
Citizen's Involvement in Local Development Activities in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study is to investigate the extent of participation of the local people in local development activities in Nepal. Descriptive and analytical research design is used in this study. The data collected through questionnaire from 70 respondents was used for the analysis. As per the data collected, the findings showed that the marginalized people were not sharing equitable benefit from the local development activities including governmental services. Similarly, the extent of implementing local projects was found to be weak. The findings from this study can provide information about the citizen's involvement in local development activities in Nepal. It could be helpful to provide some special guidelines to the policy makers for improving local governance.

Key words: Priority setting, planning, equitable benefit sharing, financial contribution, monitoring and evaluation, implementing local projects.

1. Introduction

Citizen's involvement and political institutions are the main factors that make any society and state vibrant. People involve themselves to influence the making of public policies, laws, rules, and regulations to govern the society and state. Public policies are formulated, passed and implemented with the involvement of the citizens. People's political participation are those voluntary and legal activities by which members of a society take part in the selection of leaders and directly and indirectly in the formation and influencing of the public policies and decision-making processes (Norman and Verba, 1980). Political socialization through which the individual becomes aware and conscious about the political process is called political participation. Political socialization also conceives and forms people's attitude, beliefs and emotions towards politics. The involvement of the individual at various levels of activity in the political system which would range from the non-involvement to the holding of the political office is political participation (Rush, 1992). The legal overtones of political participation has been highlighted by Rush. The actions taken by the citizens aimed at influencing the decisions taken mainly by the public leaders, representatives and officials are also a part of political participation of the people. The action could be seeking to influence the decision-makers or it could be protesting at the outcome of some decisions taken by the political leaders, their representatives, legislatives and government bureaucrats. Political participation is a major component of political stability.

Actions and interactions that are directly or indirectly related with policy making and decision making for the smooth functioning and maintenance of social relations and order come under citizen's involvement. Citizen's involvement can be ensured through electoral process.

Out of the many studies done in the field of citizen's involvement, very few have focused on both involvement and local development activity. Citizen's involvement and local development activities have not been linked in an integrated manner in the available literatures. In this study, efforts have been made to analyze citizen's involvement in local development activities. From the public administration perspective, local development activities as well as governance seem crucial.

2. Problem statement

While linking the society, state and policies to a broader extent, citizen's involvement and their representation to different state institutions become the most important sites of the political power sharing and authority. The roles that people play to govern themselves are significant in all modern political systems. Bringing governance closer to the people would improve the development outcomes, foster inclusion of the

poor and marginalized groups in decision making process, ensure equitable representation and participation in state institutions, improve efficiency of resource mobilization and utilization, and ensure transparency and accountability of central government. Emphasis is given to the capacity building of the local government to strengthen the local service delivery and to make the local government self-sufficient. In this context, this study attempts to answer the research question i.e. how is the extent of involvement of the local people in the local development activities?

The objective of this article is to analyze the “Citizen’s Involvement in local development activities in Nepal” and the specific objective of this study is to investigate the extent of involvement of the local people in local development activities in Nepal.

3. Literature Review

Citizen’s involvement is a matter of will and capacity and not only the matter of structural arrangements. Decentralization and federalism encourages participation of the local people in determining their development and well-being which is stressed by the advocates of local governance. Nevertheless, in the context of poor countries, the extent and nature of participation itself needs to be understood more deeply. Priority setting, Planning, Producing, Paying (financing) and Consumption are the five levels where participation must be done. Consumption leads to livelihood, but when it is not supported by participation in setting priorities, planning, production, paying, it is not sustainable. The biggest problem in developing country lies in participating in consumption without participating in paying, because of lack of income. This makes consumption unsustainable because there is no support for production. On the other hand, often those in power concentrate on promoting participation in the four Ps without providing participation in consumption. The result would be that the poor won’t see any significant change in their living even when they have participated. Therefore, it should be noted that consumption is more attractive and hence it is worth mentioning (Kauzya, n.d).

The fundamental component of local governance capacity building should be strengthening the capacity of local communities to generate sustainable income. The very first element of building local governance capacity is to ensure that the objectives for decentralization or for supporting local governance are clear and giving room to the involvement of all the stakeholders (Kauzya, n.d).

4. Method and Material

This article is based on the survey empirical methods, a descriptive cum analytical research design. Descriptive research is a type of study which is conducted to access the opinions, behaviors or characteristics of the given population (Wolff & Pant, 2005). An interview schedule was administered in 2020. For analyzing “Citizen’s involvement in local development activities in Nepal”, the population for this study was taken from Kathmandu. The population comprised of local people/local leaders, govt. officials, academicians, NGO/CBO officials and employees of municipalities. Sample size of 70 was taken from an unknown population. Purposive quota sampling technique was used. The quota was determined on the basis of the size of population and researcher’s convenience. Variation of Citizen’s involvement in local development activities was measured in terms of the variation of group of stakeholders. Data has been classified as per the objective of the study and analysis has been made accordingly. Simple mathematical tool was used.

5. Discussion and analysis

Discussion and Analysis is related to the issues of Citizen’s Involvement in local development activities in Nepal.

5.1. Extent of Importance of Priority Setting for Local Development

Whether it is at local, national or global level, priority setting is a challenge. People that are responsible for financial or time related resources have to make priority decisions. They have to either allocate new resources or reallocate the existing resources. The view of the respondents on the extent of the importance of priority setting for local development is shown in the table 01.

Table: 01 Extent of the importance of priority setting for local development

Group of stakeholders	Local leader/ Local people	Government officials/ employee/ Academic/NGO CBO officials	Total	Percentage
Strong	17	35	52	74
Weak	7	11	18	26
Total	24	46	70	100%

The table 01 presents the opinion of the respondents on the extent of the importance of priority setting for local development by group of stakeholders. According to the table, 74% of the respondents view that the extent of execution level on priority setting for local developments of local governments was strong. The reason for this is because the Local government operating act, 2074 B.S. has emphasized on priority setting while making plans for the local government.

5.2 Planning for local development

Planning is the process of identifying the target, defining the way to move further and implementing the best measures to attain the set target. Further, it is a participatory process of formulating a development plan with prediction of the resources. It best links the district, regional and national vision with the local community development (Bharadwaj and Acharya, 2011). Planning is more a political and participatory process rather than an isolated technical exercise and thus, planning has to deal with people through politics (Thapa, 2010).

Local planning encourages citizen's involvement in the process of planning and implementation of development program as well as mobilizes and uses local resources more effectively and efficiently. The social inclusion process is promoted and community initiatives are boosted to find creative solutions in local problems during participatory local planning. Mostly, it is a demand driven planning processes which builds the ownership of the people and stakeholders and also supports to strengthen the democratic decentralization and sustainable development (Thapa, 2010). The view of the respondents on the extent of Planning for local development is shown in the table 02.

Table: 02 Extent of Planning for local development

Group of stakeholders	Local leader/ Local people	Government officials/ employee/ Academic/NGO CBO officials	Total	Percentage
Strong	18	28	46	66
Weak	8	16	24	34
Total	26	44	70	100%

The table 02 represents the views of the respondents in the extent of planning for local development. According to the table, 66 % respondents view that the extent of planning for local development of local governments was strong and the remaining 34% view it to be weak. The reason for majority of the respondents finding the extent of planning for local development to be strong was due to the mandatory undertaking of the provisions(constitution of Nepal; existing acts and rules; existing national and provincial policies; national/provincial/local-level long term vision; national/provincial periodic plan; sustainable development goals; guidelines of national and provincial governments; problems and prospects of the local level; manifesto of the political parties involved in the local level) in the Local Government Planning Formulation Regulation, 2075.

5.3 Implementing Local Projects

Project implementation process is a challenging work for Managers/Administrators as implementation process is complex and usually requires simultaneous attention to a wide variety of human, budgetary, and technical variables (Pinto and Slevin, n.d.). The success of local project implementation can be defined in many ways to include a large variety of criteria. However, in simple words, project success can be understood as incorporating four basic facets. A project is usually considered to be implemented successfully if it comes in on –schedule (time criterion), comes in on – budget (monetary criterion), achieves basically all the goals originally set for it (effectiveness criterion) and is accepted and used by the clients for whom the project is intended (client satisfaction criterion) (Ibid). The views of the respondents on the extent of implementing local projects are shown in the table 03.

Table: 03 Extent of Implementing local projects

Group of stakeholders	Local leader/ Local people	Government officials/ employee/ Academic/ NGO CBO officials	Total	Percentage
Strong	9	16	25	36
Weak	20	25	45	64
Total	29	41	70	100%

Table 03 presents respondents' opinion on extent of the Implementing local projects. According to the table, only 36 % of the respondents viewed the extent of planning for local development of local governments to be strong and the remaining 64% found it to be weak. It reveals that the extent of implementing local projects at local level is weak because of not being able to comply with the time criterion, monetary criterion, effectiveness criterion, and client satisfaction criterion.

5.4 Financial Contribution

The local government can encourage a greater citizen participation in local level development. The necessary expenditure of time and resource to establish these goals promises of a more stable enriched local development (Gunn, n.d.). The views of the respondents on the extent of financial contribution are shown in the table 04.

Table: 04 Extent of Financial contributions

Group of stakeholders	Local leader/ Local people	Government officials/ employee/ Academic/NGO CBO officials	Total	Percentage
Strong	19	32	51	73
Weak	6	13	19	27
Total	25	45	70	100%

Table 04 shows the respondent's views on the extent of financial contribution. According to the table, only 73 % of the respondents view the extent of financial contribution for local development of local governments to be strong and the remaining 27% viewed it to be weak. The reason for majority of the respondents finding the extent of financial contribution for local development of local governments to be strong is due to the mandatory compliance of the provisions in the Local Level Financial Authority and the Local Level Financial Executing System.

5.5 Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Projects

Monitoring refers to the timely collection of information in order to measure the project performance in the course of project implementation. Monitoring helps in improving the implementation by identifying complications and the possible corrective actions. Evaluation measures the impacts and effects of the project. It is also carried out during the project implementation to improve it. It can also be carried out subsequently to the project completion to improve the future project planning and management (Agrawal, 2000). The views of the respondents on the extent of Monitoring and evaluation of local projects are shown in table 05.

Table: 05 Extent of Monitoring and evaluation of local projects

Group of stakeholders	Local leader/ Local people	Government officials/ employee/ Academic/ NGO CBO officials	Total	Percentage
Strong	16	27	43	61
Weak	10	17	27	39
Total	26	44	70	100%

Table 05 presents the respondents' opinion on extent of the monitoring and evaluation of local projects. According to the table, 61% of the respondents viewed the extent of monitoring and evaluation of local projects to

be strong and the remaining 39% found it to be weak. The reason for majority of the respondents finding the extent of monitoring and evaluation of local projects to be strong is because of the compliance with the monitoring and evaluation provisions (formation of monitoring and inspection committee; monitoring and inspection procedures; monitoring committee in the ward level; project evaluation) stated in the Local Government Planning Formulation Regulation, 2075.

5.6 Equitable Benefit Sharing

Equitable benefit sharing is the activity of maintaining the equal rights of all classes of people either; high class (politicians/professionals), middle class (general people), or lower class (marginalized people) to participate in matter of nation (Gautam, 2010). The benefit may not be equitably shared between stakeholders and that people with less power in the benefit- sharing and decision-making processes could lose out (Gebara, 2013). The views of the respondents on the extent of equitable benefit sharing are shown in table 06.

Table: 06 Extent of the Equitable Benefit Sharing

Benefited class	Local leader/ Local people	Government officials/ employee/ Academic/ NGO CBO officials	Total	Percentage	Rank
High class	12	17	29	41	1
Middle class	16	11	27	39	2
Lower Class	5	9	14	20	3
Total	33	37	70	100	

Table 06 shows the opinion of the respondents regarding the extent of the equitable benefit sharing. According to the table, 41% of the respondent viewed that high class people have been involved highly in equitable benefit sharing. Likewise, 39 % of the respondent viewed that middle class people have been involved in equitable benefit sharing. Unlike the higher two classes, the lower class people do not seem to have been involved in equitable benefit sharing only as only 20% of the respondent viewed that the lower class people are involved in equitable benefit sharing. Hence the high class people seem to have been most involved in the equitable benefit sharing followed by the middle class people and then the lower class people.

1. Summary and Conclusion

The extent of the importance of priority setting for local development by group of stakeholders was found to be strong, as viewed by 74% of the respondents because the Local government operating act, 2074 B.S. has emphasized on priority setting while making plans for the local government. The extent of planning for local development was found to be strong, as viewed by 66 % respondents, due to the mandatory undertaking of the provisions in the Local Government Planning Formulation Regulation, 2075. The extent of implementing local projects was found to be weak, as viewed by 36 % of the respondents, because of not being able to comply with the time criterion, monetary criterion, effectiveness criterion, and client satisfaction criterion. The extent of financial contribution for local development of local governments was found to be strong, as viewed by 73 % of the respondents, due to the mandatory compliance of the provisions in the Local Level Financial Authority and the Local Level Financial Executing System. The extent of the monitoring and evaluation of local projects was found to be strong, as viewed by 61% of the respondents, because of the compliance with the monitoring and evaluation provisions stated in the Local Government Planning Formulation Regulation, 2075. The extent of the equitable benefit sharing showed that the high class people seem to have been most involved in the equitable benefit sharing(as viewed by 41% of the respondents) followed by the middle class people(as viewed by 39% of the respondents) and then the lower class people(as viewed by 20% of the respondents).

2. Implications of the study

The implications of this article are as follows:

- Despite having a strong importance for priority setting for local development, balanced development at the local level is often a huge challenge.
- It is a challenge to assess the present status and forecast the future prospect in the context of planning for local development by taking into account the provisions in the Local Government Planning Formulation Regulation, 2075.
- While implementing any project, it is a challenge to get it done on schedule, get it done in the defined budget, achieve basically all the goals originally set for it; and get it accepted and used by the clients for

whom the project is intended.

- One of the challenges in citizen's involvement in local development activities is the equitable benefit sharing among all classes of people. It is a challenge to empower the lower and middle class people.

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