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## Leadership Dynamics and Public Participation in Kenya: A Case of Constituency Development Fund Projects in Manyatta Constituency, Embu County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*This study intended to establish the influence of leadership dynamics on public participation in CDF projects in Kenya: a case of Manyatta constituency in Embu County. Specific objectives of the study included determining how project leadership managerial skills, project financial management, and project leadership level of education influence public participation in CDF projects. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select a study sample of 384 respondents from six wards in Manyatta constituency. Primary data collection was conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire. The findings revealed that effective managerial skills, financial management skills and good level of education of project managers were very instrumental in ensuring public participation in CDF projects. Financial resources were also critical in enhancing public participation in CDF projects. Similarly, proper and regular staff training is important in the management of CDF funded projects and therefore this must be adopted as a common practice.*

**Keywords:** Leadership, public, participation, project, management

### **1. Background of the Study**

Globally, decentralization as a public resource's management model is progressively gaining popularity as the most effective strategy for ensuring faster development in devolved units of governance (Hickey, 2010). According to Hyden (2010), many countries are striving to decentralize both political and economic resources governance structures in order to realize faster and equitable service delivery and rapid economic development for their citizens. Decentralization of governance structures ensures that crucial services are taken closer to the people hence at the same time creating a platform for close association and interaction between the government and the public. Stacey (2011) postulates that devolution of resources enhances public trust for the government thereby generally creating a favourable environment for the support of the government by the citizenry. The process of devolution involves different dynamics, including strong leadership at different levels as well as financial resources among others.

Amundsen (2017) argues that the increased global demand for decentralized administrative, financial and political responsibilities and services in both developed and developing economies is fast gaining momentum where in the next few years this is going to be a norm rather than an exception. Despite the heightened efforts for devolved resources utilization globally, a number of weaknesses have come to the fore, including ineffective leadership and prudent management of the resources. In Africa, these challenges are being witnessed against the backdrop of alleged irregular distribution of resources and services in rural areas (Musenge, 2013). The growing public dissatisfaction with resource allocation and service delivery in far flung countryside areas makes it necessary for governments to emphasize good leadership which is critical in resource allocation, public engagement, fairness and equity in service delivery.

Although the process of decentralization may vary from one country to the other, in all cases the basic principle of reaching out to the smallest administrative units is maintained (Ng'ombe, Keivani, Stubbs, and Mattingly, 2012). Decentralization therefore aims to increase local participation in development activities through devolution of decision-making and resources from the central governments to the local governments with an assumption that increased local participation contributes to increased development (Booth, 2011). Yet, the influence of leadership at the project level may significantly influence the level of public participation in decision-making and priority setting when it comes to initiation of the projects to be initiated. Leadership dynamics play a critical role in public participation, resource allocation and implementation of the set objectives (Hsiung, 2012).

Regarding Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and public participation, there must be strong leadership, enough allocation and prudent use of financial resources, effective information and technological (IT) infrastructure, skilled staff and work specialization (Banik, 2016). Although as demonstrated above a number of factors play out in

successful execution of CDF projects through enhanced public participation, essentially, there must be clear leadership structures that enable effective public participation, clear decision-making, smooth information flow, monitoring and evaluation, and feedback mechanisms among other enabling factors. The concept of CDF is a common feature in many countries in Africa as well as in Asia. In Africa the concept of CDF has been implemented in several countries, such as Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Kenya among others (Tearfund & Micah, 2013) where the fund tends to complement other existing funding initiatives for devolved units of government (Kairu & Ngugi, 2014).

### *1.1. The Concept of CDF in Kenya*

In Kenya, constituency development fund was initiated in 2003 as a government intervention strategy for addressing poverty eradication and enhancing rapid social economic development at the grassroots (Kariuki & Misaro, 2013). Based on the 2015 CDF Act, projects implemented through CDF funds should be in respect to national government functions and should be community-based so as the benefits are available to a widespread cross-section of residents in a particular constituency (GoK, 2018). Public participation was therefore considered an important element in proper execution of CDF funded projects. The CDF Act 2015 stipulates how the CDF should be managed and administered through involvement of the public in setting priority of the projects and ensuring resources are expended in a prudent manner (Iminyi and Miroga, 2018).

### *1.2. Public Participation in Kenya*

Community engagement is an increasingly popular concept in the management of public affairs not only in Kenya, but globally (Ejimabo, 2013). In Kenya, public participation is enshrined in the country's 2010 Constitution, which emphatically underlines the need for transfer of powers to the common person at the grass-root levels. The aim for involving citizens in decision-making processes regarding important public projects is to promote fairness and transparency hence rendering initiated projects more impactful on the lives of the majority of members of the community. According to (Mwenda, 2010), in order for community projects to be successfully implemented, communities/citizens must be allowed to actively take part in all the important stages and aspects of project implementation in a prioritized manner. However, empirical evidence shows that in Kenya public participation in CDF projects is not always emphasized. Oyugi (2014) postulates that due to noninvolvement of local communities in the process of project design and implementation, some CDF funded projects are reported to have stalled.

### *1.3. Statement of the Problem*

Public engagement is critical in successful initiation and implementation of CDF-funded projects in Kenya. Yet, public participation in CDF projects commonly lacks in many constituencies in the country, with a number of projects' failure being attributed to minimal or absence of citizen engagement (Jane, 2017). Some of the common factors attributed to this state of affairs is project leadership dynamics which include managerial skills, project financial management abilities, and level of education or career training for the managers. Several anomalies in CDF projects have been reported in many constituencies, with a number of them being associated with lack of public participation for priority setting and scrutiny in public resource management. For instance, the 2016 Auditor General report indicated that despite approval and spending of Kshs 700,000 in a water project in Rongai Constituency in 2015/2016 financial year, there were no records to show how the money was spent. This anomaly further put to test leadership of the CDF management office.

In a separate audit for Yatta constituency in 2016, the KENAO audit report indicated that out of the Kshs 190,955,612 allocated to CDF, Kshs 118,325,345 had been utilized hence reflecting a 38% underutilization of funds that financial year. This situation further reflected a weakness in management of CDF projects and raised questions as to whether the public was given a chance to participate in prioritizing projects and monitoring how the money was spent to ensure a near 100% spending as per the approval that financial year. All these irregularities were partly blamed on lack of public participation which had a direct link to leadership. Another research conducted by Oyugi (2013) observed that in most CDF funded projects; public participation diminishes as the project progresses, which significantly influences outcomes and the long-term existence of the project. Hence, the role of leadership is put to test with regard to allowing public participation for successful implementation of CDF projects. Therefore, this study aimed to establish the influence of leadership dynamics on public participation in CDF projects in Kenya: a case of Manyatta constituency in Embu County.

### *1.4. Main Objective of the Study*

The main objective of this study was to establish the influence of leadership dynamics on public participation in CDF projects in Kenya: a case of Manyatta constituency in Embu County.

### *1.5. Specific Objectives of the Study*

The study addressed the following specific objectives:

- To determine how project leadership managerial skills, influence public participation in CDF projects in Manyatta Constituency.
- To establish how project financial management influences public participation in CDF projects in Manyatta Constituency.
- To find out the effect of project leadership level of education on public participation in CDF projects in Manyatta Constituency.

### 1.6. Research Questions

- How do project leadership managerial skills influence public participation in CDF projects in Manyatta Constituency?
- What is the role of project financial management on public participation in CDF projects in Manyatta Constituency?
- What is the effect of project leadership level of education on public participation in CDF projects in Manyatta Constituency?

### 1.7. Justification and Significance of the Study

Public participation is enshrined in the Kenyan constitution as mandatory for all community projects, including CDF funded initiatives. However, often public participation is not strictly enforced in many grassroots projects, thus leaving the gap on the level of transparency and accountability in those projects. Manyatta Constituency, like many other constituencies in Kenya, is faced with ineffective public participation in CDF funded projects. This casts doubts on the validity and viability of some of these projects. Hence, the findings of the study are important for helping community members to understand their role in management of CDF projects for their maximum social and economic benefits. Additionally, the findings play a vital role to the CDF managers in understanding the role of community engagement in community projects initiated by the government where public participation in decision-making is the norm rather than the exception. That means that the role of leadership in public participation in and management of CDF projects will be emphasized.

The findings will also be important for policymakers at both the parliamentary and ministerial levels. For instance, the outcome of the study may help parliament to review or amend policies governing CDF so that projects funded through CDF can effectively be completed to serve the people better. At ministerial level, the findings may enable the Ministry of Devolution and the CDF board in reviewing, strengthening and enacting policies that will promote meaningful public engagement through effective recruitment of CDF projects management. It is further anticipated that the study will serve as a reference point and provide other researchers and scholars with relevant information for future studies related to the management of CDF projects. The research is expected to build scholarly knowledge base that will be useful to researchers and the academia keen on pursuing studies meant to strengthen CDF as an important government poverty eradication scheme.

### 1.8. Scope and Limitations of the Study

Manyatta constituency in Embu County, one of the 290 constituencies in the country, formed the scope of this study. The study was restricted to leadership dynamics (i.e. leadership managerial skills, project financial management, and leadership level of education) as independent (predictor) variables and public participation as the dependent variable or outcome of this research. The study only involved CDF initiated programs of FY 2016/2017 and these provided a basis for understanding the extent to which public input was being sought by the project's management in the running of various CDF projects in Manyatta constituency. The constituency comprises of 6 electoral wards, namely Ruguru/Ngandori, Kithimu, Nginda, Mbeti North, Kirimari, and Gaturi South. A representative sample of the respondents was involved from each of the wards.

## 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Project Leadership Managerial Skills and Public Participation in CDF Projects

Project top management is critical for the success of initiated projects. Wanyama (2013) undertook a research on the role played by leadership in the management of CDF programs in Juja constituency. The research was informed by the assumption that CDF projects failed to materialize due to bad leadership and exposure to other management risks. With a target population of 239 projects which had a budget allocation of at least 200,000 shillings, the study revealed that CDF projects which had effective management team stood lower risks of non-completion. However, majority of the project managers indicate that they were not well-versed with risk management in the lifespan of a project. This included the fact that they did not consider it critical to fully involve the public in the selection, design, and making follow-ups on the subsequent status of projects. Hence, this caused limited involvement of key stakeholders from the communities in which the projects were being implemented.

In another study by Stacey (2011) to examine the influence of CDF project management in public involvement in community development projects funded through the CDF kitty, it emerged that the success of any project depended on a strong management team among other factors. The study further revealed that achievement of CDF projects was measured based on its adherence to strict set objectives, project costs, the principle of public participation, and project schedules. Despite these revelations, it was noted that most CDF projects were run by untrained project managers and on exaggerated budget allocations. Furthermore, there were a lot of bureaucracies involved in procurement and release of funds which were often associated with poor management at the helm.

The CDF Act (2015) mandates the CDF authority to monitor projects for the purpose of registering any gaps that may jeopardize their implementation. However, according to (Oyungi and Nyaguthii, 2013), there is no clear framework stipulating the frequency of monitoring and evaluation. This anomaly has complicated it even more for project teams whose members or staff lacks relevant project management skills. Lack of professional training by the project management team is a recipe for lack of clear path for setting priorities in project selection, design, and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation. In order to address this weakness, studies have suggested that there should be

formulation of a national framework for independent M&E of local programs to ensure regular assessment related to the progress of these projects (Namano, 2015). In order to enhance public participation in CDF project management, the project leadership must understand the need for effective inclusion of special interest groups, articulate participation logistics, and clear communication structures.

Furthermore, due lack of clear vision by most CDF management teams as a result of conflict of interests sparked by politics, studies have pointed out that there is a growing sense of citizen apathy (Mwenda, 2010). Common failure of CDF management team to implement citizens' prioritized projects and lack of clear feedback mechanisms for reporting on the decisions taken on their proposals, often tend to discourage many locals from engaging in public participation processes. Coupled with limited civic education and capacity, the public often tends to develop a perception that citizens' involvement in community development events does not serve its intended purpose. According to (Musenge, 2013), inadequate funding for civic education and public participation has often led to poor M&E systems, and ineffective learning and feedback mechanisms in CDF projects. This has occasionally resulted into a demand by the members of the public for payment and reimbursement of public participation attendance fees.

## *2.2. Financial Resources Management and Public Participation in CDF Projects*

The importance of CDF in development of marginalized areas in the country cannot be gainsaid. Several community projects have been initiated courtesy of the CDF kitty. Mulwa (2017) analyzed the effects of monetary allocation and proper financial management on public participation in government-initiated programs in training colleges in Nairobi City County. Employing descriptive research design and targeting three institutions in the county where 51 board of management members and 3 principals were interviewed, the study revealed that financial records in these institutions were poorly kept. Furthermore, the study established that there were no finances set aside for facilitating public participation. The findings of this study echoed the revelations by Kibeba and Mwirigi (2014) which established that most CDF projects were faced with lack of budgetary allocations for public participation which affected the frequency and quality of public involvement in projects meant to influence their lives at the local levels.

Essentially, low funding also influenced availability of crucial materials for project logistics and implementation. In a study by Okere, Damilola, Inemesit and Opeyemi (2017) to assess the relationship between financial resources allocation and management and public participation in management of local programs in Nigeria where survey research design was used, the findings indicated that lack of a clear-cut framework for budgetary allocation and spending of money in public participation logistics curtailed involvement of locals in important projects directly impacting their lives. The study concluded that for effective public participation, availability of financial resources was critical. However, other studies have indicated that most CDF projects lacked budgetary allocations for public participation logistics (Kibeba and Mwirigi, 2014).

Namano (2015) did a research to establish how fiscal auditing affected local government projects where descriptive research design was employed and 72 programs in Thika subcounty involved. Using both regressive and correlation analysis, the findings revealed that audit committee financial competence was one of the critical aspects of a competent CDF project management committee. The study concluded that financial audit committees of CDF projects must be competently trained and imparted with relevant financial management skills and that they should be able to operate independently where they frequently hold quality meetings without undue pressures from any unwarranted quarters. Despite these revelations, most CDF management committees were not professionally constituted hence lacking qualified people who understand the need for public participation in effective management of public affairs. These findings were in agreement with the study findings by Mading (2013) which indicated that financial resources were critical in community involvement in implementation of locally initiated government programs.

## *2.3. Project Leadership Education Level and Public Participation in CDF Projects*

Relevant career education and training of staff is critical in helping them acquire and upgrade skills that are important in ensuring that they perform their duties effectively and achieve the objectives of their employers. This should be no any different in CDF projects where careful selection, design and implementation of the projects are always encouraged. Yet, previous studies conducted on the challenges affecting CDF projects have indicated that a number of CDF committees are managed by politically-connected individuals with little professional qualification. Furthermore, some of the management committees were dominated by handpicked untrained individuals who are often connected with the area politicians such as the Member of Parliament (MP) (Oyugi, 2014). Studies have also linked most CDF managers to illegal practices such as corruption and general misappropriation of the funds allocated for various projects hence eroding public confidence in those projects. Ng'ombe et al (2012) aver that area MPs have often been accused of biases in the selection of CDF committee management and members where the practice of tribalism and nepotism prevail during constituting of these committees. In this sense, there is no emphasis laid on an individual's professional training or relevant managerial skills.

Relevant skills in any work environment are critical in helping the managers and the general staff to effectively achieve the objectives of their employer. According to Oyugi (2014), employees need to be empowered and regularly involved in refresher training so that they can update their skills in line with evolving tasks and responsibilities. Most CDF projects target the local communities where the level of poverty is high compared to most urban areas. In order to maximize the resources provided through the CDF kitty, it is important to have better informed stakeholders coming on board and this must be complemented by skilled employees who understand their work well (Ng'ombe et al, 2012). Studies have also indicated that it is not just enough for the staff to be trained but the right skills must be imparted and upgraded on regular basis as need arises. In a study by Magondu (2013) to understand factors influencing organizational

dynamics on public participation in CDF projects, it emerged that human resource was important in helping to actualize intended objectives of a given project. This was in addition to reliable flow of financial resources, strong M&E structures and general effective leadership where the project managers clearly understand their role.

Magondu (2013) further noted that education of project managers and staff capacity in numbers and skills are critical in effective implementation and sustainability of a project. Despite these findings, other studies have indicated that most CDF projects are run by individuals who are not professionally trained other than the fact that they are closely related to the local political class especially the local Member of Parliament (Ng'ombe et al, 2012). Political interests therefore tend to dominate in the running of CDF projects as opposed to professionalism hence negating the spirit of staff training with the aim of injecting competence in the work. According Alotaibi (2011), most constituency development fund committee members and M&E staff do not possess any relevant professional training skills. Professionally untrained staff was likely to negate the whole essence of community involvement when it comes to management of CDF-funded projects since their work environment will be saturated with a sense of insecurity hence the need to keep the public at bay.

Alotaibi (2011) concluded that there was need for the CDF committee members to undergo relevant training in order to be equipped with skills required for effective management of the kitty. This would further enable them to appreciate the need for public scrutiny of community development projects through effective public participation. These sentiments were shared by Ochieng et al (2012) who noted that training is critical for the management of CDF as this helped the staff to appreciate the need for public participation. All CDF projects cycle involved project identification, planning, and implementation, M&E and closure or handing over. However, Ochieng et al (2012) established that partly as a result of poorly trained CDF projects' management, often there was bias in terms of gender, tribal, and political affiliations when it came to recruitment of staff which generally affected implementation of important projects. Generally, due to a sense of job insecurity by unprofessional staff in CDF, this led to shunning of the public from regular participation in the projects for fear of scrutiny and possible loss of their positions. Such a scenario was likely to lead to misuse of funds, stalled projects and misplaced prioritized projects.

#### *2.4. Theoretical Framework: Theory of Change (Carol Weiss, 1995)*

This study was anchored on theory of change by Carol Weiss. This perspective was mooted by Carol Weiss in 1995 and attempted to explain why and how systems work to solve human problems. The theory of change attempts to move away from rigid planning applications to social change processes by defining and prescribing more necessary pragmatic steps for arriving at practical solutions to everyday issues. CDF projects generally are aimed at addressing emerging poverty issues at local levels where the citizens are struggling to improve their lives. The theory assumes that key stakeholders in a project are always looking forward to more practical solutions to their problems. However, for any meaningful change to be achieved there must be resources which should be appropriately channeled to where they are needed. In this sense, the project leadership must use available finances and put realistic mechanisms in place to enhance public participation and institute feedback mechanism.

Regarding individuals' role in change processes, the theory of change postulates that a realistic analysis of the current situation must always be undertaken before new input is given. CDF projects are basically about positive change in the lives of community members. However, according to this theory, positive change is not possible without careful investment in the intended change. In this context, there must be effective and visionary leadership, enough financial resources, efficient communication and feedback mechanisms, and competent staff to herald the desired change. The theory of change was appropriate for the research owing to its ability to encourage positive change in management of public affairs.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The section focuses on the methodological details adopted for the execution of the research. These include the research design, variables used in the study, site of the study, target population, and sampling techniques and sample size. Further focus is given on the research instruments, pilot study, validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and data management and ethical considerations.

#### *3.1. Research Design*

A descriptive research design was adopted to address the research objectives. The study design was suitable for a detailed presentation and analysis of the study variables where the phenomenon under research was analyzed without manipulation of the study variables (Ott & Longnecker, 2015).

#### *3.2. Study Site and Target Population*

The study was carried out in Manyatta constituency in Embu County. Established in 1997, it is one of the four constituencies in the county, including Runyenjes, Mbeere South and Mbeere North. Embu County is located in Eastern Kenya, with an area of approximately 2,556 KM<sup>2</sup> and an estimated population of 516,212. Manyatta constituency comprises of 6 wards, namely Ruguru/Ngandori, Kithimu, Nginda, Mbeti North, Kirimari, and Gatari South. As per the 2009 national population count, Manyatta constituency constituted 154,632 people (KNBS, 2016).

The target population comprised of beneficiaries of CDF projects in Manyatta constituency, where these were specifically spread across 6 wards (Ruguru/Ngandori, Kithimu, Nginda, Mbeti North, Kirimari, and Gatari South) in the constituency (KNBS, 2019). In total, the constituency has an estimated population of 154,632 people, as illustrated in Table 1 based on the six wards.

Ward	Target Population (N)
Ruguru/Ngandori	27,925
Kithimu	18,999
Nginda	28,511
Mbeti North	33,468
Kirimari	32,185
Gaturi South	13,544
Total	154,632

Table 1: Target Population  
Source: KNBS (2019)

### 3.3. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The population was stratified based on the 6 wards which make Manyatta constituency, before a sample was picked using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table of sampling theory. The table applies the following formula to obtain the sample size:  $n_0 = \frac{(t)^2(p)(q)}{d^2}$  where  $n_0$  is the sample size for categorical data;  $t$  is the value for the selected alpha level which is 0.025 in each tail = 1.65;  $p$  is the set at an estimated value of 0.5 hence  $(p)(q) = 0.25$ ;  $d$  is the acceptable margin of error for proportion being estimated at 0.05. Based on the target population of 154,632 in Manyatta constituency, the sample size for the study was 384, as summarized in Table 2.

Ward	Target Population (N)	Sample Size (n)
Ruguru/Ngandori	27,925	69
Kithimu	18,999	47
Nginda	28,511	71
Mbeti North	33,468	83
Kirimari	32,185	80
Gaturi South	13,544	34
Total	15,4632	384

Table 2: Sample Size

### 3.3. Research Instruments

Primary data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire where a mixed method approach was employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire constituted both close-ended and open-ended questions for statistical and in-depth information. The questionnaire was suitable for easily capturing a lot of information within a relatively short time hence saving time during fieldwork. Also, a questionnaire facilitated easier coding and analysis of collected data. The questionnaire was categorized into part A for the respondents' background information and part B to capture information based on the objectives of the study.

### 3.4. Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

For the testing validity of the questionnaire, expertise of the academic supervisor was sought to improve accordingly. Pretesting of the instrument was done to ascertain clarity of the questions hence enabling general improvement of the tool. Reliability of the questionnaire was tested using half-split test method, where data from the pilot test was keyed into SPSS and thereafter Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) generated. The Cronbach's alpha helps to check internal consistency of the questionnaire based on average inter-item correlation. A figure of 0.7-1.0 was considered to indicate reliability of the instrument where in this case,  $\alpha = 0.81$ , hence the questionnaire was standardized and served as a benchmark for generalization of the data.

### 3.5. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out through self-administered and face-to-face interviews. In the case of self-administered interviews, blank questionnaires were distributed to the respondents before completed ones were subsequently collected. Face-to-face interviews were administered to respondents who, for one reason or the other, were not more comfortable with the 'drop-and-pick' approach.

### 3.6. Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using SPSS software program and Excel worksheets before it was presented using frequency distribution tables. Qualitative data was organized and analyzed using coding, pattern and content analysis techniques and thereafter presented using narratives.

### 3.7. Data Management and Ethical Considerations

During the actual data collection process, social research ethics were strictly observed based on the principles of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. The respondents were clearly informed of the aim of the study before freely participating in the survey. They were also assured of a high level of confidentiality concerning the information they shared. In addition, they were assured of the researcher's intention to conceal their actual identity at all levels of data

processing, analysis and publication. Respect for intellectual property was also highly observed by properly acknowledging all the contributors to the study and through correct citations, free from plagiarism.

#### 4. Results/Findings

The main objective of this study was to establish the influence of leadership dynamics on public participation in CDF projects in Kenya: a case of Manyatta constituency in Embu County. Specific objectives included determining how project leadership managerial skills, project financial management, and project leadership level of education influenced public participation in CDF projects in Manyatta Constituency.

##### 4.1. Influence of Project Leadership Managerial Skills on Public Participation

Project leadership played a critical role in influencing public participation in CDF projects where a greater majority of the respondents agreed that managerial skills of project manager was indispensable in determining the level public participation in any given CDF projects. This was also the case with the project manager's experience in the job. These included the level of education, commitment, and attitude of the individuals at the helm of constituency CDF committees, the mode of dissemination of information to the public and manner of approach in execution of their mandate. In order to address some of those weaknesses, the public needed to be fully involved at the onset of the projects. The high level of impunity and tribalism involved in management of CDF projects also impacted public participation, especially when this was viewed against the process of tender allocations and utilization of public financial resources. Some of the CDF project managers were not transparent in their respective offices, and this made it difficult for the public to hold them accountable for their mistakes. In a number of cases, politicians placed their most trusted friends or relatives in key leadership positions, which made it difficult for the public to question the project leaders' actions. To capture some of the sentiments in a concise manner, Magwiri (not his real name), a resident of Ruguru/Ngandori ward, had the following to say:

*CDF project leadership is critical in determining public participation. However, sometimes things like favouritism, bribery, and political affiliations tend to influence stakeholders' attitude which may eventually result into lack of proper communication and absence of delegation of duties and empowerment of young leaders. There have also been reported cases of misappropriation or embezzlement of public funds; a practice that tends to discourage public participation.*

On the other hand, openness and transparency in leadership tended to improve the public image of the leaders and their respective offices thereby encouraging members of the public to feel appreciated in their contributions to community development initiatives. Improvement of creation of public awareness was also important in enhancing the level of attendance to public meetings to deliberate on important community development matters. Otherwise, a combination of dictatorship from projects' leadership and favouritism in their offices was likely to create apathy and despondency among members of the public thereby discouraging them from public participation.

##### 4.2. Influence of Financial Resources on Public Participation in CDF Projects

The study revealed that prudent management of financial resources was a precursor to the public participation in CDF projects. This implied that an effective project financial management team was likely to prioritize public participation and allocate a budget for the exercise.

There were also other factors related to financial resources that promoted or impeded public participation in CDF projects. Lack of equity in resource allocation, political interference, poor planning, poor prioritization, corruption and nepotism were some of the issues that were negatively associated with financial resources and public participation in CDF funded projects. Deliberate delay of disbursement of funds to various projects, mismanagement of allocated funds, improper budgeting with what was available, and skewed allocation based on political interference often created apathy among members of the public who eventually lost confidence in the management thus shunning future public participation forums. There were also cases of unskilled personnel being assigned projects to run on account of their closeness to the top leadership, and this sometimes-generated anger and indifference among some groups of community members which eventually interfered with active public participation.

Deliberate scaling down of frequency of public participation meetings, lack of clear infrastructure for public meetings, misplaced priorities for the projects lined up for implementation, insufficient funds for numerous projects identified by the public, community mobilization using handouts, and lack of proper way of leaders being held accountable to their financial mismanagement formed part of the challenges facing the aspect of financial resources when it came to public participation in CDF projects. Other challenges included lack of feasibility planning on financial viability, inadequate funds in the CDF kitty, lack of commitment on the part of key officials, delayed release of funds so that implementation could be expedited, skewed distribution of financial resources, and poor public mobilization. There was also lack of audit reports and proper planning structures which shrouded accountability.

##### 4.3. Influence of Leadership Education Level and Staff Training on Public Participation

The level of education of a project manager was important in influencing decisions and the direction of a given project. Yet, the study revealed that a number of project managers did not have relevant qualifications for their respective positions. It also emerged that the CDF management staffs are not trained frequently to enhance their skills in public service. Furthermore, there were doubts on whether the level of training of CDF management staff was usually lower than what the best operational standards required. Apart from project management, some the staffs occupying key positions

lacked the requisite education and/or professional qualifications to understand the need for public participation in government-initiated projects and how to implement that.

Training of staff on public procurement procedures and ethics was also critical for equipping them with contemporary information related to project management. Furthermore, frequent training would enhance staff capacity on the need for public participation and change their attitude towards the public. A strong leadership implies that there will be wider consultation before initiation and implementation of any project thereby increasing chances of project success. Furthermore, poorly trained managers and staff are likely not to understand the need for public participation. With competent and good leadership and trained staff, the public is likely to have trust with the work done and also with accountability and transparency of the management team.

Leadership is about influence and finance is an important factor in leadership. Empowered staff is an asset to any organization. Public participation in NG-CDF projects will be largely and positively influenced by project leaders being knowledgeable and their mandate, employing right technical knowhow, efficient and or effective manpower, financial discipline and the right tools of work to ensure completion of projects on proposed timelines. Good project leadership and proper management of financial resources inspire public confidence and enhance public participation in NG-CDF projects. However, many CDF projects experienced poor leadership, leading to delay in completion, poor utilization of funds as a result of corruption and embezzlement among other mismanagement practices.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study shared a lot with a number of earlier studies. For instance, in a study by Stacey (2011) to examine the influence of CDF project management in public involvement in community development projects funded through the CDF kitty, it emerged that the success of any project depended on a strong management team, prudent management of financial resources, proper personnel training, prioritizing of projects among other factors. Similarly, Mwenda (2010) discovered that due lack of clear vision by most CDF management teams as a result of conflict of interests sparked by politics; there is a growing sense of citizen apathy. Common failure of CDF management team to implement citizens' prioritized projects and lack of clear feedback mechanisms for reporting on the decisions taken on their proposals often tend to discourage many locals from engaging in public participation processes. Coupled with limited civic education and capacity, the public often tends to develop a perception that citizens' involvement in community development events does not serve its intended purpose. Further, Musenge (2013) revealed that misuse of resources and abuse of office by some CDF project managers had denied the public an opportunity for public participation since members of the public had lost public confidence on the office bearers.

Furthermore, an earlier study by Mulwa (2017) that analyzed the effects of monetary allocation on public participation in government-initiated programs in training colleges in Nairobi City County noted a number of issues that derailed public participation in government-initiated projects. The study revealed that due to poor financial management in these institutions, public participation was not effectively done. Moreover, a study by Okere et al (2017) which assessed the relationship between financial resources allocation and public participation in management of local programs in Nigeria discovered that lack of a clear-cut framework for budgetary allocation and spending of money in public participation logistics hampered public participation in government projects at local levels. The study concluded that adequate financial resources were critical for effective public participation.

## 6. Implication to Research and Practice

Leadership dynamics influenced public participation in CDF projects in Kenya where these specifically depended on the manager's leadership skills, financial management skills, and the level of education or training of the managers. Based on the statistics regarding the influence of project leadership on public participation in CDF projects, a greater majority of the respondents agreed that project leadership played a significant role in influencing public participation since the project managers always determined the level of public participation. Prudent financial management was also important in influencing the level and frequency of public participation, especially in terms of priority setting. For instance, money was essential for booking venues and facilitating movements of all key stakeholders in the process.

On the contrary, mismanagement of CDF project funds by the managers was likely to erode public confidence hence interfering with future public participations. Similarly, incompetence of CDF officials also acted as a stumbling block to organization of public participation forums hence denying the general public the opportunity to fully understand the workings of the CDF management committees. Lack of clear infrastructure for public meetings, insufficient funds for numerous projects identified by the public and lack of feasibility planning on financial viability, inadequate funds in the CDF kitty, lack of commitment on the part of key officials, delayed release of funds to expedite implementation of projects and public participation also worked against set goals with regard to civil engagement on CDF funded projects.

Project leadership and staff training also had influence on public participation in CDF projects. Other factors associated with project management and general staff training that influenced public participation in CDF funded projects included inadequate training and sensitization of community leaders for them to know how to put pressure on CDF project management to allow public participation. Training of staff on public procurement procedures and ethics was also critical for equipping them with updated information related to project management. Furthermore, frequent training would enhance staff capacity on the need for public participation and change their attitude towards the public.

The influence of leadership dynamics on public participation in government projects was evident in this study. The findings further emphasized the importance of project leadership managerial skills on public participation in government funded projects, such as CDF related ones. Project financial management also had a bearing on public participation in government-initiated projects, especially with regard to issues of corruption which made some



government officials to divert money for their own personal good at the expense of the public good. Also noted was the fact that the level of education of project leadership played a significant role in influencing public participation. Based on the findings of this study, it was apparent that a multipronged approach was critical in facilitating active public participation in government funded projects. The findings will need to be translated into practice in order to be impactful to the operations of government-initiated projects, especially as viewed alongside public participation as an important ingredient in public resource management. Specifically, based on the research findings, the following recommendations may suffice:

- All CDF managers should be compelled by the public to allow and embrace public participation as an integral part of management of CDF funded projects.
- There must be proper priority setting in initiation of CDF funded projects to foster prudent financial resources management by CDF committees. This will further enhance proper running of all activities associated with CDF such as public participation which is a requirement by law.
- CDF management staff must be regularly trained to be properly equipped with the necessary skillsets for effective execution of their work and interaction with members of the public.

## 7. Conclusions

The study made the conclusion that project leadership dynamics played a critical role in influencing public participation in CDF projects. In the absence of any of these, there was going to be gaps in terms of number of projects completed, quality of projects and time of completion. Weak project leadership would delay completion of the projects due to likely political interference. Financial resources cannot be separated from running of CDF activities including coordinating of public participation which is a requirement in public resources management such as CDF funded projects. Similarly, proper and regular project management and staff training is important in the management of CDF funded projects and therefore this must be adopted as a common practice.

## 8. Future Research

A comparative study should be undertaken focusing on the influence of organizational dynamics on public participation in NG-CDF projects across a number of constituencies in Kenya.

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