



**The challenges and Opportunities of Asset-Based Community Development
(ABCD) in Ethiopia: The Case of Dorcas Aid Ethiopia Experience**

By:

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND
ECONOMICS ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
MASTERS DEGREE OF DEVELOPMENT
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

MAY 2025

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS MADM
PROGRAM

THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY OF ASSET BASED COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT (ABCD) IN ETHIOPIA OF DORCAS AID ETHIOPIA
EXPERIENCE

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Declaration

I, the Undersigned researcher, declare that this Thesis is my original work, and hasn't been presented for a degree, in any university and that all resources of materials used for the thesis have been properly acknowledge.

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Abstract

This research investigates the challenges and opportunities of implementing the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model as a sustainable, community-led development approach in Ethiopia. More emphasizing on the practical experience of Dorcas Aid Ethiopia in Addis Ababa and Shashemene City Administrations, the study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative survey data and qualitative insights from key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The findings recognize the ABCD model's effectiveness in promoting community empowerment, ownership of development initiatives, self-reliance, and participatory planning by leveraging local assets rather than focusing on community deficits.

Despite these positive outcomes, the research also identifies significant barriers and challenges to effectively implement ABCD approach in Ethiopia. These include limited training programs, socio-cultural and institutional constraints, and inadequate access to learning resources and technical support, be it from in-country or external sources. The study acknowledges the importance of incorporating capacity building for practitioners, stronger collaboration between community actors and institutions, and the creation of enabling environments, in the policy and knowledge sector, that nurture inclusive and locally-driven development initiatives.

This research contributes to the dissertation on sustainable community development in Ethiopia by signifying that the ABCD model can serve as a transformative tool for community development when adapted to local contexts. It calls for integrated policy action and enhanced institutional support to scale the ABCD model and ensure its sustainability within Ethiopia's diverse development landscape.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to God Almighty, whose guidance, strength, and grace have sustained me throughout my graduate education and the successful completion of this thesis.

I am deeply indebted to my advisor, Dr. Jemal Abagissa, for his invaluable academic guidance and continuous support. His insightful comments, timely feedback, and unwavering encouragement have been instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this research. I am especially grateful for his consistent follow-up, his reminders on meeting deadlines, and his patience and kindness throughout the entire process. This thesis would not have been possible without his dedicated mentorship.

I also extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Turi, who professionally coordinated the data collection process in Shashemene, and to the data enumerators who supported this effort. His contributions were especially significant in guiding the qualitative data collection, and I am truly appreciative of his involvement.

Special thanks are also due to Professor Eby Kent, for his kind assistance in providing reference materials essential to this research.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my classmate, Simon Asegid, for his remarkable support and encouragement throughout the course of this work.

Finally, my profound gratitude goes to my beloved wife, Eyerusalem Beharu, for her unwavering support, patience, and understanding. Her assistance in every aspect of my life—especially in allowing me the time and space to focus on my studies during weekends and holidays, and for managing our family responsibilities during my busiest moments—has been a cornerstone of this accomplishment. To all who have contributed in one way or another to the completion of this thesis, I offer my sincere thanks.

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Acronyms

ABCD Asset Based Community Development

CD Capacity Development

CSO Civil Society Organizations

CC Community Conversation

DAIE Dorcas Aid International Ethiopia

EGCDWO Ethiopian Guenet Church Development and Welfare Organization

FGD Focus Group Discussion

GDP Gross Domestic Products

GTP Growth and Transformation Plan

KII Key Informant Interview

SHG Self Help Group

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

UN United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Program

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) as a community-led Development Model in Ethiopia, the challenges and opportunities to practice and support ABCD. The researcher has articulated reflections of the respondents, through practical experiences of professional experts and community volunteers coupled with stakeholder perspectives, on how ABCD can be effectively functional in the Ethiopian context and thus used to foster a more sustainable and just Development Model that allows communities to flourish. The chapter includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, general objective, specific objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, operational definitions of terms.

1.2 Background of the Study:

Community development is a well-articulated yet under-realized concept in Ethiopia. While scholars have well defined its principles—emphasizing participation, empowerment, and sustainability—its practical application has often fallen short of expectations (Pankhutst, 2008). Numerous multilateral, bilateral, and international development actors have invested heavily in both humanitarian relief and long-term development programs in Ethiopia. However, despite significant resource mobilization, progress has been inconsistent and, in many cases, unsatisfactory (World Bank, 2020).

This paradox invites a critical question for both researchers and practitioners: why has sustainable development in Ethiopia remained intangible? Could it stem from the absence of a shared and contextually grounded understanding of poverty (Sen, 1999)? Or is it a result of a mismatch between prescribed development models—often externally designed—and the lived realities of Ethiopian communities (Escobar, 1995)? Alternatively, is the limited sense of ownership among “beneficiary communities” a key factor hindering lasting change? These questions point to deeper the knowledge and operational gaps that demand attention and a rethinking of how development is defined, delivered, and measured.

Ethiopia's development trajectory has largely been dominated by deficit-based approaches, which identify communities in terms of their needs—such as lack of food, education, or health care—and respond by designing interventions to "fill the gaps." While such approaches have been effective in mobilizing external financial and technical resources, they have often perpetuated dependency and disempowerment, leaving communities as passive recipients rather than active agents (Kretzmann J. & McKnight J, 1993).

This externally-driven model has fostered what some scholars call a "dependency syndrome"—a condition where communities, institutions, and even national development plans rely on foreign aid, thereby stifling local initiative and innovation (Kebede, 2017). Furthermore, global development trends show a decline in donor commitment to direct aid, influenced by economic uncertainty, shifting geopolitical priorities, and donor fatigue (OECD, 2022). For Ethiopia, this signals the urgency of rethinking development strategies in ways that strengthen local agency, ownership, and resilience.

In response, Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) has emerged as a compelling alternative. ABCD flips the conventional narrative by starting not with what is missing, but with what is already present in communities: talents, relationships, traditions, and institutions (Russell C. and Hargreaves M., 2012). It assumes that every community has assets that, when properly identified and mobilized, can become the foundation for sustainable and self-driven development (Mathie A & Cunningham G, 2003).

ABCD rejects the passive framing of communities as recipients of aid. Instead, it positions them as co-creators of their own futures. By focusing on local strengths and promoting broad participation, ABCD fosters empowerment, collaboration, and social capital—critical ingredients for development that lasts (Emery M. and Flora C., 2006). It also resonates with traditional Ethiopian values of mutual support and community solidarity, such as the practices of idir, equb, and debo, which have long supported resilience and collective action (Pankhurst and Assefa, 2009).

In Ethiopia, however, the practical adoption of ABCD remains limited. Despite recent policy reforms and national development strategies—such as the Growth and Transformation Plan II

(GTP II) and Ten-Year Development Plan (2021–2030)—which emphasize community participation and local resource mobilization, implementation has been constrained by several factors. These include limited awareness and understanding of ABCD among policymakers and practitioners, top-down governance structures that limit grassroots innovation, socio-political constraints, including centralized decision-making and bureaucratic inefficiencies and social inequities, which can marginalize women, youth, and minority groups in community planning processes (Dejene A. and Abera B., 2021).

Despite these challenges, the opportunities for ABCD in Ethiopia are profound. Many communities harbor untapped knowledge, traditions, and informal institutions that can drive localized and culturally grounded development efforts. Globally, the increasing shift toward inclusive and participatory development paradigms and empowerment principles—as promoted by the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—further strengthens the case for ABCD as a relevant and timely model (UNDP, 2021).

This study therefore explores the dual landscape of challenges and opportunities surrounding the implementation of ABCD in Ethiopia. The study examines the case of Dorcas Aid Ethiopia and its partner organizations. Specifically, it focuses on initiatives that promote micro-entrepreneurship among youth in both rural and urban settings, as well as the expansion of self-help groups aimed at strengthening local economic structures. Based on the size of ABCD intervention and realize fair representation of perspectives across geographic and organizational contexts, the research targeted diverse implementation sites and organizations funded by Dorcas Aid Ethiopia for ABCD initiatives. These included: Shashemene and Lideta Sub-City in Addis Ababa, where the Ethiopian Guenet Church Development and Welfare Organization (EGCDWO) implements ABCD; Shashemene, where Dorcas Aid Ethiopia leads the implementation directly; and Bole Sub-City in Addis Ababa, where ABCD is carried out by Samaritan.

The research investigates how ABCD can be operationalized effectively, taking into account the local context, institutional dynamics, and cultural foundations of Ethiopian communities. Through stakeholder interviews, case analysis, and critical review of policy and literature, the

research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how asset-based models can support more equitable, resilient, and community-led development in Ethiopia.

1.3 Problem Statement:

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is a participatory approach that emphasizes on the strengths, assets, and capacities of target communities as the foundation for sustainable development. Globally, ABCD has been recognized as one of the transformative models for mobilizing local resources, fostering self-reliance, and enhancing social capital (Mathie A & Cunningham G, 2003). However, in the Ethiopian context, the application of ABCD remains limited both in practice and creation of conducive policy environment. Despite its alignment with national priorities on community-led development and resilience building, there is minimal knowledge on the concept and operationalization of ABCD principles in development programming across sectors. This underutilization can be attributed, in part, to a lack of contextual understanding, inadequate awareness among practitioners and policymakers, and limited documentation of evidence-based outcomes from existing ABCD interventions. Without a clear understanding of how ABCD functions within Ethiopia's diverse socio-economic and cultural settings, its potential for fostering inclusive and sustainable community development remains largely untapped.

In Ethiopia, there are considerable effort and resources devoted by local actors, international agencies, and multilateral development partners to achieving sustainable development. However, the impacts did not meet the expected level. A significant factor limiting this line of action is the tendency of too much dependence on international driven resources and strategies which tend to negate the reliance on local capacities. When developing the GTP II national development plan, among one of the challenges identified in the implementation of the first Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I), was the failure to obtain foreign assistance on time. This failure made it difficult to realize the planned development projects, which speak to the importance of predictable, and consistent external funding for realising developmental objectives. (Commission National Planning, 2016). This kind of externalized mind-set not only hinders the effectiveness of all development initiatives, but it also creates a distorted framework of understanding amongst civil society actors that diminishes community-led initiatives. As a result, the enormous capacity

of local communities rooted in their understanding of where they are from, remains untapped. This gap presents an opportunity for a pivot towards strategies that produce empowerment and focus on strength-based community building for sustainable and meaningful development.

Ethiopia is a country rich in untapped potential as well as development prospects. The country is home to enormous, fertile areas of agricultural land, rich and diverse cultures, rich and diverse natural resources, and a youthful and vibrant population; thus it possesses the building blocks to facilitate national development transformation and sustainable economic growth. Ethiopia's agricultural potential provides a vivid illustration of an underutilized resource. Agriculture constitutes 46.3% of the GDP (Trends Global, 2021). Moreover, Ethiopia's vibrant population—of which just over 70% is below the age of 30—offers a huge dividend. If this population can be provided with relevant skills training, we can use this demographic cohort as a key part of the value proposition in technology and knowledge intensive industries and economic growth. (Alexandre Raffoul, 2019). Despite such potential, the country remains heavily dependent on foreign aid, receiving approximately \$4 billion annually in 2016 and 2017, which accounts for a quarter of its national budget (OECD, 2022). Sadly, many potentials and opportunities remain untapped, highlighting the need for deliberate and innovative solutions to unlock the potential of Ethiopia's possibilities and drive inclusive and resilient development.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Ethiopia have made commendable progress in examining innovative development action in addressing these issues. Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), Community Conversations (CCs), and the introduction of the Self-Help Group (SHG) methodology have successfully mobilized and engaged rural communities and especially women in public life and governance (Endeshaw, 2021). Nevertheless, there remains a sense of sorrow that we cannot fully capitalize on the possibilities. This gap generates a continual drive to find and implement sustainable, scalable pathways to development that can effectively and positively impact the lives of individuals, households, and communities. The need to close this gap is not only a moral obligation, it is also a necessary step towards Ethiopia's self-reliant and inclusive future.

There is limited empirical exploration of ABCD's implementation, outcomes, and scalability in Ethiopia. Existing literature largely focuses on theoretical or anecdotal discussions, with very

few rigorous, context-specific studies assessing its effectiveness or documenting lessons learned from pilot initiatives. This research seeks to fill that gap by systematically examining how ABCD is being implemented, what impact it has on community empowerment and development outcomes, and what contextual factors influence its success or limitations in the Ethiopian setting.

This study focuses on the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach as one promising development model, which merits consideration going forward. ABCD encourages local asset-based approaches to development, fostering community strength, resilience and reducing reliance on external assistance. ABCD has considerable potential for sustainable development, but in Ethiopia, the approach has been under-promoted and generally, not recognized by development partners and communities. Furthermore, the lack of practical experience and implementation in practice in the Ethiopian context also means that there is little opportunity to understand or assess the approach, using a broader lens and grounded knowledge from practical experience. On the other hand, possibilities from ABCD- autonomy, local capital and capability, creativity and local development needs addressed through responsible and inclusive development practices- are ideal for development in Ethiopia. This research focuses on exploring the interactions of these challenges and opportunities in determining how to maximize the effect of ABCD as a means for long-term community-led development in Ethiopia.

1.4 Research Questions

The research was constructed to assess the overall experience and learning when implementing the Asset Based Community Development approach in a range of Ethiopian communities. The following research questions helped to deepend our exploration of practices of Asset Based Community Development approach.

- A. To what extent does Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) facilitate sustainable community development in Ethiopia?
- B. What key barriers kept ABCD from being truly effective in communities in Ethiopia, particularly related to the capacity building process and resource mobilization?

- C. How can ABCD help address certain development challenges in Ethiopia, particularly as related to poverty reduction and social cohesion?

1.5 Research Objectives

The research general and specific objectives were examined in the way that align with the research topic and question. The research general and specific objectives were:

1.5.1 General Objective

- Understand key challenges and opportunities related to the implementation of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in Ethiopia, to be able to recommend how it could better be used to meet and address local development needs and priorities.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

- To review the level of application of ABCD principles and practices in the target organization's projects.
- To understand the perceived challenges and limitations by both practitioners and communities in implementing ABCD.
- To identify potential opportunities for scaling up ABCD initiatives in Ethiopia.
- To make recommendations on steps to address challenges and optimize the benefits of ABCD.

1.6 Significance of the study

The aim of this study was to make a considerable contribution to community development by assessing the potential of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) as an alternative and reconceptualizing approach in the urban and rural settings of Ethiopia; considering the successes and challenges of its implementation is important, especially in Addis Ababa and Shashemene. The research is designed to develop actionable insights based on empirical reviews of and systematic comparisons between examples of ABCD in Ethiopia.

Based on the experience of other practitioners that is presented as references, it was expected that the findings could provide practitioners with recommendations for using ABCD and insights about using ABCD to achieve sustainable community development. This study is result is presented in a way that it informs evidence-based policy formulation and program design, enabling policymakers and development actors to integrate ABCD principles effectively in their policy and development decisions.

In addition, the study acknowledged that it contributes to community development interventions by demonstrating good practices and innovative approaches that enhance community agency, ownership and resilience. By addressing the gaps in development approaches and promoting a shift from top down to locally-led approaches, this study aims to contribute to the empowerment of communities and the promotion of quality and inclusive sustainable development in Ethiopia. These insights are instrumental to academics, development practitioners and policy makers seeking to enhance community-led development approaches.

The study also contributes to the development of academic knowledge, including the theoretical and empirical knowledge of ABCD, especially in the context of our Country Ethiopia. In addition, the study might have a contribution in mapping capacity gaps and training needs for practitioners and community members that enhances their skills and knowledge in ABCD and recommendations for approaches that empower and mobilise communities to take ownership of the developmental process to respond to local development needs.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

1.7.1 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on how the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach is being implemented in Ethiopia, specifically in the areas of Shashemene and Addis Ababa, where Dorcas Aid Ethiopia has been actively working. Rather than taking a broad or theoretical view, the study looks closely at how ABCD is actually being put into practice on the ground.

The research centers on the experiences and perspectives of those directly involved in or affected by ABCD—community members, local practitioners, and other key stakeholders. It explores

how they understand the approach, what opportunities it has created, and what challenges they face in applying it.

By narrowing the focus to these two locations and to the work of one leading organization, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of what works, what doesn't, and why. It also looks at the impact of ABCD on things like community empowerment, social connections, and long-term sustainability of local initiatives.

This study doesn't attempt to cover the whole country or every type of community development approach. Instead, it offers a grounded look at real experiences that could help shape future efforts to scale up ABCD in Ethiopia.

1.7.2 Limitations of the Study

Although this research aspires to furnish useful insights on the development of ABCD in Ethiopia, it also must stipulate its limitations:

- **Geographic Scope:** The geography of this study was limited to locations of Shashemene and Addis Ababa community, which may not be representative of the whole country.
- **Time Frame:** The time frame of the study was also limited to covering the period since 2020 which Dorcas Aid began taking a pro-active role of gradually introducing and implementing ABCD in its projects, new and old alike. This may serve to limit depth of analysis and the ability to explore impact over time.
- **The forms of data collection:** The types of data collection, such as surveys and interviews, can bias conclusions and limit findings.
- **Generalizability:** Due to the geographic as well as use of only one organization's experience in the implementation of ABCD, the representativeness of the finding as well as generalizability of the findings could be limited. Furthermore, there are factors that limit how generalizable the findings of the study are to wider contexts, such as culture, social phenomena and the economy.

While these limitations are acknowledged, the study attempts to provide useful insights into ABCD implementation within the emphasized area of study.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

2.1 The Theory Guided the Research

The study draws on the principles of Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 2000), which emphasizes individual and community capacities to gain control over their lives and environments. It aligns well with ABCD, which builds on local strengths and encourages self-driven development. The Empowerment Theory further explored by Yoesoep Edhie Rachmad in 2022, aims to understand how empowering individuals or groups can enhance their performance and well-being. In an era that increasingly demands active participation and initiative from each individual, empowerment is key to reaching maximum potential (Yoesoep Edhie Rachmad, 2022). The empowerment theory guides this research on how ABCD approach contributes on the effectively employed the empowerment strategies across various segments of the community in determining and deciding on issues that affects their life. Empowerment Theory is especially relevant in examining ABCD because both approaches value participation, local leadership, and sustainable change through internal resources. This theory helps interpret how communities perceive power, capacity, and ownership in the development process.

2.2 Background of ABCD Approach

The framework of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) stems from work done by Professor John McKnight, Professor Jody Kretzmann and their allies in the late 1980's. McKnight and Kretzmann were exploring solutions, amidst rising racial tensions in the US and ineffective institutional change, to address the problem of community building through civic engagement. In the process, they were led to question the basic premise that institutional and public reform was the vehicle to achieve social change. This prompted a four-year process of discovery together with thousands of people who had been largely compartmentalized by their issues — issues surrounding unemployment, teenage pregnancies, poverty, inadequate housing and so forth. Together with John's work, his partner, Jody, entered the communities looking to learn how, despite the socioeconomic and political barriers present, community and citizenship survival prevailed in low-income communities and how social change was occurring? (ICC, 2019). They concluded that one of the biggest barriers to effecting social change is the entrenched belief that some other larger source or power will come and intervene. The scarcity

mindset leads citizens to believe that their most valuable resources lie outside their communities, which often leads to top-down, bureaucratic solutions. There are a presumption that bigger, better resourced, more professionalized organizational systems will also lead to more favorable outcomes for everyone.

These building blocks which later became known as "community assets" demonstrated local residents' "real-life" accounts of their experiences in nurturing their health and wellbeing, protecting the environment and local economy, raising happy children, thriving in old age and aging comfortably in their own homes, responding to natural or man-made disasters, being good caretakers of the local ecology and deepening democracy, achieving social justice and advancing local knowledge(ibid).

2.3 ABCD Definition

"Asset-Based Community Development" is defined by founders John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, in their classic book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, by means of three deceptively simple and interrelated standards. The first is "asset-based," meaning that the community development methodology starts with what exists in the community: the capacities of the community's residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the community--not what is absent, or what is a problem, or what the community requires. The second standard is expediently "internally focused" meaning that the development methodology is focused first of all on the agenda building and problem-solving capacities of local residents, local associations and local institutions. In making an "internally focused" standard for "Asset-Based" community development, it is not that we want to downplay in any way either the role of the external forces that have helped create the dire conditions in lower income neighborhoods or the need to generate additional resources for these communities. Rather the strong "internally focused" standard is simply intended to underscore the importance of local definition, investment, creativity, hope and control. The third and the final one is it is a "*relationship driven*", this mainly focuses on the challenging tasks of community developers which is constantly focus on to build and rebuild the relationships between and among local residents, local associations and local institutions(Kretzmann J. & McKnight J, 1993)

Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) approach is a community-directing form of community building which seeks to mobilize and deploy strengths, resources, and abilities of individuals and organizations in a community as an alternative to solely addressing deficits or negative issues. The ABCD encourages a radically different perspective allowing for transition from a one-directional giver-receiver paradigm toward the facilitation of space for citizens to come together and collectively create that which is meaningful to them to create a shared community. (ICC, 2019). The approach is based on the notion that every community is made up of assets that can be mobilized as a means to change what needs to be changed, rather than only relying on outside resources or solutions. It also presumes that community members are (or know) the experts about their community and are best positioned to see the problems they have and what needs to be done about them. (Hao Chen, 2024).

Asset-based community development (ABCD) approaches recognize the diversity and differences that exist in the reality of people's everyday lives and places the emphasis not on what people are missing, but rather on the little things people do, despite constraints, lacks and shocks in order to cope and survive modestly. Development interventions based on a sustainable livelihoods and asset-based analysis attempt to build on how people are already coping and reinforce potential with a view to make livelihoods sustainable. This differs from development interventions based on poverty analyses, which attempt to provide those opportunities that people lack. (Hanna Nel, 2015).

Asset-based community development (ABCD) is a model of community organizing that focuses on identifying and mobilizing individual and community strengths (or assets) to create positive change in marginalized neighborhoods and other communities. ABCD as an approach to community building using community strengths, was first developed in the US more than thirty years ago. (Kretzmann J. & McKnight J, 1993). Assets can be understood as any individual, community or organizational resource or protective factor that supports health or wellbeing (Morgan A. & Ziglio E., 2007). At a community-level, assets can include aspects such as supportive networks or community cohesion as well as more tangible aspects such as land or schools (Van Bortel T., 2019).

Concerns have arisen in the UK and Europe arising from an increased interest in the use of asset-based approaches in health and care with ABCD emerging as one of the most significant traditions of thinking and practice. As the same research, (Hao Chen, 2024), The researcher found through review of multiple research studies that the link between the ABCD approach and community development or poverty reduction continues to offer much to discuss among researchers and policy-makers; however, there did not seem to be a comprehensive agreement reached. The inconsistent outcomes produced by different researchers and scholars about the link between the ABCD approach and community development may be caused in part by some combination of differences in the research design, or contextual differences. These inconsistent outcomes are also indicative of the need for much more research, in order to fully understand the relationship.

The most significant difference of ABCD is that it is not providing a service to or for people, nor are they coproducing a service with people. They are providing space for citizens to come together to co-create what is important to them as communities – largely outside of service and contracts – including love, laughter and friendship, which are also integral components of well-being.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) directly challenges traditional deficit-based approaches which attempt to solve urban and rural development issues by focusing on the needs and deficits of individuals, neighborhoods, towns, villages, etc. ABCD demonstrates that local assets (people, physical assets etc.) and individual strengths are key to ensure sustainable community development, and that people have a life of their own choosing. Instead of starting with a focus on what's wrong, ABCD invites us to start with a focus on what's strong so that we can use what is strong to address what is wrong.

Asset Based Community Development uses the assets in the community while bringing together individuals, organizations and institutions to recognize and develop those assets. This sets it apart from a Deficit-Based approach that focuses on needs identification and servicing. From the outset an Asset Based approach is spending time identifying the assets of individuals, organizations and institutions that comprise the community. The identified assets of an individual are then matched with others who have an interest and need in those assets. The key is

to start to leverage what is already available in the community and take collective action to build on the identified assets. The first key principle of ABCD is that development begins in recognizing asset typologies found anywhere in community and place. ABCD principles focus on allowing communities to avoid thinking about needs and problems as complex webs and messes that need to be sorted out, while instead focusing on unearthing and recognizing the rich, diverse and abundant talents and assets in their community.

2.4 Conceptual Framework Explanation



Chart 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is designed to illustrate how various factors influence the effective implementation of the ABCD approach in Ethiopia. It focuses on identifying and explaining the challenges, opportunities, and mediating factors that shape ABCD outcomes at the community level. The framework serves as a guiding structure for data collection, analysis, and interpretation throughout the study.

2.4.1 Understanding the Key Influences (Independent Variables)

At the heart of this framework are the factors that influence how ABCD is implemented, basically emphasizing on both the opportunities and challenges. On the opportunity side, I would like to observe the commitment, knowledge, and resources already present in communities—people’s skills, local leadership, strong social bonds, and the willingness to work together. These

are strengths that ABCD is designed to build on. On the other side, on the challenges, I would rather observe lack of technical training, resistance from authorities, cultural barriers, or limited access to funding and support. These barriers can slow down or even block progress, unless they are acknowledged and addressed.

2.4.2 What Shapes the Outcome (Mediating Factors)

Between the opportunities and challenges lies a set of contextual or mediating factors that play a big role in determining success. Think of them as "influencers"—they can either help the opportunities thrive or allow the challenges to take over. These include but not limited to; how ready and organized the community is? How well institutions (like NGOs and local government) are supporting the process? Whether policies and systems are in place to encourage ABCD rather than hinder it? For example, a motivated community may still struggle if they lack supportive leadership or if national policies don't align with grassroots approaches.

2.4.3 The Desired Change (Dependent Variable)

At the other end of the framework is the goal we are trying to reach and the effective implementation of the ABCD approach. It is because, when ABCD works well, we expect to see; communities taking ownership of their development journey, People becoming more self-reliant and confident, Local solutions emerging from local knowledge and strengths, Reduced dependency on external aid and more sustainable, inclusive, and meaningful development outcomes. This is not just about completing a project; it's about transforming how development is done—with communities, not just for them.

2.4.4 How It All Connects

The conceptual framework shows us that opportunities must be supported and challenges must be actively addressed. But even more importantly, it reminds us that how we work with communities—the trust we build, the support we provide, and the policies we put in place—can make or break the success of ABCD. By understanding these relationships, design better strategies to strengthen ABCD practices, recognize what's helping or hurting the approach on the ground and tailor our interventions to different regions, communities, or organizational contexts can be achieved. This human-centered framework doesn't just help researchers and practitioners

analyze data—it helps us listen more carefully to the communities themselves and understand what they need to thrive using their own strengths.

2.5 Inside-out development

ABCD is an internally-focused, community-driven, and capacity-focused model that recognizes human and other forms of capital. Here, community members and stakeholders are recognized as active change agents rather than clients (Nicol E. Turner-Lee, 2004). reported that ABCD exerts more effort on how to link community assets to the macro environment far beyond mobilizing community assets since it is a community-driven development strategy. Therefore, the boundaries of the community and its position in the context of economic development are vital for ABCD.(Mathie A & Cunningham G, 2003)

2.6 Participation and power distribution

In identifying and selecting strategies for the common good, ABCD requires participation (Green, 2002). Participation deals with power, ownership, and control over resource distribution within the community as well as between the community and outsiders. This helps promote the strengths and assets of all individuals to be valued and legitimated via equal participation, regardless of power imbalances through a community-driven process (Mathie A & Cunningham G, 2003). Participation makes people embedded in their community for better opportunities to improve their lives through collective action (Henderson and Vercseg, 2010).A mere presence of community assets does not show community's readiness for development initiatives unless members actively participate. That is why ABCD is built upon “community participation in development, planning, implementation, and ... benefit sharing” (Baroi H. and Rabbani G., 2011). For Bhattacharyya (2004), participation is understood as more than effective of capacity development (CD) than self-help and felt needs. Therefore, participation, for the most part, means peoples' engagement in the construction of collective meanings, implying participation in not only defining the problems to be solved but how they are solved. Specifically, people must own, feel and define their problems and then they should use their knowledge and material resources to resolve them. (Bhattacharyya, 2004). Likewise, the relationships, communal use of

resources, knowledge, and skills applied to various activities should be shared among groups (Peters Gansamo Molla and Mathie, 2009).

The Awramba community has implemented the ABCD model and is governed by some tenets that stem from the notion of respecting the rights of women to equality, respecting children's rights; to assist people not able to work due to physical capacities; not to commit a negative speech/deed and promote cooperating, goodwill, and peace with love; to accept all human beings as brothers and sisters. These tenets have allowed the Awramba community to implement most of the ABCD modelling values in their practice.

The research findings suggest that most of the seven principles are enacted in the Awramba Community. The fundamental context for these successful ABCD practices has been Awramba's overriding emphasis on human dignity and equality which has in turn fostered greater openness and trust among community members. In addition to greater shared meaning, authentic sense of community or commitment, authentic and respect-based participation, authentic representative level of participation, a higher sense of civility, authentic inside-out development process, high level of bonding social capital, and adequate access to internal resource availability, all stemmed from the community's commitment to human dignity and equality. Together, this suggests that a successful ABCD practice be highly attentive to the dignity and equality of community members because (a) people are the principal actors and agents of development (Nicol E. Turner-Lee, 2004); (b) The aim of any CD practice is to improve human wellbeing; and (c) people will only participate in collective action in an atmosphere of respect and care. Therefore, while principles such as full participation, power sharing, participation in civil society, collective meaning, and community may all suggest that the practitioner intends to bear human dignity and human equality in mind, ABCD practices require that members of a community articulate explicit rules for how they intend to act with respect for human dignity and equality in their everyday community practice.

Nonetheless, there was also a few small but important departures from a successful ABCD practice in Awramba's ABCD practice. The principles of social capital and access to resources were only partially realized in the community. According to Putman (2000), narrow social capital as bonding social capital was the most prevalent capital that developed in

Awramba(Putnam, 2000). In other words, the internal close ties of Awramba were successfully mobilized in the service of its development. Even the multipurpose cooperative in Awramba, which operates through multiple democratic groupings, has further centrally contributed to Awramba's ABCD practice. Meanwhile its links to other communities and organizations were negligible, which also result in minimal bridging and linking social capitals. Awramba has an excellent point of departure (with bonding social capital) in its ABCD practice because it usually works with its internal relationships/resources. However, the practice is not able to engage external resources; in essence to improve ABCD practice and sustainability. This shows that Awramba's ABCD has neglected (Kretzmann J. & McKnight J, 1993)seventh step which should practice instilling ABCD initiatives in communities. It is correct that all forms of social capital are important at various levels of ABCD. Bonding is required for 'getting by' while bridging and linking for 'getting ahead'. Thus, ABCD is the aggregate of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. And as bridging social capital are, in effect, poorly utilized shows a real impediment for Awramba's present and future development, because change should be moving towards sustainable development. (Ennis G. & West D, 2010). As we discussed earlier, bridging social capital is by nature inclusive, which allows a community to utilize relationships with other social groups, both inside and outside the community. Therefore, Awramba is unable to take advantage of many of the functions of bridging social capital because of its dependence only on bonding social capital (exclusive). They full advantage of bridging social capital include connecting members who would otherwise never connect, exposing members to diversity, increasing members' ability to collaborate with others, broadening the resources to which they have access, and broadening members' identity. The prevailing suspicion of outsiders among many Awramba residents has tacitly pressured the community not to devote sufficient attention to how to connect community assets to macro environments far beyond mobilizing its internal asset. s(Mathie A & Cunningham G, 2003). Community-driven development should not follow a closed-door policy. This demands Awramba to reconsider its relationship with external environments to bring about better advancement in the future.

Likewise, Awramba was also found to have limited access to available external resources (a principle that depends upon the bridging and linking social capitals) due to its weak interconnections with external communities and organizations. More specifically, the findings

surfaced evidence indicating that access to external resources necessary for future development, and relationships with the external world have been scarce in Awramba because of: (a) actual and perceived stereotypes, biases, and discrimination from surrounding communities; (b) the rigidity of Awramba's decision to self-rely only on efficiently exploiting internal assets; and (c) the relentless effort Awramba is putting forth to carefully insulate its values and principles to avoid the intermingling with an outside culture. Although further empirical research needs to be performed, these three areas are challenging the feasibility of some ABCD principles in Awramba. Whatever the reasons for this small leap backward in the realm of efficiently exploiting external resources in the community, this appears to be a paradox for Awramba because it does not reflect the organization's eagerness to promote its communal life philosophy and practice around the world. Awramba will face great difficulty disseminating its model without establishing a positive and win-win relationship with the external environment. Poor external resource utilization may even lead Awramba's ABCD to be in a difficult situation moving forward. Indeed, it has been established in many parts of the world that no community could sustain its development by only using its local resources and assets. Community members need to be able to take advantage of all the resources (internal and external) that they may need. Therefore, it is appropriate for Awramba to move forward considering its ABCD practice beyond its original initiatives.

Finally, this research has also shown that the ABCD principles are connected in important ways. The relationship between the principle of access to accessible resources and Awramba's ability to build credible relationships with the external environment is significant, as discussed above. The ability to utilize all forms of social capital was also connected to the internally developed principle of self-reliance as previously having been misinterpreted by the community that "self-reliant means to be dependent on internal resources." The other examples of connections were the relationship between the principle of a sense of community and commitment. In Awramba, the members' sense of community (that exuded from their shared meaning regarding the historical context, process, principles, norms, and values of that community) was so high that it demanded that its members give it everything they could towards the community's development efforts. This was also entirely related to participation and power relations, civil engagement as well. Therefore, it is important for ABCD practitioners to understand that all ABCD principles

may not be mutually exclusive. If there is an issue with one of the principles, it could be an issue for other principles; and therefore, the overarching performance of ABCD practices would be the sum of the principle's performance.

In the late 1980s, individuals, John McKnight, Professor Jody Kretzmann, and eighteen of their colleagues were looking for ways to combat growing racial tensions in the United States when they noticed that institutional reforms had not made a difference. They also observed that the strongest condition to social change was in the pervasive belief that rescue would come from the outside. Scarcity mindsets conditioned people not to recognize the resources they have in their communities and to be reliant upon a top-down, bureaucratic available option. Such views indicate that larger, better-resourced and professionalized could indicate improved results. However, McKnight and Kretzmann argued that meaningful social and environmental change does not stem from behavioral shifts or institutional reforms but arises through grassroots community building at the neighborhood level (ICC, 2019). It is thought that community building at the grassroots level, and the mobilization of local people's skills, the power of local associations, the resources of public, private, and non-profit institutions, the shared physical resources and ecology of local places, the economic resources of local places, and the stories and heritage of local places, contributes to community development and social change. (Kretzmann J. & McKnight J, 1993).

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach is designed in a way that it should builds on the gifts (skills, experiences, knowledge, and passions) of local community members, the power of local associations, and the supportive functions of local institutions to build more sustainable communities for the future (John McKnight, 2017).

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach that emphasizes the strengths and assets of a community rather than being focused on its deficits. Aspects of community life affected by ABCD include community cohesion, participation in decision-making, well-being, volunteering, mutual support, and mobilization of resources. ABCD strengthens the connectedness of a community by emphasizing their shared strengths and local capacities, and acting together to achieve goals. When a community identifies and uses local resources to support community goals, individuals and groups forge a shared identity and a common purpose

based on their abundant trust and connectedness with each other. For example, reports from communities practicing ABCD often indicate increased social capital, because the relationships built within these communities speak to mutual goals and respect.(Mathie A & Cunningham G, 2003). Strengthened cohesion lays a foundation for resilience, especially in the face of crises or external challenges.

ABCD encourages inclusive decision-making by actively involving community members in identifying priorities and crafting solutions. By giving residents a voice and agency in the process, it aligns development initiatives with community aspirations. This participatory approach builds accountability and ensures that interventions are contextually relevant, increasing their effectiveness and sustainability (Kretzmann J. & McKnight J, 1993).The ABCD process emphasizes promoting complete well-being by addressing issues of health, education, and economic viability in locally driven initiatives. When communities contribute its local assets, they create effective solutions with lasting impacts that reflect the needs of the community, which contribute improved quality of life or livability, and also reduce reliance on external source of income or support. The evidence shows improvement in mental and physical health outcomes is evident from ABCD project all over the world, improvement is usually a result of a greater emphasis on personal empowerment and self-efficacy among the participants.(Nel E, 2018).

By emphasizing local assets, ABCD encourages communities to contribute their skills and time toward their common goals. The process identifies specific strengths of a person, provoking participation and building a culture of volunteerism. This dynamic not only decreases project costs, but also engenders a sense of pride and ownership in community members as they see their participation lead to tangible outcomes. (Cunningham G, 2005).ABCD creates structures where community members can support one another through knowledge-sharing, peer-to-peer networks, and collective problem-solving. Such platforms, often embedded in initiatives like Self-Help Groups (SHGs) or cooperatives, foster mutual aid and reduce social isolation, especially for marginalized groups (Endeshaw, 2021). These interactions strengthen interdependence and enhance community resilience.

ABCD's primary focus on identifying and utilizing local assets—human, financial, physical, and social—ensures communities can sustain their development efforts. Mobilizing local resources reduces dependency on external funding and ensures solutions are deeply rooted in the community's context, increasing their long-term viability (Kretzmann J. & McKnight J, 1993). Additionally, communities practicing ABCD often develop innovative ways to pool resources, such as forming savings groups or leveraging local knowledge for economic ventures.

Although Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) has gained global attention as a practical and empowering way to drive community change, it's still not widely used or well understood in Ethiopia. Many development efforts in the country continue to rely on needs-based approaches, often overlooking the strengths and assets that communities already have.

What's missing is research that looks closely at how ABCD is actually being used in Ethiopia—what's working, what challenges exist, and how it could be scaled up to make a bigger impact. While ABCD fits well with Ethiopia's national priorities around community participation and resilience, there's very little evidence or documentation showing how it plays out on the ground.

This gap makes it hard for local organizations, donors, and policymakers to confidently adopt or invest in ABCD approaches. That's why this study is important: it helps fill that gap by providing real, practical insights from communities and organizations that are already trying to apply ABCD. The findings can help guide future programs, improve existing practices, and support more effective, community-led development across the country.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

The study utilized phenomenological method to understanding human experiences by focusing on the lived realities and subjective interpretations of individuals and to delve into the "what" and "how" of experiences, uncovering nuanced understandings of complex phenomena. The study also applied mixed research strategy using qualitative and quantitative methods. The combination of qualitative and quantitative designs enables the researcher to develop an overall understanding of ABCD implementation with statistical data and in-depth data from community members and stakeholders in Ethiopia specifically Addis Ababa and Shashemene areas.

This design encompasses a descriptive research design to document the present status of ABCD application and exploratory research design to identify challenges and opportunities to be addressed in its implementation, and to suggest measures that would enhance the effectiveness of the approach.

3.2 Population

The target population that served as an information source for this research were community members, local leaders, NGOs and government officials involved in community development projects throughout Ethiopia. This target population is diverse and has contributed to obtaining a holistic understanding of how the ABCD approach has been applied. The target community members who have directly participated in ABCD initiatives, who interact with local leaders, and who have benefited directly from the implementation of the ABCD approach have been the primary stakeholders, or data sources, of this research. Development practitioners, CSOs and government officials overseeing implementation of ABCD have also been target members of this study. Both the standard Urban (e.g., Addis Ababa) and Semi-Urban/rural (e.g., Shashemene) settings have been purposefully targeted to obtain a more diverse target population.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

This study employed a combined purposive and stratified random sampling approach to ensure both relevance and representativeness in the data collection process. Purposive sampling was used to intentionally select communities where the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach was already being actively implemented prior to the research. This was essential to gather informed perspectives from individuals and groups directly engaged in or impacted by ABCD initiatives. To ensure geographic and organizational diversity, stratified random sampling was then applied. This method allowed for fair representation of respondents across distinct regions and implementing partners. Specifically, the study focused on: Shashemene and Addis Ababa – Lideta Sub-City, where ABCD is implemented by the Ethiopian Guenet Church Development and Welfare Organization (EGCDWO); Shashemene, where Dorcas Aid Ethiopia also directly implements ABCD; and Addis Ababa – Bole Sub-City, where ABCD is practiced by Samaritan.

Given the geographic and institutional variation among these contexts, stratified random sampling enabled the research to reflect this diversity accurately. Furthermore, the approach was designed to ensure inclusion of a broad range of community members—capturing variation in gender, age, and socio-economic status. This enriched the dataset with diverse insights and allowed for a more descriptive analysis of ABCD implementation across different social and regional settings. Ultimately, the combination of purposive and stratified random sampling enhanced both the depth and breadth of the research findings.

3.4 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined based on the target population and the desired level of confidence for the findings. An initial estimate projected the participation of approximately 200 to 250 respondents in the survey component. Ultimately, 206 individuals participated, aligning well with the intended sample range and ensuring sufficient representation for meaningful analysis. Dorcas Aid International Ethiopia, as the lead organization promoting the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, provided technical guidance and support to its implementing partners—namely, EGCDWO and Samaritans—to strengthen the

quality and consistency of ABCD implementation across various communities. The study targeted 2 to 3 ABCD-engaged communities per partner, depending on the depth and scale of ABCD activities in each area. This represented approximately 10% of the total ABCD communities engaged by the organizations. In total, 10 communities were selected for the study: 3 from EGCDWO, 2 from Dorcas Aid's direct implementation, and 2 from Samaritans. Participants of the survey process were, practitioners hired by implementing organizations, community volunteers who were actively engaging in the ABCD implementation process and community members who benefited from ABCD initiatives.

Though with regard to key informant interview (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD), the original plan was to engage about 20 - 25 participants, due to several reasons by the organizations and its practitioners, it was only 7 participants who were actively involved in KII and 2 FGDs involving 5 and 7 participants in each of the group and provided detail qualitative data. Furthermore, during the data collection process it was identified that one of the projects which was implemented by Dorcas Aid at Shashemene was already phased out and accessing key staffs identified for KII was challenged.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The study utilized a range of different data collection instruments to gain a multi-faceted approach, with the ultimate goal of achieving valid conclusions and recommendations. For example, structured questionnaires were prepared and included to find quantitative information on community members' perceptions, experiences, and outcomes of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach as well as semi-structured interviews with key informants (local leaders and NGO representatives) to gain qualitative information and explore the challenges and opportunities that arise from implementing ABCD.

Focus group discussions has well been organized amongst community members to allow people to talk with each other, also brings forth discussions about common experiences, conceptual understandings, impacts and recommendations for the best use of ABCD within the system.

3.6 Data Collection Process

The data collection effort began with developing and piloting instruments to gather survey and interview data, establishing the parameters that makes clear sense to support the application for getting ethical clearance and requests from relevant officials or authorities. This also allowed for determining appropriate orientation of enumerators and facilitators to support important training and to help ensure consistency in the data collection process at a high quality.

As part of data collection for both the test phase and second or full phase, a virtual "meeting" was organized to engage all data collectors to review ethical considerations about the data collection, how data collection would occur, and essential engagement with local community members. Data collection was conducted using google forms and the completing Enumerator had continued access to real-time monitoring of their job (data collection) via the submissions in google forms.

During the administration of the survey questionnaires, the researcher and selected rapporteurs, interviewed the target community members and ensured that each participant was fully aware of, and the purpose of study and their rights. Interviews were recorded (with consent) and any survey data were compiled systematically for analysis. Surveys were conducted using face-to-face interviews or electronically depending on the accessibility. The researcher and research assistants also conducted purposive direct observations at project sites to supplement in addition to the self-reported data.

3.7 Data Analysis Process and Techniques

The analysis process began with a data cleaning and validation process to ensure accuracy, completeness, and consistency from the data entry process. Missing and incomplete data were deleted from the data set using the exclusion method according to suitable statistical techniques. Measurable variables included the rates and levels of participant engagement, the level of resource mobilization, and the level of positive and achievable development outcomes. Descriptive statistics in such as means, medians, and percentages summarised counts of participation, resource mobilization, and positive development outcomes in the community

survey. Comparative analysis was also used to compare the strengths of limit of communities that had engaged in ABCD and the limitations and strengths of communities using some sort of development model or approach. The main tool for statistical analysis was SPSS 27 version.

The aim was to analyze qualitative data, collected from interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews to gain insight into the ABCD model that could inform its implementation. The first step was reviewing the data (in this case, transcripts) to get a feel for the content, which is referred to as familiarization with the data. Then, thematic coding was completed, which revealed common themes appearing in the qualitative data (e.g., resource mappings, community or human capacity, barriers to implementation) and the new themes were compiled by broader emergent categories (e.g., challenges, or opportunities).

The research utilizes a convergent mixed-methods design, where quantitative and qualitative results are combined to create an overall understanding of the ABCD model. All of these processes and activities contributed to obtaining actionable findings about the usability of ABCD as a model for community-led development activities within Ethiopia, and advice on how can it be applied and further scaled.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with presenting, analyzing and interpreting the collected data from various primary and secondary sources according to the thematic areas of opportunities and challenges of implementing Asset Based Community Development Approach in Ethiopia. The research effort focused on the practical experiences of Dorcas Aid International Ethiopia and its sub-grantee partner organizations implementing ABCD in Addis Ababa and Shashemene City Administrations. The following data presented in this chapter was collected using google form and exported to excel and then to SPSS software for tabular presentation of each section and detail analysis the data.

4.2 General Profile of Research Respondents

Table 1: Location of respondents

Location of the respondent		
	Frequency	Percent
Addis Ababa	105	51%
Shashemene	101	49%
Total	206	100%

Distribution of Respondent's Location

A total of 206 respondents participated in the survey. Among the respondents, 51% (n = 105) were located in Addis Ababa and 49% (n = 101) were located in Shashemene. Together, this presents a proportionately equal number of respondents from both locales, implying some level of variation in worldview in the results while considering geographic implications.

Age of the survey Group

Table 2: Respondent's Age Group Analysis

Age of the respondents	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-33	64	31.1%	31.1%
34-45	97	47.1%	78.2%
45-59	34	16.5%	94.7%
Above 59	11	5.3%	100%
Total	206	100%	

The information generated aids our reasoning concerning the age respondents' demographics of those in the survey (206 people). 31.1% of the survey respondents represented the 18-33 Years of age category amounting to 64 respondents. This indicates there is a representation of younger respondents in the sample. The group with the most representation is the age group 34-45 Years of age (N= 97; 47.1%). We may characterize this group as a mix of individuals in early adulthood and adult group that typically has more responsibilities in their communities. The second most represented group of the research in ages is 45-59 Years of age (N=34, 16.5%), Lastly the smallest group is the age demographic for 59 and older group (N=11, 5.3%). This group is an important to potentially learn about older adults' needs and challenges.

To provide additional context, when we look at the groups cumulatively, the first two age categories (18-33 and 34-45) account for 78.2% of the respondents indicating a large portion of respondents are under 45 years of age.

Sex of the respondent group

Table 3: Sex of the respondents

Sex of the respondent:		
Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	134	65%
Female	72	35%
Total	206	100%

The survey included 134 male respondents, comprising approximately 65% of the sample. This means we can identify a notable male presence in the data, as 72 of the 206 respondents, or 35%, were female. The fact that we have a notable amount of male respondents will also naturally affect the results of the survey, especially with respect to gender specific issues, preferences, and behaviors. Although we did have a smaller number of female respondents in comparison to male respondents, their perspective is still quite important in comprehending the survey's results as a whole.

Educational Level of the Survey Respondents

Table 4: Educational Level of the respondents

Level of Education		
Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Certificate and Below	64	31.1%
Diploma	98	47.6%
1st Degree	42	20.4%
2nd Degree and above	2	1%
Total	206	100%

There are a number of 64 respondents that are "Certificate and Below," making up 31.1% of the sample. The "Certificate and Below" category represent participants who have achieved some education label, regarded as basic education qualification level. Next, the largest number of respondents were Diploma holders at 98 individuals (47.6%). Holders of a Diploma have suggested specialized training or education which meets the educational qualifications of beyond basic. There are 42 respondents (20.4%) who are 1st Degree holders, which I consider some undergraduate study completion. Considering their insight would be an important aspect of understanding the role of higher education in understanding the development concept and application of the same. Finally, the smallest number were in the 2nd Degree and higher category, which only had 2 respondents (1%). The number of degree holders in the sample suggests a limited representation of this group of individuals. While this may suggest some level of specialist knowledge and expertise, that they are a very small number suggests more efforts may not be involved during the implementation of ABCD.

Role of the survey respondents in the organization

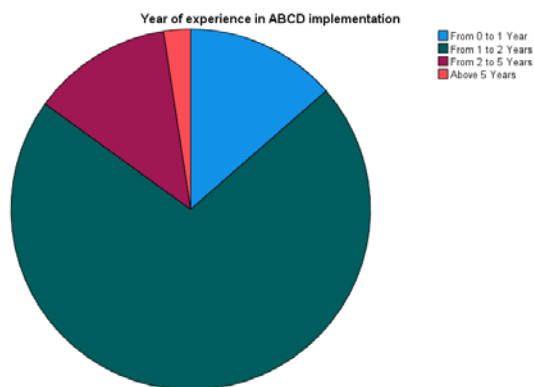
Table 5: Role of the respondents in the organization

Your Role in the organization		
Role in the organization	Frequency	Percent
Program/Project Coordinator	2	1%
Technical Expert	7	3.4%
Project Volunteer	186	90.3%
Project Beneficiary	11	5.3%
Total	206	100%

The evaluation on the identity of survey respondents by their identified role in the organizations studied determined that only 2 respondents (1%) identified as Program or Project Coordinators, 7 respondents (3.4%) reported their role as a Technical Expert in regards to relating to the ABCD approach, and the critical majority 186 respondents (90.3%) identified as Project Volunteers and the 11 remaining (5.3%) respondents identified themselves as project beneficiaries. This role related to the implementing ABCD approach in the target organizations demonstrated that the project volunteers or community representatives engaged with the ABCD initiatives voluntarily are achievable fair and plan B activities, congruent with the ABCD approach. This overwhelming majority reveals the critical function played by volunteers in sustaining the organizations while the ABCD is led. The large presence of volunteers suggests a strong deep commitment to community engagement and effectiveness and sustainability of the ABCD approach.

Respondents Year of experience in implementation of ABCD approach

Chart 2: ABCD experience of Respondents



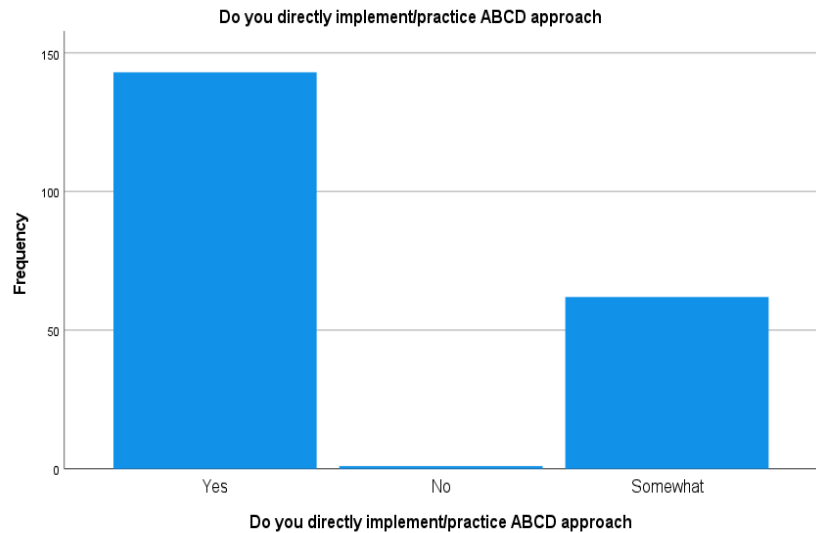
The majority of the respondents had 1 to 2 years of experience with ABCD implementation (147 respondents, 71.4%). There were 28 (13.6%) respondents with less than one year of experience, representing a group likely new to the ABCD approach. 26 (12.6%)

had between 2 to 5 years of experience, while only 5 respondents (2.4%) had more than 5 years of experience. The combined totals indicate that a total of 85% of the respondents indicated they have two years or less of experience with the ABCD framework. It would appear that the ABCD approach is a relatively new or recently adopted method for most of the participants and organizations involved in this group study.

Direct involvements of respondents in the implementation of ABCD Approach

Chart 3: Direct Participation in ABCD

The data demonstrates that there was a high level of engagement with the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach among respondents and 206 respondents provided responses. A total of 143 respondents (69.4%) indicated that they directly implement or practice the ABCD approach. A total of 62



respondents (30.1%) indicated they somewhat practice the approach, which would suggest they were either partially involved, had limited exposure, or were indirectly practicing the ABCD approach. The 1 respondent (0.5%) indicated they were not involved in the conducting of any ABCD implementation.

The results suggest that almost all of the respondents (99.5%) have at least some level of familiarity or engagement with the ABCD approach, and a large portion of respondents are actively applying it to their contexts. The permeation of the ABCD approach across the surveyed population would indicate the growing prevalence and integration of ABCD principles into community development practices.

4.3 Understanding of ABCD Approach

Table 6: Respondent's understanding of ABCD

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
ABCD mean to me is looking people and community as full of possibilities not just the recipients of aid/assistance	206	2.01	.436
ABCD mean to me is Assessing community assets not needs (deficits)	206	2.06	.391

ABCD mean to me is the relational power that grouping up people and multiply and amplify the capabilities of individuals	206	2.10	.498
Valid N (listwise)	206		

S. Question: ABCD mean to me is looking people and community as full of possibilities not just the recipients of aid/assistance

The survey question *ABCD means looking at people and communities as full of possibilities, not just recipients of aid/assistance*—recorded the mean of 2.01 indicates a strong positive perception among respondents regarding the view of communities as entities full of potential, rather than merely recipients of aid which implies that this was the most strongly agreed-upon understanding of ABCD by the respondents. Furthermore, the relatively low standard deviation (0.436) suggests a high level of consensus among respondents on this interpretation of ABCD, with limited variability in responses.

S. Question: ABCD mean to me is Assessing community assets not needs (deficits)

The mean of 2.06 reflects a similarly positive inclination towards the meaning of ABCD specifically related to assessing community assets instead of focusing on deficits. The standard deviation of 0.391 indicates a high level of agreement among respondents, suggesting that this principle resonates well within the surveyed population. this concept was understood and consistently agreed upon across the group, highlighting a very unified perception and it supports the notion that recognizing existing community strengths can foster empowerment and self-reliance.

S. Question: ABCD mean to me is the relational power that grouping up people and multiply and amplify the capabilities of individuals

Overall, respondents (N=83), on average, had a positive view of relational power and the idea of community grouping as a way to improve an individual's capabilities, as demonstrated by an average score of 2.10. The standard deviation of 0.498 suggests a moderate spread of responses, in that while most respondents agreed, there were some differences, so this might indicate more exploration of relational dynamics as a form of leveraging in community development work is warranted. Differences in item means suggest more variability in how respondents viewed this

aspect of ABCD, suggesting that some were more familiar or experienced with this dimension than others.

Overall, the insights gathered from the aforementioned table align with the available literature on ABCD which clearly indicates both recognition of, and value for, ABCD as a strength-based approach that focuses on possibilities and community assets - rather than deficits - which speaks to the training and sensitization work that has clearly taken place around mobilizing community assets when working with ABCD and suggests some effectiveness in reinforcing the core concepts related to ABCD. Overall, these findings support the meaningfulness of ABCD as a people-centered and empowering approach in the context of the study. ABCD as collective and relational empowerment is recognized, yet with a bit more variation, which speaks to a potential area for more building of capacity or clarification. More deliberate attention to relational and collective aspects of ABCD, in both practice and training, may provide greater clarity and depth of understanding related to applying ABCD. Once again, there is considerable consistency of responses (standard deviation averaged) across the three items and suggests a general understanding of core principles of ABCD among the participants.

Table 7: Respondent’s understanding on goal of ABCD

Which of the following ABCD goal highly emphasized and implemented during your intervention?	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Support communities in recognizing their own strengths and taking ownership of development initiatives.	64	31.1	31.1	31.1
Focus on uncovering & utilizing existing community assets and reduce dependency	125	60.7	60.7	91.7
Build and reinforce relationships, trust, and mutual support through local associations and informal networks.	12	5.8	5.8	97.6
Move away from a deficit-based model (what communities lack) to one that highlights possibilities, strengths, and hope.	3	1.5	1.5	99.0
Create lasting change through bottom-up approaches	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	206	100.0	100.0	

The implementing partners' focus on the ABCD goals during their community interventions demonstrates the most commonly ranked goal, with 125 respondents (60.7%) highlighting the

focus on discovering and using existing community assets while decreasing reliance on outside assistance. This result captures a clear focus on asset-based work, which enhances community sustainability and self-determination. The second most cited ABCD goal emphasized by 64 respondents (31.1%) demonstrates a focus on enabling communities to take ownership of their own development, thus aligning with key tenets of ABCD. The focus on strengths also affirms an affirmative approach to community engagement. Only 12 respondents (5.8%) selected the goal of building and strengthening relationships and trust by establishing local associations. This low percentage indicates that while relationship building is important, it may not have been prioritized in the interventions assessed. This represents a potential opportunity for improvement by building community networks. Only 3 respondents (1.5%) focused on shifting from a deficit based to a possible and strength-based model. This minimal emphasis identifies a significant gap in addressing the principals of building a positive community narrative and enhancing motivation. Only 2 respondents (1.0%) indicated that creating lasting change through bottom-up approaches was a highly emphasized goal. This finding suggests that there is limited recognition of the importance of grassroots involvement in driving sustainable change.

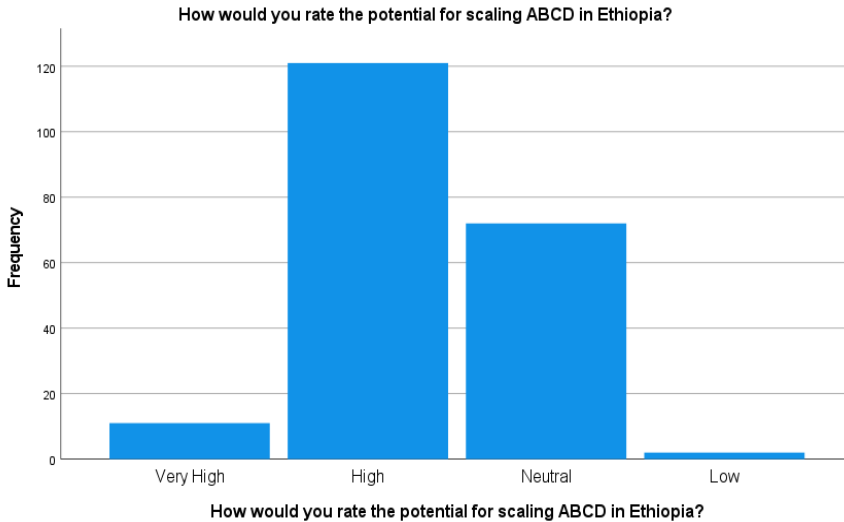
Table 8: Role of ABCD in community Empowerment

How significant is the role of ABCD in empowering communities?	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Significant	36	17.5	17.5	17.5
Significant	155	75.2	75.2	92.7
Neutral	15	7.3	7.3	100.0
Total	206	100.0	100.0	

The data presents the perceptions of respondents with respect to the impacts of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) on community empowerment. The majority of respondents, 155 respondents (75.2%), rated ABCD as “Significant” in empowering the community. A further 36 respondents (17.5%) rated ABCD as “Very Significant” in community empowerment, indicating a strong endorsement. Only 15 respondents (7.3%) were neutral on ABCD's role, and no respondents rated it as insignificant in terms of community empowerment. The total percentage of respondents the rated ABCD as either "Significant" or "Very Significant" is

92.7%, thus demonstrating a general consensus in favor of the positive role that ABCD played in empowering the target communities of this project.

Chart 4: Potential for scaling ABCD in Ethiopia



The perspective of the research participants on the potential for scaling the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach suggested that most respondents (121 people or 58.7%) rated the potential for scaling ABCD in

Ethiopia as either “High” which suggested a general optimism across respondents about the potential adaptability and relevance of ABCD across several Ethiopian contexts. 11 respondents (5.3%) rated the potential as “Very High,” which added to the overall positive sense. 72 respondents (35.0%) rated the potential “Neutral” which may represent only limited exposure to ABCD applications at larger scale or an uncertain view on how to work around implementation challenges when developing the infrastructure that is necessary for scaling ABCD. Very few respondents (2 people or 1.0%) actually rated the scaling potential as “Low,” so it may have meant very few people in the group had much skepticism about ABCD scaling potential. Looking at the cumulative percentage statistics we see that 64.1% of respondents rated a “High” or “Very High” potential for scaling ABCD, while 1% of participants said they were skeptical, which suggests there was a good level of certainty regarding the future applicability of this model.

4.4 Community Engagement and Participation

Table 9: Community Engagement ABCD vs Other Approaches

How would you rate the level of community engagement in ABCD approach compared to other development approaches?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very High	13	6.3	6.3	6.3
High	101	49.0	49.0	55.3
Neutral	91	44.2	44.2	99.5
Low	1	.5	.5	100.0
Total	206	100.0	100.0	

The ratings given by the 206 research participants regarding their perceptions of the level of community engagement in the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in relation to other development approaches suggest that the vast majority of respondents, namely 101 participants (49.0%) rated community engagement in the ABCD approach as "High", showing a clear perception of effective community engagement of communities in development processes when using ABCD. On the contrary, only 13 participants (6.3%) rated the overall level of community engagement as "Very High", supporting an overall impression of ABCD as participatory. Conversely, it is important to note that a substantial percentage of respondents, specifically 91 participants (44.2%), chose the "Neutral" rating, which may suggest that these respondents did not make a comparative judgment between other development approaches and ABCD due to lack of exposure, or various experiences within the same development approach. Lastly, only 1 participant (0.5%) rated the overall level of the engagement as "Low", providing relatively few concerns for the participatory capacity of the ABCD approach. Overall, the cumulative data analysis shows that a total of 55.3% of participants rated community engagement in the ABCD approach as either "High" or "Very High", suggesting organizations and groups who work within the ABCD approach would likely feel positively towards the program. Together, the overall low rates of "Low" further sophisticated the notion that the ABCD community engagement approach has clear participatory strengths.

Table 10: Community Members Feel Empowered to Make Decision

Community members feel empowered to make decisions that affect their lives.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	13	6.3	6.3
Agree	181	87.9	94.2
Neutral	12	5.8	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

The above table illustrates community perceptions about whether or not they feel empowered to make decisions affecting their lives. A very significant majority, 181 respondents (87.9%), agreed that community members feel empowered to make decisions affecting their lives. An additional 13 respondents (6.3%) strongly agreed, thereby adding additional evidence to the view that the community is strongly empowered. Twelve respondents (5.8%) held a neutral position; there are no respondents who felt their community was disempowered, meaning that we can conclude that there were no negative perceptions on this indicator. The cumulative % of my appreciation suggests that over 94% of the respondents see the community member's decision-making as being empowered, which indicates very strong positive sentiment toward participatory engagement and local agency.

Table 11: Sense of ownership among community members

There is created a strong sense of ownership among community members regarding local development initiatives during ABCD implementation.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	14	6.8	6.8
Agree	179	86.9	93.7
Neutral	12	5.8	99.5
Strongly Disagree	1	.5	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

This finding evaluates the extent of community ownership of local development actions under the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, utilizing 206 respondents. Thus, most respondents (179 or 86.9%) conceded that community members feel a sense of ownership was developed during their ABCD process, while (14 or 6.8%) strongly agreed, thereby demonstrating positive perceptions of community involvement and commitment. Only (12 or

5.8%) respondents were neutral, with just (1 or 0.5%) respondent strongly disagreeing, thus indicating virtually no negative perceptions or dissatisfaction. In aggregate, over (93%) respondents expressed agreement (either agree or strongly agree), reflecting a general sense amongst respondents that ABCD represents useful community ownership.

Table 12: Willingness of community members to share knowledge & Resource

Community members were willing to share knowledge and resources with each other to foster self-reliance.	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	21	10.2
Agree	172	83.5
Neutral	12	5.8
Disagree	1	.5
Total	206	100.0

The information in the table above shows community perceptions regarding their willingness of community members to share knowledge and resources with each other to build self-reliance, an important feature in the asset-based community development (ABCD) approach. According to responses from 206 participants, 172 respondents (or 83.5%) agreed that members of the community are willing to share knowledge and resources with one another in order to support one another. Additionally, 21 respondents (or 10.2%) strongly agreed, suggesting that this community members share a strong collaborative and supportive perception. 12 respondents (or 5.8%) were neutral, and 1 respondent (or 0.5%) disagreed, suggesting that there is a low level of resistance in the community context regarding this idea. Overall, there was agreement from 93.7% of the total respondents, and a clear and obvious consensus that sharing and cooperation are a central part of the community’s aspirations for self-reliance

Table 13: Community collaboration with local organization

The community have been collaborating effectively with local organizations to enhance self-reliance.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	6	2.9	2.9
Agree	154	74.8	77.7
Neutral	46	22.3	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

This analysis has revealed how far community members believe they are collaborating effectively with local organizations to promote self-reliance, as a main component of the Asset-Based Community Development approach. In total, 154 respondents (74.8%) agreed that communities are working together effectively with local organizations. 6 respondents (2.9%) indicated they strongly agree, to a lesser extent, confirming generically positive collaboration. However a more sizeable group of respondents this time, 46 people (22.3%), had a neutral opinion, indicating "not sure" or variety of experience levels regarding how they have collaborated with local organizations. Notably no respondent disagreed, and all this indicates positive opinion, and lack of negative perceptions. In fact, the neutral group has the opportunity to reflect on their collaborations' strengths, and possibly improve connections in order to ideally contextualize their partnerships and ascertain positive qualities to the collaboration process.

Table 14: Supportiveness of local Leaders on local initiatives

Local leaders encourage and support initiatives that promote self-reliance in the community	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	10	4.9
Agree	166	80.6
Neutral	29	14.1
Disagree	1	.5
Total	206	100.0

According to the research finding, most respondents, 166 people (80.6%), said that local leaders support and promote local initiatives that promote self-reliance in the community. This high percentage from a representative sample indicated that self-reliance, as both an outcome and a process promoted by the ABCD, is reasonably perceived positively in the community as a whole--and that local leadership effectiveness was perceived positively. Ten respondents (4.9%) strongly agreed that local leaders encourage self-reliance initiatives. This suggests a relatively small, but positive sentiment regarding self-reliance from a small segment of the community. Twenty-nine of the respondents (14.1%) selected the neutral option, signifying a lack of strong opinion. This indicates that while there are a fair number of community members that may feel that the local leaders are perceived positively, there are also community members that may not fully feel or recognize the impact of local leaders' support for self-reliance. Only 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed with the statement. This very low representation supports the conclusion that

very few local community members do not think that local leaders support self-reliance initiatives, which supports the current research conclusion of a positive perception.

Table 15: Community internal capacity to assess needs and priorities

The community regularly assesses its own needs and priorities without external guidance	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	17	8.3	8.3
Agree	144	69.9	78.2
Neutral	43	20.9	99.0
Disagree	2	1.0	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

Based on responses of the survey participants (206 participants), 144 respondents (69.9%) agreed that their community independently identifies and prioritizes its needs. 17 respondents (8.3%) strongly agreed, reinforcing the perception of autonomy and self-driven decision-making. 43 respondents (20.9%) remained neutral, suggesting that in some areas, self-assessment practices may not be well established or fully recognized by community members. Only 2 respondents (1.0%) disagreed, indicating minimal skepticism or concern about the community's ability to conduct independent needs assessments. The data shows that 78.2% of respondents perceive a strong culture of community-led planning, with relatively few expressing uncertainty or disagreement.

Table 16: Community participation on the planning and implementation of projects

Community members have actively participated in planning and implementing projects that benefit them.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	34	16.5	16.5
Agree	153	74.3	90.8
Neutral	18	8.7	99.5
Disagree	1	.5	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

The target respondent's perception towards on the level of community members' active participation on the planning and implementation of project that benefits their community indicated that ABCDs contributed positively in this regard. A large majority of respondents, 153

individuals (74.3%), agreed that community members have actively participated in project planning and implementation. An additional 34 respondents (16.5%) strongly agreed, further reinforcing the perception that community engagement has been significant and meaningful. Only 18 respondents (8.7%) selected neutral, and just 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, indicating that negative perceptions of community participation are extremely rare. The cumulative percentage shows that over 90% of respondents perceive community members as actively engaged in planning and implementation processes.

4.5 Training and Capacity Building Approach

Table 17: Availability of training programs on ABCD Implementation

How would you rate the availability of training programs for ABCD implementation?	Frequency	Percent
Very High	2	1.0
High	90	43.7
Neutral	94	45.6
Low	20	9.7
Total	206	100.0

This data assesses participants’ perceptions regarding the availability of training programs that support the implementation of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. 90 respondents (43.7%) rated the availability of training programs as “High”, indicating that nearly half of the participants recognize the presence of training opportunities. 94 respondents (45.6%) selected “Neutral”, suggesting a considerable level of uncertainty or inconsistency in access or awareness of such programs. Only 2 respondents (1.0%) perceived training availability as “Very High”, while 20 respondents (9.7%) rated it as “Low”. The results show that while a plurality recognizes the existence of training, a significant proportion remains neutral, pointing to gaps in access, visibility, or effectiveness of existing capacity-building efforts.

Table 18: Effectiveness of Capacity Building Initiatives

How effective are the capacity-building initiatives in enhancing skills for ABCD implementation?			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Effective	5	2.4	2.4
Effective	196	95.1	97.6
Neutral	5	2.4	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

This data presents respondents' views on the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives in enhancing the skills necessary for implementing the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. The responses are based on feedback from 206 participants. An overwhelming majority, 196 respondents (95.1%), rated capacity-building initiatives as "Effective", indicating broad satisfaction with the quality and relevance of training and support provided. 5 respondents (2.4%) rated the initiatives as "Very Effective", reinforcing the positive perception. Another 5 respondents (2.4%) chose a neutral stance, suggesting minimal uncertainty or limited direct exposure to the initiatives. Overall, 97.6% of respondents found the initiatives effective to some degree, highlighting a strong endorsement of the capacity-building efforts associated with ABCD.

Table 19: Sufficiency of Access to ABCD educational Resources

How sufficient is the access to educational resources for ABCD?	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Sufficient	1	.5	.5
Sufficient	101	49.0	49.5
Neutral	29	14.1	63.6
Insufficient	75	36.4	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

The data on the above table presents the community perceptions regarding the sufficiency of access to educational resources for Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). Understanding these perceptions is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of educational support within the community. Only 1 respondent (0.5%) rated access to educational resources

as "very sufficient." This suggests that very few individuals perceive the availability of educational resources as highly adequate. A significant portion of respondents, 101 individuals (49.0%), considered access to educational resources as "sufficient." This indicates a generally positive perception among nearly half of the community members. 29 respondents (14.1%) chose the neutral option, reflecting a lack of strong opinion. This may suggest uncertainty or variability in experiences related to educational resource access. A notable 75 respondents (36.4%) indicated that access to educational resources is "insufficient." This highlights a significant concern regarding the availability or quality of educational support within the community.

Table 20: Responses level of Consistency on ABCD capacity building initiatives

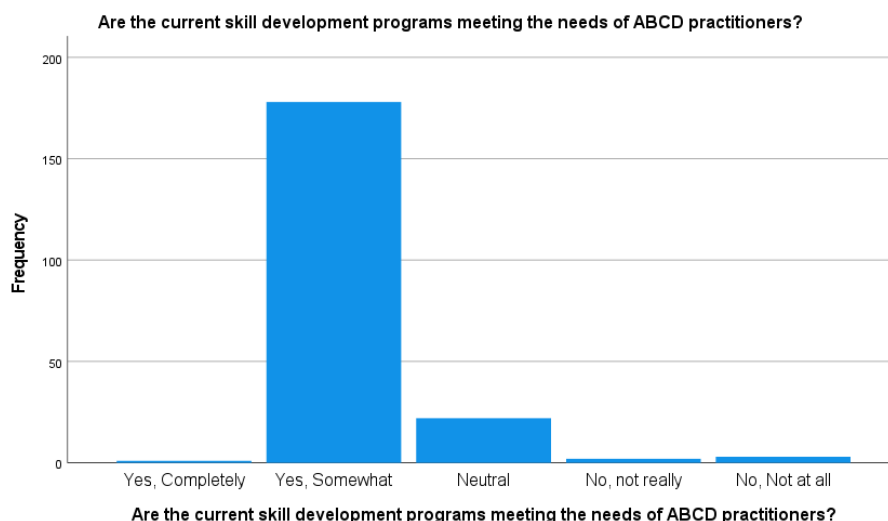
Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
How would you rate the availability of training programs for ABCD implementation?	206	2.64	.668
How effective are the capacity-building initiatives in enhancing skills for ABCD implementation?	206	2.00	.221
How sufficient is the access to educational resources for ABCD?	206	2.86	.927
Valid N (listwise)	206		

To further analyse consistency of response among the research participants, the researcher has evaluated the mean and standard deviation and found interesting results. The mean score of 2.64 suggests that respondents perceive the availability of training programs for ABCD implementation as moderately sufficient. The standard deviation of 0.668 indicates some variability in responses, implying differing perceptions among community members regarding training availability. On the "Effectiveness of Capacity-Building Initiatives by ABCD approach", it was found a mean of 2.00, respondents rated the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives as neutral and low standard deviation of 0.221 suggests that opinions are relatively consistent, indicating a general agreement on the perceived limited effectiveness of these initiatives in enhancing skills for ABCD implementation. In contrast, the mean score of "Sufficiency of Access to Educational Resources" recorded 2.86 that indicates respondents' perception on access to educational resources as somewhat sufficient. The higher standard deviation of 0.927 reflects

greater variability in responses, suggesting that while some individuals feel resources are adequate, others may not.

Chart 5: Level of the Current skill development initiatives meets Community Needs

This analysis examines whether existing skill development programs are effectively meeting the needs of practitioners involved in Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD).



The majority, 178 respondents (86.4%), indicated that current programs “somewhat” meet their needs, suggesting moderate satisfaction and general alignment with practitioners’ expectations. Only 1 respondent (0.5%) stated that the programs completely meet their needs, indicating that fully satisfactory programs may still be limited or rare. 22 respondents (10.7%) expressed a neutral opinion, potentially pointing to a lack of clarity, limited exposure, or mixed experiences. A small proportion—2 respondents (1.0%) and 3 respondents (1.5%)—believe that the programs do not really or do not at all meet their needs, respectively. Together, the data shows that 86.9% of respondents believe the skill development efforts are at least partially effective, while 2.5% feel they are insufficient.

4.6 Challenges and barriers in implementing ABCD Approach

Table 21: Capacity Building Challenges on ABCD approach

Descriptive Statistics	Range	Mini	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
What is the biggest challenge in capacity building for ABCD?	3	1	4	1.67	.843
Valid N (listwise)					

Based on the above tables that present the descriptive statistical analysis of the challenges faced in capacity building for Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), there was a low mean

score of 1.67 which indicates respondents’ strong consensus on the perceived severity of these challenges in capacity building for ABCD. Understanding these challenges is crucial for identifying areas for improvement and enhancing program effectiveness.

Table 22: Biggest Challenges Community internal capacity to assess needs and priorities

What is the biggest challenge in capacity building for ABCD?	Frequency	Percent
Lack of Training Programs	103	50.0
Insufficient Educational Resources	83	40.3
Low Community Participation	5	2.4
Inadequate Skills Development	15	7.3
Total	206	100.0

Regarding the biggest challenges in capacity building for ABCD implementation initiatives, half of the respondents (103 individuals) identified the lack of training programs as the biggest challenge. This highlights a critical area that requires immediate attention to enhance capacity building efforts. A significant portion of respondents (83 individuals) pointed to insufficient educational resources as a major challenge. This indicates a need for improved access to and availability of educational materials. Only 5 respondents (2.4%) reported low community participation as a challenge, suggesting that this may not be perceived as a significant issue compared to other challenges. 15 respondents (7.3%) identified inadequate skills development as a challenge, indicating that while it is a concern, it is less impactful than the lack of training programs and educational resources.

Table 23: Extent of Socio-cultural factors Hinders ABCD Implementation

To what extent do socio-cultural factors hinder ABCD implementation?	Frequency	Percent
To a very large extent	1	.5
To a large extent	2	1.0
Neutral	36	17.5
To a small extent	152	73.8
Not at all	15	7.3
Total	206	100.0

The above bar chart presents respondents’ perceptions of how much socio-cultural factors—such as traditional beliefs, community norms, or local power dynamics—hinder the implementation of

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). A strong majority, 152 respondents (73.8%), believe that socio-cultural factors hinder ABCD implementation only to a small extent, suggesting that such barriers are present but not significantly obstructive. 36 respondents (17.5%) expressed a neutral stance, which may indicate uncertainty or variability in how socio-cultural factors are experienced across different communities. 15 respondents (7.3%) stated that socio-cultural factors do not hinder implementation at all, further reinforcing the general perception that these barriers are minimal. Only 3 respondents (1.5%)—1 (0.5%) to a very large extent and 2 (1.0%) to a large extent—believe that socio-cultural issues are major hindrances. Overall, 81.1% of respondents feel that socio-cultural factors have minimal to no impact on ABCD implementation, indicating a favorable environment for the approach in most settings.

Table 24: Impacts of Socio-Cultural factors on ABCD Implementation

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
To what extent do socio-cultural factors hinder ABCD implementation?	206	3.86	.560
Valid N (listwise)	206		

According to the above table, the mean score of 3.86 indicates that respondents perceive socio-cultural factors as significantly hindering ABCD implementation. This score suggests a strong consensus among respondents about the impact of these factors on development efforts. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 0.560 reflects relatively low variability in responses, indicating that most respondents share similar perceptions regarding the hindrance posed by socio-cultural factors.

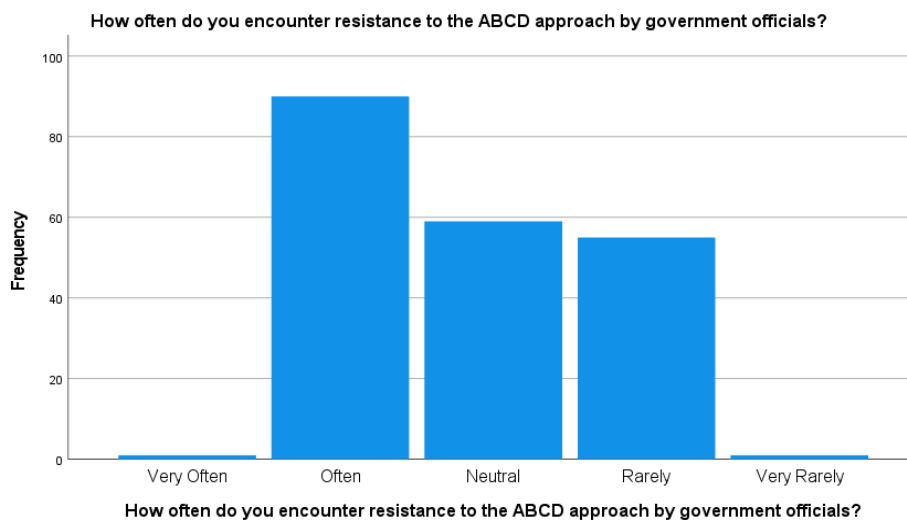
Table 25: Community internal capacity to assess needs and priorities

How impactful are technological barriers in ABCD projects?	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very High	1	.5	.5
High	11	5.3	5.8
Neutral	135	65.5	71.4
Low	59	28.6	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

The interesting part of assessing impacts of technological barriers on ABCD projects is that perception of the respondents was a significant majority of respondents (135 individuals or

65.5%) chose the neutral option. This indicates that many community members do not have a strong opinion on the impact of technological barriers, suggesting uncertainty or variability in experiences. The second relatively high response 59 respondents (28.6%) indicated that they perceive technological barriers as having a "low" impact. This suggests that a substantial portion of the community does not view technology as a significant hindrance. A small portion of respondents (11 individuals or 5.3%) considered the impact of technological barriers to be "high." This suggests that while some individuals recognize challenges, it is not widespread. And only 1 respondent (0.5%) rated the impact of technological barriers as "very high." This indicates that very few perceive technological issues as a critical impediment to ABCD projects.

Chart 6: Government Officials Resistance to the ABCD Approach



Based on the above chart, the finding explores varieties of response regarding how frequently respondents encounter resistance from government officials to the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

approach. 90 respondents (43.7%) reported encountering resistance “often”, suggesting that nearly half of the participants have repeatedly experienced reluctance or opposition from government actors when implementing ABCD. 59 respondents (28.6%) selected “neutral”, which may reflect mixed experiences or limited engagement with government stakeholders. 55 respondents (26.7%) said they “rarely” encounter resistance, and only 1 respondent (0.5%) selected “very rarely.” Just 1 respondent (0.5%) reported encountering resistance “very often.” Together, 44.2% of respondents experience resistance “often” or “very often,” while 27.2% experience it “rarely” or “very rarely,” with a substantial neutral segment (28.6%).

Table 26: Community Resistance to ABCD Approach

How often do you encounter resistance to the ABCD approach by Community members?	Frequency	Percent
Very Often	1	.5
Often	77	37.4
Neutral	74	35.9
Rarely	52	25.2
Very Rarely	2	1.0
Total	206	100.0

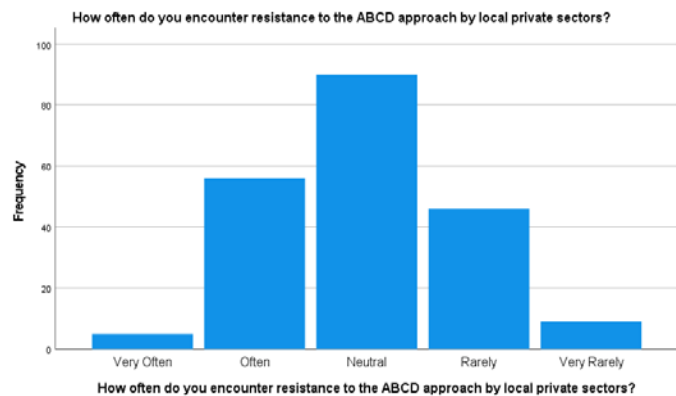
The above table summarizes the frequency and percentage distribution of responses regarding resistance to the ABCD approach. Only 1 respondent (0.5%) reported encountering resistance to the ABCD approach "very often." This suggests that extreme resistance is rare.

A significant portion of respondents (77 individuals or 37.4%) indicated that they encounter resistance "often." This suggests that while resistance exists, it is not overwhelming. A substantial number of respondents (74 individuals or 35.9%) chose the neutral option. This indicates that many community members do not have strong opinions regarding resistance to the ABCD approach. 52 respondents (25.2%) reported encountering resistance "rarely," suggesting that a fair number of individuals do not experience significant pushback.

Only 2 respondents (1.0%) indicated that they encounter resistance "very rarely," reinforcing the idea that extreme resistance is uncommon.

Chart 7: Local Private Sectors Resistance to ABCD Approach

Based on the above bar chart that presents how frequently respondents encounter resistance from local private sector actors toward the implementation of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, 56 respondents (27.2%) reported encountering resistance "often",



indicating that more than a quarter of respondents have experienced regular pushback from local businesses or private actors. A notable 90 respondents (43.7%) chose "neutral", suggesting

limited engagement, inconsistent experiences, or uncertainty about the role of the private sector in ABCD. 46 respondents (22.3%) reported encountering resistance “rarely”, while 9 respondents (4.4%) said “very rarely.” Only 5 respondents (2.4%) reported experiencing resistance “very often”. The cumulative analysis indicated that 29.6% of respondents reported encountering resistance frequently (very often + often), while 26.7% rarely or very rarely experienced resistance—leaving the largest share of respondents (43.7%) as neutral.

Table 27: Frequency and Variation of Response by different Stakeholders

Descriptive Statistics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
How often do you encounter resistance to the ABCD approach by government officials?	206	2.83	.847
How often do you encounter resistance to the ABCD approach by Community members?	206	2.89	.822
How often do you encounter resistance to the ABCD approach by local private sectors?	206	2.99	.878
Valid N (listwise)	206		

Based on the above table, the following section summarizes the mean frequency and variation of resistance encountered during the implementation of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach across three key stakeholder groups: government officials, community members, and local private sector actors. The analysis has been done using a Likert-type scale where lower values indicate higher frequency of resistance (e.g., 1 = Very Often, 5 = Very Rarely).

1. Resistance by Government Officials: Mean = 2.83, Standard Deviation = 0.847

Respondents reported a moderate level of resistance from government officials. The mean suggests that resistance is occasional to rare, but the relatively wide spread (SD = 0.847) indicates varied experiences across respondents and contexts.

2. Resistance by Community Members: Mean = 2.89, Standard Deviation = 0.822

Community members are perceived as slightly less resistant than government officials, though the difference is marginal. The mean again reflects a moderate to low level of resistance, with variability in responses suggesting differing levels of community acceptance or understanding of ABCD.

3. Resistance by Local Private Sectors: Mean = 2.99, Standard Deviation = 0.878

Among the three groups, local private sector actors show the least frequent resistance to the ABCD approach. The higher mean suggests that, on average, resistance is rare. However, the slightly higher standard deviation indicates that experiences vary, with some practitioners facing more resistance than others.

4.7 Opportunities and Impacts of ABCD approach

Table 28: ABCD Innovativeness and Tailored to Unique Needs of the Community

ABCD's programs are innovative and tailored to the unique needs of the community.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	16	7.8	7.8
Agree	186	90.3	98.1
Neutral	4	1.9	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

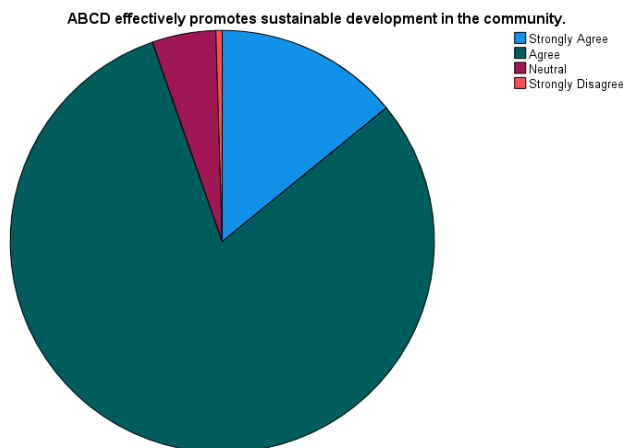
Based on the above table indicate a strong consensus regarding the innovative and community-tailored nature of ABCD's programs. The overwhelming majority (90.3%) of respondents selected "Agree," suggesting that the vast majority perceive ABCD's programs as beneficial and well-suited to community needs. This high percentage reflects a strong validation of the program's relevance and effectiveness in addressing local challenges. A modest proportion (7.8%) of respondents expressed strong affirmation of the programs' innovative qualities and community alignment. This group indicates a segment of the population that not only recognizes but also highly values the effectiveness of ABCD's initiatives. Whereas only 1.9% of respondents remained neutral, indicating minimal ambivalence regarding the programs' innovation and relevance. This low percentage may suggest that most individuals have formed a clear opinion on the subject. The cumulative percentages illustrate that 98.1% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the assertion that ABCD's programs are innovative and tailored to community needs. This statistic reinforces the notion that ABCD is largely successful in meeting the expectations and needs of the community it serves.

Table 29: ABCD’s Commitment to Transparency & Accountability

ABCD's commitment to transparency and accountability enhances trust within the community.	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	13	6.3
Agree	161	78.2
Neutral	26	12.6
Strongly Disagree	6	2.9
Total	206	100.0

This table presents the respondents’ perceptions of how ABCD’s commitment to transparency and accountability influences trust within the community. The data is based on responses from 206 participants. A large majority, 161 respondents (78.2%), agreed that ABCD’s transparent and accountable practices contribute positively to building community trust. While 13 respondents (6.3%) strongly agreed, reinforcing strong confidence in the approach’s ability to foster credibility and openness, the second large majority of respondents who are about 26 respondents (12.6%) remained neutral, possibly reflecting limited awareness or mixed experiences regarding the visibility of transparency and accountability mechanisms. 6 respondents (2.9%) strongly disagreed, indicating a small level of skepticism or dissatisfaction.

Chart 8: ABCD’s Effectiveness in Promoting Sustainable Development



The above pie chart examines the perceptions of respondents regarding ABCD's effectiveness in promoting sustainable development within the community. The largest portion of respondents (80.6%) selected "Agree," indicating a strong general consensus on ABCD's

positive impact on sustainable development. This high figure reinforces the notion that the community perceives these efforts as beneficial and effective. A total of 14.1% of respondents strongly affirm that ABCD effectively promotes sustainable development. This percentage

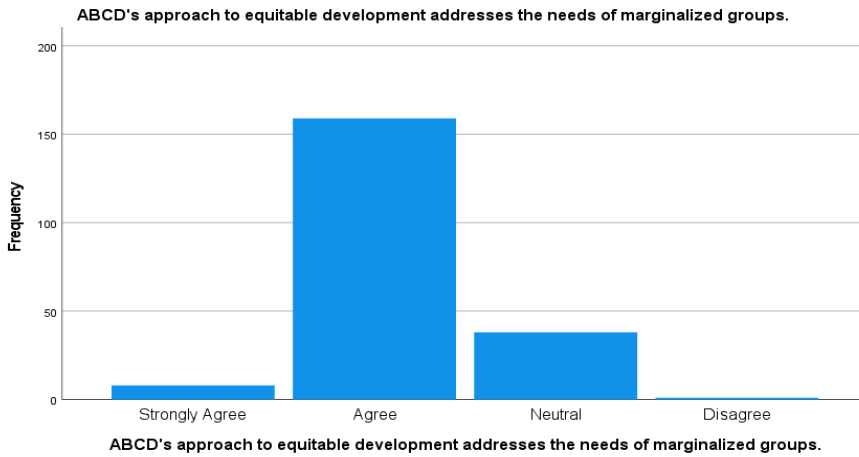
reflects a significant level of enthusiasm and support for the initiatives implemented by ABCD. Only 4.9% of respondents reported a neutral attitude, suggesting that the majority of individuals have a definite opinion on ABCD's role in sustainable development, with minimal ambivalence. A very small fraction (0.5%) of respondents expressed strong disagreement with the statement. Interestingly, the cumulative percentages reveal that 94.7% of respondents agree or strongly agree that ABCD is effective in promoting sustainable development. This statistic underscores a strong validation of ABCD's initiatives and their perceived alignment with sustainable development goals.

Table 30: ABCD Fosters Collaboration among Community Members

ABCD fosters collaboration among community members to achieve common goals.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	21	10.2	10.2
Agree	160	77.7	87.9
Neutral	23	11.2	99.0
Disagree	1	.5	99.5
Strongly Disagree	1	.5	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

This finding explores respondents’ perceptions of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in promoting collaboration among community members to pursue shared objectives. A strong majority, 160 respondents (77.7%), agreed that ABCD fosters collaboration within communities. 21 respondents (10.2%) strongly agreed, indicating that nearly 88% of respondents recognize a positive effect of ABCD on community cohesion and joint efforts. 23 respondents (11.2%) chose a neutral response, suggesting limited personal observation or mixed experiences. Only 2 respondents (1.0%) expressed disagreement, split evenly between “disagree” (0.5%) and “strongly disagree” (0.5%), reflecting minimal skepticism. The cumulative data reveals that 87.9% of respondents agree that ABCD effectively promotes collaborative behavior and collective action in communities.

Chart 9: ABCD’s Contribution on Equitable Development addressing the Needs



Based on the above bar chart, perceptions of respondents regarding ABCD's approach to equitable development and its effectiveness in addressing the needs of marginalized groups. A

small proportion (3.9%) of respondents strongly affirms that ABCD's approach effectively addresses the needs of marginalized groups. The majority of respondents (77.2%) selected "Agree," suggesting a significant consensus on the effectiveness of ABCD's initiatives in promoting equitable development. This reflects a general recognition of ABCD’s positive impact on marginalized communities. A notable 18.4% of respondents chose a neutral stance. This substantial percentage indicates that a significant portion of the population may have mixed feelings or insufficient information regarding ABCD's approach to equitable development. Only 0.5% of respondents expressed disagreement, highlighting that negative perceptions of ABCD's initiatives in this area are quite rare. The cumulative percentages show that 81.1% of respondents agree or strongly agree that ABCD's approach addresses the needs of marginalized groups. This statistic indicates a strong overall validation of ABCD’s efforts in equitable development.

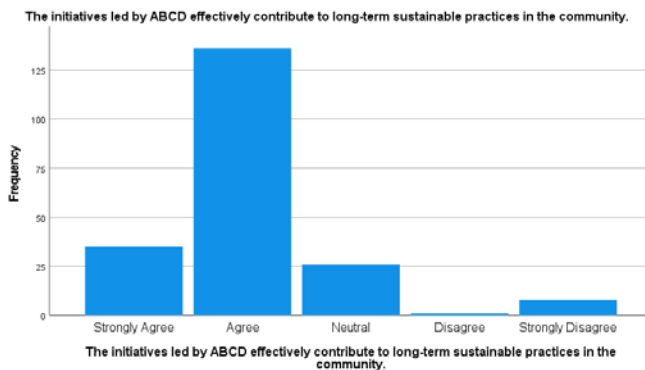
Table 31: ABCD Empowers Communities by Involving in Decision Making

ABCD empowers communities by involving them in decision-making processes.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	39	18.9	18.9
Agree	150	72.8	91.7
Neutral	14	6.8	98.5
Strongly Disagree	3	1.5	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

Perception of the research respondents regarding Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in terms of empowering communities through participation in decision-

making processes demonstrates significant level of consensus. Out of the 206 research participants, 150 respondents (72.8%) agreed that ABCD empowers communities by involving them in decision-making and an additional 39 respondents (18.9%) strongly agreed, reinforcing the widely held view that community voice is central to ABCD implementation. The remaining 14 respondents (6.8%) were neutral, which may suggest either limited engagement or awareness of the decision-making components of the approach and only 3 respondents (1.5%) strongly disagreed, indicating a very low level of skepticism regarding this core principle of ABCD. Therefore, cumulatively, 91.7% of respondents believe that ABCD positively contributes to community empowerment by fostering inclusive decision-making.

Chart 10: ABCD Initiatives Contribute to Long-term Sustainable Practice



The perceptions of respondents regarding the effectiveness of initiatives led by ABCD in contributing to long-term sustainable practices within the community indicates that the majority of respondents (66.0%) selected "Agree,"

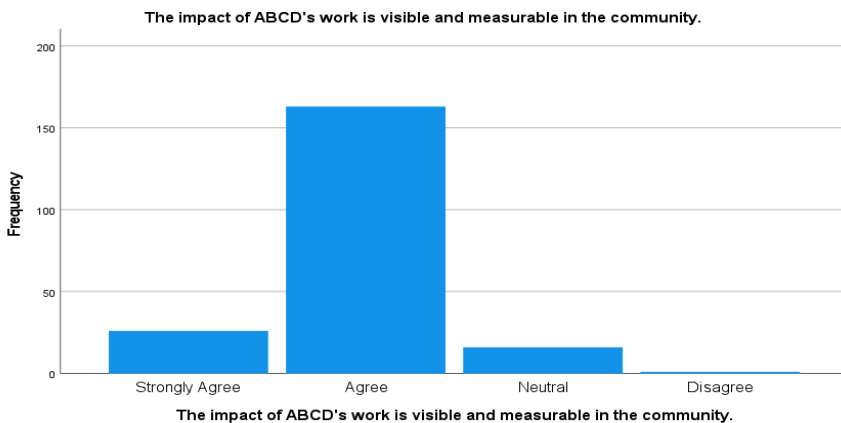
suggesting a strong consensus that ABCD's initiatives are perceived as beneficial for fostering sustainable practices. This high figure reinforces the positive impact of ABCD's work in the community. A total of 17.0% of respondents strongly affirm that ABCD's initiatives contribute effectively to long-term sustainable practices. This indicates a solid base of strong support for the organization's efforts. A notable 12.6% of respondents took a neutral stance, indicating that while many have a clear opinion, a segment remains unsure about the effectiveness of ABCD's initiatives. This could suggest a need for further information or engagement. However, only 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, and 8 respondents (3.9%) strongly disagreed, making up a small minority (4.4%) who are skeptical about ABCD's long-term impact. The findings suggest that a vast majority of respondents (83%) recognize the role of ABCD in fostering sustainable community practices, though a small proportion still question its effectiveness.

Table 32: ABCD Successfully Raise Awareness on Social and Environmental Issues

ABCD successfully raises awareness about social and environmental issues within the community.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	19	9.2
Agree	163	79.1
Neutral	12	5.8
Disagree	8	3.9
Strongly Disagree	4	1.9
Total	206	100.0

From the above table, it was observed that perception of the respondents on ABCD's success in raising awareness about social and environmental issues within the community indicated that there is positive consensus on its success. A small percentage (9.2%) of respondents strongly affirm that ABCD successfully raises awareness about social and environmental issues. While this figure is modest, it indicates a dedicated group of individuals who recognize the effectiveness of ABCD's initiatives. The majority of respondents (79.1%) selected "Agree," reflecting a substantial consensus that ABCD is effective in raising awareness. This strong support underscores the organization's perceived impact in educating the community about these critical issues. A small portion (5.8%) of respondents chose a neutral stance, suggesting that while most have a clear opinion, a few remain uncertain or feel they lack enough information regarding ABCD's efforts. A total of 3.9% of respondents expressed disagreement with the statement. This indicates that a minority of individuals do not perceive ABCD as effective in raising awareness. The percentage of respondents who strongly disagreed (1.9%) is also low, indicating that negative perceptions are relatively rare. Furthermore, from the cumulative percentages of the assessment, the critical mass of the respondents (88.3%) agrees or strongly agree that ABCD successfully raises awareness about social and environmental issues. This statistic highlights a strong validation of ABCD's efforts on the success of raising awareness about social and environmental issues

Chart 11: ABCD Innovativeness and Tailored to Unique Needs of the Community



The above chart presents the respondents' perceptions of whether the impact of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is visible and measurable within their communities. Based on

responses from 206 participants, A large majority, 163 respondents (79.1%), agreed that the impact of ABCD is both visible and measurable. 26 respondents (12.6%) strongly agreed, indicating a high level of confidence in the tangible outcomes of ABCD initiatives. 16 respondents (7.8%) selected neutral, possibly reflecting limited direct observation or knowledge of results tracking. Only 1 respondent (0.5%) disagreed, reflecting an exceptionally low level of skepticism about ABCD's effectiveness. Overall, 91.7% of respondents positively affirmed the visibility and measurability of ABCD's impact in their communities.

Table 33: Quality of Life in Community and Increase Self-Reliance

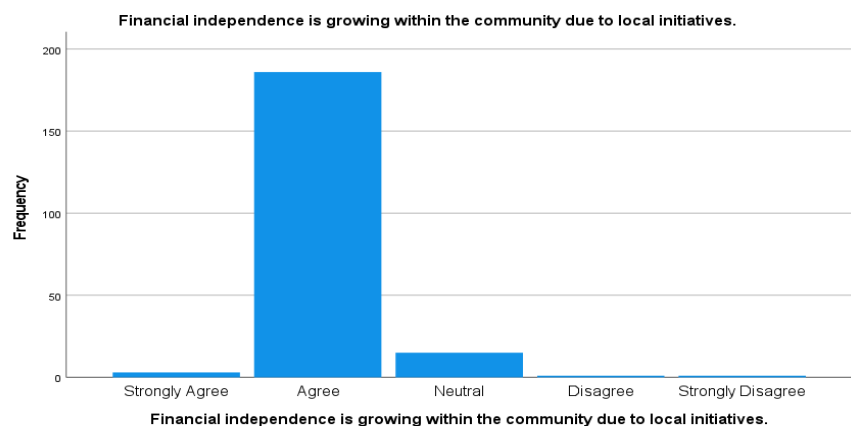
The overall quality of life in the community has improved due to increased self-reliance.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	24	11.7	11.7
Agree	153	74.3	85.9
Neutral	18	8.7	94.7
Disagree	11	5.3	100.0
Total	206	100.0	

Based on the above table, respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of increased self-reliance on the overall quality of life in the community, The majority of respondents (74.3%) selected "Agree," reflecting a strong consensus that self-reliance has positively impacted community quality of life. This high percentage underscores the perceived effectiveness of self-reliance initiatives. A total of 11.7% of respondents strongly affirm that increased self-reliance has improved the overall quality of life in the community. This indicates a segment of the population that strongly values and recognizes the benefits of self-reliance. A smaller portion

(8.7%) of respondents chose a neutral stance, suggesting that while many are supportive, some remain uncertain or feel they lack sufficient information regarding the connection between self-reliance and quality of life. A total of 5.3% of respondents expressed disagreement, indicating that a minority do not perceive an improvement in quality of life linked to self-reliance. Furthermore, the cumulative percentages reveal that 85.9% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the overall quality of life has improved due to increased self-reliance. This statistic highlights a significant validation of the positive impact of self-reliance initiatives on the community.

Chart 12: ABCD Led local Initiatives Vs Financial Independence

The above bar chart examines community perceptions regarding the extent to which financial independence is growing as a result of local, community-led initiatives, a key focus of the Asset-



Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. Out of the total 206 respondents, a dominant majority, 186 respondents (90.3%), agreed that financial independence is increasing within their community due to local initiatives. 3 respondents (1.5%) strongly agreed, reinforcing a small but clear affirmation of strong progress. 15 respondents (7.3%) expressed a neutral opinion, possibly indicating uncertainty about measurable economic improvements or limited direct involvement and only 2 respondents (1.0%) disagreed (split evenly between disagree and strongly disagree), suggesting minimal skepticism or dissatisfaction. In total, 91.8% of respondents expressed positive views about the growing financial independence of their communities, underscoring a high level of confidence in the economic benefits of ABCD-driven initiatives.

Table 34: Correlational Analysis of Education level, Socio0Cultural Factors and Community Empowerment

Correlation		Level of Education	Impacts of Socio-cultural factors	Community members feel empowered
Level of Education	Pearson Correlation	1	-.229**	-.228**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.001
Impacts of Socio-cultural factors	Pearson Correlation	-.229**	1	.246**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000
Community members feel empowered	Pearson Correlation	-.228**	.246**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	

Based on the above table correlation analysis, the information presented examines the relationships among three key variables in the context of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD):

- Level of Education
- Extent to which socio-cultural factors hinder ABCD implementation
- Perceived empowerment of community members in decision-making

1. Relationship between Level of Education and Socio-Cultural Barriers to ABCD

Implementation: Pearson Correlation Coefficient: -0.229 , Significance (p-value): 0.001

There is a statistically significant negative correlation between respondents' level of education and the extent to which they perceive socio-cultural factors as hindering ABCD implementation. This suggests that individuals with higher education levels are less likely to view socio-cultural factors as major barriers, possibly due to greater awareness, adaptability, or openness to participatory approaches.

2. Relationship between Level of Education and Community Empowerment:

Pearson Correlation Coefficient: -0.228 , Significance (p-value): 0.001

There is also a statistically significant negative correlation between level of education and the perception that community members feel empowered to make decisions. This may indicate that more educated individuals are slightly less likely to perceive community empowerment as strong, potentially due to higher expectations for participatory standards or critical awareness of gaps in inclusion.

3. Relationship between Socio-Cultural Barriers and Community Empowerment:

Pearson Correlation Coefficient: +0.246, Significance (p-value): 0.000

A statistically significant positive correlation exists between the perception that socio-cultural factors hinder ABCD and the belief that community members feel empowered. This somewhat unexpected positive relationship could imply that in contexts where empowerment is more visible, cultural norms and dynamics may become more contested or challenged, thereby making such barriers more noticeable.

The correlational analysis indicated that all three correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating meaningful relationships between these variables in the context of ABCD implementation. Education plays a critical role in shaping perceptions of both empowerment and cultural barriers. The relationship between socio-cultural factors and empowerment highlights the complex dynamics of shifting traditional norms through participatory development efforts.

Summary of KII and FGD Findings on ABCD Implementation

The community members and local stakeholders who took part in this study shared powerful stories about how the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach has helped shift the way development is done in their neighborhoods. Through the efforts of Dorcas Aid Ethiopia and its partners, ABCD has brought people together to identify their own strengths—such as local skills, labor, and resources—and use them to drive meaningful change.

In places like Shashemene and Addis Ababa, communities came together to form ABCD teams, receive training, and develop action plans based on local priorities. Community members didn't just participate—they led the way. They donated materials, volunteered their time, and supported vulnerable families through housing repairs, food donations, and educational supplies. The approach has also improved relationships with local government and created space for regular community dialogue.

While there have been many successes, the journey hasn't been without challenges. At times, ABCD efforts overlapped with government programs, causing confusion. Promised support from some individuals didn't always come through, and as volunteers, ABCD team members often hoped for small incentives like phone cards or refreshments to keep them going. Trust issues and delays in getting land or resources also created some hurdles. Despite these, people's commitment didn't fade. With time, training, and open conversations, community members began to embrace the ABCD approach more fully.

Several key factors helped ABCD thrive: strong community spirit, dedicated volunteers, practical training, and growing recognition from local authorities. One standout story comes from the SHINES project in Shashemene, where young people, elders, and local leaders joined forces to improve poor housing conditions and provide essential services in underserved neighborhoods. Through collective efforts, one elderly woman, Emiyenesh Abaru, who had lived in dire conditions for decades, received a renovated home—a moment of dignity and joy she had long hoped for. She mentioned that "I want to thank the ABCD project, which identified me in my difficult situation, exposed to both rain and scorching sun. I had endured immense challenges with my sleeping place; my previous shelter was unsafe, and I lived under great tension for my life. But after this opportunity, I feel liberated from a pit. I experienced immense joy in my life after ABCD team constructed my house!" This story tells a lot about reaching communities' real challenge by community initiatives which ABCD promoted.

The ABCD approach has made development feel local, inclusive, and lasting. Women, youth, and marginalized groups have had more chances to be heard and to lead. Communities are not only coming together—they're beginning to solve problems on their own, using what they already have. The spirit of helping one another has grown stronger, and people are starting to believe they don't have to wait for external aid to create change.

Looking ahead, communities emphasized the need for continued support—especially in the form of more training, simple tools for financial tracking, and small incentives to keep volunteers motivated. But the foundation is strong. With continued encouragement, ABCD can help more communities across Ethiopia move toward a future built on their own strengths, hopes, and collective efforts.

Chapter Five: Findings, Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the research findings obtained through quantitative surveys involving 206 participants. The data explores the current status, perceptions, implementation experience, challenges, and opportunities related to the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in Ethiopia. The section includes descriptive statistics, inferential analyses, and thematic interpretations aligned with the research objectives.

5.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study involved 206 respondents drawn from Addis Ababa (51%) and Shashemene (49%), ensuring balanced geographic representation. The largest age group was between 34–45 years (47.1%), followed by 18–33 years (31.1%). A majority were male (65%), and 47.6% held a diploma, suggesting that most respondents have mid-level technical or professional backgrounds.

Notably, 90.3% of respondents were project volunteers, reinforcing the community-centric nature of ABCD. Furthermore, 71.4% had 1–2 years of experience in ABCD implementation, and 69.4% reported direct involvement, indicating that most respondents had active but relatively recent engagement with the approach.

5.3 Opportunities of Asset Based Community Development

5.3.1 Easily understand the concept and internalized well

Participants demonstrated strong conceptual alignment with the core principles of ABCD that mean responses for key ABCD definitions such as "focusing on possibilities not deficits" ($M=2.01$), "assessing assets rather than needs" ($M=2.06$), and "relational power through collective action" ($M=2.10$) indicate high agreement. The low standard deviations across all these statements suggest a strong consensus among respondents on what ABCD entails. The data implies that ABCD principles are well-internalized among practitioners, reinforcing the success

of previous sensitization efforts. However, the slightly higher variability in understanding relational power may signal a need for further emphasis on collective engagement strategies.

5.3.2 Strong Focus on Community Asset Utilization and building sense of ownership

60.7% of respondents prioritized uncovering and utilizing community assets as the most emphasized goal, followed by 31.1% who emphasized community ownership of development ownership. This finding indicated that the strong focus on asset utilization and ownership aligns with the foundational principles of ABCD. However, minimal attention to goals like fostering networks and bottom-up approaches suggests areas for growth in implementation practices.

5.3.3 Engage and Empower community members in the development Initiatives

A total of 92.7% rated ABCD's role as either "significant" or "very significant" in empowering communities, and 55.3% rated ABCD as having "high" or "very high" levels of community engagement compared to other development models. These findings reinforce ABCD's strength in community mobilization and empowerment. However, 44.2% of neutral responses on engagement suggest that implementation practices vary, potentially influenced by contextual or institutional constraints.

5.3.4 It promotes participatory Planning and decision making

Responses reveal a very high level of perceived community ownership and active participation in the local development initiatives in which 87.9% agree community members feel empowered in decision-making, 86.9% agreed ABCD fosters ownership of local initiatives and 74.3% reported active participation in planning and implementation. These significant number of respondents consensus indicated that the ABCD approach has demonstrably promoted ownership and participatory planning. The findings validate the approach's effectiveness in fostering engagement, responsibility, and community-driven development.

5.3.5 Enhance Community collaboration and Local Leadership

74.8% agree communities collaborate with local organizations. 80.6% agree local leaders support self-reliance initiatives. 69.9% say communities assess their needs independently. While

collaboration with local actors is widely acknowledged, the relatively high neutral response (22.3%) suggests uneven implementation across regions. Also, community autonomy in self-assessment is evident but could benefit from more systematic strengthening.

5.3.6 Effective in building community Capacity and Skill Development

While 95.1% of the research respondents rated capacity-building efforts as effective, whereas 86.4% said these programs “somewhat” meet practitioner needs and only 1 respondent said training availability was “very high.” Capacity-building efforts are recognized but appear limited in coverage, depth, or accessibility. The discrepancy between high effectiveness ratings and low satisfaction regarding sufficiency points to systemic gaps in training access and content relevance.

5.3.7 Improves quality of life

Respondents showed strong agreement that ABCD contributes to sustainable development (83%), builds trust through transparency (84.5%), promotes financial independence (91.8%) and improves quality of life through self-reliance (85.9%). The data confirms that ABCD has a positive outcomes in both social and economic terms. Tangible improvements in livelihoods and institutional trust have likely contributed to this favorable assessment.

5.4 Challenges of ABCD Implementation

5.4.1 Lack of training programs and insufficient educational resource

The major challenges identified in this research based on the response gathered were lack of training programs (50%) and insufficient educational resources (40.3%). Other factors such as low community participation and inadequate skill development were less commonly reported, indicating strong community readiness but institutional or systemic shortcomings. Capacity-building efforts are recognized but appear limited in coverage, depth, or accessibility. The discrepancy between high effectiveness ratings and low satisfaction regarding sufficiency points to systemic gaps in training access and content relevance. To sustain and scale ABCD,

investment in training and educational resources is vital. Capacity development should focus not only on volunteers but also on system actors such as local leaders and facilitators.

5.4.2 Socio-Cultural and Institutional Barriers

73.8% said socio-cultural factors hinder ABCD only “to a small extent.” However, correlation analysis shows that higher education correlates with reduced perception of socio-cultural hindrance ($r = -0.229$, $p < 0.01$) and socio-cultural challenges negatively affect perceived empowerment ($r = 0.246$, $p < 0.01$). Education appears to buffer against cultural resistance. However, higher education may also raise expectations of inclusivity, leading to a more critical view of empowerment efforts. Addressing deep-seated norms through culturally adaptive approaches remains necessary.

5.5 Correlation Analysis Summary

Education negatively correlates with perceived barriers and positively with empowerment and socio-cultural barriers negatively affect empowerment. These relationships emphasize that education plays a mediating role in ABCD effectiveness, while cultural barriers must be proactively managed.

5.6 Theoretical Reflection

The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach like Empowerment Theory rooted in the belief that sustainable change originates from within individuals and communities. The ABCD approach implemented in both Addis Ababa and Shashement prioritized the identification, mobilization, and strengthening of local assets—human, social, institutional, and physical—as opposed to focusing on community deficits. Empowerment Theory, as articulated by Zimmerman (Zimmerman, 2000) on the other hand complements this by emphasizing the process through which individuals and groups gain control over their lives, engage meaningfully in community decision-making, and take collective action toward shared goals.

ABCD challenges conventional aid paradigms by positioning community members not as passive recipients of assistance but as capable agents with inherent strengths and the exploration

and utilization of untapped potential. In doing so, it aligns with the intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral components of empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). These components refer to individuals' self-perception of competence (intrapersonal), their critical awareness of resources and social structures (interactional), and their proactive engagement in community life (behavioral). From the perspective of Empowerment Theory, ABCD emerges as a practical and philosophically grounded strategy that is not only capable of mobilizing assets but also shifting power dynamics within communities.

Summary

This study examined the implementation, opportunities, and challenges of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in Ethiopia using a descriptive research design. Data were collected from 206 respondents across two key locations—Addis Ababa and Shashemene—with balanced geographic representation.

The key findings of research indicated that the majority of respondents were between 34–45 years old (47.1%), male (65%), and held a diploma (47.6%). Most (90.3%) were volunteers actively involved in community initiatives. Over 71% had 1–2 years of ABCD experience, and 69.4% were directly involved in implementing ABCD activities. Respondents strongly identified with ABCD principles such as community strengths, asset utilization, and collective relational power. 92.7% of respondents agreed that ABCD significantly contributes to community empowerment, with high levels of reported community participation, ownership, and collaboration. Key challenges included a lack of training programs (50%) and limited educational resources (40.3%). Socio-cultural barriers were perceived as relatively minimal, though they negatively affected perceptions of empowerment. ABCD was credited with promoting sustainable development, improving quality of life, increasing financial independence, and enhancing trust and transparency.

Correlation analysis revealed that higher education levels were associated with reduced perception of socio-cultural hindrances and slightly lower perceived community empowerment—highlighting the need for contextualized engagement across education levels.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significant role of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in promoting community empowerment and contributing to sustainable development initiatives in Ethiopia. The findings present strong evidence that ABCD is not only viable and well-received but also an effective model for fostering local ownership, participation, and the mobilization of community assets. Its implementation has resulted in tangible improvements in quality of life and enhanced self-reliance among communities.

The research further confirms that the ABCD approach is actively embraced, particularly by community members who have participated as volunteers in its implementation. It is widely perceived as a people-centered, participatory, and strength-based model that nurtures collaboration and reinforces the value of local capacities and resources.

Despite its strengths, the study also reveals several implementation challenges. Limited access to training and educational resources has affected the consistent application of ABCD principles. Additionally, key aspects of the approach—such as fostering social networks and adopting bottom-up strategies—have been underemphasized in some contexts, leading to an imbalanced implementation. Resistance from certain stakeholders, including government officials and private actors, while generally moderate, still poses obstacles that can hinder the approach's overall effectiveness.

To scale up and sustain the impact of ABCD, it is essential to address systemic capacity gaps, enhance cross-sector collaboration, and develop inclusive strategies that accommodate diverse educational backgrounds and cultural dynamics. Continuous learning and adaptive implementation will be critical for responding to evolving community needs and ensuring long-term success.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Capacity Building:** Develop and scale context-specific training programs on ABCD targeting both community volunteers and institutional actors. This should include targeted training for local leaders to reinforce their roles in promoting self-reliance. It is also important to improve access to educational materials, tools, and guidelines to support consistent implementation across diverse settings.
2. **Broaden the Focus of ABCD Goals:** Rebalance intervention strategies to also emphasize building community networks, trust, and bottom-up development, in addition to asset mapping. Incorporate mechanisms to shift mindsets from deficit-based thinking to strength-based narratives at all stakeholder levels.
3. **Deepen Community Engagement and Autonomy:** Foster initiatives that enhance communities' ability to assess their own needs independently and engage in self-directed development planning. Promote inclusive participation in decision-making, especially from marginalized groups, women, and youth. Develop initiatives specifically aimed at engaging older adults in the ABCD process. Their experiences and insights are valuable and can enhance community ownership and decision-making.
4. **Improve Stakeholder Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships with local government offices, private sector actors, and CSOs to reduce resistance and improve resource mobilization. Institutionalize collaboration through joint planning, monitoring, and learning mechanisms. Strengthen partnerships between community members, local organizations, and government officials to facilitate more effective collaboration. This may involve workshops and forums to improve communication and trust among stakeholders.
5. **Integrate ABCD into Policy and Systems:** Advocate for mainstreaming ABCD into regional and national development strategies to ensure sustainability and scalability. Align ABCD efforts with broader development frameworks such as SDGs.

Establishing mechanisms for regular monitoring and evaluation of ABCD initiatives to assess their impact on community empowerment and development and help identify best practices and areas for improvement.

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Annex 1: Survey Questions

Ser. No.	List of Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Community Participation and Empowerment					
1.1	To what extent does the ABCD approach enhance community involvement in local development initiatives?					
1.2	ABCD promotes community ownership of development projects.					
1.3	ABCD empowers marginalized groups to actively participate in decision-making processes.					
1.4	The ABCD approach effectively utilizes the skills and talents of community members.					
1.5	ABCD strengthens trust and collaboration among community members.					
2	Utilization of Local Resources					
2.1	ABCD encourages the sustainable use of locally available resources.					
2.2	The ABCD approach reduces dependence on external aid.					
2.3	Community members can identify and mobilize their assets effectively through the ABCD approach.					
2.4	ABCD supports the preservation of cultural and natural resources.					
3	Economic Impact					
3.1	ABCD contributes to the creation of sustainable livelihoods for community members.					
3.2	The ABCD approach enhances opportunities for skill development and income generation.					
3.3	ABCD strengthens the economic resilience of communities.					
3.4	The approach has significantly reduced unemployment in communities where it is implemented.					
4	Social Impact					

4.1	ABCD promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in development processes.					
4.2	The ABCD approach improves social cohesion within communities.					
4.3	ABCD has a positive impact on education and awareness levels within the community.					
4.4	Community health and well-being have improved due to ABCD initiatives.					
5	Environmental Sustainability					
5.1	ABCD encourages environmentally friendly practices in community development.					
5.2	The approach contributes to the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity.					
5.3	ABCD initiatives are aligned with long-term environmental sustainability goals.					
5.4	Communities implementing ABCD are better prepared to address environmental challenges, such as climate change.					
6	Policy Alignment and Institutional Support					
6.1	ABCD aligns with Ethiopia's national sustainable development policies and strategies.					
6.2	Local governments support and promote the adoption of the ABCD approach.					
6.3	The ABCD approach facilitates collaboration between communities and development stakeholders.					
6.4	The approach has influenced policy changes to focus more on community-led development.					
7	Long-Term Impact and Sustainability					
7.1	ABCD creates sustainable, long-term solutions to community challenges.					
7.2	The approach ensures the continuity of projects even after external stakeholders exit.					
7.3	ABCD reduces reliance on short-term aid interventions.					
7.4	Community members have the capacity to sustain ABCD-initiated projects independently.					
8	Challenges and Barriers					

8.1	Communities face significant challenges in implementing the ABCD approach.					
8.2	The ABCD approach is hindered by a lack of sufficient training and resources.					
8.3	External donors and stakeholders fully support the ABCD approach.					
8.4	Social and cultural barriers limit the effectiveness of ABCD in Ethiopia.					
8.5	Mobilizing local resources for ABCD initiatives is too difficult					
8.6	The current policies and institutions are not supportive towards ABCD implementation					
8.7	Socio-cultural barriers are significantly hindering ABCD implementation					