Participatory Communication Strategies for Enhancement of Development in Kenya: Migori County Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Projects

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ABSTRACT

In Kenya, the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is a devolved system established by an Act of parliament in 2003 to help achieve socio-economic development at the constituency level. The CDF Act 2003 stipulates that Members of Parliament (MP) and local citizens jointly collaborate in prioritization and implementation of local development projects in their constituencies. Research has shown that while the general public awareness of CDF projects is high, community participation in CDF projects is minimal. The Literature reviewed shows that minimal research has been done to assess communication strategies used to disseminate CDF information among stakeholders at the grass root levels. This paper describes the communication strategies used to disseminate CDF information in Rongo and Uriri Constituencies in Kenya and analyzes how these strategies impacts on community participation in CDF projects in these constituencies. The study was based on the Multiplicity approach to development communication in which communication is shifted from persuasion to participation through dialogue. It was developed through the pragmatic philosophical paradigm using convergent mixed parallel design. The study involved a total of 104 adult participants in Rongo and Uriri Constituencies of Migori County in Kenya. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected roughly at the same time and were merged in the interpretation of the overall results. Quantitative and qualitative data were displayed jointly using tables and charts. The study carried out in August 2013 found that CDF systems in Rongo and Uriri constituencies lack established communication strategies. Dissemination of CDF information to community members is done in public gatherings and functions where communication is mainly for creating awareness. As a result, participation of community members in CDF projects is minimal. The study therefore recommends the use of participatory communication strategies to enhance community participation in CDF projects.

Key words: development, participatory communication, devolved system

Introduction

Development communication continues to receive significant recognition in the world today. According to The World Bank (2002), development communication is viewed as the integration of strategic communication in development projects based on a clear understanding of indigenous realities. Development communication combines a series of elements including extensive use of data, careful planning, stakeholder participation, creativity, high-quality programming and linkages to other program elements that stimulate positive and measurable behavior change among the intended audience. All these attempts are meant to inform, create awareness and educate the people so that they can better their lives in every way.

Participation has become the dominating ideology in contemporary thinking in both non-governmental organizations, governmental and inter-governmental agencies; therefore, most international agencies are now incorporating participatory approaches on development projects. Participatory communication, an aspect of development communication, ensures that a message is constructed jointly within a group that aims at the improvement of their existential situation and to change of the social structure. Melkote and Steeves (2001) associate participatory communication with "peoples' empowerment to enable them to actively contribute in the decision-making process within development programs" (p. 36) while White (1994), views it as a process of creating and sharing knowledge, understanding and meanings among stakeholders, and where the project beneficiaries (targeted for change) are actively engaged in the design and implementation of project activities at various levels to achieve the desired goals.

The Kenyan Government over the years, has enhanced Community participation in development through decentralized programs funded through devolved funds such as District Development Fund Program (1966), the Special Rural Development Program (1969/70), District Development Planning (1971) and the District Focus for Rural Development (1983/84) ("District Focus for Rural Development", 1995).

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) system in Kenya was established by an Act of Parliament in 2003

to achieve socio-economic development at constituency level. CDF is financed by 2.5% of all government revenue every financial year; 75% of CDF fund is purposed to be shared equally among the current 290 constituencies, while 25% is allocated on the basis of poverty level indices as provided by the Ministry of Planning and National Development (CDF Act 2003, part 2). This is to ensure that poorly developed constituencies reach the near normal level of development or that they are not left behind.

Since CDF kitty was managed by the Kenyan Members of Parliament (MP), political influences were seen to affect implementation of its objectives. According to Ongoya (2005), nothing prevents the MP from handpicking the members of the CDF committee because the CDF Act 2003 does not provide checks and procedures in selecting the CDF committee. In view of this, the revised CDF Act 2013 changed the establishment and composition of both the national and local CDF committees and reduced the powers of the MP who no longer becomes the chairperson but an ex-officio in the CDF committee. Further, this Act gives a provision for public participation through open public meetings held in every Ward in Kenya within the first year of new parliament and at least once every two years to deliberate on development matters of the Ward and the Constituency(CDF Act 2013 part IV 24; 3a).

Gikonyo (2008), notes that the public should get involved in CDF through the project committees that implement CDF projects or through self-initiated local development committees that monitor the implementation of CDF in the constituency or directly by attending CDF meetings.

Taking cognizance of the role of communication in development, the objectives of the study was to describe communication strategies used in CDF programmes and to find out how these communication strategies used impact on community participation in CDF projects.

Limitations of the study

Though there are many factors that affect community participation in development, this study was limited to only one- communication strategies used among CDF stakeholders. We acknowledge the key role of communication in ensuring that information on development reach the right people and enable them make informed decisions. This study focused on how communication is used to ensure people participate in development. There are two hundred and ninety constituencies in Kenya, however, this study carried out in 2013 was limited to CDF projects initiated between the year 2003 and 2012 in Rongo and Uriri Constituencies of Migori County in Kenya. It covered sampled CDF projects in the two constituencies without comparing their level of success, focus being on communication strategies used and how these impact on community participation in those projects.

Significance of the study

This study provides useful information for incorporating communication in development. It provides information to stakeholders in CDF devolved systems on communication strategies they can use to improve community participation in CDF projects. Most importantly, this study highlights the need to use communication strategies that would emphasize dialogue among stakeholders in development projects. We believe that this information will help enhance community participation in development especially in the current devolved government systems in Kenya. The study will thus contribute to policy formulation and implementation so as to improve community participation in local development.

Study area

The study was conducted in Uriri and Rongo Constituencies of Migori County in Kenya. These two constituencies were purposively chosen because they were ranked among the bottom ten constituencies in the phase five (v) ranking of constituencies published by the National Tax Payers' Association in the year 2012 and 2013 (www.nta.or.ke). This report shows that in Uriri Constituency, 11% of the money allocated for the projects monitored in the financial year 2010/2011 were on badly implemented projects while 2% of the same amount was wasted on abandoned projects. The NTA's report on Citizen's Constituency Development Fund Report Card for Rongo Constituency shows that 16% of taxpayers' money allocated to monitored projects in financial year 2010/2011 was wasted on badly implemented projects while 9% of the total funds allocated to the monitored projects were unaccounted for (www.nta.or.ke). It would interest scholars and development partners to know why development funds would be wasted yet they should be of help to the community.

Research methodology

This study was adopted by Multiplicity approach to development communication. This approach considers development as a process of engaging stakeholders through dialogue and collaboration using horizontal communication strategies (Servaes, 1999). Multiplicity approach proposes a paradigm shift from earlier

development theories such as modernization and dependency theories. These theories employed diffusion models of communication using the mass media to transmit development information from the developed to the underdeveloped. However, in   multiplicity approach to development emphasis is on participation and communication is shifted from persuasion to participation through dialogue. The key function of communication is informing people and promoting change, yet emphasizing the importance of using communication to involve stakeholders in development process (Mefalopulos, 2008).

The use of interactive models of communication that promote the interaction between the sender and the receiver in the communication process is the core principle of participatory communication. The study therefore focused on analyzing the nature of communication between the community members and the Constituency Development Fund Committee. In dialogic communication both the sender and the receiver exchange roles in the communication process. In such an exchange, the community members would define their problems and needs such as: identification and prioritization projects to be undertaken, election of Constituency Development Fund Committee, project management committee and evaluation of the projects.

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed design. According to Creswell (2004), this is as a method of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data roughly at the same time and then merging both forms of data in the interpretation of the overall results. This choice was informed by the pragmatic philosophic paradigm which holds a pluralistic approach to derive knowledge about a problem. According to Creswell (2004), pragmatic philosophic paradigm opens door to multiple methods as well as different forms of data collection. Interviews were used to collect descriptive qualitative data from sampled key informants while semi-structured questionnaires were used to obtain quantitative data from community members. In essence, the use of mixed methods allowed the researcher to collect diverse types of data thereby deriving more information from the results which provides a more understanding of the research problem.

Findings were analyzed using a side by side approach. Using convergent parallel mixed design, a researcher can make comparison within a discussion, presenting first one set of findings then the other, then giving description and interpretation Creswell (2014). In this study, the quantitative statistical results based on community members' responses were first reported. The second stage involved changing qualitative themes into quantitative variables which were merged with quantitative data in tables, graphs and charts in a joint display of data. At the third stage, the researcher discussed the qualitative findings that either confirm or disconfirm and explain the statistical results. At this stage the utility of mixed methods approach was seen in the ability of the descriptive data to add explanations on the quantitative data.

Population description

The target population for this study was male and female adults who have lived in the constituencies for at least the past three years. This group was chosen because they are expected to have contributed in development projects in their communities. Nachmias & Nachmias (1996) defines a population as "the entire set of relevant units of analysis or data" (pg.179). A mixture of sampling techniques was used in this study. Four Wards from which data was collected were purposively sampled; two in a cosmopolitan semi-urban areas and another two in rural set ups.

Projects in the wards were grouped into two clusters; school projects and community projects. Sample units were obtained from these clusters using stratified sampling. According to Nachmias & Nachmias (1996), stratified sampling is done to ensure that different groups of a population are adequately represented in the sample so as to increase the level of accuracy when estimating parameters. The elements within each group were considered to be more alike. This choice was based on the assumption that the projects and their beneficiaries are different, therefore, some aspects of communication and community participation are likely to be different. Using snowball sampling, study participants were thus drawn from sampled two primary school projects, two secondary school and two community projects from each constituency.

Key informants which include members of CDF committees, members of school Parents Teachers Association (PTA)/ school Board Of Management (BOM) and Ward administrators were purposively sampled. These were individuals who hold key positions in the management of CDF projects therefore were useful in giving detailed qualitative data.

The study sampled 106 respondents. Out of these a total of 104 participated; 83 members of the community answered to the questionnaires while 21 key informants were interviewed.

Findings

Knowledge of CDF projects among community members

Out of 83 community members issued with questionnaires, 81 representing 98%, answered that they know CDF projects in their areas while 2 respondents representing 2% said that they did not know of any CDF projects in their areas. This shows high knowledge level of CDF projects among the community members. Some of the projects mentioned include constructions in schools, health centers, water projects and roads.

Communication strategies used in CDF programmes

It was found that CDF system does not have established communication strategies put in place to disseminate information. However, it uses other public gatherings/ fora within the community to disseminate information to the community members. Quantitative findings showed use of *Baraza* cited by 35% of the respondents, funerals 14%, churches 13%, schools 10%, billboards and posters 8%, political rallies 6%, friends and relatives 5%. Other channels of communication include radios 3% while 5% included newspapers, road shows and those who learnt about projects when they saw them. Interview responses also showed that *Baraza* is the commonly used forum, followed by funerals, Schools, churches and political gatherings. Others include billboards/notices/adverts, suggestion boxes and radios. *Baraza* is a consultative community meeting between ward administrators and community members.

It was found that the Constituency Development Fund Committee (DFC) formally recognizes the Project Management Committee (PMC), the lowest organ in the CDF system structure, which they rely on to pass CDF information at the community level. In school projects, school Head teachers inform the community members about such CDF projects during parents' meetings in schools. Findings also showed that informal interactions between CDFC, PMC and community members are used as avenues to pass CDF information.

In both quantitative and qualitative data, the most commonly used forum where CDF information is disseminated is *Baraza*. Use of CDFC/PMC was mentioned by CDFC members but was not cited by the community members. The PMC and CDFC pass CDF information to community members in *Baraza*, funerals and churches.
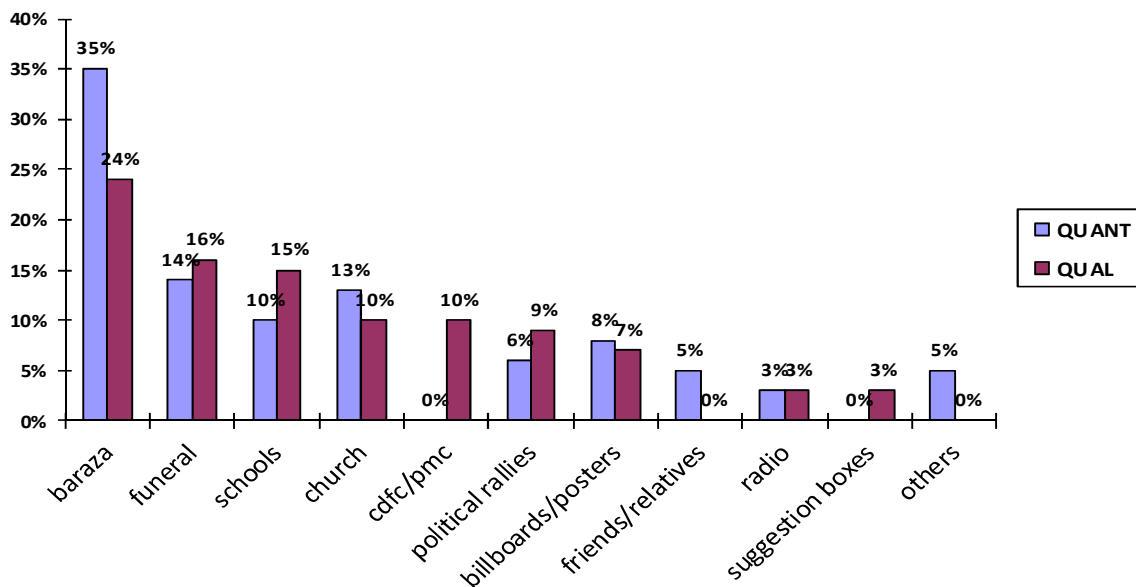

Figure 1.1 Joint data on communication strategies used in CDF

Community Participation in CDF projects

Community participation in elections of CDF representatives

There was no election of CDFC while the projects sampled in this study were undertaken. Members of CDFC were appointed by the area MP as provided for by CDF Act 2003.

The study found that constitution of Project Management Committee (PMC) is done differently. In some community projects the community members elect PMC while in school projects, the PMC are picked from the existing School Management Committees (SMC) who are the community members. However, this is not the case in all School projects. Findings in this study indicate that in some projects the PMCs are appointed outside the School Management Committees by the CDF executive or the MP.

10% of respondents who answered questionnaires showed that the PMC are elected by community members; 72 % said that the PMC are not elected by community members, while 18% did not know how the PMC is constituted.

There was convergence in the qualitative and quantitative findings on the constitution of PMC. 5 out of 8 members of the BOG/ PTA interviewed said that PMC in school projects are not directly elected but they are sampled from and already existing School Management Committees (SMC) who are the community members. This means that there is indirect participation of community members in the constitution of PMC.

However, this is not the case in all School projects. In Siala primary school project, Rongo Constituency, neither the community members nor members of Parents Teachers Association (PTA) participated in election of the PMC. Instead the PMC was appointed by the CDF executive. A similar case was found in Kamsaki Girls' secondary school project in Uriri Constituency where the appointment of the PMC was done by the CDFC executive instead of involving the community members and the school BOM. This confirms that the PMC in some cases is appointed by the CDFC executive showing lack of community participation.

In line with the structure of CDF, implementation of CDF projects is the mandate of the PMC in collaboration with the CDFC and other relevant bodies. This probably explains the findings that CDFC formally recognizes and works with the PMC and not the SMC unless the SMC serves as the PMC. The study noted that conflicts arise between the PMC and the SMC in cases where there is no community participation and representation in constitution of PMC.
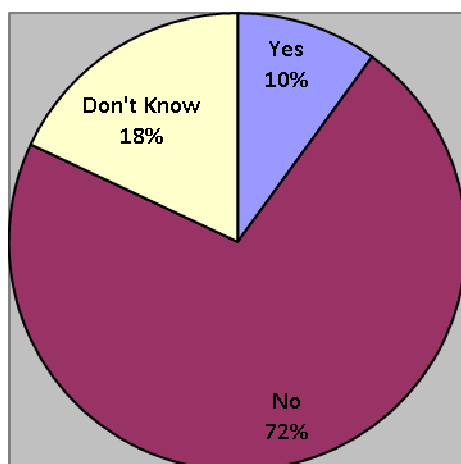

Figure 1. Community participation in election of PMC

Community participation in identification of CDF projects

Out of the 83 community members who answered questionnaires, 43% stated that CDF projects are identified by the community members, 25% do not know how the projects are identified, 24 % noted that CDF projects are identified by the area MP and CDF committee while 7 (8%) noted that CDF projects are identified by Local Development Committee.

According to the 9 CDFC members interviewed, 5 said the projects are identified by community members while 4 said the CDFC does it on behalf of the community members since they know development needs in their areas. Some school projects are identified by the PTA/ BOM who are community representatives. The study also found out that some projects are identified without community participation. In such cases, the MP together with the CDFC, identifies and allocates funds for projects, such as school projects. An example of such a project is Ramuoma primary school in Central Kanyamkago, Uriri constituency. The area residents, who learnt about the project during parents' meetings when the project was on-going, felt that they would have preferred water project as opposed to the classroom construction.

This study found out three different forms of participation in project identification: direct community involvement, indirect identification by representation and informal participation where projects are selected at the MP's discretion.

Table 1. Shows a summary of community participation in various CDF activities

Response	Project identification	Election of PMC	Project management	Project evaluation	Total
YES	43%	10%	30%	24%	26.75%
NO	32%	72%	59%	74%	59.25%
Don't know	25%	18%	11%	2%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Effects of Communication Strategies used in CDF on peoples' participation

57% of community members felt that the methods of dissemination of CDF information hindered community members from participating in CDF projects while 17% felt that the methods of disseminating CDF information highly hinder peoples' participation. They cited lack of proper ways of information dissemination on CDF activities such as election of PMC and identification of CDF projects as a course of lack of their participation in the projects. Some people failed to participate due to lack of information on when and how to participate. On the other hand, 19 % said the strategies encouraged participation while 7% said the strategies highly encourage them to participate. Nevertheless, all respondents felt that there is need to improve on the communication between the community members and the CDF office bearers.

Qualitative data showed the following findings: six out of nine members of PTA/BOM and three out of four Ward administrators felt that the communication strategies used in CDF hindered community members from participating in the projects. Ward administrators who chair *Baraza* meetings, felt that there was inadequate time allocated to discuss CDF matters with community members which results to limited knowledge among the community members on how and where they should participate in the projects. Four out of this group said that the strategies encouraged community participation in CDF projects.

Responses from CDFC members contrast these findings. 5 out of 9 felt that communication strategies used encouraged citizen participation, while 3 felt that to some extent communication strategies used hinder community participation. One respondent was non-committal on this question. Those who felt that the methods encouraged community participation said there are no better ways to let the community members know more about CDF other than through the gatherings they have used like *baraza,* schools and churches. However, those who answered "NO" felt that there is need for them to organize CDF meetings where they can meet community members frequently to discuss CDF matters, something that has been overlooked and can be done by proper funding of the committee.
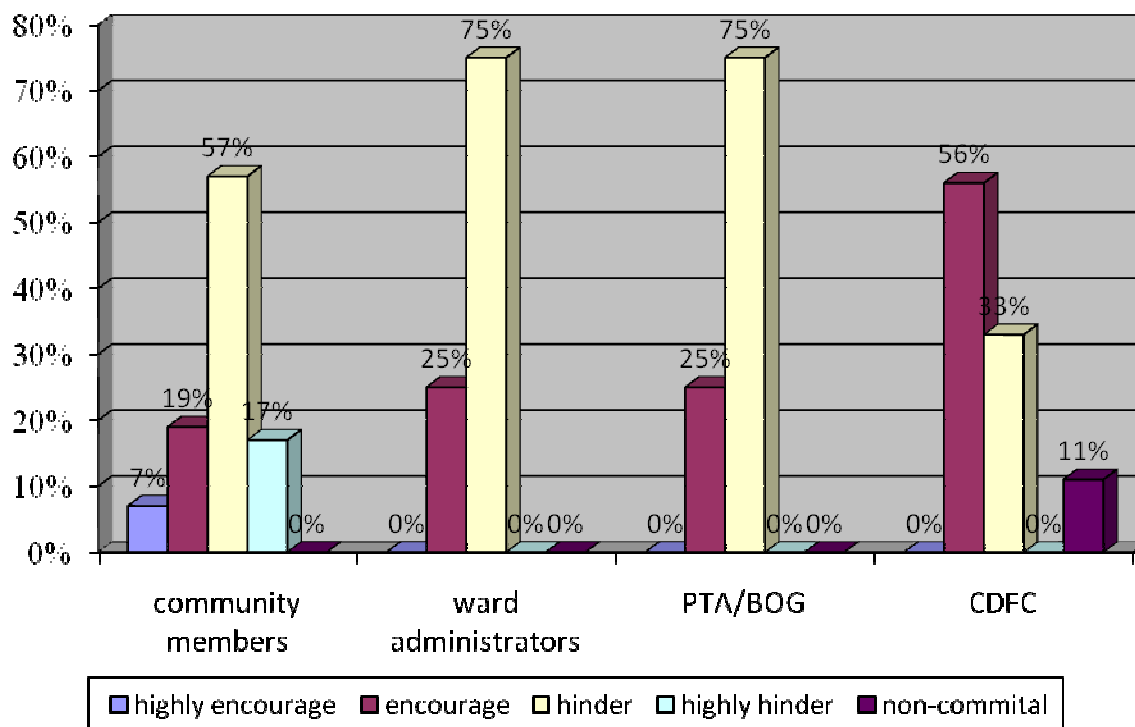
Fig. 2. showing effects of communication strategies on community Participation in CDF

Discussions

Findings of this study indicate that majority 98% of community members in Uriri and Rongo constituencies in Kenya know about CDF projects. This information is consistent with other research by the Social and Public Accountability Network (SPAN) and Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) on CDF Social Audit (2010) which showed that public awareness on CDF in Kenya is 96%. Information about CDF projects is disseminated in public gatherings such as *Baraza*, funerals, schools and political rallies. *Baraza* is a community based consultative meeting where Ward Administrator (formerly Chief) meet their community members on regular basis. While *Baraza* is the most commonly used gathering where CDF information is disseminated, in this study those who get CDF information from *Baraza* are only 35%. This low rating could be attributed to low turnout of people in *Baraza.*

A closer look at the nature of communication in *Baraza* shows that Ward Administrators discuss administrative matters such as local and national security issues, conflict resolution, peace and cohesion and education among others. They also create awareness at the grass root levels on general government policies such as registration of citizens and provisions of government funds for local citizens. In the old national government structure, the core functions of Chief was maintenance of law and order or crime prevention, environmental protection and health and also quasi- judicial and administrative work relating to land and conflict resolution, peace building or cohesion. The chiefs were perceived as very powerful leaders while the people were their subjects.

Within the CDF Act, Ward Administrator does not have an explicit role. However, in practice having realized that the Ward Administrators can be effective in information dissemination and public mobilization, many MPs and the CDFC involve Chiefs in communication of CDF information. Gikonyo (2008) argues that in areas where the local Chiefs (currently Ward Administrators) have a good working relationship with the community and the councilor (currently Ward Representative), they can greatly assist in CDF implementation. However, the local Chief can also be a stumbling block if they decide to collude with corrupt CDF members or if they decide to undermine the sitting MP for political reasons. This coupled with the fact that CDF matters such as election of CDF representatives, allocation of funds and management of CDF projects are political yet the Ward Administrators are supposed to be non-partisan in political matters, this study found that in *Baraza*, the Ward administrators have their agenda and because it is not a CDF meeting, CDF information is mainly communicated

to create awareness.

Lack of community participation in CDF projects is noted in cases where projects are 'awarded' to the people by the MP and where PMC is appointed by the CDF executive. In such cases the PMC are not answerable to the community members and as a result the projects face difficulty in implementation; some poorly done while others are abandoned. The study found such abandoned projects in Mukuyu primary School and Cham gi Wadu water project as shown in the figure below.

fig. 3. Showing Cham-gi-Wadu water project, Rongo constituency, funded by CDF, 2007.

The community members around Cham-gi-wadu water project are disappointed that they have to walk long distances in search for water yet a borehole was sunk and abandoned before completion. Mefalopulos (2008) argues that participatory communication enhances commitment so that people see the development initiative through until it is completed. In order to prevent such projects being abandoned, the community members should be involved in the project implementation so that they ensure their completion.

This study found poorly implemented projects in Ombo Kawiti Dam, Uriri constituency as shown in the figure below.

Fig.4 Showing Ombo-Kawiti Dam project, Uriri constituency.

In this project, the dam is not completely done. The drainage area gets muddy and the community members are not in charge of the dam showing that they do not own the project. Others projects are Siala Primary school and Cham gi Wadu primary school project in Rongo constituency. The latter was started, abandoned and started again thereby taking along period to complete. In Siala primary School respondents felt that the project was poorly done because management of the projects *"are in the hands of people imposed on the people by the MP"*. Members of PTA (who are the community representatives) are left out in the planning and management of CDF projects in their school thereby questioning the ownership of the projects.

Servaes et al. (1996) suggests several participatory communication strategies that can be used in development projects. One of these is Group meetings and discussions. This strategy involves the organization of a forum to get people involved and create awareness of issues of development and to subsequently find consensus on solutions. Such meetings between the community and the project staff should be open-ended with the project staff playing mostly the role of facilitators. This will ensure they do not decide for the people what should be done rather give direction on how to reach at a solution. They point out that such group meetings should not be inclusive of all community members regardless of their status but rather segmented into smaller homogenous groups to maximize individual participation. Participatory Communication can be organized among peers and through natural leaders such as respected community members with no official position but are satisfied acceptors of new measures or technologies. According to Servaes et al (1996), peer communication in groups and individual consultations has been found to be effective in creating trust and empowerment because this form of communication necessitates dialogue among the peers who are free to air their views.

Another strategy is the use of Local radio and live broadcast on location. This technique involves a team of radio producers who visit a community, produce programs locally with the active involvement of the community members, and broadcast from the field location (ibid). Participatory Radio Listening Clubs case study used in Takondwa village in Malawi is probably an example of a successful people-centred development initiative resulting from citizen engagement in public discussion (The World Bank, 2007). The public space created by Takondwa Radio Listening Clubs (RLC) gave citizens opportunity to discuss and actively give their priority in adapting to climatic change (Manyonzo, 2005). Using this strategy, the communities mobilize themselves into groups to create interactive radio forums with the CDF stake holders where they give their views on prioritization of projects and election of management committee

According to Multiplicity approach, it is at the community level where problems of living conditions are discussed and interactions with other members of the community elicited. The CDF Act gives this provision by stating that projects be identified in community meetings held at the ward level before being submitted to the CDFC and onward transmission for funding (CDF Act, 2003 section 23 (2, 3 &4) revised 2007, 2013). However, only 43% of community members showed that they participate in project identification, 32% showed that projects are identified by CDF committee representatives while 25% do not know how the projects are identified. Similarly, 72% of community members did not participate in election of PMC while 18% do not know how PMC is constituted. This shows that there is a gap between policy and practice.

Participatory communication also enhances commitment so that people see the development initiative through until it is completed. This prevents instances of abandoned or neglected projects such as those found in this study. Lastly, it builds up peoples' confidence and capabilities to undertake future initiatives to address other development concerns. This is because people feel their efforts and views are valued therefore they can take up a challenge to oversee new projects with confidence (ibid).

Conclusion

This study established that while the general awareness of CDF among the community members in Rongo and Uriri constituencies in Kenya is high, community participation in CDF projects is still minimal. This minimal participation in the CDF projects can be attributed to the lack of communication strategies developed by the CDF system. At the grass root level, the CDF system depends on public gatherings such as *baraza*, funerals, political rallies churches and school meetings to disseminate CDF information to community members. Nevertheless, communication in such fora is majorly for awareness creation. There is little opportunity for the community members to engage in dialogue with other CDF stakeholders. As a result, views of most community members are not incorporated in CDF projects. Evidence show that some CDF projects are abandoned while some are poorly implemented due to lack of proper collaboration between the CDF stakeholders and the community members.

This study recommends the use of participatory communication strategies such as consultative community meetings between CDFC and community members purely organized to discuss CDF matters. Such meetings should be done at the community level where all members of the community are free to attend. In such meetings, the community members should be given the opportunity to highlight their problems and come up with solutions, while the other stakeholders should give directions on how to arrive at the solutions. The location and the format of the community meeting should be publicized well in advance and agenda sent out so as to prepare the constituents for the discussion ahead. There is need to use Media advocacy including use of Local radio and live broadcast on location. The use of community media which mobilize community to create small interactive forums and discursive groups are effective in enhancing participatory communication.

Secondly, this study recommends that community members should be empowered to enable them know their roles in CDF projects. Participatory communication will not only give community a platform to give their voice but it will also empower them to own and control the process of development. Empowerment ensures that community members have access to information which will aid in effective decision making.

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