

**ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINING RURAL
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGER STATE: A STUDY OF WARD DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS IN RIJAU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA**

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Abstract

The Ward Development Project (WDP) is a program initiated by the Government of Niger State which adopted a community driven development version of participatory development project execution in order to achieve effectiveness in infrastructure development to improve the living standards of people at grassroots in the State. This study aimed at exploring the role of community participation in sustainable rural development in Rijau Local Government Area (LGA). Predicated on the popular Top-Down Approach which is built on the assumption that policies are always made by policymakers and implemented by mechanisms set up by the policymakers. The research adopted a survey method; a sample of 384 is taken to represent the population of the study area using the Cochran model of sample determination. The study utilizes questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion (FGD) as instruments for data collection, while frequencies, percentages and means (X) were used to take decisions in the study. Findings from the study show that community participation in the implementation of the WDP was low due to denial of local people by the ward development project committees in Rijau LGA; local peoples' contribution in securing and maintaining projects executed through the ward development project was insignificant due to lack of community participation in Rijau LGA. The study therefore recommends that government should support the community to ensure a strong commitment to participation in development projects, by truly adopting the bottom-up approach to development; orientate its mechanism for implementation to the participatory approach and to practically involve the community in decision making processes during the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the project.

Keywords: Community Participation, Ward Development Projects, Sustainability, Top-Down, Rural Development.

Introduction

The Government of Niger State initiated a policy called Ward Development Project (WDP) in 2008 which adopted a Community Driven Development (CDD) version of participatory development project execution in order to achieve effectiveness in infrastructure development to improve the living standards of people at grassroots in the State. Designed to, among other things, address the dearth of

infrastructure especially in rural areas for rural development in the state, the program executed projects across different sectors ranging from education, health, road infrastructure, power, water etc in all electoral wards across Niger State. The objectives of the program was to; actualize participatory democracy through peoples' popular participation in project executions after needs assessment; enthronement of bottom-up approach to rural development; actualize participatory decision making by the people on matters concerning them; and letting the people decide what they need by themselves and actively participate in its execution, and ownership. To achieve these objectives, the state government enacted the ward development project law in April 2009 and its subsequent amendments in November 2009 and March 2012 in order to ensure proper implementation.

The Ministry for Local Government, Community Development and Chieftaincy Affairs was charged with the implementation of the program through the Directorate of ward development project. At Local Government Levels, there were Local Government Project Advisory and Monitoring Committees (LGPAMCs) saddled with the task of approving and disbursing funds for project execution, while at the ward levels, there were Ward Development Projects Committees (WDPCs) responsible for the execution of ward projects. The sum of one million naira (#1,000,000.00) was disbursed monthly to each of the 274 electoral wards in the state for the implementation of the program through project execution.

The uniqueness of the WDP lies in its adoption of participatory method which is achieved through people-centered bottom-up approach. This means the people who are beneficiaries of the program are actively and genuinely involved in the process of initiating, planning, monitoring and more importantly executing projects and evaluating them in their communities. However, this was not achieved as local people were not actively and genuinely involved through the processes of implementing the WDP in the state. Whether it is as a result of denial from the initiators of the project or refusal from the people that resulted to lack of participation can be determined through investigation. This study therefore aims at exploring the role of community participation in sustainable rural development which the Ward Development Project objected to achieve through execution of projects in Rijau LGA, with specific objectives to;

- i. Investigate the factor(s) responsible for the low level of community participation in the implementation of the ward development project in Rijau LGA.
- ii. Examine the local peoples' contribution in securing and maintaining projects executed through the ward development project in Rijau LGA.

The research therefore asks the following questions;

- i. What was responsible for the low level of community participation in the implementation of ward development projects in Rijau LGA?
- ii. What was the local peoples' contribution in securing and maintaining projects executed through the ward development projects in Rijau LGA?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Community Participation

The World Bank cited in Mansuri and Rao (2004) describes community participation as the active involvement of a defined community in at least some aspects of project design and implementation. According to the article, participation is expected to lead to better designed projects, better targeted benefits and more cost-effective and timely delivery of project inputs. Simanowits (1997) defines community participation as something that happens in relation to something else. He mentions that, in most development projects, community participation relates to the involvement of a community in externally initiated development interventions. In this case, an external body initiates a project and the community participates. Community participation is essential for concrete development in rural areas. Theron (2005) views community participation as a process to give communities an opportunity to determine their own destination. This means that provision of grassroots level with abilities, which could enable them to negotiate development delivery systems and be able to take informed decisions, in terms of their development needs and priorities (Theron, 2005). Myers and Hirsch (1999) view community participation as an active process by which client groups or beneficiaries influence the direction and

execution of the development program with a view of enhancing their well-being in terms of income, person growth, self-reliance, spiritual development and values they cherish.

According to Lyons et al (2001), community participation has become more and more important as a means of empowering the community and making physical improvements more sustainable. In a case where improvements are in a form of a building such as for example schools, health and shopping centers, the community will have to take care of that building and they will only do so if they were involved at the decision-making stage.

Involving community in rural development projects has the potential to boost their livelihoods. Oakley and Marsden (1984) states that community participation in the context of rural development is not concerned in the first instance with how to achieve a totally participatory society but it is more concerned with how to bring about some rural sector on the part of those who depend on that sector for a livelihood.

Leisner (1974) in Lombard (1992) contends that the purpose of community participation is to create opportunities for the community to take part in planning and policy making, allocation and distribution of resources and management of services. By allowing community to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of rural development projects, local experience and knowledge could be incorporated in rural development projects enhancing not only the success of these projects, but commitment to them (Burkley, 1993)

The nature of community participation depends to a great extent on the nature of organization and mobilization at the grassroots level as well as the programmatic purpose of such participation. As such, community participation is quite clearly not an unproblematic engagement of contesting power relations. On the contrary, community participation is often driven by specific socio-economic goals that seek to ensure a better life for all, especially for those who have historically been marginalized during the successive colonial regimes.

Oakley et al. (1991) indicate that, the important issue to stress is that participation, whatever form or direction it might take, cannot be regarded simply as some kind of physical or tangible input into development project. Any form of participation occurs within a particular context and will be influenced by the economic and social forces that mould that context.

Based on the above definitions, it can be concluded that community participation is the involvement of the community in all stages of development projects affecting them and it also involves the establishment of decision making bodies that are represented by and accessible to the local communities. In relation to this study, the government of Niger state in its initiative established the ward development project committees (WDPCs) in all electoral wards who represented and were accessible to the local communities for the effective execution of projects which are aimed at enhancing rural development in Rijau LGA.

Rural Development

The term rural development implies a process of increasing productivity and improving standards of living in rural areas. "Rural" is a location constituting a space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only small patches of the landscapes, most of which are dominated by fields, pastures, woods, water, mountains and deserts (Ashley & Maxwell, 2001). Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group- the rural poor. It involves extending the benefit of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, 1975). The Ward Development Project refers to rural development as a dimension concept that focuses not only on poverty alleviation, but also on improving rural environment. Kakumba & Nsingo (2008) state that rural development is used in schemes aimed at improving the countryside or peripheral areas, with characteristics of an agrarian population. Okiy (2005) observes that rural development is a basis for economic development and information is an important ingredient in the development process. People in rural areas whether literate or not should have access to any kind of information which will help them to become capable and productive in their social and political obligation, and to become better informed

citizens generally. Rural development is a vital component in fighting poverty and eradicating dependency on communities.

In this study, rural development is seen as any strategy, plan, policy or program aimed at improving the living standards of people and environmental condition of the rural areas in Rijau LGA.

Empirical Review

Literature on community participation is growing as scholars are developing interest in the area because of its importance in rural development. Onye (2016) observes that community participation is a fundamental determinant of project sustainability which can lead to sustainable rural development. This assertion is further confirmed by Patrick et al (2016) where they reveal a significant positive and strong relationship between community participation and rural development in Bushenyi District, Uganda. This implies that the more local people participate in community development efforts, the higher the level of rural development is experienced. Similarly, Laah et al (2014) attribute the non-sustainability of rural infrastructure in Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau state to the low level of participation. That is, since the people did not participate in the process of executing those infrastructures, they are not sustained. In another development, Roseline et al (2013) concludes that lack of community participation was among the principal factors responsible for the non-sustainability of LEEMP projects in Enugu state. Oni (2015) submits that the ineffectiveness of rural development in Nigeria is associated with lack of community participation.

There are different factors responsible for community participation or lack of it. Lyons et al (2016) believes that there is a significant link between psychological well-being and participation. That is, only people in their right frame of mind participate in activities that benefit them. Samah & Ndaaji (2014) argue that level of income determines the level of community participation in women self-help groups. The argument here is that there is a positive relationship between level of income and community participation. Kimengsi et al (2016) show that community participation in majority of projects in Central Ejagham, Cameroon is determined by financial and technical support. Here, community participation is determined largely by the amount of support the government or initiators of projects is willing to commit. In their own study, Muhammad et al (2011) maintain that level of education is one of the leading factors influencing community participation in Fadama II project in Niger state. Here also, the study establishes positive relationship between level of education and community participation. Kimani & Kombo (2011) submit that socio-economic factors such as marital status, level and sources of income impacted on community participation in Kiambu District, Kenya. While agreeing with Samah & Ndaaji (2014) that level of income determines community participation, they add that marital status also determines community participation where they find that married individuals participate more than singles. Brown & Wocha (2017); Ezenwa (2017) show the importance of ward committees in information giving and awareness creation about projects and the relevance of such information in improving community participation in Abia/Odua LGA in Rivers State and Ota LGA in Ogun State. Both studies submit that creation of ward committees is vital in sensitizing the people and creating the needed awareness about projects. Awareness is therefore central to community participation.

The importance of community participation cannot be over emphasized. Danladi & Adefila (2014) argue that community participation is recognized by Self-Help groups in Paikoro LGA, Niger state as an instrument for effective and sustainable development at grassroots. The study argues that community participation sustains rural development. Emmanuel et al (2014) submit that Self-Help has helped to uncover practical development plans and encouraged participation of rural community towards infrastructure provision in Kaiama LGA, Kwara State. This means self-help groups identified community participation as a viable instrument in rural development, therefore encouraged the rural dwellers to engage in it. In their submission, Adetona & Oladeinde (2013) argue that despite the expression of dissatisfaction with Self-Help projects by community members in Irepodun LGA, Kwara State, the projects improve the living standards of the people in the area. The study proved empirically that rural development is enhanced through community participation. Ekong & Utuk (2014) submit that NGOs have a central role to play in ensuring participatory development process takes place for rapid

development of rural areas. The study emphasizes the role of NGOs in enthroning community participation which can bring about rapid rural development. Shuaibu (2014) investigates the level of contributions community based organizations (CBOs) receive from government in their efforts to develop rural communities in Zungeru, Niger State. He concludes that the contribution from government has been marginally low as very little impact is recorded in terms of financial, technical and material assistance from the State government.

However, despite the importance of community participation in rural development, it is disregarded in many projects. Otinche (2015) remarks that the ward development project in Niger state failed as a result of corruption, lack of political will and also lack of community participation. This position is reechoed by Shehu (2015) where he submits that, in the implementation of the WDP, community participation was not enthroned. Some argue that, it is as a result of denial from the government and other instruments (like ward committees) created to help in the implementation of the projects, that community members were not actively and genuinely participated. Bahuguna & Pandey (2016), show appreciable but insignificant level of participation of local community dwellers in the management of MNREGA in Garhwal Uttarakhand, Norther India. The study submits that local people were not allowed to take full responsibility of project meant to benefit them. Chukwuma (2016) argues that community participation in the development and management of rural water supply scheme in Enugu State was lacking due to denial from the initiators of the scheme. Here also, rural community members were denied from participating actively in rural water scheme by the government. Tjahjono etal (2014) find that local community dwellers in Tulungagun, East Java, Indonesia are denied of participation by project initiators.

From the review of previous works, the gaps identified are scope and conceptual. This is because all the studies seen and reviewed are conducted outside Rijau LGA and the findings may not be generalized in wider perspectives. Also, conceptual gap is the way the variables were defined by some previous research scholars as observed in the literature is different from this study conceptualization. Thus, this study is unique and intends to contribute to knowledge by investigating the role of community participation in sustaining rural development in Niger State with specific focus on WDP in Rijau LGA.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the top-down approach as its theoretical framework. The top-down approach was first developed by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) and Mazmanien and Sabatier (1983). According to Matland (1995), the top-down approach “the starting point is the authoritative decision; as the name implies, centrally located actors are seen as most relevant to producing the desired effect” (p. 146). The main actors are regarded to be the decision-makers who are responsible to formulate an efficient statute which suits to the kind of existing problem. To increase the level of efficiency, top-down theorists thus demand a clear and consistent statement of the policy goals, a minimization of the number of involved actors, a limitation of the extent of change necessary and to find an institution which supports the point of view of the policy makers in order to guarantee that the implementers sympathize with the new statute. The approach is 'policy centered' and represents the policymaker's views. A vital point is the policymaker's capability to exercise control over the environment and implementers (Younis & Davidson, 1990). Van Meter & Van Horn (1975) and Mazmanian & Sabatier (1978) see implementation as concerned with the degree to which the actions of implementing officials and target groups coincide with the goals embodied in an authoritative decision. Pressman & Wildavsky (1973) discuss the extent to which successful implementation depends upon linkages between different organizations and departments at local level. Berman (1978) offer recommendations to policymakers about effective implementation. The top-down perspective exhibits a strong desire for 'generalizing' policy advice. This requires finding consistent and recognizable patterns in behavior across different policy areas (Matland, 1995). The top- town perspective emphasizes formal steering of problems and factors, which are easy to manipulate and lead to centralization and control. Interest will be directed towards things such as funding formulas, formal organization structures and authority relationships between administrative units, regulations and administrative controls like budget, planning and

evaluation requirements (Elmore, 1978). 'It begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policy-maker's intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementers at each level. At the bottom of the process, one states, again with as much precision as possible, what a satisfactory outcome would be, measured in the terms of the original statement of intent' (Elmore, 1978). The top-down perspective largely restricts its attention to actors who are formally involved in the implementation of a specific program. The top-down researchers focus on a specific political decision, normally a law. They follow the implementation down through the system, often with special interest in higher-level decision makers. They would typically assume a control perspective of implementation, trying to give good advice on how to structure the implementation process for the above in order to achieve the purpose of legislation and to minimize the number of decision points that could be vetoed (Winter, 2003).

From the foregoing, basic assumptions underlying the top-down approach are summarized as follows:

- i. Policies are authoritative decisions made from the top by policy makers.
- ii. Policies are implemented through establishing mechanisms that represents policymakers interest not the people.

Methodology

A survey research method was used for the study. The population of the study is made up of all household heads in Rijau LGA, the population of the area was put at 176199 (NPC, 1996). The population sample comprised of 384 people living within communities in Rijau LGA. A multi-staged sampling technique was used to select the sample population. There are 11 electoral wards in Rijau Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria. The first stage involves random selection of 6 (50%) electoral wards from the LGA. The second stage involves random selection of 2 out of the 3 zones from each of the electoral wards, making 12 zones. The third stage entails systematic selection of 32 households from each of the selected zones, making 384 households. The fourth stage involves purposive selection of household heads from each of the 384 households selected, making a total of 384 respondents. The 384 respondents drawn for the study corresponded with the Cochran Model of sample determination. In addition, Government officials, Traditional rulers, Ward development project committees at various levels were purposively selected and interviewed.

The study utilizes questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The questionnaires were administered to household heads, interviews were conducted with government officials and ward development project committees, while focus group discussions were done with executives of community based development associations. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means (\bar{X}) were statistics used to take decision in the study. For items on Likert scale, respondents were required to indicate their opinion on each item based on Likert five-point scale of Highly Involved (HI), Involved (I), Undecided (U), Not Involved (NI) and Highly Not Involved (HNI). Since the items were rated on a 5-point scale, the means of each item is 2.5. However, the mean of 3.0 was used as cut off point for accepting or rejecting each of the items by the researcher. Furthermore, the item with the mean of 4.0 or above is regarded as a highly accepted statement. This idea was based on the assertion of Nwankwo (1999) when he states that researcher should fix a mean cut-off point higher than the scale mean for accepting the items. He explains that any mean score higher than the scale mean (\bar{X}) indicated that the respondents rated it high because to them it is very true or correct. Qualitative data were transcribed, coded, analyzed and presented.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Respondents of this study were the household heads. 384 questionnaires were distributed to the target population, and 351 were returned. However, some of them were not correctly filled, a total of 27 were rendered invalid by the researcher during data cleaning. Therefore, a total of 324 questionnaires were analyzed in this study, making a response rate of 84.4%.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Measurements	Frequency	Percentage
Age of respondents	<20	55	17.0
	20-40	82	25.3
	41-60	138	42.6
	>60	49	15.1
	Total	324	100
Sex	Male	221	68.0
	Female	103	32.0
	Total	324	100
Marital Status	Single	32	9.9
	Married	219	67.6
	Widowed	73	22.5
	Total	324	100
Level of Education	No Education	87	26.9
	Primary	94	29.0
	Secondary	98	30.2
	Tertiary	45	13.9
	Total	324	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents. About 17.0% of the respondents were below 20 years of age, 25.3% were within 20-40 years of age, 42.6% were within 41-60 years of age while 15.1% were above the age of 60. This implies that majority of the respondents are still at their productive age and could participate effectively in project implementation if given the opportunity. Finding shows that majority of the respondents (68.0%) were male while 32.0% were female, this could increase the level of involvement of the community members because most of the male members household heads may have influence on participation of their household members in the community projects.

The table further shows that 67.6% of the respondents were married, 22.5% widowed, and 9.9% were single. The implication of this is that most of the respondents were married and can influence the household size and number of those participating in project implementation. The study shows that 29.0% of the respondents had primary education, 30.2% had secondary education, while 13.9% had tertiary education. However, 26.9% of the respondents had no formal education. It could be deduced that a greater percentage (73.1%) of the respondents pass through basic and advanced education (secondary and tertiary) at different levels, hence are expected to be experienced and have proper understanding of communal efforts.

Table 2: level of involvement in project implementation

Type of project	H.I	I	U	N.I	H.N.I	T	M	Decision
Construction/renovation of educational facilities	27 (8.33)	63 (19.44)	58 (17.90)	109 (33.65)	67 (20.68)	846	2.61	Not Involved
Construction/renovation of health facilities	61 (18.83)	44 (13.58)	61 (18.83)	89 (27.47)	69 (21.29)	911	2.81	Not Involved
Construction/renovation of religious facilities	108 (33.33)	84 (25.93)	56 (17.28)	47 (14.51)	29 (8.95)	1167	3.60	Involved
Construction/reconstruction of culverts and drainages	94 (29.01)	112 (34.57)	53 (16.36)	41 (12.65)	24 (7.41)	1183	3.65	Involved
Construction/reconstruction of water sources	25 (7.72)	69 (21.29)	60 (21.29)	99 (30.56)	71 (21.91)	850	2.62	Not Involved

Source: Field Survey, 2017

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The level of participation of respondents in the construction/renovation of religious facilities ($x=3.60$), and construction/reconstruction of culverts and drainages ($x=3.65$) were significant, while participation in construction/renovation of education facilities ($x=2.61$); construction/renovation of health facilities ($x=2.81$); and construction/reconstruction of water sources ($x=2.62$) were not significant. Finding shows that community members were only allowed to participate in the execution of those projects where their labor was needed.

This was further explained by some government officials as follows during interviews conducted in the course of the research:

“community participation is the hallmark of ward development project, hence community members were allowed to participate in the implementation of the projects chosen based on their felt needs, in all the stages of the implementation process”.

“the program did not require any financial commitment from the communities as government has provided funds for the execution of projects, all the community members needed to do, was to participate actively through the processes of implementation, and the committees saddled with implementing the projects were directed to do so with active and genuine participation of community members”.

Members of the implementation committees made the following remarks:

“local people were not really involved due to the difficulty in making a large number of people to agree on an issue, since we are their representative, whatever decisions we made were in their interest”.

“people were involved in the execution of projects where youths were engaged as laborers, many of them have benefited from involving as laborers because the money they got took care of some of their needs”.

At the FGDs, participants were of the view that:

“the implementation committees denied the people of the opportunity to genuinely participate in the execution of projects (Field Survey, 2017).

Finding here indicates that, community participation in the implementation of the ward development project was low due to denial of people to participate by the ward development project committees (WDPCs) in Rijau LGA.

Table 3: Contribution of Rural households in ensuring sustainability of ward development projects

Contribution	Frequency	Percentage
Participation in decision making meetings	71	21.9
Labor	186	57.4
Provision of security	62	19.1
Monitoring and evaluation	71	21.9
Maintenance	78	24.1

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3 indicates contributions of community members in ensuring sustainability of ward developments projects in Rijau Local Government Area. The table shows that 21.9% participated in decision making meetings, 57.4% contributed labor towards construction of projects, 19.1% provided security, and 21.9% were involved in monitoring and evaluation of projects, while 24.1% were involved in the maintenance of the projects.

During the interviews, the following revelations were made:

“the people of Mallam Tsoho in Dukku ward did not demonstrate a sense of ownership of the project executed in their locality as majority of them refused to contribute #500 per household for the repair of the market stall's roof which was destroyed by wind storm”.

“community members in Sulubawa village of Warari ward refused to provide security when such was needed to watch over construction materials during the construction of a dispensary”.

“people in Alanga Kure and Rafin Gada of Shambo ward in refused to secure materials during the construction of their dispensary” (Field Survey, 2017).

Finding here shows that local peoples' contribution in securing and maintaining projects executed through the ward development project was insignificant due to lack of community participation in Rijau LGA.

Discussion of Findings

The study finds that community participation in the implementation of the ward development project was low due to denial of people to participate by the ward development project committees (WDPCs) in Rijau LGA. From table 2 above, local people were involved in the construction/renovation of religious places like completion of central mosque, and construction of church at Dugge ward, construction of Islamic school at Dukku ward, construction of central mosque at Genu village in Genu ward, and Warari village in Warari ward. Others were construction of Islamic schools at Shambo and Warari wards, as well as fencing of graveyard in Shambo village (Shambo ward). More mean score from the table also shows significant involvement of community in construction/reconstruction of drainages and culverts. These categories of projects were executed in all the selected wards. The reason for the above could be attributed to the fact that they were the felt needs of the communities and members provided the required labor. However, other projects such as construction/renovation of educational facilities; construction/renovation of health facilities and construction/reconstruction of water sources recorded insignificant involvement of community members in their execution. This might be due to technicalities required for instance in the construction borehole, this is an area which requires experts to carry out, moreover drilling machine will be required which is not within the ambit of the communities.

Community participation is conceptualized as a process by which members of the community, individually or collectively assume increased responsibility for assessment of their own needs, and once these needs are agreed upon, identifying potential situations to problems, and plan strategies by which these solutions may be realized (Bermejo & Bekui, 1993). DFID (2002) stresses that; the broad aim of participation in development is to actively involve people and the communities in identifying problems, formulating plans and implementing decisions over their own lives. According to a study by Kinyoda (2008) there is a low level of community participation in development projects. Her study reveals that people have not been completely involved in decision-making, selection, identification and prioritization of the projects. For example in Rijau LGA, the study indicates that majority of the local people were not given a chance to identify and prioritize projects. This is in line with the top-down approach which states that policies are made by policy makers and implemented by mechanisms set up by policy makers mostly without involvement of the people who are the beneficiaries of such projects.

Secondly, the study finds that local peoples' contribution in securing and maintaining projects executed through the ward development project was insignificant in Rijau LGA. The participation of is reflected in their contribution securing and maintaining projects executed. Table 3 revealed that only 21.9% of the respondents contributed to WDP through regular attendance of meetings where decisions on issues like community needs assessment, project priority setting, community development plans, implementation strategies and sustainability plans were formulated and decided. Participation in the decision making meetings by the beneficiaries provide the opportunity for the beneficiaries to be carried along, get their input, their commitment and build the spirit of ownership in them. Since insignificant percentage (21.9%) of the population attended such meetings, majority were left out. The table also reveals that majority of the respondents (57.4%) were involved in labor work. That is, they contributed their services to on-going activities most especially in area of construction like market stalls, mosques, Islamic school, nomadic schools, churches, culverts and drainages etc. About (19.1%) of the respondents were involved in the provision of security for the ward development projects through vigilance and other means. 21.9% of the respondents participated in monitoring and evaluation, while 24.1% of the respondents participated in the maintenance of the projects. This indicates that people did not have a sense of ownership of the projects largely because they were not involved in the initiation process where their felt needs are taken care of, rather the policy implementers made decisions on their behalf. This is in line with one of the assumptions of top-down approach which states that, policies are implemented through establishing mechanisms (WDPCs) that represents policymakers interest not the people.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study reveals the importance of creating an enabling environment for community members to actively and genuinely participate at all levels of project implementation. This done, the people will have a sense of ownership of projects since they reflects their needs not those of the policymakers or

their representatives. This paper therefore posits that for effective and sustainable rural development to take place, community participation should be enthroned where local people are allowed to participate actively and genuinely in the implementation of development projects. Accordingly, the study recommends that government should support the community to ensure a strong commitment to participation in development projects, by truly adopting the bottom-up approach to development; orientate its mechanism for implementation to the participatory approach and to practically involve the community in decision making processes during the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the project.

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