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## ASSESSMENT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES' PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN MUFINDI DISTRICT- IRINGA , TANZANIA

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**Abstract:** Despite participatory planning being given prominence in local government Acts No 7 and 8 of 1982, people centric development culture has not yet been institutionalized in rural Tanzania. This study is an endeavor to have an assessment of local communities' participation in Rural Development Planning in Mufindi District, Tanzania. A cross- sectional research design was adopted whereby purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain a sample of 72 respondents. Interview, Questionnaire and Observation methods were the main instruments used in data collection and the collected data such as; *Operational Procedures for Rural Participatory Planning and the Issues that Affect Community Participation* were analyzed by using SPSS. The study revealed several issues that affect the extent of participation of local people in development interventions including interference of politicians and bureaucratic. A powerful few customarily overshadow the powerless mass, the poor and the marginalized successfully block their meaningful integration in development interventions. Also the operational procedures of rural participatory planning were identified irrelevant to the extent that people's participation in development projects become minimal because of improper procedures used to identify those projects. The policy makers should enact the participation friendly guidelines as an important option for promoting and encouraging involvement of local beneficiaries in local development projects. In order to break through this unholy alliance and to place a culture of participatory practice at grassroots level in villages, the government in collaboration with Local Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) which are working closely with the poor and the disadvantaged have to create massive awareness program.

**Key words:** *Community participation, planning, rural development*

### 1.0. Introduction

Since 1970's scholars, development practitioners, donors as well as governments particularly those in developing countries, began to consider people's participation through decentralization as a new strategy for development. In a new paradigm, decentralization is regarded as means to achieve people's participation in development (Ahmed, 1987).

The decentralization as an ideal approach to rural and urban development encourages local initiatives in the development process by giving the people more power in decision making and involving them in the Planning, implementation, and evaluation process (Ngwilizi, 2002)



These local communities can better articulate their needs and demands and local government are at least in principle in a better position to meet those demands. Local government and communities can take many more decision on their own and adopt development policies for urban and rural areas to suit the specific need of the population for sustainable development (World Bank Report 2000 as cited by Kikula, 1999).

Through participation, a solid local knowledge base is used for development. Protagonists of community participation provide several key reasons for its necessity. Firstly, it is argued that it provides an equal opportunity to influence the decision making process, secondly, based on popular sovereignty, it ensures that the Government is sensitive to the needs of the people, thirdly, it counter acts the sense of powerlessness in the poor (Monyemangene, 1997).

There is a clear commitment by the government to the adoption of participatory planning as means of empowering people to determine their own destine of development.

The Tanzania Development vision 2025 provides national level guidance of development process. The vision 2025 clearly states that:-

*Deliberate efforts must be made to empower the people and catalyze their democrat and popular participation. The strategy should entail empowering local governments and communities and promoting broad based grassroots in mobilization of resources, knowledge and experience with a view to stimulating initiatives at all levels of society (URT, 1998).*

The Tanzania Government through its Local Government Reform of 1998 states that: -

*The local government will facilitate the participation of the people in deciding on matters affecting their lives, planning and executing development programmes in doing the local government authorities will be transparent and accountable to the people. This will be the basis for justifying their autonomy from undue central government interference (URT, 1998)*

In its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper the Government state that: -

*Communities will participate in planning implementation and monitoring community activities supported by government and other actors. Communities will also monitor quantity and quality of services delivered to them. Mechanism will be developed to enable communities to make leaders, local authorities and central government accountable to the people they serve. (URT, 2005)*

Despite various efforts made by the government on facilitating participation of local communities in planning and implementation of their development interventions, but yet these efforts have been partially attained and so the majority of rural priorities have been precluded as a result the lives of local people in Tanzania and Mufindi District in particular have been gradually changed.

## **2.0 Methodologies**

The study was conducted in Mufindi District, Iringa region, the choice of Mufindi district as an area of study based on its characteristics features regarding the presence of abundant natural



resources of which the selection has been made to map whether diversity impacts on the local people's realization of development thinking through participation or not.

Sample of 72 respondents was randomly selected for data collection whereby a cross-sectional design was conducted to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. Some of the qualitative data were generated through in-depth interview using checklist. The study involved in-depth interview with key informants including; government official from the village to District level including; 6 VEOs, 6 Village Chairpersons, 12 Vitongoji Chairmen, 1 DPO, 1 DALDO, 1 DT and 1 DEO as a representative. The key informants were purposively included in this study so as to get insight understanding of the Local Communities' Participation in Rural Development Planning. Quantitative data were analyzed using International Business Machines-Statistical Package of Social Science (IBM-SPSS. 20.0) software programme to produce descriptive statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data were subjected to content analysis to present peoples 'opinion on the Local Communities' Participation in Rural Development Planning in Mufindi District.

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Information presented in Table 1 below indicates that 42 (58.3%) respondents were males and 30 (41.7%) respondents were females. This implies that women's participation in planning process is poor compared to their counterpart men. Most of respondents (37%) involved in this study were in the age range between 46 years and above. About 79.2% of the respondents had primary level of education while few had secondary, college and non-formal education. Furthermore, marital status of respondents' shows that majority of respondents were married that accounted for 54%. The results from table 1 also demonstrate that the two groups of respondents the one which gets the amount bellow 100,000 Tshs and the other which get a monthly amount of income between 200,000 and 300,000 Tshs were the majority.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents n= 72**

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	30	41.7
Male	42	58.3
<b>Age</b>		
18 - 25	7	10
26 - 35	26	36
36 - 45	12	17
46 and above	27	37
<b>Education Level</b>		
No formal education	7	9.7
Primary education	57	79.2
Secondary education	6	8.3
College education	2	2.8



<b>Source of income per month (in Tshs)</b>		
Below 100,000	20	27.8
Between 100,000 – 200,000	17	23.6
Between 200000 – 300,000	20	27.8
Between 300000 – 400,000	6	8.3
400,000 and above	9	12.5

### 3.2 Operational Procedures for Rural Participatory Planning.

In the present study, the researchers intended to assess the Local Communities participation in Rural Development Planning in Mufindi District. In order to materialize this, the researchers initially wanted to explore the relevance of procedures used for rural participatory planning. More over respondents were asked to explain which in this regard, Mechanisms used to invite people to meetings and Procedures Used to Select the Development Projects in the past twelve months.

**Table 2 Operational Procedures for Rural Participatory Planning**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Attributes</b>		
<b>Mechanisms Used to Invite People to Meetings</b>		
Notified by Kitongoji chairman	24	33
Writing Posters	20	27.8
Announcements in mosques/Churches	19	26.4
don't know	9	12.5
<b>Procedures Used to Select the Development Projects</b>		
Through Village meetings	21	29.2
Through village leaders	44	61.1
Through prioritizing the needs	7	9.7

Relevance of operational procedures for rural participatory planning was assessed through examining how invitations to meetings were made. Findings in Table 2 above reveal that there different ways used by village leaders to inform village dwellers about the meetings to be held. Thus 20 (27.8%) of respondents said writing posters was among the ways used to pre- inform them about the meeting, 24 (33.3%) respondents said that they were being notified by Kitongoji chairmen, 19 (26.4%) said they were getting invitation of village meetings through announcements provided in mosques and churches and 9 (12.5%) of respondents they don't know any going on issues regarding to village meeting. The innovative findings to this study reveal that, poor mechanism used to invite people to attend meetings could contribute to poor attendance. For instance, when people are invited to meetings through announcements provided in the Churches and mosques it means those who do not attend either of the worship house will obvious not adhere to the intended invitations. These findings concur with that of Katabalo (2011) who conducted a research on An Assessment of the Performance in Good Governance of



Village Government in Misenyi District. According to him the majority of Villagers were not attending Village meetings because of the ways used to invite them. According to the opinion in the present paper, the appropriate way of inviting people to meeting is through notifying by Kitongoji chairmen. This is because he/she can do so by visiting a house by house.

Similarly, findings in Table 2 above show that 21(29.2) of respondents said projects are identified in village meetings, 44 (61.1%) respondents said projects are identified by village leaders and only 7 (9.7%) of respondents said projects are identified by prioritizing the needs of the villages.

According to the findings in Table 2 above one can conclude that villagers' ideas and priorities have been ignored. This observation goes in line with that of Kagosi *et al.* 2010 as cited in Tanzania Journal of Development Studies whereby their study on Participatory Irrigation Management and Food Security in Semi-Arid Areas of Tanzania, revealed minimal participation of farmers during planning and designing stage was attributed to top down mindset in which farmers were used to receiving external ideas. Furthermore, some district staff and irrigation engineers ignored farmers' opinions.

### 3.3 Issues that Affect Community Participation in Development Interventions

The present sub-section is devoted to analyze some of possible factors that may have been affecting and arguably encumbering to some extent the effective participation of community people in development activities in the grassroots level.

**Table 3 Issues that Affect Community Participation in Development Interventions**

Attributes	F	%
<b>Respondents' Perception on Village Revenue Expenditure</b>		
To pay allowance for village leaders	24	33
To pay for development projects	20	27.8
The village leaders use money for their own benefits	19	26.4
<b>Political and Bureaucratic Leaders in Planning and Implementation of Development Interventions</b>		
High influence	28	38.9
Moderate influence	25	34.7
No any influence	19	26.4

Table 3 above depicts that 28 (38.9%) respondents' perception on the village revenue were used to pay allowances to village leaders, 20 (27.8%) respondents said the funds were used to pay for development projects and 24 (33.3%) said the funds of the village were used by village leaders for their own benefits. From perception of majority of respondents who participated in this study, findings indicate that a big amount of village revenues is used by village leaders in both allowances and their own benefits. This implies that there is both embezzlement and misallocation of village revenues.



Similarly the findings in Table 3 above, 28 (38.9%) of respondents said there is high influence of political and bureaucratic leaders on planning and implementation of development interventions, 25 (34.7%) of respondents said there were moderate influence of political and bureaucratic on planning and implementation of development interventions and 19 (26%) of respondents said there were no any influence of political parties on planning and implementation of development interventions.

Moreover, some of village leaders from both bureaucrat’s categories like VEO and elected representatives Village Chairmen, interviewed in the study mentioned that during project selection/ planning in their respective villages, they had to face to and adjust with the request or influence of local political leaders especially from Ward Councillors and ruling party.

According to these findings it seems that politics has a great influence on planning and implementation of village development plans. The study conducted by Kaole (2011) on the Value addition of Community Participation in Promoting Educational Infrastructure in Community Secondary Schools in Kilombero District, was revealed that community members are sometimes willing to participate through contributing but once politicians are persuading them not to contribute because of the claim that government provides a lot of money for constructions of schools and other social services so there is no need for them to contribute.

### 3.4 Community Awareness on who is Responsible for Village Development

Table no 4 highlights the respondents’ perceptions when they were asked to tell who was responsible to their development.

**Table 4 Community Awareness on who is Responsible for Village Development**

Attributes	F	%
<b>Respondents Perception on the Responsibility to Village Development</b>		
Villagers	21	29.2
Government	27	37.5
Villagers plus government	14	19.4
I don't know	10	13.9

Table 4 above reveal that 21 (29.2%) of respondents perceive that, the responsible body for the village development are the villagers themselves, 27 (37.5%) of respondents said that Government is one which is responsible to the village development, 14 (19%) of respondents said that both villagers and government are responsible to village development and 10 (13.9%) of respondents were not knowing who was responsible for the village development.

Similarly findings above continue to reveal that only 19.4% of respondents are aware that the issue of village development is impossible without joining the efforts of both the government and the villagers. It is obvious that any development plan must involve both government and community who are the beneficiaries of the particular intervention, but it is unfortunately that the majority of the villagers are either perceiving that the responsibility to their development is carried by the either government or villagers themselves of which it is wrong perception. This



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may mean that the issue of participation is a voluntary issue and if someone is required to participate then he/she has to do so in payment basis.

#### **4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study concluded that most of the Local Communities in Mufindi were partially involved in planning the issues regarding to their Development, in so doing most of the community felt needs are not considered during Development project planning stage. The policy makers should enact the participation friendly guidelines as an important option for promoting and encouraging involvement of local beneficiaries in planning in the issues relating to their development issues. The collaboration with Local Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) which are working closely with the poor and disadvantaged groups have to create massive awareness program like workshops and seminars which will enable the local communities to be aware of their position in planning their development issues. Moreover, the government should enact laws and guidelines which will be preventing Bureaucratic and Political leaders who regularly interfering the local communities' development planning process to favor their own interests.



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