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Examining Effectiveness of Ward Development Committees in Decision Making Processes: A Case Study of Kanakantapa and Chalimbana Wards Development Committees on CDF

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Abstract

The study examined the effectiveness of Ward Development Committees in Decision-Making within Constituency Development Fund Integration in Chongwe Constituency. The study was guided by three objectives which includes, to evaluate the role of Ward Development Committees in the decision-making process of CDF projects, to assess the effectiveness of the integration between Ward Development Committees and the CDF management structures and to identify challenges and opportunities affecting the participation of Ward Development Committees in CDF-related decisions. The study applied descriptive research design, data were collected from 55 participants representing diverse stakeholder groups, including CDF beneficiaries, Ward Development Committee members, council officers, and constituency office staff. The study utilized questionnaires to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, and the analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics and thematic interpretation. Findings reveal that a significant majority (73%) of respondents viewed the involvement of WDCs as "very important" to the

success of CDF projects, with an additional 9% considering their role "critical." Key enablers to supporting WDC participation included regular stakeholder meetings (65%), training and capacity building (64%), and strong leadership (60%). These findings underscore the importance of local institutional support and internal governance structures in promoting effective community engagement. Conversely, external support such as NGO involvement (7%) and technological tools (25%) were cited less frequently, suggesting that sustainable WDC participation is largely dependent on internal, community-driven mechanisms. The study concludes that while WDCs are widely perceived as vital to CDF project success, their influence is shaped significantly by factors such as leadership quality, ongoing training, and the consistency of stakeholder engagement. These findings highlight the need for policy interventions aimed at strengthening the operational capacity of WDCs and institutionalizing participatory practices in CDF management frameworks.

Keywords: Constituency Development Fund, Ward Development Committee, Decision Making

Background Statement

Globally, participatory development has gained prominence as a strategy for achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Countries such as India (through the Panchayati Raj system), the Philippines (with its Barangay Development Program), and Kenya (via the National Government Constituency Development Fund - NG-CDF) have institutionalized mechanisms for citizen participation in local development planning and budgeting. These models emphasize community ownership, transparency, and local accountability. International development agencies like the World Bank and UNDP advocate for decentralized funding and grassroots participation, arguing that such frameworks improve service delivery, reduce poverty, and strengthen democratic governance (World Bank, 2012). However, success depends on the functionality of local structures, the clarity of roles, and the capacity of communities to engage meaningfully issues that are mirrored in the Zambian context with Ward Development Committees (ARJESS, 2021).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, several countries have adopted variations of the Constituency Development Fund model, including Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. These funds aim to empower Members of Parliament and communities to address local

development priorities directly. Kenya's NG-CDF, for instance, has been both praised for addressing infrastructure gaps and criticized for limited oversight and politicization challenges also noted in Zambia. Similarly, studies in Uganda have highlighted the importance of local councils and community structures in influencing fund utilization, though effectiveness often hinges on capacity, inclusivity, and governance quality. Zambia's implementation of an expanded CDF, with a strong role for Ward Development Committees, aligns with these regional efforts but also presents an opportunity to learn from regional pitfalls and successes to strengthen grassroots-driven development (ZIPAR, 2022).

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was first introduced in Zambia in 1995 as a mechanism to foster grassroots development, with Members of Parliament working closely with communities to implement local projects (PSAM & Caritas Zambia, 2022) [4]. Initially governed by Section 45 of the Local Government Act until the 2016 constitutional amendment, it was later formalized under CDF Acts in 2018 and further refined in 2024 (Zambia Constitution Amendment Act No. 2 of 2016; Constituency Development Fund Act No. 11 of 2018; Constituency Development Fund Act No. 1 of 2024). This legal evolution underscores the institutionalization of the CDF within Zambia's decentralization framework. The legal scaffolding for the CDF is comprehensive: Article 162 of the Constitution (Amendment) Act No. 2 of 2016 and the CDF Acts of 2018 and 2024 outline fund management, accountability, and stakeholder roles. Additionally, it intersects with the Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019, Public Finance Management Act, National Planning and Budgeting Act, and Public Procurement Act.

Since 2021, the CDF budget in Zambia has experienced exponential growth from approximately ZMW 1.6 million per constituency to ZMW 30.6 million in 2024 (Zambia Ministry of Finance, 2024). This expansion coincided with new programmatic mandates: empowerment initiatives for youth and women, and bursaries for secondary schools, broadening the CDF's scope beyond infrastructure.

WDCs are statutory bodies established under the Local Government Act to channel community development aspirations at ward level, including the submission of project proposals for CDF funding (Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019). They serve as the interface between citizens and CDF Committee decisions, representing grassroots needs in planning and oversight (Chileshe, 2023) [6]. Despite strong legal backing, WDCs face systemic constraints: inadequate administrative support, lack of funding, logistical shortfalls, and limited training. Coordination challenges also persist among ministries and local authorities, undermining effective project implementation (Transparency International Zambia, 2023) [28]. Community awareness and participation in the CDF process remain weak. Residents often feel uninformed or perceive the process as politically driven (Simutanyi, 2023) [27]. Centralized decision-making and political interference further undermine genuine community engagement (Mulenga, 2023) [22].

Recent assessments show sluggish progress: only 6.2% of projects from 2023 were completed by November 2023, while the broader average has been around 52%, with significant variation across constituencies (Auditor General's Report, 2023; Caritas Zambia, 2023 [5]). Such delays compromise project efficacy and erode community

trust. Against this backdrop, analyzing how effectively WDCs influence CDF decision-making is crucial. It sheds light on whether legal frameworks translate into meaningful participation, accountability, and development outcomes. Understanding this dynamic can inform interventions that bolster decentralization goals, enhance administrative capacity, and promote inclusive development in Zambia. Hence, it is against this background the researcher undertook this study.

Objectives

The general objective of this study was to examine the role, effectiveness, and challenges of Ward Development Committees in the decision-making and management processes of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects.

Specific Objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives.

1. To establish types of Decision-making Process Utilized in the Ward's Development.
2. To examine the Effectiveness of Decision-Making Processes in Ward Development.
3. To ascertain the relationship between Good Decision-Making Processes and Ward Development.
4. To Identify Limitations of Ward Decision Making Processes.

Literature Review

Globally, the evolution of decision-making in development planning has been shaped by a growing emphasis on inclusivity, transparency, and analytical rigor. One of the most prominent global models is the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), developed by Thomas Saaty. AHP is a structured, multi-criteria decision-making method that allows complex problems to be broken down into a hierarchy of simpler sub-problems. Through pairwise comparisons and expert judgments, decision-makers can quantitatively determine the relative importance of various factors, leading to more structured, transparent, and defensible decisions (Saaty, 1980; Fountzoula *et al.*, 2022). A variant of this model, the Analytic Network Process (ANP), allows for interdependence among decision elements, making it suitable for more complex planning environments. Both methods have been used in public-sector planning, infrastructure development, and resource allocation across the globe, enhancing objectivity in decision-making where multiple stakeholders and conflicting interests are involved.

In addition to analytical methods, participatory models such as Participatory Budgeting (PB) have gained global traction. Originating in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1988, PB empowers citizens to directly engage in allocating portions of public budgets. The model has since spread to over 1,500 cities worldwide (Wampler, 2007). Participatory budgeting offers a platform for grassroots voices to influence financial decisions, promoting equity and accountability. Globally, PB takes two major forms: top-down (mandated by national policy, such as in Peru) and bottom-up (driven by civil society or local governments, such as in Brazil). These models reflect a shift in development paradigms toward more democratic, community-driven governance structures, aligning with the principles of participatory development a process where local stakeholders are involved in all stages

of planning and implementation to ensure that projects are relevant, sustainable, and community-owned (Chambers, 1997).

Similarly, Participatory Planning integrates local inputs into formal policy frameworks. In countries such as South Africa and Uganda, legal provisions mandate participatory mechanisms in local governance. For example, South Africa's Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process requires municipalities to consult communities before formulating five-year strategic plans. Uganda's guidelines for lower-level governments likewise stress local participation in planning and budgeting, though implementation varies widely (UN-Habitat, 2012). These global trends underscore the increasing importance of community engagement as a core element of effective and equitable development planning.

In the African context, decision-making processes at the ward and local levels have seen varying degrees of evolution, often influenced by decentralization policies and donor-driven reforms. One notable approach is Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), which devolves decision-making authority over natural resources to local communities. In countries like Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe, CBNRM has enhanced the capacity of communities to manage resources sustainably, fostering local ownership and reducing dependency on centralized state structures (Chirenje, Giliba & Musamba, 2013). These models represent a paradigmatic shift from centralized development planning to decentralized governance, emphasizing local participation as essential for legitimacy and effectiveness.

In Zimbabwe, participatory budgeting at the ward level has shown potential to enhance transparency and citizen trust. A study by Ndlovu *et al.* (2023) in Mangwe District revealed that successful implementation of PB depended on citizen awareness, simplified planning processes, councillor leadership, and transparent reporting mechanisms. However, the study also noted that inadequate training, limited access to information, and political interference hindered the full realization of participatory ideals. Similarly, in Ghana, although participatory structures exist, studies have shown that bureaucratic dominance often limits meaningful citizen influence. The result is often tokenistic consultation that reinforces existing power hierarchies rather than genuinely empowering communities (Nyendu, 2012).

In Asia, participatory models have experienced both state-led and community-driven transformations. South Korea institutionalized participatory budgeting in all local governments by 2011. In Seoul, a 300-member committee comprising citizens from different budget sectors—helps prioritize development initiatives. In one year alone, citizens approved over 300 projects worth 59.3 billion Korean won (~USD 55 million) (Park, 2014). This model reflects both scale and seriousness in applying participatory frameworks to public finance management. In India, the 74th Constitutional Amendment mandated ward committees to facilitate decentralized decision-making. Although implementation has been inconsistent, some cities such as Bangalore and Pune have adopted participatory budgeting successfully. Kerala's "People's Planning Campaign" (1996) stands out as a pioneering example in which 35% of the state's development budget was devolved to local governments for community-led planning (Isaac & Heller, 2003). This empowered village assemblies (Gram Sabhas)

to formulate detailed development plans, emphasizing bottom-up planning rooted in local priorities.

An exemplary model from Kenya the Ward Development Planning (WDP) framework—further illustrates participatory success in Africa. Implemented in arid and semi-arid counties such as Garissa, Turkana, and Isiolo, the WDP model establishes Ward Planning Committees (WPCs) composed of elected community members. These committees identify and prioritize development needs based on context-specific challenges, ensuring greater alignment between county budgets and local priorities. Research by Mercy Corps and the SPARC initiative has shown that this model enhances accountability, responsiveness, and trust between communities and government authorities (SPARC, 2023; Mercy Corps, 2023). Kenya's experience demonstrates how structured, inclusive ward-level planning can be a tool for deepening devolution and improving service delivery, particularly in marginalized areas.

In Zambia, decision-making at the ward level is primarily facilitated through Ward Development Committees (WDCs), which are established under the Local Government Act No. 2 of 2019. WDCs are intended to be the foundational structures for decentralized planning, ensuring that development initiatives are responsive to the needs of local communities. However, empirical evidence reveals that WDCs face significant operational challenges. A study conducted in Keembe Constituency (Chibombo District) by Siachisa *et al.* (2023) found that most WDCs were either dormant or underperforming. The major obstacles included lack of funding, poor coordination with local councils, political interference, and limited adherence to governance guidelines. These factors severely undermined the committee's effectiveness in facilitating participatory development.

Moreover, local citizens often exhibit low levels of awareness and participation in ward-level planning processes. A study in Nsanjika, Eastern Province, revealed that while residents recognized the existence of WDCs, they were rarely involved in the decision-making or project implementation processes (Mataka & Ngulube, 2020). The lack of meaningful consultation has led to misaligned development priorities and reduced community ownership. Additionally, limited technical capacity, weak administrative structures, and irregular communication between ward and district offices have further constrained the performance of WDCs (Hanangana, 2016).

From a theoretical perspective, Zambia's local governance framework aligns with Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969), which categorizes participation into degrees ranging from non-participation (manipulation, therapy) to tokenism (informing, consultation) and full citizen power (delegated power, citizen control). Most WDC operations in Zambia fall within the tokenism level, where communities are consulted but lack real power to influence outcomes. Buccus *et al.* (2007) argue that meaningful participation requires not only legal frameworks but also capacity building, information access, and institutional accountability—all of which are lacking in the Zambian context. Moreover, the absence of clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within the WDC framework contributes to inefficiency and weak accountability structures (Nienbuys, 1990). Despite the legal provision for citizen-led development, WDCs in Zambia have yet to fulfill their intended roles. Political patronage, ethno-political

biases, and limited community engagement have continued to inhibit the realization of decentralized governance. The integration of WDCs into broader district planning systems remains superficial, often lacking synergy and coordination. Unless these systemic issues are addressed, ward-level decision-making in Zambia will continue to suffer from legitimacy deficits and implementation gaps.

Globally, the recognition of community-level committees as essential actors in participatory development marks a significant shift toward more inclusive and democratic governance models. These committees serve as vital conduits between grassroots populations and formal government institutions, facilitating community input into decisions that affect local development. One of the most influential global examples is Participatory Budgeting (PB), which originated in Porto Alegre, Brazil. PB institutionalizes citizen engagement by allowing residents to participate directly in the allocation of municipal budgets. This model has been widely celebrated for enhancing transparency by opening fiscal processes to public scrutiny, promoting equity by directing resources to underserved communities, and increasing accountability by enabling citizens to monitor how public funds are spent (Abers, 1998). The Porto Alegre experience illustrates that when community committees are formally embedded within government decision-making frameworks, they can transform public administration from a top-down exercise into a collaborative, responsive process.

In addition to Brazil's pioneering example, the People's Planning Campaign in Kerala, India, provides another compelling case of effective integration of community-level committees into formal governance structures. Kerala's approach involved constitutionally mandated ward committees that linked grassroots voices with local government planning and budgeting cycles. This legally grounded framework ensured that development priorities identified at the community level were systematically incorporated into official development programs. The campaign also invested heavily in sustained capacity-building, equipping local actors with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage meaningfully with complex bureaucratic processes (Heller, 2001). This initiative demonstrates that legal recognition combined with institutional support can institutionalize participatory governance, making it more resilient and effective in addressing local needs.

A critical insight from these international models is the centrality of clear legal mandates and structured institutional linkages in empowering community committees. In both Porto Alegre and Kerala, the existence of formalized roles and responsibilities for community representatives helped prevent the marginalization of local voices and reduced the risks of tokenistic participation. Sustained capacity-building was another cornerstone, ensuring that committee members were not only included but were also equipped to influence development decisions substantively. These elements create a virtuous cycle where empowered local committees improve development outcomes by ensuring that projects align with community priorities, enhancing local ownership, and strengthening social accountability mechanisms. Without such structural foundations, community participation risks being superficial or symbolic, failing to translate into meaningful influence over development processes.

Ultimately, the global experience underscores that Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and similar local governance bodies can play a transformative role in shaping development outcomes, but only when supported by enabling environments. This includes legal recognition that clearly defines their roles, political commitment to their authority, and ongoing institutional support through training and resources. These conditions create the necessary foundation for community committees to function not merely as advisory groups but as active decision-makers with the power to influence resource allocation and project implementation. Such lessons provide valuable guidance for countries like Zambia, where strengthening the integration of WDCs into formal development structures could enhance participatory governance and improve the effectiveness of local development initiatives.

At the regional level, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a notable expansion of local development committees as part of broader decentralization reforms aimed at enhancing community participation in governance. These committees, such as Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Ward Development Committees (WDCs), are intended to serve as crucial links between grassroots communities and formal government systems. In Botswana, VDCs were established with the explicit purpose of channeling community needs and priorities into official development agendas, theoretically empowering local populations to influence decision-making processes. However, research by Mogale (2003) reveals that these committees often suffer from a lack of real decision-making authority, inadequate training, and weak integration with higher-level administrative bodies. Consequently, while VDCs exist in form, their practical influence remains limited, reducing their capacity to facilitate meaningful community-driven development.

In South Africa, ward committees are a cornerstone of participatory democracy and decentralized governance. They are formally recognized as vehicles for community engagement in municipal affairs, intended to promote transparency, accountability, and responsiveness at the local level. Despite this strong institutional mandate, the effectiveness of ward committees has been repeatedly undermined by persistent political interference that compromises their autonomy and representativeness. Lentswe (2013) highlights that ward committees often lack the necessary resources—financial, logistical, and human—to carry out their functions effectively. Furthermore, poor coordination between ward committees and municipal structures leads to fragmented communication and duplication of efforts. These challenges collectively hinder the committees' ability to serve as effective platforms for community participation and local development oversight.

Similarly, in Nigeria, Ward Development Committees have played important roles, particularly in the realm of primary healthcare delivery. These committees help mobilize community resources, facilitate health education, and raise awareness about health initiatives, thereby contributing to improved service delivery at the local level. However, their operational capacity is frequently constrained by inadequate logistical support such as transportation, office space, and communication tools. Moreover, unclear and poorly defined roles contribute to confusion among committee members and government officials alike, weakening collaboration and undermining accountability mechanisms (Chukwuocha *et*

al., 2019). Inconsistent government engagement further exacerbates these issues, as committees are often left without sustained support, diminishing their potential impact on health governance.

These regional experiences reveal a pervasive pattern: despite the widespread establishment of local development committees under decentralization policies, many of these bodies remain under-resourced and insufficiently empowered. Institutional support in the form of formal mandates, training, administrative resources, and clear lines of accountability is often lacking. This systemic neglect results in committees functioning in a largely symbolic capacity rather than as active agents of change. The recurring themes of political interference, poor coordination, and limited capacity highlight significant barriers that prevent WDCs and similar committees from fully realizing their participatory governance potential.

In summary, while the creation of local development committees in Sub-Saharan Africa reflects an important policy commitment to decentralization and community participation, the actual impact of these bodies is frequently constrained by systemic institutional weaknesses. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms that go beyond formal recognition to include capacity-building initiatives, resource allocation, political safeguards, and stronger institutional linkages between community committees and government structures. Without such holistic support, the promise of decentralized, community-driven development will remain elusive, limiting the ability of ward-level committees to influence local governance and development outcomes effectively.

In Zambia, Ward Development Committees (WDCs) play a pivotal role in the implementation of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), a key decentralized funding mechanism designed to promote local development by directly involving communities in decision-making. The legal framework governing the CDF explicitly mandates WDCs to identify community needs, propose development projects, and monitor the execution of these projects. This framework aims to decentralize power and resources, theoretically empowering local populations to influence development priorities that affect their daily lives. However, while the policy design presents a robust participatory model, the actual influence of WDCs in CDF decision-making processes has been inconsistent, often falling short of the envisioned level of community empowerment.

Methods and Procedure

This study adopted descriptive case study research design. This design was adopted because it allows data to be collected from the target population at once and hence, it provides data from participants who hold diverse thoughts about the topic of study. In social sciences a descriptive study design is a research method involving an in-depth and comprehensive investigation of the subject of study. It is due to this fact that the researcher chose to use descriptive study design over other design to allow an in-depth examination on the effectiveness of ward development committees in decision-making within constituency development fund integration in Chongwe Constituency Chalimbana ward and Kanakantapa ward of Chongwe District Zambia. This study used both quantitative and qualitative approach.

Target Population

Based on literature, such as Singh and Masuku (2014), population is defined as the whole individual or a source of information about something that has a relationship with research and can be expected to be a description of what is needed in research. Singh and Masuku (2014) also underline that an area of generalization which turns out to be any certain qualities and characteristics of an object and/or subject that later be studied and concluded subsequently, is considered as study population. Thus, the study population for this research was the Ward Development Committee member from Kanakantapa ward and Chalimbana ward, cooperative members within the wards who benefited from CDF, the ward counsellors, Chongwe Constituency Development Committee and the selected people from Chongwe district council in Chongwe district Zambia. On average the study population was 100. A random selection of participants from the target population was conducted. However, the selection of participants was gender sensitive, and the principle of equity and inclusiveness was applied.

Sampling Design

The study participants were recruited randomly from the study target population. The sample size of the study participants was determined from target population using Yamane formula. The research participants were selected randomly from the qualified target population while giving everyone the probability of being picked.

Inclusion Criteria

All individuals who met the inclusion requirements for this research as stated above were given an opportunity to participate in the study provided, they were able to give out reliable data for the study as recruiting of participants focused on the abilities to give reliable and authentic information. Only residents of Chongwe constituency and residing in Chalimbana and Kanakantapa ward who were a member of WDCs or Cooperative which benefited from CDF or worked at the council or were in Constituency Development Committee who had reached the age of consent and could provide the needed information for this study were recruited.

Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria for this study were based on the participant's inability to submit information, failure to keep an appointment, and possession of challenges that would have hampered their participation in the study, such as illness, relocation and busy schedules causing them to miss arranged meetings. Therefore, the following were excluded from this study.

- Children
- Sick people who could not afford to consistently attend research interviews
- People with mental problems (research discretion)
- Senior citizens who could not afford to provide credible data.

Sample Size Determination

A sample of fifty-five (55) participants was used in this study comprising of 24 males and 31 females. The sample was determined using Yamene formula.

Data Collection Methods

To comprehensively address the research objectives, a mixed-methods data collection tool was developed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component consisted of a structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended questions, designed to gather measurable data on participant demographics, experience, and perceptions related to the study topic. This allowed for statistical analysis and comparison across groups. Complementing this, the qualitative component involved open-ended interview questions or focus group discussions aimed at exploring participants' in-depth perspectives, experiences, and understanding. By combining numerical data with rich narrative responses, the tool provides a more holistic understanding of the research problem, enhancing both the validity and depth of findings. In applying a mixed-methods approach to data collection, a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques was used to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Quantitative data was collected through structured surveys/questionnaires distributed to research participants, enabling the researcher to gather standardized data suitable for statistical analysis. Concurrently, qualitative techniques such as semi-structured interviews and open-ended survey questions were employed to capture detailed insights, opinions, and personal experiences from participants. Using both techniques allowed for triangulation, where the strengths of one method compensated for the limitations of the other, thereby increasing the reliability and depth of the research findings.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data collected involved a systematic process that integrated both quantitative and qualitative techniques. First, the quantitative data from structured questionnaires were coded and entered in statistical software Excel for descriptive and inferential analysis, allowing the identification of patterns, trends, and relationships among variables. Simultaneously, the qualitative data from interviews was transcribed and analyzed thematically using tools manual coding to identify recurring themes, categories, and deeper insights. Once both sets of data were analyzed separately, the findings were compared and integrated to draw comprehensive conclusions, allowing the quantitative results to be explained and enriched by the qualitative insights. This triangulation enhances the validity and depth of the research outcomes.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a research method that uses multiple methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena and to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings. Four types of triangulations: (a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) data source triangulation. For purposes of this study, we applied employ triangulation of sources and investigations.

Limitations of the Study

The following were major challenges faced during this research.

1. The study of this nature required adequate financial and logistical support.
2. **Illiteracy:** Some respondents would hide important

information because of not understand the importance of the research.

3. **Time Resource:** This research would need a lot of time to be more comprehensive.

To resolve the challenges above, the researcher applied different mechanisms which included the following.

1. External source of fund.
2. Participants were highly informed and assured of confidentiality to enable them to release the required data by the researcher.
3. Some regular meetings were arranged to gather the needed data within the university stipulated time frame.

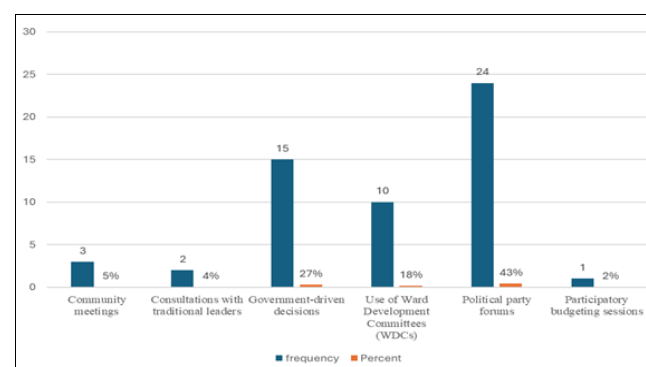
Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was sought from Information and Communication University. The researcher also sought approval from the Constituency office under the ministry of local government and rural development and the district council administration office. Participants' wellbeing in this study was a priority. The principal investigator insured that participants were treated with respect and given enough information for them to make informed voluntary consent. No harmful activity regarding their participation in the study had occurred. Throughout the study, the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants was highly maintained. Participants were interviewed separately to allow them to express themselves freely. In addition, participants were assured that the findings from this study were not linked to any individual. The participants were systematically recruited without any bias. Participants were well informed about the study including information on voluntary participation in the study. Both oral and written agreements of consent were obtained before data collection.

Findings

Types of Decision-making Process Utilized in the Ward's Development

The first objective for this study was to establish the types of decision-making process utilized in the ward development. To establish this, the researcher asked participants to tick against their option on the question, what types of decision-making processes are commonly used in your ward's development planning? Their responses were as shown in Fig 1 below.



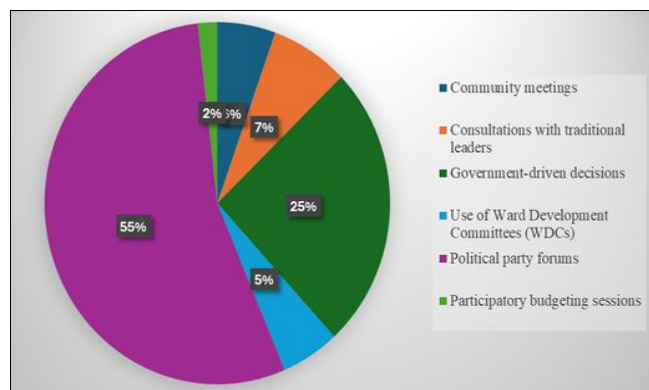
Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 1: Summary of types of Decision-making Process used

The data shows that political party forums are the most used method for making development decisions, accounting for 43% of responses. This is followed by government-driven decisions at 27%, and the use of Ward Development

Committees (WDCs) at 18%. Community meetings and consultations with traditional leaders were less frequently reported, representing 5% and 4% respectively. The least used method was participatory budgeting sessions, mentioned by only 2% of respondents.

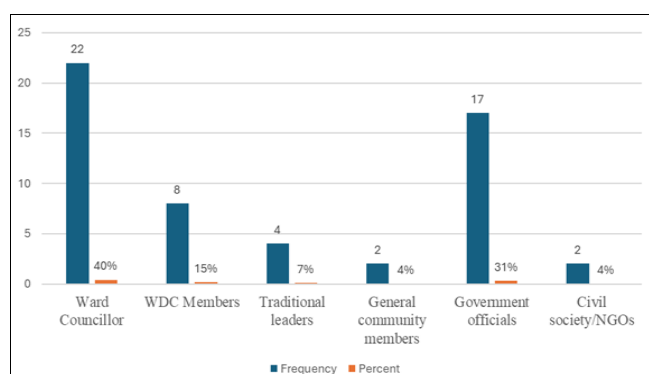
The researcher also sought to find out which method was frequently used, and the responses from the participants were as illustrated in the Fig 2 below.



Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 2: Frequent used Decision-making Process Summary

The most common method for making development decisions was through political party forums, which accounted for 30 responses, indicating a dominant influence in the decision-making process. Government-driven decisions followed, with 14 responses, showing significant involvement of formal authorities. Consultations with traditional leaders were mentioned by 4 respondents, while both community meetings and the use of Ward Development Committees (WDCs) had 3 responses each, suggesting relatively limited community-based participation. Furthermore, the researcher sought to find out Who the main decision-makers are in ward development to understand how much the WDCs are involved in the process. The responses from the participants were as shown in Fig 3 below.



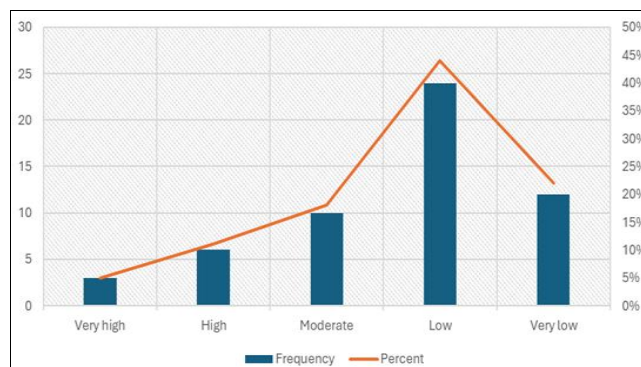
Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 3: Main CDF Decision Makers Summary

This data shows that Ward Councillors play the most significant role in development decision-making, with 40% of responses identifying them as key actors. Government officials follow closely, accounting for 31% of responses. WDC Members were mentioned by 15%, indicating a moderate level of involvement. Traditional leaders were cited by 7% of respondents, while general community members and civil society/NGOs were the least involved, each receiving only 4%. This suggests that while formal

structures dominate the process, broader community and civil society engagement remains limited.

Further, the researcher also wanted to understand how much the community members are involved in the Community development project using CDF. To establish this, participants were asked to rate how much the community members were involved in the development decision making process. Their responses were as shown in the Fig 4 below.



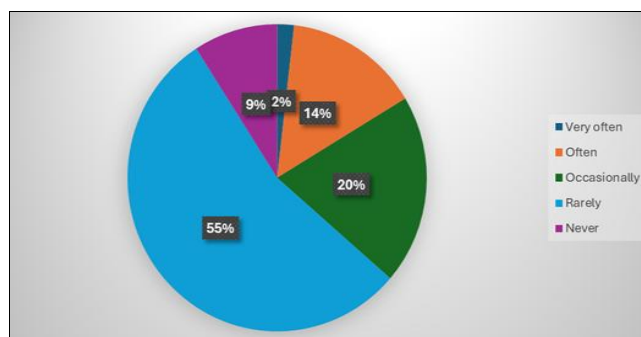
Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 4: Summary of Community Members involvement in Decision Making

The data shows that most respondents feel community involvement in the decision-making process is low, with 66% rating it as either "low" or "very low." Only 16% believe involvement is "high" or "very high," while 18% rated it as "moderate." This suggests a general perception that the community is not adequately included in important decisions, highlighting the need for more transparent, inclusive, and participatory approaches to ensure community voices are heard and considered.

The Effectiveness of Decision-Making Processes in Ward Development

To understand the effectiveness of decision-making processes in ward development, the researcher asked different questions. The study first sought to find out how often community consultations are conducted in ward before making development decisions. Participants were asked to tick the responses, and their responses were as illustrated in the Fig 5 below.



Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 5: Summary of how often Communities are Consulted in Development Decision

The data shows that community consultations are generally infrequent before making development decisions. Only 1 respondent said consultations occur very often, and 8 said often, while 11 indicated they happen occasionally.

However, the majority of 30 respondents said consultations are rarely conducted, and 5 said never. This suggests that most participants feel community engagement in decision-making is limited or lacking in their ward.

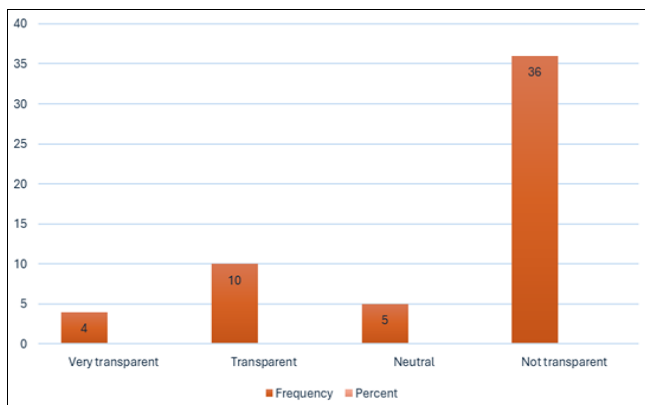
The researcher also sought to find out if CDF development projects being implemented as agreed at a community level. Participants were given options to respond by ticking. The responses from the participants were as shown in Fig 6 below.

Source: Field Data 2025

Fig 6: Development Project Being Implemented as Agreed Summary

The responses suggest that development decisions are not consistently implemented as agreed in meetings. While 5 respondents said decisions are always implemented and 9 said most of the time, the majority indicated otherwise: 20 said sometimes, 15 said rarely, and 6 said never. This shows that although some implementation does occur, there is a notable lack of consistency, with most participants perceiving only occasional or infrequent follow-through on agreed decisions.

The researcher also sought to find out if decision making processes are transparent to help find measures to improve the processes available. The research participants are given option to tick based on their experience. Their responses were as shown in Fig 7 below.



Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 7: Summary of Decision-making Processes Transparency

The responses indicate that most participants view the decision-making processes as lacking transparency. A significant majority, 36 respondents believe the processes are not transparent. Only 4 respondents said they are very transparent, and 10 considered them transparent, making a total of 14 respondents who viewed the processes positively. Meanwhile, 5 respondents were neutral. Overall, the data suggests a strong perception of insufficient transparency in decision-making.

The study also sought to find out if development outcomes improve due to the decisions made through these processes. Participants were asked to agree to this statement or disagree. The Fig 8 below shows the responses provided.

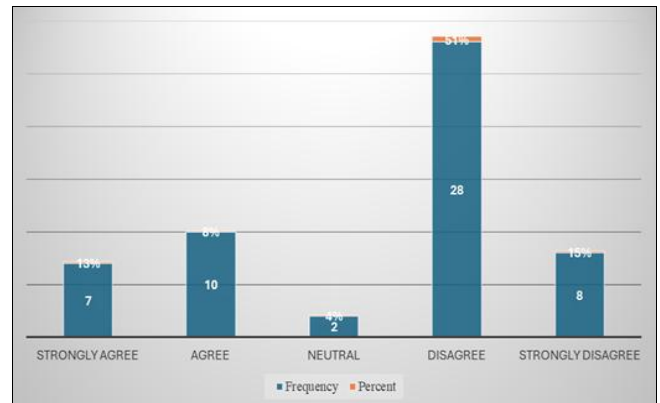
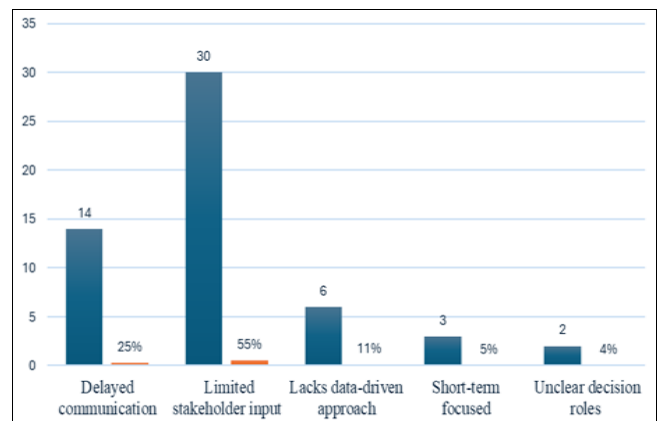


Fig 8: Summary of Development Outcomes

The data collected indicated that most respondents held a negative view, with 51% disagreeing and 15% strongly disagreeing, totaling 66% expressing some level of disagreement. In contrast, only 13% strongly agreed and 8% agreed, making up 21% who expressed agreement. A small portion, 4%, remained neutral. Overall, the results suggest that most participants were not in favor of the statement or issue presented.

The study also sought to find out the weaknesses observed by participants in the current decision-making process. Respondents were asked to tick against their option, their responses were as illustrated in the Fig 9 below.



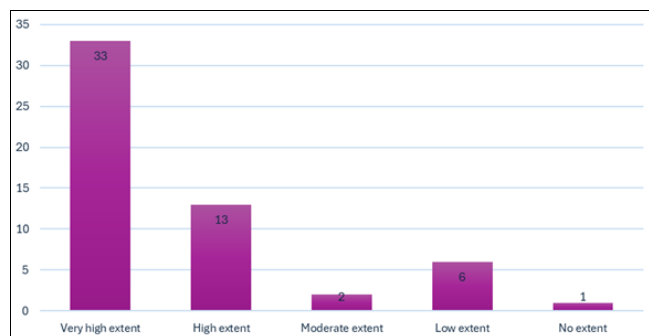
Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 9: Weakness on the Current Decision-Making Processes Summary

The results indicate that the most observed weakness in the current decision-making process is limited stakeholder input, cited by 55% of respondents. This is followed by delayed communication at 25%, suggesting issues with how and when information is shared. Smaller portions of respondents identified other concerns such as a lack of data-driven approaches (11%), short-term focus (5%), and unclear decision roles (4%). Overall, the findings point to a need for more inclusive engagement, timely communication, and better use of data to strengthen the decision-making process.

Relationship between Good Decision-Making Processes and Ward Development

The Study further sought to find out on the relationship between good decision-making process and ward development. The data show the views of the participants on how the good decision-making process relates to ward development. To establish, the participants were first asked to answer the question; to extent do you think good decision-making would influence development in your ward? The responses from the participants were as illustrated in the Fig 10 below.

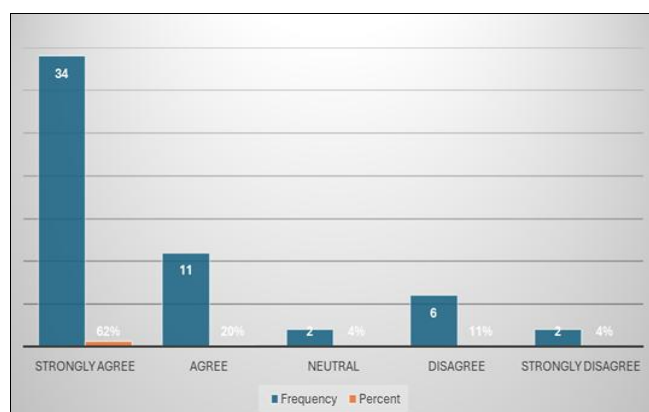


Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 10: Relationship between Good Decision Making and Ward Development Summary

Most respondents believe that good decision-making has a strong impact on development in their ward, with 33 people (very high extent) and 13 people (high extent) expressing this view together making up a clear majority. Only a small number see the influence as moderate (2 respondents), low (6 respondents), or none (1 respondent). This suggests that most people recognize a strong connection between effective decision-making and positive development outcomes in their community.

The study also sought to find if good decision-making leads to increased trust and cooperation in the community. Participants were only asked to strongly agree to strongly disagree with the statement. The responses from the participants were as shown in the Fig 11 below.



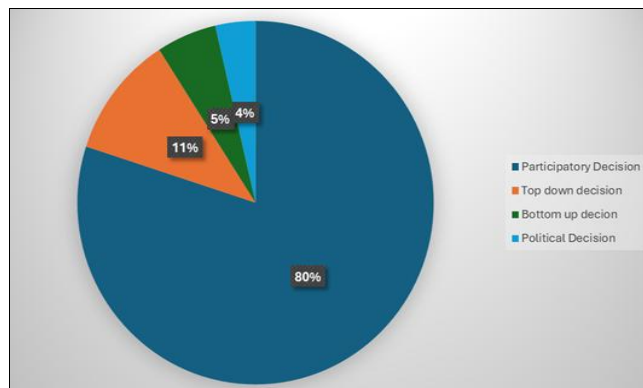
Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 11: Good Decision making and Cooperation

The data shows that a significant majority of respondents 62% strongly agree and 20% agree support the statement in question (though the exact statement isn't specified here). This indicates a high level of agreement overall, with 82% expressing a positive view. Only a small number were

neutral (4%), while 15% (disagree and strongly disagree combined) expressed a negative opinion. Overall, the responses suggest strong support for the statement among participants. Let me know if you want this tied to a specific question or topic.

The study also sought to find out on the types of decision which are more sustainable in the community. The Fig 12 below shows the responses provided by the respondents.

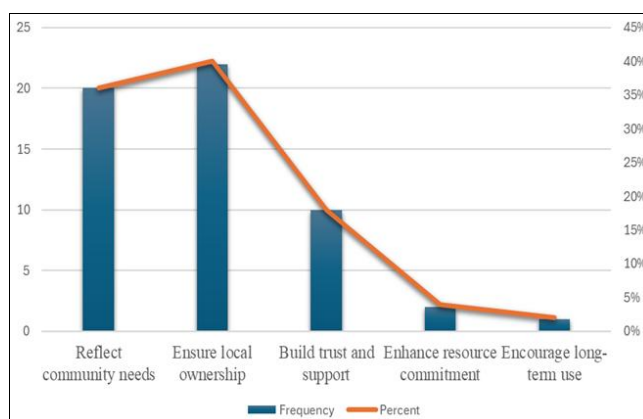


Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 12: Summary of the Decision Types that are Sustainable.

The responses indicate a strong preference for participatory decision-making as the most sustainable type, with 44 respondents choosing it as the overwhelming majority. In contrast, top-down decisions were selected by only 6 people, bottom-up decisions by 3, and political decisions by just 2. This suggests that most people believe sustainability is best achieved when decisions are made inclusively, with active involvement from various stakeholders, rather than through hierarchical or politically driven processes.

The Study also sought to find out from participant on different what makes participatory decisions more sustainable. The responses from the participants were as illustrated in the Fig 13 below.



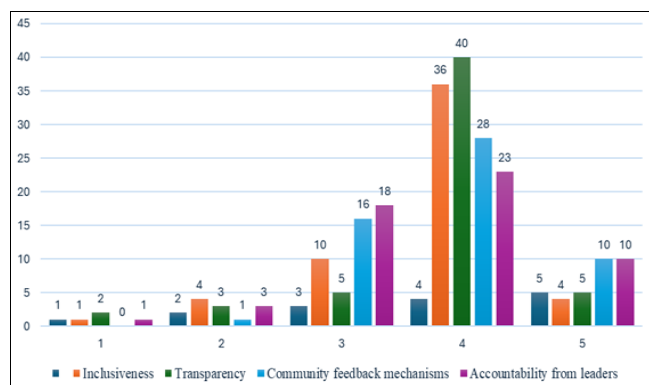
Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 13: Participatory decisions are more sustainable How? Summary

The data shows that development projects resulting from participatory decisions are seen as more sustainable primarily because they ensure local ownership (40%) and reflect community needs (36%). These two factors together make up 76% of the responses, indicating that sustainability is strongly linked to community involvement and relevance. Other benefits identified include building trust and support

(18%), while fewer respondents pointed to enhancing resource commitment (4%) and encouraging long-term use (2%). Overall, the results highlight that when communities are involved in decision-making, projects are more likely to be accepted, maintained, and aligned with local priorities.

Furthermore, participants in this research were also asked to rate different elements in terms of their importance for good decision-making from 1 to 5. Where 1 represented not important and 5 very important. The responses from the participants were as shown in Fig 14 below.



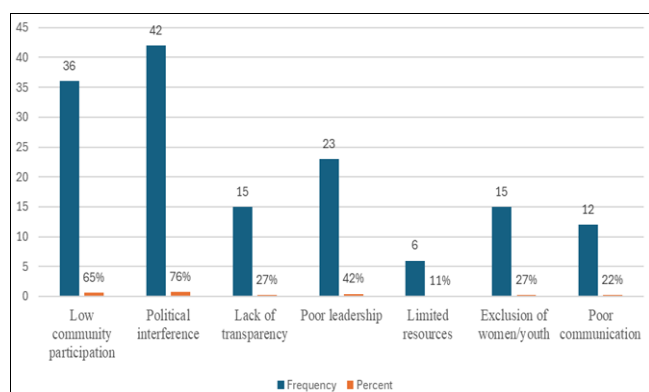
Source: Field Data 2025.

Fig 14: Different Elements and their importance in decision making Summary

The results show that respondents consider transparency and inclusiveness the most important elements of good decision-making, with the majority rating them as highly important (levels 4 and 5). Community feedback mechanisms also received strong support, though slightly less than the top two, indicating that opportunities for community input are valued. Accountability from leaders was seen as important but had more mixed responses, suggesting it may be harder to implement effectively. Overall, the data highlights that open, inclusive, and participatory processes are seen as key to making sound and sustainable decisions.

To Identify Limitations of Ward Decision Making Processes

The researcher also sought to find out limitations of ward decision making processes to find measure to improve. Participants were asked to share the biggest challenge in the ward decision making process.



Source: Field Data 2025.

The data reveals several key limitations affecting ward-level decision-making processes. The most cited issue is political interference (76%), followed closely by low community

participation (65%) and poor leadership (42%), indicating a lack of inclusive and accountable governance. Other significant concerns include lack of transparency and exclusion of women and youth (both at 27%), as well as poor communication (22%). Limited resources (11%) were the least reported limitations. Overall, the findings suggest that political influence and weak community engagement are the main barriers to effective and sustainable decision-making at the ward level.

Conclusion

This final chapter presents the overall conclusions and practical recommendations derived from the findings of the study, which explored the role and participation of Ward Development Committees (WDCs) in the implementation of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects. Building on the analysis presented in Chapter Four, this chapter summarizes the key insights in relation to the three research objectives: (1) evaluating the role of WDCs in CDF project decision-making; (2) assessing the effectiveness of integration between WDCs and CDF management structures; and (3) identifying challenges and opportunities influencing WDC participation in CDF-related decisions. The conclusion section synthesizes the main findings, highlighting how WDCs are perceived as essential actors in grassroots governance and how their involvement impacts the success, transparency, and responsiveness of development projects at the constituency level. It also reflects on the enabling factors that have strengthened their participation, such as stakeholder engagement forums, training, and strong local leadership. The recommendations section offers actionable proposals aimed at policymakers, local authorities, and development partners. These are intended to enhance the functionality and sustainability of WDC participation in the CDF framework, particularly in areas such as institutional capacity, coordination mechanisms, and inclusive community engagement. The chapter closes by emphasizing the critical need for continued support and policy attention to strengthen decentralized governance through empowered and well-integrated WDCs.

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