

# **Factors Affecting Community Participation in Local Development Programs of Civil Society Organization in Southern Ethiopia**

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**Abstract:** The main objectives of this study were to assessing the nature and level of community participation in development programmes and examining the factors affecting community participation in development programmes of E4Y project at Lemo District, Hadiya Zone. Cross sectional survey design was used for this study. Sample of 125 beneficiaries of E4Y project were selected for the study purpose by adopting simple random sampling technique. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample respondents. Besides, focus group discussion and key informant interview were held among project management committee and community leaders and NGO officials respectively. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to address the set objectives. The results of focus group discussion and key informant interview were supplemented with the survey results. The findings indicate that majority of the respondents found to be participating in the development programmes as beneficiaries. The level of participation of the community was found to be high only during implementation stage. The NGO uses a top down approach in designing the projects. The results of ordered logistic regression analysis show that independent variables such as awareness of community, self-reliance, decision making, access to information, training, education, and accountability were the positive significant factors affecting community participation in local development programmes. Based on the finding, it has been recommended that the NGO need to encourage beneficiaries' involvement and participation in all stages of projects by assigning roles and responsibilities.

**Key words:** Community Participation, Civil society organization, E4Y project, Development Programs

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Date of Submission: 24-06-2019

Date of acceptance: 06-07-2019

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Community participation is an active engagement and involvement of community members in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of project in pursuit of improving their well being. In the context of development, community participation refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits (Caleb Wasilwa, 2015).

Since the 1990s, multilateral agencies such as the World Bank placed greater emphasis on stakeholder participation as a way to ensure development sustainability (Kotze D, 1997). It is now regarded as a critical component which could promote the chances of development initiatives being sustainable through community capacity building and empowerment (Lyons K, 2000). Empowerment in this context means giving people who are marginalised, vulnerable, and excluded from development, the ability to be self-reliant to manage their own resources. It is believed that participation would lead to empowerment through capacity building, skills, and training (Manyasa, E.O., 2009). By increasing the ability of people, projects, and or communities to be self-reliant, they are then able to contribute towards the sustainability of development projects which in turn could contribute to the broader notion of sustainable national development.

Community participation in development projects has become an important element in the design and implementation of development projects. Participation of the community is in the form of Community Based Development (CBD) and is among the fastest growing mechanism for channelling development assistance. The aim of community participation in CBD projects is not only to reverse the existing power relations in a manner that creates agency and voice for the poor but also to allow the poor to have more control over development assistance. It is expected that this will result in the allocation of development funds in a manner that is more responsive to the needs of the poor, better targeting of poverty programs, more responsive government and better delivery of public goods and services, better maintained community assets, and a more informed and involved citizenry that is capable of undertaking self-initiated development activity (Marston C.et.al, 2013).

The Government of Ethiopia has adopted decentralization policy which facilitates participation of the community in the development programs that are being implemented by both government and non-governmental organizations. Engaged Educated Empowered Ethiopian Youth Project (E4Y) is one of the civil society organizations in the study area and an applicant of World Vision Programs. This developmental project have inbuilt capacity to develop the community with involvement of community (beneficiary) through addressing access to livelihoods for households and their youth; increased community engagement and leadership opportunities for youth; enhanced financial services and income generating activities to households; provide direct education support services to complete secondary school or access higher education, vocational and skills training programs for youth; improve access to community social protection support for household and provide linkages to government programs for implementation of project activities with building power or capacity through community participation (IE4Y, 2018).

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Botes and van Rensburg (2000) have identified a number of obstacles to community participation, namely: Inhibiting and prescriptive role of state; Paternalistic role of development professionals; Over-reporting of development successes; Selective participation; Hard-issue bias; Conflicting interest groups within end-beneficiary communities; Gate-keeping by local elites; Excessive pressures for immediate results; the accentuation of product at the expense of process; and Lack of public interest in becoming involved.

Fundamentally, it is important to acknowledge the unequal power relations and potential conflicts at the centre of any participatory process. Outsiders initiating a participatory exercise, for whatever purpose, inherently have more power than the community members with whom they are to work. As well, there are power inequalities in any community where an intervention takes place. For participation to enhance the capabilities of the poor both of these factors need to be recognized and their potential negative impacts minimized.

In developing countries, the challenges impinging the success of development projects were poor participation, negative attitude and lack of awareness (Ering, 2006). The challenges facing most communities were how to link them to government and Non-government programs. Various attempts by government to increase the utilization of the capital of the communities and to increase the productive capacity of the people have unsuccessful. Because, most of the community members have not actively involved in need assessment and the implementation of such programs. This poses negative impacts on the sustainability of the projects (Nwachukwu, 2011).

Although studies done by Marsela, 2015; Kanyanya et al., 2014; Isaiah, 2016; Bailur and Gigler, 2014; Teshome et.al, 2014; Meza et.al, 2016 are available at the review, they all concentrated on mainly community partnerships, community development practice through participation, importance and factors of community participation in development programs. The empirical literature on community participation acknowledges that there may be a large gap between the idealised textbook representation of the concept and non-profit organizations experiences with the approach. Hence, the present study was undertaken to fill the research gap.

### **Objectives of the study**

The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To assess the nature and level of community participation in development programs and
2. To analyze the factors affecting community participation in development programs.

## **III. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### ***Description of the study district***

Hadiya Zone is one of the 14 zones in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional (SNNPR) state of Ethiopia. It consists of ten Districts and two Administration city. *Lemo District* is the study area situated in Hadiya Zone of Southern Ethiopia. It is situated in the Southern-tip of the zone and bordered with Gombora district in North-west; South with Kambeta Tambaro Zone and with Soro District in Southeast; with Ane-lemo District in North-east and in the North with Silte Zone. The total land area of the District is 382 square km, which comprises of 35 rural villages. The altitude of the District ranges from 1950 to 2500m above sea level. The livelihood of the community in the district depends mainly on mixed farming (crop and livestock production). The majority of rural households is engaged in subsistence agriculture taking place on small and fragmented plots through the employment of oxen and traditional farm implements and share their living quarters with their domestic animals. Dominantly growing crops in the study area include wheat, teff, sorghum, bean and pea, barley, maize, potato and Enset.

**Description of E4Y Project**

Engaged Educated Empowered Ethiopian Youth (E4Y) project is one of World Vision applicant developmental project. It is found in Lemo District from southern Ethiopia which targeted male 412 (51.6%) and female 386 (48.4%) total 798 households. Inside Lemo district the projects includes seven villages (namely Mass-bira, Kidigisa, Debube-Bellesa, Ashe-Kubega, Omoshera, Mesen-Bako and Tachegnaw-Kode). The main objectives of the project is enhanced access for households' livelihood and their youth; provide direct education support services to complete secondary school or access to higher education; vocational and skills training programs for youth; enhance financial services and income generating activities, improve access to community social protection carry for households and create linkage between government and NGO services (E4Y report, 2016).

**Research design**

Cross sectional survey design was used for this study. Furthermore, both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were applied for data collection and analysis. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used for data collection. Primary data was collected from the selected respondents who are the beneficiaries of the project through the questionnaire. Furthermore, Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions were conducted with the officials of selected NGO, Woreda Administrative Office and community based leaders to elicit qualitative data.

**Sampling techniques**

E4Y Project being implemented at Lemo District was selected as the study unit purposively. BY adopting Carvalho's sample size determination table, 125 beneficiaries were selected on simple random sampling technique from 798 beneficiaries representing seven villages as given in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sampling frame**

No.	Name of Villages	No. of household in each Village (N)	Proportionate to each Village	Sample size (n)
1	Massbira	114	114/798*125	18
2	Kidigisa	134	134/798*125	21
3	Debube Bellesa	137	137/798*125	21
4	Ashe Kubega	93	93/798*125	15
5	Omoshera	96	96/798*125	15
6	Mesen Bako	102	102/798*125	16
7	Tachegnaw Kode	122	122/798*125	19
	<b>Total</b>	<b>798</b>		<b>125</b>

*Source: E4Y Project Report, (2018)*

**Tools and methods of data collection**

A well structured questionnaire was prepared, pretested and administered among the selected project beneficiaries. The questionnaires were distributed to the sample respondents to be filled by themselves. Besides, key informant interview was conducted with a project officer, two District stakeholders and four elderly community leaders. Focus group discussion was held among project management committee members.

**Method of data analysis**

The nature and level of community participation was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies, percentages and diagrams. Factors affecting the level of community participation in development project were analyzed using ordered logistic regression model.

**Table 2: Meaning and units of measurements of variables**

Variables	Meaning	Units of measurements
<b>Dependent variable</b>		
Level of community participation	It is an ordinal variable refers to the level at which the community participate in the decision making process of a development project.	Low (1) Medium (2) High (3) Level of participation
<b>Independent variables</b>		
Level of education	It is an ordinal variable which means the	Illiterate (1)

	level a respondent has actually attained in education.	Grade 1-5 (2) Grade 6-8 (3) Grade 9-10 (4) Grade 10-12 (5) Diploma (6) Degree (7)
Awareness of community	It is an ordinal variable refers to the level at which the community aware about the interventions of NGOs	Low (1) Medium (2) High (3)
Training	It is a dummy variable which means the respondent got training related to his profession	Yes (1) No (0)
Access to information	It is a dummy variable means whether the respondent do have access to information about the project plan	Yes (1) No (2)
Involvement in decision making	It is a dummy variable refers that the involvement of community in the decision making process of the project	Yes (1) No (2)
Self reliance	It is an ordinal variable refers to psychological feeling of individual households that indicate personality and its dimension such as mental independence, self-confidence, happiness and make decision easier than others	Agree (1) Neutral (2) Disagree (3)
Accountability	It is a dummy variable refers to the responsibility assumed by the community in all the phases of the project	Yes (1) No (2)
Leadership quality	It is an ordinal variable refers that the ability of the leaders to influence through motivation, guide and communication on the project activities with the individual or as a group towards the accomplishment of project goals	Agree (1) Neutral (2) Disagree (3)

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Nature and Level of Community Participation in the Development Programs

##### Nature of Participation

An attempt has been made to assess the nature of community participation in the following section.

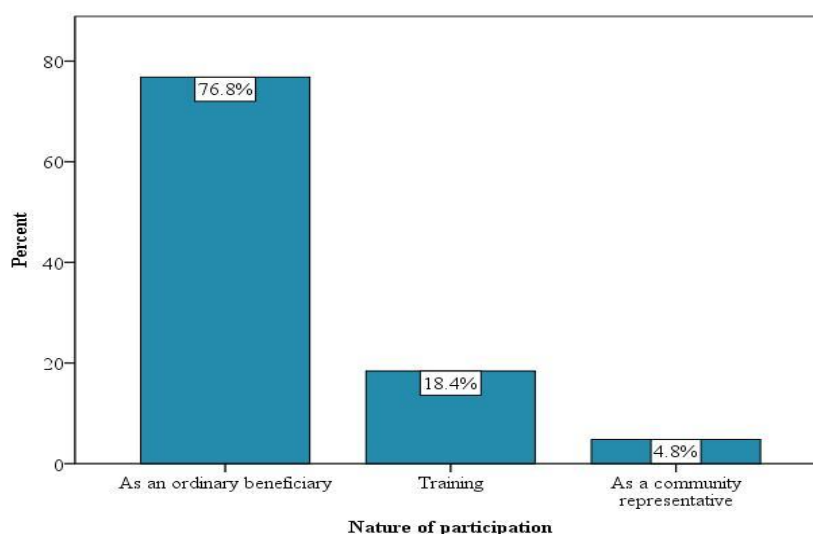


Figure 1: Nature of community participation

Source: Field survey, 2018

Figure 1 portrays a visual observation of the nature of community participation in the study area. Accordingly, the majority (76.8%) of respondents participated as an ordinary beneficiary. The results of FGDs depicted that people participate in development project and programs (Education, Agriculture and Microfinance institution) as direct beneficiaries and youth have been supported with E4Y project in education activities and training in decent work. The key informants further indicated that the E4Y project served the community for three (3) years. Participation as a voluntary contribution in planning projects, including participation in decision-making, implementation of projects, monitoring and evaluation of development programs were weak. The key informant interview from government office indicated that beneficiaries did not participate with NGOs especially before the start of the project and after the project ended. Some of them participated as community representative during the project implementation stage. This implies that the nature of participation of the community as only beneficiaries without having any stake on the ownership of the project.

**Level of Community Participation**

In this sub-section, the level of community participation in E4Y project was presented and discussed to hereunder.

**Table 3:** *Level of participation of respondents on information sharing and consultation*

Statements	Level of participation									
	Very Low		Low		Medium		High		Very High	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The NGO officials shared the information about the details of project	4	3.2	11	8.8	14	11.2	86	68.8	10	8.0
The NGO officials have consulted with the community on the modalities of the project	3	2.4	6	4.8	23	18.4	83	66.4	10	8.0

**Source:** Field survey, 2018

As indicated in Table 3, about 76.8% of the beneficiaries revealed that the NGO officials have shared the information about the project and its related benefits to the community. Similarly, about 74.4% of them replied that they were consulted by the NGO about the modalities of the project and the importance of community throughout the duration of the project. This indicated that the NGO solicit participation of community in information sharing and consultation about the project work and the proposed intervention is trying to inform its activities related to the project work, the situation and realities of the project to its beneficiaries.

**Table 1:** *Level of participation of respondents on joint assessment*

Statements	Level of participation									
	Very Low		Low		Medium		High		Very High	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Your involvement with NGO in problem identification and prioritization	5	4.0	5	4.0	34	27.2	69	55.2	12	9.6
Your involvement with NGO in need assessment.	5	4.0	7	5.6	33	26.4	61	48.8	19	15.2

**Source:** Field survey, 2018

A perusal of table 4 reveals that about 64.8% of respondents had participated along with NGO in problem identification and prioritization. While 64% of sampled respondents had participated in carrying out need assessment survey. The results of the key informant interview and focus group discussion with regard to the beneficiaries’ involvement in project planning and implementation indicated that there was less participation of the community in the planning stage.

**Table 2:** Level of participation of respondents on decision making

Statements	Level of participation									
	VL		L		M		H		VH	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
You were actively involved in the planning and design of the project.	11	8.8	50	40.0	47	37.6	16	12.8	1	.8
You were able to have a say in determining the priorities of the project.	5	4.0	58	46.4	41	32.8	21	16.8	-	-
You were able to have a say in determining your role (s) in the project.	4	3.2	48	38.4	56	44.8	16	12.8	1	.8
You had control and influence over the allocation resources used in the project.	25	20.0	46	36.8	26	20.8	27	21.6	1	.8
You had a say in revisions, agreements, and other issues related to the project.	34	27.2	67	53.6	14	11.2	3	2.4	7	5.6

Source: Field survey, 2018

The results of Table 5 shows that about 13.6% of respondents actively involved in the planning and design of the project, 16.8% of them were able to have a say in determining your role(s) in the project, 22.4% of them had control and influence over the allocation resources used in the project, and 8% respondents had a say in revisions, agreements, and other issues related to the project. This implied that the level of respondents' participation on decision making was low. The results of focus group discussion revealed that the leader makes major decisions. Project beneficiaries were involved in determining benefits packages. In terms of project related decisions, the project team used to consult with the beneficiaries, but they told that only a select group in the community makes most of the decisions. On the other hand, the Kebele project team indicated its dissatisfaction with regard to project level decision-making. They further indicated that most of the time certain projects are designed by the NGOs without the knowledge of the community and presented to the community after it is approved. The key informants also confirmed that in some cases the E4Y project uses a top down approach in designing projects.

**Factors affecting the level of community participation**

In this section, an attempt has been made to examine the factors affecting the level of community participation in development programs of the NGO. Since the dependent variable level of community participation is ordinal variable (High, Medium and Low), it is imperative to apply ordered logistic regression model. Before using the model, multicollinearity problem among the independent variables was tested using contingency coefficient and it was found that there was no such problem among the variables. The results are presented in the table 6.

According to ordered logistic regression output, out of nine variables which were included in the model, seven predictor variables have significant positive effect on the level of community participation. The variables are awareness of community participation, self-reliance, decision making, and access to information, training, education, and accountability. Since it has no value to present insignificant variables, the following few paragraphs describe only these significant variables.

**Table 6:** Results of Ordered Logistic Regression Model

Variables	B	S.E	Wald	Odds Ratio	p-Value
Awareness	1.029*	.417	6.088	2.798	.014
Self-reliance	.692*	.324	4.562	1.998	.033
Leadership quality	.014	.335	.002	1.014	.967
Commitment	.403	.319	1.598	1.496	.206
Decision making	1.619**	.478	11.472	5.048	.001
Access to information	.787*	.310	6.430	2.197	.011
Training	1.138**	.412	7.618	3.121	.006
Education	.542**	.203	7.087	1.719	.008
Accountability	1.385*	.543	6.502	3.995	.011
Chi- Square	471.32				

p-value	0.000
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.503

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**Note:**  $\beta$ = Ordered logit coefficient (Estimate), SE=Standard Error, \* & \*\* Significant at 5% level and 1% level respectively

**Awareness:** It is evident from Table 6 that awareness on community participation has positive and significant effect on the level of community participation since coefficient and p-value ( $\beta=1.029$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) in the model. It can be inferred from the values of odds ratio that if the awareness of community participation is increased by one unit the response variable the level of community participation will expect to change by 2.798 regardless of other independent variables in the model. As the awareness level of the respondent on community participation increases, their participation also increases. This implies that the awareness level of the community affects the participation level of respondents.

**Self-reliance:** It was hypothesized that self-reliance has positive effect on the level of community participation. The result from the model output ( $\beta=0.692$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) also supported the hypothesis that there is a positive influence of self-reliance on the level of community participation. The results of odds ratio interpreted as a unit increase in the self-reliance of respondents creates a 1.998 unit increase in the level of community participation. This implies that the psychological feeling of the community has effect on the participation level of respondents.

**Decision making:** - It is observed from the model results that decision making of NGOs has positive and significant effect on the level of community participation. The ordered logit coefficient and p-value ( $\beta=1.619$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) revealed that decision making has found to be statistically significant effect on the level of community participation and the prediction shows that if the decision making increased by one unit the level of community participation will be expected to change by 5.048 units regardless of other independent variables in the model. This implies that the authority and decision making at the top of the project affects the participation level of respondents.

**Access to information:** - It was expected that there is a positive association between access to information and level of community participation. The model output ( $\beta=.787$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) supports the hypothesis and shows the positive effect and significant association between access to information and level of community participation. Keeping the influence of other variables constant, a unit increase in access to information will increase the level of community participation by 2.197 units. This implies that access to information about project plan and service affects the participation level of respondents.

**Training:** The relationship between training and level of community participation has positive and significant ( $\beta=1.138$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) association. It can be inferred from the values of odds ratio coefficient that if the community has training, their level of participation will expect to change by 3.121 while the other variables in the model are held constant. This implies that active participation of the community on different trainings such as entrepreneurship, like skill training, improvement of saving habit increases the participation level of respondents.

**Education:** The ordered logit model coefficient and p-value ( $\beta=.542$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) shows that respondents educational level has statistically significant effect on the level of community participation. The odds ratio shows that a one unit increase in educational level of respondents, will expected to change the level of community participation by 1.719 given other variables in the model are held constant. This implies that education level of the community affects the participation level of respondents.

**Accountability:** It is observed from the model results that the accountability of the NGOs has positive and significant effect on the level of community participation. The ordered logit coefficient and p-value ( $\beta=1.205$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) revealed that accountability of NGOs has found to be statistically significant effect on level of community participation and the prediction shows that if NGOs accountability increased by one unit, the level of community participation will be expected to change by 3.995 units regardless of other independent variables in the model. This implies that accountability of NGOs affects the participation level of respondents.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude from the study findings, it was observed that the level of community participation throughout the project phases was found to be low. The authorities of the project adopts top down approach in project design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The nature of participation of the community seems mere beneficiaries of the project outcome. Community representatives were found to be participating in project meetings as and when conducted by the NGO. Projects are usually designed by the

NGOs without the knowledge of the community and presented to the community after approval by the NGOs. The major factors that affect community participation in development programs were awareness, self-reliance, decision making, information, training, education level, and accountability. By increasing the awareness level of the community about the project, the confidence of the community to take part in the development programs, decision making, access to information, availability of training, education level, accountability of the NGOs enable the community to participate in development programs.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are forwarded on the basis of the major findings of the study.

- It is found that the community is participating as an ordinary beneficiary during the implementation stage of the project rather than at the planning and project ending stage. Therefore, the community should be empowered through comprehension and information about the project by fully participating in the development project. The NGOs need to encourage beneficiaries to participate in all phase of development project.
- Projects are usually designed by the NGOs without the knowledge of the community and presented to the community after approval by the NGOs. Therefore, the NGO need to integrate development plan or holistic approach in order to allow the community to have an opportunity to identify their needs and problems and device mechanism to meet such needs.
- Self-reliance of the community is found to be a factor that affects community participation in the study area. Therefore, the NGOs need to assist the community to discover their potential and also mobilize community to be self-reliant. In addition, the *Woreda* administrative organs should also create platforms where community should be able to express their feelings without fear.
- Access to information is the main aspect that enables the community to participate in development programs. Therefore, local government information center and NGOs should strengthen community awareness on the value and access to information. As such there is a need to establish community based information technological centers for display, strong and dissemination information knowledge related to community participation in development project and program.
- NGOs need to provide training by designing community training project and creating forum for meeting, workshops, and conferences to discuss and deliberate pertinent issue open to enhance community participation in development program.

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IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

Karunakaran R. “Factors Affecting Community Participation in Local Development Programs of Civil Society Organization in Southern Ethiopia”. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 24 no. 07, 2019, pp. 25-33.