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Strategies for improving public participation for sustainable development in selected counties in Kenya

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Abstract

Public participation in Kenya has been passive, cosmetic and taken for granted. The government has been practicing top-down, sometimes purposeful or tokenistic bottom-up approach to public participation. This led people to believe that there was active public participation but in reality it has been passive or none at all. The study aims to explore strategies of improving public participation in the counties in Kenya. The study was undertaken in the following counties, namely: Kericho, Bomet and Narok. This study was conducted through analytical survey approach and a sample size of 384 was determined from a target 1,051,077 persons, using simple sampling technique. Data collection instruments used was: Questionnaires were used to collect data that was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the results presented in tables. From the findings the study concludes and recommends that, there is need to change the mindset of the general public and the leadership. This will improve their attitudes towards public participation, increase their willingness to participate and have good political goodwill. This can be achieved through civic education, continuous dissemination of information, sound policies to guide public participation and engaging the right stakeholders.

Keywords: Public Participation, Sustainable Development, County Governments, Devolution, Devolved Governance

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1. Introduction

Public participation is a political principle, which has been recognized as a right – the right to public participation. Article 10(2) of the Constitution of Kenya, holds that the national values and principles of good governance include (a) patriotism, national unity, sharing and devolution of power, rule of law, democracy and participation of the people (d) sustainable development (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

White (1992) defines public participation as an active involvement of the local population in decision-making concerning development projects and their implementation. In development planning and implementation, people as citizens and consumers of the services are the most valuable resource, since they know and understand their needs and how such needs can be met. This definition is supported by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) which further highlights that in public participation, people themselves are afforded an opportunity to improve their conditions of living, with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative (Davids et al., 2005). Public participation is a useful tool to promote the involvement of the public in governance. The World Bank Development Report 1999/2000 states that governments at all levels have begun to understand the importance of inclusive, participatory and consensual models of public participation (World Bank, 2000). As a result, various strategies are applied to consult and engage with members of the public in progressive nations across the globe.

Participation has captured the imagination and hopes of politicians, policy makers and practitioners alike (Jochum et al., 2005; Cornwall, 2008). Across the globe –from Brazil to India to the United States - we have witnessed 'an explosion' of interest in participation over the past decade; this is particularly true for public participation (Dunn, 2007). In keeping with efforts to promote good governance, many African countries have also identified public participation as a key principle to promote and uphold good governance. For example, in adopting the African charter on democracy, elections and governance in 2007, the 53 member states of the African Union committed themselves to, amongst others; promote the conditions that are necessary to foster citizen participation and transparency (African Union, 2007).

In Brazil, the most common stated example of effective public participation is the municipal participatory budgeting initiative (Sprague, 2000). This participatory process is one of the creative programmes developed by the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil. The aim of the participatory budgeting process is to address severe disparities in the living standard of the city residents, by bringing these residents on board during participatory processes. According to Sprague (2000) the inclusion of participants in the process of budgeting for capital improvement brings people into the realm of negotiation, compromise, and prioritization of many worthwhile and necessary projects. This type of participatory budgeting brings transparency into budgeting and educates people about the scope of possibilities. As a result of public participation, people develop a better understanding of government and its programmes. They learn and understand why certain projects cannot be conducted at a particular time, but later. In India, a common stated example of effective public participation is the community and sustainable forest management. Sustainability of forest management comes through community participation at all levels from planning, intervention and monitoring (Kotwal et al., 2008). In this regard a bottom-up approach is applied wherein communities are mobilised to participate in all forestry interventions.

In Uganda, efforts to promote public participation have taken the form of both policy frameworks and the development of implementation modalities. The government took appropriate steps to put in place supporting legislative framework to promote public participation. In this regard, the enactment of the 1993 Local Councils Statute was a way of broadening the space for citizen participation (Kakumba and Nsingo, 2008). The legislation was designed in such a way that it facilitates effective involvement of communities in articulating their needs and influencing programme planning and implementation. The main aim was to foster citizen participation in the processes of rural development. In addition, according to the United Nations Development Report (UNDP, 2006), Uganda has been able, through public participation to significantly reduce the levels of HIV/AIDS. In Ghana, public participation played a significant role in reducing corruption. In South Africa, since 1994 the government has applied several initiatives to effect public participation. These include methodologies such as *izimbizo*, Exco-meets the people, public hearings, ward committees, community development workers, Citizen Satisfaction Surveys and Citizens Forums. In addition, various structures such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) and the National Anti-Corruption Forum were established to create a platform for public participation.

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2, 2007) has identified core values of participation. The IAP2 core values are: Those who are affected by a decision or a policy have a right to be involved in the decision-making process; Public's contribution will influence the decision; Public participation ensures sustainable decisions by recognizing the needs and interests of all participants; public participation ensures and facilitates the involvement of those who may be affected by or interested in a decision; Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate; Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

The objective of the study was to explore strategies of improving public participation in the devolved system of governance for sustainable development.

2. Literature review

2.1. Devolution

Devolution is considered a form of political decentralization, involving a full transfer of responsibility, decision-making, resources and revenue generation to a local level of public authority that is autonomous and fully independent from the devolving authority. Decentralization is often linked to concepts of participation in decision-making, democracy, equality and liberty from higher authority (Dutta, 2009).

According to Ndege and Brooks (2013) the writers of Kenya's constitution were bold in their quest to devolve public governance and resources to the grassroots. Previously, the "national cake" was exclusively shared from Nairobi, with the presidency having an inordinate say in who got what. More often than not, these decisions were premised neither on national good, nor on strategic considerations. Political cronyism and corruption meant that resources were diverted to areas that were politically favoured, with the rest

lining the pockets of senior government officials and their acolytes. Devolution was thus seen as the panacea – a mechanism to inject equity in the distribution of resources. According to International Commission of Jurists (ICJ, 2013) devolution in Kenya is based on the supremacy of the Constitution, sovereignty of the people and the principle of public participation. Devolution is one of the concepts in the Constitution that has brought about a complete overhaul in Kenya's system of governance. This is because it is a new aspect in the Kenyan governance. The need for Devolution has been seen in many countries and it is informed by the need to have power sharing, checks and balances in governance and the decentralization of resources.

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 seeks to ensure effective citizen participation in all facets of governance, to which the county governments must respond. According to Report of the Task Force for Devolved Government (TFDG, 2011) the new constitution seeks to reverse the centralized non participatory governance paradigm by institutionalizing an embracing governance system and a leadership with integrity. It does this primarily by: establishing an enabling normative framework; creating relevant governance institutions; creating checks and balances on the exercise of executive power; providing for facilitative legislation; enhancing public participation in governance as a bulwark against abuse of power and tightening the process of recruitment, and retention of critical public officers. The system combines self-governance and shared governance at the local and national levels respectively. The essence of this is that at the local level the people are allowed a certain flexibility within which they can make decisions that are unique to themselves and their locality.

2.2. Public participation

The objective behind public participation is to facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision made by government. Participation is the process through which stakeholders' input and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them (Odhiambo and Taifa, 2009). Okello et al. (2008) further define it as a process whereby stakeholders influence policy formulation, alternative designs, investment choices and management decisions affecting their communities. Public participation is seen as a form of empowerment and is a vital part of democratic governance. It is part of a 'people first' or 'people centered' methods of management, which avoids centralized, hierarchical decision-making. Participation is important because practical experience on the ground shows that it establishes the necessary sense of ownership. Generally people tend to resist new ideas if these are imposed on them. Participation has greatly contributed to the sustainability of development initiatives, strengthened local capacity, given a voice to the poor and marginalized and linked development to the people's needs (Odhiambo and Taifa, 2009).

The need for power to the citizens is important because participation without power can create frustration and give participants a feeling of emptiness. The Kenyan constitution (Republic of Kenya, 2010) provides viable proposals aimed at achieving participatory governance. It is, however, critical to observe that devolution in itself will not enhance 'automatic citizen participation'. First, it will be imperative that adequate civic education and awareness is provided so that citizens understand their responsibilities in a devolved system. Scholars have cited lack of capacity of many of the actors in developing countries as the reason for

governments' resistance to participation by the poor, who generally, have limited education, low literacy levels and hence deficient understanding of the policy process (Anwar, 2007). Hence, civic education is necessary and urgent

2.3. Legal provisions on public participation

Our Constitution makes citizen participation a central part of Kenya's governance system. Participation of the people is recognized in Article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya as one of our national values and principles of governance. Further Article 174(c) provides that the object of devolution is to "enhance the participation of people in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them." Article 184 (1) (c) also requires that mechanisms for participation by residents be included in the national legislation relating to urban areas and cities governance and management (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The centrality of public participation cannot therefore be over-emphasized.

The rationale of public participation is based on the foundation that the people of Kenya have sovereign power which they have delegated to state actors at the national and county levels. The sovereignty must be respected and institutionalized in all processes of governance. The Constitution of Kenya demands transparency, accountability, participation and inclusiveness in governance. The County Government Act, 2013 and other devolution laws mandate county governments to engage citizens in planning and policy making processes, facilitate public communication and access to information, establish citizen fora and conduct civic education, among others.

The Constitution provides for the participation of the public in the exercise of the powers of the state and in making decisions through indirect and direct involvement of the people in the process of policy making (Article 232 (d)) and participation in the legislative business of the National Assembly, Senate and County Assemblies (Article 118 (1) (a) (b), 124 (1) (b), 124 (4) (c), 196 (1) (a) (b)). The point is to fortify the entailed Constitutional gains through practically consistent legislations. Article 196 of the Constitution further provides for public participation in the proceedings of the County Assembly. This will enhance responsible governance and accountability to the people as well as community-based monitoring and advocacy for transparency and accountability. Closely related to leadership and integrity, are the national values and principles of governance that should guide us as a country and as individuals in spirit and practice. These are defined in Article 10 (2) of the Constitution.

The County Government Act, 2013, provides further guidelines for the realisation of the goal of the Constitution of ensuring the participation of the people in governance. According to section 87 of the Act;

> *Citizen participation in county governments shall be based upon the following principles: a) Timely access to information, data, documents, and other information relevant or related to policy formulation and implementation; b) Reasonable access to the process of formulating and implementing policies, laws, and regulations, including the approval of development proposals, projects and budgets, the granting of permits and the establishment of specific performance standards; c) Protection and promotion of the interest and rights of minorities, marginalized groups*

and communities and their access to relevant information; d) Legal standing to interested or affected persons, organizations, and where pertinent, communities, to appeal from or, review decisions, or redress grievances, with particular emphasis on persons and traditionally marginalized communities, including women, the youth, and disadvantaged communities; e) Reasonable balance in the roles and obligations of county governments and non-state actors in decision-making processes to promote shared responsibility and partnership, and to provide complementary authority and oversight; f) Promotion of public-private partnerships, such as joint committees, technical teams, and citizen commissions, to encourage direct dialogue and concerted action on sustainable development; and, g) Recognition and promotion of the reciprocal roles of non state actors' participation and governmental facilitation and oversight.

According to International Commission of Jurists (ICJ, 2013), in line with these principles, several provisions have been highlighted below as key to public participation at the county level. Firstly, the Constitution in Article 118 and 196 requires Parliament and county assemblies respectively to conduct their business in an open manner, and hold their sittings and those of their committees, in public; and facilitate public participation and involvement in the legislative and other business of the assembly and its committees. More importantly, the Constitution prohibits both houses from excluding the public, or any media, from any sitting unless in exceptional circumstances where the speaker has determined that there are justifiable reasons for doing so. The County Government Act also provides for citizen participation in a number of areas. Under section 15, it grants any person power to petition the county assembly to consider any matter within its authority, including enacting, amending or repealing any of its legislation. Secondly, under section 27 of the Act, it empowers the electorate in a county ward to recall their member of the county assembly before the end of the term of the member. Last but not least, the Act specifies the structure that the county government should put in place to facilitate citizen participation. These include:

a) Information communication technology based platforms;
b) Town hall meetings;
c) Budget preparation and validation fora;
d) Notice boards: announcing jobs, appointments, procurement, awards and other important announcements of public interest;
e) Development project sites;
f) Avenues for the participation of peoples' representatives including but not limited to members of the National Assembly and Senate; and,
g) Establishment of citizen fora at county and decentralized units.

2.4. Strategies of improving public participation

Public participation in the development process is not only a constitutional and legal requirement, but a necessity in ensuring that development programmes have a positive political, social, economic and environmental impact on citizens. Development practice as a discipline is unlikely to work if the citizens are

not actively engaged in all aspects of the process (Aregbeshola, 2009). It is imperative to invest in a comprehensive civic education programme to empower citizens to internalize and understand their roles, rights and responsibilities in a devolved system of government.

A fair assumption is that most citizens do not know or understand their rights and responsibilities or what role they need to play, and more importantly, they don't know how to engage constructively with the County government and other non-states parties involved in the development process. The development agency school of thought expresses that participation is all about building partnerships and ownership from the bottom up and primarily making policies more sensitive to the poor (World Bank, 2000). The poor are generally the less educated and less organized than other more powerful stakeholders. Although they are more difficult to reach, their opposition can compound the problem of getting development projects accomplished.

The followings are the possible processes that may be undertaken to improve public participation in development process:

- *Provision of incentives:* in order to encourage participation, the public needs to be given some incentives; the absence of which may discourage participation.
- *Access to adequate information:* an ignorant person cannot make a well informed decision about a project; whereas a fully informed person will insist on better delivery from the decision-makers; this insistence will force the authority to settle for a more rational, equitable and sustainable decisions (UN Millennium Project, 2005). The information should be understandable to the participants. The information should be sufficient and accurate, with less technical jargons.
- *Broad-based participation:* public participation must be broad, by encompassing different stakeholders: including the disadvantaged and minority (Palerm and Aceves, 2004). There is a growing consensus that timely and broad-based participation are essential tools for effective development planning and resource management.
- *Promote dialogue:* public participation must be a two-way exchange of information, where dialogue is initiated in order to reach a consensus (if possible) between the project proponents and the participants (Palerm and Aceves, 2004).
- *Empowerment:* public participation should be directed to equip the participants with the necessary skills, knowledge, and values needed for them to change their own situations.
- *Access to justice:* there should be opportunity for the people to change the focus of the decision-makers, as well as the opportunity to seek legal redress (Palerm and Aceves, 2004).
- *Social learning:* participation should be directed towards mutual learning, where the participants will be able to understand other people claims (Lane and McDonald, 2005).

3. Methodology

This study was conducted through analytical survey approach. In analytical research, the researcher has to use facts or information already available, and analyze these to make a critical evaluation of the material. The

study was carried out in the three counties located in the South Rift, Kenya; these are Kericho County, Bomet County and Narok County. They are located in the southern part of the former Rift Valley Province of Kenya. In this research, quantitative data was obtained through closed-ended questionnaires. The target population for this study was 1,051,077; derived from Kenya Population and Housing Census of 2009 of adults who are 18 years old and above residents of the three counties. This study employed proportionate stratified random sampling (has 3 counties as 3 strata, out of which samples are drawn in proportionate to the population size of each county) for members of the public who responded to questionnaire. Simple random sampling is the basic sampling technique where we select a group of subjects (a sample) for study from a larger group (a population). Each individual is chosen entirely by chance and each member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. Every possible sample of a given size has the same chance of selection. The respondents to questionnaires were the residents of the three counties who were 18 years and above.

The sample size was determined by the formula suggested by Fisher et al. (1983) in Mugenda and Mugend (2003) for estimating sample sizes in social surveys as shown below;

$$\mathrm{n} = \frac{Z^2 \mathrm{pq}}{d^2}$$

n - The desired sample size (when the population is more than 10, 000).

Z – Standard normal deviation at the required confidence level (1.96 at 95% confidence level)

p – Proportion in the target population estimated to have the characteristics (assume 50% if unknown) = 0.5

$$\mathrm{q} = 1 - \mathrm{p} = 0.5$$

d – Level of statistical significance (tolerable error = 5% = 0.05).

$$\mathrm{n} = \frac{Z^2 \mathrm{pq}}{d^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \mathrm{x}\ 0.5\ \mathrm{x}\ 0.5}{(0.05)^2} = 384$$

The total population of persons who are 18 years and above in the three counties are 1,051, 077 (KPHC, 2009); this are more than 10,000, therefore according to Fisher et al. (1983) in Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) the sample size will be 384. A sample size of 128 was picked from Kericho County, 121 from Bomet County and 135 from Narok County for purposes of answering questionnaires.

Questionnaires and document analysis were used as the main tools for collecting data. The research collected both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained by administering questionnaires while the secondary information was collected through document analysis which was review of the relevant literature. The quantitative data was obtained through closed-ended questionnaires which were administered to members of the public who are adults and residents of the three counties. Data analysis for this study was done using the SPSS. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and presented in tables, as per the objective, data was analyzed in terms of counts/frequencies, percentages and descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation).

4. Data analysis, findings and discussions

The objective of this study was to explore strategies of improving public participation for sustainable development in the devolved system of governance. To achieve this objective, the respondents were asked to respond to several statements intended to describe strategies of improving public participation.

4.1. Demographic characteristics

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the responded with the aim of establishing the general background of respondents that participated in the study. Various studies have shown that demographic characteristics of the respondents influence greatly their involvement in public participation. The significance of demographic characteristics aids in understanding how public participation is influenced by person's gender, level of education and age. Demographic characteristics act as intervening variables. Therefore demographic characteristics of the respondents are of great significance to this study. The demographic characteristics discussed include gender, level of education and age bracket.

4.1.1. Gender of the respondent

The researcher established the gender composition of the public that responded to the questionnaire and the findings are presented in Figure 1.

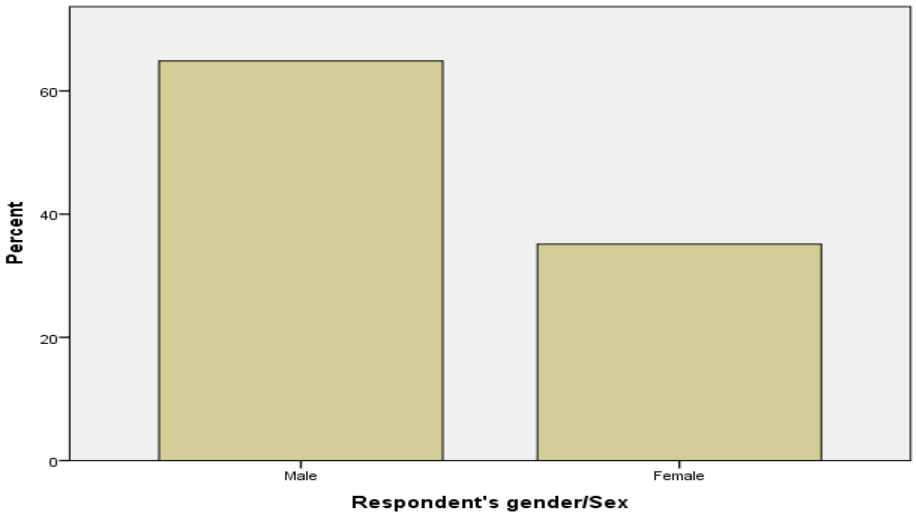

Figure 1. Gender of the respondents

As illustrated in Figure 1, majority of the respondents were male. This finding show that more male than female tend to be more active and participate more in public participation activities; male tend to dominate but at least a third of the respondents were women which is in line with the constitution in terms of gender representation.

4.1.2. Level of education of the respondents

The researcher established the level of education of the public that responded to the questionnaire and the findings are presented in Figure 2.

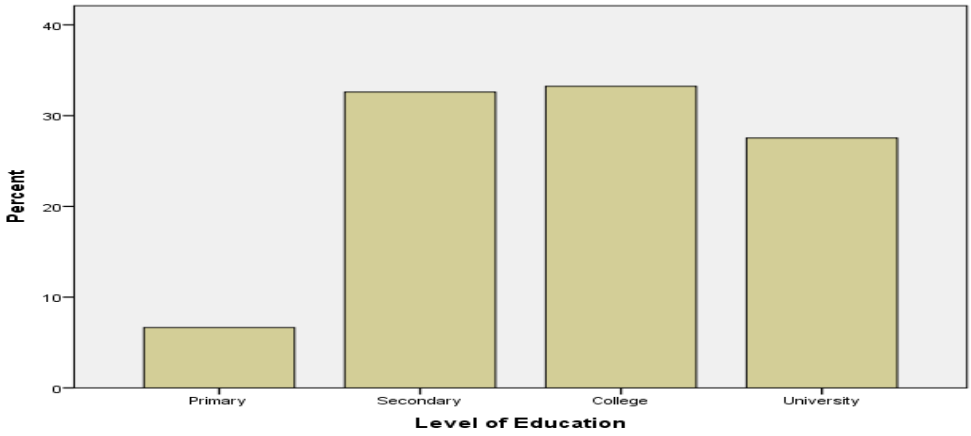

Figure 2. Education level of the respondents

As illustrated in Figure 2, respondents composed of those with primary education up to university education. Majority of the respondents had college or university education. College and university students have higher intellectual capacity to participate in development and public participation activities; due to their level of education. Therefore majority of the public are in a position to participate in all processes of public participation.

4.1.3. Age bracket of the respondents

The researcher established the age bracket of the public that responded to the questionnaire and the findings are presented in Figure 3.

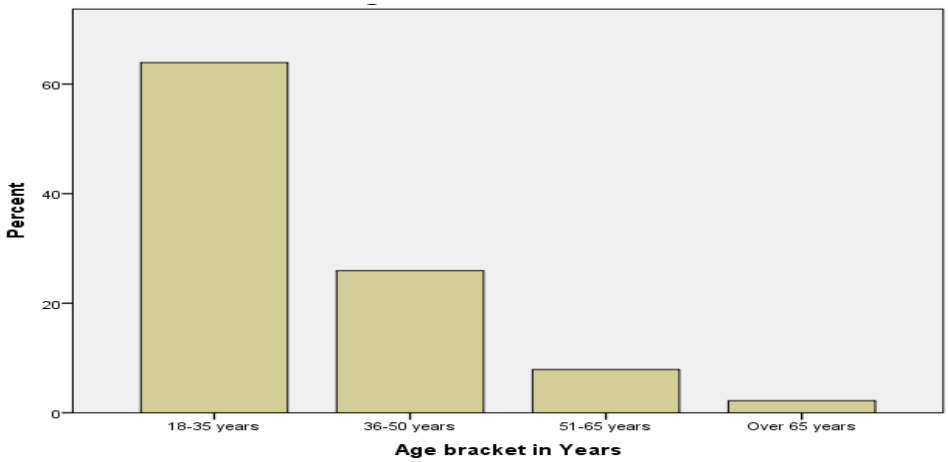

Figure 3. Age bracket of the respondents

As illustrated in Figure 3 the composition of participants varied from the youth to the senior citizens, with majority been the youth. The youth are the most energetic and active group of the adult population who tend to be involved more in development activities such as public participation. Therefore this is an opportunity that the government can utilize to ensure as many people as possible participate in development activities.

4.2. Strategies of improving public participation in the county

The respondents to the questionnaire were asked to respond to the question, "To what extent do you agree with the following statements as the strategies of improving public participation in the county for sustainable development? They were given choices to tick; Strongly Disagree- 1, Disagree- 2, Undecided- 3, Agree- 4 and Strongly Agree- 5. The findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategies of improving public participation in the county

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Open dialogue between county government and the public for quality deliberation and consensus during public participation	316	1.0	5.0	3.823	1.2085
Doing civic education and training on importance of public participation and improving citizen's capacity to participate	316	1.0	5.0	4.117	1.0369
Access to adequate information about public participation meetings and on what is to be discussed in the meeting	316	1.0	5.0	3.870	1.0745
Provision of incentives such as refreshments, meals and transport to members of the public during public participation meetings	316	1.0	5.0	3.275	1.2306
Having accessible venues & well known venues for public participation and having it on a day majority of the public can attend	316	1.0	5.0	3.570	1.2742
Use of simple and/or local language during the public participation forums that can be understood by common citizens	316	1.0	5.0	3.867	0.9959
County government and/or assembly should put in place policies and laws to guide public participation process	316	1.0	5.0	3.832	1.1043

Table 1 shows that open dialogue between county government and the public for quality deliberation and consensus during public participation is a strategy to improve public participation; has a mean of 3.823 and

standard deviation of 1.2085; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents believe that open dialogue between county governments and the public will lead quality deliberation and consensus during public participation thus improving public participation. Open dialogue is where the public is allowed to air their views, suggestions or grievances openly without intimidation, threats or undue influence from any quarters. The county also provides all information about the county in terms of developments plans, budget allocation, financial expenditures, procurement process, and employment of workers, policies and legislative agenda. This will help in making the people and the county government to understand each other and what is expected from them; quality deliberation will be achieved and consensus will be built hence people-driven development process will happen leading to sustainable development in the long run.

That carrying out civic education and training on public participation improves citizen's capacity to participate in public forums; has a mean of 4.117 and standard deviation of 1.0369; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents believe that carrying out civic education and training on public participation improves citizen's capacity to participate in public forums; this make the public to understand their constitutional rights to participate in county development activities, demand for services and call on leaders to accountability. It is through civic education and some other forms of training that majority of the public can understand and differentiate between role of the county governments and that of the national governments. The county governments can engage NGOs and civil societies to undertaken civic education and training to avoid conflict of interest and political interference.

That access to adequate information about public participation meetings and on what is to be discussed in the meeting improves public participation; has a mean of 3.870 and standard deviation of 1.0745; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents believe that public participation will improve greatly if there will be adequate access to information about public participation meetings and on what is to be discussed in the meeting. Most residents who attend public participation forums don't have prior information on what is to be discussed and therefore are not prepared to participate effectively and make meaningful contributions. There is need to empower the public by giving the information and documents containing information on development activities and legislations that require their input in advance so that they know and understand what they are coming to do in public forums. The organizers of the meetings should avail the documents and other necessary information to the public in a place which is they can easily access such as distributing them in market places, churches, chiefs barazas, MCA offices, ward and sub-county administrators offices; apart from posting the documents in websites for those who can easily download. The public will be able to prepare their questions and contributions in advance before the actual meeting. An ignorant person cannot make a well informed decision about a project; whereas a fully informed person will insist on better delivery from the decision-makers; this insistence will force the authority to settle for a more rational, equitable and sustainable decisions (UN Millennium Project, 2005).

That provision of incentives such as refreshments, meals and transport to members of the public during public participation meetings improves public participation: has a mean of 3.275 and standard deviation of

1.2306; which means majority of the respondents are undecided or indifferent with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents are not sure if the provision of incentives such as refreshments, meals and transport to members of the public during public participation meetings improves public participation and the number of participants will also increase. Studies have shown that, not many people are willing to leave their work to attend a meeting the whole day without some kind of compensation. Apart from giving the participants incentives and other necessities like writing materials, there is need to recognize individuals and organized groups that always attend such forums. There is also need for the organizers of the meetings to start the meetings on time and to end on time; this will motivate people to attend knowing that they will spend the shortest time possible as per the program, otherwise holding people for many hours will discourage them from attending future meetings. In order to encourage participation, the public needs to be given some incentives; the absence of which may discourage participation.

That having accessible venues and well known venues for public participation and having it on a day majority of the public can attend improves public participation; has a mean of 3.570 and standard deviation of 1.2742; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents believe that hosting public participation forums in accessible venues which are well known and having it on a day majority of the public can attend improves public participation. This has also contributed to the low attendance of public participation forums because most county governments and county assemblies hold their public participation forums in places that sometimes are not well known and sometimes they keep on changing venues leaving the public not knowing where to go. The county government should organize the forums in such a way that most citizens will attend; these forums should happen during the weekends or market days where people are free to attend. There is need designate many places where public participation forums can be hosted and these venues should be located at the ward level if not village level; this will ensure majority of the public attend.

That use of simple and/or local language during the public participation forums that can be understood by common citizens improves public participation; has a mean of 3.867 and standard deviation of 0.9959; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents concur that use of simple and/or local language that can be understood by common citizens during the public participation forums improves public participation. The public participation documents should be translated to local language, Kiswahili or simple English; avoiding technical jargons and vocabularies that will put off the common citizens; it can also be translated orally during presentation; therefore translators should be employed by county governments for purposes of public participation. This will ensure the message is understood by citizens from all walk of lives and everybody will be in a position to make contribution regardless of their background without language barrier or any other form of discrimination.

That county government and/or assembly should put in place policies and laws to guide public participation process to improve public participation; has a mean of 3.832 and standard deviation of 1.043; which means majority of the respondents agrees with the statement and their responses are not so dispersed from the mean. Majority of the respondents believe that public participation will improve if county

government and/or assembly will put in place policies and laws to guide the process. Most counties don't have policies, laws or guidelines to guide public participation process. Most of them depend on guidelines and policies that were formulated by the national government under the ministry of planning and devolution. There is need for each county to develop their own policies and regulations which is tailored to meet their unique needs of their residents.

5. Conclusion

Majority of the public are in a better position to participate in public participation because of their level of education which is above secondary education and majority of them are youthful hence there are energetic and active; therefore they can participate more in development activities. The study also concludes that, there is need to involve more women in public participation because more men tend to be involved than women yet some development projects affects women more than men.

The study also conclude that for public participation to improve in the devolved system of governance the following strategies should be implemented or put in place: open dialogue between county government and the public for quality deliberation and consensus; carrying out civic education and training to improve public capacity to participate effectively and efficiently; access to adequate information; provision of incentives such as refreshments, meals and transport to members of the public during public participation meetings; accessible venues and holding meetings on a day majority of the public can attend; use of simple and/or local language; and putting in place policies and laws to guide public participation process. The study also concludes that there should be continuous communication and dissemination of information on what is going on in the county; engagement the right stakeholders especially the opinion leaders and experts; and good timing of meetings so has to have key stakeholders attending.

6. Recommendations

There is need to empower the public by giving the information and documents containing information on development activities and legislations that require their input in advance so that they know and understand what they are coming to do in public forums. There should be continuous communication and dissemination of information on what is going on in the county, engage the right stakeholders especially the opinion leaders and experts, have good timing of public participation meetings so has to have key stakeholders attending, formulate/have civic education bill/laws and assembly to be in touch with the public by use of media and public barazas. There is need for each county to develop their own policies and regulations which is tailored to meet their unique needs of their residents.

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