

Community Participation in Development Planning and Implementation in Rural Sierra Leone: A Case Study of Kailahun District

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Corresponding Author: Mohamed Kaifala Jimmy M Pil Candidate, Institute of Geography and Development Studies, School of Environmental Sciences, Njala University	Abstract: Community participation in decisions that have to do with planning and the implementation of development projects in Sierra Leone has been neglected for far too long; and more studies have ascertained the veracity or fact regarding this. This study was undertaken to investigate and have a detail assessment of community participation in development planning and implementations in rural communities in Sierra Leone. The objectives of the study were the examining of the knowledge of the rural people about decentralization on the one hand, investigating their participation in decision process towards development. Data were collected from 400 respondents selected purposive and systematic random sampling techniques using a structured questionnaire to collect data from households and semi-structured questionnaire to collect data from key informants. Data was analysed using statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) and correlation using regression. (Carefully arrange these sentences) Result indicated that there was not much knowledge about decentralisation owing to the little or less participation of the people and their service providers in decision-making regarding development but also the non-engagement; and which has inevitably resulted in severe socio-economic deprivation- particularly in the context of basic services in the rural communities. Keywords: Stakeholders' Participation In Development Planning And Implementations: A Case Study Of Kailahun District.
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Introduction

The lack of community participation in rural development implementation is posing a serious threat in development administrations in rural communities around the world. It was observed that the involvement of community stakeholders into the governance of the communities would yield a better fruit in the delivery of services that will offer communities better living conditions. To enhance the participation of communities, many governments around the world have resolved to adopting decentralization; and which, they believe, would bring about improvement in the governance of communities

Today, many countries around the globe embrace and adopt decentralization as an integral principle in governance: and they hold the conviction that positive and sustainable socio-economic improvement is bound to occur where and when a nation allows its gubernatorial system to be absolutely characterized by the principles of decentralization.

In fact, many pundits particularly those in the domain of political science consider it a system of governance that strongly advocates for inclusiveness to enhance the total participation of the grass root, and whose involvement in statecraft or national governance will augment the social service delivery on the one hand, strengthening good governance on the other hand. Expected of this study nonetheless, is the contextual analysis of participation in decentralization around the rural communities of Sierra Leone
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Decentralization can be considered a governance system with an embodiment of the central government devolved powers, functions and responsibilities with strategic plans that can positively reflect the sensibility of the governed particularly in terms of demand yearning or expectation for improvement in life and in consonance with contemporary global socio-economic development standards (Irtysheva et al 2021). As a system of governance, that is gaining increasing acceptance globally (World Bank Report 2014). It is believed that policy arrangements in such a system of governance will make room for an improvement in the provision of social services in developing countries in particular. It has helped in the promotion of local participation in development planning to ensure equitable distribution of resources for the development of local economies.

The policy of decentralization gives much room to the full participation of citizens in the making of decisions that involves the development of their communities. Citizens' participation can make room for a much higher level of accountability and transparency, thereby necessitating actions or measures that can enhance the fight against corruption- stemming from reduction and culminating to obliteration (Kamal and Arifin 2019). For as much as ideas or views of many pundits, comprehending philosophers, social engineers etc. embedded in several publications consulted so far have maintained affirmatively that decentralization can rapidly



develop the local economies of nations. policy designers’ beer not only the onus but also the fiduciary responsibility for the making in their decisions and policy making plans for the provision of resources in their ardent drive towards the development of their communities (Haelg, Sewerin and Schmidt 2019)

Decentralization has gained the support of many stakeholders in governance such as local politicians, ethnic groups and diverse sets of people. It has been viewed as a very significant transformation strategy that will help in the provision of social services where the centralized systems could not (Islam and Ahmed 2015). According to Kassen (2021) decentralization is seen as most suitable for the development of communities in Africa. International organizations, donors, civil societies and citizens resolved to governance through decentralization as a system that best suit development implementations in Africa. This was as a result of the exposure of the weaknesses of the centralization system of governance.

A lot of social groups have been sidelined in critical decision matters. In Africa, it was mainly as a result of pressure from the majority who at the same time felt marginalized by their central governments. The feeling of marginalization emanated from exclusion of the grass root in critical decisions that has so much to do with their livelihood and rendered them little or no stake in the decisions that affect their wellbeing, Christopher and Everest (2022).

This study is aimed at the examining of stakeholders’ participation in critical decisions-making processes that determine the design and method of implementation of development projects for the achievement of the desired goals.

Does decentralization bring any improvement on the level of knowledge the people had on service delivery? How much impute has been made by the community stakeholders in critical decisions?

Methodology

Research employed a mixed method where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data was collected with the use of well-structured questionnaire to collect data from households that were selected using systematic sampling. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed to collect data from key informants who were selected from the local government departments, the education, health and water sectors respectively. The household survey was done in five main chiefdoms of Jahn, Kpeje-West, Kpeje-Bongre, Upper-Bambara and Luawa that were purposively selected in Kailahun District as indicated on the maps below.



Figure 1 A map of Sierra Leonre indicating the location of Kailahun District

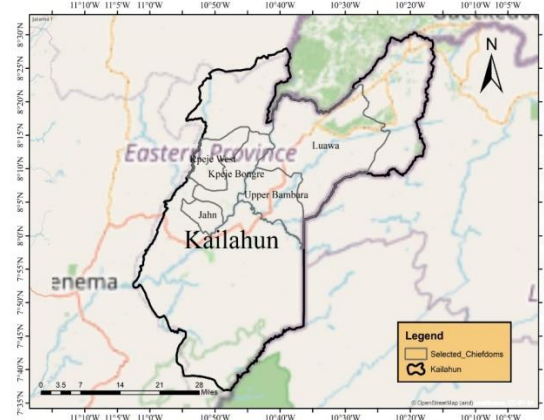


Figure 2. A Map Showing Kailahun District indication the chiefdoms where data was collected

Kailahun district is situated in the eastern regions of Sierra Leone; and shares boundaries with the Republic of Guinea to the north (and with the Moa river forming part of it), the Republic of Liberia to the east, the Kono district to the north and the Kenema district to the west respectively. The district has a total land area of 3,940km² with a population of 550,435 (Census 2021) with 75,00-80,000 households. Household population of the selected chiefdoms is 37,481.

To seek the perception or opinion (and with experience) of households about the implementation of development programs or projects, eighty (80) questionnaire was administered in each of the chiefdoms respectively; and giving a grand total 400 administered around the entire district.

Table 1: display distribution of respondents per chiefdoms

	Chiefdom	No sections	No of sections selected in each C/Dom	No of communities selected	Total of households in chiefdom	No of households selected for interview
1	Luawa	10	6	7	18,983	80
2	Upper-Bambara	4	4	4	8,650	80
3	Peje-West	5	4	4	4,698	80
4	Peje-Bongre	6	4	4	3,530	80
5	Jahn	5	4	5	1,627	80

Author’s field report 2015

The KII was conducted among 28 respondents. There were 3 respondents from the Ministry of Education, 3 respondents from the Ministry of Health and 2 respondents from the Ministry Water Resources. Interview was conducted among 14 staff from the district local council and 6 councilors from the political wards.

First, purposively sampling was done selected the five chiefdoms in Kailahun District. Next, communities were selected within each chiefdom to make sure the sample had good geographic spread, a random sampling was used to select households for a face-to-face interview. Finally, our enumerators approached households in each community for an interview with head or a representative. This gave a final sample of 400 respondents, in line with the sampling logic used in comparable community-level studies in Sierra Leone.

Analysis

Ethical consideration was done for the collection of social science data. A formal engagement with community heads were done for every community and due permissions were sought from every individual where motive was explained before start of interview.

KII was narrative interpreted for analysis.

Variables used for correlation analysis of participation and awareness of communities development projects included with responds’ sex, education and employment status as predictors

Result and Discussion

Socio-demographics of respondents

Table 2 above present data on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents ranging from sex, age, educational status and employment status and income situation of respondents. It begins by displaying that, we surveyed 400 community household heads across the five chiefdoms. Just over half 53% were male and just under half 47% were female. The Key Informant (KI) Interview took place among 28 respondents with 20 males and 8 females.

Their ages ranged from 18 to 75 years, with a mean of 37.3 (SD = 10.5) and a median of 37. The age distribution leans towards

younger and middle-aged adults, which is what we would expect for the working-age population of the area. This is in line with Arsian et al (2020) who said that 1 billion of the world’s 2 billion youth population is found in developing countries and the youth share is rising rapidly which will lead to the challenge of understanding the approaches towards their affairs. This research was done in one of the world’s developing countries in the sub-Saharan Africa. The educational picture stands out as a particular concern, 66% of respondents had no formal education at all. Only 13% had finished secondary school, and just less than 1% of respondents had tertiary qualifications. This pattern reflects the wider state of rural access to educational, where decades of underinvestment and the legacy of the civil war continue to limit schooling opportunities. Most 75% of the respondents earned their living through self-employment. It was discovered that most of the respondents earn their living mainly through subsistence farming or small-scale trading. 22% were unemployed, and only 4% respondents held formal salaried jobs. Together, these characteristics describe a rural population with limited formal schooling and limited access to formal employment the kind of context where decentralised service delivery, if it works well, has the most to offer. As argued by Kantagora and Onyemaechi (2025). one way to enhance improvement in the income situation of a community people is through the provision of social services. The income situation of the respondents with highest 38% whose daily income falls within le 51-le100, second 35% of respondents whose daily income fall within le1-le24 while the least 27 % whose daily income fall within le25-le50

Knowledge of decentralisation and services delivery

The implementation of decentralization is largely anchored on the delivery of social service for people of a third world country like Sierra Leone. It is obvious that their knowledge about service delivery requires investigating and will awake their knowledge of decentralisation.

The provision of such knowledge largely hinges on the effective functioning of their local representatives and the institutions that are concerned. It will further enhance their awareness about service delivery.

Table 2 Distribution of respondents whether they had knowledge of decentralisation in the study area.

Knowledge	Frequency	Percent
No	145	36.5
Yes	262	65.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Authors Field Data 2025

Table 2 above displays. a significant number (62.5%) of respondents have knowledge about decentralisation while there is (36.2%) of respondents do not have knowledge of decentralisation.

Whether household heads can state the type of services that the council implement.

The household heads were asked to state their knowledge of services delivery undertaken by the district council in Kailahun District. The finding is presented in table 4 below.

Table 3 Distribution of respondents whether they had knowledge of development implementations in the study area.

Knowledge	Frequency	Percent
No	139	34.8
Yes	261	65.2
Total	400	100.0

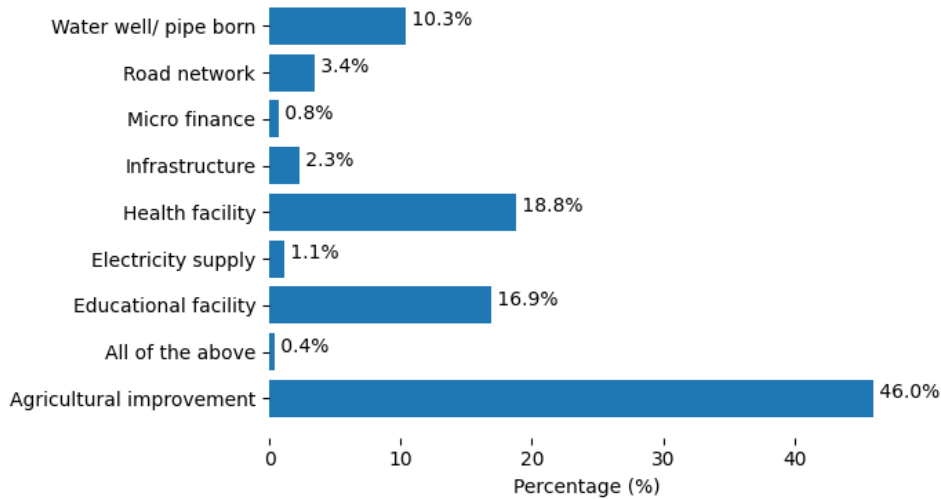
Source: Authors Field Data 2025

Table 3 above displays knowledge of development projects that were ongoing and or that were completed in the communities. A significant number 65.2% agreed to state developments projects that were implemented while there were others that were in progress. There is 34.8% of respondents that denied knowledge of neither ongoing projects nor completed projects for a long time now precisely 5 years. However, this seem to be in line with Masiya et al (2019) who said that main challenge often faced in the provision of social services to rural communities is lack of knowledge about service delivery.

Types of development projects implemented

The household heads were further asked to state which services or projects that they know the council is implementing in the study area. The findings are presented in the figure below. The indications from the respondents displays that, there were development implementations of various types that they are aware of. Below is what was implemented.

KII indicates that there is implementation of development services undertaken while a lot under implementation in the district that will bring improvement to the livelihood of the people in the rural communities.



Source: Author’s Field Data 2025

Figure 3 Distribution of development projects ongoing

Figure 4 above display result on list of the development services that were going on in the communities. The highest among them 46% of respondents said it was agriculture. This is in line with Claude and Mango (2021) who stated that a significant improvement in development administration is in the provision of agricultural extension in rural communities. All other evidences seem to contradict (Nickson and Cutting who confirm improvements in service delivery in decentralisation such as Second 18% said it was health facility was provided, third 16.9%)

said it was education, while fourth 10.3%) said it was water resource fifth 3.4%) said it was road network, sixth 2.3%) said it was infrastructure and Seventh 1.1%) said it was electricity supply.

Whether council engages with the community members in executing services

The implementation of the decentralisation policy was to have a local council that will be at the central of the governance of the communities. The policy emphasis that their operation is crucial because it should be done hand in hand with the community people.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by whether council engages with the community members in executing development services

Options	Frequency	Percent
No	160	40.0
Yes	240	60.0
Total	400	100.0

Source: Authors Field Data 2025

Table 5 above shows that 60%) of the respondents were involved in an engagement about services delivery with the local councils while 40%) of them denied any involvement in any engagement about service delivery. Engagement could be regarded as a more tangible way of having knowledge about something.

While we have the KII data display ineffectiveness in community engagement with the highest number 14 of them that took a neutral position on that, 12 who said there was a very effective community engagement, 4 of them said that community engagement was very ineffective. However, this seem to conform

with (Christopher & Everest 2022) who have over the past discovered a gap in literature pointing out that, there was still a challenge in the translation of policy into action by local government staff.

Development projects within the last five years

In evaluating impact, research chose to have specific period of time-frame within which development implementations should be measured to assess an impact. Study chose to make an evaluation of service delivery within the last five years in the district. This analysis was done to examine the knowledge of the

people about the delivery of social services in the rural communities within the last five years. This was done to assess how much households can testify the rate at which they have benefitted from the delivery of service in the immediate past of just five years. In the local government policies, it is clearly outlined in the provisions that there should be guarantee of access to the basic

needs of communities at least to a minimum level of service provision to the local communities, Masiya and Mangai (2019). This serves as a justification for this study to take a look into the implementation of specific service provisions within the rural communities.

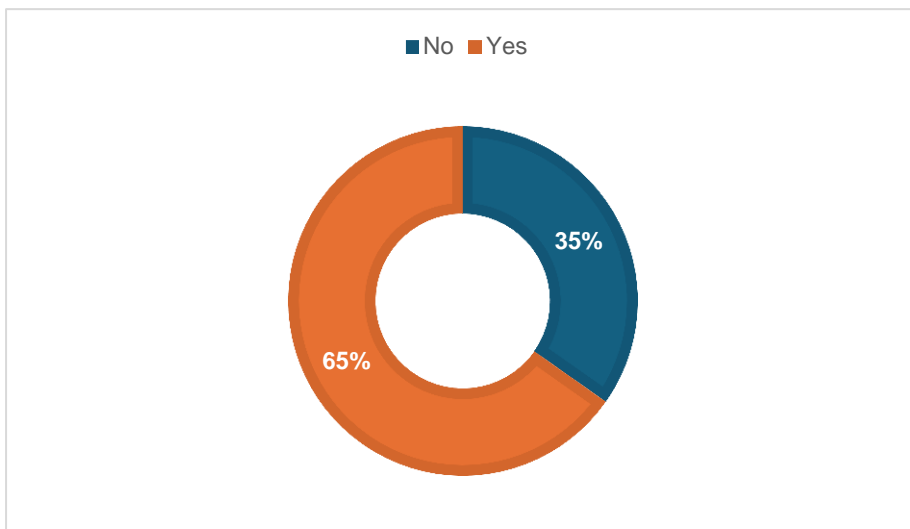


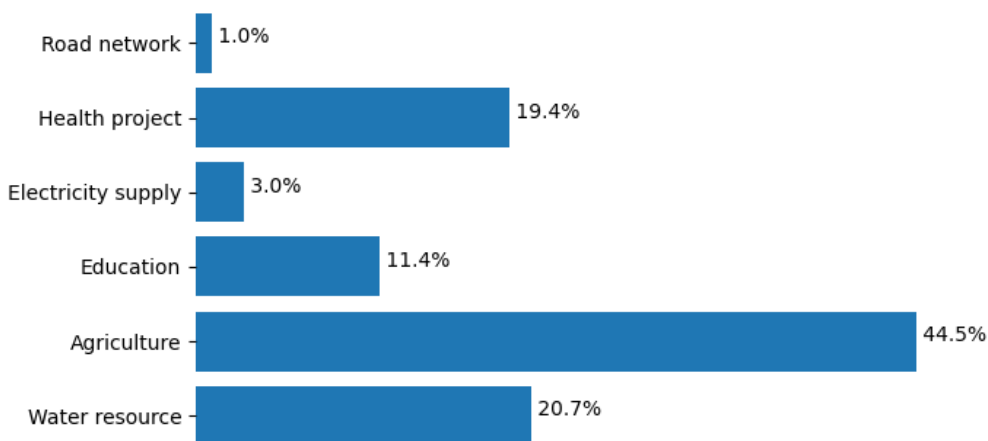
Figure 4 Distribution of knowledge respondents’ knowledge of development Projects in the Last Five Years.

Source: Authors Field Data 2025

Figure 3 above indicates that a significant number 65% of respondents are aware of development interventions in the communities in the last five years while 35%) of them said there is no development project ongoing in the communities. This indicates that there is still a very good number of community members who are somehow left out in community participation.

Specific development projects implemented

Household interviews were conducted to highlight the various types of development projects that have been implemented in the rural communities in the district over the past 5 years.



Source: Authors Field Data 2025

Figure 5 list of specific projects implemented in the communities

figure 5 above display the highest 44.5% selected agricultural implementations, second 20.7% said health, third 19.4% said education, fourth 11.4% said water resources, fifth 3 % electricity supply, sixth 1% said road network. As it has been

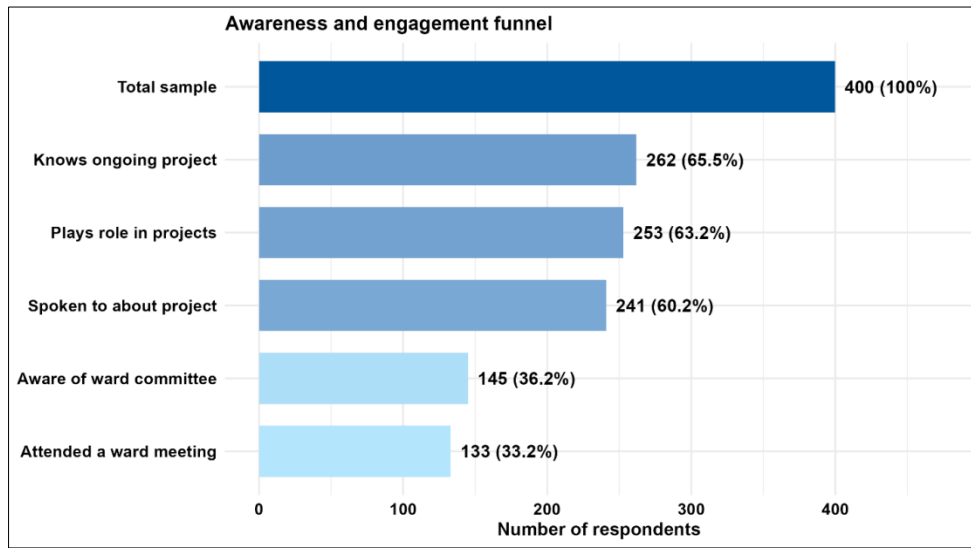
reported by Claudia and Mango (2021) that administrative decentralization has produced a significant increase in the provision of services like agricultural extension for rural communities that have helped to narrow the gap in livelihood sufficiency.

In the KII, a significant number n= 16 said it has a positive

effect on service delivery, 9 of them said very positive while 2 of them chose to be neutral.

Awareness and engagement funnel across survey

This section addresses the first research objective from two angles. First, how widespread is awareness of development projects in these communities? Second, which kinds of people are most likely to be aware?



Source: Author’s field data

Figure 6: Awareness and engagement funnel across the survey sample

Patterns of Awareness and Engagement

The awareness funnel tells a clear story (figure 6). Of the 400 respondents, 65.5% (n = 262) knew of an ongoing project in their community, and 60.2% (n = 241) had been spoken to about a project. From there, however, engagement levels fell sharply. Only 36.2% (n = 145) were aware of the existence of a development committee, and just 33.2% (n = 133) had ever attended a development-committee meeting. In other words, information about projects circulates fairly well, but participation in the formal local-government structures set up by decentralisation remains thin

on the ground. This is in line with Masiya et al (2019) who said that a major challenge in rural communities is the provision of social services.

Knowledge about project implementations

These findings make sense in context. Schooling builds reading skills and exposure to public information channels. Self-employment — typically as a market trader or smallholder farmer keeps people circulating in public spaces where project information spreads. The implication for policy is straightforward. Projects that rely only on word-of-mouth or written notices will reach the educated and the self-employed first, while those without these advantages will be left out of the loop.

Table 5: Predictors of awareness of ongoing development projects (binary logistic regression, N = 395)

Predictor	OR	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value	Sig.
Female (vs Male)	0.832	0.532	1.306	0.4227	Ns
Education	2.516	1.257	5.399	0.0125	*
Self-employed	2.578	1.564	4.277	0.0002	***
Age (years)	1.011	0.990	1.034	0.3083	Ns

Note. *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, ns = not significant. Highlighted (yellow) rows are statistically significant; OR > 1 indicates higher odds, OR < 1 indicates lower odds. McFadden Pseudo R² = 0.05.

Two predictors stood out as the strongest drivers of project awareness. Respondents with secondary or tertiary education were about 2.5 times more likely to be aware of an ongoing project than those with less education (OR = 2.52, 95% CI: 1.26–5.40, p = 0.012). Self-employed respondents were similarly advantaged: their odds of awareness were about 2.6 times higher than those of other respondents (OR = 2.58, 95% CI: 1.56–4.28, p < 0.001). Sex and age, on the other hand, made no significant difference.

participation. If so then this data presents a contradiction with Aye (2015) who said that decentralization came to make inclusion of the community population that was previously excluded from engagements such as youths, women, children, aged and more.

However, KII indicates that the delivery of social services was mostly taken place in consultation with the local people. The consultation of the resident’s data display that 27 of them said there was a mechanism of making consultations in the implementation of development project. One of them even wrote that “by engaging with the communities to explain their felt needs”

This displays that, there is still a significant number of community people who are still being excluded in development

anytime a development project is about to be implemented while 1 of the respondents denied any consultation.

It was observed that most of the community members of Kailahun district mostly get their information from workers of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). What remains a challenge is the appropriateness of their messages with decentralization and the services delivery under investigation. It was reported that an increase in citizens' participation will increase civic engagement which will result in creating a platform that will enhance prompt response to development problems (Kassen 2021). Their messages are mostly skewed towards their intervention areas. For e.g., an NGO that is with an intervention on public health will have their messages focusing on community health and not any other area. However, it was widely accepted by KIs especially from within the local councils that it was part of their duty to advance knowledge about service delivery.

This is in line with Claude and Mango (2021) who reported that administrative decentralization has produced a significant increase in the provision of services like agricultural extension for

rural communities that have helped to narrow the gap in livelihood sufficiency.

Stakeholder Participation in the Decentralisation Process in the Study Area

This section seeks to investigate the stakeholders' participation in planning, designing and implementation of projects in rural communities.

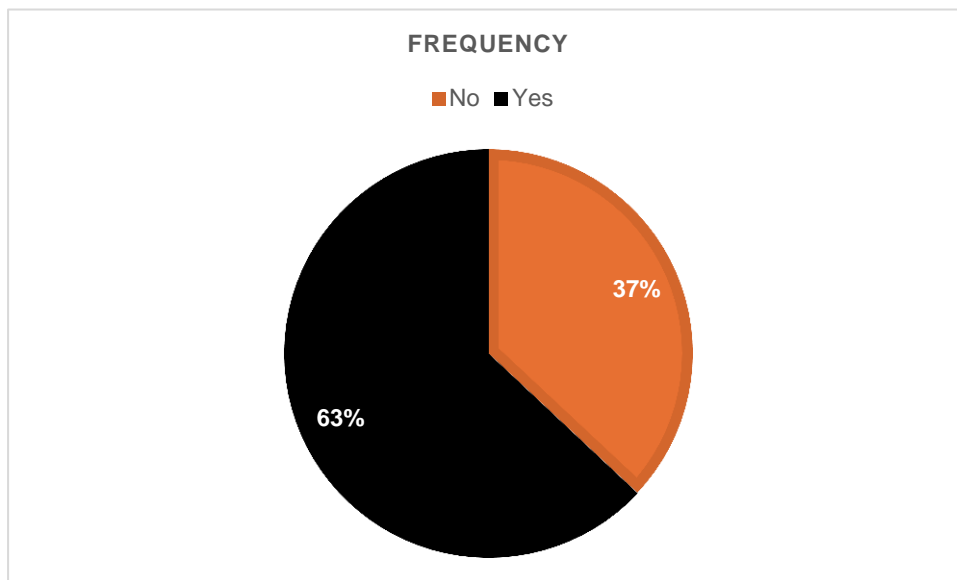
Whether households participate in design and implementation of development projects

In the implementation of development project, it is expected that there should be an input done by all stakeholders' concern. Whether this is what it takes in the implementation of development projects in the rural communities requires an investigation.

Categories of participatory engagement

The placement of participation into categories is strongly required in this study.

Figure 7 distribution of respondents' participation rate



Source: Authors Field Data 2025

Table 7 above indicates that a significant number (n=252, 63%) of respondents have been participating in development planning and implementation while (n=148, 37%) denied any participation.

This might be possible due to the fact that farming activities of some respondents might serve as deterrent to their participation in community meetings. This is in line with Bosch et al (2024) they stated that there is a transformation in the mode and processes of community decision making process that has enhanced participation of the majority. However, there is still more room for improvement in the participation of grassroot people. This is in line with (Royle and Atkinson 2025) who said that the ability of the grass root to assert pressure from below is still very limited.

In the KII data, it is indicated that a high number 27 responded said that there is improvement in the provision of services in the district while only 1 said there is no improvement. In community governance, it is expected that an improvement in participation will create improvement in the delivery of services as stated by (Kamal 2019). However, there was a further assessment of how these individuals participated in the planning and implementation of these projects.

How participation have been taking place

A major reason for the enactment of decentralisation is to bring governance closer to the community people. It is expected that the participation of communities will improve once their political representatives are at their door step. Research made and investigation into the kinds of participations that has been going on among the community people.

Figure 8 distribution of how participation have been taking place



Source: Authors Field Data 2025

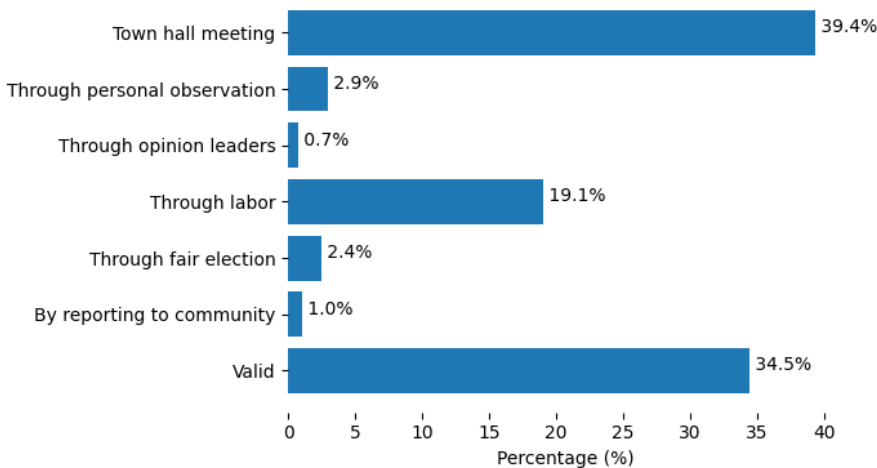
Figure 8 above indicates that the highest 83.3% said their own mode of participation was to provide labor which is a very critical part of project implementation. 5.2% said they do counterpart funding, 4.4% said they attend project planning meetings, 4% said they were involved in project need assessment, 2% said they do community mobilization for need assessment, 0.8% said they do project monitoring. In support of this, Elmi (2014) supported that decentralization offers a wider participation of the people in the running of their affairs through elected representatives who will ensure equitable distribution of resources and wealth.

The study further assessed what were their functions in the particular nature of participation that they did in the implementation of projects.

The mode of involvement in the participations

Community people always have diverse mode participation that takes place in development implementations, research is interested in knowing how all these participation goes.

Figure 9 roles in community in sustainable utility of the services provided



Source: Authors Field Data 2025

Figure 9 above indicates that the highest 40.3% said they have been involved through town hall meeting, second 19.5% said through labor, third 3% said through personal observation, fourth 1% said it was by reporting to community, fifth .8% said through opinion leaders, while .3% said through fair election.

Role of the community in Sustainable utilization of the development projects

In any development where there is participation from the people, there will be community ownership of that project. This

study seeks to examine how community ownership took place in the utilization of these projects. It should be taken into cognizance that, actual participation of community member enhances service output and putting into effect the decisions that will span from planning. There were times when projects were imposed on the people without hearing from them about their needs. Such projects have hardly succeeded as the acceptance rate from the people was always very low. Such situations have led to neglect of these services.

Table 6 roles in community in sustainable utility of the services provided

Types of utility	Frequency	Valid Percent
Careful utility of facility	70	26.1
Pay running cost	136	50.7
Payment of tax	6	2.2
Responsibility for maintenance of facility	56	20.9
Total	268	100.0
Total	400	100

Source: Authors Field Data

Table 6 above, the highest 50.7%, stated that, they have been doing payment of running cost levied on them, second 26.1% said they ensure careful utility of the services, third 20.9% said they are responsible for maintenance of the services, fourth 2.2% said they are paying taxes. Data above display how oversight was done by community people in the implementations of project. This is crucial because research suggest that an oversight from local people will reduce central government monopoly over projects (Zarychta et al 2024).

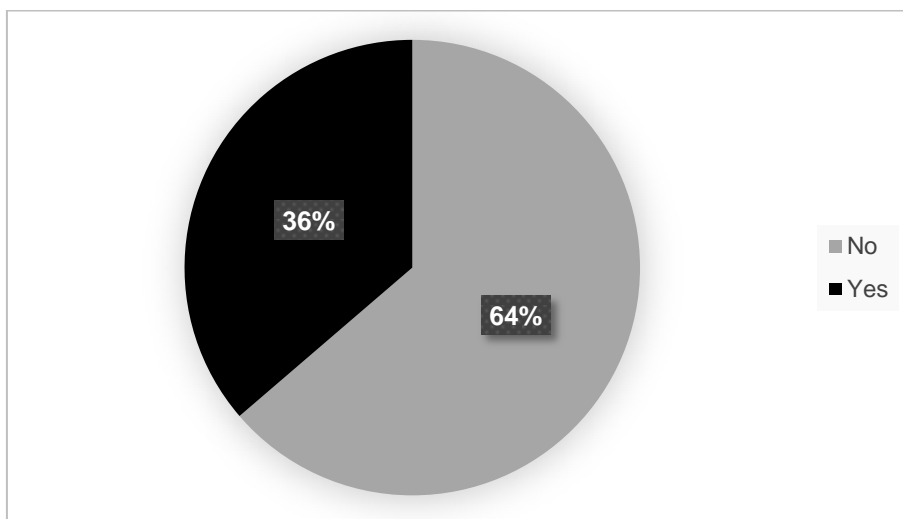
This is in accordance with KI interview from water resources. It was discussed that the provision of water for safe

drinking is done in partnership with the community and that there are trained technicians in the communities for maintenance of the facilities anytime there is a breakdown.

Knowledge of ward committee members in their communities

Despite the long-standing existence of ward committees in our local councils it was suggested that community’s knowledge about them should come under investigation. Study established that, there was little or no knowledge about their existence among respondents. It was espoused by this research that they were dormant in most of these communities of late.

Figure 9. Awareness of the existence of ward committee members in your community



Source: Authors Field Data 2025

Figure 9 shows that a significant number 62.7% (n=251) of respondent are not aware of the existence of any ward committee in their communities while 35.8% (n=143) said they know about the existence of the ward committee members and 1.5% (n=6) who said they don’t know about any ward committee formation.

It is clearly indicating that Nickson and Cutting (2020), hypothesis that participation in development implementation confirms improvement in service delivery in decentralization

Whether respondents have been attending ward committee meetings

Table 7 attendance of ward committee meeting

Responses	Frequency	Percent
No	270	67.5
Yes	130	32.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Authors Field Data

Table 7 above shows a significant number 67.5% (n=270) who has not attended any ward development committee meetings, while 32.5% (n=130) claim to have attended the ward development committee meetings.

This is contrary to Pascoe (2024) who said increase in knowledge about service delivery will happen when there is a relationship between service providers and their communities.

Decentralisation rests on the idea that ordinary citizens can take part in shaping development. We modelled this using two outcomes: whether the respondent had played a role in project design, and whether they had attended a ward-committee meeting.

The two outcomes capture slightly different aspects of participation. The first measures direct involvement in shaping projects; the second measures presence at the formal channel through which decentralisation is supposed to work.

Table 8: Predictors of stakeholder participation in development projects (binary logistic regression, N = 394)

Predictor	OR	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI	p-value	Sig.
Female (vs Male)	0.522	0.330	0.825	0.0054	**
Secondary or Tertiary education	0.966	0.498	1.912	0.9186	Ns
Self-employed	4.465	2.692	7.516	<0.0001	***
Age (years)	1.006	0.984	1.029	0.5823	Ns

Note. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, ns = not significant. Highlighted (yellow) rows are statistically significant; OR > 1 indicates higher odds, OR < 1 indicates lower odds. McFadden Pseudo $R^2 = 0.115$; Hosmer–Lemeshow goodness-of-fit $p = 0.145$ (good fit); all VIFs < 1.10 (no multicollinearity).

3.3.8 Respondents’ mode of participation in Project Design? — Interpretation of Table 20

In Table 8 above Two predictors emerged as significant in the participation model (N = 394, McFadden $R^2 = 0.115$; Hosmer–Lemeshow $p = 0.145$, indicating good fit; all VIFs below 1.10). Female respondents had only about half the odds of being involved in project design compared with male respondents (OR = 0.52, 95% CI: 0.33–0.83, $p = 0.005$). This gender gap fits a familiar pattern in rural Sierra Leonean local governance, where women’s voices are often under-represented in formal decision-making spaces. Self-employed respondents, on the other hand, had over four times the odds of playing a role (OR = 4.47, 95% CI: 2.69–7.52, $p < 0.001$). The very strong size of this effect again points to the social presence and visibility of traders and farmers. These are people who are out and about in their communities, and that visibility translates readily into being approached for project consultation. Education and age, interestingly, did not matter once the other predictors were taken into account. Participation seems to depend more on social position than on schooling.

However, it was stated that an increase in knowledge will result into validity and reliability of services delivery which will only happen when there is close relationship between the service providers and their community, (Pascoe 2024).

Distribution of respondents that Attends Ward-Committee Meetings?

When we turn to ward-committee meeting attendance, the picture becomes much simpler (N = 395, McFadden $R^2 = 0.104$). Only one predictor was significant. Self-employed respondents had over eight times the odds of having attended a ward-committee meeting compared with other respondents (OR = 8.52, 95% CI: 4.00–21.11, $p < 0.001$). This even larger effect confirms that self-employment is the dominant predictor of formal participation in local decision-making. The policy implication is hard to miss. Ward committees the formal vehicle through which decentralisation is meant to channel community voice are heavily populated by one social group. Salaried workers and the unemployed are largely absent. Building more inclusive participation mechanisms, perhaps through targeted outreach or alternative consultation formats, would broaden the base of decentralised governance.

Data above display how oversight was done by community people in the implementations of project. This is crucial because research suggest that an oversight from local people will reduce central government monopoly over projects (Zarychta et al 2024).

This is in accordance with KI interview from water resources. It was discussed that the provision of water for safe drinking is done in partnership with the community and that there are trained technicians in the communities for maintenance of the facilities anytime there is a breakdown.

This is contrary to Pascoe (2024) who said increase in knowledge about service delivery will happen when there is a relationship between service providers and their communities.

An increase in knowledge will result into validity and reliability of services delivery which will only happen when there is close relationship between the service providers and their community, (Pascoe 2024).

Conclusion

Research findings revealed respondents’ knowledge about decentralisation and the implementation of development project around the district; but what remain obscure or unclear is the existence of the ward development committees which should serve as an intermediary between the local councils and the community people in terms of consultations in their respective communities; and of course, the non-engagement of people in decision-making processes was eminently clear or understood. It is obvious that the decentralisation process itself might have abandoned this arrangement for far too long now. This was supported by Cristopher and Everest (2022) in their discovery of gap in literatures with series of challenges in the local councils’ ability to translate policies into working processes.

It further discovered respondents’ awareness of several existing development projects round the district and their implementation at a very low scale, excluding those of agriculture which implementation steadily and uninterruptedly go on in high gear. Pathetically though, Kailahun district, the country’s agro-economic hub, had passed through catastrophic period of eleven year civil war and pandemic outbreak (hemorrhagic Ebola Viral disease), which claimed lots of lives respectively; and which unfortunate situation may have apparently or obviously caused

high NGO-concentration or presence in the district and for implementation more development projects- particularly in the area of agro-economy.

Also, it revealed that both men and women have knowledge about decentralisation and project implementations in the region It was also discovered that most of the men and women who had knowledge of decentralisation and project implementations were the self-employed. Most of the people under the self-employed category were petty traders and small-scale farmers it was believed that their social presence in public places might have given them knowledge about these issues.

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