

# Community Participation in Urban Road Infrastructure Development Projects: The Case of Wolkite Town, Ethiopia

Fekadu Mersha Zeliku,  
Lecturer & Researcher, Dilla University Center for studies of Women,  
Children and Youth (CSWCY), Dilla, Ethiopia  
Email: befmersha@gmail.com

## Abstract

Community participation is regarded as an important approach adopted in development projects. This study seeks to examine community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town, Ethiopia. A convergent mixed design was adopted whereby data was gathered through questionnaires, key informants interview, focused group discussions and document analysis. A sample of 366 household heads, 21 focused group participants and 9 key informants were selected utilizing purposive and simple random sampling techniques' to elicit information for this study. Data obtained from focus group discussion and interviews were analyzed qualitatively, and used for the purpose of triangulation. The study found that the level of community participation in Road infrastructure development projects was generally low. Besides the majority of community members were not aware of their roles and responsibilities in road development projects and that urban residents were generally not actively involved in decision making, planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. Findings also revealed that the institutional structures installed by the municipality to involve communities in local development initiatives especially roads are highly disorganized and unsustainable implying that community participation in road infrastructure development projects was carried out in campaigns and was not well institutionalized in the Town. The major challenges that hinder community participation in road infrastructure development were lack of awareness, poor coordination and communication between local authorities and communities, weak institutional structures and lack of resources. The paper concludes that for effective community participation in urban road development projects, overcoming barriers to participation and promoting more participatory approach was essential.

**Keywords:** Community Participation, Challenges, Urban Road Infrastructure Development Projects, Wolkite Town.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Back Ground of the Study.

Community participation is one of the important approaches adopted in development endeavor. With the transition from place-based to people-based development, a paradigm shift to participatory development emerged (Ndunge & Mbukusab, 2020). Since then, the focus of development has shifted to the active participation of grassroots citizens in development initiatives, rather than simply becoming beneficiaries of development

Participatory development is an important approach towards enabling communities to play an active role in projects initiated to address issues affecting their life and livelihoods, thereby assure the sustainability of such projects (World Bank, 2004). As noted by Thwala (2010) communities are no longer mere recipients of development projects; rather they have become critical stakeholders that have an important role to play in the planning, implementation, management and evaluation of projects in their areas.

Community participation has been part of development policy, programmes and projects in both developing and developed countries (UNDP, 2009). Community may participate in different development activities such as building infrastructures such as roads, health services and education development. Effective project management practices mainly involve the participation of community members in processes of identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (USAID, 2009). The most widely accepted and adopted strategy for ensuring people's participation in local development is decentralization and there is, perhaps, no other institution close enough like local government to provide the scope and platform for people's participation in their own development.

During the past decades a number of developing countries including Ethiopia have undergone decentralization within the existing organizational structure with the expectations of increased local participation in decisions and improved system efficiency (Saito, 2008). The argument is local governments are closer and more in touch with the community and this is hypothesized to be a better position to deliver basic services more efficiently and effectively according to the local needs and priorities than the central government (*Ibid*).

In this context, Tegegne & Clacey (2011) asserted that the rationale for decentralization is not only the

transfer of significant amounts of power or authority, functions and capacity from central government to local governments but also promoting high-level community participation, democratic governance and maximum accountability of decision-making.

While the decentralization framework creates the conditions for real community participation in several development programs/projects of local governments in reality the participation of communities were very limited in many spheres in which Wolkite Town is no exception.

The participation of the community in development projects/ programs was limited against the municipality need. As a result there was still a need to come up with better ways by which the community will be in a position to participate fully in road infrastructure development projects. Due to this fact the road infrastructure development of the town has been poorly developed, therefore examining community participation status, unpacking the challenges and explore strategies for improving community participation in development intervention is crucial.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem.**

Given the unprecedented rate of urbanization in Ethiopia and the lack of municipal revenues to meet the growing needs, significant gaps have been emerged in access to basic services and infrastructure in cities/towns (World Bank, 2018). As a response to these gaps, governments at all levels have made efforts to collaborate with multiple stakeholders in reducing urban poverty and improving infrastructure to boost urban residents' livelihoods.

In view of this, Ethiopia's urban local governments are responsible for providing "state services," such as education, health, justice, and security and "municipal services," such as roads, drainage, sanitation, and solid waste collection and disposal (Tegegne & Clacey, 2011; World Bank, 2015; Tafa & Letu, 2018). But they often lack the capacity to fulfill their responsibilities. With this limited capacity of local governments, it is much harder for cities to provide the necessary infrastructure and services for rapidly growing urban populations. In response, several approaches have been tried over time. The supply approach was first adopted by government but community involvement in urban infrastructure development was promoted in its quest for alternatives.

Community participation approach in urban infrastructure helps to generate or mobilize enough resources from both local government and the community towards the implementation of projects. As such all municipal functions in Ethiopia are expected to be financed from own local revenues that the involvement of urban residents to fill such infrastructure gaps is important (MUDHC, 2014). The involvement of the community in various development projects and programs, such as road development, has drawn a great deal of interest among many researchers. Accordingly, a substantial body of research has been conducted globally, but there are few studies focusing on the issue in Ethiopia. For example studies have been done on practices/status, challenges and the role that the local community participation plays in roads development projects at local level (Dodajo, Serbech & Asfaw, 2014; Meskerm, 2015; Seboka, Assmie & Ibrahim, 2020). However, none of these studies address the institutional mechanisms or arrangements through which community members were involved in road development projects. In addition, no such study has been conducted in Wolkite Town.

According to Wolkite Town administration (2020) some concerted efforts has been making to participate urban communities in various local development projects such as road infrastructure development using multiple approaches; however community involvement continues to be very limited. Therefore, to fill the above mentioned gaps and by taking the faced problems in to account this study tried to examine community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town, Ethiopia.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study.**

The overall objective of the study was to examine community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town. More specifically, the purpose of this study include:-

- (i) To investigate the institutional frameworks for community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town,
- (ii) To assess the extent of community participation in urban road infrastructure development in Wolkite Town and,
- (iii) To identify the challenges for effective community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects in the Town.

### **1.4. Scope of the study.**

This research was conducted at Wolkite Town in Gurage Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR). For the purpose of its manageability, the study was delimited to examine gravel and cobble stone roads development projects in the town. Furthermore, the study was focused only on the institutional contexts, extent and major challenges of community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects in the period between 2016 to 2020.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Study Site.

The study was conducted in Wolkite town, the capital Town of Gurage Zone, in southern, Nations, Nationalities and People Region (SNNPR). It is one of the twenty two reform towns opted as a hub of development in the region (Kumel, 2014). Wolkite Town located at 158 km South-West of Addis Ababa along the main road to Jimma Town. Geographically, the town roughly lies between 8°17'- 8° 28' North latitude and 37° 17'-37°47' East longitude. The town has six administrative units named kebeles (the lowest unit of urban administration). Cobble stone road development was a recent phenomenon in the town.

### 2.2. Research Design.

In this research project the researcher used a convergent mixed method design. This method of research was preferred because a researcher was able to develop a complete understanding of the existing problem by obtaining different but complementary data. According to Creswell & Plano clark, (2018) a convergent design is adopted in order to look at issues from different perspectives and to triangulates findings.

### 2.3. Sampling and Sample Size.

A multi stage sampling design was applied in this study. In the first stage out of the three sub cities of wolkite town two of them i.e Bekur and Addis were selected purposively as they comprised a larger portion of the Town's built up area and population. And then one kebele from Addis and two from Bekur totally three kebeles were included in the study using simple random sampling techniques (*see* Table 1). List of household heads of each three sampled kebeles was used as a sampling frame to draw household survey participants. Finally, from the total 7696 household heads in the three sampled kebeles 366 of them were drawn using sample size determination formula adapted by Ross, Lawrence & Thomas (2002) as follows:-

$$n = \frac{NZ^2 \times 0.25}{(d^2 \times (N-1) + (Z^2 \times 0.25))}$$

Where, n = sample size required,  
 N = Total population size  
 d = precision level (0.05)  
 Z = confidence level (95% confidence level = 1.96).

$$n = \frac{7696 \times 1.96^2 \times 0.25}{(0.05^2 \times (7696-1) + (1.96^2 \times 0.25))} = 366$$

Therefore, n= 366

Following the total sample size was determined, the sample size for each kebele was computed from the total sample size based on the heads of the household size of each kebele to ensure a proportional representation of each, as highlighted in Table 1: below:-

TABLE 1: Distribution of household head respondents from each kebeles.

| S.No | Name of sub cities | Name of kebeles | Targeted population | Share of each kebele from the total sample size |
|------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---|
| 1    | Addis              | Ediget Chora    | 2090                | 100   |
|      |                    | Selam Ber       | 2823                | 134   |
| 2    | Bekur              | Ediget Ber      | 2783                | 132   |
|      |                    | <b>Total</b>    | 7696                | 366   |

Source: Own calculation, 2020.

Furthermore, 9 key informants and 21 focus group participants were recruited using purposive sampling techniques. In general the total sample size used in this study was about 396.

### 2.4. Method of data collection.

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to examine community participation in road infrastructure development projects through generating the primary and secondary data that are needed to achieve the predetermined objectives. In line with this, the study used well pre-tested questionnaires containing questions which composed of open ended and close ended questions, interview, Focus group discussion and desk review. The reasons behind using a combination of such methods were to reduce the limitations of each method. Therefore, all the available data instruments used in the study collectively ensured the validity and reliability of the data.

## 2.5. Data analysis.

Data analysis is a process of transforming, modeling, coding and cleaning data, which aims to find out useful information to solve the research problem. Overall, quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used in this study. In the process of mixed data analysis, qualitative data analysis was dominantly employed. The primary data collected through survey questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS version 20. The result of statistical analysis was presented using frequency distribution tables and graphs while Qualitative data collected through interviews, FGDs and document review were analyzed using narration and thematic analysis and; finally the collected data from these sources were triangulated.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Demographic and Socio Economic Characteristics of Respondents.

The results in Table 2 shows that a little more than one half of the respondents 194 (53%) were males and the other 172(47%) were females. Majority 129 (35.25 %) of the respondents were fell within the age group 34 to 41 years, whereas an additional 96 (26.23%) of them were between the age group of 26 to 33 years. A considerable portions 176 (48%) of the respondents had college diploma and above, 64(17.5%) of the respondents had secondary education and 61 (16.7%) of the respondents were attained primary education. Only 24 (6.6%) of the respondents were not educated. From this it can be concluded that insignificant number of respondents were uneducated. Over half of the respondents 191 (52.2%) were engaged in trade activity and salaried employee while almost one tenth of the respondents were unemployed. It was found in the study that 234 (63.93%) of the respondents were married, 107 (29.23%) of the respondents were single and 13 (3.55%) of them were divorced and the remaining 12 (3.28%) of the respondents were widowed. It was also found that 105 (28.7%) of the respondents were stayed in the study area between 5 to 10 years, 103 (28.1%) were stayed 11 to 15 years, 100 (27.3%) were reside more than 15 years, and only 58 (15.8%) of them resides in the study area less than five years. This vividly indicated that most of the respondents were lived long enough in the study area, so that the data collected from them was relevant and valid.

TABLE 2: Socio Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

| S.No | Variables       | Cases                  | Number<br>(n=366) | Percent |
|------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| 1    | Sex             | Male                   | 194               | 53      |
|      |                 | Female                 | 172               | 47      |
| 2    | Age             | 18-25                  | 47                | 12.84   |
|      |                 | 26-33                  | 96                | 26.23   |
|      |                 | 34-41                  | 129               | 35.25   |
|      |                 | 42-49                  | 73                | 19.95   |
|      |                 | 50 and above           | 21                | 5.74    |
| 3    | Education level | Read and write         | 24                | 6.6     |
|      |                 | Primary education      | 61                | 16.7    |
|      |                 | Secondary education    | 64                | 17.5    |
|      |                 | Certificate            | 41                | 11.2    |
|      |                 | College Diploma        | 75                | 20.5    |
|      |                 | First degree and above | 101               | 27.6    |
| 4    | Marital status  | Married                | 234               | 63.93   |
|      |                 | Single                 | 107               | 29.23   |
|      |                 | Divorced               | 13                | 3.55    |
|      |                 | Windowed               | 12                | 3.28    |
| 5    | Length of stay  | Below 5 years          | 58                | 15.8    |
|      |                 | 5-10 years             | 105               | 28.7    |
|      |                 | 11-15 years            | 103               | 28.1    |
|      |                 | Above 15 years         | 100               | 27.3    |
| 6    | Occupation      | Trading                | 98                | 26.8    |
|      |                 | Salaried Employee      | 93                | 25.4    |
|      |                 | Farming                | 74                | 20.2    |
|      |                 | Unemployed             | 36                | 9.8     |
|      |                 | Others                 | 65                | 17.8    |

Source: Own Survey, 2021

### 3.2. Institutional Frameworks for Community Participation in Road Infrastructure Development Projects in Wolkite Town.

Placing proper institutional structures in an organization is a necessity during any development processes. However, as Düvel (1999, p. 2) pointed out, the institutional framework is just one of several factors that can limit or promote community participation in development projects. It is, in reality, only a structure that allows for, but does not guarantee, proper participation and functioning. The study sought to examine the existence of institutional frameworks particularly development committees through which community members have been allowed to participate in road development projects in Wolkite Town. Accordingly Respondents were asked regarding the presence of institutional structures for community participation in road infrastructure development projects in the study area. The results in Table 3 indicated that only 139 (37.9%) of respondents affirms the presence of institutional frameworks set by the government to allow the community in local road development projects in their locality.

TABLE 3: Respondents’ opinion regarding the existence of institutional structures to participate in road development initiatives of their locality.

| Item  | Response     | Frequency<br>(n=366) | Percent |
|---|--------------|----------------------|---------|
| Do you know the existence of any formal institutional arrangement to participate in local development issues like roads in your locality? | Yes          | 139                  | 37.9    |
|   | No           | 143                  | 39.1    |
|   | I don’t know | 84                   | 23.0    |

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

On the other hand, 143 (39.1%) of respondents have no knowledge of the presence of any institutional system in which communities participate in road development projects, while the remaining respondents 84 (23%) have no idea whether the institutions exist or not and choose I don’t know. In line with this the revised participatory urban development procedural and structural arrangement directive (RPUDPSAD) of SNNPR asserted that the institutional arrangements have been set in place to involve urban dwellers’ is being used to perform different urban development activities like roads development (RPUDPSAD, 2016). And the community structures are tailored in urban settings across the whole region including Wolkite Town at different levels ranging from the City/Town level to 1 to 5 arrangements ( see Figure: 1)

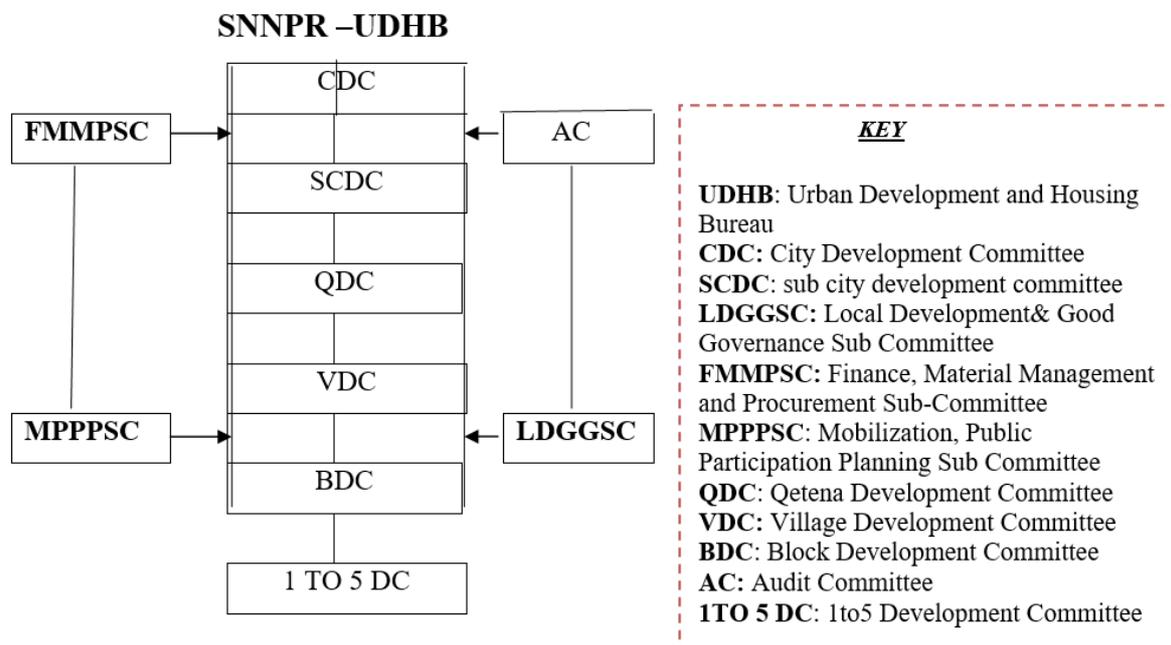


FIGURE 1: Institutional Frameworks of Participatory Urban Development in SNNPR Including Wolkite Town.

Source: Researcher Constructs Based on the Revised Participatory Urban Development Procedural and Institutional Arrangement Directive of SNNPR, 2021.

Furthermore those who confirmed the existence of an institutional framework for community involvement in road development projects were also asked if the current institutional framework had made a positive contribution to community participation in the development of road infrastructure in the town. The majority of respondents revealed that the government's institutional frameworks make no significant contribution to community participation in the town. This finding was in agreement with Molosi-France & Dipholo (2017) who reported that village development committees (VDCs) do not serve their intended purpose of engaging the

community in the development process in Botswana. The key informants also agreed with the idea and stated that the institutional structure's inability to ensure community participation in development projects was due to the multiple and complex nature of the institutional arrangements/committee structures at the town and kebele levels, frequent restructuring of the institutional arrangement, absence of sustainability, lack of cooperation among sectors and stakeholders, and lack of resources. Further, focus group participants' ascertained that development committees were poorly organized, had unclear responsibilities, were not properly supervised by the municipality, and lacked sustainability.

As the face to face interview responses with different officials of the town and Qetena/ kebele revealed that, in the current trend community participation in the town, most of the development committees were not functional. This implies that the development activities such as roads in the town were under taken without the real participation of the community. Further focus group participants stated that development committees were not organized based on procedures of the directive. The only committees which were existent and relatively functional become the kebele and village committees.

### 3.2.1. Respondents Views on the Conduciveness of the Existing Institutional Frameworks for Community Participation in URIDP.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of conduciveness of the existing community participation framework for community participation in the town. The findings in Figure 2 reveals that most respondents 211 (57.65%) reported that the existing institutional structures installed by the municipality to involve the community was not conducive for community participation while a total of 62 (16.94%) respondents stated that the institutional arrangements was conducive. Furthermore, 58 (15.85%) and 35 (9.56%) of respondents replied moderately conducive and don't know respectively. In view of this most focus group participants stated unanimously that the current institutional framework for community participation was not conducive for effective participation, in many cases it is unrealistic and complex; it needs restructuring and rearrangement to make it inclusive and conducive for the participating communities at the grassroots level. In asserting this the key informants added that community frameworks in urban local development projects such as road development have been restructured multiple times in the past, but that it is now also needed to make community involvement meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable.

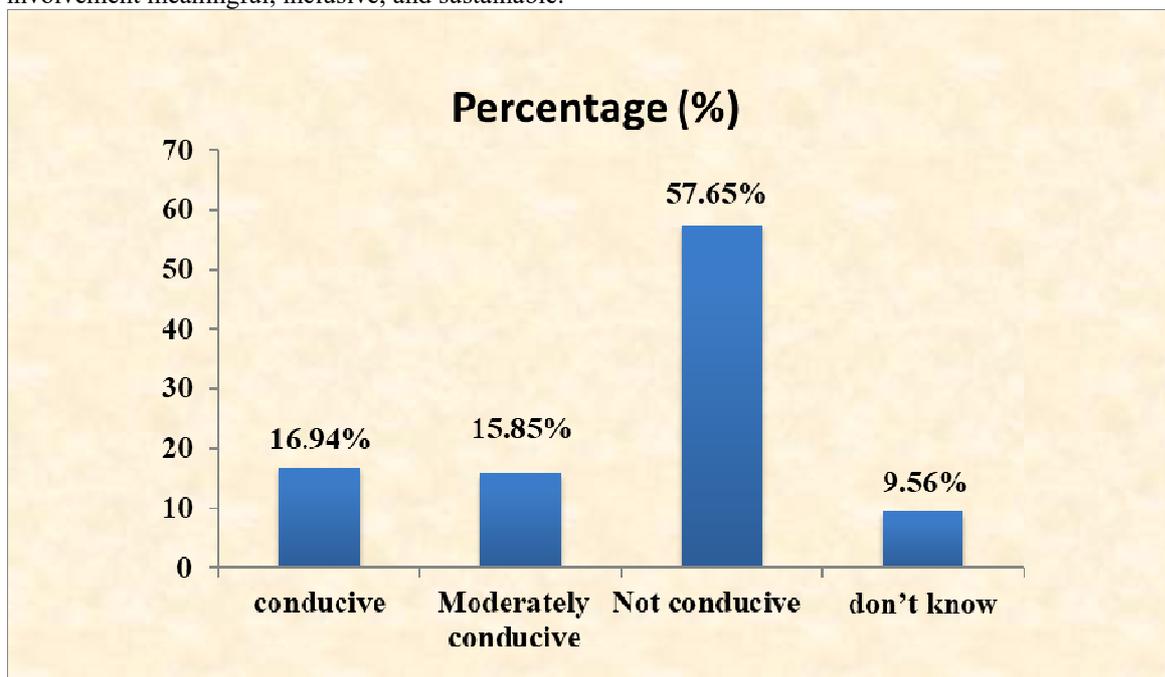


FIGURE 2: Respondents views on the conduciveness of community participation structures in road development projects in the town.

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

### 3.2.2. Participatory Local Development Representative/Community Forums in URIDP in Wolkite Town.

It was evident from Table 4, that the great majority of the respondents 297(81.14%) pointed out that there was no forum that deals about local development issues like roads in the town while the rest of the respondents 69 (18.85) replied otherwise.

TABLE 4: Respondents views on the existence of forums that involve the community, the committees and government bodies to discuss on local development issues (roads).

| Item   | Response | Frequency<br>(n=366) | Percent |
|--|----------|----------------------|---------|
| Is there any forum for the community, the development committees and government bodies meet to discuss on local development issues (roads) together? | Yes      | 69                   | 18.85   |
|  | No       | 297                  | 81.14   |

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Concerning the existence of forums focus group participants confirmed that forums which discuss on local development issues (roads) that involve local community, the committees, government bodies and other stake holders was absent. The reasons behind this fact as indicated by the FGDs were due to turnover of political leaders, lack of commitment on part of local government bodies and un-institutionalization of community participation in road development projects in the Town. Despite this, the key informants expounded that forum which was important for dealing about local development issues like roads, was not accomplished as planned in the Town due to various reasons such as lack of budget, a lack of attention to the value of community forums and limited stake holders participation. This result agreed with RatnaAyu & Syarifuddin (2020) finding that development planning deliberation forums in Indonesia have yet to include the community in village planning.

### 3.3. Extent of community participation (CP) in road infrastructure development projects in wolkite town.

Respondents were asked if they had ever participated in URIDP in their localities. Communities have different experiences of participation in URIDP in the research area. Accordingly 134 (36.61%) of the respondents admitted that they have participated on road development projects in terms of money, labor, and decision making, while 232 (63.39%) did not participate in any URIDP whatever form. This showed that still a large number of urban residents did not participate in development projects. Similarly most focus group discussants confirmed that the participation of local communities in road development projects was very limited and unorganized in the town.

World Bank (2004) points out that the success of community participation in development projects depend on the extent to which community members are involved to support various phases of project life, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Figure 3 presents the extent of community participation at different stages/phases of the road development projects. The survey results revealed that majority of the respondents 216 (59 %) were involved in the implementation stage, 57 (15.57%) was in the planning stage, 42 (11.47%) of the respondents indicated that they had been involved during the monitoring and evaluation stage and 23 (6.28%) said they never took part in anything to do with the project. Furthermore, only 28 (7.65%) indicated that they were involved in the need assessment stage. This scenario can be probably explained by the fact that some of the respondents indicated that they never attended any village meetings in their locality. Thus, it clearly revealed that the extent of community participation at different stages of road development projects was negligible.

The findings were agreed with that of Blackman (2003) that despite the recent upsurge in the “bottom-up” approach to development, project beneficiaries/community members were still not fully participating in the identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects that are meant to improve their lot. Similarly, Ojwang & Bwisa (2014) contend that there was low community participation in all phases of the project with a few community members involved at the conception stage. The low community participation had a direct negative impact on the ownership of the projects consequently affecting the overall performance. This was also supported by the findings of Mataka & Nguluwe (2020) who reported that lack of community involvement in decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation of community projects in Zambia. On the contrary, the present study findings were not in line with those of Quelyoe, Marlissa & Ratang (2016) who found that there was a very high level of community participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of Villages Infrastructure Development projects in Jayapura Regency, Indonesia.

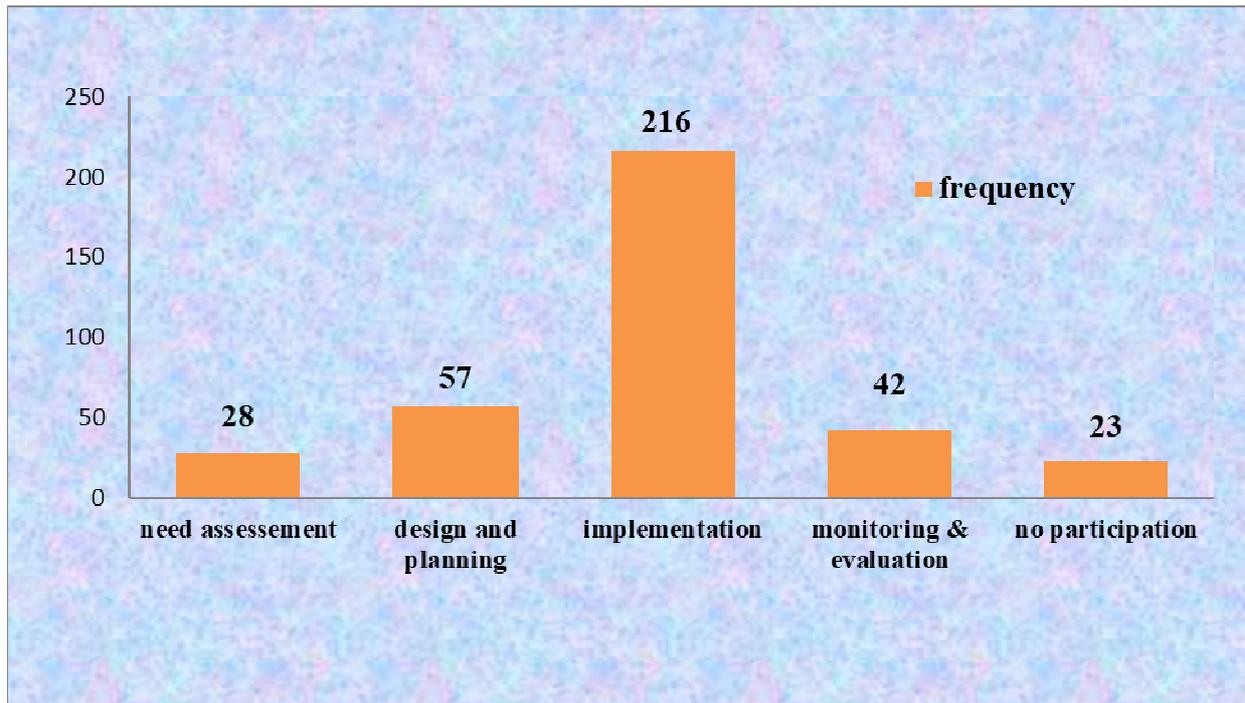


FIGURE 3: Respondents' Participation Level by Stages of URIDP in the Study Area.

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Moreover, respondents were asked to rank the level of community's participation in road infrastructure development projects of their locality. As shown in Figure 4 below, 25 (6.83%) of the respondents replied that the community's participation in URIDP was in a very high level, 31 (8.46%) of the respondents put it under the high level, 54 (14.75%) of the respondents affirm it under medium level, 202 (55.19%) was low, 39 (10.65 %) was very low while the remaining 15 (4.1%) of respondents said don't know. This implied that there was low level of community participation in the URIDP in the study area. Focus group participants and most key informants confirm that the participation of communities in URIDP was considered to be minimal.

Similar results were reported by (Ahmed & Swapan, 2009; Kambuga, 2013; Laah, Adefila & Yusuf, 2014; Rashied & Begum, 2016; Hassan, Muturi & Samantar, 2018; Seboka, Assmie & Ibrahim, 2020) that the level of community participation in local development projects was considered to be low caused by several factors that militate against their participation. On the contrary, the present study findings were not in line with those of Adedayo & Afolayan (2012) who found that there was a high level of community participation in the provision of infrastructure such as roads across medium-sized towns in Kwara State of Nigeria.

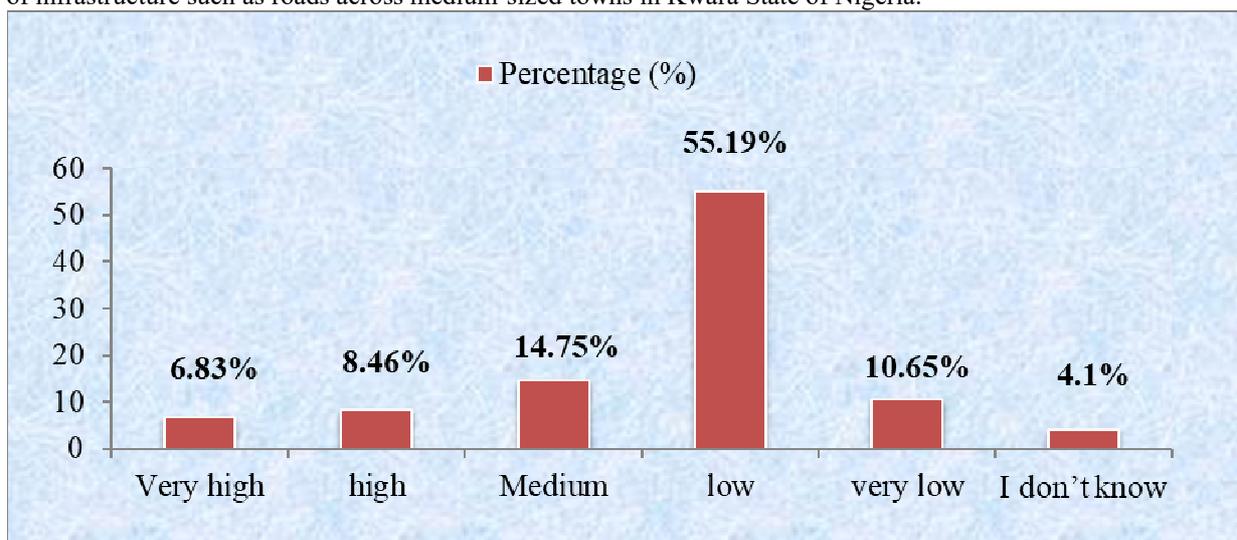


FIGURE 4: Households' Response to the Levels of Community Participation in URIDP in the Study Area.

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

### 3.3.1. Community Participation in Decision Making Process Concerning Road Development Projects in Wolkite Town.

Rashied and Begum (2016, p.72) stated that in participation decision making process is one of the most important phenomena that actually indicates the participation level. He further asserted that participation brings the public into the decision-making process. The process of public participation in decision making is reflected though the extent to which residents took part in project-related decisions. In line with this respondents were asked if they were involved in decision making process concerning road development projects in the area under study. The findings of this inquiry as indicated in Figure 5, that a significant number of respondents 237 (64.75%) did not participate in decision making process while only 129 (35.24 %) respondents reported that they were participated in decision making process concerning road infrastructure development in their locality. The findings are congruent with findings of Ileka (2018) that community participation was poor in decision making process concerning development projects in their localities. It was further established that, little consultation is being done by the local authorities to advocate for community participation.

Further, the most common reasons provided by respondents who did not participate in community meetings where decisions concerning road development activities undertaken were lack of information about when the meetings were held, lack of interest/commitment on part of community members and lack of consideration given to their views. Furthermore, the top-down approach was mentioned as another reason why people do not participate in decision making process. Focus group participants (FGPs) further confirmed unequivocally that they are often required to accept pre-determined decisions without the opportunity to debate on those issues. These findings disagree with Swanepoel and De Beer (2006,p. 45) argument that any participation devoid of political power among local people is weak and does not represent empowerment but involvement where the community is not the main role player. This implies that local people's ability to have power to make decisions is key to participation.

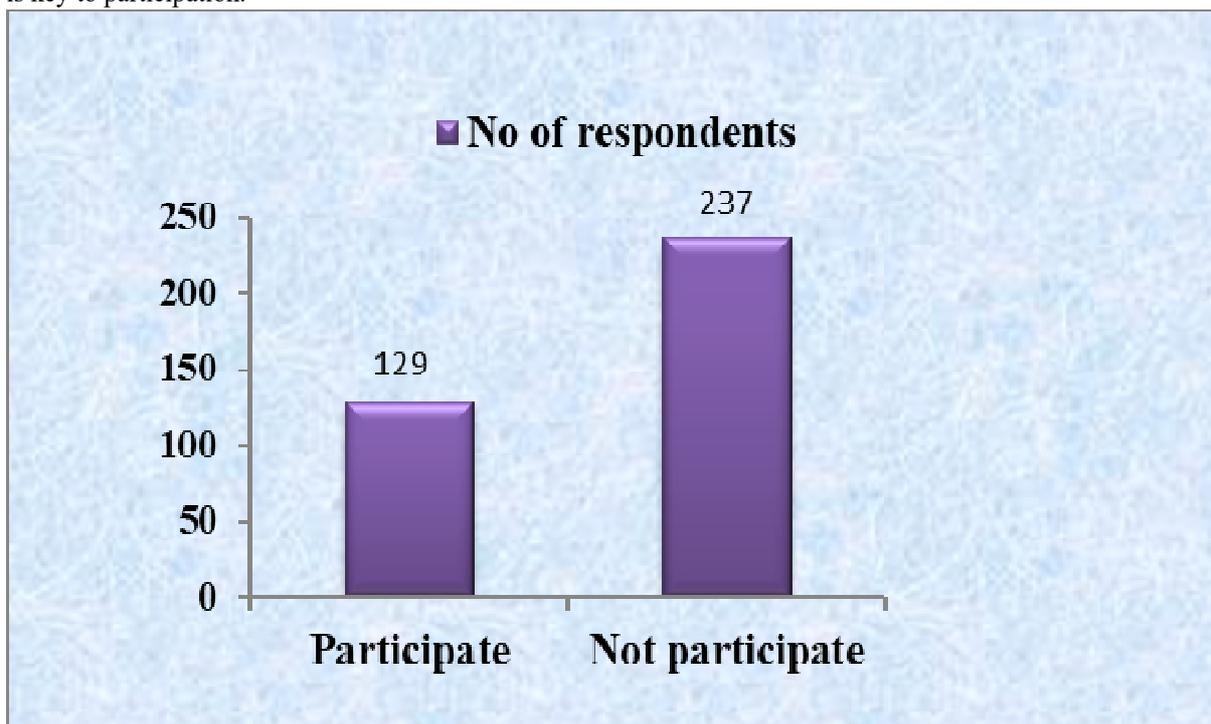


FIGURE 5: Response on participation in decision making process concerning URIDP by survey Participants  
Source: Field Survey, 2021.

### 3.3.2. Awareness among Communities about Their Roles and Responsibilities in Road Development Project Participation.

The results of findings shown that the highest percentage 319(87.15%) of the respondents believed that community participation has played an important role in urban road development projects while the remaining respondents 47 (12.84 %) rated participation to be of no importance. The result indicates that communities are aware of the importance of community participation in road development in their locality. Likewise, key informants and FGD participants maintained the idea that community involvement in development projects such as roads is very crucial since community participation empower community; create sense of ownership, transparency, accountability and efficiency and sustainability.

According to results in Figure 6 below, majority of the respondents who represented 198(54.09%) said that

they have no awareness of their roles and responsibilities concerning road development projects in their localities and only 109 (29.78%) responded that they were aware or strongly aware about their roles and responsibilities while the other 59(16.12%) of respondents replied that they were partially aware of their roles and responsibilities'. Findings from focus group participants revealed that community people were not given awareness of their roles and responsibilities. According to the focus groups, the reasons for people not being informed of their rights, duties, and responsibilities were a lack of trainings and hands-on capacity building opportunities, miscommunication between leaders and the local community, and a lack of project-related information to communities. From the findings of this study, it was straightforward to figure out that the majority of the community members were not aware of their roles and responsibilities which in turn contributed to the weak participation of communities in urban road development projects. This was consistent with the findings from other studies (Dodajo, Serbech and Asfaw, 2014; Kilewo and Frumence, 2014; Chado, Johar and Zayyanu, 2016; Adebayo, 2018) which found out that lack of awareness about community participation contributes to low participation of community members in developing and implementing various development projects.

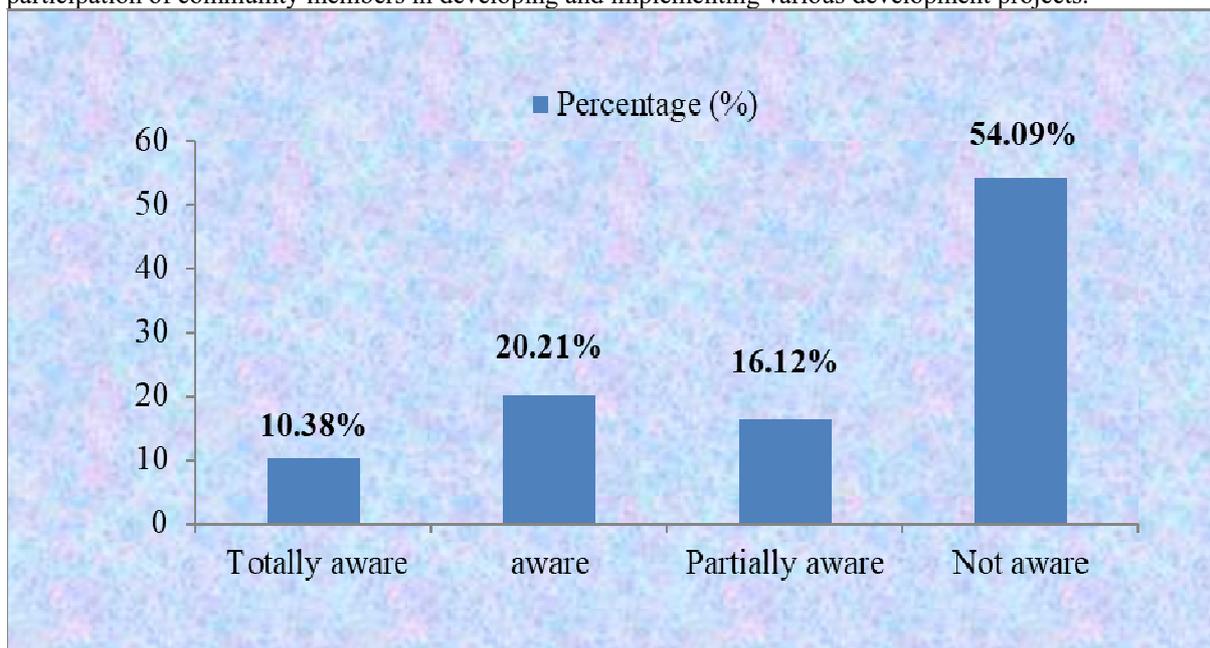


FIGURE 6: Respondents Awareness about their Roles and Responsibilities in URIDP Participations

Source: Field Survey, 2021

### 3.3.3 Access to Information about URIDP in Wolkite Town.

It was noticed that the more people in the community get information about projects in their areas, the more likely that they are to participate. According to the findings in Figure 7 it was observed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents 221 (60.38%) reported that they have no access to information concerning road development projects carried out in their locality which resulted them to be unaware of their role in the road development process, however, the rest of the respondents claimed that they have had access to information about the road development projects of their area. These findings agree with those of Ileka (2018); Kugonza & Mukobi (2015) findings that information was not readily accessible or effectively disseminated to the majority of citizens and therefore is not fully harnessed for planning, monitoring and evaluating development projects. As a result, people did not know how to participate and did not get adequate information from local authorities whereby the level of people participation in the research area was perceived by community members to be low. To ascertain this, Focus group participants stated that most of the time information related to development projects is disseminated to communities through meetings and other means, but that a significant proportion of community members did not attend community meetings when they were called up on.

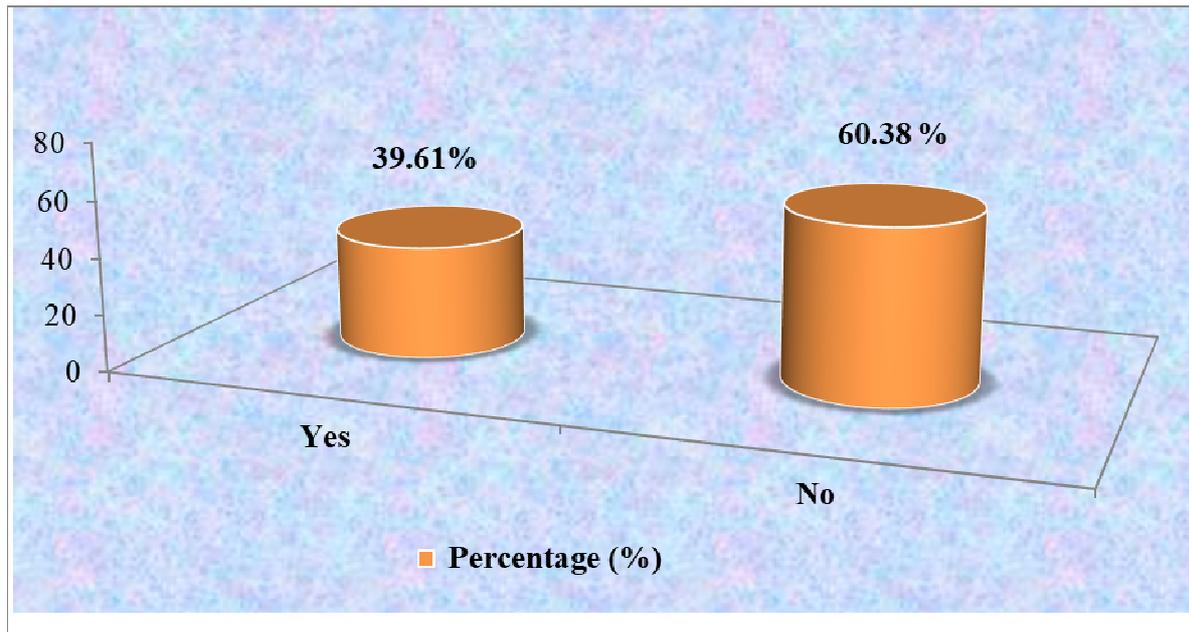


FIGURE 7: Respondents access to information concerning URIDP in their locality  
 Source: Field Survey, 2021.

### 3.4 Major Challenges of Community Participation in Road Infrastructure Development Projects in Wolkite Town

Challenges that hindered community participation in development projects were manifold. In this regard respondents were asked to choose from alternatives and reply by ranking the major challenges in relation to their effects on participation of community in road development projects in the study area.

TABLE 5: Distribution of Respondents Indicating challenges of community Participation in road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town.

| Barriers to community participation   | Responses (n= 366) |       |          |       |              |       |                       |      |
|---|--------------------|-------|----------|-------|--------------|-------|-----------------------|------|
|   | Strongly agree(SA) |       | Agree(A) |       | Disagree(DA) |       | Strongly disagree(SD) |      |
|   | Freq               | %     | Freq     | %     | Freq         | %     | Freq                  | %    |
| Lack of awareness/information   | 188                | 51.36 | 138      | 37.70 | 31           | 8.46  | 9                     | 2.45 |
| Poor coordination and communication b/n the local authority and communities | 175                | 47.81 | 99       | 27.04 | 52           | 14.20 | 40                    | 10.9 |
| Selective participation   | 87                 | 23.77 | 127      | 34.69 | 113          | 30.87 | 39                    | 10.6 |
| Poor and Inefficient Leadership   | 64                 | 17.48 | 151      | 41.25 | 114          | 31.14 | 37                    | 16.9 |
| Weak institutional set up.  | 115                | 31.42 | 174      | 47.54 | 46           | 12.56 | 31                    | 8.46 |
| Time constraint   | 23                 | 6.28  | 88       | 24.04 | 156          | 42.62 | 99                    | 27.0 |
| Lack of resources   | 60                 | 16.39 | 165      | 45.08 | 95           | 25.95 | 46                    | 12.5 |
| lack of interest and commitment on part of community                        | 31                 | 8.46  | 42       | 11.42 | 225          | 61.47 | 68                    | 18.5 |
| Lack of supportive policies and incentives                                  | 11                 | 3     | 47       | 12.84 | 215          | 58.74 | 93                    | 25.4 |

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 5 depicted that, the majority of survey respondents 326 (89.07%) were strongly agree or agree with the point that lack of awareness/information was the main challenge that hinder people to participate in URIDP while 31(8.46%) were not agree with the points that lack of awareness/information obstruct community participation in road development projects and the remaining respondents 9(2.45%) were strongly disagree with the point. As it clearly indicated inadequate information was one of the constraints to participate in urban road development projects in the study area. The findings were congruent with findings of Sileshi, (2017), Kugonza & Mukobi (2015) that lack of awareness/ information limit community participation in development projects.

With regard to poor coordination and communication between the local authority and communities as hindrance to community participation, majority of respondents 274(74.86%) were strongly agree and agree with the points that poor coordination and communication among community and local leaders became an obstruct for peoples participation in road development projects in the study area, however 52(14.20%) of respondents

replied not agree and the remaining respondents 40 (10.92%) were strongly disagree on the same point. It showed that poor coordination and communication negatively affect the participation of urban residents in the research area. Mwiru (2015) made a similar observation in her study on the importance of community participation in development projects, saying “ project beneficiaries have the right to be aware of project related information, but information about the development projects to beneficiaries is almost absent at the grass root level, which causes a hindrance to local peoples participation in development initiatives”. Matching with this, World Bank (2010, p.185) asserted that to ensure active community participation, effective communication in development projects is needed. Further, it identifies “communication with the community” as “a critical element of a successful participatory process.” However, to-date, active community participation in many development projects is absent because of lack of effective two-way communication in the projects.

Regarding to selective participation out of 366 respondents 127(34.69%) agreed that it was a key factor for poor community engagement in URIDP. Meanwhile the remaining respondents 113(30.87%), 87 (23.77%) and 39 (10.65%) were said not agreed, strongly agree and strongly disagree respectively. From this interpretation it can be deduce that more than 50 % of the respondents strongly agree and agree with the point selective /non participation as a bottle-neck for meaningful community participation at the research area. This was in agreement with the findings of Meskerem (2015) who observed that selective participation significantly constrains community participation in urban road development projects.

With respect to poor and inefficient leadership majority of the respondents 215(58.74%) were replied either strongly agree or agree while the rest 114 (31.14%) and 37(16.93%) were said disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Regarding weak institutional arrangements or structure 174 (47.54%) of the respondents agree with point that weak institutional frameworks as a challenge that limit peoples participation in road development projects. On the other hand 115(31.42%), 46(12.56%) and 31 (8.46%) were replied strongly agree, not agree and strongly disagree respectively. About time constraints, a portion of majority of respondents 156(42.62%) were disagree that time constraints as a factor limiting community participation, while 99(27.05%) chose strongly disagree, 88 (24.04%) said agree and the rest negligible 23 (6.28%) portions strongly agree that time constraint became the hindering factor for meaning/ full participation. From this it could be deduce that time constraint was not the main bottle neck to obstruct community participation in road development projects in Wolkite Town.

With reference to lack of resources majority of the respondents 165(65.08%) were agree with the point that lack of resources was key hindering factor for community participation in road development in the research area. Furthermore, 60 (16.39%) respondents were replied strongly agree, 95(25.95%) of the respondents not agree and the rest 46 (12.56%) of survey respondents were strongly disagree with the point that lack of resources was not the constraints of community participation in URIDP. Regarding lack of interest and commitment on part of community challenges, majority of the respondents 225(61.47%) were not agreed, while 68 (18.57%) of the respondents strongly disagree with the points that lack of community interest and commitment constraint the peoples to participate in local URIDP. On the other hand 42 (11.42%) respondents were agreed with the point that lack of community interest and commitment constraint the people participation in road development projects and the remaining respondents 31 (8.46%) were strongly agree with the point. This implies that a significant number of respondents identified as lack of interest and commitment on part of community was not the challenge that militating against community engagement in road development projects in the study area. Finally as indicated in Table 4.10 majority of respondents 308(84.15%) were not agreed or strongly disagree with the point that lack of supportive policies and incentives was challenges to community participation in URIDP. However, 47 (12.84%) and 11 (3%) of the respondents were agreed and strongly agree with the point that local residents were not fully participated due to lack of supportive policies and incentives respectively.

In a nutshell, as it was observed from the finding, the major challenges that setback community participation in URIDP in the town included: lack of awareness, coordination and communication failures, weak institutional framework and lack of resources.

## **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **4.1. CONCLUSION.**

This paper examined community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town, SNNPR. As a result, this study clearly points out that participation in urban road infrastructure development projects was found to be important (87.2%) among the respondents of the town and a very high percentage (76.8%) of the respondents expressed willingness to engage in the provision of road infrastructures in their neighborhood. Despite their willingness to participate, the results of this study showed that the level of community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects particularly in cobbles stone and gravel roads was low(36.6%).

As per findings of this study community members do not play an active role in planning, decision making, monitoring and evaluation processes which imply that efforts to promote participation in the URIDP have not evolved to higher levels where participation could be seen. As such it could be concluded that community

participation in urban road infrastructure development (gravel and cobble stone roads) remained at the bottom of the ladder of participation and that the extent of participation in decision making processes was minimal.

This study also demonstrated that a significant majority of the respondents reported that they involved in road development projects during implementation phase/stage. Due to this community participation at project identification, planning, monitoring and evaluation stages have been very in significant. Given these findings the study concludes that community people should be involved in all phases of road development project from the process of the needs assessment for the design and development of project, through project implementation to project monitoring and evaluation.

Study findings also revealed that out of the total respondents' majority of them 221 (60.38%) were indicated that information was not readily accessible or effectively disseminated to the majority of urban residents and therefore was not fully involved in URIDP of their locality. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents 297 (81.14 %) stated that there was no forum where the local community, committees, government agencies, and other stakeholders could meet to discuss local development issues such as roads.

This study also discovered that the majority of community members were unaware of their roles and responsibilities in road development processes in their community. More findings revealed that the institutional structures installed by the municipality to involve communities in local development initiatives especially road infrastructure development are highly disorganized and unsustainable implying that community participation in road infrastructure development projects was carried out in campaigns and was not well institutionalized in the town. As a result community mobilization is very important because it creates awareness among stakeholders; people become aware of their roles, responsibilities, resources, technical expertise and the kind of help they are likely to need from outside.

Finally the study further unveiled that the major challenges that restrain community participation in road infrastructure development in Wolkite Town were lack of awareness /information, poor coordination and communication between local authorities and communities, weak institutional structures and lack of resources.

#### **4.2. RECOMMENDATION.**

Dwelling on the findings discussed above, the researcher forwarded the following points as recommendations:-

- i. It is vital to enlighten residents of urban communities about the importance and rationales of community participation in road infrastructure development projects as this would encourage full cooperation and thus effective participation.
- ii. There is the need for involving urban communities from conception through implementation and evaluation to enhance ownership of the road projects. Moreover, the opinions of the community members should be considered in all decisions concerning the road development projects.
- iii. Regular monitoring of projects should be undertaken to identify gaps in community participation and act on the situation accordingly.
- iv. It is worthwhile to instill appropriate institutional frameworks that ensure effective community participation in road infrastructure development projects.
- v. Information concerning projects must be provided to the local community on time so as to ensure community participation in the project. In addition, forums that set for the discussion of community development issues including roads need to be revitalized to realize community participation in decision making processes.
- vi. Addressing the identified challenges to community participation in road infrastructure development projects in the study area to ensure substantive community participation. This will necessitate coordinated efforts from various stakeholders, including the local governments, development partners, and the community at large.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

*The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.*

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