

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

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**Abstract**—The purpose of this study was to examine community participation in road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town, Ethiopia. The survey used a convergent mixed research design. A total of 366 households, 3 focus group discussions and 9 key informant interviews were held to elicit information for this study. Data were analyzed through the use of SPSS version 20 and presented in frequency and percentage tables accordingly. The study found that the level of community participation in Road infrastructure development projects was remained low. Besides the majority of community members were not aware of their roles and responsibilities in road development projects and that urban residents were generally not actively involved in decision making, planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. Findings also revealed that the institutional structures installed by the Town administration for community participation initiatives were highly fragmented and not functional. The major challenges that hindered community participation in road infrastructure development were lack of awareness, poor coordination and communication between local authorities and communities, weak institutional structures and lack of resources. The paper concluded that for effective community participation in road infrastructure development activities it is crucial to overcome barriers to participation and creating ownership of development decisions and projects which contribute to the sustainability of road infrastructure.

**Keywords**—Community Participation, Challenges, Road Infrastructure, Wolkite Town.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Community participation is one of the important approaches adopted in development projects. As a development approach, it needs the active involvement of individuals and communities in decisions about things that affect their lives. With the transition from place-based to people-based development, a paradigm shift to participatory development emerged [1]. Efforts to engage communities' in the development process is not only an inherent right of people, but it also often results in better use of resources that are intended to address the needs of the communities [2]. Moreover, the participation of the beneficiaries is an important factor, because the community people are the key element to authentic analysis of the reality of their own social problems and the means of solving them [3].

Community participation has been part of development policy, programmes and projects in both developing and developed countries [4]. As pointed out in [5], communities are no longer mere recipients of development projects; rather they have become critical stakeholders that have an important role to play in the planning, implementation, management and evaluation of projects in their areas. In doing so, community may participate in different development activities such as building

infrastructures such as roads, health services and education development.

The most widely accepted and adopted strategy for ensuring people's participation in local development is decentralization and there is, perhaps, no other institution close enough like local government to provide the scope and platform for people's participation in their own development. In this regard, during the past decades a number of developing countries including Ethiopia have undergone decentralization within the existing organizational structure with the expectations of increased local participation in decisions and improved system efficiency [6]. The argument is local governments are closer and more in touch with the community and this is hypothesized to be a better position to deliver basic services more efficiently and effectively according to the local needs and priorities than the central government. Moreover [7], asserted that the rationale for decentralization is not only the transfer of significant amounts of power or authority, functions and capacity from central government to local governments but also promoting high-level community participation, democratic governance and maximum accountability of decision-making.

Within the above context, Ethiopia's urban local governments are responsible for providing "state services,"

such as education, health, justice, and security and “municipal services,” such as roads, drainage, sanitation, and solid waste collection and disposal [7,8, 9]. But they often lack the capacity to fulfill their responsibilities. With this limited capacity of local governments, it is much harder for cities to provide the necessary infrastructure and services for rapidly growing urban populations. In this respect, several approaches have been tried over time. The supply approach was first adopted by government but community involvement in urban infrastructure development was promoted in its quest for alternatives. The objective of community participation may include the active involvement of the community in every step in the project create cooperation, shared decision and control over resources and capacity building to achieve more sustainable desired outcomes [10].

Given the unprecedented rate of urbanization in Ethiopia and the lack of municipal revenues to meet the growing needs, significant gaps have been emerged in access to basic services and infrastructure in cities/towns [11]. As a response to these gaps, governments at all levels have made efforts to collaborate with multiple stakeholders in reducing urban poverty and improving infrastructure to boost urban residents' livelihoods. In this regard community participation has been promoted as a key to urban development interventions. Community participation in urban infrastructures helps to generate or mobilize enough resources from both local government and the community towards the implementation of projects. As such all municipal functions in Ethiopia are expected to be financed from own local revenues that the involvement of urban residents to fill such infrastructure gaps is important [12]. Nevertheless, community participation in urban infrastructural development continues to be very limited. To our knowledge limited studies explored the issue of community participation in urban road infrastructures development in Ethiopia. Additionally, none of these studies address the institutional mechanisms or structures through which community members were involved in road development projects. It was no exception in wolkite town.

According to Wolkite Town administration/municipality (2020) several efforts has been made to realize community participation in different local development initiatives like roads. Nevertheless, the participation of the community in development projects/ programs was limited against the municipality need. Due to this fact the road infrastructure development of the town has been poorly developed. To this end, there was a need to come up with better ways by which the community will be in a position to participate fully in road development projects. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the institutional setting, extent and challenges of community participation in road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town, Ethiopia.

The rest parts of the paper have the following structure. Section II highlights related works of the study, Section III provides the methodology where the author mentions the

measures that were undertaken to conduct this study, Section IV discusses the results which are summarized using tables and figures. The Section also includes the discussion of study findings where the author triangulates study findings with relevant related works done by other researchers and Section V concludes research works with future directions.

## II. RELATED WORK

[13], studied community participation in road infrastructure development projects in Bishoftu Town, Ethiopia. The study applied a mixed research approach. The study period was between 2009 and 2013. The study used primary data collected from 385 household residents of the town through questionnaire survey. Moreover, key informant interview with government officials and other related stakeholders were also applied. The results indicated that community participation is implemented in the town to fill the financial gaps of projects. Further, the community was not participating in the entire project cycle and there was also poor communication and relationships among local leaders and the community.

[14], conducted research on the status of people's participation in local development projects of some selected town administrations of Oromia Region, Ethiopia. The aim of the study was to examine the extent and status of people's participation in the local development projects in selected four urban local governments of the region as a case study. The study used primary data from urban residents through questionnaire survey. The results of the study showed that people's participation in local development project processes was low. The study also revealed that administrative constraints like bureaucracy and lack of attention to the interests of local residents greatly hindered community participation in the study area.

[15], investigated the role of community participation in road development projects using a mixed research approach in Jimma Town, Ethiopia. The study used cross sectional data collected from 360 residents in the study area. The finding revealed that the presence of poor urban road infrastructure development both in quality and access, the road sector was found to be external resource dependent and deficient in resource mobilization. Furthermore, residents of the town was not participating in the entire road development project which adversely affecting community's sense of ownership.

[16], examine the determinants of community participation in the implementation of development projects in Kwale County, Kenya. Descriptive research was utilized to guide the study. Data were collected from 300 respondents through the use of questionnaires. The study conducted a regression analysis in order to establish the relationship between leadership, culture, commitment, level of literacy and community participation. The study findings indicated that there was a positive correlation between leadership, culture, community support, level of literacy and community participation in the implementation of development projects in Kwale Country.

[17], researched on the importance of community participation in development projects at local level the case of Dodoma municipal council in Tanzania. The study used a case study research design. Questionnaire survey, key informant interview and observation were applied as data gathering tools. The study established that community participation was low due to socioeconomic and political-cultural factors. It was also showed that communities were contributing financially, few were contributing through labor and materials hence it was concluded that citizen's response towards contribution to development projects being poor. The study further revealed that citizen involvement in decision making was very low and citizens are not aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities which are caused by lack of citizenship education, miscommunication between leaders and local residents.

[18], examined the impact of community participation on road and water infrastructure development in the suburban areas of a medium size city, AKure, Nigeria using a range of qualitative methods. The study also assessed the participation of the local residents and contribution of community self-help projects to adequacy of infrastructure development in these communities. The study found that community self-help projects contributed to the adequacy of road infrastructure; and community participation contributed more to availability, accessibility and affordability of road infrastructure while the qualities remain poor and not improved.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### Study Area

The study was carried out in Wolkite Town, Ethiopia, located on latitude 8°17'N and 8° 28'N and longitude 37° 17'E and 37°47' E. It is located at 158 km South-West of Addis Ababa along the main road to Jimma Town. It is also one of the twenty two reform towns opted as a hub of development in the in southern nations, nationalities and peoples region (SNNPR). The town has six administrative units named kebeles (the lowest unit of urban administration). The road infrastructure development of the town was very poor. And cobble stone road development was a recent phenomenon in the town. The study focused on a period of five years from 2016 to 2020 as it was since the beginning of this period that the revised participatory urban local development procedural and institutional arrangement directive started its implementation in towns of SNNPR including wolkite town.

#### Research Design

In this research project the researcher used a convergent mixed method design. This method of research was preferred because a researcher was able to develop a complete understanding of the existing problem by obtaining different but complementary data. According to [19] a convergent design is adopted in order to look at issues from different perspectives and to triangulate findings.

#### Data Type and Source

Both qualitative and quantitative types of data were used. The study applied both primary and secondary sources of information. The sources of primary data were sample household respondents, office heads, experts and community leaders whereas; secondary data were obtained from various sources such as journals, relevant books, official documents and other online materials that were relevant to this study. Therefore, all the available data sources used in the study collectively ensured the validity and reliability of the data.

#### Sampling and Sample Size

A multi stage sampling design was applied in this study. In the first stage purposive sampling was used to select wolkite town (*Study Area*) due to its convenience for the researcher and no research was conducted related to the issues. In the second stage out of the total six kebeles of wolkite town three of them were selected purposively as they comprised a larger portion of the Town's built up area and population namely *Selam Ber* (2823 HHs), *EdigetBer* (2783 HHs) and *Ediget Chora* (2090 HHs)(see Table 1). List of household heads of each three sampled kebeles were used as a sampling frame to draw household survey participants. In the final stage, from the total 7696 households found in the three sampled kebeles 366 have been drawn using sample size determination formula adapted by [20] as follows:-

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

Where; n = sample size required,

N = Total population size

d = precision level (0.05)

Z= confidence level (95% confidence level = 1.96).

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

Therefore, n=366

Overall, after the total sample size was determined; the sample size for each selected kebele was computed proportionally as detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Household Respondents from Each Kebeles.

S.N <sup>o</sup>	Name of sub cities	Name of kebeles	Targeted population	Sample selected
1	Addis	EdigetChora	2090	100
		SelamBer	2823	134
2	Bekur	EdigetBer	2783	132
	Total		7696	366

Source: Own calculation, 2021.

Respondents for Questionnaire survey were recruited through systematic sampling techniques. Systematic sampling was chosen because it is easier and less costly method to select samples if lists of population are available

and considerably lengthy. On the other hand purposive sampling was used in the selection of the key informants for interview and participants of focus group discussion in the study.

#### Method of data collection

The target populations of this study were households, administrative officials, experts and community leaders in wolkite town. In conducting this study, the primary data were gathered through Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. Additionally, document review was done. The reasons behind using a combination of such methods were to reduce the limitations of each method. The brief accounts of each method were described as follows:

**Questionnaire:** The major data collection instrument used for this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both open and closed-ended questions. Prior to data collection, validity and reliability testing of the instrument was undertaken. Questionnaire was administered in local languages for the sake of clarity and to easily understand by the respondents. The data was collected by 3 enumerators and supervised by the researcher.

**Interview:** The researcher applied semi structured interview to obtain data from the key informants. It was conducted with nine different individuals at Town and Kebele levels. This was used to get detail information from the concerned offices of town administration, municipal office and sampled kebele offices and so as to support the response to be obtained through the questionnaires.

**Focus Group Discussion:** In this study, three FGD each having seven members was held in the selected kebeles. FGD included both male and female participants. The FGD members were mainly composed of those individuals who were local development committee members and community leaders in their respective kebele and *mender* (village) in the study area. The FGD primarily arranged with issues not addressed through questionnaires and interview. And, it was also used even with questions that were included in the questionnaire but that need further information.

#### Data analysis

After collection of the primary and secondary data, the researcher has done editing, coding and tabulation of the data. Based on the nature of the data, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used. In the process of mixed data analysis however, qualitative data analysis was dominantly employed. The primary data collected through survey questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS version 20. The result of statistical analysis was presented using frequency distribution tables and graphs while Qualitative data collected through interviews, FGDs and document review were analyzed using narration and thematic analysis and; finally the collected data from these sources were triangulated.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic and Socio Economic Characteristics of Respondents

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

**Table 2:** Socio Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Variables	Cases	Number N=366	Percent
Sex	Male	194	53
	Female	172	47
Age	18-25	47	12.84
	26-33	96	26.23
	34-41	129	35.25
	42-49	73	19.95
	50 and above	21	5.74
Education level	Read and write	24	6.6
	Primary education	61	16.7
	Secondary education	64	17.5
	Certificate	41	11.2
	College Diploma	75	20.5
	First degree and above	101	27.6
Marital status	Married	234	63.93
	Single	107	29.23
	Divorced	13	3.55
	Windowed	12	3.28
Length of stay	Below 5 years	58	15.8

Occupation	5-10 years	105	28.7
	11-15 years	103	28.1
	Above 15 years	100	27.3
	Trading	98	26.8
	Salaried Employee	93	25.4
	Farming	74	20.2
	Unemployed	36	9.8
	Others	65	17.8

Source: Field Survey, 2021

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

There is growing question whether there are frameworks and structures that enhance community participation in urban development initiatives and its sustainability. [21], argued that placing proper institutional structures in an organization is a necessity during any development processes. Further he added that institutional framework is just one of several factors that can limit or promote community participation in development projects. This study sought to examine the existence of institutional frameworks particularly development committees through which community members have been allowed to participate in road development projects in the study area. Accordingly respondents were asked regarding the presence of institutional structures for community participation in road infrastructure development projects in their locality. The results in Table 3 indicated that only 111(30.3%) of respondents affirms the presence of institutional frameworks to allow the community in local road development projects of their Area.

Table 3: Respondents' opinion regarding the existence of institutional structures that enable them to participate in local road development initiatives

Item	Response	Frequency N=366	%
Q.1 There exists a formal institutional structure in the town that helped communities to participate in local development issues like roads.	Yes	111	30.3
	No	171	46.7
	I don't know	84	23.0
Q.2 If your answer for Q.1 was "yes" do you think that the existing institutional structure ensures effective community participation in roads development initiatives?	Yes	9	8.1
	No	98	88.3
	I don't know	4	3.6

Source: Field Survey, 2021

On the other hand, 171 (46.7%) of respondents said "no" that there was no any functional institutional system that enabled communities to participate in road development

projects in their localities, while the remaining respondents 84 (23%) have no idea whether the institutions exist or not and choose I don't know.

Furthermore those who confirmed the existence of an institutional framework for community involvement in road development projects were also asked if the current institutional framework had made a positive contribution to community participation in the development of road infrastructure in the town. Only 9(8%) of the respondents mentioned that the existing institutional structures played beneficial role in ensuring community participation in road development activities in the study area. However, majority of the respondents 98 (88.3%) believed that the existing institutional frameworks made no significant contribution to community participation in the town. In the same vein, most key informants also agreed with the idea and stated that the institutional structure's inability to ensure community participation in development projects was due to the multiple and complex nature of the institutional arrangements'/committee structures at the town and kebele levels, frequent restructuring of the institutional arrangement, absence of sustainability, lack of cooperation among sectors and stakeholders, and lack of resources. Further, focus group participants' affirmed that development committees were poorly organized, had unclear responsibilities, were not properly supervised by the municipality, and lacked sustainability. They also stated that development committees were not organized based on the procedures stated in its establishment. They added that the only committees which were existent and relatively functional become the kebele and village committees. Thus, it can be inferred from the above discussion that the existing development committees' structures were not established properly at all levels, the efforts that make town administrators were highly fragmented as well as community participation initiatives were mainly carried out on campaigns. This suggests that the development activities such as roads in the town were under taken without the real participation of the community. This finding was in agreement with [22] who reported that village development committees (VDCs) do not serve their intended purpose of engaging the community in the development process in Botswana.

### Respondents Views on the Conduciveness of the Existing Institutional Frameworks for Community Participation in Urban Road Infrastructure Development Projects (URIDP)

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of conduciveness of the existing community participation framework for community participation in the town. The findings in Figure 1revealed that most respondents 211 (57.65%) reported that the existing institutional structures installed by the municipality to involve the community was not conducive for community participation while a total of 62 (16.94%) respondents stated that the institutional arrangements was conducive. Moreover, 58 (15.85%) and 35 (9.56%) of respondents replied moderately conducive and don't know respectively. In view of this most focus



group participants stated unanimously that the current institutional framework for community participation was not conducive for effective participation, in many cases it is unrealistic and complex; it needs restructuring and rearrangement to make it inclusive and conducive for the participating communities at the grassroots level. In ascertaining this key informants added that community frameworks in urban local development projects such as road development have been restructured several times in the past in order to make community participation meaningful and sustainable. Despite this fact, the involvement of community in local development operations has still behind the municipality's demand.

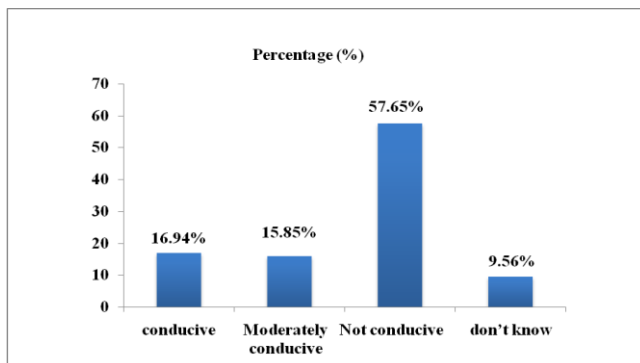


Figure1: Respondents views on the conduciveness of community participation structures in road development projects in the town.

Source: Field Survey, 2021

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

It was evident from Table 4, that the great majority of the respondents 297(81.14%) pointed out that there was no forum that deals about local development issues like roads in the town while the rest of the respondents 69 (18.85) replied otherwise. Similarly, majority of FGD participants confirmed that most of the time the municipality did not undertake community forums as planned. As per the FGD respondents due to the absence of community forums the views of the beneficiaries do not get an opportunity to be heard and thus the influence of communities on the execution of local development projects was very minimal. They further asserted that the major reasons for the problem were turnover of political leaders, lack of commitment on part of government bodies and lack of attention to the value of community forums in local development in the Town.

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

Item	Response	Frequency (N=366)	%
Is there any forum for the community, the development committees and government bodies meet to discuss on local development issues (roads) together?	Yes	69	18.85
	No	297	81.14

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Furthermore, most key informants argued on the issue and identified the absence of proper execution of community forums in the study area. As a consequence, the needs and preferences of local communities were not well addressed. As per the key informants the major limiting factors for conducting community forums in the Town was because of lack of budget, limited stakeholders participation and un-institutionalization of community participation. Thus, it was concluded that community representative forums was not properly executed in the town administration even though it was considered as a strategy to allow stakeholders in urban development undertakings and processes. This result agreed with [23] finding that development planning deliberation forums in Indonesia have yet to include the community in village planning.

#### 1) Extent of community participation (CP) in road infrastructure development projects in Wolkite Town.

Respondents were asked if they had ever participated in road infrastructure development projects in their localities. Communities have different experiences of participation in the research area. Accordingly 134 (36.61%) of the respondents admitted that they have participated on road development projects in terms of money, labor, and decision making, while 232 (63.39%) did not participate in any sort. This implied that a large number of urban residents did not participate in development projects. In conformity with the above result, most focus group discussants felt that the participation of local communities in road development projects was very limited in the town. As a result residents in the study area were not actively engaged in road development operations of their locality. Discussion with some key informants also verifies the lack of community participation in local development initiative like roads in the study area.

[24], points out that the success of community participation in development projects depend on the extent to which community members were involved to support various phases of project life, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Figure 2 presents the extent of community participation at different stages/phases of the road development projects. The survey results revealed that majority of the respondents 216 (59 %) were involved in the implementation stage, 57 (15.57%) was in the planning stage, 42 (11.47%) of the respondents indicated that they had been involved during the monitoring and evaluation stage and 23 (6.28%) said they never took part in anything to do with the project. Furthermore, only 28 (7.65%) indicated that they were involved in the need assessment stage. This scenario could be probably explained by the fact that some of the respondents indicated that they never attended any village meetings in their locality. Thus, it clearly indicated that the extent of community participation at different stages of road development projects was negligible.

The findings were agreed with that of [25] that despite the recent upsurge in the "bottom-up" approach to development, project beneficiaries/community members

were still not fully participating in the identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects that are meant to improve their lot. Similarly, [26] contend that there was low community participation in all phases of the project with a few community members involved at the conception stage. The low community participation had a direct negative impact on the ownership of the projects consequently affecting the overall performance. This was also supported by the findings of [27] who reported that lack of community involvement in decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation of community projects in Zambia. On the contrary, the present study findings were not in line with those of [28] who found that there was a very high level of community participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of Villages Infrastructure Development projects in Jayapura Regency, Indonesia.

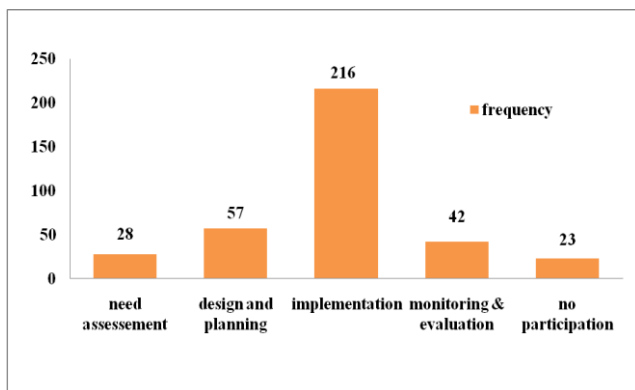


Figure 2: Respondents' Participation Level by Stages of road infrastructure development projects in the Study Area.

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Moreover, respondents were asked to rank the level of community's participation in road infrastructure development projects of their locality. As shown in Figure 3 below, 25 (6.83%) of the respondents replied that the community's participation in URIDP was in a very high level, 31 (8.46%) of the respondents put it under the high level, 54 (14.75%) of the respondents affirm it under medium level, 202 (55.19%) was low, 39 (10.65 %) was very low while the remaining 15 (4.1%) of respondents said don't know. This implied that there was low level of community participation in the road development projects in the study area. Focus group participants and most key informants confirm that the participation of communities in road development projects was considered to be low.

Similar results were reported by [29, 30, 31, 32, 33] that the level of community participation in local development projects was considered to be low caused by several factors that militate against their participation. On the contrary, the present study findings were not in line with those of [34] who found that there was a high level of community participation in the provision of infrastructure such as roads across medium-sized towns in Kwara State of Nigeria.

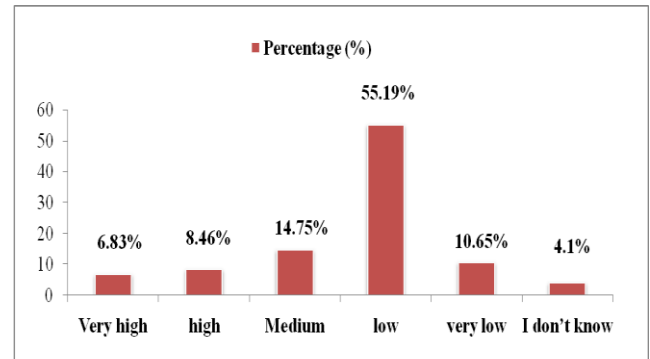


Figure 3: Households' Response to the Levels of Community Participation in road development projects in the Study Area.

Source: Field Survey, 2021

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

[32], notes that in participation decision making process is one of the most important phenomena that actually indicate the participation level. He further asserted that participation brings the public into the decision-making process. The process of public participation in decision making is reflected through the extent to which residents took part in project-related decisions. In line with this respondents were asked if they were involved in decision making process concerning road development projects in the area under study. The findings of this inquiry as indicated in Figure 4, that a significant number of respondents 237 (64.75%) did not participate in decision making process while only 129 (35.24 %) respondents reported that they were participated in decision making process concerning road infrastructure development in their locality. The findings were congruent with findings of [35], that community participation was poor in decision making process concerning development projects in their localities. It was further established that, little consultation is being done by the local authorities to advocate for community participation.

Further, the most common reasons provided by respondents who did not participate in community meetings where decisions concerning road development activities undertaken were lack of information about when the meetings were held, lack of interest/commitment on part of community members and lack of consideration given to their views. Moreover, the top-down approach was mentioned as another reason why people do not participate in decision making process. Focus group participants (FGPs) further confirmed unequivocally that they were often required to accept pre-determined decisions without the opportunity to debate on those issues. These findings disagree with [36] argument that any participation devoid of political power among local people is weak and does not represent empowerment but involvement where the community is not the main role player. This implies that local people's ability to have power to make decisions is key to participation.

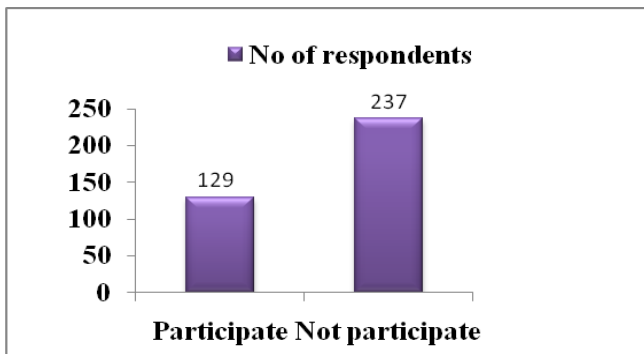


Figure 4: Response on participation in decision making process concerning URIDP by survey Participants  
Source: Field Survey, 2021.

### Awareness among Communities about their Roles and Responsibilities in Road Development Project Participation

According to results in Figure 5 below, majority of the respondents who represented 198 (54.09%) said that they have no awareness of their roles and responsibilities concerning road development projects in their localities and only 109 (29.78%) responded that they were aware or strongly aware about their roles and responsibilities while the other 59 (16.12%) of respondents replied that they were partially aware of their roles and responsibilities. Findings from focus group participants revealed that community people were not given awareness of their roles and responsibilities. Again they stated that the reasons for people not being informed of their rights, duties, and responsibilities were a lack of trainings and hands-on capacity building opportunities, miscommunication between leaders and the local community, and a lack of project-related information to communities. This clearly exposed that the majority of the community members were not aware of their roles and responsibilities which in turn contributed to the weak participation of communities in urban road development projects. This was in agreement with the findings of [37, 38, 39] who found that lack of awareness about community participation contributes to low participation of community members in developing and implementing various development projects.

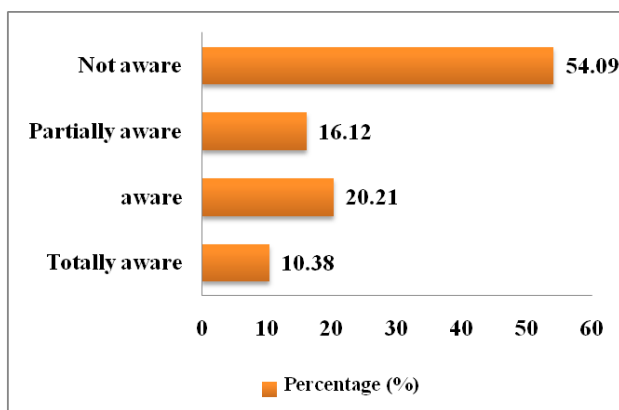


Figure 5: Respondents Awareness about their Roles and Responsibilities in local road development initiatives.  
Source: Field Survey, 2021

### Access to Information about URIDP in Wolkite Town

It was noticed that the more people in the community get information about projects in their areas, the more likely that they are to participate. According to the findings in Figure 6 it was observed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents 221 (60.38%) reported that they have no access to information concerning road development projects carried out in their locality which resulted to be unaware of their role in the road development process, however, the rest of the respondents claimed that they have had access to information about the road development projects of their area. These findings agree with those of [34, 39] findings that information was not readily accessible or effectively disseminated to the majority of citizens and therefore is not fully harnessed for planning, monitoring and evaluating development projects. As a result, people did not know how to participate and did not get adequate information from local authorities whereby the level of people participation in the research area was perceived by community members to be low. To ascertain this, Focus group participants stated that most of the time information related to development projects was disseminated to communities through meetings and other means, but that a significant proportion of community members did not attend community meetings when they were called up on.

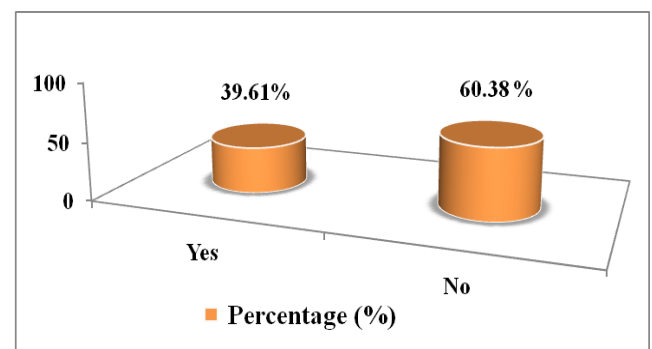


Figure 6: Respondents access to information concerning road development projects in their village.  
Source: Field Survey, 2021.

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

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

Table 5: Percentages of Respondents Indicating challenges of Community Participation in road development projects in Wolkite Town.

Barriers to community participation		Responses N=366			
		SA	A	DA	SD
Lack of awareness/information	f	188	138	31	9
	%	51.36	37.70	8.46	2.45



Poor coordination and communication b/n the local authority and communities	f	175	99	52	40
	%	47.8	27.04	14.2	10.9
Selective participation	f	87	127	113	39
	%	23.77	34.69	30.87	10.6
Poor and Inefficient Leadership	f	64	151	114	37
	%	17.48	41.25	31.14	16.9
Weak institutional set up.	f	115	174	46	31
	%	31.42	47.54	12.56	8.46
Time constraint	f	23	88	156	99
	%	6.28	24.04	42.62	27.0
Lack of resources	f	60	165	95	46
	%	16.39	65.08	25.95	12.5
lack of interest and commitment on part of community	f	31	42	225	68
	%	8.46	11.42	61.47	18.5
Lack of supportive policies and incentives	f	11	47	215	93
	%	3	12.84	58.74	25.4

NB-SA= strongly agree A= agree DA=dis agree SD= strongly agree f= frequency

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

As shown in Table 5 majority of survey respondents 326 (89.07%) were strongly agree and agree with the point that lack of awareness/information was the main challenge that hinder people to participate in URIDP while 31(8.46%) were not agree with the points that lack of awareness/information obstruct community participation in road development projects and the remaining respondents 9(2.45%) were strongly disagree with the point. As it clearly indicated inadequate information was one of the constraints to participate in local road development projects in the study area. This finding confirms the findings of [40, 41] that lack of awareness/ information limit community participation in development projects.

With regard to poor coordination and communication between the local authority and communities as hindrance to community participation, majority of respondents 274(74.86%) were strongly agree and agree with the points that poor coordination and communication among community and local leaders became an obstruct for peoples participation in road development projects in the study area, however 52(14.20%) of respondents replied not agree and the remaining respondents 40 (10.92%) were strongly disagree on the same point. It showed that poor coordination and communication negatively affect the participation of urban residents in the research area. [17], made a similar observation in her study on the importance of community participation in development projects, saying "project beneficiaries have the right to be aware of project related information; however information about the development projects to beneficiaries is almost absent at the grass root level, which causes a hindrance to local peoples participation in development initiatives."

Regarding to selective participation out of 366 respondents 127(34.69%) agreed that it was a key factor for poor community engagement in road development projects. Meanwhile the remaining respondents 113(30.87%), 87 (23.77%) and 39 (10.65%) were said not agreed, strongly agree and strongly disagree respectively. This implied that more than half of the respondents strongly agree and agree with the point that selective participation as a bottle-neck for meaningful community participation in their locality. This was in agreement with the findings of [13] who observed that selective participation significantly constrains community participation in urban road development projects.

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

With reference to lack of resources majority of the respondents 165(65.08%) were agree with the point that lack of resources was key hindering factor for community participation in road development in the research area. Furthermore, 60 (16.39%) respondents were replied strongly agree, 95(25.95%) of the respondents not agree and the rest 46 (12.56%) of survey respondents were strongly disagree with the point that lack of resources was not the constraints of community participation in URIDP. Again most focus group discussants confirmed that community people were refrain from participation in road development projects due to lack of resources. They also asserted that the community would participate in their local development activities in different ways based on their capacity.

Regarding lack of interest and commitment on part of community challenges, majority of the respondents 225(61.47%) were not agreed, while 68 (18.57%) of the respondents strongly disagree with the points that lack of community interest and commitment constraint the peoples to participate in local URIDP. On the other hand 42 (11.42%) respondents were agreed with the point that lack of community interest and commitment constraint the people participation in road development projects and the remaining respondents 31 (8.46%) were strongly agree

with the point. This implied that a significant number of respondents identified as lack of interest and commitment on part of community was not the challenge that militating against community engagement in road development projects in the study area. Finally as indicated in Table 5 majority of respondents 308(84.15%) were not agreed and strongly disagree with the point that lack of supportive policies and incentives was challenges to community participation in URIDP. However, 47 (12.84%) and 11 (3%) of the respondents were agree and strongly agree with the point that local residents were not fully participated due to lack of supportive policies and incentives respectively.

In summary, the major challenges that setback community participation in URIDP in the town included: lack of awareness, coordination and communication failures, weak institutional framework and lack of resources.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

- (1) The study concludes that the level of community participation in road development projects particularly in cobbles stone and gravel roads was low (36.6%). As per findings of this study the institutional structures tailored to involve communities in local development initiatives especially roads was highly fragmented and inconsistent implying that community participation in road infrastructure development projects was carried out in campaigns and in disorganized manner.
- (2) This study also demonstrated that a significant majority of the respondents reported that they involved in road development projects during implementation stage. As a result, community participation at project identification, planning, monitoring and evaluation stages have been very in significant. Given these findings the study concludes that local communities should be involved in all phases of road development projects that spans from the process of needs assessment to project monitoring and evaluation.
- (3) The study established that out of the total respondents' majority of them 221 (60.38%) was indicated that information was not readily accessible or effectively disseminated to the majority of urban residents and therefore was not fully involved in URIDP of their locality. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents 297 (81.14 %) stated that there was no forums where the local communities, government agencies and other stakeholders could meet to discuss on important local development issues such as roads.
- (4) The study further deduced that the majority of community members were unaware of their roles and responsibilities in road development processes in their community. More findings revealed that community members do not play an active role in planning, decision making, monitoring and evaluation processes which imply that efforts to promote participation in the

URIDP have not evolved to higher levels where participation could be seen.

- (5) The study also unveiled that the major challenges that restrain community participation in road infrastructure development in Wolkite Town were lack of awareness /information, poor coordination and communication between local authorities and communities, weak institutional structures and lack of resources.
- (6) Finally the study was narrow in scope as there is the need for further research in a broader area as well as on the nature of key factors affecting community participation in local development initiatives. Such findings will inform a well-conceived policy intervention to address the problem.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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

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