Perceived benefits and barriers to community participation in development projects – The case of *Hazina ya Maendeleo ya Pwani* on the Kenya coast

Melckzedeck K. Osore[1,2]*, Farida A. Hassan[2], George N. Morara[1,3]

[1] Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, PO Box 81651- 080100, Mombasa, Kenya

[2] Pwani University, Department of Community Development, PO Box 195 - 80108, Kilifi, Kenya

[3] Kisii University, Department of Aquatic and Fisheries Science, PO Box 408 – 40200, Kisii, Kenya

* Corresponding author: babaalmasi@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Benefits and barriers to participating in community development projects as perceived by participants were studied in coastal counties of Kenya through a World Bank-funded initiative known as *Hazina ya Maendeleo ya Pwani* (HMP). Primary data were collected from 326 randomly selected HMP beneficiaries using questionnaires. Data analysis using SPSS prioritized perceived benefits of participation as: acquisition of additional financial support (94 %); development of new skill (90.8 %); enhanced ability to meet own individual needs (90.8 %); development of valuable professional relationships (90.8 %); acquisition of useful knowledge (84.2 %); increased utilization of own expertise (77.9 %); heightened public profile (77.2 %); ability to contribute to community (71.9 %); ability to have greater impact (68.8 %); and enhanced ability to effect public policy (49.1 %). Perceived barriers were prioritized as: feeling unwelcome (89.4 %); lack of information or not knowing (87.9 %); feeling unable to make a difference (87.9 %); demanding work schedule at home or office (69.7 %); inadequate transportation (50.8 %); and concern for safety (43.2 %). The study concluded that while the perceived benefits still strengthen the argument for active involvement of communities, development practitioners need to incorporate "*what's in it for me?*" as an incentive for participation in future. They should also develop context-specific strategies to overcome participation barriers.

Keywords: Community participation, perceived benefits and barriers, community based organizations, *Hazina ya Maendeleo ya Pwani*, Kenyan coast

Introduction

Community participation in development initiatives is regarded as an important strategy that promotes project ownership and sustainable development. This participation has mostly been through common interest groups, such as Community Based Organizations (CBOs), which are voluntary membership groups consisting of individuals structured into self-defined communities. CBOs are seen as non-profit, non-governmental institutions where membership is placed on an equal level and whose main goal is to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of every member (Abegunde, 2004). CBOs serve as a link between citizens and the government and are often thought to be more responsive to community concerns than government agencies or private businesses (Mwaura and Ngugi, 2014). Due to their 'local' nature, CBOs have a better understanding of the needs, priorities and capabilities of the community in which they operate and by communicating these needs and capabilities to the policy makers, they give their communities a voice. CBOs are now increasingly asserting their importance as alternative economic vehicles that will spur development in Africa as they contribute 24 % to

the gross national income of Africa's economy (Bhoke and Mwita, 2016). In Kenya, the numbers of registered CBOs have significantly increased and have now become the key target group for implementing development projects at the grass roots level (Mwaura and Ngugi, 2014). To a certain extent, local communities in Kenya rely on CBOs for the delivery of essential services such as education, health, water, among others.

Benefits of community participation have widely been described in the literature. Reed (2008) for example, highlighted benefits such as improved decision making, increased support and reduced costs as pragmatic benefits of community participation. In addition to these, increased representation, empowerment of marginalized groups, increased trust and promotion of social learning could be achieved. On the contrary, community participation is also associated with some disadvantages including its potential to cause conflict due to the increasing range of perspectives from different participants during decision making. It is expensive and time-consuming because it needs to involve all stakeholders thus leading to trade-offs between the individual interests and motivation for collective action of the group (Olson, 2013). It can also be susceptible to elite capture where wealthier or more powerful individuals gain a disproportionately large share of benefits, increasing inequalities and marginalizing weaker stakeholders (Persha and Anderson, 2014). While there are numerous and well-documented cases illustrating the problematic nature of participatory development, particularly in Africa (e.g. Kilewo and Frumence, 2015; Oketch, 2016; Lekaota, 2016; Osman, 2018; Setokoe and Ramukumba, 2020), there is still general optimism and support for community participation in development. As such, development in the full sense of the word is not possible without appropriate community participation (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000).

Barriers to community participation include poor means of communication, obscure information regarding the roles and responsibilities of the different participants, limited capacity due to lack of training, and insufficient financial resources to support the implementation of their activities (Kilewo and Frumence, 2015). A plethora of factors such as the paternalistic posture of authorities, the prescriptive role of the state, embellishment of successes, selective participation, inter-group conflicts, gate-keeping by leaders, excessive pressures for immediate results and disinterest within the primary beneficiary community

were identified as barriers to community participation (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000). To encourage community participation in development, it is important to understand the principal variables that influence the perception of the local community regarding the barriers and benefits of community participation. As such, measuring subjective views and perceptions of the benefits and barriers of community participation is important to understand why people choose to or not to participate in development initiatives. In the absence of knowing what people perceive as limits to their community involvement, leaders of not-for-profit organizations such as CBOs are left guessing about why people do not participate (Torgerson and Edwards, 2012). This underlines the need to understand community perceptions relating to the benefits and barriers of community participation.

Much of the literature on community participation has focused on clarifying the concept (Chambers, 2007; Hodgkinson, 2004; Stukas and Dunlap, 2002), assessing the good that it does for those who are involved (Liu and Bessar, 2003; McBride *et al.*, 2006), factors affecting participation (Dorsner, 2004), and criticisms and challenges of participatory approaches altogether (Hayward *et al.*, 2004; Cornwall, 2009). While these issues are important, it is also interesting to understand the community's perception regarding the benefits and barriers of community participation. Perceptions are important in measuring human well-being (Woodhouse *et al.*, 2015), understanding and influencing human behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and enlisting stakeholders' support (Gurney *et al.*, 2015) that are critical to community participation in development initiatives. As such, recognizing perceived benefits and barriers of community participation in development is important for the successful implementation and management of government and donor-funded projects. Given the continued popularity of community participation, it is important to understand why people choose to participate in development initiatives, and the perceived benefits and barriers. A good understanding of community's perception of the benefits and barriers to community participation helps community leaders to identify potential challenges and address them, and design appropriate strategies to encourage the members to participate. No study has been conducted to identify the perceived benefits and barriers to community participation in the context of natural resources management and provision of services within coastal Kenya. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to fill this void in research through the

use of a case study of a World Bank-funded community grant facility referred to in Kiswahili as *Hazina ya Maendeleo ya Pwani* (HMP). HMP takes the approach of Community Driven Development (CDD), which emphasizes the handing over of the entire development process, planning decisions and investment resources directly to community groups and the local government (Wong, 2012). Supported projects in resource management included promotion, conservation of and sustainable use of fisheries, forestry and other coastal resources. The supported community services included promoting social wellbeing by constructing early childhood classrooms, and enhancing provision of essential services such as water.

Various approaches have been used to determine individuals' perceptions towards particular programmes or issues. For example, the perceived benefits and barriers to community participation could be determined by administering Likert type questions to the survey respondents (Mpokigwa *et al.*, 2011; Shan, 2012). The individual Likert questions are then analyzed and percentages or frequencies of each item described and presented (Shan, 2012). In the present study, benefits and barriers to community participation were assessed using multi-item measures adapted from the Synergy Model of Weiss *et al.* (2002)

and indices from Khodyakov *et al.* (2011). Benefit of community participation was measured in terms of 10 closed-ended items organized into three main categories comprising capacity building, political impact, and professional development as presented in Table 1. Respondents used a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) to assess their experience of 10 benefits resulting from participating in a community-based project. The barriers to community participation scale comprised six closed-ended items (Table1), which were also scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Materials and methods
Study area
Figure 1 is a map of Kenya (inset) showing the location of the coastal region and the study sites. The study was conducted in all the six coastal counties of Kenya, A total of 150 projects were implemented to completion in Kwale (30), Taita Taveta (32), Mombasa (27), Kilifi (24), Tana River (20) and Lamu (17). Dots therein indicate sites of HMP projects in each county.

The coast region covers an area of 83,603 km² constituting about 11.5 % of the total area of the Republic of Kenya with a coastline of approximately 600 km long. The region is inhabited by a culturally heterogeneous

Table 1. Measuring benefits and barriers of community participation.

Benefits of Community Participation

a. Capacity Building
    1   Development of new skills
    2   Acquisition of useful knowledge about services, programs or people in my community
    3   Ability to have a greater impact than I could have on my own
    4   Enhanced ability to meet own needs

b. Political Impact
    5   Acquisition of additional financial support
    6   Enhanced ability to affect public policy
    7   Heightened public profile

c. Professional development
    8   Development of valuable professional relationship
    9   Ability to contribute to my community
    10   Increased utilization of my expertise or services

Barriers to Community participation

    1   Demanding work schedule at home or office
    2   Inadequate transportation
    3   Feeling unwelcome
    4   Concerns for your safety
    5   Lack of information or not knowing how to begin
    6   Feeling that you can't make a difference

Source: Weiss *et al.*, 2002; Khodyakov *et al.*, 2011.

population with the Mijikenda being the largest ethnic group. Human density along the Kenya coast, with Mombasa leading with 5,495 per km², is higher than in many other parts of the country (Government of Kenya, 2009; KNBS, 2019). More than 57 % of coastal residents are classified as 'very poor', living on less than the international poverty line of 1.9 US\$/day (Ferreira *et al.*, 2015). As documented by KNBS (2019), based on the national poverty line of Kenya Shillings 1,562 (rural) and 2,913 (urban), severity is high in the coast region especially in the counties of Tana River (44 %) and Kwale

disparity in literacy between men and women; with literacy among the later being significantly low in the counties of Kilifi (68 %), Tana River (34 %) and Kwale (57 %) (Government of Kenya, 2008; Hoorweg *et al.*, 2000).

Study population

The target study population comprised the communities living in the coastal region, at that time estimated to be 3.3 million people (KNBS, 2010), and currently 4.3 million (KNBS, 2019). The accessible population was the 2,160 community members drawn from the
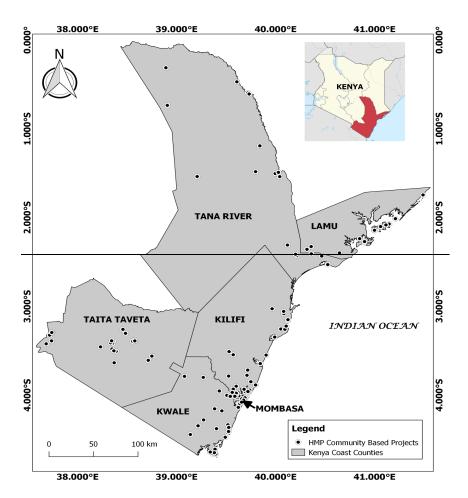

Figure 1. Map of Kenya showing coastal counties and location of HMP projects.
(Source: Modified from Hassan et al., 2020)

(49 %). Regardless, the region is endowed with a variety of resources that support livelihoods and economic development locally and nationally, and form the basis of maintaining the health and function of marine and coastal ecosystems (Ongoma and Onyango, 2014). These resources include mangroves and coastal forests, seagrass meadows, corals, fish and various fauna and flora in the near shore and the open marine environment. The region is also characterized by significant

CBOs that participated in the implementation of HMP and were also the beneficiaries of the same.

Sample size and sampling procedure

A sample size of 326 persons was computed using Ross *et al.* (2002) as illustrated in the Equation below. The proportionate sampling technique was used to get a fair representation of the study sample from each of the six coastal counties. Simple random sampling

techniques were used to obtain the study respondents using a sampling frame obtained from HMP records in the HMP Manual (Aura *et al.*, 2015).

Equation: Computation of study sample

$$n = \frac{NZ^2 \times 0.25}{(d^2 \times (N-1)) + (Z^2 \times 0.25)}$$

Where n = sample size required
N = total population size (known or estimated)
d = precision level (usually 0.05 or 0.10)
Z = number of selected standard deviation units of the sampling distribution corresponding to the desired confidence level

Therefore, the following formula was used to compute the study sample

$$n = \frac{2,160 \times 1.96^2 \times 0.25}{(0.05^2 \times (2,160-1)) + (1.96^2 \times 0.25)}$$

Resulting in n = 326

Data collection
Semi-structured questionnaires with two sections were used to collect primary data. Section I requested demographic information of the participants while Section II was used to identify the benefits and barriers of community participation. Desktop review of previously published and unpublished research, including internet material, was used to obtain secondary data about the study topics. Out of the 326 questionnaires distributed to randomly selected respondents in a face-to-face interview, 285 were correctly filled and returned resulting in a response rate of 87.4 %. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) stipulated that a response rate of 50 % is adequate for analysis and reporting, a response rate of 60 % is good, and a response rate of 70 % is very good. Therefore, the 87.4 % response rate reported for this study formed an acceptable basis for analysis, reporting and drawing conclusions from the data obtained.

Data analysis
SPSS - Version 21 was used to analyze the data while descriptive statistics were used to report on the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Results and discussion
Socio-demographic and cognitive variables
Table 2 shows the distribution of some key socio-demographic variables of the respondents. Results show that more than half of the respondents were female (n = 179; 62.9 %) while 37.1 % were male. This infers that the range of respondents was dominated by females. This information is relevant because women play a vital role in community development projects. About half of the respondents were in the age category of 20-30 years, while 35.6 % were 31-50 years. Regarding the level of education, just over half (n = 158; 55.3 %) of the respondents had primary education. These results are in agreement with Ochiewo (2004) who stated that the level of school dropouts at secondary school level in the coast region is very high. Gender, age, level of education, household size and occupation are among the factors that influence community perceptions of benefits and barriers.

The majority (n = 194; 68.2 %) of the families had a household size of 1-5 people while 30.3 % (n = 86) had 6-10 people. Concerning occupation, the majority of the respondents were either traders (n = 138; 48.5 %) or in both formal and informal employment (n = 114; 40.2 %). Very few respondents practiced farming or fishing.

Perceived benefits of community participation among coastal communities
Benefits of participation among members in community initiatives were evaluated using three parameters namely: a) capacity building; b) political impact; and c) professional development, and further broken down into various sub-categories as presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Table 3 shows evaluation of various sub-categories statements measuring capacity building as a perceived benefit of community participation.

Capacity building as a benefit of community participation
This study evaluated the extent to which capacity building was perceived as a benefit of community participation in development initiatives. Table 3 shows the outcome of the evaluation. Capacity building was measured in terms of a set of parameters comprising 4 statements: development of new skills; acquisition of useful knowledge; ability to have a greater impact in the society; and enhanced ability to meet own needs. The first and fourth statements elicited positive reviews with 90.8 % (n = 259) agreeing that community participation encouraged the **development of new skill** and **enhanced ability to meet own needs** amongst community members. This finding corroborates that of Blackstock *et al.* (2007) that participation may also promote social learning. This is where

Table 2. Distribution of socio-demographic variables (N = 285).

Variables	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	106	37.1
Female	179	62.9
Age		
Below 20	39	13.6
20-30	136	47.7
31-50	101	35.6
Over 50	9	3
Level of Education		
Primary school	158	55.3
High school	110	38.6
College	13	4.5
University	4	1.5
Household size		
1-5	194	68.2
6-10	86	30.3
10-15	4	1.5
Occupation		
Farming	4	1.5
Fishing	2	0.8
Trading	138	48.5
Employment	114	40.2
Other	26	9.1

stakeholders and the wider society in which they live learn from one another. They learn through developing new relationships, building on existing relationships and transforming adversarial relationships as individuals learn about the other's trustworthiness and appreciate the legitimacy of the other's views (Leeuwis and Pyburn, 2002; Stringer *et al.*, 2006).

A large number of respondents, (n = 240; 84.2 %) perceived **acquisition of useful knowledge** as a benefit of community participation. Similar results were reported by Robinson *et al.* (2010) where training and capacity building for communities was an important end goal in itself which can support community participation in development initiatives in the longer term. On the contrary, lack of knowledge about co-management associations in conservation of protected areas, and how to join them have also been identified as factors that limit participation (Ward *et al.*, 2018).

A total of 196 (68.8 %) respondents perceived **ability to have greater impact** on their community as the reason for taking part in a community development initiative. They perceived "greater impact" to mean positive outcomes at community level such as better life, improved access to social services etc. The results of the present study concur with the findings of Uche-Nwachi *et al.* (2018) in which the citizenry highly rated improvement of rural economy and provision of employment as the main reasons for participating in community development projects. Similarly, De Vente *et al.* (2016) reported that meaningful community participation in protected areas is more likely to deliver positive outcomes for livelihoods and biodiversity, although local context is also an important predictor of success.

This therefore means that communities do consider the anticipated outcome of the project prior to choosing to participate or not. The findings correlate with those of Uche-Nwachi *et al.* (2018) who reported that the high percentage of farmers who participated in community development projects is an indicator that the project is based on their felt need. The finding is in congruence with that of Khadka and Nepal (2010) that local communities participate and support activities that they feel will bring them clear tangible and preferable benefits in terms of products or income. Alternatively, greater community participation may be experienced as burdensome, and have negative consequences for the individuals and communities involved if they are not adequately supported or if their expectations are not met (Greene, 2007).

Table 3. Capacity building as a perceived benefit of community participation (N = 285).

Statements measuring a particular perception	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Neutral (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)
Development of new skill	22 (7.7%)	259 (90.8%)	2 (0.7%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)
Acquisition of useful knowledge	45 (15.8%)	240 (84.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Ability to have greater impact	84 (29.5%)	196 (68.8%)	2 (0.7%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)
Enhanced ability to meet own needs	24 (8.4%)	259 (90.8%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)	2(0.7%)

Political impact as a benefit of community participation

This study also assessed political impact as a benefit of community participation. It was measured in terms of acquisition of additional financial support, enhanced ability to affect public policy, and heightened political profile. Table 4 shows responses obtained about perceived benefit from political impact.

The majority of respondents 268 (94 %) agreed that they are likely to participate in a community project if they sensed a likelihood of **acquiring additional financial support** such as through political connections. Respondents described financial support to be in form of increasing financing for their community project or for individual benefit through paid casual labour. This finding is similar to those reported by Ward *et al.* (2018) that participation led to community members obtaining direct benefits from the NGOs such as paid work (e.g., "being a porter and building the new campsite"), training (e.g., "we get training on techniques for farming and growing crops"), and materials (e.g., provision of seeds and farming tools). Given the high poverty level amongst coastal residents and competing basic needs requiring the limited financial resources, the potential to access external financial support seems to be a motivation for individuals to participate in community development initiatives. On the flipside however, drained participants' energy levels as well as time and financial resources are some unintended negative consequences of community participation (Attree *et al.*, 2011).

The notion that community participation **enhanced the ability to affect public policy** drew a different response from the respondents. About half (n = 140, 49.1 %) of the respondents agreed that the view was true while 93 (32.6 %) respondents disagreed. Meaning that respondents do not strongly disagree but generally agree that political impact enhances ability to effect public policy. This finding is congruent with those of Beierle (2002) who reported improved quality of decisions made through addition of new information, ideas and analysis in the majority of the cases where communities participated in environmental decision making. Similar results were reported by Reed (2008) who opined that community participation can enhance the quality of environmental decisions by considering more comprehensive outputs. A significant proportion of the respondents (n = 220, 77.2 %) were of the view that community participation led to a **heightened public profile**. Active participants in community initiatives, inadvertently create future political profiles for themselves.

Professional development as a benefit of community participation

The responses obtained about perceived benefits from professional development is shown in Table 5. Professional development as a benefit of community participation was categorized into three variables comprising: i) development of valuable professional relationship; ii) ability to contribute to my community; and iii) increased utilization of own expertise.

From the study, the majority (90.8 %; n = 259) of the respondents considered **development of valuable professional relationship** as a perceived benefit and incentive for them to participate in community development initiatives. The study findings are paralleled

Table 4. Political Impact as a perceived benefit of community participation (N = 285).

Statements measuring a particular perception	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Neutral (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)
Acquisition of additional financial support	15 (5.3%)	268 (94%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Enhanced ability to affect public policy	4 (1.4%)	140 (49.1%)	48 (16.8%)	93 (32.6%)	0 (0%)
Heightened public profile	28 (9.8%)	220 (77.2%)	13 (4.6%)	24 (8.4%)	0 (0%)

Table 5. Professional development as a benefit of community participation (N= 285).

Statements measuring a particular perception	Strongly Agree (n)	Agree (n)	Neutral (n)	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)
Development of valuable professional relationship	22 (7.7%)	259 (90.8%)	2 (0.7%)	2 (0.7%)	0 (0%)
Ability to contribute to my community	80 (28.1%)	205 (71.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Increased utilization of own expertise	15 (5.3)	222 (77.9%)	15 (5.3%)	32 (11.2%)	0 (0%)

with those of Stringer *et al.* (2006) that participatory processes have the capacity to transform adversarial relationships, learn about others' trustworthiness and appreciate legitimacy of their views (Leeuwis and Pyburn, 2002; Stringer *et al.*, 2006). This finding corroborates that of Blackstock *et al.* (2007) that participation may also promote social learning.

Experimental evidence also suggests that community engagement may benefit a community more widely, in terms of increasing mutual trust and understanding between different population groups (Callard and Friedli, 2005). On the flipside however, Ward *et al.* (2018) argued that participation can expand the range of perspectives in decision-making thus increasing the potential for conflict, and by extension poor relationships amongst community members. Community participation could also be seen as a potentially divisive factor within communities. A number of older Chinese people engaged in service planning, for example, reported that they had experienced disapproval, criticism and even bullying from other community members, who assumed that their primary motive for involvement was financial (Chau, 2007).

The study also revealed that a significant proportion of the respondents (n = 205; 71.9 %) identified the **ability to contribute to their own community** as a perceived benefit of community participation. This was expressed in terms of communities allocating both time and financial resources to the community project, which they would ordinarily not do if they were on their own. The study findings resonate with those of Attree *et al.* (2011) who reported that the majority of individuals who were actively involved in initiatives utilizing community participatory approaches experienced positive benefits, in terms of their self-confidence, self-esteem, social relationships and individual empowerment. Similar results were reported by Taylor *et al.* (2012) that community participation is instrumental as a means to achieve cost-effective, relevant and accessible health services; a priority issue for rural communities in Australia. The present finding is also

in congruence with Okafor (2005) who contended that when communities participate in their own project, there is normally greater transparency and accountability, which enhances service delivery. This is where stakeholders and the wider society, in which they live, learn from each other through the development of new relationships, building on existing relationships and transforming adversarial relationships as individuals.

A significant proportion of the respondents (n = 222; 77.9 %) agreed with the opinion that community participation **increased utilization of one's own expertise**. Retired or even practicing professionals who take time to lend a hand in community projects in their own regions develop their professions and skills further and so does the community they serve.

Barriers to community participation among coastal communities

Gantt bars in Fig. 2 show the responses to a questionnaire relating to perceived barriers to community participation evaluated using six parameters namely: i) concern for safety; ii) demanding work schedule at home or office; iii) feeling that you cannot make a difference; iv) feeling unwelcome; v) inadequate transportation; and vi) lack of information or not knowing. Tabulated responses for each answer from the six questions are attached in the Appendix.

The majority of the respondents (43.2 %; n = 123) disagreed with the opinion that **concern for their safety** was a reason for not participating in community projects. This could be because most of the projects were located within a close geographical area where people are familiar to each other and concerns for their safety is not an issue.

A **demanding work schedule** was of interest to a significant proportion (69.7 %; n = 199) of the respondents who agreed that it was a major barrier among communities and in particular among females. This is especially so because the majority of the respondents were female who also assume other family
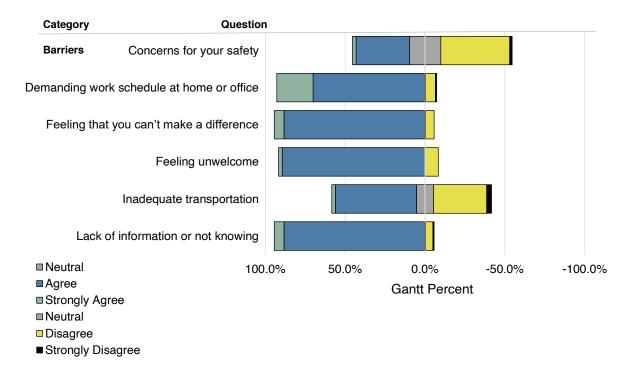
Figure 2. A Gantt bar chart visualizing the Likert scale survey data results of a questionnaire regarding barriers to community participation in development projects. Actual data showing categories of barriers, questions and answers as responded is shown in the Appendix.

responsibilities thus potentially reducing their overall time available for participation in community development initiatives. This is particularly true for single parents and families who work long hours or multiple jobs and therefore prioritize their limited free time to be with their children (McBride *et al.*, 2006). Torgerson and Edwards (2012) reported similar results that time-consuming family obligations disproportionately shouldered by women potentially constrain their participation. As such, the effect of demanding work schedules on a community's willingness to participate in development projects should not be underestimated, because it may work against such projects. Windle *et al.* (2009) stated that besides a demanding work schedule, the timing of community participation events and a lack of support to help particular groups to attend were barriers to community engagement, as different timings suit different groups of people. For instance, conducting community activities over the weekend would be suitable for the working adults and those with school going children while the holiday period would be more suitable for the youth. On the contrary, health managers sometimes rationalize non-participation because they perceive that people in small communities lack sufficient time, might become fatigued and eventually drop out (Brunger and Wall,

2016). The study findings are contrary to those of Mattingly and Bianchi (2003) who reported that in spite of the absence of work commitments, the unemployed individuals may find themselves struggling to maintain their livelihoods and having little free time to participate in community work. The results also contradict those of Wilson (2000) who opined that the employed are linked to greater social networks and may therefore be exposed to a wider range of possible volunteer activities to participate in.

The respondents gave their views on their perception of **"feeling that you cannot make a difference"** as a barrier to community participation. A significant majority (87.9 %; n = 250) of the respondents felt that this was true (agree). This could be caused by the technical nature of some of the community projects where most of the respondents felt that they cannot effectively contribute to the development and execution of community projects due to their low education (primary) level. This is supported by the socio-demographic findings (Table 2) that shows more than half (55 %; 158) of the respondents attained only primary school as their highest level of education. Similar results were reported by Stephen (2005) who argued that community members with less education may not feel that

they can effectively contribute to processes that require extensive technical knowledge or civic skills. The study finding could also be because those in leadership positions do not take views of their less educated members leading to a seriously sense of cynicism towards the overall value of community participation. The feeling that one cannot make a difference could also be due to lack of capacity resulting from factors such as limited understanding and language skills, low confidence and self-esteem (White and Woodward, 2013).

Feeling unwelcome when participating in community projects was also a concern for a majority (89.4 %; n = 255) of the respondents. In their view, the respondents reported that the CBO leadership makes most of the decisions leaving the rest of the members as silent observers. This feeling mostly occurs in situations where there is poor relationship amongst community members or even between community members and the staff charged with the responsibility of overseeing project implementation. Some of the respondents cited cases of discrimination and exclusion by development practitioners and CBO leadership, which altogether contributed to their perception of not feeling welcomed, hence making their participation rather difficult. This finding correlates with those of Carlisle (2010) who reported that a history of poor relations between communities and engaging agencies could make it difficult to get community members to participate in development initiatives and to keep communities on-board. Similar results were reported by Robinson *et al.* (2010) that specific groups in the society described as stigmatized, isolated, marginalized or vulnerable comprising young people, older people, and ethnic minority groups, end up feeling unwelcome and as such finding it difficult to participate in development initiatives. This feeling of being unwelcome needs to be addressed because it could lead to local participants feeling disappointed and thus affecting their overall contribution to community work.

Inadequate transportation was identified as a perceived barrier to community participation by 50.8 % (n = 145) of the respondents. Access to transport services was considered difficult in areas where public transportation services are not reliable and with households dispersed and not easily accessible. However, 33.3 % (n= 95) of the respondents felt that transportation was not a barrier to community participation, probably because their households are not that dispersed and the community initiatives are located near to their homes. This finding contradicts Hartell (2008) who provided evidence from a social capital benchmark survey indicating that inadequate transportation is a barrier to community involvement.

The last aspect to be tested related to the barriers to community participation was the **lack of information or not knowing** what the project is all about. Most of the respondents (87.9 %; n = 250) agreed with the hypothesis that a major barrier to community participation in projects is the lack of information about it. Regardless of their enthusiastic participation in HMP projects, some community members require more time to grasp the details of the concepts, possibly due to limited command of English. Lack of information may also emerge from non-clarity of what the project is all about and the specific role of participating individuals. This finding resonates with those of Torgerson and Edwards (2012) that lack of information prevents community members from being as involved in development initiatives as they would wish. Similar findings were reported by Robinson *et al.* (2010), who stated that low levels of awareness and lack of understanding bar effective community participation. This is particularly true for those with limited education who may not feel that they can effectively contribute to processes that require extensive technical knowledge or civic skills (Stephan, 2005). For this reason, communicating the goals and expected outcomes of the development project clearly from the outset, and being transparent about the process aids effective community participation (Hatamian *et al.*, 2012). As such, providing a clear explanation of the purpose of community participation ensures 'buy-in' from participants, especially those who could not initially see why they were being involved.

Conclusions

This research gives insight on the human dimension of coastal communities in the localities where HMP was implemented, and contributes to capacity development and outreach. The results prioritized perceived benefits of community participation in HMP as: (i) acquisition of additional financial support; (ii) development of new skill; (iii) enhanced ability to meet own individual needs; (iv) enhanced ability to address important community issues; (v) development of valuable relationships; (vi) increased utilization of own expertise; (vii) heightened public profile; (viii) ability to contribute to community; (ix) ability to have greater impact; and (x) ability to influence public policy. The results suggest that whereas the welfare of the general community seems to be the main driver

of community participation, personal benefits appear to be an important factor considered by individuals when deciding to participate. The implication of this finding is that development practitioners of projects similar to HMP may need to consider and incorporate "*What's in it for me*" as an incentive for community members to participate.

Perceived barriers to community participation in HMP projects were prioritized as: (i) feeling unwelcome; (ii) lack of information or not knowing; (iii) feeling unable to make a difference; (iv) demanding work schedule at home or office; (v) inadequate transportation; and vi) concern for one's safety. The implication of these findings is the importance of informing members fully about the project goals and benefits, preferably during pre-implementation training, their specific role, and agreeing on a convenient time for community members to participate in order to overcome potential barriers.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that while the study findings might not be transferable to other settings partly due to limited analyses; successful community participation in development work similar to HMP may be contingent upon enhancement of the perceived benefits to incentivize community participation. In the same spirit, development practitioners may need to take cognizance of the perceived barriers with a view to develop context specific strategies that overcome the perceived barriers to community participation. On this basis, the perceived benefit still strengthens the argument for active involvement of communities in development initiatives.

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APPENDIX

Response to the six questions regarding perceived barriers to community participation in projects.

Question	Answer	Respondents	Percent (%) Respondents
Concerns for your safety	Strongly Agree	6	2.3
	Agree	95	33.3
	Neutral	56	19.7
	Disagree	123	43.2
	Strongly Disagree	4	1.5
Demanding work schedule at home or office	Strongly Agree	65	22.7
	Agree	199	69.7
	Neutral	2	0.8
	Disagree	17	6.1
	Strongly Disagree	2	0.8
Feeling that you can't make a difference	Strongly Agree	17	6.1
	Agree	250	87.9
	Neutral	2	0.8
	Disagree	15	5.3
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Feeling unwelcome	Strongly Agree	6	2.3
	Agree	255	89.4
	Neutral	0	0
	Disagree	24	8.3
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
Inadequate transportation	Strongly Agree	6	2.3
	Agree	145	50.8
	Neutral	30	10.6
	Disagree	95	33.3
	Strongly Disagree	9	3.0
Lack of information or not knowing	Strongly Agree	17	6.1
	Agree	250	87.9
	Neutral	2	0.8
	Disagree	13	4.5
	Strongly Disagree	2	0.8