An Assessment of Rural Youth Participation in Community Development Projects in Turkana South Sub-County: An Approach to Community Development and Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

The integration of local and international cultures enhances people’s ability to adapt to external influences of sustainable aid and sustainable development programs and processes. The study was conducted in Turkana, where government intervention on projects was made with deliberate efforts to implement inclusive development projects. Traditionally Turkana society has well-defined gender roles that appear to contradict inclusive and participatory approaches determined by government projects and interventions. The study sought to establish a legitimate influence on youth participation and to assess the impact of cultural norms on youth participation in community projects. The study used a descriptive design and targeted 47,359 young people. The study used Krejcie and Morgan’s table and an equally divided sample procedure to obtain a sample of 381 respondents in the study. Research has shown that educated youth will speak well and seek citizenship, and show that the standard of formal education is negatively correlated (-0.251) with youth participation in project planning and community development projects (-0.094) respectively, barriers to youth participation in project planning are not limited to learning and training. Therefore political, institutional, financial and technical factors played out in determining whose voice is heard and which decisions are acceptable. There was an inconsistent balance (-0.109) between gender roles and participation in community project planning meetings and gender issues consideration in community projects, respectively. A negative correlation (-0.14) between age and meeting planning has been revealed which means that the patriarchal values system in rural areas favours gender roles and traditional cultural practices that oppose the
development, advancement and participation of women in community development.

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**INTRODUCTION**
Participation is the key to holding on to development. Mulwa (2008) noted that very few community-based projects could be successful without the use of participatory principles. It is not surprising that all development activities and government programs in all departments use participatory mechanisms that not only increase the interest of various sectors but also contribute to community development policies and planning forums, at small and large levels (Mulwa, 2008). In addition to the important role that development plays in the development and implementation of development, all major development agencies including international companies, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have reached an agreement that sustainable development can only be realized through citizen participatory development process (Kumar, 2002). Participatory planning model advocates for the needs of the community to be the focus of any development program.

Youth participation in decision-making promotes democracy by giving the public the opportunity to participate in government decision-making processes. Public participation in Kenya is critical to budgets and legal processes. The constitution has stipulated specific areas; specifically, Article (2) a, b and c: on national values and principles of governance includes; democracy and citizen participation; to include; good governance, honesty, transparency and accountability. Article 27 of the Constitution of Kenya guarantees youth non-discrimination. In this regard, participation enhances equality and non-discrimination. According to Zhong (2014), youth participation includes
volunteering with NGOs, participating in community activities, joining community-based organizations, picketing, and community resource mobilization. From the foregoing participation is a strategy of transforming society from the sharing of limited knowledge, power and economic distribution to the acceptable outcomes needed by the majority of the population (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009).

Simmons, Birchall and Prout (2006) and Burton (2009) however, raised the issue of how to measure effective participation and what is the key to setting the process. This study adopted Mikkelsen (2005) explanation that actual participation leads to democratic processes in which benefiting community members make their own decisions and control outcomes. Chambers (1993) identified participants’ behaviour as a critical challenge to implementing a participatory approach, according to Chambers development experts who consider themselves superior to their local counterparts, and that this practice prevents local members from expressing their issues and needs. It is clear that participation processes are in the hands of users who can use them for their own experience and personal gain.

In developing countries in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the concept of youth participation is not easy to achieve because it is traditionally unprepared for responsibilities. In the author’s view, community development projects are likely to succeed with a well-planned strategy to improve the participation of rural youth included in the project plans. This strategy enables rural youth to participate effectively in participatory development; a very significant way to empower young people to manage and manage community development projects in order to appreciate community development efforts (Thomas & Thomas 2015). In Cambodia, about 60% of Cambodians are young people. The Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport considers young people to be those between the ages of 14 and 30 (Onu, 1988).

In South Africa, the concept of youth participation in community development encompasses the spirit of human virtues, compassion and humanity (African Youth Report, 2011). In Nigeria, youth actively involved in community development programs, high social trends, response time, ingenuity and innovation. It is, therefore, important to apply their practical features to the ongoing transformation of society through the active and visible participation in programs aimed at their development.

In Tanzania, Masanyiwa and Kinyashi (2008) established that members of the public participate more effectively when they see that the interventions made by the development agencies address their immediate needs as identified in the public consultation process. In addition, Bhatnagar and Williams in Mohamud, Muturi and Samantar, 2018 established that people support and participate in development programs that address their needs. Beneficiaries participate collectively to take action on social and economic development that leads to economic empowerment and capacity building. People’s participation can be based on the fact that people have the ability to do the work that suits their needs by being empowered to develop themselves in a concerted effort to improve living conditions (Samah & Aref, 2009; and Jivetti, Njorai & Njorai, 2016).

In Kenya, 20% of the population are young people between 15 and 24 years old out of
whom 84% live in the rural parts of the country (Jivetti, Njorai & Njorai, 2016). As a result, rural areas need more programs to develop the capacity of young people living in these areas. Jivetti et al. (2016) noted that the Kenyan Government has tried to implement other youth-focused development programs over the years. Although these programs focus on economic, social, political, cultural and social development, the impact of these interventions on the quality of life of the youth is still being debated. These programs are poised to succeed if they focus on empowerment, skill-development education initiatives, and generation of employment as a means of improving livelihoods for economic development.

According to Sulo et al. (2012), level of youth participation is reduced by inadequate income, assets that include land and skills or access to financial services. Lack of participation reduces social shares and ultimately develops in the community. There are many people dropping out of school in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Kenya which can be caused by exam failure and widespread poverty. The most popular economic businesses include motorcycle or bicycle services (BodaBoda) services, poultry and textiles. Advances in agriculture, finance, land and skills are a challenge for many young people who want to get a loan from a financial institution (Sulo et al., 2012). The participation of young people in community programs promotes positive change in society and utilizes the public funds needed in the community.

**Statement of the Problem**

Government of Kenya has been implementing various projects and programs especially the Youth Affirmative Funds which was established in 2007 to provide loans, attract and facilitate small, medium and micro enterprises to support marketing and job creation (Hope, 2012). In 2009, the Kazi Kwa Vijana (KKV, Poverty Alleviation and Poverty Alleviation program was launched by the Kenyan Government (Jivetti et al., 2016) all aimed at reducing poverty and strengthening food security in Turkana County and across the country; it does not get involved in any income.

The government also introduced Kenya’s National Youth Policy 2006 to target young people aged 15-30 to identify young people as equal citizens of economic, social, political, and social participation (GoK, 2006). Although these programs focused on economic, social, political, cultural, and social life, the programs were expected to be successful if they focus on empowerment, skills training, and job creation as ways of improving livelihoods of the young people. Empowerment was to prepare young people to face poverty, overcome adversity, and improve their quality of life (Jivetti et al., 2016). Ultimately, this could expose the stock of social capital that is important in improving public sense, inclusion, community identity, and integration. In the author’s view, community development projects are likely to be successful if a well-planned strategy for improving the participation of rural youth is also included in the project planning cycle. This study specifically assessed the influence of socioeconomic factors on rural youth participation in community projects in the Turkana.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study sampled of 381 respondents
from 47,359 people aged 18-35 years using the Krejcie and Morgan table. Sixteen project team leaders were purposively selected from the Turkana County Economic Planning Office based ongoing projects as contained in the Turkana County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2013-2017. The study used a five-point Likert scale questionnaire to collect data because of its usefulness in collecting data from the majority of respondents. In the Focus Group discussions, participants were identified with the guidance of provincial and local government administration and also organized space and security during the discussions. The data were subjected to descriptive analyses that included a range of standard and standardized treatments. SPSS (version 20) was used in the data analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the measurement data. Details were presented with the use of tables and quantities where appropriate and finally a general opinion was made.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Level of youth Participation in Community Projects

The study used various levels of participation by the Turkana Public Participation Act, 2015. This Act provides for public participation in public affairs in relation to policy-making processes in Turkana County and provides for public participation in regional affairs. A lesson relied on the sampled minutes and list of attendance of National Government Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF) committee in the study area, progress report from the directorate of Public Participation-Turkana county government, NGAAF-Turkana, Turkana south Uwezo Fund Management Committee (UFMC projects since 2014 to date. The analysis of the level of youth participation is summarised in community participation matrix in Table 1.

| Forum                     | Number and Source of Participants                                                                 | Development Committee Representatives | No. of youth in the forums M F | Role of the Committee                                                                                   |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Constituency NG-CDF Committee | The committee has two youth representatives, one person with a disability, and two men and two women proposed by the community under the patronage of the area MP and approved by the NG-CDF board. | 7 members                              | 0 1                            | Consider all project proposals from all wards in the Constituency and any other projects which a Constituency Committee considers beneficial to the Constituency: |
| Project Management Committee | 55 members                                                                                         | 10 7                                   |                                | participate in strategic planning, approve changes to the governance model and manage the project outputs |
| Forum                     | Number and Source of Participants | Development Committee Representatives | No. of youth in the forums M F | Role of the Committee                                                                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Turkana South CUFMC     | 5 members nominated by the Constituency MP from each ward, 2 youth representatives of the opposite gender, nominated by women MP, the other three were government officials nominated as per the PFM Act of 2012 | 10 members                          | 0 0                              | Oversee implementation of the Fund in each Constituency.                               |
| NGAAAF                  | 6 members nominated by the County Women MP from each Constituency, other 5 were government officials nominated as per the PFM Act of 2012 | 11 members                          | 0 0                              | Oversee implementation of the Fund at the County as stipulated in the PFM Act of 2012. |
| Locational Peoples Forum| 20-50 people, 11 representatives from each of the 3-5 village clusters in a Location and 17 co-opted representatives of organised groups | 120 members (20 per ward)           | 3 2                              | County Development Plans; County Budgets; County Legislation; and County Reports       |
| Ward Peoples Forum      | 30-90 people: 6 from each location 15-25 co-opted from each of the village clusters 17S organised groups representatives | 11 members                          | 1 1                              | County Development Plans; County Budgets; County Legislation; and County Reports       |
| Sub-County Peoples Forum| 53-97 people, 11 from each ward and 20 representatives of organised groups | 55 members (11 per ward)            | 2 4                              | County Development Plans; County Budgets; County Legislation; and County Reports       |

Adapted from (2013-2017) County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) Review Report of 2017

The study further established that the participation in the forums elicited in Table 1 was not open to the general public, for instance, the NG-CDF committees comprised of male representatives who were not in the age bracket; however, the dismal level of youth participation was more compounded by the fact there were organised groups from which all nominations were done. According to the Turkana County Department of Economic Planning, the following groups were represented in public participation where applicable:

- Union of Primary School Teachers
- Union of Post Primary Education Teachers
- Secondary School Head Teachers Association (KESSHA)
- Primary School Head Teachers Association (KEPSHA)
- Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO)
- Youth Council
- Dominant Civil Societies (CSs)
- Turkana Religious council
- Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM).

From the foregoing, there a glaring disparity between youth and adults’ participation in national development especially in political and organisational forums of community decision making. This analysis is similar to that of Zeldin et al. (2007) who established that
youth must conform to strictly prescribed parameters that have been set by adults in community governance and management of community projects.

**Youth Participation in Community Projects**

In this section the researcher explored the extent to which rural youth participation in decision making, community mobilization, financial contribution, project legitimization, planning the project, monitoring/evaluating the project, raising funds for the project, and organizing skilled and unskilled labour for the project. The results were summarized in *Table 2*.

### Table 2: Extent of participation in community development projects

| Activity                                           | Great Extent | Moderate Extent | Less Extent | Not at all |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|
| Organizing skilled and unskilled labour for the projects | 107 (31.2%)  | 98 (28.6%)      | 68 (19.8%)  | 70 (20.4%) |
| Monitoring and evaluating the projects             | 36 (10.5%)   | 29 (8.5%)       | 177 (51.6%) | 101 (29.4%)|
| Community Mobilization                             | 12 (3.5%)    | 67 (19.5%)      | 56 (16.3%)  | 208 (60.7%)|
| Accepting and legitimizing the projects             | 66 (19.2%)   | 112 (32.6%)     | 105 (30.7%) | 60 (17.5%) |
| Decision making                                    | 23 (6.7%)    | 57 (16.6%)      | 66 (19.2%)  | 197 (57.5%)|
| Financial contribution towards the projects         | 18 (5%)      | 31 (9%)         | 91 (26.5%)  | 203 (59.5%)|

The analysis in *Table 2* indicates that level of youth participation in a community development project was significantly higher for the skilled individuals. Therefore, there is a low level of youth participation in the planning process of various community development projects taking place in the learning environment. These findings support critics of the rational model of decision-making that often ignore the magnitude of social planning.

**The Impact of Youth Level Education on Participation in Community Development Projects**

In this study, education was considered to be the acquisition of appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable a person to be socially fit. The analysis of how the impact of the quality of education in young people’s participation in community development projects. Pearson’s coefficient was used to ensure the presence or absence of a correlation between the level of education and the participation of youth in community development projects, as shown in *Table 3*. 
Table 3: Correlation between education level and youth participation

|                | Education Level | Implementation | Opinions | Planning |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|----------|
| Education Level| 1               | -.094          | .204**   | -.251**  |
| Implementation | -.094           | 1              | .043     | .741**   |
| Opinion        | .204**          | .043           | 1        | .017     |
| Planning       | -.251**         | .741**         | .017     | 1        |

*correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)
**correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)

In Table 3, the level of education is closely related to the opinion of youth on community projects (0.204) but is negatively associated with youth involvement in project planning and implementation of social development projects respectively. The implication of this finding is that as one attains a higher level of education, participation in community development projects it may be more appealing but young people are given very little opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation of social development projects in Turkana. This is in stark contrast to Mboga (2009) which draws attention to the levels of impact of education on social cohesion in Kenya. Mboga noted that education enhances the community’s ability to develop the right desires and aspirations to participate in meaningful and systematic processes such as budget building. Research has shown that the potential for citizen participation has only emerged when addressing a combination of sociocultural and socioeconomic factors simultaneously; these, according to Robinson (2007). The findings of the study further corroborate that of John (2009) who established that education, socioeconomic status, and networks that citizens have are key factors in determining whose voice gets heard and what decisions get adopted.

Economic Discrimination

The overall level of youth participation is fuelled by the perception that citizen participation in committees and forums is often dominated by members of the highest social and economic group. Respondents were asked if they were facing economic discrimination when organizations created awareness and planning community projects. Answers are summarized in Table 4.

From the findings in Table 4, the majority of respondents 240 (70.1%) confirmed that they were facing discrimination when government agencies were creating awareness or advocacy of community projects in the area.
Table 4: Youth discrimination in community projects

| Age       | Youth are discriminated |   |   | Total |
|-----------|-------------------------|---|---|-------|
|           | Yes                     | No|   |       |
|           | f    | %   | f  | %    | n    | %   |
| Below 25  | 86   | 25.1| 57 | 16.6 | 143  | 41.7|
| 26-30     | 52   | 15.2| 31 | 9.0  | 83   | 24.2|
| 31-35     | 84   | 24.5| 7  | 2.0  | 91   | 26.5|
| 36-40     | 5    | 1.5 | 8  | 2.3  | 13   | 3.8 |
| 41-45     | 13   | 3.8 | 0  | 0    | 13   | 3.8 |
| Total     | 240  | 70.1| 103| 29.9 | 343  | 100 |

The respondents were further asked to mention categories of discrimination they were facing in community projects. The findings were recorded in Table 5.

Table 5: Nature of Economic discrimination

| Nature of discrimination | Age Below 25 | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36-40 | 41-45 | Total |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Age                      | 47           | 18    | 34    | 0     | 0     | 99    |
| Lack of working experience| 6            | 3     | 10    | 0     | 3     | 22    |
| Lack of skills           | 7            | 23    | 18    | 0     | 2     | 50    |
| Gender                   | 0            | 0     | 11    | 0     | 2     | 13    |
| Nepotism and tribalism   | 26           | 8     | 9     | 5     | 6     | 54    |
| Physical disability      | 0            | 0     | 2     | 0     | 0     | 2     |
| Total                    | 86           | 52    | 84    | 5     | 13    | 240   |

Findings in Table 5 indicate that majority of the respondents cited discriminations due to age (99), nepotism and tribalism (54), lack of skills (50), while 103 respondents declined to mention any form of economic discrimination in the study area. Although many experts promote public participation as a means of incorporating public values into the decision-making process, this study agrees with the findings of Abel and Stephen (2000) and Weber (2000) that citizen participation committees are often filled with members of Kenya’s highest social and economic group.

The analysis in Table 5 is also supported by Oduor and Muriu (2013) who found that young people are not yet fully involved in designing, planning and implementing programs.

Hierarchical Interpersonal Relationships and Community Participation

The study continued to seek out young respondents’ views such as values, incentives, or the ability to contribute to community health in a rural setting.
Table 6: Perception of youth having the values, motivation, or competence to contribute to the civic life of a society

| Response            | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree      | 147       | 43.0       |
| Agree               | 120       | 35.1       |
| Disagree            | 37        | 10.8       |
| Strongly Disagree   | 38        | 11.1       |
| Total               | 342       | 100        |

Table 6 shows the majority of 147 respondents (43%) strongly agreeing and 120 (35.1%) strongly agree with the assurance that the general public, including parents, does not see that young people have values, incentives, or ability to contribute to community life in rural communities. These findings support Mutua’s (2013) assertion that interpersonal relationships in the community is one of the key pillars of successful project management. Varghese and Ostrom (2001) equally claim that the basic groups of multicultural societies in particular do not trust each other and therefore do not have harmony; therefore, they carry conflicts and it will be difficult to organize them.

In an interview with the local CSO APAD, which has been actively involved in the granting of pastoral community rights, it has been noted that there has been and still is a significant missing person in the management category from the upper-middle class of young educated to top local government officials. “In some places where the discussion was held, the elders did not allow women to speak in barazas, which allowed women to watch and listen rather than to speak during the meeting; there was also a section for speaking managers and public meetings. The elders usually spoke in a calm manner, after which the younger one began to talk and one elderly woman spoke up. Young women often spoke outside youth meetings where they were present” (28 September 2017, KII-interview).

This view and analysis of Table 6 agree with the studies of Sherrod, Flanagan and Youniss (2002); Lawyer-Purta et al. (2000) in establishing the distinction between young and old and the courage to take responsibility for older people is particularly relevant in the political and organizational forums of public decision-making.

The impact of Government policies on youth participation in community projects

The survey seeks feedback from respondents on how government policies have affected youth participation in community development projects.
Table 7: The impact of government policies on youth participation in community development projects

| Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------|------------|
| Very great extent | 7 | 1.8 |
| Great extent | 31 | 9.1 |
| Moderate extent | 31 | 9.1 |
| Small extent | 31 | 9.1 |
| Not at all | 18 | 5.5 |
| No response | 224 | 65.4 |
| **Total** | **343** | **100** |

In Table 7, 31 (9.1%), on a large or medium scale and 18 (5.5%) indicated that government policies did not affect youth participation at all while only 6 projects (1.8%) supported the argument.

In a one-on-one discussion with the Director of Operations of the Department of Economic Planning in the Turkana regional government, he questioned the involvement of a few individuals and groups who were historically disadvantaged.

“**The Turkana community still preserve its unique culture and identity; thus, most citizens remain outside the integrated economic life of the country. Most project and program executives will still take the best approach to integrate minority and marginalized people into a common process of public participation**” (6 July 2018 KII-interview).

These findings are in line with the Hague’s (2009) disclosure that existing policies in the country undermine community through natural bias in the in order to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, many young people in rural areas cannot access legal rights and services.

“**NYC policy just benefits those in towns and those who have connections in bigger offices, even the county youth policy members were just picked from Lodwar, there were no elections anywhere here**” (Focus Group Discussion GD1, 27 October 2017 Interview)

According to the findings of this study, Turkana County has a Public Participation Act which was passed on 30 October 2014, and later gazetted on 17 April 2015; however, a law that provides for public participation and public affairs in relation to policy-making processes, the County government will still engage the public with legal processes. Respondents to Focus Group interviews said young people are less likely to be involved and included in regional activities. This was due to age discrimination, lack of experience, lack of youth advocacy and non-partisan leaders.
CONCLUSION

The study found that the level of involvement of rural youth in community development projects in Turkana is still low; therefore, older people and projects officials still dominate community project planning processes. A similar conclusion was made by Simmons, Birchall and Prout, (2012) who concluded that the most citizens in participation chain do not fully understand some of the reasons people engage in resource sharing, and how they can be integrated into participation.

The study contradicted the studies of Adenkule, Adefalu and Oladipo (2010) and Angba, Adesope and Aboh (2009), who found that as a person attains a higher level of education, conditions conducive to social development may be more favourable and higher education beneficiaries are more likely to adopt new skills because the quality of education is closely linked to the youth participation in project planning and the implementation of community development projects respectively. Therefore, barriers to youth participation in community development projects in Turkana are not limited to inadequate education and training but to the combination of ‘political, institutional, financial and technical factors within national and County governments in determining whose voice is heard and which decisions are acceptable. This study is in line with those of Oduor and Muriu (2013) who say that barriers to youth participation in project projects point to Kenya and not just limited education.

In determining the differences between the youth and the adults and the courage to take responsibility for the elderly is exposed especially in the political and organizational forums for women in the project management process. This analysis is similar to that of Camino and Calvert (2007), who postulated young people who participate in public administration are expected to comply with strict limits set by adults. Gender roles and interpersonal relationships have therefore become a major barrier to public participation in development projects so that the community, including parents, does not see that young people have values, incentives, or the ability to contribute to community life in a rural area.

The analysis of the impact of government policy on youth participation in community projects revealed that 63% of young people were unaware of government guidelines and policies that support troubled youth in Turkana. The researcher concluded that the youth were not aware of the existing government policies and the legal framework guiding youth participation in national development and decision-making processes. Youth related policies were ineffective despite the various benefits associated with youth policies; they often suffer from unemployment to influence youth inclusion and participation in decision-making processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to achieve national youth voice and promote the provision of research advisory services through the national youth organization, staff must provide more jobs and provide youth with meaningful opportunities to participate in governance as this may encourage youth participation. As a result, this will create more youth participation in all spheres of government, thereby improving governance. Secondly, Youth Development Officers must create an environment that
promotes youth participation and informs youth participation in community policy making, planning, decision-making, decision-making and governance in general.

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