

# ROLE OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PERFORMANCE OF DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS: A CASE OF LAIKIPIA COUNTY

<sup>1</sup>Milka Kariuki, <sup>2</sup>Dr Ephantus Kihonge

<sup>1</sup>Student of Msc in Governance and Leadership Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer in Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

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**Abstract:** Citizen participation in governance under the 2010 constitution gives the residents of each county the right to be involved in determining their socio economic wellbeing. This would positively influence the performance of county governments. This research sought to study role of citizen participation in performance of devolved government: a case of Laikipia County. Specifically, the study sought to: - analyze the role of citizen participation in project identification on devolved government performance; assess the role of citizen participation in budgetary process on devolved government performance; and determine the role of citizen participation in social audit on devolved government performance in Laikipia County Government. The study findings provides knowledge on the role of citizen participation in performance of the county government since this has not been extensively assessed, the concept of devolved government being a new phenomenon. The study is of importance to policy makers in the Government (National and County Government) in matters of planning and policy formulation regarding enhancing performance in service delivery. Descriptive research design was used in this study whose target population was 29 village elders, 6 ward administrators and 110 public citizens in Laikipia East Constituency. The sample size was 126 respondents which included 11 village elders, 5 ward administrators and 110 citizens, selected using systematic cluster sampling method. Specifically, multi stage sampling and snow balling sampling techniques, was used to identify respondents. Data was collected using both secondary and primary data collection methods. Primary data collection tools were self-administered questionnaires and interviews, while journals, text books, and internet were used to collect secondary data. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 23 and was presented using frequency tables and graphs.

**Keywords:** Citizen, Performance & Devolved Government.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Study:

Citizen participation in governance and public service delivery is increasingly pursued in a bid to improve the performance of governments. This is particularly the case at the local level where services need to be differentiated according to local preferences. As a result recent focus of decentralization reforms has been on the government's relationship with the citizens (Brinkerhoff, et al., 2007). In this context, decentralization is seen as a conducive means of achieving principles of good governance, by what Cheema (2007, p.171) calls, 'providing an institutional framework at the sub-national level through which groups and citizens can organize themselves and participate in political and economic decisions affecting them'. This requires local government units that have the political space and capacity to make and effect decisions.

Citizen participation is often equated with more democracy, better accountability and more effective policy decisions. It is considered a fundamental prerequisite to achieve sustainable development Stella, (2004). Howet and Ramesh, (2002) argue that economic development of a country depends on the quality of policy framework, the decisions taken, especially the process involved in formulating each decision. This in the authors view is the work of policy communities and policy networks. Joshi and Houtzager (2012) defines a policy community as a network of individuals, groups, government departments, organizations and agencies that dominate decision making in a specific policy field.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite existence of a structured policy framework on public participation in governance, there is limited knowledge amongst the public of the spaces or opportunities for engagement. Secondly, though the structures exist, there is in some cases little commitment to making them work on the part of duty bearers. Over the past decade or so, there have been increasing opportunities for ordinary citizens to participate in policy-making on a range of issues from example community planning, environmental management, health care and quality, political reform, and science and technology.

Based on the assumption that the positive effects of citizen participation, devolved functions performance would be expected to increase the downward accountability of county governments to provide services to their constituents, this has not been the case in many parts of the country. While participation is often crucial for engendering upward pressure on government and downward accountability to citizens, the composition and institutionalization of citizen participation are critical variables in predicting the representatives of the process and pro-poor oriented outcomes (Deras and Grant. 2003).

There is therefore need for involving citizens in County Government activities to improve performance; hence this study therefore analyzed the role of citizen participation in performance of devolved government.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Cognitive Engagement Theory:

This study will be guided by the cognitive engagement theory by Biggs's (1987). The main idea of this theory is that participation depends on citizens having access to information about politics and government policies, and their desire to use that information to engage in a reasoned way. The increase in the levels of education that helps citizens to acquire and process large amounts of information, it is considered that education provides skills in the area of technology while at the same time increases the individual's ability to analyze it further cheaper in cost to acquire information (TV, electronic media), contribute to produce a process of citizen mobilization.

From this point of view, this theory recalls the Greek concept of being an informed citizen and as a member of the polis, actively involved in politics and understand the whole process of government policies. From this perspective the informed citizen is a "critical citizen". Citizen dissatisfaction with the state makes manifest in forms of unconventional participation, such as protest.

The main variables that explain this theory are: education, use of media, interest in politics and political knowledge, and satisfaction / dissatisfaction policy. Education is measured in levels from low to high; use of media, if referred through these information is acquired about politics; political interest in terms of motivation to continue government operations and policy-making, political knowledge is whether citizens understand how the political system works; and satisfaction / dissatisfaction policy refers to public attitudes about the performance of the system to deliver benefits to the citizens.

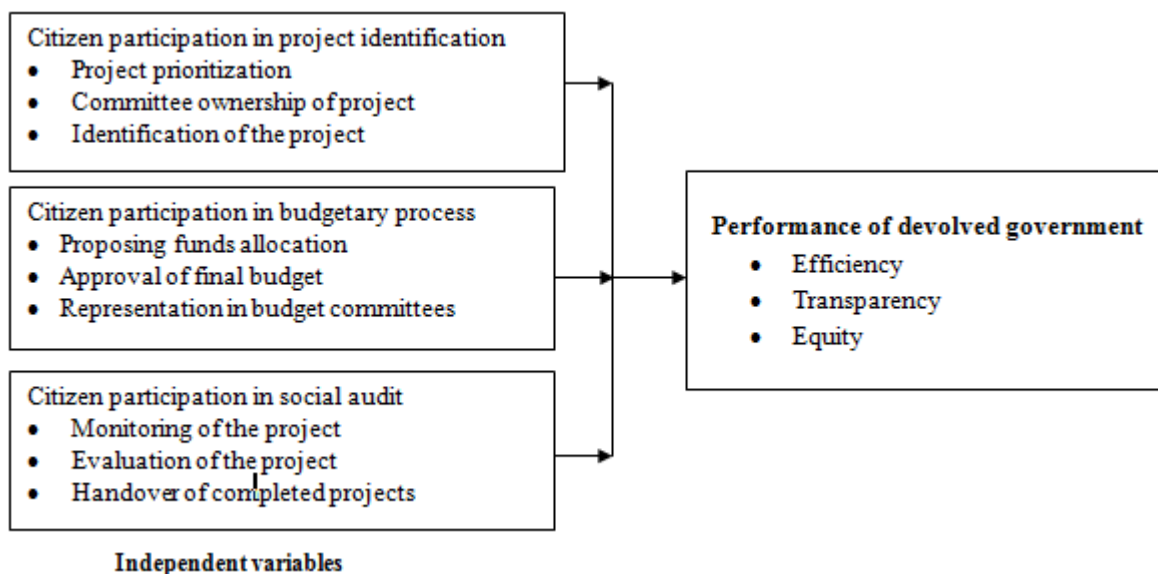
The theory of citizen involvement presupposes that public participation is a critical component of policy formulation process. It is anchored on the principle that those who are affected by decisions have a right to be involved in the decision making process. The principle implies that public contribution will influence the decision so that legitimacy of a policy increases when one involves people (Abels, 2007). The theory proposes that policies tend to become better in a qualitative sense if they are co-produced by the policy makers and the target groups. This according to the theory may be regarded as a way of empowerment and a vital part of democratic governance.

Critics to this theory said that this theory does not explain why once individuals have acquired all the information, they would be motivated to use it to act in an informed manner. That is, citizens are able to acquire and process information, but in the absence of incentives is not clear why they would be motivated to participate. Nowadays, it is easy to imagine a city with high levels of education, interested in politics, which follow the media and to know the functioning of the political system, but not voluntarily participate in political events. So, acquire and process information is incomplete to explain participation in the absence of a theory of incentive mechanism.

**Systems Theory:**

This study will be guided by Systems Theory by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1972) who is often cited as the father of general systems theory, first introduced GST in the 1930's, which gained recognition in scientific circles in the 1950's and 1960's. A system is described by the relationships among its components (public participation in budgetary, public participation in project identification, and evaluation and public participation in social audit and the relationship this system has with its environment (Frick, 2004). When changes are made in a system, one or more of these relationships can be affected. This can be related to effect of social audit in performance of devolved government.

Systemic change, however, is a comprehensive process where "a fundamental change in one aspect of a system requires fundamental changes in other aspects in order for it to be successful." (Reigeluth, 1992). These aspects can be related to public participation in budgetary, public participation in project identification and public participation in social audit.

**Conceptual Framework:****Research Gap:**

There are various studies which either had knowledge or research gap. For example Cheema & Rondinelli (2007) found out that the relationship between citizen participation and decentralization is 'conditioned by complex political, historical, social, and economic factors' which differ in magnitude and importance from country to country. This study does not relate citizen participation with performance of county governments. Secondly, there is a dearth of data on the relationship between participation and service delivery outcomes.

A study by Robinson (2007) observed that there is no systematic or comparative evidence on whether increased citizen participation in decentralized local governance generates better outputs in provision of education, health, drinking water and sanitation services'. This study does not cover all aspects of performance of county governments.

**4. DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION****Response Rate**

The response rate of the village elders, ward administrators and members of the public are as presented

**Response rate**

Category	Sample size	Response	Percentage
Village elders	11	11	100
Ward administrators	5	5	100
Public	110	91	82.9

Illustrates the response rate of the respondents who were sampled and interviewed in the study. The study targeted 11 village elders, 5 ward administrators and 110 members of the public. The response was 100% for the village elders and ward administrators, while for the public it was 82.9%, meaning 91 members of the sampled members of the general public completely filled in and returned the questionnaires, while all the village elders and ward administrators targeted were interviewed. The high response rate is attributed to the fact that the researcher employed 5 research assistants to personally administer the questionnaires and ensure they were filled in by the respondents. Further, the researcher personally interviewed the village elders and ward administrators using the interview guide questionnaires.

### Demographic Information of the Members of the Public

The researcher sought to establish the demographic data of the public respondents and looked at their gender, age, education level, length of stay in Laikipia East Constituency, occupation and income level. Their responses are highlighted in sub sections 4.3.1 for gender, 4.3.2 for age, 4.3.3 for education, 4.3.4 for Length of stay in the study constituency, 4.3.5 for occupation and 4.3.6 for income level.

#### Gender of the members of the Public

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Their responses are shown in Table 4.2.

#### Gender of the members of the public

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Male	70	69.0
Female	28	31.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From Table 69.0% of the members of the public were males while 31.0% were females. This implies there were more males respondents than females which might be because more males are interested in participating in county governance, especially in project identification, budgetary processes and in social audit. This conforms to the observation that there is more male participation in governance processes, as observed in studies by Motsi & Madyiwa (undated) and the assertion by Dick & Zwerteveen (2001) for more women involvement for effective citizen participation in governance issues. However, this was not expected to affect the responses from the respondents or in any way creating any form of biasness.

#### Citizen participation in project identification

The researcher sought to find out how citizen participation in project identification influences performance of the devolved government. The respondents were asked questions related to citizens involvement in identification and prioritization of projects, process of involvement, citizens empowerment to hold the government accountable to identified projects, and approaches to improve citizen participation in project identification. On the part of village elders and ward administrators, they were asked during the interviews, how they involved the public in project identification and prioritization, how they invite the public to participate in the projects, if the citizens have the capacity to effectively participate in project identification and prioritization, if at all they see the importance of public participation, and how public participation can be improved.

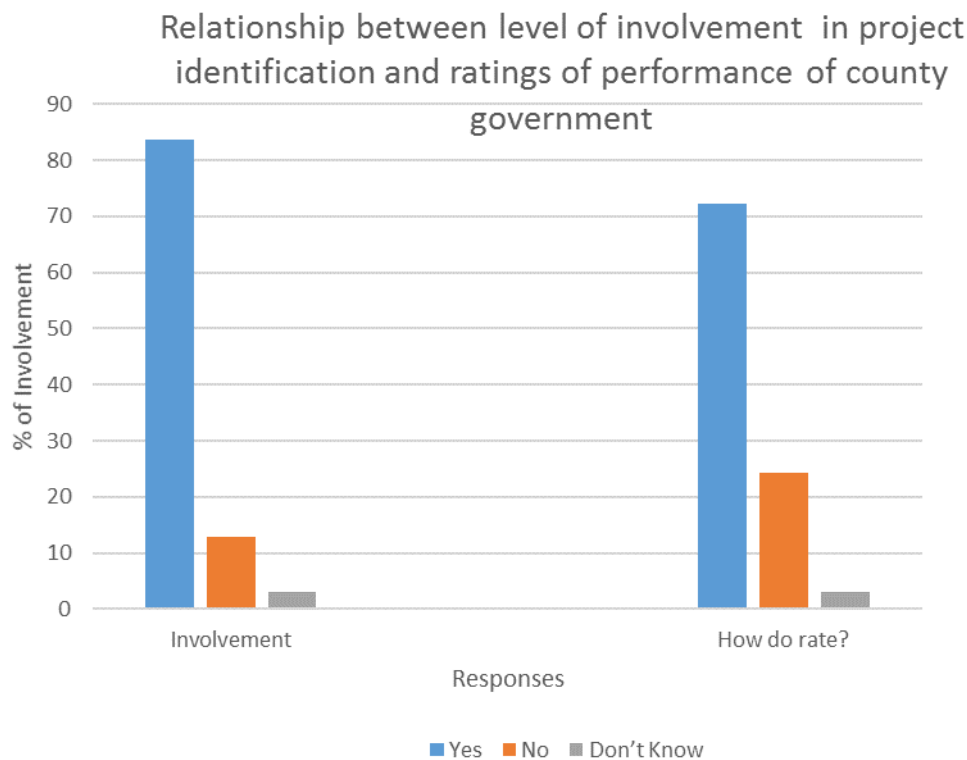
#### Citizen involvement in project identification

The study sought to find out whether, according to the respondents, if the county government involves citizens in project identification and the projects in which they have been involved and the rating of county government in citizen involvement in project identification. Their responses are as shown.

Citizen Involvement in project identification and county government performance rating

Citizens involved	Frequency	Percentage	Rating	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	76	83.7	High	66	72.3
No	12	12.9	Low	22	24.3
Don't know	3	3.4	Don't know	3	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The graph below shows the relationship between the level of citizen participation and performance of county government rating.



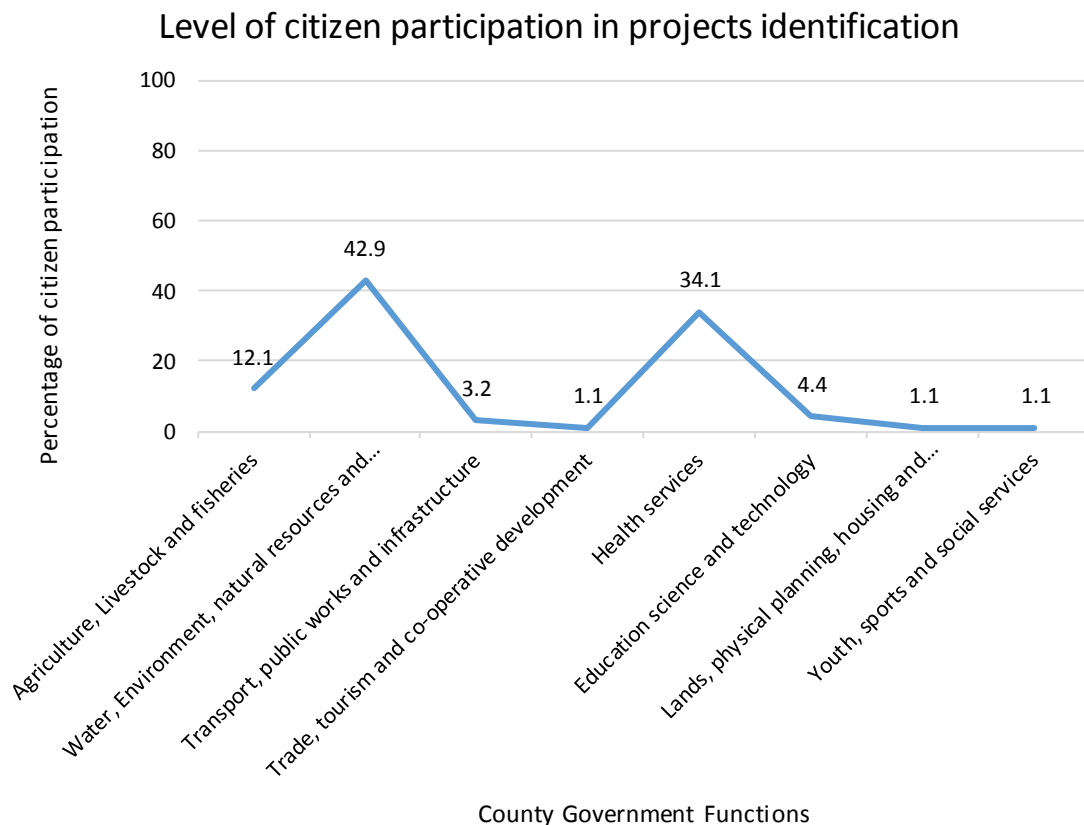
From Table 4.8, 83.7% of the respondents indicated that indeed county government involves citizens in projects identification, 12.9% of the respondents said they were not involved, while 3.4% indicated they did not know if the county government involved citizens in projects identification. For those who said yes, they indicated that the county government involved citizens in water and health services provision related projects especially water pans, water storage tanks and dispensaries, as indicated in the table 4.9.

#### Projects in which citizen have been involved identification

Related projects involved in identification	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture, Livestock and fisheries	11	12.1
Water, Environment, natural resources and sanitation	39	42.9
Transport, public works and infrastructure	3	3.3
Trade, tourism and co-operative development	1	1.1
Health services	31	34.1
Education science and technology	4	4.4
Lands, physical planning, housing and urbanization	1	1.1
Youth, sports and social services	1	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Citizens have largely been involved in identification of water pans, (45.1%) health centers, dispensaries (34.1%), 12.1% agriculture and livestock related projects like animal vaccination projects, cattle dips and irrigation, 3.3% have been involved in identification of rural roads that require upgrading and murraming, while 1.1% have been involved in youth, sports and social services; Lands, physical planning, housing and urbanization and in Trade, tourism, and cooperative development, in each of the categories.

The graph below indicates the level of citizen participation in different Laikipia county government's functions



For those who said that the county government does not involve citizens in projects identification, was due to the fact that no framework has been laid down and proper plans and strategies setup to ensure the citizens are involved in project identification.

The respondents who said they did not know cited the reasons that they are yet to be enlightened on public participation.

From the interviews, there was an indication that the ward administrators through the village elders engage in community mobilization to participate in projects identification. However, there is usually a low turnout due to the fact that the public is generally reluctant and lack incentives to motivate them to participate. Citizen participation in local decision making and policy making is weak because of citizens' skeptical attitudes about the effectiveness of participation and their limited knowledge of government processes. Even though a large number of citizens are not satisfied with their representation in county government activities, only 20% are actually willing to participate in county government. Their participation is limited largely because they feel that this participation would ultimately be ineffective in helping them influence local decision making. The interviews revealed that many citizens believe county government decisions are ad hoc and made without requesting or responding to citizens input.

### **Citizen Participation in budgetary process**

The researcher sought to find out how citizen participation in budgetary process influences performance of the devolved government. The respondents were asked questions related to citizens involvement budget making process, how they are involved, accessibility of county budget and plans to citizens for scrutiny, means of budget dissemination to public and approaches to improved citizen participation on in budgetary processes.

### **Citizens involvement in budget making process**

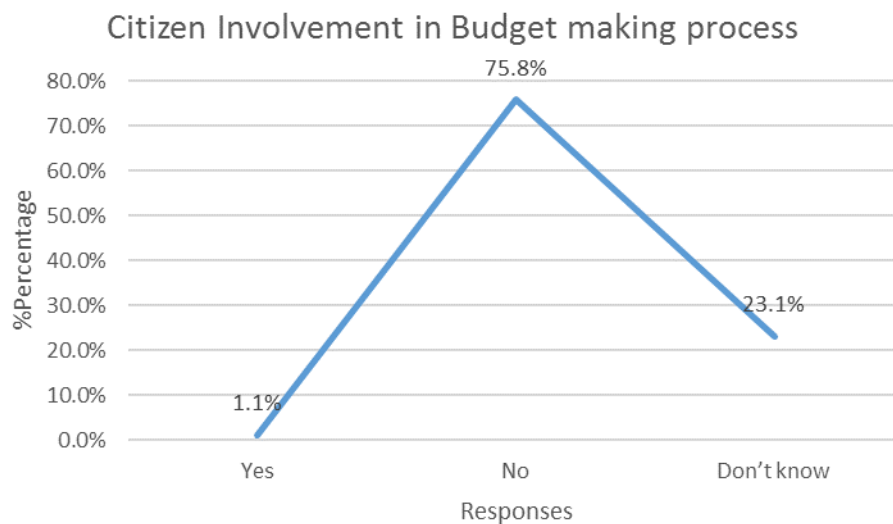
The respondents were asked if citizens are involved in the budget making process. Their responses were as indicated in the table.

**Citizens involvement in budget making process**

Involvement in budget making process	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1	1.1
No	87	75.8
Don't know	3	23.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From Table 75.8% of the respondents felt the citizens are not involved in the budget making processes, while 23.1% were not sure if the county governments involves citizens in budgeting. Only 1.1% said that the county government involved citizens in budget making process. This was attributed to the fact that budget making process requires technical input.

The graph below indicates the responses regarding their involvement in the budget making process.



There was a concurrence between the respondents from the public, and the village elders and ward administrators interviewed, where 90% of the interviewed respondents said there was almost no involvement of citizens in the budget making process, due to complexities of the process.

**Accessibility of county budget and plans by citizens**

The respondent were asked questions related to transparency and timeliness of budgeting, if budgets are in a language the citizens understand, easy to interpret and understand, and means of budget dissemination to public. Their responses are as shown in table.

**Cross tabulation of views on accessibility of budgets and performance of the county government**

Measures of Accessibility	Yes	No	Don't Know
Budgeting is transparent	0.0%	87.8%	12.2%
Budgeting is timely	2.3%	0.0%	87.8%
Done in language citizens understand	75.8	12.0%	12.2%
Easy to interpret and understand	68.5%	12.0%	12.2%

From Table, though the county government has been publishing the budget, the majority 87.8% felt than the budget was not transparent and they didn't know if it is done on time. However, for those who had accessed the budgets, only a few, 12.0% were of the opinion that it is not done in a language citizens understand and not easy to understand, while the majority, felt it was done in a language that citizens can understand and easy to interpret. The rest, 12.2% had not accessed the budget, so they didn't know if it is easy to interpret and understand.

**Means of budget dissemination**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Television	0	0.0%
Newspaper	0	0.0%
Radio	0	0.0%
Public baraza	80	87.8%
Internet	0	0.0%
Mobile phone	0	0.0%
Others specify (e.g. Churches)	0	0.0%
Have never seen a county budget	11	12.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

From 87.8% had accessed the budget, and all had accessed it through public baraza. 12.2% had never accessed the county budget.

From the interviews, such public information like county government spending and budgets, is not known to many respondents. 62% of the respondents don't know while 38% of the respondent are aware. This shows that there is big gap between those who know and those who lack basic public information in the county.

**Citizen Participation in Social Audit**

The researcher sought to find out how citizen participation in social audit influences performance of the devolved government. The respondents were asked questions related to citizens involvement in social audit of development project, access to county government transactions for social audit, and approaches to improve citizen participation in social audit.

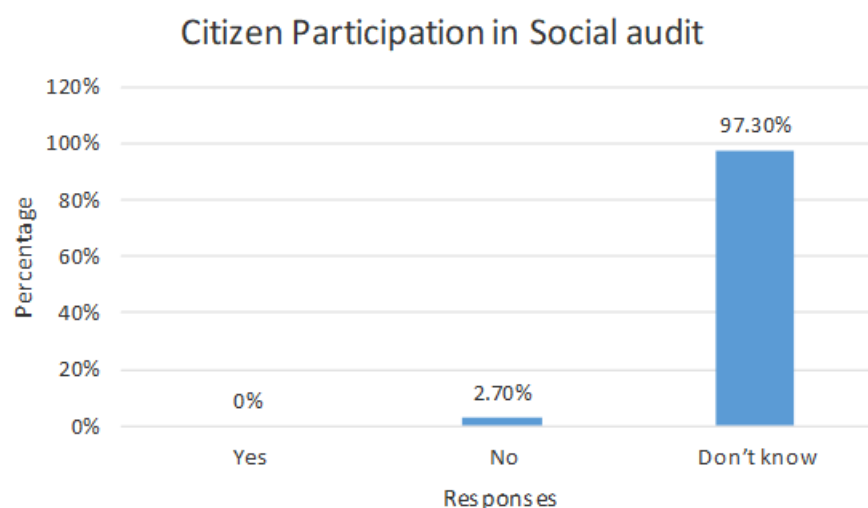
**Citizens involvement in social audit of development project**

The respondents were asked if citizens are involved in the social audit of development projects by the county government. Their responses were as indicated in the table.

**Citizens involvement in social audit**

Involved in social audit	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	0	0.0
No	2	2.7
Don't know	89	97.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From Table the majority 97.3% of the respondents didn't know if the county government involves citizens in social audit of development projects, while 2.7% said the county government did not involve citizens. None of the respondents said that there was citizen participation in social audit. This is as indicated in the graph below;





There was a concurrence between the respondents from the public, and the village elders and ward administrators interviewed, where 90% of the interviewed respondents said there was almost no involvement of citizens in the social audit.

#### Access to county government transactions for social audit

The respondents were asked whether there was access to county government transactions to citizens for social audit of development projects. Their responses were as indicated in the table 4.17

#### Access to government transactions for social audit

Government transactions are accessible	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	0	0.0
No	2	2.7
Don't know	89	97.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From Table, the majority 97.3% of the respondents didn't know if the county government transactions were accessible for social audit, most citing having never been interested, while 2.7% said the county government transactions were not easy to get, and where available, not easy to interpret.

From the interviews, there was a concurrence with the respondents from the public, where 92.3% of the interviewed respondents said that the public was not very interested in the transactions of the county, thus explaining the high percentage not knowing if the transactions were actually easy to assess. Nevertheless, 7.7% of the interviewees felt it was easy to access government transactions for social audit.

## 5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Role of citizen participation in project identification on devolved government performance

The first objective sought to analyze the role of citizen participation in project identification on devolved government performance in Laikipia county government and the results showed that 83.7% of the respondents indicated that indeed the county government involved them in project identification while 12.9% of the respondents said they have never participated in project identification. It was noted that 72.3% of the respondents rates the county government highly in performance, having been involved in project identification, while 24.3% rated the government lowly.

However, it was noted that the county government did not involve the citizens in project identification in all its functions. 45.1% of the respondents indicated to have been involved in water provision related projects (such as water pans), followed by health provision related projects such as health centers and dispensaries. None of the respondents had been involved in some of the county government functions related projects such as Lands, physical planning, housing and urbanization; and Trade, tourism and co-operative development.

On the other hand, there was very little citizen participation in project prioritization, with 5.3% of respondents indicating to have been involved in project prioritization. However, there was an indication from the respondents of the interviews that the projects identification and prioritization are done concurrently, where after the public identifies the different projects, they agree on the projects that are to be implemented in short term, midterm and in long term.

Regarding citizens level of empowerment to hold the county government accountable on identified project, it was noted that 51.6% of the respondents felt the citizens have the capacity to hold the county government accountable, 45.1% felt that the citizens don't have the capacity, while 3.3% was not sure if the citizens have the capacity to hold the county government to account. Besides, 75.8% of the respondents indicated that there was no automated interaction process between government and citizens during the project identification, 1.1% indicated there was, while 23.1% did not know if there was, where they largely indicated that they were not sure if it indeed existed. In addition, 75.8% of the respondents indicated that there was no checks and balances to foster accountability in project identification, 1.1% indicated there was, while 23.1% did not know if there was checks and balances to foster accountability in project identification.

Finally, it was noted that citizen participation in project identification can be improved through:- Awareness creation on what citizen participation is and its importance in projects identification; The county government designate funds to

facilitate the process of citizen awareness creation, publish and widely disseminate any information of public significance in accordance with the relevant legislation and explore alternative methods of disseminating information. Besides, there is need to give sufficient notice of meetings to enable communities adequately prepare to attend and participate effectively in consultations. Majority of the respondent 95% felt that capacity building of the citizens to empower them to participate effectively in formulation of projects and plans, implement projects and ensure their sustainable management.

The computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was 0.703 which depicts a strong positive correlation between citizen participation in project identification and performance of the county government. This means more citizen participation in project identification lead to better performance of devolved government performance.

### **Role of citizen participation in budgetary process on devolved government performance**

The second objective sought to assess the role of citizen participation in budgetary process on devolved government performance in Laikipia County Government and the findings showed that, 75.8% of the respondents felt the citizens are not involved in the budget making processes, while 23.1% were not sure if the county governments involves citizens in budgeting. Only 1.1% said that the county government involved citizens in budget making process. This was attributed to the fact that budget making process requires technical input. There was a concurrence between the respondents from the public, and the village elders and ward administrators interviewed, where 90% of the interviewed respondents said there was almost no involvement of citizens in the budget making process, due to complexities of the process.

On accessibility of county budget and plans by citizens, though the county government has been publishing the budget, the majority 87.8% felt than the budget was not transparent and they didn't know if it is done on time. However, for those who had accessed the budgets, only a few, 12.0% were of the opinion that it is not done in a language citizens understand and not easy to understand, while the majority, felt it was done in a language that citizens can understand and easy to interpret. The rest, 12.2% had not accessed the budget, so they didn't know if it is easy to interpret and understand.

In regard to the means of budget dissemination 87.8% had accessed the budget, and all had accessed it through public baraza. 12.2% had never accessed the county budget

From the interviews, such public information like county government spending and budgets, is not known to many respondents. 62% of the respondents don't know while 38% of the respondent are aware. This shows that there is big gap between those who know and those who lack basic public information in the county.

Finally the researcher sought to find out which would be the most effective way to involve the citizens in budgetary process. Majority of the respondent (95%) felt that capacity building of the citizens to empower them to participate effectively in budget formulation was important; Technical personnel from relevant government ministries such as finance, water, roads and public works need to be incorporated in the planning stages to provide guidance on the identified needs and the requisite financial and technical resources of projects; and the need to have a legal framework to actualize citizen participation in budget making at the county level. The researcher asked respondents to indicate what they thought the county government should do to improve its budget communication to the citizen. A number of responses were floated by the respondents and the researcher sampled a number of the responses which were relevant to the question. They proposed that the government can improve its communication by calling public barazas using posters and also calling members using phone, by using radios, phones and pamphlets. They should also have a schedule of meeting with specific dates and times every month rather than calling for a meeting on immediate, urgent and emergency basis.

The computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient is 0.606 which depicts a strong positive correlation between citizen participation in budgetary processes and the performance of the devolved government. This means that the more the citizens are involved in budgetary processes, the better the performance of the devolved governments.

### **Role of citizen participation in social audit on devolved government performance**

The third objective sought to determine the role of citizen participation in social audit on devolved government performance of Laikipia County Government. The majority (97.3%) of the respondents didn't know if the county government involves citizens in social audit of development projects, while 2.7% said the county government did not involve citizens. None of the respondents said that there was citizen participation in social audit. There was a concurrence

between the respondents from the public, and the village elders and ward administrators interviewed, where 90% of the interviewed respondents said there was almost no involvement of citizens in the social audit.

Regarding the access to county government transactions by citizens for social audit of development projects, the majority (97.3%) of the respondents didn't know if the county government transactions were accessible for social audit, most citing having never been interested, while 2.7% said the county government transactions were not easy to get, and where available, not easy to interpret. From the interviews, there was a concurrence with the respondents from the public, where 92.3% of the interviewed respondents said that the public was not very interested in the transactions of the county, thus explaining the high percentage not knowing if the transactions were actually easy to assess. Nevertheless, 7.7% of the interviewees felt it was easy to access government transactions for social audit.

In addition, the respondents gave their views on how social audit influences performance of the county government, as follows:- a majority (87.3%) felt that it would help improve service delivery, increase citizen trust in government, and expose grand and petty corruption in public spaces. However, 81.6% said that social audit would not increase participation in an organized effort to solve problems, this was attributed to the fact that there are other factors that influences citizen participation in solving a common problem.

Nevertheless, 27.9% felt that social audit would lead to improved access to county public officials as well as promotes responsiveness, effectiveness and accountability of county government to its people.

In regard to the most effective way to involve the citizens in social audit, majority of the respondent (97.8%) felt that capacity building of the citizens to empower them to participate effectively in social audit was important; Awareness creation was also rated highly, as most people are not even aware that they have a right to participate in social audit. A few (16.3%) felt that there is need to have an institutional legal framework which is appropriate and workable, and provides for citizen participation in social audit. This would include a comprehensive system for compiling and distributing reports, and information used for decision making. Further, 56.9% felt that there was need for the county government to designate funds for social audits facilitation.

The computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient between citizen participation in social audit and performance of the devolved governments was 0.688. This depicts a strong positive correlation between citizen participation in social audit and performance of the devolved governments. This means more citizen participation in social audit will improve performance of the devolved governments

## 6. DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to discuss the research findings based on the three objectives and subjecting these findings to literature and further concluded on each of them.

### **Extent to Which Citizen Participation in Project Identification Influence Devolved Government Performance**

The first research question looked at the extent to which citizen participation in project identification influence devolved government performance in Laikipia County government. It was noted that citizen participation in project identification was indeed able to enhance performance of the devolved government, mainly due to their influence on the which projects are prioritized by the government for the benefit of the public which is in agreement with Rowe and Frewer (2000) who wrote that a range of methods for undertaking public participation exists, ranging from those that elicit input in the form of opinions to those that elicit judgments and decisions from which actual policy might be derived and again Humphrey, Pirola-Merlo et al, 2002 conclude that citizen participation is a process of social interaction where the citizens to influence the decisions of the government, thus impacting on the performance outcome, in this case delivery of services the county government is mandated to deliver to the citizens. The public at large also felt that they have the capacity to critique the county government actions or inactions on identified projects. Nevertheless, there were no automated processes for government – citizens' interactions, however, some checks and balances that foster accountability on identified projects were present and entrenched within the rules of public participation that calls for representation of all, meaning gender representation, the youth, people living with disabilities, minority and other vulnerable groups. All the same it was noted that the public participation fora had no good representation of communities/regions because self-interests of certain people and population plays a big role and some communities are left out due to their small numbers.

It was also noted that involvement of citizens in project identification increases their level of satisfaction with the services being rendered by the county government, which is in agreement with Abels (2007) who said, public participation is anchored on the principle that those who are affected by decisions have a right to be involved in the decision making process. The principle implies that public contribution will influence the decision so that legitimacy of a policy increases when one involves people

The computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient depicted a strong positive correlation between citizen participation in project identification and the performance of the devolved government. This means more citizen participation in project identification leads to enhanced delivery of services, thus impacting positively on the performance of the devolved government.

### **Extent To Which Citizen Participation in Budgetary Process Influence Devolved Government Performance**

The second research question looked at how citizen participation in budgetary process influence devolved government performance in Laikipia County government. It was noted that by and large, citizens are not involved in the budget making processes owing to the fact that budget making process requires technical input. Furthermore, budgets accessibility was low, despite being done in a language that citizens can understand and easily interpret. Budget dissemination was only done through public barazas, and it was noted that there is big gap between those who know and those who lack basic public information in the county. This is in agreement with Carol (2003), who wrote that surveys on public participation in budget making processes may not reflect the intensity of a respondent's opinion, cost is a factor, citizens may not have appropriate information to make an informed decision, and questions can be written in a manipulative or leading manner. Public meetings have been used in a deliberative way to provide two-way communication on budget issues, but attendance is often low and may not represent the community as a whole, and participants may have insufficient knowledge for effective input. The computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient between citizen participation in budgetary process and performance of devolved government depicted a strong positive correlation between citizen participation in budgeting and government performance. This means more citizen participation in budgetary process is required in enhancing devolved government performance.

### **Citizen Participation in Social Audit Influence on Devolved Government Performance**

The third research question looked at how citizen participation in social audit influence devolved government performance in Laikipia County Government. The study found out that most of the respondents were not aware that they have a right to participate in the social audit and thus none had ever participated in any, even in the projects that they had participated in the identification. It was noted that majority of the respondent had never been interested in accessing the county government transactions and for those who accessed said they were not easy to interpret.

The respondents gave their views on how social audit influences performance of the county government, where majority felt that it would help improve service delivery, increase citizen trust in government, and expose grand and petty corruption in public spaces. This was in agreement with Rashid (2011) who wrote that public participation encourages openness, accountability and transparency, and is thus at the heart of inclusive decision-making.

The study also was further in agreement with Joshi & Houtzager (2012) who cited that citizen participation in monitoring is a core requirement of effective service delivery. It is not a nice-to-have. This means that mechanisms must be workable, funded and integrated in core business processes. As such the mechanisms should not be overly complicated and ambitious. They should be appropriate to the context in which they are deployed and sustainable in terms of the available resources and skills. The computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient between citizen participation in social audit and performance of the devolved governments was 0.688. This depicts a strong positive correlation between citizen participation in social audit and performance of the devolved governments. This means more citizen participation in social audit will improve performance of the devolved governments

Citizens need to be part of a feedback loop. It is essential that the system for compiling and distributing reports is efficient and has a quick turn-around. Accountability and feedback about how the information is used for decision-making by departments can help build trust between citizens and government. Feedback should include details of corrective actions to be taken, timeframes and who is responsible, as observed by Yang, & Pandey, (2011).

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the Citizen participation in project identification, budgetary process and social audit has an influence on performance of the devolved government. and to a greater extent more involvement in the three, leads to a better performance of devolved government. The study also concludes that the citizen participation in devolved government processes is not just “a nice-to-have” thing, since it is provided for in the constitution, but is a core requirement of effective service delivery.

Further, capacity development of citizens helps and/or influences the effectiveness of the citizens in their participation in project identification, prioritization, budgeting and social auditing of development projects.

Most of the respondents reiterated the fact that access to information was a factor influencing the level of citizen participation. They proposed that the government should improve communication by calling public barazas using posters and also calling members using phone, by using radios, phones and pamphlets. There should also be a schedule of meeting with specific dates and times every month rather than calling for a meeting on immediate, urgent and emergency basis

Further, most respondent were in agreement that citizen participation helps improve service delivery, increase citizen trust in government, and expose grand and petty corruption in public spaces.

The above findings will assist the policy makers to understand how to better involve citizens in project identification, prioritization, budgeting and social auditing, and as such help in development of a framework through which the citizens are actively and effectively involved in the devolved governance processes, for enhanced service delivery.

It is also imperative for the devolved governments to develop a capacity needs assessment tool and a citizen capacity development plan, if they are to leap the optimum benefits of citizen participation. This is due to the fact that an informed citizenry will be in a position to effectively participate in projects identification, budgeting, social audit as well as participate in policy formulation.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above findings, the following are the recommendations of the study:

1. Citizens should be trained and empowered on how to go about participating in project identification, prioritization, budgeting and social auditing of development projects. This will require a concerted effort between the civil society and the devolved governments.
2. The devolved governments should improve on their interactions and communications with the members of the public through the means that is accessible to all. Proposals were given among them open data platform, where citizens can access information online. Besides, there is need to give sufficient notice of meetings to enable communities adequately prepare to attend and participate effectively in consultations.
3. Citizen participation should be an all-inclusive exercise, where all stakeholders and different categories of citizens are represented, to include the minority, PLWD, the youths as well as regional balance among others.
4. To facilitate effective citizen participation in budgetary process, technical personnel from relevant government ministries such as finance, water, roads and public works need to be incorporated in the planning stages to provide guidance on the identified needs and the requisite financial and technical resources of projects
5. For effective citizen participation in social audit, there need to include a comprehensive system for compiling and distributing reports, and information used for decision making. The devolved government also need to designate funds for social audits facilitation.

### Areas of Further Research:

Future research should seek to establish best practices within different county governments with an intention to share them with other devolved governments. Further, it is recommended that further studies to be done to establish the role of different actors in the performance of devolved governments; Relevance of the concept of public participation and how it is being implemented in the devolved governance structures,; as well as to determine the imperatives of an effective framework of Citizen Participation in Local Government.

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