

# Community Participation in Urban Infrastructure Development: Experience from Bishoftu Town, Oromia National Regional State

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## Abstract

The study aimed at analyzing community participation in urban road infrastructure development projects. To this end, the study employed mixed approach. Survey questionnaire was administered for 385 sample respondents that were selected using multistage cluster sampling. Key informant interview schedules were used to collect data concerning poor community participation and road infrastructure development in the City with purposively selected informants. Findings reveal that community participation is implemented in the town to fill the financial gaps of projects. The community is not participating in the entire project cycle. Participation in policy formulation, planning, implementation, maintenance and operation, and evaluation are not evident; and thus obstacle for substantive community participation. The study also found that there is poor communication and relationships among the municipality, kebele leaders that manage the project and the community. I.e. community participation is not institutionalized for permanent impact; this problem has affected the possibility for fostering institutionalized community participation in the City and hampered the synergy of the growing trend of participation in the development of the City. The study concludes that bottom-up approaches, building effective communication channel between the community, kebele leaders that manage the project and institutionalization of the growing trends of participation in the City is essential. Therefore, more capacity building strategies are required to promote community participation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Development is being considered in many parts of the World. Development encompasses economical, social, cultural, security and participatory decision making processes. In addition to the natural resources available, which is a core component of development, harmony and integration of all sectoral activities with friendly National as well as International Policies is a prerequisite for development (Medhin, 2002). However, many development programs implemented by the governments are often in conflict with the interest of the local people in many countries (Robertson, 1984). One way of learning more about development in developing country is studying the reasons for failure. The success or failure of development in developing countries depends heavily on national contexts, policies and strategies. Most of development activities have been implemented in a compartmentalized manner and in some cases even without consultation of stakeholders. Additionally, any developing economy is also influenced by international conditions and policies of other country and international organizations (MOFED, 2010).

The presence, absence as well as the quality of urban infrastructure greatly affects the welfare of citizens and an efficient functioning of urban economy (Yirsaw, 2012). The deficiencies in urban infrastructure is a reflection not merely of absolute resource constraints at city level but also of constraints, related to the institutional arrangements of urban infrastructure services delivery” (World Bank, 1995). And the absence of responsible office could also a reason for the poor functioning of the existing efforts.

To contribute effectively, infrastructure users must be provided with the basic right to self-help improvement, better security of tenure, organizational and technical support, an environment conducive to enabling and supportive policies, and a larger voice in the process of road infrastructure development. However, the potential contribution of community participation in the urban road infrastructure development is constrained by numerous factors such as the absence of secure tenure rights, inappropriate technical standards, rigid planning methods, time-bound project management requirements, and the absence of workable models (Schubeler, 1996).

Bishoftu Town is one of the most expanding Towns in Ethiopia in general and in Oromia Regional State in particular and it is the city administration which is administered by the Mayor. Lack of involvement of the community remains critical in the city. Moreover, absence of clear organizational structures, functions and roles in the whole range of local government that enable both the development of these infrastructure and involving the community in this process is also a contributing factor.

Community participation to be meaningful the final decision must be made by people at bottom level (Batten, 1994). However, the development of urban infrastructure like roads is under the responsibility of the local government in the city bottom-up approach is not given as a base for effective community participation, rather top-down approach is done by a decision given from the governmental office, and which will be imposed on the community.

Urban road infrastructure development strategies can realize their full potential only through active

involvement and organization of urban people at grassroots level. The aim of community participation is to enhance the skills and capacity of communities by promoting their participation in the own development. Therefore, it is vital and timely to seek appropriate strategies that lead to deliberate actions on the part of the public and the private sectors to properly manage the relationships between urban road infrastructure development and community participation. Thus, this study is conducted to analyze the practice, challenges and possible solutions of community participation in road infrastructure development in Bishoftu Town.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Study area and population

This study was conducted at Bishoftu Town. It has nine *kebele* and has the total population of 171,115. From these 51% or 87679 are female and the rest 49% or 84240 are male. This Town is selected because; it is one of the reform towns in the region which shows dramatic change in growing patterns from other town in the country. Furthermore, the researcher has background information about the area and for this found it more viable to focus on.

Currently, the total number of households in this town is 35,814. Therefore, the survey or study population or universe are those households living in the *kebele* and at the same time target population are those households,. In other words, the information is collected from those samples

households, *kebele* leaders that manage the project and City Administrator. Therefore, these samples were the unit of analysis for the purpose of this research.

### 2.2 Data sources

The researcher used both primary and secondary data sources in order to collect appropriate data by employing different instruments of data collection that generate both qualitative and quantitative data sets. Primary data was collected using systematically prepared questions which allowed the researcher to produce a rich and varied data set in a less formal setting and a more detailed examination of experiences, feelings or opinions with selected key informants. The key informants are City Administrator, Kebele leaders and Employees of City Administration. Key informant interviews used in order to understand the perceptions of different stakeholders. Informal interactions and semi-structured questionnaires were used to gather data from households'. Desk review was made in order to supplement evidence from the primary sources. On the other hand, secondary data was collected through review of relevant literature from different sources and formats, including books, articles and other related research documents.

### 2.3 Instruments of Data Collection

In order to obtain relevant and adequate information the researcher used Key informant interviews, questionnaires and desk review. In this study, key informant interview was conducted to collect the necessary data in order to make the study more complete. Both structured (systematically prepared questions) and semi-structured interviews were administered. Because using only one type of interview may leads to less rich data or information. Semi- structured question mainly used because allowed the researcher to go beyond systematically prepared questions. Moreover, the way respondents act and answer leads me to ask in different ways. Therefore, individuals who expected to have background information on the community participation in the urban infrastructure development were contacted and interviewed. The potential respondents were Head of *Kebeles*, City Administrator and Employees of City Administration. Questionnaires which have semi-structured (closed and open ended) questions and administer to collect a wide range of data from the households. The questionnaires was designed by the researcher and administered by the same and enumerators by training them. The questions were prepared in English language and translated in to Afan Oromo language and administered by trained enumerators under direct supervision of the researcher. The administration of the instruments seriously supervise and more than half of it was be undertaken by the researcher in order to minimize errors. This specific instrument helps the researcher to widen the size of the data for the study. All the respondents filled and returned the survey questionnaires 100% achieved. In order to ensure the relevance of collected data, the researcher undertaken a detailed and extensive review of existing literature on community participation and road infrastructure development specifically in reference to road infrastructure development. This includes different websites, project reports and research papers.

### 2.4 Sample and Sampling procedures

As suggested in Bartlet et al, 2001, The required sample size for this study is determined by using the formula below by considering the level of acceptable margins of error at 5% (or 95% confidence interval) :-

$$\text{If } N \geq 10,000, \text{ then Sample size} = n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where, N = population size

z = confidence level (95% = 1.96)  
 p = estimated characteristics of study population (0.5)  
 q = 1-p  
 d = level of statistical significance set/margin of error (0.05).

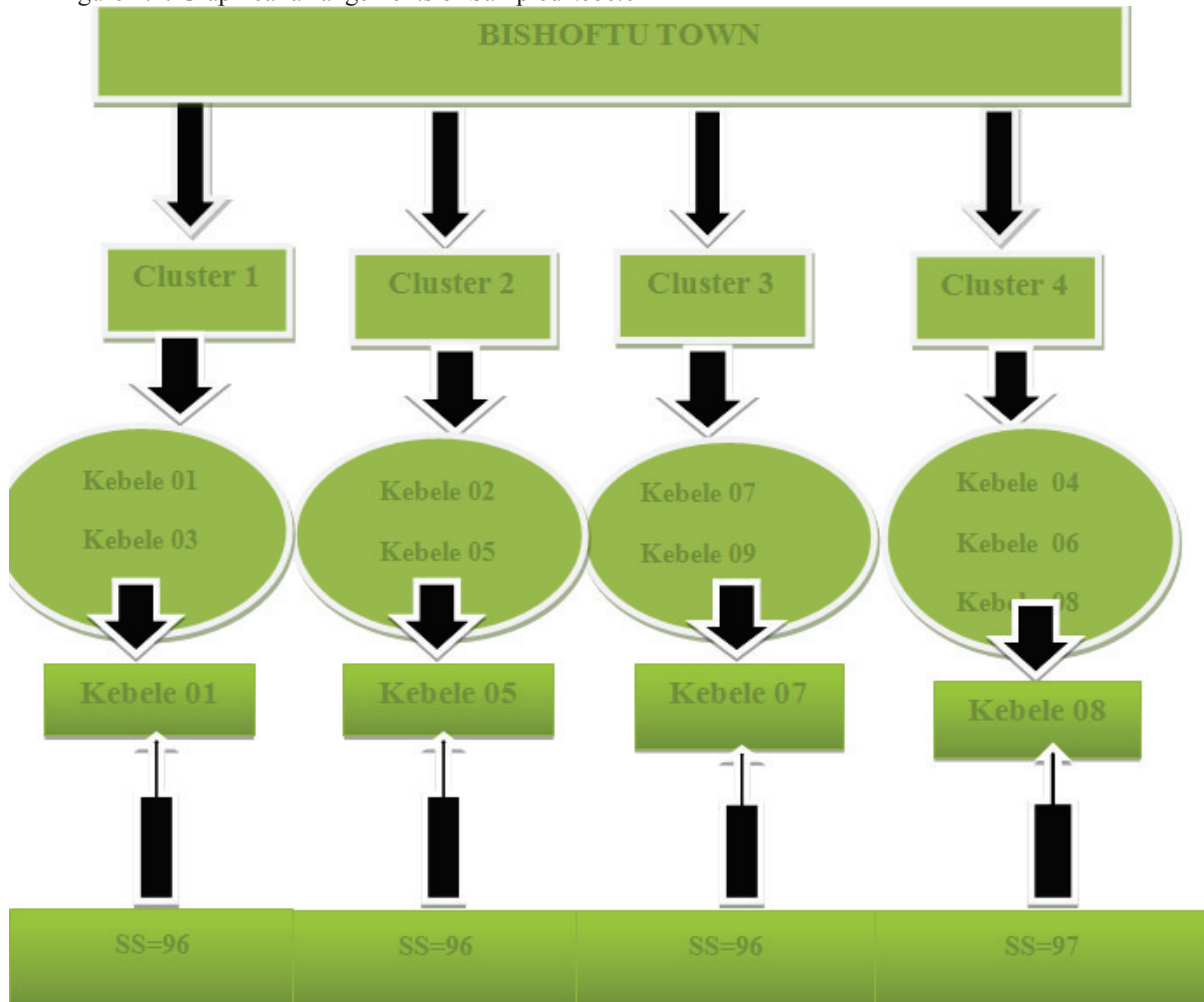
The sizes of populations are greater than 10,000. Therefore, sample size is the result of the above calculation:-

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = 385$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study was 385 respondents. In this study the researcher used multistage sampling technique in order to select sample respondents from the given population. Given the nature of the study, multi stage sampling was preferable over the other techniques to select a representative sample size. In the first stage total population and performance achievement of each *kebele* was considered and taken as a defining variable in clustering the town's *kebele* in to some manageable size from which sample respondents are drawn. Accordingly, the nine (9) independent administrative units were clustered in to four (4) manageable sizes. In the second stage, a simple random sampling technique was used and one (1) *kebele* was selected from each cluster. Totally 4 *kebele* (01, 05, 07 and 08) was selected as sample *kebele* from which households were drawn. In the third stage, 385 total respondents (96, 96, 96, and 97) respondents were proportionally selected from 01, 05, 07 and 08 *kebele* respectively for the survey using random sampling.

Figure 2.1. Graphical arrangements of Sampled *kebele*



Source: field survey, 2015

Key informants were selected from Bishoftu Town administration, head of *kebele* and employees of city administration. These key informants were selected by using purposive judgmental sampling procedure, based on the knowledge and experience regarding the subject under study to elicit the necessary data.

Table 2.1 Selections of key informants

No	Targeted key informants	No. of selected key informants	Method of selection
1	Bishoftu Town Administrator	1	Purposive sampling
2	Head of <i>Kebele</i>	4	Purposive sampling
3	Employees of City Administration	2	Purposive sampling
<b>Total</b>		7	

Source: field survey, 2015

## 2.5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the above two approaches descriptive method of data analysis was used. Descriptive methods of analysis was applied to describe and interpret the current practice, challenges and the major hindering factors for community participation in urban road infrastructure development in selected *kebele*. It was applied to examine the potential of community participation in improving road infrastructure development. In addition, the descriptive analysis enables to analyze the relationship between community participation and improvements in road infrastructure development in the town. In this method the researcher has no control over the variables and only report what has happened or what is happening. Also the researcher attempts to discover even when cannot control the variables.

On the basis of the assumed relationships between variables the data gathered through interviews was analyzed by narrating and describing the meanings and implications. In other words, data which are qualitative in nature was described, classified and concepts were connected with one another. The quantitative data was analyzed through simple statistical methods like, percentages and cross tabulations were made to facilitate meaningful analysis and interpretations of the research findings.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Materialization of community participation

There is no well organized document which shows exactly when community participation is initiated in the town. As it was observed from the review of various documents that the Municipality maintains disaggregated data to a very limited extent regarding when community participation is initiated in the town. As a result, it is difficult for the researcher to obtain the disaggregated data. But, based on the information obtained from the interview with Mr. Mohammed Geda (2015), Bishoftu Town Community Participation Team Leader and Ms. Elisabet Abera (2015), Community Participation Expert of Bishoftu Town community participation is a recent phenomenon in the town. But, now it is getting a great attention and becomes the big tasks of the city administration. The practice of community participation efforts in the city is started aiming to beautifying the town. The participation was only focused to the contribution activities and the amount of money that needs to be contributed by each of the residents in the kebelles was determined by the administration itself.

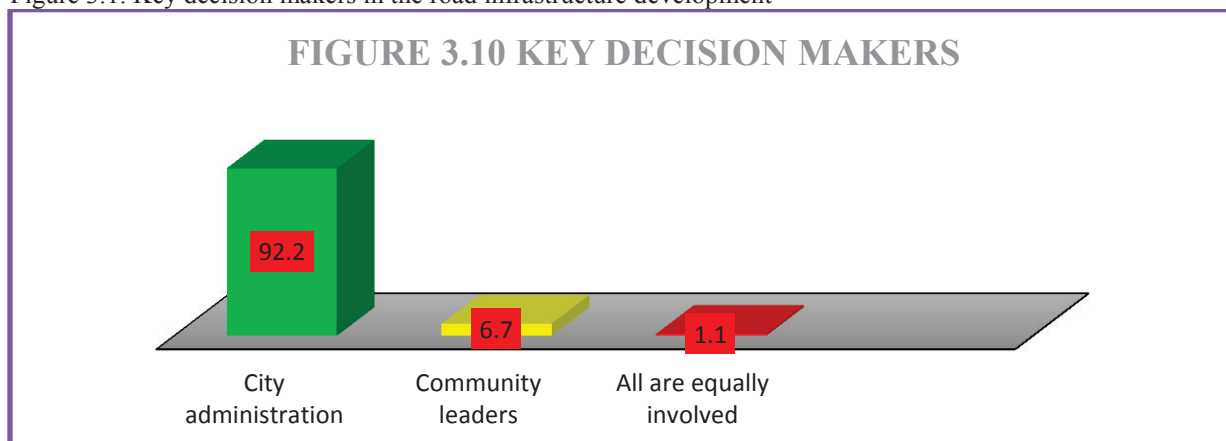
According to Mr. Mohammed Geda (2015), Community Participation Team Leader of Bishoftu Town. Community participation is legally started in the year 2001 in the town by establishing a committee. The committees are six in number these are development committee, peace committee, security committee, culture and tourism committee, arbitration committee, women's and child committees. The committees are organized at the level of the city that has planned to undertake several activities through participation of the community. These committees are composed of city administration representatives and different individuals. They has been organized and a number of sub-committees under it with several responsibilities like mobilizing of the necessary resources in order to achieve the stated objectives that have been established for. The main aim of the project is making the city attractive for tourism and maintain its ecological balance.

### 3.2. Decision makers in the road infrastructure development

Figure 3.1 below depicts the key decision makers in the road infrastructure development currently acknowledged in Bishoftu town. The chart clearly deploys the dominance of the city administration role in deciding road infrastructure development projects consisting 355(92.2%), followed by community leaders which accounts for 26(6.7%). The rest insignificant number of respondents 4(1.1%) were identified that all are equally involved in the development of road infrastructure projects. These clearly shows that the community had little decision making power while majority of the decision making power concerned with road infrastructure development is concentrated at the municipality. Community participation is about bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it. Community participation allows all community stakeholders to have a word and decide on infrastructural development concerns. Their concerns were expressed particularly in relation to the community's ability to influence decisions regarding road infrastructure development. Accordingly, the respondents expressed their concerns regarding participation in decision making phase as they perceived that municipality was imposing the already made decisions (top-down approach). Generally, from the above discussion we can infer that the city administration has a major decision making power in deciding road

infrastructure development projects in the town.

Figure 3.1. Key decision makers in the road infrastructure development

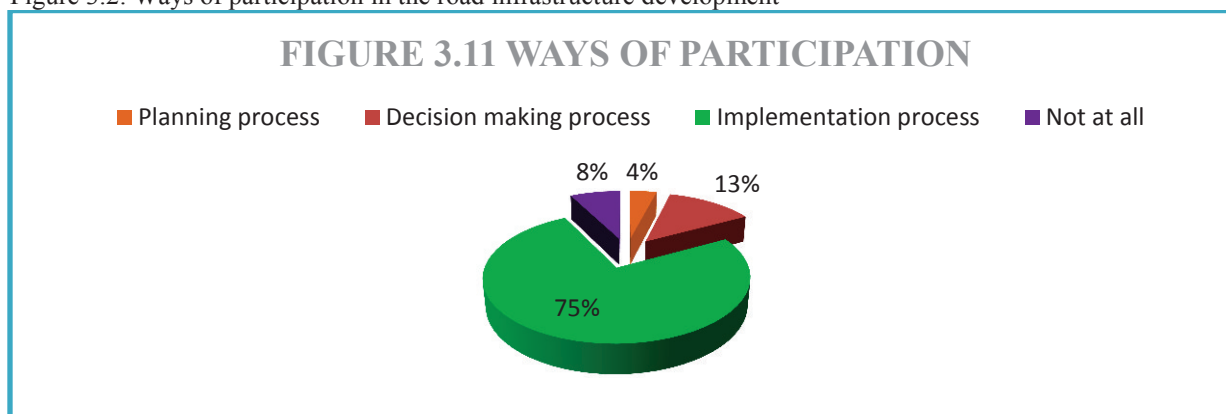


Source: field survey, 2015

### 3.3. Ways of community participation in road infrastructure development programs

It is worthwhile to investigate the way that the community participates in the road infrastructure development in order to understand in which level the communities are entitled to participate. Accordingly, the researcher tried to assess the level in which the community is participated in the process of road infrastructure development. The figure 3.11 below clearly demonstrates that out of 385 total sampled respondent 15(4%) of the total sampled respondent replied that they had participated in the planning process of road infrastructure projects. While 51(13%) participants reported that they participated in decision making process. Majority of respondents 289(75%) of the respondents replied that they were involved in the implementation process of the road infrastructure development. This indicated that most of the time the communities are participated in the implementation stage after the plan is designed by the city administration and decisions are made without the consultation of the community. The community participation activities are contributing in the development of infrastructure services in the city. And the local development activities are scaling up from construction of lower quality local road accesses to asphalts. However, the efforts were focusing on getting community contributions in order to bridge the financial gap of the local government. The rest 30(8%) reported that they were not involved in any level. Though the need for involving the community through the entire participatory infrastructure cycle including policy formulation, planning, implementation, maintenance and operation, and evaluation and at the same time building a permanent institution responsible for community participation endeavors, effective communication and relationships among the community, municipality and other various stake holders in the infrastructure development are very important and help to promote community participation and improve the road infrastructure development in the city.

Figure 3.2. Ways of participation in the road infrastructure development



Source: field survey, 2015

### 3.4. Roles and Importance of Community Participation

The responses to the question forwarded to the survey participants regarding the role of the community in the development of road infrastructure as it indicated in the following figure 3.13 shows that, most of the respondents 275(71.4%) were believed that the community plays a very crucial role in improving road



infrastructure development. While, 97(25.2%) respondents felt otherwise. The survey result also revealed that insignificant number 13(4%) of respondents were unable to say anything concerning the role of the community in improving road infrastructure development in Bishoftu town. From these we can infer that community involvement is highly recommended in the development of road infrastructure because the community plays a vital role in these regard. Community participation is identified as a key mechanism to strengthen road infrastructure development in developing countries. The development programs will be much improved, only when the local community plays a vital role in its process. It is believed that community participation will contribute towards designing acceptable and user friendly projects and make communities develop an interest in the operation and maintenance of projects (Sibiya,2010).

### **3.5. Hindrances of community participation in urban infrastructure development**

Community participation is not yet developed very well in the city; due to these fact there are several challenges that are faced by the community. The respondents were indicated the potential challenges they face and has prevailed in the road infrastructure development. These are: Lack of resource, lack of access to information, absence of representative community groups in the decision-making process and the relationship between government and the community (the existence of in effective communication).

## **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

Community participation is a recent phenomenon in the town. But, now it is getting a great attention and becomes the big tasks of the city administration. The existing community participation efforts are mainly focused on the process of implementation in which the people make different contributions mainly to promote local resource mobilization which lacks the participation of the community to decide on its own affairs in the development of road infrastructure services in its locality. The participation was only focused to the contribution activities and the amount of money that needs to be contributed by each of the residents in the *kebele* was determined by the administration itself. The decision making process does not allow the community an opportunity to inform their pressing needs and priorities. In other words the procedure still focuses more on participating the community at the stage of project implementation in order to fill the financial gaps. The community participation has to start from identifying the needs of the community and to use its powers to meet the identified needs to continue through the entire processes of infrastructure management function includes: formulation of policies, planning, programming, implementation, construction and maintenance and monitoring and evaluation.

Moreover, the survey also reveals that community participation is not yet developed very well in the city, due to these facts there are several challenges prevailed in community participation. These are lack of resource, lack of access to information, absence of representative community groups in the decision-making process, the existence of in effective communication, lack of coordination between the municipality and *kebele* leaders, lack of awareness on the part of the community, lack of attitudinal change and lack of positive attitude (they feel that our views were not taken into consideration and they associate community participation with politics. Therefore, the municipality should create an enabling environment for participation and this should include addressing the factors influencing community participation as well as filling the capacity gaps within the community in order to achieve effective community participation in the road infrastructure development.

### **4.2 Recommendation**

Upon completion of the study, this research provides different recommendations to be carried out to promote community participation and improve road infrastructure development to make it effective and sustainable. Firstly, Community participation must be more than a policy statement there must be genuine commitment to encourage participation in all aspects and at levels of development project rather than a policy. The most important action that the local authorities can take to encourage community participation is to welcome local people to contribute to the activities which are to be implemented or implemented. Different organizational structures should be created at various levels of the administration with identified responsibility for the several functions like identification and prioritization of the problems of the community and preparation of the necessary standards and designs and evaluation of the performance has also been identified in the participatory infrastructure development. Because, participatory infrastructure management calls for an appropriate organizational set up for the actors with clear division of tasks in line with interests and capacity. In addition the municipality is expected to design different motivational mechanisms in order to encourage those individuals or group of individuals to mobilize full community participation and improve road infrastructure development in the town.

Building effective communication channel between the community and the municipality which could provide meaningful participation and strengthening the capacity of the community through identifying the wish

lists of the community (public interest identification), providing public consultation (through public meeting) and capacity building aiming to achieve road infrastructure development and ensure its sustainability.

Viable communication systems among the various entities of local government and other actors like the regional urban development office and other stake holders are important to improve road infrastructure development in the city. Discussions could take place, and in the process the stakeholders could have a common vision, but other people's views could also be appreciated and the success of community meetings should not be measured against the attendance but by its ability to transform needs and wants into tangible solutions there should be adequate discussion with large community on urban infrastructure development issues.

The municipality should create platforms where communities will be able to express their feelings without fear, engaging all relevant stakeholders during the planning stage of the projects, integrated development plan meetings should be effectively publicized in order to allow the community to have an opportunity to identify their needs and problems and device mechanisms to meet such needs. Therefore, the need for involving the community from the very early stages of decision making in needs and resource assessment, priority setting and in general through the entire processes of participatory infrastructure development is advisable.

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