

Influence of the Level of Community Awareness Public Participation in Budget Formulation Process in Kenya

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Abstract: This study therefore, sought to establish the influence of the level of community awareness public participation in budget formulation process in Kenya. The sample size consisted of 194 participants. This sample was drawn from a population of 377 participants who took part in past (2015/2016) Turkana County budget formulation process. Ten participants from each ward of the 30 wards in the county and 30 ward administrators, 6 sub-county administrators and 41 county executives and assembly members in charge of finance and budgeting committee. The participants were drawn from 30 wards of the six constituencies namely Turkana North, Turkana West, Turkana Central, Loima, Turkana South and Turkana East constituencies. The sample was selected using purposive and stratified random sampling. Data collection was done using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data for frequencies and percentages distribution tables and mean. Data analysis was performed using inferential statistics mainly correlation and linear regression. The results revealed that the hypothesized variables had a statistically significant effect on the formulation of the budget process in Turkana County. The study recommends the extension of similar studies in other counties in the Country.

Keywords: Community Awareness, Public Participation, Budget Formulation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study is set to examine the constitutional and legislative provisions on public participation, frameworks put in place by Turkana county government that facilitate participation in governance through citizen and civil society involvement in the budget process. Participatory budgeting is a process of democratic policy-making in which the government invites citizen inputs during the budget process and allows their influence in budget allocations. Participatory budgeting has drawn significant attention from public administration practitioners and scholars in recent years. According to the World watch Institute (2007), about 1200 municipalities around the world had adopted participatory budgets by 2007. Based on a survey of U.S. Counties with populations greater than 50,000 in late 1999 and early 2000, Wang (2001) found that 46.2% of the respondents reported that their Counties involved citizens or citizen activists in the budgeting function. In a more recent 2004 survey, Yang and Callahan (2005) found the adoption rate increased to 66% for counties/municipalities with populations from 25,000 to 49,999 and from 250,000 to 499,999. Ebdon and Franklin (2006) studied factors that affect the adoption of citizen budgets and proposed an impact model of citizen participation in budgeting (Ebdon, 2000; Franklin & Ebdon, 2005). In the last two decades some Latin American countries have implemented participatory budgeting as a way of incorporating citizens' perspectives into budget making in order to increase citizens' right to participate and enhance transparency. Some of these countries include Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. By the year 2007, 2,500 local governments in these countries were implementing participatory budgeting with great success (ELLA 2012).

In South Africa from March 2008, local municipalities throughout South Africa adopted their own budgets. The Local Government Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA, Act 56 of 2003) puts at the centre of this process the voice of the people. The MFMA calls for active participation and input from the Citizen in the budgeting process as well as the

alignment of the budget to the IDP. In order to ensure Citizen participation in local governance, government has over time put in place various pieces of legislation and policies. Citizen participation is a principle that has been given prominence in the CoK 2010. Participation should imbue all public affairs and be promoted by both Non-State Actors and the State acting in public interest. The Constitution sets key requirements for the legislature at both levels of government to provide frameworks for Citizen Participation in governance processes. This emphasis for citizen participation underscores the fact that the election of representatives does not negate the need for people to continuously be involved in governance processes. Citizen's opportunity to take part in a political process is such a fundamental tenet of any democratic society (Aulich 2009). Democratic theory suggests that public participation is undertaken to achieve different purposes and underlying goals. Citizen participation requires that people be at the centre of decision-making processes. Budgeting is a fundamental activity of any government world over. Through the process, the government is able to translate the use of physical resources to meet national priorities and fulfill their promise to the electorate. Citizens on their part expect the process of budgeting to be fair, transparent, and equitable (OECD 2007).

According to Moseti (2010), participation serves as an instrument for closing the gap between local government, civil society, private sector and the general community by developing a common understanding about local situation, priorities and programmes. Therefore, the aim of Citizen Participation would be to promote shared understanding, transparency and accountability in governance and create ownership of development decisions, programmes and project. Tshabalala & Lombard, (2009) further argues that this process allows marginalized individuals to have voices in the implementation development initiatives. It enables for full involvement of ordinary members of the community in decision making, planning, designing, organizing and executing development initiative that affect them. On the other hand OECD, (2001) asserts that Public participation is part of "people centered" or "human centric" principles, which have emerged in Western culture over the last thirty years, and has had some bearings of education, business, public policy and international relief and development programs. Citizen participation is advanced by the humanist movements.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the fact that, the constitution of Kenya 2010 has put in place legal structures and policy frameworks to foster public participation in the budgetary process at the county level, these have not been implemented fully by most county governments. The policy and legal instruments also provide broad policy statements with very little specifics with regards to how and when public participation is supposed to take place. Economic and Social Rights Centre (2013) has documented some of the challenges that affect effective citizen participation in budgeting process. These include resistance towards the politics of participation, inadequate transparency of the budget information, lack of structured mechanism for participation, an insensitive legislation to citizen demands on the budget, absence of avenues for effective remedies and inadequate citizen capacity. Corruption incidents especially in procuring materials for new projects, lack of transparency in awarding tenders to competing firms/individuals and sometimes favoritism, lack of community participation in the full process of budgeting and lack of follow up procedures to ascertain if the proposed budget is followed to the later prove a challenge to the process of budgeting. Past studies conducted by Gregory, (2000) has indicated that there is need to be sensitive to the local socio economic and political situation and consider under what conditions participatory approaches can be used without increasing the vulnerability of the already marginalized groups. Itad, (2004) has shown that there is need to develop and rationalize a project framework which conforms to the project and community. Shepherd (1998) argues that participation is usually asserted, not demonstrated, as few development organizations have time to examine the indicators or follow the process of how participation in budgeting happens and what its effects are on participants and in the wider society. There is nothing much done on citizen's participation in budget formulation processes in devolved governments in Kenya, thus reason for this research. Due these factors, a majority of the citizen and especially the pastoralists and marginalized poor, however are still not actively and effectively participating in making budget decisions and policies that are meant to address high levels of poverty and inequality that are exhibited in many counties despite the annual allocation of billions of tax payers' money. Though Turkana county government enacted. The Turkana County Public Participation bill, 2014, the bill does not yet clearly defined and set up a definite threshold that determines how to incorporate public views in matters related to the budgeting formulation. The county has also not developed a policy to that effect. (County Government of Turkana, 2014) This has in effect limited the effectiveness of Citizen Participation in budgeting process. This study therefore, sought to establish the influence of the level of community awareness public participation in budget formulation process in Kenya.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge on the devolved funds is a significant factor in determining the citizens' participation in Budgeting Process. A study of Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) projects, Dulani (2003, p.12) concluded that the level of community participation was limited to being informed what had already been decided by other key players which implied "passive participation by consultation". A study by Okungu (2008) constituency development fund (cdf): enhancing governance and accountability from an audit perspective, in Gatanga constituency suggested that less than 40% of the population might be involved in project implementation, management, monitoring, and evaluation at any time. The majority (60%) are not. The rather low public participation or community participation in project identification and prioritization may be responsible for the low project ownership that characterizes many projects in some constituencies. Lack of proper communication or information flow may be partly responsible for the rather low knowledge levels regarding existence of CDF and other devolved funds. In addition, deliberate exclusion of some constituents due to political reasons may also be partly responsible for the rather low level of community participation. Mechanisms and structures for conflict resolution regarding CDF are virtually non-existent in most of the sampled constituencies (Okungu, 2008).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study population comprised of 377 participants of the budgeting process in the six constituencies of Turkana County during the 2015/16 budget formulation and county executive committee in charge of finance and budgeting and county assembly members concerned with finance and budgeting. The sample frame of this study consisted a list of all participants of the budgeting process in the 2015/16 financial years from the 30 wards and six constituencies of Turkana County. The study used structured questionnaires and interview guide developed by the researcher, specifically for this study to collect the required data. Descriptive analysis was used to determine the proportions and frequency of the variables. The data collected from the closed-ended items of the questionnaire were assigned numerical values (coded), checked for any errors and finally analyzed by use of a computer package, SPSS. Qualitative data was organized and analyzed through themes.

5. FINDINGS

Table 1

	Mean	Standard Deviation
You understand the concept of public participation in budget formulation	4.25	1.125
Have participated in budget formulation at your constituency level In the last two years?	4.37	1.159
The constitution provides for mechanisms for public participation in budget formulation	4.37	1.144
Given a chance, I would participate (again) in budget formulation at my constituency	4.22	1.117

The study sought to examine the respondent's level of agreement or disagreement on the various measures of Table 1, presents the relevant results which show that on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1= strongly and strongly disagree=5). The means and standard deviations were between mean score of 4.22 and 4.37 respectively for all the variables. These values showed that the respondents were in agreement with the various measurers of extension all the variables had a standard deviation of less than 2.0 which means that all the variables are normally distributed around their means. In extension all the variables had a standard deviation less than 2.0 which means that all the variables are normally distributed around their means. The regression coefficient of Citizen's awareness in Budget participation was found to be 0.322. This value shows that holding other variables in the model constant, an increase in Citizen's awareness in Budget participation by one unit causes the budget formulation process to increase by 0.322 units. The value of the coefficient was also positive. The positive effect shows that there is a positive relationship between Citizen's awareness in Budget participation and budget formulation process. The coefficient was not just positive but also statistically significant with a t-statistic value of 6.851.

A t-statistic value of 1.96 and above is normally accepted to be statistically significant for inference analysis. The standard error was found to be 0.047 and the p-value was found to be 0.000. The variable was also found to be the most influential variable on the budget formulation process in Kenya. The interpretation was that Citizen's awareness in Budget participation should be encouraged in Turkana county and other counties.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that citizen's awareness in Budget participation had influence on budget formulation process in Turkana county. The findings that citizen's awareness in Budget participation had a positive effect on budget formulation process showed that it is relevant for the public to be aware of budget formulation process. This meant that citizen's awareness in budget participation would have a positive effect on budget formulation process. This variable was also found to have a statistically significant effect on budget formulation process.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Since the citizen's awareness in Budget participation was found to be a key determinant of budget formulation process, the county government officials should keep a keen eye on ensuring that citizens' awareness in budget citizen's awareness in budget participation is considered very seriously. Since the results showed that citizen's awareness in budget participation facilitated the improvement of the budget formulation process all other counties are encouraged to ensure that the public is keen on ensuring that the public is able to participate.

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