

Kenya's Constituency Development Fund (CDF): Citizens' Awareness in Kanduyi Constituency of Bungoma County

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Abstract

Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is a strategy that channels resources to community projects proposed by community members. It is a participatory fund and increases citizens' involvement in the provision of services which empowers them to manage their livelihoods. To determine citizens' awareness of CDF projects, 35 projects in Kanduyi constituency of Bungoma County in Kenya were studied. Interview schedules for the beneficiaries and PC members were used to collect primary data with 175 beneficiaries and 70 PC members being interviewed. Administrative locations in the constituency were stratified into urban and rural. In each location projects were grouped in categories namely: education, health, water and sanitation, roads and bridges, environment, agriculture and electricity. One project was randomly selected from each location, where five beneficiaries and two Project Committee members were picked randomly for interview. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. Of the two hundred and forty five respondents interviewed, 175 were beneficiaries of the CDF projects. The level of awareness of the existence of CDF by the respondents was at 97.1%. Of the beneficiaries, 80% were aware of CDF activities in the constituency. Despite the awareness among beneficiaries, only 18% knew the cost of the projects they were involved in. Among committee members, 12.3% were not aware of the cost of the projects, 33.3% did not know the amount dispersed for the projects and 10.6% were not aware of the status of the projects. Despite citizens' awareness of the existence of CDF activities in the constituency and location, they lacked knowledge on how they can be involved in the activities. There should be a shift in awareness creation with regard to information about the projects. Awareness campaigns about CDF have borne fruits but there is need for more information to be given to citizens about the costs of the projects and subsequently the amount dispersed at all stages of implementation. This may improve participation and lead to increased citizens' ownership of projects.

Keywords: Awareness, Decentralization and Participation

Background Information

Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was established in Kenya by an Act of Parliament in 2003. It is a homegrown initiative that was intended to address inequalities in development around the country. The fund has sparked great interest among ordinary people because they can be directly involved in deciding how government monies is used in their communities (IEA, 2006). Communities in Kenya have used their CDF allocation for projects such as the construction of schools, health facilities, water projects and roads. In many places, these projects have been the first infrastructure improvement seen in years.

Literature Review

Africa's failure to achieve development has been characterized by escalating poverty, unemployment and inequality within and across African states. Mbahazi (2005) contends that the common explanation to this has been the top-down approach to development that was adopted by most African states under the guise of national unity. This disenchantment with the centralized approach, following its dismal contribution to development has since seen the call by donors for a people centered approach to development.

The experience from other parts of the world has been used to justify the call for the above mentioned approach for Africa. For instance, as observed by World Bank (2000,9), the Caribbean, East Asia and Eastern European countries embraced decentralization as an important component for their development agenda and have fared better than Africa. The explanation is that decentralization strengthens good governance, democratization and creates efficiency and equity in the use of public resources and public delivery. It is against this background that decentralization as a strategy has dominated the discourse on state restructuring in Africa in the last four decades.

There are various forms of decentralization; first, there is de-congestion which involves transfer of administrative authority from the center to the field. The center, however, maintains policy and operational control. Second is delegation where responsibility for decision making and service delivery is passed by government to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by it but which remains directly answerable to it for functions delegated to them. This leads to government being relieved of the burden of service delivery, despite the fact that it retains overall control of policy and resources. Then, there is devolution which is a political arrangement whereby power (political, administrative and fiscal) is distributed to sub-national units. Muia (2005) define

devolution as the transfer of authority to sub-national governments electorally accountable to sub-national populations, sub-national governments include local governments, local authorities, counties and state governments. They can be single or multiple tier and their responsibilities may range from a large number of important functions to a few minor functions.

Kenya's history of decentralization dates back to independence where it can be traced in the independence constitution. At independence a form of decentralization known as *majimbo* (devolution) was adopted. Which gave significant responsibility to the regions. In this approach, the local authorities were responsible for collection of taxes and maintenance of schools, health facilities and minor roads (Wanjiru, 2008). However, as observed by Oyugi (2001) this strategy was short lived because it was meant for political stability based on multi-party system then. It was short lived, since by 1964, when Kenya became a Republic, the major opposition party, Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), crossed over and joined the Kenya African National Union (KANU) government, then the country reverted back to a centralized system of governance and the regions became provinces.

In Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya (ROK, 1965), the government stated that planning was to be extended to provinces, districts and municipalities so as to ensure that there was progress in each administrative unit. Each province, district and municipality was expected to establish a development committee and development advisory committee. Chitere and Monya (1988) examined the conception of this strategy using the decentralization framework and found that the characteristics which were also its limitations included dominance by civil servants, use of centralized system of allocating funds, reliance on a system that tended to retain staff at a higher levels rather than post them to the communities and lack of effective involvement of county councils in planning and implementation of programs. The Commission of Inquiry on Public Service Structure i.e. Ndegwa Report (ROK, 1971) recommended the transformation of this approach to a district focus strategy so as to fast track development to rural communities and improve on people's involvement.

District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) strategy became officially operational in Kenya in 1983. It was a strategy that aimed at making the district the basic operational unit for design and management of rural development (ROK, 1982). As observed by Makokha (1985), DFRD was based on the bottom up approach that permitted lower levels of decision making and autonomy in setting their objective and priorities. It therefore had the potential for ensuring participation of rural inhabitants in starting priority projects and meeting more needs of districts. But Tostensen and Scott (1987) noted that the limitation of this strategy included its reliance on the existing institutional framework, lack of adequate resources for its implementation and development-oriented field units by the provincial administration officials.

Chitere and Ileri (2003) observed the weakness in the DFRD as being in the implementation of programs. They argue that the strategy only emphasized empowerment of field workers in making decisions relating to planning and implementation of programs, however literature on participatory planning emphasized the need for field workers to facilitate the process of empowering local people to be able to shoulder their development. They further suggest that the main concern with DFRD should have been on human resources, which entails strengthening of peoples' capacities to identify problems, plan their solutions, mobilize required resources and implement planned actions. In a decentralized literature, emphasis is put on institutional and other efforts needed to facilitate plan-making and plan-implementation at the local level which involves the use of contemporary planning tools including baseline data collection and active involvement of communities through their organizations and leaders which DFRD failed to implement.

The decentralization of fiscal management from the central government to sub-national units in Kenya can be traced back to session paper NO.1 of 1986 on Economic Management for Renewal Growth (EMRG) that called for reforms to strengthen the participation of local governments in the development process (ROK, 1986). A decade later these reforms were initiated through the establishment of Kenya Local Government Reform Program (KLGRP). Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) was created as a result of the initiative of KLGRP that aimed at revitalizing local authorities. In the process of addressing the issues of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, then, there emerged the need for the grant system for LATF through the LATF Act CAP 08 of 1998 (ROK, 1998). LATF was a public fund that was transferred to all local authorities in Kenya. The purpose of this fund was to improve the local service delivery, improve council financial management and accountability, pay all council debts and enhance participatory development planning at the local community level through Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) (Smoke, 2004). Its implementation procedures required that councils hold meetings with local community members to discuss priority needs and propose projects to the clerk of the council for short listing and presentation to the full council meeting for approval and then be submitted to the Ministry of Local Government (LG) (ROK, 1998).

Despite the above reforms, it was noted that residents of local authorities were largely ignorant of any development being undertaken by the authorities and how resources were allocated for projects (Khadiagala and Mitulah, 2007). Lack of participation in development projects raised questions on the conditions of implementing LATF and whether the scheme had facilitated participatory planning in development. Hence a major gap was observed between the local authorities and local residents.

The purpose of CDF is to bring fast and relevant development to grassroots level, i.e. to enable individuals at the grassroots level make expenditure choices that benefit their welfare in line with their needs and preferences (Kimenyi, 2005). The idea is based on the understanding that communities and populations are better placed to manage their affairs namely: social, cultural, economical and political (Odhiambo and Anyembe, 2009). As such the impact of participation can be significant if funds are effectively used (Oyugi 2007; Wanjiru, 2008). Because of involvement, the benefiting community can also act as a monitoring agency thereby creating efficiency in resource utilization and management.

Kanduyi Constituency of Bungoma County has an administrative division and has both urban and rural set-ups. Micro economic activities take place within the urban set-up while many agricultural activities are practiced in the rural areas. The landscape from one location to another is different with different population density, needs and preferences. The CDF activities in the division are evident at location level, with location committees, actively involved in project approval. The study aimed at investigating the level of citizens' participation in CDF funded projects at location level in Kanduyi Division.

Methodology

The study was a descriptive cross sectional survey design. This was suited for the study because the study aimed at collecting and analyzing quantitative data. An interview schedule and direct observation was used to collect primary data while secondary data was obtained from the District Development Officer's (DDO) records. Kanduyi division of Bungoma County in Western Kenya, was selected purposefully because the division has both urban and rural set-ups and also, it makes up one complete constituency.

Projects were identified and listed per location and category before they were selected. In each category, one project was selected randomly for the study. Lists of members for the project committee (PC) were obtained and two members were selected randomly for the study. A list of households who were regular users located in the selected projects was compiled as project beneficiaries. From this list, five households were selected randomly. The household heads were visited and interviewed. Stratified sampling of locations was used to establish the level of participation in urban and rural set-ups.

The main method of data collection was interview schedule for the beneficiaries and project committee members. Direct observations were used to establish the status of selected projects. Lists of funded projects between January 2005 to January 2010 were obtained from the District Development Officer's (DDO) office of Bungoma South District.

The data obtained was edited; coding was done by assigning numbers and symbols for identification purposes and classified into categories. This was then analyzed using descriptive statistics Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. In the process of analysis, the following issues were vital to establish, the level of awareness of citizens about the existence of CDF at the constituency and location level; the knowledge of citizens on costs, amount dispersed and status of projects; knowledge on the role citizens are supposed to play in needs identification, project identification and planning.

Results

In total 245 citizens were interviewed. From each location, 35 beneficiaries and 14 project committee members were included. Two hundred and thirty eight respondents (97.1%) acknowledged being aware of CDF funded projects in the constituency while 2.9% were not aware. Of the 175 beneficiaries, 140 (80%) were aware of CDF activities in their locations.

CDF project activities are spread across the constituency in all the locations and that is why we have a location development committee. At any time funds are released, they are distributed in all locations to support the projects of the location. Since all location members are expected to have participated in the needs identification and project selection, the awareness level was expected to be high at the location.

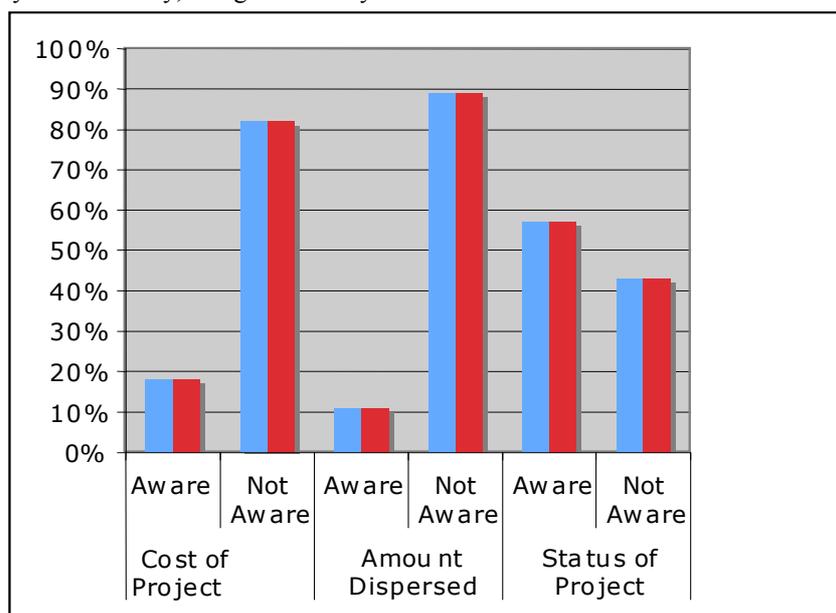
When asked to give their opinion about the level of awareness of CDF among the general population at location level, 34.2% of beneficiaries responded as low, 22.9% as high, 22.3% as very low, 9.7% as very high while 8% were non-committal (Table 1). This observation is similar to what was observed among PC members.

Table 1: Awareness levels among respondents from Kanduyi constituency, Bungoma County

Response	Beneficiaries		Committee Members	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Very High	17	9.7%	9	12.9%
High	40	22.9%	30	42.8%
Low	60	34.2%	22	21.4%
Very Low	39	22.3%	9	12.9%
Don't Know	19	10.9%	0	0%
Total	175	100%	70	100%

Beneficiaries level of awareness on the cost of the projects, how much had been dispersed towards the project and the status of the project, showed that only 18% were aware of the cost of the project, 11% knew how much had been dispersed for the project and 57% were aware of the status of the project (Table 2).

Table 2: Level of awareness among individuals who benefitted from the constituency development fund projects in Kanduyi constituency, Bungoma county



Some committee members were not aware of the costs, amount dispersed and status of projects they were serving, with 12.3% not aware of the cost of the project, 33.3% did not know the amount dispersed for the project and 10.6% not being aware of the status of the project (Table 3).

Table 3: Committee members' awareness of projects in which they served as implementers

	Cost of Project		Amount Dispersed		Status of Project	
	Know	Don't Know	Know	Don't Know	Know	Don't Know
Number	50	7	38	19	51	6
Percentage	87.7%	12.3%	66.7%	33.3%	89.4%	10.6%

Discussion

Citizens' Awareness and Knowledge of Decentralized Funds

Knowledge of decentralized funds by the citizens is key in attaining better participation in any community development initiative. Wilcox (2007) notes that citizens are reluctant to participate in any community activity when they do not have enough information to act responsibly. He notes that they will avoid participation as long as possible or until when they have what they believe to be sufficient information. Agreeing, Mawhood (1983) observes that citizens will voluntarily participate in a community activity when they have better knowledge of an issue or situation, but when citizens have limited knowledge or information then opposition will occur. For the study to establish levels of community participation in CDF, it was important first to ascertain the awareness of citizens about the fund. This study sought to establish if citizens were aware about the existence of the fund, the projects being funded in their communities, the budgets for the projects, funds so far released and the status of the projects. From the survey conducted by the Kenya Human Rights Commission (2006), it was established that Kenyans were generally aware of the existence of CDF, however very few citizens knew exactly the amount of money allocated to their constituencies.

On the contrary, Brian (1985) argues that understanding of a decentralized fund does not come with

knowledge and information alone, but also by weighing information against previous knowledge and experiences as well as analyzing one's perception of a situation. According to section 23(3) of the CDF Act (2003), the Location Development Committee (LDC) is supposed to educate members of the location with the help of the area MP on the presence of CDF fund, help them to come up with the development plan in order of priority and also put in place community accepted project management committees (PMC) for the funded projects. The PMC then, is left with the overall responsibility of updating citizens with all necessary information in the project cycle. This study was to establish if citizens were aware of their role in putting in place the project committees and if committees were giving citizens opportunities to participate in the project cycles.

Citizens' Knowledge of CDF Activities

The constituency development fund (CDF) is one of the latest innovations of the government of Kenya. Through the CDF Act of 2003, the Finance Minister is mandated to transfer to the constituency level, an amount of money equal to not less than 2.5 percent of all government ordinary revenue collected every financial year and any other monies accruing to or received by the National Constituencies Development Fund Management Committee (NMC) (CDF Act, 2003).

The purpose of CDF is to initiate development projects for citizens at grass root level within the shortest time possible (Oyugi, 2007). The introduction of CDF was a response to the slow implementation of the normal government projects and therefore it is meant to improve the flow of funds from the exchequer to the citizens directly without the impediments posed by bureaucracies. CDF funds projects of public interest and benefit only. However in the case of educational bursaries, it is individuals that benefit, since it is in the interest of the community that poor children amongst it access education. CDF can fund a joined project as stipulated in the Act as long as the CDF contribution funds a complete unit or phase of the project in order to avoid cases of stalled projects on which CDF funds have been spent. According to the CDF Act (2003), for a project to be funded by CDF it has to go through a process, among which a location meeting is to be convened for the citizens to identify its development concerns and needs. Then propose relevant projects that may address these needs and concerns.

It is assumed that the location is the lowest level citizens can be reached and that citizens in a given location share a common surface with similar needs and concerns. Because of this, the LDC is central in the community as concerns the activities of CDF, it is expected that the LDC represent the location interest groups including the marginalized. Every project is expected to have a working committee, which may be in existence as a result of a continuing project or it may be formed for the purpose of a new project in the community, without which there will be no funding. This committee is supposed to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with the approved project implementation plan and budget and report regularly to the CDF Committee. It is further supposed to consult with the relevant government departments during the implementation phase to ensure accuracy in plans and budgets (Odhiambo & Anyembe, 2009).

Inanga and Osei-Wasu (2004) postulates that the philosophy guiding the constituency development financing, as being informed by the benefit that accrue to the citizens as a result of fiscal decentralization. Under the CDF framework, lower level units of development by virtue of being closer to the citizens, are seen to be in a better position to identify citizens' needs and therefore provide them with the appropriate form and level of public service. Lower level units manage the planning and budgeting of the funds. The projects are supposed to be proposed by citizens so that they capture their needs adequately. This kind of decentralization planning and budget management is aimed at allowing transparency in the utilization of resources.

In a national study survey done by the IEA (2006), it was observed that there was a high level of awareness and knowledge of CDF. However it showed a low level of projects being owned by citizens and having participated at any level of the project cycle including representation in the project committees. It was argued that despite the high level of awareness of the CDF fund, it is still regarded as the MP's money. These can be explained by the fact that there is high level of illiteracy among citizens concerning the fund and political influence asserted by the MPs'. The present study re-examined the levels of awareness and establish perception on citizens' ownership of CDF projects.

In as much as most citizens were aware of CDF activities, their perception about public awareness of CDF is still low. However, a high percent of PC members were of the view that public awareness of the fund is high. This may be explained by the fact that though citizens are aware about the activities of CDF, they observe less participation of citizens in these activities and assume that it may be because of their low awareness. This low perception can hinder citizens' involvement based on the fear of making decisions that may not serve communities wholly. The level of awareness on the cost of the projects and the amount dispersed for the projects among citizens in Bungoma was low. However, most respondents were aware about the status of the projects. Further, citizens did not know the budget costs and amounts dispersed for them. This may be because of the way projects are identified and how funds are dispersed to the community. Since dispersion of funds has traditionally been by members of parliament through public rallies in which citizens poorly attend, low knowledge of the projects' budget and amount dispersed is expected. This risks exaggeration of the budget and deception on the amount

dispersed among the CDF officials.

On the other hand, most committee members knew the cost of the project, the amount dispersed and the status of projects. These findings show that there exists a gap of information between the PC members and citizens, which need to be bridged. Since empowerment lies in a group and not change agents or social workers (Andrea 2006), PC members act as social workers leading to a gap that exists between citizens and PC members. The PC members are supposed to be representatives of the citizens in the project and therefore, they are expected to be informing citizens of the happenings in the project. If this gap exist then it is possible that citizens did not nominate PC members as their representatives in the committee. And if they were not picked as representative in the projects, then, they are imposed on the community by external persons, who hinder citizens' involvement.

Beneficiaries rely on the committee members to get information about the cost of the project, since budgeting is done by the technical committee of various ministries and information handed over to the committee for implementation. The amount dispersed is also done in forums attended by PC members mainly. However status of the project can be observed by all citizens in a community, but to determine whether the project is complete or not may be more technical to a common man. Unfortunately, most active members of the committee are usually the chairperson, secretary and the treasurer and it is them that are central people with information. Other committee members may not necessarily be informed much.

CDF is expected to have a positive impact on development at the grassroots. In addition to advancing the welfare of the people, it is expected to have an outstanding effect on participation which in itself is pivotal to the empowerment of citizens. However, it has been shown that there has been low involvement of citizens in project selection and implementation across the country (IEA, 2006). This calls for urgent alternative interventions that will result in active and full participation of community members in projects that impact their lives.

Summary

The summary of the findings were that there is a high level of awareness of CDF activities at the constituency and location level. However, knowledge about the cost of projects and amounts of funding dispersed is low. About the status of the projects, the findings showered that there is a low awareness of projects status.

Conclusion

The citizens were aware of CDF activities and is highest at constituency and location level. Most citizens don't the cost and amount of funds dispersed for projects in their community. These showed that previous campaigns about the CDF fund have borne fruits and may have emphasized just about the existence of the fund but not about its utilization.

Recommendation

This study recommends a shift in awareness creation with regard to information dispersion to citizens. Since most citizens lack knowledge about the cost of projects and amount of funds dispersed, and this lack of information may led to mistrust by project beneficiaries, this study recommends that signposts be erected near project sites with project cost and funding information clearly displayed for all citizens to see. The study further recommends that project management committees be expanded to include more representatives of the communities benefitting from the project directly, so as to have inclusiveness and representation and therefore better flow of information.

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