Participatory Budgeting: Strengthening Public Participation in County Planning and Budgeting

Workshop held at the Kenya School of Government, 29-30 October 2015

On October 29th and 30th, 2015, the Kenya School of Government (KSG), in partnership with the Council of Governors, the Ministry of Devolution and Planning and the World Bank, hosted a workshop on participatory budgeting for county executives and senior officers. The event, held at the KSG Nairobi Campus, drew participation from 42 out of 47 county governments represented by county officials managing county finances, budgets, public administration, as well national government representatives, civil society and donors.

The workshop was organized to review the experiences of county officials in managing participatory processes in county budgets and plans, and to design a program of support and knowledge sharing around participatory budgeting. The World Bank sponsored a team of experts who have implemented participatory budgeting in other countries, including Brazil, Portugal and Madagascar, to share experiences with the counties. The workshop provided a platform for county officials to showcase progress and challenges they face as they operationalize Constitutional mandates for public participation.

The importance of public participation in county planning & budgeting

In his opening speech, Hon. Joash Maangi, Chairman, Deputy Governors Forum and Deputy Governor, Kisii County reminded participants that engaging citizens in the budget process is a requirement by law as enshrined in the Constitution. He said that the new planned initiative on participatory budgeting is timely, given that counties face a myriad of challenges. He highlighted the need for participatory budgeting to respond to the unique needs of Counties, and also that support should eventually be scaled up to as many counties as possible. "It is worth noting that this process is both a political and technical process and a balance needs to be struck between the two variables," said Dep. Governor Maangi. "A sound budget should reflect populace choices and priorities on the services and entitlements that should be provided while still providing space for the overall national goals."

County Voices -- Kenya counties share experiences with their peers on public participation in county budgeting

County Officials presenting at the workshop

Kiambu County shared its strong emphasis on using ICT to share information and receive feedback from citizens. Douglas Muremi, ICT Director, Kiambu said that the county posts its key documents, including the budget, County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and Annual Development Plan (ADP) online; however, whenever they host budget forums and direct citizens to the website the public still ask for hard copies at the forums. The county acknowledges the limitations of engaging citizens via internet as its website is not interactive, and emails remain one directional. It is looking at re-designing its website and establishing a call centre to enable citizen feedback to be collected and responded to.

Makueni County explained how it has set aside 25% of its investment budget to be decided through a participatory process engaging citizens down to the sub-ward level. The Makueni CEC for Finance, Ms. Mary Kimanzi, explained that with a total of 30 wards and each ward divided into 3 sub-wards, the county usually holds at least 90 public forums on the budget annually at a cost of about Kshs. 20 million. The county allocates 25% of its annual budget, for ward development projects identified directly through the public forums. The County has further established Community Project Management Committees (PMCs) to oversee the projects and developed a civic education handbook.

County Officials attending the workshop

Bungoma County detailed how it has tried to mainstream public participation in all the nine sectors of the budget framework. Rosellyn Omolloh, Service Delivery Advisor to the Governor, explained that each of the sectors allocates a portion of their budget to facilitate public participation processes. The county has developed various tools for engagement including a Public Participation Framework and handbook and has translated this handbook into Kiswahili copies which will be available at county ward offices.

Uasin Gishu County explained how it is using chiefs and village elders to assist in mobilizing citizens for public forums. This is done in collaboration with the sub-county and ward administrators and departmental officers, said Shadrack Sambui, CEC Member for Finance, Uasin Gishu. The county has also established Project Management Committees that oversee the implementation of projects on behalf of the citizens. Some of the benefits the county is realizing as a result of public participation are less political pressure, increased service delivery and county officials can now project their budgets for the next year.

Ms. Mwanamwaka Mabruki, PS, MoDP giving her closing remarks

Kakamega County developed a comprehensive database that it uses in mobilizing citizens for public forums. Kulaki Wangia, CEC Treasury, explained that to ensure continuity of discussion in each stage of the budget cycle, the county identifies 100 individuals from the different stakeholders, who they work with during each financial year. This approach however does not prevent other individuals from participating in the forums.

In their presentations and the lively discussions that ensued, counties also expressed a number of challenges in operationalizing participation at the County level. Some of the challenges identified include lack of trained staff to manage the process, time constraints, lack of clear tools to ensure the consultations are meaningful, conflicting interests and political interference, inadequate budgets, elite capture, and limited participation, amongst others.

In her remarks, the Principal Secretary (PS) of Devolution, Ms. Mwanawaka Mabruki, Ministry of Devolution and Planning, highlighted the important role that public participation plays. "Public participation is now an integral part of decision making in our public institutions," she said. She acknowledged the efforts by the counties and urged them to document successful cases of public participation to build local learning and knowledge exchange on good practices. In closing the PS informed the participants that the Ministry was finalizing a set of guidelines on public participation and called on the county officials present to make use of them.

Global experiences -- What is participatory budgeting?

Started in Porto Allegre, Brazil, in 1989 participatory budgeting is a specific methodology that was developed to facilitate citizens to determine priorities, within a fixed budget envelope. Essentially, government allocates a part of its investment budget to a participatory process – in which citizens are mobilized so as to be representative of communities and constituents, and then provided a facilitator to arrive at a set of priority investments, which the government is obligated to undertake. In sum, participatory budgeting is a democratic process of decision-making that entrust citizens to decide how to allocate part of a budget.

Around the world participatory budgeting is rapidly expanding because it is seen as a space to restructure and allow new dialogues among actors. Giovanni Allegretti, Participatory Budgeting Expert and Professor at the University of Coimbra (Portugal), said "there is a progressive understanding that participatory process must overcome the traditional top down participation subject to 'selective hearing' in order to involve the citizen, in a more effective way." Participatory Budgeting promotes concepts of justice and redistribution, de-politicization of public budgets, decentralization, enhances governability and learning-by-doing approach for citizens to understand the limits of public finances and constructively participate in priority setting – which always involves trade-offs.

Participatory budgeting has been replicated in 2,500+ localities and been the subject of more than 1,000 evaluations and studies. Observed impacts – that vary across localities -- include:

- increased citizen's confidence in public institutions and elected representatives,
- greater inclusivity in decision making,
- improved ownership and maintenance of public spaces by inhabitants,
- increased in the pro-poor expenditures,
- improvements in the delivery of services,
- increases in taxes revenues.

The WB team described approaches that have been used by local governments in other countries, and presented a step-by-step process for designing and implementing a Participatory Budgeting process. Setting the stage, Bruce MacPhail, Local Governance Consultant, World Bank, reviewed the four key stages for capital investment planning namely financial planning; project identification and prioritization; program and project management; and monitoring and evaluation. He said that a common problem with investment planning is the "wish list" that is generated from the authorities and citizens without reference to financial limitations. This problem is made worse when decisions are not transparent as they allow opportunities for abuse. Mr. Allegretti presented different approaches that have been used to involve communities in identification, selection, and monitoring of investment projects around the world. Tiago Peixoto, Governance Specialist, World Bank, provided details on the impacts of participatory budgeting and the role that ICT has played in facilitating this process. The use of ICT in participatory budgeting can "increase the channels of participation and lower the cost of participation" he said.

Day Two Seminar: bringing Kenyan and global experiences together

The day following the workshop, an in-depth seminar was held with counties wishing to explore participatory budgeting in greater detail and identify how they could apply it to their budgeting and public participation practices. The seminar was attended by 10 counties based on a combination of self-selection and the following criteria:

- Willingness to commit a percentage of their investment budget (at least 5% of overall development/investment budget) to a process of Participatory Budgeting where citizens decisions on what investment the county makes will be binding
- Willingness to adopt participatory Budgeting in the next budget process
- Demonstrate that citizen input in previous county budget exercises was integrated into the final budget. Evidence included minutes indicating results of public meetings, citizen friendly budgets

The seminar started through a role-play exercise where county teams worked through a typical participatory budgeting process where they presented priorities based on different citizen identities (unemployed youth, elderly persons, working class citizens etc). Counties were then taken through a prioritization process based on weighting using statistical information. Thereafter the county teams developed action plans proposing what they would do for each of the 10-steps to design and operationalize PB in their counties, as an action learning exercise.

Some key takeaways from participating counties:

> *Prioritizing projects using different methodologies, such as voting, using weights of different agreed upon parameters, will reduce political interference and increase citizen satisfaction*
>
> – Kulaki Wangia, CEC Treasury, Kakamega County

> *Prioritizing during the participatory budgeting process helps to provide immediate feedback to the public. Leaving consultative meetings with the long "wish lists," leads to suspicion as citizens do not get clarification or feedback on what projects were identified and why.*
>
> – Kulaki Wangia, CEC Treasury, Kakamega County

> *Ensuring that a portion of the budget is allocated to citizen identified and prioritized projects is very empowering to the citizens and establishes good relationships between them and the government*
>
> - Priscillah Mungo, Head of Budget, West Pokot County

> *Through participatory budgeting the public can reduce the list of investment projects to the satisfaction of everyone through consensus building. When the public agrees in a public forum, even if politicians come to demand for their own "pet projects," they will be informed of the decisions by the public.*
>
> - Lawrence Micheni, Head of Budget, Tharaka Nithi County

Way forward

As next steps the World Bank's Kenya Accountable Devolution Program* will support the design and implementation of participatory budgeting in a set of three initial counties in the current FY 2015/16 and an additional 3 counties in FY 2016/17 for a period of 3 years, through the Kenya Participatory Budgeting Initiative (KPBI). This support will include a combination of design and implementation support, accompanied by learning and knowledge exchange activities opened to all counties. The final selection of counties will be based on counties committing to the initiative by signing a results agreement.

* The Kenya Accountable Devolution Program (KADP) is a World Bank executed Trust Fund financed by DFID, EU, Finland, Sweden, and USAID. The Program provides devolution support to national and county governments and other stakeholders through analytical and technical assistance. The support specifically focuses on: managing the fiscal impacts of devolution at both the National and the County Government levels; strengthening sub-national public finance management and performance monitoring systems as well as capacities; and, strengthening mechanisms that enable County Governments to be responsive and accountable to their citizens.

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To access presentations and other materials from the workshop, please visit:

- Kenya's Devolution – WB
- Kenya devolution hub