

ABSTRACT

The Government of Kenya and non-governmental organizations have promoted interventions or projects aimed at improving water situations in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands though with some low level of sustainability. Initiating projects to ease accessibility to water in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands is a good cause; however, without proper planning and integrated approach that ensures sustainability of water sources and its accessibility, such projects will not have lasting impact. This project studied the influence of community participation in improving the sustainability of the water projects in the target area. There is need to understand why there are numerous water projects being implemented in Kitengela yet water shortages persist. The objectives were set as: to establish the capacity of water management committees, to assess the level of community participation and to examine the factors hindering community participation in community water projects in Kitengela Division. Descriptive survey design and observation methodology was used to collect research data. The target population was 12,000 households with a sample size of 396. The project management to participate in the study was selected through simple random sampling while the Non-Governmental Organizations/Community Based Organizations staff and government officers were purposively selected. Descriptive statistics was used and the data collected edited, coded and analyzed using SPSS. The study showed that the capacity building focused on the water management committees does not fully include the ordinary community member in order to operate and maintain the water systems on their own. The study also found out that the community was only involved partially, the community was involved at identification stage but in subsequent stages, consultations were minimal. Equally, most community members said that they had experienced various challenges during participation in project activities and that influenced sustainability of projects. In investigating capacity building for the water management committees to ensure sustainability, the study established that, the policy used should be adapted to suit the needs of the people and to include monitoring and evaluation. Sustainability was inadequately addressed during the initial stages of project identification. For a water project to be sustainable, sense of ownership must be instilled, participation must be promoted and even sharing costs must be addressed. The study also revealed that lack of information, lack of capable local organization/leadership and lack of resources are some of the challenges facing community participation. It is therefore recommended that proper training and technical support at all levels and for all groups engaged in water project implementation and management should be given priority, at the same time the community should be involved or mobilized so as to build interest in sustaining the initiated water projects.