

Local Authorities as Agents for Mobilising Citizen Participation in Development within Bamenda Municipalities: An Analysis from the Participatory Democratic Theory

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of local authorities on citizen participation in social and economic development in the Bamenda municipalities of Cameroon. The problem addressed is the limited mobilization of citizen involvement despite an established legal framework. The study aims to assess local authorities' roles as mobilizers and identify factors hindering effective participation. Utilizing a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 400 residents and 80 council officials through standardized questionnaires. Analysis was conducted using Chi-Square tests to evaluate the significance of local authority mobilization on citizen engagement. Findings indicate a strong positive perception of local authorities' influence on social development, with 172 agreements and a Chi-Square value of 22.45. In contrast, economic development participation received 118 agreements and a Chi-Square value of 18.67, reflecting skepticism regarding local authority effectiveness. Despite some skepticism, a majority acknowledge the positive role of local authorities in fostering citizen involvement. The study recommends enhancing communication and engagement strategies to improve citizen participation in economic initiatives and addressing resource shortages in healthcare and education. By strengthening citizen engagement, local authorities can significantly contribute to sustainable development in Bamenda.

Keywords: Local Authorities, Citizen Participation, Social and Economic Development, Bamenda Municipalities, Cameroon.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Local authorities are the government at the grassroots closest to the people. Local authorities are the tier of government administration that coordinates the activities of citizens at the local community levels. Local authorities as a concept of government existed long before the arrival of the colonialists in Cameroon (CLGF, 2022). In the Bamenda grassfield of Cameroon, the Native Authority system existed as a form of "decentralised arm of the government in the colonial state" (Mamdani, 1996). The Native Authority system presumed a king at the centre of every polity and consequently modeled itself on patriarchy and authoritarianism (ibid). Native Authority operated on the premise that villages within the geographical or cultural spheres were brought together to conduct local administration and economic and social development activities (Numvi, 2015). According to Nnamdi (1998), the system involved the Native Authority in what was essentially a colonial administration designed to reduce

the alienation that might have resulted from an outright British Administration.

Local authorities represent one of the basic elements of any democratic regime and the right of citizens to participate in the management of public affairs is an integral part of the democratic principles (Batanov, 2002). The concept of local self-government assumes that citizens' participation in the management of public affairs can be implemented most directly at the local level. The existence of local authorities vested with real powers makes it possible to provide control, which would be the most effective and close to the needs of the population (Batanov, 2002).

Three bills (the bill to institute the general code of regional and local authorities, the bill to institute the House of Chiefs and the bill to institute North West and South Regions a special status) voted by the Cameroonian House of Parliament in December 2019

were promulgated into law on 24 December 2019. These laws replace the hitherto laws of 2004 on local councils with their multitude of subsequent amendments. Under the provision of the laws of 2019, there is devolution of powers accompanied by transfer means, financial, material and human, to local entities that are made of 10 regions and 374 councils. The President of the Republic can by decree create or re-delimit the geographical boundaries of a local authority as well as rename or decide on the temporary regrouping of local authorities. For the steering and evaluation of the process, there is a national council and an inter-ministerial Committee of local services (section 73- 87 orientation law). These new laws (that essentially focus on local development and governance) constitute the basic framework of rules on regional and local authorities in Cameroon (LAW No 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 bill to institute the regional code of regional and local authorities).

Before 24 Dec 2019, local entities were endowed with largely social functions like the celebration of marriages and delivery of birth and death certificates (1974 law relating to councils). In the transfer of powers for local development under the 2004 orientation law of councils and regions amended in the 24 December 2019 laws, local authorities are assigned the task of promoting economic, social, health, education, cultural and sports development (section 17 of 2019 Bill to institute the general code of regional and local authorities). Powers that correspond to the promotion of development in these sectors are devolved to local authorities under conditions laid down by law (section 17-21 of rules applicable to regions and councils). The development opportunities implied in the execution of these tasks are new to local authorities in Cameroon (Cheka, 2007). Here, the local authorities can act as a catalyst to local development by strengthening municipal infrastructure, carrying out a broad range of activities under the heading of 'governance' (institutional capacity building of local government structures as well as civil society organisations and especially the interface between them) and an endowment with the capacity to lead local development for wealth creation. This way, devolved powers will greatly contribute to citizen participation and in serving development.

The main argument at stake here is why despite the enabling legal environment local authorities have minimally mobilised citizens' participation for development in Bamenda municipalities.

Objective of the Study

The study has two objectives. The main objective and the specific objectives. The main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of local authorities as mobilising agents for citizen participation in development within the Bamenda city municipalities. While the specific objective is as follows:

- 1) To examine the tactics used by local authorities in mobilising citizens' participation in development within municipalities of Bamenda city.
- 2) To examined the impact of local authorities' mobilisation of citizen's participation in development within Bamenda city municipalities.

Review of Related Literature

This section provides a review of both theoretical and empirical literature underpinning this study. The specific areas covered here are theoretical review, conceptual framework and the empirical review of past studies.

Conceptual Review Local Authorities

A local authority, sometimes also referred to as a municipal authority, is a term that refers to a rural and urban political subdivision below the national level which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, and which includes authorities in municipalities, cities, villages and others. The term excludes district or regional subdivisions of the national government that are set up solely for national administrative purposes (United Nations, 1997). Local authorities are created to render services in defined geographical areas, primarily because of the inability of the central government to attend in detail to all the requirements of society that have to be satisfied by a government institution. The range of urban services provided by local authorities in developing countries, more particularly in Africa, are, inter alia, parks, street cleaning, sanitation, refuse collection, road construction and maintenance, housing, water and sewerage, primary education, clinics, residential and industrial estates, planning and zoning, fire and ambulance services, camping sites and recreational services (Meyer, 1978: 12).

The URT (2004) report describes local authorities as political sub-divisions at the local level exercised by representative councils, established according to law to exercise specific power within defined areas of jurisdiction such as municipal council and city council. Local Authorities is a sub-national, semi-autonomous level government discharging its functions in a specified area within a nation and are closest to the people and therefore responsible for serving the political and material needs of people and communities in a specific local area. Such areas could be a rural setting or an urban setting, a village, a town, a district, a municipal or a suburb in a city, depending on the size.

Local Authorities is "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms,

processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences” (UNDP, 1997).

This study appropriates the definition by URT (2004) that, local authorities are political sub-divisions at the local level exercised by representative councils, established according to law to exercise specific power within defined areas of jurisdiction such as municipal councils and city councils.

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation, according to (Muriu, 2012), is how citizens exercise influence and control over the decisions that affect them; (Graventa and Valderrama, 1999;4), refer to it as ‘the intervention of citizens with a determined social interest in public activities’. This can be done directly or indirectly. Direct participation, occurs where citizens-individually or in various forms of self-organization are actively engaged in decision-making processes on matters affecting them. Indirect participation is where citizens express their preferences through their elected and other representatives. Indirect participation is also referred to as political participation as the citizens’ role is limited to selecting representatives (ibid, p2).

According to the World Bank report (2015), citizen participation is described as a process through which beneficiaries’ influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources that affect their lives. Long (2013) also notes that by recognising and supporting greater involvement of local people’s initiatives or perspectives, priorities, knowledge, and skills will lead to another donor-driven and outsider-led development. Therefore, the effective involvement of people in creating and designing structures, policies and programmes is to improve their living conditions as well as serve their interests (African Charter, 1990).

Types of Citizen Participation

There are basically two ways in which citizens participate in the political system in many countries. Some ways are common, or conventional, and some are rare, or unconventional. The two Common types of participation are as discussed below.

Conventional Political Participation

Conventional political participation comprises traditional and commonly accepted political behaviour that uses established institutional channels of representative government and includes voting in elections and referendums, volunteering for a political campaign or making a campaign donation, joining an activist group, serving in the public office etc.

Unconventional Methods of Citizens' Participation

Unconventional methods of citizen participation include activities that are sometimes considered inappropriate but are not illegal. Examples of Unconventional methods of citizen participation include boycotts, demonstrations and protests. Unconventional activities are often designed to work as an alternative to conventional activities when conventional methods aren’t working to achieve the desired goal (Logan, 2017).

Development

Todaro (1986) sees development as a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganisation and reorientation of the entire economic and social system, in addition to improvement in outputs, which involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structure as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs. Seers (1969) ask questions in responding to development questions. To him, the question about the country’s development is therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? All three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the resulting development even if per capita income is doubled. Joel (2016) citing Gana (1986) explains the concept of development as the capacity and creative capability of a people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the imaginative and practical application of their creative talent and productive power. Development therefore should not be limited to mean economic welfare or material well-being. It should rather include improvements in social, cultural, economic, environmental and political aspects of the whole society like security, social activities, political institutions, etc.

Empirical Literature Review

Wang (2001) emphasised that when the local authorities demonstrate a good understanding and prompt response toward the needs of the public, it will result in citizen satisfaction. However, Wang (2001) acknowledges that there is still a challenge to public involvement despite various mechanisms of citizen participation utilised by different cities. The challenge identified was significant and relevant to management functions, including budgeting, personnel, and procurement functions where citizens are not interested due to the technical nature of management. The study was conducted with public managers on their perceptions about citizen participation; therefore, Wang (2001) recommended a study, which would determine the perceptions of the citizens.

Jide (2010) researched the role of local government in Rural Development, using simple content

analysis. The result shows that the organizational environment for enhancing rural development remains the local government. The core issues in rural development include self-help; attention to need (felt and latent), integrated community for development; and mobilization of human and material resources which could facilitate the provision of social amenities and infrastructure.

Hamza and Yahaya (2019) researched the role of local government in rural development in Nigeria: a study of the Lafia local government area of Nasarawa state. The results show that Local Governments have contributed significantly to the improvement of the lives of the rural dwellers in Nasarawa state. This was because the majority of the respondents disagreed with the assertion that there is no significant relationship between Local Government and rural development in Nasarawa state.

2. THEORETICAL LITERATURE

2.1. Participatory Democratic Theory

The participatory democratic theory holds that citizens participate individually and directly in decisions that affect their lives, rather than through elected representatives. This theory combined the models of direct and representative democracy. In direct democracy, the people have the authority to deliberate and decide what is good for them while in representative democracy the people choose governing officials to do so for them. While direct democracy was the original concept, its representative version is the most widespread today. The argument about this theory is how changes that will make our own social and political life more democratic will provide opportunities for individuals to participate in decision-making in their everyday lives as well as in the wider political system. The theory is all about democratising democracy.

Citizens' participation in this context is the inclusion of the people in the activities of a community. This process directly engages the people in decision-making and considers its inputs.

The extent to which citizen participation should be considered necessary or appropriate is under debate in political philosophy today (Fishkin, 2011).

The most prominent argument for participatory democratic theory is its function for greater democratisation. This argument is about changes that will make social and political life more democratic and will provide opportunities for individuals to participate in decision-making in their everyday lives as well as in the wider political system. This is about democratizing democracy. With participatory democracy, individuals, groups, communities and municipalities can realistically achieve their interests and objectives thus providing the means to a more developed, just and accountable society.

Proponents of this theory also hold that, with participatory democracy, individuals or groups can realistically achieve their interests, "providing the means to a more just and rewarding society, not a strategy for preserving the status quo". Participatory democracy may also have an educational effect.

2.2. Mechanism of Participatory Democratic Theory

Scholars have recently proposed several mechanisms to increase citizen participation in democratic systems. These methods intend to increase the agenda-setting and decision power of people by giving citizens more direct ways to contribute to politics (Jane, 1995.pp 706-715) some of these mechanisms include:

1) Citizens' Assemblies:

Citizens' assemblies are representative samples of a population that meet to create legislation or advise legislative bodies. When citizens are chosen to participate by stratified sampling, the assemblies are more representative of the population than the elected legislatures (ibid). Assemblies chosen by sorting provide average citizens with the opportunity to exercise substantive agenda-setting and/or decision-making power. Throughout the assembly, citizens are helped by experts and discussion facilitators, and the results are either put to a referendum or sent in a report to the government.

2) Public Consultation Surveys:

Public consultation surveys are surveys on policy proposals that have been put forward by legislators, government officials, or other policy leader. The entirety of the deliberative process takes place within the survey. For each issue, respondents are provided relevant briefing materials and arguments for and against various proposals. Respondents then provide their final recommendation; public consultation surveys are primarily done with large representative samples, usually several thousand national and several hundred sub-national jurisdictions.

3) Town Meetings:

In local participatory democracy, town meetings provide all residents with legislative power (Fishkin, 2005). Practiced in the United States, particularly in New England, since the 17th century, they assure that local policy decisions are made directly by the public. Local democracy is often seen as the first step towards a participatory system (Mutz, 2006. P.3). Theorist Graham Smith, however, notes the limited impact of town meetings that cannot lead to action on national issues. He also suggests that town meetings are not representative as they disproportionately represent individuals with free time, including the elderly and the affluent.

2.3. Criticism of Participatory Democratic Theory

The most prominent argument for participatory democracy theory is its function of greater democratisation. The opposition to this theory is the disbelief in citizens' capabilities to bear greater responsibility because some reject the feasibility models and refute its proposed educational benefits. Due to self-interest, rational members have little incentive to participate because they lack the skills and knowledge to be effective, making it cost-effective to rely on officials' expertise.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design (Survey):

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few items (sample) considered representative of the entire group. Amini (2000) stated that in survey design, a sample of the population is used and this permits generalization of results to the target population. According to Nzeneri (2012), descriptive survey research design deals with what is happening presently. In descriptive survey research, only a sample is studied and findings are generalised to the entire population. This research design enabled the researcher to describe and elucidate the motivating factors of popular participation in socioeconomic development projects in municipalities within Bamenda City.

Furthermore, the study has used survey research design because survey research design is credited for its usefulness in collecting a large amount of data from a sizeable population for generalisation effectiveness. It also enables the researcher to gather information or data from a large group of the population. The data in survey were obtained by using standardised tools, particularly questionnaires, structured interviews and observation.

3.1. Background of the Study Area

The study covers the three municipalities of Bamenda (Bamenda I, II and III) in Mezam division of the North West Region of Cameroon corresponding to seven villages, (Bamendakwe, Nkwen, Ndzah, Mankon, Chomba, Nsongwa and Mbatu). Bamenda is a

cosmopolitan city and capital of the North West Region. It is the third largest city in Cameroon after Douala and Yaoundé situated 366km North West of the administrative capital of Cameroon, Yaoundé and about 450 km of Cameroon's economic capital, Douala. Bamenda city is located between latitude 6°5'2''N and latitude 6°6'4''N and longitude 10°0' and 10°31'E of the Greenwich meridian (Ngoran & Benoit, 2021). The city is situated in the western highlands of Cameroon at an altitude of 1230m-1510m (Master Plan of Bamenda City Council, 2011-2027). A Presidential Decree No. 2007/117 of 24 April 2007 regroup Bamenda city into three sub divisions namely Bamenda I (Bamendankwe), Bamenda II (Mankon, Chomba, Nsongwa and Mbatu) and Bamenda III (Nkwen and Ndzah). This was in alignment to Cameroon's decentralisation law to bring development. Bamenda is bordered to the North by Bafut sub division, to the North West by the Momo division, to the South by the Santa sub division and South West by Bali sub Division. To the West the Tubah Sub division borders it (Ngoran & Benoit, 2021).

Population of the Study:

Population refers to the set of entities about which the researcher wishes to conclude. It also refers to the entire group of individual cases or objects having similar observable attribute (Young, 2016). In addition, the target population is the collection of individuals to whom the study results apply. All these authors see a population as "a universe" that consists of a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurements. Cooper and Schindler (2014) further observed that the target population is the total collection of elements about which one wants to make an inference. A study population is the people or individuals that meet the researcher's scope of the study population.

For this study, the Population was drawn from the three municipalities that make up the Bamenda city and the council officials (such as councillors, mayors and council workers occupying posts of responsibility). The population of Bamenda municipalities is estimated at 362586 inhabitants, and is spread all over the city areas (Bamenda I, Bamenda II and Bamenda III council's area).

Table 1: Inhabitants of Bamenda municipality per council area

Locality	Population
Bamenda I	28,359
Bamenda II	184,227
Bamenda III	150,000
Total	362586

Source: 2005 Population and Housing Census

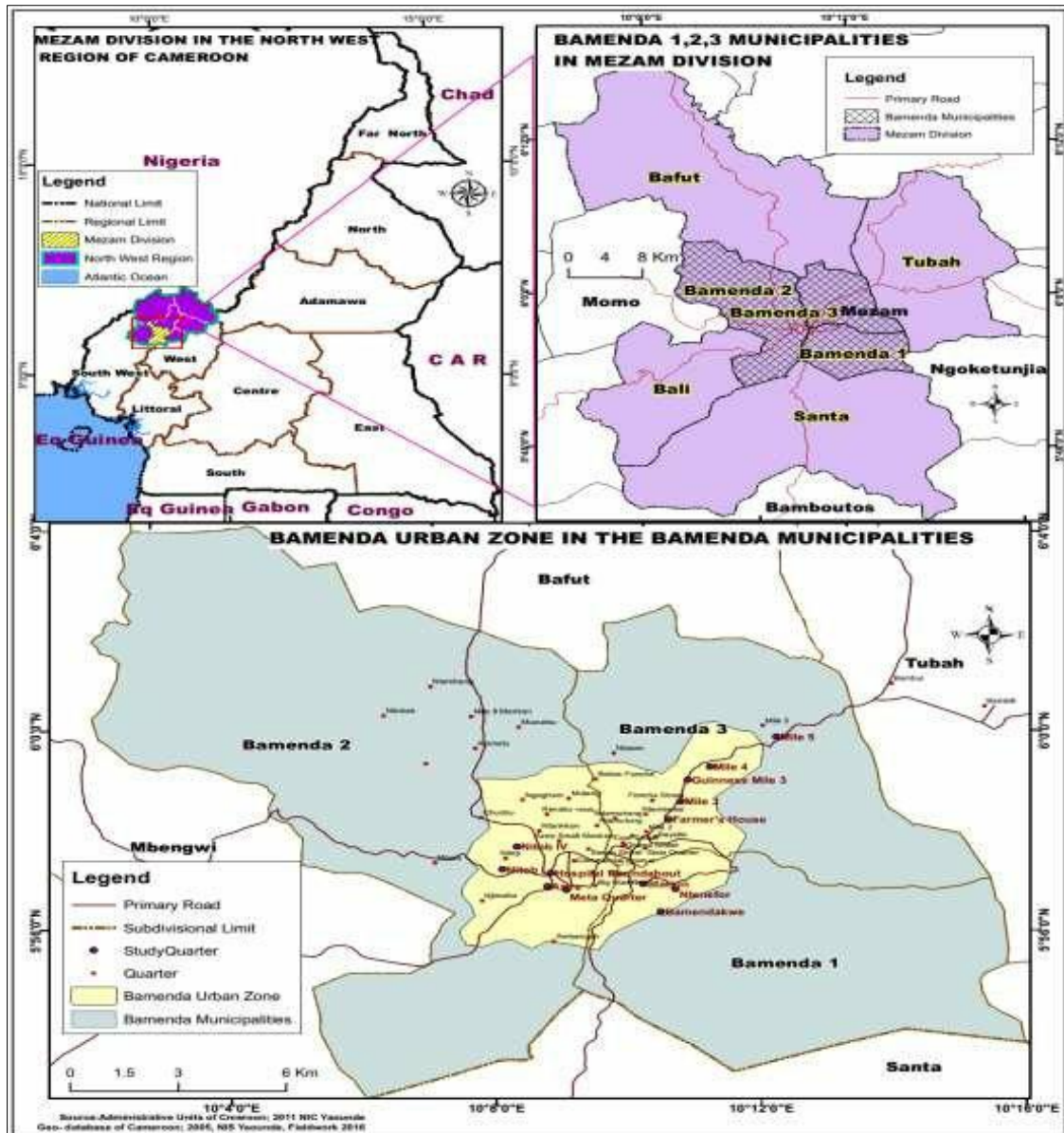


Figure 1: Map of Cameroon and the Bamenda Municipalities

Another specific population considered for this study comprised municipal councillors and mayors in Bamenda Municipalities.

Table 2: Total Number of Council officials and councillors per council area in Bamenda

Council area	Councillors	Mayors/deputies	Total
Bamenda I	28	03	31
Bamenda II	28	03	31
Bamenda III	28	03	31
Total	84	09	93

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Sample Size:

A sample size represents the selected respondents of a study who should be as closely representative of the total population as possible and should not be excessively large or small. It is a finite and representative number of individuals or objects in a population to be studied. Burns & Burns, (2012) stated

that a sampling size facilitates the formation of a sampling unit that refers to one member of a set of entities being studied which is the material source of the random variable or a published list in which or a set of directions for identifying a population. The choice of the sample size was mainly based on the need for accuracy

required by the researcher and the degree of variation. This made the study units have 400 participants.

The sample population for this study was determined from the total population of Bamenda I, II and III on the one hand, and from the total number of municipal councillors and council officials of the three councils on the other hand. In the former, since the total population of Bamenda was estimated at 322889 inhabitants, the sample size with a level of precision of 0.05 was determined to enable us to have a representative population. This sample was statically determined using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)} 2$$

where: n= Sample size

N= Total population of Bamenda (362586)

e= Level of precision (0.05)

From the above-stated formula, the sample size was established at 399.55 inhabitants and to minimize the sampling error, the sample size was slated at 400. Based on this arithmetic, the sample size was further determined in proportion to the inhabitants in the main localities in Bamenda in the table below.

Table 3: Sample Size of the inhabitants in Bamenda per council area

Localities	Population	Sample size	% of sample size
Bamenda I	28,359	75	18.75%
Bamenda II	184,227	175	43.75%
Bamenda III	150,000	150	37.5%
Total	362586	400	100

Source: field survey (2023)

From these computations, it is clear that with a total sample size of 400, the sample size of Bamenda I was 75, that of Bamenda II was 175 and that of Bamenda III was 150.

The sample size of the councillors and council officials in Bamenda was also determined following the statistical formula above. This sample size was also determined in proportion to the number of municipal councillors and officials in each of the municipal areas as presented below.

Table 4: Sample size of municipal councillors and officials of Bamenda I, II and III council areas

Council area	Number of Councilors/Council officials	sample size	Percentage of Sample size
Bamenda I	33	20	25%
Bamenda II	33	30	37.7%
Bamenda III	33	30	37.7%
Total	99	80	100.4%

Source: field survey (2023)

From the above calculations, it is evident that from the total sample size of 80, Bamenda I council was 20, that of Bamenda II was 30, and that of Bamenda III was 30.

3.3. Sampling Technique:

The researcher used both stratified random sampling techniques with proportional allocation methods and purposive to obtain information, if the sample is representative, the results would be reliable and Valid (Singh (1994). This study covered the three council areas within Bamenda City. A stratified random sample is obtained by selecting one unit on a random basis within the strata until the desired number of units is obtained. Stratified random sampling involves stratification or segregation of sampling elements, followed by random selection of the subjects from each stratum (Sekaran, 2015). A representative from a population of 400 residents of Bamenda I, II and III residents participated in this study and were knowledgeable about the council areas. The qualities included were the number of years one has stayed in the

area randomly drawn from each stratum of the municipality to give a representative population of 400 residents. The city was divided into strata and the strata were further divided into strata which participants were randomly drawn from to give a representative population of 400 residents. Stratified random sampling was used to select those to participate in each stratum. The number of respondents to be selected from each stratum was determined in other to have a proportionate representation. The interval from one stratum to another was calculated by dividing the population size by sample.

The main advantage of stratified sampling is that it captures key population characteristics in the sample list as it is in a weighted average, this method of sampling produces characteristics in the sample that are proportional to the overall population. This means that the local authorities were stratified based on their functional areas. The municipality was divided into three main Strata (Bamenda I, II and III). Each stratum was further divided into sub-strata based on age, sex,

profession and level of education. This was to ensure that the sample represent the population under study and also take into consideration the heterogeneous nature of the This was drawn from low, medium and high-density communities of each municipality. The participants were municipalities. A random non-probability sampling technique was used to select the audience for the study within each stratum to ensure that there is equal representation and also avoid bias in selecting the audience. A door-to-door and community-to-community campaign was carried out to.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The information collected was from both primary and secondary sources. Primary information was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The secondary method will depend largely on data gathered from journals, conference papers, books, council's reports/minutes, government publications and reports. Data collected was analyzed using frequency and tables and interpreted through the use of a 4 points Likert questionnaire.

3.5. Data Analysis and Presentation of Result

Table 5: Council area of respondents

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bamenda I	68	18.9	18.9	18.9
	Bamenda II	142	39.6	39.6	58.5
	Bamenda III	149	41.5	41.5	100.0
	Total	359	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey (2023)

From the above table, out of the 400 questionnaires administered to the respondents of all the 3 municipalities, 359 representing 89.76% were returned

while 41 representing 11.4% were not returned. A total of 359 questionnaires were returned and analyzed.

Table 6: Bio Data of respondents

S/No	Biodata	Scale	frequency	Percentage
1	Age	18-30	39	10.9
		31-40	112	31.2
		41-50	141	39.2
		51-above	67	18.7
		Total	359	100
1	Sex of respondents	Male	237	66.0
		Female	122	34.0
		Total	359	100
5	Level of education	No formal education	37	10.3
		FSLC	38	10.6
		GCE O/L	53	14.8
		GCE A/L	65	18.1
		HND	44	12.3
		First Degree	65	18.1
		Postgraduate	51	15.9
		Total	359	100

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Data presented in the table shows the bio-data of the respondents in the three municipalities of the Bamenda city under study. The findings reveal that most respondents are male (66.0%) while female constitute only (34.0%).

The highest participants are those in the age category of 41-50 years (39.2%), the age category from 31- 40 (31.2%), the next is 18-33 (10.9%), and 50 and

above years (18.7%). The result indicates that the majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 41-50 years. Similarly, the greater numbers of respondents are those with GCE A/L and First Degree certificates (18.1%) each, followed by postgraduate diplomas (15.9%) and GCE O/L (14.8%) respectively. Non-negligible proportions are those with no formal education and held FSLC and HND.

Table 7: Tactics used by local authorities to mobilised citizen participation on development

S/N	Items	SD	DA	A	SA	X ²	Remark
1	Face to face	05	17	263	74	33.84	Accepted
2	Town criers	35	66	189	69	30.80	Accepted
3	Rallies	08	19	205	127	21.23	Accepted
4	Radio	07	27	232	93	18.82	Accepted
5	Television	03	11	210	136	16.31	Accepted
6	Internet	32	68	176	83	29.99	Accepted
7	Others like churches, village meetings etc.	03	10	237	109	33.84	Accepted

Source: Field survey (2023)

Table 7 above reveals that out of the seven (7) tactics identified as a means to mobilise citizens to participate in the development by local authorities, the denizens of Bamenda municipalities accepted that the local authorities are implementing all these tactics. The analysis reveals distinct preferences for various communication methods based on agreement levels and Chi-Square values. Face-to-face interactions garnered a frequency of 263 agreements and only 37 disagreements, resulting in a Chi-Square value of 48.43, indicating a very strong preference.

Town Criers received 189 agreements and 111 disagreements, with a Chi-Square of 33.84, suggesting significant acceptance. Rallies had 205 agreeing and 95 disagreeing, leading to a Chi-Square value of 30.80, reflecting respectable support. In contrast, Radio attracted 232 agreements against 68 disagreements, with a Chi-Square of 21.23, indicating moderate agreement but also some variability in opinion.

Television showed 210 agreements and 90 disagreements, resulting in a Chi-Square of 18.82, suggesting a similar level of moderate acceptance. The Internet method had the lowest frequency with 176 agreements and 124 disagreements, giving a Chi-Square of 16.31, reflecting less effectiveness and greater disagreement. Lastly, others (including churches and village meetings) achieved 237 agreements and 53 disagreements, resulting in a Chi-Square of 29.99, indicating significant acceptance. Overall, the data underscore that traditional communication methods are more effective than digital platforms, as evidenced by higher agreement levels and corresponding Chi-Square values.

3.6 The Impact of Local Authorities Mobilisation of Citizen's Participation in Social Development.

Social development is about improving the well-being of every individual in society so they can reach their full potential. The success of society is linked to the well-being of every citizen.

Table 8: Data showing respondents responses on the impact of LAs mobilisation of citizen participation on the social development of Bamenda city Municipalities

		SDA	DA	A	SA	X ²	Total
I am often mobilized by a local authority (mayor and councillor) to participate in the construction of community water project initiatives that are beneficial to my municipality.	Freq	19	113	153	74	37.67	359
	percent	5.3	31.5	42.6	20.6		
I am often mobilised by a local authority (mayor and councillor) to participate in educational activities that are beneficial to my municipality.	Freq	25	85	189	60	12.56	359
	per cent	7	23.7	52.6	16.7		
I am often mobilised by a local authority (mayor and councillor) to participate in health-related activities that are beneficial to my municipality.	Freq	19	95	203	42	28.45	359
	per cent	5.3	26.5	56.5	11.7		
I am often mobilised by a local authority (mayor and councillor) to participate in sporting and leisure activities that are beneficial to my municipality.	Freq	31	90	168	70	25.90	359
	percent	8.6	25.1	46.8	19.5		
I am often mobilised by a local authority (mayor and councillor) to participate in activities that are aimed at protecting the environment within my municipality (clean-up campaigns, planting of environmentally friendly trees etc..)	Freq	34	88	145	92	31.25	359
	percent	9.5	24.5	40.4	25.6		

Source: Field survey (2023)

The data presented in Table 3 illustrates the extent to which local authorities, specifically mayors and councillors, mobilize citizens to participate in various social development initiatives. The responses are categorized into four levels of agreement: Strongly

Disagree (SDA), Disagree (DA), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA), along with the corresponding Chi-Square values and total responses. In terms of community water project initiatives, a significant portion of respondents expressed a positive perception of local

authorities' efforts to mobilize participation, with 42.6% agreeing and 20.6% strongly agreeing. The Chi-Square value of 37.67 indicates a notable deviation from expected frequencies, highlighting strong motivation among citizens to engage in these initiatives. This suggests that local authorities are effective in encouraging participation in projects that directly benefit the community.

Regarding educational activities, the data shows that 52.6% of respondents are willing to participate, although the Chi-Square value of 12.56 indicates less statistical significance compared to community water projects. This suggests that while there is motivation to engage in educational initiatives, it may not be as strong or consistent. Local authorities may need to explore more effective strategies to enhance citizen involvement in this area. When it comes to health-related activities, a significant majority, with 56.5% agreeing, shows strong motivation to engage. The Chi-Square value of 28.45 reflects a meaningful level of variation in responses, indicating robust interest in health initiatives. This suggests that local authorities have successfully mobilized citizens to participate in health-related programs, which is crucial for community well-being.

In terms of sporting and leisure activities, nearly half of the respondents, 46.8%, agreed to participate. However, the Chi-Square value of 25.90 indicates moderate significance, suggesting that local authorities may need to enhance their engagement strategies in this area to boost participation. This implies that while there is a willingness to engage in sporting activities, further efforts are necessary to increase involvement.

Lastly, the data shows a strong interest in environmental protection activities, with 40.4% agreeing and 25.6% strongly agreeing. The Chi-Square value of 31.25 indicates a significant level of variation, suggesting that citizens are motivated to engage in initiatives aimed at environmental sustainability. This highlights an opportunity for local authorities to strengthen their efforts in promoting environmental initiatives and fostering community involvement in sustainability efforts.

Overall, the analysis indicates that local authorities have a notable impact on citizen participation in social development initiatives, particularly in health-related activities and community water projects. While there is a general willingness to engage, the varying Chi-Square values highlight the need for local authorities to tailor their strategies to enhance participation in specific areas, such as educational and sporting activities. By addressing these gaps, local authorities can foster a more collaborative environment that encourages active citizen involvement in social development efforts.

3.7 The Impact of Local Authorities Mobilisation of Citizen’s Participation on Economic Development of the Bamenda City Municipalities

In the community, the economic development idea is to build new wealth from the basic local resources by repositioning these assets as attractors of capital. This can be accomplished by re-uniting local structures to inculcate funds and other related strategies that restore pride and give local people more economic power to control their economic destiny.

Table 9: The impact of local authorities in mobilising citizen’s participation in economic development

		SDA	DA	A	SA	X ₂	Total
I am often mobilised by a local authority (mayor and councillor) to participate in the construction and/or maintenance of road networks that are beneficial to my municipality.	Freq	19	134	130	76	85.00	359
	percent	5.3	37.3	36.2	21.2		100
I am often mobilised by a local authority (mayor and councillor) to engage in income-generating activities that are beneficial to my municipality.	Freq	35	188	84	52	134.0	359
	percent	9.7	52.4	23.4	14.5		100
I am often motivated by a local authority (mayor and councillor) to pay my taxes.	Freq	35	110	141	68	58.0	359
	percent	9.7	30.6	39.3	18.9		100

Source: field survey (2023)

The table illustrates the impact of local authorities on citizen participation in economic development, highlighting both agreement and disagreement levels among respondents. For the statement regarding participation in the construction and maintenance of road networks, there were 130 agreements and 153 disagreements, resulting in a Chi-Square value of 18.45. This indicates a moderate level of support for local authority mobilization in this area, suggesting that while many respondents see the value, there is also significant skepticism. In terms of engaging

in income-generating activities, the responses showed 84 agreements against 223 disagreements, with a Chi-Square value of 22.67. This reflects a more pronounced opposition, indicating that local authorities may need to enhance their efforts to effectively mobilize citizens for economic activities. Lastly, regarding motivation to pay taxes, there were 141 agreements and 145 disagreements, leading to a Chi-Square value of 15.34. This suggests a relatively balanced view, with a slight inclination towards agreement, but also notable

dissent regarding the effectiveness of local authorities in motivating tax compliance.

Table 10: Combination of LAs mobilisation of citizen's participation on social and economic development of the municipalities of Bamenda

	SDA	DA	A	SA	Missing
The Impact of Local Authorities on Citizens participation in Social Development	26 7.1	94 26.3	172 47.8	68 23.2	22.45
The impact of local authorities on citizen's participation in economic development	30 8.2	144 40.1	118 33	65 18.2	18.67

Source: field survey (2023)

The table presents data on citizens' participation in both social and economic development as influenced by local authorities. For social development, there were 172 agreements as against 120 disagreements, resulting in a Chi-Square value of 22.45. This indicates a strong positive perception of local authorities' impact on social development, suggesting that many respondents feel effectively mobilized in this area. In contrast, participation in economic development showed 118 agreements against 239 disagreements, with a Chi-Square value of 18.67. This reflects a more mixed response, indicating that while there is some support for local authority initiatives in economic development,

there is also considerable scepticism and opposition. The Chi-Square values highlight significant associations between local authority mobilization and citizen participation, particularly in social development, where the higher Chi-Square value suggests a more favourable view. Conversely, the lower Chi-Square value for economic development indicates challenges in engaging citizens effectively in this area. Overall, while local authorities appear to have a positive impact on social development participation, they may need to enhance their strategies to foster greater citizen involvement in economic development initiatives.

Table 11: The impact of LAs mobilisation of citizens participation on the social and economic development of the municipalities of Bamenda city

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	28	7.8	7.8	7.8
Disagree	119	33.14	33.14	40.94
Agree	145	40.3	40.3	81.24
Strongly Agree	67	18.7	18.7	100.0
Total	359	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The frequency distribution table illustrates the impact of local authorities (LAs) and citizen participation on social and economic development in the municipalities of Bamenda. Among the respondents, 28 (7.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement, while 119 (33.14%) disagreed, indicating a significant portion of the population is sceptical about the effectiveness of local authorities in fostering participation. Conversely, 145 respondents (40.3%) agreed, and 67 (18.7%) strongly agreed, reflecting a positive perception of the impact of local authorities on citizen engagement in development initiatives.

The Chi-Square value of 21.34 suggests a significant association between local authorities' actions and citizen participation in social and economic development. The data indicates that while there is a notable level of scepticism, a majority of respondents recognize the positive role that local authorities play in facilitating citizen involvement. This highlights the importance of enhancing communication and engagement strategies to further improve participation in development efforts within the municipality.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study conducted in response to research question 3, which explored the impact between local authorities and citizen participation in socioeconomic development, revealed that local authorities significantly and positively influence community development. This finding aligns with the work of Gilbert & Ward (2014). The study showed that respondents agreed that the presence of high socioeconomic development facilities is contingent upon active citizen involvement. The analysis further indicated that respondents recognized that improved citizen participation could help stem the deterioration of public trust, evidenced by widespread hostility toward the government. Additionally, it was equally noted that respondents believed that citizen participation process serves as a transformative tool for social change. The findings demonstrated that citizens' participation leads to better outcomes and decision-making in development activities.

The result indicates that there is evidence of engagement by local authorities in the municipalities of Bamenda regarding community development within the

council areas. The findings revealed that local authorities have undertaken several socioeconomic development projects, including road construction, healthcare service provision, and educational initiatives. Observations also revealed that the municipalities of Bamenda predominantly engage in agriculture, indicating that a significant percentage of the population is involved in farming as their primary occupation.

However, as the researcher observed, local authorities have boosted agricultural productivity in the area by providing quality seeds and materials to local farmers. Additionally, they promote agriculture by organizing agricultural shows where farmers can display their produce for public viewing. Moreover, agric production is promoted by rehabilitating farm-to-market roads in order to facilitate the transportation of agricultural produce to the markets.

Regarding healthcare services and education, local authorities are leaving no stone unturned to ensure quality services are provided to the community. Numerous health centres, primary schools, and secondary schools can be found in the communities, though with an acute shortage of resources, such as nurses, well-equipped laboratories, medical equipment in health centres, and teachers and structures in schools. Local authorities have been making efforts to improve the situation by appealing to citizens for support in any form for the survival of these institutions. Moreover, greater attention is paid to these services during the budgetary sessions of the councils, as explained by the mayors of the three councils.

The research findings further revealed that other social amenities, such as water and electricity, are in short supply. Nevertheless, Local authorities are making commendable efforts to provide potable drinking water to communities. For example, in Bamenda II, solar-powered water catchments have been constructed in Old Town (Ntambag) and Ntamulung quarters, and other quarters yet to come. In Bamenda I, new water catchments were constructed to alleviate the water crisis faced by communities during the dry season, while in Bamenda III, a new purification plant was established that can supply close to 800 cubic meters of water. Electricity supply has been extended throughout the communities with solar installations.

Kuppusamy (2008) posits that local authorities are public agencies that provide urban services to communities, thereby enhancing better operations. They are the primary source of services in community development in many developing countries, including Cameroon. Being closest to citizens and central to participatory development, local authorities in Cameroon have been assigned an important role in community development. Shaw (2008) states, "Community development's potential as an entering

wedge is still what matters most about it and what can make it most distinctive." Community development is imperative as it confronts challenges and seeks opportunities to contribute to the renewal of political and democratic life. It plays a crucial role in securing a better future for citizens and renewing democracy. Citizens are therefore encouraged to participate in the development programs and activities to enhance the performance of local authorities. Shaw (2011, p. 11) explains, different conceptions of citizenship have been inscribed in development theory and practice over time." Thus, historically, development encompassed various practices among communities. To perform better at the local level, all initiatives for socioeconomic development require significant action to avoid potential obstacles in terms of policy and politics (Fudge, 2009).

5. CONCLUSION

For development to have any meaningful impact on the livelihoods of Bamenda denizens, it must be participatory as outlined by the participatory development theory. Therefore, local authorities of the Bamenda city municipalities need to step up their efforts in mobilising citizens to participate in development.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

As a proposition, local authorities should adopt a more people-centred approach to facilitate necessary collaboration and partnerships with communities within their jurisdiction, thereby enhancing the process of municipal development. Information from the field reveals that some local authorities are acting merely as an extension of the central government. Consequently, the non-public sector within the municipalities should take it upon themselves to develop the Bamenda Municipalities, either in collaboration with the councils as partners or independently in cases where the councils refuse to cooperate. This suggests that the responsibility for developing the Bamenda Municipalities should not rest solely with local authorities.

Civil Society Organizations and NGOs should mobilize the population for more socioeconomic productive activities, seek sources of funding for development projects, and provide employment by increasing public understanding of the issues at stake. They can manage projects for the council as joint ventures or through leasing arrangements, and, above all, promote the culture development for the municipalities. Non-public actors can help build the capacity of councils and facilitate access to development by addressing funding needs, while also empowering the community.

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