



ASSESSMENT OF CONSTRAINTS AFFECTING CBOs IN ACHIEVING THEIR OBJECTIVES: CASE OF EMBU AND BUNGOMA COUNTIES, KENYA

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Abstract: *The objective of this study was to assess the constraints of CBOs in achieving their objectives. The research was based on case study research design. The target population was the project officers of the pilot projects, key informants from the CBOs and farmers in Embu and Bungoma counties. The study employed purposive sampling in selecting the CBOs and farmers who were the members of the organizations. Data collection was done through data triangulation whereby data was gathered through methods like, document analysis, key informant interviews and focus group discussions to ensure the validity of the information. Qualitative data was obtained from the notes recorded from the field. The field notes were recorded in verbatim. The analysis was done in form of frequencies, percentages which presented in terms of graphs, pie charts and tables. The study concluded that, the challenges the CBOs face range from the membership of the organization, leadership, capacity building, project monitoring and evaluation, networking, marketing of products and networking of the groups. The study recommended that, finances should be provided so that members can acquire the office space and equipment they might require for the day to day operations of the group activities.*

Keywords: *Constraints of CBOs, Objectives*

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INTRODUCTION

Background Information

Community based organizations (CBOs) are non-profit groups that work at a local level to improve life of residents. Their focus is to enhance equity across societies in all the domains like health, environment, and quality education, access to technology, information and livelihoods of members. They are typically and almost always staffed by local members within their neighborhood. CBOs have become an important form of development assistance when they work in partnership with other organizations for the benefit of the communities that are served by the organizations (World Bank, 2006). Studies have shown that sustainability of community based initiatives depends on an enabling institutional environment, which requires government commitment and accountability of the leaders of the community. External agents like the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs) strongly influence development project success. According to World Bank, CBOs are poorly trained on project identification, financial management, networking for purposes of scaling up of projects activities (World Bank, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Some CBOs efforts settle for the empowerment of individual members and do not seek to build power capable of making community change (Zimmerman, 1995). This is attributed to their nature; size and scaling hence have no significant impacts. This is because, CBOs lack funding, weak leadership and institutional capacities. They also face problems of suspicion on management of funds, lack integrity in terms of transparency and accountability in use of available funds and lack sustainability.

Objective of the Study

To find out the constraints of CBOs in achieving their objectives

LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges Faced by CBOs

Some CBOs efforts settle for the empowerment of individual members and do not seek to build power capable of making community change (Zimmerman, 1995). This is attributed to their nature and size. They are too small in size and scale and have no significant impacts, lack funding, weak leadership and institutional capacities. They also lack integrity in terms of transparency and accountability in use of available funds, lack sustainability; face problems



of suspicion on management of funds, members have too much expectation on performance and achievements of the CBOs. The organizations that compose a community have been termed mediating structures (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977) and this makes people not to have morale of joining them because they are assumed to represent personal interests rather than community interests.

Community Driven Development (CDD)

According to World Bank, the concept of CDD treats poor and marginalized people as assets and partners in search of sustainable development solutions (World Bank, 2006). This is an approach that gives control of development decisions and resources to the community groups.

The groups' acts as vehicles in the community development process since they empower and mobilize the community to participate in the process. Communities always strive to reduce poverty and increase their income, food security and service delivery. This can be done by pooling social and human capital through participation in project design, involvement to ensure people themselves are part of their own development.

In this approach, communities are viewed to be development partners rather than recipients of benefits. They shape their own development through mobilization of resources and act as part of the process and not spectators of development process.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was based on case study research design. Case study design is an approach to studying social phenomena through analysis of an individual case. The data collected from the selected CBOs were organized in terms of cases, where horticultural farmers CBOs, dairy farmers CBOs and river users association CBOs were intensively studied on the way they organize their leadership, manage their finances, how they design their projects, the nature of networking and their role in ensuring that there is sustainable land management. Data obtained was analysed to give information to be used in scaling up the CBOs. This was to provide an insight for expansion to other CBOs of the same nature for scaling up purposes. Descriptive analysis was provided to show the performance of the CBOs based on successes, challenges and interventions required. The descriptive provided generalizations which could be used for scaling up other CBOs based on the in depth information obtained. Target



Population: The target population was 1000 civil servants in Eldoret town drawn from all public institutions.

Target population

The target population was the project officers of the pilot projects, key informants from the CBOs and farmers in Embu and Bungoma counties. These counties were selected because IFAD and Government of Kenya (GOK) has funded some CBOs which the researcher wanted to investigate good capacity that could be replicated to other areas and also to explore on the constraints which they face so that solutions can be sought for desired impacts to farmers.

Sampling Size and Techniques

The study employed purposive sampling in selecting the CBOs and farmers who were the members of the organizations. Purposive sampling involved focus on a particular characteristic of a population that are of interest to the researcher and for this case the CBOs involved in sustainable land management were the focus. CBOs were selected from the pilot projects which have been funded GoK and IFAD to evaluate their success and challenges they face so that they can be replicated to others. Twenty nine (29) CBOs were selected based on the activities they do, like water resource users associations, dairy farmers and horticulture. Seven (7) key informants from each CBO were selected for the interview. Two (2) Focus Group Discussions were conducted in Embu and Bungoma comprising of farmers from the CBOs. Each FGD had 20 farmers who were members of the CBOs. Three (3) key informants from the three pilot projects were interviewed. Eight (8) GoK officials were also interviewed. This made the total number of people for the interview, two hundred and Twenty (220). Since this was a case study design, the chosen cases gave a representative number from the total population from the CBOs for scaling up of the activities rather than studying all CBOs in Embu and Bungoma which are involved in sustainable land management.

Data Collection tools and procedures

Data collection was done through data triangulation. According to O'Donoghue and Punch (2003), triangulation is a "method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data. In this study, it involved using more than one method to gather data like, the use of document analysis, key informant interviews and focus group



discussions to ensure the validity of the information. This involved asking the key informant and FGD participants on how the organization operates its success and constraints it faces in the management of their operations. The researcher was also concerned with views, attitudes, feelings and perceptions of informants hence such information was best collected through FGDs. (Bell, 1993; Touliatos & Compton, 1988).

a) Key Informant Interviews

According to Carter (1992), key informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who know what is going on in the community. The purpose of key informant interviews is to collect information from a wide range of people—including community leaders, professionals, or residents who have first-hand knowledge about the community. These community experts, with their particular knowledge and understanding, can provide insight on the nature of problems and give recommendations for solutions. The researcher prepared an interview schedule which was administered to the contact persons of the CBOs who was either the chairman, secretary or any other official who was in charge of the CBOs at the time of data collection. The questions asked guided the respondents and the researcher on activities undertaken by the CBOs, organizational management, and finances, ownership of the project and project development and design.

b) Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The focus group discussion (FGD) is a rapid assessment, semi-structured data gathering method in which a purposively selected set of participants gather to discuss issues and concerns based on a list of key themes drawn up by the researcher/facilitator (Kumar 1987). This involved exploring the perceptions, experiences and understanding of the CBOs members on the capacity, finance, monitoring and evaluation and technical assistance pertaining to the organization. Two (2) FGDs from the selected CBOs, one from Bungoma and one in Embu were conducted.

The researcher developed broad discussion points and discussed them on the selected members of the CBOs. The FGD members expressed their opinions on the issues discussed and responses recorded by the enumerators.

c) Document analysis

Document analysis is a social research method and is an important research tool in its own right and is an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation. Documentary work involves



reading lots of written material (it helps to scan the documents onto a computer and use a qualitative analysis package). A document is something that we can read and which relates to some aspect of the social world. Official documents are intended to be read as objective statements of fact but they are themselves socially produced (Heffernan, 2001). This study collected data from documents like brochures, pamphlets and magazines obtained from the organization based on activities they have initiated. The CBO officials gave the researcher the relevant documents like the constitution and bylaws which provided information regarding the structure and functions of the organization. Close analysis of these documents gave an in depth information that members could not relay during the interviews.

Validity and Reliability

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), the reliability of an instrument is the measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. To test the reliability of interview schedule for key informants and FGD schedule to be used in the study, a pilot study was conducted in Embu on a CBO which was not sampled for the study to test the reliability of the instruments to be used. After the pilot study, the instruments to be used were tested and adjusted so that they could be used for the actual research. Pilot study helped in adjusting the structure of the schedules and arranging questions for the preparation of the actual study.

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaires was keyed into the computer in the excel format. It was then exported to SPSS for quantitative analysis. Qualitative data was obtained from the notes recorded from the field. The field notes were recorded in verbatim. The analysis was done in form of frequencies, percentages which presented in terms of graphs, pie charts and tables. Descriptive analysis was given to explain the activities, challenges and successes of the CBOs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Constraints of CBOs

The third objective was on the constraints faced by the organizations which range from lack of office space and equipment, poor administration, lack of electricity, lack of securities and lack of staff. These constraints are not the same to all the CBOs studied. They range from



one CBO to another and also depend on the functions undertaken by the CBO and the time of its formation.

Table 1: Challenges experienced by CBOs

Problems experienced by CBOs	Number of respondents from the organizations
General administration	7
Lack of office space	182
Lack of securities	7
Lack of staff	7
Total	203

Lack office space and equipments was experienced. This is explained by the 182 respondents who indicated that their organizations lacked office space where they can use as a venue for their meetings. The ones which have office space and equipments have rented offices though they have insufficient furniture, computers and other office equipments which can make the operations of the CBOs fast and more efficient so that they can provide the services required by the members and the community at large as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Organizations with office space and equipments

Organizations with office space and equipments	Number of respondents from the Organizations
Yes	21
No	182
Total	203

From the study, it was found that the CBOs do not motivate and encourage volunteers to participate in the group activities. It was found that (10%) of the respondents agreed that there were volunteers who helped in the CBOs activities. The rest of the 182 (90%) respondents said that their groups had no volunteers as summarized in the table below:

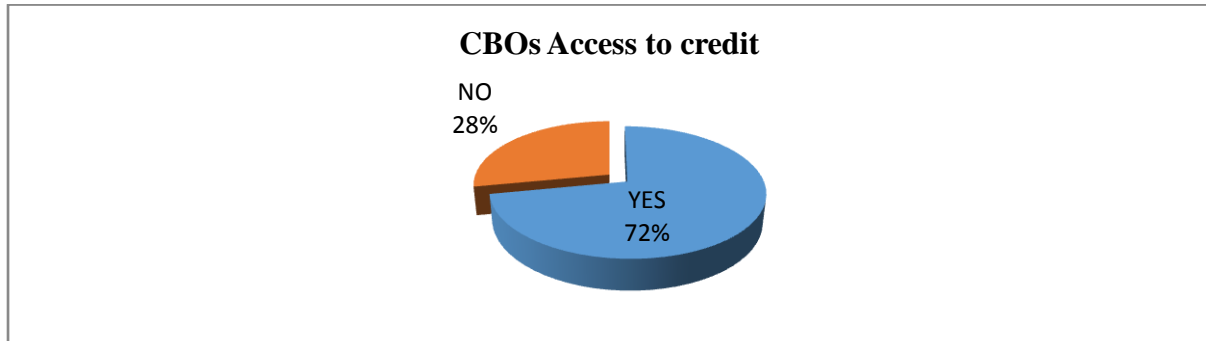
Table 3. Volunteers in the Organization

Volunteers in the org	Number of respondents from CBOs
Yes	21
No	182
Total	203



The investigated CBOs faced a challenge of accessing to credit facilities. The respondents (56) indicated that their organization has ever accessed credit facilities. The other 147 respondents said that did not have access to credit facilities. The figure below gives the percentage of the CBOs which had access to credit.

Figure 1: Number of CBOs in which their members have access to credit facilities



The groups indicated that they could not access credit due to lack of collateral, difficulties in repayments, and higher interest rates. Those groups which had access to credit facilities are the women groups which got the loans from Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT). Some of the CBOs members also got monies from within the organization through table banking whereby they pool their money together as members and give loans to any member who would wish to borrow but with low interest rates. Table 4 gives a summary of reasons for the group members not getting loans.

Table 4 Reasons for CBOs not accessing credit facilities

Reasons for not having access to credit facilities							
Access to credit facilities (%)	Difficulties in repayments	Interest rates are high, bureaucracy	Lack of information on the process	Loans from microfinance institutions	No assets for collaterals	Not interested	Organization offers loans to its' members
Yes	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
No	4.8%	4.8%	57.1%	4.8%	9.5%	9.5%	9.5%
Total	3.7%	3.7%	44.4%	25.9%	7.4%	7.4%	7.4%

CONCLUSION

The study established that the groups studied have challenges which need to be solved. These challenges range from the membership of the organization, leadership, capacity



building, project monitoring and evaluation, networking, marketing of products and networking of the groups. Through organizational scaling up, members can be trained and given capacity on how they can manage their own organizational affairs.

Lack of office space and equipments was a major impediment that the CBOs faced. They operated in mobile places or utilized schools and churches for their meetings. They lacked enough office equipments which can make their work easy.

RECOMMENDATION

Finances should be provided so that members can acquire the office space and equipment they might require for the day to day operations of the group activities. This will actualize the process of participation to activities of the group.

CBOs should be mobilized through trainings on the need to participate in preparation of work plans of their organization. This will help in attaining the desired results and being strict to the time lines. Members should participate in policy formulation so that their issues are taken into consideration. The line ministries should participate in enlightening the CBOs on the human rights based approach and the ethics behind activities of the organization. This will build trust between the organizations and other stakeholders and partners.

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