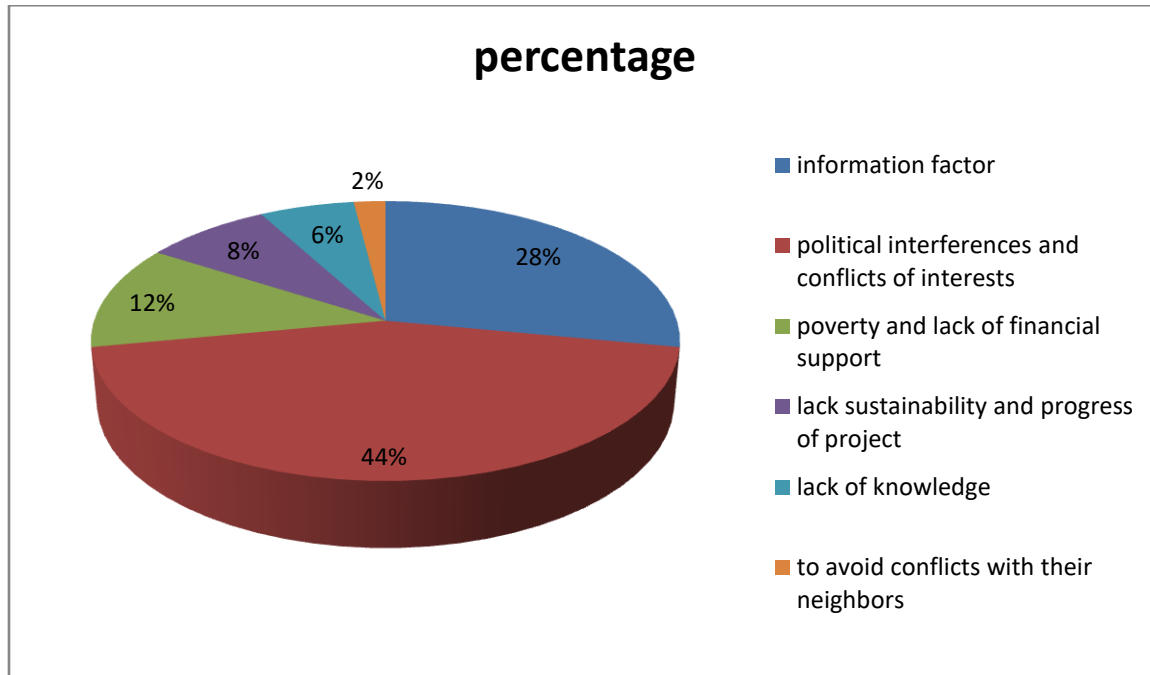
Figure 4.6 Awareness among citizens about their roles and responsibilities in project participations



Source; *survey 2017*

Reasons for poor participation of the public in local development projects

Figure 4.7 indicates that 116 (28%) respondents stated that they did not have enough information to participate. Respondents pointed that project are undertaken for the development of local people hence projects should be selected, designed and implemented in consultation and with the help of local people. Project beneficiaries have the right to know and be known about the project related information. It was revealed that the practice of disseminating project related information to beneficiaries is almost absent which acts as a hindrance to citizen participation in development initiatives. 182 community respondents stated that political interferences and conflicts of interests is also a pertinent factor representing 44% of the total sample. The other strong reason that makes citizens not to participate in development project is the existences of leaders who are incompetent in the development projects who take their positions for granted and even fail to know the best ways of involving citizens' .Leaders misuse public funds which make citizens not to trust them. Respondents pointed out that sometimes some projects are selected by the locally selected representative not on the basis of community demand but for attaining personal gain. In order to do that, they set up close allies in project implementation process keeping the original beneficiaries in the dark. Forty-nine (49) respondents representing 12% quoted poverty and lack of financial support as another reason for obstructing their involvement in community projects still some have failed to contribute, with reasons such as famine which has caused shortage of harvests that could help them earn money and poor living standard of the families. Another 32 (8%) respondents reported that they failed to participate as many development projects lack sustainability and progress and that they did not like to be associated with such projects. Delay of funds from the government and unfulfilled promises and sometimes the government leaving the duty of funds contribution for the projects to citizens: this cause the delay of projects since citizens can sometimes fail to contribute on time. There were twenty-four 24 respondents who reported that they lack knowledge on projects representing 6% of the sample, and that this prevents them from active participation. It was only seven (7) respondents representing 2% of the sample who reported that they avoided participating in project to avoid conflicts with their neighbors.

Figure 4.7: Percentage of reasons for not participating in development projects

Source; *survey 2017*

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

The study focused on Analysis of community participation in development projects at local levels. With specific objectives which were to examine the roles of local community participation in development projects at local level, and to assess the extent to which citizens are involved in decision making, in development projects at local level .

One of the significance of this study was to influence the local people representatives to appreciate and involve citizens in making decisions and involve them in development issues concerning their wellbeing. The study has also looked on various literatures on participation and what other researchers said on participation in community development projects.

The researcher started by looking at the social-economic profile of respondents such as age, gender, literacy level (education) and their occupation the findings described the characteristics of the study samples. The findings revealed that majority of respondents have primary school education and some with no formal education. Also the study determines the level of community

participation, respondents were asked if they participated or did not participate in development projects in their locality. The findings revealed that the level of participation is very low and major type of participation was through labor and financial contribution rather than participation in decision making.

Findings also showed that citizens are not aware of their roles and responsibilities which cause them not to understand the meaning and importance of their participation in development projects. Furthermore it was revealed that communities are not involved in decision making process hence leaders establish projects of their interest and even misuse public funds.

Reasons to why citizen participation in development projects at local level was low were revealed which are poor or incompetent leaders, ignorance (lack of education among many citizens), political interference and other factors such as fraud accusations facing the government and poor living standard of the people.

Findings revealed that the degree of involvement of citizens in development projects is low. The community was involved in money contribution and manual labour but they were not involved fully in planning process and decision making of its implementations.

Recommendation

The researcher came up with the following recommendations.

- The project implementers should train the community members on project management and its significance before implementation and the leaders should create awareness among beneficiaries and stakeholders on how funds are being utilized in development projects
- Community sensitization and awareness programs should be undertaken to the community members in order to reduce resistance to change among community members this will be significant in order to reduce chances of community rejection of projects.
- The need to involve the community to greater extent, much more sensitization and awareness to other stakeholder is needed so that in their collaboration they set objectives could be attained on time. Partnership in the mobilization of both international and national resources and energies for the betterment of the communities.

- In order to increase degree of trust to citizens to local representatives, the government officials must carry out all actions fair to all beneficiaries and avoid mistrust and political party's difference.
- The elected representatives at local level are mostly uninformed about the benefits of participatory development approach. Lack of knowledge in this regard on their part may have contributed to their confusion and misconception. Launching training programs or workshops organised by the central government and municipalities may help change the mind-set of the elected representatives regarding participatory practices in development interventions.
- The study recommends leaders at local levels to ensure that agenda of the meeting must originate from the grass-roots level and get discussed collectively in order to reduce resistance during implementation

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