

Influence of Participants Preparation for Citizen Fora on Equity in Resource Allocation by County Governments of Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Public participation has become a basic requirement for good governance in democratic societies across the world. It is also instrumental in development practice, where it holds the promise of including the community in agenda-setting as well as decision-making in development planning, implementation and sharing of development benefits. In Kenya, both the national and county governments have been engaging the members of the public in participatory processes including budget making process with various degrees of success. For the goals of public participation to be realized, the forums for engaging citizens must be structured in a way that the desired outcomes are achievable. Participants preparation is critical for ensuring they give meaningful and quality input. This study sought to investigate the influence of participants preparation for citizen fora on equity in resource allocation by county governments in Kenya. The study surveyed targeted members of the public who had participated in the budget hearing forums organized by county governments in nine counties selected for the study using a multistage sampling procedure. A total of 491 respondents selected through systematic random sampling, as well as 27 county government officers who were interviewed as key informants. The resulting data, both quantitative and qualitative was cleaned, coded and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics and content analysis respectively. The findings of the study show that sufficient publicity in planning for the forums and availing timely, comprehensive, and adequate information to the budget forum participants have a positive and significant influence on equity in resource allocation by county governments. Specifically, it showed that sending invitations to members of the public in a timely manner through channels that are widely accessible to the members of the public leads to a higher number of people attending which is important for decisions that promote equity outcomes. Furthermore, availing adequate budget information helps the participants to understand the entire budget process, the proposed projects and the amounts allocated which enables them to give proposals that engender equity in resource allocation. The study recommends that county governments should strengthen both the publicity and civic education to ensure that members of the public are sufficiently mobilized and empowered to give input that will enable the counties to allocate resources in an equitable way.

Key words: Participants preparation, Equity, Resource allocation, County governments, Budget fora

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Participation has been recognized as one of the essential elements of good governance alongside the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision (UNDP, 1997). Participation of citizens is instrumental in the

development process as it leads to several positive benefits. According to Moyo (2008), meaningful development cannot be achieved and sustained without popular participation. Participation leads to several desirable outcomes including increasing legitimacy of development agencies, increasing community ownership, empowerment, and capacity building, promoting transparent, inclusive, and fair decision-making processes as well as equitable distribution of development benefits and burdens (Chambers, 2002; Laurian and Shaw, 2009)

Globally, engaging the citizenry in various decision-making processes by both national and subnational entities has grown over the years spurred by a widening acceptance of democratic governance principles across the globe (Kanyinga, 2016). Public participation has been employed in decentralised units to involve citizens in decision-making about environmental impact assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring of local government projects, land use, infrastructure development as well as allocation of resources (Bosert et al, 2013). Resource allocation has been defined by Mitchell (2012) as the process of choosing a set of competing spending alternatives and it involves the process of matching the activities/projects to be undertaken with the resources available towards the achievement of pre-determined goals and objectives.

In Kenya, public participation is not only a key ingredient to the success of devolution as envisaged in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 (GoK, 2010), but is also a necessary condition for transparent and democratic governance both at the national and county levels (Kanyinga, 2016). However, for public participation to attain these positive outcomes, several essential elements must be in place, key amongst them how participants are prepared for the forums (Nabatchi and Leighniger, 2015) which was the subject of this study. Other important considerations include meeting the legal requirements; timing and venue of the forums; representativeness of the members of the public involved; the institutional arrangements for public consultations and, more importantly, whether the public views and concerns are incorporated into the final decisions made by the governmental authorities who spearhead such public engagements (Creighton, 2005; Fung, 2015; Suphattanakul, 2018; Bobbio, 2019)

In the distribution of public resources, two broad allocational principles have been cited in literature, namely, equality and equity (Anselmi, 2012). Equality-based allocation treats all the groups/regions as if they are the same regarding resources shared between them while equity is the idea that people who are different should not be treated the same way but that it is often necessary to treat people differently depending on their differing circumstances (Lakin, 2016). Involving the public in making decisions over how and on what to allocate resources through participatory budgeting has yielded redistributive outcomes in Porto Alegre in Brazil (Wamper, 2012) and more recently in Seoul in South Korea (Hong and Cho, 2018) with poorer sections of municipalities/towns receiving higher allocations compared to richer sections thus engendering equity. However, such outcomes are predicated on the condition that the citizens are well mobilised in time to attend such forums and they are also furnished with accessible, understandable and comprehensive budget information (Muthomi and Thurmaier, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

The role of public participation in the budget making process in Kenya is well explored and studies have investigated various aspects including; effects of public participation on the budget process (Indeche & Ayuma, 2015; Okumu, 2019) and determinants of public participation in the budget making process (Kituyi, 2021) and transparency in Kenya's budgeting model (Muthomi and Thurmaier, 2021) amongst others. In addition, some studies have explored the principles and practices used by counties in allocation of public resources (Lakin 2016; Kinuthia, 2018) but no study has sought to empirically examine the link between participants preparation for budget forums and equity in resource allocation at the county level in Kenya which was the focus of this study. Although it has been acknowledged that equity outcomes in resource allocation is not solely determined by public participation (Muriu, 2014), yet citizen engagement

in the budget process by county governments, if well executed, is a significant factor in enhancing equity as people's views informs both the allocations of the budget as well as the locations of projects within the county based on the needs identified and prioritised by the citizens themselves (Kinuthia, 2018). Part of ensuring meaningful and effective participation is about how, when and to whom are the invitations to attend such forums sent (publicity of the forums). Also, the information provided to participants should be timely, accessible, comprehensive and relevant to enable them give meaningful contribution at the budget forums (Muthomi and Thurmaier, 2021). The County governments of Kenya have been engaging the public in budget preparation since 2013 and yet no study has been conducted to determine whether participants preparation for such forums has any bearing on whether the allocation of resources is equitable amongst the various regions within the counties.

Research Objective

The objective of the study was to assess the influence of participants preparation for Citizen fora on equity in resource allocation by County governments of Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Participants preparation for citizen fora has no significant effect on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Genuine public participation assumes that the people who participate have the capacity to engage meaningfully and give useful input that will add value to the process and the outcomes of the participation exercise (Laurian et al, 2010). It is important to prepare participants of citizen forums adequately to enhance their capacity to engage (Nabatchi and Leighner, 2015). According to Bobbio (2018) effective public participation requires availing complete, balanced and accessible information to the participants. One of the criticisms often leveled by government officials against citizen forums is that the views they receive from such forums are rash, irrelevant or ill-informed to be of any practical value in public decision-making (Nabatchi, 2012 c; Muthomi and Thurmaier, 2022). However, there is evidence from empirical studies that show that whenever the citizens are given comprehensive and non-biased information in a format that is easily accessible to them, the quality and usefulness of their input improves significantly (Carpini, 2000)

Participant preparation has been conceptualized differently by different scholars since different participation opportunities call for different levels of preparation depending on the complexity of the issues and what is at stake in the decision being considered (IBP, 2023). According to Bossert et al (2013), participants preparation incorporates methods used for informing/inviting the stakeholders as well access, timeliness and quality of information given to them. Brown and chin (2013) have delineated participants preparation into two categories; whether the stakeholders were provided with sufficient information and knowledge to take part (i.e. to attend the forums) and whether the process of consultation gave the participants sufficient information to meaningfully participate i.e. whether it was relevant to the matter under consideration.

According to the guidelines of public participation prepared by the Ministry of devolution and planning and the Council of Governors in Kenya, the public ought to be provided with information about the venue, timing and agenda for discussion, expenditure estimates, medium to long term planning frameworks, as well as other relevant data critical for effective public participation (GoK, 2016). The guidelines however do not specify the timelines for availing this information leaving counties with the discretion on when to provide such information including some availing the budgets in hard cop on the material day of the forum (Muthomi and Thurmaier (2020) Such information can be shared through several ways including printed handouts, through websites, on social media and other online platforms, through live discussions on

community radio as well as through presentations by county government technical staff at the forums (IBP, 2023). Studies on participants preparation in Kenya have consistently showed that it has a positive effect on the outcomes of the participatory events. A study by Mbithi (2018) on determinants of public participation in Kenyan counties, found that ease of access to information on county budgets improved the likelihood of having a meaningful budget forum. Additionally, Ngeeti and Odhiambo (2022) found that lack of clear communication by the county government officials about public forums affected the efficacy of public participation outcomes in Narok County. Muthomi and Thurmaier (2020) in their study on participatory transparency in four counties of Kenya investigated both the recruitment methods employed by county governments to reach attendees as well as the budget information they had access to in preparation for the Budget forums in four counties of Kenya. Their study revealed that the information provided was helpful in assisting the citizens to prioritize the development projects in their counties. All these studies agree with the theoretical position that informed citizenry is an integral part of effective participatory democracy (Pateman, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by participatory democratic theory as well as participatory development theory. Participatory democratic theory became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s and is believed to have been originated by Arnold Kauffman (1969) who called for what he termed “participatory politics”. In this theory, public participation is instrumental to democratic practice in that it promotes democracy by affording opportunities for the citizens of a country to participate in decision making by their governments (Cheema and Rodinelli, 2007). Some of the benefits of participation include promotion of democratic ideals like transparency, accountability and representativeness (French & Bayley, 2011). It also engenders fairness and justice (equity) as the voices of those marginalized are brought to the surface by their participation (Arnstein, 1969). This theory helps situate this study within the broader scope of participatory governance of which public participation is a critical element.

Participatory development model emerged against the backdrop Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) which sought to help ‘outsiders’ quickly learn from local people about their realities and challenges and was popularised by Robert Chambers in a series of publications (1994a, 1994b and 1997). According to this theory, peoples’ participation in development include their involvement in decision-making process, in implementing programmes, in the sharing of benefits of development programmes as well as involvement in efforts to evaluate such programmes (Bhatnagar & Williams, 1992; Hicks, 2004). The central idea about peoples’ participation in development is that the people who are affected by decisions made, should have a say in or influence over the processes and outcomes of such decisions (Parfitt, 2004). Consequently, the community should be listened to, and their voices incorporated into the final decisions and outcomes. Participation offers them an opportunity to be involved in and influence development programmes and projects (Coulibaly, 2004) The usefulness of this approach as a theoretical model for this study lies in the fact that participatory approaches to development has been shown to promote equitable sharing of public goods (World Bank, 1994).

Conceptual Framework

The relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this study was conceptualised as shown in Figure 1. below. Participants preparation was conceived in this study as level of publicity of the forums as well relevance of information provided to the participants in preparing them to engage in the budget forums. It was envisaged in the study that if the members of the public who attend the budget forums are adequately mobilised through effective publicity channels and platforms, this would ensure sufficient turnout from the targeted public. Moreover, providing them with relevant and adequate budget information prepared them to understand the issues under discussion. Both variables were conceptualized as having a direct implication on whether the views given to the public will influence equity in resource allocation for

three programmes selected for the study namely health, agriculture, and roads by the county governments of Kenya. Equity in the allocation health budget was assessed by determining whether the final budget allocations considered the level of access to health services as gauged by distance to the nearest health facility. On the other hand, equity in distribution of agriculture budget was assessed by whether the needs of the farmers as gauged by their expressed priorities during the forums was reflected in the final budget. Finally, equity in the allocations for the roads budget was evaluated by whether the final budget reflected the priorities of the citizens based on the population of the users of the various roads within the county.

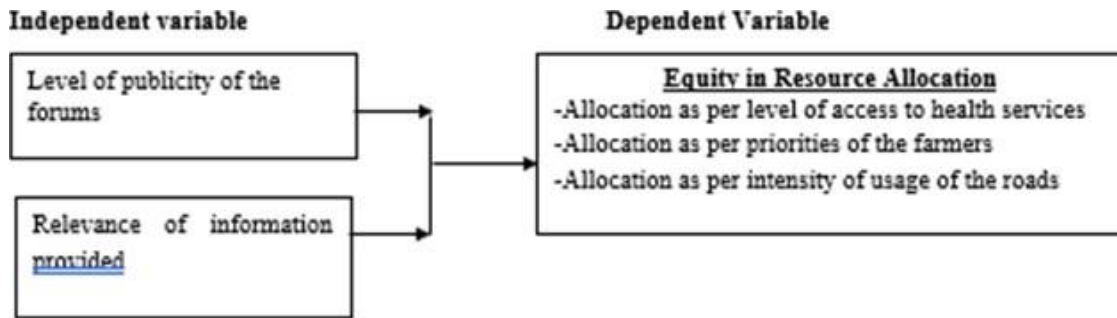


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-method design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of mixed methods approach in evaluating public participation has been employed in other studies both internationally (Rowe and Frewer, 2004) as well as in Kenya (Opiyo, 2017). It has the advantage of capturing the different perspectives of various stakeholders which is critical in evaluating the success of public participation activities (Bickerstaff and Walker, 2001). In this study, questionnaires were used for collecting data from the budget forum participants and interview guides were used to obtain information from the key informants who were the county governments officers. In this way, information from the interview augmented and clarified responses from the questionnaire respondents. The study covered nine counties out of forty-seven counties across Kenya. These were chosen based on percentage of poverty incidence and status of enactment of public participation laws/bills. Using these two criteria, the counties selected for the study comprised of Homabay, Kisii, Nyeri, Kwale, Busia, Isiolo, Machakos, Makueni and Elgeyo-Marakwet. The target population was 132345 citizens who had participated in citizen fora for County budget preparation and validation processes as per the list obtained from the controller of budget which is the national agency in charge of disbursing funds to the county governments after ensuring that there is evidence that there was public participation. Out of this population, a sample size of 494 participants was drawn to participate in the study through systematic random sampling technique proportionally based on the number of wards per county. A total of 491 questionnaires representing 99% response rate, were properly filled and used to analyze the data. The 27 key informants were purposively selected based on the involvement of their offices in public participation in budget making process in the counties. They included county director of public participation, county director of budget and the chairman of the county budget and appropriations committee of the county assembly. The raw quantitative data from the field was first cleaned before coding and keyed into SPSS software for analysis (descriptive, regressions (OLS) and hypothesis testing). Cleaned qualitative data was analysed using content/thematic analysis and direct quotations to illustrate the key themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The response rate for the questionnaires that were distributed was 99% which was deemed to be sufficient for data analysis as well making inferences on whether participants preparation influences equity in resource

allocation by county governments of Kenya. Moreover, the 27 key informants provided qualitative responses which were analyzed and presented as themes and direct quotes to buttress the quantitative findings.

Equity in Resource Allocation by County Governments of Kenya

Equity in resource allocation by county governments in Kenya was conceptualized in this study as fairness in the distribution of county government budget towards three programmes that are decentralized functions to county governments namely health, agriculture (both livestock and crop) as well as County roads. Equity in resource allocation requires that resources are distributed in a fair and just manner whereby areas or groups that have greater needs receive more allocation of resources (Kapiri and Razavi, 2022). The participants were asked to indicate their agreement or otherwise with statements relating to equity in these three sectors (health, agriculture, and roads) based on a five-degree Likert scale and the summary findings are presented in Table 1. The mean was used to test the distribution of the responses based on the scale presented below the table.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Equity in Resource Allocation (N=491)

Statements on Equity in Resource Allocation	SD	D	NA/ND	A	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation
	%	%	%	%	%		
Allocations for the provision of health services reflects the people’s health needs.	9.10	25.10	23.20	23.20	19.40	3.21	1.30
Allocations for the provision of health services addressed the key health challenges facing the people.	7.70	28.70	22.60	25.10	16.00	3.10	1.21
Allocation for the provision of health services targeted regions and social groups that would benefit the most	10.70	26.10	21.40	25.90	16.00	3.12	1.32
The allocation of the health budget reflects the differences in population and geographical size of wards.	7.90	24.10	27.30	22.50	18.20	3.22	1.20
Allocation for projects enhancing crop production reflects the priorities of the crop farmers	10.60	32.30	19.10	24.20	13.80	3.00	1.24
Allocations for projects enhancing livestock production reflects the priorities of the livestock farmers.	11.50	29.10	25.30	22.70	11.30	2.91	1.23
Sub counties/wards that have a higher crop production capacity generally received higher allocation of the agriculture budget.	15.60	28.90	23.90	20.90	10.70	2.80	1.21
Regions that have high agricultural potential but face production constraints e.g poor rainfall/poor roads network generally received higher allocation of the agriculture budget.	16.40	26.60	23.50	19.70	13.80	2.91	1.30
The budgetary allocation for Crop production targeted regions that would benefit most by enhancing their crop production potential.	14.00	28.40	25.40	21.50	10.50	2.90	1.51

Allocation for livestock production targeted areas that would benefit the most.	11.00	28.80	26.60	21.70	11.90	2.90	1.22
Allocation for road projects considered the status of roads as identified by the people.	9.20	22.00	25.90	23.20	19.8	3.20	1.31
Allocation for the Roads budget reflected the number of users of the various roads.	8.70	25.30	25.30	23.50	17.20	3.21	1.22
The allocation of the Roads budget considered the needs of the users of the various roads.	7.70	27.70	18.60	27.90	18.00	3.21	1.21
Generally, budgetary allocations responded positively to the diverse needs of the people.	17.20	19.80	20.40	30.40	12.10	3.00	1.31

Mean: Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.00-1.80, Disagree (D)=1.81-2.60, Neither Disagree nor Agree (ND/NA) 2.61-3.40, Agree (A)=3.41-4-20, Strongly Agree (SA)=4.21-5.0

The findings show that respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with all the fourteen (14) statements about equity in resource allocation for the three programs since all the responses fell within a mean score of 2.61-3.40. This can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, it can mean that equity in the allocation of resources for the three programmes is sometimes realized, and other times not achieved by county governments. This indicates that equity as a criterion for distributing resources may not be consistently applied and that other considerations (political, efficiency and feasibility) may from time to time take priority over equity when allocating resources (Godwin,2018). It could also mean that the respondents lacked sufficient information on how the budget for the three programmes were allocated in the year of study for them to form a definite opinion on the matters. This is a viable explanation as other studies on public participation in budgeting have shown that lack of adequate and user-friendly budget information is one of the challenges faced by members of the public during hearings on the budget (Muchunu, 2015; Kipyegon and Wanjare, 2017; Maika and Iravo, 2018).

Factor Analysis on Equity in Resource Allocation

Factor analysis was conducted on the Likert scale statements using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Factor analysis is a technique used in multiple-indicator measures to reduce variables which a researcher needs to deal with by determining whether several indicators group together into distinct clusters (Bryman, 2012). The PCA was conducted to reduce the several items in the Likert scale into a few factors while at the same time retaining observed variations from the variables.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained on Equity in Resource Allocation

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.169	58.347	58.347	8.169	58.347	58.347	3.791	27.078	27.078
2	1.248	8.914	67.261	1.248	8.914	67.261	3.503	25.020	52.098
3	1.034	7.388	74.649	1.034	7.388	74.649	3.157	22.551	74.649
4	.625	4.466	79.114						
5	.484	3.457	82.572						
6	.425	3.038	85.609						
7	.363	2.590	88.200						

8	.313	2.237	90.437					
9	.292	2.088	92.524					
10	.272	1.944	94.468					
11	.244	1.742	96.210					
12	.205	1.461	97.671					
13	.176	1.260	98.931					
14	.150	1.069	100.000					

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

It can be seen from the table that that three factors had initial Eigenvalues greater than 1 and accounted for 74.65% of the total variance across all the factors extracted. This means that these three factors explain to a greater extent equity in resource allocation by counties in this study. The three factors extracted include: allocation as per level of access to healthcare services, allocation as per priorities of the farmers, allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads. Moreover, an analysis on the rotated component matrix of the three extracted components was done and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix on Equity in Resource Allocation

Statements on equity in resource allocation	Component		
	Allocation as per level of access to healthcare services	Allocation as per priorities of the farmers	Allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads
Allocations for health services reflects the people’s health needs.	.229	.848	.231
Allocations for health services addressed the key health challenges facing the people.	.242	.850	.280
Allocation for health services targeted regions and social groups that would benefit the most	.260	.784	.295
The allocation of the health budget reflects the differences in population and geographical size of wards.	.303	.753	.218
Allocation for projects enhancing crop production reflects the priorities of the farmers	.669	.262	.175
Allocations for projects enhancing livestock production reflects the priorities of the livestock farmers.	.700	.397	.275
Sub counties/wards that have a higher crop production capacity generally received higher allocation of the agriculture budget.	.778	.272	.229
Regions that have high agricultural potential but face production constraints e.g poor rainfall/poor roads network generally received higher allocation of the agriculture budget.	.746	.220	.337

The budgetary allocation for Crop production targeted regions and social groups that would benefit most by enhancing their crop production potential.	.694	.107	.285
Allocation for livestock production targeted areas that would benefit the most.	.703	.310	.364
Allocation for road projects considered the status of roads as identified by the people.	.312	.321	.757
Allocation for the Roads budget reflected the number of users of the various roads.	.292	.196	.816
The allocation of the Roads budget considered the needs of the users of the various roads.	.259	.271	.838
Generally, budgetary allocations responded positively to the diverse needs of the people.	.352	.254	.681
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.			

According to the criteria for evaluating factor loadings in the rotated component matrix, a loading is considered substantial if the value is 0.4 and above. The results in the table above show that all the statements for each component were substantially loaded implying that all the statements for equity on agriculture, health services and roads measured what was envisaged in the conceptual framework. Moreover, descriptive statistics on the extracted components was undertaken and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Equity in Resource Allocation Components (N=491)

Component	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Allocation as per level of access to healthcare services	3.2	0.40	0.75
Allocation as per priorities of the farmers	2.8	0.11	0.91
Allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads	3.6	0.60	0.92

Mean: Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.00-1.80, Disagree(D)=1.81-2.60, Neither disagree nor Agree (NDNA) 2.61-3.40, Agree(A)=3.41-4.20, Strongly Agree (SA)=4.21-5.0

Based on the mean scores, the respondents agreed that there was equity in allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads (mean=3.6). This means that respondents perceived that resources for road projects (construction and maintenance) within the counties studied were distributed according to the needs of the road users in various wards. Qualitative comments from the respondents corroborated this finding as found in the quote below:

“Public participation recommendations are a good basis to determine equity. When you listen to the views in every location, their views will reveal their real needs (roads, more classes, health equipment’s, etc) that you would not know if the people were not involved in identification of projects. Public participation gives direction on allocations based on their needs for different wards for example in one ward, the need may be to build a new road, and, in another ward, the need may be to repair an existing road which needs maintenance” R1

This finding agrees with the findings of a study in Peru in the town of Ayacucho on budget allocation for small roads conducted by Mendedez (2015). Using a composite index of multiple factors including distance to market, population and, access to education and health centres, it was shown that equity was reflected in

the budget allocation for roads in the town as areas with highest poverty levels were preferentially targeted for road construction and rehabilitation. The respondents neither disagreed nor agreed that there was equity in allocations as per priorities of the farmers (Mean=2.8) and allocation as per level of access to health services (Mean=3.2) respectively. This could mean that that the respondents either lacked sufficient information to form a definite opinion on whether equity was achieved in these two programmes or that the allocations for these programmes reflected equity in some cases while in other cases it did not. About agriculture, the declining aggregate budgetary allocation for agricultural programmes over the years, means that equity concerns may not be the most important consideration as opposed to more ‘practical’ factors such as efficiency, viability and balancing political interests.

The reality is that the Kenyan government’s investment in agriculture has been declining over the years although it went up slightly in the financial year 2021/2022 (KNBS, 2022). Despite agriculture being the main economic activity and source of livelihoods for more than 75% of Kenyan households and its contribution to more job opportunities especially in the rural areas (KNBS,2019), both at the national and county, the budget for agricultural docket has been relatively low. This has a direct impact on resource allocation as empirical studies have demonstrated that where resources are limited and government officials are operating on a tight budget, equity concerns take a back seat about how the available resources are allocated (Charvel et al,2018)

The subject of equity in the allocation of health resources has been a subject of research and debate for health policy makers worldwide (Li, et al; 2020). Various criteria have been proposed and implemented in the allocation of health resources including cost effectiveness efficiency, disease burden, severity of disease, equity and quality amongst others (Liu et al, 2016). It has been shown that equity, though prominently mentioned in literature as an important consideration in health resources allocation, is rarely achieved (WHO,2000). For example, a study by Kaur et al, (2019) about criteria for priority-setting health resource allocation in Low and Middle-income countries drawn from Africa, Asia and Latin America concluded that cost-effectiveness was the most frequently used criteria, followed by health benefits with equity considerations coming in third place. This is partly because equity as Guindo et al, (2012) concedes, is difficult to operationalize in decision-making and priority-setting processes in a pragmatic manner” (Guindo et al, 2012:10).

Qualitative Findings on Equity in Resource Allocation by County Governments in Kenya

The County government officials that were interviewed as key informants were asked about whether equity was a key consideration in allocating county resources. A thematic analysis of their responses was undertaken, and the results presented in Table 5. The results revealed that equity is an important consideration when allocating county resources.

Table 5: Perspectives of Key Informants on Equity in Resource Allocations by Counties.

Thematic areas of considering equity	How equity is considered in resource allocation by county governments
Ward Development Funds	Within the wards, the Ward Development Fund (WDF) allocation is based on the priorities/needs identified within the wards.
Marginalised groups	For various marginalised groups, the allocations to the relevant ministries/sectors reflect allocation for marginalised groups (bursaries, Youths, People living with Disability, marginalised areas)

Flagship projects	Flagship projects are spread across subcounties to ensure equity across the county
Disaster preparedness and management Fund	Places prone to disaster get more allocation for disaster- preparedness
Devolved functions	Devolved functions (roads, health services and agriculture) get different allocations based on needs within the county.

Twenty one out of the twenty-seven key informants agreed that equity is an important consideration when allocating the county development budget. This is seen in the allocation for; ward development funds, funds for minority /marginalised groups, flagship projects funds, disaster preparedness funds, and funds allocated to various development projects across the devolved functions. This is line with other studies where governmental and non-governmental agencies that work with communities assert that equity is one of the inherent values and desired outcomes both in their processes and outcomes (Kaur et al, 2019). To underscore this perspective, one respondent observed that:

Allocation of the development budget within the ward funds are shared equitably. We ask whether there is a cluster/sublocation that has never received any government projects and the ones that have never received are given priority in the financial year. Within a given ward, we ensure that not all projects are concentrated in one area but look at each area and their priority needs. Within the wards there is fairness on how and where the projects allocated. R2

However, six out of the twenty-seven respondents noted that equity is not considered consistently, and that on some occasions, allocation of the county development budget is distributed equally. In some instances, equity and equality were considered synonymous by the respondents. Moreover, in practice equity is challenging to implement partly because it is difficult to measure (Svara and Brunet,2005) as opposed to other criteria like efficiency which are relatively easier to operationalize. The fact that equity as a concept is challenging to operationalize arises from the theoretical position that equity, as a normative concept (Rawls; 1976) is difficult to quantify with precision. Moreover, equity is not the only consideration when distributing development budget within the county. Others include feasibility of projects, resources available, return on investments and political factors amongst others (Pandey &Young,2011)

Participants Preparation and Equity in Resource allocation

The objective of this study was to examine the influence of participants preparation for citizen fora on equity in resource allocation by county governments. In addressing this objective, descriptive statistics of participants preparation are presented and discussed followed by factor analysis on the statements. The section concludes by correlation and regression analyses and discussions of the findings and their implications with relevant qualitative comments also cited to shed light on the findings. One of the key determinants of participants preparation is how the information about the forums is communicated to the members of the public as well as how and when the budget documents are availed to the public (Franklin, Ho and Ebdon, 2009) which in this study was conceptualized as level of publicity.

Level of publicity of the forums

To ascertain the level of publicity of the budget forums, the respondents were asked to indicate the media through which they received invitation to attend the budget forums and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Mode of Invitation to Budget Forum as identified by members of the public.

Mode	Frequency (N=452)	Percentage
A Short Message Service (SMS) from a county official	194	42.9
Personal Invitation by a ward administrator/manager	185	40.7
A phone call from a county official	155	34.1
Announcement at Chief’s Baraza	121	26.8
WhatsApp messages	119	26.3
Announcement in church/mosque	110	24.1
Radio announcement	98	21.7
Announcement at local school/market	64	14.3
Notice boards	63	13.9
County Website	45	10.2
Public announcement using PA system	44	9.8
Newspaper advert	36	7.8
Invitation letter sent to you	26	5.9
Facebook/Twitter	20	4.5
Television announcement	9	2.0
Email	5	1.1

The findings show that the citizens received invitations to participate in the county budget forums through a variety of media/channels. The most used methods to pass information to the members of the public were Short Message Service (SMS) from a county official (42.9%), announcement by a ward administrator/manager (40.7%), and a phone call from a county official (34.1%). This concurs with other studies on media used in mobilizing the public for budget forums (Musunza and Muna, 2021; Kandie,2020) which showed the same pattern. However, one recent study has shown the rising uptake of social media (Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter) as a means of inviting the members of the public especially the youth (Mayienda, 2020)

The same question on mode of invitation was posed to the 27 county officials who plan and coordinate the public forums in the nine counties namely, director of public participation, director of budget and the chairman of the Budget and Appropriation Committee of the County Assembly. A content analysis of their responses was done, and the results presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Mode of Invitation to Budget Forum by County Officials interviewed.

Modes of Invitation	Frequency (N=27)	Percent
Adverts in Newspapers	26	96.30
Invitations through Community Radio stations	23	85.16
Information through Local administrative officers	20	74.07
Notices pinned in public spaces	10	37.03
Post on County Website	9	33.33
Social media posts	8	29.63
Announcements in Public functions/ <i>barazas</i>	7	25.93
Announcement in churches/mosques	4	14.81

Through CSOs working in the county,	2	7.41
Sending Bulk SMS	2	7.41
Distributing Pamphlets	1	3.70
Erecting Banners	1	3.70
Sending Invitation Letters	1	3.70
Sending Emails	1	3.70

According to the results of the interviews, the methods mostly used for inviting the public are newspaper adverts (96.30%) and invitations through the community radio stations (85.16) followed by invitations through local administrative officers (74.07). The findings from the two sources (members of the public and county officials) agree on the use of local administrative officers at the ward level as a crucial way of passing information to the members of the public as well as use of community radio for sending invitations. However, there was a discrepancy between the two groups on the use of SMS and Newspaper adverts which were rated differently by the two groups of respondents. This can be attributed to what other studies have found (Opiyo, et al, 2017; Musunza an Muna;2021) namely, that many members of the local communities do not read the notices due to the fact that they are written In English language (which is not understandable to many people at the local level) as well as not being able to buy the newspapers due to cost constraints. This makes them rely mostly on information from the local administrators who partly communicate through Short Message Services since most members of the community own or have access to mobile phones. The extensive use of radios and newspaper adverts for communicating to the public on participation forums has been confirmed by other studies as well (Opiyo, et al, 2017; Mioga and Amuhaya; 2018). However, a study by Muthomi and Thurmaier (2020) revealed that counties are increasingly resorting to social media especially face book and WhatsApp to sharing information with the participants as well get feedback on their needs and priorities.

Relevance of Information provided at the forums.

The respondents were also asked to specify the kind of document that was shared with them during the budget forum they attended, and the results are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Documents accessed by members of the public during budget forum.

Documents shared with the participants	Frequency(N=491)	Percentage
Budget estimates	213	43.38
County Plans	115	23.42
Previous budgets	73	14.87
Others	90	18.33
Total	491	100.00

The majority of the respondents cited budget estimates at 43.38% followed by county plans (23.42 %) as the documents that were shared mostly during the forums. This is explained by the fact that county budgets are supposed to follow county plans as stipulated in the Public Finance Management Act (PFM, 2014). The county budget cycle begins with planning, both long term (County Integrated Development Plan), Medium term (MTEF) and short-term as encapsulated in the Annual Development Plans (ADP) (Mbithi, 2018). It is incumbent upon the county budget office to align the budget with these planning documents and any significant deviation from what is captured in these plans is deemed a violation of the budgeting

requirements (GOK,2014) and can be challenged in a court of law. The same question on the kind of documents shared with the members of the public during the budget forum was posed to the county officials directly responsible for planning public participation forums for budget making namely, Director of Budget and the Chairperson of County budget and appropriation committee and the results of the content analysis are summarised in Table 9.

Table 9: Documents shared during budget forums from interviews with county officials.

Type of document shared at the budget forum	Frequency(N=14)	Percentage
Budget estimates	10	71.42
Planning documents (ADP/CIDP)	4	28.57
Popular version of the budget	3	21.43
Schedule of ongoing projects in the county	3	21.43
Schedule of completed projects in the last budget	3	21.43
Report on last year’s budget- what was done/not done	1	7.14
Community action plan	1	7.14

The findings as captured in the Table 4.16 are consistent with what was noted by the public, that the most shared document is the budget estimate (71.42%) followed by county plans (21.43). This indicates that there is concurrence between the planners of the forums and the participants on the kind of budget information shared during budget forums which also agrees with other studies on budgeting that have been carried out in Kenya (Kandie,2020; Larson,2017). The respondents were also required to indicate their agreement or otherwise with statements relating to participants preparation for the budget forum and the descriptive findings are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Summary Statistics on Participants Preparation (N=491)

Statements on Participants Preparation	SD	D	ND/NA	A	SA	Mean	Std. Deviation
	%	%	%	%	%		
The invitation to the forum was sent to you in a timely manner.	10.70	13.50	21.40	36.60	17.80	3.41	1.21
The invitation to the forum was sent through a medium that is accessible to many citizens in the county	10.50	14.10	25.10	34.90	15.40	3.31	1.20
The Budget information was availed to you in good time	16.00	27.50	21.10	26.90	8.50	2.81	1.24
The information on budget provided to you was relevant to the discussions at the meeting	4.50	10.30	21.70	40.10	23.50	3.70	1.10
The information given was sufficient for you to participate meaningfully at the meeting	4.70	15.70	19.40	36.90	23.30	3.61	1.10
The information on budget provided by the county officials was useful in helping you understand the budget process and your role as a participant.	4.00	15.80	17.80	36.00	26.50	3.72	1.11

The budget information given at the meeting was easy for you to understand	5.70	13.50	19.20	42.60	19.00	3.60	1.10
The information on the budget was shared in a format that you could access	13.00	18.40	18.20	36.80	13.60	3.21	1.30
The budget information was shared in a language that you could easily understand	6.70	13.60	16.40	42.10	21.30	3.60	1.21
The information was shared in a way that people with disabilities of hearing or seeing could easily understand.	42.80	17.40	12.30	19.00	8.50	2.30	1.41

Mean: Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.00-1.80, Disagree(D)=1.81-2.60, Neither Disagree Nor Agree (NDNA) 2.61-3.40, Agree (A)=3.41-4-20, Strongly Agree (SA)=4.21-5.0

The mean was used to test the distribution of the responses to the statements and from the table, out of ten (10) statements on participants preparation, respondents agreed with six (6) of them which indicates that they found the preparations for the budget forums adequate. The respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with three (3) statements about participants preparation indicating that in some cases the preparation was adequate while in other cases it was not. The respondents however, disagreed with the statement that the budget information was shared in a way that people with disabilities of hearing or seeing could easily understand (Mean=2.3). This concurs with a study by Mbithi, Ndambuki and Juma (2018) who found out that disabled people were disadvantaged in the way information is given to members of the public. In their study, they observed that in most forums, the disabled (visually and hearing impaired), are not adequately catered for because the budget information is not availed in braille format nor is sign language interpretation provided.

Factor Analysis on Participants Preparation

The results on factor analysis on statements measuring participants preparation are presented in Table 11

Table 11: Total Variance Explained on Participants Preparation

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.587	45.872	45.872	4.587	45.872	45.872	3.828	38.278	38.278
2	1.275	12.750	58.622	1.275	12.750	58.622	2.034	20.344	58.622
3	.963	9.626	68.248						
4	.742	7.422	75.669						
5	.601	6.009	81.678						
6	.476	4.763	86.442						
7	.434	4.338	90.780						
8	.352	3.519	94.299						
9	.304	3.036	97.335						
10	.266	2.665	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The Total Variance explained output shows that two factors were extracted explaining 58.62% based on the Initial Eigen values. The factors include level of publicity of the forums as well relevance of the information provided at the forums. Empirically, these are the two constructs that account significantly for participants preparation. The other construct included in the conceptual framework (User-friendliness of information given to the participants) was found to have minimal contribution to participants preparation and was therefore not extracted. A rotated component analysis with extracted components was undertaken and a matrix generated as in Table 12.

Table 12: Rotated Component Matrix on Participants Preparations

Statements on Participants Preparation	Component	
	Relevance of provided information	Level of publicity of the forum
The invitation to the forum was sent to you in a timely manner.	.165	.720
The invitation to the forum was sent through a medium that is accessible to many citizens in the county	.356	.634
The Budget information was availed to you in good time	.256	.742
The information on budget provided to you was relevant to the discussions at the meeting	.835	.090
The information given was sufficient for you to participate meaningfully at the meeting	.811	.172
The information on budget provided by the county officials was useful in helping you understand the budget process and your role as a participant.	.859	.142
The budget information given at the meeting was easy for you to understand	.780	.248
The information on the budget was shared in a format that you could access	.657	.233
The budget information was shared in a language that you could easily understand	.690	.239
The information was shared in a way that people with disabilities of hearing or seeing could easily understand.	.017	.576
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

Based on the criteria of 0.4 and above of Eigen values being considered sufficient loading on the components, the matrix shows that the first three and last statements associated with the level of publicity of the forums are adequately loaded while the fourth to the Ninth variables are substantially loaded on relevance of information provided. Descriptive statistics on the extracted participants preparation components was conducted and the results are displayed in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics on Participants Preparations Components (N=491)

Component	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Level of publicity of the forum	3.6	.90	0.91
Relevance of information provided	3.3	0.98	0.71

Mean: Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.00-1.80, Disagree (D)=1.81-2.60, Neither Disagree nor Agree (NDNA) 2.61-3.40, Agree (A) =3.41-4.20, Strongly Agree (SA) =4.21-5.0

The descriptive statistics on the extracted components show that the respondents agreed that the level at which the publicity for the forums were conducted was adequate. This implies that the communication given to the members inviting them to the budget for a was satisfactory but could be improved. Literature on public participation has consistently shown that for the participants to be adequately prepared to meaningfully engage in public forums, the communications sent to the members of the public inviting them for such fora ought to be sent in a timely manner through a medium that is accessible to them (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004; Ebdon, 2006; Guo, 2012). Other studies on public participation in budgeting have not established the same conclusion, for example, a study on effectiveness of public awareness strategies on public participation in Kakamega county found that the information shared with the public was insufficient as the strategies used were ineffective (Simba, Miroga and Amuhaya, 2018). Moreover, a study by Mbithi (2018) focusing on determinants of public participation in Kenya counties revealed that across the counties, participants at Budget forums still had difficulties in accessing the budget documents before the day of the forum.

The respondents on the other hand, neither disagreed nor agreed with whether the information provided at the forums was relevant. This indicates that either the information shared with the respondents before or during the forum was only partially relevant or that in some cases the information was relevant while in others it was not. Relevance of information for budget forums means that the information is presented in accessible format as well as useful in understanding the budget process and the budget estimates presented at the forums (World Bank, 2015). Two separate studies about information provided to participants at budget forums Muchunu, (2015) and Kantai, (2010) unanimously concluded that that access to budget information across the budget cycle remains a major challenge to members of the public. In both studies, it was noted that budget documents were shared late (on the material day of the forum) indicating that the citizens did not have sufficient time to interrogate the information well enough to give input that will address equity concerns. Further, a study by Sumba et al (2018) revealed that citizens had low access to information about implementation of devolved projects in Kakamega county.

Regression Analysis between Equity in resource allocation and Participants Preparation

To determine the effect of participant’s preparation on equity in resource allocation, the study conducted an Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression between the two variables. According to Mugenda (2012) regression analysis is a statistical technique used to predict a dependent variable using a single or several independent variables. The results of the regression analysis is presented in Table 14.

Table 14: Regression Analysis between Equity in Resource Allocation and Participants Preparation

Independent	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	Beta	Std. Error	T	Sig.	Beta	Std. Error	T	Sig.	Beta	Std. Error	T	Sig.
(Constant)	-.006	.044	-.131	.896	.008	.044	.175	.861	-.003	.043	-.067	.947
Level of publicity of the forum	.146	.044	3.293	.001	.141	.044	3.200	.001	.232	.043	5.420	.000
Relevance of provided information	.195	.044	4.389	.000	.226	.044	5.106	.000	.278	.043	6.492	.000

Dependent	Allocation as per level of access to healthcare services	Allocation as per priorities of the farmers	Allocation as per intensity of usage of the roads
R – squared	0.069	0.071	0.131
Std. Error	0.9685	0.965	0.9377
F – ratio (2, 477)	15.109	18.222	35.96
Prob. > F	0.000	0.000	0.000
VIF(Average)	2.17	3.01	4.12
Shapiro-Wilk test	Statistic:0.940, Sig.=0.013	Statistic:0.979, Sig.=0.064	Statistic:0.679, Sig.=0.001

The F-statistic (ANOVA test) for all the three models in Table 14 shows that the regression coefficients are all statistically significant (with p-values less than 0.05) and therefore the conclusions are valid. It also reveals that sufficiency of publicity of the forum and relevance of provided information had the highest influence on allocation of resources as per intensity of usage of the roads, allocation as per priorities of farmers and finally allocation as level of access to health services. Moreover, the study has established that sufficiency of publicity of the forums as well as relevance of information provided at the forums are positively related to and significantly influence equity in allocations for health services, agriculture and roads projects.

This implies that the undertaking sufficient publicity for budget forums and providing relevant information at the budget forums contributes to equity in resource allocation for health services, agricultural projects as well as road projects within the county.

Empirical studies on whether participants preparation leads to equity in resource allocation are few but the ones available indicate a significant relationship. A study by Hong and Cho (2018) on citizen participation and the redistribution of public goods in Seoul, Korea noted that participatory budgeting led to larger budget allocations for low-income neighborhoods compared to high income neighborhoods due to what he termed as the ‘social pressure hypothesis’ which he posited as the tendency of authorities to allocate resources equitably if they know their decisions and actions are being monitored by others who are both well informed and are able to question such allocative decisions. A study of participatory budgeting in Porto Allegro in Brazil also showed that where the citizens are knowledgeable about the process and content of the budget making, the allocation of the budget favoured poorer regions of the municipality (Wampler,2000).

Hypothesis Testing

This research used the outcomes of regression to test the hypothesis. The acceptance/rejection requirement was that the null hypothesis was accepted if the p value was less than the standard p-value (0.05), but if it exceeds 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected as was the case in this study as is shown in the table below:

Table 15. Result of Hypothesis Testing

No	Hypothesis	P value	Verdict
H0 ₁	Participants preparation for citizen fora has no significant effect on equity in resource allocation by county governments.	0.000<0.05	Rejected

The results revealed a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ significance level; hence the null hypothesis was rejected based on the regression results. This means that participants' preparation significantly influences equity in allocation of resources towards health services, agricultural projects and services, and road projects. Participants preparation conceptualized as engaging in high-level publicity for the forums as well as availing relevant information to the members of the public has a bearing on equity in resource allocation by county governments. This agrees with a study by Hong and Cho (2018) who found that adequate preparation for public forums empower the citizens with knowledge which, in turn, increases transparency in the process of resource allocation by specifying the criteria used for allocating resources which promotes equity in resource allocation. The finding is also line with what has been noted in literature that participatory budgeting has redistributive benefits, as less advantaged areas or groups often receive a higher allocation of government resources (Baiocchi, 2005; Klun and Bencina, 2021). Participants preparation for budget forums ensures that informed citizens can hold governmental authorities accountable over their allocative decisions (Ebdon, 2006).

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Summary of the findings

The findings indicated that most of the questionnaire respondents agreed that information on budget provided was relevant to the discussions at the meeting; it was sufficient for them to participate meaningfully in the meeting; it was useful in helping them understand the budget process and their role, the information was easy to understand and was shared in a language that they could easily understand. This aligns with the conceptual framework which showed relevance of information provided is one of they key variables in participants preparation.

However, the respondents disagreed that the budget information was availed to them in good time and that the information was shared in a format that people with disabilities of hearing or seeing could easily understand.

The regression results revealed that both level of publicity and relevance of information provided at the budget forums had a positive and statistically significant effect on equity in resource allocation for health, agriculture, and roads by county governments. This is attributable to the fact that availing relevant and adequate budget information assists the participants to understand the entire budgeting process, the proposed projects and the amounts allocated in the budget proposals. This in turn informs their proposals during the deliberations at the forums and the decisions arrived at concerning the location of and allocation towards prioritized projects. This agrees with the participatory democratic principle that effective participation in democratic governance is a function of informed citizens. One of the pillars of democratic governance is where citizens have access to relevant, adequate, and accurate information from the governing authorities in order to hold such authorities accountable over the decisions they make.

Moreover, the finding that the information shared with attendees was helpful to them to give proposals to the county government officials about areas/regions that require a higher allocation in the budget underscores the role of adequate preparation in ensuring equity. Qualitative results on equity in resource allocation revealed that participants preparation has an impact on equity in resource allocation which concurs with the theoretical position held by participatory development model about the relationship between empowerment of the community members through participation and equitable allocation of development benefits, in this case allocation of county government development budget within the county.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that participants' preparation as characterized by sufficient

publicity and providing relevant information to the forum participants had a positive and statistically significant influence on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya regarding allocations for healthcare services, agricultural projects and services as well as roads projects. The study identified the key aspects of participants' preparation that influences equity in resource allocation namely, appropriateness of media of inviting attendees to the events and the relevance of budget information shared with the members of the public. Specifically, the study concluded that effective preparation includes the information inviting members of the public to attend the forums being sent in a timely manner, through channels that are accessible to the majority of the citizens. In addition, such budget information is useful when it is relevant in terms of the format of its presentation. This conforms to participatory democratic theory which puts emphasis on informed citizenry as a pre-condition for democratic governance.

Study limitations

The findings of this study are limited to public participation in county government budgeting process as relates only to three programmes from the development (capital) expenditure (Health, Agriculture, and Roads) and not the entire budget. It is probable that a study on the entire budget (both capital and development) would yield different results. This is because in some projects, what is spent on recurrent expenditure to provide services (like purchase of medicine and certain personnel) may be as important as putting up health infrastructure from an equity perspective. Moreover, from a methodological viewpoint, equity in this study was assessed from the perceptions of the respondents, which is a valid approach, but other approaches can be explored by other scholars. Lastly, the findings revealed that the two participant preparation variables that have an influence on equity in resource allocation by county governments accounted for 7%, (health) 7% (agriculture) and 13% (roads) for the changes in equity in allocations of these programmes respectively.

This suggests that there are other variables other than participants preparation that are instrumental to achieving equity in resource allocation by county governments which require further investigation.

Recommendations

The findings of the study, both the descriptive and inferential, provides insights on how participants preparation for citizen fora can be improved towards realizing equity in resource allocation by county governments in Kenya. The study established that participants preparation had a positive and statistically significant effect on equity in resource allocation by county governments of Kenya concerning equity in allocations for health, agriculture, and roads projects. To strengthen participants' preparation for the budget forums, the study recommends that county governments should ensure that budget documents are relevant, availed in a format and language that is easy to access as well as simple to understand by the participants. They should also be made available in advance before the day of the forum (at least one week before the day of the forum) for them to peruse and internalize the information beforehand. Moreover, the communication inviting the public for the forums should be sent out early (at least a week) giving adequate notice, be shared widely using different methods (channels) and be comprehensive to enable members of the public to be better prepared for the forums. In addition, county governments should enhance civic education to the members of the public on the operations of the County government, the importance of their participation in the budget making process and on the content of the budget documents. Without effective civic education, the participants often lack critical knowledge necessary for them to make informed proposals, which has a knock-on effect on whether equity in the allocation of county resources is realized.

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