



## **Collective Action in Community Driven Development: Who acts in what activities and in which stages?**

**Rebecca Waweru**

*Lecturer, Dept. of Development Studies, St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya*

### **Abstract**

*The aim of the study was to establish if there is collective action by beneficiary community in the community driven development approach. The study design was a descriptive ex-post facto cross-sectional survey which used a non-random sampling technique and both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study population was 2304 members of community interest groups. Ninety (N-90) individual and five (5) focus group interviews (N-47) were conducted to generate primary data, collected using individual questionnaires and interview schedules respectively. The study established that although communities have the option of acting collectively in the community driven development approach, the main project activities in which they participate collectively in are needs assessment through participatory rural appraisal (PRA), planning and implementation while low collective action was reported in project, identification, monitoring and evaluation. Further, youth and individuals outside organised community groups hardly act collectively with other development constituents. It can be concluded that collective action as an attribute, ideal and tenet of community driven development is not always assured since there is systematic isolation of segments of community including persons who are not members of organized groups. Implications of study findings are that development practitioners/policy makers ought to ensure that they involve individuals in collective project activities and not only work with people in groups since some individuals in project areas may not necessarily belong to organized groups and might therefore miss out as development constituents.*

**Keywords:** *Community, Driven, Development, Approach, Collective Action, Participation, Beneficiary*

---

**1. Introduction:** Community and integrated rural development are ideas that have been tried in the past but with disappointing results (World Bank, 2000). Over the years, various development approaches have emerged, including community based and driven development. The principle of inclusivity and collective action in development processes is an inalienable fundamental of people centered, based and driven development approaches. Community development that does not embrace inclusivity as a foundational building block tends to stifle true participation and negates the ideals of community ownership of activities and projects.

Community driven development (CDD) is an approach premised on control of development processes by beneficiary communities including their ability to act collectively to spin and drive the development agenda. The main medium through which community driven development projects achieve their outcomes is by mainstreaming participatory processes (King et al., 2010). The choice of development projects in the community driven development approach is community based, premised on inclusion of all community members in development discourses and project processes, including the participation of poor and the traditionally marginalised groups like women and youth (Carsey et al., 2011).

Community driven development approach is based on an assumption and principle of collective action by beneficiary community in development activities and processes, including participation of the traditionally marginalized groups like women, the youth, individuals who are not necessarily members of organised groups and the "poor of the poorest". Collective action as a parameter that

measures beneficiary community participation includes assessing communities' participation in the development processes and project lifecycle i.e. project identification, needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Collective action is a crucial avenue through which communities can participate in development. Collective action ensures that everybody's ideas and needs in the community are catered for and that everybody has an opportunity to make contribution and share responsibility in development processes. Collective action ensures that everybody comes on board, gives their time and energy in development, and reaps the benefits accrued thereof. Through collective action, beneficiary communities become real resources, protagonists and experts in their development processes.

**2. Literature Review:** Collective action in development processes is a key ideal in people centered and community driven development initiatives. Collective action ensures that all segments of the community are partakers of development projects and that they reap any resultant benefits.

Vijayendra and Ana (2005) observe that one key tenet of community driven development approach is its capacity to improve beneficiary community collective action in development. Mansuri and Rao (2004) note that development projects with genuine and authentic participatory elements increase the overall effectiveness particularly in building capacity for collective action. William and Bhatnagar (1992:178) further argue that, "people act in consent, as members of groups or communities, to advice, decide, or act on issues which can best be solved through collective action". Olukotun (2008) observes that through participation, the community develops skills for collective action, maintenance and sustainability. However, most development activities in the traditional and top-down approaches development processes are characterized by low or no collective action by all segments of the community including the marginalised, youth, women and the poorest of all, an aspect community driven development is premised to be anchored on.

Heinrich and Lopez (2007) note that in the conventional and traditional development approaches, activities and processes are usually dominated by a relatively small group of privileged, well-off or better educated individuals in the community who "benevolently capture" these processes and direct them in ways that do not benefit the beneficiary community. Rigon (2011) further underscores that occasionally, elites learn how to manage the discourse of participation and its language, and are able to exploit these skills to gain (or maintain) privileged access to development resources, systemically isolating majority of community members, including the traditionally isolated groups. The elite appoint themselves as representatives of the community and become intermediaries between project officials and beneficiaries, resulting to isolation of the traditionally marginalised groups in communities.

Mulwa (2008a, 2008b) stresses that when communities act collectively in the development process in the conventional approaches, it is usually superficial, with the local elites hijacking the process and the development agents using them to justify the process as participatory. Further, external agencies possess "development wisdom" and experts manage development processes without including beneficiary communities thus systematically isolating communities in the process, resulting to communities not being involved.

Royal Danish Embassy, Kenya (2008) in a study on service delivery in Kenya found out that the quality of participation does not seem to match the quantity in terms of institutional setup. The study established that 59% of all the respondents in the user survey had never attended a community meeting, while some reported forced participation. This is a typical characteristic of traditional and top-down community development approaches' lack of collective action.

The above literature therefore underscores the importance of collective action in development processes and discourses as well as indicating that there exists glaring gaps between theory and practice especially in the traditional, conventional top down development approaches. It is upon such assumptions that the community driven development tends to inculcate collective action of the beneficiary communities as a crucial ingredient in development processes.

**3. Study Objective:** The study objective was to, among other objectives, establish if there is collective action by the beneficiary community as a parameter of participation in the community driven development approach. The variables to assess collective action that the study sought to assess were project identification, needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, who

participates in what activities and how community rates itself and their confidence to act collectively in the community driven development processes.

**4. Study Site, Design, Sample Size and Methods:** 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 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 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. Data is presented in the results/findings section in form of tables and a figure.

**5. Results:** The findings presented in this section are derived from the socio-demographic information and questions that sought to assess collective action in project activities, the project activities in which communities act collectively and description of community's collectively action in project activities including project identification, needs assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, who acts collectively in project activities, how the beneficiary community rates its collective action in projects as well as their rating of their confidence to act collectively in the community driven development approach. The respondents were required to give a yes or no for each response to each option and yes response was taken to be the highest percentage.

**5.1 Socio-demographic information:** 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 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 Communities collective participation in project activities in the community driven approach**  
The study sought to find out if communities collectively participate in the project activities in the community driven development approach. 98.9% of the respondents said yes while 1.1% said no. From the focus group interviews a participant reported this,

*'All the community members are open to get involved in the collective activities like meetings but the youth don't like to take part in development'*-Community Interest Group member.

**5.3 Activities communities collectively participate in:** On which project activities communities collectively participate in, 98.9% of the participants indicated needs assessment/appraisal/PRA, 77.8% in planning, and implementation at 60.0%. The activities which were reported to be least collectively participated in were evaluation at 2.2%, monitoring at 25.6% and project identification at 32.2% as presented in table 1. From the focus group interviews, there was reported collective action

especially in needs assessment (PRA), planning and implementation but not much in monitoring and evaluation.

**Table 1. Activities communities collectively participate in**

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Project identification	67.8	32.2	100.0
Needs assessment/appraisal/PRA	1.1	98.9	100.0
Planning	22.2	77.8	100.0
Implementation	40.0	60.0	100.0
Monitoring	74.4	25.6	100.0
Evaluation	97.8	2.2	100.0

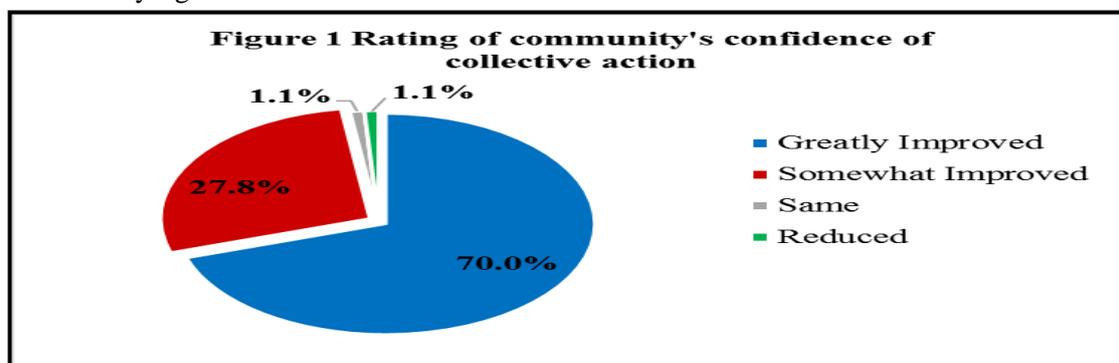
**5.4 Description of study participants and community collective action:** Asked to describe their own collective action and that of the community, all the respondents (100%) indicated it was voluntary.

**5.5 Who else in the community participates collectively:** About who else acts collectively, all the respondents mentioned community group members at 100%, followed by administrative leaders at 86.7%, local elites at 81.1% while individuals were mentioned at 75.6%, with opinion leaders mentioned as the least at 62.2% as shown in table 2. Majority of the focus group interviews reported that mainly community groups/community interest groups participate in the community driven development approach. Opinion leaders and individuals were rated least.

**Table 2. Who else in the community participates collectively**

Category	No	Yes	Total
	%	%	%
Individuals	24.4	75.6	100.0
Community group members	0.0	100.0	100.0
Opinion leaders	37.8	62.2	100.0
Administrative leaders	13.3	86.7	100.0
Local elites	18.9	81.1	100.0

**5.6 Community rating of collective action and its confidence to act collectively:** Regarding how the community rates its collective action in the community driven development approach. 86.7% of the respondents mentioned much, followed by moderate at 13.3%. On the question of how they rated their and local community’s confidence to act collectively in the community driven development approach compared to others, 70.0% indicated it had greatly improved followed by somewhat improved at 27.8%. The least mentioned response were same and reduced, both at 1.1% as demonstrated by figure 1.



**Figure 1: Rating of community’s confidence for collective action**

**6. Discussion:** For projects to have the support and participation of all segments, it is crucial that there is collective action that enables beneficiary communities to participate in development activities and discourses. Vijayendra and Ana (2005) argue that collective action leads to high degree of social cohesion for the common good. The study found out that overall, communities collectively participated in the project. This means that the community driven development approach gives opportunity to all people including the traditionally marginalized groups like the poorest of all, youth and women to take part in development but youth do not participate for reasons that could not be established by this study.

Collective action in the entire project cycle is crucial to sustained participation of beneficiary community in development. Beneficiary communities are said to have participated in development processes if this happens in all stages of project life. This creates ownership and responsibility taking among project constituents. From the study findings, it is evident that needs assessment/appraisal/PRA followed by planning, and implementation had highest collective action respectively while evaluation, monitoring and project identification received the least collective action. The findings therefore indicate that in the community driven development approach, collective action as a parameter of participation fluctuates in the various stages of the project cycle, reducing drastically in the monitoring and evaluation stages.

In people and community driven development initiatives, it is important that beneficiary community members act collectively on a voluntary, self-will basis. It is evident from the study that in the community driven development approach, communities' collective action is voluntary. Kariuki and Place (2005), in a study in Central Kenya highlands, observed a similar trend which indicates that participation in collective action is often voluntary, usually through organised structures like community groups, coupled with norms which regulate functioning of the groups. It can therefore be deduced from the study findings that collective participation in the community driven development approach is purely voluntary.

It is paramount that in community driven development, all segments of the community participate in development activities whether they are in organized groups or not. The action and input of everyone in the community in development activities and processes matters. The study findings indicate that it is mainly community group members, administrative leaders and local elites who were said to be most active while youth, opinion leaders and individuals were considered to be least active. It can be argued from the study that only people in organised groups act collectively in development in the community driven development approach while individuals and youth conspicuously miss out. Vijayendra and Ana (2005) make similar observations about teenagers and youth (men and women in their twenties) being disengaged from development processes in their community. Kariuki and Place (2005) further observe that some people who may not belong to any organised groups choose to participate in collective action through ad hoc activities and not through systematic engagement.

For community collective action to be considered ideal, it is important that beneficiary communities rate their participation in development processes highly. The study established that the community rates its collective action as much in the community driven development approach. This implies that in the community driven development approach, the beneficiary communities feel they highly act collectively as opposed to other development approaches where collective action is minimal.

Beneficiary community members must have confidence to act collectively for them to perceive they act collectively in development activities. It is evident from the study that majority of the community members felt that their collective action in the community driven development has greatly improved compared to other development approaches. This indicates that in the community driven development approach, there is increased collective action by beneficiary communities in development.

**7. Conclusion:** It can be concluded that in the community driven development approach, although communities have the option of acting collectively, the main project activities in which they act collectively are needs assessment through participatory rural appraisal (PRA), planning and implementation while there is low collective action in project, identification, monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, as much as all segments of the community ought to act collectively as prescribed in the principle of inclusivity in people and community driven development approaches,

youth and individuals outside organized community groups hardly act collectively with other development constituents. Equally, as observed by the study participants who rated their collective action as much and their confidence to act collectively as greatly improved compared to other development approaches, it is important that the larger development constituents resonate with collective action as an assumption, principle and fundamental, which form crucial building blocks of community driven development.

### References:

- [1] Carsey, R et al., (2011), *Reshaping Institutions: Evidence on External Aid and Local Collective Action*, National Bureau of Economic Research, UK
- [2] Heinrich, C and Lopez, Y (2007), *Does Community Participation Produce Dividends In Social Investment Projects*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, available at: [http://elibrary.worldbank.org/docserver/download/9780821321362.pdf?expires=1299482879&id=id&accname=ic\\_id22396261&checksum=5E552F4A5DCA20C48902BDFE6A7908C8](http://elibrary.worldbank.org/docserver/download/9780821321362.pdf?expires=1299482879&id=id&accname=ic_id22396261&checksum=5E552F4A5DCA20C48902BDFE6A7908C8) (accessed 15 December 2014)
- [3] Kariuki, G. and Place, F. (2005), *Initiatives For Rural Development Through Collective Action: The Case Of Household Participation in Group Activities in The Highlands of Central Kenya*, IFPRI, Washington
- [4] King, E et al., (2010), *Interventions To Promote Social Cohesion In Sub Saharan Africa*, 3ie , USA
- [5] Mansuri, G. and Rao, V. (2004) *Community Based and Driven Development: A Critical Review*, World Bank, Washington
- [6] Mulwa, F. (2008 a) *Demystifying Participatory Community Development, Revised Edition*, Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi
- [7] Mulwa, F. (2008 b), *Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation of Community Projects, Community Based Projects Monitoring, Qualitative Impact Assessment, and People-Friendly Evaluation Methods* (Revised Edition), Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi
- [8] Olukotun , G. (2008) “Achieving Project Sustainability Through Community Participation”, *Journal of Social Sciences* Vol 17(1), pp 21-29, available at: <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JSS/JSS-17-0-000-000-2008-Web/JSS-17-1-001-08-Abst-Text/JSS-17-1-021-08-598-Olukotun-G-A/JSS-17-1-021-08-598-Olukotun-G-A-Tt.pdf> (accessed 20 November 2014)
- [9] Rigon, A. (2011), *Rethinking Development In An Age of Scarcity and Uncertainty*: npd
- [10] Royal Danish Embassy, Kenya. (2008), *Community Participation and Service Delivery A Study Of Strategies And Mechanisms For Participation In Local-Level Planning And Service Delivery In Kenya Nairobi*: Kenya, Royal Danish Embassy
- [11] Vijayendra, R. and Ana, I. (2005), “The Social Impact of Social Funds in Jamaica: A ‘Participatory Econometric ’Analysis of Targeting, Collective Action, and Participation in Community-Driven Development”, *The Journal of Development Studies*, 41(5), pp 788-838
- [12]William, A. and Bhatnagar, B. (Eds) (1992), *Participatory Development And The World Bank, Potential Directions For Change*, World Bank Discussion Papers, 183, World Bank, Washington
- [13] World Bank. (2000), *The Community Driven Development Approach In The Africa Region: A Vision Of Poverty Reduction Through Empowerment*, World Bank, Washington