

Challenges and Prospects of Community Participation in Improving Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Extension: The Case of Boloso Sore Woreda, SNNPR, Ethiopia

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Abstract

A number of scientific research and educational system have given attention to the needs and priorities of local communities. However, utilization of community potential through integrating indigenous and modern practical knowledge to enhance agricultural extension and environmental rehabilitation has been not satisfactory. Therefore, this study has assessed the bottlenecks and opportunities of community participation in environmental rehabilitation and agricultural extension in Boloso Sore Woreda. The study has employed personal interviews, questionnaire, focus group discussions, and observation in addition to using available documents. The study was mainly based on the data obtained sample household respondents which were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used for the purpose of describing different variables of the study. It was also examined the structure, mechanisms and its key problems of community participation in environmental rehabilitation and agricultural extension activities. The data analysis process was also made by making use of frequency distribution tables, percentage and pie charts. As a result, there is lack of integration, not only between the local government and community but also within communities themselves. This indicates that there existed insufficient coordination level of the Woreda administration and lack of transparency within the administrative bodies' working procedure in the resource allocation processes. This in turn affected the commitment level of local people to participate in different activities of environmental rehabilitation and agricultural extension.

Keywords: Community, Coordination, Indigenous, Integrating, Participation, Transparency

1. Introduction

Community participation is one of the basic issues in today's world as it enhances the community's practical skills and knowledge as well as boosts up their organizational skills to solve different problems. Despite Africa's unsatisfactory track recorded in a community participation and institutional integration in the environmental rehabilitation and agricultural extension (ERAE) over the decades, it has been improving. This is due to the fact that the continent has been confronted by a number of major problems to enhance community participation in every developmental issue (Desalegn, 2007).

Community participation is also a highly fashionable term in current development practice. Until the 1990's, development discourse emphasized the role of the state and of international agencies in delivering development to people. This blueprint approach was progressively challenged because of its various reasons to effectively address the underlying causes of poverty. The rationale behind community participation is multifold: increased participation is supposed to promote greater efficiency, more accountability and transparency, enhanced ownership and empowerment. Ultimately, participation is supposed to be the key to genuine and sustainable poverty alleviation by shifting power to those who are "local and poor" (Nelson, 2005).

Behind the buzzword of community participation, lays a wide range of structure, mechanisms and processes all of which are context-specific and have a different impact on the overall performance of participation. Involvement of the local people in different ERAE activity's plan or design, implementation, maintenance and decision making empowers the local participants as well. Thus, community participation is highly encouraged in the programs like natural resource conservation, utilization of improved seeds and fertilizers in order to ensure the sustainable local economic development (World Bank cited in Addis, 2005). Ethiopia has begun community participation in ERAE programs and practices. However, there are some problems in order to achieve effective, participatory and accountable structure and mechanisms through which the local communities involve in ERAE (Desalegn, 2007). Insufficient coordination of the local government, lack of clear structure and mechanisms, disintegration between communities at local level, low participation of community in: planning, implementation, decision making and budget allocation activities are common problems in the study area (Beamlaki, 2012).

In this respect, there is limited systematic research that could inform policy makers and empirical

understanding in the study area. Therefore, the main objectives this study is to assess the bottlenecks and prospects of community participation in improving ERAE by providing due attention specifically in: examining the structure, mechanisms and key problems of community involvement in planning, implementation, decision making, and control of resources in the ERAE activities in the study area; assess prospects of community involvement in ERAE activities in the study area.

2. Methodology

2.1 Description of the study

Boloso Sore *Woreda*¹ is one of the twelve *Woredas* in Wolayita zone found in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). The *Woreda* is bordered on the south by Sodo Zuria *Woreda*, on the west by the Omo River on which Gibe-3 hydroelectric power station was built which again separates it from Dawro Zone, on the north, northwest & northeast by Kembata Tembaro like Kacha Bira, and Hadiya Zone Misraki Badawacho *Woreda*, on the east by the Hadiya, and on the south east by Damot Sore *Woreda*. The administrative center of Boloso Sore *Woreda* is Areka town. Based on 2017 sample survey data the *Woreda* has a total population of 456,125 averagely, out of which 108,870 of whom 53, 058 are men and 55,812 women were at productive age. The total area of Boloso Sore is 110.72 square kilometers. (BoFED, 2017).

2.2 Data Collection Methods

The study was descriptive case study that employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to analysis the current status of community participation. These methods were also used to identify the problems of community participation within which structure and mechanisms used to improve the ERAE service delivery in the study area. The reasons behind using a combination of both methods were to reduce the limitations of each method by taking detail data from different sources. The two major sources of data were primary and secondary sources.

From the former source, some relevant data were obtained by making use of open & closed-ended questionnaire, observation, checklists prepared for focus group discussion (FGD) and interview; while from the later source, it was collected through reviewing and analyzing the existing documents on both theoretical and empirical aspects of the issue under study. The major reasons for relying upon primary and secondary types of data were to make easy the broad nature of the concept of community participation in ERAE. Secondary data were also used to supplement primary data.

*Woreda*¹: - is an administrative division of Ethiopia (managed by a local government), equivalent to a district.

2.3 Sampling Procedure, Sample Size and Data Collection Processes

The study employed different sampling procedures. As it has already been indicated above (see section 2.2) data collection instruments used in the study area. Based on these instruments the respondents explained their agreement on structure and mechanisms through which community members involved in planning, implementation, decision making and resource distribution so as to be benefited. The Community Based Associations (CBAs) representatives as well as *Woreda* experts were involved as a key informant for interview purpose. There are 76 experts and 28 CBAs found in the study area (BoFED, 2012). Thirty experts and sixteen CBA representatives of different associations were involved as a key informant in the study area purposively. Each CBA holds 20-30 households as the member of association in all *Kebeles*¹. The above technique was used intentionally in order to get detail data from the key informants on the problems and prospects of community participation in ERAE.

Since CBA representatives and experts have direct relation with the community to develop planning, implementation, decision making and control of resource distribution in through the given structure and mechanisms the study area. Three out of twenty nine *Kebeles* were selected by using purposive sampling technique in the study area. The two main reasons for selecting three *Kebeles* namely (Wormumma, Xaddisa and Dolla) out of twenty nine were as follow: First, the total populations within each sampled *Kebeles* were nearly more than two folds of the other *Kebeles*. Second, the numbers of CBAs in sampled *Kebeles* were also greater than CBAs in the other *Kebeles*. Therefore, among the twenty nine *Kebeles* containing 12, 145 households, three *Kebeles* with 1340 total households were selected by the technique mentioned above. There are about 1340 (1151 men-headed & 189 women-headed) households in the three sampled *Kebeles* (BoFED, 2012). As suggested by Gay regarding the sample size, for descriptive study, 10 to 20 % of the accessible population is enough (Gay 1983, cited in Kumar, 1999).

$$\text{Number of selected sample} = \left(\frac{x}{N}\right) 100\%$$

Where: n designates the sample size the research uses;

$$\begin{aligned} N &\text{ designates total number of households in the study area;} \\ &= 257 \div 1340 \\ &= 19.2\% \end{aligned}$$

Kebele¹: -A kebele (Amharic "neighborhood") is the smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia similar to ward a localized and delimited group of people. It is part of a woreda, or district, itself usually part of a Zone, which in turn is grouped into one of the Regions based on ethno-linguistic communities.

Therefore, 19.2% of the total households i.e., 257 households were selected by using stratified sampling method. The stratification was based on gender i.e. male and female headed households to identify the present status, problems, structure and mechanisms of community involvement in the ERAE service delivery. Both random and non random sampling techniques were used to enable the researchers thoroughly understand the challenges of community involvement under investigation in the study area. To determine the proportion of each stratum i.e., (male and female headed households) in the study population, the following formula suggested (Kumar, 1999).

$$S_x = \frac{E_x}{P} \quad \text{Where } S_x = \text{the proportion of stratum } x \text{ in the population (p)}$$

E_x =The number of elements in stratum x

P =Total population size in the sampled locality

Accordingly, the proportion of women-headed households in the sample population of the household computed as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Women-headed households } S_x &= \frac{189}{1340} \\ &= 0.1410 \text{ (i. e., 14.10\%)} \end{aligned}$$

The proportion of male-headed households has been computed in the similar fashion. Finally, in order to supplement data obtained through questionnaires and key informant interviews, FGDs were held in different groups purposively. Two FGDs in each of the 3 sampled *Kebeles*, totally six FGDs were conducted in the study area. Each FGDs contained 8 households from *Idir¹*, *Ikub²*, youth association, women association, cooperative association, elder's groups, religious leaders and development agents purposively from the study area. The main reasons for relying on FGDs were to minimize the biasness within and between the target population groups on the study issues. Therefore, all the available data instruments used in the study collectively ensured the validity and reliability of the data.

2.4 Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis was both quantitatively and qualitatively with the purpose of describing different numerical evidences in the study. It was also examined the structure, mechanisms and its key problems of community participate in ERAE activities. The data analysis process was also made by making use of frequency distribution tables, percentage and pie charts.

Iddir¹: - the funeral associations in Ethiopia are known as the *iddir* (e'dir) - associations that ensure a payout in cash and in kind at the time of a funeral for a deceased member of the family of a member of the group (Dercon et al., 2004:11). **Ikub²**: -is a local organization which performs all the saving and credit activities of money only for the members of the organization.

The raw data that were collected from both primary and secondary sources through the aforementioned data collection tools were subsequently be edited and tallied manually and entered in to computer software program of MS-excel. Finally, these basic ideas were brought together for interpretation.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 The Structure of Community Participation in Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Extension

As the qualitative data indicated that, the structures in the study area, of course, have been used not only to perform the ERAE activities but also seriously for any political agreement and disagreement of the communities in the area. As the report and implementation manual of the local or *Woreda* government indicated that, the given activities have institutional framework and the flow of its own institutional arrangement at *Kebele* level structures. As articulated by interviewees, *Woreda* officials who are living at the *Kebele* level, are well trained and accompanied with their own duties and responsibilities to support their community in the study area. This is on the basis of structures between the local government and the community that is experts are assigned for each *Kebeles* to support all the ERAE activities and political situations in the study area. Accordingly, within the kebele structure *Woreda* officials have access to pursue government policies in the *Kebeles* for which they are assigned and responsible. *Kebele* administrations, since they are the lowest tier of government with paid development agents (DAs), accountable to and reporting to *Woreda* level government in the area, are government-formed structures at the grass root level that are used for agricultural cooperative, environmental protection committee, committee of local development army which they call it '*Dichcha wodena¹*' women's association, road construction and maintenance committee. These all structures have their own duties and responsibilities given by the local government based on their own visions, missions, goals and objectives in their locality.

In addition to these, the administration of each *Kebeles* is headed by the chairperson with 11 cabinet members chosen from 100 people who themselves were chosen by the people in their *Kebeles*. Under the elected chairperson, there are 11 cabinet members including vice *Kebele* chairperson. In the study area, *Kebele* administration is accountable to the *Woreda* administration, the DAs are members of the *Kebele* cabinet and also the communities have their own *Kebele* social courts elected from the communities themselves. The court has five members, two of whom are women. It meets twice a week and is responsible for major disputes such as conflicts over land, cattle entering farmland, group fighting, minor theft, serious conflicts between husband and wife and serious quarrelling between individuals. It has a right to decide a penalty up to 500 *birr* but it has no right to decide on imprisonment. More serious crimes are reported to the police, and the cases are seen to the *Woreda* court. The recent structure called as '*Limatawi budin*¹' or '*Dichcha woddena*' used for mobilizing and controlling local people at a grassroots level have been played great role in ERAEs development.

According to the focus group discussants and interviewee indicated that any participatory activities like labor, money and materials contributions were organized through these structures and the absence of any household during the working period would result in punishment according to the legislation set by the community themselves. In addition to these the other characteristics of *Limatawi budin* includes community workshops to identify needs, plan for implementation of environmental protection activities through committee organized by members are made of 3 women, 3 men and 3 youth steer..

¹*Limatawi budin (Dichcha Woddena)*: - is the type of structure used for mobilizing and controlling local people at a grassroots level that can play great role in any of the local development activities.

The qualitative field data indicated that, DAs are intermediaries between the government and the local community who disseminates and implements government directives, policies, information and are again responsible for mobilizing community members for group work of ERAE activities in the study area. *Kebele* leaders are also influential, particularly during land measurement and resources distribution, *Woreda* is the basic co-coordinating unit at the local level for planning, implementation, and budgeting resources for the given activities as well as institutions at *Kebele* levels are also responsible for collecting information, identifying and prioritizing needs, and feeding this information..

Different researcher investigated that community driven development planning is a planning which addresses social, economic and political needs of the local people. It is also a process that involves decisions, or choices, about alternative ways of using available resources in the area with the aim of achieving particular goals at some time in the future (Unifruit, 2011). As table 2 below shows, household's perception have indicated that 46(31.29 %) and 36(24.49%) of the level of responsibility of planning and implementation were done by the *Woreda* government and the DAs of the *Kebele*. This indicates that the level of awareness and sense of ownership within the local people was unsatisfactory in the study area. Accordingly, about 39(24.49%) and 26(17.69 %) of the local people perception shifted the responsibility for the *Kebele* administrative councils and CBAs and the communities at large.

Similarly, 70(47.62%) and 25(17.01 %) of the respondents thought that the major role in the participation of decision making relays on, the willingness of *Woreda* government and *Kebele* administrative councils. These helps to understand most of the local communities were not invited to engage in the decision making activities of resources distribution on the planned activities, as the researcher's observation and understanding from the respondents, most of the communities were not being expected to involve in the situation where both the physical and financial resources distribution took place. Comparing to the above issue, the community's assumptions of the major role in the participation of decision making on the specification of resources were 31(21.09 %) for the DAs, 21(14.18 %) for community based associations.

Based on this data, not only the actual participation of local people basically in the resources allocation and distribution processes is poor, but also the way through which the *Woreda* government being active, is not as such capable of solving the local community's environmental and agricultural concerns or problems. Therefore, the local government has to be transparent for all the activities carried out by the people to the people, because to create more and more ownership and sense of belongingness for the activities going on and so as to bring the communities to control their resources day and night with greatest interest and commitment in the study area. FGD indicated that the community's involvement in planning and implementation was less before five years ago but recently the level of involvement have been increasing.

As figure 1(A) illustrates, 67% of the sample respondents replied that they participated in the planning and implementation phase based on the given structure like *dicha woddena*, whereas 19% indicated that they were only involved in working activities. A total of 14% responded that their participation was limited to only attending meetings that were called by their *Kebele* committees and agreed on what they have already designed. In terms of the involvement of communities in planning and implementation, the information obtained from all FGDs indicated that in some of their locality, there appear to have been little involvement but participants felt that it was very important to be involved.

During the field survey, an attempt was made to collect quantitative data to assess the level of decision-

making at the community level. Accordingly, the respondents were asked to indicate who makes most of the decisions in the community for each and every ERAE activities. As figure 2 (B) mentioned, 55% indicated that the *Woreda* and *Kebeles* councils make most of the decisions. A total of 29% of the respondents said that it is the DAs who make the decisions, while the remaining 16% responded that they did not know who make decisions in the ERAE activities in their area.

3.2 Mechanisms of Community Participation in Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Extension

Indigenous knowledge is a form of knowledge accumulated over many years and originated from their locality. As compared to many modern techniques, traditional ways of implementing ERAEs are more effective, inexpensive, and locally available and culturally appropriate, and in many cases they become based upon preserving and building on the patterns and processes of nature. There are many justifications for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in any developmental endeavor. For instance, as evidenced in many parts of the world, "...development efforts that ignore local circumstances, local technologies, and local systems of knowledge have wasted enormous amount of time and resources" (World Bank, 2014).

As the focus group discussants and interviewees indicated that many local communities have indigenous knowledge of mobilizing the community by using different mechanisms in order to plan, implement, utilize and control the resources distribution to live in economically capable area. As articulated by interviewees, in the study area the indigenous knowledge system of the local people has increasingly becoming vulnerable to challenges brought by an inevitable modernization processes in the area. Accordingly, pressures related to modernization such as growth of educational systems, environmental degradation, population growth and increased local people connectivity with various communities both within and abroad are now eroding the indigenous knowledge system of the area.

However, local people in the study area have developed and adopted several traditional mechanisms of community participation in their ERAE activities like improved fallows, use of cover crops, use of farm implements for soil and water conservation, practices to control soil erosion and use of green manure by forming active development collaborative groups locally named as '*Dagguwa*¹'. This kind of mechanism is grouping peoples to conserve land and water resources, construction and maintenance road, enhance their productivity and integrate their indigenous technologies with the modern ones. The others are '*Shankka*²' and '*Bitta Chimma*³'. The qualitative data indicated that, in addition to the traditional one, the other best way that the local government in cooperation with the *Kebele* councils including, community based associations representatives have been directing different modern mechanisms of community participation to bring improvement in the ERAE practices. ¹ is a group of local people who are arranged only to participate in their ERAE activities in the form of joint working unit. ² is kind of group that local people used traditionally only for hunting and means of evaluating an individual's level of strength and good hunter. ³ is a kind of group used for internal conflict resolution occurred within the local people.

Accordingly, information dissemination by the local community members within a community is decisive, because the local community has the behavior of immediately accepting information about technologies of new agricultural practice, soil and water conservation, family planning and sanitation from their neighbor and community based associations than, the other government officials. Currently, information sharing through consultation, co-operation and jointly working for one objective of increasing productivity and environmental rehabilitations is highly increasing at normal rate in the study area.

As the qualitative data indicated that, with full information about the ongoing activities of ERAE especially, new technologies in their area, the local communities have developed visible sense of ownership in their area gradually. As the sense of ownership increased in the area, the communities become confident and interested more to plan, implement and make decision in different ERAE in their area. One of the respondents directed that, short term training that are prepared and given by DAs for community and CBAs, mainly about different agricultural extension technologies become the best mechanisms to local economic growth. Accordingly, the communities were asked to indicate impacts of community participating mechanisms effectiveness in the improving the agricultural products and the physical environments of the area and, their livelihood. Of the sample in figure 3(C), 81% of respondents indicated that not only information sharing and sharing benefit through two way communication with different bodies (DAs, *Woreda* experts and cabinet) but also co-operation with each other has great impact for their better livelihood and further development of their area.

However, 17% of the respondents said that, has little impact which can be positively or negatively affects community's livelihood and the reason forwarded by one of the CBAs representative to question presented by the researcher supports this situation.

"I am not expected to be informed any new technologies and even our Kebele DAs are not as such interested to come and see my garden in order to comment what is well done and not, I think this is because of misunderstanding of our Kebele councils, considering me as the member of opposing party

and some other reasons which in turn implies there is less good governance in Kebele”.

Finally, 2% considered the mechanisms has no impact (both positively and negatively) to their livelihood because they are traders who don't live always with the communities.

As data in the Table 3 below shows, households have indicated the level of their agreement or disagreement on various issues that suggest the level of integration of community in the ERAE practice as well as the current mechanisms of the ERAE activity in the study area. Accordingly, about 45(30.61%) sample respondents agreed and 26(17.69%) strongly agreed on the responsibility, good governance, equity and justice in resources distribution through the local government on the given mechanisms in their area respectively. Whereas, about 22(14.97%), 17 (11.56%) and 37(25.17%) of them have strongly disagreed, undecided, and disagreed on the same issue respectively. Based on this data, even though the number of respondents who agreed and disagreed on the same issue is more or less similar, given the presence of some undecided respondents, it is not fair to say the mechanisms of local government within the community that serve as the system through which the local people participate in every ERAEs activities is very strong.

On the other hand, 77.55% of the sample households agreed upon the fact that continuous involvements of community is being undertaken and more than three-fourth (80.27%) of the responses show an agreement on the role played to challenge the existing problems in ERAE. However, the various associated challenges still tend to impede the full realization of the CBAs potential in the study area.

Similarly, a substantial proportion 84(63.94%) of respondents disagreed on the item pertaining to the transparency and accountability in decision making, because, the actual participation of the local community on their ERAE can be affected by several challenges related to the local government and community itself. In this regard, there are certain indicators to determine the area in which local government is more open to the community and not, in the study area.

Accordingly, 70(47.62%) and 56(38.09%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively on the interest of young people participation. Similarly, about 53(36.05%) and 71(48.30%) sample respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively on the improvement in community participation. Based on this data, not only the actual participation of local people in the ERAE affairs is good, but also the mechanisms by which the local government being run, are capable of solving the local community's agricultural and environmental concerns. In addition to the above clarification of table given the highest frequency of agreed and strongly agreed opinion of the respondent failed on the planning and implementation activities of ERAE by using the local community were being undertaken on a regular basis in the study area.

3.3 Challenges of Community Participation in Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Extension

The problems of community participation are; basically participatory activities in budgeting and other type of resources distribution and, sometimes decision making activities that do not take into account local structures power and local people into consideration. As a result, there is inconvenience, not only between the local government and community but also within communities themselves (World Vision, 2008). As articulated by focus group discussants and interviewees the insufficient coordination level of the *Woreda* government and lack of transparency within the administrative bodies working procedure in the resource allocation processes. Lack of unity between the communities at local level is also taken as another big problem in the area because it affected the interests as well as the commitment level of local people to participate in different activities of ERAE.

Accordingly, the unsatisfactory level of community participation basically in implementation, decision making and budget allocation activities, are the main problems that aggravate other challenging factors which hinder the development speed of the study area. As it has already been described earlier, there are different problems of community to involve in ERAE practices in the study area. Here, the given structure within the study area operates not only the ERAE activities but also become very important tool to mobilize any political issues and other unrelated field works thrown from the *Woreda* councils to the DAs in their area. That is why because any of the other government structure available at the *Woreda* level has no agent at the grassroots level except that of education and health Offices. This has also negative impact in the improvement processes of service delivery of agricultural and natural resources offices experts and agents' performance in the study area. One of the respondents said that, others service delivery governmental organization have no contact with them and the reason forwarded by that individual to question presented by the researcher supports this situation.

“As long as we are farmers, I think the *Woreda* government did not consider to discuss any issues except agricultural activities with us, leave alone planning and implementation activities with us, there is no agents for the other service delivery sectors in our Kebele so that the local government's thought is, we farmers are capable only for agricultural and environmental issues and the others will be left for the government itself.”

Accordingly, majority of the respondents confirmed that, the co-ordination level, resources controlling, critical identification of the communities need and goals to plan, two way communication between the government and community, site selection to implement through high degree of community involvement and trends of continuous follow up of the local government down to *Kebele* level for the ongoing activities are not as

such successful. "The seriousness of any planned activities proceeds forward in the area is implemented until, the other hot issues thrown from the Region to Zone and Zone to *Woreda*, and then the former one would be forgotten forever". Therefore, such kind problematic situation makes the community's commitment level insignificant and ERAEs become not sustainable in the study area.

As it can be seen from Table 4, an overwhelming majority (90.48%) of the sample households replied that they were not involved in the fiscal budget allocation process for ERAE in the study area. This indicates the local government is not clear and transparent in resources distribution. As articulated by interviewees, such kind of thinking does not generate sense of belongingness within the community and it brings failure of participation of the local community.

Accordingly, for instance, about 40(27.21%) sample households put forward that the power of structure in the study area is not well made in order to control the resources and actively participate in all ERAE activities mentioned above.

3.4 Opportunity of Community Participation in Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Extension

As the qualitative data indicated that, the people working in local governments and community based associations often serve the same local community, address the same community problems, and have the potential to widen opportunities of solving community's problems with each other. Mainly, *Woreda* government officials have been playing progressive roles for dealing with public problems related to the resources and create chances to the particular community goals and needs. Accordingly, different community based organizations like, *Idir Ikub* and religious leaders frequently mobilize the volunteers and private households more effectively in the protection of the environment from damage and re-plantation of what was previously affected. Also, communities can often act with greater speed and flexibility than local government can in responding to new technologies for environmental rehabilitation activities.

Moreover, the structures in the area from the *Woreda* government up to the *Kebele* committee which they call it *Dichcha woddena* and one to five local people networking within, more or less do have their own positive contribution in creating good opportunity for community participation of the study area.

Furthermore, dynamic and progressive nature of the community's involvement opened opportunities for the marginalized and poor local people in the study area gradually. This figure 4 confirmed that the level of participation in planning is 57.82% which could be nearly two folds compared to (25.17%) the implementation of what was planned earlier. But the level of both decision making (9.52%) and control of resources (7.48%) are far reaching to the planning activities in the study area.

4 Conclusion

The co-ordination level, resources controlling, critical identification of the communities need and goals to plan, two way communication between the government and community, site selection to implement through high degree of community involvement and trends of continuous follow up of the local government down to *Kebele* level for the ongoing activities are not as such satisfactory. Local people in the study area, have developed and adopted several traditional mechanisms of community participation in the activities ERAE by forming active development collaborative groups locally named as '*Dagguwa*'. These all have been taken into considered due to the local people's behavior of accepting information immediately from their neighbor and community based associations than, the other *Woreda* and *Kebele* officials in the study area.

Based on the findings of the study, the followings are recommended that the government and other concerned stakeholders should find the root causes of local community's lesser commitment and interest level in the participation of the planning and implementation activities of ERAE in their area. The Committee (*Dichcha Woddena*) including both the local community and the community based associations representatives should be established only to improve the agricultural productivity and environmental rehabilitations of the area, by mobilizing community engagement in the ERAE program and practices more effectively rather than other political issues in the area. Community and local government collaboration with respect to environmental protection and agricultural productivity should further be consolidated. To this end, its associated challenges should clearly be detected and remedial measures should be undertaken against the same. Indigenous knowledge resource of the local community should properly be harnessed, documented, and integrated with the scientific methods of resource conservation. In this regard, the local government with other stakeholders can play a great role.

Author Contribution Statement Merihun Fikru brought the idea, design and wrote the research. Endirias Geta (PhD) supervised and edited the manuscript.

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Table 1. Structure of Local Community Level Planning, Implementation and Decision Making Institutions

Institution	Characteristics/ Duties and responsibilities
Limatawi buden (Dichcha Woddena)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents 30-40 households • Manages his/her members in common work • Have common plan in common agenda • Community workshops held to identify needs and establish priority • Development committee comprising 3 women, 3 men and 3 youth steer the process
Sub-kebele (Goxyiya)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents 90-150 households • Government teams are responsible for, identification of needs and goals, planning and implementation of ERAE in the area. • Government team usually consists of 5 people representative of the grassroots and includes household heads, teachers, farmers and elders • Government team receives assistance in its activities from development agents
Kebele (Gabbare mabarara)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents ≥ 250 households • <i>Kebeles</i> originally set up by Derg to control the local population • Replicate structure of the <i>Woreda</i> • Elected officials • Responsible to control resources like land, forest etc • Responsible to supply agricultural inputs like fertilizers, improved seeds and others • Responsible for consolidating the prioritized needs of grassroots level across all service delivery sector
Woreda (Worrada)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents 29 <i>Kebeles</i> • Responsible for consolidating priorities and reconciling them with available budgets • <i>Woreda</i> council elected and responsible for final approval of plans • <i>Woreda</i> administrator elected by council and head up <i>Woreda</i> executive • <i>Woreda</i> executive consists of heads of all the offices and the <i>Woreda</i> administrator

Sources: Field survey March-April 2012

Table 2. People's Perception in Planning and Implementation Structures of ERAE in the Study Area

Item	WG		KACs		DAs		CBAs	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Responsibility for planning and implementation of the whole ERAE of the area failed on?	46	31.29	39	26.53	36	24.49	26	17.69
The major role in the participation of decision making especially on the amount and unit of ERAE plan, and the needed resources in the area depends on?	70	47.62	25	17.01	31	21.09	21	14.18
More responsibility mandate to control the resources utilization pattern during the implementation of the ERAE in the study area failed on?	54	36.74	41	27.89	37	25.17	15	10.20
Owner of the whole ERAE activities under gone in their area including the allocation of fiscal budget of the area is done by?	75	51.02	53	36.05	-	-	19	12.93

Where; WG=Woreda government, KACs= Kebele Administrative councils, DAs = development agents, CBAs, community based associations

Table 3. The Households' Level of Agreement on the Present Feature of Community Involvement in Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Extension

Items	Response	Degree of Agreement					Total
		SD	D	UD	A	SA	
Strong community involvement mechanisms are highly practiced to minimize the leadership challenges so as to enhance the ERAE recently in your area	Freq	16	23	8	81	19	147
	%	10.88	15.65	5.44	55.10	12.93	100
Currently, acts of responsibility, good governance, equity and justice in resources distribution through the given structure is intentionally carried out for the benefit of the community by the community in your area.	Freq	22	37	17	45	26	147
	%	14.97	25.17	11.56	30.61	17.69	100
Planning and implementation activities of ERAE by using the local community are being undertaken continuously on a regular basis in your area	Freq	7	15	11	51	63	147
	%	4.76	10.20	7.48	34.69	42.86	100
Transparency and accountability in decision making, budgeting and control of resources are carried out in your area.	Freq	41	53	7	25	21	147
	%	27.89	36.05	4.76	17.01	14.29	100
Different CBAs have played great role in tackling challenges and then promoting the ERAE in your area	Freq	11	18	-	44	74	147
	%	7.48	12.24	-	29.93	50.34	100
Strong interest of involving community especially, young people in ERAE is highly encouraged in your area.	Freq	7	14	-	70	56	147
	%	4.76	9.52	-	47.62	38.09	100
Based on the highly improving characteristics of the community participation in ERAE, the future Boloso Sore will be better.	Freq	11	7	5	53	71	147
	%	7.48	4.76	3.40	36.05	48.30	100

SD=strongly disagree, D=disagree, UD=undecided, SA=strongly agreed A=agree Source: Field survey, March-April, 2012

Table 4. Households' response to the community participation in ERAE activities

Item	Alter	Respondent		Total
		Yes	No	
You have involved in the fiscal budget distribution process in your area.	Freq %	14 9.52	133 90.48	147 100
You participated in the decision making process of different ERAE activities	Freq %	85 57.82	62 42.18	147 100
The plans of ERAEs activities are being carried out by you on a regular basis?	Freq %	95 64.63	52 35.37	147 100
Mobilizations of the community for any ERAE awareness have been done by you.	Freq %	109 74.15	38 25.85	147 100
You have fully interest to implement the ERAEs in your villages.	Freq %	97 65.99	50 34.01	147 100
The community structure is well made in order to control the resources and perform the ERAE.	Freq %	107 72.79	40 27.21	147 100

Source: Field survey, March-April, 2012

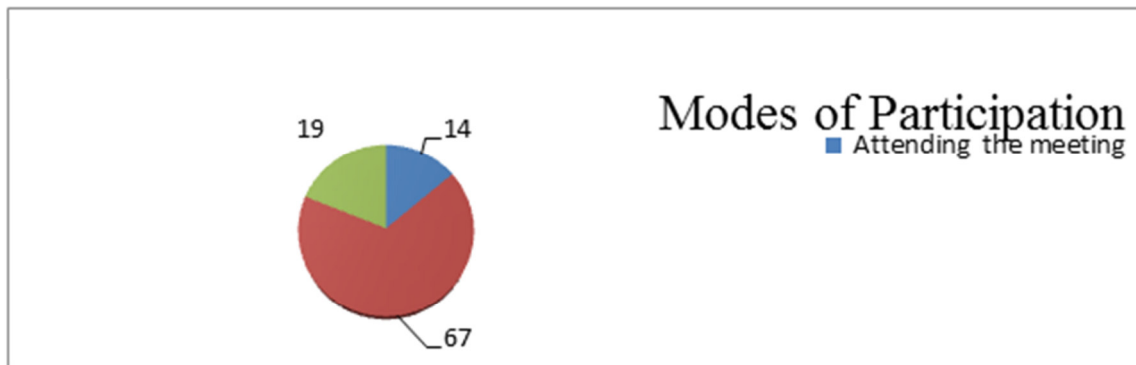


Figure 1 (A) Level of Participation

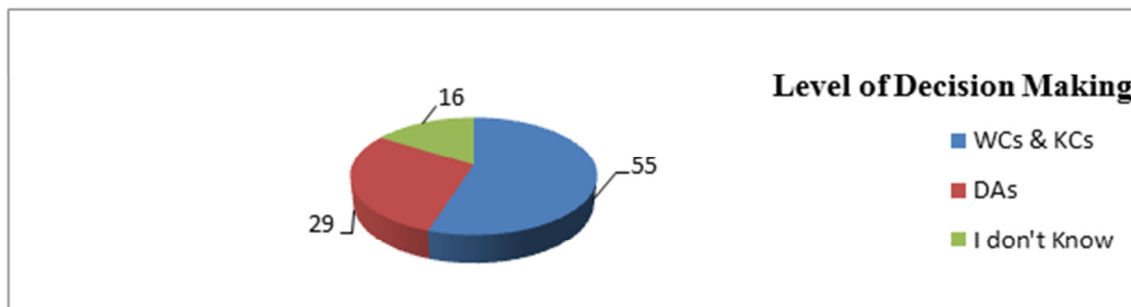


Figure 2 (B): Decision Making at the Community Level

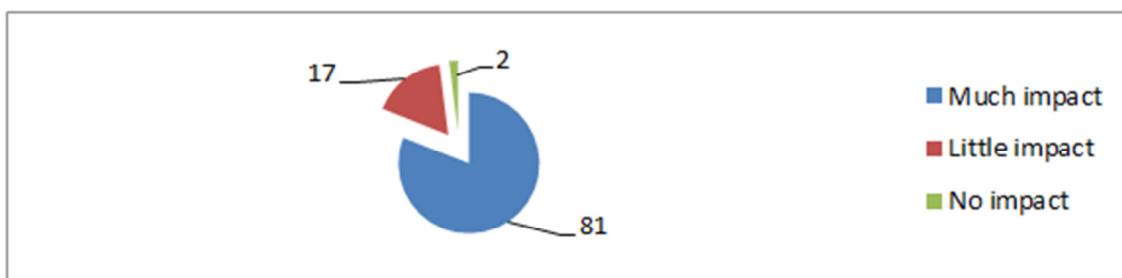


Figure 3(C). Both positive and negative impacts of community participation mechanisms in the livelihoods of the local people

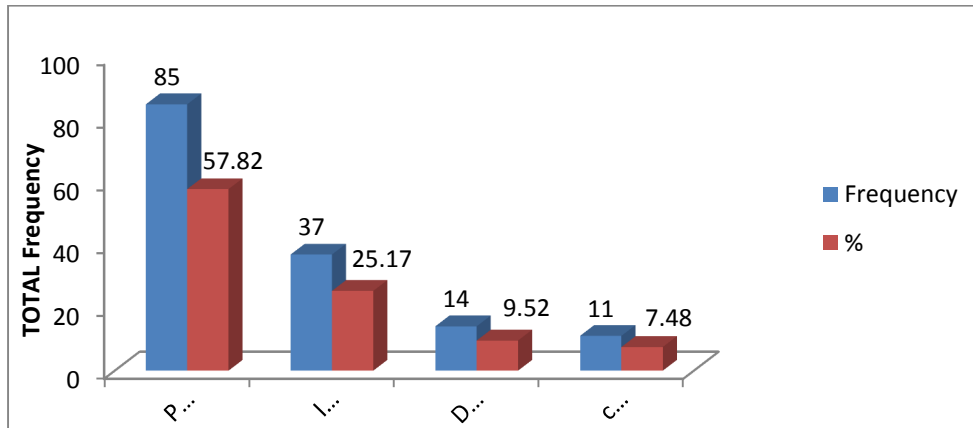


Figure 4(D) the opportunity available to participate in the environmental rehabilitation and agricultural extension activities P = Plan, I=implementation, D= decision making, C= control of resources