



The role of local community in oil exploration in Lokichar basin, Turkana County, Kenya

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Abstract

Community participation in the management of livelihood resources is an important aspect that needs to be enhanced. In this way the local community not only owns the available resources but also invest them based on their real needs and not perceived needs. This study investigates the involvement of the local community in oil exploration as well as the working relationship between multinational oil corporations and host communities in Lokichar Basin, Turkana County. With the aid of the study objective, the mixed research design was adopted for the study. A sample size of 270 was adopted for this study and the study employed purposive sampling technique. Data collection procedures used was: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and interview schedules. The study concludes that, development projects should not be introduced into host communities without the consent of the members of the host community. Hence, there should be participation of the members of the host communities to determine their own priority or projects needed.

Keywords: Local Community; Participation; Resource Management; Livelihood; Oil exploration; Lokichar Basin

1. Introduction

The Oil exploration in Kenya is currently in Lokichar Basin, Turkana County. The inhabitants of this region are predominantly pastoralists who depend on the grazing land for their animals. With the dawn of oil exploration, the host community looks forward to improved living standards stemming from the CSR activities of the extractive industries. However, this can only be realised if the local community is actively involved in the activities of the extractive industries. The best result in development are achieved when the focus is on people's choice and if multinational oil corporations refuse to acknowledge this noble cause, definitely no developmental progress could be achieved successfully. Human development goes beyond economic well-being and it should be able to capture the needs and interest of the people by acknowledging their choices on projects identification and exercising freedom on matters that affect their lives.

There have been occasions when projects centred on community development have been deliberated upon and executed in the communities in the region where oil exploration is taking place, without members of host communities taking part in the decision making on the kind of projects mostly needed by the host communities and this, has instigated conflicts emanating between oil corporations and host communities in Lokichar Basin. Therefore it is important to ensure that host communities are adequately incorporated in the planning and implementation of community development projects. The role of community members in sustainable community projects is essential because, they feel the direct impact of both the negative and positive implementation of any development agenda

Study objective

The main objective for this study was to find out the role of the local community in oil exploration in Lokichar Basin.

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2. Methodology

The researcher used mixed methods approach in carrying out the study, specifically the exploratory sequential approach. The study targeted residents of Turkana East, Central and South Sub-Counties in Turkana County; Youth and Women groups, Vulnerable members, Civil servants, Non-Governmental, Organizations (CBOs, CSOs, FBOs), and lastly, Business men were the key Informants. The study employed a multidimensional approach to data collection. Instruments of data collection were; questionnaires, focused group discussions, interview schedules and observation. Semi structured questionnaires were the main instruments for collecting primary data. Interview schedule was also administered to the selected respondents who did not know how to read and write on their own. The researcher used focused group discussion to collect information from groups of people who share the same characteristics or are of the same age.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Community Based Approach to Natural Resource Management

Community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) is an approach under which communities become responsible for managing natural resources (forests, land, water, biodiversity) within a designated area. Turner (2006) asserts that CBNRM refers to resource management practices in which people dependent on those resources or affected by management practices are involved in the management and exploitation of these resources. This calls for cooperation between the parties or actors involved.

CBNRM has grown in practice in both developed and developing countries, but its reasons for implementation vary widely depending on both the local and national context. In developing nations, CBNRM has been used as a dual conservation and poverty alleviation strategy, especially for indigenous groups (Kellert *et al.*, 2000). It is largely related to the realization that biodiversity conservation initiatives that impede local people's access to natural resources utilized for their subsistence and livelihood have been unsuccessful (Chan *et al.*, 2007). The creation of national parks and reserves, for example, has been a major source of conflict between urban and rural citizens because of their exclusionary nature (Kijtewachakul *et al.*, 2004).

This is complicated by unclear land tenure because native groups often have no documentation of ownership (FAO, 2007). CBNRM in developing countries has been initiated by international non-governmental organizations, international institutions (United Nations), and national governments (Kellert *et al.*, 2000). Local communities have also implemented CBNRM without the guidance of external agencies and primarily in response to exclusionary management of public lands (Kijtewachakul *et al.*, 2004). The inception of CBNRM in developed countries is less associated with poverty alleviation and direct subsistence for local peoples. However, it is often related to indigenous groups, but generally these groups have more clear land tenure and ownership than those in developing countries.

Land tenure and biodiversity conservation play an important role in why cooperation between local communities and conservation groups has emerged in developed countries. In the United States, for example, most land not held by state or the federal governments is privately owned and managed, so promoting landscape level habitat conservation requires the cooperation of these private land owners. In many countries environmental management has been the realm of national or state governments, with little recognition of the people living closest to the resource. However, the idea that local people may have a role to play in the planning and management of their surrounding environments is gaining ground. Based on this discussion, the researcher argues for the need to devolve power and authority from central government to local institutions and people. This is based on the belief and desire to integrate traditional ecological knowledge in balancing socio-economic and environmental goals in the conservation and protection of natural resources.

By decentralizing natural resource management, CBNRM is an effort to incorporate local communities into guardianship of their immediate environment in an attempt to meet ecological and social goals on both local and global scales. The practice of CBNRM has been supported by a number of movements and paradigm shifts in theory regarding humans and the environment. The flux of nature paradigm shift in ecology, for example, promoted new thinking in how species, especially humans, relate to their environments. The flux of nature concept has various elements, namely that a systems approach is most appropriate for ecosystem management, humans are a part of the landscape, and participation by humans in natural resource management is a viable and necessary endeavour.

This conceptual change allows for more incorporation of local groups in management of natural resources rather than excluding them completely as has been done historically. Interdisciplinary approaches to natural resource management, informed by fields such as political ecology and ecological economics, have also developed with the flux of nature paradigm shift and have implications for CBNRM (Berkes, 2004). These approaches to environmental issues are largely related to the fact that economic and social disparities are often the root causes of natural resource degradation. In fact, CBNRM has been acknowledged by the United Nations as a form of sustainable development, which has ecological, economic, and social goals.

CBNRM is an attempt to allow local people access to manage their surrounding natural resources, whether for direct subsistence or economic livelihood, and to preserve the species and ecological function that comprise native ecosystems. These projects are often initiated in biologically diverse areas where human activity has been a cause of ecosystem degradation and population declines of native flora and fauna. In totality, the differences between developed and developing countries is largely inconsequential, because regardless of scale, CBNRM focuses on the interdependence of ecological, economic, and social factors.

Community-based approach often leads to more equitable and more sustainable natural resource management for the following reasons:

- Those in closest contact with, and whose livelihoods are impacted by, natural resources are best placed to ensure effective stewardship.
- Natural resources should be managed to ensure equitable benefits for the diverse interest groups within a population.
- Communities often have better knowledge and expertise in the management of the natural resources than government agencies/private industry.
- Multiple-purpose management of natural resources by communities generally provides more varied land use, with greater species diversity than private/industrial management systems.
- Local management may help reduce government costs

Community involvement in the management of natural resources requires that the community is empowered. Empowerment here means enabling people to gain strength, confidence and vision to work for positive change. An empowered community has the ability to make decisions on issues that affect them and can also assume full responsibility over the consequences of those decisions. The GOK therefore needs to empower the local residents of Turkana County for the good of the oil activities and so as to achieve the common good, which entails bringing about a positive social change to their lives due to the oil finds in Turkana County.

Community involvement in the management of natural resources, especially in the Oil exploration, leads to building capacity of the local community in terms of enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices to enable them to cause similar effect and impact on the people and the community they serve. The oil company can do so by letting the local community be aware of the plans they have so that the local residents can as well be part of the planning and implementation of such initiatives.

4. Study findings

4.1. Local community participation in oil exploitation

It is worth noting that the local community ought to be incorporated in the decisions around oil exploration in Lokichar Basin for purposes of smooth running of the activities as well as building a better relationship between the extractive industries and the local residents living near their area of operations.

54.6% of the respondents were not aware of what goes on in the EI whereas 45.4% know the activities of EIs as indicated in Table 1. Local community claims that they are sidelined by Tullow Oil Co. and even not allowed anywhere near the residential camps or operation sites of Tullow if not employees of the EI. This then means that there was no way they could be aware of the operations of the EIs. Hence, they ended up being passive recipients of the decisions made even if they affect them directly.

It is worth noting that even the fact of Oil being in Lokichar Basin is one thing that the local residents had no knowledge. When asked how the local residents got to know that there is Oil in their region, one respondent said: One elder in Kalapata village in Turkana South District said:

“...Mzungu was in Loperot in the 90s and mentioned that there is oil in Turkana...the “mzungu” left and said they will come back for the oil deposits they have seen in Turkana...(Interview with Karenyang).

Another herdsman from Nakukulas said:

“...We heard from our leaders that radios have announced in Nairobi that there is oil in Turkana...(Interview with Loluka).

Table 1 Awareness of the activities of the Extractive Industries

Are you aware of the activities of extractive industries?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	109	45.4
No	131	54.6
Total	240	100.0

When the local community is not aware of what is going on, the consequence is mistrust. A study of oil exploration in the Alberine region of Western Uganda by Mwesigye (2016) revealed that when the local people feel inadequately aware of information on natural resource management, they build mistrust on the EIs. As such even the local residents started feeling like even their resource was being taken secretly.

A resident in Nakukulas said “...I think even the Oil is being carried at night secretly by these trucks of the Oil Co....who knows.....” This leads to the community disowning the resource as not bearing any benefits to them in future. In fact one elder from Loperot said “....Nangolenyang a Kenya, ka Tullow ka eesi lu a ekalamu monan kiteyari Akimite na...’ (Finally, the beneficiaries of this Oil you are talking about will be the GOK, Tullow Oil Co. and you the elites). In this case the locals felt that they may not even benefit from the Oil proceeds given that they had no idea of the activities of the EIs.

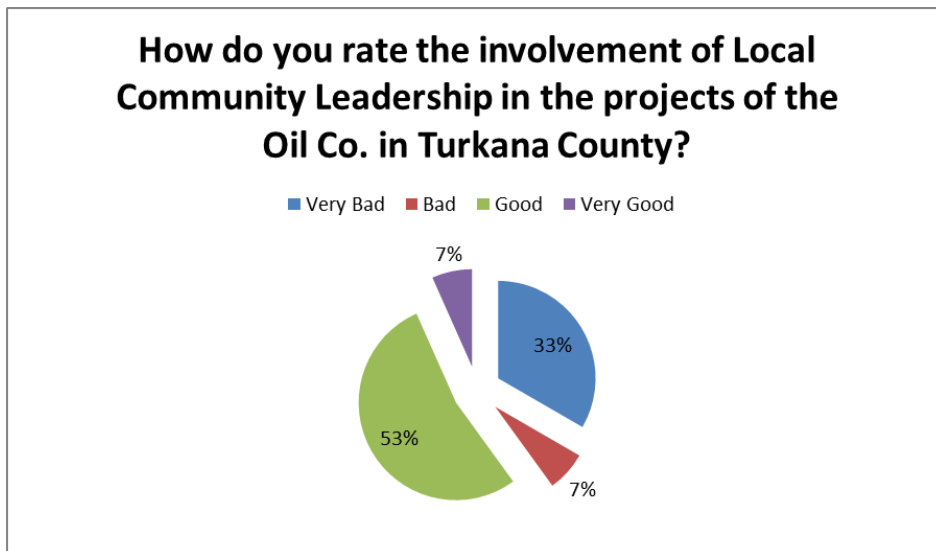


Figure 1 How do you rate the involvement of the Local Community Leadership in the projects of the Oil Co. in Turkana County?

However, the local leadership asserted their involvement in the operations of the EIs and this then they do on behalf of the local community. Here the local Community leadership refers to the Chiefs and religious leaders as informants in the study. Leaders, being representatives of the local community, need to be in touch with the EIs in order to bridge the gap of information between the EIs and the local residents. The findings of this study as seen in Figure 1 showed that majority of the local community leadership (53%) asserted that their involvement in the projects of the EIs is very good, 7% rate their involvement as being good. A minority of the local community leadership was not contented with their involvement in the projects of EIs and thus 33% rate this involvement as being very bad whereas 7% rate it as being bad.

On the overall the local community leadership is fully involved on matters touching the livelihood of their folks. One Local Chief said *“We are the eyes of the government on the ground...we are on the forefront on matters affecting our people and so we are fully involved in the projects of EIs for the good of the people we represent...”*. Dialogue between stakeholders increases the opportunities for success and hence development. A study on the reserves in the Eastern Italian Alps in the province of Trento by Umberto (2017) confirms the success brought by stakeholder involvement in the management of natural resources.

Despite the involvement of the local community leadership in the projects of the EIs for the community, there was still dissatisfaction on the part of the local residents who claimed that their views were not put into consideration. This kind of attitude led to a strained rapport between the EIs and the local residents.

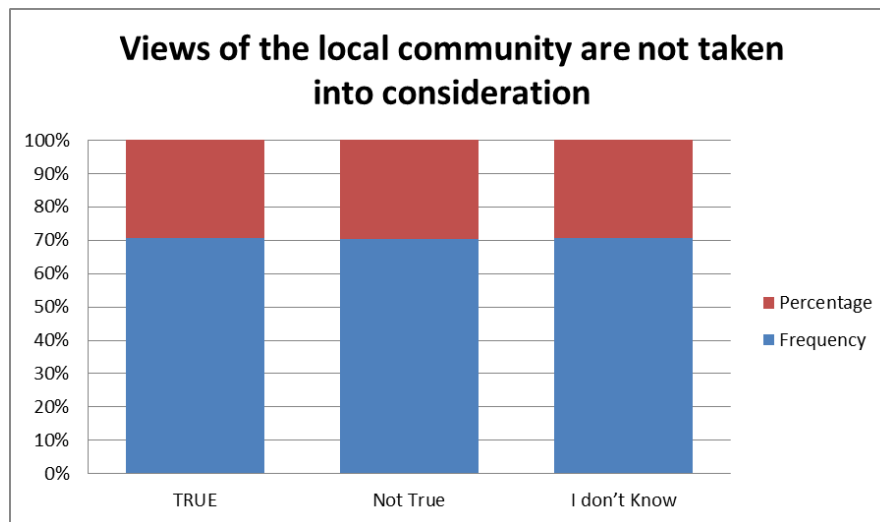


Figure 2 Views of the local community are not taken into consideration

It is worth noting that the local community here refers to the communities living adjacent to the exploration sites. These communities had expressed their dissatisfaction of being represented by the local community leadership in the name of Chiefs and politicians. The findings of the study in Figure 2 showed that 82.9% of the respondents agree to the fact that the views of the local community are not being taken into consideration by the EIs. On the other hand 12.1% of the respondents consider this factor as not being true whereas 5% do not know whether it is true or not that their views were not considered by EIs. The local community felt disrespected when their views were not considered. Such was the case with the latest demonstrations after the launch of the EOPS.

When the local residents are poorly engaged, marginalised or excluded from the dialogue in the development process, they are almost certain to begin to oppose the development. This is particularly the case where they have not been consulted on whether the development should proceed at all, especially if there is the risk that they will bear the impacts and fail to benefit.

Table 2 Consultation with extractive Industry for oil camps establishment

Were you consulted in the establishment of camps for extractive industry in your area?			
		Frequency	Percent
1.	Yes	131	54.6
	No	109	45.4
	Total	240	100.0

The findings of the study showed that the 54.6% of the local community members assert that they were consulted in the establishment camps for EIs. On the other hand, 45.4% do not agree to have been consulted as indicated in Table 2.

According to the local communities living near the oil drilling sites, they were only informed that the EIs have been given a particular part of the land for their camps and operation sites. One herdsman from Lokicheda village said:

“...These outsiders (Tullow Oil) came with our leaders and informed us that Tullow Oil want to establish an Oil camp (The famous Ngamia 1) in our gazing land...

This is a clear indication that the communities living near Oil camps were only informed of the decision without being involved in the primary stage of deciding where camps will be built. In whole we can say that the community participated though in the category of passive participants. Another herdsman added his voice to this issue with the words: *“....After a lengthy discussion we accepted that they can establish the camp where they have chosen... After agreeing with them we slaughtered some goats and camel as brought by Tullow Oil as a ground breaking ceremony... (Interview with Lokeno).*



Figure 3 Picture of ceremony after land has been given to the EIs

The local community celebrated with the investor (Tullow Oil Co. officials) every after the land was given to the EIs to carry out their activities as indicated in the Figure 3 above. This is a manipulative form of participation, which comes with incentives to motivate participants to take part in a decision. The incentive to the local community in this case was the bringing of animals to celebrate the agreement reached upon of giving community land for oil-related activities.

Table 3 Local community capacity to contribute to oil related activities

Do you have the capacity to contribute to Oil Exploitation activities in Lokichar Basin?		
	Frequency	Percent
Yes	90	37.5
No	150	62.5
Total	240	100.0

Against this background, respondents therefore pointed out the following areas as vital for building their capacity: Sensitization on Oil-related activities, Awareness on benefit-sharing, protection of the environment, advocacy and technical skills on Oil industry. It is important that the local community participates more in the entire decision-making process

Due to low levels of competence of the communities living near the drilling sites, it was then necessary to seek their opinion as to who they can trust for advocacy in order that they too can benefit from the natural resource in their region.

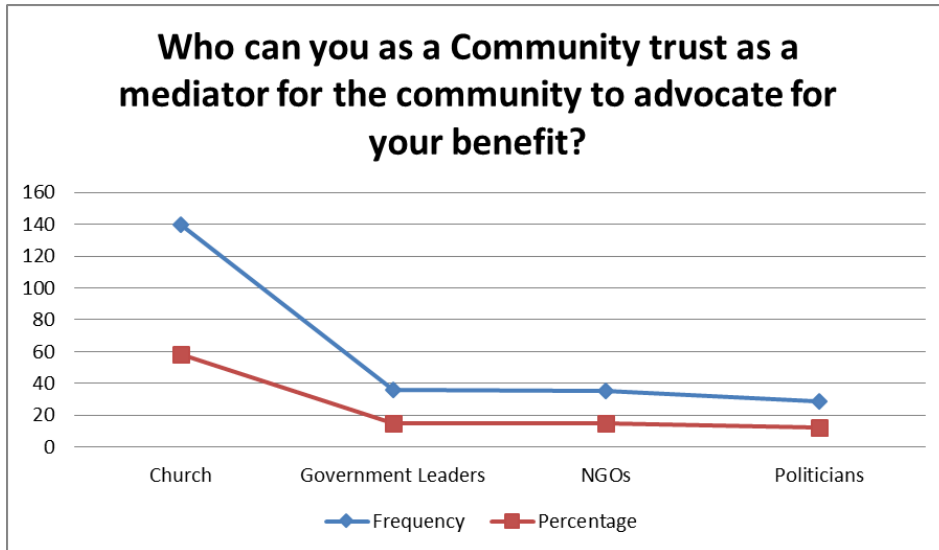


Figure 4 Who can you as a Community trust as a mediator to advocate for your benefit?

60% of the respondents trust the Church Leadership as advocates for their benefit, 20% of the respondents trust the Government Leaders whereas 10% of the respondents place their trust on NGOs and politicians respectively as indicated in Figure 4. One respondent from Kapese said:

“...Nyikidemari ituan a Ekanisa ibore...Keci bon itijiunete ateni.. (Church are not corrupt...Them alone can mean good to us... (Interview with Lapur.)

These findings are in agreement with a study done by Erik in Ghana (2015) on oil production and fishing communities, which confirm that there is always a feeling of mistrust on the community against politicians’ capability of steering affairs of the community. People also think that the government cannot ensure equal distribution of resource revenue.

5. Conclusion

The local community is to a good extent involved in the decision-making process with regard to the operations of exploration activities. The local communities living near the oil exploitation sites have expressed their awareness of some activities of the EIs.

The involvement of the local stakeholders, especially the County Government of Turkana, for the benefit of the local communities, was optimal given the presence of legislature on oil and gas extraction in Kenya and also because of the fact that agreements made so far were between the government and the oil company.

The study therefore recommends the following:

- The success of CSR agenda depends on the level of community participation in the identification of community development projects executed by the EIs to their host communities in Lokichar Basin.
- Development projects should be introduced into host communities with the consent of the members of the host communities. Therefore the local residents should participate in the choice of CSR projects to determine their own priority or projects needed.
- The need for meaningful engagement of local communities in the activities of the extractive industries. Constant engagement enhances the relationship between the local community and the extractive industries. Engagement of local community leads to them owning the natural resource in their region and a sense of being valued. This can be promoted through consultation and enabling the local community to be active participants in the management of the natural resources found in their area.

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