
Assessment of Community Participation in Rural Development Projects In Kohima Village, Nagaland.

Shevito Theyo (Principal Investigator),

Assistant Professor, Kohima Science College (Autonomous), Jotsoma Email: shevitotheyo@gmail.com

Selie Puro (Co- Principal Investigator)

Kekhriele Nakhro (Co- Principal Investigator)

Kezhadi Leno (Co- Principal Investigator)

Noketo Pusa (Co- Principal Investigator)

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ABSTRACT

Community participation in planning and implementation has always been associated with Rural Development. The purpose of the study is that the effort of the community can help to improve the people's quality of life wherein providing opportunity for better socio-economic activities. Participation has become an integral part of development. Nevertheless, the challenge is, in what way the Community Participation should be effectively carried out to achieve developmental gains, such as, improving the living condition of the vulnerable sections of the society. Community participation in development especially Rural Development can be contemplated from these two directions: the kind of decision-making process that would enable community participation; and the benefits of development such as employment generation through different schemes and creation of durable assets in the village. This research therefore is solely conducted to understand community participation in attaining sustainable development.



1. Introduction

Rural development aims to enhance the living standards and economic prosperity of individuals residing in rural regions, which are typically characterized by low population density and geographic isolation. Despite the implementation of various projects designed to aid rural communities, many individuals remain unaffected due to their exclusion from the planning and execution stages, highlighting the critical need for active community involvement in rural development initiatives. Rural development becomes more achievable when local residents are involved in the infrastructure planning and implementation process, as these projects are centered on infrastructure. To make sure that the overall goals and objectives are realized to its full potential, it is vital to incorporate effective community participation doctrines.

Notably, according to Catanese (1984), the idea of community participation in planning had been a long standing and intrinsic part of the history of planning. Community participation is an engaging process where the beneficiary groups shape and guide the development project to improve their well-being, including aspects like income, personal growth, self-reliance, and other valued outcomes. It is also important to note that the extent to which participation leads to greater benefits for beneficiaries hinges on the processes involved and the level of community involvement in decision-making.

2. Statement of the problem

Despite the recognized importance of community participation in the success of rural development projects, there are significant gaps in understanding how various factors influence effective participation. This research aims to investigate the barriers and enablers of community involvement in rural development initiatives, focusing on socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. Specifically, the study aims to deal with the following questions:

1. What are the main factors that affect community engagement in rural development projects?
2. How do varying levels of education, income, and social capital among community members impact their participation?
3. In what ways do local governance structures and policies facilitate or hinder community involvement?



4. What best practices can be identified to enhance community participation and ensure the sustainability of development outcomes?

By studying in detail the above issues, the research will enable one to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of community participation, providing actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders involved in rural development.

3. Literature review

Community participation is pivotal for the success and sustainability of rural development initiatives. Engaging local communities allows projects to address specific needs, enhance ownership, and improve outcomes. Chambers (1997) highlights that community involvement leads to greater support and longevity of development efforts. Furthermore, participation fosters empowerment and capacity building, as individuals acquire skills that benefit their communities (Pretty, 1995). For instance, Narayan (1995) found that projects with high participation levels showed significant improvements in health, education, and infrastructure.

However, several barriers impede effective community participation. Socio-economic factors, such as poverty and low education levels, restrict meaningful engagement (Moser, 1993). Cultural norms may also limit participation, especially among marginalized groups like women (Cornwall, 2008). Institutional challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of transparency, further deter community involvement (Riddell, 2007).

Conversely, certain enablers can enhance community participation. Educational programs raise awareness and empower local residents (Cornwall, 2008). Inclusive governance structures that prioritize stakeholder input significantly improve participation (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Capacity-building initiatives, such as training workshops, equip community members with the skills needed for active engagement (Fagbohun, 2016).

Successful case studies illustrate the benefits of community participation. For example, the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach in Bangladesh engaged communities in project planning, resulting in improved agricultural practices and increased incomes (Chambers, 1997). Such examples emphasize the importance of continuous stakeholder engagement and adaptive management.



Despite the extensive research, gaps remain, particularly regarding the long-term impacts of community participation on rural development and the role of technology in facilitating engagement. Continued exploration in these areas is needed for developing effective strategies that will enhance community involvement and promote sustainable rural development.

4. Aims & Objectives

The primary aim of the study is to investigate the factors that influence community participation in rural development projects and to identify strategies that enhance effective engagement, thereby fostering sustainable development outcomes.

Objectives

- To analyze the socio-economic, institutional and cultural factors that affect community participation in rural development projects.
- To identify and examine the barriers that inhibits community involvement, particularly focusing on marginalized groups.
- To inspect successful rural development projects that demonstrate effective community participation, extracting best practices and lessons learned.
- To assess the long-term impacts of community participation on project sustainability and community development outcomes.

5. Methodology

Both Primary and Secondary data will be used for the purpose. To employ a blended approach design to collect both quantitative data through surveys and qualitative details through interviews and focus groups, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of community participation. Develop a structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data on levels of participation, perceived barriers, and enablers. Distribute the survey to a representative sample of community members. A detailed survey of the area will be carried out and mapping of the said village will be prepared as desired. Descriptive statistical technique will be employed for the analysis of data. Analyze the transcripts by coding them to uncover recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to community participation.

Additionally to primary data collection, this study will also incorporate secondary data analysis to enrich the understanding of community participation in rural development projects. Relevant literature,

existing reports, and case studies will be reviewed to provide context and support the findings from surveys and interviews.

6. Background of the study area

Kohima Village under Kohima District is an Angami Naga village of the Indian state of Nagaland. It has the geo-coordinates of 25.675° N to 94.112° E. It is located in the northeastern part of the present-day Kohima Urban Area. It is also known as ‘Bara Basti’ and is the second largest village in Asia constituting the North-Eastern part of Kohima Urban area today. It has a population of approximately 21,000 residents. The village exhibits a commendatory sex ratio of 1,013 females for every 1,000 males, reflecting a balanced demographic composition. With a total of 5,012 households, Kohima village is characterized by a closely-knit community, where the average household size contributes to its vibrant socio-economic structure.

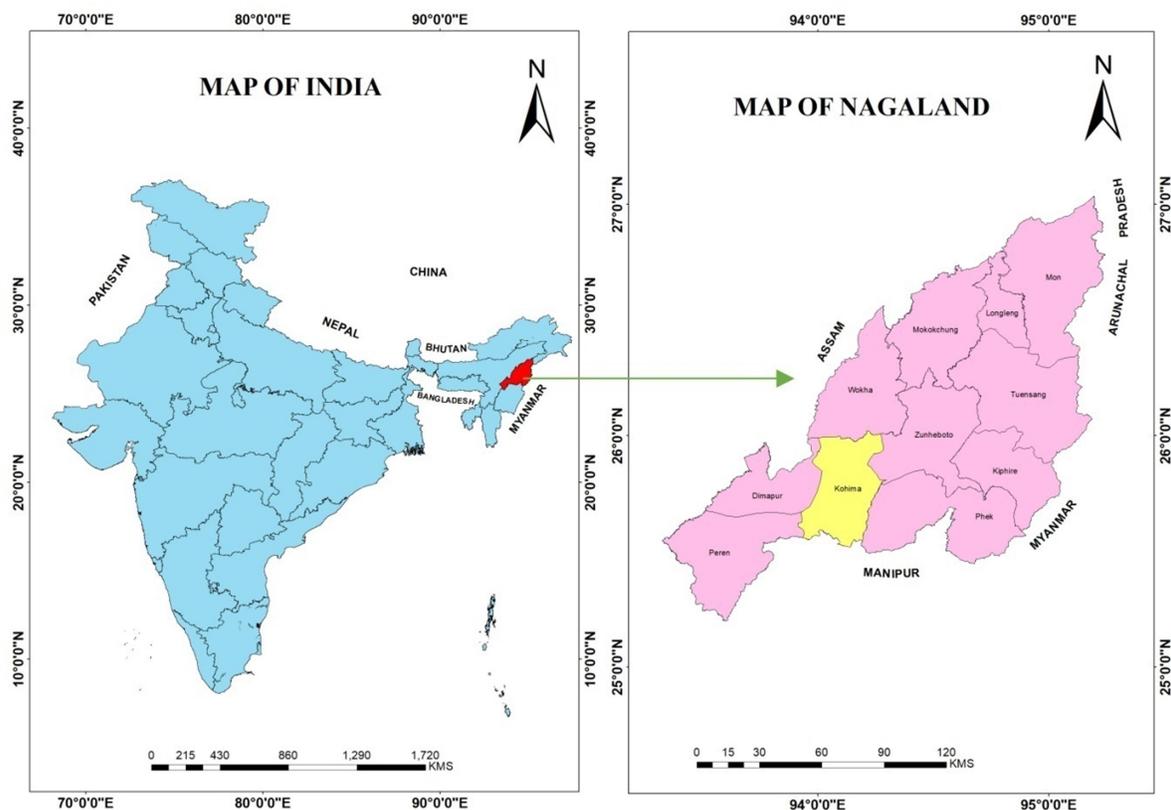


Figure 1: Map of Nagaland showing Kohima District

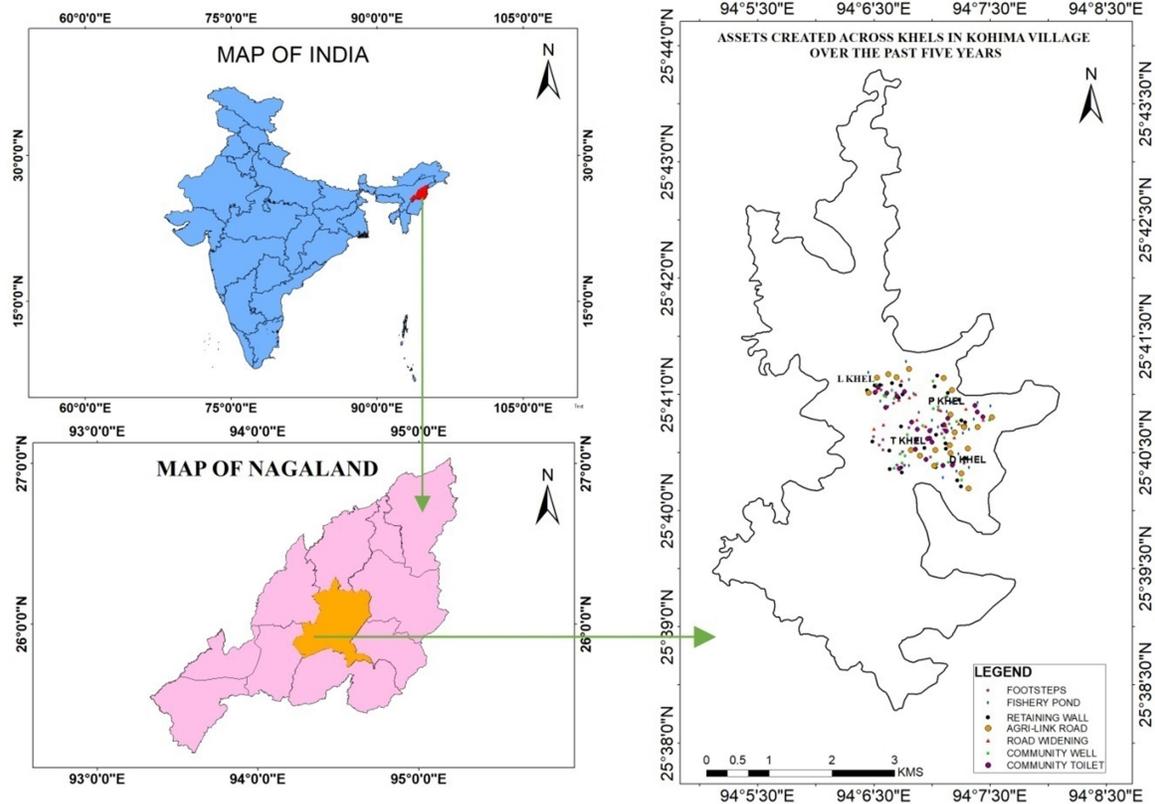


Figure 2: Map of Kohima District showing the study area i.e Kohima Village

7. Results and Discussions

Community participation is a vital component of successful rural development projects, as it empowers local populations to engage themselves actively in the all the three vital stages of development i.e. planning, implementation, and maintenance of initiatives that exert influence on their lives. Effective participation fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, leading to more sustainable outcomes. Among the various forms of community participation, manual labor and construction, monitoring and maintenance, resource mobilization, and community meetings and decision-making stand out as key mechanisms through which communities can influence their development trajectory. By involving community members in these activities, projects not only benefit from local knowledge and skills but also strengthen social cohesion and enhance the overall well-being of the community.



Plate 1: Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigators interacting with the active leaders of Kohima Village

7.1 Forms of community participation in Rural Development Projects

SL.No.	Forms of Community Participation	Number of respondents
1.	Manual labour & construction	30
2.	Monitoring and maintenance	20
3.	Resource mobilization	5
4.	Community meetings and decision making	45
	Total number of respondents	100

1. Manual Labour and Construction

30 % of respondents reported participation in manual labor and construction activities. This form of involvement is often seen in physical infrastructure projects such as road building, water supply systems, and community buildings. It suggests a significant level of engagement in hands-on activities, with many individuals willing to contribute physical labor to the development of their community. This form of participation is commonly valued for its tangible impact and direct benefit to the local environment.



Plate 2: Villagers of Kohima Village engaging themselves in manual labour

2. Monitoring and Maintenance

20 % of respondents indicated involvement in monitoring and maintenance activities. This form of participation is pivotal for the sustainability of rural development projects, as it ensures already existing infrastructure remains functional and that the projects continue to serve their intended purpose. Participants in this area often provide feedback on the condition of facilities, help identify issues that require attention, and assist in maintaining resources.



Plate 3: Active leaders of the village monitoring the assets created in their village

3. Resource Mobilization

Only 5% of respondents reported involvement in resource mobilization. This typically involves efforts to secure funding, materials, or other necessary resources for development projects. While fewer respondents engage in this activity, it is still a vital component of rural development, as it ensures that the projects have the financial and material backing required to proceed. The low participation in this area may reflect the challenges of raising funds or the limited availability of external resources in rural areas.



Plate 4: Villagers involve in resource mobilization

4. Community Meetings and Decision-Making

The largest proportion of respondents, 45%, participated in community meetings and decision-making processes. This form of participation highlights the significance of local governance and engagement of community in shaping development projects. Individuals involved in decision-making processes contribute their perspectives on what projects should be prioritized and how they should be implemented. Their participation ensures that the demands and priorities of the community are reflected in development plans and projects.



Plate 5: Villagers taking part in Community meetings

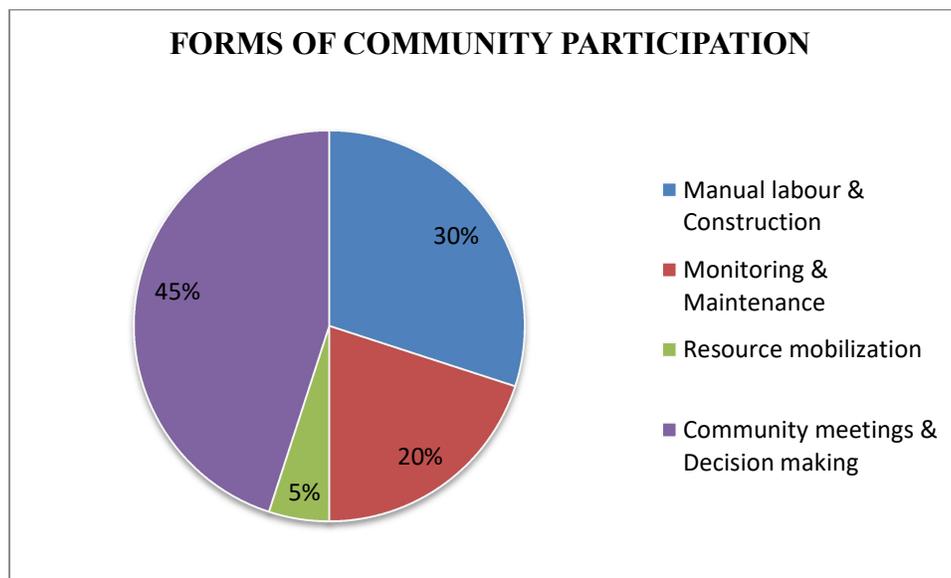


Figure 3: Pie diagram showing the forms of Community Participation in Rural Development Projects

8. Assets created across Khels in Kohima Village over the past five (5) years with assistance from department of Rural Development

Name of the asset	Name of Khel			
	Lhisemia (L Khel)	Tsütüonuomia (T Khel)	Dapfhütsumia (D Khel)	Pfuchatsumia (P Khel)



Footsteps	5	6	5	5
Fishery Pond	5	7	5	5
Retaining wall	7	7	8	6
Agri-link road	5	5	6	5
Road widening	4	4	3	3
Community Toilet	6	8	5	5
Community well	5	7	6	6

Table 1: Assets created across Khels in Kohima Village over the past five (5) years with assistance from Department of Rural Development

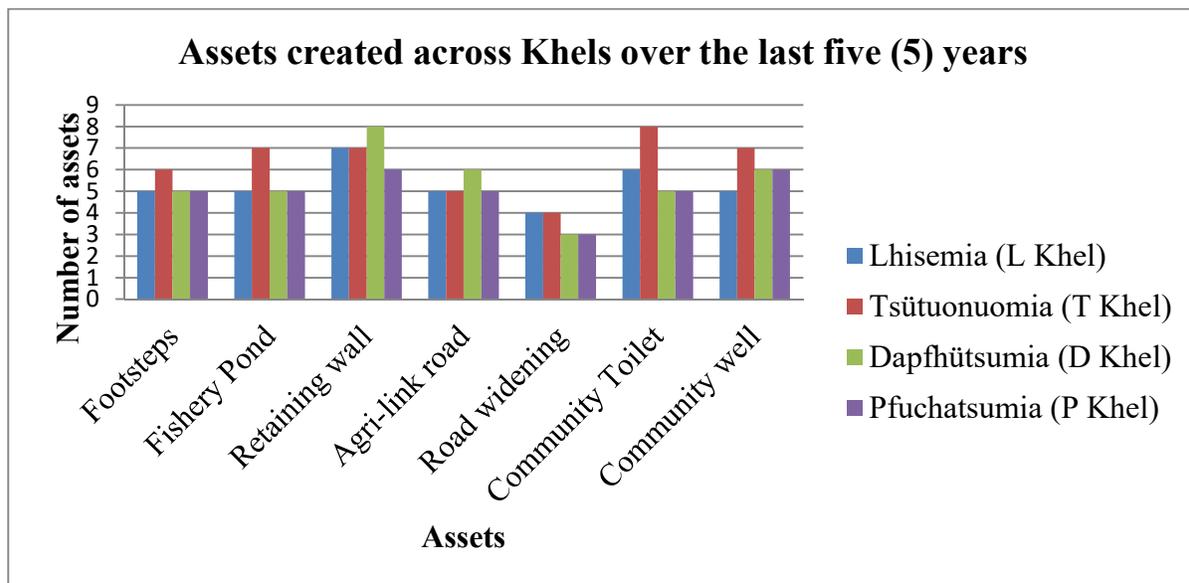


Figure 4: Bar graphs showing the number of assets created across Khels in Kohima Village

This bar graph presents a comparison of the number of infrastructure and assets across four created across four different Khels i.e L Khel (Lhisemia), T Khel (Tsütuoenuomia), D Khel (Dapfhütsumia), and P Khel (Pfuchatumia) of Kohima Village. For each Khel, the bars represent the number of assets corresponding to various categories, such as Footsteps, Fishery Ponds, Retaining Walls, Agri-link Roads, Road Widening, Community Toilets, and Community Wells. This figure reflects the quantity of assets in each Khel indicating the distribution of resources and infrastructure.

In regard to assets created, T Khel (Tsütuoenuomia) has the highest number of assets in certain categories. Explicitly, it has the largest number of Fishery Ponds (7) and Community Toilets (8). These figures indicated that T Khel has a higher emphasis on water management and sanitation that is essential



for supporting local agriculture and public health. On the other hand, D Khel (Dapfhütsumia) leads in the number of Retaining Walls (8), indicating a concern on land stability and erosion control. This reflects their priorities related to protecting infrastructure from environmental factors.

While T Khel and D Khel stand out in some categories, the distribution of assets across other categories is almost balanced as for example the number of Footsteps, Agri-link Roads and Community Wells is relatively consistent across the Khels. However, the Road Widening projects are noticeably fewer in all Khels, with both D Khel and P Khel having the least number of these projects. This suggests that road widening is not feasible in many places due to already existing build up infrastructure near the road sides.

Overall, the figure provides insight into how different khels prioritize various types of infrastructure and community assets. For example, T Khel appears to focus on water management and sanitation, while D Khel places greater emphasis on protecting infrastructure from environmental factors. Through these findings, policymakers/planners can better allocate resources and plan for future development based on the specific needs of each Khel.

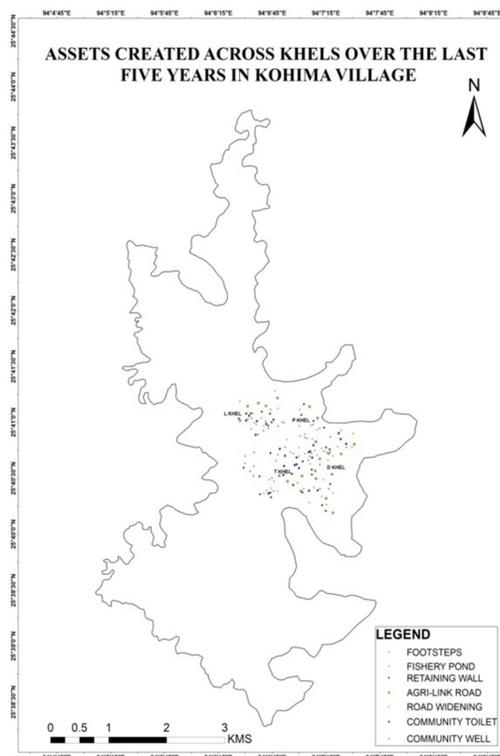


Figure 5: Map showing the assets created across Khels in Kohima Village

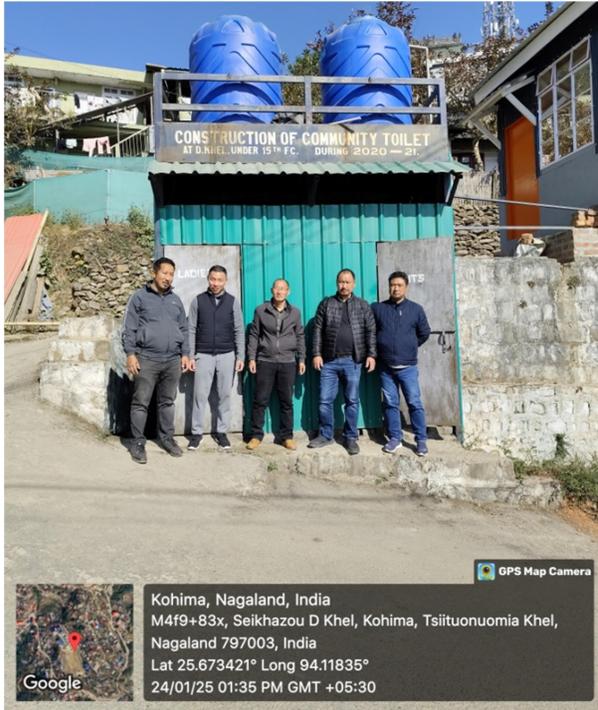




Plate 6: PI and Co-PIs' visiting the various assets created in the Village

9. Reasons for non-participation in Rural Development Projects





Plate 7: PI and Co-PIs' interacting with the beneficiaries of Kohima Village

1. Lack of Awareness or Information

The survey results indicate that while 45% of respondents participated in community meetings and decision-making, a significant portion of the population did not. This suggests that those who did not participate were unaware of upcoming projects or not fully informed about the purpose or benefits of the initiatives. Without clear communication about opportunities to engage, individuals did not take part in activities or even recognize their potential contributions.

2. Limited Access to Resources or Time

Only 30% of respondents participated in manual labour and construction, which involves physically demanding tasks that often require significant time and resources. Many individuals, especially those engaged in other livelihoods, have not been able to spare their time or energy needed to take part in these labour-intensive activities.

3. Low Participation in Monitoring and Maintenance

The relatively low level of participation in monitoring and maintenance activities (20%) suggests that many community members did not see the value in this type of involvement. Some perceive these activities as less urgent or immediate compared to construction projects, which have more visible and tangible results. Additionally, there is a lack of training or awareness on the importance of ongoing maintenance for the sustainability of development projects.



4. Distrust in Project Outcomes

The relatively small number of respondents involved in **resource mobilization** (5%) indicates a lack of trust or confidence in the effectiveness of the projects. Community members have witnessed previous development efforts were not successfully implemented or did not yield lasting benefits, which made them less inclined to participate in future initiatives.

5. Social or Cultural Barriers

While the survey doesn't explicitly break down participation by gender or age, certain groups, such as women, the elderly, or marginalized social groups, did not feel encouraged or empowered to participate in certain forms of development. For example, manual labour and construction are traditionally seen as male-dominated activities in many rural communities, which has limit involvement of women or older individuals.

6. Lack of Skills or Confidence

Some individuals feel that they lack the necessary skills or expertise to contribute to more specialized activities, such as resource mobilization or monitoring and maintenance. This explains the lower level of participation in these areas (only 5% and 20%, respectively). With no adequate training or mentorship, individuals feel that their contributions would not be valuable or effective.

10. Potential for Community Participation in Rural Development Projects

1. Economic improvements or income-generating activities, or social welfare programs can create a more stable environment in which individuals and households have the capacity to engage in development initiatives.
2. Higher education and access to training programs can significantly increase a community's ability to participate in decision-making and project implementation. Educated individuals are more likely to understand complex development processes and are empowered to advocate for their needs.
3. Recognizing and engaging with existing social structures can enhance participation. For example, involving respected community leaders or elders in facilitating projects can foster greater trust and ensure that initiatives align with local values. Community-driven processes that respect and incorporate traditional knowledge may be more successful.



4. Strengthening community organizations and promoting social networks can provide a foundation for participation. These groups can serve as platforms for information dissemination, collective decision-making, and resource mobilization.
5. Gender-sensitive development approaches that seek to empower women through education, leadership training, or targeted interventions can unlock significant potential for participation. Women's involvement in rural development not only improves outcomes for women but also positively impacts overall community development.

11. Long term impact of community participation in Rural Development Projects

Determining the long-term impacts of community participation on rural development project sustainability and community development outcomes is critical to understanding the effectiveness of participatory approaches and ensuring that these initiatives lead to lasting benefits. Community participation is often seen as essential for achieving both immediate project success and long-term sustainability. However, the real benefits such as the ability of communities to manage their own development, improve quality of life, and increase resilience are often realized over time.

Here's an analysis of the long-term impacts of community participation on rural development project sustainability and community development outcomes:

1. Enhanced Project Sustainability

Long-term sustainability is the key goal for rural development projects and community participation plays a pivotal role in ensuring that projects continue to function effectively after external support has ended.

a) Ownership and Accountability

Community participation fosters a sense of ownership among local people. In situations where community members are actively involved in the design, implementation, and management of a project, they are more probably to take responsibility for its long-term success. This sense of ownership leads to increased commitment to maintaining project outputs, ensuring they are sustained even without ongoing external support.

b) Capacity Building for Local Management



Through participation, communities gain skills and knowledge that help them manage projects independently. This capacity building leads to the development of local institutions, such as community management committees or cooperatives, that can continue to oversee projects long after they are completed.

2. Improved Community Development Outcomes

Community participation directly influences a variety of socio-economic and cultural outcomes that contribute to overall community development. Over time, the collective benefits of participation can transform communities and improve quality of life.

a) Increased Social Capital

One of the long-term impacts of community participation is the development of social capital - the networks, trust, and relationships that bind community members together. This social cohesion leads to more effective collective action, a stronger sense of solidarity, and improved conflict resolution mechanisms.

b) Empowerment and Inclusive Development

Community participation promotes empowerment, particularly among marginalized groups such as women, youth, and indigenous people. Over the long term, participation can lead to changes in gender roles, increase social mobility, and improve access to resources, leading to more inclusive development.

c) Improved Access to Basic Services

Involving communities in the design and implementation of projects ensures that services are more aligned with local needs. This can lead to long-term improvements in access to basic services like water, education, healthcare etc. Communities that participate are more likely to advocate for services, ensure their sustainability, and hold service providers accountable.

d) Economic Growth and Diversification

Participation in development projects often leads to improved economic conditions, either through the direct benefits of the projects. Over time, community members develop new skills and diversify their livelihoods, which strengthen their economic resilience.



12. Suggestions

1. Providing continuous training in **project management**, **financial literacy**, and relevant technical skills enables communities to independently manage and sustain projects. Peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange will further enhance local expertise.
2. Promoting **inclusive development** ensures that marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, are involved in decision-making, leading to more equitable and sustainable outcomes. Women's involvement in leadership and skill-building can significantly improve community resilience.
3. Building **social capital** through **community cohesion** is also essential. Encouraging collaboration and trust among community members will ensure that they can mobilize resources effectively and address challenges together, contributing to long-term project sustainability.
4. Environmental sustainability is another critical consideration. Integrating **sustainable practices**, **resource conservation**, and **climate adaptation** strategies will ensure that the project can withstand environmental challenges and protect the community's resources.

13. Conclusion

The assessment of community participation in rural development projects underscores the key role of local involvement in achieving successful, sustainable, and impactful outcomes. Active community participation enhances the **applicability** and **effectiveness** of development interventions, as it ensures that the projects are aligned with the specific needs, values, and aspirations of the people they are meant to benefit. When communities are involved in decision-making, resource management, and the implementation process, they are more probably to take ownership of the project, leading to a greater sense of responsibility and commitment to its long-term success of the development projects.

However, the degree to which participation translates into positive outcomes depends on a range of factors, including **leadership** and the **capacity** of local stakeholders to manage and sustain the project over time. Strong, inclusive leadership is crucial for fostering collaboration and ensuring that marginalized groups such as women, youth, and other vulnerable populations are actively involved in all stages of the project. This inclusivity not only promotes equity but also contributes to social cohesion and solidarity, which are key for overcoming challenges and achieving collective goals.



Another critical aspect that influences the effectiveness of community participation is the **development of local capacity**. By providing communities with the necessary training and resources whether in **project management, technical skills, or financial management**, rural populations are better equipped to handle the challenges that arise during and after the project. Furthermore, fostering **financial sustainability** through income-generating activities, savings groups, or local business ventures ensures that projects can continue to thrive without ongoing external aid.

The environmental sustainability of rural development projects is also closely tied to community involvement. When communities are empowered to manage natural resources whether through **the practices of sustainable agriculture, conservation strategies or climate change adaptation practices**, they are more likely to protect and preserve their local ecosystems for future generations. Thus, community participation is not only about social and economic empowerment but also about ensuring the long-term environmental health of rural areas.

Finally, this assessment highlights that while the involvement of communities is fundamental; ensuring the long-term success of rural development projects requires continuous monitoring, adaptation, and support. Establishing **robust monitoring and evaluation** systems, coupled with periodic feedback from the community, is essential to ensure that the project remains relevant and responsive to emerging challenges. The **partnerships** formed between local communities, government agencies, can further enhance the sustainability and scalability of these initiatives.

In sum, the findings of this assessment emphasize that community participation is not just a procedural element but a core strategy for achieving rural development goals. By integrating communities into the heart of development efforts, fostering local leadership and skills, and ensuring that projects are environmentally and financially sustainable, rural development projects can deliver lasting benefits that strengthen the resilience and well-being of rural populations. Therefore, future rural development initiatives must prioritize community participation as a key driver of success, ensuring that development is both inclusive and sustainable in the long term.

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