



**EFFECT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES  
ON ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
IN BARINGO COUNTY, KENYA**

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**Abstract:**

The participation of members of the public in government development programmes is enshrined in the Kenyan constitutions. The participation is not just mere appearance in project deliberations meetings but to be involved in all aspects of the project from initiation to completion. Poor achievement of sustainable development agenda in the county of Baringo has resulted to increased poverty level, increased illiteracy level, increased health risks challenges, insecurity, household income per day being below 1 USD, devastating natural occurrences (flooding of Lakes Baringo and Bogoria, famine, hunger) and poor road network access continues to be experienced. The aim of this paper was to determine the effect of public participation strategies towards achievement of sustainable development in Baringo County. The study was conducted in the six sub counties of Baringo involving sampled residents and sub county administrators. The study was anchored on concurrent triangulation design that allowed collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Data was collected through use of questionnaire and interview guide. Analysis of data has been done using descriptive, inferential statistics

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and thematic content analysis. The research found out that there was minimal participation of Baringo residents in development initiatives. The county government of Baringo at times shared ( $M=2.61$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ) information on socio-economic projects being implemented in the county on occasional basis. Correlation statistics computed showed a weak positive relationship ( $r=0.288$ ) between public participation practices and sustainable development in Baringo County, Kenya. The paper concludes that public participation practices strategies were not regularly used, and this contributed to slow achievement of sustainable developmental targets in the study area. The paper recommends that if the county of Baringo is to realise its county integrated development plans goals, public participation should be the key strategy towards achievement. This means that public participation should be at the core of any sustainable development initiative and hence Baringo county government needs to be keen on this practice.

**Keywords:** public, strategy, participation, sustainable, development, achievement

## 1. Introduction

Sustainable development is the key aspiration for the 21st century nations and corporations (public & private). Sustainable development is a necessity today's objective for the following reasons: improving quality of life, more generous definition of welfare and happiness includes factors related to our environment and communities, and economic factors; environmental issues, economic and social overlap (Gberevbie & Segun, 2017). For sustainable development to be attained, issues of governance, democracy, citizenship and political participation are essential (United Nations, 2016). Better governance is a prerequisite for and probably also a product of steps towards sustainability (Fikkert, 2018). Good governance consists of openness and participation, accountability, effective coherence, efficiency (proportionality) and greater sensitivity to the immediate context that is promised by subsidiary (OECD, 2013). This paper focuses on the aspect of public participation as a strategy towards achievement of sustainable development. Midina, Joseph and Mohamad (2016) noted that one of the important elements in advancing sustainability agenda in the public sector is the public participation or stakeholders' engagement. The dissemination of project information is crucial in ensuring the successful execution of public projects implemented in the community. The United Nations (2016) argued that through public participation in sustainable development, policy making is brought closer to people by engaging people in policy development, implementation and more direct evaluation, and public service delivery is designed around the needs and preferences of people rather than organisational structure of government. In both cases the emphasis is on understanding people's needs and striving for people satisfaction.

The Kenya Constitution (2010) indicates that 'public participation' is a fundamental principle that should be observed across all social, economic and political areas of this nation. This is also applicable in development projects where public inputs

and comments on what they want to be done for by the government are critical. Public participation helps to ensure that governments are accountable for their actions and responsive to public interests and therefore every project that they start should have the support and involvement of members of the public. However, statistics from research conducted shows that the sustainability of various development projects implemented in the country is very low. A research by Kipyegon (2015) found out that Kenya had an overall sustainability rating of 49.0% on World Bank funded projects, which is low as compared to other east African countries which had a higher sustainability rating. Kenya promulgated a new very progressive constitution in the year 2010 which resulted in the birth of 47 County Governments. The county Governments are now the new centres of Development in Kenya and therefore the research was undertaken in Baringo County. This study focused on public governance on achievement of sustainable development in Baringo County, Kenya. The county is situated in the rift valley region covering an area of 11,015 square kilometers. It is bordered by seven counties; Laikipia, Samburu, Turkana, West Pokot, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Nakuru, Kericho and Uasin Gishu. The total population of 66,763 people demand better services from the county government through accomplishment of various sustainable development projects. According to the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2018 -2022 Baringo County has a human development index of 0.5108 which is lower than the national average of 0.520. The human poverty index stands at 30.6% compared to the national level of 29%. The poverty incidence is 52.2% compared to national incidence of 45.2%. Water and sanitation is a big problem in the county. Water shortage is prevalent. This is caused by low rainfall received and cyclic droughts. People spend many hours daily looking for water, Access to clean water is a big challenge in the county. According to the CIDP the average distance to the nearest water point is 5kms. This poses a major challenge to health and pollution hazards among the residents of Baringo County. Access to health and nutrition is still a major problem in the county. The questions that prompted this investigation were that could be the issues of non-participation of public members in sustainable development could be the reason for slow development of the county? This paper therefore looks at the effect of public participation strategies on achievement of sustainable development in Baringo County Kenya.

## **2. Literature Review**

Studies have been conducted in relation to public participation and achievement of sustainable development from various countries. In Canada, Cadman, Boyko and Cooper (2017) reviewed relevant literature on sustainability, stakeholders and the urban design process. A pilot study was then described in which stakeholders involved in the UDCP discussed key themes relating to sustainability and the process. These themes include sustainability, community engagement, the design brief, design quality, design champions and processes. The study confirmed the importance of recognising the stakeholders in a process and creating a fluid framework to allow communication of

ideas and decisions. Stakeholders form constructs about their environment which inform their approach to sustainability. The gap created from Cadman et al. (2017) is that their study was anchored on qualitative approach while this study did use both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In Bangladesh, Ferdous (2018) research was to understand the mechanism of Swamp Forest Restoration in Sunamganj (SFRS) project for the purpose of analyzing the linkages between natural resource conservation and livelihood security, its impacts on major capital assets of local community, and the views and perspectives of different stakeholders. The researcher applied the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) Framework for the analysis. The study followed a qualitative research approach which was supplemented by quantitative data. It was found that local community members were mobilized by the SFRS project in four selected areas: i) conservation and management of flooded forest, ii) capacity building activities, iii) providing Alternative Income Generating (AIG) activities, and iv) raising awareness. However, limited community participation was found, perhaps due to variations of opinion among stakeholders regarding the SFRS project and its activities. Arkhangelskaya (2018) assessed economic efficiency of a wood building through examining construction industry key stakeholders decision-making aspects. The methodology focused on two approaches; individual interviews, online surveys and life cycle cost (LCC) assessment approach with construction sector critical stakeholders. LCC assessment results indicates cost-reducing opportunities for wood building related to material's lightweight, prefabrication, and fast installation, which allow decreasing the construction costs. Questionnaire and interview result showed that construction sector professionals identified the benefits of building with wood and embraced practices associated with it. Findings showed challenges affecting stakeholders' decision to embrace wood in building projects existed. Communication on knowledge on wood buildings economic and technical performance was rarely done.

In Sweden and Germany, Dembczyk and Zaoral (2014) wanted to understand how stakeholders were engaged in the creation of an innovative product and/or service for environmental sustainability in sustainable entrepreneurial start-ups from the perspective of the firm. The data collection technique was through semi-structured interviews. To understand stakeholder engagement, time scale, visual mapping and deductive approach was used. Results indicated how various stakeholder groups like technology developers, promoters, financial resource providers, feedback providers and project team members were involved in developing innovation and business start ups in the product development and commercialisation stages. Relationship with stakeholders and secrecy impact on how stakeholders were being engaged.

Toth (2017) looked at how 'wisdom council' – a public participation method had on its participants. Participatory observation involving semi-structured interview was used as a methodology. Results indicated that participatory methods were essential for observing the impact of the 'wisdom councils' on its participants to better understand if and how these impacts could be important for permitting more sustainable development.

Soheila and Janbaz (2013) research was to identify methods and procedures of participation planning in order to use the most of people's participation ability to develop the urban areas. The statistical population for this research includes the caretaker of families in the urban areas of Qaemshahr city, and by Using the Morgan Table, we selected a sample consisting of 380 households. Findings indicated that citizen participation had such an outstanding role that by changing the approach in the city and urban areas planning, it would lead to an urban sustainable development.

Pimoljinda and Siriprasertchok (2017) investigated the importance of landscape analysis in designing the public participation process for rural sustainable development projects, using a case study of a non-governmental organisation (NGO)'s development projects in Chonburi province. They found out that lack of impact of landscape analysis on the spatial distribution or density of the target population had become a significant intervening obstacle in promoting public participation. Aly and Amer (2011) studied Sid Gaber Railway station project public participation process in Egypt. They deduced that stakeholders do have control over decisions made at the rail project and government officers needed to have the capacity to handle the conflicts, address anger and hostile manners and to achieve public trust instead of doubting public participation. Sidi Gaber station has a special location, a unique architectural style and a historical value; so, the research carried on a questionnaire to know the public opinion about this project especially from the logic of heritage rehabilitation and maintenance, and from the environmental point of view.

In Uganda, Kajoba (2016) assessed the influence of stakeholder involvement on service delivery in the oil sector in Buliisa District, western Uganda. The study employed a correlational research design and both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A total of 114 respondents participated in the study. The study findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between stakeholder involvements in the oil exploration design/planning, implementation and M&E processes and service delivery in Buliisa. It was concluded that, stakeholder involvement in planning, implementation and M&E processes enhances service delivery. Ronoh, Mulongo and Kurgat (2018) assessed challenges of integrating public participation in the devolved system of governance in Kenya. The study was conducted in Kericho, Bomet and Narok Counties. Analytical survey approach was used in the study. Data was collected via questionnaire whose data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Result showed that utilisation of public participation approaches was low because of these factors; members of the public unwillingness to participate, no political good will, members of public negative attitude towards PP, lack of time to participate, inadequate knowledge on PP, political interference influences the extent and quality of participation, demand for incentives and lack of time by the citizens. Kipyegon (2015) investigated the determinants of sustainability of World Bank funded projects in Kenya. The study adopted both cross-sectional and explanatory research designs. The targeted projects were all projects funded between the years 2000 and 2012. The study targeted 65 respondents of which 51 successfully filled and returned the questionnaires. The findings of the study showed that

the clarity of stakeholders' roles affects project sustainability. Stakeholder involvement during implementation is necessary for project sustainability. The involvement would make the stakeholders own the project outcome and thus enhances the success of projects sustainability.

### 3. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in Baringo County Kenya which is divided into 6 sub counties; Baringo Central, Baringo North, Tiaty, Baringo South, Eldama Ravine and Mogotio. The target population involved 666,763 people according to Kenya National Bureau of statistics 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census (KNBS, 2019). In terms of research design, a concurrent triangulation guided this study. A design in a single study that contains quantitative and qualitative data collection methods that is performed at the same time. This is a mixed method research design where data is collected concurrently, analysed concurrently and presented concurrently (Creswell, 2014). The aim of concurrent triangulation research design is to provide information to research questions and also test hypothesis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2015). A sample size of 384 respondents was selected in addition to 6 sub county director of education to participate in the study. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were utilised in selecting respondents. This study designed questionnaire and interview guide to collect data. The instruments used were subjected to pilot test, reliability and validity before they were taken to the field. Analysis of data has been done through qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis.

### 4. Results and Discussions

The study collected information from Baringo county residents in six sub counties: Tiaty, Baringo South, Mogotio, Baringo Central, Eldama Ravine and Baringo North. The instruments used were questionnaire and interview schedule. A total of 343 residents from the expected sample of 384 responded to questionnaire items reflecting a response rate of 89.32%. Moreover, interviews with all (100.0%) Sub County Administrators were conducted in the six sub counties. The researcher asked the respondents to indicate if they were aware of any development project done by their county since the year 2013. Their feedback is given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Respondents Awareness of Developmental Projects Implemented by County Government

| Awareness level  | Frequency  | Percentage   |
|------------------|------------|--------------|
| Extremely aware  | 26         | 7.6          |
| Aware            | 138        | 40.2         |
| Moderately aware | 78         | 22.7         |
| Somewhat aware   | 57         | 16.6         |
| Not aware at all | 44         | 12.8         |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>343</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Result in Table 1 show that 138 (40.2%) of respondents agreed that they were aware of at least a county government project in their area, 78 (22.7%) were moderately aware, 57 (16.6%) were somewhat are, 44 (12.85) were not aware at all while 26 (7.6%) were extremely aware. Descriptive data shows that majority of respondents were moderately (3.13 and SD=1.17) of projects being implemented in their county. Their awareness level despite average will help the research understand whether governance strategies are applied for the purpose of ensuring the projects being implemented are sustainable.

#### 4.1 Public Participation and Achievement of Sustainable Development

The main objective of the study was to know how residents of Baringo County were involved in public participation during project initiation and implementation. This is because the constitution of Kenya guarantees each citizen to public participation on any government project at all levels of governance. The researcher collected data from all the six sub county administrators using interviews and sampled residents from the six sub counties using questionnaires. At first, the researcher asked the respondents (residents) to indicate their rating of public participation in county government projects on a scale of five; Always (5), often (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2) and never (1). The outcomes are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Residents Perception on Public Participation in Baringo County**

|     | Item   | N              | R             | S              | O             | A             | M      | SD      |
|-----|--|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------|---------|
| i   | We participate in decision making in the county  | 86<br>(25.1%)  | 92<br>(26.8%) | 117<br>(34.1%) | 23<br>(6.7%)  | 25<br>(7.3%)  | 2.4431 | 1.15044 |
| ii  | We are involved in planning of projects initiated by the county government                 | 94<br>(27.4%)  | 86<br>(25.1%) | 103<br>(30.0%) | 36<br>(10.5%) | 24<br>(7.0%)  | 2.4461 | 1.19545 |
| iii | We are aware of Fiscal budget for this year since we participated in meetings              | 145<br>(42.3%) | 71<br>(20.7%) | 60<br>(17.5%)  | 29<br>(8.5%)  | 38<br>(11.1%) | 2.2536 | 1.36897 |
| iv  | I have attended public/town hall meeting to discuss the affairs of the county              | 177<br>(51.6%) | 54<br>(15.7%) | 75<br>(21.9%)  | 19<br>(5.5%)  | 18<br>(5.2%)  | 1.9708 | 1.19662 |
| v   | We are involved in monitoring how the county utilise funds received through devolution     | 169<br>(49.3%) | 91<br>(26.5%) | 50<br>(14.6%)  | 15<br>(4.4%)  | 18<br>(5.2%)  | 1.8980 | 1.13094 |
| vi  | We are consulted prior to initiation of socio-economic projects in this area by the county | 123<br>(35.9%) | 70<br>(20.4%) | 102<br>(29.7%) | 19<br>(5.5%)  | 29<br>(8.5%)  | 2.3032 | 1.24542 |
| vii | Information on socio-economic  | 77<br>(22.4%)  | 87<br>(25.4%) | 111<br>(32.4%) | 26<br>(7.6%)  | 42<br>(12.2%) | 2.6181 | 1.25536 |

Amos Kiptui Kibet, Benjamin Tarus, Sr. Lucy Wanza  
EFFECT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES ON ACHIEVEMENT  
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|  |                                 |  |  |  |  |  |        |         |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--------|---------|
|  | projects is shared to residents |  |  |  |  |  |        |         |
|  | <b>Composite</b>                |  |  |  |  |  | 2.2761 | 1.22046 |

**Key:** N-Never, R-Rarely, S-Sometimes, O-Often, A-Always, M-Mean and SD-Standard Deviation.

Research findings reveal that 117 (34.1%) of respondents indicated that they sometimes participate in decision making matters in the county of Baringo. Only, 25 (7.3%) always participated in decision making while 86 (25.1%) have never ever participated. Mean values show that majority of residents rarely (M=2.44 and SD=1.15) participated in decision making processes in the county of Baringo, Kenya. the outcome suggests that decision making processes is not inclusive and appears to be the mandate that only elected and county government officials participate. The residents seem not to be involved at all. This is in contrast to the views expressed by some sub county administrators where one of them indicated that:

*“They are involved in the process through public participation. They are members of project management implementation committee.”*

Another sub county administrator indicated:

*“Public participation in all the three processes Annual Development Plan (ADP), County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP) and budget estimates. Representation from the community. Involving the public to identify the project.”*

Secondly, 103 (30.0%) indicated that they were sometimes involved in planning of county government projects, 86 (25.1%) were rarely involved, 94 (27.4%) have never been involved, 36 (10.5%) admitted to sometimes being involved while 24 (7.0%) were always involved. the result therefore shows that residents are rarely (M=2.44 and SD=1.19) involved in planning of county government projects in the county of Baringo, Kenya. This implies that projects being initiated in the county of Baringo lack input of majority of residents. This could explain why their sustainability and effective implementation remains a challenge. This is different from Sub County administrators who indicated:

*“Citizens participation in project identification, participation in project implementation, performing budget planning through public participation and monitoring of project as it continues.”*

Thirdly, 145 (42.3%) indicated that they are not aware of fiscal budget for the year 2018/2019 because they did not participate in deliberations meetings by the county assembly of Baringo. The mean statistics show that respondents were rarely aware (M=2.25 and SD=1.36) of meetings to discuss county budget plans as required by county government Act (2012). This is because, most of the adverts on meeting places are always done in the daily newspapers which are far to reach by a majority of residents of the area.

In addition, some of these meetings are held in urban centres which are accessible to little number of residents. This information is different from what Sub County administrators indicated as quoted by one of them No. 5 who remarked that:

*“Participating in budget process public meetings. They write memorandums to department. They form project supervision committees.*

When asked on whether they had ever attended public town hall meeting to discuss affairs of their county, more than half 177 (51.6%) never attended, 54 (15.7%) indicated to have rarely attended, 75 (21.9%) had at times attended, 19 (5.5%) often attend and 18 (5.25) always attend. The mean statistics shows that most respondents have rarely ( $M=1.97$  and  $SD=1.19$ ) attended meetings on county affairs in Baringo county. This shows their level of consideration by the county government in giving their inputs and contributions to sustainable matters affecting their counties.

Research also discovered that close to half 169 (49.3%) of residents indicated that they have never been involved in monitoring of fund usage by Baringo county government since the year 2013. Only 18 (5.2%) agreed that they always monitor funds utilisation by the county government. The descriptive statistics reveal that monitoring of funds by residents rarely ( $M=1.89$  and  $SD=1.13$ ). The mean values are below two suggesting that resident rarely participate in monitoring funds usage by their county government. On the frequency to which residents were consulted prior to initiation of socio-economic projects, 123 (35.9%) were never consulted, 70 (20.4%) were rarely consulted, 102 (29.7%) were at times consulted, 19 (5.5%) were often consulted and only 29 (8.5%) agreed that they were always consulted when new projects were initiated in their wards.

The mean statistics shows that majority of residents of Baringo were rarely ( $M=2.30$  and  $SD=1.24$ ) consulted when new projects were being initiated. This shows that despite some projects being initiated, they lack public input and therefore do not have public approval and support even if they are completed. Asked as to whether information on socio-economic projects was shared to residents so that they can understand the details of the project, 77 (22.4%) indicated it has never happened, 87 (25.4%) indicated that it is rarely shared, 111 (32.4%) indicated that it is at times shared, 26 (7.6%) indicated that information is often shared while 42 (12.2%) indicated that they are always provided with information on various projects being conducted by county government in their vicinities. The mean values show that respondents are sometimes ( $M=2.61$  and  $SD=1.25$ ) provided with information with regard to various socio-economic projects being undertaken by county government of Baringo. The mean values are on the lower end of the group suggesting that close to half of respondents do not receive project information in the county.

Composite data shows that public participation on various projects being implemented by county government of Baringo was low ( $M=2.27$  and  $SD=1.22$ ). This is in

contrast to response given by the sub county administrators who indicated that public participation was common in implementing sustainable development agenda.

One (No. 6) mentioned that:

*“Sub county locational development committee present during the public barazas guided by the planning department. Technical team visits the sites, ascertain costs and goes for approval to the project management committee with the report.”*

Further, a correlation analysis was computed to check on the relationship between public participation strategies and sustainable development achievement. Results are given in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Public participation and sustainable development achievement

|                             |                     | <b>Public participation</b> | <b>Sustainable development</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Public participation</b> | Pearson Correlation | 1                           | .288**                         |
|                             | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                             | .000                           |
|                             | N                   | 343                         | 343                            |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation statistic shows that there exists a weak positive relationship ( $r=0.288$ ) which is significant ( $p=0.001$ ) between public participation of residents of Baringo county and sustainable development. Considering the research had earlier identified that public participation was low, this also appears here not to have significant effect on sustainable projects being initiated in the study area. Nevertheless, the outcomes suggest that there would be likelihood in projects being sustainable when aspects of public participation are taken into consideration by the county government of Baringo, Kenya. where there exists no opportunity for public participation, the county government need to find ways and means of ensuring that all views of residents are taken and acted upon for the purpose of realising sustainable agenda.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The role of public participation in project conception, design, planning, implementation and completion is key to attain their objectives in current times. The Kenyan constitution requires that public participation is done in all aspects relating to management of public funds. The residents have to be informed on what the county government is intending to do in their locations. The study established that the level of public participation in sustainable development projects was low in the county. In some cases, it was found out that the information on public forums was not disseminated through the right channels. This meant that public members’ inputs and contributions were not collected in majority of projects that were being implemented in the county of Baringo, Kenya. Further, the research discovered that due to low involvement of residents in public participation forums, it did not significantly affect sustainable development efforts ( $p>0.05$ ). It was also

discovered that sub county administrators claimed to conduct public participation but respondents appeared to disagree with the statement. when pressed further to shed more light on the participation that existed, it was found out that these consultative meetings were mostly held in urban centres in high end hotels and not community / village centres where majority of members of public converge. This state of affairs led to rejection of the null hypothesis and conclusion that public participation governance strategies did not significantly influence sustainable development programmes in Baringo County, Kenya. In recommendations, there is need for county government to consider using alternative methods of disseminating information rather than relying on newspaper and notices when organising for fiscal meetings. This can be done through disseminating information through schools where children can inform their parents, church gatherings and also during market days. Also, the members of the public need to be sensitised on their role in participatory governance through civic education forums by relevant organisation and government agencies.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

### **About the Author(s)**

The corresponding author is a Certified Public Accountant Kenya (CPA) professional working in the Kenya public service. The other two co-authors are MBA research supervisors teaching Strategic Management Courses at Catholic University of Eastern Africa – AMECEA GABA Campus Eldoret.

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