

## Community Participation in Urban Infrastructure Development: Case study at Bishoftu Town, Ethiopia

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### ABSTRACT

The study aimed at analyzing community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects. To this end, the study employed mixed approach. Survey questionnaire was administered. Key informant interview schedules were used with purposively selected informants. Findings reveal that community participation is implemented in the town to fill the financial gaps of projects. The community is not participating in the entire project cycle. Participation in policy formulation, planning, implementation, maintenance and operation, and evaluation are not evident; and thus obstacle for substantive community participation. The study also found that there is poor communication and relationships among the municipality, kebele leaders that manage the project and the community. I.e. community participation is not institutionalized for permanent impact; this problem has affected the possibility for fostering institutionalized community participation in the City and hampered the synergy of the growing trend of participation in the development of the City. The study concludes that bottom-up approaches, building effective communication channel between the community, kebele leaders that manage the project and institutionalization of the growing trends of participation in the City is essential. Therefore, more capacity building strategies are required to promote community participation.

**Keywords:** Community participation, infrastructure and infrastructure development

### INTRODUCTION

Development is being considered in many parts of the World. Development encompasses economical, social, cultural, security and participatory decision making processes. In addition to the natural resources available, which is a core component of development, harmony and integration of all sectoral activities with friendly National as well as International Policies is a prerequisite for development (Medhin, 2002). However, many development programs implemented by the governments are often in conflict with the interest of the local people in many countries (Robertson, 1984). One way of learning more about development in developing country is studying the reasons for failure. The success or failure of development in developing countries depends heavily on national contexts, policies and strategies. Most of development activities have been implemented in a compartmentalized manner and in some cases even without consultation of stakeholders. Additionally, any developing economy is also influenced by international conditions and policies of other country and international organizations (MOFED, 2010).

The presence, absence as well as the quality of urban infrastructure greatly affects the welfare of citizens and an efficient functioning of urban economy (Yirsaw, 2012). The deficiencies in urban infrastructure is a reflection not merely of absolute resource constraints at city level but also of constraints, related to the institutional arrangements of urban infrastructure services delivery” (World Bank, 1995). And the absence of responsible office could also a reason for the poor functioning of the existing efforts.

Since 2009, various efforts aimed at improving community participation in the development of urban infrastructure like road have been carried out by the local government. Offices of the local government like the Municipality and the *Kebele* are taking part in various stages of the local infrastructure development activities like, in planning, decision making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The '*Kebele*' administrations, which are close to the residents, are playing a leading role in organizing of community participation efforts in the City. Nevertheless the efforts were highly fragmented and not well coordinated as well as community participation initiatives are conducted on

campaign and unplanned manner according to the City Administration Report (2013).

To contribute effectively, infrastructure users must be provided with the basic right to self-help improvement, better security of tenure, organizational and technical support, an environment conducive to enabling and supportive policies, and a larger voice in the process of road infrastructure development. However, the potential contribution of community participation in the urban road infrastructure development is constrained by numerous factors such as the absence of secure tenure rights, inappropriate technical standards, rigid planning methods, time-bound project management requirements, and the absence of workable models (Schubeler, 1996).

Urban road infrastructure development strategies can realize their full potential only through active involvement and organization of urban people at grassroots level. The aim of community participation is to enhance the skills and capacity of communities by promoting their participation in the own development. Therefore, it is vital and timely to seek appropriate strategies that lead to deliberate actions on the part of the public and the private sectors to properly manage the relationships between urban road infrastructure development and community participation. However, this study is undertaken at Bishoftu Town which is one of the city's existing in the Oromiya National Regional State of Ethiopia. Currently, the town has 35,814 households and 9 *kebeles*. Thus, the study is conducted to analyze the practice, challenges and possible solutions of community participation in road infrastructure development.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Study Area and Population

This study was conducted at Bishoftu Town. The population of this study comprised of all the households in the town including under those kebele leaders that are engaged in managing the project and City Administrators.

Presently, the town has 9 kebeles. In all the nine kebeles comprising a total of 35,814 households 49% are males and the rest 51% are females.

#### Data Sources

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in order to collect appropriate data. Primary data were collected from unpublished sources from city administrator, employees and Key informants to understand the perceptions of

different stakeholders. Which are the results of questionnaires and interviews? Desk review was made in order to supplement evidence from the primary sources. The secondary data were collected from different published materials like report and manuals of the city administration, journals, books, magazines, websites, research findings, policy documents and other relevant materials were reviewed.

#### Data Collection Techniques and Instrument

In order to obtain relevant and adequate information the researcher used key informant interviews, questionnaires and desk review as instruments of data collection. Key informant interview was conducted with the city administrator and kebele leaders believing that they have deep and relevant information about the issues and it was conducted with face to face with the help of system in order to minimize information loss. Both structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Because using only one type of interview might leads to less rich data or information. Un-structured interviewing method was used in this case study because this method involves direct interaction between the researcher and a respondent and hence, it gives chance to move the conversation in any direction of interest that may come and also used to ask questions which were not included in the structured interview in case new questions raised as ideas emerge through the process. Questionnaires consists of both open and close ended were administered to collect a wide range of data from the households. Lastly a detailed and extensive review of existing literature on community participation and road infrastructure development were undertaken specifically in reference to road infrastructure development in order to ensure the relevance of collected data. This includes different websites, project reports and research papers.

#### Sample and Sampling Procedures

The researcher used multistage sampling technique in order to select sample respondents from the given population. Given the nature of the study, multi stage sampling was preferable over the other techniques to select a representative sample size. The sample size for this study was 385 respondents out of the target population of 35,814 households. These were selected to ensure that the sampling size had characteristic representation of the population using the formulae developed by Bartlet et al, 2001, the formula to find the sample size is:

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If  $N \geq 10,000$ , then Sample size =  $n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$

Where, N = population size

z = confidence level (95% = 1.96)

p = estimated characteristics of study population (0.5)

q = 1-p

d = level of statistical significance set/margin of error (0.05).

n = sample size.

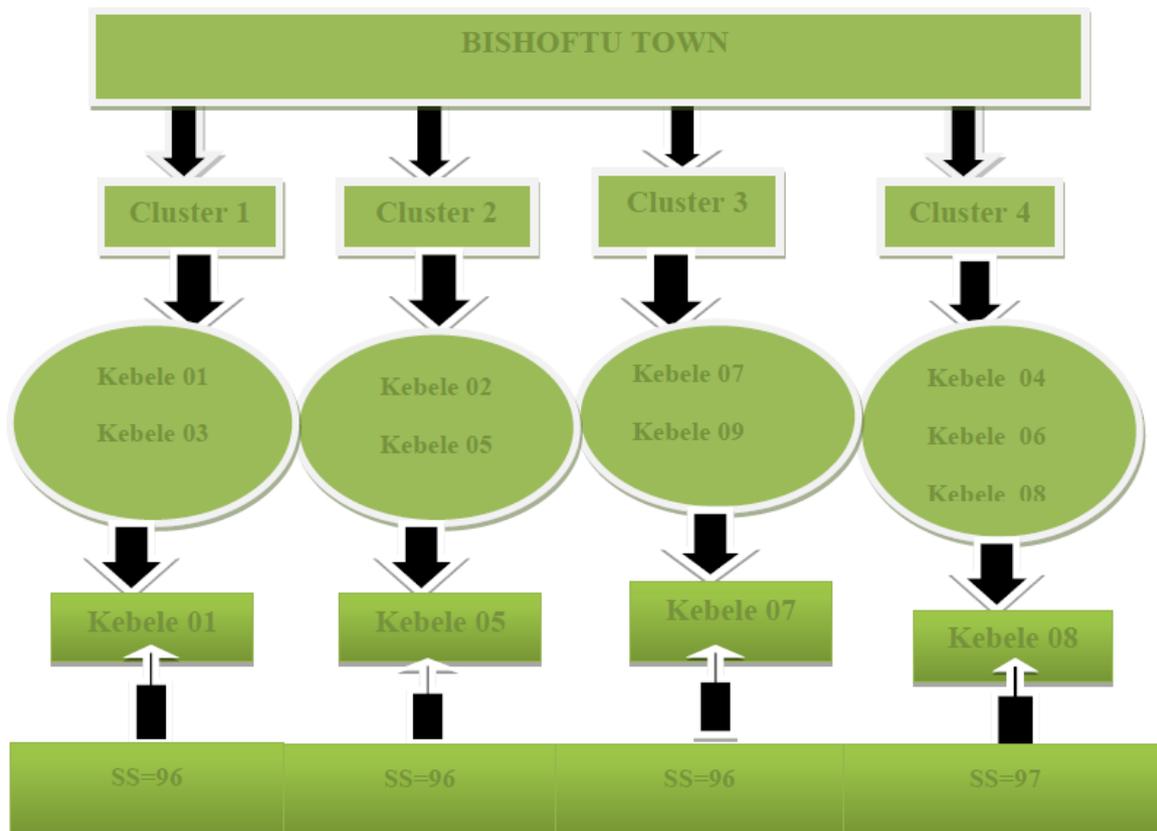
How the formula is used is shown below

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = 385$$

The distribution of the sample across the cluster was done using the total population and performance achievement of each *kebele* was considered and taken as a defining variable in clustering the town's *kebele* in to some manageable size from which sample respondents are drawn. Accordingly, the nine (9) independent administrative units were clustered in to four (4) manageable sizes. In the second stage, a simple random sampling technique was used and one (1) *kebele* was selected from each cluster. Totally 4 *kebele* (01, 05, 07 and 08) was selected as sample *kebele* from which households were drawn. In the third stage, 385 total respondents (96, 96, 96, and 97) respondents were proportionally selected from 01, 05, 07 and 08 *kebele* respectively for the survey using random sampling.

**Graph1.** Summary of samples taken from each *kebeles*.



Key informants were selected from Bishoftu Town administration, head of *kebele* and employees of city administration based on purposive judgmental sampling procedure.

### Method of Data Analysis

Based on the above two approaches descriptive method of data analysis was used. Descriptive

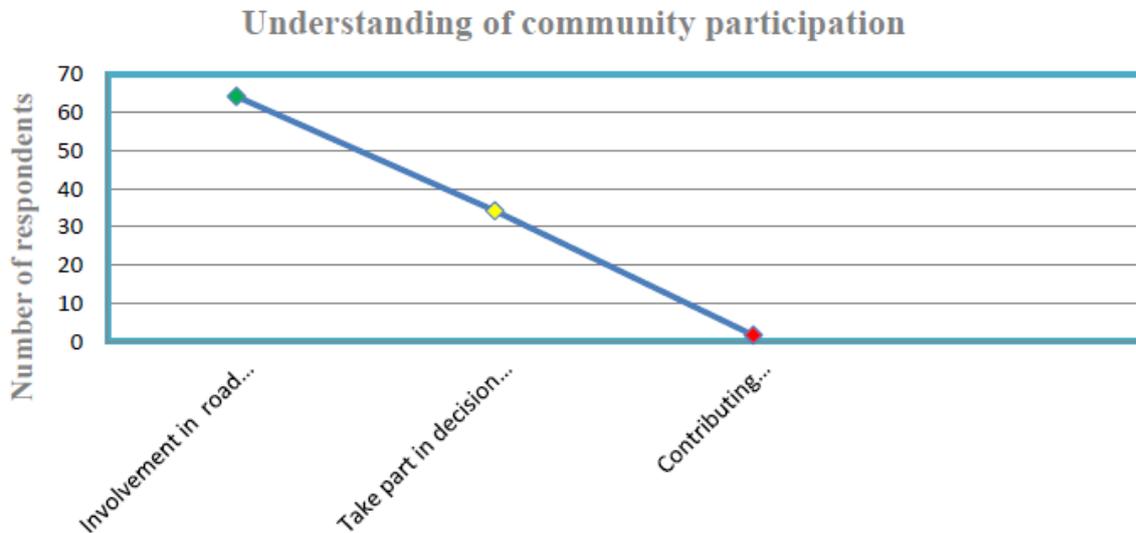
methods of analysis were applied to describe and interpret the current practice, challenges and the major hindering factors for community participation in urban road infrastructure development. In this method the researcher has no control over the variables and only report what has happened or what is happening. Also the researcher attempts to discover even when

cannot control the variables. These help the researcher to make comparison between the ideas that are collected because the information need to be cross- checked. On the basis of the assumed relationships between variables the data gathered through interviews was analyzed

by narrating and describing the meanings and implications. In other words, data which are qualitative in nature was described, classified and concepts were connected with one another. The quantitative data was analyzed through percentages and cross tabulations.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Graph2.** Understanding of community participation



Source: field survey, 2015

Survey result graph 2 above reveals that 201(64.2%) of the respondents, responded that community participation is a course where most community members were actively involved in the road infrastructure projects and at the same time the community is taking the lead in improving the road infrastructure development. However, 107(34.2%) respondents stated that community participation is the process whereby

community members are part of decision-making process in road infrastructure development in which community would like to. The rest 5 (1.6%) of the total sampled respondent replied that community participation is contributing resources (money and labor). This indicates that there are different perceptions and understanding of respondents about community participation in road infrastructure development.

**Diagram1.** Willingness to participate in the project



Source: field survey, 2015

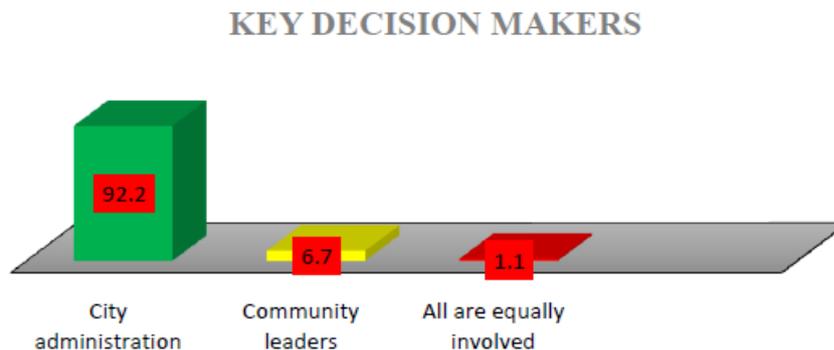
According to Diagram 1 Out of the 317 respondent who said they are willing and prepared to participate in the road infrastructure development 93(29.3%) of the respondents responded that for enhance and in order to

improve the quality of infrastructural service rendered to them, While 106(33.4%) of the respondent stated that for efficient and effective utilization of resources, Another 58(18.3%) of the respondent replied that for getting attention

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to satisfy their pressing needs and priorities. And the rest 60(19%) of the respondent mentioned that to take part in decision making process. These are the major motivating factors that motivate the community to participate in the

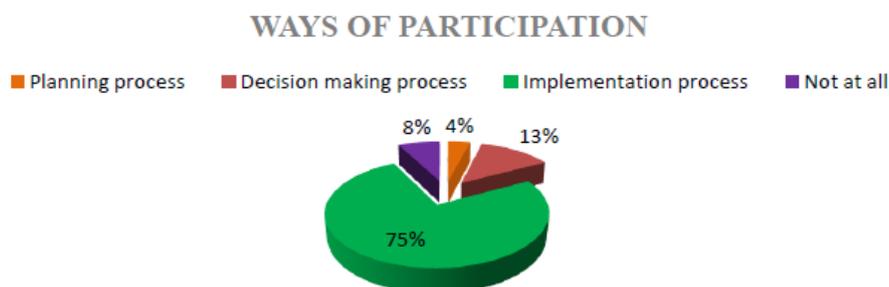
**Diagram2.** Decision makers in the development project



**Source:** field survey, 2015

Diagram 2 depicts the dominance of the city administration role in deciding road infrastructure development projects consisting 355(92.2%), followed by community leaders which accounts for 26(6.7%). The rest insignificant number of respondents 4(1.1%) were identified that all are equally involved in the development of road infrastructure projects. These clearly shows that the community had little decision making power while majority of the decision making power concerned with road infrastructure development is concentrated at the

**Diagram3.** Ways of participation in the project



**Source:** field survey, 2015

According to Diagram 3 above 15(4%) of the total sampled respondent replied that they had participated in the planning process of road infrastructure projects. While 51(13%) participants reported that they participated in decision making process. Majority of respondents 289(75%) of the respondents replied that they were involved in the implementation process of the road infrastructure development. This indicated that most of the time the communities are participated in the implementation stage after the plan is designed by the city administration

road infrastructure development projects. Generally, this implies that the communities are highly committed to take part in the road infrastructure development projects which are taken place in their locality.

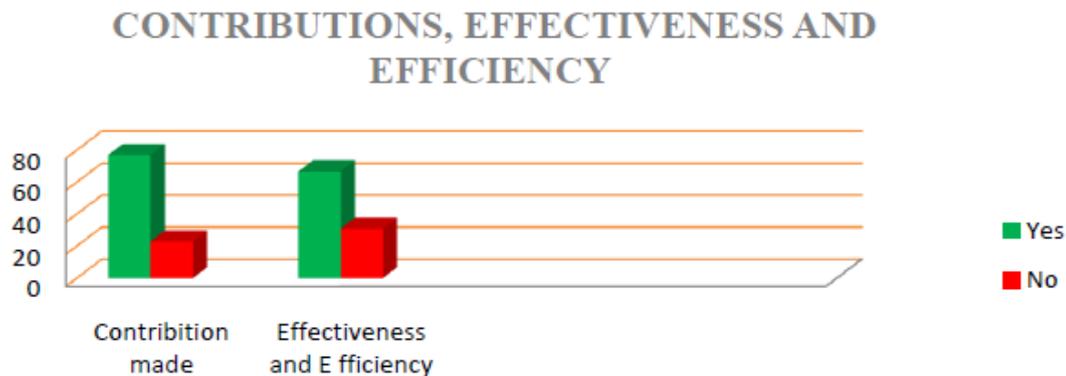
municipality. Community participation is about bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it. Community participation allows all community stakeholders to have a word and decide on infrastructural development concerns. Their concerns were expressed particularly in relation to the community's ability to influence decisions regarding road infrastructure development. Overall, the city administration has a major decision making power in deciding road infrastructure development projects in the town.

and decisions are made without the consultation of the community. The community participation activities are contributing in the development of infrastructure services in the city. And the local development activities are scaling up from construction of lower quality local road accesses to asphalts. However, the efforts were focusing on getting community contributions in order to bridge the financial gap of the local government. The rest 30(8%) reported that they were not involved in any level. Though the need for involving the community through the entire participatory infrastructure cycle including

policy formulation, planning, implementation, maintenance and operation, and evaluation and at the same time building a permanent institution responsible for community participation endeavors, effective communication and relationships among the community, municipality and other various stake holders in the infrastructure development are very important and help to promote community participation and improve the road infrastructure development in the city.

Community participation is identified as a key mechanism to strengthen road infrastructure development in developing countries. The development programs will be much improved, only when the local community plays a vital role in its process. It is believed that community participation will contribute towards designing acceptable and user friendly projects and make communities develop an interest in the operation and maintenance of projects (Sibiya, 2010).

Diagram4. Contributions, effectiveness and efficiency in the project



Source: Own survey, 2015

Survey result of Diagram 4 above reveals that majority of the respondents 297(77.1%) responded that they were made different contributions in the road infrastructure project. Whereas the rest 88(22.9%) of the total sample respondents stated that they did not make contribution for road infrastructure projects. From these we can infer that majority of the community is highly committed to take part in the road infrastructure development. These were enhancing the understanding of cost sharing because; they could contribute various skills and abilities that could improve road infrastructure development. At the same time significant number of the respondent 265(68.8%) reported that community participation in road infrastructure development leads to efficient and effective utilization of public resources. While 3(0.8%) of the respondent felt otherwise. Another 117(30.4%) of the total sample respondent replied that they do not know. From these one can understand that community participation in road infrastructure development leads to efficient and effective utilization of public resource. Finally, the respondents also suggested that if the community worked together the development goal could be easily accomplished and leads to effectively in the implementation of road infrastructure development projects.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusions

Community participation is a recent phenomenon in the town. But, now it is getting a great attention and becomes the big tasks of the city administration. The existing community participation efforts are mainly focused on the process of implementation in which the people make different contributions mainly to promote local resource mobilization which lacks the participation of the community to decide on its own affairs in the development of road infrastructure services in its locality. The participation was only focused to the contribution activities and the amount of money that needs to be contributed by each of the residents was determined by the administration itself.

The decision making process does not allow the community an opportunity to inform their pressing needs and priorities. In other words the procedure still focuses more on participating the community at the stage of project implementation in order to fill the financial gaps. The community participation has to start from identifying the needs of the community and to use its powers to meet the identified needs to continue through the entire processes of infrastructure management function includes:

formulation of policies, planning, programming, implementation, construction and maintenance and monitoring and evaluation.

Moreover, the survey also reveals that community participation is not yet developed very well in the city, due to these facts there are several challenges prevailed in community participation. These are lack of resource, lack of access to information, absence of representative community groups in the decision-making process, the existence of ineffective communication, lack of coordination between the municipality and *kebele* leaders, lack of awareness on the part of the community, lack of attitudinal change and lack of positive attitude (they feel that our views were not taken into consideration and they associate community participation with politics).

Both municipality and the *kebele* administrations are key actors in the in the road infrastructure development activities But, their relation is weak which lacks coordination. In addition relationship between the community and municipality is strained by the community perception that the municipality does not understand the pressing needs and priorities of the community as a result of ineffective communication. Therefore, the municipality should create an enabling environment for participation and this should include addressing the factors influencing community participation as well as filling the capacity gaps within the community in order to achieve effective community participation in the road infrastructure development.

### Recommendation

Based on the findings listed, the researcher forwards the following recommendations:

The researcher recommends that community participation must be more than a policy statement there must be genuine commitment to encourage participation in all aspects and at levels of development project rather than a policy. The most important action that the local authorities can take to encourage community participation is to welcome local people to contribute to the activities which are to be implemented or implemented.

Different organizational structures should be created at various levels of the administration with identified responsibility for the several functions like identification and prioritization of the problems of the community and preparation of the necessary standards and designs and

evaluation of the performance has also been identified in the participatory infrastructure development. Because, participatory infrastructure management calls for an appropriate organizational set up for the actors with clear division of tasks in line with interests and capacity.

Viable communication systems among the various entities of local government and other actors like the regional urban development office and other stake holders are important to improve road infrastructure development in the city. Discussions could take place, and in the process the stakeholders could have a common vision, but other people's views could also be appreciated and the success of community meetings should not be measured against the attendance but by its ability to transform needs and wants into tangible solutions there should be adequate discussion with large community on urban infrastructure development issues.

The municipality should create platforms where communities will be able to express their feelings without fear, engaging all relevant stakeholders during the planning stage of the projects, integrated development plan meetings should be effectively publicized in order to allow the community to have an opportunity to identify their needs and problems and device mechanisms to meet such needs. Therefore, the need for involving the community from the very early stages of decision making in needs and resource assessment, priority setting and in general through the entire processes of participatory infrastructure development is advisable.

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