International Institute of Social Studies

Community Participation Practices and Perceptions in Stunting Reduction: A case study from Tanzania.

A Research Paper presented by:

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

Governance and Development Policy
(GDP)

Specialization:

Local Development Strategy

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The Hague, The Netherlands
December 2020

Dedication

To my Dad Mr. Aurelian Mahuwi, being an orphan and endured rejections of exploitative traditions, he rose up and took courage from my mother Salome Komba and together they pushed hard to support me and my siblings (Venant – RIP, Laurent Mahuwi, Anakleth Mahuwi and Theodatus) to pursue knowledge and education. Thank you and much love!

Acknowledgements

Contents

List of Acronyms

ANC	Antenatal Care
ASRP	Accelerating Stunting Reduction Project
CHWs	Community Health Workers
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
IRDO	Integrated Rural Development Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MKUKUTA	Mpango wa Kukuza na Kupunguza Umaskini Tanzania
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSGPR	National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction
O & OD	Opportunity and Obstacles to Development
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
REPOA	Research for Poverty Alleviation
SBCC	Social Behaviour Change Communication
TFNC	Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USAID	United States of America International Development Agency
WHO	World Health Organisations

Abstract

This research employed the concepts of participation, power relations and downward accountability to uncover problems of NGOs in Tanzania in realising transformative community participation among communities they serve. These concepts were first reviewed in the literature to understand existing contestations of various scholars in the discourse of community participation. There is substantial agreement in the literature regarding problems of NGOs implementing community participation emanating from misinterpretation of participation. Two NGOs implementing community nutrition project were chosen as a case in this study. A semi – structured interview as part of a qualitative approach was used to investigate NGOs' perceptions of community, their participation practices and how they attempt to empower communities in an effort to achieve transformative community participation. This paper found that NGOs struggle to achieve transformative participation because of limited autonomy due to their over-dependency on donor funds. The prevalent assumptions among NGO staff that development projects are solutions for poor people deprives the community of their power to decide what is important for them. This paper argues that a holistic engagement of community members would perhaps enhance more sustainable solutions because the project would tap local knowledge and identify cultural barriers to transformative participation. Finally, taking community as an integral part of the project cycle may reduce NGO biases against community and achieve more transformative community participation.

Relevance to Development Studies

Community participation is one of the well-travelled concepts in the practice and discourse of development. Its fundamental importance in the international development cannot be underestimated particularly in the aid sector and because of this, it has attracted academicians, researchers and practitioners to research about it. Its establishment perhaps was triggered by the post-world war 2 domination of the top down approaches to development. The initial thought of community participation put community at centre of development and encouraged development actors to transform community to full empowerment. The rhetoric of bottom up approaches which many NGOs promoted via participation practices are still stumbling to transform community members to independence and have been seen to be costly and time consuming. Perhaps such dilemmas are fuelled by the unequal power relationship existing between donors and NGOs which is manifested in the way community members are framed by powerful actors. At this juncture, the discussion of community participation practices and perceptions of NGOs seem particularly interesting as it unlocks issues pertaining to NGOs practices of participation, how accountable they can be to the community they serve and what challenges they encounter as they endeavour to achieve transformative community participation. This research regards transformative participation as critical tool for community empowerment as opposed to tokenism which has dominated participation practices of many NGOs.

Keywords
Community participation, perceptions, practices, project, NGO, stunting, Tanzania

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research is about community participation practices and perceptions as implemented by NGOs in the development projects in Tanzania. For years, development work particularly that of international and domestic NGOs in developing world and Tanzania have been using community participation approaches to implement various projects aimed at transforming lives of the marginalised community members. While such approaches have gained praises and credited by donors and multilateral organisations like United Nations, there is still lack of empirical evidence as to why development organisations such as NGOs like Pact Tanzania and Integrated Rural Development are struggling to fully commit to transformative community participation. The rhetoric of community participation per set cannot guarantee community empowerment. This study proposes that NGOs deliberate commitment to mutual accountability may enhance meaningful community participation. Moreover, participatory project designs, appraisals and re-alignment of NGOs community power symmetry may further enhance meaningful community participation. This research investigated NGOs problems in relation to their hurdles in achieving full transformative community participation by questioning how such NGOs perceive community, what participatory practices are employed by these NGOs in delivering community project and how they endeavour to empower community. This study hence argues that NGOs have entangled themselves with what I call 'paradox of legitimacy'. While they endeavour to involve community in the project, more often they found themselves failing to fully empower community members because of the need to impress donors and due to budget deficit. The study also found that NGOs dependence on donors to finance their project restricted their focus to community and instead accounted more to donors. This ultimately created the unequal relationship between community and NGOs.

1.2 Background to the research

At global level nutrition has gained important recognition as an important development sector. According to Shekar et al (2006) sustainable development may hardly be met if targets and goals for addressing nutrition are not met. Leach and Kilama (2009) contend that inclusion of this target alone is not guarantee that they will be met. Nutrition is not only an optimum human health but also a key development determinant for individual citizen and a nation at large. People who are malnourished as observed by (Mkenda, 2004; Alderman, Hoogeveen & Rossi, 2005) are less productive and children will perform poorly in schools and that the children at adulthood will earn less and this will have negative implication to national development.

Tanzania has been at the frontline in stimulating efforts to address malnutrition in the past 15 years and has made commendable work to fight undernutrition (te Lintelo et al 2020:1). Official statistics from the Government of Tanzania (2016) shows that Stunting prevalence among children aged five years have steadily reduced from 48% in 1999 to 44% in 2005 and declined further to 34% in 2015. Despite this, there is limited evidence of the extent to which communities were involved or contributed to the initiatives that addressed stunting. Discourse of community participation have traditionally focused to rural development interventions within the development realm. However, the adoption of the primary health care by

World Health Organisation member states in 1978 echoed the importance of Community participation in the health sector (Rafkin et al 2007:8). According to WHO (1978) the principles of primary health care consists of equity and community participation, multisectoral partnership for enhanced sustainability. Studies about participation in Tanzania have highlighted existence of two main school of thoughts lingering among development practitioners. Marsland (2006:65) observed "empowerment" which relates to promotion of bottom up decision making among local communities. The second participation is about the role of people in Tanzania to contribute to nation development. This type of participation derives its underpinnings from Julius Kambarage Nyerere first President of Tanzania. In his book published in 1968 about Freedom and Socialism, Nyerere underscored importance of citizens participation in community development.

> "Development is the participation of people in a mutual learning experience involving themselves, their local resources, external change agents and outside resources. People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves by participation and co-operative activities which affect their wellbeing. People are not being developed when they are herded like animals into new ventures." (Nyerere 1968).

The above quote echoes the importance of citizens to take the driving seat for their development. Meaningful development is realized when people who are the end users of development are part and parcel of development project. The integration of community constitutes aspects of people involvement in various decisions that impact their lives. In 1960s to 1970s many development initiatives in Tanzania were implemented by community members through the philosophy of participation. Sustainable development has been associated with community owning their destiny by taking charge of their own development needs. Nyerere also reiterated this in one of his quotes that "...to be meaningful development has to be people's centred". In recognition of this multinational organizations like World Bank adopted participatory development approaches to community development over four decades ago. These organizations considered community participation an important component for promoting local level social services provisioning and enhance sustainable development (Dola & Dolbani 2006; WHO 2002).

1.2 Overview of key study terminologies

This study focuses into underscoring how organizations engaging in the community participation projects related to Stunting reduction in Tanzania practice and perceive community participation. The application of these terms has spanned varieties of disciplines such as education, medicines, engineering, development, and linguistic just to name a few. The key terms will be defined in turn in the following sub-sections.

1.2.1 What is practice and perception?

The terminologies have various definitions depending on the context and use. This research understands 'Practice' as defined by OED (2020) that it is *"The actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to the theory or principles of it; … activity or action considered as being the realization of or in contrast to theory"*. Since this study investigate various practices related to community participation as implemented by IRDO and Pact Tanzania therefore this notion of practice is pragmatic. On the other hand, the OED (2020) defines perception as "The process of becoming aware or conscious of a thing or things in general; the state of being aware; consciousness". This conceptualization of the term perception is relevant in this research because this study explores how various organizations are

fundamentally aware or not aware about practical concepts of community and participation. The level of awareness in this case is important since it has the potential to influence the way these organizations engage with communities and how community benefits from the project services.

1.2.2 What is participation?

The World Bank participation sourcebook (1996:3) defines participation as "...a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them". Participation is better understood by relating it to the concepts of pluralism (Chambers 2013:158). Chambers believes in participation process there is power relations, certain behaviors and a sense of involvement. While pluralistic participation entails aspects of mutuality, transparency and creativity. Economic Commission for European Journal of Social Sciences (1982) states participation as "a voluntary contribution by the people in one or another of the public programmes supposed to contribute to national development". While, according to Cohen and Uphoff (1977), participation means "people's involvement in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes, their sharing in benefits of development programmes and their involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes". These definitions underscore the importance of empowerment, decision making, ownership and evaluation. Hence direct involvement of people from the onset of any activity affecting their daily life is imperative.

1.2.3 What is community?

The word community may seem simple but is a complex and multifaceted concept in a sense. There have been simplistic definitions that sees community as homogenous group of people in a given location with shared interest (Link et al 2012:3). Jones and Wells (2007:407) have defined community as "...individuals who work, share recreation, or live in an area". Sociologist like Hillery (1955:12) have broad definition of community "…grouping of people who reside in a specific locality and who exercise some degree of autonomy in organizing their social life…". The author also adds that a community will have a particular population characteristic and a peculiar culture (1955:12). While these definitions have high degree of correctness and validity, yet the idea of community may not be universalized. According to Edwards and Jones (2019) the term community in recent years have come to mean a political constituent in which people are grouping together to serve certain political needs. In the Tanzanian context the term community or "Jamii" in Kiswahili language usually mean an administrative unit established by law and constitute a particular population, leadership and governed by national level laws and bylaws. This research adapted the sociological notion of community as proposed by Hillery (1955).

1.3 Country profile Tanzania

This study was conducted in the United Republic of Tanzania, a country in Eastern Africa found in the coordinates of 6.3690° S, 34.8888° E. The country population according to the World Bank is estimated to be 56.8 million. In terms of geographical area coverage Tanzania has 945,087sq km. It is surrounded by seven neighbouring countries of Kenya and Uganda to the north, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi to the south while in the west it borders Rwanda, Burundi and DRC Congo and to the east is the Indian Ocean. Songwe Region is located in the southern highland part of the country about 750km south of Dodoma the

capital city of Tanzania. This is a newly established region with six district councils of Songwe, Ileje, Mbozi, Tunduma and Momba. The country has over 125 ethnic groups. Tanzania uses English and Swahili as two official languages. Christianity and Islam are the two major religions in the country. The country was founded in the principles of socialism and self-reliance also known as 'Ujamaa' ideologies. However, in 1992 the country opened up for neo-liberal ideas of free market economy.

Map 1.1 The map of United Republic of Tanzania

Source: www.tanzania.go.tz

1.4 Statement of the research problem

The foundation of community participation in Tanzania can be traced from the days of independence in which Julius Nyerere introduced the ideas of 'socialism and self-reliance' or 'Ujamaa na Kujitegemea'. These political ideas were promoted across the country in an effort to encourage self-development in the community through collective work. Thus, direct participation by the community in bringing about their development strides. Marsland (2006:67) observed that such type of participation is essentially still applied to date by various organizations in the implementation of development programmes in Tanzania. Marsland echoes that "…but the popularity of community participation can also be explained by noting that it is not new concept to Tanzanians." (2006:68). Evidence from studies suggest that the history of participation in Tanzania has created a particular participation inherent to Tanzania. Johan Pottier (1997) for example compared participation in Uganda and Tanzania and differentiated Tanzanian reliance on formal means as opposed to that of openness and dialogue among Ugandans. In 1980s the introduction of the new market economy in Tanzania as denoted by Shivji (2007: viii), witnessed the rise of NGOs as alternative institutions in social services provisioning particularly in the remote areas.

These development agents have claimed to employ participatory approaches in the implementation of various community-based projects including nutrition interventions. Despite significant amounts of funds and notable initiatives being put in place by donors and NGOs geared at implementing community participation initiatives for many years, many communities in Tanzania are still not fully empowered and transformed to independence of control of their inclusivity decisions. Furthermore, Hossain et al (2004:831) in their study about community development and its impact on health in South Asia, they argued that despite NGOs inclusion of participation approaches in health care projects for example, assurance of real community participation continued to be a concern. Organisations such as Pact Tanzania and IRDO are still struggling to realise this. This research therefore unravels what has been hindering NGOs such as Pact Tanzania and IRDO to fully commit to transformative participation. We know that many NGOs have been for many years engaging community as observed by (Agarwal 2001) in a rather more tokenism way as opposed to transformative approach.

1.5 Justification of the research

This research is about a case of a nutrition project implemented by two NGOs in Tanzania. In Tanzania the nutrition sub-sector is relatively young and in recent years many development organisations have invested more resources in nutrition and anti-stunting initiatives. This raised my interest to undertake this research about community participation In such investment interventions. Moreover, I have been keen to investigate how they practice community participatory approaches and further explore, if such NGOs have full commitment to transformative participation or not and what are barriers to achieve that. For over a decade the number of donors and NGOs implementing community-based nutrition projects in Tanzania has grown. In the field of nutrition, many of these donors and NGOs have claimed to employ community participation approaches in promoting behaviour change and adoption by empowering community members with relevant knowledge. There is profound evidence from literature that for decades the community participation approach to development has dominated mainstream sectors such as education, water sanitation and hygiene, infrastructure sector and even research. Evidence from studies also shows that despite such participatory approaches being praised as involving people more, there are still questions about their ability to empower beneficiaries. Since community participation is a relatively new practice in the medical field and in health establishments (Reflin 2007:8), this further justifies the need for this research.

Like many other researches and academic works this research intends to contribute to the development and generation of new knowledge related to community participation in the context of community level nutrition project. From a theoretical standpoint, finding from this study will help not only to strengthen the promotion of community participation practices in responding to community nutrition challenges but also inform development actors like NGOs and donors on the importance of investing in transformative participation. Finding from this research may help various actors like NGOs and donors to improve relationship with community. Furthermore, they will use the research recommendations for scaling up future interventions, whereby the community is central to participation and decision-making. Insights from this research will inform future researchers on community participation in the context of nutrition. Recommendations related to promotion of downward accountability for enhancing community participation will be shared with policy makers and other developmental practitioners in Tanzania, and certainly add value to their approaches of enhancing community participation.

1.6 Research purpose and questions

The aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions and participation practices of NGOs within the context of Accelerating Stunting Reduction in Tanzania by critically analyzing what has been hindering them to avail full transformative community participation. This research has found that, NGOs have limited understanding of local level power relationships this was evidenced by too much trust and use of village leaders in the project activities. Such kind of findings are relevant not only for development actors such as NGOs who design community projects but also other researchers in the discourse of transformative participation. This kind of research permitted the use of qualitative enquiry to unravel what makes development organizations such as Pact Tanzania and Integrated Rural Development Organisation struggle to commit fully to empowering participation more especially during the implementation of project such as Accelerating Stunting Reduction.

1.6.1 Research questions

To achieve the above objective the study established the following questions to guide the investigation.

Main question
What prevents NGOs in the case study of ASRP in Tanzania from fully committing to transformative community participation?

Sub questions

- How does nongovernmental organisation such as Pact Tanzania and IRDO perceive community and participation?
- What community participation practices are used by NGOs like Pact Tanzania and IRDO in implementing ASRP project?
- How do NGOs such as Pact and IRDO empower beneficiaries in the ASRP project?

1.7 Research paper organisation

The first chapter highlighted the overview of the research focus, unpacking key research terminologies, then shifts to presenting the research problem its relevance the purpose and questions. Chapter 2 discusses various contestations regarding participation, power relations and downwards accountability as key fundamental concepts employed in this study. It also touches into community participation from a health perspective from a wide range of literature and finalises with the analytical framework for the study. The methodology and techniques used to conduct this study is presented in chapter three along with aspects related to ethics. Chapters 4 and 5 focuses on key findings broken down into three main themes NGOs perception of community – powerful or powerless and the role of power brothers in community participation and Challenges of NGOs in implementing downward accountability. Chapter five closes the paper with concluding remarks.

Chapter Two – Research concepts and analytical framework

2.1 Participation and power relationship

Participation discourse has been heavily accused of being mostly rhetorical and even of causing negative effects in the development process (William 2004:563). Specific to development programs, participation has become not only an end in itself, and indicator for program accomplishment but also an essential means for donor endorsement (2004:563). This means participation is considered a mainstream approach in much development intervention, across a span of sectors in the global south. Perhaps the romanticizing of participation in the practice of NGOs is what sparked the critical question that William (2004) notes, as to whether participation is genuinely empowering or even disempowering the most marginalized.

It sounds logical to disentangle the embodiment of participation in the NGOs development work by questioning its authoritative ways of practice. Scholars such as Kumar and Corbridge (2002) have observed that development programs have failed in some instances due to issues of power reproduction in the community elites, project routinization, the capture and co-option of such projects. In line with this, Kothari (2001) for example argues that development projects seem to underscore need for collective inclusion which in many cases have entrapped marginalized groups within the power structures. In Mosse (2001) sense this type of power structures usually are reinforced by power dynamics emanating from within and outside community. This argument means the marginalized communities are subjected to power not only from NGOs experts but also from their own elites.

Another illusion of participation is the idea that the marginalized are able to negotiate power and knowledge through participatory process, this is challenged by Cooke and Kothari (2001), that these assumptions have in essence concealed and encouraged inequalities in the communities. This is because the type of participation practiced by development project is naturally top down and embedded within the systems of NGOs. An obvious challenge is the "…misinterpretation of how and where power is expressed within participation" (2001:14). Gaventa and Cornwall (2006:122) sees power as "…a relationship of domination in which the control of knowledge and its production is important as material and other social relations" This definitions echoes two important aspects of power "relation" and "control". One school of thought theorize power as an object in situ see for example (Weber 1978; Dahl 1957). Another perspective hypothesize that power is actually people's ability and creative energy as well as resources which people own it (Parsons, 1963; Arendt, 1970; Browne, 1995). Hoy (1986) for example present a different view of power as something that is used by people than owned.

The idea of community empowerment came from the above schools of thought on conceptualizing power. Samah and Aref (2009:45) concludes that empowerment hence would mean enchanting power from people with capability to do that from others. From these definitions we see that the concept of power can be interpreted differently by different people but the important point all perspectives are making is that, power is fundamentally inherent to people either in a group or as individuals. Therefore, in the context of development project community participation is making sense when is implemented in combination with empowerment. This will underscore the pragmatism of development centred around community or people as explained by Mayo and Craig (1995).

The expression of empowerment of the marginalized as expressed by much of the development donors and NGOs is by itself problematic. Hence the assumptions that people participation in the development intervention means empowerment is perhaps inadequate. This study used the concept of power to explain the relationship existing between various actors such as NGOs, Donors and community in their partnership to implement Community-based Stunting Reduction Project in Mbozi district.

2.1.1 The typologies of participation

The word participation is superficially used to mean anything that constitute people which is quite illusional and has the potential to mislead the meaning of real participation (Cornwall 2008:269). Since this research explored levels of participation among NGOs, theorizing varieties of participation from various scholars was imperative. Much of the proponents of participatory typologies have suggested an assumption that participation is either good or bad and used a participatory ladder to describe how quality of participation is increasing or decreasing heading up or down the ladder. Borrowing ideas from Arnstein (1969:217) on citizen participation ladder, this research analyzed the struggle of NGOs like Pact and IRDO to achieve transformative participation practice among community reached by ASRP project.

Figure 1.1 The ladder of Citizen participation
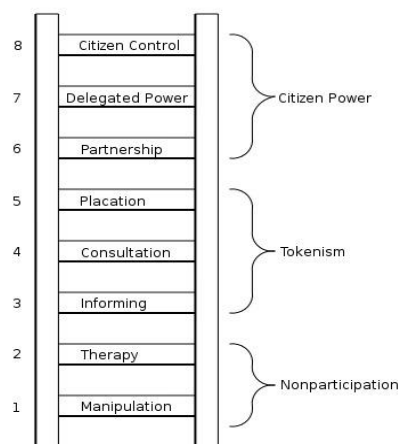
Source: Arnstein (1969:217)

The above typology of participation by Arnstein (1969: 217) denotes various levels in which participation gravitates from Manipulation to Citizen Control of their own destiny in a developmental project that targets them. In the context of community development interventions participation has become a crucial consideration throughout the project life cycle as observed by Agarwal (2001). Agarwal contented that in the stages within the participation ladder the movement from one step to the other is depended on deliberation of various development actors. This study looked at what exactly happens in practices in terms of the key steps. From Arnstein's typologies it can be deduced that the meaningful participation is the one that promotes citizen power. This study situated its participation questions around transformative i.e. empowerment rather than tokenism. The concept participation in this research is fundamental in investigating the role of NGOs such as Pact Tanzania and IRDO

in promoting community empowerment in the implementation of ASRP Project. Similarly, it will help discover whether beneficiary's participation is aimed at enhancing their power or they are manipulated to meet donor demands. It also helped understand how participation has taken place within the project activities and whether it promoted empowerment or disempowerment of the community. they participate in different levels of the project from design to monitoring and how their active participation brought structural change in different level for total women empowerment.

2.2 Perspectives of community participation

In the realm of development thinking and practices, the ideas of community participation have prevailed for over forty years now. This concept came into being as a result of failed top down approaches to development. Development thinkers and practitioners believed that people cantered development was an ideal for achieving a holistic and long last development. Ever since multinational organizations like World Bank, USAID, UNDP, UNICEF just to mention a few have employed principles of participation in the community-based development programs especially in less developed nations (Awortwi 2013:90). But what does community participation mean? Awortwi (2013:93) defines it as "… a process whereby people who are supposed to benefit from local development influence the direction and execution of project activities rather than merely receiving a share of the benefit."

There has been strong believe and advocacy for community participation practices because of the belief that when community is involved people will have a sense of responsibility towards protection and upkeep of project which may result into meaningful sustainability (UNCHS, 1998). This understanding of community participation is slightly problematic because it assumes community as homogenous while studies and practice have taught us that community is uneven. Scholars on community participation see for example (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994; Esman and Uphoff 1984; Korten 1986; Oakley 1994) have argued that project design may be enhanced, and quality decision making will be increased when community have a voice. This means the involvement of community from the beginning of the project is essential for a project's successful outcomes and sustainability.

Perhaps critics of community participation is traced back to rural development practices from scholars like Robert Chambers three decades ago. His argument was, poor people in the development processes have been underrepresented. According to Chambers (1983) " Poor people are rarely met; when they are met, they often do not speak; when they do speak, they are often cautious and deferential; and what they say is often either not listened to, or brushed aside, or interpreted in a bad light". The contemporary hypothesis of community engagement has gained importance due to its potential to remedy such shortfalls explains (Butin 2010) and have established deliberate strategy to put community at the centre of any development endeavours. This type of approach underscores the pragmatic role of development actors (donors and NGOs) to ensure community play an activate role as core participants in the process of development. This encompasses, aspects related to needs assessment, prioritization of what, how, where and who, decision making, monitoring and evaluation of results related to the project that benefit them.

For many years' international development organizations like donors as well as civil societies in the global south have had blurred understanding of the term community. The dominant understanding stemming from this school of thought has been that community is a homogenous and as such should be "stable, concrete and unified collectives" (Link et al. 2010:4).

While in essence community is such a complex unity which has capacity, knowledge and resources and as such has the power to make decision relevant to their needs. It is not a surprise that for over forty years promotion of community participation in the development work failed to eradicate community problems.

In the context of less developed country like Tanzania community participation as an idea is highly used but least known (Nientied *et al* 1990:53; Oakley 1991:269). Evidence from literature in the field of community participation have strong appreciation about the contribution of community participation in development and particularly in the global south. One area that benefited and still enjoy community participation approaches is the NGO sector. But practitioners of the community development project within the NGO sector are seen to hijack community role in such interventions. Despite its praises community participation as a concept is condemned by several scholars and academicians particularly in relation to its applicability in the development projects (Botes and Van Rensburg 2000:41).Botes and Van Rensburg (2000:41) contends that for years non participatory methods became inherent within the community participation practices. These authors are arguing that true community participation has been hampered by outsiders as well as insiders and they call these "obstacles". This assumption of exterior problems presents the reality that campaigning for community participation by institutions like development NGOs and government has in many cases used selective tactics including financial prejudices. Since community is by far heterogenous hence gate keeping as well as local elite capture has been a serious internal problem to realization of true participation. Community is pushed for producing results of a project which they were not even involved in planning in the first place.

For years development initiatives in Africa and Tanzania in particular have claimed to be participatory while the practice has been dominated by paternalistic tricks imposed by either foreign or national experts to communities (Botes and Van Rensburg 2000:42). These challenges caused scholars like Cadribo (1994:22) to even call Africa "graveyard of development projects due to their failures resulting from externally stimulated development and externally managed processes." These tendencies have exacerbated poverty in many parts of Tanzania because participatory approaches suffered serious failures. In many instances' community would only participate in these projects because of certain manipulation or allure of incentives such as gifts or money. Such project will lack ownership and as a result sustainability could not be realized and many collapses immediately after donor exit or due to community half-hearted participation and abandonment.

Obiols and Erpf (2008) in their study of the Playpumps – Merry-go rounds water project in Mozambique they found that the project received high level of promotion from government and donors, yet it was a complete failure because community did not own it. The project evaluation report as cited by Borland (2014:333) found that;

> "children were not always moving the play wheel—they often enjoyed the PlayPump as a gathering place, just sitting on it and chatting. However, as soon as the evaluation team (foreigners) walked towards the PlayPump, the children rushed to the pump (like they have been told), showing their ability to rotate the play wheel at an enormous speed. The children pushing the wheel with such a high speed could only keep up this pace for a few minutes before being exhausted"

This is an example of the failed project due to underestimation of community participation particularly in the process of project design. People in the community have different behaviours that in a way may affect the project even if they were not fully involved.

Furthermore, some scholars have questioned the decision-making aspects in the community participation practices. It is expected that professional experts would do a facilitative role in the development process instead they played manipulative. Knowingly or unknowingly NGO expert due to the skills they have would assume the community is lacking knowledge and would consider themselves as omnipotent and with solutions for every community problem (Morgan 1993). Gaventa and Cornwall (2006) claim this type of relationships within the participatory practice has a potential of creating power asymmetries between the "upper" professionals and the "lower" community members.

2.2.1 Community participation in health interventions

The concept of community participation in the health sector was first recognized after the adoption of the primary health care in 1978. The commitment to incorporate principles of community participation in health planning and care was paramount (Rafkin et al 2007:8). In the field of medical science community participation was simply considered as organizing people to uptake an intervention (2007:8). Rafkin invented a typology relevant for community participation in the health programs (Rafkin 1985:9). The medical approach pertains to the way project planners understands health.

Nevertheless, this approach defines health as nonexistence of and participation in which people implement what they are advised by health practitioners. The health services approach where health is defined according to WHO that is "...the physical, mental and social well-being of individual" (WHO 1946). This methodology is seen as collaborative in which community offer various resources like time, materials and money. However, in this approach health experts still define project requirements and needs. The community development approach defining human health as a condition. It also considers participation as important aspect of health project design and management by community and the role of health experts as facilitators (Rafkin et al 2007:9). This research is aligned to the community development to health because it seems to emphasize empowerment and therefore avails community power, knowledge and skills relevant for making decisions affecting their lives.

2.3 NGOs and downward accountability in the context of participation

This is a concept with rich history among development academicians and practitioners and one of the problematic terminologies to define. Schedler (1999) for examples indicates the purpose for accountability was to establish a mechanism through which those in power can be responsible. According to (Schedler 1999:13) the concepts entails "…concerns for checks and oversight on the exercise of power...). Furthermore, as described by Bovens (2010:947) that the concept of accountability is rather general and would imply instruments for holding institutions responsible to the people. Tense discussion, contestations and disconnectedness on the definition of accountability by scholars seem to affirm the statement "If accountability is everything, it may mean nothing" Bovens (2010:947).

In the NGOs discourse accountability has come to simply mean the act of being answerable based on certain actions, decision and use of financial resources. This research borrowed the accountability definition from Schedler (1999) where accountability means the community right to be involved at stages of project cycle management. This definition seeks to understand accountability from the community perspective. Development practitioners and scholars have contended that community participation approaches are likely to succeed if donors and NGOs are held accountable by communities they serve (Murtaza 2012:109). This
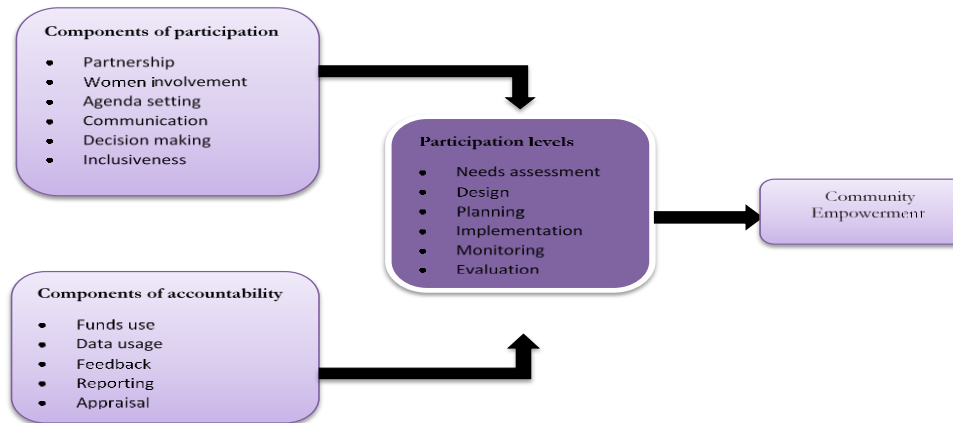
argument highlights the need for donors to be responsible to beneficiaries as opposed to the traditional way in which donors and NGOs reports to funders. For many years bottom up accountability have not been possible because of the power asymmetry prevalent in the donor, NGOs and community collaborations.

Scholars have described different forms of accountability see Martaza (2012:114) *upward accountability* in which this is inclined to donors and donor countries and according to him this is a legal accountability. Martanza also point out *downward accountability* to communities and this is an ethical way of being accountable. Proponents of this perspective such as Agyemang et al (2009), Edwards and Fowler (2002), Ebrahim (2005) and Kilby (2006) postulate that donor project effectiveness is improved when NGOs engage in accountabilities discussions with people in the community aiming at gauging their responsiveness to the fundamental needs of these communities. This argument underpins the importance of mutual interaction with people in the community by underscoring the community participation in examining NGOs effectiveness (O'Dwyer and Unerman 2010:451). NGOs and donors have increasingly recognized the benefit of downward accountability to communities. This shift as described by Jacobs and Wilford (2010) has gained paramount importance because downward accountability is linked to project effectiveness and efficiency. The tendency among development actors such as NGOs has been towards donors, hence this research investigated problems in the implementation of mutual accountability.

2.4 The analytical framework

This research puts attentions on Pact and IRDO community participation perceptions and practices. The analysis looked at various assumed perceptions and practices and how these play in various phases of participation in the ASRP project. This research operationalized on the basis of the interrelationships of three main concepts of participation, downward accountability and power relationships and how these may or may not have contributed to NGOs full commitment to empowering community. The study looked at the degree, quality and outreach of participation and accountability aspects by analysing a number of practices or variables such as feedback, decision making, involvement, communication, agenda setting, role-division etc. It was important to be established these parameters because it helped to investigate the extent of NGOs commitment towards transformative community participation.

Figure 2.1 Analytical Framework

Components of participation

- Partnership
- Women involvement
- Agenda setting
- Communication
- Decision making
- Inclusiveness

Participation levels

- Needs assessment
- Design
- Planning
- Implementation
- Monitoring
- Evaluation

Community Empowerment

Components of accountability

- Funds use
- Data usage
- Feedback
- Reporting
- Appraisal

Source: Adapted from Rafkin et al (2007).

Community participation and downward accountability are two key elements in enhancing community power and decision making in the context of project implementation. In this research these concepts are related under the assumptions that meaningful participation will be realised when IRDO and Pact are accountable to the community they serve. Community voice is echoed through various accountability mechanisms related to how donors and NGO use project resources like funds and equipment. Pact and IRDO can realise this objective by promoting local people voice on matters of interest to them. It is important that Pact and IRDO involve community members at key phases of project cycle hence 'Participation levels.' These phases include project initiation or conceptualisation, project design, project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. During this time Pact and IRDO need to ensure space is availed for target communities to share inputs of key priorities they would need to be addressed and included during project conceptualization, design, implementation and evaluation. This is important because it will leverage power relationship between project actors in this case Pact, IRDO and target community. The assumption is these practices and perceptions will be manifested through participation phases which eventually facilitate community empowerment. The logic is as far as community is involved in the participation phases and have the power to influence project action then community will be transformed to empowerment. The framework underneath shows the relationship between key research variables.

# Chapter Three - Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

This is a qualitative study which investigated what has been hindering many development actors such as Pact Tanzania and IRDOs to fully commit to transformative participation in the context of ASRP project in Tanzania. In depth review of various books and articles was done to establish critical underpinnings of research concepts which was the important source of secondary data. Data collection exercise was conducted among key project informants namely, academicians, NGO practitioners, independent research experts and government employees in August and September 2020. Information obtained from the online interviews conducted helped to analyze the linkage between various participation practices, perceptions and empowerment and how downward accountabilities, power relationship influenced NGOs commitment to full transformative participation. The primary data also was supplemented by secondary information from various project documents and relevant sector policy and frameworks from government.

3.1.2 Pact Tanzania and Integrated Rural Development Organization

This research was done under the auspices of Pact Tanzania and Integrated Rural Development Organization (IRDO). These are International and National NGOs respectively, implementing a five years Accelerating Stunting Reduction Project funded by UNICEF Tanzania. The two NGOs were chosen because first getting a perspective of an international and national NGOs which is good for comparison purposes. Second; they are both renowned for implementing community-based nutrition activities in Tanzania. These two NGOs together implement a five years community-based nutrition project 2016 to 2020 with the net value of $5million using community based SBCC approach. The project aims at reducing the prevalence of stunting among young children under-five years of age in Tanzania from 44% in 2013 to 35% in 2020 (i.e. 20% relative reduction or 3.4% average annual reduction rate). The target population of the project is Children 0-59 months 383,785, Pregnant women 77,391, Children 0-23 months, 153,514 Mothers/caregivers 153,514. Below is the organisation structure of the ASRP project in Tanzania.

Figure 3.1 Organisation structure of the ASRP project
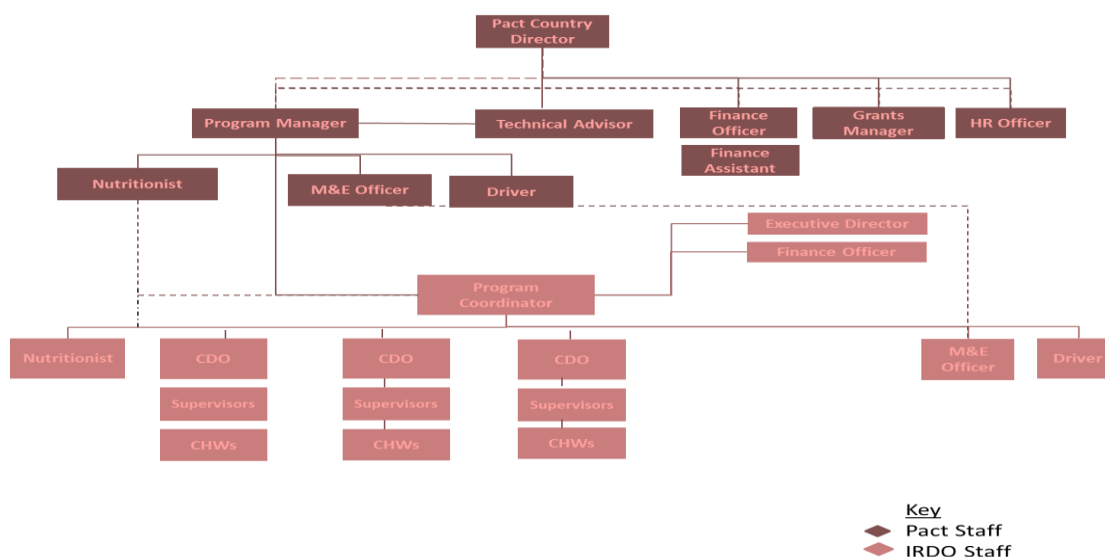
Source: Accelerating Stunting Reduction Program Management Document, 2016.

3.2 Research participants, sampling and sample size

3.2.1 Research participants

Respondents for this research were selected among project staff from Pact Tanzania and IRDO and additional respondents were other actors such as Government, research think tanks, academia and development consultants. As King (2019:57) contends that diversity is the most relevant factor for sampling in the qualitative research. Hence range of respondents across project sections and other stakeholders guided the sampling of respondents in this research.

3.3.2 Sampling and Sample size

This research employed two types of sampling. In order to investigate the various practices and perceptions among NGOs purposive sampling technique was used to sample study participants among employees of these organizations. Additionally, the study also included a range of other participants from external stakeholders and for this reasons Key Informant sample was applicable. As the nature of this research required some participants to be well knowledgeable about the Tanzanian context in relation to the work of development actors like NGOs. Again, their ability to access and use computer equipment and online platform for interviewing was considered a criterion.

This study had 12 participants sampled among Pact and IRDO employees working under ASRP project. A total of 20 employees directly work in the project in which 6 work under Pact Tanzania and 14 under IRDO. These are employees occupied positions like project officers, project managers or coordinators, project nutritionist, M&E Officers and community development officers and representatives from the board of directors for IRDO. The study purposively sampled 6 staff equivalents to 30% of the total number of project employee to participate in the research 2 from Pact Tanzania and 4 from IRDO. For the purpose

of limiting biases that are likely to feature in the discussion with project staff, the study draw 6 other participants from other stakeholders such as Tanzania Food and Nutrition Center (TFNC) 1, Regional Government 1, District government 1) academics[1] (1), Research think tank (REPOA) (1) and independent consultants (1). The study secured one interview with government employees due to some permit and government clearance procedures.

3.3 Data sources and collection techniques

3.3.1 Primary data

The qualitative research over the last decade has benefited from the rise in the technological advancement and in particular internet (Salmons 2009). Hurdles of conducting the offline interviewing have been minimized due to possibilities of online interviewing (Hooley et al 2012). This study collected primary data using online environment as opposed to the conventional face to face interaction with respondents for data collection. The main reason for the choice of online data collection approach was due to the travel restrictions caused by covid-19 measures. Organisations such as Pact Tanzania and IRDO suspended community work and employees worked from home due to covid-19.

Studies have shown benefits and problems of conducting data collection through online interviews in comparison to physical interviewing. Scholars like Magde et al (2006) note such benefits as reduced cost of travel and time, enhanced flexibility among research participants. The uses of computers saved much resources especially time in doing transcriptions denotes (Hooley et al 2012). Fielding (2010) the power relationship between the researcher and respondents are well balanced and the respondent may easily decide not to continue with the interview. The potential for participants disruptions caused by stuff around them is high, there may also be loss of connectivity of internet which result into loss of visibility (Madge 2006). Hooley (2012) also add that the degree of knowledgeability of participants in the use of the information and communication technology is another downside. The level of comfortability if speaking and discussing over the internet varies among interview respondents and this may be a challenge too (2012:57).

Hooley (2012:60) suggest four typologies of online interviewing methods. First is Asynchronous text-based methods consisting of email, discussion boards and SMS. Second is Asynchronous multi-media methods which entails photo and text combinations, video blogs and responses. Third is Synchronous text-based comprising of chart rooms and messenger service and fourth is synchronous multi-media which is composed of video and audio conferencing. This study used email to facilitate correspondence with participant of the research including sharing letters of introduction of the study. A semi structured interview was designed and administered online. Video and audio-conferencing using Zoom and Skype are the three main platforms used. Participants were provided opportunity to choose a platform of their preference. One responded from the academic institution requested questionnaire and responded on questions online and sent back via email.

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[1] University researchers and professors

3.3.2 Secondary data

Much of the research secondary data was derived from project specific documents such as annual reports and evaluation reports. I also reviewed the United republic of Tanzania government documents such as Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (2016), Tanzania National Nutrition Strategy (2011), National Social Behavior and Communication guideline of (2016), Food and Nutrition Policy, National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction, Women and Gender Development Policy. Besides, I also reviewed and used insights from published articles, journals and books related to community participation discourse.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

3.4.1 Data collection and handling

The actual data collection preparation began end of July 2020 by contacting Pact Tanzania and IRDO and government of Tanzania via ministry of Health. This communication intended to introduce a researcher and the introduction of the study and make general arrangement for the next steps including requested permission to interview some relevant government official working with Tanzania Food and Nutrition Center. Actual online interview for collecting primary data took place from August 13th until September 10, 2020. The qualitative data for this research was collected through semi structured interviews with ASRP project staff and other stakeholders. The interviews were done through online video conference and audio conference. Zoom and skype were the two mail platforms used while one responded requested a questionnaire for him to fill and send back via email. To ensure confidentiality participants were asked to select a quiet place which they would feel comfortable to talk. For convenience purpose two languages English and Swahili were used during the interview process. The author is fluent in both languages, so translation was not a concern. Besides, 12 interviews were planned to be undertaken but only 9 which is 75% of the total interviews was carried out. The reasons for not conducting 3 interviews was due to lack of government approval from Tanzania National Institute of Medical Research to undertake this study. Another reason was difficult of internet connectivity from the side of two IRDO staff whose office is in the rural community of Ileje Songwe Tanzania. The researcher believes that despite this the interview went well. The table below provide an overview of participants in the interviews conducted.

Table 1.1 List of Semi – structured interviews

No.	Designation	Organization
1	Project manager	Pact Tanzania
2	Nutrition Officer	UNICEF Tanzania
3	Project Nutritionist	Pact Tanzania
4	Private consultant	Christian Council of Tanzania
5	Research officer	REPOA Tanzania
6	M&E officer	IRDO

7	University Professor	Sokoine University of Agriculture
8	Community Development Officer	IRDO
9	Regional Nutrition Officer	Regional Government Office

<center>Source: Designed by the author</center>

Furthermore, for triangulation purposes four main project documents were review which are ASRP project mid-term evaluation report, Annual reports for year 1 and 4 of project implementation which is 2016 and 2019 respectively. The author also reviewed government of Tanzania key documents related to nutrition. Such documents include, The National Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan 2016/2021, The national Food and Nutrition Policy, Community Development Policy, Women and Gender Development Policy and The National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (NSGPR/MKUKUTA). These documents formed an important source of secondary data which not only helped triangulate findings from interviewees but also reinforced research internal validity.

3.4.2 Data analysis

Data gathered from the interviews with respondents was first transcribed and aggregated before actual analysis. This whole data set constituted notes taken during interviews and audio recordings. This information was transcribed as necessary to attach meaning into various pieces of information in relation to a given research questions. Later three main themes were established which guided the analysis. The main themes were:

- NGOs perception of community 'powerless' or 'powerful'
- The Role of power brokers in community participation 'village leaders'
- Challenges of NGOs implementing downward accountability

To enhance the linkages of various concepts in this study ATLAS.ti software for qualitative data analysis was used. Important codes were established to analyze meanings of variety of themes generated from interviews. The data was later interpreted, discussed and reported.

3.5 Ethical considerations and research limitations

The COVID -19 pandemic to great extent complicated the study in some way. The hurdles not only influenced the choice of approach but also the logistical and ethical aspects. A drastic change from direct field work where physical contacts was expected to a total online interviewing created fear to me as a researcher and to other participants. Despite these challenges, considerable ethical aspects were taken serious by following the new ISS COVID -19 guidance of doing research. This informed the whole process of preparation and final data collection. Important research protocols were adhered to including transparent communication with research participants about research objective. The researcher maintained high level of confidentiality for participants involved and information they shared. The consent forms were prepared and shared with participants for reading and signing. Prior to conducting interviews introduction letters were sent to participating organizations and individuals with a brief summary of study aim.

<center>18</center>

This study encountered a number of challenges ranging from administration to methodological ones. Administratively, I was denied interviewing participants from government except one for lack of government approval from Tanzania National Institute of Medical Research to undertake this study. This was beyond my capacity for I was required to be physically in Tanzania to process this type of permit and due to COVID 19 crisis travelling was very restricted at the time of data collection. Another challenge was due to internet connectivity. I could not interview two IRDO staff whose office is in the rural community of Ileje Songwe Tanzania, mobile internet is the sole source of connectivity in spite of several attempts the interview could not be done.

Methodologically this research design relied on a single technique of online interviewing. This was caused by the use of online platforms and challenges of live interaction with participants due to covid-19. Otherwise the design intended to conduct interviews with community members in the community and through focus group discussion and Interviews to local leaders. While the technique was relevant and provided useful insight for this research a combination of two or three would enhance the quality of the study. To enhance this study validity primary information from online interviews was supplemented by secondary data from literature and project documents as mentioned previously.

Chapter 4 – Perceptions and Power brokers – 'village leaders'

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings regarding how do organizations such as NGOs and in this case Pact and IRDO perceive community and participation. Interviews were conducted with NGOs staff, government officials, academicians, development consultants and research think tank to find out their views on participation and community particularly in the context of development work in Tanzania and in the ASRP project. Two main themes will be discussed in this chapter. First; NGOs perception of community and participation – powerless or powerful and Second; role of power brokers - village leaders in community participation. These two themes will help understand the dynamics of perceptions not only from project staff but also from other stakeholders. In this chapter also the analysis of findings is compared with a body of literature in relation to these key themes. This chapter will provide answers to the study question one. As pointed in chapter one, perception would mean "The process of becoming aware or conscious of a thing or things in general; the state of being aware; consciousness" (OED 2020). Much as NGOs practice community participation in implementing community-based nutrition projects, exploring the extent to which they understand participation as well as community in theoretical standpoint deem important in this research. The assumption in this case is that the quality of participation can be influenced by NGOs understanding of the concepts of participation.

4.2 NGOs perception of community and participation

Perhaps understanding how various stakeholders engaging in the community-based nutrition interventions in Tanzania perceive the concepts *community* and *participation* would be an important juncture to assess the nature of participation practices employed. Substantial work of literature has warned about the challenges of defining community and which in many cases have affected how services to these communities are rendered (Bhattacharyya 2004:7). Studies have found that many practitioners NGOs in particular have the tendency of considering community as a homogenous entity. This assumption has left many marginalized groups without full access to project benefits because of what is called *'authority hijack'*. The NGOs therefore taken upon themselves in identifying whom in the community to include and exclude. Similarly, development practitioners take participation superficially as observed by variety of scholars see for example (Mosse 2001; Kothari 2001; Gaventa and Martorano 2016; Cooke and Kothari 2001). I am claiming that inadequate understanding of what community means and what real participation means paves the way to poor community participation between NGOs and donors on one hand and the community on the other.

4.2.1 How community is perceived

The interviews I conducted with research participants unfolded multitude of responses which indicated the kind of perceptions they had about community. Overall all respondents had some degree of understanding of what community means in their own context. About 4 participants had a critical view of community while the rest had the 'expert view of community'. By expert view of community, I mean their understanding of community is based on the definition of donors through targeting process which inform the project initiation, design, formulation, financing, implementation and evaluation.

"…for us we consider our target villages and beneficiaries as community…we work in about 750 villages and our direct beneficiaries are women of reproductive age, pregnant women and lactating mother..." [Interview with UNICEF Nutrition officer, 14 August 2020].

The obvious challenge of perceiving community this way is the ignorance of the influence of other community members such as local political leaders, traditional leaders and people with power who can in a way influence the way the project is implemented in these target villages. I also find this perception problematic because it disregards the interconnectedness nature of people in the community. Despite considering beneficiaries as important people in the communities there are still other marginalized groups in the community who can in a way enjoy the benefits if only, they were given opportunity. For instance, there is no emphasis on inclusion of women with disability (i.e. women living with albinism, physical disability) and how we ensure they actually participate. While project focus is on women, the question of men inclusion is ignored, yet they make key decisions on family planning and reproductive health lives of women. On the other incidence of my interview one interviewee reiterated how he sees community being defined by NGOs in Tanzania;

"I think what they refer is the various groups of people they deal with, for instance: Infants/children; women; men; people with disabilities; the combined population in an area depending on their mission, vision and objectives." [Interview with Professor and Researcher from Sokoine University of Agriculture, 31 August 2020].

Furthermore, my other interviews with participants who are not project staff but have experience working or researching on community participation practice had a slightly different perspective of what community entails. It was found that community is such a broad word which may not easily be understood and sometimes it is defined differently depending on the society and donors. Based on this conversation I learned that community may mean "…multiple households subdivided into wards and have shared characteristics with existing administrative structure..." [Interview with REPOA Tanzania, 13 August 2020]. He also added in swahili "…unajua bado katika jamii zetu kuta changamoto ya usawa sababu wanajamii wanatofautiana kipato, umaarufu na uwezo wa kujieleza nk." Meaning "…yet in these communities there are issues of inequality because of differences in income, famousness and the ability to speak out etc.". One thing that stood out in this understanding of community is the acknowledgement of the heterogeneity nature of community which perhaps many NGOs and practitioners for some reasons tend to ignore. Overall finding here is that, there are still some confusion in how community is understood not only by NGOs implementing ASRP project but also by stakeholders with interest in the project. The interviews have revealed some common understanding of among NGOs that community involves people who according to project entails "targeted beneficiaries and villages". While it has been found also that community not only consist of targeted beneficiaries but also includes existing social economic diversity happening in the community. Bringing all tother, it is profoundly important for NGOs to have a holistic perception of what community means which I consider key in designing inclusive projects.

In another conversation, it was discovered that in the context of development projects in Tanzania, the practical definition of community is perhaps generated right from the project inceptions. NGOs and donors in many cases perceive community in a certain way depending on the kind of project they need to design and the social problem they wish to address. For example, ASRP project predefined their community before they could start implementation and direct service to those community.

"…I have been writing project proposals for various NGOs and donors….it is a norm to these organizations to perceive community as people who are in need, who have problems,

who are vulnerable and must be supported…yaani wanasema jamii ni watu wenye shida, wenye uhitaji na hivyo wanahitaji kusaidiwa" [Interview with independent development consultant from Tanzania, 18 August 2020].

This particular way of perceiving community is very disempowering because NGOs assumption of community as *'weak'* and *'vulnerable'* demeans community capacities in terms of their knowledge and resource base which cannot guarantee transformative participation. While on the other end it is the means to justify NGOs legitimacy of existence and mandate to operate in these villages. Another concern in this perception is community voices and ability of making their own decision is ignored by powerful institutions like NGOs. One of the critical questions here is what kind of support does community need? who decide on what to be supported and how is the support provided? And who benefit? Such questions were similarly echoed by one of the responded as in the following example.

"…I can give you one simple example donors and NGOs implementing behavior change related to stunting may assume community has stunting issues, while in realities villages have water crisis…. women will delay attending nutrition group counselling sessions because they spent more time searching for water…it hard for such project to bring impact in the long run". [Interview with independent development consultant from Tanzania, 18 August 2020].

4.2.2 How participation is perceived

There is a general consensus within literature and development discourse that the concept of participation has problems. One notable concern has been how it is understood by those claiming to practice and in this research, it means NGOs and stakeholders in development practice. In order to find answers to how NGOs perceive participation I asked research participants how they understood participation. It was observed that participation has varieties of meaning to different people and organizations.

Findings show that practiced participation by NGOs in the donor funded project is unrealistic. Based on their experience NGOs have been reluctant to conduct baseline surveys to map out community need bottom up, Carman (2007: 64) in his study about "Evaluation Practice Among Community-Based Organizations" reported similar findings. This has been caused by many donor countries and donor organization considering it as an expensive venture. Again, many NGOs implementing project in the community are second tier donors with budget conditionalities which limit them to spend money on conducting such surveys. Windscreen survey are the most common practice in assessing community problems which do not involve community members as opposed to in depth surveys. Other issues raised were donor and NGOs ignorance about previous studies or surveys by government or organizations that established problems facing communities e.g. O & OD. This ignorance contributed to many donors rushing into tackling the wrong problem for the community which then affect the level of community participation because community members will be destructed by other pressing needs. In many cases this will end up manipulating community and hence fail to achieve the intended empowerment as suggested by scholars like Arnstein in typology of citizen participation ladder.

Furthermore, participation is considered important when it involves community members. This was spelled out in one of the conversations with research participants; "Participation may mean self-involvement or being part of a certain motive, whether being promoted by government, NGOs, political parties or cultural engagement." [Interview with Professor and Researcher from Sokoine University of Agriculture, 31 August 2020]. Understanding participation in this way may be questionable because promoters of participation in this sense are

institutions with power as opposed to community. Government has authority over people in many cases, NGOs on the other hand have upper hand because they have more resources and influence and so is the political parties. This definition still echoes the assumptions that the practice of participation is still top down and real participation which is people centered and empowering may be a challenge to achieve.

4.3 The role of power brokers in community participation – 'village leaders'

The ASRP project which is the case of this research employs SBCC approach to promote nutrition behaviour change among its beneficiaries. Findings shows that local leaders and influential family members have been in the front line in facilitating behaviour change among lactating mothers, pregnant women and caregivers of children 0 – 59 years of age in the community. It is quite interesting at this juncture, to explore how village leader's involvement in the project promoted participation among regular community members and how power relationship played out, and that the marginalised and the weakest were given a voice. The use of local leaders was considered important for two reasons. First; local leaders are respected and trusted and second; they can influence compliance of certain behaviour e.g. attending to ANC. How village influence behaviours were rather problematic. Many of these local leaders have political power and hence they inclination to authoritarianism was inevitable. All project staff respondents underscored the use of community leaders is far better as opposed to the use of trained experts to convey similar message:

> "…of course, village councillors for example have been front line in promoting women adherence to exclusive breastfeeding for six months…we have seen benefits of using village leaders like in prenatal care for pregnant women has increased". [Interview with ASRP Project staff, 17 August 2020].

Figure 4.1 Village leaders presiding community SBCC meeting

Source: ASRP project annual report 2019

While there may be some issues with this approach, NGOs assume that these village leaders will convey the correct message related to nutrition and accelerate behaviour change. On the other hand, beneficiary's compliance may be influenced by the power of authority that these village leaders have. This way of involving local leaders promote more of tokenism king of participation rather that transforming community participation to a more empowering one. In many cases beneficiary's participation in the project activities are likely to be coerced due to fear of local leaders.

4.3.1 Gender and participation

The study about gender and participation conducted by Supriya Akerkar (2001) from the Institute of Development Study in England hinted the challenge of lack of awareness of the existence of conflicting interest among men and women for example. This was linked to project implemented using participatory approaches. Evidence from the conversations with project staff interviewed revealed that women form over 90% of the participants in the counselling groups. For ASRP project. This is primarily because the project only target lactating and pregnant women hence men involvement was limited. When asked why the project did not target men considering men form an important part of family, the project manager said;

> "…most men do not participate in child caring role…after all in Tanzania child caring is considered wife's role…in our target villages men normally travel a lot to farm and graze cattle…" [Interview with ASRP Project Manager from Pact Tanzania, 17 August 2020].

From the above text it can be deduced that, there is a deliberate proliferation of women disempowerment which is normalized by NGOs. This kind of practices not only denies women access to other economic activities but also exacerbate the already existing vulnerability of women in the society. For a holistic behavior change to be achieved both men and women participation in the nutrition counselling groups is key because the application of new practice takes place in the household were both parents need to work collaboratively. In this case NGOs and the project in particular underestimated the importance of intrahousehold dynamics which in a way will affect how new behaviors are put into practice by families.

In the case of this research women are involved more in ASRP project activities than men. Despite being involved it has been found that their participation is rather passive. This has been due to three reasons:
   a. Culture and traditions of many Tanzanian communities do not permit women to speak out in front of men. This was reiterated in one of my conversation with research participant "...culturally women in our country are not supposed to talk much". [Interview with UNICEF Tanzania, 14 August 2020].
   b. Men resistance to comply with certain behaviours. Another participant also noted that in an effort to change behaviour men have been a hindrance. In some societies, women are required to allow men to suck their breast first before a baby.
   "Hii tabia inashangaza kiasi lakini ipo katika maeneo mengi ya jamii za vijijini..hivyo wanawake hulazima kunyama maana kwa kuhofia kuhatarisha mahusiano yao.." meaning, "It seems a strange behaviour but it does happen in many of the rural areas…women cannot speak during meetings with local leaders due to fear of breaking their marriage". [Interview with Songwe Regional Officer, 4 September 2020].
   c. Intrahousehold dynamics. In the typical Tanzania village setting house do not only consist of a woman and a man, the house may have other extended family members. This mixture of people in the household may impede women ability to practice intended behaviours and as such they will be shy in the counselling sessions (ASRP mid – term evaluation report 92017:21).

Equality and equity in the participation process of the community development project is important. Meaningful and empowering participation will be achieved if projects are able to

acknowledge existing difference between men and women and other groups in the community.

This study discovered the coverage of participation practices as implemented and understood by Pact Tanzania, IRDO and other stakeholders interviewed respectively. Based on the conversations from the interviews conducted in relations to participation practices I argue that at the moment, many of the community participation observed can hardly contribute to a holistic community empowerment in terms of decision making, agenda setting and raising their voice to change project aspects like inclusion of excluded community members. I further assert that if stunting reduction need to be achieved, NGOs must ensure men in particular participate fully in the daily interventions instead of women only. Moreover, provision should be made for the inclusion and participation of the various marginalized categories. Finally, it is time now NGOs practice of top down approach and selection of specific target as consummate for community participation, need to be revisited to enhance community ownership of the service provided.

Chapter Five - Community participation practices and downward accountability

5.1 NGOs implementation of participation practices

There are two famous perspectives of participation practices. One was suggested by Arnstein's (1969) in her ladder of participation in which the emphasis is about participation that is people centered. Another perspective was promoted by scholars like Pretty (1995) in which participation is looked from those who applies participatory practices and in this case NGOs. It is important to underscore that the analytical framework of this research established important participation practices which are assumed to be used by NGOs in the way they implement community project. Sampled employees for ASRP project which is the case of this research investigation were asked as to how such practices like agenda setting, partnership, communication, empowerment, decision making, women involvement and inclusiveness are being implemented in order to ascertain extent of community participation.

5.1.1 Agenda setting

Agenda setting is an important aspect of participation in which NGOs and community should agree amicably that for whose benefit the project is initiated and implemented. A meaningful development agenda is realized when community people have initiated the development agenda and hence the core of the project mandate is managed by the community. Positive participation in this sense would embrace the ideas that community themselves should establish their own needs and problems that need to be addressed. However, it seems the traditional ways of top down agenda setting in which NGOs predetermine community problems is still rampant. This type of practice is problematic because it fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity nature of community people and their needs. Community participation cannot be transformative if activities are not initiated by community themselves. This was mentioned in one of the interviews;

> "…you know our project has a fixed timeline and it is normally not very easy to bring beneficiaries at the beginning…..we have the statistics from government which clearly indicate communities with stunting burden…the project then will decide which community to implement…" [Interview with ASRP Project staff, 17 August 2020].

5.1.2 Communication

The type of interaction and how such interactions are done between community and NGOs in the implementation of the project form an important examination point. During interviews it was found that the NGOs interacts with community quite frequently at least twice in a quarter. However how such interactions are undertaken shaded a different light. The project has a distinct mechanism to communicate with community members and project beneficiaries, which according to ASRP year one report the entry point to the community is through district officials and then 'local leaders' at community level. The second level is through community volunteers who communicate with project beneficiaries. This approach was praised as to enhance project acceptance due to the high respect these local leaders and community volunteers have in the target villages.

"…the use of local leaders to inform community about our project actually helped us get more acceptance and facilitated smooth implementation….as you know people trust their leaders like local councilors…yes this way we were able to enroll more pregnant and lactating mothers in the project especially in the beginning of the project…"[Interview with ASRP Nutritionist from Pact Tanzania, 18 August 2020].

While such practices are common in many donor funded projects and are considered as normal practices of participation, they underestimate the realities of hidden power influence of such elites that may silence the voices of community members who feel that the project is not ideal for them. Similarly, it is quite possible that some local leaders can be authoritative in the way they influence community members to participate in the project particularly councilors because they are politically elected.

5.1.3 Partnership

Likewise, such type of interactions is not meant to enhance community and NGOs mutual partnership in the delivery of project benefits but rather act as mere way to inform the community about activities that have already been decided by the project. This kind of practices are far from real participation as pointed out by Arnstein (1969:217) that their intentions are rather unscrupulous because the actual purpose is not to allow beneficiaries to participate in the development activities rather to get local leaders approval to implement what they already planned. Experience has shown that some NGOs have met some serious resistance from community members because of inadequate involvement in the NGOs activities in their community. Similar concerns were resonated in my interview with a researcher and Professor of Nutrition Epidemiology from Sokoine University, he pointed out that the tendency of NGOs ignoring beneficiaries results into community members ignoring NGOs work.

" Sometimes even if you ask random questions to individuals in the community on the existence of a certain NGOs and what they do, sometimes they might respond to say 'We only see their vehicles passing-by or we only know their offices, but we are not sure of what they are doing in our village/district." [Interview with Professor and Researcher from Sokoine University of Agriculture, 31 August 2020].

Cornwall (2008) in his paper about "Unpacking 'Participation': models, meanings and practices" has underscored empowerment as one important participation practices among many practices. However, he challenges the superficial misrepresentation of empowerment ideas within the context of consultations done by NGOs to community (2008:270). Some research informants had same doubt when asked about their opinion regarding beneficiaries' empowerment in the community-based nutrition project in Tanzania.

"…look here I have worked at senior positions with top donor organizations and international NGOs in Tanzania for over 20 years now…the truth is real community empowerment cannot easily be reached…desk selection of community is normal… project inception meetings are usually confused with empowerment…" [Interview with independent development consultant from Tanzania, 18 August 2020].

The above transcript indicates how business as usual dominates community-based interventions under the umbrella of participation. As Conwell (2008:270) argues that such practices like awareness creation for the upcoming project are not for empowerment purpose but rather aim at legitimizing the choice that have been done already by NGOs management. Much as the mandate for decision making dictates the power it is logical to assume the same in the NGOs community relationship. If community have the opportunity to make decision

regarding matters that concern them in the whole process of project implementation, then they have achieved meaningful participation.

5.2 Participation process in Counselling groups 'who speaks'

Furthermore, the researcher also investigates the extent to which participation was taking place in the process of group counselling itself. In particular this research needed to find out who has more voice in the counseling groups. The counselling groups normally consists of 12 women both lactating and pregnant. A trained CHWs convene a meeting once in a month and deliver a session on particular nutrition practice such as exclusive breastfeeding. From the conversations with the ASRP nutritionist and Project community development officer that CHWs acts as trainer because they have trained to facilitate and are slightly knowledgeable about the topic. It was also found that many women act as listeners and not active participants.

> "…our community workers are intensively trained on how to deliver counselling about infant and young child feeding…yes they also have monthly target to reach and report unless they won't get monthly allowance….it is true women in the villages do not talk much…" [Interview with ASRP community development officer 14 August 2020].

Such practices are quite common in many projects that are donor funded in which the primary purpose of the project is not to ensure beneficiaries fully participate by engaging into live dialogue about things affecting them. The objective of NGOs is more about reaching target they agreed with the donor and hence the so-called participation is actually an authoritative kind of interaction which is operationalized by skilled personnel of the project.

5.3 Decision making as a bedrock for empowerment

Good participation practices according to scholars like Quick et al (2011) is geared at ensuring a wide range of community members are included in the decision making that impact their daily life. They argue that inclusive participatory process guarantees quality inputs from many diverse groups of people including the marginalized members of the community and enhance community ability to deliver agree actions (2011:274). In this research I examined about who makes decision at various stages of the project cycle. Findings indicate that NGOs and project technical staff dominate decision making process. In other instances, it was found that village leaders also participate in decision making particularly in the choice of community volunteers and sometimes of which hamlet should form part of the project. When asked why community members are not part of the decision-making process, one technical staff said the following:

> "…unajua hii miradi ya wahisani ina masharti ya muda, nakaujuavyo kushirikisha wananchi katika maamuzi huchukua muda mrefu na huchelewesha utekelezaji… meaning these donor funded projects have some conditions of time limit, involving community in the decision-making takes time and it will delay implementation…" [Interview with ASRP M&E staff, 20 August 2020].

Rowlands (1995:101) argues that decision making is the foundation of empowerment. He defines empowerment as "…the act of bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it." (1995:102). As indicated in the above paragraph that the decision-making process in the ASRP project activities from project design to implementation is dominated by project experts and local leaders. Essentially these are people with power and as such they

influence obedience which is the indicator of the existence of 'power over', community members in this sense are dominated by NGOs and local elites to decide for them. Lack of community decision making power in the project is the barrier to achieving transformative community participation.

5.4 Challenges of downward accountability

Debates regarding NGOs accountability is well travelled. Definition wise downward accountability is the type of accountability in which NGOs and beneficiaries have mutual learning and interaction (O'Dwyer and Unerman 2010:451). The efficiency and effectiveness of NGOs work to empower the marginalised poor sits particularly in how they implement accountability mechanisms and in a particular way downward accountability. For years NGOs accountability has been blamed to be more inclined towards their donors as opposed to their beneficiaries. There is direct relationship between effective downward accountability and community empowerment "…for an NGO to be effective in empowerment, it should have some element of formal or semi-formal accountability to those it wishes to see empowered…" Kilby 2006: 951). This research explored challenges of Pact Tanzania and IRDO downward accountability in the implementation of ASRP project in Tanzania. The analytical framework for this research established five elements of accountability through which downward accountability process may take place. These elements include feedback mechanics, project reporting and appraisal, the use of data and project funds. It is assumed that these are key aspects through which accountability mechanisms may take place. Project staff participated in the process were interviewed about what in particular takes place in promoting accountability and what are the main issues.

In the interviews with project staff, two main accountability types were identified. Financial accountability and programmatic accountability. These are part of the project design in which the formal is meant to facilitate project accountability on how funds are being used by the beneficiaries while the latter intends to promote project and beneficiaries' interactions in terms of project activities. Findings from this research show that these mechanisms have been established to promote NGOs legitimacy to the beneficiaries as opposed to enhancing community power against NGOs. Beneficiaries do not form part of the team that design such mechanisms for example on reporting tools are not prepared by beneficiaries as suggested by one research participant:

> "…reporting templates and tools are very technical, normally are designed by project specialist to capture progress of activities…" [Interview with ASRP M&E staff, 20 August 2020].

It can be seen from this example that despite community participating in reporting activities they are hardly meant to benefit from the process. This echoes the challenges of power asymmetry during implementation of downward accountability as pointed out by (Jacobs and Wilford 2010) that it is not easy for powerful actors like NGO managers to lose their control over beneficiaries.

It is important to note that the key accountability elements described in the analytical framework of this research are inherent in the project design documents (work plan, M&E framework, reporting templates etc.). It was found in this study that Pact Tanzania and IRDO consider these tools as support to promoting downward accountability. The use of these tools is rather top down and are quite advanced for common community members to understand. In this sense the interaction that was meant to promote accountability activities

will turn into tools of disempowerment. This is because NGOs will define achievement on the basis of how well work plans and budgets have been implemented and executed respectively. This came out well from my conversation with the ASRP project manager when asked how accountable the project is to the beneficiaries; "…we have tried to ensure community members participate in the monitoring activities and review meetings…many have trusted us because they can see our budgets and can help monitor how budget is spent in the activities…" [Interview with Project Manager ASRP, 17 August 2020]. These findings align with what scholars like Jacobs and Wilford (2010) have argued that many of these linear approaches to accountabilities ignore community interest and instead NGOs experts will emphasize on completion of project activities.

Feedback is another critical aspect in promoting downward accountability. NGOs efforts to empower community make sense when there are two-ways traffic mechanisms for feedback sharing. Community members should be able to voice out dissatisfaction with the promises made my NGOs in delivering a particular service and NGOs should be able to update beneficiaries regarding various processes affecting them. Feedback mechanisms are critical in enhancing mutual accountability and promote power balance between development actors. This research found that in the context of ASRP project there is only one-way feedback mechanisms in place. "…we receive feedback from the beneficiaries about their feelings about the project during community based quarterly joint supportive supervision…" [Interview with Project Nutritionist, 18 August 2020]. Project also collect monthly and quarterly reports from community volunteers through much formal data base which cannot be accessed by regular project beneficiaries.

While joint supportive supervision meetings in the community may seem relevant platform for beneficiaries to share feedback as a way to enhance accountability, more often such meetings are dominated by village leaders and project staff. Common members of the community find themselves silent. Again, many of such meeting are part of the linear project design in which their primary objective is to complete one of the project activities and not to truly secure critical view of the quality of the services provided. NGOs attach some allowance to such events which then dilute the independent opinion of the majority who are not invited to such meetings.

In my interviews with ASRP staff, it was discovered that NGOs and in this case Pact Tanzania and IRDO are still stumbling and demonstrating their effectiveness in the downward accountability. As reported in the other sections above, one biggest concern has been inadequate commitment to use of meaningful participatory processes. Pact Tanzania and IRDO have used the term participatory to mean working together with community but not allowing community to hold the project accountable. This is probably due to NGOs too much commitment to meeting donor requirements related to delivery project on time and on targets. This tendency will eventually bypass participatory process which according to findings from this study have been seen as delaying project implementation.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

This study investigated the perceptions and participation practices of NGOs in development discourse within the context of the Accelerating Stunting Reduction Project in Tanzania. It employed a qualitative enquiry approach to critically examine what has been hindering the case study NGOs and the project from full transformative community participation, despite being there for many years. Through the use of concepts like participation, power relations and downward accountability, the study established various contestations arising from how NGOs understand community participation. I delved into how these understandings and practices affect the journey towards achieving transformative community participation particularly in the context of development projects in Tanzania. In a nutshell the paper looked at how NGOs perceive community, what participation practices are used by these organizations and how empowerment is actually done. Through the literature review and the interviews conducted, this research shows that there is no easy path to achieving full transformative community participation through community-based donor funded projects. This is for a number of reasons: donor funded projects are restricted by timelines and participatory process are naturally slow. Another reason is NGOs like Pact Tanzania and IRDO are still perceiving community as 'weak' and because of this development actors assume the responsibility to help them and facilitate community to help themselves. Likewise, when NGOs help these community, the approach to which the help is rendered is said to be participatory, however, this study established that the participatory practices claimed are rather symbolic aimed at fulfilling donor demands as opposed to transforming such societies to empowerment.

This research also established that NGOs have for too long considered themselves as the panacea for community needs. Interviews revealed that, project staff are proudly believers that stunting issues will be addressed through donor funded interventions. The author of this study thinks that a holistic engagement of community members would perhaps enhance more sustainable solutions because the project would tap into local knowledge and identify cultural barriers that hinder adoption of appropriate behaviors among lactating mothers. As pointed out in this research, intrahousehold dynamics related to gender for instance influenced women's commitment to behavior change. NGOs' reliance on village leaders as an entry point for community participation also seem to be problematic. The project put more trust in village leaders which in my understanding implies development is hijacked by those in positions of power, hence this impedes genuine participation processes. This paper found that village leaders influenced participation in the village counselling meetings, in which local leaders had more opportunity to speak than beneficiaries during community meetings. More interesting was the discovery of what I would call **"confusion of inclusion and involvement"** which is seen to be participation. This finding reaffirms some of the contestations regarding the problem of participation which this paper discussed in the literature review in the previous chapters.

This research argues that despite its relativity in its implementation, transformative community participation is critical in achieving community empowerment and sustainability, yet the conventional rhetoric of community participation is still being used. The study concludes that blaming development actors like NGOs alone may not be fair. Instead, deliberate efforts by various actors such as donors, government, community and NGOs need to be undertaken to promote more bottom-up and more inclusive actions geared to achieve participatory community empowerment.

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