

Leadership in Community Mobilization, in Soil and Water Conservation: *The Case of Gimbi Woreda, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia*

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to assess the leadership competencies in community mobilization for soil and water conservation. The study employed descriptive research with quantitative and qualitative methods. In this study, probability and non-probability sampling technique was used to obtain the desired sample from different strata in the study. Data were also collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were collected from 187 households and 10 woreda leaders. FGD is also held with 20 individuals using non-probability sampling in support of the primary sources. Woreda documents were also used to identify the situation in the study area. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (using SPSS version 20.0). Various tests were employed to find the results the study tries to investigate. Different descriptive statistics were employed in the study coupled with tests of differences between independent variables in the study. Mann-Whitney test was employed to calculate the difference between the independent variables since the data used is ordinal data. The result of the study shows that between the different stratus the study has investigated, there is statistically significant difference between the participation processes employed in different Kebeles. The study also shows that the community is not empowered to plan development activities nor reject projects imposed by the government. The study also evaluated leadership competencies in the Woreda implemented by the leaders and found out that, vision leaders, commitment, persistence and transparency are among competencies that score low while competencies like communication, motivation, inspiring participation, getting feedbacks and technical competency of leaders are among the respondents score higher. From the result, we can conclude that by working on leadership competencies, we can achieve better community participation level.*

Index Terms: Leadership competencies, Kebeles¹, Woreda²

1. Introduction

The major concern of the leader is to lead his followers for certain shared objective/goal by influencing them to act willingly to accomplish their shared goal. In Ethiopia the public sector is trying to offer the basic public goods and services for the citizens. It is very important to note that in giving public service government must ensure that, those public goods are perceived by citizens as their own goods and the participation in the provision of developmental activities are better accomplished with the participation of all. Community participation in the planning, designing and implementation of development projects is increasingly a feature of development project design. World Bank experience suggests that “projects tend to be more sustainable and yield higher return when they involve those they are intended to help” (Bhatuagar et al, 1992).

The practice of CP continues to be important development agenda in Ethiopia. It is noteworthy that the FDRE has incorporated the right to participate in development activities in the new constitution. Article 43/2 of the constitution state: “Nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community” (FDRE 1995, p. 101).

¹ **Kebele** is the smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia, similar to a ward, a neighborhood or a localized and delimited group of people.

² **Woreda** is an administrative division in Ethiopia (managed by a local government), equivalent to a district with an average population of 100,000. Woredas are composed of a number of Kebele, or neighborhood associations, which are the smallest unit of local government in Ethiopia.

Community participation in development has been very poor in Ethiopia. The development activities performed by government are not supported by the community and leadership role in community mobilization is very poor. Even though in Ethiopia the ideology of the government, the constitution and other government development programs encourages participation of the people in development activities the implementation of these policies may not be similar to what's sought to happen. While it is important that this fundamental right is provided for in the constitution, the difficulty arises in its realization in the actual process of planning and implementation of development activities. This would require not only a deeper appreciation of the fundamental importance of the principle of popular participation but also of the establishment of the appropriate mechanisms for its realization. There appears to be a wide gap between the goal espoused and its implementation on the ground (Fassil, 2005).

Gimbi is one of West Wollega Zonal Woredas' in Oromia regional state located around 441KM in the south west of Addis Ababa. The Woreda has 33 Kebeles 32 rural and 1 urban and the estimated total populations of 84,419 in which the rural is 82,198 and the Urban 2,221 residents. In the woreda, there are two levels of administrative leadership units. First, at woreda level with 39 male and 10 female woreda cabinets those are headed by 5 woreda councils. Second, at kebele level, there are about 1032 woreda leaders with 32 woreda managers with 26 male and 6 females. In addition to that 87 Development Agent workers, 26 cooperative and 64 female health extension workers are giving service in the woreda. These are some of the major public agents working in the woreda with the community and they are trying to provide service to the locals and coordinate development works in the society.

The purpose of this study was to study the leadership practices in implementing the soil and water conservation projects, the communities' response to the projects implemented and strategy followed in the process.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Leadership and Community Participation

Leadership can be defined as speaking, listening and acting in a way that mobilizes self and others to take effective action to realize visions, possibilities and dreams (Friedman, 2005). It is a dynamic purpose between leaders and collaborators in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they affect real, intended change (Freiberg et al, 1996).

Community leadership entails monitoring all aspects of the interaction between the local government and the community served. Local government managers are community leaders when they shape the council's agenda and propose policy, when they relate directly to individuals and groups in the community, and when they make administrative and managerial decisions within their organizations. Community leadership is a long-standing role of local government managers, and its scope has expanded over time in response to new conditions in communities (Newell, 2004).

Chinese Philosopher Lao-tzu thought a good leader was one who, "when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will all say, we did this ourselves" Newell, (2004) summarize the leadership aspects of leadership in the community in the following three points. Shaping the agenda and proposing policy, relating directly to the community, orienting the organization to the community. Where there is no sense of community, there is no community and no vision are possible. For those who seek to formulate vision of sustainability for a town or city, first steps may necessarily include activities that build toward a truly integrated community (Corey, 1986).

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Description of the Study Area

Gimbi woreda is one of the West Wollega Zone Woreda found at about 440 KM west of the capital city Addis Ababa. Geographically the woreda was situated at the longitude 901N- 917N and latitude of 35⁰44E- 36⁰09E. The woreda was bordered in the North by Kemeshi woreda of Benishangul Regional State, on the south by Haru woreda, on the East by East Wollega zone and on the West by Homa and Lalo Asabi woreda. The woreda has 32 rural kebeles.

The total area of the woreda is about 112,970 Hectare. Out of this area 74187.55 hectare around 67.9 % is used for agricultural purpose, 22,880.67 hectare is covered with forest, which account 20% of the land, 19,201.43 hectare which is about 16.9% of total area is covered with coffee, 5,467 hectare is covered with dispersed forest and trees planted by people and the rest around 6,959.7 hectare about 6.16% of land constitute coffee, river, stones and urban land.

3.2 Sample Design

To get the proper representative population; stratified sampling method was used depending on the performance of the villages. There are 32 Kebeles in Gimbi woreda where soil and water conservation projects are being carried out. All the kebeles are participating in the conservation and this kebeles are ranked by the woreda experts in three categories according to their performance in the projects. The high performing kebeles on the level of Community Participation are ranked A, the medium performance is B and the lower performing kebeles are categorized in C category. The Kebeles were stratified in high performing kebele, medium and lower performing kebele and then, the representative village was selected by simple random sampling from these categories. The other participants in this research paper are the woreda leaders assigned to this kebeles and the study have stressed on this group of people because this group of people are responsible for community participation activities in the woreda and they are experts in the area.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Different sampling techniques are used in this research. Both probability and non-probability sampling was employed to select representative sample.

3.4 Sample Size

The other important thing is determining the sample size. Determining the number of representative population is also mandatory. So, to have manageable sample size, the study relay on, the two kebeles selected and used sample population from the households in the village to determine the sample size. The total population of the household in Gimbi woreda is about 14,679 according to data I got from Gimbi Woreda Agricultural Development Office (GWADO). The total house hold population of the households of the two kebeles is 467 households.

Table: 1 type of data and sample size

Type of data collection	Total population	Sample size	Participants
Closed Ended Questionnaire	467	210	CP participants
Open Ended Questionnaire	32	10	Woreda leaders at the Kebele
Focus Group Discussion	2 FGD	20	Woreda leaders, elders, model farmers
Total		240	

3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches of data analysis have been used. The descriptive statistics is used to analyze the data gathered with close ended questionnaires using graphs, charts, bars by using likert scale which helps in measuring the attitude of the respondents and use SPSS models to analyze the relationship between the variables. Descriptive statistics methods like frequencies, mean and median were used to analyze closed ended questionnaire. Mann-Whitney test is also employed to analyze the relationship between different independent variables. The primary data gathered with FDG and open ended questionnaire is analyzed with qualitative method of data analysis.

4. Results

4.1 Participation Process of SWC in Gimbi Woreda

This part of the study precinct the participation process implemented to enhance active participation of the community in SWC projects in the woreda. Community participation can be achieved thorough different means and different literatures stress on the way participation is materialized for the sustainability of participation in the community. We will test the participation process implemented in the Gimbi woreda by raising different questions and assess the status of participation process to evaluate the prospects of participation in the woreda for sustainability of the projects implemented in Gimbi woreda. Community

participation is nothing without empowerment of community and positive community attitude for participation in different development works in the locality. We will see these issues in this paper to understand the status of participation in the woreda.

Table: 2 Mann-Whitney test of the two kebeles on the right of people to raise development issues

		Ranks			
	Kebele of the respondents	N	Mean Rank	Z	P-value
participants right to raise development issue	Loya Gafare	69	122.89	-5.856	.000
	Wara Sayo	118	77.11		
	Total	187			

Source: own survey (2013).

The above output table shows that there is statistically significant difference among the two kebeles on the right of people to raise development issues by themselves ($Z = -5.856$, $P\text{-value} < 0.5$). We can see from the results of the different stratum the existence of respondents believe of raising development issues of their locality when they want. We can conclude from this result there is a difference on the attitude of respondents on their right to raise development issues in different strata. As discussed previously in this paper the two strata we have in this research is from high performing kebele and lower performing kebele in Gimbi woreda according to GWADO report and we can see the difference in the two strata in Mann-Whitney test where the mean rank for people's right to participate or raise the development issues they want is higher for the higher performing kebele, that is Loya Gafare kebele.

Table: 3 Mann-Whitney test of the kebeles on the right of people to leave participation when they want

Category	Kebele of the respondents	N	Mean Rank	Z	P-value
participants right to leave project	Loya Gafare	69	70.78	-4.623	.000
	Wara Sayo	118	107.58		
	Total	187			

Source: own survey (2013).

The above table shows that there is statistically significant difference on the right of people to leave the SWC work when they want in the different stratum. The Mann-Whitney result of the two kebeles show the difference in the right of people to leave the project when they want with ($Z = -4.623$, $P\text{-value} < 0.05$). The mean value of the kebele with lower CP that is Wara Sayo is higher for the right of people to leave the project is higher and the kebele with higher CP mean value is lower which may indicate that the participants of CP in the Loya Gafare where the participation is active believe they have duty to participate in the community participation works that they believe it is mandatory for social member of a community to duly acknowledge the local development works and participate accordingly.

4.2 Leadership Competencies

Effective community participation may require a whole host of leadership competencies that we could not be listed simply. A leader should possess these leadership competencies to be a true community leader and there is no one or two competencies we say enough to become a perfect leader. That means a leader needs a combination of different competencies to become a leader that brings change to the society.

In this section we will deal with different leadership competencies that are very common and as well important for the leader and test the community leaders in achieving or mobilizing the community in SWC in Gimbi woreda. The responses we get for the leadership competencies are from the two kebeles in Gimbi woreda. A total number of respondents are 187 among which there 69 respondents are from Loya Gafare kebele and the rest 118 are from Wara Sayo kebele.

The responses of the SWC participants are rated by using five point likert scales ranging from 1 to 5. The range of responses is from strongly agreeing to the leadership qualities presented to strongly disagreeing to the existence of that quality by the leaders of community leaders in the woreda. The important leadership competencies presented for evaluation are leaders' vision, communication qualities, mobilizing people, commitment of the leaders, persistence of leaders to achieve a goal, participating people in decision making, listening to the people, getting feedback from the people, transparency in their activities and leaders technical competency to lead the community in SWC works.

Table: 4 leadership competencies

Leadership Competencies	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
vision of the leaders	3.5847	3	0.88989
communication level of leaders	4.0424	4	0.7208
leaders' level of sharing vision	3.6695	3	0.84787
leader's motivation of participants	4.0678	4	0.66318
leadership commitment to participate people	3.6441	3	0.86257
leaders have persistence to achieve the goal	3.5932	3	0.83959
leaders effectively inspire community	3.9576	4	0.70885
leaders involving people and participating	3.8475	4	0.74681
leaders get feedback	3.9576	4	0.7208
leadership transparency in involving people	3.7119	3	0.87805
leadership technique to lead people in participation	3.7119	4	0.75222

Source: Own survey (2013)

Vision is one of the traits that a leadership is always related in different leadership literatures. Visionary leader is a kind of leader that everybody wishes for and a trait very important in leading a small group of people to a big nation. As we can see from the table above the mean and median value of leaders vision in achieving CP as rated by the respondents is lower with median value 3 and mean 3.5. As indicated in the above table, it looks like the participants of SWC in Gimbi woreda perceive that the leadership is weak at having vision.

As indicated in the above table the mean and median value of leaders' communication skill in mobilizing people in SWC is good with median score of 4 and means value of 4.04. If we compare the values of leadership competencies measured in this questionnaire the value we get for leaders communication skill is among the higher results. Form the above result we may conclude that the participants from SWC in Gimbi woreda perceive that communication skill of leaders in mobilizing the community is in a good stage.

We have already discussed the importance of vision for a leader under this study. The above table depicts that the value of median for ability of leaders for sharing vision with the society is 3 and the mean score is 3.6. The result of sharing vision with the society is low from the leadership competencies we are trying to evaluate here in this study. Looking at this score we man conclude that in Gimbi woreda the ability of leaders to share vision with the community is lower than the other leadership competencies we are aiming to discuss.

As we can see in the table the value for leaders motivation of participants for the development activities in the woreda is higher than the other competencies mentioned in the table. The mean value for the respondents is 4 and also the mean value for median is also 4, which depicts that from the likert scale the score for the item indicate the participants of the SWC in Gimbi woreda believe the leaders ability to motivate the people is high.

Leaders' commitment to participate people in development works is also one of a very important leadership commitment we want to measure in this study. The value for leadership commitment measured in this study is the mean value of 3.6 and median value of 3. Depending on the result of this likert scale measurement we may conclude that the participants of SWC projects in Gimbi woreda perceive that the leaders' commitment to participate the people in the development works is lower than the other leadership competencies.

Achieving a goal needs persistence to work towards that goal without faltering on the way. Especially for leaders this competency is very important in challenging situation like mobilizing people to get the attention of all participants in development works. As indicated in the above table the participants score mean value is 3.59 and median value of 3 which is lower score from the other competencies mentioned in the above table. Depending on these results we may conclude that in the study area the participants perceive the leaders' persistence in achieving goal in SWC works is lower than the other competencies discussed.

Inspiring the followers is one of the essences of leadership that every leader should do to get true followers. In the above table we have dealt with the ability of leaders to inspire community to achieve active community participation. The mean and median score of the ability of leaders to inspire community is 3.9 and 4 respectively, which is a higher score from the competencies presented above. We may conclude from these results that, the participants of SWC in Gimbi woreda agree that community leaders in the woreda are inspiring the community in the woreda to achieve active community participation.

Community participation is a basic pillar of this study in which this research work is developed around. In the leadership competencies we intend to experiment in this study one of the competencies we look is leaders' ability in involving people and participate in development works. The above table shows that the mean and median score for the ability of leaders to inspire and involve the community in development works especially in SWC projects is 3.84 and 4 respectively. From these results we may conclude that participants of SWC in Gimbi woreda perceive the ability of leaders to involve and inspire the community in CP program is good.

The leadership willingness to accept feedback from the community is one of the leadership competencies given attention to be studied in this research. As can be depicted from the table the mean value and median score of the leaders' willingness to listen the feedback from the society is rated 3.93 and 4 respectively. We may conclude from this score that the community responded in this questionnaire perceive the leader is letting them give feedback to the leaders. The score for leaders' level of getting feedback from the community is among the high score recorded in the leadership competencies listen in the table.

One of a very important thing in community participation is a community should trust the leaders to actively participate. Without, mutual trust between the leader and the follower, it is highly probable a cooperation between them could succeed. For the trust to exist between the leader and the follower there must be a transparency in their actions. From the table we can illustrate that the mean and the median value of leadership transparency in involving people in SWC in Gimbi woreda is 3.7 and 3 respectively. The value for leadership transparency in involving people in development work is slightly smaller in score and we may conclude from this score that the participants of SWC in Gimbi woreda observe leadership transparency in involving people in development work is slightly smaller from the other leadership competencies listed in the table.

As illustrated in the table the last leadership competencies we came across is the leadership technical competency to lead people in the participation of SWC works in the woreda. The value of leadership technical competency in SWC works shows that the mean score of 3.7 and median value of 4. The participants rate the score for leadership technical competencies among the leadership competencies that have higher value in the likert scale score. These may conclude from this that the participant of the community participation in Gimbi woreda perceive that leaders have enough technical competency to lead a SWC program in the woreda.

5. Strategy followed by leaders to mobilize the community in SWC

The prime strategy followed by the leaders in SWC projects in Gimbi woreda is giving training for farmers. Most of my respondents of open ended questionnaire stressed the importance of awareness creation for the community on SWC by teaching the severity of land degradation in the woreda and that the degradation leads to decrease production as well as the lack of grazing land and scarcity of water that is already a major problem in Gimbi woreda.

Most of the respondents of FGD also responded that in Gimbi woreda they do have training before participating in the SWC. Training is given for all participants in the woreda and the participants in FGD responded that they get a very good lesson from the training and it helps them to understand the importance of the SWC for the productivity in production and rehabilitating the environment also enable them to get pasture land for their livestock and they can also find fire wood for their consumption.

The other strategy they followed is using experience sharing of farmers on the farms of farmers who do quality SWC job and change their farm land. The respondents of open ended questionnaires stressed that the importance of experience sharing in changing the attitude of farmers towards a better participation

process in the community. It is sometimes easier to show a tangible result to change the attitude of the community rather than telling them a theory or science of SWC on the meetings. Some of the participants of FGD explained the importance of a best practice they have seen from the other projects in the woreda that use community participation for the conservation of the environment.

Some of the respondents of open ended questionnaire also mention that there is another strategy for active community participation. The strategy is using best practice as a bench mark for mass mobilization and community participation work. In Gimbi woreda there are many SWC works that is used as a bench mark for community participation. These best practices are a government led project called Sustainable Land Management (SLM) that has done a remarkable job in the woreda and the NGO project called DASC. Gimbi woreda has got this opportunity to show to the community as well as use these projects as a bench mark in mobilizing the community. The strategy mentioned in the open ended questionnaire is monitoring and evaluation of projects. My respondents mentioned that the projects are evaluated and monitored to enhance the performance in community participation. There is timely evaluation of the projects as my respondents mentioned.

6. Leadership Qualities needed to mobilize community in overall local development projects

Commitment of leaders and participatory leadership are the two most commonly mentioned in the open ended questionnaire given to the leaders. Leaders must be committed to achieve the development works they intent to achieve in the society. The respondents also mentioned the importance of involving the community in every stage of community participation works in the woreda.

Furthermore, the quality of leadership needed according to some respondents is communicating the strategy to the people. They stressed that leadership must converse with the community the importance of the project and the importance of community participation to implement the project in the society. An idea should be understood by the community to implement the project in a successful way and to achieve mutual understanding there is no better way than communicating the strategies and activities thoroughly to the people. These can be achieved through teaching and giving training to the concerned society.

Others stressed the importance of supervision and support for the project to be successful. The leaders must work to achieve successful community participation by helping the project work smoothly by giving decisions in the matters of SWC projects. The works implemented in the community could also be unsuccessful if there is no proper supervision from the leaders. Thus, supervision and support for the project are important leadership qualities important in SWC project in Gimbi woreda.

7. Discussion

The study has found out that there is a difference in participation process in different stratus studied in this research. The value of Mann-Whitney test of Loya Gafare and Wara Sayo kebele shows there is a statistically significant difference in participants' right to raise development issue, knowledge of objectives of participation, participants' right to choose projects and the way participants participate in SWC projects. Participants from higher performing kebele response is higher in mean value than lower performing kebeles which indicate that the attitude of participants in different stratus may be related to the leadership practice implemented in the kebeles.

This study in addition to participation process in the woreda tried to assess the leadership competencies that exist in the woreda. Leadership competency is difficult to measure and the list of competencies needed is also vast and measuring those qualities is difficult. The paper tries to show the list of important competencies needed to mobilize community for participation in the woreda.

Among leadership competencies discussed in the study the mean and median value of respondents is lower for vision of leaders, leaders persistence for achieving a goal, leaders commitment to achieve goals and sharing vision for the community is among competencies that score lower grade. These competencies are among very important qualities for a leader to be successful and proper attention should be given in this regard.

In contrary, motivational quality of leaders, effective communication with participants, proper feedback from the participants and effectively inspiring communities are among leadership competencies participants of the study perceive more existent in community leaders in Gimbi woreda.

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