

# Determinants of Public Participation on Sustainability of County Government Projects in Uasin Gishu County

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to establish the determinants of public participation on sustainability of county government projects in Uasin Gishu County Government. Public participation aims at bridging of the gap between the government, civil society, private sector and the general public, building a common understanding about the local situation, priorities and programs. The study was guided by the following research objective: - to examine the effect of shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects in Uasin Gishu County Government. The research design that was used is a descriptive as it is concerned with describing the characteristics of county governments with regards to public participation and sustainability of projects in county Uasin Gishu County. The study was carried out in Uasin Gishu County government headquarters which is located in Eldoret town, Kenya. The target population to be studied shall include the thirty eight managers of ongoing projects and sixty two community leaders in areas that projects are being undertaken within Uasin Gishu County government because they are the beneficiaries of the services provided by the county government. The whole population formed the sample size hence the sample size was 100 respondents. A census study was undertaken. The researcher used structured questionnaires; the questionnaires contained closed ended questions. The choice of structured questionnaire was picked due to its ease of administration, analysis and time saving. The data collected was processed, analysed and presented with the use of charts, graphs, percentages, ratios and the relationship between the variables was established and tested using multiple regression. From the analysis, there is a significant correlation between sustainability of county government projects and community involvement. This therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between sustainability of county government projects and community involvement. Based on the findings, the results revealed that public participation encourages openness, accountability and transparency, and is thus at the heart of inclusive decision-making and that there is an acceptance of project by public minimizing the challenges in project implementation and meeting the needs of the community. For the public to participate in a project, ownership of the project should at core and results of the project should always be clear always for sustainability of county projects in Uasin Gishu County and other counties.

**Keywords:** Shared Ownership, Public Participation, Projects Sustainability.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Public participation requires that people be at the center of decision-making processes. Therefore, involving people in making decisions that concern their lives is an essential feature of performance in established governing units such as county governments in Kenya. Globally, a lot of funds have been used in communities to enhance the living situation of the citizens. However, one of the most critical obstacles is the extent to which the projects are able to continue despite the

exit of donors, while the beneficiaries reap dividends; appreciate their participation and ownership role in the project. Apparently, it is sustainability that makes the difference between success and failure of community-based projects (Peter et al. 2015). Public participation is the practice of looking for and facilitating the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision (Mdunyelwa, 2008). The principle of public participation holds that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be concerned in the decision making process. Public participation may be regarded as a way of empowerment and as vital part of democratic governance (Moseti, 2010).

Worldwide, implemented projects by the county governments in United States of America (USA) such as Texas County include: community hospitals, residential buildings, roads, railway lines, water projects, waste management and agricultural projects (Abdulrahman A. & Dr. Otieno M, 2017). Fernando (2009) found out that there is imbalanced development in various states, counties and local states or municipalities in America, India, Austria and Malaysia. The major reason cited for this different development in states/counties despite the fact that they are operating in the same countries include: differing state/county by laws, rates of imposed taxes, financial resources availability, natural resources availability, corruption, infrastructure, politics, security, cultural factors and educational factors and climatic conditions (Abdulrahman A. & Dr. Otieno M, 2017).

According to Brown (2011), the aim of devolution is to bring about a reduction in the size and influence of the national government by reducing national taxes and expenditures and by shifting many national responsibilities to the states. Because one feature of devolution involves sharp reductions in national aid, states are compelled to assume important new responsibilities with substantially less revenue to finance them. In every region or any economic block, infrastructure development is an important driver of development to improve counties competitiveness and helping to integrate the country into the global economy and it promotes sustainability and socially inclusive economic growth. According to Ababa (2013), development aid to Kenya stood at \$770m in 2005 and has been steadily rising since 2002, supporting several projects all geared towards development. Some of the projects have, however, been successful. However, little evidence is available on the true impact of funded programs on the lives of the poor in Kenya. One of the most critical obstacles is the extent to which the projects are able to persist despite the exit of donors, while the beneficiaries reap dividends, and appreciate their participation and ownership role in the project. Apparently, little evidence indicates that, it is sustainability that makes the difference between success and failure of community-based projects. EU (2004) defines sustainability as “the likelihood of a continuation in the stream of benefits produced by the project after the period of external support has ended.” Mulwa (2010) noted that project sustainability concerns itself with the continuity of a project until it attains its set objectives. Policy and decision-makers make an assumption that there is a causal relationship between public participation and service delivery. This assumption is observable in the attempt to work with citizens and groups to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and to improve their quality of life—where the emphasis is on working with communities for the betterment of their quality of life. This is emphasized in participatory budgets and performance management, and in the way public participation should give rise to the improvement in the delivery of services.

According to Mbaabu, 2012, the Constitution of Kenya 2010 gives people the right to take part in projects that have a direct effect on their wellbeing. In relation to sustainability, public participation refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits (Abdulrahman A. & Dr. Otieno M, 2017). Multi-national companies are coming to the country seek for local talent with international project management certifications and while most of these openings are initially temporary in nature, there are occasions where permanent contracts are essential and there are many facets to project management as a career in project management is well suited for those who are looking for a challenging and diverse work environment, where no two days are ever alike (Wachira 2015). According to the County Public Participation Guidelines (2015), the members of the public are supposed to participate in: the legislative process/policy and law making; planning and budgeting for county public service delivery; implementation/delivery of county public services; and performance management. Other areas are; oversight through monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning; and vetting of public officers (Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2015).

Public participation enables both the county and national governments to realize the needs of the citizens that are most pressing. Kenya as a country has different climatic conditions. In the 47 counties, some receive more rain than others;

some have high population compared to their surface area, all this dictates the type of project to implement. Uasin Gishu County is known for growing of cereals and rearing of dairy cows among others. The county is highly dependent on agriculture. For both the national and county governments to come up with the most adaptable and acceptable projects, they have to involve the public or its citizens in making decisions. Uasin Gishu is one of the 47 counties in Kenya that in the former Rift valley province. It is divided into six sub-counties: Turbo, Soy, Ainabkoi, Moiben, Kesses and Kapseret. The sub-counties are further subdivided into fifty one locations and ninety seven sub-locations.

According to Republic of Kenya Report (2000), money has been set aside by the government to assist the communities from the local areas for the purpose of development and empowering the communities and the marginalized people. This resource decentralization helps bridging the gap between the rich and the poor and some of this money is channeled through devolved funds. Recent efforts in national planning in Kenya have sought to identify development priorities through consultations (Nganga, 2011). For example, the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) involved broad stakeholder consultations across the country with the objective of eliciting information on key concerns and priorities. Likewise, the Economic Recovery Strategy for Employment and Wealth Creation took account of the priorities expressed by stakeholders though the consultations were not as broad and intensive as those carried out in the PRSP. These consultations have been particularly insightful in highlighting the priority rankings of development needs by communities (Kimenyi, 2005).

According to Williams, (2003), sustainability is reflected in the capacity of the community to cope with change and adapt to new situations. A project that is seen as worth sustaining today may not be so in future. Notwithstanding, substantial resources have been allocated to developing and maintaining community-based programs for children, youth and families, relatively little is known about how these programs are sustained and what factors lead to their failure. Inadequate information and understanding of what sustains community based programs has led to various researches focusing on how community projects can be sustained past their initial funding base and increase their longevity in addressing the needs of the community. The study focused on determinants of public participation on sustainability of county government projects. Public participation aims at bridging of the gap between the government, civil society, private sector and the general public, building a common understanding about the local situation, priorities and programs. Public participation encourages openness, accountability and transparency, and is thus at the heart of inclusive decision-making. The level and the nature of public participation in local governance issues are often used as indicators of a healthy civic culture (Moseti, 2010).

Problems of political interference render county governments dysfunctional. Most of the time, politicians are of the view that because they are appointed by the people, they are legitimate representatives of the people and are therefore free to make decisions on behalf of the people. As a result the politicians' interests end up at the frontline; regardless of the needs of the people they represent (Mdunyelwa, 2009). However, there has been complains of ownership of projects that results from individualism and apathy, unresponsive projects which is caused by misappropriations of funds, lack of capacity to handle projects due to incompetence and ignorance and lack of community involvement because of broken linkages. The Kenyan Constitution makes citizen participation a central part of Kenya's governance system. Participation of the people is recognized in Article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya as one of our national values and principles of governance. Further Article 174(c) provides that the aim of devolution is to: "enhance the participation of people in the exercise of the powers of the State and in making decisions affecting them." Article 184 (1) (c) also requires that mechanisms for participation by residents be included in the national legislation relating to urban areas and cities governance and management. The centrality of public participation cannot therefore be over-emphasized. The rationale of public participation is based on the foundation that the people of Kenya have sovereign power which they have delegated to state actors at the national and county levels. The sovereignty must be respected and institutionalized in all processes of governance (County Public Participation Guidelines, 2016). The study aims was to examine the effect of shared ownership on sustainability of county.

## **2. EFFECTS OF SHARED OWNERSHIP ON SUSTAINABILITY OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT PROJECTS**

According to Kariuki K. & Mbwise H. (2014) the participatory practice has not yet been cultured accordingly. Project information is rarely communicated to the public. An effective evaluation system has not been fully institutionalized to

capture the opinions of the real project beneficiaries. Information enables citizens to make more informed political choices, contribute to public initiatives, and push for policy improvements on issues. Adequate, timely, and appropriate information about how a project is conducted and policies determined is a necessary precursor to effective collaboration between county governments and the public. Although government administrators, officials, and community leaders have long recognized the value of public participation for a variety of purposes, processes, and decisions (Bryson et al., 2013; Yang & Pandey, 2011) and it is undoubted that local community involvement in the decision making process will enhance the outcome of the framework of a proposed development plan, they frequently do not have a good understanding of how to design participation processes to achieve desirable outcomes.

A study by the Institute of Economic affairs in 2006 shows that lack of skills and knowledge not only hinders citizen participation but eventually leads to collapse of projects. The study shows that even though the projects may be implemented, they usually lack sustainability when the projects are handed over to communities upon the exit of the donor/funder. This is because such a community lacks the skills to manage the project. In all the Citizen's report cards they constantly make recommendations to the development partners to involve the community in project planning and throughout the project cycle to enhance ownership of the projects by the community in line with the new constitution (TISA, 2010). Safeguards should be provided to prevent consultative forums from being controlled by any one political group, organized interest, or entity. These safeguards should embrace clear and transparent proceedings and competitively selected and qualified staff with ability to manage procedures.

The benefits that are normally proclaimed as arising from ensuring public participation in the sustainability as to whether or not a project with potentially significant development on the community should proceed. Firstly, local knowledge often provides valuable information that might be missed by outside experts. Secondly, it improves the chances of legitimacy of a project, thereby reducing the costs emanating from the social tensions that can result from an externally-imposed project. In the long run this will save on time and meeting the needs. The public must be involved in project identification in order to allow them to be the co-owners of the project. Furthermore, the opportunity exists for vocal groups to take over the process and seek to shape decisions in directions which may not be sufficiently representative of the participating public. The possibility that delay or expense may result or unfavorable publicity be aroused, or even mobilized, may prompt project sponsors or supporters or government officials, while paying lip service to the norm of public participation, to seek to denude the process of substantive content or limit its scope.

Kasiaka, (2004) explain that, "Participation is an approach through which beneficiaries and other stakeholders are able to influence project planning, decision-making, implementation and monitoring phases. On the other hand, participation is considered to be a prerequisite for project ownership, successful implementation and sustainability of the projects in question. Participation does not mean acceptance of all ideas from diverse groups. In participation, there is a need to combine indigenous and intellectual knowledge. However, care must be taken so that intellectual knowledge does not influence that of the indigenous.

### 3. METHOD

The study applied a descriptive research design with a target population of 100 and census method. The data collection instrument was questionnaire. Piloting was done to test the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. The data was analyzed using SPSS to produce descriptive statistics (frequencies) and presented in tables. The information collected was presented in tabular and graphical formats. Discussions of the findings were given in under the information presented. The information analyzed was interpreted in relation to the research objectives and in reference to the research hypothesis. The data collected was sorted and then coded ready for analysis. Multiple regression and ANOVA tools was used.

### 4. DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Effect of shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects in Uasin Gishu County Government.

This section of the questionnaire was used to assess the respondents' perception towards effect of shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects in Uasin Gishu County Government. The variables that measured this objective and the findings are presented in table 4.1 below

Table 4.1: shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects Variable

	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Total
Public participation encourages openness, accountability and transparency, and is thus at the heart of inclusive decision-making	41.5	34.5	5.7	9.6	8.7	100
Acceptance of project by public	47.2	30.1	9.0	4.7	9.0	100
The lack of effective structures for people's participation has been a major constraint upon more widespread development	55.9	31.1	2.8	9.3	0.9	100
the needs of a community is established as responsibility arises	39.8	23.6	21.4	6.5	8.7	100
increased political interference in county projects	55.4	32.8	1.8	4.3	5.5	100

The findings presented in Table 4.1 above, are discussed below.

The results revealed that when respondents were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or were not sure of the statement "Public participation encourages openness, accountability and transparency, and is thus at the heart of inclusive decision-making", 41.5 percent strongly agreed, 34.5 percent agreed, 5.5 percent of the respondents were not sure, while 9.6 percent and 8.7 percent respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. This implies that public participation encourages openness, accountability and transparency, and is thus at the heart of inclusive decision-making.

On the statement of acceptance of project by public, the results revealed that 47.2 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statements while 30.1 percent agreed that there is an acceptance of project by public. 9.6 percent strongly disagreed and those who were not sure represented 9 percent. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that there is an acceptance of project by public.

On the statement that the lack of effective structures for people's participation is a major constraint upon more wide spread development. The results revealed that 55.9 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that lack of effective structures for people's participation has been a major constraint upon more widespread development, 31.1 percent agreed while 9.3 percent strongly disagreed. This implies that most respondents are positive that the lack of effective structures for people's participation has been a major constraint upon more widespread development.

When asked whether the need of a community is established as responsibility arises the results indicated that 39.8% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. 23.6 percent agreed to the statement that the needs of a community are established as responsibility arises. 21.4 percent were not sure. Only 6.5 and 8.7 strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed to the statement that the needs of a community are established as responsibility arises.

On the statement "increased political interference in county projects" the result revealed that 55.4 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statements. 32.8 percent of the respondents agreed while 1.8 were not sure. Only 9.8 percent disagreed, disagreed strongly that increased political interference in county projects. This therefore implies that increased political interference in county projects.

## 4.5.1 Statistical Relationship between shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects

The study sought to find out the relationship between shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects and the following results were obtained from bivariate correlation. The results are presented in table 4:2 below.

**Table 4.2: Statistical Relationships between shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects**

		shared ownership	sustainability of county government projects
<b>shared ownership</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.289**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
<b>sustainability of county government projects</b>	Pearson Correlation	.289**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.2 above shows that there was a significant correlation between shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects at  $P=0.01$ . This therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects.

To determine the strength of correlation, a regression analysis was done and it yielded the following results

**Table 4.3: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.464 <sup>a</sup>	.232	.076	1.484

a. Predictors: (Constant), Shared ownership

b. Dependent Variable: Sustainability of County Projects

Table 4.3 shows the R and  $R^2$  values representing the simple correlation. The R value is 0.464 which indicates a weak correlation. The  $R^2$  value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "sustainability of county projects", can be explained by the independent variable, "shared ownership". In this case, 23.1 percent can be explained, which is relatively low. This therefore implies that there is relationship between shared ownership and sustainability of county government projects is high at  $r=0.464$  and 23.2 percent of sustainability of county government projects is determined by shared ownership.

The Study further sought to find out how shared ownership would predict sustainability of county government projects. ANOVA analysis yielded the results in table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4: ANOVA analysis**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.410	1	43.410	32.101	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	609.203	82	1.806		
	Total	612.715	85			

a. Dependent Variable: shared ownership sustainability of county government projects

b. Predictors: (Constant), shared ownership

ANOVA results in Table 4.4 above indicate that the regression model predicts the outcome variable significantly well. This indicates the statistical significance of the regression model that was applied. An F statistic of 32.101 indicated that the model was significant. This was supported by a probability value of 0.000. This is less than the conventional probability of 0.0005, which is less than 0.05, and indicates that; overall, the model applied can statistically significantly predict the outcome variable.

#### Coefficient Determination:

The study determined the regression coefficient between shared ownership and sustainability of county government projects. The results were presented in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Coefficient Determination of shared ownership and sustainability of county government projects**

		Unstandardized Coefficient B
<b>Sustainability of county government projects</b>	<b>Constant</b>	2.197
<b>Shared ownership</b>		.636

Coefficient Determination of shared ownership and sustainability of county government projects in Table 4.5 above provides the information needed to predicate sustainability of county government projects from shared ownership. Both the constant and shared ownership contribute significantly to the model. The regression equation is presented as follows; sustainability of county government projects = 2.197+0.636 (shared ownership)

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the study indicated that there was a significant correlation between shared ownership and sustainability of county government projects at  $P=0.01$ . This therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between shared ownership on sustainability of county government projects. Public participation should be encouraged, openness, accountability and transparency,

and is thus at the heart of inclusive decision-making for acceptance of project by public. The managers should provide effective structures for people's participation for major development.

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