

Socio-Economic Constraints to Community Participation in Rural Water Management in Ndarugu-Thiririka Sub-catchment, Athi Basin, Kenya, 2014

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Abstract:

In rural areas, water availability in the right quantity and quality is an important step towards achieving socio-economic development. Thus, the provision of sustainable water supply has been a central issue in Kenya with priority on low-income rural communities and underdeveloped areas with poor water resources. This has forced many rural communities to embrace community management model in rural water systems. However, despite continued large-scale investment by the government and international donors, the sustainability of community water projects is still very low. Community participation in rural water management is purportedly a key element for community water projects to be sustainable. This study therefore explored on socio-economic constraints to community participation in rural water management in Ndarugu-Thiririka Sub-catchment, identified the opportunities that are available to the communities in rural water management, assessed the impact of community participation in rural water management and examined variations in community participation among the selected projects in the sub-catchment. The study was carried out in four community managed rural water supply projects, namely Kinyathena, Juja Farm, Munyu and Kamunyaka. Different types of data were collected using household questionnaires, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The data type collected included the socio-economic characteristics of the sample households, level of community participation, socio-economic constraints to community participation, available opportunities to communities in rural water management and the impact of community participation in rural water management. The collected data from the field was organized in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages were used to describe and summarize the data while inferential statistics such as chi-square and ANOVA were used to reach conclusions and make generalizations of the population. SWOT Analysis was also used to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of community participation in rural water management. Tables, graphs and pie charts were used to present results. ANOVA test results ($F= 1.67, p= 0.018, p < 0.05$) reveal that there is a significant difference in the level of community participation on the basis of monthly income while ANOVA test results ($F= 1.02, p= 0.45, p > 0.05$) and ($F= 1.22, p= 0.21, p > 0.05$) reveal that there is no significant difference in the level of community participation on the basis of the level of education and economic activity respectively. In addition, chi-square test value ($\chi^2=23.88, df=8, p= 0.002, p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship between age and the level of community participation while Chi-square test value ($\chi^2=1.72, df=2, p= 0.42, p > 0.05$) reveals no significant relationship between gender and the level of community participation. The study recommends the government, Non-Governmental Organizations and donors to provide

programmes for intensifying agricultural production, credit and rural financial support and to give adequate and continued financial support to the communities involved in rural water management. Capacity building is also required to enhance the ability of communities in rural water management. This will form the basis for ensuring water availability for rural development.