



## Determinants of the Level of Households' Participation in Ngos Supported Projects in Homa Bay District, Kenya

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**ABSTRACT:-** This paper explores the determinants of the level of households' participation in NGOs projects in Homa Bay District, Kenya. It was motivated by the fact that most NGOs supported projects cease to exist once the involved NGOs withdraw their support. Even though participatory development is vital in the success of these projects, there has been a challenge on how to put it in practice to ensure that targeted beneficiaries are properly involved in the management of these projects. The main objective that informed the arguments in this paper was aimed at exploring the determinants of the level of households' participation in NGOs supported projects. Rational choice theory also informed the arguments in this paper. Descriptive survey design was adopted in this study. There was a systematic random sampling of 120 household members who have taken part in NGOs projects and a purposive sampling of eleven key informants. Interview guide and interview schedule were used to collect data from respondents. Collected data from the field was analyzed using SPSS and Excel computer programmes. Findings of this study indicated that among other determinants of the level of households' participation in NGOs supported projects in Homa Bay District are level of education for household members, role of local community leaders, and NGOs restrictions. This study concluded that even though there were elements of households' participation in some NGOs supported project, it was least effective leading to the collapse of most of the NGOs initiated projects. This has led to incapability of the community to take control of their development process. Hence, this study recommends for adjustments of the NGO policies on community contribution in the projects in order to broaden households' level of participation.

NGOs, Households, Participation, NGO Supported Projects

### I. INTRODUCTION

Homa Bay District in the then Nyanza Province but currently in Homa bay County was ranked in the national census as the poorest District in the country in 1997 with 77% of its population projected to be living below poverty line (Republic of Kenya, 1997). Greater part of the underprivileged were found to be living in rural areas of the District and mainly HIV/AIDS orphans, small scale farmers, people with disability, widows, single mothers and street children. The reasons for the high levels of poverty in the District were the locals' passive attitude towards manual work, poor fishing and agricultural methods. Others were the exploitation of farmers by middlemen, high incidence of HIV/AIDS related deaths, and negative cultural practices that impede agricultural production at household level (Republic of Kenya, 2009).

The above mentioned predicaments called for urgent measures to mitigate the situation. In an attempt to contain the rising incidences of HIV/AIDS, poverty and the consequential problems in the District, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) responded by initiating several development projects in the region in aid of the government. According to IFAD (2003), most GoK interventions were constrained by the institutional reforms of the line-ministries, which tended towards facilitation (of actors) and less implementation of projects thereby, living a huge implementation gap. As a result, many NGOs moved into Southern Nyanza, with Homa Bay District being the most targeted to complement GoK efforts in mitigating the massive need for support and assistance in an attempt to contain the above mentioned problems. Despite the large number of NGOs, together with government efforts, the absolute and food poverty still stood at 45% and 50% respectively in Homa Bay District (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

The assertion by NGOs has been that development projects they support use participatory approach in all stages of management. Conversely, in as much as the above may be true on the side of NGOs, the reality on the ground seems to speak otherwise. Even though NGO officials consult widely with members of the

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community before initiating the project, there have been some disparities between present project activities and those that non-participating community members would want to be involved. As Ukpong (1993) noted, these differences could be explained by the fact that community members are not consulted with regard to activities of their choice. He further verified that disparities in development activities are a source of failure for many NGO and other institutional community development initiatives.

Empirical study show that community projects often collapse due to various factors, the most critical of which has proved to be low or non-participation of the community in decision making (Mulwa, 2010). In most cases, there is a tendency for core planning teams not to involve certain stakeholders in planning. Marginalized groups, poor rural household members, minorities and others are often left out because planners assume that these groups are not well informed or educated enough to contribute to the planning process (UNDP, 2009). According to Orieko and Mutiso (1991:2), important participatory development course call for development facilitators or change agents to “go to the people, live with them, learn from them, start with what they know, and build on what they know.”

As Nyerere (1973) affirms, people will only develop themselves by what they do; by making their own decisions, which increases their own knowledge and by full participation as equals. Non-Governmental Organizations thus need to involve households in the projects they support so that they own them. However, this has not been the case as efforts made have been inadequate to try to involve households as key stakeholders in the management of projects supported. This study was therefore, a well-timed one given that it has been long enough since the inception of NGOs activities in Homa Bay District yet the uptake of these projects have been low. A review of 2002-2008 Homa Bay District development plans for instance, showed that approximately 35% achievement rate was achieved especially on projects co-funded by NGOs and the government.

### **Problem Analysis**

Homa Bay District has witnessed increased number of NGOs activities with the aim of helping the government meet the increased needs of the people. This is attributed to the reality that the government sometimes gets outstripped in fully providing these services in the right quality and in time. Therefore, civil societies led by NGOs have responded by initiating development projects with the aim of helping the affected household members improve their living standards. With the intention that these projects are possessed and utilized by the households, there has been expectation that household members are involved in key stages in the management of these projects. Conversely, this has not been the case as efforts made have been inadequate in involving households as key stakeholders in the management of the projects. As a result, most NGOs' initiated projects collapse once the involved NGOs pull out; a trend if not attended to, can hamper future development efforts in the District. However, much is still unknown about the determinants of the level of households' participation and their influence in the adoption of NGOs' supported projects.

### **A note on Methodology**

This study used descriptive survey design. The design is preferred where subjects respond to a series of statement or questions in a questionnaire or an interview (Jackson, 2003). The study area had an accessible population of 2050 households from which a sample was drawn for the study to help describe the phenomenon under study. According to Orodho (2003), descriptive survey is ideal for gathering information about people's perceptions and attitudes, opinions, habit and a variety of social issues. The design was very vital especially in exploring the perception of the household members, NGOs managers among other key informants towards households' participation on NGOs supported projects in Homa Bay District. The design is also preferred where standardized questions that elicit standardized responses are used (Lavine and Gelles, 1999). This was the case of this study. The use of the design thus, helped in precise and fair understanding of the results.

This study was conducted in Homa Bay District, Homa Bay County, Kenya as illustrated in the in Map 3.1. The District borders Rachuonyo District to the north and Rongo District to the South. It borders Suba District to the West and Kisii South to the East. However, recently Homa Bay District was sub-divided into two Districts, that is, Homa Bay and Ndhiwa but this study used the old administrative boundaries where Ndhiwa is part of the old Homa Bay District. This was because Ndhiwa District as at the time of this study did not have its specific data as it still drew most of the operations from Homa Bay District. Similarly, the NGOs projects targeted for study were also introduced through the old Homa Bay District, thus making it necessary to use the old administrative structure where Ndhiwa and Riana were part of Homa Bay District.

Specifically the study was carried out in three divisions, that is, Asego, Ndhiwa and Riana. The choice for these three divisions was based on the many number of NGOs' projects and the household participation and adoption problems associated with them. A review of 2002-2008 Homa Bay District development plans showed that approximately 35% implementation rate was achieved. This was due to a number of development challenges that hampered the successful implementation of the development projects envisaged. Some of the

challenges cited were: poor planning of the projects leading to some project staling, NGOs implemented projects other than the ones proposed in the plan some of which were not the priority projects of the people, lack of adequate funds, delay of the release of funds by projects co-funded by both the government and NGOs. With regards to most projects supported by NGOs, there had been challenges when it came to households' participation, which had been seen as one of the causes of the collapse of a number of these projects once the NGOs phase out. On the number of NGOs, there were 23 registered and a number of non-registered NGOs by the DDO's office in the District as at the time this study was being conducted.

## II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

A total of 120 household members who have participated in NGOs projects in Ndhiwa, Riana and Asego divisions were interviewed. The mean age of the respondents was 37.5 years with minimum and maximum age being 19 and 70 years respectively. The mean household size was found to be 6 members. The knowledge of demographic characteristics of the respondents was necessary for the understanding the views from each category.

**Table 1: Gender of the Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	59	49.2%
Female	61	50.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

When respondents were asked about their gender, majority (50.8%) were females while 49.2% were males. These statistics show that both genders were well represented in the study and the responses given were therefore representative with regards to gender.

**Table 2: Age of Respondent**

Age Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
18-24	21	17.5%	17.5%
25-30	26	21.7%	39.2%
31-40	28	23.3%	62.5%
41-50	26	21.7%	84.2%
51 and above	19	15.8%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*Source: Field data (2012)*

### Age of Respondents

Table 2 above shows that majority (23.3%) of the respondents were in the age category 31-40 years, followed by those in age categories 25-30 and 41-50 each at 21.7% then those in the age bracket of 18-24 at 17.5% and lastly above 51 years at 15.8%. Thus, a majority of those interviewed were above 25 years and were in a position to understand the dynamics of development projects in their respective areas.

**Table 4: Marital Statuses of the Respondents**

	Males		Females		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>Single</b>	16	13.3%	9	7.5%	25	20.8%
<b>Married</b>	43	35.8%	36	30%	79	65.8%
<b>Divorced</b>	0	0%	2	1.7%	2	1.7%
<b>Widowed</b>	0	0%	14	11.7%	14	11.7%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>49.1%</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>50.9%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Field data (2012)*

Table 4 shows that majority (65.8%) of the respondents were married followed by those who were single at 20.8%, then widowed 11.7% and lastly those divorced at 1.7%. Majority of men were married at 35.8% compared to females at 30%. On the other hand, there were more single men at 13.3% compared the single females at 7.5%. Widowed and divorced women comprised 11.7% and 1.7% respectively. These statistics shows that this study majorly involved respondents who have families and had understanding of what participating in NGOs projects mean.

**Table 5: Level of Education of the Respondents**

	Males		Females		Totals	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<b>No formal education</b>	None	none	2	1.7%	2	1.7%
<b>Primary</b>	14	11.7%	25	20.8%	39	32.5%
<b>Secondary</b>	23	19.2%	20	16.6%	43	35.8%
<b>College and above</b>	22	18.3%	14	11.7%	36	30.0%
<b>Totals</b>	59	49.2%	61	50.8%	120	100%

*Source: Field Data (2012)*

From Table 5, majority (35.8%) of the respondents had secondary education followed by primary education 32.5%, then college and above education at 30.0% and only 1.7% did not have formal education. Majority (20.8%) of females interviewed had primary education compared to males 11.7%. On the contrary, majority of males had secondary at 19.2% and college and above at 18.3% as compared to women who had secondary education at 16.6% and only 11.7% had college and above. Generally, a greater part of the respondents had secondary education and above meaning they had a better understanding of the NGOs projects in their respective areas.

**Table 6: Development Projects Supported by NGOs in Homa Bay District**

Projects	Frequency	Percent
<b>Health Projects</b>	3	60%
<b>Water and Sanitation</b>	2	40%
<b>Livelihood Projects (IGAs)</b>	4	80%
<b>Orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) support</b>	4	80%
<b>Construction of Social amenities</b>	2	40%
<b>Group Savings</b>	1	20%

*Source: Field data (2012)*

When NGO officials were asked to mention the projects they support in Homa Bay District, four out of five of the NGOs interviewed (80%) were supporting livelihood projects. Livelihood projects here were those associated to Income Generating Activities (IGAs) like dairy goat project, group savings, poultry keeping, orange fleshed sweet potato growing project, groundnut growing project, business activities, among other food and cash crops. Three out of five NGOs (60%) were supporting health projects related to awareness creation on HIV/AIDS, support for people living and affected by HIV, defaulter tracing for HIV clients on ARVs drugs but not adhering. Two NGOs (40%) were supporting water projects majorly facilitating sinking of boreholes, supplying plastic water tanks and capacity building on how to maintain the sanitation of water points.

Orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) projects were being supported by four out five NGOs (80%). Under these projects OVCs were being given nutritional support, educational needs like payment of school fees, provision of school uniforms and books. However, the support depended on the availability of funds from NGOs and could be stopped any time regardless of the situation of the OVC. In most cases only one member of a household could benefit from this initiative even though there may be other deserving members of the same household. Constructions of Social amenities like modern classrooms in primary and secondary schools, latrines for the community members and in schools were also mentioned. See Table 6.

### Determinants of the Level of Households' Participation in NGOs Projects

The findings the determinants of the levels of households' participation in NGOs projects are presented here below.

**Table 7: The Level at which Respondent Participated in NGO's Project**

Level of participation	Frequency	Percent
<b>As a beneficiary</b>	32	26.7%
<b>Implementation of the project</b>	61	50.8%
<b>Identification and design of the project</b>	9	7.5%
<b>Lower level decision making</b>	11	9.2%
<b>In monitoring and evaluation and policy making</b>	7	5.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Source: Field Data (2012)*

Table 7 shows the levels at which respondents participated in the management of NGOs projects where majority (50.8%) participated in the implementation stage of the projects' management followed by those who participated at the identification stage at 26.7%, then lower decision making at 9.2%, identification and design of the projects were 7.5% and lastly those who participated at the Monitoring and evaluation at 5.8%. The findings also revealed that majority of those who participate as beneficiaries had primary education at 48.9% whereas majority of those who participated in the projects' identification and design had college education and above at 55.6%. In the implementation stage, all the respondents across all levels of education except those without formal education were fairly represented. What comes out very clear from these figures is that households are not represented as expected in the identification of the projects.

**Table 8: Determinants of the Level of Households Participation**

	<b>Most influential factor</b>	<b>Second influential factor</b>	<b>Third influential factor</b>	<b>Fourth influential factor</b>	<b>Fifth influential factor</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Level of education of the household</b>	<b>45.8%</b>	20%	13.3%	12.5%	2.5%	94.1%
<b>Gender inequality</b>	1.7%	13.3%	16.7%	9.2%	<b>32.5%</b>	73.4%
<b>Government-NGO relation</b>	4.2%	9.2%	10%	8.3%	20.8%	52.5%
<b>Local leaders</b>	28.3%	<b>36.7%</b>	15.8%	6.7%	4.2%	91.7%
<b>Socio-cultural factors</b>	7.5%	4.2%	6.7%	<b>39.2%</b>	25.8%	83.4%
<b>NGOs restrictions</b>	11.7%	13.3%	<b>35.8%</b>	20%	8.3%	89.1%
<b>Others</b>	0.8%	3.3%	1.7%	4.1%	5.9%	15.8%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100	100%	100%	100%	

*Source: Field data (2012)*

Table 8 shows the findings of the factors that influence the level of participation on NGOs projects. The factors were ranked by the respondents on a scale of 1-5 based on how influential the factor was. When asked to mention the most influential factor, majority (45.8%) chose the level of education of a household member, 28.3% mentioned local community leaders, 11.7% NGOs restrictions, 7.5% socio- cultural factors, 4.2% cited government – NGOs relationship, 1.7% gender inequality and 0.8% gave other factors like the age and social status.

On the second most influential, majority (36.7%) mentioned local leaders, 20% level of education, 13.3% NGOs restriction, 13.3 gender inequalities, 9.2% government – NGOs relation, 4.2% socio- cultural factors and 3.3% gave other factor like past experience with other NGOs.

On the third influential factor, majority (35.8%) alluded to NGOs restrictions, 16.7% gender inequalities, 15.8% local leaders, 13.3% level of education, 10.0% government – NGOs relation, 6.7% socio cultural factors and 1.7% provided other determinants like age and social status.

On the fourth most influential factor, majority (39.2%) referred to socio- cultural factors, 20% NGOs restrictions, 12.5% level of education, 9.2% gender inequalities, 8.3% government – NGOs relation, 6.7% local leaders, and 4.1% other factors like the vulnerability of the household member as well as corruption involving favouritism.

On the fifth and the last influential factor, majority (32.5%) mentioned gender inequality, 25.8% socio cultural factors, 20.8% government – NGOs relation, 8.3% NGOs restriction, 4.2% local leaders, 5.9% other factor like the nature of a project and only 2.5% gave education level.

**Table 9: Determinants of the Level of Participation According to NGOs**

	<b>Average</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Levels of education of household members</b>	3.40	0.40	Influential
<b>Gender inequality</b>	2.60	-0.40	not influential
<b>Government- NGOs relation</b>	4.00	1.00	Influential
<b>Local CBOs leaders</b>	3.60	0.60	Influential
<b>Past experience with other NGOs</b>	3.60	0.60	Influential
<b>Socio-cultural factors</b>	3.00	0.00	Influential
<b>Households' attitude</b>	4.60	1.60	Influential

*Source: Field data (2012)*

Table 9 shows the results for the determinants of the levels of households' participation according to the NGOs officials who were interviewed. In order to ascertain the determinants, the study used a five point likert type scale with values 5- most influential, 4- moderately influential, 3- influential, 2- least influential and 1- not influential was used to identify the factors. A cut of mark of 3 was used to show the level of influence of each factor. For the purposes of interpretation any factor with an average  $\geq 3$  was marked influential while those factors falling below 3 indicated non- influential as perceived by NGO officials. The findings of this study shows that attitude of the household members was found to be influential factor with a score of 1.6 followed by government – NGOs relationship at 1.0, local leaders 0.6, past experience with other NGOs at 0.6, level of education at 0.4 and socio- cultural factors at 0.0 in that order. Gender inequality was found to be non – influential determinants with a score of -0.4.

In other findings from the NGO officials, all NGOs reported that they valued households' participation in the projects they support. On how to select the project to be supported all respondents chose base line survey as a method used to identify the community's priority needs. There was also 100% agreement that NGOs use already existing government development plans and strategies. On the conceptualization of the concept of household' participation, 60% admitted that there exist a difference on the understanding of what participation entails whereas 40% of the officials interviewed thought otherwise.

### **III. DISCUSSIONS**

This section presents a detailed discussion of the research findings based on the objective of this study. The discussion has been presented with respect to the findings of previous studies in the same area of knowledge. In areas where the findings of this study seemed to differ from the previous studies, a reasonably convincing rationale based on the objectives of this study has been provided. It has also attempted to harmonize the differing views of the previous study findings with efforts to bridge the identified gap in the body of knowledge of participatory development.

#### **Determinants of the Level of Households participation in NGOs Supported Projects**

On the level of participation, this study established that majority (50.8%) of the respondents participated in the NGOs supported projects at the implementation stage compared to the 7.5% who participated in the identification stage. This reveals that majority of the community members are not involved during the initial stages of project management rather they are co-opted only during the implementation. These findings tend to be in agreement with the previous studies by Surender and Niekerk (2008) who established that most development agents tend to design and decide upon projects before engaging with the communities regarding their specific needs and conditions. It is therefore worth noting that failure to involve the key stakeholders like households at the beginning is comparable to planning for collapse of such projects thereafter. This is attributed to the reality that engaging the households only during the implementation stage steal from them their key role in coming up with their priority needs given that what NGOs may propose as the their felt need may be the least ranked need.

This study reveals five major determinants of the level of households' participation in the NGOs supported project, namely education level of household members, influence of local community leaders, NGOs restrictions, socio-cultural factors and gender inequality in that order. Respondents reported that their participation were restricted by the aforementioned factors which they argued come into play before rolling out the project plan and throughout the projects lifetime. Nevertheless, of the factors established, each of them has a standalone influence in checking the level of households' participation that makes complete influence.

Education was found to be the most influential determinant on the level of household participation on the NGOs supported projects. In most projects, only those members of the community with higher levels of education could participate at advanced levels of project managements. Majority of respondents with primary education reported that they participate immensely both as implementers or beneficiaries of the projects proceeds. On the other hand, majority of the respondents with college education and above were likely to be engaged in technical stages of project management that require certain skills. Although this kind of specialization may be necessary, it can be misused to deny the vast majority their fundamental role in identifying their priority needs.

Household members may lack the needed technical expertise on how to manage certain aspects of the projects, but when they are engaged fully in the projects management, they learn more and with time they develop confidence and experience, rich enough to help them handle project when NGOs finally withdraw their support. But as Karnani (2009) notes, local communities typically have low capabilities and low levels of education and for this reason, expecting a high level of participation from them in designing and implementing projects is conceivably idealistic, and remains a lengthy and demanding course. However, when they are denied access, the study's findings indicate that the community members can sabotage the projects. Participation and support from all stakeholders at this point is highly encouraged because it ensures successful, proficient and

collective input in decision-making on certain aspects of projects management. While this strategy may look real, all attention has to be given to the households who are the targeted beneficiaries of most NGOs projects.

Level of education of respondents was found to be very important when analyzing the perception of households on NGOs supported projects. Level of education influenced the opinion of the respondents on certain aspects of project management. For instance respondents with primary education were unlikely to agree that they own projects supported by NGOs. On the other hand, respondents with college and above levels of education were likely to agree that households own the projects supported by NGOs. Similarly, respondents with primary level of education were very doubtful when asked whether they can manage the projects after NGOs withdraws while majority in the other categories agreed with view that households can actually manage the NGOs initiated projects. On whether NGOs restrict level of participation, respondents with primary education were likely to agree with the claim as opposed to those with college education and above who were likely to disagree that their level of education is restricted. What comes out very clear in the above variation is that when households are engaged in the management, they tend to develop a feeling of ownership of such projects and vice versa.

It is thus sound to argue that very few members of the households are being engaged during the projects identification stage as most projects were decided upon before being brought to the community members to implement. The argument is that households do not have the needed education to handle technical parts of the projects. As a result, sometimes the projects are managed by experts from outside the community who may not be well conversant with the community's felt needs. These findings are contrary to studies by Cheng (2009) who found out that the deprived community members are usually aware both of their challenges and needs thus their inclusion in all stages of project management plays a pivotal role in their success. Admittedly, education enlarges a person's competence, rising his or her intellect and likely ability. For all these, it is expected that progress in the projects is more likely to occur in situation where members of a community has reached some level of education. Whereas this may be true, the reality is that regardless of the level of education, members of the community have diverse needs that can only be met when they are brought on board. This may only be possible by engaging all the stakeholders alike with the households taking active role.

This study also found out that local community leaders play key role as far as households' participation in and the eventual acceptance of the NGOs supported projects is concerned. Respondents who mentioned local community leaders as a determinant on the level of household participation believed that the success of any development undertaking is pegged on the role they play. Local leaders were found to be playing a very important role in the needs identification and provision of the needed data to NGOs. In addition, it was also revealed that leaders play a great role in mobilizing members to help in the implementation of the projects. In areas where leaders executed their duties diligently, projects performed quite very well. This was due to the confidence a proper guidance and inclusion of the households regardless of the factors that would otherwise be used to deny them participation.

Whereas a section of the respondent reported that local leaders play positive role, there were those who held different views. However, studies by Ozor (2008) indicate that some of the major roles played by the local leaders include; decision making on different issues touching the community and require incorporated approach. Others include acting as link between governmental and non-governmental agencies and the community for financial and technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation of projects for proper implementation, and raising funds through levies, donations, launchings, etc to finance community development projects in the area. On the contrary, the findings if this study show that most NGOs projects that have collapsed in Homa Bay District were as result of the failure on the part of the leaders chosen to represent the community in various projects an any creative, transparent and objective way.

Local community leaders having been entrusted with the noble task of representing the households sometimes neglect their people by tending to incline on the side of the NGOs. In doing so, there is a tendency to ignore the views of the majority and run the projects based on the interest of the chosen few, consequently, the real beneficiaries are usually neglected. Some leaders were also reported to be very biased when it comes to choosing the beneficiaries as well as those who are supposed to be engaged in the projects. There were cases where leaders trusted betrayed the community by mismanaging the projects once they were handed over to the community by NGOs. All these reasons summed up were established to be playing a key role in checking the level at which households get involved in the said NGOs supported projects. The reality is that leaders block members of the community from having a direct contact with the NGOs.

NGOs officials interviewed corroborate the views given by the respondents on their leaders when they argued that some leaders are found in almost all projects even though people do not like them based on their past records. One NGOs official remarked,

"...some community leaders are found in almost all projects in their area...sometimes people do not like them to an extent that when they are spotted in any project, the households tend to keep away from participating with fear that their participation may yield nothing based on their past records."

*(Source: NGO Official in charge of field coordination of projects, 2012)*

The above statement indicates that despite the important role that local leaders play to enhance participation, they can sometimes inhibit households' participation in NGOs project. On the other side, local leaders who were interviewed took the blame from them and instead accused the NGOs agents for not being transparent to the households given that what their promises sometimes are not fulfilled. One community leader commented that,

*"...anyisi wuoyi matin, waseyudo wich kuot kod jok ma warito kabisa nimar jo NGOs gi ketowa mondo wakaw nying ji moningo yud kony bange to onge gima gikelo. Ma nyisore ni wan ema chal ni wachamo gik momiwa kod NGOs mondo wami jopiny, to ma ok en adiera"* (...listen to me young man, we as leaders have been embarrassed greatly from the people we represent. Some NGOs officials at times direct us to provide them with detailed lists of names of the household members to be supported but later on nothing is given to them. The perception is that households think that we get those benefits but fail hand them over, this is not true."

*(Source: Key informant, Chief from Riana Division, 2012)*

This therefore creates a misunderstanding between leaders and the members of the community who feel that their leaders short change them. In this misunderstanding, this study acknowledges that it can be detrimental to the development projects. It is against this controversy that this study recommends that even though local leaders may important, NGOs agents should insist on dealing with the households under the guidance of local leaders. This can build trust among these key players as well as reducing the cost of managing the projects. This can make households participate freely and devote their resources in the projects as a way of promoting participation and the eventual ownership of the projects.

In a nutshell, in spite of the central role local community leaders play towards the success of the NGOs supported projects, sometimes they may fail to represent the entire population but rather stand for particular interest groups. The neglected section of the population thus feels betrayed and ceases participation and or explores strategies that can help sabotage such projects. It thus necessary that local community leaders be given relevant trainings on social skills like decision making, mobilizing the community into action, relaying information to the people.

NGOs restriction in the projects they support was also cited as one of the key determinants on the level of households' participation in the NGOs supported projects. Respondents revealed that NGOs are so strict and rigid on their pre defined projects and are unlikely to change even if such projects are not beneficial to the community members. In their strictness, they may be willing to change the location of the projects if households do not comply with what they have for them. What is revealed here is that first, the projects are decided upon by NGOs themselves without engaging the household, this in itself deny the households their key role in prioritizing their needs and coming up with the most pressing and important ones.

Despite these restrictions it is believed that empowerment of the community can only occur when individuals and communities take power in the projects (Laverack, 2006). The NGOs officials interviewed on the other hand were convinced that they involve the households in almost all stages of project managements. Interestingly local community leaders were divided on this point. There were those who believed that NGOs are not strict but are just doing what is good for their targeted beneficiaries. On the contrary, there were those who believed that NGOs agents do not respect the will of the people by imposing some projects on the people even if they are not beneficial to them. From the findings, it can be argued that there exist communication breakdown when it comes to who should take greater responsibility on the projects identification. It is thus necessary to affirm that there is urgent need to engage households fully on initiatives that affect their livelihood.

Socio- cultural factors were also mentioned as determinant of the level of households' participation in the NGOs projects. People who have influence were found to be the ones who enjoy participation while edging out the deserving majority who are economically disadvantaged. Respondents reported that people with financial influence are the ones who benefit first while the real beneficiaries merely get the left over. Even in the actual participation in the management, the disadvantaged households are only expected to be beneficiaries of the project and or take part during implementation. Female respondents complained that sometimes men sabotage the NGOs supported projects. Male respondents on the other hand argued that most NGOs projects target women and children only while neglecting their interests. The argument here is that sometimes when men get involved, they edge out women and do not allow them to participate in projects that are women specific. This notion is pegged on the premise that women are not suppose to lead while men watch. The issue of gender inequality comes out very clear from the foregoing argument. As Cornwall and Whitehead (2007) argued, most development institutions still have to be reminded constantly on the need for gender analysis even on those projects that affect women directly. This study noted that despite the fact that most projects target women and the underprivileged members of the community, sometimes men overthrow them and take full control. It is therefore, necessary that NGOs enact institutional changes on rules and practices that would promote the participation of the right beneficiaries.



#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

This study concluded that the level of households' participation in NGOs projects was influenced by the level of education of household members, opinion leaders, NGOs restrictions and socio-economic factors. This study further concludes that NGOs do not give households enough information that could enable them make rational choices on whether to participate in the projects or not. The respondents reported that when they are given insufficient information, they proceed to participate; however, when disappointing experiences set in, it becomes difficult to continue taking part in such projects. This study also found out that the level of households' participation in NGOs projects is determined by the level of education of household members followed by the influence of local community leaders. However, the reality is household members with higher level of educational achievements are usually not involved very much in NGOs projects. They are perceived to be troublesome as they question the management and the general operation of the NGOs projects. It is therefore true to note that in as much as some level of education is important in project management, it should not be taken as the only influential factor that determines the level of participation. Additional determinants like attitude, nature of projects and past experience among other factors are also important to that effect.

#### Recommendations

Basing on the study findings, the following recommendations were made:

#### Policy recommendations

- i. It is recommended that households' participation should be enhanced in these NGOs projects. The involvement of the community is important and would ensure high chances of projects' ownership by the targeted beneficiaries leading to high possibilities of projects' sustainability. Enhancing participation involves allowing the community to take active role in the projects from the problem identification all through to monitoring and evaluation stages to ensure that their priority needs are captured by the development agents.
- ii. Local community leaders need to change their approach on the vital role they play in NGOs projects. There is a great need by leaders to provide a democratic space and allow households interact freely with NGOs devoid of any barrier. In addition, they should also refrain from making certain decision independently without taking views of their subjects.
- iii. With regards to determinants of the level house of households participation, this research can recommend that even though the level of education is important when it comes certain aspects of project management, it should not be used by development agents to deny households their right to participate in a development process that affect their lives. Instead, those members of the community with low educational background should be encouraged to participate in decision making based on their ability.

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