

# Effects of Community Awareness on Public Participation of Women in the Development Planning Processes in Awendo Sub County

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## Abstract

Public participation is a principle that has been given prominence in the Constitution of Kenya (2010). Participation should imbue all public affairs and be promoted by both genders acting in public interest. The Constitution sets key requirements for the legislature at both levels of government to provide frameworks for public participation in governance processes. The emphasis for feminist participation underscores the fact that the election of representatives does not negate the need for people to continuously be involved in governance processes. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of community awareness on public participation of women in the development planning processes in Awendo Sub County. The target population of the study was from the four administrative wards of Awendo Sub County, twenty (20) Religious leaders and local opinion leaders from each of the four wards selected randomly and four (4) members of County Assembly from Awendo Sub County. The target population was 57,724 participants. Using Krejcie & Morgan table, the sample size was three hundred and eighty two (382) people. Stratified sampling technique was used to partition the sample frame. Proportionate sampling was used to get the actual sample of each stratum relative to the overall sample size. Simple random technique was used to select the specific size from the strata of the target population. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected, using interview schedules for key informants and questionnaires respectively. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22. Qualitative data was transcribed and reported according to emergent themes and narratives while Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data was presented by the use of tables. The study concluded that the level of public participation is highly dependent on level of public awareness and vice versa.

**Keywords:** Women, Awareness, Community, Public participation, Development Planning

**DOI:** 10.7176/PPAR/12-2-04

**Publication date:** April 30<sup>th</sup> 2022

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Democratic governance will be meaningless if governments do not ensure an effective and fully informed public participation (Bastidas, 2004) asserted that Governments need to better take into account public participation not only to effectively engage the general public, but also to establish a more mutually beneficial government and citizen relationship

Globally, democratic governance is increasingly being pursued in a bid to entrench transparency and accountability; check corruption and provide opportunities for participation of all citizens in decision-making processes. To this end, countries endeavor to reform constitutions and governance policies to entrench all citizens' 'voices,' particularly the underprivileged and specialized groups in the communities (Kamlage, Jan-Hendrik & Nanz, Patrizia. 2018). To actualize the reforms the governments which have instituted the reforms, should provide for public participation in their constitutions and policies. Public participation is recognized as a critical principle and element of democracy (Ebbesson, J. et al., 2012), in that, it opens spaces for different categories of the public to air their concerns as far as decision making and governance are concerned. Among the categories of people in the society whose participation has not been or partially included, are the women. No wonder, therefore, that affirmative action is being advocated and undertaken to include women's participation (Campbell, 2018). Globally, only 23% of parliament members are women (UN Women, 2013, p. 53). Similarly, there are only 17 heads of State who are women and Ministerial and managerial position held by women globally which account for only 18% and 34% respectively (World Economic Forum, 2018, p.9)

Public participation and accountability in Kenya can be traced back to Kenya's decentralization initiatives. These initiatives included the District Focus for Rural development (DFRD) in the 1980s, and the proliferation of decentralized funds in Kenya in the late 1990s (Oyugi and Kibua, 2006).

Public Participation in Kenya predates the establishment of county governments (Lakin, 2013). In 2001, Local Authorities (LAs) established a formal mechanism for public participation called the Local Authorities Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) (Hongo, 2010). In order to access transfers from the national government under the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF), LAs were required to allow the public to participate directly in planning and budgeting for a particular fixed portion of the available resources, with a focus on development projects (Kibua and Mwabu, 2008). Thus for LAs to access funding to pay for essential services and manage their debts, they must adopt the doctrine of participatory budgeting (Oyugi and Kibua, 2006).

Evidence shows that women's rights in politics and decision-making are an area in which slow progress has occurred and limited gains made. Progress has not been substantial in legislatures at national and local levels. This makes it difficult to enforce policies and decisions on advancement of women in parliament, senior positions in the public sector and local government level. Yet one of the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is: "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace" (Beijing Declaration, para 13, United Nations 1995).

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 says that citizens have the right to participate at each level of public participation. In conformity, (World Bank, 2002) notes that citizens' awareness of their rights, roles and responsibilities is a necessary element for constructive citizen participation.

The concept of community awareness and participation emerged in the early 1970s from the community movement in developing countries and has since become important basis for project success (Thwala, 2010). Community awareness and participation are particularly necessary due to the failure of the top-down approaches to address challenges such as high poverty levels and environmental degradation among others. Consequently, emphasis shifted from imported technical professional solutions to community based development, recognizing local knowledge and skills of the people living in poverty and making effort to engage them in participatory programmes (Warburton, 2000); (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

As noted by the (World Bank, 2004), community awareness and participation process through which stakeholders gain influence and control over development initiatives, decisions and resources affecting their lives and livelihoods. To many developing governments, community awareness and participation are valuable in improving community welfare, training people in local administration and extending government control through self-initiatives (McCommon, 1993).

Community participation brings forth several advantages to communities in terms of empowerment, capacity building, improving project effectiveness and efficiency; project cost sharing and enhancing ownership (Thwala, 2010). The extent of participation varies from information sharing, consultation, decision making and initiation of action. The concept is successful in situations where community members and community based organizations take up active role and responsibilities than where development actors merely target them by baseline surveys and consensus-building meetings (Thwala, 2001; 2010). Community based organizations serve as channels for information flow to communities to enable them make informed decisions and choices (Thwala, 2009).

(Omolo, 2010) argues that for devolution to be successful citizens must be politically conscious, they must not only be aware of their rights and responsibilities but also know the channels via which they can exercise them.

For development initiatives to gain ground, beneficiaries must be aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities (Muhammad, 2010). Development can only be successful if the citizens are politically conscious; they must not only be aware of their rights and responsibilities but the channels via which they can exercise them (Omolo, 2010). In some jurisdictions, the right to public participation is enshrined by law. The right to public participation is conceived as a human right or as manifestation of the right to freedom of association. Countries such as the US, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Sweden, have public participation and freedom of information provisions in their legal systems since the Middle Ages to establish how citizens' awareness of public participation as a right affects their involvement in the integrated development planning process.

Capacity building programmes for improving participation of rural women in the public participation process are often lacking and not effective to create an environment where the people and their governments have meaningful engagements on issues that affect them. They are powerless and do not know how they can empower themselves to influence decisions in the public participation process. These factors coupled with poor access to information about the CIDP process cause people staying in the rural areas not to participate effectively in the process.

There's been little or no training, skills development and provision of appropriate information have been

done to enable women to participate effectively and to engage in meaningful discussions on public participation related issues in their own governments.

Community change processes affect residents, first and foremost; they should be able to help shape such changes. Private sector businesses rely on multi-billion-dollar market studies to ascertain consumer desires, but local governments typically solicit public participation only through public hearings, of which many residents are often unaware.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional study design. A cross-sectional survey collects data to make inferences about a population of interest at one point in time. The study collected data from Awendo sub-county to ascertain women's participation in development planning processes in the Sub County. Cross-sectional surveys have been described as snapshots of the populations about which they gather data. Cross-sectional surveys may be repeated periodically. However, in a repeated cross-sectional survey, respondents to the survey at one point in time are not intentionally sampled again, although a respondent to one administration of the survey could be randomly selected for a subsequent one.

According to (Orodho, 2009), descriptive studies are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to provide information about naturally occurring behavior and attitudes or any other characteristic of a particular individual. It will describe what existed concerning variables or conditions in a situation (Mugenda&Mugenda, 2003).

(Kothari, 2004) defines research design as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner aimed at combining relevance to research purposes. This study adopts a cross-sectional survey design. A cross-sectional survey design is used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow the researcher to collect information, summarize them, present, and interpret them for clarification (Orodho, 2008). The design was used to collect, gather information, present, and interpret data to clarify the study. The survey design was suitable in this research as it depicted and described the state of affairs as they existed. According to (Kothari, 2004), the researcher has no control over variables but can only report what happens. Therefore, the researcher attempted to discover the variables that could not be controlled to unravel the causes of such variables.

According to (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003), the cross-sectional survey design is useful in explaining the status of the two variables. It enables the generation of new information directly from the respondents.

The study was carried out in Awendo Sub County, which is located in South Western Kenya. It is a Sub County in Migori County, from the former Nyanza Province of Kenya. The county has a population of 108,913 (2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census) and covers 262 km<sup>2</sup>. The sub-county comprises of 4 wards; West Sakwa, South Sakwa, North Sakwa, and Central Sakwa. South Nyanza Sugar Company is domiciled in the Sub County and employs over two thousand people from various tribes and different counties in Kenya.

The dominant communities in AwendoSub County include the Luo, making 90% of the sub county's population. The main economic activity in the area is agriculture. However, other communities such as Somalis, Luhyas, Kisiis, and Indians are also present as business people or are employed by the government.

The area is endowed with physical infrastructure. That is; it has relatively good road network which serves in the transportation of agricultural products and links the Sub County with sub counties forming Migori County. Further, the area has relatively good Electrical power supply covering the entire area of study although there are enclaves of community members who do not enjoy access to the power network. Data from Economic planning department on women's public participation in Migori county show that representation of women from Awendo sub-county in public participation forums have generally been very low as compared to other sub-counties within Migori county. This scenario calls for a study to find out reasons for low turnout in such fora.

(Kothari, 2008) describes a target population as the total collection of elements about which one wishes to make inferences while the sample size represents a population. The study population was women (57,724) residing in the four wards of Awendo Sub County, religious/opinion leaders (20), ward administrators (4), and the Members of the Sub County Assembly(4)

(Cornell, 1960) described sampling as the process by which a relatively small number of individuals, objects, or events are chosen and analyzed to determine the entire population from which it was chosen. The researcher used Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination table (Appendix). From the sample size determination table, the target population of 57,724 participants requires a sample size of 382 ordinary women.

According to (Copper and Schindler, 2006), the sample size must be large enough to represent the universe population. Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967) guided in selecting the appropriate sample size for public participation fora participants that were interviewed. The method is ideal for use when it is impossible to interview all the respondents in the population, which comprises all participants. However, this study adopted the approach of Krejcie and Morgan table (1970), which gives a sample of 382 based on a population of 57,724. To find the sample size for the opinion leaders, the researcher used a sample size by (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003), who asserts that a sample size of between 10-50% is acceptable for a study. The research adopted stratified sampling due to the nature of the target population. Stratified sampling requires one to partition the

sample frame into relatively homogeneous subgroups that are distinct. Proportionate sampling was used to get the actual sample of each stratum relative to the overall sample size. A simple random technique was used to select the specific size from the strata of the target population. The simple random technique was used to select the respondents to take part in the study; it ensured that the entire individuals in the defined population have an equal and independent chance of being selected to form the sample.

This community exhibited homogenous characteristics with reference to their social, economic, and political activities and their environmental and geographical space. This homogeneity made it appropriate to use Krejcie & Morgan's table to determine the sample size from a population of 57,724 women.

This study used questionnaires and interview schedules with key informants in an attempt to provide answers to the research questions. A summary of the research instruments to be used and the purpose each served is discussed below.

Data collected from the questionnaire's administrations were analyzed quantitatively, while data from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively. (Martin and Acuna, 2002) assert that SPSS handles a large amount of data given its broad spectrum of the statistical procedure and quite efficient. Frequencies and percentages were used to discuss the findings while, tables, pie charts, and bar graphs were used to present data.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

##### 4.1 Questionnaire Return Rate

The study sought to establish the response rate of the respondents to determine its adequacy in giving a reliable analysis of the data

Table 1: Response Rate

	Questionnaires Administered	Questionnaires filled & Returned	Percentage
Respondents	382	279	73.04

Source: Survey data (2020)

The study targeted a sample size of 382 respondents to be administered with questionnaires from which 279 were filled in and returned making a response rate of 73.04%. This response rate was satisfactory to make conclusions for the study as it was representative. According to (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999), a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% and over is excellent. Based on the above assertion, the response rate was excellent.

##### 4.2 Gender of Respondents

In a bid to establish the gender category of the respondents, the study posed a question requiring the respondents to indicate whether they were male or female. Results of gender distribution are shown in table 4 below

Table 2: Gender category

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	98	35.13%
Female	181	64.87%
<b>Total</b>	279	100%

Source: Survey data (2020)

On respondent's gender category, the study established that, majority of the respondents as shown by 64.87% were females whereas 35.13% were males. This implies that both male and female respondents were fairly engaged in this study and therefore the research findings did not suffer from gender biases.

##### 4.3 Highest Level of Education

The study sought to determine the respondents' highest level of education achieved. Results of respondents' achieved highest level of education are shown in table 5 below

Table 3: Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
KCPE	57	20.43%
KCSE	95	34.05%
College Diploma	75	26.88%
Bachelors' Degree	47	16.84%
Masters	5	1.80%
PhD	0	0.00%
Total	279	100%

Source: Survey data (2020)

From the findings, most of the respondents as shown by 34.05% indicated KCSE as their highest level of education, 26.88% indicated College Diploma as their highest level of education, 20.43% indicated KCPE as their highest level of education, 16.84% indicated a bachelors' degree as their highest level of education, 1.80% indicated masters as their highest level of education whereas none of the respondents indicated PhD as their highest level of education. From this study, the results showed that the respondents in Awendo Sub County were fairly educated

#### 4.4 Age of the Respondent

The study sought to determine the respondents' age category. Results of respondents' age distribution are shown in table 4 below

Table 4: Age of the Respondent

Age category	Frequency	Percent
20 to 30 years	90	32.25%
31 to 40 years	111	39.80%
41 to 50 years	54	19.35%
Above 51 years	24	8.60%
Total	279	100%

Source: Survey data (2020)

From the research findings, most of the respondents, as shown by 39.80%, indicated that they were aged between 31 to 40 years, 32.25% of the respondents indicated that they were aged between 20 to 30 years, 19.35% of the respondents indicated that they were aged between 41 to 50 years where as 8.60% of the respondents indicated that they were aged above 51 years. The results from this study showed that all the respondents were of mature age, hence, able to make independent decisions.

#### 4.5 Effects of Community Awareness on Public Participation of Women in development planning process in Awendo Sub County

The study sought to establish whether community awareness influence public participation of women in development planning process in Awendo Sub County. Results are as shown in table 5 below

Table 5: Does Community Awareness Influence Public Participation of Women

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Yes	142	50.90%
No	137	49.10%
Total	279	100%

Source: Survey data (2020)

From the findings, a slight majority of the respondents as shown by 50.90% were of the opinion that community awareness influence public participation of women in development planning process in Awendo Sub County whereas 49.10% of the respondents were of the of the contrary opinion.

#### 4.6 Measures Used to Encourage Public Participation of Women and Awareness

The study sought to determine some of the tools used by the County Government in promoting public awareness and participation of women in development planning process in Awendo Sub County.

Table 6: Measures Used to Encourage Public Participation of Women and Awareness

<b>Sensitizations tool</b>	<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Local radio station	Yes	238	85.30%
	No	41	14.70%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>
Short message service	Yes	119	42.65%
	No	160	57.35%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>
TV stations	Yes	191	68.46%
	No	88	31.54%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>
Posters	Yes	163	58.42%
	No	116	41.58%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>
Local Barazas	Yes	233	83.51%
	No	46	16.49%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>
Door to door campaigns	Yes	90	32.46%
	No	189	67.74%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Survey data (2020)

Table 6 above shows some of the measures used by the county government to encourage public participation and awareness of women in Awendo Sub County. From the research findings 85.30% agreed that the county government, through the staff at Awendo Sub County, were using local radio stations to encourage public participation and awareness of women 42.65% agreed on the use short message service, 68.46% agreed on the use of local TV stations, 58.42% agreed on the use posters, 83.51% agreed on the use of local barazas whereas 32.46% agreed on the use door to door campaigns. Other measures indicated include partnering with local churches, mosques, public campaigns and Sub county and county website. This implies that promoting public awareness and participation of women in development planning processes in AwendoSub County, the County government of Migori, through the Sub County of Awendo staff, was using local radio station. Other measures used were short message service, local TV stations, posters, door to door campaigns, partnering with local churches, mosques, public campaigns and Sub County and County website

#### 4.7 Level of Community Awareness and Participation of Women in Respect to Development Planning Processes in Awendo Sub County

The study sought to determine the extent to which respondents agreed with the statements below relating to effect of community awareness on public participation of women in development planning processes in Awendo Sub County.

Table 7: Level of Community Awareness and Participation of Women in Development Planning Processes in Awendo Sub County

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std Deviation
Community members are always notified of public participation forums within their regions	4.2%	9.7%	7.5%	38.1%	40.5%	4.20	1.05
The level of community awareness determines their public participation in development planning process	16.4%	9.6%	5.2%	36.0%	32.8%	3.82	1.67
Community members are well involved in the various stages in development planning process	0%	7.4%	3.2%	46.8%	42.6%	4.22	0.87
Awareness of participation program gives interested communities opportunity a chance to influence the outcome.	16.3%	0%	6.5%	43.5%	33.7%	3.89	1.36

Source: Survey data (2020)

Table 7 above shows the extent to which level of community awareness influences public participation in development planning process in Awendo Sub County. From the research findings, majority of the respondents agreed that; community members are well involved in the various stages in Sub county development planning process as shown by a mean of 4.22 community members are always notified of public participation forums within their regions as shown by a mean of 4.20, awareness of participation program gives interested communities opportunity a chance to influence the outcome as shown by a mean of 3.89 and that community members are always notified of public participation forums within their regions as shown by a mean of 3.82.

In interviews with MCAs, religious leaders and opinion leaders on the effectiveness of the awareness creation strategies employed by the County government to encourage women participation in Awendo Sub County, majority of the respondents 21 mentioned that they were fairly effective, 10 mentioned that they were very effective while 4 mentioned that they were less effective. Those who mentioned that the strategies were fairly effective explained that the strategy had created awareness among all citizens on the importance of their participation, that members of the public have come to know and participate in development planning process through seminars and training programmes organized by the County government at the Sub County level. Creation of awareness has improved turn up by the members of the public including women during meetings, many members of the public are now well acquainted with their rights and that it has improved coordination of activities within the Sub County. On the other hand, those who mentioned that awareness creation was less effective explained that the exercise has not been properly and effectively done to make more members of the public become aware of their role in development planning process. They were of the opinion that more appropriate ways should be adopted in the creation of public awareness.

In interviews with the members of the public on the effectiveness of awareness creation strategies by the County government to encourage women participation in development planning process, the general view was that the seminars and trainings called by the Sub County are few in number in a year, short and they are not publicized thus majority of the citizens are not informed. In all the interviews, the participants agreed that the use of vernacular radios is an effective means of promoting awareness to citizens. The citizens felt that the Sub County staff was not committed to awareness creation, or building their capacity due the vested interests. That an ignorant population will be easy to control. In case of a forum for creation of awareness, the official employ technical language making the all process vague, that not much information delivered to the public domain. Those who mentioned that they were effective explained that many people have become more aware of their role in development planning process, keeping the public abreast on the development projects within the Sub County and that opinion and views of the members of the public are heard.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established the level of that community awareness determines the level public participation of women in the development planning processes. The study also noted that in view of promoting public awareness and participation of women in the development planning processes, Awendo Sub County agreed on the use of local

radio stations, use of short message service, use of local TV stations, use of posters, door to door campaigns, partnering with local churches mosques campaigns and county and sub county portal.

The study established that encouraging public awareness was critical in promoting citizen and especially women participation in the development planning process. The study also noted that the success of public participation in the development planning processes is dependent on citizen awareness of the participation program, effective utilization of different public platforms. The study concludes that the level of public participation is highly dependent on level of public awareness.

The study noted that low level of public awareness contributed to poor public participation in development planning process. Therefore, strong measures that promote public awareness on development planning processes need to be instituted.

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