

# Factors Influencing Citizen Participation in Local Government Budgeting Process in Tanzania - Case Study of Arusha Municipal Council

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**Abstract:** *The national budget is the most important economic policy instrument for government. It reflects the government's social and economic policy priorities. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. Data was collected from a random sample of 120 respondents; drawn from four wards of Arusha municipality. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Chi-square tests were used to establish association and relationships between and among variables. The study revealed that government policy influences the level of citizen-participation but also observed that the current allocation system is inefficient, cumbersome, and nontransparent. The study revealed high level of citizen participation which shows that most of the respondents seem to be aware of their roles with a mean score of 1.6583. The study revealed low understanding among the community on their rights to participate in government budgeting process. The results of cross-tabulation between respondents' education levels and their participation in budgeting process indicates that as someone gets more education the more the chances of engaging into budgeting process. These results are statistically significant with chi-square test and p-value of 0.037. From the findings it is clear that the local leaders do not play their role effectively in enhancing citizen participation with a mean score of 1.8417. The government should take initiatives to educate citizens' right to participate in the budgeting process as it always does on voting. Mechanism such as campaigns should be put in place for leaders to know whether citizens indeed participate in the budgeting process or not so that village leaders who do not allow citizens participation are made accountable.*

**Keywords:** Citizen-participation, budgeting process, participatory budgeting, local government

## 1. Background

The opportunity to give citizens the right to take part in budgetary processes is such a fundamental tenet of the democratic system of government that its very existence is rarely questioned. It is globally encouraged in democratic countries and it is underscored as an important aspect in development (Berner, 2001). Citizens' participation started a long time in countries like USA, e.g., New York Municipal Research Bureau where citizens participated in resource allocation (Berner, 2001). When citizens and their non-traditional political organizations participate directly in budgeting decisions, they assume ownership of the national budget knowing that their concerns have been taken into account.

However, citizens' participation does not happen automatically, in the first place, target population must be motivated, persuaded and reminded about their potential to help themselves, become accountable and hold others accountable. In Tanzania, since the beginning of Local Government (LG) reforms in the 1980 the government went through different programs of reforming the local government known as the Local Government Reform Program (LGRP), which was done in phases (URT, 2009). LGRP achieved many things such as the awareness of local government reform has increased, local authorities have increased capacities and that people's participation in local development has increased. Local Government Authorities (LGAs) shall have the right of decentralization and power to participate and involve people in the planning and implementation of development programs within their respective areas throughout the country. Mukandala, (2004) emphasizes that the purpose of the local government reforms

is to transfer authority to the people. LGAs have the responsibility for social development and public services provision in their jurisdiction. They play an important role in the facilitation and maintenance of law and order and deal with issues of national importance such as education, health, water, roads and agriculture. Local governments constitute a unitary governance system all over the country based not only on elected councils and committees but also on professional administration (URT, 1998).

Despite these efforts to decentralize, little is known about the effective participation of citizens in the budgeting for local government. Ordinary people are not fully participating in various plans and programs which are taking place in their areas because in practice as central government still appears to approve most of the important deliberations of Local government in Tanzania (Challigha, 2008). Tanzania's score on the Open Budget Index shows that the government provides the public with minimal information on the central government's budget and financial activities during the course of the financial year. This makes it difficult for citizens to participate in the budgeting process as well as holding the government accountable for its management of the public funds (Open Budget Index, 2008). It is also difficult to assess budget performance in Tanzania once the budget year is over. A year-end report is not published, preventing comparisons between what was budgeted and what was actually spent and collected. However, Tanzania does make its audit report public in a timely fashion, though it does not provide much information on whether the audit report's recommendations are successfully implemented. Access to the highly detailed budget information needed to understand the government's progress in undertaking a specific project or activity remains limited. The documents such as budget guidelines and enacted budget are very

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difficult to follow, they are produced in English only and few copies are printed to minimize circulation (Hakielimu, 2006).

The government of Tanzania recognizes the importance of citizens participation as it has specifically placed some words that are catching in the document of Decentralization by Devolution “citizens at all levels will cost effectively participate and demand transparency and accountability for allocation and use of public resources, and in planning and delivery of public services, socioeconomic development and poverty reduction” (URT, 2009). However to enhance participation of the citizens in the budgeting process in order to enhance accountability of the government to its citizens needs to be effectively addressed.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine factors influencing citizens’ participation in the budgeting process in the local government in Arusha municipal, Tanzania. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the role of the government policy on citizen participation in local government authorities in Tanzania, assess the level of awareness on citizen participation in local government authorities in Tanzania, to highlight the extent to which the level of education influence citizen participation in local government authorities in Tanzania, to examine how leadership influence citizen

participation in local government authorities in Tanzania and to establish how age influences citizen participation in local government authorities in Tanzania.

## 3. Research Methodology

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research approaches through a cross-sectional research design in which data were collected at one point in time from the selected sample of wards. The proposed study was a cross-sectional in nature because it aimed at evaluating what is happening and assessed the situation of present facts in the study area for the short period of time. The study covered the sample of 120 respondents from four wards of Arusha municipal. Data collection involved the use of questionnaires. Data analysis was done through use of descriptive statistical tools namely frequencies, and percentages.

## 4. Results and Analysis

### *The Role of the Government Policy on Citizen Participation*

The study revealed that government policy influences the level of citizen participation and most of them agreed with the concepts used to determine the level of policy Influence in citizen participation in the budgeting process (Table 1).

**Table 1: Role of government policy on citizen participation**

Parameters for influence of government policy	SDA		DA		AG		SAG		Mean score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
There is a policy on citizen participation in budgeting process	10	8.3	49	40.8	57	47.5	4	3.3	2.4583
I am involved in setting policy on citizen participation on budgeting process	6	5	46	38.3	62	51.7	6	5	1.7500
I am aware of the government policy that provides for citizen participation	25	20.8	68	56.7	26	21.7	1	0.8	2.5667
I have faith / trust in government policy on citizen participation	48	40	56	46.7	14	11.7	2	1.7	2.0250
The government policy provide a room for everyone to participate into budgeting process	13	10.8	22	18.3	75	62.5	10	8.3	2.6833
The government policy offers space for the citizen to give their suggestions in budgeting	1	0.8	12	10	82	68.3	25	20.8	3.0917
In general, the government has a clear policy on citizen participation in budgeting process.	2	1.7	45	37.5	66	55	7	5.8	2.6500
Overall Mean									2.4607

The overall mean score for all of this was 2.4607 items; this implies that overall perception of citizen on the influence of policy was positive though with some challenges. From these findings it can be observed that the current allocation system is inefficient, cumbersome, and nontransparent.

### *The Level of Awareness on Citizen Participation*

According to the study findings in Table 2, the level of citizen awareness on participation was high with a mean score of 2.55 out of 4; except the component of receiving public invitations for participation in budgeting process that had a mean score of 1.6583. This findings can be re-

enforced with the fact that the public always receive public invitations for participation in budgeting process which also had positive mean score with the effective awareness campaigns for citizen participation are effectively. Moreover, some of the respondents were able to affirm that they are aware as a citizen regarding their responsibility in budgeting process. In general, the government provides awareness on citizen participation in budgeting process. However, there are some people who don’t understand the process and more efforts should be undertaken to improve on awareness.

**Table 2: Level of awareness on citizen participation**

Parameters for level of awareness on citizen participation	SDA		DA		AG		SAG		Mean score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I am aware that it’s my right to participate in budgeting process	0	0	3	2.5	80	66.7	37	30.8	3.2833
We are always informed when to participate in budgeting process	4	3.3	47	39.2	69	57.5	0	0	2.5417
We often receive public invitations for participation in budgeting process	51	42.5	61	50.8	6	5	2	1.7	1.6583
The awareness campaigns for citizen participation are effectively	2	1.7	63	52.5	54	45	1	0.8	2.45
I am aware as a citizen regarding my responsibility in budgeting process	4	3.3	22	18.3	88	73.3	6	5	2.8
In general, the government provides awareness on citizen participation in budgeting process.	1	0.8	51	42.5	67	55.8	1	0.8	2.5667
Overall Mean									2.55

**Influence of Education on Citizen Participation**

According to the study findings, there is low understanding among the community on their rights and chances to participate in government budgeting process. The results of cross-tabulation between respondents' education levels and

their participation in budgeting process indicates that as someone gets more education the chances of engaging into budgeting process is increased. These results are statistically significant with chi-square test and p-value of 0.037.  $\chi^2 = 22.011$ ;  $df = 12$ ;  $p = 0.037$  (Table 3).

**Table 3: Level of education and citizen participation**

Parameters for influence of education	SDA		DA		AG		SAG		Mean score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Low understanding among the community on their rights influence to participation in budgeting process	41	34.2	64	53.3	13	10.8	2	1.7	1.800
Low education among the members of the community influence the participation	14	11.7	78	65	26	21.7	2	1.7	2.1333
People with high education participate more in budgeting process	0	0	3	2.5	36	30	81	67.5	3.6500
People with low education do not participate much in budgeting process	15	12.5	70	58.3	30	25	5	4.2	2.2083
Education plays a crucial role in citizen participation in budgeting process	0	0	1	0.8	42	35	77	64.2	3.6333
I feel strongly that my level of education has an influence in the way I participate in budgeting process.	1	0.8	24	20	85	70.8	10	8.3	2.8667
In general the education level determines level of participation in budgeting process.	5	4.2	30	25	71	59.2	14	11.7	2.7833
Overall Mean									2.7249

The overall mean was 2.7249 which implies that the overall influence of education was high and as more people get educated, the higher the level of citizen participation in budgeting. This applies also to different development initiatives that require the participation of citizens whether in kind or material wise.

**Influence of Leadership on Citizen Participation**

The influence of leadership on citizen participation was assessed through a number of statements in which respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement; resulting in a mean score of 2.7738 which denotes high rating (Table 4). From the findings it shows that the local leaders are effectively playing their role in enhancing citizen participation. This implies that leadership influences citizen participation and with strong leadership the community becomes more vibrant and resourcefulness.

**Table 4: Influence of leadership on citizen participation**

Parameters for influence of leadership on citizen participation	SDA		DA		AG		SAG		Mean score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Leaders have knowledge and a good understand on citizen participation in budgeting process	1	0.8	29	24.2	80	66.7	10	8.3	2.8250
Leaders are not aware on how to influence citizen participation in budgeting process	3	2.5	76	63.3	38	31.7	3	2.5	2.3417
The level of citizen participation are influenced by Leaders	1	0.8	10	8.3	97	80.8	12	10	3.0000
In my ward leaders play a great role to influence citizen participation	1	0.8	13	10.8	69	57.5	37	30.8	3.1833
In my ward leaders do not play effectively the role in influencing citizen participation	38	31.7	66	55	13	10.8	3	2.5	1.8417
In general, leaders have a great influence on citizen participation in budgeting process	0	0	14	11.7	81	67.5	25	20.8	3.0917
I feel extremely good participating in budgeting process because of my leader's influence	0	0	18	15	68	56.7	34	28.3	3.1333
Overall Mean									2.7738

**Influence of Age on Citizen Participation**

The findings show that most of the respondent aged 30-39 years were in agreement that age has a significant influence on citizen participation with a mean score of 2.7933; where

further analysis using chi-square test indicated the relationship was not statistically significant with a p-value 0.397.  $\chi^2 = 9.445$ ;  $df = 9$ ;  $p = 0.397$ .

**Table 5: Age and citizen participation**

Parameters for influence of age on citizen participation	SDA		DA		AG		SAG		Mean score
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Young people participate more in budgeting process than old ones	0	0	27	22.5	76	63.3	17	14.2	1.9167
My age determine the level of participation in budgeting process	9	7.5	44	36.7	64	53.3	3	2.5	2.5083
I proudly commit my time and in participate in budgeting process because am still young	0	0	12	10	86	71.7	22	18.3	3.0833
Youth are encouraged to participate in preparation of budget	0	0	7	5.8	27	22.5	86	71.7	3.6583
In general, your age determines level of participation in budgeting process.	9	7.5	24	20	69	57.5	18	15	2.8000
Overall Mean									2.7933

**5. Conclusions**

From the study findings, it is clear that each citizen is responsible for participating in budgeting process. The government also has the responsibility to provide

opportunities for citizens to participate in the budget planning. If the budget is scheduled without the participation of citizens, citizens will not be able to question the expenditures. Effectively engaging the citizens in budgeting process will not solve complicated budget and financial policy dilemmas, but it is also an important part of an overall

strategy both to encourage good governance practice and to adopt politically viable yet responsible financial policies. Engaged citizens are more knowledgeable about government, hold more thoughtful and sophisticated views of public policy, and are less skeptical in their attitudes toward their government. Improving citizens' involvement in national budget policy is especially important. The budget represents the public's priorities and allocates the responsibility for paying for those activities. If citizens are not engaged in the budgeting process, they cannot employ a meaningful oversight and hold officials accountable.

## 6. Recommendations

From the study findings, most of the citizens do not know their rights on participatory budgeting as anchored in the constitution. Therefore, just as they always do during the elections, the government should take initiatives to educate citizens' right to participate in the budgeting process as it always does on voting.

Further, the Government should enforce policy implementation on community participation in budgeting. There is also a need to hold leaders accountable for failing to implement the requirement of community participation, sensitization and awareness creation on the importance of community and gender-based participation in the budgeting process.

Local leaders need to develop participatory strategies that take on board all social groups in the community as well as influencing and motivating community members to participate actively in the budgeting process at local level. It is also important that the government translates all the documents related to budget into a language that the locals can easily understand; Swahili. Most of the budget documents are in English which make it hard for a normal citizen to understand them. Even the regulations for the budgeting process are in English and most of the village leaders cannot read and write, so it's hard for them to involve the citizen to participate in budgeting process.

There is also need to train local leaders on community participation and involvement. Likewise, capacity building to community members and leaders on their respective roles and responsibilities in budgeting and financial issues needs to be effected for all Wards.

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