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Stakeholder Participation on Sustainability of Community Development Projects Under Devolved Governance in Makueni County, Kenya

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Abstract:
Kenya's development agenda has been faced with historical challenges ranging from the top-down approach in development, allocation, and direction of huge resources to unplanned and unforeseen projects and poor projects management. Public participation is a fundamental standard of any nation's democracy and has remained one of the significant requirements for projects success and sustainability. The promulgation of the new Kenyan Constitution, 2010, made a deliberate effort to pave way for participatory development. However, this has not been fully realized in most sectors eight years down the line. The study sought to establish how citizen involvement in the project management cycle relates to the success and long-term existence of projects. In addition, it sought to investigate the implications of the mechanisms, processes and the established county structures of public participation at the county level. From the findings, the study established that mechanisms, processes, and country structures employed by the county governments and other development partners directly influence project sustainability. It also realized that the county has made some progress in entrenching public participation however with partial implementation of all the mechanisms, processes and structures required for sustainable public participation. The study recommends that the level of participation in projects should be increased; with more emphasis on the village and ward structures with adequate, clear and time information flow on public participation. The County Public Participation Framework should be enacted into law.

Keywords: Community participation, sustainability, mechanism, processes, county structures

1. Introduction

Participatory development became a serious subject of debate when different scholars questioned and criticized the decision-making practice by a small circle of the high profile and most powerful people in the regimes (Shipley& Utz, 2012). Community participation approaches have become major demands by the development agencies including the United Nations, the World Bank, and other donors. The bottom-up approach has gained increased importance for its gains in project performance and sustainable development; it makes implementation better and sustainable with minimal community complaints. Globally, it is acknowledged that the bottom-up technique approach makes individuals improve proprietorship. Cornwall (2008) asserts that a major public-private partnership (PPP) initiative in the United States have reportedly failed due to community opposition. This state of affairs reveals that a community's participation in a project is critical to the project's success and without its input the outcome may not be impressive.

According to the Khalfan (2006) development of the community looked at the improvement of the welfare of the locals, training the people on how local administration operated as well as ensuring that the local self-help activities carried out by the community had government control (Zawdie & Langford, 2000). Recently, community participation is coming up as one of the main strategies of development more so in local development initiatives which are basically viewed as a basis for project success and sustainability.

Post-independence, the Kenyan central government did not change the systems at once, but controlled and managed all the resources and the citizens were granted very limited opportunity to make decisions, which resulted in undemocratic institutions, (Gitau & Amaya, 2006).The Kenyan 2010 constitution created devolved units of governance that distributed power from the central government to the grassroots via the county governments. The new constitution has allowed the citizen to participate in not only county government affairs but the national government as well (Kivoi & Lutta, 2019).

Kenya as a country has gradually moved from a more federal to a regional/devolved form of governance. One of the most recent efforts of the Kenyan Government was the adoption of the new constitution of Kenya in August 2010. The new constitution reintroduced devolution as a strategy to promote and ensure equal distribution of the Country's resources throughout the country for regional balancing and ensure all regions achieve sustainable development. As a

country, this structure of government increased the spaces for legitimate public engagement at both the national and county levels of governance. As an effort to further entrench public engagement, the country enacted the County Government's Act 2012 which provides for principles of public participation (Munene, 2019).

Several counties have made some strides in the legislation of public participation frameworks and policies (Auriacombe & Sithomola, 2020). Research by World Bank identifies Makueni and Elgeyo- Marakwet counties as key regions that have made deliberate efforts in mainstreaming public participation. However, the two counties' efforts do not directly point out the practicability of participation and the effects on the counties' project sustainability. In line with the COK 2010, Makueni County prepared the Makueni County Public participation and Governance Bill in 2014, a year after the initial formation of the County Governments. This was made through an Act of the County Assembly to give effect to citizen inclusion in the county plans. Despite the legal provisions and the pressure to entrench public participation, no tangible structures are in place to monitor the implementation processes in terms of the mechanisms, structures, and their implications to the projects' sustainability. The study, therefore, draws much interest in the progress of public participation within the context of devolution with a specific target of Makueni County being a pioneer county in entrenching citizen inclusion in county plans.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Since the devolved government is prefaced on the idea of resident strengthening, one of the significant windows through which the achievement of county governments can be comprehended is public participation. The Constitution made an expansive system for public participation in region administration. Public participation in their undertakings has not yet accomplished the adequate levels that fit the bill to suggest full investment (Rural Communities Impacting Policy, 2002). In the discussion, public participation where the project should involve the community, the probability of project working to a sensible end is constrained; is this case in Makueni County. As indicated by a statement by the Society for International Development (2016), the majority of County Governments did not give platforms for dynamic citizen participation. Without dynamic public participation in project advancement choices made by a few frequently deny the majority their privileges to impact project development. The difficulties and achievements of project sustainability in devolved government have been seen across counties. Though, an array of documentation exists of these successes and failures. This is somewhat a result of the brief span during which devolution has been executed. This study focused on Makueni County particularly Kibwezi, West Sub- County which has documented both the successes and challenges of project sustainability through the devolved government using lenses of public participation. The interest was to learn from the mechanisms, processes, and Makueni structures employed by the County in particular

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Literature Review on Projects Sustainability, Mechanisms, Processes, County Structures and Water Projects.

2.1.1. Sustainability of Community Development Projects

According to Jørgensen, Hermann, and Mortensen (2010), Sustainable development can be portrayed as the improvement that tends to the issues of the present age without exchanging off the limit of individuals later on to address their issues. There are different methods for defining sustainability with regards to projects development. The definition much of the time relies upon the viewpoints and needs of the stakeholders (Mathur, 2008). Sustainability can be alluded to the capacity of a program to react to the issues of a network in a nonstop, way (Noori, 2017). Rondinelli (2013) attests that the 'Sustainability of projects significant past the project time frame and is estimated by the level of merchandise and enterprises kept up and conveyed following five years of the end of usage of the task: the continuation of neighborhood activity invigorated by the venture and the age of successor administrations and activities because of venture constructed nearby limit'. Sustainability can likewise be characterized as the proceeding of project benefits past the task time frame, and the continuation of nearby activity animated by the task, and the age of successor administrations and activities because of project-assembled neighborhood limit (Honadle and Vansant as referred to in Kamarah, 2017). The task is viewed as feasible in the transient when 'the venture exercises and advantages proceeded at any rate 3 years after the life of the project' (John, 2018).

Project sustainability is one of the most basic viewpoints for all grassroots, national, and worldwide improvement organizations. Late examinations led by TANGO International (2008a, 2008b, 2008c, and 2008d) have demonstrated that while the pattern with the execution of ventures is indicating noteworthy improvement, the pattern with post-usage maintainability is fairly disillusioning - progressively, fewer tasks are being supported.

The primary audit of project sustainability directed by the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department found that solitary nine out of twenty-seven of the farming projects contemplated were named 'sustained', eight more 'doubtful', and the staying ten were 'not sustained' (Bamberger and Cheema, 1990). Furthermore, out of seventeen instruction ventures secured by a similar report and a later report by the World Bank, nine were named prone to be supported, five were suspicious, and three were probably not going to be continued. Khan (2000) asserts that the sustainability of the project is a significant test in many creating nations. Huge quantities of activities actualized at huge expenses regularly will in general experience challenges with manageability. This implies enormous consumptions are brought about in executing these projects while networks are denied the advantages that may come if these activities were to be sustainable.

Internationally, assets for social welfare administrations are shrinking. Population pressures, evolving needs, monetary challenges, and requests for more prominent viability are generally influencing the course of social welfare

(Bens, 1994). The use of nonprofessionals through resident association instruments to address social issues has gotten progressively ordinary (Wasilwa, 2017 referred to Kaufman and Poulin, 1996). Besides, worry with the issue of project sustainability likewise originates from the mounting pressures from the residential voting public to definitely decrease or perhaps end remote guide programs together (Asongu& Nwuchwu, 2017). These weights have made governments, giver associations and advancement laborers begin to consider the viability and the estimation of help being conveyed to Third World nations over the previous decades. Contributor associations and improvement laborers are worried that the guide being conveyed appears to give barely any positive effects on the beneficiary nations. Much of the time, the advantages of improvement tasks or projects likewise appear to end of government withdrawal or outside help from the activities or projects.

Project sustainability, in this manner, involves three segments including the network, project results, and external help (Luvenga et al, 2015). A project is attainable if the people from the system/beneficiaries are capable of solitude without the assistance of outside progression accomplices. The program recipients should keep creating results for their advantage for whatever length of time that their concern despite everything exists (Luvenga et al., 2015). Significant improvement associations including multilateral offices like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have landed at a close to an agreement that undertakings can't be maintainable and dependable except if the community's participation is made integral to the arranging and the executives of tasks, (Kumar, 2002).

As indicated by Monday, Adadu and Usman (2019), most project failure starts from attempts to constrain standard top-down projects and exercises on various neighborhood genuine components where they don't fit or address the issues of the close by people. The top-down technique acknowledged that people were exorbitantly unmindful and possibly rough to effectively see and pick what was satisfactory and fitting for them and in like manner were not expected to set up their own improvement needs, rank them and recognize the most felt need (Mulwa, 2008). Due to the top-down technique that had been employed by most governments and advancement organizations in creating nations for the greater part of the tasks they had started for its networks, manageability as a key segment for guaranteeing that networks claimed the program, kept enduring as long as improvement experts continued getting things done for the individuals. The top-down strategy was liable for the breakdown of most network improvement ventures, for example, dams, scaffolds, schools, and even wellbeing offices. Network interest being developed activities are intended to address the insufficiencies of the top-down way to deal with community improvement, (Mulwa, 2004).

2.1.2. Mechanisms of Public Participation and Project Sustainability

The appropriate definition of the concept Mechanisms for the purposes of this study are the structures or networks through which the community constructively and positively engages in devolved governance. Simply these are the opportunities or the avenues provided by the development partners or the government to the citizens as an opportunity for them to give their views on any development agenda.

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 offers noticeable quality to public participation; it advances vote-based system by furnishing the rights holders with the chance to partake in basic leadership forms influencing them and their communities. For example, Article 1 of the Constitution expresses that all sovereign force is vested to the individuals of Kenya. This means the move-in administration from incorporated to decentralized, and from 'top-down' to 'bottom-up'. Among numerous changes, devolution is the most noteworthy. The space for resident state cooperation keeps on extending, the legislature and common society have increased noteworthy experience conveying participatory devices and approaches for discourse and commitment, particularly associated with service conveyance.

Devolution, therefore, gave birth to decentralized units for inclusive grassroots development. With the Constitution giving a legal ground for effective public participation, the County Government Act 2012, breathed life to the functions of counties and the spaces for Public participation. Sec, 87 of the CGA, defines the values/ principles of citizen engagement in counties which are: Well-timed sharing of any information, data as well as policy documents for analysis, inputs, formulation, and implementation by the public without any restrictions. The citizens have also been empowered to participate in the processes of the formulation and implementation of the policy documents and laws. This means there should be no policy or process gaps and the public should feel part and parcel of the whole process. The policy-makers should as well ensure there are promotion and protection of the rights and interests of the marginalized as well as the minorities including the youth, women, and PWDs. There should be legal grounds that protect them and their interests and their needs should always be taken into account. The Act also provides for the provision of a balance in the functions and responsibilities of all actors like the Non- State Actors, National Government, and the Counties, and this should provide for shared responsibilities as well as partnerships. The section appreciates as well appreciates that the two levels should provide commentary oversight as well as Authority in their function. Non-state Actors should also be in the frontline in providing oversight for accountable and transparent systems.

Sec 91 of the Act allows the establishment of avenues or modalities for citizen participation which includes: ICT Platforms for communication and information sharing, City Hall forums/ meetings, Citizen Engagement forums for budget plans inputs and validations, public procurement awards as well as public office appointments in line with the public attention. In this study, the research is interested in unveiling the sustainable mechanisms to engage all the stakeholders in development initiatives instead of relying on the theorized modalities. Bearing in mind that each county is unique with different economic, social, and physical structures, the study will try to highlight the most applicable and suitable avenues for community engagement minimizing the challenges in the processes and appreciating its uniqueness.

2.1.3. Processes of Public Participation and Project Sustainability

Rowe and Frewer (2010) propose four criteria for assessing a public participation method: Criterion of asset openness, the standard of undertaking definition, model of organized basic leadership, and basis of cost-adequacy. Asset availability and organized basic leadership is especially useful for managing the development of the participatory methodology to cultivate social learning and structure member communication and thought. The primary essential standard, asset openness, stipulates the assets that members need to settle on a choice. This incorporates (a) data assets, or the realities expected to settle on an educated choice; (b) HR, or access to specialists and others that can give required data; and (c) material assets, or articles like projectors or whiteboards to encourage understanding. These assets would all be significant for conveying supportability ideas, issues, and answers for different members.

Fung and Wright (2011) combine key standards of engaged participatory administration. They express that strategies should lead exchange past a unique talk on values and rather center on discussions about handy issues and solid issues. Individuals influenced by the issues being talked about ought to be allowed a chance to ponder answers for the issues. Healey (2013) talks about inventive urban administration as an option in contrast to the built-up schedules (and) decide bound bureaucratic methods that capture arranging forms. Under innovative administration, procedures would strengthen instructive discussions that are encouraged through exploratory practices.

Public participation can likewise improve arrangement usage by expanding the authenticity of the basic leadership process and, in this manner, diminishing clash. Different examinations have exhibited that whether people, in general, acknowledge a choice relies on whether the open see the basic leadership process as reasonable (Bulkeley and Mol 2003; Murphy 2004; Newig 2007). Drawing in the general population in basic leadership can help defeat shortfalls in the majority rules system.

Adapting to low participant sustainability education in participatory methodology would lend to a requirement for able help. Rowe et al. (2010) consider including evaluations of satisfactory and reasonable elicitation just as data introduction. The capacity of open cooperation to convey on its heap guarantees relies on how governments and common society make an interpretation of standards into training. For instance, open interest doesn't improve fair practice in the event that it is not comprehensive. In like manner, open information doesn't improve the nature of basic leadership if the correct individuals are not in the room (those with one-of-a-kind data) or decision-makers do not consider that data (Fung, 2015).

Public participation has prompted a quick expansion of open gatherings, public forums and other government activities explicitly intended to encourage resident participation in the basic leadership process (Smith 2014; Fenton and Gustafsson 2017). Notwithstanding, open info isn't constrained to formal support components. Common society and social developments apply pressure from outside the political procedure; this preparation utilizes a scope of strategies, for example, network discussions, neighborhood alliances, and petitions to impact arrangement advancement. Truth be told, almost all argumentative choices today are molded by both organized public participation and preparation.

Public participation procedures to help maintainable advancement might be powerful if it encourages consideration about genuine issues and their potential arrangements, and if it underpins social learning. Because of normal time requirements of participatory arranging forms, we center especially on data assets and introduction just as a help to empower discussions about manageability results among partners who may not be agreeable or acquainted with maintainability. In this manner, facilitators should be uniquely prepared to lead thoughts on sustainability supported by materials like visuals to help member understanding. An open interest process adjusted to members' manageability education may yield helpful discourse, look for a bargain, discover normal comprehension, and empower powerful maintainability arranged results to impact consequent strategy choices (Ndege and Brooks, 2013).

2.1.4. County Structures and Project Sustainability

As indicated by the Report of the Task Force on Devolved Government, TFDG (2011), the constitution is giving a significant change in perspective from an arrangement of extraordinary rejection and minimization to a framework that puts an accentuation on incorporation and investment of all parts of the general public in the undertakings and advantages of administration. Support improves straightforwardness of cooperation in the open space through such offices as notice board declarations of openings for work, enrollments data, social/participatory planning, opening the spending procedure to resident investment, acquisition straightforwardness and oversight advisory groups, month to month income and use reports, quarterly advancement status reports, semi-annual checking reports arranged through the Sub-County Citizen Forums, County and Sub-County Assemblies, month to month open income and use discussions, and quarterly vis-à-vis question and answer sessions with the representative and congressperson of every County. The authoritative components of every one of these instruments and stages for resident support may shift from part to area and from County to County.

The County Government Act, 2013, gives further rules to the acknowledgment of the objective of the Constitution of guaranteeing the interest of the individuals in administration. As indicated by segment 87 of the Act, Citizen investment in provincial governments will be founded on the accompanying standards: a) Timely access to data, information, reports, and other data applicable or identified with strategic plan and usage; b) Reasonable access to the way toward defining and actualizing strategies, laws, and guidelines, including the endorsement of advancement recommendations, activities and spending plans, the giving of grants and the foundation of explicit execution models; c) Protection and advancement of the premium and privileges of minorities, underestimated gatherings and networks and their entrance to important data.

The Constitution of Kenya requests straightforwardness, responsibility, support, and comprehensiveness in administration. The County Government Act, Kenya (2013) and other devolution laws command region governments to draw in residents in arranging and arrangement causing forms, to encourage open correspondence and access to data, and

to lead community training, among others. Article 196 of the Constitution further accommodates open investment in the procedures of the County Assembly (the Republic of Kenya, 2010). This improves dependable administration and responsibility to the individuals just as network-based checking and backing for straightforwardness and responsibility. Firmly identified with authority and respectability, are the national qualities and standards of administration that should control us as a nation and as people in soul and practice.

As indicated by ICJ (2013), in accordance with these standards, a few arrangements have been featured underneath as key to open investment at the province level. Right off the bat, the Constitution in Article 118 and 196 requires Parliament and district congregations separately to lead their business in an open way, and hold their sittings and those of their boards of trustees, out in the open; and encourage open investment and inclusion in the authoritative and different business of the get-together and its councils, (the Republic of Kenya, 2010). All the more critically, the Constitution restricts the two Houses from barring people in general, or any media, from any sitting except if in uncommon conditions where the speaker has established that there are legitimate explanations behind doing as such. The County Government Act additionally accommodates resident investment in various zones. Under segment 15, it gives any individual capacity to request of the region gathering to think about any issue inside its power, including sanctioning, altering or revoking any of its enactment. Furthermore, under segment 27 of the Act, it engages the electorate in a district ward to review their individual from the province gets together before the finish of the term of the part. To wrap things up, the Act determines the structure that the area government should set up to encourage citizen participation.

2.1.5. Water Projects in Kibwezi Sub-County

Many of the water projects initiated in most parts of Kenya are poorly managed and stall a few years after their implementation (Kavindu, 2018). This state of affairs may be attributed to various factors. One of the reasons why many water projects stall is the lack of community involvement in all phases of the project. Additionally, as noted by Kavindu (2018), some PMC members lack the expertise to manage the water projects competently. The case in Makueni is, however, different because the county government has put in place mechanisms of involving all the stakeholders at all phases of project management. The county has initiated a number of water projects as captured in the table below:

Project Type	Ward	Project Name	Project Status
ALGON water project	Kikumbulyu North	Kyenini	Initial Stage
Kwa Makio Dam	Kikumbulyu North		Initial Stage
Makindu Water Project	Makindu		Initial Stage
Construction of Sand Dam	Emali		Initial Stage
GPA/WIBA	All ward		Initial Stages
Kisingo Borehole	Makindu	Kisingo Borehole	Distribution Stage
Ngomano Borehole	Makindu	Ngomano Borehole	Distribution Stage

Table 1: Kibwezi West Sub-County Water Projects

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. Community Participation Theory

The theory was proposed by Windle and Chibulka (1981) but developed by David Wilcox in 1991. The theory offers a dynamic paradigm shift in practical mobilization an elaborate plan for engagement, cooperation, and authority. The most significant procedure in any advancement venture is the support of the participation of the community. Deprived of community participation it is beyond the realm of imagination to expect to figure out what are the issues, imperatives, and nearby wants for a given network. As indicated by Harvey and Reed (2007) cooperation of venture recipients are of extraordinary quintessence in that it upgrades the feeling of possession among individuals. This is significant in guaranteeing that undertakings are worked and kept up after the execution stage. Network Participation Theory accepts that when numerous members participate in decision-making and own the process, external organizations will have less impact on changing what has been agreed upon. The theory concentrates on the contribution of communities and not just the workforce from actualizing organizations. Community participation is achieved through community-oriented or joint association of task recipients and the implementing organizations (Khwaja, 2004). This study benefited from the concepts of Community Participation Theory because most of the research questions touch on the key aspects of the theory. The theory informed the study on how project beneficiary involvement leads to the sustainability of programs.

2.2.2. Arnstein's Ladder of Participation Theory

Sherry Arnstein argues that citizen participation entails the reallocation of power among all the people from the top-most to lowest. This shift enables the poor who she refers to as have- nots, in most cases excluded from development initiatives, to be deliberately included in the simultaneous action plans. The action plans could be political, social, or economic in nature and should affect the citizens directly. In her Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969), she proposes and discusses eight levels of participation. According to the Ladder of Participation, Sherry shows that the level of participation ranges from High to Low. Basically, Ladder illustrates who has the power, where important decisions are made, and when the decisions are made. Her ladder clearly illustrates the so-called 'power' and 'powerlessness' of people. She gives eight stages each with its illustration on people's engagement in decision-making. These include Manipulation, Therapy, and Informing, Consultation, Placation, Partnership, Delegated power, and Citizens Control from the top to lowest. The theory

of Ladder of Participation is crucial to the current study because it was used to evaluate how empowering citizens through participatory development assists them to own the program translating to its sustainability. The program is not just imposed on them by the powerful institutions; the citizens play an active role in all its phases

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive design that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data which helps to describe and analyze phenomenon as they appeared in the research without bias. With a focus of Kibwezi West Sub-county, which is one of the 6 sub-counties in Makueni, the targeted population was 80,805 registered voters in Kibwezi West Constituency which is a Sub-County (IEBC, 2017) with a sample size of 384 using the Fischer (1998) formula. The study also targeted 20 county administration officers who lead the implementation and in participatory development in the delivery of water projects. Well-designed questionnaires and key informant interviews were employed during data collection. The quantitative data collected was analyzed with the use of Statistical package for Social sciences. For qualitative data, several themes were discussed in detail and presented in a narrative form according to the objectives of the study. Linear regression analysis was utilized to estimate the coefficients to the linear equation and independent factors that were best foresee the value of the reliant variable.

4. Results

4.1. Mechanisms of Public Participation and Project Sustainability

The study found out that respondents who are majorly residents of Makueni County were   partially involved in the budget-making process. This indicates that the residents within the target area have some knowledge of the budget-making process and are called upon to give their views and especially during the preparation of the County Budget Estimates and other county policy documents. Respondents also noted that they are involved in the legislation process by county assembly. They acknowledged that they are allowed to sit in the County Assembly chambers and listen to Assembly proceedings on issues that affect water and other projects provisions in the region. It was interesting to realize that respondents admitted that they are sometimes involved in the vetting of public officers whereby the are allowed to vet the local officers before they are employed especially officers who come from the same locality. Participants acknowledged their involvement in the formulation of county policies especially at the approval and implementation stages. The largest sample population agreed that they are sometimes involved in planning, implementation, and monitoring of county development projects. From the study, it is clear that the county has various mechanisms and employs them differently to ensure the public is involved in making critical decisions both at the assembly and at the executive level. The community members also understand these mechanisms but the levels of involvement and participation vary from process to region. This was confirmed by one of the Makueni county leaders engaged as a key informant that

'The mechanisms used to enhance the sustainability of water projects in the county involve improving relationships and trust between decision-makers and the public, and among different stakeholders themselves. In Makueni County, there is collaboration between stakeholders and community to manage difficult decisions, and resolve disputes towards sustainable development'

4.2. Processes of Public Participation and Project Sustainability

In relation to the processes employed by the county on public participation, 29.4% of the respondents agreed that the county government provides adequate and timely information on public participation while the majority 67.6% disagreed on the same. In relation to public consultations on key county policy documents, the study found out that 30% of the sample population was happy that the county consults them and gives feedback on public participation while an overwhelming 64.3% were dissatisfied and unhappy with the way the county participation with the process. From the study therefore, majority of the respondents agreed that they are invited to participate in the public participation forums, but the county doesn't provide adequate information for the planned discussions during the forums. One of the discussions portrayed that some local residents receive documents of discussions during the public participation forums whereby the documents are too detailed and most of the time written in English and this becomes a challenge for them to read, internalize, extract key view points and participate fully and give their views. A different variable of study during the research was weather the Makueni county residents are involved in the budget making process. The study found out that partially the respondents were involved throughout the whole cycle of budget making process while 77.5 % disagreed that they are involved in the entire budget making cycle by both the assembly and executive. From the discussions, those who disagreed argued that their proposals are rarely included in the final budgetary documents and this, therefore, invalidates their participation. Any public participation in project development requires good and effective communication of detailed information. The County should think about how to create sustainable and reliable communication with the stakeholders and durable locations/ avenues for maintaining and sharing information during county planning processes in order to capture and adopt community views to planning documents. This gives the community the confidence that their proposals based on their needs are actualized during the implementation stage. In the building community trust (Bos and Brown, 2015), reported a cultural change of behaviors usually bridged the gap in community participation. Majone (2005) reported that the existence of a political community was important in enhancing credibility in policy management.

Separately, the study realized that only 13.7% of the study population are fully empowered to take part in the county decision making processes on issues concerning the projects the county intents to implement while 70.9 of the population felt that they lacked the capacity to fully give their views in what is required during the participation forums. From the discussions, the study realized that the participants attended these forums as a call by their government and majority attended the forums and left without a word. From an enquiry which was not part of the intended questions was that, they respected the invites but they were not sure of what to contribute in the forums so they preferred to keep quiet. These findings are similar to those by Kumar (2002) who reported that it is wise to begin consulting with the community right from the start. This helps to bring trust, understanding, and support for the group. If the project proceeds too far before the community is informed there may be problems with rumors and the spreading of misinformation. To build community support for any project there is a need to ensure that the community is well informed and ideally, part of the initial planning for the project. Inviting the public to express their views and concerns about the project can help to enhance community support and ultimately the success of the project. The community participation process must communicate to participants how their input affected the final decision by the government. Feedback is an essential exercise in this regard. With the county Government of Makueni having a well-structured system of public participation, it's clear that there are teething problems of information sharing to the stakeholders and that the community is still not the final decision maker on their priority needs in line with county plans. The county therefore should create conducive and practical platforms that would enable communities to receive relevant and clear information and provide an opportunity to air their views and provide feedback. The community participation process provides participants with the information they need in order to participate in a meaningful approach. This was confirmed by one male county administration officer who had this to say:

'The participation process must be driven by a shared purpose, with the nature and scope of the participation task clearly defined. This includes ensuring that the process is transparent so that the public can see what is going on and how decisions are being made.'

On the other hand, one county leader reported that:

'Processes such as broad public participation in decision-making is a fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development of projects and should not be gender bias. Adequate representation of implicated interests and openness to public scrutiny: Participation must be sufficiently broad to reflect a cross-section of concerned perspectives on the particular issue; and the results of the process should be open to inspection by all interested parties.'

4.3. County Structures and Project Sustainability

The study looked at the parameters of Makueni county structures of Public Participation and it was realised that at least 23.6 % of the population agreed that they are aware of the proposed public participation structures. The same population agreed that these structures are clear and well understood by the local people. A large number of the population of 63.5% disagreed to the variance. Ideally, no effective participation process can be designed without first learning about and developing some level of relationship with the stakeholders that will be engaged. As a rule of thumb, it is a good idea to try to meet the participation needs and desires of key stakeholders. In addition, the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that county government structures are inclusive and no gender biases during public participation. The research found out that the county has established different structures of public participation which are key avenues for project sustainability such as village level, ward level, sub-country level, and county level to enhance project outcomes through information, consultation, involvement, and collaboration. The County Government of Makueni scores positively on the second level of participation i.e. ward level in terms of public participation. Moreover, 29.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that county structures have clear roles in relation public participation of the locals, while 74.5% disagreed to the variable

Concerning resources, 27.6 of the respondents agreed that county structures have enough resources to carry out effective public participation at all levels while 68.8   felt that the three were no or limited resources to conduct public participation forums. From the study, community members disagreed that there enough resources to facilitate public participation since the majority expect to be facilitated to participate in the forums adequately with transport, meals, and the documents required which rarely happens. The County Government Act provides for the allocation of 2% of the total County Annual Budgets to facilitate Public Participation. From the County Government perspective, the budget is not enough to facilitate all public participation forums that require community views. From the county leaders, there is the continued emphasis that participation should be free and voluntary by the community members since the development projects are bound to benefit them but the uptake of these views is very slow and gradual. The complaints from the community members are that they expect to be paid to take part in the participation forums. The findings collaborate with findings from a study by Kinyondi (2008) that community participation utilizes individuals in the community for decision making. This employs the skills and talents of citizens to meet the collective goals of community participation. In every project, there is a need to identify the target and facilitate their participation. This was confirmed by one of the interviewed officers who reported that:

'Knowing the community, who are to be the beneficiaries of any development initiative, is critical to building support. Successful community-building efforts are more likely to occur when the process includes taking careful steps to measure and analyses the needs and problems of the community (systematic gathering of information and analysis of community issues).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

Community participation in projects is a key instrument in creating self-reliant and empowered communities, with stimulating and clear mechanisms, processes, and structures for collective action and decision- making. The study established that the County Government of Makueni used forums such as village forums, ward forums, and sub-county forums but community members were not proactively engaged with the county public participation platforms such as budget-making process, legislation process by the county assembly, vetting of public officers, and formulation of county policies among others. The study also established that community members are partially aware of the processes used by the county government to facilitate public participation processes. It is also clear from the study that there is no adequate information for citizen participation in all county plans and processes, there is also inadequate feedback on views regarding project planning and implementation, and limited participation in final decision-making on issues concerning the county government. Moreover, the study established from the community perspective that county structures are not clear and did not have clear roles in relation to public participation of the locals unlike from the perspective of the County Leaders where they understand the roles from the Makueni County Public Participation Framework. In conclusion, we can say that the county has a good framework for public participation but still struggling in its implementation. There is limited decentralization from the county level to the lower units.

5.2. Recommendations

The study recommends that;
- The county government of Makueni should put more emphasis on the village and ward forums for public participation since they are more accessible by the locals. Since the constitution proposes various mechanisms for public participation, the county should ensure all are well understood and that community members can actively take part in any of those.
- The county should also ensure adequate, timely, and clear information which the locals can understand the mechanisms and processes of public participation is shared with the locals for them to participate actively and voluntarily. Timely feedback should also be given to the locals concerning their proposals to avoid suspicion and complaints.
- The County Government should additionally ensure that their County Public participation structures are well understood by the locals at all levels for effective participation and lastly,
- Makueni County Public Participation Framework should be enacted into a law for tracking and monitoring.

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