

An Exploration of the Barriers to Community Participation in Development within Ompundja Constituency

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the barriers to community participation in development within Ompundja Constituency in the Oshana region. A qualitative research approach was followed, in which data were gathered through data collection and field interviews. The respondents in the study comprised fifty-seven (57) community members, including officials from Oshana Regional Council and Ompundja Constituency Office. Key findings of the study indicated contrasting views between the community and Ompundja Constituency officials with regard to community participation in development. Community participation is not yet recognised as a key operational principle of development. Government officials have a degree of understanding, but community members are not aware of their roles and responsibilities. There must be a genuine commitment to encourage participation in all aspects. Participation can only occur when the community organises itself and takes responsibility for managing its problems. In order for the government to achieve maximum community participation and subsequently overcome barriers to development, the constituency is obliged to create an enabling environment for community participation, which includes, amongst others, addressing institutional obstacles and capacity gaps within the community. Ompundja Constituency creates awareness about developmental projects and ways in which the community can actively participate. Subsequently, the capacity of the local people needs to be developed to enable them to contribute positively to the development of their local governments. The common belief is that involving citizens in rural programmes and empowering them has the potential to boost their livelihoods and foster development.

Keywords

Community Development, Community Participation, Ompundja Constituency

1. Introduction

The Ompundja constituency is located in the Oshana region. The Ompundja Constituency is named after an Oshiwambo wild animal (deer) called *okapundja*. The total population of Ompundja constituency is approximately 4659 people (NSA, 2014: p. ii). With nine constituency centers, one growth point: Enguwan-tale, and eleven villages of which nine are in remote locations. This study investigated the role of constituency context in determining the underlying causes of the impacts of community involvement on development and examined the reasons for low participation in community development. Do residents care enough to actively engage in decision-making? Who is going to bear the brunt of the blame? Since independence, the Namibian government has faced the problem of accelerating community participation at the regional and local levels, as a lack of community participation leads to program and project failure. There are community participation structures in place, such as Village Development Committees (VDCs), Constituency Development Committees (CDCs), Regional Development Coordination Committees (RDCCs), and Regional Councils, but little participation has been observed (Nekwaya, 2007). As a result, community participation is critical for concrete development in rural regions, and development programs are greatly improved only when the local community plays an important role in their execution (Nhlakanipho, 2010).

Development initiatives and rural, impoverished living conditions continue to deteriorate. People living in rural places confront challenges such as a lack of essential social services and economic prospects (Nekwaya, 2007). Furthermore, physical planning is centralized in major towns, leaving populations in outlying places underrepresented in participatory planning (Okello et al., 2009). Programs and projects are being delayed as a result of low community participation. In terms of infrastructure development, Ompundja constituency lacks, among other things, a health facility (clinic), a suitable road, enough network coverage (MTC and/or TN mobile towers), and a police sub-station. However, 92% of schools have access to power, and 85% have access to potable water (Oshana Regional Council, 2018). These are the motivations that shaped the substance and essence of this study. As a result, the researcher attempted to investigate the influence of community participation in this constituency. Community involvement, among other things, has offered checks and balances against undue political influence in service delivery and contempt for professionalism and meritocracy in the public sector (Odhiambo et al., 2005). In this paper, the author aimed to explore the barriers to community participation in development within Ompundja Constituency in Oshana region.

2. Methodology

2.1. Design and Sample Size

The research use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather, evaluate, and interpret data depending on participant responses. Fifty-seven (57) commu-

nity members, including officials from Oshana Regional Council and Ompundja Constituency office, participated in the study. In this manner, topics are studied in greater depth to uncover potential solutions to identified concerns. Despite its limitations, mixed approach is the most suited method for research practical development. The mixed technique combines the complementary advantages of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Mixed approach is significant in Namibia due of the interdisciplinarity and lack of data.

2.2. Instruments

Utilising a questionnaire and structured interviews, data was obtained. The researcher utilised semi-structured questionnaires to obtain data. For the two sample groups engaged in the investigation, two distinct questionnaires were constructed. The semi-structured questionnaire approach is particularly beneficial since it allows the researcher to gain firsthand knowledge about the topic (Singh, 2007). Inhabitants of the Ompundja Constituency were questioned using semi-structured interviews to obtain data. The purpose of semi-structured interviews is to elicit detailed and in-depth information from respondents by allowing researchers to ask questions. This provides the option to produce more flexible data.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Barriers and Challenges to Community Participation in Development

“Community involvement occurs in a sociopolitical setting”, (Kumar, 2002: p. 29). Consequently, “one should recognize that adopting community participation in the rural development process is not a simple task, as the form that participation takes is influenced by the overall circumstances and the unique social environment in which action is taken” (Nekwaya, 2007: p. 16). Additionally, according to Nampila (2005), “community participation does not ensure success and there is no established framework for community participation” (p. 44). This happened as a result of community participation’s unclear goals and objectives and its haphazard and unsystematic approach. limitations on time and policy timelines, lack of community resources, dependency on volunteers, lack of knowledge, lack of representation of rural communities and some community groups in decision-making processes, and lack of understanding of the policy-making process (Steven and Jenifer, 2002).

Illiteracy is a barrier to community engagement. This is because illiterate people may be excluded from community involvement due to professional and technical communication (Theron, 2005). According to Meyer et al. (2002), “there are attempts to identify a good decision based on the amount of pleasure and readiness to engage. For example, the literature does not say what the criteria for excellent decisions are” (p. 66). This can be troublesome since the results can be misinterpreted. Local governments may get frustrated if real, empowered

community engagement slows down project planning and implementation. This may cause individuals to disregard the mechanisms that underpin community engagement. “The rural poor’s low socioeconomic status prevents them from participating meaningfully” (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2008: p. 118). This remark is supported by Gama (2000) and Hussein (2003), who argue that socioeconomic problems such as a lack of adequate civic education, illiteracy, and poverty, which culminate in indifference, impede community engagement in development processes. According to Kumar (2002), “community engagement may cause delays and impede progress in the early phases of field work, thus postponing the attainment of physical as well as financial aims” (p. 28). It’s important to note, though, that the barriers to getting involved in the community are directly related to how people see community participation (Oakley, 1991).

Inadequate financial capacity: “the inadequate financial situation of local communities not only decreases communities’ capacity to engage in development initiatives but also affects the entire rural development process” (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2008: p. 116). Inadequate resources limit a rural community’s capacity to successfully influence and shape policy in comparison to other policy players. This generates an inequity in which impacted populations do not have the same chance to participate in and influence the process (Obiageli et al., 2015: p. 24). According to Steven and Jenifer (2002), “rural inhabitants perceive a lack of access to information regarding government programs and services” (p. 3).

The improvement of rural inhabitants’ situations in diverse rural areas has been a crucial problem of socioeconomic development strategy (Adedayo et al., 2000). The rural people’s poor socioeconomic situation prevents them from participating meaningfully. Furthermore, most community organisations, such as non-governmental organisations and civil society, have poor internal structures and lack a broader representation of the people’s voice, making them fairly shallow (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2008).

Political patronage, “there has been general lack of political commitment on the side of the central government towards effective devolution of powers, which is evident in the continued influence and interference in the functioning of local government units” (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2008: p. 115). These may vary in different forms and degrees from a decentralized, laissez faire and free enterprise system to a fully centralized, strongly planned and controlled one (Obiageli et al., 2015).

According to Musukwa (2001), “citizens are unwilling to engage if they are irritated by growing living costs and economic situations that deprive them of their peace of mind and desire to successfully participate” (p. 20). As a result, “the poor financial condition of local communities not only lowers their capacity to engage in development initiatives but also has an impact on the entire rural development process” (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2008: p. 116). Most community members are apprehensive that their participation in rural development initiatives will cost them time, effort, and resources. Because of significant levels of

poverty among community members, most do not participate in rural development programs, particularly when such participation entails monetary contributions (Hussein, 2003). Members of the community must be compensated for attending meetings, workshops, or performing unskilled labour. Lack of resources is restricting community engagement in rural development programs; members must have access to resources. Thus, proper financing, government training programs, education leaders, and volunteers to assist rural causes and efforts are among these resources (Chifamba, 2013).

3.2. Challenges to Community Participating Development Projects in Ompundja Constituency

According to the findings of the study, illiteracy has major repercussions for developmental difficulties. Illiterate individuals clearly do not comprehend development, and hence their illiteracy is a significant barrier to their involvement. This study supports Theron's (2005) assertion that "illiteracy is a barrier to community engagement" (p. 65). Illiterate people are frequently regarded as troublesome because they frequently lack the ability to define their needs and present their thoughts in a structured manner. As a result of their illiteracy, they are unable to participate. The researcher recognises that people's overall degree of education has a substantial association with their style of life. In agreement with Thandi and Ntini (2017), educated communities enhance the quality of life by promoting a sense of dignity, ensuring the enjoyment of all rights, and fostering a strong interest in public affairs. Educated communities are equipped with the skills to think critically and question ideas, suggestions, and proposals that are presented to them (Thandi & Ntini, 2017).

Wiggins (2003) confirms Theron's claim that "in his classification of the poor and vulnerable of rural regions, including individuals who lack formal education and skills that give a possibility to attain non-farm occupations" (p. 20). When you are in this position, it is harder for a constituency to grow because, based on the level of education, it is more likely to be agricultural than industrialised.

Residents' understanding of development approaches was limited due to a lack of education and training. If these community people become trained, it may promote community engagement in development. If community members become skilled, it may help to improve the constituency's development. With capacity building in place, unemployment will be reduced, perhaps creating job possibilities for the community. This can be accomplished through CDC-organised workshops or meetings. Hussein (2003) emphasises the need of motivation, training, and civic education in enabling citizens to engage intelligently in local development issues/projects.

The analysis indicates that not all age groups have an impact on the growth of the Ompundja Constituency. Progress issues in the Ompundja Constituency are based only on the older generation, who are viewed as guardians of society, despite the fact that youngsters are the key to development. Generations of edu-

cated youth are not included in development activities. Actively involving youths in community development initiatives can implicitly recognise youth as valuable and effective community members, potentially leading to more entrenched and long-lasting community transformation (Robinson & Green, 2010). In line with the objective of the study, which was to investigate the obstacles to community engagement in the Ompundja constituency and discover measures to increase participation, the researcher observed the following in order to comprehend the reasons for non-participation in Ompundja development initiatives: Analyse the causes of non-participation in community development initiatives.

According to the study, the capacity of women and young people to engage in decision-making or influence others in decision-making is significantly lower than that of males. This conflict hindered participation in Ompundja constituency growth. According to the data, participation rates are low among women and young people. Ultimately, this issue will hamper the skills of youngsters and women. According to the previous authors in the literature review, there are valid reasons why residents of Ompundja Constituency are unwilling to participate in development: time constraints, lack of project sustainability, lack of political interference, conflicts among beneficial, and lack of funding or resources. According to (Kumar, 2002), community engagement is time-consuming and slows early fieldwork progress, hence postponing the fulfilment of physical and financial goals. Members of the community stated unequivocally, *most of the time, choices that have already been made are imposed on us without any opportunity for debate*. Lastly, nine respondents noted that meetings organised by authorities had a defined agenda, resulting in a lack of meeting direction and unanimity. *We seldom discuss matters linked to development in our meetings*.

Nekwaya (2007) concurs that different stakeholders, including politicians, may utilise community engagement to further their own goals. Kakumba and Nsingo (2008) feel passionately about this topic and argue that the interaction between politicians and civil officials has produced role and interest conflicts, confrontation, and power struggles in disadvantaged areas. According to Kakumba and Nsingo (2008), the lack of sustainability in development initiatives is due to low levels of education and weak managerial skills. Indeed, these factors have a significant impact on the Ompundja community.

The study also discovered that certain communities have challenges due to their distant position, particularly in terms of lengthy distances between centres within the constituency. Furthermore, the CDC has little money. This has an impact on the CDC's funding constraints, which are regarded as a lack of assistance for transportation costs for members to attend to meetings, as well as low community engagement in decision making.

Inadequate network coverage that results in inadequate information dissemination is also a factor in the constituency's lack of community involvement in development. A lack of communication results in a lack of community engagement, which can impede community development.

Unemployment is also a significant barrier for Ompundja residents to engage in the development of their area. If the unemployment rate was lower, it would be easier for community members to start their own initiatives without relying on the government. However, due to the high unemployment rate, it is difficult for them to obtain the necessary funds. Respondents' primary concern regarding their involvement is a lack of funds or a low income. Hussein (2003) says that "participation cannot be fulfilled in a context of high living costs, bad economic conditions, and diminished citizen peace of mind" (p. 271). In this situation, the community requires incentives. More research has shown that low-income groups have not engaged in the project's decision-making and development procedures. People (community members) are reportedly less inclined to engage owing to tenure, wealth, gender, age, or politics in communities that are less varied (Botes & Van Rensburg, 2000).

These respondents reported that community leaders take a considerable amount of time to return and provide input, maybe two months. Insufficient positive feedback loops and limited engagement between community people and their councillors are the primary obstacles to growth. Another 19 participants said that community leaders do not provide their communities with development process input. In contrast, sixteen (16) respondents, or 28%, did not provide a response to the subject posed. Government officials believed that the lack of participation in Ompundja's community development projects was primarily due to the fact that "*due to the economic crisis, some people wanted quick benefits, which community development projects were unable to provide because there were typically no low-hanging fruit and lengthy processes had to be followed before receiving rewards.*" Tensions and interpersonal confrontations are the most time-consuming issues. On the other hand, CDCs do not empower and capacitate communities. It is crucial for grassroots individuals to comprehend community structure for growth. Another problem is that development projects aren't well planned or evaluated, which means that people don't know the laws and policies.

According to (Laverack, 2001), involvement without a formal leader who assumes responsibility for completing tasks, resolving conflicts, and giving group direction frequently ends in chaos.

3.3. Ways of Improving Community Participation in Namibia

The Constitution is supreme and has community-related provisions. Article 6: Life, Article 8: Human Dignity, Article 17: Political Activity, Article 20: Education, Article 21: Fundamental Liberties, Article 45: Representative Nature, and Article 96: People's Welfare. Such studies don't provide enough data to support Article 95 of the Constitution, which declares that the state must promote and safeguard the people's welfare. The constitution allows freedom of expression, capacity growth through education, and indigenous knowledge. Namibia created a growth plan (Republic of Namibia, 2004). Namibia Vision 2030 promotes in-

tegrated development planning so local people can communicate their needs and objectives for 2030. Communities must know about this important book and its purpose.

The most significant measure local authorities can take to increase community involvement is to invite community members to contribute to upcoming or ongoing events. For individuals to join in a project, they must believe that they can affect its conclusion. In addition, the circumstances for constructive conversation on community-critical problems should be established. All perspectives should be considered, and all people should have an equal opportunity to participate in decision-making. Those who are ordinarily excluded from the process should be given a “voice” through community involvement. In addition, community engagement must be a continuous commitment that begins with “where people are at” rather than setting unrealistic goals—Brown’s slow-fast incremental strategy (Nampila, 2005).

According to Nampila (2005), “through learning, the community will be able to evaluate itself as a strong group and work creatively towards transforming society and constructing a new world” (p. 41). Low levels of educational achievement among rural adults and youth limit both existing and future chances for development. Therefore, education contributes significantly to the growth of rural areas. Cavarra et al. (1996) indicated that training is a fundamental right and offers the essential building blocks for a business’s growth. As a corollary, “the supply of training should aim to increase people’s cognitive abilities and, consequently, their attitude towards self-development” (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001: p. 755).

Understanding and providing the circumstances for a truly lifelong learning culture, particularly in rural regions, is essential for the nation’s economic and mental prosperity. Participation in the community teaches communities how to resolve issues and enables diverse opinions to be heard. In this scenario, learning is encouraged, and individuals will be able to assist themselves (Nampila, 2005).

According to Louw and Butcher (2005), “learning is the process of engaging actively with experience” (p. 213). This demonstrates that schooling improves the learning potential and information-handling skills of rural residents. It also requires enhancing critical thinking and utilising contemporary educational delivery technology and resources to create new learning opportunities for individuals wherever they may be (McQuid et al., 2004). Therefore, successful learning fosters a desire for further education and contributes to human growth.

According to Nampila (2005), “the other way to strengthen community engagement is through fusing together public/community/private partnerships based on existing organisational capabilities” (p. 45). It is crucial that community groups be compensated for managing and maintaining infrastructure in conjunction with or under contract with local government. Sustainability can only be ensured if communities and benefit groups engage in project operation and maintenance. In order for communities to join into partnerships with local gov-

ernment for the execution and administration of local economic development and infrastructure projects, the ability to sustain these relationships must be developed 9 (Nampila, 2005). Participation therefore involves encouraging participants to adopt ideas and activities that are motivated by their own thinking and deliberation and over which they have effective control. The standard education system should provide greater teaching on the social functioning of the society and the individual citizen's responsibilities (Kumar, 2002).

3.4. Ways of Improving Community Participation in Ompundja Constituency

3.4.1. Capacity-Development

Capacity development refers to “the procedures of enhancing an individual's or an organization's capacity to do tasks” (Meyer & Theron, 2000: p. 18). It is therefore the responsibility of community leaders in Ompundja to equip and capacitate communities so that they can participate in initiatives and make informed decisions. The respondents asserted that they had never been given authority over development procedures and project procedures. The community voiced the sentiment, “*We lack the capacity to engage in development processes owing to a lack of information that should have prepared us for our obligations. There is a need for seminars and training designed to educate people on why participation in development programmes in the constituency is vital.*”

The researcher is knowledgeable of the impossibility of the Constituency training every member of the community. The community feels that CDCs are relevant individuals who should be equipped with community development procedures and processes, and whose participation is required. Respondents believed that CDCs existed; nevertheless, they were unaware of their functions. Community members who were members of CDCs disclosed that they did not get any training or seminars of value. As members of the CDCs, they were uninformed of their duties and obligations. This suggests that CDCs were not implemented effectively. Respondents reported that at one point they viewed CDCs as community leaders' agents tasked with investigating individuals who requested service delivery.

3.4.2. Empowerment

Community engagement in development must be more than a policy statement; rather than a policy on paper that is not implemented, there must be a true commitment to foster participation in all elements and levels of development. It has been discovered that the residents of Ompundja lack empowerment. Without realising it, growth and empowerment are at the heart of community engagement. There can be no growth without empowered residents. Empowerment is required so that residents may exercise their freedom of choice and make their own decisions. The key to growth is empowerment. The most essential technique for increasing community engagement in Ompundja is raising awareness among residents and constituency councillors. The following com-

ment from a resident validates this discovery:

According to Brett (2003), “participation is an empowering process in which people, in collaboration with each other and those who can help them, identify problems and needs, mobilise resources, and assume responsibility for planning, managing, controlling, and assessing the individual and collective actions that they themselves decide upon” (p. 5). Participation, as a process of empowerment, is concerned with the development of skills and capacities to enable rural people to manage better and have a say in negotiating with current development institutions (Oakley, 1991: p. 9). According to Oshana Regional Council officials’ responses on what needs to be done to promote community engagement in development planning and service delivery. *“CDCs should be empowered and enhanced in terms of capacity development. Resources are required to improve capacity building for CDCs. Instead of relying on the government, residents must learn how to produce their own cash while they wait for the government. Constituency councillors must grasp how community members influence development policies, which affect their well-being, in order to progress and promote development.”*

Participation as empowerment can therefore assist to elevate recognised voices by allowing rural residents to determine and execute the measures they think are vital to their development (Slocum et al., 1995). Theron (2005) concurs that community involvement refers to the process of empowering individuals via the development of their skills and talents so that they can engage with the rural development system and make their own decisions on development needs and goals. Swick (2001: p. 264) emphasises that every person’s voice is essential to building strong individuals and communities. Residents of Ompundja must be active in the development process so that they may discover the options available to them as beneficiaries and so acquire the capacity to manage their own development.

3.4.3. Community Meetings

According to Clearly (2008), meetings consist of a group of individuals disseminating information, making choices, or addressing a specific problem through discussion. Community meetings provide enough opportunity for community members to discuss their concerns and choose which problems should be addressed first. According to the study, only 32 percent of the total 100 percent of residents showed up for community meetings, and the other 68 percent claimed that they were poorly informed. Absence at initiation meetings indicates that the community was excluded from the initial goal-setting process.

As it has been observed, there is a noticeable underrepresentation of women and young individuals in meeting attendance. In light of this, leveraging the power of social media emerges as a valuable communication tool. By utilising social media platforms, we can effectively disseminate information regarding meeting dates and encourage greater participation among young people. This approach is particularly advantageous considering the widespread usage of social

media among youth, surpassing traditional mediums such as radio. By adopting this strategy, we can foster inclusivity and ensure that the voices of young individuals are heard in the formulation process.

Since communities feel that they were left out of the project's design, this might lead to issues (Everatt, 2001). People thus tend to reject or only partially accept plans established for themselves and will therefore be more devoted to supporting their own plans. Meetings in the beginning are crucial because this is when ideas are discussed and the community may provide suggestions and criticism. People get the ability to rank the objectives of initiatives during the kickoff meetings.

It is doubtful that initiatives will be sustained if community people are not involved in the initiation meetings since they are the ones who are aware of their unmet requirements. The majority of responders didn't show up for the introduction meeting, thus they didn't learn crucial details about the projects, such as their goals. This demonstrates that there was a breakdown in communication between the community and the government throughout the planning stage. If they had been included in the starting phases, one respondent said, their involvement would have made the process more relevant to them.

4. Recommendations

In order to promote community engagement in development, this research proposes the following recommendations based on its findings:

Community participation is a centre of development. Community involvement should be based on the role of the community as primary players who should be permitted and empowered to influence and share the responsibilities of the rural development process, as proposed by the research. The Ompundja Constituency must raise knowledge about community development and community participation opportunities. Residents of the Ompundja constituency should unite as a community to take collective action, find answers to the difficulties of community engagement in development, and foster a greater information interchange. It is essential to involve community people in the study and formulation of priorities.

Promoting capacity building. Communities in Namibia have an insufficient awareness of their duties as citizens, which hinders their ability to participate meaningfully in the legislation and policy-making process. Consequently, the capacity of the local populace should be enhanced so that they may positively contribute to the constituency's growth. It is essential that informal engagement opportunities exist and be encouraged. The degree to which the community has been educated and entrusted with authority over the project determines the level of success of community engagement. CDCs in constituencies must not slumber on the job; they must be well equipped to convey information to community members.

In addition, the community should be trained, informed, and aware of the

significance of their engagement for their well-being. As mandated by the constitution, Ompundja Constituency must do more to educate communities on the necessity of involving women and young people in community development programmes so that they have equal opportunities as men. Therefore, thorough training is advised. The researcher concurs with (Smith, 2006), that the community participation theory demonstrates the two connected factors that must be considered while engaging in participatory development, namely, empowerment and capacity building.

Vibrant community members: There must be thriving communities inside the constituency. The majority of community members in a specific area must possess the necessary abilities for effective involvement. Youths must be taken into greater account in development programmes. Community members must be vocal in order to expose any constituency that fails to provide. Levels of decision must be clarified, and women with children must be self-assured and hone their ability to participate actively in the decision-making process. Members of the community must inspire others to join in development efforts.

Self-sensitization: Community sensitization is recommended so that its members, in their role as citizens, can participate fully in development processes. Constituencies must come up with their own development plans with their by-laws, instead of relying on government. For the communities of Ompundja Constituency to achieve better participation in development, they must rely on the proverb which says “*if you want to cross the river and you are afraid of the crocodile, cross in a group*”. Meaning the communities of Ompundja must organize themselves in groups and be vocal to uplift their own constituency.

It is suggested that the community be educated so that its members, in their capacity as citizens, may engage actively in development activities. Instead of relying on the government, constituencies must come up with their own development strategies using their local ordinances. For the residents in the Ompundja Constituency to achieve greater engagement in development, they must heed the adage “*if you want to cross the river but are terrified of crocodiles, cross as a group.*” In other words, the Ompundja communities must form groups and be loud in order to advance their own constituency.

Responsible government: To begin the development process in the constituency, the councillor must be aware about the community’s requests to support them during the collective decision-making process. Namibia’s Ministry of Urban and Rural Development and National Planning Commission must work jointly to include local communities in development. Hussein (2003: p. 276) says the government’s responsibility is to promote bottom-up development, orient its workers to the participatory approach, and include the community in project conception, implementation, and evaluation. Essential is transparency. Communities don’t receive budget information. To ensure communities have access to information, the Ompundja Constituency must have a development budget document, Vision 2030, the Regional Development Plan, and policy-relevant resources. Local government institutions and the community should build a col-

laborative partnership to develop a local vision, mission, and strategy for planning, allocating resources, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating economic development initiatives. Budgets must benefit all constituencies.

Failure to establish these circumstances would result in poor community engagement, as well as disintegrating constituency development and service delivery.

5. Summary of the Findings

The study aimed to explore the barriers to community participation in development within the Ompundja constituency. The low standard of living among the inhabitants led to poor participation, with participation being top-down and minimal. Which then influence factors such as unwillingness to participate, poor financial conditions, illiteracy, poor capacity to engage women and young people, conflicts and interpersonal confrontations, conflicts of interest, slow feedback, unemployment, poor network coverage that results in inadequate information dissemination, and poor planning and evaluation. Therefore, participation is associated with empowerment and enables inhabitants to have a voice in future development initiatives. Community development is influenced by participation, which includes decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development programmes and projects. The study found that constituency development committees (CDCs) are ineffective in implementing development in Ompundja. To accelerate the process of development at the constituency level, CDC members and heads of centres should form part of implementation committees, becoming key players in the community development process.

6. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore the barriers to community participation in development within Ompundja constituency. Throughout the mixed method, the followings were analysed:

The residents of Ompundja Constituency have a low standard of living, which contributes to low participation. Participation is not yet recognised as a crucial operational principle of development within the constituency. According to [Smith \(2006\)](#), participation is always related with participant empowerment. Only by actual effort by residents can development issues in the constituency be overcome.

Community Development Centers (CDCs) in the Ompundja constituency should play a significant role in the implementation of development programmes and projects. To expedite the process of development implementation at the level of the constituency, members of CDCs and directors of centers should serve on implementation committees.

The Ompundja Constituency must undertake the task of implementing developmental plans despite its lack of resources and personnel. There is still much work to be done. We must identify every stage of the project or service delivery

and consider how we may engage the community so that we don't lose their wisdom and understanding.

Community interaction is limited to consultation, limiting the creative potential of all community members. Without information sharing, no progress can arise (Smulders et al., 2010). New possibilities can be developed when all of the community's information needs are met to raise awareness and promote talents.

Communities in Ompundja constituency have the lowest level of influence or control owing to illiteracy, poor access and lack of funding. To eradicate these difficulties within their constituency, CDCs must be sufficiently equipped.

Ompundja Constituency and Oshana Regional Council must study community engagement in development and how the impoverished might influence public policy. Participation only happens when a community organises itself and handles its issues. This function requires recognising problems, devising solutions, implementing them, and following through (Cheetham, 2002).

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Conflicts of Interest

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

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