

The Impact of Area Development Committees in Sustainable Asset Based Community Development-Ta Kambwiri, Salima District Malawi

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Abstract

Community's participation is of great importance for sustainable development. According to the UN's community participation is a process by which people take an active and influential role in shaping decisions that affect their lives. In this context the establishment and empowerment of community development structures such as Area Development Committees is very vital to ensure sustainability of development initiatives. This study was aimed at examining the impact of Area Development Committees (ADCs) in the sustainability of the asset-based community development. The study was informed by a descriptive research design. It employed both probability sampling and non-probability sampling targeting a total of 100 respondents comprising of key informants (KI) which has included members of ADCs, traditional leaders and extension/community development workers or project officers. This researcher administered a semi structured questionnaire to the main respondents of the study who were community members. From the findings the majority of the respondents reported that they required some kind of incentive to become completely functional towards their community development. The study shows that respondents disagree that community members have self-motivation in the participation because it is realized that committee members do not find any intrinsic value, hence do not find it motivating. The researcher recommends that community members and their leadership should come up with locally devised methodologies of income generating to enable these committees to be functional.

Keywords: Development, Committees, Sustainability

1. Introduction

Community development is a complex field (Chinsinga and Kayuni, 2008). A lot of scholars, organizations and community development practitioners have provided different definitions of community development. Development in this study has been defined as the improvement of one's life and that of a community in all aspects, be it Economic, Social, Political and Technological (Malunda and Mpinganjira, 2002) [11]. At the heart of what the government does is to render development activities or projects meant to improve the lives of the people at a community level. Apart from the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are also rendering the same development initiatives in their areas of interest. According to NSO (2018) [13], Malawi population is rate at 18.6 million, and 80 percent of this population is living in below poverty line. This is despite the country's numerous economic policies efforts in reducing poverty across the country. The challenge in realizing the goal of poverty reduction has been attributed to politics and poor

implementation of the development projects at community level which underrates the use of ADCs.

Jones (2014) [7], suggest that traditional leaders together with their organized Area Development Committees (ADCs) members serve as a focal point or the pinnacle of acceptance of a project as well as the continuity of the project for the sake of sustainability. Participation of community members or receipt of the development projects by community members may involve difficult and long processes but through ADCs it is somehow easy since they are already organized and in turn it brings many benefits: the contribution of local knowledge to; an increased chance of objectives and outputs being relevant to perceived needs; greater efficiency and honesty of officials and contractors because they are under scrutiny; ownership of the activity by the area based development committees. Through empowerment, participation can also lead to changes in knowledge, skills and the distribution of power across individuals and communities thus improving social equity". Therefore, active participation is of paramount

importance for any community development practice. Both the government and the non-governmental bodies in rendering development at community level require channels of community entry if the development is to be sustainable. In this case asset-based community development initiatives if they are to be sustainable, they usually need the participation of community members. Area Development Committees are very instrument in the implementation of various development programs at the community levels and these includes the asset-based community development initiatives. Therefore, it is the very aim of this study to analyze the role and establish the impact of ADCs in the sustainability of the asset-based community development initiatives with a focus on the area of TA Kambili of Salima district in Malawi.

2. Statement of the Problem

Non-governmental organizations and Government departments have been implementing community development projects in the area of TA Kambwiri and continually seek the participation of community members in their development activities especially through ADCs. Some projects have failed due to poor participation of community members in the project activities or actually people (community members) did not welcome the project hence the projects sometimes abandoned along the way before completed. During stakeholders and partners' meetings, community development workers have been complaining of lack of participation in the implementation of community development projects. Some community activities which were previously done by the community members seem to be declining. There is a need to assess the contributing factors that lead to change in community participation in community development activities. Having an outlook in more of such projects experiencing poor participation of the community members, they usually forgo the use of Area Development Committees (ADCs) as a starting point for community participation. This is the case because the role of what really ADCs do as far as community development projects are concerned hasn't really been unveiled and established.

3. Objectives of the Study

Main Objective

The main objective of this research study was to assess and unveil the impact of ADCs in the sustainability of the asset-based community development.

Specific Objectives

The Specific Objectives of this Study Included the Following

- To analyze the recent ADC's participation trends in asset-based community development initiatives.

- To explore ADCs level of knowledge and perception of their contribution to asset-based community development
- To describe government and NGOs level of ADCs involvement in their community development initiatives.
- To explore the role ADCs, play and establish their impact in the sustainability of the asset-based community development.

4. Research Questions

- What are the recent area development committees' participation trends in asset-based community development initiatives?
- What is ADCs level of knowledge and perception of their contribution to asset-based community development initiatives?
- How does the government and NGOs level of ADCs involvement in their community development initiatives?
- What is the extent of the role ADCs play and establish their impact in the sustainability of the asset-based community development?

5. Significance of the Study

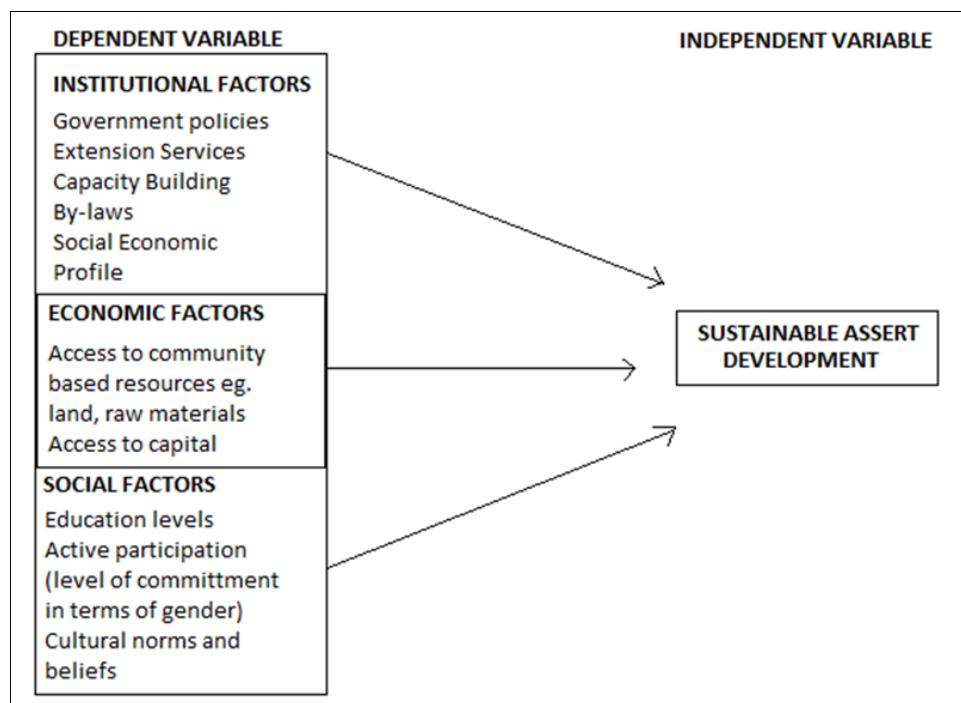
The outcome from this research study will be used as a guiding tool in the formulation and implementation of the development projects and programs that directly affect the local communities. In addition to that, it will enable the policy formulators to take issues regarding ADCs seriously in dealing with developmental projects in the local settings. The study will also bring to light the factors that are affecting the participation of ADCs in sustainable assets-based management projects.

6. Scope of the Study

The study strives to unveil the impact of ADCs in the sustainability of the asset based community development, its complementary objectives includes; examining the recent area development committees participation trends in community development initiatives, to assess ADCs level of knowledge and perception of their contribution to the community development initiatives, to determine government and NGOs level of ADCs involvement in their community development initiatives and to Analyze the role ADCs play and establish their impact in the sustainability of the asset based community development.

7. Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the conceptual framework presented below:



Source: Researcher, 2023

8. Research Methodology

The study was informed by a descriptive research design. It employed both probability sampling and non-probability sampling targeting key informants (KI) which has included members of ADCs, traditional leaders and extension/community development workers or project officers. This researcher administered a semi structured questionnaire to the main respondents of the study who were community members. The study population was delivered from the Area development committee (ADC), Village development committees (VDCs), and the communities' members in the group village headmen under the TA. The participants included male and female community members that are impacted with the development initiatives impacted by the ADC. The total sample size for the study 100 community members selected through simple random sampling for the main respondents and purposive sampling for the key informants. The researcher used Focus group discussion, Semi-structured interviews, and Key informant interviews as the main method for data collection

9. Discussion of Key Findings

From the findings 88% of the respondents agree that there is low or poor participation due to various reasons in which many commented that they needed some kind of incentive so that they become fully functional towards their community development. The results show that 23% of the respondents agree to the idea that the community members have self-motivation in the participation, 77% of the respondents disagree because they find it out that committee members do not find any intrinsic value, hence do not find it motivating. Furthermore, 82% of the respondents disagree on the idea that the committee members or community members organized themselves voluntarily to participate in development initiatives.

The researcher sought to find out the ADCs level of knowledge and perception of their contribution to asset-based community development. Therefore, on the idea of members being aware of local policies 95% agree to the notion that community members recognize and respond to challenges for social improvement and this is in line with Chisinga and

Kayuni (2008) who expressed that, while there is generally a common understanding of what community development is at the national level, the understanding varies widely at district and village levels.

The study also found out that 85% of the respondents agreed that area committee members are knowledgeable in identifying assets of individuals, associations and institution that form the community.

On the government and NGO involvement there has been a strong agreement to the statement followed by those who just agreed and few had to disagree to the idea that there is capacity building by the two stakeholders. It also found out that Government and NGOs enable transparency and accountability and they are a change driving force in the community. Msukwa (1994) ^[12] discussed that social funds are financed by national governments to operate in local communities, sometimes through NGOs, to provide temporary employment in public works and services.

In relation to the role of ADCs in sustainability of the asset-based community development the results show that 70% strongly agreed hence it was observed that few disagree that committee members mobilize resources in a trusted manner. The researcher found results that show that many respondents agree to the importance of the role of the committee in identifying the needs of the community which truly reflect what the community really need towards the development. Finally, good percentage of the respondents strongly agreed that supervision, monitoring and evaluation by the ADCs improve the sustainability of the community projects.

Conclusion

Participation of community members or committee members towards community development project is through various incentives that motivate and inspire to do the work despite the fact that ADC is a volunteer-based role in the community. Further few admitted that do not know much about local policies and not know how best to utilize the available assets. Government and NGOs play a vital role through capacity building, enabling transparency and accountability through various strategies in project implementation process and after.

Lastly it was noted that ADCs are able to identify the needs of the society and also play a role of supervision, and evaluation of projects which are tools to ensure sustainability of the asset-based community development. The study also found out that the respondents agreed that area committee members are knowledgeable in identifying assets of individuals, associations and institution that form the community. The researcher's findings demonstrate that many respondents agreed with the importance of the role of the committee in identifying the needs of the community that truly reflect what the community really needs toward development

Recommendations

Community members and their leadership should come up with locally devised methodologies of income generating to enable these committees to be functional.

The committees should continue refraining from being partisan to enhance community confidence and participation in community development work.

The District Council should hold regular committee review meetings to discuss their work and challenges.

Recommendations for future research

- An analysis of how political economy issues affect the performance and sustainability of SADC
- The role of social workers in supporting sustainable assets-based community development projects

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