



Local Institutions in Community Driven Development: 'Makeshift' or 'Organic'?

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Abstract

Involvement of local institutions in community development is one parameter through which community participation is gauged. One key importance of local institutions in the development process is that they act as avenues through which community needs and collective aspirations are channelled. The study was conducted in Gatwanyaga sub-location, Gatwanyaga Location, Thika East District, Kiambu County, and Central Kenya. The study was a descriptive ex-post facto cross-sectional survey. 90 individual interviews and 5 focus group interviews (N=47) were conducted to generate the study's primary data. Although local institutions are mainstreamed in development processes in the community driven approach, the study established that the approach does not necessarily utilise 'organically grown' development coordination structures like village development committees and instead 'makeshift' structures are established which do not survive after the project life. Also, as with conventional development approaches, the study established that local institutions that take part in the development process are mainly women, self and community interest groups, with youth groups conspicuously missing, an aspect that negates the tenets of people and community driven development approaches which mainstreams inclusivity.

Key Words: *Community, Driven, Development, Approach, Local Institutions.*

1. Introduction : Community driven development (CDD) is an approach premised on selection, design and implementation of projects as well as participation of beneficiary communities being channeled through local institutions like community based organizations, women, self and youth groups. Participation of local institutions is crucial in development processes. Local institutions are one way through which community participation in development can be gauged. Ham & Theron (1998) argue that dominant characteristic of participatory development is its identification of local groups as the basis for project implementation. Pose (2013) observe that formal and informal institutions are essential for the success of development. Ham & Theron (1998) further note that effective development is attained when people belong to organized groups and when the people feel that it is good for them to act in a coordinated manner. However, Pose (2013) argues that bringing institutions to participate in development process is easier said than practiced. Occasionally, development agencies fail to incorporate 'organically grown' institutions in development but instead, they establish 'makeshift' organisations. This paper presents findings, generates discussions and conclusions of assessment of local institutions as a parameter of community participation in the community driven development approach.

2. Literature Review: Local institutions are one way through which community participation in development can be gauged. In the absence of local institutions, it is not possible to attain authentic and organized beneficiary community participation in development. Indicators of genuine community participation include the existence of structures like committees as people's local institutions.

Mulwa (2008a) & UNDP (1970) observe that traditional development processes neglect to take into account the broader perspectives of local people through the local institutions. This eventually leads to wrong or misplaced development projects being identified, leading to fragmentation of the development process. As further corroborated by Chitere & Mutiso (2011), local structures either do not exist or if they do, they are weak and therefore they cannot be trusted to be avenues through which development programmes can be channelled. Mulwa (2008 a) argues that in the traditional community

development processes, local institutions are hardly recognized and involved because community members do not value themselves, are used to things being done for them or the development catalysts ignore them. Usually development agents work with 'local' elites who claim to represent the people and their institutions. In most cases, local institutions are non-existent and when they exist they are hardly enlisted in development processes. This leads to isolation of the marginalized groups. Eversole (2010) observes that in the traditional top-down and participatory approaches development processes, not only are experts seen as holding all the relevant knowledge for development, but they are also considered de facto owners of the institutional terrain, leaving local institutions disadvantaged. Thwala (2010) in a study conducted in South Africa concludes there is need for local institutions and governance structures to be avenues through which participation can be facilitated. Pseudo-participation negates genuine and authentic participation through local institutions in the traditional top-down community development approaches.

It is on the basis of the above literature that shows local institutions are not necessarily avenues through which development is channeled in the conventional development initiative that the researcher sought to determine if local institutions are mainstreamed in development processes the community driven development initiative.

3. Objective: The objective of the study was to, among other objectives, determine if local institutions get involved in development in the community driven development approach.

4. Study Design, Methods, Sampling and Locale: The geographical and administrative locale of the study was Gatunyaga Sub-Location, Gatunyaga Division, Thika East District, Kiambu County, Kenya.

The study employed a descriptive, ex-post facto cross-sectional survey research design, being carried out after an intervention (a multi-sectoral community driven development project). It was descriptive since it described the status of community participation as per the time of the study. Non – probability (quota) sampling technique was used to select the sample. The sample size for the individual interviews was 90 (N=90) and 5 focus group interviews (N=47) community interest groups (CIG) members. The breakdown of 90 was drawn from 9 sectoral groups with the quotas having been proportionately allocated (for purposes of representativeness). From the total 2304 CIG members, the calculation of quota proportionality was based on the size of each sector divided by the total of CIG members (from the 9 sectors) multiplied by 90. The 47 participants for the focus group interviews were randomly selected from the 9 sectors, with each interview having 8-10 participants proportionally drawn from the 9 sectors. The choice of 90 participants and 5 focus group interviews was discretionary.

Mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) were used for data collection. The method used to collect quantitative data was individual interviews while qualitative data was collected using focus group interviews. The reason for the choice of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies was to enhance corroboration, diversification, verification and enrichment of the data collected through multiple methods. The tool used to collect quantitative data was a structured questionnaire, and an interview schedule with thematic topics was used to collect the qualitative information. Quantitative data was organized, processed and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (univariate) were computed to generate frequency outputs. For qualitative data, refined themes were categorized and codes used to create thematic impressions and patterns that formed the basis of analysis and interpretation.

5. Results: The participation parameters assessed by the study include presence of local institutions, nature of membership, formation, inter-linkages and authenticity of the local institutions. The respondents were required to give a yes or no response to each option and yes response was taken to be the highest percentage.

5.1 Socio-demographic information of the study participants: Socio-demographic information of the study participants is as follows. On the variable of gender, 56.7% of the study participants were female while 43.3% were male. Age of participants (categorized on a likert scale) recorded the following results: 20-30 years was at 4.4 %, 31-40 years at 23.3%, 41-50 years at 30.0 %, 51-60 years at 18.9 % and 61 years and above at 23.3%. The marital status of the participants was 11.1% single, 86.7% married, while 2.2% reported being widows/widowers. Education level of the participants was

recorded as follows: 62.2 % of the respondents reported having primary education, followed by secondary at 30.0 %, none at 4.4% while college at 3.3 % was the least category. Occupations of the participants ranged from farmer at 72.2 %, business at 23.3% while musician, mason, adult teacher and pastor were all at 1.1 %.

5.2 Local institutions involvement in development projects: On the question of whether or not other local institutions apart from the focal development area committee get involved in development, all the respondents gave a yes response (100%). From focus group interviews, the participants reported that local institutions like women and self-help groups participated in development in the community driven development approach.

5.3 Other local institutions involvement in development : Asked which other local institutions are involved, respondents mentioned women groups as the highest at 98.9%, followed by self-help groups at 96.7%, youth groups at 50.0% and community based organizations at 28.9%. Traditional leaders and men groups recorded the lowest frequencies at 2.2% and 7.8% respectively as shown in table 5.1

Table 5.1 Other institutions involved in development

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Community Based Organisations	71.1	28.9	100.0
Women groups	1.1	98.9	100.0
Traditional leaders' groups	97.8	2.2	100.0
Self-help groups	3.3	96.7	100.0
Youth groups	50.0	50.0	100.0
Men groups	92.2	7.8	100.0

5.4 Community interest groups meeting criteria: If the community interest groups meet several criteria, the respondents mentioned registration at 100%, followed by constitution at 97.8%, while reporting at 20.0% followed by accountability at 60% attained the least scores, as figure 5.1 shows. Focus group interviews revealed similar findings on community interest groups legal status. The study found out that reporting of activities was at a minimal level.

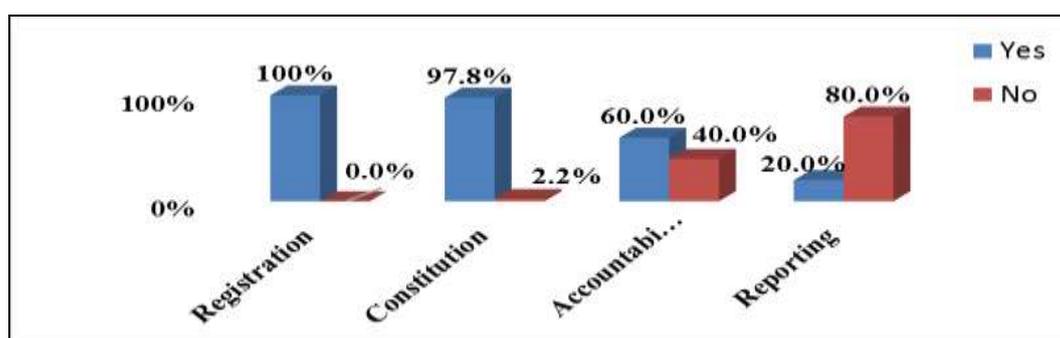


Figure 5.1 Community Interest Group meets criteria

5.5 Membership of the community interest groups: On where the membership of the community interest groups is drawn from, respondents mentioned women at 95.6% as the highest, followed by men at 94.4%, community groups, local elites and youth followed at 86.7%, 42.2% and 36.7% respectively while development partners/donors, opinion and administrative leaders were the least mentioned at 1.1%, 7.8% and 8.9% respectively as indicated by table 5.2. On membership of the local institutions, majority of the focus group interviews indicated that community interest groups comprise various segments of the community including the poor, women and men.

Table 5.2 Community Interest Group membership

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Community groups	13.3	86.7	100.0
Opinion leaders	92.2	7.8	100.0
Administrative leaders	91.1	8.9	100.0
Men	5.6	94.4	100.0
Development partners/donors	98.9	1.1	100.0
Local elites	57.8	42.2	100.0
Women	4.4	95.6	100.0
Youth	63.3	36.7	100.0

5.6 Multiple community group membership: Asked whether they are also members of other community groups apart from the community interest groups, 78.9% indicated that they were while 21.1 % indicated that they were not.

5.7 Presence of Local Development Governance Structure: The study sought to find out if there is a local development governance structure. Majority of the respondents (93.3%) indicated that there was no village development committee in the sub- location while 6.7% of the respondents indicated that there was one. This was similar to findings of the focus group interviews which indicated that there was no village development committee in the sub-location. Of the respondents who indicated that there was a village development committee in the sub-location, only 5.6% responded that it was established before project initiation.

5.8 Presence of development coordination structure: The study further found out that presence of a community interest group committee (Focal Area Development Committee) was reported by the respondents at 100%.

5.9 Presence of project committee: On being asked if there is a community interest groups' committee, all the respondents (100%) in the individual interviews said yes while the focus group interviews also indicated there was one. On when the community interest groups committee was established, all the respondents (100%) indicated that it is done just before project initiation. The focus group interviews also indicated that the community interest groups were formed as a result of the project.

5.10 Composition of community interest group committee: Asked about the composition of the community interest group committee, majority of the respondents indicated that 97.8% were community groups, followed by local elites, administrative leaders and opinion leaders at 74.4%, 35.6% and 33.3% respectively while development partners/donors scored the least at 1.1% followed by individuals at 28.9%, as table 5.3 illustrates. From the focus group interviews, majority of the participants indicated that the community interest groups committee is comprised of all segments of the community except the youth.

'The community interest groups' committee is made of all segments of the community but the youth isolate themselves from development work because they want quick financial benefits' - community interest group member.

Table 5.3 Who comprises the Community Interest Group Committee

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Individuals	71.1	28.9	100.0
Community Groups	2.2	97.8	100.0

Opinion leaders	66.7	33.3	100.0
Administrative leaders	64.4	35.6	100.0
Development partners/donors	98.9	1.1	100.0
Local Elites	25.6	74.4	100.0

5.11 Establishment of community interest groups leadership: The study sought to find out how the community interest groups leadership is established in the community driven development approach. All the respondents indicated that it is democratic at 100%. Also 100% of the respondents said they consider the community interest groups elections free and fair.

5.12 Collaboration of community interest group committee with other institutions: On other institutions which work with the community interest group committee, the respondents gave other groups as the highest at 91.1%, followed by government at 67.8% while working with NGO's was the least at 16.7% as shown in figure 5.2. This information was similar for the focus group interviews.

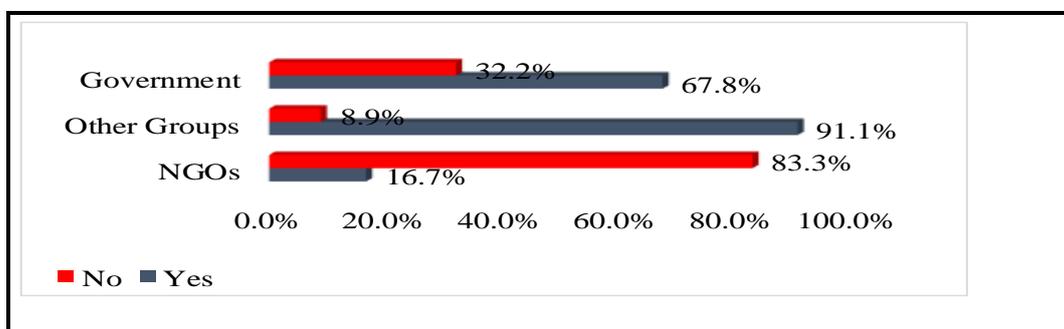


Figure 5.2 Other institutions which work with C I G Committee

5.13 Community rating of local institutions' participation in development: About how they rate the local institutions to participate, 80.0% of the study participants mentioned much, followed by moderate at 16.7% while very much and little were at 2.2% and 1.1 % respectively. Similarly, on how they rate their own confidence and that of local institutions to participate in development in the community driven development approach compared to other approaches, 58.9% indicated that it had greatly improved, 38.9% mentioned it had somewhat improved while 2.2% indicated that it had remained the same, as illustrated by figure 5.3.

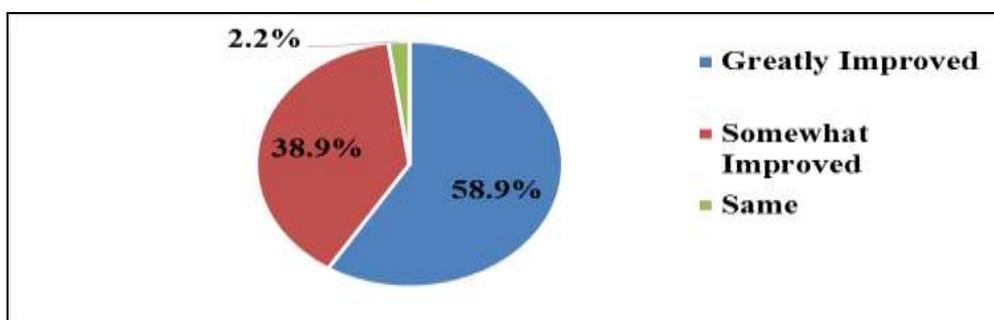


Figure 5.3 Rating of community's confidence in local institutions

6. Discussion: Community driven development is premised on its ability to promote inclusion of community organization structures from all segments of the community in the development processes. Ham & Theron (1998) argue that it is impossible to work with and select interest groups in a community to work with without considering the whole community structure .The findings from the study indicate low inclusivity in development of local institutions that represent some segments meaning in the community driven development approach, some segments of society like women get

involved more than others like youth and men, an aspect that negates the ideals and tenets of participation.

Local institutions ability to meet legal and other formal criteria is crucial. The study findings established that the local institutions involved were registered and had constitutions, findings which resonates with findings by Kariuki & Place (2005) whose study in Central Kenya showed that all groups sampled seemed to subscribe to the requirement for registration and legalization. However, although the community driven development approach gives prominence to legal status of community groups, issues of development accountability through reporting are still lacking.

Ham & Theron (1998) citing Cernea (1990) observe that local institutions are formed on the basis and process of self-selection of the members and the willingness to associate. From the study findings, membership to community interest groups was open to all segments of society although the youth and men isolate themselves. The findings therefore imply that in the community driven development approach, membership to local institutions equitably cuts across most segments of the society.

Community members belonging to multiple local organizations is a common scenario of democratic and people driven development. Kariuki & Place (2005), in a study in Central Kenya highlands, report that 84% of their sampled study participants reported having members who belonged to one or more groups. This means that in the community driven development approach, membership to multiple groups is a common practice, which enhances diversity and social capital building, an important ingredient of inclusive and participatory development.

Local development governance, management and coordination structures are crucial for the delivery of sound development. The study found out that presence of a community interest group committee (Focal Area Development Committee) was reported by all the respondents. This implies that the community driven development approach does not always work through existing local government structures but instead, it establishes 'makeshift' structures like community interest groups committees which denotes functional participation.

Presence of local development structures is crucial as an avenue through which development can be delivered. Development government structures are constituted by beneficiary community's representatives therefore advancing their agenda. The study findings indicated that there was no development government structure before the onset of the community driven development project and instead community interest groups committee and a focal area development committee was formed to facilitate the development process. It can further be deduced from the findings that the community driven development approach does not necessarily gain entry to the community through pre-existing community structures but instead, there is establishment of 'functional' structures like the Focal Area Development Committee which might collapse after the project life.

Control and dominance of development processes by only few members of the community negates the principle of equity and inclusivity. The study findings indicate that most community members are actively involved in the community driven development approach and should the case be otherwise, this denotes lack of authentic participation in development. The study findings indicate that community groups, followed by local elites, administrative leaders and opinion leaders are the key development players as opposed to all if not most of the community members.

Cernea (1990) as cited by Ham & Theron (1998) observe that performance of community groups improves when the group has developed leadership structures and internal norms and procedures capable of organizing and managing its members. Democratic leadership freely and fairly constituted is essential for sound community development. The study findings established that leadership is democratically established in free and fair elections in the community driven development approach.

Inter-linkages and collaboration between local institutions is a positive attribute in enhancing coordination in development. Inter-linkages between various groups consolidate development efforts. The study findings show there are inter-linkages among the community driven development approach.

For community to fully participate in development processes, there is need for them to not only participate but also have confidence. The study findings indicate that majority of the participants have much confidence in the local institutions participation in development. This indicates that the community driven development development approach enhances and demonstrates participation of local institutions, an aspect which implies that participation in development entails nurturing micro-organizations as avenues through which development can be channeled.

7. Conclusion: The study has provided insights into how local institutions which ideally are peoples' organizational and representation structures participate in development in the community driven development approach. Most of the findings are similar to the practice in the conventional development approaches. Conspicuously noted from the study is that the community driven development approach does not necessarily work with pre-existing 'organically grown' development structures like village development committees but instead, new 'makeshift' structures like focal development area committees are established to act as development coordination bodies, which collapse as soon as projects come to an end. It is important that development practitioners and agencies strengthen already existing development coordination local institutions since they are more sustainable and they tend to grow spontaneously with only external support to strengthen them.

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