

The Effect of a Community-Driven Development Approach on Project Performance: Evidence from the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project in Benishangul gumuz, Bambasi woreda, Ethiopia¹

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Abstract

Forced displacement is affecting host communities, driven by a range of underlying factors leading to complex socio-economic and environmental impacts. In response to these challenges, the Government of Ethiopia, with financial support from the World Bank, implemented the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP), which adopts a Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach to address the needs and priorities of both host and displaced populations. This study investigated the effectiveness of a Community-Driven Development (CDD) project implementation approach within the context of the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) in the Bambasi District of Western Ethiopia. A descriptive and explanatory research designs were employed using primary data through semi-structured interviews with 26 purposively sampled key informants, including project staff and village chairpersons, supplemented by secondary document analysis. Key findings indicated that the CDD approach successfully fostered active community participation, reduced project costs, minimized completion time, and enhanced community ownership and empowerment, effectively addressing genuine community needs. However, the project implementation was characterized by critical challenges, including elite capture, financial shortages for robust supervision, and limited budget ceilings that prevented the full completion of subprojects. Crucially, a significant gender imbalance was observed, with cultural norms and systemic barriers limiting women's participation. A statistical comparison revealed that a significant difference ($t = -2.43$, $p = 0.0188$) between the project's success in meeting beneficiary priorities and the clarity of its objectives, suggesting a gap between the program's design (high consensus on objective Mean = 2.92, SD=0.27 and its impact on beneficiary satisfaction (predominance of 'Lower' performance ratings). This highlights the difficulty CDD approach face in meeting expectations within the Ethiopian context. The study recommends that project management increase budget allocations for project follow-up and supervision, raise the budget ceiling for community and strategic investment fund subprojects, and prioritize strategies to address systemic gender imbalance and elite capture to maximize the project's sustainability and equitable impact.

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1. Introduction

Displacement of refugee in the Horn of Africa has been exacerbated by both natural and man-made factors, including climate change, environmental degradation, drought, conflict, and civil unrest in neighboring countries (Pankhurst, & Piguet, F.2009²). Ethiopia, hosting nearly one million refugees as of December 2023, faces significant challenges in accommodating these newcomers (Ahmed, 2023³). The refugee-hosting regions are affected by extensive pressure on host community from limited access to essential services, weak institutional capacity, high unemployment, and poverty (Piguet, & Pankhurst, 2010⁴). The influx of refugees places a heavy burden on local communities' socio-economic situation that significantly increasing the demand for basic services such as education, healthcare, and water, as well as natural resources like water and fuel wood (Iheka & Taylor, 2018⁵). As Ethiopia strives to achieve its own development goals, the pressure on host communities becomes increasingly difficult and challenging (Fasselt, & Uraizee, 2024⁶). Recognizing that forced displacement is both a humanitarian and developmental challenge, the United Nations and the World Bank have reached a consensus on the need for comprehensive responses to act through community driven project(Geda etal.,2005⁷).

In response, the Ethiopian government, in collaboration with the World Bank, has implemented the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP I) over the past six years (2016-2022) (Gagiano, 2021⁸). This initiative aims to mitigate the impacts of the prolonged presence of refugees on host communities in five regions namely: Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Somali, and Tigray (Okpewho, & Nzegwu, 2009⁹). The project employs a Community Driven Development (CDD) approach, empowering communities to identify problems, prioritize

² Pankhurst, A., & Piguet, F. (Eds.). (2009). *Moving people in Ethiopia: Development, displacement and the state*. Addis Ababa University Press.

³ Ahmed, A. (2023). *Internal displacement in Ethiopia: Towards a new policy and legal framework for durable solutions*. Jigjiga University.

⁴ Piguet, F., & Pankhurst, A. (2010). Migration, resettlement & displacement in Ethiopia: A historical & spatial overview. In A. Pankhurst & F. Piguet (Eds.), *Moving people in Ethiopia: Development, displacement and the state* (pp. x-xx). Addis Ababa University Press.

⁵ Iheka, C., & Taylor, J. (Eds.). (2018). *African migration narratives: Politics, race, and space*. University Press of Florida.

⁶ Fasselt, R., & Uraizee, J. (Eds.). (Forthcoming 2024). *Rethinking refugeehood in contemporary African migration narratives*.

⁷ Geda, A., de Jong, N., Kessler, A., & Mulugeta, T. (2005). The dynamics of poverty and inequality in Ethiopia 1995-2000. *Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford*.

⁸ Gagiano, A. (2021). Narrating African migration: Perspectives and chronotopes in narrative strategies. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 33(1), 15-30. <https://doi.org/xx.xxx>

⁹ Okpewho, I., & Nzegwu, N. (Eds.). (2009). *The new African diaspora*. Indiana University Press.

needs, and monitor implementation. Communities contribute 15% of project costs, fostering ownership and engagement in development processes (Bashir, & Lewis, 2008¹⁰).

The DRDIP aligns with the government's decentralization policy, promoting effective community participation in planning and project execution (World Bank, 2016¹¹). It also supports the World Bank's Strategy for addressing forced displacement, focusing on enhancing the resilience of vulnerable host communities (Dan-ChurchAid. 2020¹²). To facilitate project implementation, various community committees have been established, including community facilitation teams, community procurement committees, and community project management committees (Coady Institute, 2011).¹³ The Community Driven Development (CDD) approach empowers communities to control development decisions and resources, allowing them to plan and execute local projects while improving service delivery (Mosse, , 1997a¹⁴). To effectively targeting marginalized groups and enabling communities to manage resources, community Driven Development programs can facilitate rapid poverty reduction (Wong, and Guggenheim, 2018¹⁵). This approach also enhances efficiency through transparent resource allocation, reducing corruption, and improving service quality.

Community led project development promotes equality, empowerment, and social justice, enriching the lives of individuals within their communities (Zemzem, 2021¹⁶). In recent years, there has been a growing interest in participatory approaches aimed at improving community well-being and enhancing the effectiveness of development programs. While evidence indicated that engagement of beneficiaries in development projects leads to greater success (Kenny, 2011a¹⁷), there remains a notable research gap regarding the specific benefits and challenges associated with the community driven development (CDD) approach, particularly within the context of the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) in Ethiopia. Although phase I of DRDIP demonstrated significant achievements due to community involvement, comprehensive studies assessing the direct impacts of this participatory model on household-level livelihoods and the specific dynamics of community participation in project selection and prioritization are

¹⁰ Bashir, H., & Lewis, D. (2008). *Tears of the desert: A memoir of survival in Darfur*. One World Publications.

¹¹ World Bank. (2016). *Development response to displacement impacts project (DRDIP)*. World Bank Group.

¹² Dan ChurchAid. (2020). *Community-led adaptation for climate resilience and green income opportunities in Ethiopia*. DanChurchAid Report.

¹³ Coady Institute. (2011). *Applying an asset-based community-driven development approach in Ethiopia, 2003-2011*. Coady International Institute.

¹⁴ Mosse, David. (1997a). "Colonial and Contemporary Ideologies of Community Management: The Case of Tank Irrigation Development in South India." *Modern Asian Studies* 33(2): 303–38.

¹⁵ Wong, S. and Guggenheim, S. (2018). "Community Driven Development: Myths and Realities". Policy Research Working Paper - 8435. World Bank Group, Social, Urban, Rural and Resilience Global practices.

¹⁶ Zemzem, S. (2021). "Community Participation and the Quality of Rural Infrastructure in Ethiopia"; available on, <https://academic.oup.com/jae/advancearticle/doi/10.1093/jae/ejab017/6330841>. Pdf, accessed by August 2021, viewed by March 2024.

¹⁷ Kenny, S. (2011a). *Developing communities for the future* (4th ed.). South Melbourne, Australia: Cengage Learning.

lacking. This study aims to investigate the performance of the Community Driven Development (CDD) approach in the implementation of the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) in Bambasi Woreda, Benishangul Gumuz region.

2. Methodology

The research is conducted in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, one of Ethiopia's fourteen regional states established. This region, located in the western part of the country, shares borders with Sudan, Amhara, Oromia, and Gambella regions. Covering approximately 50,380 square kilometers, it has a diverse topography and hosts a population of over 1 million people, with a significant portion residing in rural areas. The region is notably home to refugees from neighboring countries, particularly in three woredas: Bambasi, Homosha, and Mao and Komo. Bambasi Woreda, part of the Asossa Zone, serves as the specific study area. It is bordered by several regions and is characterized by a mixed population of urban and rural dwellers. The Bambasi woreda has a population density of approximately 31.04 people per square kilometer, with various ethnic groups and languages present. Agricultural practices dominate the local economy, although infrastructure challenges hinder productivity.

A descriptive and explanatory research design was employed to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the Community Driven Development (CDD) approach within the context of the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP). This design enables the researcher to answer questions related to the 'what' and 'how' of the project implementation, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources to inform conclusions and recommendations. The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were gathered through interviews with project staff and "kebele" chairpersons, while secondary data were obtained from documents related to the project at various administrative levels. This combination ensured comprehensive coverage of the study topic and allowed for the validation of findings. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted, with descriptive and inferential statistics used to summarize the quantitative data. Qualitative data from interviews and document reviews were analyzed thematically to extract key insights.

The study focused on a target population of 26 individuals, including project staff from federal, regional, and woreda levels, as well as members of the Bambasi Woreda project technical committee. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents had relevant experience and knowledge regarding the DRDIP. The total sample size consisted of 26 respondents, including 21 project staff and 5 members from the technical committee. Additionally, interviews were conducted with 3 project managers and 9 kebele chairpersons to gather insights on community engagement in project implementation. To ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments, the questionnaires were tested using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a coefficient of 0.734, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The variables were measured using a Likert scale, which allowed for nuanced responses related to the effectiveness of the CDD

approach in the DRDIP implementation. Data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS software version 25.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Demographic Distribution on Performance of Community Driven Project Performance

Result in Fig-1 shows the demographic distribution result indicated in the four charts provide valuable insights into the characteristics of a specific population sample, focusing on sex, age, education, and work experience. Demographic distribution by Sex chart indicates a significant male predominance in the sample population. The existing disparity indicates that men are overrepresented compared to women. The bar for males is notably higher, indicating a potential gender imbalance in the demographic data surveyed. Gender imbalances in employment are well-documented in Ethiopia. According to the World Bank, (2020¹⁸), cultural norms and systemic barriers restrict women's participation in the labor market. Women face challenges such as limited access to education and resources, which could explain their under representation in various sectors emphasizing that engaging women in the workforce is essential for achieving gender equity and enhancing economic growth.

Result in Fig-1 also shows that demographic distribution by age in which the largest age groups represented are 26-35 and 36-45, with fewer individuals in the 46+ category. This distribution suggests a relatively young workforce, with a concentration of individuals in their prime working years. The absence of significant representation in the older age group may indicate higher turnover rates or a growing job market attracting younger professionals. Ethiopia has a youth demographic dominance, with a significant proportion of the population under 30 years old (Central Statistical Agency, 2019¹⁹). This youth dominance presents opportunities for innovation and adaptability in the workplace. However, it also poses challenges, such as high unemployment rates among young graduates, necessitating targeted policies to create job opportunities (Buchholz et al., 2021²⁰).

Result in Fig-1 also shows that demographic distribution by education indicates that there is a higher frequency of respondents with Bachelor's degrees compared to those with Master's degrees (MSc). This indicates that while higher education is becoming more accessible, there may be barriers preventing individuals from pursuing advanced degrees. The Ethiopian government has made strides in expanding access to higher education, as noted in the Ethiopian Education and

¹⁸ World Bank. (2020). Women, Business, and the Law 2020. Washington, DC.

¹⁹ Central Statistical Agency. (2019). Population and Housing Census. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

²⁰ Buchholz, L., et al. (2021). Youth Employment in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities. African Development Bank.

Training Policy (2018). However, the lack of advanced degree holders suggests that challenges remain in pursuing postgraduate education. Higher education levels are associated with better job prospects and economic outcomes, as shown in various studies (ILO, 2020²¹).

Result in Fig-1 also shows that the demographic distribution by work experience indicates the majority of respondents fall within the 6-10 years and 11-15 years of experience categories, with fewer in the 16-20 years and above 25 years categories. This distribution indicates a relatively young workforce in terms of experience, which may reflect a dynamic labor market but also raises concerns regarding job stability and career progression. The concentration of mid-level experience suggests that while many young professionals are entering the workforce, there may be barriers to retaining employees or advancing their careers. Goodwin, and Young, (2013) ²²highlights that many African nations, including Ethiopia, face challenges related to labor market instability and the need for continuous professional development to retain talent.

²¹ Buchholz, L., et al. (2021). Youth Employment in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities. African Development Bank.

²² Goodwin, S., and Young, A. (2013). Ensuring children and young people have a voice in neighborhood community development. Australian Social Work, 66(3), 344-357.

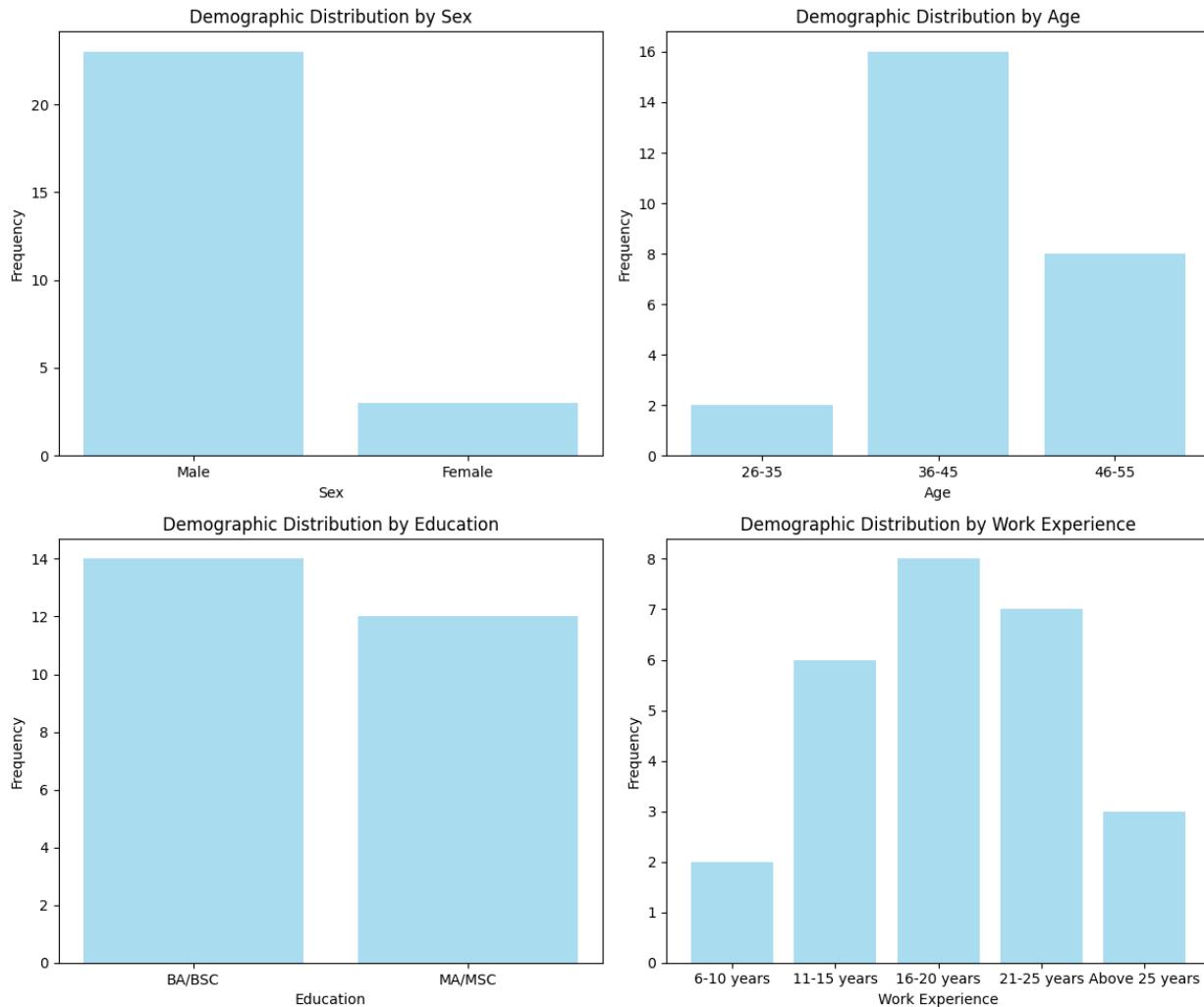


Figure 1- Figure depicts the demographic variables of respondents for community driven project

3.2. Community Driven Implementation on Project Performance

Result in Fig-2 indicates the analysis of observed versus expected frequencies represented in the bar chart that provides a comprehensive view of respondents' perceptions regarding a particular variable likely related to community development projects or program effectiveness. This statistical measure is crucial for investigating the degree of association between categorical variables, helping to determine whether the observed distribution deviates significantly from what would be expected under a null hypothesis made in our study. The chart includes both observed

frequencies (in blue) and expected frequencies (in orange), with a dashed line indicating the chi-squared value of 18.00 respectively. The observed frequencies highlight that the actual responses from participants across several categories: "Much higher," "Higher," "About the same," "Lower," and "Much lower." The data reveals that the category "Lower" has the highest observed frequency, followed by "About the same," "Much higher," and "Higher.". The low frequencies in the "Much higher" and "Much lower" categories indicate a consensus among respondents leaning towards a perception of lower effectiveness or performance relative to expectations made.

Result in Fig-2 also indicates the chi-squared value of 18.00 with a significant deviation between result for the observed and expected frequencies. A high chi-squared statistics shows that the distribution of responses is not random and that there are underlying factors influencing respondents' perceptions. This significant difference is indicative of a divergence between what respondents expected and their actual experiences or perceptions regarding the variable in question. The predominance of responses in the "Lower" category indicates a widespread sentiment of dissatisfaction or underperformance, which is critical for program evaluation. In the context of community-driven projects in Ethiopia, such results may reflect the challenges that these initiatives face in meeting beneficiaries' expectations. Previous study indicates that while community-driven development (CDD) approaches can enhance engagement and ownership, they often encounter hurdles related to resource allocation, capacity building, and effective stakeholder participation (World Bank, 2020²³).

Similar study for instance conducted by Ethiopian Development Research Institute (2021²⁴) observed that community projects frequently struggle to align their outcomes with local needs, leading to perceptions of ineffectiveness. This disconnect can result from inadequate community involvement in the decision-making processes, highlighting the importance of participatory approaches that ensure beneficiaries' voices are heard and integrated. Moreover, the findings align with broader trends observed in Africa, where the effectiveness of development projects is often scrutinized based on their ability to deliver tangible benefits to communities. In similar findings of a study in the International Institute for Environment and Development (Adebayo et al., 2023²⁵) emphasizes that successful projects not only meet predefined objectives but also resonate with the lived experiences and expectations of community members. Failure to achieve this alignment can lead to disillusionment and a lack of trust in development initiatives.

²³ World Bank. (2020). *Women, Business, and the Law 2020*. Washington, DC.

²⁴ Ethiopian Development Research Institute. (2021). *Community Participation in Development Projects*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

²⁵ Adebayo, A. A., Ojo, B. C., & Musa, K. L. (2023). Community participation in rural development projects. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 10(1), 50-65

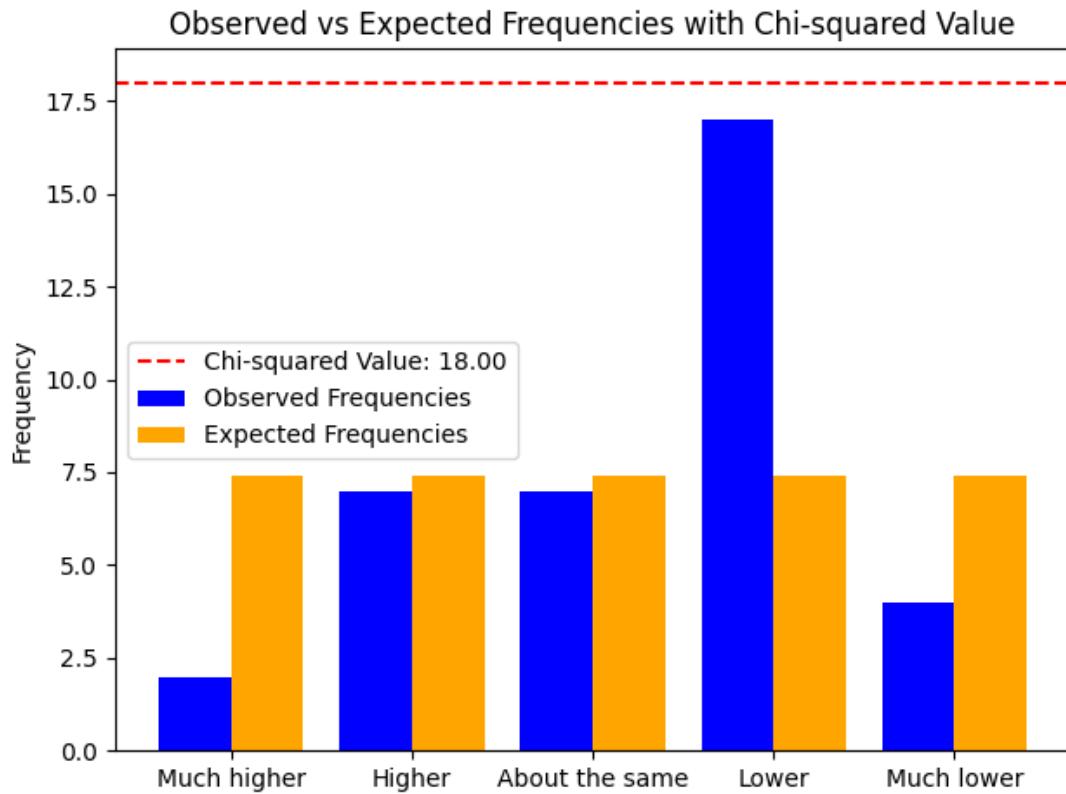


Figure 2- depicts the observed and expected frequencies with Chi-square test

Result in Fig-3 indicates the mean value for the influence of various community subproject categories on project implementation, focusing on men, women, elites, elders, and others (unspecified). It includes mean values and standard deviation (SD) bars, providing insights into the variability of influence among these groups. The mean influence value for men is the lowest among the categories, indicating that men have a foundational presence but not the highest influence. The mean influence of women is slightly higher than men's, indicating a marginal yet notable role in project selection. Women's participation in local governance can enhance project relevance and effectiveness, addressing community needs more comprehensively. The marginal influence of women indicates ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in decision-making processes. Studies show that women's representation in community governance is often limited by social norms, economic constraints, and lack of access to education (Debebe, & Rajesh, 2024²⁶).

²⁶ Debebe, G. B., & Rajesh, G. (2024). Navigating governance in modern Ethiopia: Analyzing challenges and prospects. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 5(5), 2232-2236.

For instance, the Ponduri, (2020)²⁷ emphasized the need for policies that empower women to participate more fully in community decisions. The mean influence for elites is considerably higher, indicating that their social status significantly impacts decision-making. Elders have a high mean influence value, reflecting the respect accorded to traditional authority figures in community decisions. Elders can mentor younger community leaders; blending traditional knowledge with modern approaches to governance. The high mean influence of elders underscores their traditional authority in community matters. However, as younger generations become more educated, this dynamic may shift. Research indicates that integrating youth perspectives alongside traditional wisdom can foster innovative solutions to community challenges (Swift-Morgan, J., 2009²⁸). Engaging marginalized groups in the decision-making process can lead to more equitable outcomes, as noted in various participatory governance studies

The strong influence of elites reflects the socio-economic hierarchies prevalent in many communities. Elite capture can lead to decisions that favor specific interests over the broader community needs (Platteau. 2004²⁹). Studies in Ethiopia have shown that involving diverse community members in decision-making can mitigate the risks associated with elite dominance (Zemzem,, 2021³⁰). This category for Others (Specify) shows the highest mean influence, suggesting that unspecified or alternative voices may play a significant role in community dynamics. The mean values indicate that while men have a role in decision-making, their influence is not as pronounced as that of elites or elders. This suggests a more complex dynamic where traditional roles are being challenged. The standard deviation bars indicate variability in influence within each category. A larger SD suggests greater divergence in opinions or experiences within that group, while smaller SDs indicates more consensuses. The high mean influence for the "Others" category suggests that there are significant but perhaps less formalized voices in the community. This could include marginalized groups or alternative stakeholders whose perspectives are crucial but may not be traditionally recognized. Engaging these voices is essential for inclusive community development (Tesfahuney, 2018³¹).

²⁷ Ponduri, D. S. B. (2020). Assessment of community participation in practicing good governance at Haik Town local administration, Ethiopia. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 9(4), 244-251.

²⁸ Swift-Morgan, J. (2009). What community participation in schooling means: Insights from Southern Ethiopia. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(3), 382-404.

²⁹ Platteau, J. P. (2004). Monitoring elite capture in community-driven development. *Development and Change*, 35(2), 223-246. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2004.00346.x>

³⁰ Zemzem, S. (2021). "Community Participation and the Quality of Rural Infrastructure in Ethiopia"; available on <https://academic.oup.com/jae/advancearticle/doi/10.1093/jae/ejab017/6330841>. Pdf, accessed by August 2021, viewed by March 2024.

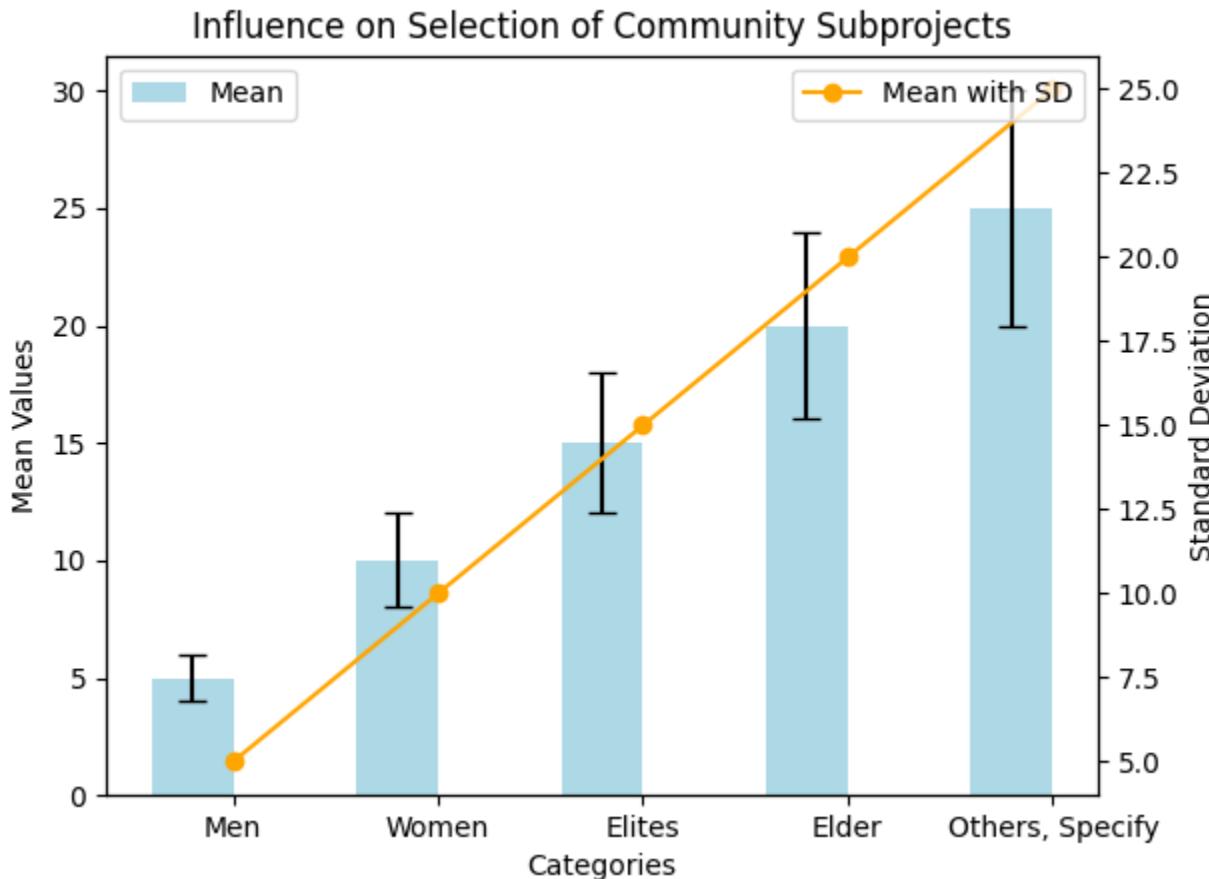


Figure 3- Figure illustrates the mean influence of various community subprojects for project implementation

Result in Table-11 indicates the statistical analysis of the development response to displacement impacts project (DRDIP) provides insightful data regarding how well the program meets the priorities of its beneficiaries compared to its objectives. The mean scores and standard deviations for three key aspects how well the DRDIP meets beneficiary priorities, the priorities set for the program's objectives and the perceived achievement of those objectives offer a increased understanding of the program's effectiveness. Furthermore, the comparison between objectives priorities and objectives achieved yields a t-statistic of 1.21 and a p-value of 0.2310, indicating no significant difference. This result reinforces the notion that although the program's objectives are perceived to be met, there is still a gap in their relevance to the actual priorities of the beneficiaries.

Result in Table 2- also indicates the mean score for the item "DRDIP meet priorities of beneficiaries" is 2.54, with a standard deviation of 0.76. This score suggests a moderate perception

among respondents regarding the program's alignment with the actual needs and priorities of the beneficiaries. The relatively high standard deviation indicates a variability in responses, suggesting that while some beneficiaries may feel that their priorities are somewhat addressed, others may perceive significant gaps. This discrepancy highlights a critical issue in development practice, where the disconnect between program implementation and beneficiaries' needs can lead to dissatisfaction and reduced effectiveness.

In comparison, result in Table 3- also indicates that the mean score for "Objectives Priorities" is higher at 2.92, with a low standard deviation of 0.27, indicating a consensus among respondents that the program's objectives are well-defined and prioritized. The result indicates that while the goals of the program may be clear and agreed upon, the actual execution in meeting the needs of the beneficiaries is lacking. Moreover, the statistical comparison between the DRDIP meeting the priorities of beneficiaries and the objectives priorities yields a t-statistic of -2.43 and a p-value of 0.0188, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This finding confirms that there is a significant difference between how well the program meets beneficiary needs versus how well the objectives are prioritized.

Result in Table 4- also indicates the mean score for "Objectives Were Achieved" stands at 2.81, with a standard deviation of 0.40. This score reflects a perception that the objectives set forth by the program have been achieved to a reasonable extent. The comparison between the DRDIP meeting beneficiaries' priorities and whether the objectives were achieved shows a t-statistic of -1.60 and a p-value of 0.1168, which indicates no significant difference. This suggests that while the objectives may be perceived as achieved, they do not align closely with beneficiaries' needs.

The findings reflect a broader trend in development programs in Ethiopia, where the alignment between project objectives and the specific needs of communities often falls short. Research conducted by the Ethiopian Development Research Institute emphasizes the importance of incorporating community input during the planning and implementation phases to ensure that programs effectively address local priorities (Beukes, 2021³²). Furthermore, studies from the International Institute for Environment and Development highlight that many African development programs successfully achieve their set objectives but often fail to resonate with the actual needs of the communities they are designed to serve (Ndiaye & Toure, 2019³³).

³² Beukes, J. W. (2021). Authentic African community development practices in a diverse society: A transdisciplinary approach. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 42(1), p34-56.

³³ Ndiaye, A. B., & Toure, M. S. (2019). Climate change adaptation in Senegal. In J. Oloo (Ed.), *African perspectives on climate change* (pp. 75-90). Kenya University Press.

Table 5- Table indicates responses related to cost performance and the cost of Community-Driven Development

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Comparison	T-statistic	P-value
DRDIP Meet Priorities of Beneficiaries	2.54	0.76	DRDIP Meet Priorities of Beneficiaries vs Objectives Priorities	-2.43	0.0188
Objectives Priorities Were Achieved	2.92	0.27	DRDIP Meet Priorities of Beneficiaries vs Objectives Were Achieved	-1.60	0.1168
Objectives Were Achieved	2.81	0.40	Objectives Priorities vs Objectives Were Achieved	1.21	0.2310

Result in Figure 4- Indicates the analysis of the mean and standard deviation of responses related to cost performance and the cost of Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects compared to non-CDD projects provides significant insights into the perceptions of stakeholders regarding project efficiency and financial management. The bar chart illustrates two key components: the mean values of responses and the associated standard deviations, which reflect the variability in perceptions among respondents.

The mean score for "Cost Performance" stands at approximately 6.0, while the mean for "Cost of CDD Projects Compared to Non-CDD Projects" is notably lower, around 4.0. This stark difference in mean values indicates a positive perception of cost performance among the respondents, suggesting that CDD projects are viewed favorably in terms of their financial management and efficiency. The relatively high mean score signifies that stakeholders believe CDD projects effectively utilize financial resources to achieve their objectives.

Conversely, result in Figure 5- Indicates the lower mean score for the cost of CDD projects in comparison to non-CDD projects suggests that respondents perceive CDD projects as less cost-effective or potentially more expensive when compared to traditional non-CDD projects. This disparity raises questions about the financial sustainability of CDD initiatives. The standard deviation bars for both categories indicate variability in responses, with cost performance showing a wider range of perceptions. This variability may reflect differing experiences or expectations among stakeholders regarding the financial outcomes of CDD projects.

The findings are consistent with existing literature on CDD initiatives in Ethiopia and across Africa. Research indicates that while CDD projects often enhance community participation and ownership, they can sometimes lead to increased costs due to the complexities involved in

mobilizing community engagement and managing local resources (Getahun, 2018³⁴). For instance, a study by the (Melesse, & Gudu, 2019³⁵) highlights that while CDD approaches can improve project relevance and sustainability, they may also entail higher upfront costs compared to conventional development projects. Furthermore, the perceived cost inefficiency of CDD projects may stem from the administrative and logistical challenges associated with community engagement. As noted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (Melesse & Gudu, 2019³⁶), CDD projects often require extensive training, capacity building, and ongoing support to ensure effective community participation, which can contribute to higher overall project costs.

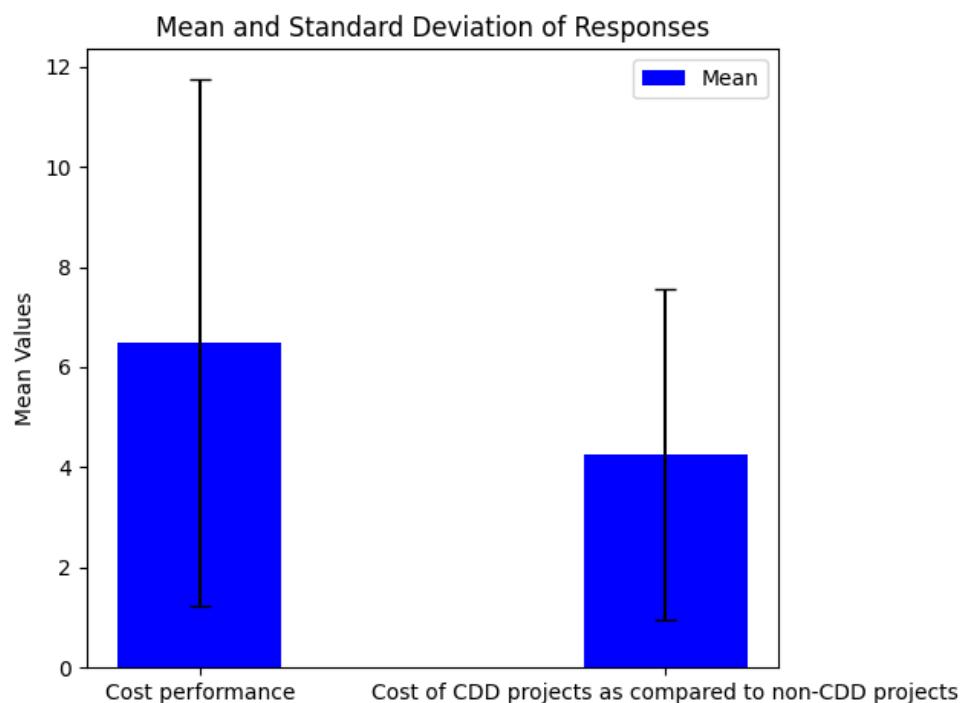


Figure 6- Indicates the cost performance and the cost of Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects compared to non-CDD projects provides

³⁴ Getahun, H. (2018). The Role of Community Demand Driven Development in Empowering Women: The Case of Bambasi Woreda, Beneshangul-Gumuz Region. (*Unpublished MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia*).

³⁵ Melesse, T., & Gudu, W. (2019). Socio-economic challenges and opportunities of the post-2010 resettlement program at Bambasi district, BGR. *African Journal of Human and Social Sciences Research*, 1(1), 137–154.

³⁶ Melesse, T., & Gudu, W. (2019). Socio-economic challenges and opportunities of the post-2010 resettlement program at Bambasi district, BGR. *African Journal of Human and Social Sciences Research*, 1(1), 137–154.

Result in Figure 7- shows that the bar chart illustrating the quality assessment of Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects compared to non-CDD projects offers valuable insights into stakeholder perceptions regarding the effectiveness and quality of these two types of initiatives. The chart presents mean percentages for four categories: "Much higher," "Higher," "About the Same," and "Much Lower," with the blue bars representing the mean quality assessments and corresponding error bars indicating variability in responses. The category "Higher" stands out with the highest mean percentage, indicating that a significant portion of respondents perceive CDD projects as delivering better quality outcomes relative to non-CDD projects. The result indicates that stakeholders recognize the added value of community engagement, local ownership, and participation inherent in CDD approaches. However, the substantial error bars for this category indicate considerable variability in responses, reflecting differing experiences or expectations among stakeholders. Conversely, Result in Figure 8- shows that the categories "Much Higher," "About the Same," and "Much Lower" show lower mean percentages, with "Much Lower" being the least represented. This distribution implies that while many respondents view CDD projects positively, there remains a notable portion that either sees them as comparable to non-CDD projects or has concerns about their quality.

Other similar studies also indicated that there is positive perception of CDD projects is consistent with findings from various studies in Ethiopia and across Africa, which highlight the benefits of participatory approaches in development. Research indicates that CDD projects often lead to improved project relevance and sustainability, as they actively involve community members in the decision-making process (Ambaye, & Abeliene, 2015³⁷). For instance, a study by the (Gebre, 2014³⁸) found that CDD initiatives tend to create more tailored solutions that address local needs effectively, contributing to higher satisfaction among beneficiaries. However, the variability in responses, particularly in the "Higher" category, suggests that not all CDD projects are perceived equally. Some projects may struggle with implementation challenges, resource allocation, or insufficient capacity building, leading to mixed evaluations. For example, Tesfahuney, M. (2018³⁹) notes that while many CDD projects achieve their objectives, others may fall short due to local governance issues, lack of technical support, or inadequate community engagement. The lower percentages for the categories "Much Higher" and "Much Lower" indicate that extreme

³⁷ Ambaye, G., & Abeliene, A. (2015). Development-Induced Displacement and Its Impacts on the Livelihoods of Poor Urban Households in Bahir Dar, North Western Ethiopia. *African Humanitarian and Migration Review*, 1(3), 310–333.

³⁸ Gebre, T. T. (2014). The Effect of Development Induced Displacement on Relocated Household: The Case of Addis Ababa. (*Unpublished Master's Thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam*).

³⁹ Tesfahuney, M. (2018). Challenges and Opportunities of Refugee-Host Community Relation in Ethiopia: The Case of Bambasi Refugee Camp Area in Western Ethiopia. (*Unpublished MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia*).

perceptions are less common, suggesting a tendency towards moderate evaluations of quality. This finding underscores the importance of continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms to address any shortcomings and enhance the overall effectiveness of CDD projects.

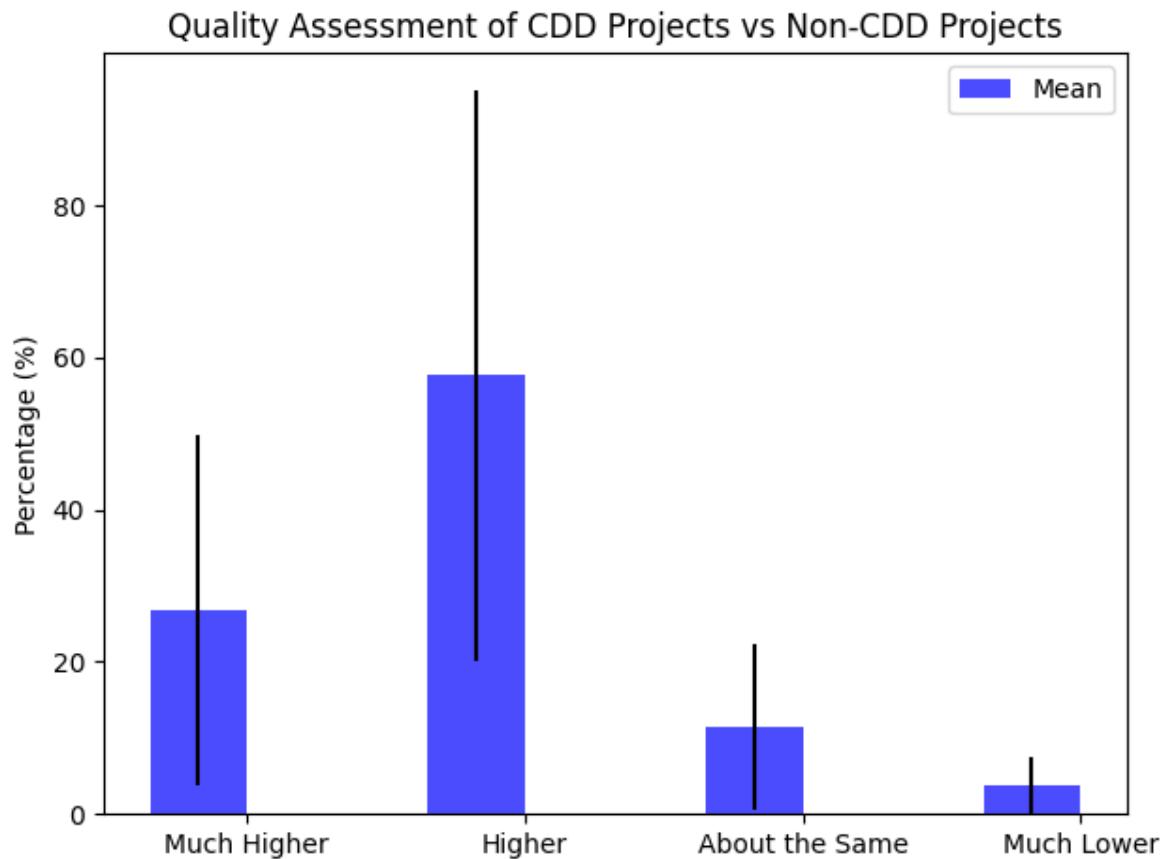


Figure 9- illustrating the quality assessment of Community-Driven Development (CDD) projects compared to non-CDD projects

4. Conclusion

The assessment of project effectiveness, particularly concerning community perceptions and beneficiary priorities, revealed critical insights. The significant Chi-square value, coupled with a predominance of "Lower" effectiveness responses, strongly underscores a disconnect between project implementation outcomes and community expectations. This finding is critical for program evaluation, indicating a pressing need for immediate programmatic adjustments and improvements. The analysis further highlights a crucial gap between the program's stated

objectives and the actual priorities of the beneficiaries. While the Community-Driven Development (CDD) approach is intended to ensure alignment with local needs, the observed disconnect emphasizes that participatory development practices must be strengthened beyond mere initial consultation. The findings suggest that future strategies must prioritize continuous, enhanced beneficiary engagement and robust feedback mechanisms to ensure program outcomes align with the lived realities and needs of the communities served.

The study reveals significant intra-community governance challenges, particularly concerning equitable participation and decision-making for subprojects. The data indicates a pronounced influence of men and local elites in project governance, sharply contrasting with the limited roles of women and elders. The deep-seated gender and social disparities that undermine the fundamental principles of CDD inclusivity and broad representation. Addressing these imbalances through targeted policies and inclusive decision-making frameworks is essential for achieving equitable development outcomes and ensuring all community members are genuinely empowered by the projects that affect their lives. The complex interplay of traditional and emerging power structures necessitates intentional interventions to foster a more equitable and representative decision-making process.

Beyond project-specific dynamics, the demographic overview of the Ethiopian workforce highlights fundamental structural issues that influence project implementation capacity. Critical areas identified include gender disparities, a youthful age profile, varying educational attainment, and work experience levels. These characteristics, which shape the pool of local labor and management, necessitate targeted national policies focused on empowering women, enhancing comprehensive educational pathways, and improving job stability for younger workers. Addressing these underlying workforce challenges is vital for fostering a resilient and effective environment for development initiatives like the DRDIP.

The perceived cost performance of the CDD projects presents a complex picture. While stakeholders generally acknowledge the effective use of resources inherent in CDD initiatives, concerns were noted regarding their cost relative to non-CDD projects. This finding underscores the importance of rigorous financial planning, transparent resource allocation, and careful management to ensure the cost-effectiveness and long-term sustainability of CDD projects. To maximize the impact of CDD across the Ethiopian and African contexts, it is imperative to address these cost-related concerns through improved project design and identification of best practices that optimize both participation and cost efficiency.

In conclusion, while the CDD approach under the DRDIP demonstrates promise in fostering community ownership and efficiency, its effectiveness is significantly limited by issues of elite capture, gender inequity, and a critical misalignment between project outcomes and beneficiary expectations. To enhance the efficacy and sustainability of community-driven initiatives in Ethiopia, we recommend the following: Strengthen Inclusive Governance: Implement mandatory quotas and training to mitigate gender imbalances and elite capture and ensure equitable

representation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in all decision-making bodies. Enhance Participatory Alignment: Integrate continuous feedback loops and monitoring mechanisms to align project objectives dynamically with the evolving needs and priorities of the beneficiaries. Optimize Financial Planning: Conduct detailed comparative cost-efficiency studies between CDD and non-CDD projects to refine financial planning, improve resource allocation, and demonstrate the value proposition of the CDD model. Future research should focus on developing and testing specific strategies for bridging the gap between community expectations and project outcomes and identifying best practices that successfully integrate cost efficiency with broad community participation in displacement-affected contexts.

Disclaimer: This paper has utilized AI tools for drafting and refining content, while efforts have been made to ensure accuracy and clarity.

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