



COMMUNITY MOBILISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES UNDER UGANDA'S PARISH DEVELOPMENT MODEL: EVIDENCE FROM EMPOWERMENT, PRODUCTIVITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research paper was to assess the extent to which community mobilisation supports the implementation of the Parish Development Model (PDM) Fund in Uganda. In doing so, the paper was conceptualised using relatively new theoretical perspectives, namely participatory development and Asset-Based Community Development. A mixed-methods design was chosen for the study to understand how awareness, engagement, and participation collectively influence community mobilisation at the parish level. The study is based on findings from the existing empirical literature, which suggests mixed practices in community mobilisation, despite a strong emphasis on inclusive participation in the policy framework. The inconsistencies appear to stem from challenges faced by various actors, including institutional deficiencies, communication failures, and sociocultural factors. The research finds that effective community mobilisation under the PDM requires context-sensitive strategies, strengthened local governance structures, and integrated communication systems. The study highlights the importance of effective and sustained community mobilisation to achieve meaningful transformation at the grassroots level, thereby contributing to the ongoing dialogue on decentralisation.

KEYWORDS

1. Community Mobilisation,
2. Parish Development Model (PDM)
3. Decentralised Development
4. Participatory Governance
5. Local Development Outcomes

INTRODUCTION

Community mobilisation is now being recognised as one of the key building blocks for enabling inclusive growth, Participatory Governance and generating sustainable changes in the socioeconomic landscape as part of a wider transition towards a decentralised model of development (Ahmad & Islam, 2024a). The current paradigm of community mobilisation has evolved from simply a means of disseminating information about development processes to a multifaceted concept incorporating awareness-raising, stakeholder engagement, behaviour change, and collective action (Nipa et al, 2025).

The findings of both empirical and theoretical scholarship support the view that effective community mobilisation contributes to an increased sense of community ownership and greater legitimacy of local institutions, as well as to the transformation of policy objectives into actual development results (Wahid et al, 2017). In Uganda, the Parish Development Model (PDM) is a flagship policy initiative

aimed at transitioning households from subsistence to a cash economy (Katusiimeh & Wamara, 2025; Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2024). The PDM is closely linked to the broader objectives of decentralisation and is consistent with Uganda's national development priorities, embodying community engagement through parish-level planning processes, community-based resource allocation, and participatory decision-making (Rwigema, 2022). At its heart, the PDM is based on the premise that structured and inclusive forms of community mobilisation (for example, sensitisation campaigns, community-based platforms and linkage between institutions) will result in more active citizen participation and accountability, thereby contributing to improved local development outcomes (Restrepo-Mieth, 2023).

Developing and implementing community development programs based on concepts of community area planning has been done for many years around the world (Quimbo et al, 2018). There is, however, evidence that the way large-scale community development programs have been

implemented does not match what was envisaged in the policy frameworks (Moulton & Sandfort, 2017). The breadth and diversity of how these programs have been implemented appear to vary across different community types within similar sociocultural, economic, and political environments (Bardosh et al, 2017).

For example, studies conducted in Uganda have found large differences in the levels and types of community participation, the extent of community engagement, and the overall effectiveness of participatory community development programs (Muhwezi et al, 2019). In fact, many community development programs have focused more on procedural than on transnational aspects (Chung Tiam Fook, 2017). Procedural community development programs are characterised by top-down communication methods, a lack of inclusivity in the decision-making process, and weak, ineffective feedback mechanisms for the community (Ahmad & Islam, 2024a; Bell & Reed, 2022). Procedural approaches have also been shown to limit communities' ability to effectively take ownership of community development programs, thereby undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of decentralised community development efforts (Wahid et al, 2017).

There is also a significant body of literature indicating that community mobilisation as a construct is treated very uniformly across the available literature and that there is little information regarding the interconnections between the various elements of community mobilisation (engagement, awareness, and participation) and the sociocultural, economic, and political environment in which community mobilisation occurs. Therefore, this is an analytical gap in the literature on the extent to which community mobilisation produces measurable development outcomes, especially within complex policy environments such as the PDM. Community development processes using participatory methods have the potential to produce meaningful results when built upon supportive institutional structures and context-sensitive implementation strategies (Adefila et al, 2024). A community can enhance participation by engaging in governance and citizenship frameworks, which is critical to how actively it participates in any given effort (Howard & Wheeler, 2015).

The purpose of this paper is to review community mobilisation in the context of regional government development in Uganda by critically examining how community members participate in implementing the PDM Fund, drawing on both established methods and emerging theories of community-page development. The study highlights stakeholders' local-level experiences, providing insight into how communities experience mobilisation and development, while also clarifying how structural and operational components can affect the quality and impact of community mobilisation within regional government. Finally, the paper provides a detailed analysis of community mobilisation through an inclusive framework that considers both traditional and innovative approaches.

Theories on mobilising communities in decentralized Development Systems

This analysis of this study is based on three complementary theoretical perspectives that work together to develop a multi-dimensional picture of how to mobilize communities in decentralized Development Systems.

Participatory Development Theory establishes participatory engagement as a fundamental component in facilitating sustainable development (de Poza-Vilches et al, 2019; Sebunya & Gichuki, 2024). In contrast to development being delivered to communities as passive recipients, participation in decision-making processes is necessary for communities to take ownership of Development interventions and ensure Development institutions are accountable to and responsive to local needs (Awoonor, 2025; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Therefore, viewing community mobilisation within the context of the Parish Development Model (PDM) represents a process aimed at enabling voice, inclusion and collective decision-making - thus legitimising and enhancing the effectiveness of decentralised governance systems (Kgosinyane, 2024).

Second, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Albert Bandura (1986), offers a behavioural perspective for understanding the process of mobilisation (Beauchamp et al, 2019; Rumjaun & Narod, 2025). SCT represents the reciprocal interaction among individual cognitive processes, the social environment, and observed behaviour and therefore incorporates concepts such as self-efficacy, observational learning, and reinforcement. While primarily used to explain how people change their behaviour, SCT is relevant for this study because it helps explain how mobilisation efforts (through sensitisation, information transfer, and community engagement) help develop people's willingness and ability to participate in development projects (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022; Ismail & Brown, 2026). Thus, mobilisation is not only about conveying information but also about transforming people by changing their attitudes towards development and creating a perception of the potential benefits of collective agency, enabling people to sustain their engagement in development initiatives (Rachmad, 2022).

Third, the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Theory, developed by John Kretzmann and John McKnight in 1993, provides an analytical lens that focuses on community strengths rather than deficits (Boodram, 2019). The ABCD Theory emphasizes the use of local assets (such as social networks, local knowledge systems, and leadership structures) as the basis of development (Nel, 2018). Rather than viewing communities as dependent on external activities, ABCD encourages the activation of community capacities to foster resilience, innovation and sustainability through mobilisation, thereby creating a more sustainable community (Skhosana, 2025).

When considered together, these theoretical perspectives create an interdisciplinary, comprehensive framework for understanding community mobilisation within the PDM framework. In terms of community mobilisation, Participatory Development Theory elucidates the structural/institutional dimension of participation; Social Cognitive Theory elucidates the cognitive/behavioural processes underpinning participation; and ABCD Theory elucidates the resource-based/contextual aspects of community mobilisation. Together, they portray community mobilisation as a multifaceted construct comprising awareness, engagement, and participation, all essential mechanisms through which the impact of decentralised development initiatives translates into direct positive social change at the grassroots level. As a consolidated framework, this application enhances the analytic rigour of the analysis and provides a means to measure the extent to which the processes of community mobilisation through the PDM initiative are inclusive, behaviourally effective and rooted in local capacity.

TOOLS AND METHODS

Utilising a convergent mixed-methods approach, this study explores how community mobilisation works through the implementation of the Parish Development Model in Uganda. Data were collected through a community-administered structured questionnaire that generated quantitative information on community mobilisation outcomes. The questionnaire, based on a 5-point Likert scale, measured three dimensions of community mobilisation: empowerment, productivity, and sustainability.

Qualitative data were obtained through a review of relevant policy documents and literature on community mobilisation and the Parish Development Model. These sources provided contextual and explanatory insights that complemented the quantitative findings.

Both purposive and stratified sampling techniques were employed to ensure adequate representation of different stakeholder groups within the study population. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and mean scores, to identify patterns and variations in community mobilisation outcomes. Qualitative information from policy documents and relevant literature was analysed using thematic content analysis to identify key themes, trends, and policy implications related to community mobilisation.

To ensure methodological rigour, several quality assurance measures were implemented, including content validation of the research instruments, assessment of internal consistency, and triangulation of data sources. Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring voluntary participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community mobilisation has increasingly emerged as a central pillar of development practice across the world, particularly within decentralised governance systems that seek to place citizens at the centre of decision-making and development implementation (Ahmad & Islam, 2024b; Ngunjiri, 2023). Globally, development agencies, governments, and scholars recognise community mobilisation as a process through which individuals and communities become aware of development opportunities, engage with institutions, and actively participate in initiatives that affect their livelihoods (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024; Ojha et al., 2016). Rather than being a one-off activity, community mobilisation is widely viewed as a dynamic and progressive process that strengthens local ownership, enhances accountability, and promotes sustainable development outcomes (Obiakor et al., 2025).

The theoretical foundations of community mobilisation are largely grounded in participatory development approaches, which emphasise the active involvement of beneficiaries in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes (Blackburn et al., 2018; Tremblay et al., 2017). Participatory development challenges traditional top-down models by advocating for inclusive decision-making and community empowerment as prerequisites for successful development interventions. According to De Vente et al. (2016), meaningful participation enables communities to influence decisions that affect them and increases the likelihood of sustainable outcomes. Similarly, Blackburn et al. (2018) argue that development initiatives are more effective when citizens move beyond being passive recipients of services and become active partners in the development process.

Within this broader discourse, community mobilisation is commonly conceptualised as a multidimensional process comprising awareness creation, community engagement, and active participation (Gingir & Medeni, 2024; Lippman et al., 2016). These dimensions are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, with each representing a progressively deeper level of citizen involvement. Awareness lays the foundation for engagement, while engagement facilitates meaningful participation (Mittal & Bansal, 2024). Together, these dimensions contribute to community empowerment and collective action, which are essential for achieving development objectives.

At the global level, awareness creation is widely recognised as the entry point for effective community mobilisation (Turin et al., 2023). Development programmes depend heavily on the extent to which intended beneficiaries understand programme objectives, implementation mechanisms, and expected outcomes (Jabeen, 2018; Kim et al., 2020). Studies from community-driven development programmes in Asia, Latin America, and Africa consistently demonstrate that well-designed communication strategies enhance programme uptake and community ownership (Gessese & Hailyesus, 2025; Komi et al., 2023). Effective awareness campaigns typically utilise multiple

communication channels, including community meetings, mass media, local leadership structures, and institutional communication systems, to ensure broad reach and inclusivity (Latupeirissa et al, 2024; Sanusi et al, 2025). Conversely, inadequate communication often results in misinformation, exclusion, and low participation rates, ultimately undermining programme effectiveness (Cruickshank et al, 2026; La Bella et al, 2021).

Beyond awareness, community engagement represents a more interactive stage of mobilisation characterised by dialogue, consultation, and collaboration between communities and implementing institutions (Aitken et al, 2016; Tan et al, 2025). Engagement enables stakeholders to share experiences, provide feedback, and influence decisions that affect programme implementation (Oliver et al, 2018; Potthoff et al, 2023). International evidence suggests that successful engagement is strongly influenced by the quality of local governance, leadership effectiveness, and institutional responsiveness (Abdi et al, 2025; Bouckaert, 2023; Sotarauta & Beer, 2017). Participatory governance systems that encourage transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness tend to generate higher levels of stakeholder engagement and trust (Rhamadhani & Edeh, 2024; Waddington et al, 2019). However, weak institutional capacity, inadequate facilitation skills, and limited resources often constrain meaningful engagement, reducing community involvement to passive attendance rather than active contribution (Emynorane et al, 2026).

The highest level of community mobilisation is reflected in active participation, where community members contribute directly to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of development interventions (Lippman et al, 2016). Participation extends beyond consultation and involves communities exercising ownership over development processes and outcomes (Foster, 2018). Empirical evidence from community-driven development programmes in Nigeria indicates that active participation enhances project sustainability, strengthens local accountability mechanisms, and improves resource utilisation (Awoonor, 2025). Participation is particularly effective when it includes marginalised groups such as women, youth, and vulnerable populations, whose voices are frequently underrepresented in development processes (Adom et al, 2025). Inclusive participation not only improves equity but also broadens the range of local knowledge and resources available for development initiatives (Ahmad & Islam, 2024a; Awoonor, 2025).

In Africa, community mobilisation has become an important strategy for promoting local development, poverty reduction, and decentralised governance (Agegnehu & Dibu, 2017; Atisa et al, 2021). Many governments have adopted participatory approaches that seek to strengthen community involvement in planning and resource allocation (Sebunya & Gichuki, 2024). However, evidence across the continent reveals significant variations in mobilisation outcomes. Onyancha et al. (2025) found

that context-specific mobilisation strategies, supported by strong local leadership and institutional commitment, significantly improve participation and programme effectiveness. Their findings suggest that successful mobilisation depends not only on community willingness to participate but also on the capacity of institutions to create enabling environments for engagement. These observations align with Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) theory, which emphasises the importance of leveraging local assets, capacities, and social networks to drive sustainable development (Skhosana, 2025).

Uganda's decentralisation framework provides a particularly relevant context for examining community mobilisation. Since the introduction of decentralisation reforms, community participation has been promoted as a mechanism for improving service delivery, accountability, and local development. The Parish Development Model (PDM), launched as Uganda's flagship strategy for socio-economic transformation, places community mobilisation at the centre of its implementation framework (Asiimwe, 2025). The model seeks to move development planning and resource allocation closer to citizens through parish-level structures, thereby enhancing local ownership and participation (Katusiimeh & Wamara, 2025).

Within the PDM framework, community mobilisation is expected to facilitate awareness creation, strengthen engagement between citizens and implementing agencies, and promote active participation in development activities (David, 2025). The model assumes that informed and engaged citizens are more likely to participate in decision-making processes and effectively utilise development resources (Bell & Reed, 2022). Consequently, community mobilisation is not merely a support function within the PDM but rather a foundational mechanism for achieving programme objectives (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2024).

Empirical evidence from Uganda presents a mixed picture regarding the effectiveness of community mobilisation under the PDM (Asiimwe, 2025). Studies indicate that awareness levels vary significantly across districts, largely depending on the intensity and consistency of sensitisation efforts. Therefore, communities exposed to sustained awareness campaigns reported higher levels of programme understanding, engagement, and participation than communities where communication efforts were fragmented (Burnside-Lawry & Carvalho, 2016). These findings underscore the critical role of effective communication in facilitating programme uptake and community ownership.

Similarly, research on community engagement under the PDM suggests that institutional capacity and leadership quality significantly influence mobilisation outcomes (Khan & Short, 2021). Local leaders play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue, coordinating community activities, and fostering trust between citizens and government institutions (Lansing et al, 2023). However, limited

facilitation skills, inadequate logistical support, and weak accountability mechanisms often undermine effective engagement. Rijal (2023) observed that in some communities, engagement remains largely symbolic, with citizens attending meetings but having limited influence over decision-making processes.

Participation under the PDM also varies considerably across communities. While some districts have reported high levels of community involvement in programme activities, others continue to face challenges related to exclusion, limited representation, and weak community ownership. Jovani (2025) demonstrated that active involvement of women and youth groups significantly improves participation outcomes by expanding representation and enhancing inclusivity. Those findings suggest that targeted strategies for marginalised groups are essential to ensuring equitable and sustainable development outcomes.

Overall, the literature suggests that community mobilisation under the PDM is shaped by a complex interplay among awareness, engagement, and participation. While the policy framework strongly emphasises inclusive participation, implementation experiences reveal persistent challenges related to communication, institutional capacity, leadership effectiveness, and community trust. These findings indicate

that successful mobilisation requires more than policy commitment; it demands context-sensitive strategies, strengthened local governance structures, and integrated communication systems capable of sustaining meaningful citizen involvement (Tan et al., 2025). It is within this context that the present study examines the extent to which community mobilisation supports the implementation of the Parish Development Model Fund in Uganda.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Community Mobilisation Outcomes under the Parish Development Model

The purpose of this investigation was to assess the role of community mobilisation in supporting the implementation of Uganda's Parish Development Model (PDM). The research addressed community mobilisation via three major areas of consideration: 1) the amount of empowerment within a given community; 2) the successful or unsuccessful productivity results; and 3) how sustainable the development efforts were. Generally speaking, the community members involved in this study had an overall positive view of the influence of community mobilisation on the implementation of PDM, although specific perceptions differed across the three domains of mobilisation.

Table 1: Presents the descriptive statistics for the three dimensions of community mobilisation.

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Community Empowerment	3.58	0.91	Moderately High
Productivity Outcomes	3.49	0.88	Moderately High
Sustainability of Initiatives	3.62	0.86	High

Source: Authors

The findings suggest that each dimension had mean scores above the midpoint of the scale is an indication that community mobilisation will lead to adding to each of the components of the PDM. Of the 3 dimensions, sustainability had the highest mean score ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.86$), followed by community empowerment ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.91$), whereas productivity outcomes had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.88$), though still positive. The low standard deviations represent that the 3 dimensions of community mobilisation were consistently perceived by the respondents.

These results suggest that, rather than just being an additional activity within the PDM, it can be considered one of the key means of achieving the program's overall objectives. The positive score on each of the 3 dimensions demonstrates that the community believes that mobilisation provides a greater opportunity for the community to become involved, take responsibility and achieve positive development at the parish level.

Community Awareness as a Foundation for Mobilisation

The research demonstrated that the establishment of awareness is integral to mobilizing communities to be engaged in the PDM. Respondents stated that they had

primarily heard about the programme through local leaders, meetings at their parishes, community sensitisation and other forms of mobilisation. It also seems clear from the data that those participants who were more aware of the programme objectives and process(s) were more likely to participate in both programme activities and discussions in their communities.

This corroborates the belief that community mobilisation can be viewed as a sequence of activities, beginning with creating awareness. Awareness appears to provide the basis for engagement/participation. Communities that are aware of the programme's objectives have a better capacity to understand its potential benefits and can contribute positively to its implementation.

Just as Onyancha et al. (2025) noted, awareness has long been deemed an essential condition for effective mobilisation, with previous research highlighted in this study confirming its importance as the starting point for successful mobilisation whereby those districts that conducted a structured, continuous awareness/sensitisation campaign had significantly better levels of uptake and participation than those that relied solely on ad-hoc communications. Additionally, there is substantial global evidence suggesting that people's access

to information plays a critical role in their willingness and ability to engage in building development programming. Therefore, these results indicate that both awareness and communication are important factors for the success of any PDM implementation.

Community Empowerment and Local Participation

The average score for community empowerment was 3.58 (SD = 0.91), indicating that most people felt their mobilisation had helped them acquire the skills and resources needed to participate in local development processes. The increased awareness of developmental initiatives and their involvement in community-based meetings, as well as increased self-esteem when interacting with local governance structures, are examples of the success of mobilisation efforts in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and decision-making capacity to communities. Since citizenship is based on empowering people, enabling them to be proactive in developing interventions rather than simply relying on others is essential to decentralising development.

The findings reaffirm the Participatory Development Theory, which holds that when citizens participate in decision-making about their livelihoods, they are more likely to experience authentic development. This finding is supported by Hammett (2018), who argued that when citizens actively participate in their political system, they develop greater agency and strengthen democratic governance. Similarly, by asserting that one of the primary outcomes of participatory development programs is the enhancement of community empowerment, Timidi and Okuro (2024) have also validated the Participatory Development Theory.

Additionally, the results are consistent with other evidence on African communities. Ahmad and Islam (2024a) concluded that implementing inclusive leadership structures and participatory governance processes has significantly improved stakeholder participation and empowerment. Therefore, the study confirms the contribution of community mobilisation through the PDM program to enhancing local capacity and increasing citizen involvement in governance related to rural community development.

Community Mobilisation and Productivity Outcomes

The mean Productivity score was significantly lower than both Engagement and Co-ordination, at 3.49 (SD=0.88). However, respondents agreed that the mobilisation efforts had created opportunities for increased participation in income-generating activities, improved access to PDM resources, and enhanced community co-ordination regarding economic development.

While there is a distinct difference between the Productivity scores and the other two dimensions, this suggests that, although mobilisation has successfully increased awareness and participation, it will take significantly longer for these gains to be converted into measurable economic

outcomes. In many cases, economic transformation requires significant levels of investment, access to productive resources, technical assistance, and access to markets; therefore, it can take much longer for such changes to occur compared to changes in both awareness and participation.

Nonetheless, the results suggest that mobilisation plays a role in creating an enabling environment for economic development by connecting community members and providing access to PDM-based opportunities. Participation through collective action and effective information sharing helps communities to identify productive activities and coordinate efforts to achieve economic goals.

Findings align with the literature on community-driven development and support the assertion that participation improves economic outcomes by optimising resource use and enhancing local accountability systems. Results reflect the PDM's purpose to help households transition from subsistence production to an economy of money use through community-level interventions.

Sustainability of Development Initiatives

Among all dimensions examined, sustainability recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.62, SD = 0.86). This finding indicates strong respondent agreement that community mobilisation contributes to the long-term viability and ownership of development initiatives.

The high sustainability score suggests that mobilisation fosters collective responsibility, local ownership, and continued commitment to development programmes. Respondents emphasised the importance of continuous sensitisation, effective local leadership, and regular community involvement in maintaining momentum for development activities.

This finding is particularly important because sustainability remains one of the most significant challenges facing development interventions. Programmes often achieve short-term success but struggle to maintain outcomes once external support is reduced. The present findings suggest that community mobilisation may help address this challenge by strengthening local ownership and reducing dependency on external actors.

The results strongly support Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) theory, which emphasises leveraging local assets, capacities, and social networks to achieve sustainable development outcomes. According to the ABCD perspective, communities possess valuable resources that can be mobilised to drive long-term development. The findings indicate that the PDM's emphasis on community structures and local participation may be contributing to the development of sustainable, community-based systems that support ongoing socio-economic transformation. The findings also resonate with the work of Sánchez-Soriano et al. (2024), who found that strong local leadership and

community ownership significantly improve sustainability outcomes in development programmes across Africa.

Challenges Constraining Community Mobilisation

While many respondents identified positive results from using the PDM as their tool for community mobilisation, they had also identified several obstacles to successful mobilisation. The most common obstacles cited by respondents included a lack of usable communication systems, delays in sharing information through those systems, inadequate capabilities among local leaders, a lack of follow-up and monitoring, cultural barriers, and perceived inefficiencies in the institutions involved in the PDM.

The results of the study also provide an important explanation regarding the differences in mobilisation results. While the policy framework calls for inclusive participation, the reality of implementation often limits the effectiveness of mobilisation efforts. The lack of an effective communication system could limit awareness, while insufficient institutional capacity could limit meaningful opportunities for a consumer to engage in this process.

The findings corroborate those of Motloutsi (2024), who reported that low levels of trust and weak communication structures continue to undermine community participation in several PDM implementation areas. Similarly, Rijal (2023) found that limited institutional support often reduces community engagement to symbolic participation rather than meaningful involvement in decision-making.

These challenges suggest that successful mobilisation requires more than community willingness to participate. It also depends on institutional readiness, effective leadership, adequate resources, and responsive governance structures that can sustain citizen engagement.

Implications for PDM Implementation

In sum, the research indicates that community mobilisation is essential to facilitating the implementation of the Parish Development Model (PDM) in Uganda. The high scores achieved in empowerment, productivity, and sustainability suggest that awareness, engagement, and participation are all greatly associated with programme success.

The analysis also suggested that organisational mobilisation effectiveness is influenced by enhanced communication systems; the development of local government governance capacity; the strengthening of accountability systems; and ongoing community sensitisation/information sharing. Findings consistent with participatory development theory and asset-based community development theory suggest that communities can create meaningful transformation at the grassroots level when they are provided with the ability to obtain relevant information, are engaged in their development processes, empowered, and able to mobilise their own resources towards achieving development objectives.

Ultimately, the research concludes that community mobilisation should be a strategic pillar of the PDM rather than merely an ancillary function. The continued development of mobilising structures and processes will likely continue to positively impact programme success; increase community ownership; and advance the overall goals of decentralisation, poverty alleviation, and sustainable local development in Uganda.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the extent to which community mobilisation supports the implementation of the Parish Development Model (PDM) in Uganda. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Participatory Development Theory and Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), the study conceptualised community mobilisation as a progressive process comprising awareness creation, community engagement, and active participation. The findings demonstrate that community mobilisation plays a significant role in implementing the PDM by enhancing community empowerment, improving productivity outcomes, and strengthening the sustainability of local development initiatives.

The results revealed generally positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of community mobilisation, with sustainability recording the highest mean score ($M = 3.62$), followed by community empowerment ($M = 3.58$) and productivity outcomes ($M = 3.49$). These findings suggest that communities view mobilisation not only as a mechanism for disseminating information but also as an important catalyst for fostering local ownership, collective action, and long-term commitment to development interventions. The study further established that awareness creation serves as the foundation for effective mobilisation, while engagement and participation represent increasingly deeper levels of community involvement that contribute to programme success.

The findings provide empirical support for Participatory Development Theory, which emphasises the importance of citizen involvement in development decision-making processes. They also reinforce the assumptions of Asset-Based Community Development by demonstrating that communities are more likely to sustain development initiatives when local assets, leadership structures, and social networks are effectively mobilised. However, the study also revealed persistent challenges, including weak communication systems, limited institutional capacity, inadequate follow-up mechanisms, and sociocultural barriers that continue to constrain meaningful participation in some communities.

Overall, the study concludes that community mobilisation is a critical determinant of successful PDM implementation. While financial resources and institutional structures remain important, the ability to inform, engage, and empower communities ultimately determines the extent to

which development interventions achieve their intended outcomes. Sustainable grassroots transformation under the PDM therefore requires community mobilisation to be treated as a strategic development function rather than a peripheral implementation activity.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice in implementing the Parish Development Model and other decentralised development programmes in Uganda.

First, government should strengthen community sensitisation and communication systems at the parish level. Since awareness emerged as a foundational element of mobilisation, there is a need for continuous, structured information dissemination through multiple communication channels, including local leaders, community meetings, radio programmes, social media platforms, and village-based outreach mechanisms. Communication strategies should be tailored to local contexts to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all community members.

Second, there is a need to invest in the capacity development of parish and local government structures responsible for mobilisation. Training programmes should focus on participatory leadership, community facilitation, conflict resolution, stakeholder engagement, and communication skills. Strengthening the competence of local leaders would improve the quality of community engagement and enhance trust between citizens and implementing institutions.

Third, policymakers should institutionalise participatory mechanisms that enable communities to contribute meaningfully to programme planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Participation should move beyond information sharing and consultation to include genuine involvement in decision-making processes. Particular attention should be given to the inclusion of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups whose perspectives are often underrepresented.

Fourth, the government should strengthen monitoring, feedback, and accountability systems within the PDM framework. Regular feedback loops between communities and implementing agencies would enhance transparency, improve responsiveness to community concerns, and increase public confidence in programme implementation. Such mechanisms would also provide opportunities for continuous learning and adaptive management.

Fifth, development partners and implementing agencies should adopt context-sensitive mobilisation strategies that recognise differences in local socio-cultural, economic, and institutional conditions. Uniform mobilisation approaches may not be effective across all communities. Instead, mobilisation interventions should be tailored to local

realities while leveraging existing community assets, networks, and leadership structures.

Finally, the study highlights the need to reposition community mobilisation as a core pillar of development policy rather than merely a supporting activity. Future policy frameworks should explicitly recognise mobilisation as an investment in social capital, local governance, and sustainable development. Strengthening mobilisation structures will not only improve the effectiveness of the Parish Development Model but also contribute to broader national objectives of decentralisation, poverty reduction, inclusive growth, and community resilience.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Dr Patrick Mafumbo Wabwire: Writing–review & editing, Data collection, Article Submission. **Dr Margaret Nakiwala:** Writing–review & editing, Writing–original draft, Investigation, Data analysis, Conceptualisation.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT (v2 capabilities) in order to improve the language and readability of the text. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the publication's content.

Declaration of Competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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