

To Examine Economic Factors Influencing Citizen Participation in Local Governance in Meru District Council - Tanzania

Imaniel Mosses¹, Dr. Mike A. Iravo PhD²

^{1,2}Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, P. O. Box 62000-00200, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract: *This study focused on economic factors influencing citizen participation in local governance in Meru district council. The researcher reviewed several literatures and theories, then developed a conceptual framework which helps to identify the knowledge gap from the previous studies. The population size includes 1 DED, 23 WC, 3 WEO, 5 VEOs, 6 Village leaders, 15 fifteen cell leaders, as well as 57 ordinary local citizens from different background with gender respectively. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and face to face interviews, while secondary data was collected from document reviews. The qualitative data was descriptively and narratively analyzed by using tables through SPSS. The finding shows the causative agent that weakens participations is the huge income disparities between rich and poor where rich are favorable class and valuable in decision making process than the poor. Therefore MDC is required to come up with strategic ways that can enhance citizens participation in decision making and failure to do so bureaucracy will continue to happens, nepotism, misuse of resources, expansion of marginalization, gender and increase number of uneducated community because those who are stable financially will continue makes decision that will favor a specific group of people and specifically those who are economically good. The researcher recommended that economic empowerment is most important thing in MDC. The government has to introduce microfinance, SACCOS, and assures accessible loans to people so that they can be financially stable and reduce burdens of work and unwillingness of citizens when it comes to the issues of participation.*

Keywords: citizens, participations, governance and local governance

1. Introduction

Citizen participation in Tanzania has become popular since 1992 after the introduction of multiparty system. It is considered an essential part in democratic governance since it brings stronger networks between people who live in the same brotherhood. Citizen participation is the social capital because it creates a certain kinds of social networks that enable citizens and communities to access resources and work together to tackle problems for themselves. Citizen participation in the affairs of their community is an important ingredient of democracy and development. According to Richardson (1983) "The opportunity to give the citizen right to take part in the political system is such a fundamental tenet of the democratic system of government that its very existence is rarely questioned. People must be able to have their say to vote, engage in political debate and let those in power know their views on issues which concern them. This is what democracy is all about.

2. Problem Statement

Citizen participation means that citizens are part and parcel of what happens in their society or country. The citizens are part of the decision – making process on matters that affect them. Communication is a two-way consultative process. Thus, it is the bottom – up as well as top-bottom before any decision is reached. Villadsen and Lubanga (1996) argued that one of the vital and indispensable pillar /principle or rather tenet of democratic government is citizen participation. In Meru district despite of the World Bank, UNDP, and government of Tanzania takes various initiatives in promoting citizen participation in promoting democratic governance for instance introduction of local government Reform Program, Check and balance system, Ombudsman

office, Community based organization, Women empowerment, Provision of loans from WB, Introduction of Public Private Partnership, and establishment of national frame work for Good governance in Tanzania, there is much doubt if the citizens of Meru District are full participate in local government issues, that is why the researcher investigate the economic factors influencing citizen participation in local governance in Meru district council, Tanzania so that they can come up with clear strategies for improving the situation.

Purpose of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess the economic factors influence citizens participations in local governance Meru district council, Tanzania. The study sought to identify if is there any relationship between income, means of production and community participations.

Research Methodology

The study adopted survey design. The design allowed detailed explanation of the problem in the study because is the quick methods of obtaining information about large group of people in a flexible and inexpensive way. The study covered target population of 110 respondents includes 1 DED, 23 WC, 3 WEO, 5 VEOs, 6 Village leaders, 15 fifteen cell leaders, as well as 57 ordinary local citizens from different background with gender respectively. Data was collected directly from the respondent using questionnaires and face to face interviews. Data was descriptive analyzed by using tables through SPSS.

3. Results and Analysis

To identify economic factors limiting local citizens to participate in local governance in Meru district council.

Volume 5 Issue 6, June 2016

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In these objective the researcher evaluate economic variables includes means of production, monthly income and

how impact the participation of the members of the community.

How do you contribute in local government service delivery * What is your monthly average income					
Count		What is your monthly average income			Total
		0<300000	300000<500000	500000<800000	
How do you contribute in local government service delivery	Payee	0	6	2	8
	developmental contribution	64	24	0	88
	professional contributions	0	0	1	1
Total		64	30	3	97

Table 1, Respondents contribution in service delivery in relation to their monthly average income

Table 1, Researcher needed to compare the citizens monthly income in relation to what they devote themselves in local government service delivery. From the findings data shows that 64 with average income less than 300,000 provides developmental contribution, 24 with average income between 300,000 and 500,000 also provides developmental contributions, 6 with average income between 300,000 and 500,000 provide tax to contribute to the services delivery and 2 with average income between 500,000 and 800,000 also provide tax and 1 on the same group provide

professional contribution. Therefore from the findings, we found that large number of citizens which is 88 from 97 of the sample with diverse income provides developmental contribution such as labor power, cash and information towards service delivery.

From the interview, interviewee responded that their monthly average income range between 500,000 to 1,000,000 and they said they contribute to the community by paying tax as usual, and provide developmental contribution when they invited in any fundraising programs that targeted to empower the community in all ways of life.

How do you participate in the local government decision making * What is your means of production					
Count		What is your means of production			Total
		Employed	Business	5	
How do you participate in the local government decision making	I don't participate in any way	2	0	64	66
	Attending local meetings and committees	6	0	0	6
	attending some decision making bodies by virtue of my position	1	0	0	1
	through suggestion box	0	24	0	24
Total		9	24	64	97

Table 2, ways in which members of community participate in decision making in relation to their means of production

Table 2, the researcher compares the respondent's aggregate source of income and how do they involve in local government decision making. From the findings we found that 64 who work with other informal sectors they don't participate in a anyway, 24 they participate by providing their query, concerns and comment through suggestion box, 6 who are employed attending local meetings and committees, 2 who are employed are not participate in any way and 1 who are employed attending some decision making bodies by virtue of their position. This makes the researcher to understand that 66 of the respondents with diverse means of production are not participate in local government decision making something weakens performance of Meru district council.

From the interview, the interviewee responded that are the public servants and they participate in decision making by actively involved in executive meeting to presents community problems and setting the priorities, arranging the community meeting to discuss with public their concerns, collect citizens complains and actively get involved in any community program for example "weka mazingira safi" are in front line to clean the environment.

4. Conclusion

The findings shows that the causative agent that weakens participations is the huge disparities between rich and poor where rich are favorable class and valuable in decision making process than any other group. Therefore MDC has to come up with clear strategies to enhance citizens participation in decision making and failure to do so bureaucracy will continue to happens, nepotism, misuse of resources, expansion of marginalization, gender and increase number of uneducated community because those who are in power will continue makes decision that will favor a specific group of people and specifically those who in rich.

5. Recommendations

Economic empowerment, economic empowerment is the process of adding and imparting extra capacity to women and men to participate in and to contribute to any productive sectors so that they can raise their income and benefit from it in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Economic empowerment increases community access to economic resources, giving them confidence to participate in decision making and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information. Economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and is a right of the

members of the community. Economic empowerment needs sound policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment from all development actors. MDC can assure his community economic empowerment by providing loans for developmental activities, provides agriculture subsidies and practical training to reduce the number of jobless people in the community and to raise their confidence to participate in decision making processes.

6. Recommendation for Further Study

Further investigation for citizens participation in local governance is required to explore the demographic changes in our community and bind them closely to local governance participations, identify which strategies are particularly effective in obtaining bottom up support for strengthen citizen participations in local governance; determine how diversity will promote participations in local governance; and explore the impact of economic empowerment in enhancing participations in local governance

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