

# Community Involvement: Who Sits on Which Wheels in the Community Driven Development Approach?

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**Abstract:** The objective of the study was to determine, among other objectives, if the beneficiary community is involved in development in various stages of the project as a parameter of participation in the community driven development approach. The study design was an ex-post facto cross-sectional survey, which used non-random sampling technique (quota), and both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The sample size for individual interviews was 90 (N=90) and 47 (N=47) for the focus group interviews. The study established that some segments of the community especially the youth and opinion leaders' involvement in the various stages of the project is low, denoting exclusion and that there is fluctuating beneficiary community involvement in the various stages of the project. Further, the study found out that it is mainly women who are involved in most project activities, a situation which could be attributed to the fact that project activities also meet and respond to needs directly associated with women. Also project activities have time and opportunity costs that are not consistent with men, youth, opinion leaders and local elites direct needs. The implications of the study is that funders, development agencies, practitioners, stakeholders and proponents of participatory development approaches ought to device mechanisms of enlisting more beneficiary community involvement in development processes, discourses and activities as well as mainstreaming of community involvement in all the stages of the project cycle.

**Keywords:** Approach, Beneficiary, Community Driven, Development, Involvement, Participation, Project, Stages.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Community involvement in development specifically in the various stages of the project cycle is crucial and important for development. Arthurson (2003) observes that community participation supports creation of sustainable communities, community capacity building and community ownership of projects. Community development requires the involvement and participation of local residents in identifying projects and strategies they can use to improve their quality of life (Green & Haines, 2008). Mansuri & Rao (2004) stress that the cornerstone of community-based development initiatives is the active involvement of members of a defined community in at least some or all aspects of development. Despite the emphasis and the good intention of practitioners of participatory development approaches, there are some problems experienced especially in rural areas, where massive development projects are proposed and introduced in communities with little or no participation and consultation, and involvement of the people (Kimani & Kombo, 2011).

### 1.1. Background to the Study and Literature Review:

Cernea (1985) observes that the issue of who in the community is responsible for development is controversial. The inability and lack of willingness of development agencies implementing top down, traditional community development approaches to elicit the involvement of communities in their development leads to lack of ownership and eventual project

failure. Midgley et al., (1986) argue that proponents of community participation argue that conventional opportunities for participation offer limited scope for community involvement in development. Local communities are usually isolated in development processes and are only consulted when and if need be. Midgley et al., (ibid) further observe that community-level involvement is generally low in conventional and non-participatory development approaches. Botes & Rensburg (2000) argue that community participation is not always a genuine attempt to empower communities to choose development options and destinies, instead it is sometimes an attempt to advance already agreed plans. Occasionally, it is the most visible and vocal, well-off and educated groups and persons that participate in development processes, making marginalized and invisible groups to be systematically excluded (ibid).

Mohamad (2010), in a study conducted in Bangladesh, indicates that 93 % of the respondents reported that they never participated in the planning phase of any development projects with only 24 % of the respondents saying that they were involved in one or more projects' implementation process, indicating that the remaining 76 % of the people were not involved in the implementation. Further, Thwala (2010) in a study in South Africa established that 40% of the respondents claimed they had never been involved in water projects before. This corroborates the fact that hardly is beneficiary community involved in development processes in the traditional community development approaches.

Masanyiwa & Kinyashi (2008) in a study carried out in Tanzania observe that project staff and community respondents explained that monitoring of project activities were mainly done by project staff, community leaders and development committees who reported back to the local communities. This means local communities were not involved. Further, National Anti-Corruption Campaign Steering Committee (2008) in a study in Kenya established that only 32.5% were involved in project monitoring. This means that 77.5 % of the communities were not participating in monitoring the community development fund (CDF) projects and that the community exclusion level stood at 79%, meaning only 21% were included. Slightly over 25% of the population in the same study was involved in CDF projects in one way or another, meaning about 75% of the community was not involved. This indicates low community involvement in development projects. It is evident from the study that there is low community involvement in development in the traditional community development approaches.

Rono & Aboud (2003) in a study in Nandi District in Kenya found out that the average percentage of respondents who reported their involvement and participation in all the phases of the community projects in which they were expected to participate in was only 50%. This means that remaining 50% of the community members were not involved, neither did they participate in development projects. Also the same study indicates that a bigger majority (63.3 %) of the respondents had no involvement and participation in rural development projects. That means only 36.7 % were involved, leaving out a big majority of community members from the development processes. This can translate to low community involvement in the traditional development approaches.

Okinda (2009) in a study done on community participation and management of Constituency Development Funds (CDF) in Kisii District in Kenya indicates that only 4 % of the people interviewed had attended project identification meetings, mainly due to the manner in which the project identification and selection was done. This means that 96% of the constituents did not get involved in the CDF development identification processes. This indicates very low community involvement in project identification by communities in the traditional community development approaches. Mansuri & Rao (2004), and Mulwa (2008b) contend that community involvement in traditional development approaches is usually dominated by elites, who tend to be better educated, have fewer opportunity costs on their time, and therefore have the greatest net benefit from participation and control of development processes. This alienates some of the community members from the development process.

## II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Community involvement in development processes and discourse remains a major challenge and handicap for development agencies and practitioners. In Kenya, there have been many projects implemented using the community driven development approach yet there is minimal documentation of if beneficiary communities get involved in development, how they are involved and in which stages of the project cycle they are involved in. The gap of documented knowledge on the above parameters of community participation in the community driven development is what constituted the problem statement for this study.

### III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to, among other objectives, determine if the beneficiary community is involved in development as a parameter of participation in the community driven development approach. The variables that were measured to assess community involvement in the community driven development approach are who gets involved, how they get involved in acquiring and controlling resources, procurements, project design, identification, needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Study Site, Design, Sample Size and Methods:

The geographical and administrative locale of the study was Gatuanyaga Sub-Location, Gatuanyaga Division, Thika East District, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive, ex-post facto cross-sectional 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 for the study which was 90 (N=90) and 5 focus group interviews (N=47), all drawn from community interest groups (CIG). 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 containing thematic topics was used to collect the qualitative information.

Quantitative data was organised, processed and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (univariate) were computed to generate frequency outputs. For qualitative data, refined themes were categorised and codes used to create thematic impressions and patterns that formed the basis of analysis and interpretation. Data is presented in the results/findings section in form of tables and figures.

### V. RESULTS

#### 5.1 Socio-Demographic Information of participants:

This section entails presentation and interpretation of the socio-demographic information (characteristics) of the study participants who were community interest group members drawn from nine sectors.

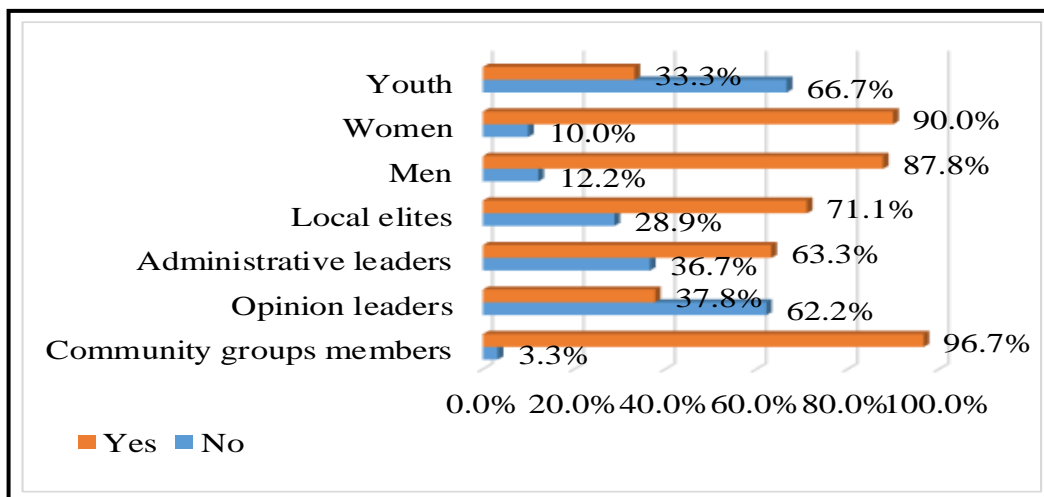
On the variable of gender, 56.7% of the study participants were female while 43.3% were male. Age of participants (categorized on a likert scale) recorded the following results: 20-30 years was at 4.4 %, 31-40 years at 23.3%, 41-50 years at 30.0 %, 51-60 years at 18.9 % and 61 years and above at 23.3%. 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 as follows: 62.2 % of the respondents reported having primary education, followed by secondary at 30 .0 %, none at 4.4% while college category was at 3.3 %. 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 Community involvement in all stages of project:

The study sought to find out if the beneficiary community gets involved in various stages of the project in the community driven development approach. All the respondents (100%) gave a yes response. Most of the focus group interviews indicated that the community through community groups / community interest groups gets involved in the community driven development approach in one way or another.

**5.3 Involvement in projects identification:**

On the question of who in the community gets involved in identifying projects, the respondents mentioned community groups' members at 96.7%, followed by women at 90.0 %, men at 87.8%, local elites at 71.1% and administrative leaders at 63.3%. The least mentioned category was youth at 33.3% followed by opinion leaders at 37.8%, as illustrated by figure 5. 1.



**Fig: 5.1. Who in the community gets involved in project identification**

**5.4 Community involvement in acquisition & control of resources:**

Asked who in the community gets involved in acquiring and controlling resources, majority of the respondents mentioned community groups' members at 97.8%, followed by men at 83.3%, women at 82.2%, administrative leaders at 63.3% and local elites at 61.1%. The least mentioned were opinion leaders at 13.3%, followed by youth at 21.1% as demonstrated by table (i). The focus group interviews revealed that the acquisition and procurement of resources is mainly done by the government /funder and the community through community interest groups gets involved in utilization of the resources once acquired.

**Table (i) .Who gets involved in acquiring /control project resources**

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Community group members	2.2	97.8	100.0
Opinion leaders	86.7	13.3	100.0
Administrative leaders	36.7	63.3	100.0
Local elites	38.9	61.1	100.0
Men	16.7	83.3	100.0
Women	17.8	82.2	100.0
Youth	78.9	21.1	100.0

**5.5 Community involvement in needs assessment:**

The study sought to find out who gets involved in needs assessment. Community group members were mentioned as the highest score at 95.6%, followed by women at 93.3%, men at 92.2%, administrative leaders at 78.9% and opinion leaders at 63.3%. As illustrated by figure 5.2, the least mentioned was youth at 46.7%, followed by local elites at 62.2%.

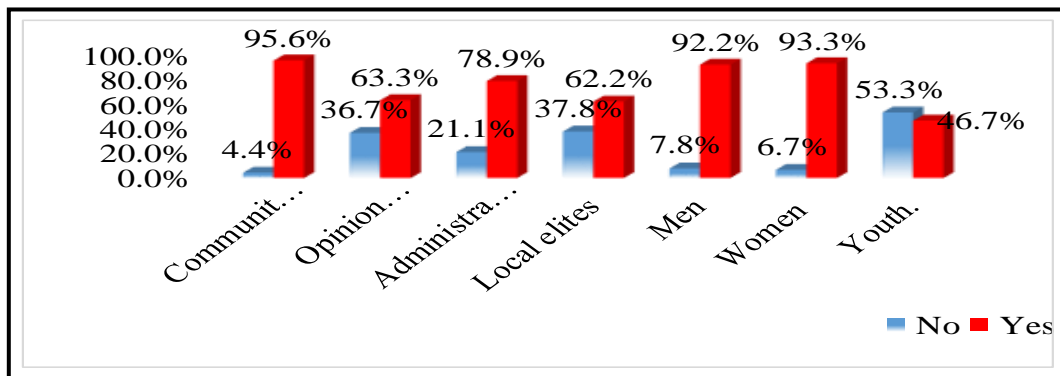


Fig: 5.2 Who in the community is involved in needs assessment

**5.6. Community involvement in making project plans:**

The study sought to find out who in the community makes project plans. Majority of the respondents mentioned women at 93.3%, followed by both community groups and men at 92.2% respectively, administrative leaders at 71.1% while the least were opinion leaders at 22.2% followed by youth at 26.7% as shown in table (ii). Most of the focus group interviews revealed that through community groups, administrative leaders, women, men and local elites are involved in community.

Table (ii) who in the community gets involved in project planning action planning during the PRA

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Community groups members	7.8	92.2	100.0
Opinion leaders	77.8	22.2	100.0
Administrative leaders	28.9	71.1	100.0
Local elites	50.0	50.0	100.0
Men	7.8	92.2	100.0
Women	6.7	93.3	100.0
Youth	73.3	26.7	100.0

**5.7 Community involvement in projects implementation:**

Regarding who in the community gets involved in the implementation of projects, the highest mentioned category was women at 95.6%, followed by men at 94.4%, community groups' members at 91.1%, administrative leaders at 52.2% and local elites at 37.8%. The least mentioned were opinion leaders at 5.6%, followed by youth at 25.6%, as demonstrated by table (iii).

Table (iii) Who in the community gets involved in the implementation

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Community group members	8.9	91.1	100.0
Opinion leaders	94.4	5.6	100.0
Administrative leaders	47.8	52.2	100.0
Local elites	62.2	37.8	100.0
Men	5.6	94.4	100.0
Women	4.4	95.6	100.0
Youth	74.4	25.6	100.0

**5.8 Community involvement in project monitoring:**

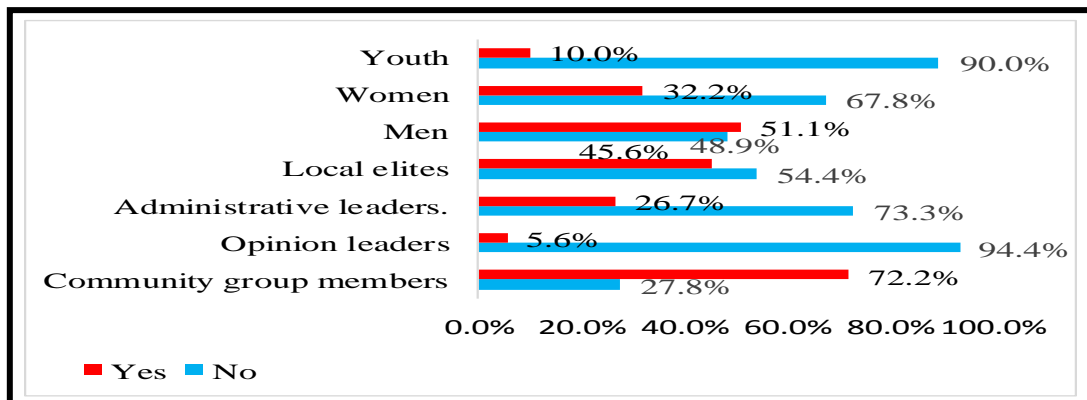
On who in the community gets involved in monitoring projects, majority of the respondents mentioned community groups’ members at 90.0%, followed by men at 86.7%, women at 84.4 % and administrative leaders at 42.2%. The least mentioned was opinion leaders at 11.1%, youth at 20.0% and local elites at 37.8%, as shown in table (iv). Similar results were generated by the focus group interviews.

**Table (iv) Who in the community gets involved in monitoring**

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Community group members	10.0	90.0	100.0
Opinion leaders	88.9	11.1	100.0
Administrative leaders	57.8	42.2	100.0
Local elites	62.2	37.8	100.0
Men	13.3	86.7	100.0
Women	15.6	84.4	100.0
Youth	80.0	20.0	100.0

**5.9 Community involvement in project evaluation:**

On who in the community gets involved in project evaluation, respondents mentioned community groups members at 72.2 %, followed by men at 51.1%, local elites at 45.6%, women at 32.2% and administrative leaders at 26.7%. The least mentioned were opinion leaders at 5.6%, followed by youth at 10.0%, as shown in figure 5. 3.



**Fig.5. 3 Who in the community gets involved in evaluation**

**5.10 Community rating of their involvement in the community driven development approach:**

The study sought to find out how participants rate their own and community involvement in the community driven development approach. 82.2% of the respondents mentioned much with 15.6% indicating moderate while 2.2% reported very much. Most of the participants of the focus group interviews mentioned that they rate the community involvement in development in the community driven development as much and better than in other approaches they have experienced before.

**5.11 Community rating of their confidence to be involved in various stages of development:**

On how they rate their own and community confidence to get involved in various stages of a project in the community driven development approach compared to other development approaches, 71.1% said that this has greatly improved,

26.7% indicated that it has somewhat improved while 2.2% indicated it had remained the same as shown in figure 5. 4. Focus group interviews generated similar findings.

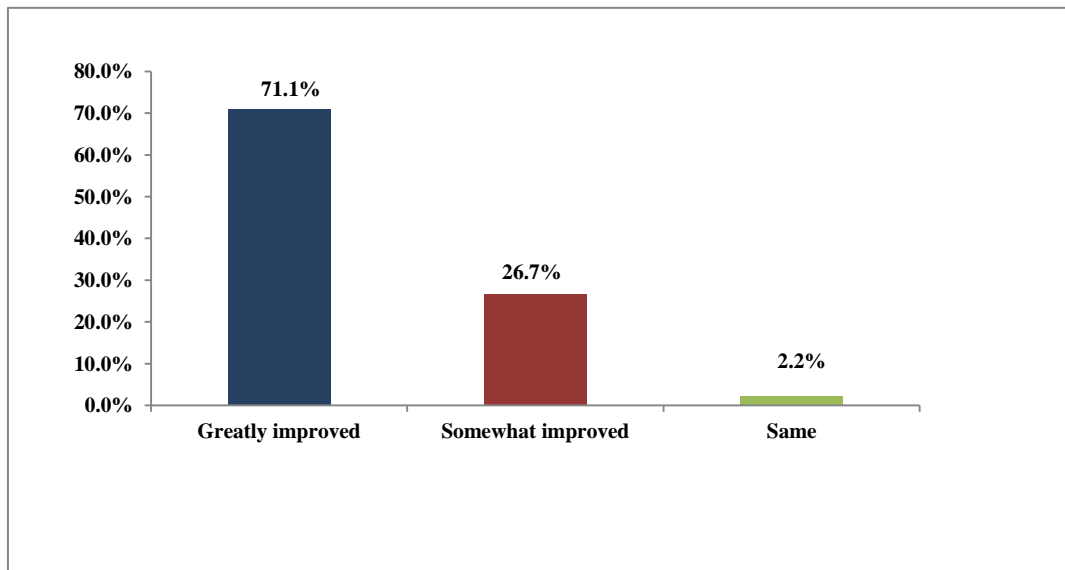


Fig. 5.4 Rating of community's confidence to get involved in development

## VI. DISCUSSION

Mansuri & Rao (2004) argue that the cornerstone of community-based development initiatives is the active involvement of members of a defined community in at least some or all stages of development projects. It is against this backdrop that this section seeks to discuss aspects of community involvement in development in the community driven development approach as established by the study findings.

It is crucial that most if not all segments of the community participate in all if not most of the stages of the project. The study established that the beneficiary community gets involved in most stages of development through community interest groups. It can therefore be deduced from the study that in the community driven development approach, the beneficiary community gets involved in the development process but the level of involvement in each stage of the project cycle varies and fluctuates.

For communities to utilize resources for project purposes, it is crucial that most if not all community members get involved in acquisition and control of project resources. It can be established from the study that community groups' members, followed by men, women, administrative leaders and local elites acquire resources although the government ministries and /funders still have control of resources once acquired.

In people and community driven development initiatives, all segments of the beneficiary community should be involved in identification of projects to be carried out in their communities. The study established that community groups' members, women, men local elites and administrative leaders respectively are involved while the youth and opinion leaders are not involved. In order for beneficiary community to own development processes, all segments of the society need to be involved in the identification of both projects and sub-projects. The fact that youth and opinion leaders are conspicuously left out in projects' identification negates the tenets and principles of inclusivity in people driven development initiatives.

The ability of all segments of the community to carry out and prioritize needs that will be addressed by development projects is key in people and community driven development approaches. As Paul (1987) argues, there ought to be a needs analysis by beneficiaries geared towards attempting to form a basis for designing a project to match community needs and capacities. The study found out that it is community group members, women, men, administrative leaders and opinion leaders respectively who were mainly involved in needs assessment. This still leaves out youth as key constituents of development.



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For project plans to represent the needs and views of the majority in the community, there is need for all segments of society to be equitably involved in the process of project planning. The study found out that it is mainly women, community groups, men, administrative leaders respectively who participated in project planning while opinion leaders, local elites and youth were least involved. This means that in the community driven development approach, planning is not inclusive thus disapproving the principle of inclusivity that is hyped as a tenet in the community driven development approach.

Participation of all the segments of the community in project implementation is one way through which communities own and contribute towards their development. The study established that it is mainly women followed by men, community groups' members, administrative leaders, local elites, opinion leaders and youth respectively who get involved in implementation of projects. It can therefore be deduced that in the community driven development approach, it is mainly women who are involved in the implementation stage, just like in conventional approaches where it is mainly women who implement projects through provision of manual labour, paid or voluntary and trainings (Bowen, 2007; Masanyiwa & Kinyashi, 2008).

All beneficiary community members should be involved in project monitoring since it is a crucial stage which entails taking stock of development inputs and processes as a right and a responsibility for all development stakeholders and constituents. The study found out that it is community groups' members followed by men, women, administrative leaders, opinion leaders, youth and local elites who were involved in project monitoring activities. This means that in the community driven development approach, all beneficiaries are not necessarily involved in project monitoring.

As with all other stages of a project cycle, it is crucial for majority of community members to take part in the evaluation of projects as a way of taking overall stock of process and activities, results and accrued benefits. The study established that community groups' members, men, local elites, women, administrative leaders participate in project evaluation while opinion leaders and youth were least involved in the evaluation stages in the community driven approaches, as is the case with the findings on the other stages. This indicates that segments of the community like the youth and opinion leaders are hardly involved in development projects' evaluations in the community driven development approach, an aspect that negates principles, imperatives and tenets of inclusivity in people driven development.

For development initiatives to be accepted and enlist involvement and participation of the beneficiary communities, it is imperative that the communities rate highly their involvement and confidence in the projects implemented. The study established that community rating of their involvement in development in the community driven approach to be much and it has somewhat improved compared to other approaches they have experienced before. This means the community driven development approach is appreciated by the beneficiaries.

## VII. CONCLUSION

It is evident from the study findings that as much as community involvement is a key parameter used to measure community participation in development, in the community driven development approach, it is mainly women who are involved in most stages of the project cycle while some segments of the community especially the youth and opinion leaders' involvement in the various stages of the project is low, denoting exclusion. This could be attributed to the fact that project activities also meet and respond to needs associated with women and that project activities have time and opportunity costs that are not consistent with men, youth and local elites' aspirations. Further, the fluctuating beneficiary community involvement in the various stages of the project cycle as established by the study also spells pseudo participation tendencies. This is because in the community driven development approach, beneficiary community involvement in all stages of the project cycle is considered a principle, fundamental and a key building block for empowerment, capacity building and sustainability. It can be concluded that in the community driven development, although most segments of the community feel they get involved in resource acquisition and utilization as well as in most of the stages of the project, there are still some missing links. Development practitioners and funders still have control over resource acquisition and utilization, and most of the stages of the project cycle. The implications of the study is that funders, development agencies, practitioners, stakeholders and proponents of participatory development approaches ought to device mechanisms of enlisting more beneficiary community involvement in development processes, discourses and activities as well as mainstreaming of community involvement in all the stages of the project cycle. Further, the



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element of inclusivity has to be fully mainstreamed into development processes and activities so that all segments of the community get involved without isolation of the traditionally isolated groups like the youth.

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