



**FACTORS AFFECTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN EFFECTIVE DEVOLVED GOVERNANCE IN KENYA:
A CASE OF UASIN GISHU COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the factors affecting public participation in effective devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County. The study targeted 105 residents of Uasin Gishu County who were chosen using stratified random sampling and the County Transitional Authority Coordinator. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from the residents, key informant interviews from the county government official. The data was analysed using the descriptive statistics that were generated by use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The presentation of data was in the form of tables and figures for showing comparisons, trends and clarity for easy understanding of the findings. The findings of the study showed that public participation was affected by the level of access to information by citizens; citizen's awareness levels on public participation and accountability of county governments to public needs. The study concluded that: The County government of Uasin Gishu provide information to its citizens however the channels used were not convenient due to poor timing and improper use of channels; Awareness levels among Uasin Gishu County residents was very low as majority of them thought that they had no role to play in the county government; had not received any training on public participation; and were not familiar with enactments guiding public participation in devolved governance; The Uasin Gishu County government was not accountable to the needs of its residence as most of the projects undertaken were not reflective of the needs of the county residents; majority of the residents had not been involved in public forums and those involved felt that their opinions were not taken seriously. Based on the findings, this study recommended that Uasin Gishu County government established an ICT-resource centre where citizens could be able to access government information; creates awareness through massive public awareness on public participation campaigns through radio, television and public gatherings; capacity build its residents on public participation through training; and hold public forums at ward levels to reach out to more citizens. Finally the study recommended further research in other counties on the impact of public participation in devolved governance.

Key Words: *Access to Information, Citizen Awareness, Accountability, Public Participation, Effective Governance*

INTRODUCTION

Public participation in governance is a concept that is highly embraced by most democracies in the world. It is seen as the epitome and measure of effective governance. Devolved governance is a system that is well known for enhancing effective governance through public participation. Public participation has proved to be an effective mechanism in promoting effective governance. Experience has shown that public participation strengthens democracy and governance; increases accountability; Improves process quality and results in better decisions; manages social conflicts; and enhances process legitimacy (Ministry of Devolution & Planning, 2016).

Public participation is the process through which stakeholders' input and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them (Odhiambo & Taifa, 2009). Okello and Chege (2008) on the other hand define public participation as a process whereby stakeholders influence policy formulation, alternative designs, investment choices and management decisions affecting their communities. Therefore public participation is a process through which citizens actively participate in matters that affect their lives. In public governance public participation involves techniques such as public hearings and sittings, citizen watchdog groups, social audits and citizen advisory groups (Yang & Callahan, 2005).

A devolved system of governance is one of the best mechanisms through which public participation in governance may be enhanced. Through devolution, selected functions are transferred from a central authority to the lowest feasible structure and state power of revenue collection and expenditure among others is ceded from a Central Authority to Local Authority, the state powers. Devolved governance has been closely linked to effective governance through the enhancement of public participation. Public participation in governance enhances effective governance through: Citizen Empowerment; the generation of new, diverse and innovative ideas

and actions; enhancement of citizen government relations; appropriate prioritization of projects; improved delivery of public services; and government's responsiveness (IEA, 2015).

The current system of devolution in Kenya is an example of devolved governance. The system is composed of a centralized national government and 47 county governments. Each of these Counties form the County Governments comprising of the County Assemblies with state powers of legislation and County Executives with state powers of implementing the laws and policies (Lubale, 2012). According to the *County Public Participation Guidelines (2015)*, the members of the public are supposed to participate in: the legislative process/policy and law making; planning and budgeting for county public service delivery; implementation/delivery of county public services; and performance management. Other areas are; oversight through monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning; and vetting of public officers (Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2015).

The new system of governance was adopted following the promulgation of the current constitution in Kenya in 2010. The promulgation of the current Constitution has provided a strong legal foundation for the enhancement of public participation in governance through devolved structures at county level. Article 1 of the Constitution vests sovereign power in the people of Kenya and is exercised at both the national and county levels; The Fourth Schedule of the constitution gives counties the power to ensure and coordinate the participation of communities and locations in governance at the local level and assisting communities and locations to develop the administrative capacity for the effective exercise of the functions powers and participation in the governance at the local level (Constitution of Kenya, 2010).

Other enactments that provide a framework for citizen participation in development include the County Government Act, 2012 and the Public Finance Management Act 2012. The County

Government Act places an obligation on the County Governments to create an enabling environment for citizens' involvement in running the affairs of the Counties. The Public Finance Management Act 2012 requires the county executive member for finance to issue a circular setting out guidelines to be followed in the budget process. The circular should provide details on how citizens can participate in the county budget making process; while section 207 necessitates the cabinet secretary in charge of Finance to draft regulations to provide for structures, mechanisms, processes and procedure for participation.

However the concept of devolution is not new in Kenya. Over the years, Kenya has adopted various decentralization policies that aimed at enhancing public participation by bringing the government closer to the people. Consequently the country has progressively shifted from a centralized to a decentralized form of governance. This change came about due to the shortcomings that characterized the centralized system of governance, misappropriation of public funds, inefficiency among government officials, overlooking of local communities in development projects which led to failure of such projects. As a result the government adopted decentralization policies which were first devolved to the district (District Focus for Rural Development-DFRD); then to the local authorities (Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plans-LASDAP) and finally to the Constituencies (Constituency Development Fund-CDF (Legal Resources Foundation Trust, 2009).

However these devolution systems and structures lacked a coherent or coordinating framework and were characterized by overlaps, duplication, and despite their multiplicity, low citizen involvement (Omollo, 2010).

The District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) Strategy which became operational in 1983 was a bottom-up approach to development which the planning machinery was the district headquarters. Participatory development further evolved in 1996 through the enactment of the Physical Planning Act. The Statute unlike the District Focus

for Rural Development provided for community participation in the preparation and implementation of physical and development plans. Later on the government introduced the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plans (LASDAP) and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) which formed the main vehicles of citizen participation at the local level.

The LASDAP was introduced in 2001 through a ministerial circular while the CDF was established in 2003 through the CDF Act (2004). The decision making unit for LASDAP was at the ward level with three year rolling plans focusing priority areas in health, education and infrastructure (Kibua & Oyugi, 2006). The CDF Act on the other hand targets constituency level development projects and provides for communities to participate in development through its various committees: the CDF Committee (CDFC) members who are selected by the local MP and the Project Implementation Committee(PIC) which is made of local stakeholders (Odhiambo & Taifa, 2009). However its major undoing has been the lack of clear mechanisms for the community to participate in decision making. This led to the subsequent adoption of the new system of devolution.

Uasin Gishu one of the 47 counties in Kenya that lies in the former Rift valley province. Its divided into six sub-counties: Turbo, Soy, Ainabkoi, Moiben, Kessess and Kapseret. The sub-counties are further subdivided into fifty one locations and ninety seven sub-locations. According to the 2009 Population and Housing Census, the total population of Uasin Gishu County stood at 894,179 and is projected to grow to 1,211,853 by 2017. The main economic activity in the area is Agriculture. Its main town (eldoret) is famously known as the home of champions (Uasin Gishu County Integrated Development Plan, 2013-2018).

Public participation in governance in the county takes the form of Public forums. In this case citizens receive prior invitation to the forums through print and broadcast media (UasinGishu

County Government, 2014). Since its establishment has held such forums the major one being the Finance Bill 2015-16 and the County Integrated Development Plan 2013-2018:

Statement of the problem

The Kenyan system of devolved governance provides for public participation and this is a right guaranteed by the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution, the County Governments Act 2012 and the Public Finance Management Act 2012 (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010). It is therefore expected that this system of devolution can improve participation in governance by bringing the government closer to the people (Ndubi, 2013). The resulting benefit of enhanced public participation is effective governance by guarding against abuse of office by public servants and political leaders; controlling against excessive discretion being vested in civil servants in public procedures; providing checks and balances against unnecessary political interference in service delivery (Odhiambo & Taifa, 2009).

Based on the positive expectations of public participation, it anticipated that devolved governance in Kenya would increase accountability and improve service delivery to counties. However, this has not been the case in many counties. Three years after the establishment of the county governments, service delivery in most of the counties has not improved significantly (TI, 2014); county governments are characterized by high levels of corruption and embezzlement of public funds (EACC, 2015) while citizen participation remains low and limited to merely giving opinions during public forums rather than actively participating in decision making as envisaged in the Constitution (IEA, 2015). This is contrary to what was expected of the devolved governments. Therefore there is need to find out why public participation is low among the county governments; why are citizens only involved as giving opinions rather than actively participating in governance; why has the devolved system not been able to significantly

improve service delivery and enhance accountability contrary to previous expectations. It is for this reason that this study sought to determine the factors affecting public participation in effective devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to determine the factors affecting public participation in effective devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County. The specific objectives were:

- To examine the effect of access to county information on public participation and effective devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County.
- To assess the impact of citizen awareness on public participation and effective devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County.
- To find out the influence of accountability on public participation and effective devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Participatory Democratic Theory

Participatory democratic theory emphasizes on the broad participation of citizens in the operation of political systems. It envisions the maximum participation of citizens in their self-governance strives to create opportunities for all members of a population to make meaningful contributions to decision making and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities (Hilmer, 2010)

The theory was developed in the 1960s and 1970s, as a viable alternative to liberal democracy and theorized by American political scientists, including Robert Dahl and Carole Pateman.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

In developing the participatory democratic theory, Carole Pateman drew her inspiration from the *Social Contract* of French philosopher Rousseau. In her book Carole describes Rousseau's Social

Contract as one on the excellent models for facilitating participatory democracy. Rousseau's political theory of social contract is about individual participation of each citizen in decision making. He says that participation in decision making is a way of protecting private interests and ensuring good governance and that certain economic conditions are necessary for a participatory system. He advocated for a society that is characterized by economic equality and economic independence.

Rousseau's ideal situation was one where no citizen would be rich enough to buy another and none would be poor as to be forced to sell himself. According to him every individual should own a property which forms the basis of his political equality and independence. However this does not mean absolute equality but rather the differences that exist should not lead to political inequality.

John Stuart Miller (1806-1873)

Pateman (1970) further used the works of J.S. Miller. According to Miller, good governance promotes good management of the affairs of the society by means of existing facilities, moral, intellectual and active development of its members (citizens). Miller argues that an individual is only capable of developing when he actively participates in public affairs, when an individual is solely concerned with his own private affairs and does not participate in public affairs, then the self-regarding virtues suffer as well as the capacities responsible for public action remain undeveloped. According to Miller, there is no need of having participation at the national government if the individual has not been prepared at the local level. It is at this local level that he learns to govern himself, It is at this level where not only do the issues dealt with affect the individuals day to day life but where he also stands a good chance of being elected to serve at the local body.

Participatory Democracy by Carole Pateman (1970)

In her book *Participation and Democratic theory*, Pateman (1970) argues that participatory democratic theory is built around the central assertion that individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another. That the existence of representative institution at the national level is not sufficient for democracy.

Pateman argues that for there to be maximum participation at the national level, the socialization or social training must take place at other spheres so that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities can be developed. The development of the individual takes place through the process of participation itself.

Pateman further argues that the main function of participation in participatory democratic theory is an educative one. The role participation plays in democracy is wider including a psychological role as well as enabling individuals to gain experience in practical democratic skills and procedures. Participatory democracy is self-sustaining as it develops and fosters the qualities necessary for it through the educative component. This is because the more an individual participates, the better able they become to do so. This is the common notion that practice makes perfect. Pateman adds that participation has an integrative effect and it aids in the acceptance of collective decisions.

Pateman concludes that for a democratic polity to exist and succeed, it is necessary for a participatory society to exist. This means a society where all political systems have been democratized and socialization through participation can take place in all areas. If individuals are to exercise maximum control over their lives and environment, the authority structures in these areas must be so organized that they can participate in decision making. For this to be possible, a substantive measure of economic equality is required to give the

individual the independence and security necessary for participation.

Participatory Democracy by Robert Dahl (1989)

Robert represents the face of the contemporary theory of participatory democracy. In his 1989 book: *Democracy and its Critics*, Robert argues that an ideal democratic process should satisfy five criteria's:

Equality in voting- According to Robert citizens in a democratic state should be entitled to one person one vote which shall ensure equality among all the citizens regardless of their socio-economic status, race, religion or gender. This shall help to safeguard the rights of the minority.

Effective participation-that citizens of a country must have adequate and equal opportunities to express their preferences throughout the decision making process

Enlightened understanding –Additionally for such citizens to effectively participate in the democratic process they must be enlightened otherwise known as having access to information. According to Robert, a democratic society must be a marketplace of ideas, free press, free speech and citizens must be able to understand issues.

Citizen control of the agenda- citizens should have a collective right to control the agenda

Inclusion- the government must include and extend rights to all those subject to its law, citizenship must be open to all majority rule in choosing alternatives, the will of over half the voters should be followed. At the same time, restraints on the majority must also be placed so as to avoid situations where the majority have free reign over everything they want. Minority rights, the constitution should guarantee the rights of those who do not belong to the majority basic principles such as freedom of speech and of assembly are essential minority rights and finally democracies must also involve representation of the relationship between the few leaders and the many followers. In politics, this means that the desires of the people should be replicated in

government through the choices of elected officials.

Application of the theory to the study

This study sought to determine the factors affecting public participation in effective devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County. The theory of participatory democracy provides the link between public participation and effective governance. According to the theory, for there to be effective governance, there must be maximum citizen participation in governance. Additionally the theory gives an example of an effective devolved two level government where citizens participate at the local level in governance. At this level according Pateman (1970) this is where issues affecting the citizen are discussed and it is here that the citizens capacity to participate and the national government is developed. This model is similar to that of the Kenyan system of devolved governance and therefore giving a clear understanding of public participation in devolved governance.

The theory also gives the factors that affect public participation in governance: Rousseau argues that the ideal condition for public participation is economic equality and economic independence. This is an example of a socio-economic factor that affects public participation in governance. Rousseau advocates for a situation where citizen would be rich enough to buy another and none would be poor as to be forced to sell himself. According to Rousseau every individual should own a property which forms the basis of his political equality and independence. However this does not mean absolute equality but rather the differences that exist should not lead to political inequality.

Pateman on the other hand insists on capacity building. According to Pateman it's only when a citizen has been trained through socialization that he/she can effectively participate in governance, this is done at the local level where socialization or social training takes place so that the necessary individual attitudes and psychological qualities

can be developed. The development of the individual takes place through the process of participation itself.

Miller on the other hand emphasizes the importance of education and experience as a necessary factor in public participation. According to Miller it is at this local level that an individual learns to govern himself, It is at this level where not only do the issues dealt with affect the individuals day to day life but where he also stands a good chance of being elected to serve at the local body. This gives the citizens enough experience to effectively participate in governance at the national level.

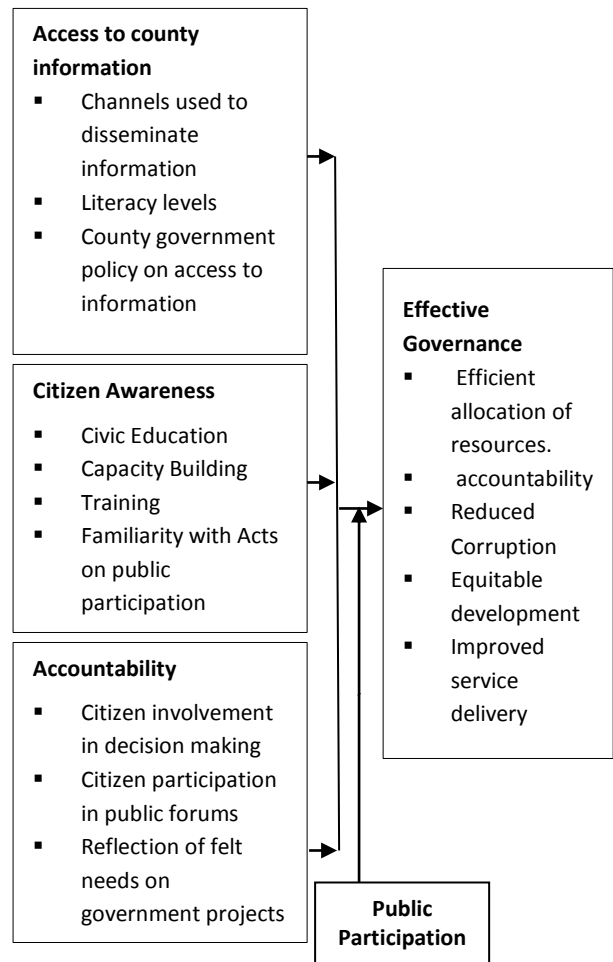
Robert on the other hand emphasizes on three important factors that are likely to affect citizen participation in governance:

Robert emphasizes on a legal framework that will guarantee the citizens their rights. According to Robert for there to be effective citizen participation, citizens in a democratic state should be entitled to one person one vote which is only possible if it legally backed;

Robert also emphasizes on the need for adequate and equal opportunities for citizens/public to express their preferences throughout the decision making process. This implies that governments at the local level ought to provide opportunities for the public to participate by developing an institutional framework to ensure this happens; Finally Robert argues that access to information as an important component in public participation. According to Robert, citizens need to be enlightened by accessing information/ideas and there should be freedom of the press, freedom of speech and citizens must be able to understand issues.

Therefore this theory guides the study by providing the researcher with the link between public participation and effective governance and also by giving the factors that affect public participation in a devolved system of governance.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables Moderating Variable Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Civic Awareness- Citizen Awareness is one of the driving forces in participation of public governance. Citizens cannot participate in governance if they are not aware of the opportunities to participate and how to participate. For citizens to actively take part in matters of public governance, they must be politically conscious and have access to information. This means that they must not only be aware of their rights and responsibilities but also know the channels through which they can exercise them (Omolo, 2010).

Access to information- Access to information is one of the ways through which citizens become aware of opportunities that are available for them to participate in governance as well as acquire the skills and knowledge on how to participate. Citizen participation is only possible when the

citizens are knowledgeable on the operations of their government. This enables them to make informed decision on issues relating to their development and participate fully in public life. Without freedom of information, state authorities or agents can selectively release good news while withholding damaging information. This allows inefficiency, ineptitude and corruption to thrive and such practices hinder effective public participation in governance (TI, 2014).

Enhanced capacity to participate- Capacity refers to a set of skills, knowledge and operational capacity that enables individuals and groups to achieve their purposes (Okello et al, 2008). For there to be effective public participation in governance citizens need more than awareness of their roles and responsibilities more importantly they need knowledge and skills on how to execute the responsibilities (Omolo, 2010). Awareness without the knowledge on how to participate may not have any impact on public participation in governance. If anything it hinders the ability of citizens to effectively participate in governance.

Literacy levels

Access to information is key to public participation in devolved governance. However this is only possible if a person is literate. Equally for citizens to actively participate in governance, they have to be literate as these discussions are technical in nature and require at least level education to actively participate and give meaningful contribution. For there to be meaningful participation in development project/governance largely depends on the educational status of the people. Therefore literacy becomes a determining factor in public participation. Illiterate people hardly understand the practical issues of governance and thus their illiteracy is a great hindrance to their participation. Illiterate people also cannot be able to articulate their demands and put forward their opinions in a systematic way. Hence, their illiteracy is leading them to non-participation (Ndubi, 2013).

Vibrant Civil Society organization- As Muriu (2013) put it, a vibrant civil society is essential in

facilitating participation in governance. According to him local governments at times need pressure from civil society organization. In addition to this civil society organizations involved in matters of governance play a key role in creating awareness of the available opportunities, building the capacity of citizens to participate and at times participate on behalf of the citizens. They were instrumental in lobbying for these opportunities. In her evaluation of decentralization funds, Omolo (2010) holds that these devolution funds do not provide for capacity building hence this role is left to civil society organizations.

The above factors therefore enhance the participation of the public in devolved governance. Public participation in governance in turn enhances effective/good public governance through the following ways:

Efficient Allocation of Resources- this means the service delivered by the government match the preferences of the citizens (Muriu, 2013). It is assessed by the extent to which citizen needs are expressed in proposals and reflected in the decisions and final service provided. According to Azfar et 2001,through participation by citizens, local governments have better knowledge of the preferences and hence can vary services to suit demands (Azfar, et al.2001).

Transparency, accountability and reduction of corruption- Accountability implies that government agents make public government revenue and expenditure and are responsible for their actions (Muriu, 2013). In this case the government makes it open to the public the resources that they have and how this resources have been spent. According to Devas and Grant (2003) citizens should have accurate and accessible information about local government: About available resources, performance, service levels, budgets, accounts and other financial indicators. Public participation ensures that the government constantly disseminates information on its actions especially on expenditure. Citizens are therefore able to monitor government activities and demand for accountability from

government officials which ensures transparency in the public governance. Transparency and accountability reduces corruption by public officials.

Equity- Equity implies the accessibility of services by all citizens taking into account geographical and demographic factors. This includes targeting the poor and marginalized who have previously been ignored. An all-inclusive citizen participatory process ensures that the voice of all citizens is heard including those who are poor and marginalized. Effectively this means even those that do not have political representation are noted by government and this ensures needs of the minority and poor are heard and taken into consideration when planning. The resulting effect is equitable development among all citizens.

Improved quality of service- With efficient allocation of funds to projects that match citizen's priority, transparency and accountability there is no doubt that service delivery to citizens is bound to improve immensely. Efficient allocation of resources means that the government is meeting the needs of the citizens and that their funds are well utilized without wastage or embezzlement and hence efficiency in service delivery. Public participation also ensures that the government is able to obtain immediate feedback from its citizens and therefore improved service delivery.

Therefore there is no doubt that public participation enhances good governance. Without citizen participation, there is bound to be improper allocation of funds which do not match with citizens needs/development priorities which leads to abandoning of projects and hence wastage of public funds, corruption is also bound to thrive in the absence of an active citizenry that constantly monitor the government and demands for accountability. The resulting impact would be poor service delivery to citizens and misuse of public funds. However active public participation guards against this.

Empirical studies on public participation in public governance

Framework for Public Participation

The findings of the study indicated most of the counties under study had put in place a mechanism/framework for public participation. Most of these are done through the sub-county and ward administrators. However in most of the counties participation is limited to merely information giving to the public and opinion giving rather than active involvement of citizens.

In Kisumu County for instance the government has put in place decentralized structures to the Ward and Sub-County levels and the appointment of the Ward and Sub - County Administrators for effective public participation. Through this structure, public meetings at the ward level are held on quarterly basis to engage the public on planning and policy development. Members of the public usually attend these meetings so as to give their views on development projects in their ward. However the county does not have a Public participation Act.

In Turkana County, public meetings are held at the ward levels on quarterly basis to allow community members to participate in county planning and budgeting processes. Turkana County has a public participation Act in place.

In Isiolo the county executives in conjunction with the county assembly hold ward based consultations on budget priorities. In this case, the public received information on the proposed projects by the county government and they were provided with opportunity to give feedback on the proposed projects and budget allocations. However this approach to public participation is not adequate as it is more of information giving rather than engaging the public in governance.

In Makueni County, the county government has developed a *Handbook on Civic Education*. The handbook covers content on civic education and public participation and acts as a guide book for the county. The County has a Public Participation Office which is headed by the Public Participation

Coordinator (PPC). This office ensures that public participation is well organised and coordinated across the various departments; and that communities are well educated and organised to effectively participate.

Awareness Creation and Information Dissemination

The study found out that most of the county governments had put in place strong communication framework to create awareness and disseminate information to the public on public participation in devolved governance. However the problem is that most the methods used such as the county websites, social media. Newspaper and magazines are not easily accessible to the rural poor. To compensate for this some of the counties use vernacular radio stations.

In Kisumu County for instance the government has created an Information Communications Technology (ICT) forum with a toll free number: 21142, which enable the public to ask questions to all County departments on basic service delivery, financial matters, and other county affairs. County departments usually conduct public barazas to enlighten the public on resources that have been allocated to various community projects too enable the public to scrutinize public expenditure during the implementation period. In addition to this, the government uses notice boards that are pinned in the Chief's offices for the ward representatives.

In Turkana, the County government occasionally informs citizen through local media about the County progress. In addition to this the government has developed two local magazines: the *Turkana Mirror* and *Turkana Times*. The magazines are published on weekly basis to educate and inform county residents County plans and activities' undertaken in specified locations and progress made.

In Isiolo the County government the Sub- County Administrators and Ward Administrators are the main dissemination channel to communities at

the lowest level. The county occasionally uses Isiolo and Baliti community radios to make announcements. In addition to this the government also has a website which some information is uploaded. There are also other measures/mechanisms for the dissemination of information to the public such notice boards, press releases and newspaper adverts.

In Makueni the County government has the *County Disclosure and Communications Policy* which requires government to provide the public with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about its policies, programmes, services and initiatives. In addition to this, any official communication is sent through the Sub- County Administrators and Ward Administrators.

Levels of Public Participation in devolved governance

The levels of public participation vary from simply sharing of information to active engagement of citizens in the implementation and management of projects and services. (MoJCA, 2012). Different researchers have measured levels of public participation in public governance using different approaches. The most used approach by previous researchers is by looking at the turn out during public participation forums. This method has been used by previous researchers while analysing levels of citizen participation in LASDAP and CDF:

A study conducted by the Institute of Economic Affairs on the level of participation on CDF measured citizen participation by looking at the citizens turn out during public. The study put the turn out level at 39% (IEA, 2006). A similar study by Oxfam in Turkana to find the reason for the lower levels of participation among the residents on the LASDAP measured the level of participation by looking at the attendance which was at 18% (Omollo, 2009). Similarly a national baseline survey by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Analysis and Research (KIPPRA, 2006) on *Decentralized Funds in Kenya* based on a sample of 7 districts established a similar trend as above.

The study showed that attendance of meetings was below 5 percent in all the sample units.

Other researchers have added another aspect to measuring the level of public participation. Oyugi and Kibua (2006) in their study on *Planning and Budgeting at the Grassroots level* using the LASDAP fund used a different approach where they looked at the active engagement of citizens during the meetings. In their study they sampled 7 Local Authorities. Their study found out that apart from low attendance, participation by the public involved giving what they called ‘wish lists’ of projects and they were not actively involved. The study also indicated that there were notable low quality discussions.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, 2002) has developed a different approach of measuring level of citizen participation by looking at how citizens are involvement during public forums. Like Oyugi and Kibua (2006), IAP2 looks at how the public is engaged during these meetings.

IAP2 has developed a model that has four levels of citizen participation:

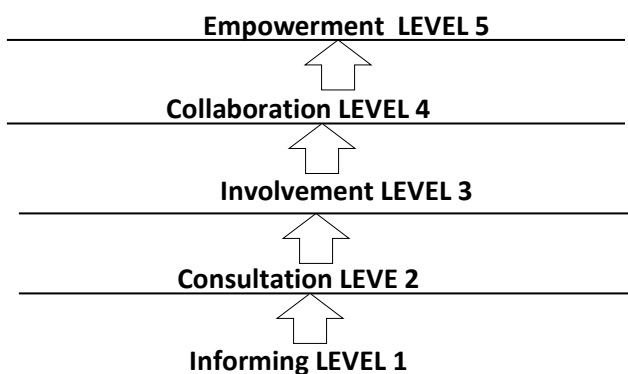


Figure 2: IAP2 model on levels of citizen participation

The above IAP2 model has five levels corresponding levels of public participation with the lowest level one and highest level five. In the first level, the mode of public participation is informing. This is the lowest level of public participation where the public is informed about the government activities but there is no involvement in public governance.

At the second level the mode of participation is Consultation which involves getting the public opinions on governance issues. This is done through meetings where the public opinion is sort and the feedback used as an input in decision making. At the third level the mode of participation is Involvement which involves directly working with the public in making decisions that affect them to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are understood and considered in decision making.

The fourth level of participation involves Collaboration where the government partners with the public in every aspect of decision making including the development of alternative solutions to problems and choosing the preferred solution. The highest and final level of participation involves Empowerment where the power of final decision making lies in the hands of the public.

Public participation in Kenya is still at level two where the public is consulted on various issues and their opinions used as inputs in decision making. However there are a few instances where the public is actively involved in decision making. This can be attributed to the lower levels of awareness and lack of capacity to participate. A *Review of status of Public Participation, and County Information Dissemination Frameworks: A Case Study of Isiolo, Kisumu, Makeni and Turkana Counties* by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA, 2015) showed that the public participation in the four counties during the Finance Bill 2015-16, Public meetings at the ward level are held on quarterly basis to engage the public on planning and policy development. The members of the public usually attend these meetings so as to give their views on development projects in their ward. However according to the study, due to lack of knowhow of budgetary issues, public participation was merely about giving opinions.

Civic awareness and public participation

Civic awareness forms one of the most important components of citizen participation. According to

Omolo (2010) in her paper on *Policy Proposals on Citizen Participation in Devolved Governance in Kenya*, citizen awareness is one of the driving forces in participating in public governance. Citizens cannot participate in governance if they are not aware of the opportunities to participate and how to participate. For citizens to actively take part in matters of public governance, they must be politically conscious and have access to information. This means that they must not only be aware of their rights and responsibilities but also know the channels through which they can exercise them (Omolo, 2010).

According to a study conducted by the Institute of Economic Affairs, civic awareness should involve two aspects; Awareness of the available opportunities to participate as well knowledge of how to participate. Knowledge of opportunities without the knowledge of how to participate may not facilitate citizen participation. Their study on the Constituency Development Fund showed that the fund is well known by 85% of Kenyans across Kenya's eight provinces however, the knowledge of regulations and specifics of CDF was very low (21%) and communities were unaware of costs of projects and disbursed amounts (IEA, 2006). This explains the low level of participation by citizens: their study showed that high level of awareness of the CDF at 96% however the level of involvement is very low at 39% (KHRC & SPAN 2010).

A study conducted by Oxfam in Turkana to find the reason for the lower levels of participation among the residents on the LASDAP showed that low level of awareness was the main reason for low participation in the project. The level of awareness in the district of the LASDAP process was at 18% and a corresponding level of participation. A majority of respondents (82%) were not aware. The low levels of awareness were due to the limited one week period within which notice is given of LASDAP meetings (Omolo, 2009).

Oyugi and Kibua (2006) in a study on *Planning and Budgeting at the Grassroots level* with a sample of

7 Local Authorities found that awareness of LASDAP was low, and participation and representation was poor. It found that most participation was at the point of identifying projects and preparation of what it called 'wish lists' of projects.

On who participates in the LASDAP process, Oyugi and Kibua found that in all the 7 Local Authorities, there was non-attendance of meetings by the local elites hence there was notable low quality of discussions. Similarly a national baseline survey by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Analysis and Research (KIPPRA, 2006) on *Decentralized Funds in Kenya* based on a sample of 7 districts established a similar trend as above. It found that only 29.8 percent were aware of LATF and participation in analysis, agenda setting, decision making and attendance of meetings was below 5 percent in all the sample units.

Capacity building and citizen participation in governance

Capacity building consists of developing knowledge, skills and operational capacity so that individuals and groups may achieve their purposes (Okello et al, 2008). For there to be effective citizen participation in public governance citizens need more than awareness of their roles and responsibilities more importantly they need knowledge and skills on how to execute the responsibilities (Omolo, 2010). Awareness without the knowhow on how to participate may not have any impact on citizen participation in public governance. If anything it hinders the ability of citizens to effectively participate in governance.

A study by the Institute of Economic affairs in 2006 shows that lack of skills and knowledge not only hinders citizen participation but eventually leads to collapse of projects. The study shows that even though the projects may be implemented, they usually lack sustainability when the projects are handed over to communities upon the exit of the donor/funder. This is because such a community lack the skills to manage the project. A case in point is the CDF structures, study findings

by the institute show inadequate knowledge of project planning, implementation and monitoring processes among communities and the various committee members (IEA, 2006). This explains the high levels of wastage and misappropriation of resources by managers of the project due to poor capacity of the committees to manage the colossal funds disbursed to them (Omolo, 2009).

Lack of skills and knowledge explains why projects always deteriorate and eventually collapse despite being successfully implemented. According to the Institute of Economic Affairs, projects such as the CDF and LASDAP may be successfully completed, they often deteriorate over time. One of the main reasons behind this is that the communities lack the capacity to sustain projects handed over to them. This is because the projects do not allocate funds to train community members on project management (IEA, 2006).

A study conducted by KHRC and SPAN, (2010) on *Harmonization of Decentralized Development in Kenya* looked at awareness and participation of citizens in the management of LATF, that is, the LASDAP process in 8 Local Authorities. The study revealed that the levels of awareness of LATF and the LASDAP process are high at a national average of 66.4 percent. However, the actual levels of participation are low especially with regard to management of services (10.6%), monitoring of services (12.7%), budgeting and planning (13.3%), and implementation (13.6%). This was due to lack of skills and knowledge of the LASDAP project.

Access to information as an integral component of citizen participation

Access to Information and citizenship competencies Information enables citizens to make more informed political choices, contribute to public initiatives, and advocate for policy improvements on issues. Adequate, timely, and appropriate information about how politics is conducted and policies determined is a necessary precursor to effective political action, especially in developing democracies where lack of access to

information has been a chronic barrier to effective citizen participation.

Access to information is the cornerstone of good governance, meaningful participation and transparency. A democracy thrives when the citizens are knowledgeable on the operations of their government. Access to information in government domains enables citizens to make informed decision on issues relating to their development and participate fully in public life. Without freedom of information, state authorities or agents can selectively release good news whilst withholding damaging information. This allows inefficiency, ineptitude and corruption to thrive and such practices hinder effective citizen participation in public governance (TI, 2014).

The importance of accessing information by citizens has been recognized by the Constitution and Article 35 provides that: Every citizen has the right of access to:

- Information held by the state and
- Information held by another person and required for the exercise or protection of any right or fundamental freedoms.

From the foregoing literature it's quite clear that citizens can only participate in governance if they are aware of the available opportunities and how to participate otherwise known as civic awareness. According to Omolo (2010) in her paper on *Policy Proposals on Citizen Participation in Devolved Governance in Kenya*, for citizens to actively take part in matters of public governance, they must be politically conscious and have access to information.

This means that they must not only be aware of their rights and responsibilities but also know the channels through which they can exercise them (Omolo, 2010). Therefore access to information becomes a cornerstone in the success of citizen participation.

The importance of access to information in promoting citizen participation has been proven by a number of researchers:

A study conducted by Oxfam in Turkana to find the reason for the lower levels of participation

among the residents on the LASDAP shows that provision of information alone is not enough, the information has to be timely and correct to enable citizens understand it and prepare for participation. The report showed that low level of awareness (18%) was the main reason for low participation in the project. The low levels of awareness were due to the limited one week period within which notice is given of LASDAP meetings and therefore the citizens were not able to access information on time to enable them acquire knowledge on the process and how to effectively take part in the process (Omolo, 2009). Similarly a study by Transparency International and media reports show that use of proper channels for communicating the information is also important in facilitating active citizen participation. The information has to be communicated through channels that reach majority of the intended residents. The low levels of citizen participation in Uasin Gishu County during the County draft budget 2014/2015 was due to lack of proper communication of information to the citizens. Even though the government used both print and broadcast media, a section of Eldoret town residents have accused the county assembly of providing information to the public using wrong channels claiming they always get information late hence the low turnout in the public forums (Khisu, 2015; TI, 2015). Advertising information through channels such as the social media, government website may only reach techy-savvy citizens especially those in town. However majority of the residents in rural areas may be left out. Majority of such residents do not have access to the internet. Additionally televisions and newspapers may not be accessible by all and therefore vernacular radio stations become an effective tool in such settings. Other factors that they may enhance citizen participation in devolved governance include committed local leadership and external pressure from the civil society organizations, the central government and development partners.

Therefore citizen participation is determined by interrelated variables.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive survey research design. Descriptive research determines and reports the way things are and attempts to describe such things as possible as behaviour, attitudes, values and characteristics (Mugenda, 2009). The study targeted Uasin Gishu County residents and the County Transition Authority Coordinator. The sampling frame used in this study was the voters register. A list of registered voters in each county was obtained from the Independent Electoral & Boundaries Commission (IEBC).

This study targeted a sample population of 105 respondents who were chosen across all the 6 sub-counties. A total of 18 people were chosen from each of the six sub-counties to take part in the study. The Uasin Gishu County Transition Authority Coordinators was also interviewed during the study. The population of Uasin Gishu County was 894,179.

The study used both primary and secondary methods to collect data. Primary data was collected from sources such as; Uasin Gishu County residents and the county transition authority coordinator, key informant interviews, focused group discussions and questionnaires were used to obtain data from these groups: Self-administered questionnaires were used to obtain information from the county residents.

To enhance the reliability of the study, 7% (8) of the questionnaires were pre-tested in Eldoret town which was the main town in the county and any inadequacies and ambiguities identified and corrected before the study began. The pre-testing of the instruments was done to identify any ambiguity or items not clear to the respondents and necessary changes made.

The data was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was edited to eliminate inconsistencies, summarized and coded for easy classification in order to

facilitate tabulation and interpretation. Descriptive statistics were used for the analysis of the research questions. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) computer software was used to run the analysis.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, 105 questionnaires were issued, out of these questionnaires 105 were fully completed representing a response rate of 100%. Out of the 105 respondents, 23.8% were between the age of 18-27; 38% between the age 28-37; 26% between 38-47; and 12% between had 48 years and above. The youth who are considered to be 35 years and below were majority of the respondents (61.9%) indicating that youth in Uasin Gishu County are active participants in devolved government activities. On education level of the respondents; 18.1% had primary school level education; 38.1% had secondary school level education; 29.5% college level; and 14.3% university level.

Access to County Government Information

Provision of Information by County Governments

The study sought to determine whether the county government of Uasin Gishu provided information on public participation. Majority of the respondents with a percentage of 85 indicated that the county government provided information while 15% indicated that the government did not provide information. This was confirmed by the County Transition Authority Coordinator. According to him the Uasin Gishu County government disseminated information to the county residents regularly whenever there was need for public participation.

The researcher sought to find out the type of information that the county residents have received. Based on the study findings majority of the respondents (46%) said that they had received information on County Integrated Development plan; 33% on County Budget; 12% on County government expenditure and 10% from county development projects. This was affirmed by the County Transition Authority coordinator who

asserted that since the establishment of the Uasin Gishu County government, the government has held public forums to disseminate information on the Finance Bill 2015-16 and the County Integrated Development Plan 2013-2018.

On Information Channels used, Majority of the respondents (33%) said that they obtained this information from the internet which was usually posted on the county website as confirmed by the county official or on social media. This was closely followed by radio with 29%; public announcement with 17%; TV at 11% and Newspaper at 10%.

On channel convenience, similar to the findings by Transparency International, majority of the respondents feel that the channels used by the government are not convenient: 47 % indicated that the channels are not convenient; 40 % indicated that they are convenient while 13% felt that the channels used are highly convenient. On whether information got to residents on time before public forums on development projects are held, Majority of the respondents (75%) said that information did not get to them on time while 25% said that information got to them on time.

Majority of the respondents (85%) were able to access government information through channels such as the internet (county website and Social media), Radio, Television, Newspaper and public announcements. Through such channels the government disseminated information on issues such county budget, CIDP, development projects and makes announcements on public participation. However according to the respondents 79% said that the channels used were not quite convenient as this information most of the time got to them late or was disseminated at the wrong time which affected their ability to effectively participate in devolved governance. Majority of the respondents (35%) obtained information from the internet however not everyone in the county had access to internet; similarly the message also passed through radio shown by a response of 30%, however the timing

could be wrong when most people were not listening. Therefore provision of information alone was not enough, the information had to be timely and correct to enable citizens understand it and prepare for participation. The findings on access to information in Uasin Gishu County were similar to those by conducted by Oxfam in Turakana. The study showed that the reason for the lower levels of participation among the residents on the LASDAP was because information was provided late. That even though the respondents accessed information they got it late due to the use of wrong channels. Therefore provision of information alone was not enough, the information had to be timely and correct to enable citizens understand it and prepare for participation (Omolo, 2009).

Awareness Levels on public participation

Awareness levels among the residents of Uasin Gishu County were very low: 52% of the residents were not aware of any enactment relating to participation in devolved governance; only 28% were aware of the Constitutional requirement for public participation while 20% were aware of the County government Act and this mostly were the graduates. The rest of the citizens were not aware and only heard about it. For this reason majority of the residents are not aware of their role in devolved governance. Consequently majority of them failed to take seriously their role in public participation agreeing with the findings of Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA, 2015) that levels of awareness among Kenyans on public participation was very low and hence low public participation.

On Knowledge of Enactment, Most of the residents in Uasin Gishu County came to know of the Acts guiding public participation through their own research. This confirmed that majority of the residents obtained their information from the internet through research rather than wait for county government to give them information. That 67% of the residents got information through their own research; 18% through county

government and 15% through civil society organizations. Even though access to the internet enabled one to acquire more information as compared to that disseminated through radio or TV, majority of the residents did not have access to the internet and even those that did not know how to research. Internet research remained a preserve of the learned and in most cases graduates which implied that awareness was created mostly among the learned while ordinary citizens are left.

Training on public participation

Low level of awareness was further confirmed by the number of residents who had received training on public participation. Only 19% Of the residents who participated in the study confirmed that they had received training from Civil Society organizations while 82% said that they had not received any training. Therefore if residents had not been trained on public participation and were not able to conduct research on their own then it meant that awareness levels remain low.

For those trained, 79% said they had been trained on how to access government information while 26% had been trained on budget preparation. The training received by Uasin Gishu county residents was only good at making them knowledgeable on public participation however this did not in any way build their capacity to effectively participate in county government activities. Additionally it was only a small number of residents who had been trained on how to access this information and therefore majority of the residents were largely unaware of how to participate.

On role of residents in County Government, majority of the residents (72%) said that they did not have any role to play while 28% said they had a role to play. This confirmed the low level of awareness among the residents. Even those that said they had a role only said that their role was limited to identification and planning of projects. This was contrary to the guidelines by the ministry of Devolution and planning (2016) which required that residents be involved in the whole process

from project identification, planning, implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Awareness is Key to public participation. When there are low level of awareness there tends to be low public participation. This had been confirmed by Oxfam whose study on levels of participation on LASDAP showed that low level of awareness (18%) was the main reason for low participation in the project. The low levels of awareness were due to the limited one week period within which notice is given of LASDAP meetings and therefore the citizens were not able to access information on time to enable them acquire knowledge on the process and how to effectively take part in the process (Omolo, 2009). Awareness levels on public participation in Uasin Gishu County were very low which can be attributed to the inconvenience caused by the channels used by the government to disseminate information. Due difficulties in accessing information, majority of the residents were not aware on their role in county government as 72% said they had no role to play on the county government; additionally only a handful 19% have received training on how to access government information; 52% of the residents were not familiar with any Act guiding public participation; the 48% who were aware acquired the information through research however not everyone was capable of conducting research on the internet which means that majority of the residents remain largely unaware of public participation in devolved governance.

Accountability of Uasin Gishu County Government

For there to be accountability by county governments, public participation was essential in all government activities to facilitate monitoring and demand explanation on how public money is spent. For this reason the residents were asked if they have participated in county development planning including the development of the CIDP: 76% of the residents said that they had not participated in the process while only 29% said

they had participated. Therefore the low level of participation was a reflection of low accountability in Uasin Gishu County.

To further understand the effectiveness of public participation in Uasin Gishu County, the residents were asked if they felt that their opinions were considered seriously during the public forums. Only 26% felt that their opinions were considered seriously while 74% felt that their opinions were not considered seriously. This showed public participation in Uasin Gishu County was at the lowest level of informing and where residents were involved merely giving opinions rather than involved as partners.

Levels of participation during public forums were also looked and the following was observed.

Majority of the residents (80%) felt that public participation was very low while 20% felt that it was high. The residents were asked to determine this by looking at the turn out during the public forum.

On activity Involved in during Public Forums, The residents were further asked to identify the specific activity that they were involved in during the public forums. For residents that had been involved in public forums, 55% said they had been involved in development planning; 45% in budget preparation while none had been involved in monitoring and evaluation. This was contrary to the guidelines by the Ministry of Devolution which requires that the residents be involved in all the phases of a project. However according to the County Transitional Authority Coordinator, it was not possible to involve the residents in all the phases as they lacked the technical knowhow.

Development projects and County needs

The residents were also asked if the development projects undertaken by the Uasin Gishu County governments reflected their needs: 62% felt that the projects undertaken did not reflect their needs while 38% felt that the project reflected their needs. This was a clear indication that public participation in Uasin Gishu County was very low and that it involved residents giving their opinions

which the government did not consider properly when initiating development projects.

Accountability is reflected in the needs of the county residents: that if the development projects undertaken by the county government are the felt needs of the residents, then this means that the county government takes into consideration what county residents want and considers their opinion. The findings of this study indicate that this was not the case in Uasin Gishu County: The findings of this study indicated that the residents felt that the development projects undertaken by their county government were not reflective of their needs given that majority of them had not participated in any public forum: 65% of the residents felt that the projects undertaken in the county were not reflective of their felt needs as 78% of the residents felt that their opinions were not taken seriously which had been reflected by the opinion that the projects undertaken were not reflective of their needs; 76% of Uasin Gishu County residents had not gotten a chance to participate in any public forum.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Key Findings

Access to information was instrumental in public participation in that it created awareness and built the capacity of citizens to effectively participate in devolved governance. The first objective aimed at determining the access by citizens to county government information on public participation. The findings of this study showed that:

The residents of Uasin Gishu were able to access government information through channels such as the internet (county website and Social media), Radio, Television, Newspaper and public announcements. Through such channels the government disseminated information on issues such county budget, CIDP, development projects and made announcements on public participation. However according to the residents the channels used were not quite convenient as this

information most of the time got to them late or in disseminated at the wrong time which affected their ability to effectively participate in devolved governance. Therefore provision of information alone was not enough, the information had to be timely and correct to enable citizens understand it and prepare for participation.

Awareness was Key to public participation. When there are low level of awareness there tends to be low public participation. However when awareness levels are high, residents know of their duty to participate, its importance and how to effectively participate. The second objective aimed at assessing awareness levels among Uasin Gishu County residents. The findings showed that: Awareness levels on public participation in Uasin Gishu County were very low which could have attributed to the inconvenience caused by the channels used by the government to disseminate information. Majority of the residents were not aware on their role that they were supposed to play; additionally only a handful had received training on how to access government information; most of the residents were not familiar with any Act guiding public participation; Most of those who had information acquired it through research however not everyone is capable of conducting research on the internet which means that majority of the residents remain largely unaware of public participation in devolved governance. Additionally information provided by the government through channels such as radio, television and newspaper are mostly announcements for public participation and not informative information on public participation. Therefore awareness levels remain low among the residents.

Accountability was reflected in the needs of the county residents: that if the development projects undertaken by the county government were the felt needs of the residents, then this meant that the county government took into consideration what county residents wanted and considered their opinion. The third objective of this study aimed at finding out how accountable the Uasin

Gishu County government was to the needs of its residents. The findings of this study indicated that the residents felt that the development projects undertaken by their county government were not reflective of their needs given that majority of them had not participated in any public forum. For those who had participated the main issues involved were budgeting and planning; however those who had participated felt that their opinions were not taken seriously which had been reflected by the opinion that the projects undertaken were not reflective of their needs.

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicated that public participation in devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County was affected by access to information, awareness on public participation and the accountability of county government to the needs of the citizens. That when citizens were able to access information on public participation they became knowledgeable on their rights to participate and how to participate in devolved county governance. This was in turn helped to create awareness among the residents on various issues such the Acts guiding public participation; ways through which they can participate in devolved governance and their capacity to participate was enhanced. This lead to effective public participation in county government activities that were reflected through projects that are based on the felt needs of the county government.

From the findings of this study it can be concluded that: The County government of Uasin Gishu provided information to its citizens however the channels used were not convenient due to poor timing and improper use of channels. Detailed information on important issues was only provided through the internet which was not accessible to everyone. Channels that were accessible were used only for announcements. Awareness levels among Uasin Gishu County residents was very low as majority of them:

thought that they had no role to play in the county government; had not received any training on public participation; were not familiar with enactments guiding public participation in devolved governance; and those trying on their own were only able to this through the internet which was a preserve of a few learned.

The Uasin Gishu County government was not accountable to the needs of its residence as most of the projects undertaken were not reflective of the needs of the county residents; majority of the residents had not been involved in public forums and those involved felt that their opinions were not taken seriously; equally participation was low marked by low turnout and minimal contributions due to lack of technical knowhow on some of the issues.

Recommendations

The Uasin Gishu County government develops an ICT-Resource centre where citizens can go and easily access information on various issues on public participation. Train it citizens on how to access information especially on the internet this will be easy given that majority of the residents have O-levels. Ensure that it disseminates information a simplified language through channels that are easily accessed by many like local vernacular radio stations.

The Uasin Gishu County in collaboration with the Ministry of Devolution and planning together with local CSOs conducted training to capacity build Uasin Gishu County residents on public participation. Undertakes massive awareness creation on public participation through public announcements in local radio stations, public gatherings, television and through the social media.

The Uasin Gishu County government holds public forums at ward level to reach out to more citizens. Capacity builds its citizens so that they can give valuable opinions that can be considered during decision making. Treat its residents as equal partners in decision making rather than just calling them to listen to their opinions.

Areas of Further Research

This study mainly focused on factors affecting public participation in effective devolved governance in Uasin Gishu County. However there is a need for further research to be conducted on the factors affecting public participation in effective devolved governance in other counties

in Kenya so as to determine whether the other factors affecting public participation and effective devolved governance not tackled in this study. Therefore, further research should be undertaken in the private sector and other countries to investigate the other factors that affect effective devolved governance.

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