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Community participation cum socio-economic development; in the 21st-century Somopho community. Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa

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Abstract. Community development to a large extent is a dynamic process that involves the cooperation of both the members of a particular community, NGOs, and government agencies. Over a long period, there has been a steadier process of economic and social change in rural communities through their steady participation commonly understood as their collective involvement in assessing their needs and organizing strategies to meet those needs. Using a mixed-methods approach this work argued that as part of community development, it is believed that citizen's participation is necessary because it results in better decisions when community members are involved in decision-making vis-à-vis project implementation while seeking a lasting change for individuals and the communities and societies in which they live. The work concludes that when the objective of community development is empowerment and capacity building, sustainable socio-economic and cultural development, the community will not be far from achieving its goals of sustaining and accelerating community members' participation in their development.

Keywords. Somopho; Development; Economic; Sustainability; Empowerment

Introduction

Community development to a large extent is a dynamic process that involves the cooperation of both the members of the community and government agency (ies). To quantify the level of involvement of community members in their [own] development may be a herculean task. But the major thing is the willingness of the community members to be involved in an all-round developmental process and the acceptance of the necessary government agency in such a process. There has been considerable recent discussion of the changes that are taking place in community development in terms of the nature of such development within rural economies and on the part of the government in terms of the approaches adopted towards rural community policy. Hodge & Midmore (2008:5) however, argue that there has been a steadier process of economic and social change in rural communities over a long period.

Community participation is commonly understood as the collective involvement of local people in assessing their needs and organising strategies to meet those needs (Nkwake, Trandafili & Hughey 2013:2). Although there are variations that occur in how community participation is conceived and comprehended. Nkwake et al. (2013) had argued that there is a

widespread agreement that community participation is a vital ingredient that motivates community's socio-economic development. This was corroborated by one of the respondent that *participating in our community's development has giving us a sense of belonging, apart from seeing it as a means of assisting one another*. By interpretation, community participation provides members of the community with a sense of unity where they can address their socio-cultural and economic problems through careful reflection and collective action as a development strategy.

Schaffer (1991), Oakley (1991) further contends that community participation can be linked to the sustainability of developmental programmes because there is a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for such developmental programme by stakeholders which are members of the community. What this means is that even when government agencies withdraw their participation in such developmental programmes, the members of the community are still willing and are capacitated by their willingness to mobilize and commit the available local material and financial resources to continue with implementing their planned programme.

In their contribution, Samah & Aref (2009) states that community participation in the developmental process is somewhat stimulated by, and punched up from, individuals' experiences participating in community development. Hence, the assertion that *community participation is the heart that pumps the community's lifeblood* (Reid 2000). Using Somopho community as a unit of our study, this work engaged a mixed-methods approach to assist in the understanding of the process of people's participation in community development activities.

Methodology

Research methods according to Breakwell, Hammond, & Fife-Schaw (2006) describe the how part of collecting data within the framework of the research process. Typically, there are two basic methods used by researchers in social sciences for collecting data; quantitative and qualitative methods. In other to explore the role of community members vis-à-vis their influence on participation in community development activities, this work engaged a mixed-methods approach. Mixed-methods approach is described as the class of research where the researcher combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004:17). Using this method helps to validate the opinions of scholars, that is; the extent to which requirements of the scientific research method have been followed during the process of generating research findings. It also helps to minimise the weakness that might have arisen if one method is used.

Research objectives

This work aims to provide an insight into the relevance of community members in community participation while enhancing the inclusive development of their community. As such this study seek to establish the necessity of citizen's participation in community development vis-à-vis project implementation while seeking a lasting change for individuals and the communities and societies in which they live.

Theoretical Explanation/literature review

To understand the concept of community development, we must define the community. Depending on one's understanding and from which perspective we see the term, there are a plethora of definitions giving to the term thus making it a bit challenging to define.

In his work *Developments in the Sociology of Culture*, Williams (1976) asserts that community can be the active and persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships or the convincing word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important,

perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization, community seems not to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term.

According to Chatterjee & Koleski (1970:82) the word community is laden with many ambiguities, with different connotations in depending on different situations. Ruopp (1953:5) however, argued that to jettison the word may lead to a departure from the concept of community where the main benefit of the concept of community is its emphasises on the qualitative aspects of human development rather than quantitative. And thus define community as the attribute of every group brought together by the fusion of certain integrative forces such as shared locality and shared interactions and something to be achieved.

Hayden (1979: 25) sees community as an organic, natural set of relationships, a group in which membership is valued as an end in itself; which concerns itself with many significant aspects of the lives of members; which allows competing factions; whose members share a commitment to a common purpose and to procedures for handling conflict in the group; whose members have responsibility for actions of the group; and whose members have an enduring and extensive personal contact with each other. Smith (1996), Hillery (1955) & Gallie (1956) however, sees community as a geographical location and configuration, where members of the community share identities and values underpinned by some functional ideological differences. By interpretation, though confined to a geographical location; the idea of functional ideological differences implies such a community would constantly be under threat of disunity and thus frequently orchestrating opposition to common goals and values.

Hence Botes & van Rensburg (2000) submission that socio-cultural and economic factors outside the end-beneficiary community where true community participation is taking place, conflicting interest groups, gate-keeping by local elites, and alleged lack of public interest in becoming involved, excessive pressures for immediate results could hinder and indeed constrain the promotion of community development.

In an attempt to give it an operational definition, Wilmot (1989) sees community as one existing at three different levels, in terms of locality (territory); as a community of interest or interest group, such as the black community; the white community; the Indian community, and then, a community composed of people that share common socio-economic challenge, such as sharing a common bond like working for the same employer or alcohol dependency community. Notwithstanding this categorization, the community has remained a contested concept.

From this classification, it is possible to take a theoretical position that community development takes place in a pluralist society [and, therefore, in pluralist communities]. Pluralists theorists according to Popple & Quinney (2002) had argue that membership in local communities, trade unions, voluntary societies, churches, and similar organizations is more important than distinctions between classes.

Although, it's been argued that involving community members in planning and execution of community projects may be too expensive and time-consuming the fact remains that community leaders initiate community and developmental programs in response to the said community reaction to a proposed communal project or action which at the end benefit the community. These benefits include; getting good information and ideas on public issues; support for planning decisions; avoidance of protracted conflicts among community members and costly delays in [socio-economic] project execution; preservation of community's goodwill which can be carried over to future decisions; and maintenance of the spirit of mutual trust and cooperation among community members and government agencies.

As part of community development, it is believed that citizen participation is necessary, because it results in better decisions, hence the argument that when community members are involved in decision-making vis-à-vis project implementation there is a tendency for the

community to accept and be willing to work with the government (Heberlein, 1976). Apart from this, one can argue that when community members are allowed to participate in their affairs it will serve to checkmate undue political interference in the administration and management of the community economic resources as well as allow productive access to the benefits of an inclusive [democratic] governance. By implication, when members of the community are involved in the decision-making process it reduces the likelihood of community leaders making self-serving decisions.

Cahn & Camper (1968) had argued that there are three justifications for community members' involvement in the day to day affairs of their community; it promotes dignity and self-sufficiency within the individual, it serves as an avenue to tap into and utilize the energies and resources of individual citizens within the community for the promotion of the common interest of the community and provides a source of special insight, information, knowledge, and experience, while contributing to the general development of the community. Thus emphasis is on problem-solving while eliminating deficiencies in the community's socio-cultural and economic cohesion.

In the developing world, rural areas have been a field of development experiments. Dinko, (2017:540) argued that Africa is considered the largest developmental experiment laboratory with both state and non-state actors as well as academics conducting research on development works. Successive governments in South Africa; following the attainment of inclusive governance in 1994 have drawn and still drawing various socio-economic cum developmental policies, projects, and programmes with a focus on developing rural communities, which have, however, remains chronically unattended to. Instead, most of these communities are left on their own to either come together and finance developmental projects in their communities. Thus justifying Bhattacharyya's (2004:5) statement that the purpose of community development is the pursuit of solidarity and agency by adhering to the principles of self-help, felt needs, and participation.

Theoretically, community development seeks a lasting change for individuals and the communities and societies in which they live. It focuses on the centrality of oppressed people in the process of overcoming externally imposed social and economic problems (Allison, 2009). The theory postulate that a working community system has a dual structure where one side is designed for stability, regular performance, and predictability and the other side is designed for evaluation and change. Therefore, suggesting balanced respect for the effectiveness of both tradition and social invention that advocate for equality of standing for citizen roles, structures, and processes.

While trying to define community development, Bhattacharyya's (2004) raised some fundamental questions; what precisely is community development? Why is engaging in it important? And where does it stand with other practical as well as academic endeavours? By implication, defining community development is a bit challenging. This has again shown that there is no clear-cut delineation of community development, how it is interpreted may likely affect one's orientation when initiating a development program hence, its variance among those who profess to practice it (Christenson & Robinson (1989), Denise & Harris (1990).

Community development has been viewed by many as development at the grassroots. It, therefore, means that community development comprises of a loosely tied group of concepts hence defining it as a group of people in a locality initiating a social action process to change their socio-economic, cultural, and environmental situation. Bhattacharyya's (2004) further argued that the concept of community development must satisfy two conditions; it must be unique in its purpose and its methodology, in terms of its scope, and must be universal. Solidarity, which is a shared identity derived from a place, ideology, the quality of life ideals

trust, and mutual obligations that enable people to take collective measures to address shared problems are some of the qualities that unite communities thus making it possible to distinguish a community from all other types of social relations. Hence, Luna, et al., (2004) assertion that community development is a practice of transforming marginalised communities so that the people in those communities may collectively and positively act on their [poor] situations. In essence through community-based approaches to development, local people became aware of their socio-cultural and economic problems and circumstances, and thus serves as pedestal to recognising and solving these problems (Medallon, 2001).

Sanders (1957) once argued that community development is derived and possibly takes its name from community-oriented programmes and activities as well as a more ambitious scheme of socio-economic development. He, therefore, points out that theoretical formulations in community development are possible at two different levels; the practitioner (which is largely administrative and action-oriented). The other level is that of the social scientist. This is largely conceptual he argued. Community development can therefore be view as a process, focusing on categorisations of interaction, as a means to an end, as a programme, as procedures, as well as movement involving commitments from the community members through their participation.

Community participation is conceived as, a systemic inclusion of all and sundry within the community in an on-going [community] development process (Schafft & Greenwood 2003). It is a self-motivated process propelled by the desire to be fully involved or be part of [socio-economic and cultural] affairs that positively affect their lives. Bamberger (1988) believes it's an evolutionary process where the beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of community development projects not just as ordinary recipients of the benefits accrue to the community through the project but as active participants that share the same goal and sustained aspirations employing their involvement in community projects.

Taylor, Wilkinson & Cheers (2008, cited in Nkwake et al. 2013) while trying to define community participation identifies the following four theoretical methods in community participation: contribution approach; instrumental approach; community empowerment approach; and developmental approach. Primarily, community participation in the contributions approach involves voluntary contributions, to a community project, which can be time, human and material resources, or community-based knowledge. Usually, this process is often facilitated by external bodies such as NGOs while the members of the community, as well as the community, follow. Sometimes the stakeholders will have to wait for further instructions on how contributions made will be put to use.

However, the well-being of the community is considered as a result of the instrumental approach, rather than see it as a process. Community participation is seen as an intervention to support other community development involvements. The importance of this approach is hinged on local and national priorities and are led by experts in community development. People's empowerment and community support, as well as individuals and groups, are at the forefront while utilizing the community empowerment approach where people are allowed to take greater control over issues that affect them. This process encourages people to meet their needs and aspirations in a self-aware and informed way which takes advantage of their skills, experience, and potential. This includes socio-cultural, economic, and personal developments. In a developmental approach, development is conceived as a collaborative process, rooted in a community of interest. Here the locals, as well as the experts, participate in decision-making while working towards achieving the outcomes they consider are very important towards achieving the desired socio-economic development.

Development

Development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-layered process. In some [socio-economic] situations, development is used as a synonym for growth. When development is used without reference to quality or consequences, it may be good or bad. It is a concept that is associated with a certain type of change in a positive direction.

By itself, development theory has little value unless it is applied, translates into results, and unless it improves people's lives (Todaro, 2000: 77). By implication, development must take a holistic approach meaning that all [socio-cultural, economic, and environmental] factors are taken into account as a whole as they are interdependent for the benefit of all. Further to this approach, in community development the way of approaching needs the inclusion of education, economic, culture, health care, psychology, etc. that are essentially needed for a productive life.

The expectation, therefore, is that within the community the aspect of culture will relate to economics, politics, and the environment while fulfilling the principle of relational thought and communal interaction. Hence, the assertion that instead of each member of the community thinking about himself/herself, each is imagined in the context of an entirety. This approach therefore, increased capabilities and effectiveness of community systems that substantially benefits the people who are members and geared towards improving the community systems and not toward individual improvement. The outcomes of which would be improved infrastructure, better health care, lower crime rates, improved social integration, operating with give-and-take relationships as well as improved recreation and economic opportunity.

The objective of development is always positive although there are no independent measures of what constitutes improvement but there are indications that change is certainly possible. Development is therefore a judgment that can only be made by community members according to their values, aspirations, and expectations. Development must therefore be seen as representing the whole length and breadth of change by which an entire social system turns to various developmental needs and evolving aspirations of individuals and groups within that system and moves away from the condition of life widely perceived as unacceptable towards a condition of life considered to be socially, culturally, politically and economically healthier (Adetiba, 2013).

It therefore, means that development has different connotations to different schools of thought. The meaning a particular scholar attaches to the term depends on the person's idiosyncratic view of the socio-political and economic world and more importantly the geographical location of the person. Thus, in community development, the term development is taken as a reference to a particular type of conscious effort at stimulating improvement; where the result is hinged on positive change. Development will therefore be perceived differently by someone living in Durban; a coastal city in South Africa in comparison to someone living in Somopho, a local community in Kwazulu-Natal of South Africa.

The meaning of development is not only a product of the individual's perspective but also of the particular period in time when the word is being expressed. In other words, the way people see development in the late 19th century is far different from the way it is seen today, owing to the influence of modernization. To Adetiba (2013), the dimensions of development are very diverse; it includes economic, social, political, legal, and institutional structures, in various forms, the environment, religion, arts as well as culture. It is, therefore, possible to say that development can be understood as the actions taken to involve not only economic growth but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing, and other essential services all to improve the quality of life of every individual and group.

In Somopho community, development could be accomplished when the operation of the political system is in line with the prevailing legal and ethical principles of the political

community. There are six goals of development which have been identified; they include growth as the central objective of development; equality of distribution of socio-economic and political resources, autonomy and self-reliance, the preservation of human dignity through a constitutional form of governance or charter of human rights the absence of which may lead to repression of people, participation in governance. This implies that there must be a mechanism for citizen's access and involvement in administration and the ability of the state to respond to new challenges and demands to adapt to changing needs Young (1982). The absence of these arguments may translate to underdevelopment.

The Nature of the Research

A community is usually discussed in terms of its geographic location, history, culture, language, beliefs, or interests. Community development is, therefore, a set of approaches undertaken by individuals, informal groups, and organizations in making sense of the issues which affect the lives, goals, and aspirations of community members. Where co-operation and co-ordination that leads to all-round community wellness is the basis for their motivation.

Hence Kenny's (2007) assertion that community development is a processes, tasks, and visions held by community members for empowering [the] communities to collectively take responsibility for their socio-economic and cultural development. To this end Phillips and Pittman (2014) couched community development as an outcome and a process where the community members collectively go for all-round self-improvement. Ordinarily community development theory sees communities as systems, suggesting that the growth of a community is a combination of personal strengths, initiatives, and systems that naturally helps to bring about change in [the] community (Cook, 1994, Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Somopho community, located in Ntabanana Municipality of Kwazulu-Natal, evolved during the colonial period. History had it that the community was named after its founder who died in 1885 owing to his military exploit during the colonial era. A respondent comment . . . *every indigene of this community is proud to be associated with the community because of the role that our first king played as a military man who fought the colonial masters to stand still.* However, things have changed over time as a result of increased knowledge, regarding the pursuit of personal/individual improvement but knowledge has shown that established orientation towards socio-cultural and economic integration are relevant for community development where individuals are allowed to participate in systemic capacity building.

It is pertinent to state that one of the main challenges of this research is how to create usable and accessible information, designed for the context of structural intervention, from the conceptual ambiguity of the available data that will be useful for future reference and a possible update of future Somopho community. It is also important to state that this research was carried out at a time when leaders in the community were struggling over who will be the traditional ruler of the community. As a result of this some of the community members thought the researcher was in the community to work in support of parties fighting over the leadership position in the community.

Thus making it difficult to get informants to commit to giving necessary information. This resulted in considering an approach to deal with the believability of information from informants to simplify informed use of the work in the future. What this portends to mean is that analysis of information must be done in such a way that they would be captured to thwart superfluous contestations from the community leaders.

It has been observed that in the research of this nature there are categories of information that allow for information that has been identified to contain points of controversy or unresolved contradictions. According to Gregory and Mbele (2011), there is also a category

of information which is merely observations of researchers and a description of issues by researchers at the time of capturing. For example, observations may be made by an interviewer that informants appeared to hide certain critical or controversial but important issues for fear of being apprehended by their leaders, or, contrariwise, that there was a spirit of openness in the course of an interview. This has cast aspersions on some of these leaders.

Community leadership in Somopho and South Africa generally, has gone through several transformations over a while particularly after the 1994 transition to democratic rule. With particular reference to the periods of colonial conquest, and subsequent introduction of the obnoxious apartheid system, the roles, and functionality of community leaders have also been distorted to such an extent that the acceptability of the role of community leaders became questionable; where community leaders were reduced to mere government functionaries responsible for the enforcement of unpopular socio-political policies and laws. Thus lessened the acceptability of these community leaders in the eyes of their subordinates.

One of the respondents pejoratively comments . . . *our leaders in this community are not different from those we had before 1994, they only instruct us on what we must do to have access to basic amenities, they are friends of some of our councillors who daily deceive us without performing their duties. That is one of the reasons why people are not ready to support some of them. They pretend to be our leaders but connive with politicians and rob us of necessary socio-economic developments as a result of their corrupt practices*’.

Comparatively, in West Africa particularly Nigeria where the Indirect Rule system was used; during the period of colonial rule, community leaders were reduced to mere puppets who only implemented the colonial socio-economic policies by collecting taxes on behalf of the colonial government. This, however, favoured, the colonialist who from time to time interfered in the internal political affairs of these communities. After independence, their relevance had been eroded as a result of their collaboration with politicians to rob members of the community of their socio-economic rights.

Community development cum participation in the practice

In the practice of community development, several models described how communities are/can be modelled towards their sustainability. These models include; organization of neighbourhood, organization of functional communities, the economic and social development of the community, social planning, community programs development and networking, coalitions, policies, and social actions and social movements (Goreacii, Cebotari & cel Bun, 2018:4).

From the functionalist theory of community development, the community is considered to be a social formation that fulfils five functions; communication, social participation, social control, mutual support, and the assurance of economic prosperity. By interpretation, community development would be a social movement that is focused on promoting a better life for the members of the community, rooted in their collective and active participation which may wholly be based on members of the community’s initiatives. For this to be archived it means that different but needful techniques would have to be used to produce the necessary developmental and beneficial changes. The reason why Paul (1987:2) sees community participation as an active process by which members of the community influence the direction and execution of development projects geared towards enhancing their well-being in terms of income, social mobility, personal growth, self-reliance or other communal values they so cherish

Community development is therefore geared towards increased and better participation of people in community affairs while revitalizing the existing forms of local governance, as

well as transition to an efficient local administration (Goreacii, Cebotari and cel Bun, 2018). Thus justifying the statement that development does not start from goods, but from people, from their education, organization, and discipline (Schumacher, 1973:19). Without these three factors, any resource remains only an empty, hidden, and unused opportunity. Premise on this, one can submit that the yearning for [economic] development made the Somopho's leadership embark on some developmental projects in the community in 2017.

For the potentials of a community to become active, it means such a community needs to implement certain strategies, programs, and actions that will involve community members' participation. One of the respondents confirms that in a meeting conveyed by the community leaders, *the people agreed that there is a need to build a community hall that will house some of the community's historical facts about the first leader (Somopho) as well as their local crafts, thereby attracting people from other provinces in the country as well as tourists while promoting socio-economic development and preservation of their culture, in addition to serving as a community centre where members of the community can come together as a group to enjoy group activities, social support, public information, and many other purposes that will enrich the lives of citizens.*

What this translates to mean is that the community centre will offer the community an avenue to proffer solutions to the challenges of internal crises, racism, gender violence, crime, unemployment, and other social vices through enriching the community members' lives as well as occupy their time with socio-economic activities that encourage social integration amongst members of the community. Another respondent in an interview granted on the 21st of May 2019 also confirms that *not minding their socio-economic differences they have agreed that the local school must be given a facelift in terms of infrastructure to promote the social mobility of its teaming youths.*

Apart from this, they also believe that it will also strengthen social capital. In other words, if members of the community are in contact with their neighbours from other communities there is the likelihood of a built-up social capital, where the social needs of community members could be met and thus help improve the living conditions of community members. Putnam & Bowling (2000:48-50) further reiterated that the community in question will benefit from the cooperation of all its parties, and individuals within the community will find themselves in associations of communication, assistance, and all-round development on a personal and community basis.

Goreacii et al. (2018) further suggest that the hunger for development in local communities will ensure local health in that the general welfare of the population, as well as their social relations, would be strengthened. However, this will depend on the state of health, which includes the psychological and physical aspects of a human being. *Within the community, we believe that once the people are psychologically sound, it becomes easier for people to be free from negative emotions and the wrong impression about one another* asserted one of the respondents.

As much as socio-economic development is significantly important in local communities, the sustenance of these developments must be of paramount importance to the community leaders in collaboration with the government at the grassroots level. To Weil (2005) sustainable development within the community also represents the quality of services provided; that meet the socio-economic and cultural needs of the people by the government as well as respond to various socio-economic problems associated with the community. It, therefore, means that the actions focusing on sustainable development must and are expected to transpire from the needs of individuals in the communities that were originally intended to serve them.

Of importance on the sustainability of community development is the understanding of the community context in which such development activities are carried out.

Within South Africa's context, a community such as Somopho is conceived as a term-limited by geographic space. Notwithstanding the assertion that community development is perceived to be a solution to solving existing socio-economic problems, perhaps the reason why community members in South Africa need to be mobilized to contribute to the economic and socio-cultural development of their localities and generally to ensure the general well-being. Each community to a certain extent therefore needs intervention not from the government alone but members of the community.

Within the local community, Goreacii et al. (2018) write that development involves planned participation of community members where the process aims at introducing positive changes for increasing the social capital of such community while attempting to solve the community's collective socio-economic problems. Ploch in one of his work 'Community development in action: a case study' published in 1976 reiterated that community development is a process of voluntary involvement of citizens in the context of improving every aspect of community life. He further states that naturally, this would lead to the incorporation of human and institutional relations at the community level. Hence, the evolvement of constant change at the community level.

It is, however, important to say that sometimes when community members are expected to participate in the development, there is the tendency for them to invoke a cliquey card to justify their non-involvement. This paper had earlier mentioned the issue of succession disputes which may hamper development. A respondent comment that *it has been a bit difficult for some of us to participate in the building project because of the crises associate with the leadership of the community. Notwithstanding, we will patriciate for the sake of posterity, our children are growing up and it is not good for them to see us fighting over small issues like leadership position.* In essence, there is the possibility of invoking a succession card claiming that 'the community leader is not from their clan and hence their resolve not to support such a leader, thus placing socio-economic development on the altar of leadership schism.

If it thus happens like that distribution of power within the community as well as the roles of actors involved must be spelled out; there must be a rational and coherent social process of resolving problems. Strategically, members of the community need to be involved in the process of consultation, reconciliation of differing parties, while creating and integrating individuals involved to build mutual trust.

In a community where different 'ethnic' groups often lay claim to the leadership for relevance, the mentality, and how people perceive things may differ. Therefore, it is suggested that focus should be on certain institutions, socio-economic agents, socio-cultural actors, and trusted community/political leaders, with the understanding of the community's cultural aspects and traditions that are subsequently presented as an economic effort. Therefore, to make the local community more efficient, there must be an avenue where community members and their representatives are given access to benefit from the community

Conclusion

The National Framework on Traditional Leadership and Governance Act No. 41 of 2003 establishes the roles of [traditional] community leaders, it observes that, in the rural areas, the institution can be a pedestal to supporting the government in improving the quality of life of the people in rural communities. Some of the [expected] roles the institution plays are the promotion of socio-economic development and service delivery, promotion of peace and stability amongst the community members, thus contributing indirectly to nation-building and

social cohesiveness within their communities, promotion, and preservation of the culture and traditions of their communities, etc. What the above suggests is that any local community, at any particular point in time can be described in terms of its relevance to transformations to fit into an ongoing socio-economic and cultural system where its roles are fully harnessed while aiming at chronological transformation typical of Somopho.

This work has argued that participation only transpires in community development when the members of the community share in the formulation as well as execution of socio-economic programmes intended to enhance the living standard of the community. What this translates to mean is that members of the community and in some cases in collaborations with agencies (NGOs and government at the grassroots level) should be allowed to be part of the plans as well as how amenities in the community would be used and possibly assess these facilities since its meant for the enhancement of their well-being. The object of development in any community is, therefore, the people and it is their involvement in the direction and execution of developmental projects that are of more concern and the involvement of the people is the hallmark of community participation.

Given such an opportunity to participate, gives the community pride of ownership of the social amenities while furthering the development of the community. Hence the assertion that individual and community participation in socio-economic projects creates the belief in common understanding, which enhances the possibility of communal success in the execution and implementation of socio-economic programmes intended for better living in a community rather than simply receiving a share of benefits from such community projects (Paul 1987). In other words, when the objective of community development is empowerment and capacity building, a sustainable socio-economic and cultural development, the community will not be far from achieving its goals or targets while sustaining and accelerating community members' participation in community development.

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