

Assesment of Mtwara rural district local community participation in natural gas projects

Edita Melkiory Assey

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The study assessed the nature of Mtwara Rural District local community participation in natural gas projects. Specifically it examined the perception of local community on natural gas, investigated activities that local communities do in the natural gas projects, established factors influencing community participation in natural gas projects and evaluated benefits which local community get from natural gas investment. A case study design was adopted within a framework of mixed method approach. A total of 163 individual households were involved in a social survey. In-depth interviews and focus discussions involved village executive officers key informants from natural gas industry and elderly people in the study villages. Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis to report the main content and messages from the data while quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics giving frequencies and percentages.

The findings indicate that majority of the local people perceived natural gas projects negatively. Low level of education and limited participation contributed to the negative perception. However, there was some of activities in which local community were involved like site preparation, carrying equipment, security officers and building construction. Also study revealed that level of education influenced participation especially those who were non-educated feared to participate while some of those who had formal education were free to participate in the natural gas projects. It is revealed that, inadequate awareness, low level of education, negative perceptions, favouritism and corruption also hinder local community participation in natural gas projects.

VEOs and employees in the natural gas projects revealed that there were benefits which local community accrued from natural gas as few schools were renovated, market were built, and room for maternal care was built as a result of natural gas investment in the study villages. Respondents at households' level however, indicated that though there were some benefits from natural gas projects the local people in the study villages were still suffering with several problems like

shortage of water supply, poor transport and communication as well as poor schools and hospitals. Spread of HIV AIDS and environmental pollution were some of costs associated with natural gas projects in the study area.

It is important to improve social service (road transport, electricity supply, employment opportunity, water supply, schools building, building and renovate hospitals, and local markets; training) as capacity building in both local community and their leaders to increase awareness about natural gas among them; and increasing participation of local community in natural gas projects. Government and natural gas investors should create conducive environment for local community participation in natural gas projects, benefits sharing and ensuring adequate fair compensation in case of any loss of village land and other properties due to investment on natural gas projects.