

# **Citizens' Participation in Development: A Case of Constituency Development Fund (Cdf) In Kanduyi Constituency of Bungoma County, Kenya**

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## **7.1 Abstract**

This paper focuses on citizens' participation in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in Kenya and is based on a study that was carried out in Kanduyi constituency of Bungoma County. CDF was established in Kenya by an act of parliament in 2003 and it is a strategy that channels resources to community projects proposed by community members. The strategy is supposed to increase citizens' involvement in the provision of developmental services and in so doing, empowering them to manage their livelihoods. The paper examines citizens' participation in the identification, selection and prioritization, planning and implementation of CDF projects. A descriptive survey design was used with 245 respondents taking part in the study. The findings indicated that citizens' involvement in CDF projects was low and the major cause of this low participation was lack of knowledge and information on how CDF projects are identified, selected and prioritized before funding. The paper further discusses the benefits and limitations of citizens' participation in the development agenda. The recommendations were that for CDF to be all inclusive, more funds need to be allocated towards awareness and information dissemination to create stronger structures that will increase citizens' awareness about the procedures in the fund. Secondly, there is need to expand both the Location Development Committees (LDC) and Project Committee (PC) membership so as to cater for more inclusive.

**Key Words: Citizen, Participation, Decentralization, Development and Project**

## **7.2 Introduction**

Africa's failure to achieve development has been characterized by escalating poverty, unemployment and inequality within and across a majority of African states (Mbahazi, 2005). The common explanation to this has been said to be the top-down approach to development that was adopted by most African states under the guise of national unity. This disenchantment with the centralized approach, due to its dismal contribution to development, has since let to the call by donors for a people centered approach for African development. Experiences from other parts of the world have been used to justify the call for decentralized citizen's involvement in development in Africa. For instance, the Caribbean, East Asia and East European countries have embraced decentralization as an important component of the development agenda and have fared better than Africa (World Bank, 2000). The explanation is that decentralization strengthens local governance, democratization and creates efficiency and equity in the use of public resources and public delivery. It is against this background that public participation as a development strategy has dominated the discourse on most state restructuring in Africa over the last four decades.

Kenya had attempted two forms of decentralization namely; devolution which is the delegation of authority to formally constituted government bodies to discharge specific functions and de-concentration which refers to delegation of authority to staff of central government away from the headquarters (Barkan and Chege, 1989). However devolution of political power had not taken

place substantially though attempts had been made to devolve development management (Ribot, 2002). Decentralization attempts in Kenya have mostly dealt with de-concentration of central functions by bringing them to lower levels of governance (Kimenyi, 2005).

Efforts to involve people in the development process in Kenya can be traced back to the mid-1960s with the establishment of the District Development Grant in 1966, the Provincial Development Committee in 1968, Special Rural Development Program in 1970 and the District Development Committee in 1971. The more substantive decentralization came in 1983 with the adoption of the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) strategy

The decentralization of fiscal management from the central government to sub-national units in Kenya can be traced back to session paper No. 1 of 1986 on Economic Management for Renewal Growth that called for reforms to strengthen the participation of local governments in development process (GOK, 1986). A decade later, these reforms were initiated through the establishment of Kenya Local Government Reform Program (KLGRP) in 1995. Later, Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) was created as a result of the initiative of KLGRP that aimed at revitalizing local authorities. In the process of addressing the issues of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in the service delivery, there emerged the need to establish the grant system for the LATF Act No. 8 of 1988 (GOK, 1988). LATF was a public fund that was transferred to all local authorities in Kenya. It accounted for 5% of the total annual income tax and its disbursement was based on the population of areas served by various local authorities. The purpose of LATF was to improve the local service delivery, improve council financial management and accountability, settle all council debts and enhance participatory development planning at the local community level through the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (Smoke, 2004). Its implementation procedures required that councils hold meetings with local community members to discuss priority needs and propose projects to the council clerk for short listing and presentation before a full council meeting for approval, then, the list submitted to the ministry of Local Government for funding (GOK, 1988). Despite the above reforms, it was noted that residents of local authorities were largely ignorant of any development being undertaken by the authorities and how the resources were being allocated for such projects (Khadiagala and Mitullah, 2007). Lack of citizens participation in development projects raised questions on the implementation of LATF and whether the scheme had facilitated the participatory planning of development in the activities of the local authorities. Thus there was a major gap between local authorities and the residents.

Seven years down the line, the constituency emerged as the target area for channelling funds following the failure of LATF to improve on the service delivery as discussed above. Hence CDF came into existence under the management of elected members of parliament, through an Act of Parliament in 2003 (GOK, 2003). It is a home-grown initiative that was intended to address inequalities in development around the country. As observed by Kimenyi (2005), when it was established, Kenyans got very excited about the fund and it sparked great interest among ordinary people because they felt that for the first time, they could be directly involved in deciding how government monies were to be used in their communities.

### **7.3 The Rationale for the CDF Kitty**

The purpose of CDF is to initiate development projects for citizens at grass root levels within the shortest time possible (Oyugi, 2007). The introduction of CDF was a response to the implementation of the normal government projects and therefore it was meant to allow the flow of

funds from the exchequer to the citizens directly without the impediment posed by bureaucracies. CDF funds projects of public interests and benefits only. However, in the case of educational bursaries, it is individuals that benefit, since it is in the interest of the community that poor children amongst it access education. Inanga and Osei-Wasu (2004) postulate that the philosophy guiding the CDF financing is informed by benefits that accrue to the citizens as a result of fiscal decentralization. Fiscal decentralization is justified on the basis of failure of economic planning by the central government to provide adequate development. Under the CDF framework, lower levels units of governance by virtue of being closer to the citizens are seen to be in a better position to identify citizens' needs and therefore provide them with an appropriate form and level of public participation. These lower levels of units manage the planning and budgeting of the funds. The projects are supposed to be proposed by citizens so that they capture their needs adequately. This kind of decentralization planning and budget management is aimed at allowing transparency in the utilization of resources.

For any development program to fulfil its social responsibility, it should be able to capture the needs of citizens during project identification. If the project is to give the best value to the beneficiaries, then priority lies in fulfilling the felt needs of the citizens. These felt needs are correctly captured during project identification and planning stages. Kimenyi (2005), argues that CDF is supposed to bring fast and relevant development to the grass root levels by enabling individuals at the grass root level make expenditure choices that benefit their welfare which is in line with their felt needs and preferences. The notion of participation is based on the understanding that communities and populations are better placed to manage their affairs namely; social, cultural, economic and political and in view of project management, inclusions of a wide range of interested parties in the decision making process gives development projects more legitimacy in the eyes of the beneficiaries, because such projects deals with real needs of the people (Odhiambo and Anyembe, 2009). Oyugi (2007) argues that the impact of participation can be significant if funds are effectively used because participation stimulates local involvement in development projects. Because of involvement, the benefitting community can also act as a monitoring agency thereby creating efficiency in resource utilization and management. In addition to advancing the welfare of the people, CDF is expected to have an outstanding effect on participation which in itself is pivotal to the empowerment of citizens.

#### **7.4 The Problem Statement**

Although there have been several efforts to involve citizens in CDF projects, little effort has been made to analyse the nature and level of their participation. This omission can partly be attributed to the fact that for a long time grass root citizens have been regarded as passive participants and only consumers of any development generated in a top-down procedure. One way of empowering citizens is by recognizing their initiatives and eliminating social blockages that may suppress their participation in making decisions and resource acquisition.

Several studies on citizens' participation in development projects that benefit them, have given general recommendations and reasons as to why citizens' involvement is important towards attaining sustainable development. Many attempts in Kenya towards decentralization have been in the form of devolution of development fund that brings fiscal decision making process down to the citizens. This decentralization aims at stimulating citizen participation in the identification, prioritization, design and implementation of their preferred development projects. This is based on

the assumption that it will lead to efficient allocation of resources. However doubts have been raised as to whether CDF has met this objective. The implementation of the fund has been dogged by a controversy generated in part by the weakness in the CDF Act 2003, lack of community participation and a few mechanisms of oversight to hold the management committee and parliamentarians accountable. It is argued that most of the development decisions were made by the constituency development committees (CDC) as opposed to grass root decision making processes. The committees constituted to manage the projects were normally appointed by political leaders in the constituency, a phenomenon that reflects centralization. Since citizens' participation is central in the bottom-up approach in development, this study set out to investigate citizens' participation in CDF projects at the constituency level.

### **7.5 Research Objective**

The main objective of the study was to examine citizens' participation in constituency development fund projects in Kanduyi constituency of Bungoma County in the republic of Kenya.

### **7.6 Methodology**

The study was a descriptive survey design that aimed at collecting data on citizens' participation in CDF projects. A descriptive survey design was suitable for this study because the study aimed at collecting and analysing data in order to give a quantitative description of citizens' participations in CDF funded projects. Interviews and direct observation were used to collect primary data while secondary data was obtained from the District Development Officer's (DDO) office records. Funded projects were divided into seven categories namely; water and sanitation, education, healthy, roads and bridges, agriculture, electricity and environment. From each category per location, one project in each location was selected for the study. This was done by making a list of all funded projects per category and a project for the study was picked randomly. In total seven projects were sampled per location and thirty five for the study.

Two categories of citizens were interviewed for the study, namely; those who use the services of the project from the community where the projects were constructed who are herein referred to as beneficiaries. Secondly, committee members of individual projects referred to as Project Committee Members (PC). Five households from the beneficiaries were picked randomly from a pool of beneficiaries and interviewed, with household heads interviewed on behalf of each household selected. Two PC members of each selected project were picked randomly also and interviewed. In total 175 beneficiaries and 70 PC members participated in the interview, making a total of 245 participants.

Borg and Gall (1989) suggest that a minimum representative of participants in a population needed for a descriptive survey research is 100 participants in each major group and 40-50 in each minor sub-group. Random sampling allowed the research to apply inferential statistics to the data. Inferential statistics enables the researcher to make certain inferences about population values on the basis of obtained sample values.

### **7.7 Results of the Study**

Beneficiaries were asked if they were involved in the identification of the project and those who were not involved were further asked if they knew of a person who was involved. Findings showed

that 73% of the respondents did not participate in project identification, while 53% of those who did not participate knew at least a person from the community who was involved.

They were further asked if they were given opportunity to participate in project selection and prioritization, if they knew how to participate and if they had tried to be involved. Only 41.1% of the beneficiaries acknowledged to have been given opportunity to participate in project selection and prioritization, 26.3% knew how to be involved as stipulated in the CDF Act 2003 and only 17% participated.

The study further sought to find out if beneficiaries were given opportunity to participate in project planning, if they knew how to be involved and if they made attempts to be involved. The findings showed that beneficiaries were poorly involved in project planning with only 29% acknowledging to have participated and 74% of the citizens did not know on how to be involved in project planning process, while 83% did not even make an attempt to be involved in planning.

On the implementation of CDF projects, the study sought to establish if citizens were given opportunity to participate, if they knew how to be involved and if they made attempts to be involved in project implementation. The findings were that only 33.1% of the citizens acknowledged having been given opportunity to participate in project implementation, while 74.3% of the beneficiaries were poorly informed on the procedures on how to be involved in the implementation process and 17% made an attempt on how to be involved in project implementation.

## **7.8 Discussion**

Participation in the identification of projects must begin with a person attending the location development meeting that identifies community needs and priorities that are meant for funding by CDF. Absence in such meetings hinders a person's participation; however one can be represented in such meetings by an elected leader. During location meetings, all needs of the community are supposed to be identified and prioritized, then a location committee established. The established committee will be left to be in-charge of all CDF projects in the location for a period of three years and is expected to fund the projects in the sequence in which they were prioritized.

Knowledge on how to be involved in project selection and prioritization is normally obtained from the CDF Act 2003, but for most people the CDF Act is a vocabulary. Elected leaders are meant to interpret the act to the people through public forums, so the findings showed that they got the same information in public forums organized by elected leaders and provincial administration. The inability of most citizens to attend these forums caused them to miss out on the information that deals with the development agenda of their communities. The location committee can only implement what has been agreed on in the location general meeting and therefore if citizens are not given opportunity to make expenditure decisions, then they will be alienated from the development process. Hence the location development committee is expected to take sufficient measures to involve as many people as possible in the selection and prioritization stage of the project.

As observed from the study findings, citizens were poorly involved in project planning. A good number were not given the opportunity to participate, while a higher percentage did not try to be involved in the planning process. Low level participation of citizens in project planning means that the plans executed in these projects may not be very relevant to community needs, the

implementation process would be slow and local resources may not be fully utilized (Muia, 1989; as cited by Oyugi, 2001). As argued by Shuman (1998), low participation in planning has the following risks; most resources are bound to be sourced away from the community thus making the whole process of the project expensive, it makes the quality of the work poor and the relevance of decisions will be low.

It was highly expected as revealed in the study that citizens participation in the implementation of the projects was to be low, based on the observed trend at project identification and planning stages. Community members did not have sufficient information to enable them participate. These findings agree with Wilcox (2007) who notes that people are reluctant to participate in any community activity when they do not have enough information to act responsibly. He argues that people would avoid participation as much as possible or until when they have what they believe to be sufficient information.

### **7.9 Why Participation**

There are many assumptions about the benefits that come as a result of citizens' involvement in any development process. In this connection, Conyers (2000) provides four broad categories to outline citizen participation objectives, they include; local empowerment, administrative efficiency and effectiveness, national cohesion and central control.

For local empowerment to take place there must be local participation in the formulation and implementation of the development process (Bartle, 2005). Agreeing, (Andrea, 2006) recognizes that empowerment resides in a person or a group and can only be exploited when the persons/groups are allowed to participate in issues that affect them. However the impact of participation and the ability of people to be empowered is influenced by the method used to have them participate.

Concerning administrative efficiency and effectiveness, Ribot (2002) posits the view that governments, donors and the private sector, support peoples' participation on efficient grounds. He argues that when there is local participation, decisions are more relevant to local needs and conditions are more likely to be effective, local facilitation and transactions costs will be reduced by making decisions locally, decentralized decision making can be quicker and more flexible and therefore efficient. According to Wilcox (2007), local knowledge and labour can facilitate implementation, management and evaluation of program. Because local actors will benefit from reducing costs of their efforts, they are likely to use their resources more efficiently.

Citizens' participation can serve as a means to maintain political stability when pressures arise from locals and elites demanding more power (World Bank, 2002). In connection with this, Oyugi (2001) observes that in Uganda and South Africa, citizens' participation was used by respective regimes at that time to consolidate national unity. Olowu (2001) views people's participation as promising to resolve conflicts in Angola, Morocco, Senegal and Sudan. In Kenya the DFS policy of the 1980's was intended to increase efficiency of central government administration than promoting popular participation (Conyers, 1983; as cited in Ribot, 2002).

Citizens participation in CDF is encouraged by the assumption that it will avail opportunities for decision making and address real development concerns among citizens. That people tend to resist new ideas if they are imposed on them, hence involving people in decisions, makes them own such

decisions and by extension the projects. Participation strengthens local capacities by enhancing local skills and knowledge, which people can use for future activities. Participation also gives a voice to the poor and other disadvantaged and marginalized people to whom, lack of a say is a major factor contributing to their poverty and marginalization. Participation contributes to sustainability of projects implemented as a result of ownership and creates a condition of democratization of development, since it links development to the people (Wanjiru, 2008). CDF is built on the bottom-up approach to development, in this approach the beneficiaries are meant to be major decision makers and directors of their own development.

### **7.10 Limits to Participation**

In many instances, it is the elites rather than the most vulnerable that capture participation powers, which is then used to suppress local minorities including women and other marginalized groups (Olowu, 2001). According to the World Bank (2002) report, it states that conceding power to local governments is no guarantee that all local interests groups will be represented. It may simply mean that power is transferred from national to local elites. Under the CDF procedures, projects are written and submitted to the area MP who then is supposed to hand them over to the Clerk of the national assembly. When a group of constituents is not politically correct with the area Member of Parliament, then its projects risk not being funded. Hence the elected leaders play a significant role in funding and disbursement of funds towards projects.

Stinson (1984) points out that for participation to be effective then participating through financial support is important, this should be able to increase ownership and sustainability of a development. Agreeing with this statement, Chambers (1983) remarks that membership in any community owned activity is directly related to the citizens' socio-economic status. Citizens' with lower income, less education, less occupation status and lower levels of living are less likely to participate in voluntary services than persons of higher brackets. However, since many CDF projects are constituted in places with little financial support, all the funding comes from CDF kitty and thus they miss financial participation.

Cultural values and traditional beliefs are key to the implementation of any community project. However, Kate (2007) argues that some traditional beliefs are an impediment for development, especially the customs and cultural practices that undermine the status of women in society. In most societies women are the main users of community project services and they bear a bigger burden when there is scarcity. Equally when denied involvement in the acquiring these services, then they will not fully utilize the project services. Under the CDF Act 2003, there is provision of equal representation of either gender on any committee to ensure equity in gender participation.

### **7.11 Conclusion**

The study revealed that citizens appreciate and own CDF projects that have been constructed in their environment. This could be as a result of the relevancy of the projects in the community. The ownership ability could be used as a stepping stone to build stronger structures at community level and those structures can be used to increase citizens' participation.

It is also clear that the procedures for project identification, selection and prioritization were not clear to beneficiaries. This observation is reflected in the low percentage of those who have knowledge of how to be involved in the identification, selection and prioritization of projects.

Lastly, citizens' participation in planning and implementation of CDF projects was low. This low participation was attributed to insufficient knowledge and information citizens have on how, when and where to be involved. Efforts to have more participation from citizens may not yield much unless sufficient and clear information is given to citizens on what is expected of them in the funds framework. Lack of information and procedures can cause frustrations and withdrawal among beneficiaries.

### 7.12 Recommendations

First, there should be a shift in the awareness creation with regard to information about projects. From the study, most citizens lacked knowledge on the procedures required for them to participate in CDF. This lack of information may lead to mistrust about the management of the fund by the beneficiaries. Secondly, the study revealed that citizens appreciated and owned projects that were sponsored by the fund. This positive attitude towards CDF projects can be used as a basis of building stronger structures to support the activities of the fund which in turn will support projects' sustainability. This can be done by introducing an aspect of community contributions as part of citizens input in the project. Citizens' contribution in a development increases projects ownership, quality and sustainability. Thirdly, there is need to develop a plan that can open up communities to the understanding of the operations of CDF. The plan should show clearly, levels to which citizens can be involved. Thus expanding the CDC, LDC and PC to allow a large representation with a wide spectrum of ideas can be a solution to inclusivity. Lastly, if the fund is to be in use as institutionalized, then, there is need to develop a training manual or guide that can assist committee members at various levels and other partners in understanding the structures and procedures of CDF as enshrined in the Act.

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