

Public Participation Effects on Execution of Constituency Development Fund in Makueni County, Kenya

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How to cite this article: Nthiga, G. K., & Moi, E. (2021). Public participation effects on execution of constituency development fund in Makueni County, Kenya. Journal of Public Policy and Governance, 1(1), 26-35.

Abstract

Makueni County has been touted as having the best public participation framework in Kenya and possibly in Africa. The framework has been commended to the extent that the World Bank has recommended other County Governments in the Country to embrace the model in an effort to make sure adequate involvement of the public in county development agendas. However, little research has been conducted to examine the effect that utilization of the framework has on the implementation of CDF projects in the county considering its associated expenses. This study therefore sought to determine the effect of public participation on the execution of CDF projects in Makueni County, Kenya. The descriptive research design was adopted. Only a small proportion of the participants indicated that they were involved in the execution of projects in the sub-county. However, most of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the execution of public projects in the area. The involvement of the participants in execution of project was rather active where participants were given jobs during the execution of projects in the area. Concerning the satisfaction, most of the respondents believed that their influence in the development agenda of the region was either average or above average. The study concluded that public participation had a substantial effect on the execution of public projects. It was recommended that Makueni County could explore other ways of expanding the role of public participation to its electorate. This study has showed that the county has made commendable strides in involving the people in the execution of public project. Similar efforts might be needed to expand the participation in other issue such as formulation of new policies.

Keywords: *Public Participation, Execution, Constituency Development Fund*

1.0 Introduction

Public participation is a vital characteristic of good governance. Through governance decisions, implementation (or lack of) for different policies is done (Jun & Bryer, 2017). Governance is considered effective if its processes are participatory, consensus and inclusion-oriented. Results-oriented governance ought to be based on the rule of law to ensure that corruption or inefficiencies are eliminated or minimized (McLavery, 2017). It ought to

ensure that democratic virtues such as accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and equitability are prioritized. Incorporating public participation in governance ensures that the perspective of all people in the society is factored in public policy decision-making (Marais, Quayle, & Burns, 2017).

In Kenya, public participation is enshrined in the new constitution promulgated in 2010 (Muigua, 2014). A key highlight in the new constitution is the decision to transit from a centralized government to a devolved one, which implies not only taking the power from the national to county government but also to the electorate at the lower ranks of the society. The constitution requires public participation to be exercised at all levels of government before the executives and national bodies make official choices (Kimani et al., 2012). It is important to acknowledge that public participation is rather a new process in Kenya whose complexity and essence are yet to be articulated by the citizenry and perhaps leaders (Papa, 2016). For this reason, the activity has been exercised in an unstructured approach for a protracted period.

Makueni County has been exercising public participation through several approaches. First, it informs the public by providing information to help them understand emerging issues while consulting them for their feedback on alternatives or decisions (Mbevi, 2016). The county also involves the public by factoring their concerns throughout the decision-making process (Mbevi, 2016). It has also been collaborating with the public not only in developing decision alternatives but also in identifying ideal solutions. The county government has been empowering its electorate by placing final decision-making authority in their hands. Its participation framework has been designed to promote voluntary participation without any scheme to luring citizens to take part other than the sense of democracy and belonging (World Bank, 2018).

1.1 Problem Statement

Makueni County has been touted as having the best public participation framework in Kenya and possibly in Africa (World Bank, 2018). However, little research has been conducted to examine the effect that utilization of the framework has on the implementation of government projects in the county. Notably, public participation drives are expensive activities whose funding is derived from taxpayers' money, which is the case for Makueni County (Wang & Bryer, 2012). It is therefore essential to examine the effect that these activities have on the actualization of government projects in the county. Noteworthy is that the World Bank has recommended in the recent past the framework to other County Governments in the Country in an effort to make sure the public is adequately involved in county development agenda (World Bank, 2018). The embracement of the public participation framework by other counties is dependent on its success and effectiveness in project implementation in the county serving as the case study. Existing research suggests that public participation has little to no significant effect on the implementation of government projects in the county (Kasumbi, Omboto, & Nassiuma, 2017; Mutisya, 2018). This contradicts the conventional literature on the relationship between democracy and development projects (Asiedu & Lien, 2011; Baird, 2012).

Mutisya (2018) examined the impact of public participation on the development programs in the county in Ivingoni and Nzambani wards and concluded that the participation had hardly affected development programs especially in prioritization and evaluation. This was inconsistent with the current literature that champions for public participation as a component

of development. The study noted that the sampled respondents were hardly involved in public participation initiatives, suggesting that the study's outcomes were largely affected by its methodology. Kasumbi, Omboto, and Nassiuma (2017) examined the role of citizen power in the sustainability of water projects in Makueni County and noted there was no significant relationship. Notably, Mutisya focused on county-funded projects and did not involve projects funded by the national government. The inconsistency of these conclusions suggest that more research is needed to examine whether citizen participation in the county influences the implementation of government projects, which would form the basis for recommending this framework to other county governments and the larger national government. The current study furthered this research direction by examining the influence of public participation on the execution of CDF projects in Makueni County, Kenya.

1.2 Objective of the Study

To determine the effect of public participation on the execution of CDF projects in Makueni County, Kenya

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the stakeholder theory proposed by Freeman in 1994 to guide the planning of organizational affairs. The theory accentuates the idea that the consideration of all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of organizational affairs is paramount (Freeman, 1994; 2004; Freeman et al., 2010). The theory asserts that leaders ought to manage organizational activities in the interest of all shareholders. This means including all interested parties to ensure that the yields of those activities are at least felt across the board. Failure to involve all stakeholders in the management of the organizational activities could be detrimental to the overall progress of an organization (Freeman, 1994). The definition of the concept of stakeholder varies depending on context. While it may infer the employees and supplies in a corporate context, in governmental activities, stakeholders include not only the executive decision makers but also the citizenry across all the ranks of a society (Freeman, 2004; Freeman et al., 2010).

Groups and individuals who collectively form the public have a stake in good governance. This stake is exercised in either the direct use of public services or the indirect use of services according to other groups in the society (Freeman et al., 2010). The managers of public resources have an obligation of making sure that the utilization and management of those resources is conducted in the interest of the electorate (Freeman et al., 2010). County governments carry part of this responsibility in the modern-day Kenya as compared to the past where the national government was responsible for the utilization of the public resources. In the context of devolution, stakeholder involvement means including not only the perspectives of regional governments but also those of their electorates, a role that is well served by the public participation framework of Makueni. The framework empowers the public in the county to be involved in the handling and administration of affairs in the county by allowing the public to provide their opinions on matters important to the county.

The stakeholder theory provides a strong foundation for achieve progress in development by championing for the involvement of all stakeholders (Harrison & Wicks, 2013). This is vital for ensuring the satisfaction of the stakeholder and for advancing political, social, and economic goals. Critiques of the theory argue that organizational leaders hardly prioritize on

the goals of other people other than self-goals especially political goals (Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2013). However, this theory is closely associate is spirit with the concept of public participation, which makes it ideal for this study. Unclear from the theory is that it only suggests the benefits of stakeholder involvement. It does not provide a guide for examining the benefits yielded from seeking the opinion of all stakeholders in public planning. This leaves the theory open for use in different studies such as the present research.

2.2 Empirical Review

In a survey, Tesha, Mokaya, and Bakari (2015) analysed the role of stakeholder participation in government projects in Uganda. The concluded that the level of stakeholder participation in development projects was high as a result of civic education, access to information and political goodwill. A study by Ojwang and Bwisa, (2014) sought to evaluate the support of management in influencing Constituency Development Fund projects' performance. The outcomes demonstrated three pillars of implementation as objective project ownership, utilization of local resources control and evaluation. According to Farid (2019), participation is undertaking an activity in collaboration with others. Also, it includes involvement of individuals and groups in development processes in attempts of enhancing independence and improved lifestyle (Oladele, 2013).

Ketoyo (2017) examined the effect that public participation has on the actualization of government-funded projects in Nairobi County. The study assessed the manner in which the engage of all stakeholders affects the strategizing and execution of projects in the county. The study adopted a descriptive research design targeting respondents from the eight sub-counties in Nairobi. Multistage sampling was adopted to bring together 384 respondents from the sub-counties. The sample also included project managers and administrators who were selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected using document reviews and questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The study yielded that public participation did not substantially affect the implementation of government-funded projects in the county. This was attributed to such factors as inadequate communication with citizens, inadequate skills for stakeholder engagements, and nepotism. The study also cited the lack of a government policy to guide county governments in exercising public participation. This study underscores the premise that the involvement of the public through consultation can affect county government projects although the effect may vary from one region to another.

Important elements from the reviewed studies are the level of public participation, project prioritization, and the execution of public projects. The spectrum of public participation may consist of such activities as informing the public, consulting the public, involving the public, collaborating with the public, or empowering the public (Ríos, Benito, & Bastida, 2017). This includes providing the public with objective information (inform), seeking feedback on analysis and issues (consult) besides working with the public to ensure their concerns and aspirations are considered (involve). It also involves partnering with the public in project decision-making (collaboration) and placing the power for final decision-making in the hands of the public (empower) (Ríos, Benito, & Bastida, 2017). The prioritization of public project involves such activities as the selection of public projects, identification, and mobilization of resources (Marcelo, Mandri-Perrott, House, & Schwartz, 2016). Lastly, the execution of public projects is concerned with such issues as the completion, speed of implementation, project monitoring, and satisfaction among the people (Adek, 2016).

Harwin (2018) carried a study in Machakos County on stakeholder's involvement in projects decision making. The study recommended that the decision-making process should be open, the residents should be involved in various implementation steps, there should be regular meetings with the public to deliberate on the issues affecting the county projects to foster transparency and confidence building, furthermore there was need to trim the overwhelming influential powers the politicians had in development projects.

Seimuskane and Vorskava (2018) carried a study on the citizens' satisfaction on execution of local authority's projects in Switzerland. The study was descriptive in nature where a sample size of 322 respondents was involved in this study. The study revealed that citizens' participation in the local authority's programs especially at the execution stage is an important attribute in formation of the citizens' attitude towards the authority. At local authority's level, citizens' satisfaction has the very strong linkage with the trust level and active participation.

3.0 Methodology

The descriptive design was utilized in this research. The study targeted an approximate population of 60,550 people in Mukaa Sub-County. The study involved a sample of 203 citizens from the target population who were selected randomly. A questionnaire and an interview guide were used to collect primary data. Descriptive statistics were used in data analysis.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Influence of public participation on the execution of NGCDF projects

The objective of the research was to examine the effect of public participation in the execution of NGCDF projects in Mukaa Sub-county. The study explored whether the electorate had been involved in the actualization of public projects, the involvement of which largely occurs through provision of labor. Several issues along that dimension were assessed as showed in Table 1.

Table 1: Public participation in project execution

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Ever been given a job in one of the public projects	6.2%	18.0%	22.7%	44.8%	8.2%	2.91	0.957
Participated in building public projects in Mukaa	27.8%	14.4%	41.8%	16.0%	-	1.86	1.063
Respondent gets opportunity to give feedback	4.1%	20.6%	25.3%	44.8%	5.2%	3.26	0.581
Satisfied with level of public participation in execution of public projects in the sub-county	6.7%	17.0%	24.2%	44.3%	7.7%	3.29	0.754
Satisfied with execution of development projects	4.6%	20.1%	27.8%	41.8%	5.7%	2.24	0.99

On average, the respondents agreed that they had been given a job in one of the public projects, a sentiment to which 44.8% agreed or strongly agreed (8.2%) ($M=2.91$, $SD=0.957$). However, only 16% of the respondents indicated that they had taken part in building projects in the sub-county, with most of the participant expressing indifference to the sentiment ($M=1.86$; $SD=1.603$). The participants also indicated that they were receiving opportunities to provide feedback during the execution and implementation of public projects, a sentiment to which 44.8% agreed. The participants further indicated that they were satisfied with the level of involvement of the public in the execution of public projects in the sub-county. The study further explored perceptions among the electorate concerning public participation in the execution of public projects in the sub-county. That only a small proportion of the participants were taking part in execution of projects than were taking part in the prioritization is consistent with principles of democratic governance. At the heart of democracy is the need for participation in planning and execution at least by the majority of the electorate, although the framework varies with states (bbbb-Springer6). Table 2 shows result on extent of participation in project execution.

Table 2: Extent of participation in project execution

Parameter	Response	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
The influence of the respondent in development affairs in the region	Very Low	4.1%	2.23	1.013
	Below Average	22.7%		
	Average	26.8%		
	Above Average	39.2%		
	Very High	7.2%		
Invited to Participate in overseeing the building of public projects	Hardly	22.7%	1.52	1.049
	Rarely	22.2%		
	Not Sure	35.6%		
	Sometimes	19.6%		
Informed when development projects are about to start	Never	5.2%	2.24	0.99
	Seldom	19.1%		
	Sometimes	27.8%		
	Often	42.8%		
	Always	5.2%		

The respondents indicated that they had an average (26.8%) to above average (39.2%) influence on the implementation of the development agenda of their region (M=2.23, S.D=1.013). The respondents indicated that sometimes (19.6%) they had been invited to take part in overseeing the execution of public projects, although some indicated that this was hardly (22.7%) or rarely (22.2%) the case as showed in Table 2. They also indicated that they were often (42.8%) or always informed when public projects were about to start. The observations were independently confirmed by the key informants as showed in Figure 1. The key informants strongly agreed (18%) and agreed (53%) that the electorate in the sub-county was involved in the execution of public projects. The observation was inconsistent with Mutisya (2018) who noted that public participation had not influenced the implementation of public projects. This disparity could be attributed to the fact the study explored the participation at selection level as opposed to active participation in projects. This suggests that the public participation shapes the implementation of projects when the public is involved in the projects. However, the observation was inconsistent with Ketoyo (2017) who observed that the participation of the electorate in public projects in Nairobi had no substantial influence on their implementation.

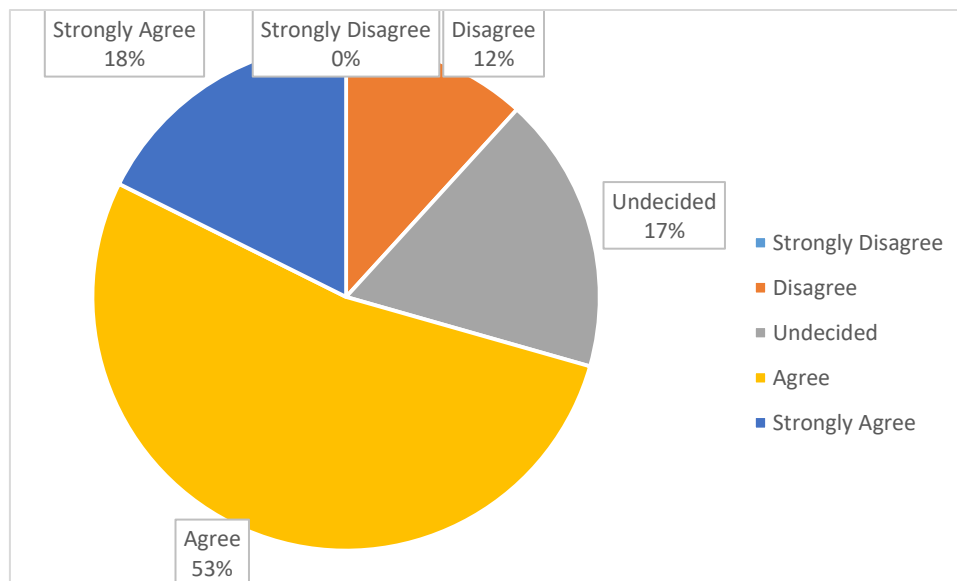


Figure 1: Key informants’ perspectives about public participation in project execution

4.2 Summary

Only a small proportion of the participants indicated that they were involved in the execution of projects in the sub-county. However, most of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the execution of public projects in the area. The involvement of the participants in execution of project was rather active where participants were given jobs during the execution of projects in the area. Concerning the satisfaction, most of the respondents believed that their influence in the development agenda of the region was either average or above average.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that public participation has had a substantial effect on the execution of public projects. Public participation has helped in ensuring that the electorate in involved in the execution of public projects in the sub-county. The electorate enables projects in the region to be completed successful all factors held constant. It also provides essential labor for actualizing projects. This involvement is likely to have been a key reason for the satisfaction the public derived from the already completed projects in the area. The participation has helped in ensuring that projects are course and that the community benefits from the jobs in the development of those projects.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommended that Makueni County could explore other ways of expanding the role of public participation to its electorate. This study has showed that the county has made commendable strides in involving the people in the execution of public project. Similar efforts might be needed to expand the participation in other issue such as formulation of new policies.

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