HIVOS East Africa

Evaluation of Citizen Engagement and Participation Models

Consolidated (Popular Version) Report

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Busara

Hivos
people unlimited

Executive Summary

Hivos East Africa recently implemented three "citizen agency" interventions aimed at promoting citizen engagement and participation in governance, public policy and contracting processes in Kenya. Hivos is keen on generating knowledge and evidence on how these interventions, through a set of CSO/infomediary partners, influence and impact citizen-driven change, as well as to gain a deeper understanding of the role of these infomediaries in driving citizen engagement.

The 3 interventions are: **Every Citizen Counts,** which aims to improve budget and fiscal accountability at the county government level; **Community Media Fund**, which seeks to improve citizens' access to relevant information that enables the public to support policies and practices that drive inclusive economic and human development at all levels; and **Open Up Contracting**, an initiative that supports CSOs, journalists, entrepreneurs, start-ups and other frontline organisations to foster more efficient, transparent and accountable contracting processes.

To support these efforts, Busara, as the learning partner, leveraged on its expertise in qualitative and quantitative research, evaluation design, and behavioural mapping to conduct a four-phased research study. The aim of this research was to assist Hivos and its partners to answer the following core research questions:

1. What are the current patterns of citizen engagement among target populations?

2. What behavioral barriers and levers affect citizen engagement and participation?

3. What is the efficacy of pro-civic engagement models?

4. What impact have infomediaries had on citizens' ability to demand for transparency and accountability in governance?

5. What are citizens' perceptions of and experience with infomediaries?

Some of the key findings are highlighted below:

1. CSOs can enhance the effectiveness, and therefore impact, of their community engagement strategies by honing in on their influence in the community and by targeting specific segments within the community

2. CSOs have the ability to strongly influence citizens' self-efficacy and perceived ability to influence change in their communities

3. CSOs have the important responsibility of continuing to demystify county governance processes

4. Barriers that hinder citizens from effectively participating in governance emanate from both within and outside the control of citizens

5. Citizens appreciate the important role played by CSOs within their communities, but signaled some areas for improvement mostly in relation to their engagement strategies

6. Majority of the citizens feel PLWDs are currently not afforded enough opportunities to be involved in community issues

7. A majority of participants expressed concern that CSOs/ infomediaries were biased in selecting participants to attend training sessions or public forums

Some key recommendations from the study are highlighted below:

1. Simple, culturally relevant, and accessible information delivered through the right channels will increase likelihood of citizens engaging, and therefore acting on CSO information

2. CSO interventions should first prioritize overcoming the barriers outside of the citizen's control, but within the control of a CSO's operations

3. CSOs should learn to leverage citizens' genuine desire to learn ways through which they can become drivers of their own development and co-creators of democracy

4. Infomediaries should strive to fill the gaps created by exclusion of PLWDs from important issues in the community

5. CSOs should take into account and manage citizen's expectations on what's realistic when advocating for a public issue; lack of this could deter citizens from taking actions in subsequent cases

6. CSOs and Infomediaries should strive to be impartial in their community engagement strategies to sustain the trust of the citizens

Contents

Introduction

Background

The promotion and respect of fundamental rights and freedoms is essential in the creation of civic spaces that promote citizen participation and engagement. The government respect and promotion of rights and freedoms affords citizens safe spaces to express themselves and comfortably contribute to their economic, political and social development, and often have readily available information and platforms to hold their leaders accountable for actions that affect them. It is against this backdrop that Hivos East Africa, through its Freedom and Accountability portfolio, sought to promote a "citizen agency" change model, where sustainable change is driven by actions of motivated citizens. This "citizen agency" model is based on the idea that when exposed to readily accessible and relevant information and ideas, and when there is access to practical tools, pathways and examples on how to turn these ideas into actions, ordinary citizens can become drivers of their own development and co-creators of democracy.

In an effort to encourage this "citizen agency" change model, Hivos implemented three projects: **Every Citizen Counts**, which aims to improve budget and fiscal accountability at the County government level; **Community Media Fund**, which seeks to improve citizens' access to relevant information that enables the public to support policies and practices that drive inclusive economic and human development at all levels; and **Open Up Contracting**, an initiative that supports CSOs, journalists, entrepreneurs, start-ups and other frontline organisations to foster more efficient, transparent and accountable contracting processes.

Busara in collaboration with Hivos conducted research around the aforementioned projects with the aim of filling the existing knowledge gaps to better understand which of the citizen agency change models could be scaled to effectively facilitate citizen-driven change in Kenya. More specifically, the research aimed to quantify the effects and impacts of infomediaries in mediating citizen engagement and brokering accountability, as well as to gain a deeper understanding of the role of infomediaries in citizen engagement, and how citizens engage and participate in advocacy.

Core Research Questions

Busara based this research on a set of five broad core questions, namely:

1. What are the current patterns of citizen engagement among target populations?
2. What behavioral barriers and levers affect citizen engagement and participation?
3. What is the efficacy of pro-civic engagement models?
4. What impact have infomediaries had on citizens' ability to demand for transparency and accountability in governance?
5. What are citizens' perceptions of and experience with infomediaries?

Research Approach and Methodology

This engagement was implemented through a 4-phase approach:

PHASE 1

Objective	Phase 1 aimed to understand the current state of information access and citizen participation in governance, and to understand how different segments of the Kenyan citizenry engage with infomediaries.
Approach	Desktop literature review on current civic participation practices and behaviors of citizens, factors affecting participation and the role played by infomediaries in influencing observed levels of citizen engagement. Academic and non-academic reports as well as partner reports provided by Hivos East Africa were used.
	Busara conducted Key Informant Interviews with 7 of Hivos East Africa's partners: InfoNET, Uraia Trust, LENGGO, Fahamu, Media Mechanix, KCOMNET and AMWIK. The Interviews were conducted in person or via Skype or phone calls.

PHASE 2

Objective	Phase 2 involved qualitatively assessing the behavioral factors relevant to citizen engagement and participation, as well as the role of infomediaries in shaping these factors.
Approach	Busara conducted 5 focus group discussions and 13 in-depth interviews with beneficiaries of the various initiatives by 7 of Hivos East Africa's partners in the following counties: Isiolo, Tharaka Nithi, Embu, Mombasa, Kwale, Nairobi and Kajiado.

PHASE 3

Objective	Phase 3 largely involved collecting demographic and psychographic quantitative data and information on citizens' choice environments. Busara used this data to conduct segmentation (clustering) analyses to assess and identify any naturally occurring segments formed by the survey parameters.
Approach	Busara designed and implemented a quantitative survey that was administered to 601 study participants in 3 research counties namely; Nairobi, Mombasa and Embu. Research participants were categorized into one of four groups; youth, People Living With Disabilities (PLWD) , general citizens and suppliers.

PHASE 4

Objective	Phase 4 sought to experimentally test the efficacy of pro-civic engagement models and communication strategies on citizen engagement through a lab-controlled study.
Approach	Test the effectiveness of different prototypes of infomediary communication on civic engagement behavioral outcomes, particularly the comprehension and retention of information, as well as participants' willingness to act on this information

Key Takeaways

1. Current patterns of civic engagement and participation among target populations

1.1 Defining civic engagement and participation

Although civic engagement and civic participation have the same objectives (improvement of public service delivery), and are often used interchangeably, they mean different things. They differ in the actors that initiate the process and the formalities. Civic engagement is a formal process initiated by a governmental body down to the citizens; government officials encourage citizens to participate in government's decision-making through engagement in policy discourse, policy assessment and feedback on matters that concern them. With civic engagement, the government implements policies, rules and puts in place structures and frameworks to stimulate citizen's involvement. On the other hand, citizen participation is a largely informal process initiated by citizens to ensure proper governance processes are adhered to. Due to its informal nature, there are no specific rules or structures set up by the government to guide the process of citizen participation. Encouraging citizens to engage and providing them with the necessary tools to engage are typical civic engagement problems, while mobilizing enough citizens' support and targeting larger policy domains are common challenges faced in driving civic participation.

The importance of civic engagement in driving and upholding the foundations of democracy has been strongly established in the literature. However, the appropriate channels, mediums and models for promoting effective civic engagement and participation differ between and within countries. This is partly because civic engagement and participation has been used to mean different things, and can be applied to a broad range of contexts (Berger, 2009). In addition, the level of participation of citizens could differ based on a wide array of factors, from culture, norms, institutions and values, all of which are highly contextual. Our research focused on both civic engagement and participation.

Citizens' definition of civic engagement behavior encompasses engaging with power
Most scholars generally agree that civic engagement and participation is ultimately about political engagement, which essentially means engaging with power. However, we were keen to understand how citizens define and perceive civic engagement. We learned that civic engagement and participation behaviors are not only limited to engaging with the

government, but encompasses a wide range of activities that citizens voluntarily, or not so voluntarily do for the benefit of others within their community or to improve their quality of life.

In practice, our research revealed that citizens' understanding of civic engagement cuts across three related categories of activities:
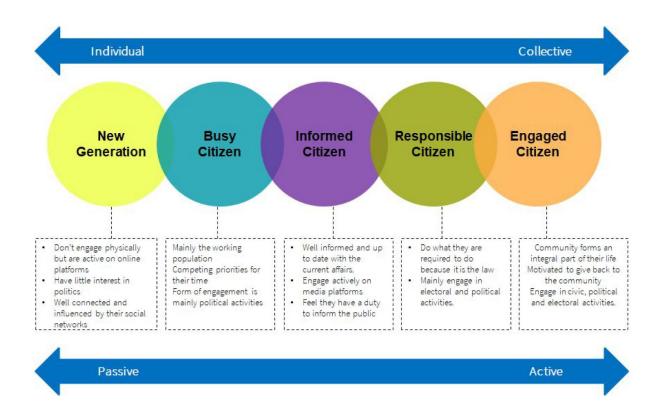
a) **Civic activities:** Common activities that emerged included working to solve a community problem e.g drug abuse and insecurity; taking part in harambees; volunteering; joining or participating in community groups and associations

b) **Electoral activities:** Commonly cited examples included registering to vote; voting in general and by elections; engaging in in-person debates and radio talk shows about politics; encouraging people to vote for a particular leader or party; attending political rallies, etc.

c) **Political voice**: Commonly cited examples included contacting/visiting a public official; writing articles in newspapers; taking part in boycotts or demonstrations; attending public participation forums and meetings; signing petitions, etc.

It's important to note that the use of terms such as "civic engagement" and "citizen participation" is uncommon among citizens, but the concept is well established.

1.2 Emerging patterns of civic engagement and participation

i) Citizens' continuum of engagement cuts across passive to active engagement

Through our exploratory qualitative research, we identified 5 categories or profiles of citizens based on their attitudes and propensity to civically engage and participate. Although not an absolute measure for contextualizing patterns of civic engagement, this categorization is useful as it organizes an abstract and often difficult-to-grasp concept of citizen engagement. By so doing it provides a simplified framework for better understanding different types of citizens and designing more effective and targeted interventions. Movement between one category to another is fluid and though uncommon, a citizen can demonstrate attributes of 2 or more profiles. These profiles are described below:

Individual — Collective

New Generation	Busy Citizen	Informed Citizen	Responsible Citizen	Engaged Citizen
• Don't engage physically but are active on online platforms • Have little interest in politics • Well connected and influenced by their social networks	Mainly the working population Competing priorities for their time Form of engagement is mainly political activities	• Well informed and up to date with the current affairs. • Engage actively on media platforms • Feel they have a duty to inform the public	• Do what they are required to do because it is the law • Mainly engage in electoral and political activities.	Community forms an integral part of their life Motivated to give back to the community Engage in civic, political and electoral activities.

Passive — Active

ii) Citizens consider the President, followed by the MCA, as bearing the greatest responsibility for addressing community issues

Findings from Phase 3 of our research rightly suggested that elected public officials e.g the president, MCAs, MPs, Senators and Governors should be held responsible for addressing issues in their community. More specifically, it emerged that while a bit removed from community issues, the presidency is the most important level of leadership and affects citizens' lives the most, followed by the Member of County Assembly (MCA) at 37% and 26% respectively. However, it's also noteworthy that after elected public officials, citizens consider themselves as bearing the most responsibility for addressing community issues. Below are what we found to be common ways that citizens address issues in their community.

Discussing political, social and community issues, as well as membership to community organizations are the most popular issues that citizen engage on

The research identified that some of the key issues that citizens engage with include: political, social or community issues, and participating in a group or organization. On the latter point, the research identified that about 37% of the study respondents belong to organizations that advocate for the community's welfare, with membership rates being significantly higher for PLWDs. Additionally, we also identified that citizens in Mombasa and Nairobi counties were less likely to

be part of such community welfare groups compared to citizens in Embu county, regardless of gender, income, age, etc. There are various reasons why this could be so, but the fact that Nairobi and Mombasa have more urban populations than Embu might point us in the right path to understanding this. On the other hand, the research identified that participants were least likely to sign an online or paper petition or participate in protests, marches or demonstrations

Older (above 36) male citizens are more likely to take action to solve issues facing their community, regardless of the type of action, while younger, more educated citizens were more likely to engage in community issues through media platforms. This is not surprising, as the youth are more likely to be active on different social media platforms, particularly with the increasing popularity of some of these platforms e.g Facebook and Twitter etc.

Our research identified that citizens rarely directly contact their local elected leader e.g MCA, MP, Governor on issues affecting their community. The few that have more frequent direct interactions with elected leaders are more likely to be male, older (above 36 years old) and married, and most likely from Mombasa county. Although it emerged that citizens are more comfortable engaging with local non-elected community leaders e.g elders or religious leaders, older citizens were more likely to reach out and engage with these leaders.

2. Behavioral factors influencing civic engagement and participation

2.1 Behavioral factors the motivate citizens to participate in addressing community issues

Our research findings point to the fact that citizens' motivation to engage and participate in addressing issues in their community can be broadly categorized into three:

a) **External factors** - status-enhancing incentives such as public recognition, financial incentives, obligation and shared values.
b) **Internal factors** - include individual goals and self-enhancement, as well as high levels of self-efficacy - one's belief in their ability to effect change and better the lives of the people in the community.

c) **Social factors** - include having a strong social identity e.g membership to welfare associations, trust in the government's ability, evidence of good leadership, and social acceptance emanating from participating in civic activities.

The above being said, our research identified the following as the most important factors influencing citizens' motivation:

1. Motivations for civic engagement are nuanced, but activities that citizens perceive to have a higher social impact e.g influencing policy making, improving the quality of life in the community, are frequently endorsed.
2. The depth of civic participation is driven by the motives or beliefs that led to civic engagement. For instance, citizens who were motivated to engage due to the belief that civic engagement is one's constitutional duty were more likely to engage.
3. A citizen's engagement level changes as motivation changes. As one's social, economic and political environment changes, so does one's motivation to engage. For example, a citizen who is in university will probably stop engaging in education-related matters after graduation.
4. Strong social networks are an important factor in driving the depth of a citizen's participation. Participants who were members of associations or groups (formal or informal) as well as religious groups expressed a stronger desire to get involved in various activities with the communities they served.

2.2 Levers (enablers) of effective civic engagement and participation

Access to information is an essential component for driving engagement
Provision of information sparks discussions among community members and within their social networks. Utilizing social networks and providing citizens with important information needed to drive engagement has the potential to improve citizens' motivation and levels of participation. CSO strategies that involve providing practical solutions for citizens to demand accountability through sustainable channels and platforms that are accessible and can provide links with relevant leaders are more likely to succeed. The study found that while information is effective at empowering citizens, to be more effective, information should be coupled with a call-to-action messages that demonstrate exactly how their voices can be heard.

Costs (financial, time, effort) of engagement are key determinants of a citizen's willingness and ability to engage
The time and effort costs are important considerations before citizens engage. We found that citizens with more time participate more in community events. Depending on the

nature of a community and the prevailing culture, getting the buy-in of the members of the community on the time, date and duration of meetings prior to organizing meetings creates a sense of belonging for the members of the community, and could go a long way towards promoting participation.

2.3 Barriers to effective civic engagement and participation

Citizen engagement is hindered by both structural and behavioral bottlenecks

The factors that influence a citizen's engagement in civic activities are largely behavioral or structural, and are often interlinked. Some of these structural factors identified from our research include; poverty, low literacy rates, language barriers, social and economic exclusion. All these limits a citizen's ability to engage. On the behavioral side, lack of trust in the government, lack of information, low self-esteem leads to apathy, and ultimately hinders citizen's engagement in civic activities. There is no quick fix to solve the issues preventing engagement. Below is a summary of the range of barriers identified through our research:

Structural barriers	Behavioral barriers
- Lack of public transportation to venues where public participation forums are located - Exclusion from the public participation forums - Lack of political good will - Time constraints resulting from competing priorities such as work and family - Dispersed living in remote areas. - Poor planning of public participation forums - Language barriers - Low literacy rates - Poverty - Social and economic exclusion - Lack of platforms for citizens to engage with their leaders - Poor systems in the judiciary - Lack of effective feedback	- Loss of trust in the government's ability to address their needs - Lack of information - Perceptions towards government (apathy) - Status quo bias - Disillusionment - Lack of confidence to express their views and perception that their views will not be heard - Low self-efficacy - Low self-esteem which contributes to feelings of embarrassment in public participation especially for PLWD - Gender norms that prevent women's participation and interactions outside the home. - Dependency syndrome (expectations for a financial reward to participate)

Inactions from concerned authorities reduces trust in office holders and creates apathy among citizens

A powerful barrier that emerged from our research was related to citizens' prior experience and levels of success from participation. Here, we identified that impressions from past experiences engaging leaders eventually influences a citizen' perspective or motivation to engage. Prior negative experiences, such as government unresponsiveness, greatly reduces citizens' self-efficacy, and gradually leads to apathy. As CSOs/infomediaries engage with communities and encourage them to be drivers of

change, it's also important to keep in mind that unfulfilled promises could largely diminish their credibility and reduce citizen's future level of engagement.

3. Efficacy of pro-civic engagement models

What motivates CSOs and infomediaries?

Majority of Hivos' CSO partners generally appear to push for civic participation for genuine reasons. Some of the partners we interviewed engage in training of the local citizens in journalism skills, which are motivated by the desire to see equal talent and opportunities for young journalists both in the grassroots and in major towns/cities. This is true for Media Mechanics who specifically train journalists from Mt. Kenya region, equipping them with investigative journalist skills to enable them to play their role as the fourth estate and engage with citizens in a meaningful way.

For others, they are simply motivated to see a better Kenya in terms of good governance. They, therefore, seek to build the capacity of citizens to enhance their participation in the management of local affairs and projects, and to hold duty bearers accountable, especially where there is room for abuse of office by public servants who hold significant influence over public procedures. This was true for InfoNET who wants to see an end to corruption in the tendering process, thus red-flag questionable contracts and create an avenue for its audience to push the relevant authority to act.

Some of the partners were however critical of the motivations of some CSOs in their space, who go into the civil society space for political and/or financial gain. It was difficult for us to assess how true this is among Hivos' partners.

Kenya has a detailed and extensive legal framework covering citizen engagement and participation. However, this doesn't always translate to functional or meaningful participation

With the promulgation of the New Kenyan Constitution in 2010, public participation in governance at the county and national levels has become a crucial part of the democratic process in Kenya. Through the Constitution and several Acts of Parliament (such as the Public Finance Management Act and the County Governments Act), Kenyans' freedoms and rights to actively participate in decision-making processes in the government, including the budget and legislative process have been guaranteed.

Despite having a strong legal framework, effective citizen participation is often riddled with structural and behavioral challenges. These are highlighted below:

Structural Challenges	Behavioral Challenges
Some county governments do not have an office or organ with a specific mandate to spearhead the public participation process.	There's a lack of commitment from county government officials from establishing effective mechanisms for facilitating public participation.
Some county governments lack formal procedures to host public views and lack proper channels for feedback and association of public input.	There's a lack of awareness amongst citizens on the frameworks, structures and opportunities for public participation in some of the counties.
Some counties suffer from inadequate funding to ensure some of the mechanisms established by the County Government Act of 2012 kick off.	The government agencies and officials share information for public participation in bulky documents that are not user-friendly.
Counties focus more on transparency for county development plans, but there's little effort in ensuring transparency once the plans are being implemented. (International Budget Partnership, 2019)	County governments can widely consult the public and fulfill many of the legal requirements of the law, while also choosing to close the door to more meaningful engagement (Halloran 2017)

While an extensive legal framework signals a free and empowered citizenry, this doesn't always translate to functional or meaningful participation by citizens, as highlighted above. There is still a big role to be played by intermediaries and other stakeholders within the civic space to ensure meaningful participation by Kenyan citizens.

Both media and non-media platforms are popular among citizens, with most trusted civic information being received through media platforms

While both media and non-media platforms are possible sources of information, citizens seem to trust and have a preference for platforms that are convenient for them in terms of language used, ease of access and validity of information. With the growing popularity of local vernacular radio stations, citizens are able to access information in a language that they relate with and understand. On the other hand, the youth spend a lot of time on social media platforms, and cite these platforms as their preferred platform for accessing, sharing and creating information related to community governance issues. However, the threat of misinformation or "fake news" appears to grow everyday, as beliefs, opinions and facts are all discussed together, making it difficult for a non-savvy consumer to distinguish them apart.

As such, infomediaries could bank on providing civic information through media platforms due to their popularity. Media platforms also present an opportunity for infomediaries to integrate functions that will enhance citizen engagement, such as online feedback and

monitoring systems that enable participatory budgeting, transparency and public participation. However, issues of accessibility of such platforms among target populations should overshadow the usefulness of such platforms. Where non-media platforms are used, infomediaries could adopt interventions that make such platforms easy to use, access and re-assure the validity of the information being relayed.

4. Impact of CSOs/ infomediaries on citizens' ability to demand transparency and accountability in governance

4.1 How do citizens perceive CSOs/infomediaries?

Citizens believe that CSOs play a key role in bridging the gap between citizens and their local leaders

From our research, we identified that citizens generally have a desire to ensure that their leaders are visible and held accountable to their constituents. However, citizens face a series of structural and behavioral barriers (as highlighted in Section 2 above), that hinder their ability to effectively hold their leaders accountable. As such, a majority of the citizens we spoke to that have engaged with CSOs / infomediaries applauded the manner in which CSOs help bring them closer to their local leaders through organizing round table meetings between their leaders and citizens, or the unity that the infomediaries have helped build between the leaders and the citizens. This important "middle-man" role that CSOs play and their network creation abilities are crucial for closing the gaps between local leaders and citizens.

Elected officials and citizens respectively bear more responsibility for addressing community issues, compared to CSOs

It emerged from our research that citizens don't consider CSOs as bearing enormous responsibility for addressing community issues in the same way elected leaders (President, MCA, etc) are. As highlighted earlier, elected public officials e.g the president, MCAs, MPs, Senators and Governors are considered to bear the highest responsibility for addressing issues in their community. After elected public officials, citizens consider themselves as bearing the most responsibility, followed by community leaders, then CSOs. This signals that while citizens find CSOs useful, they're not held to a high standard of expectation. CSOs consider them as playing an important role in the community, and while citizens generally agree, it's not to the same extent.

4.2 What has worked well so far?

Through training and capacity building, infomediaries have improved citizens' ability to effectively engage

For citizens to engage in civic matters effectively, there is a need for them to have the relevant skills and knowledge of how to participate in governance and demand for accountability. Through our research, we learned that 1 in 4 citizens we engaged with recorded to have received some form of training by a CSO or infomediary. These training activities vary from partner to partner, depending on the programs being run. For instance some of the citizens reported being trained on the tendering process and how to keep track of government expenses through tendering. Others received training on their human rights, while others were trained on how to use social media to get useful community information. With such training, most of the citizens reported having used it for the benefit of the community. Others reported having used the knowledge gained through training on their human rights to educate others about their rights. For some women respondents, after receiving the training on government budgeting they proceeded to talk to their fellow women about the budgeting process. Beyond basic information sharing, training and capacity building appears to have worked well.

Current CSO strategies appear to impact citizens' self-efficacy (perceived ability to influence change)

CSO strategies highlighted above, such as building the capacity of citizens to understand tendering processes or how to use social media to get useful community information, appear to have impacted some citizens' belief in their ability to influence change. Citizens that had participated in forums, meetings, or training with infomediaries had higher scores on statements such as "I can work with others to make a difference in the community", "I can voice my opinion in the community, I can engage with public leaders". There are some demographic nuances to the effectiveness of such strategies, however, where men, citizens earning more than Ksh 30,000 and those with a university or postgraduate education, appear to have higher self-efficacy scores. This begs the question as to whether current CSO strategies are more impactful on citizens with already higher levels of self-efficacy e.g more educated citizens, than ordinary citizens.

4.3 What can be improved moving forward?

Local governance processes are still not well-understood by citizens

Citizens reported the desire to access local governance information such as the budget spending by the county government, but such information was reported to be difficult to access from the local governments. Several barriers were reported that have made it

difficult for citizens to access and use such information. Some citizens reported being frustrated by the bureaucratic processes involved when requesting for such information, while others mentioned being threatened and intimidated by government officials. Other barriers mentioned included; communication barriers, inaccessibility of supporting documents to act on the information provided to them by infomediaries, disillusionment where citizen's feel their voice is not heard, and sometimes information is available but there are restrictions for how the information can be used. While CSOs have developed and implemented interventions aimed at simplifying and making governance processes more accessible, it appears that this is still an important area for improvement.

CSO can improve on the inclusivity of their activities and perceived presence of bias

However, we found that the awareness or inclusion of infomediary activities is still quite low. For instance, only 11% of our study respondents across Embu, Mombasa and Nairobi can name infomediaries or CSOs that provide information on county budget spending. In the same vein, only 40% have attended CSO-led public forums in the past. Additionally, a little over half of the respondents believe the CSOs are biased when choosing who to participate in their training. These numbers signalled that there are significant segments of the communities where our CSO partners engage in that don't have a lot of contact with CSOs or are included in CSO-led activities and training.

Citizens' awareness of available channels can still be improved

On the other side, citizens highlight lack of knowledge on available channels to address community issues as the reasons for lack of action by them. 44% of our respondents mentioned lack of awareness of channels as the reasons for not taking any actions to solve community issues. There are mixed opinions on the inclusion of PLWDs/special groups in community matters. Aligned with these views, a majority of respondents suggested that CSOs should hold more training sessions and not be biased when selecting participants, rather, they should ensure that every facet of citizens in the society be included.

Conclusion

Although our research generated evidence and knowledge on what works and what doesn't for effective citizen engagement and participation, the following seven are the most important proposed courses of action for civil society organisations / infomediaries to consider when developing and implementing strategies for engagement with communities aimed at promoting and enabling citizen engagement and participation in governance at all levels. These are not arranged in any order of priority, as they all speak to different CSO needs and capabilities.

1) CSOs can enhance the effectiveness, and therefore impact, of their community engagement strategies by segmenting their target audiences

Appreciating that there exists differences among citizens, and taking the time to understand these differences (through simple interviews, focus group discussions and observational studies) is key for more effective community engagement by CSOs. This is because how community engagement strategies, information and activities are received, and therefore impact different audiences, is often different. Depending on what outcome a CSO is looking for e.g increased engagement with leaders, community organising, wide dissemination of information, voting, you can use a simple segmentation approach to design and target different types of activities to different types of citizens. For example, our research found that older (over 36 years old), male citizens are more likely to take part in action to address community issues, while those with little/no formal education are less likely to take action. On the other hand, younger, more educated citizens are more likely to engage through media platforms compared to non-media platforms, while women are more likely to share civic information received from CSOs/infomediaries with others.

2) CSOs have the ability to strongly influence citizens' self-efficacy and perceived ability to influence change in their communities

A key finding from our research was that citizens tend to be highly motivated to engage in civic activities they feel empowered and able to adequately contribute in, and which will result in a positive impact in the community. Such empowerment is often accomplished when citizens receive information and training on what their rights are, what their leaders' responsibilities are, and how exactly to take action to solve community issues. We found that CSOs play this crucial role, and have experienced success in their ability to empower and influence citizens' self-efficacy. Our study respondents that had taken part in a CSO training or had received civic information e.g county budget spending scored highly on the

following statements: I can work with others to make a difference in the community; I can voice my opinions in my community; I can deal effectively with community issues; I can engage with public leaders. Additionally, citizens that have engaged with CSOs were more likely to seek more information and take action. For example, we found that an overwhelming majority (87% from our lab experiment)) consider civic information e.g civilian oversight training content, as provided by infomediaries, to be very relevant to their lives, and almost all expressed a willingness to learn more about issues highlighted. Although CSOs have the power to empower community members that have engaged with CSO information and content. CSOs should therefore seek to broaden their reach and focus on strengthening citizens' self-efficacy through information and training.

3) Simple, culturally relevant, and accessible information delivered through the right channels will increase likelihood of citizens engaging, and therefore acting on CSO information

One area that CSOs' impact has been greatly realised has been in filling the existing citizen knowledge and skills gaps through provision of information and training. Our research identified that actual citizen participation occurs when citizens are empowered to make decisions through access to information. However, information on its own is not enough to drive citizen engagement. The information needs to be delivered through the right channel, by the right person, at the right place and at the right time. This study identified many diverse tools that CSOs use to communicate to citizens. Similarly participants shared numerous channels through which they access information; e.g. (i) print media; through newspapers, magazines, newsletters, (ii) offline media; through television and radio, (iii) online media; through social media feeds, e-mails and (iv) text notifications; through mobile app ecosystems. With all these options combined, effective communication becomes hard to achieve. All in all there is no one size-fits all strategy for CSO communication. Information dissemination will vary greatly by platform and channel, and ultimately depending on what the message is and who needs to hear it. As such, CSOs need to understand their target audience through extensive research. Qualitative research could provide essential information on the target audience preferred channel for accessing information as well as their preferred time for receiving information. This type of information would be useful for CSOs to segment their target audience based on their preferred communication channels as well as the preferred time that citizens would like to receive information. Further, the needs of the target audience need to be understood well by CSOs especially with regards to their time and competing priorities for the same. For example, information that needs to be translated into action by citizens should also be provided well in advance such that citizens have ample time to engage with and understand the content before being asked to share ideas and opinions necessary for decision making. Results from the study showed that the source of information matters. Citizen's are willing to engage with information that they can authenticate. The right person to disseminate information would be one who has earned credibility and trust from the citizens. The study results show that CSOs have earned citizens trust and have a good

standing within the communities they serve. CSOs should leverage this when developing strategies for providing information.

On the other hand, CSOs need to take into account citizens whose literacy levels are low as well as people living with disabilities (PLWD), whose information needs are often different from those of the general population. Using simplified language to communicate to the community and translating information to braille is necessary for the inclusivity of these groups in order to facilitate their participation in the cultural life of their community. In addition, CSOs could consider creating socially and culturally relevant reference points for desired behavior patterns through training and sensitization. This can include the use of plays or relatable stories that would be easy for these groups to understand.

Finally, our research identified that both media and non-media platforms are popular among citizens, but the most trusted information is often that which is received through media platforms. As such, the growth of digital media and increase in mobile penetration has the potential to empower particular audience segments, i.e. the youth and marginalized communities.

4) CSOs should learn to leverage citizens' genuine desire to learn ways through which they can become drivers of their own development and co-creators of democracy

CSOs succeed because they are deeply embedded in the communities they serve, cement relationships with community groups and have a good grasp of the community issues that citizens most care about. Our research identified that there exists genuine interest amongst citizens to learn and identify ways through which they themselves can become drivers of their own development and co-creators of democracy. For example, our research identified that citizens often take action to tackle community issues and drive development in their communities through forming or joining welfare groups e.g chamas. Our research also identified that those that belong to welfare communities are significantly more likely to attend public forums. This evidence, coupled with CSOs' understanding of community needs and issues should present CSOs with opportunities to build on this interest to drive citizen participation and engagement in the areas they serve.

5) Barriers that hinder citizens from effectively participating in governance emanate from both within and outside the control of citizens. CSO interventions should first prioritize overcoming these, to the extent that a CSO can

Our research identified that effective citizen engagement is often hindered by structural and behavioral barriers. These can be within and outside of a citizens control

Factors within the citizen's control - Low self-efficacy; lack of time to engage in civic affairs; citizen apathy, where some citizens see no need to be involved in civic affairs; lack

the means to participate, e.g. lack of transport to attend a public forum.

Factors outside of a citizen's control - The lack of sufficient platforms and channels to engage leadership; poor planning of events and forums for citizen engagement; lack of information; poor channels to disseminate such information as well as the perceived unavailability of leaders responsible to engage with the citizens

6) CSOs have the important responsibility of continuing to demystify county governance processes

Through training, infomediaries share skills and knowledge with target communities on how they can effectively participate in governance and enable citizen-led change within their communities. These include training on the government tendering process, how to read and interpret county budgets, human rights, how to use social media to access and share useful community information, among others. Those that have received such CSO-led training in the past consider this information important, have found to have higher self-efficacy, and many have shared this knowledge with their friends.

However, more can be done to enable citizens to better understand local governance processes in their county. Our research process found that while CSO training is effective at empowering communities to be drivers of their own development, many citizens (including those that had received training) still expressed a desire to better understand the complex county governance processes. This signals that current training and information sharing strategies on how local governments work have a lot of room for improvement to ensure county governance processes are better understood by citizens.

7) Citizens appreciate the important role played by CSOs within their communities, but signaled some areas for improvement

Our research findings highlighted the fact that CSOs and infomediaries have a long standing reputation within the communities they work in as trusted sources of information. They have the knowledge and networks to influence demand for transparency and accountability from local leaders, in a way that citizens might not be able to. This is largely due to failures by many county governments to promote inclusive governance through having non-transparent and highly bureaucratic processes. Therefore citizens often look to CSOs and infomediaries to overcome such barriers and provide the right channels for engaging with their leaders.

However, citizens highlighted a couple of areas of improvement for CSOs as they engage with communities.
- **CSOs need to take into account and manage citizens' expectations** - some citizens we spoke to highlighted that through CSOs, they have felt empowered to engage with their local leaders and share issues affecting their communities. While engaging with local leadership is often successful, there are many instances where

issues brought forward by citizens remain unresolved. Such unresponsiveness by the government can often lead to despair and can discourage citizens' willingness to express concerns to their leaders and more so to engage in civic matters. As such, it is important for CSOs to manage citizens' expectations of how change happens, how long it can take, and how a single attempt at engaging with local leadership might not be sufficient.

- **CSOs should ensure that they appear impartial in their community engagement strategies** - a significant majority of citizens we engaged with highlighted that they were concerned about CSO bias in selecting participants for training and attendance to public forums. While this might be an unintended consequence of a CSO's strategy, where for example they intentionally focused on a particular segment of the population, it's important that CSOs don't appear to be biased in the eyes of the communities they engage with. This is because bias can quickly erode the trust and confidence that citizens have in CSOs. As such, CSOs should consider strategies to mitigate the potential of such perceptions through, for example, open and transparent communication to community members about the purpose and target audience of a forum or training, ensuring the format, delivery and location CSO meetings and events are as inclusive of different types of citizens, among others.

- **CSOs should engage more persons living with disabilities** - A majority of the citizens we engaged with through our research believe that PLWD are currently not afforded enough opportunities to share their voice in discussing and solving important community issues. As such, CSOs' role as intermediaries between governments and communities becomes even more important within this context. CSOs should therefore strive to ensure that their community engagement strategies elevate the voices of PLWD and help fill such existing gaps in inclusivity of PLWD in local governance processes.

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