

Governance Factors Affecting Community Participation In Public Development Projects In Meru District In Arusha In Tanzania

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to have a fresh look at the local governance status through exploring governance factors affecting community participation in public development projects. The study also has investigated the actors and factors shaping participation as well as causes for non-participation. For the purpose of the study, six wards within two divisions of Poli and Mbuguni and Meru district headquarters were selected. In the wards, a total of 80 respondents from among the community members were interviewed through a structured questionnaire. Others were Village chairman; Village Executive Officers, Ward Executive Officers and Councilors were also interviewed and involved in the FGD. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Simple descriptive statistics and cross tabulation and figures were used in the analysis. The analysis showed that the communities were participated in the public development projects and people were participating through financial, material and labor contribution to the public development projects. The analysis also showed that, the government supported the ongoing public development projects including through provision of fund and expertise. The study showed the benefit of community participation in the development projects or programs like ownership of the projects and enjoying the benefits accrued from the projects. The study also indicated that there is significant change in terms of governance as influencers of community participation in public development projects. Despite the fortunes, study showed some challenges found in wards and villages being the incidence of corruptions and misuse of public resources which were mentioned to slow community participation in public development projects. It was therefore concluded that adhering to the good governance principles contribute positively towards community participation in public development projects.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Tanzanian Local Government system is based on political devolution and decentralization of functional responsibilities, powers and resources from central government to local government and from higher levels of local government to lower levels of local government and overall empower the people to have ultimate control over their welfare. Local governments through their elected leaders have a responsibility for social development and public service provision within their areas of jurisdiction; facilitation of maintenance of law and order and promotion of local development through participatory processes. In addressing governance issues, of recent there has been a shift to approaches that focus more on making comprehensive community-based changes to affect individual behavior. This research will reveal factors that affect community participation to engage in the community development processes and its impact on development project activities, discusses current approaches as compared to the new development era. In particular, it focuses on community mobilization as an increasingly important strategy, providing the framework to encourage participation, cooperation, and collaboration for the common good. Community in this case refers to a group of interacting people living in a common location and such a group is organized around common values, cultures, language and is attributed with social cohesion within a shared geographical location, generally in social units larger than a household (Moringka, 2000). It's of the fact that if community members are not effectively involved or not themselves engage into development works; the consequences are poor socio economic wellbeing with increasing levels of poverty. Effective participation in this case refers to the involvement of the people concerned in analysis, decision-making, planning, and program implementation, as well as in all the activities, without the involvement of external agencies (Evans & Appleton, 1993). Involving local people in planning can increase their commitment to the program and it can help them to develop appropriate skills and knowledge to identify

and solve their problems on their own. It also helps to increase the resources available for the program, promotes self-help and self-reliance, and improves trust and partnership between the community and leaders. Therefore, if you involve the local community in a program which is developed for them, you will find they will gain from these benefits and develop sense of ownership (Chitambo et al, 2002). In Tanzania however, the concept and techniques of "participation" have two antagonistic pathways (Moses, 2004). The two discourses of participation circulating in the country emanate from international development expert who view participation as "empowering" and aim to involve local people in decision-making processes; and the other is held by Tanzanian development experts. The Tanzanian discourse of participation is rooted in African socialism and Nyerere's concept of self-reliance (kujitegemea), in which citizens are obliged to contribute their labor and resources in a community effort to "build the nation" (kujenga taifa). These two conceptualizations of "participation" are divergent and yet, because the language of participation remains the same, and since generally expatriates and Tanzanians do not spend too much time working together in the field, all actors are able to imagine that they understand each other and are working to the same agenda.

1.2 Research Problem

The research problem concerns sustained community participation in the implementation of public development projects in Meru district council. Despite the globally applauded potential benefits of community participation in development programs, the implementation of such programs with sustained community participation, poses numerous problems to planners and social service providers, especially in developing countries. Tanzania being a developing country has its legal frameworks for service provision and imbued with governance and accountability systems stipulated in the Local Government Authorities Act No. 7 of 1982. While there is a relatively clear system of accountability in local government in Tanzanian context, the performance of accountability mechanisms remains problematic. According to the Oversight

process of local Councils in Tanzania report (REPOA, 2008), several reasons have been cited to explain the poor accountability and governance that takes place in various LGAs. These include: poor access to information which is in turn caused by unfavorable attitude of the leaders and council staff, poor working tools and infrastructure, technocratic procedures and formats for releasing information and lack of a culture of transparency. Poor representation of the citizens by their councilors in the decision making processes and the lack of participation in these processes contribute to further undermine accountability. Notwithstanding these developments hurdles still exist: lack of structure, or perceived need, for MPs or councilors to consult or feedback to constituents between elections, lack of means for the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) to follow election process more closely, lack of attention to civic education, lack of popular understanding of the role and responsibilities of council leaders, lack of understanding of the planning and budgeting processes are additional challenges facing accountability at local level. Corruption just to cite one is not a new phenomenon in Meru district; According to the research done by the Community Economic Development and Social Transformation (CEDESOTA) in 2010 on democratic governance and social accountability, there were many forms of corruption practices such as: embezzlement, bribery, negligence, nepotism, patronage, theft and deceit. Like other institutions in the country, the local government institutions are also involved in corruption in service delivery systems. For instance in financial year 2011/2012 the Controller and Auditor General report (AGR/DFP/2011/2012) indicated that activities for the for Meru District council were either partially implemented or not implemented due to embezzlement whereby about 20 million shillings were not reported, an indication of unaccountability. According to this research by CEDESOTA, at the rural level, no strong legal or management systems that could seal off corruption. Both elected and appointed leaders dare to corrupt democratic institutions for their own interests. Corruption at all levels has continued to slow down community participation in public development projects which has always been said is the consequences of poor governance among leaders and government officials in the district. Corruption is always perceived as public enemy number one in developing countries (World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim, 2013). There are other challenges which need to be investigated further as well as their contributing factors. Thus the purpose of this research which was to investigate the governance factors affecting community participation in public development projects in Meru district, Tanzania. This was followed by recommendations for improving community participation in development projects in Meru district council.

1.3 Research Objective

To examine governance factors affecting community participation in public development projects in Meru District.

1.4 Research Questions

What are the effects of governance in community participation in public development projects?

1.5 Scope of the Study

Geographically the focus of this study is limited to 8 wards of two divisions of Poli and Mbuguni under Meru districts. The 8

wards belonging to two different divisions of Meru with different socio-economic backgrounds will be purposefully selected. One distinct advantage of selecting these wards as the unit of analysis is that it will help examining community people's scope and nature of participation in the development projects considering the existing economic and educational diversity among people of these two zones. In fact, the study has endeavored to assess the nature of people's participation in development projects (particularly in identification and implementation stages) in Poli and Mbuguni divisions for financial years of 2011/12 and 2012/13. Besides mapping the extent of people's participation in the development process, the study has also explored the factors impeding local people's participation in development project cycle/implementation.

2.0 Conceptual Framework

Governance is about power, relationships and accountability, a process in which communities communicate their interests, their input is absorbed, decisions are taken and implemented, and decision makers are held accountable. According to Galadima (1998:117), governance is a process of organizing and managing legitimate power structures, entrusted by the people, to provide law and order, protect fundamental human rights, ensure rule of law and due process of law, provide for the basic needs and welfare of the people and the pursuit of their happiness. The key principles of good governance as applied in the public interests include strong commitment to integrity, ethical values, and the rule of law; and openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement. Good governance is an issue for all individuals, agencies and organizations (state, private sector and civil society) that hold power in making decisions affecting access to rights. Governance is "good" when it ensures that political, social and economic priorities of the communities who aspire for development change are based on a broader consensus in society, and that the voices of all are heard in decision-making over allocation of resources. On the other hand as a factor that affects community participation; poor governance is characterized by arbitrary policy making, unaccountable bureaucracies, unenforced or unjust legal systems, the abuse of executive power, a civil society unengaged in public life, and widespread of corruption cases. It is from these negative attributes, that a development project can be leading the whole process astray. Good governance is, therefore, that kind of governance that adheres and distinguished by specific characteristics. Two and major ones are accountability and transparency. Recalling of the research topic as "Governance factors affecting community participation in public development projects in the rural set ups; the independent variables were identified as governance and dependent variables as community participation (figure 1).

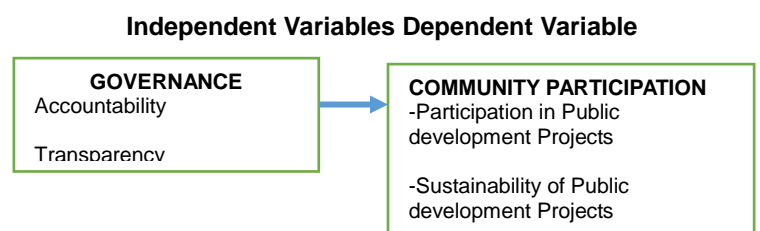


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the effects of governance in community participation in public development project

An organization or government may have good governance if they are accountable and transparent to their people. Accountability improves community participation and increases awareness of knowledge and capacities to improve ability to negotiate as equals with authorities and other stakeholders to promote common objectives, and increase responsiveness to conflicts within the community. Accountability and transparency enhance community participation in public sector agencies, community participation in management and public hearings (Cummins 2007). It improves various dimensions of efficiency including; greater attention to the priorities of communities, increased transparency on budgets and public resources. Participation is another characteristic for good governance whereby the people are allowed to be part of the decision-making process. An organization or Local Government Authority (LGA) observing good governance principles ought to be effective and efficient in its participatory decision making processes and implementation to produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of the resources at their disposal (ACDP, (2002). Good governance requires equitable and inclusive since all members feel that they have a stake in what is being done and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. Today, good governance can therefore be assessed primarily in terms of the degree of transparency of decision-making and policy implementation and through disclosure and the adequate functioning of mechanisms of public accountability (Foster, 2005). Community participation is a process based on dialogue with a community to identify its problems and possible solutions that, ultimately, empowers communities. Cook (1975) notes that community participation in the observance of good governance legitimizes public development program, its plans, actions and leadership. To legitimize can often mean the difference between success and failure of community efforts. To attain meaningful community participation requires adherence of good governance principles. Failure to this which may result from poor governance will lead to poor development. Adopting this view, along with the teachings of Paulo Freire (2006), participation becomes a theory driven mechanism in which local communities and outsiders come together, as participants, through adherence of governance principles to achieve community defined goals. In order for the public development projects in the communities to succeed, communities need to actively take part in designing, planning, implementing and shaping the projects that affect them.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design adopted in this study is a case study. This design was chosen due to its flexibility in terms of data collection and analysis, also due to its depth and breadths of the study variables. The targeted population included village and ward leaders, government officials including extension officers and civil society organizations. Sampling frame therefore is the set of source materials from which the sample is selected (Krishnaswami, 2002). The sample frame for this study therefore encompassed Community members, Village chairpersons, Village Executive Officers, Ward Executive Officers, extension workers, NGOs, district officials. From these groups data were collected basing on the level of awareness of village and ward leaders, political leaders and District Council officials on the governance factors affecting community participation into different public development

activities. The reason for opting to conduct study through sampling is that it uses less cost, less field time and its more accuracy. Data collection methods employed were interviews through questionnaires, observations, focus group discussion and documentary reviews. Through interviews, data were collected using unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Use of more than one data collection methods increases the validity and reliability of data collected (Bond, 2006:34-39). This was categorized into two; primary and secondary methods of data collection. The analysis and summary of the findings was done with the assistance of statistical tools like Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and interpretations of data based on statistical generalization.

4.0 Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

Intended sample size of the study was 96 respondents in selected wards of Meru District Council. At the end of the study survey only 80 respondents reached which is equal to 83% of the total target sample size of the study. The data was analyzed using statistical tools like Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and interpretations made basing on statistical generalization. The qualitative information was presented in a narrative or tabulated form. Quantitative method was used to generalize and identify prevalence from the data provided by the informants.

4.2 Demographic Analysis

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent involved in the study were sex, dwelling time and education level. The findings show that majority 66.3% of respondents in the research area are male (Table 1 below) this means that, it is likely that majority of men are involved in leadership and participation of public development projects mostly compared to women.

Table 1: Sex of respondent (N=80)

Sex	Respondents	Percentage
Male	53	66.3
Female	27	33.7
Total	80	100

Source: Researcher's field findings 2015

These findings were supported by the FGD of the study were it has been noticed that men are always involved into public development projects in terms of monetary and labor as opposed to women. The study also revealed that such involvement of community men it's a typical characteristic of most community development projects especial in rural areas of African societies, which ultimately creates a sense of ownership of the project (URT, 2006). The lifetime of an individual has relationship with respondent participation in community development projects and his or her awareness on the communities' issues. Findings show that majority 92.5% of respondents who were interviewed lived in the area more than six months, during the survey of the study (Table 2 below). This implies that they have enough knowledge and awareness of their communities and projects going on in their locality.

Table 2: Dwelling time in the study area

Duration	Frequency	Percentage
Less than Six months	6	7.5
More than Six months	74	92.5
Total	80	100

Source: Researcher's field findings 2015

The analysis discovered that education level of the respondent is vital to engage in the community development projects and other matters related to governance and leadership. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondent's education level was Secondary school (Table 3). This means that they are capable to read, write, understand and internalize issues at hand including bylaws, contracts, project design and implementation as well as monitoring evaluating the outcomes.

Table 3: Respondents Education level

Level	Frequency	Percentage
None	7	8.7
Primary	15	18.8
Secondary	48	60
Tertiary	10	12.6
Total	80	100

Source: Researcher's field findings 2015

4.3 Governance and leadership and leadership style

Community participation in public development projects depend more on how people are governed and lead. The level of democratic governance has direct relationship with peoples' participation in the public development projects. Findings indicated that 85% of leaders were democratically elected by the community members. These become highly accepted and respected to mobilize people into public development projects. Findings realized that the process involved in leadership election has direct relationship with people's participation in public development projects. Unlike in the past, in the presence of multiparty, people, government and election supervisors strive to have fair and free election in the district. Ninety four percent (94%) of the total respondents said they are willing to participate in any activities initiated or mobilized by their leaders while 87% of respondents admitted that they had contributed and involved in the public development projects. The frequencies of respondent's contribution to the projects varied, majority 86.6% often participated, and 10% seldom and 2% never participated (Table 4). The seldom participation happened because of time limitation and interference with their other livelihood activities like jobs, business etc. The often participation into development project faced the same challenge of time interference, thus mostly pay money as their contribution. Furthermore, 90% of the respondents said they were engaged and contributing in the project through community meetings, such as meetings from the hamlet to the village levels.

Table 4: Community Participation

	Frequency	Percentage
Often	52	86.6
Seldom	6	10
Never	2	2
Total	80	100

Source: Researcher, field data

4.4 Effects of governance in community participation in development activities

The study was guided with this assumption; the good governance encouraged community to participate into public development projects. This study also was curious to examine the existing relationship between governance and community involvement in public development projects. Findings showed that involvement of community in public development projects has been observed to be dependent on and motivated by leadership style which observes principles of good governance in the study areas. This was proved true by eighty five percent (85%) respondents who were influenced to participate in public development project just because of accountability, transparency and teamwork showed by their leaders. Therefore, findings put forward that effective governance does have significant relationship on people's participation and contribution to community development project. The findings too, divulged that effective governance in the implementation of public development projects encourages better decision making and the efficient use of resources and strengthens accountability for the stewardship of those resources. Also it was revealed by the study through documentary review that working together as a team for both elected and appointed community leaders build a trust to the community and make them willing to participate effectively in the public development projects (Wily, 2003). The question on the government support to the public projects, the response was yes by village and district officials that the government through local government authority does provide support depending on the size of the project and how much community has contributed. This was also confirmed by 83% of interviewed respondents who said "Yes" that government provides support (table 5 below) and such projects are mainly services delivery and economic development projects.

Table 5: Government support to Public Development Project

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	50	83.0
No	6	13.3
Not sure	2	3.3
Total	80	100

Source: Researcher, field findings

4.5 Governance Challenges faced implementation of public development projects

This section presents existed challenges that affect the implementation of public development projects in the district. Interviewees said that some leaders were not transparent enough to let people know the exact amount of revenues whether from the government or community contribution. In Kikatiti village where there was water project, leaders were not ready to explain transparently on the income and expenditure

of the project. Misuse of public resources and corruption were mentioned as challenges facing the development projects. Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents said that there might be some incidences of corruption and misuses of resources. While 42.5% said there some incidence of corruption and misuses of resources contributed for the project though there was no evidence documented so far. Whereby, only 7.5% of interviewed respondents said there were no cases of corruption and misuse of project resources. Skills were mentioned as key aspect in project developments. Forty five percent (45%) respondents indicated that there is lack of administrative and project management skills which impacted negatively on the community participation and sustainability of projects. The leaders suggested provision of the training before commencement of any development project.

5. CONCLUSION

Basing on the findings it is concluded that the community involvement is crucial for a successful and sustainable public development projects. Likewise and generally governance is critical and has significant effects on community to participate into development projects. On the other hand, from rational analysis, there is significant link between good governance principles and levels of community participation in public development projects despite of few discrepancies emanating from leadership election and implementation of development projects.

6. Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:-

- (i) The government and stakeholders should facilitate and increase awareness on community participation in public development projects in order to create a clear and common understanding of essences of their contribution and ultimate benefits. This may be potential for greater participation and contribution of other actors such as NGOs, Development Partners, Communities and Individual (Omari, 2002).
- (ii) Misuse of development project resources was observed as one of the reasons that discouraged community to participate into public development projects. Therefore, this study recommends adequate administration of law to combat misuses of project resources.
- (iii) All variables of governance have a strong and positive relationship with community participation in terms of participation and sustainability. The study therefore recommends that appointed and elected leaders should strive to become model to their people in terms of commitment to integrity, ethical values, and obey rule of law and openness.

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