



Strengthening Citizens' Participation In Decision-Making Through Interactive Radio Dialogue In Kitui, Machakos And Makueni Counties.

Final Report

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Acronyms

AVF	Africa's Voices Foundation
ADP	Annual Development Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSAP	Common Social Accountability Platform
CoK	Constitution of Kenya
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
CPPC	County Public Participation Committees
CSB	County Service Board
FM	Frequency Modulation
MCA	Member of County Assembly
NCPWD	National Council of Persons With Disabilities
PLWD	Persons Living With Disabilities
PPF	Public Participation Forum
SEKEB	South Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc
SMS	Short Message Service
WDC	Ward Development Committee



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last decade, since the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the national and county governments in Kenya have endeavoured to increase the public involvement of citizens in political decision making. The Kenyan courts have also emphasised the primacy of public participation in the governance processes, while simultaneously seeking to clarify what constitutes effective public participation. However, one thing remains clear, effective public participation is far from being institutionalised in Kenya.

Besides strengthening civic engagement and amplifying citizen voice, social accountability initiatives aim to increase the transparency of governance and ensure feedback to the citizens. Africa's Voices Foundation (AVF), in partnership with South Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc (SEKEB), with funding from Porticus, deployed the Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP) methodology to spark plural dialogue between the citizens and their county leadership on various aspects of public participation. The project focused on Kitui, Machakos and Makueni counties and leveraged the use of mass media, telecommunications, technology, and social science research to capture citizen views and synthesise these into actionable insights. The key findings and recommendations in this report aim to contribute to the strengthening of county' public participation processes and the capacity of local authorities to respond to citizens' voices.

The project convened a co-design meeting with stakeholders who included county government staff, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), community leaders and local administration to create awareness on the project. The participants were invited to give input into the identification of information gaps on citizen public participation in the three target counties, and subsequently into the design of the radio series. This process led to the development of a communication plan for engagement on Musyi FM, a vernacular radio station with wide following in the three counties. AVF thereafter deployed its data infrastructure that included a toll free SMS shortcode to collect and analyse SMS messages shared by the general public. AVF used a mixed-methods approach, combining responsible technology and robust social science, to unearth qualitative insights into what citizens think on priority topics, and quantitative insights on how citizen perspectives vary between different groups across the counties.

Who participated in the dialogue

A total of **3,074 individuals** sent in a total of **5,147 messages** over the five weeks of radio broadcast, **2,967** of those consented for their messages to be included in the analysis. Figure 1 indicates the demographic breakdown of participants in the dialogue who sent messages relevant to be included in the analysis¹. The dialogue was effective at engaging with women, who made up **27.5% (n=328)** of participants, youth (aged 18-35), who made up **45.4%(n=617)**, and people with disabilities (PLWDs), who made up **9% (n=130)** of participants. This indicates the

¹ Please note that providing demographic information is voluntary and therefore some participants do not submit all, or in some instances any, demographic information. Therefore the total of participants who report their gender does not match with the total sample size of those who responded to the weekly question.



strengths of the interactive radio methodology in reaching demographic groups that often have limited access to public participation processes in Kenya.

Figure 1: Participation by age, gender, disability and language group

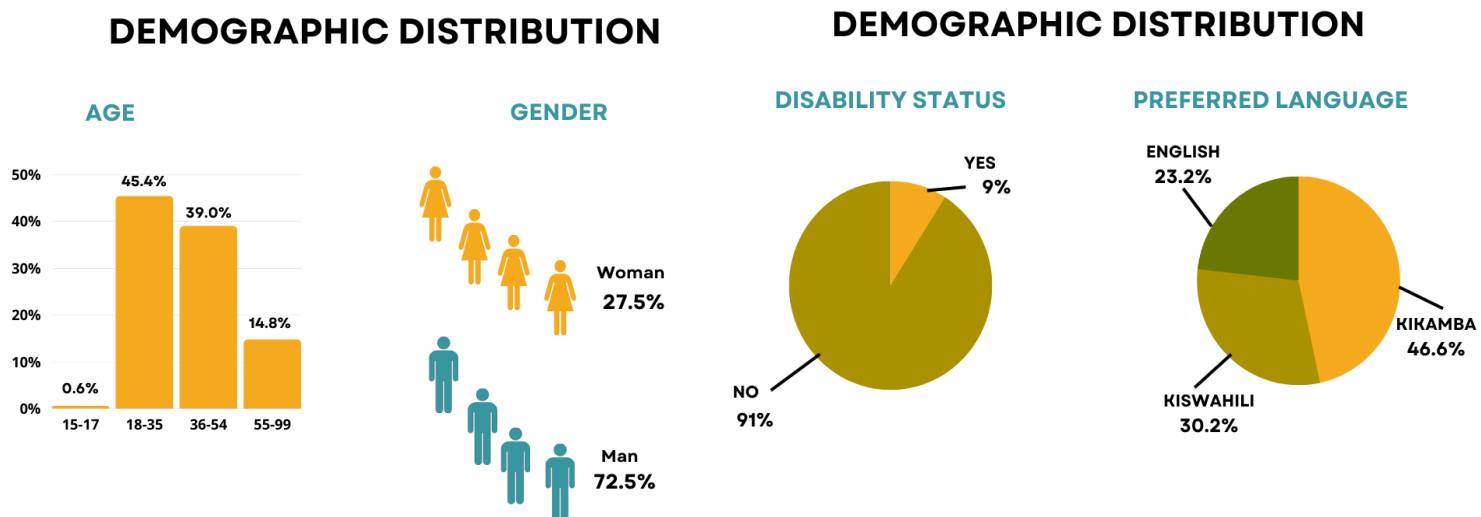
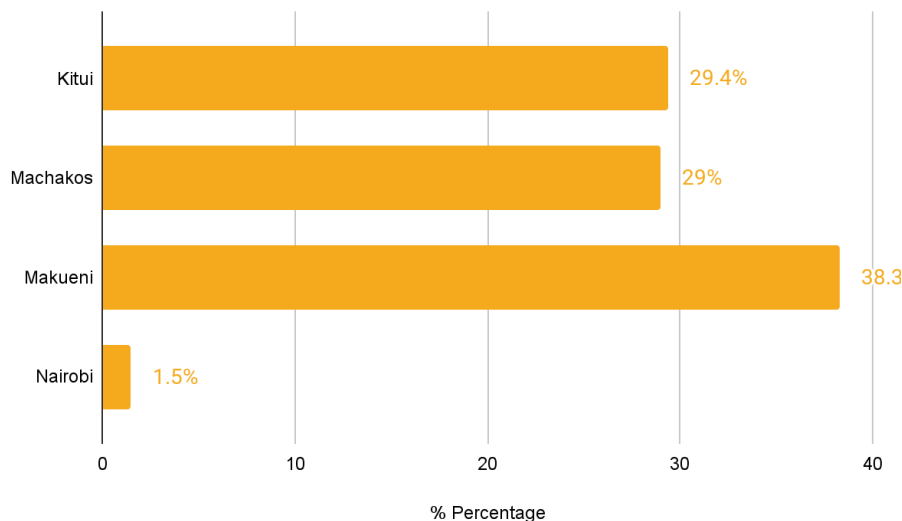


Figure 2: County Distribution





Key Findings

The following are the key insights identified across all five weeks of the radio dialogue:

- **The top three development priorities** across the counties are Water & Sanitation, Road & Transport Infrastructure and Health were the top three priority areas mentioned by the participants.
- **Inter-county collaboration:** Throughout the discussion citizens repeatedly emphasised the value of regional cooperation to boost collective economic growth, and suggested a wide range of joint projects perceived to have the potential to advance welfare across the three counties. Some of the projects suggested for regional collaboration include; water and irrigation solutions, agriculture, road & transport infrastructure projects, electricity, and education. This is indicative of **clear public understanding of the value of, and support for, the newly formed SEKEB.**
- **More decentralised and inclusive participation in decision making:** To improve participation in decision making, the county governments of Kitui, Machakos and Makueni should devolve the process of public participation to the lowest unit at the village, make it more inclusive by targeting rural populations, women, people with disabilities, and the illiterate while improving communication of the process beforehand.
- **Diversifying spaces for public participation:** To improve participation of young people in the process, complementarity participation mechanisms, for instance use of digital platforms should be adopted by the counties to especially engage the younger tech savvy demographic.
- **Accountability for development priorities:** Most of the citizens mentioned the need for their elected Members of County Assemblies being available to perform their oversight role for development projects that have been prioritised in their wards. Further, they mentioned the need for their elected leaders being accessible so that the electorate can hold them to account on their oversight roles.
- **Inclusion of marginalised groups in county processes:** To ensure marginalised groups, People Living With Disabilities (PLWDs), women and youth, feel included in county processes such as appointments, tendering process and in public forums, respondents from the three counties proposed the counties to develop special considerations to ensure PLWDs have access to opportunities as provided in the CoK 2010.

Recommendations

On the basis of this study the project team makes the following recommendations to the county governments of Kitui, Machakos and Makueni.

1. County administrations, in partnership with SEKEB leadership, should work closely with their constituents to identify key wards where investments in sustainable water solutions, such as rain water harvesting or drilling boreholes, would have the greatest



impact. Additionally administrations should consult citizens to identify key roads requiring repair and development. Within this, county administrations should aim to create safe spaces in which citizens are able to directly engage with them and share their feedback on existing development projects with an aim of enhancing transparency and accountability.

2. The county administrations, in partnership with SEKEB leadership, should work collaboratively on larger scale infrastructure projects, specifically on irrigation, transport and agriculture, which will benefit citizens across the bloc. Additionally, it would be beneficial for the three administrations to develop collective water and soil conservation policies and practices applicable across the region in order to jointly tackle the ongoing impact of the drought.
3. The county governments should work with the Ministry of Lands at the national government level to curb land disputes by, among other measures, surveying, mapping and issuance of land title deeds.
4. Greater transparency around how county authorities prioritise public projects, including clarity on how citizen priorities are incorporated into decision-making would likely significantly improve public trust in, and support for, county governments. This demonstrates to constituents that public participation can lead to concrete outcomes in project delivery, and not just serve as a tick box exercise in the county planning processes.
5. In order to tackle low community awareness of feedback mechanisms, the counties should undertake a coordinated civic education programme to create awareness around the existing feedback and grievance redress mechanisms in the counties that are available for citizens' use to escalate challenges or complaints regarding certain development projects. This should also include providing information on the role and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the county including the citizens themselves.
6. PLWDs significantly highlighted the lack of accessible education institutions within the SEKEB region. As a result county governments and the national government should aim to improve the accessibility of education institutions for PLWDs, especially those with mobility challenges and use wheelchairs.
7. To effectively deepen and expand citizen engagement spaces the SEKEB counties should continue using diverse multi-media channels and approaches to reach the target population up to the lowest level possible (i.e. village level). This should include targeting remote populations, women, and people living with disabilities, youth and the illiterate. For instance, by using AVF's bespoke methodology which combines interactive radio, SMS, and social media platforms among other capabilities. The Interactive methodology builds trust by demonstrating county government's willingness to listen and respond to people's feedback. The absence of two-way communications leaves citizens feeling excluded from decision making processes.



1. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of Kenya, promulgated in 2010, brought about an ambitious new system of decentralised governance, predicated on devolving power and responsibilities to 47 new counties and through this devolving power towards the citizenry. Public participation is a core element of this process. The new constitution enshrines public participation as a national value and principle of governance (Constitution of Kenya 2010, Article 10(2)). Articles 174(c) and 232(d) protect the rights of citizens to engage in decision-making and accountability on issues and matters that affect them. Elsewhere, the Constitution obligates county governments to provide for structures for citizen participation to be established (Article 191(1)). In its January 2016 'County Public Participation Guidelines', the Government of Kenya's Ministry of Devolution and Planning & Council of Governors, defined "public participation" as follows:

"The process where individuals, governmental and non-governmental groups influence decision making in policy, legislation, service delivery, oversight and development matters. It is a two-way interactive process where the duty bearer communicates information in a transparent and timely manner, engages the public in decision making and is responsive and accountable to their needs. The public gets actively involved in the process when the issue at stake relates directly to them."

A particular aim of the devolution process was to enable members of the public to participate in governance and decision-making at the local level, providing a greater opportunity for citizens to hold their local administrations to account. This left many Kenyans with high expectations that devolution would improve service delivery and government accountability. However, provisions for *how* to effectively create space for meaningful citizen engagement, and subsequent social accountability, remained ambiguous. The impact of the modalities through which citizens make demands on the degree to which citizens feel empowered to trigger recognition and action from the government remains an open question². In the eyes of many, the extent to which public participation has effectively led to greater social accountability and improved governance performance under the mandate of the new constitution varies greatly.

The SEKEB region comprises Kitui, Machakos and Makueni counties, all of which have made some progress in institutionalising public participation in recent years. The Bloc was established in 2016 as an economic vehicle for Kitui, Machakos and Makueni counties who share similar economic, political and historical characteristics. It is legislated through an Act that was passed in the three County Assemblies and is chaired by one of the Governors on a rotational basis.

Of the member counties, Makueni County has been recognised for its best practises when it comes to its approaches to public participation³, which includes developing a clear public

² Although much literature evaluates approaches to civic engagement more broadly, the format in which citizens make claims is rarely systematically evaluated - see for example - Joshi & McCluskey. (2018). The art of 'bureaucraft': Why and how bureaucrats respond to citizen voice. MAVC., Fox. (2014). Social Accountability: What does the evidence really say? GPSA.

³ Standard Media. [Makueni Public participation model gets World Bank praise](#)



participation framework⁴, setting up community based approaches for decision making, such as Ward Development Committees (WDCs), and conducting awareness campaigns to educate its citizenry on their right to participate in the decision making processes. Similarly, Machakos County has made efforts to enhance its public participation, including establishing WDCs, Public Participation Forums (PPFs) and County Public Participation Committees (CPPC) and is in the process of setting up a call centre for its citizens to lodge and follow up on complaints and request for information. Finally Kitui County has also established WDCs and PPFs. Further, the county has an online platform for public participation where citizens can submit their views and opinions on various issues affecting them. However, even with these considerable efforts to improve public participation, it is evident that public participation is still far from being fully institutionalised. Some citizens feel that their views and opinions are not taken into account during county decision making, exacerbated by information about public participation forums not being adequately publicised in a timely manner through channels accessible to the grassroots levels.

It is in light of these challenges that Africa's Voices Foundation (AVF) collaborated with the SEKEB to deliver an interactive radio series aimed at collecting citizens' views and experiences of public participation and governance of their counties. Using AVF's unique Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP) approach, this project broadcasted five interactive radio talk shows on Musyi FM radio under Royal Media Services, which covers the entire SEKEB region and broadcasts in Kikamba.

Project Objective

The series was specifically aimed at advancing citizen participation in good governance by putting citizens in direct dialogue with county governments, and showcasing opportunities for public participation in county governments in Kenya.

The specific objectives were:

1. Fostering public dialogue between citizens and authorities.
2. Use the findings from the citizen dialogue to validate the specific County Integrated Development Plans.
3. Recommending programme/policy options for SEKEB county governments, civil society actors and donors to improve on delivering public participation commitments under devolution.

⁴ [Makueni Local Administration. Makueni Public Participation Framework](#)



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The Common Social Accountability Platform

“Social accountability” refers to a form of civic engagement that builds accountability through the collective efforts of citizens and civil society organisations to hold public officials, service providers and governments to account for their obligations with responsive efforts⁵. Alongside strengthening civic engagement and amplifying ‘citizen voice’, social accountability initiatives aim to increase the transparency of governance in many arenas, ranging from local service delivery to national processes of development policy formulation⁶.

In response to the clear need for spaces in which citizen voices can be listened to and responded to by both government and aid decision makers, Africa's Voices launched the Common Social Accountability Platform (CSAP) in 2018. CSAP's objective is to enhance the inclusion and participation of citizens in decision-making across, governance, peace-building efforts, humanitarian interventions and development programmes. By leveraging Africa's Voices' interactive radio method for nurturing dialogue and gathering public opinion, the platform aims to build a sustained channel for open conversation between citizens and decision-makers, across sectors and mandates. CSAP uses a combination of radio programming and SMS messaging to create a platform that citizens actively engage in, whilst simultaneously allowing for feedback received from citizen SMS messages to be robustly analysed, understood and ideally, acted upon. AVF's approach allows for two types of critical insights:

1. Rich qualitative understanding of citizen perspectives;
2. Quantitative understanding of the prevalence of perspectives and how these vary by demographic group.

This can fill evidence gaps on citizen perspectives so as to make governments' decision-making more accountable, responsive and grounded in the voices of citizens.

2.2 AVF's Interactive Radio Method

CSAP is built on AVF's interactive radio method which aims to build dialogue and ensure citizens are able to inform decision-making. The interactive radio approach is designed to leverage the vibrant media and telecommunications landscape that has emerged in sub-Saharan Africa to build large-scale, cost-effective and inclusive conversations⁷.

Kenya presents an opportunity for innovative media engagement especially, with the recent digital migration, increased access to the internet and digital platforms, and continued

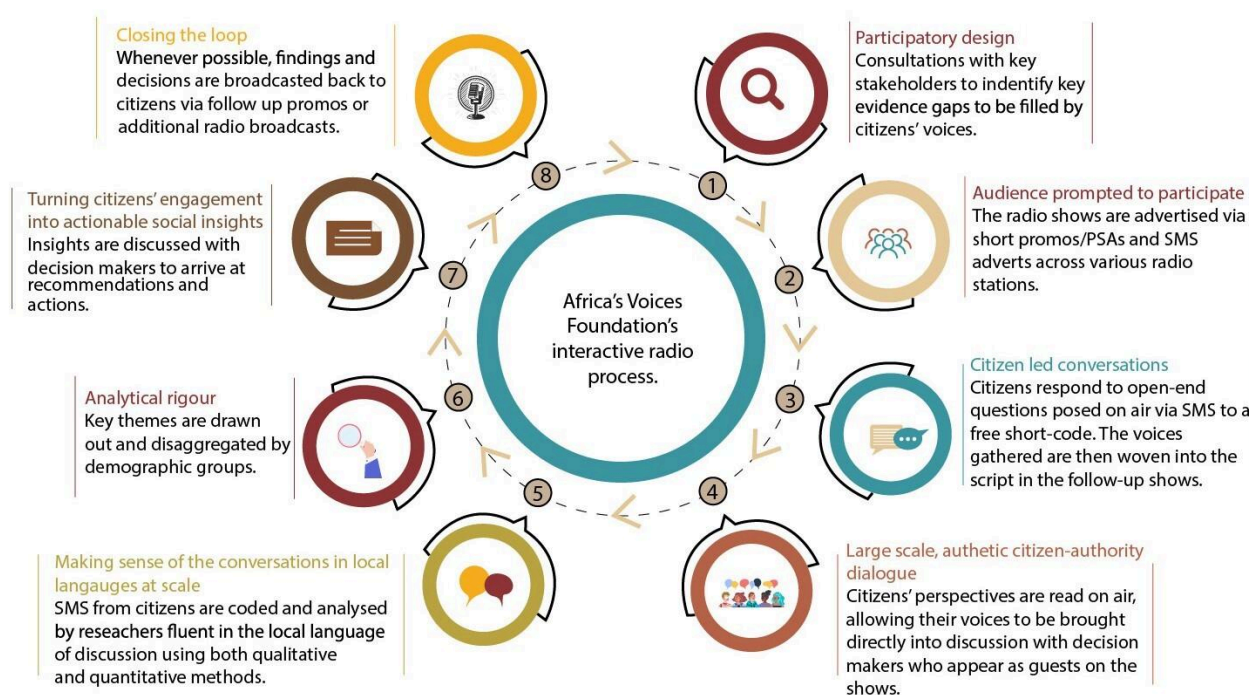
⁵ Houtzager, P. and A. Joshi (2008). Introduction: Contours of a research project and early findings. IDS Bulletin 38 (6), p. 1-9.

⁶ Gaventa, J. and G. Barrett (2010). So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement. IDS Working Paper No. 347. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

⁷ USAID (2017), Somalia Perceptions Survey, Part 1: The Emerging Federal States, Puntland and Mogadishu.

proliferation of mobile devices⁸. Interactive radio projects can build on this landscape to effectively implement radio show debates with key decision-makers. Audiences drive the discussion by inputting their perspectives through SMS to a toll-free shortcode. By connecting citizens with each other and with decision-makers in this way, AVF's interactive radio method is able to overcome some of the barriers of cost, infrastructure, and security that traditional survey methodologies often face, without losing the scope for rich and sustained citizen-authority interactions. In addition, engaging through SMS and radio allows citizens who are traditionally excluded from public discussion spaces, such as women, youth and IDPs, to have a voice in decision-making processes.

Figure 1: CSAP methodology flow



Moreover, by convening citizens in large-scale discussions, the interactive radio method allows for the gathering of public opinion in a way that combines the richness of on-the-ground qualitative approaches with the scale and some of the quantitative value of perception surveys.⁹ Through a specific set of techniques, AVF analyses messages gathered in response to interactive radio to generate evidence on public opinion on critical issues that can be used by decision-makers to ensure their programming and policy is responsive and accountable to citizens. This combined method of digital dialogue and opinion research can be deployed as a key piece in support of effective durable solutions programming in Kenya.

⁸ Geopoll (2021), Media Audience Measurement Report.

⁹ S. Srinivasan & C. A. Lopes, (2016) 'Africa's Voices Versus Big Data? The Value of Citizen Engagement Through Interactive Radio', in Voice & Matter, Communication, Development and the Cultural Return, O. Hemer and T. Tufte (eds.) NORDICOM.



2.3 Building inclusive community engagement at scale

AVF, SEKEB and officials from the three participating counties co-designed content for citizen engagement and partnered with Musyi FM to broadcast 5 interactive radio shows. The shows aimed to deploy an interactive radio approach as a citizen engagement/public participation tool for enhancing good governance. A weekly show was preceded by public service announcements (PSAs) that advertised the upcoming radio show. The PSAs also included the radio question for that week and the free-to-user sms shortcode. Towards the end of each live show, the radio presenters picked a few (3-4) calls from listeners but those calls were not included in this analysis. Four demographic questions on age, gender, location and disability were sent out to everyone who had participated in the radio dialogue. At the end of the engagement cycle a final radio show was broadcasted to share key findings from the radio engagement while gathering citizens' views on whether they feel that they have a voice in decision-making that affects them as well as their views on how to improve future shows.

"Thankyou for taking our opinions into consideration, be blessed and keep up with the good deeds" Man, 31, Machakos.

"Okay. Thank you for informing us, it is evident that were are highly valued" Man, 57, Machakos

On-The-Ground Forums

The on-the-ground forums were designed to complement and deepen the interactive radio discussion. Participants attending represented a range of different demographic groups, including Persons Living With Disabilities (PLWD), women, youths and elderly people with low literacy levels, and citizens who have no access to radio or mobile phones and were therefore unable to participate in the radio dialogue. The forums offered an opportunity to these marginalised groups to give feedback on the research questions that were discussed on radio. The forums were conducted in Kamba language and the facilitator would ask the participants the radio question and allow for the audience to respond during which qualitative data was collected via audio recordings to add depth to the analysis of the radio dialogues. Further, the forums provided an opportunity for the facilitator to follow up on some of the issues and responses shared by the participants .

The interactive radio questions were designed in collaboration with key stakeholders including county officials responsible for public participation and citizens engagements, members of CSO communities in the region, and were open-ended to provoke lively and plural discussion in an engaging and accessible way. The full communications flow, including the consent and socio-demographic questions is outlined in Table 1.



Table 1: *Communications flow*

Radio show questions	Consent	Socio-demographic survey	Final evaluation
<p>1. What are the three priority developments that you would like the County Government to implement in your ward in the next five years?</p> <p>2. What projects can Kitui, Machakos and Makueni counties collaborate in to advance the region?</p> <p>3. What can your county government do to improve your participation in the county's decision making process?</p> <p>4. How will you hold your county government accountable for your development priorities for the next 5yrs?</p> <p>5. How can your county government improve on its inclusion of women, PLWDs and youths in all its processes</p>	<p>Thanks. We'd like to use your answers for research on development priorities and want to ask a few more questions.</p> <p>If you prefer not to participate, reply STOP and you will receive no questions and your messages will not be analysed</p> <p>If you consent to being part of this study, please respond to the following questions.</p>	<p>LANGUAGE What language do you prefer to use? (Kamba/Swahili)</p> <p>WARD [ASK ALL] In which ward do you currently live?</p> <p>GENDER What is your gender?</p> <p>AGE How old are you? Please answer with a number in years.</p> <p>DISABILITY [ASK ALL] Are you a person living with a disability?</p> <p>CLOSING: Thank you. Tune in to MUSYI FM every Thursday from 8AM to 9AM and share your opinion. We will be sending you more messages in the next few days.</p>	<p>1. Did this consultation process make you feel that you have a voice in decision making that affects your community? Yes/No. Please explain</p> <p>2. What suggestions do you have for ways to improve future radio consultations?</p>

2.4 Gathering insight on public opinion

The second aspect of the interactive radio approach is analysis of audience engagement to inform decision-making with a rich understanding of public opinion. AVF generates robust social science evidence on opinions that are shared at a group level and that emerge in collective discussion.



In-depth qualitative and quantitative insights - AVF grouped the messages received according to different themes that our Kikamba-speaking researcher identified in the data. This categorisation concluded in a 'coding frame' of themes and sub-themes for each research question. After an extensive validation process, the labelled dataset was then analysed using quantitative methods and visualised to assess the relative prevalence of the different ideas emerging from the conversation. AVF then provided a thick description of the ideas in the dataset, using many quotations directly from citizen voice, to give deeper insight into the main themes of the data¹⁰. Messages are accompanied by demographic information of the individual who sent them (obtained upon consent). However, as collecting the demographic details is entirely at the discretion of the participant, some demographic information is missing.

Prevalence and variations by demographic group and geography - By combining this labelled dataset with data received from audiences on their demographic information, AVF can analyse how perspectives varied between different demographic groups. Odds ratios were used to test for associations between groups and ideas because they are particularly sensitive to sample size and therefore set a higher threshold for achieving results with statistical significance. In this instance, statistical significance is not indicative of the ability to infer these results to a wider population, but suggestive of the reliability of the patterns and associations identified in the data.

Consent - AVF made clear in all radio communications that data would be analysed to inform the recommendations to the SEKEB member counties. Participants were given the option of opting out from having their data analysed by texting the keyword 'STOP'.

2.5 Limitations of the methodology

Analytical approach: The data gathered using this method constitutes a non-probabilistic sample and this affects the type of insights presented below. Firstly, there is a coverage error given that radio participation is based on the listenership of Musyi FM as there are up to 10 Kikamba broadcasting radio stations in the region. Low literacy levels also limit effective coverage. Second, there is a sampling error: those who participate are self-selected amongst potential audiences based on a range of factors such as phone ownership, media habits, literacy, and gender roles. This dataset thus, cannot be used to estimate the prevalence of certain perspectives based on this sample for the populations in the target counties. Additionally some perspectives held by those groups outside of radio participants (e.g. those unable to access radio) may not be identified by this approach.

Instead of pursuing quantitative aggregates of individual perspectives, AVF's research seeks to complement and strengthen qualitative analysis by understanding how opinions are shared - and vary - at the group level. This suggests how these ideas might circulate beyond the specific radio participants as they are indicative of a wider group. From a statistical point of

¹⁰ For the full thick description see Annex 1.



view the lack of representativeness is less important for a study based on associations than aggregate indicators. This report's qualitative insights about opinions and associations with demographic groups are therefore of indicative value for understanding the perspectives of comparable groups in the population. They are best used with other knowledge and research for informing policy and programme decision-making.

Data collection: Working with broadcast media and mobile phone networks is an effective modality for gathering data, but also leads to specific operational challenges that can negatively impact the quality of data.



3. ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Summary of radio engagement

This section outlines details of who engaged in the five weeks of radio talk shows. It is important to note that percentages and theme prevalence reflected in this report reflect feedback from those who opted to participate by sending an SMS, therefore this is not representative of the SEKEB region population as a whole. The messages referenced within this report are presented verbatim, as shared by participants in response to the weekly radio question and as such any spelling or grammatical errors in the messages do not constitute an oversight. The translation is provided by AVF. AVF champions authentic citizen voices and we do not alter or edit the messages of our participants other than for the purpose of anonymisation.

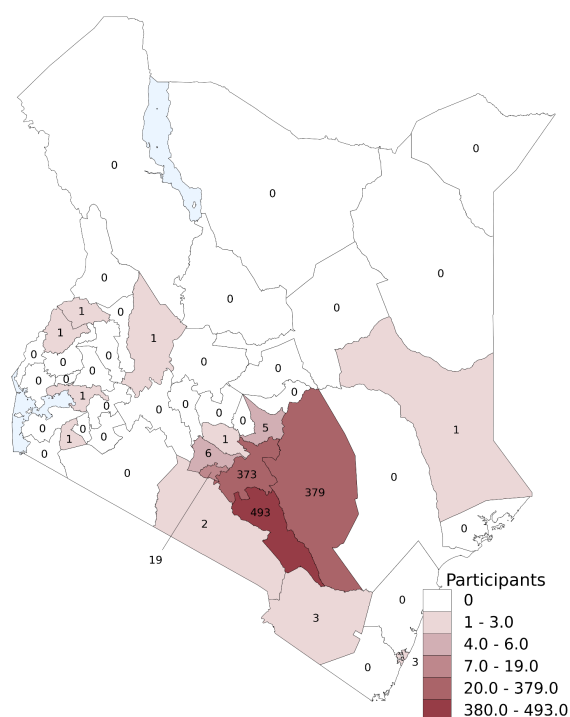
3.2 Who participated in the dialogue?

The total number of those who participated in the dialogue was **3,074**. Of these, **2,967** consented to have their data included in the analysis. More than three-quarters (83.1%, n=2,554 of 3,074) of the total individuals who participated sent relevant messages for analysis. The messages that are considered 'not relevant' refer to messages that do not directly answer the radio question. However, many of these responses still constitute valid sites of engagement between citizens and the radio dialogue, for example through sending greetings, questions, thank you and consents. The figures below indicate the gender, age and disability status of participants in the dialogue who sent relevant messages and have therefore been included in the analysis¹¹.

Map 1: Geographical distribution of participants

Location: As demonstrated in the map, the majority of participants reported being located within the SEKEB region, with the highest proportions in Makueni (n=493), followed by Kitui (n=379) and Machakos (n=373). This correlates to the coverage areas of the radio station which broadcasted the interactive dialogue.

Although the radio coverage did not extend significantly beyond the boundaries of the three target counties, it is clear that some participants reported other districts across the country, this may

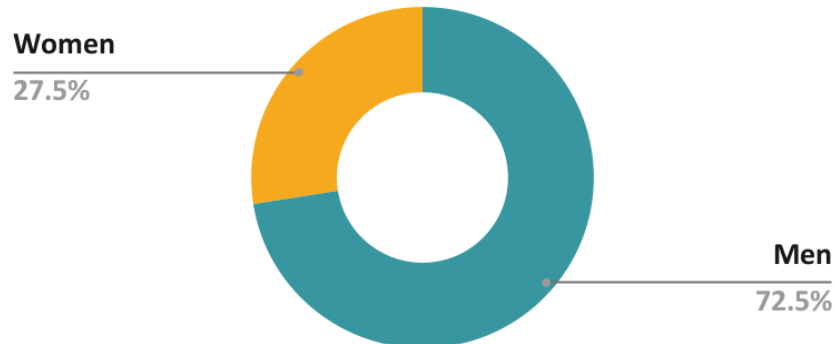


¹¹ Please note that providing demographic information is voluntary and therefore some participants do not submit all, or in some instances any, demographic information. Therefore the total of participants who report their gender does not match with the total sample size of those who responded to the weekly question.



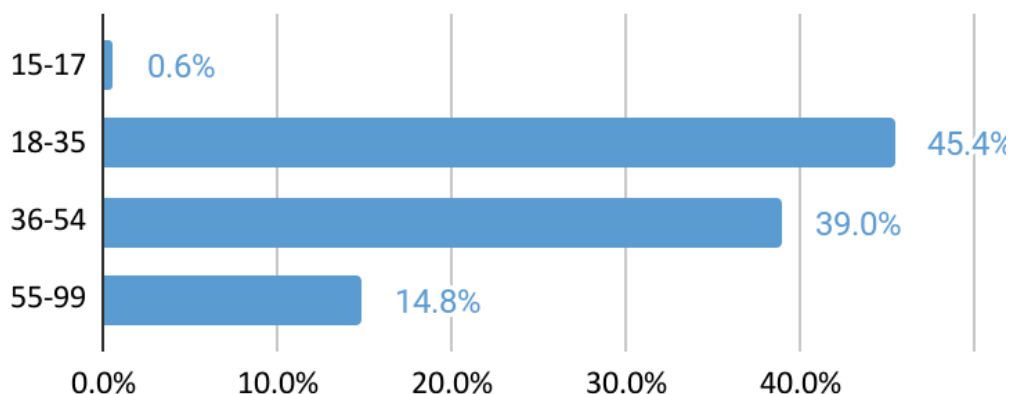
reflect the listeners' home counties, rather than where they were listening from.

Figure 2: Gender split of participants who reported their gender (n=1,191)



During the five weeks of the radio broadcast, 1,191 participants reported their gender. Over one-quarter (27.5% n=328) were women indicating that interactive radio is an effective platform for engaging with women, who are often excluded from more traditional decision-making spaces.

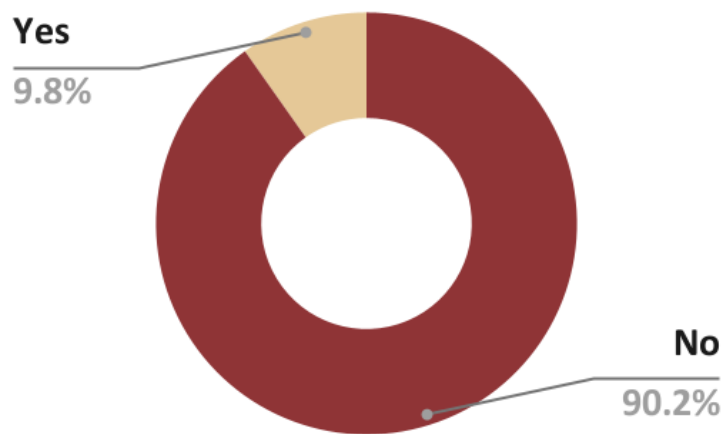
Figure 3: Age split of participants who reported their age (n=1,358)



For participants who responded to the age demographic question, almost half fell in the 18-35 age group (45.4%, n=617), followed closely by those aged between 36-54 (39.0%, n=530). The high number of participants in the two age categories could be attributed to their interest in the participation of their county development which translates to their personal developments, as well as the higher level of digital literacy amongst this generation in comparison to older citizens. The lowest engagement was among listeners aged 15-17 years (0.6%, n=8) which may reflect a lack of interest in the topic area, or that this age group have limited access to mobile phones.

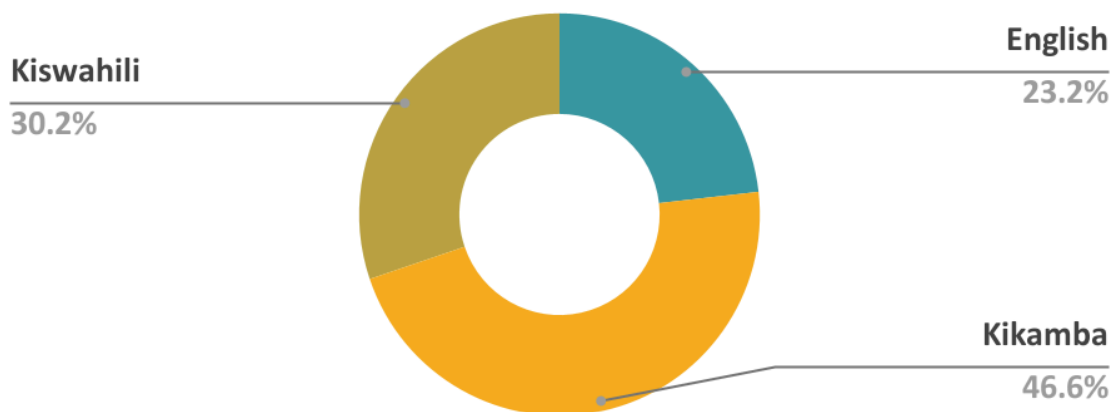


Figure 4: *Disability status of participants who reported their status (n=1,326)*



Almost one in ten (9.8% n=130) of participants indicated that they had a disability. This is a higher number compared to the reported percentage of Persons Living With Disabilities in the 2019 national census that reported 2.2% of Kenya's population were PLWDs¹².

Figure 5: *Preferred language of participants who reported their status (n=1,310)*



Almost half of all participants (46.6% n=610) reported Kamba as their preferred language to engage in during the dialogues, followed by Swahili (30.2% n=396) and finally English at 23.2% (n=304). AVF's multi-lingual research team enables citizens to engage in the language they feel most comfortable in, ensuring that the interactive radio dialogue remains as inclusive as possible.

¹² [Development Initiatives. \(2020\) Status of Disability in Kenya](#): Statistics from the 2019 Census.



4. KEY FINDINGS: MAKING SENSE OF CONVERSATIONS AT SCALE

Week 1: Citizen priorities for development in their wards

The first radio talk show was aired on the 5th of December 2022, with the Governor of Makueni, HE Mutula Kilonzo Jr as the studio guest. A total of 2,179 participants sent in 3,564 messages, 2,042 people sent in 3,046 relevant messages that were deemed relevant for analysis. They responded to the following question: ***What are the three priority developments that you would like the County Government to implement in your ward in the next five years?***

The content of the shows was designed to align with the finalisation of the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). Following the conclusion of the 2022 national elections, the newly elected government officials were mandated with the development of the CIDP, a policy document which will guide all public spending for the five-years. Input from citizens is central to the development of the CIDPs¹³. At the time of the radio talk shows, Kitui and Machakos Counties had finalised their citizens consultations and were incorporating the feedback into the document. The focus of the first radio show was to verify citizen priority developments against what the counties had already documented in the CIDPs. This proved to be an effective mechanism for strengthening the legitimacy of the CIDPs - for example, during the Machakos CIDP validation workshop it emerged that two of the top citizens' development priorities identified in the radio discussion directly aligned to the CIDP priorities; these were water and sanitation, and roads and infrastructure.

It is worth noting that this week's question received the highest number of responses from the public and that citizens continued to send their responses to the question throughout the subsequent 4 weeks of radio programming. During this first week of radio broadcast, the public were informed that their feedback and messages would be forwarded to their county leadership for consideration as the administrations continued with their preparations for the 5 years long CIDP process. The continued responses to this week's radio question throughout the series suggests that the citizens are very keen to ensure that their county leadership are aware of their ward-specific development priorities which needed to be considered during the county planning processes.

The radio guest was His Excellency Hon. Mutula Kilonzo Junior, the newly elected governor of Makueni County, who talked about the development plans that his newly formed county government will be focusing on. His presence in the studio also contributed to the high engagement as citizens felt they had been given a chance to engage directly with their leadership to front their development priorities unlike through the usual lengthy public participation process. Further, he gave an overview of the SEKEB Bloc, including its composition and mandate. He also had an opportunity to respond to some of the questions raised by listeners in regards to the status of some development projects in Makueni County, as this quote from the radio transcript demonstrates:

¹³ [County Integrated Development Plan \(CIDP\) | AHADI toolkit](#). County Governance Toolkit. Accessed 17 January 2023.

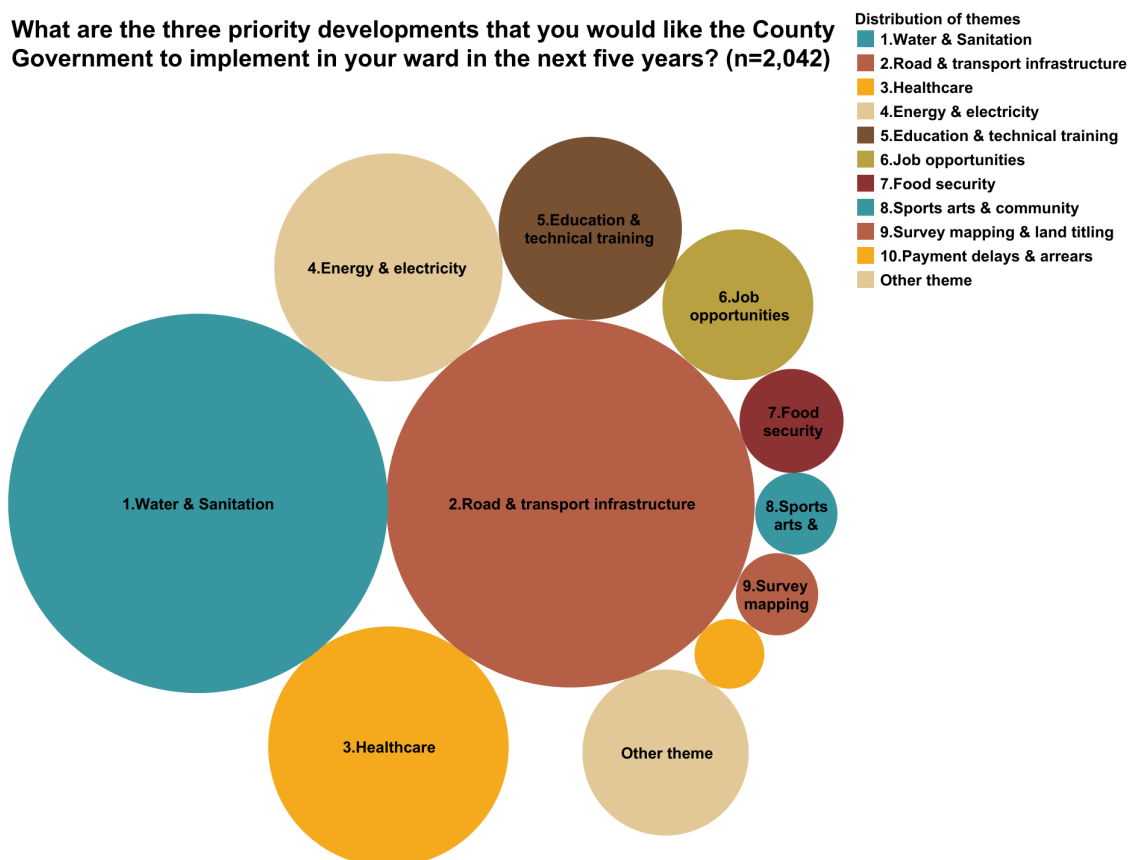
Presenter (reading message from citizen): “Governor, do you have any plans to install street lights in Sultan Hamud?” Male, Makueni.

H.E Mutula Jnr: “Yes there is that plan. In Fact, we have held a meeting with a team from rural electrification and set up a plan to put money in our supplementary budget to cater for the installation. I had a different idea though since there are nonfunctional masts that have cost the county over KES 1.8 million. My opinion is to install solar-powered street lights as I saw in Homa Bay to also cut the cost of the County's electricity bill.”

Presenter (reading message from citizen): “I wanted to ask about the plan you have for the people that were evacuated in Kaunguni, a place called Kithayoni- Makindu.” Female, Makueni.

H.E Mutula Jnr: “The title deed was processed for 16,731 hectares of land in August. Now the challenge is how to determine the genuine members and true owners of the land because initially only 1800 people claimed the land and as of now 5400 people are claiming it. About the Makindu people, we will have to do planning before titling the land the same as Kibwezi. It's a process that we are initiating and there is a budget for the same.”

Figure 6: Thematic distribution of messages in Week 1 dialogue





Big infrastructure projects, such as water services, roads and energy provision were key priorities for citizens across the target counties, with significantly higher proportions of listeners raising these issues over social development concerns, such as health and education.

Over half of the participants in the dialogue (52.2% n=1,065) highlighted water and sanitation as being a key priority in their ward. Listeners identified a range of specific activities that the local government should implement, such as drilling boreholes, constructing dams, and building public toilets in markets to reduce instances of open defecation. **The strong emphasis on water and hygiene provision likely reflects the impact of the ongoing drought on water scarcity which continues to impact the SEKEB region.** The county administrations should work with their constituents to identify sustainable solutions to the water scarcity problem such as rain water harvesting, boreholes drilling and distribution to the homesteads which would have the greatest impact.

"Machakos Matungulu East Ward, the problem is water, let's construct dams, they will save us, the problem is water, thanks" Man, 40, Machakos

"Kaliku location kawala sub location kyeni village we need more boreholes at least 2, that's the main to me coz with water we can do irrigation" Man, 30, Kitui

"Public Toilet needed in Kimongo Machakos. The forests have been fouled." Man, 19, Machakos

Similarly, almost half of all respondents (49.1% n=1,003) highlighted the need for investments in road and transport infrastructure. Within this many listeners spoke about specific roads which needed repairing or rebuilding in their wards. The responsibility for the construction of transport infrastructure is shared between the county and the national governments. County governments are mandated to construct county roads, linking villages, local facilities, rural access roads linking various small towns within the county, and feeder roads, which connect rural areas to the major roads and highways which fall under the purview of the national government. Given the heavy citizen emphasis on road and transport infrastructure investments, county administrations in SEKEB should ensure that they allocate an adequate budget for infrastructure development in these key areas. Additionally, as with investments in water infrastructure, county administrations should work closely with citizens to identify priority areas requiring investment in better transport links.

"Kindly we need feeder roads to open our Village...We can't do Transportation of our loved ones to Burial the inroads are apathetic or non existence". Female, 50, Makueni.

"We need a bridge from Kanoto to Kalangi, when it rains children suffer when going to school, Tulimani ward." Woman, 23, Makueni.

Alongside water, hygiene and transport, a smaller proportion of citizens (18.9% n=385) also highlighted the need for investment in energy and electricity across the different counties. Again



the strong emphasis on physical infrastructure suggests citizens currently view such projects as having greater potential benefit to their ward than other types of interventions. It may also be indicative of the expectation amongst citizens that local authorities hold the primary responsibility for delivering these projects, rather than e.g. national government or aid agencies. The high numbers of citizens mentioning electrification is likely attributed to the slowing down of the Last Mile Connectivity Project (LMCP)¹⁴ which sought to increase access to electricity in rural and low income areas in Kenya. The project was launched in 2015 designed to connect 1.5million households to the national grid by 2020, though by the end of 2020 2.5million households were connected, exceeding the earlier set goal. Further a Phase II was designed to build on these gains from Phase I¹⁵ propelling the county towards its ambitious goal of achieving universal electric access for its citizens by the end of 2022¹⁶.

"To the Governor, Wavinya ndeti/ Mca kyumbi, Several households lack power-KPLC. We plead for the same, Last mile project. Kindly." Man, 60, Machakos.

"Let every eligible household be supplied with electricity under the last mile project." Man, 48, Machakos.

"Are there any plans to complete the stalled electricity project, especially in areas where it was not established like Kiima Kiu Kalanzoni Ward?" Man, 50, Makueni.

Aside from public infrastructure needs, **a smaller proportion of citizens prioritised social development issues such as health, education, training and job creation.** Slightly more than one-fifth of the listeners mentioned priorities regarding healthcare provision (20.9% n=427), mentioning specific needs such as ensuring that hospitals are stocked with medication, medical supplies such as gloves, syringes and additional medical personnel. **Older participants (55+ years) more commonly mentioned healthcare than those aged 18 – 35 years, which may reflect the greater healthcare needs for this generation¹⁷.** This could be attributed to the notion that older people tend to be more susceptible to diseases and in most cases have to contend with chronic diseases that need to be taken care of.

"We also try and work on Ngiini Hospital please try and work out on that Hospital please" Man, 61, Makueni.

"FIRST, WATER IN EVERY VILLAGE, SECOND THE HOSPITALS SHOULD BE NEAR THE VILLAGE PEOPLE THREE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS SHOULD BE SPACED TO ACCOMMODATE 20 STUDENTS AS OPPOSED TO 40 SO THAT THE TEACHERS CAN TEACH WITHOUT STRESS." Man, 61, Makueni.

"Ndithini Ward, tarmac the Murifarm- Kawethei Kaku road, 2 Construct a medical lab in Kiatineni Dispensary. 3 Let us drill a borehole Nduundune Village Kiatineni Sub Location." Man, 56, Machakos.

¹⁴ For more information see [Kenya Power: Last Mile Connectivity Project](#).

¹⁵ Global Infrastructure Hub - [Last mile connectivity program Kenya](#)

¹⁶ World Bank - [Maximizing Financing for Development in Action: The Kenya Energy Sector Experience](#)

¹⁷ A higher proportion of participants aged 55+ mentioned healthcare compared to 18-35, significant at p – value 0.0212.



"education, Provide medicine in the hospitals, water and better roads." Man, 55, Machakos.

Over one in ten listeners (12.1% n=248) highlighted the need for the establishment and provision of equipment to education and training institutions. Relatedly, a similar proportion (8.2% n=168) mentioned creating job opportunities, for example casual workers to support the construction of county development projects or sweeping the market, as well as a plan to transition interns and temporary workers into permanent jobs in the different sectors across the counties. Men more commonly mentioned job creation than women¹⁸, which could be attributed to the fact that men are more likely to be the primary breadwinners for the household.

"Makueni county, prioritise on building ECDE classrooms, employ Ecde teachers on permanent and pensionable terms, CBC to be implemented" Man, 33, Makueni.

"Welding and fabricating training centre at chinna" Woman, 56, Machakos.

"On Trade, Industry, Marketing, Tourism & Cooperative Development; increase employment rates of young men and women with targeted measures for disadvantaged youth, by putting in place school-to-work transition policies" Man, 27, Makueni

"I would like the youth to be given the market cleaning jobs and building dams" Man, 30, Makueni.

"Healthy workers under locum especially (kitui county referral hospital) to be confirmed , personally am struggling to get rent,food ,I have a baby hence working for almost three months with no pay", Woman, 34.

Small numbers of citizens raised the issues of food security (3.2% n=80), the need for investments in sports, arts and community centres (2.5% n=51). Listeners emphasised the importance of increasing support to youths in order to boost productivity and reduce the prevalence of destructive behaviours, such as drug and gambling addictions.

Finally a very small proportion of citizens (2.4% n=50) mentioned survey mapping and land titling to reduce land disputes. This theme was more significantly mentioned by participants aged 36-54 years compared to those aged 18-35 years¹⁹ which may be because at this age people are more likely to be investing in and/or inheriting land.

"There is increased hunger , children are suffering from hunger" Woman, 28

."Betting business should end machakos count 55, machakos, man" Man, 55, Machakos

"There is water that was drilled in kisekini-kilungu although that was not the right place. We are not satisfied since the water is little and serves few people. Finally, betting points in Makueni have increased, and they are escalating insecurity. Governor please shut the betting business. No demogs provided.

¹⁸ A higher proportion of women mentioned healthcare compared to men, significant at p – value 0.0184.

¹⁹ A higher proportion of participants aged 36-54 mentioned survey mapping and land titling than those aged 18-35, significant at p – value 0.0242 .



"Providing access to information for persons with disabilities, in braille and sign language. building an accessible public toilet for those using wheelchairs. Skill development centre for persons with disabilities" Man, 59, Kitui

"People have cultivated paths and feeder roads and many people have lost their lives because of land conflicts. Please survey our lands to save our people and to also construct roads for their easy movement " Man, 42, Makueni

Finally a small number made specific follow up on payment delays and arrears (1.8% n=36) that have been due. Women more commonly mentioned this theme compared to men²⁰.

"Governor, why have you let the women who work at Emali market suffer, why don't you want to pay them their money, we have been locked out of our houses, we have no food, we are in a big problem, man" Woman, 22, Makueni

Week 2: Identifying opportunities to boost growth through regional coordination

The second week of the radio dialogue, 1,043 citizens sent in 1,542 messages among these 930 participants sent in 1,216 relevant messages that were used in analysis in response to: ***What projects can Kitui, Machakos and Makueni counties collaborate to advance the region?***

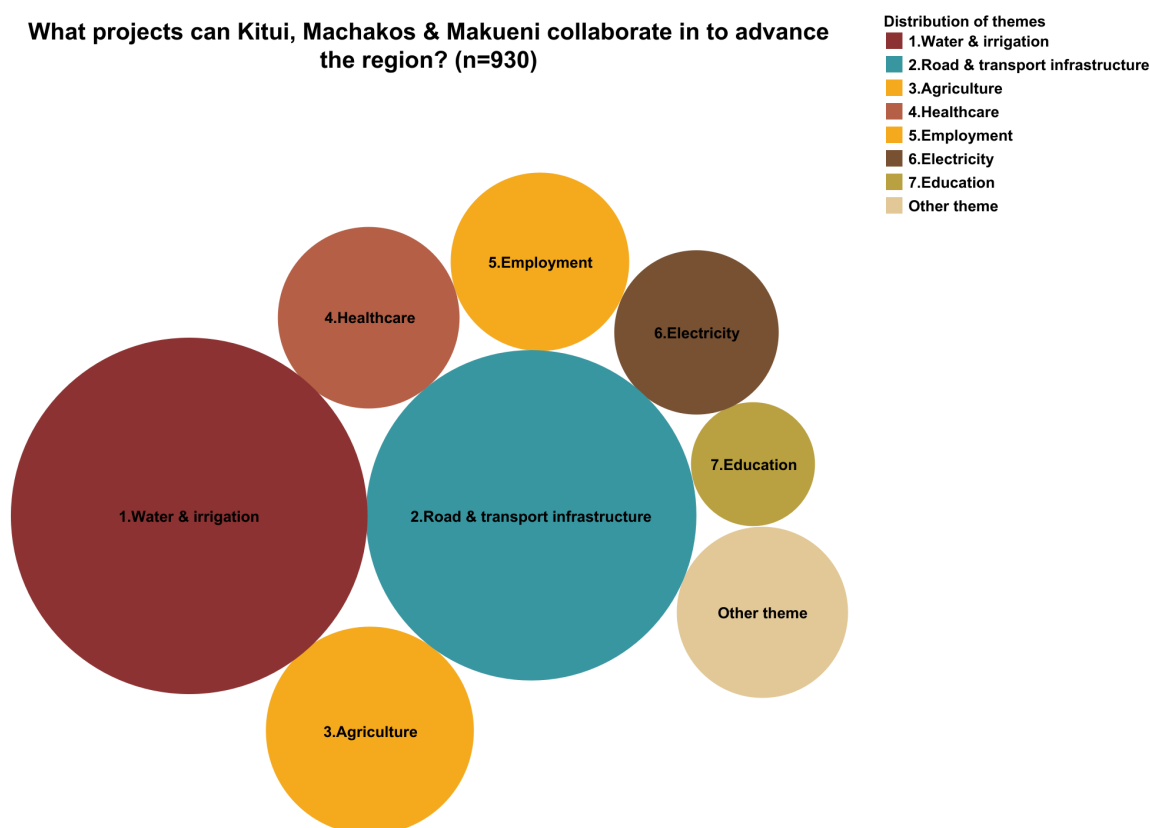
In the studio the Acting CEO of SEKEB Ms. Faith Muthoki talked about the structure, role, composition and the mandate of the bloc. She also highlighted some of the ways the three counties could collaborate in implementing to advance the region as well as some of the challenges facing the economic bloc:

"...harmonising tariffs to ease trade across the region and also attract investors from outside the region. Constructing and improving roads linking these counties to open up the region for easy transportation of goods and services. For instance, the road from Wikililye to Wote, and another from Kangundo through Kaani to Kitui road, in the event that you want to transport goods from Kangundo to Kitui you do not have to go through Machakos. The road from Kitui through Zombe, Mwitika, Hola to Lamu- can connect SEKEB with LAPSET, so that we can access the port without getting to Mombasa." Excerpt from interview with Ms. Faith Muthoki, Acting CEO of SEKEB

Figure 2: Thematic distribution of messages in Week 2 dialogue

²⁰ Significant at (p - value 0.0326).

What projects can Kitui, Machakos & Makueni collaborate in to advance the region? (n=930)



Throughout the discussion citizens repeatedly emphasised the value of regional cooperation to boost collective economic growth, and suggested a wide range of joint projects perceived to have the potential to advance welfare across the three counties. This is indicative of **clear public understanding of the value of, and support for, the newly formed SEKEB.**

Echoing the emphasis on water infrastructure in the previous week, just under half (48.1% n=447) of participants in the week 2 dialogue raised the need for county administrations to collaborate on water and irrigation projects, with some listeners mentioning that they walk for several hours to access water.

"Gavana Malombe must dig a borehole at Yatta. We walk 4 hours to fetch water at Athi River."
Female, 62, Kitui.

"1. Revive the stalled Yimutundu Water project, 2. Kinyongo Water project and 3. Mwea/Kiumi water project all in Kithungo/Kitundu Ward and expand the area to benefit." Man, 55, Makueni

This illustrates that water for domestic use is still at the heart of most participants in the region and citizens rank it top of their priorities. Participants aged 36-54 years and 55+ years significantly mentioned water and irrigation compared to those aged 18 – 35 years.²¹ This may be

²¹ Participants aged 36-54 years (p – value = 0.0428) and 55+ years (p – value <0.0001) significantly mentioned water and irrigation compared to those aged 18 – 35 years



because those aged between 18-35 years predominantly live in the rural areas in their parents homesteads. Ergo, the parents, aged 36+, are ideally the ones in charge of farming decisions such as how or where to get irrigation water for the crops.²² In order to respond to this clearly identified need, **county governments should work collaboratively on larger scale water irrigation projects which will benefit citizens across the bloc, for example the Thwake Multi-purpose Dam. Additionally, it would be beneficial for the three administrations to develop collective water conservation policies and practices applicable across SEKEB.**

Similarly to the dialogue in the first week, road and transport infrastructure (41.3% n=384) was the second most commonly mentioned priority requiring a joint response from SEKEB county administrations. Rehabilitation of the poor state of roads and completion of stalled infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges was seen to be key to enabling inter-counties trade and promoting tourism.

"Prioritise road projects like marraming and grading both big and feeder roads." Man, 44, Makueni.

"Governor Wavinya you know the road linking Machakos and Kitui Counties is impassable. From Katangi through, Kiamani Primary school, Yumbuni secondary school, Kamale to Musele where Machakos borders Kitui County up to Kwakilui. We would be grateful if that road was improved." Man, 47, Machakos.

"Roads are essential for market linkages of our produce malili market konza thwake dam for tourism roads opening and graded ones are needed to make us grow" Woman, 51, Makueni.

Agriculture was mentioned by a smaller proportion of listeners (16.3% n=152), many of whom suggested specific agribusiness ideas that could be coordinated across the three counties. This **indicates that citizens from the three counties recognise the value of coordinated agricultural policy to boost regional economic growth, and suggests that there would be notable public support for county-wide agriculture projects led by SEKEB.**

"Bringing farmers together, educating them and organising for benchmark from other counties that are doing well in agriculture." Man 38, Kitui.

"Machakos,kitui and makueni will need one Fruit processing factory to push for value addition for their farm produce" Man, 50, Machakos.

"Setting a joint mango and citrus processing plant to enable them process their fruits" Woman, 29.

As with the discussion on land surveys in week 1, **agriculture was more commonly prioritised by older participants (aged 36+) in the dialogue than by citizens aged between 18-35²³,**

²² Kenya Wall Street. 2020. [2019 Census data shows Kenya has a youthful rural population.](#)

²³ This theme was significantly mentioned more by participants aged 36-54 years (p – value =0.0195) and 55+ years (p – value =0.0001) significantly compared to those aged 18 – 35 years



which may again be because this proportion of the Kenyan population own land that is used for agricultural practices and therefore their feedback is biased towards their county governments providing solutions to the challenges they face in their agricultural efforts.

Finally, approximately one in ten listeners suggested that the three counties should collaborate to improve service provision on healthcare (12.5% n=116), employment (12.0% n=112) and electricity (10.2% n=95). A small proportion (5.8% n=54) also highlighted education. It is notable that people living with disability significantly mentioned the latter theme²⁴. This may be because most educational institutions are constructed without considering the accessibility needs of PLWDs.

"Can we have a common healthcare programme as SEKEB, for citizens to register with an amount of money to get a card(or use USSD) to receive healthcare in all public hospitals in our 3 counties, then the card is renewable annually?" Male, 38, Makueni.

"Youth employment to cut across the three counties. Common seminars and workshops rotating around the counties" Woman, 55, Makueni.

"Start a regional kitty to boost youth and women in business" Man, 40, Kitui.

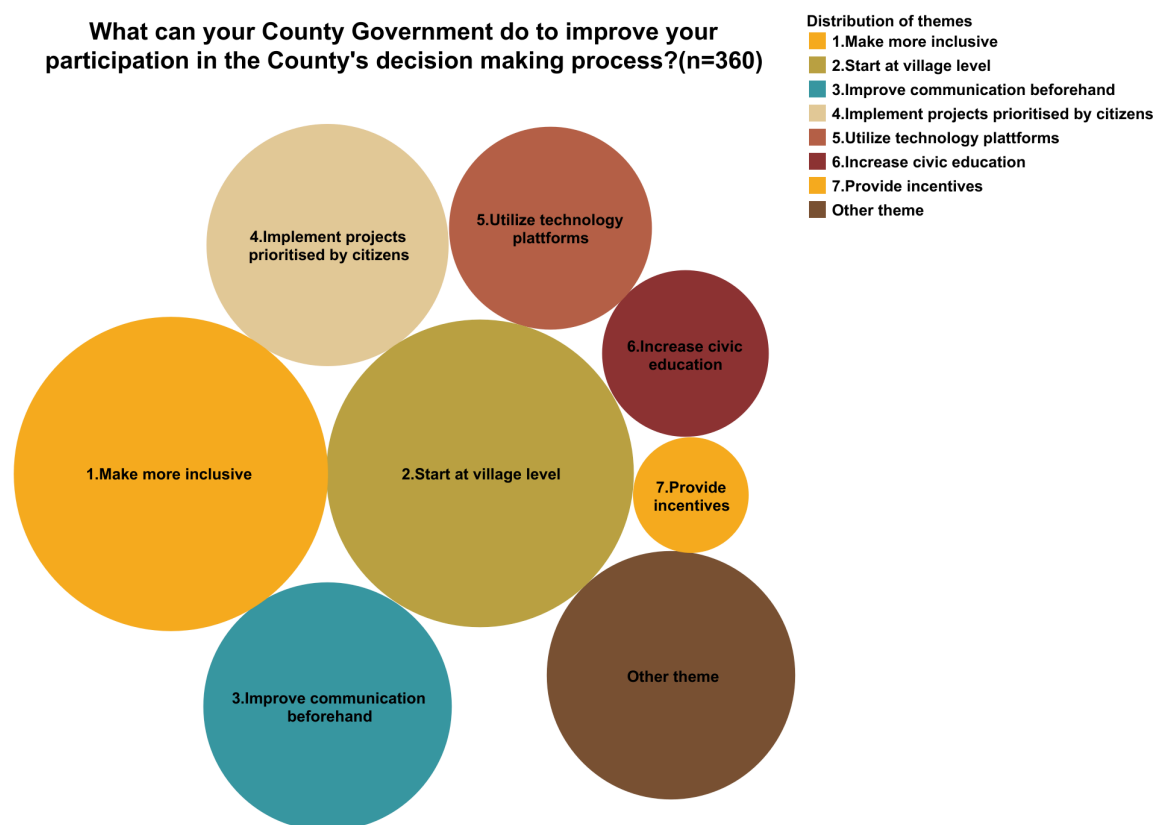
Week 3: Barriers to public participation identified by citizens

The third week of the series sought to understand the challenges which limit public engagement in county processes. A total of 820 listeners participated in the dialogue and sent in 595 messages, among these 425 people sent in 360 messages that were used in the analysis. The radio question was: ***What can your county government do to improve your participation in the county's decision making process?***

This episode featured Dr. Victor Ndambuki, Machakos County Secretary and Mr. Wambua Kawive, a Civic Engagement Expert. Dr. Ndambuki spoke about the public participation process in the counties, outlining that it is the citizens' right as well as their civic responsibility and therefore they need to own the process and demand for both implementation and feedback from their local government. Mr. Kawive urged the county leadership to ensure they respect the citizens' views by implementing the projects as proposed, and also by considering appropriate timings for their public engagement meetings. He furthermore emphasised that the limited resources available to local authorities means they cannot implement all priority projects identified by citizens. As such county administrations should be transparent about how they make funding decisions given the limited resources available to them.

²⁴ This theme was significantly mentioned more by people who stated they are living with a disability (p - value 0.0458)

Figure 3: *Thematic distribution of messages in Week 3 dialogue*



One of the motivations for the devolution system of governance was to promote participatory governance of the local citizens. Despite this commitment to promote citizens' engagement in all the county's decision-making processes, **a quarter of listeners (26.7% n=96) suggested that county administrations need to go further to improve the inclusivity of their current public participation processes.** In particular, citizens mentioned that county administrations should strengthen the involvement of youth and women in public forums, and improve opportunities for rural populations to participate. Relatedly, **25.6% (n=92) of participants suggested that public participation "should start at village level" in order to ensure that more citizens can be involved in decision-making, and that decisions will be informed by citizen views on the ground.**

"Let them come to the villages, we the disabled should be reached. Most of us use wheelbarrows and cannot go far, so we cannot progress. Let we disabled be considered. If you look at three counties that don't benefit from public participation," Man, 40, Disabled, Makueni.

"They should involve the youths and women in the rural areas because mostly they aim for the urban areas" Man, 37, Makueni.



"Everyone should be given a chance to air their views during public participation, even a 2 minute chance would be appreciated but not only a few should speak." Woman, 33, Makueni.

"Every village should take part in the public participation" Man, 50, Makueni.

"It is appropriate to give those in the grassroot a chance to express their views on projects that can involve young people." Man, 38, Machakos.

A slightly smaller proportion of listeners (16.7% n=60) went further to **emphasise the value of timely communication prior to public participation events taking place, in order to increase awareness and allow adequate time for community members to attend** - for example by working with village elders or utilising public barazas. Some listeners also mentioned that it would be useful for county officials to share any relevant documents in advance of public meetings. Similarly, a very small number of citizens (3.6% n=13) indicated that the local authorities should provide incentives such as transport reimbursement and seating allowance for citizens travelling long distances to attend public meetings.

"Ensure timely communication for public participation forums and sharing of documents before the meeting" Female, 42, Machakos.

"For Public participation to advance it should be budgeted for to advertise to people through radio, cars, m.c.a and chiefs should be involved in mobilising people to participate." Man, 48, Makueni.

"By doing baraza's through chiefs, administrators or village elders where they can communicate county plans to its people and give them room to give their views" Woman, 29, Makueni

Aside from suggesting mechanisms to improve the inclusivity of physical meetings, 11.1% (n=40) of citizens also suggested that county authorities could better utilise technological platforms, such as digital platforms and social media, to increase the inclusivity of meetings for those who are unable to physically attend. This would also encourage greater participation amongst youth, those who have full time employment, and who are more likely to engage via social media due to their higher rate of digital literacy. For instance using AVF's bespoke methodology which combines interactive radio, SMS, and social media platforms among other capabilities.

"Use social media so that people can be reached wherever they are to contribute, this is because the face-to-face approach will only reach a few" Woman, 35, Kitui.

"County government can give room to make suggestions via digital platforms. This sms coz not all of us can make our voices heard in rallies, pia there need be community Civic education coz most of the residents don't differentiate county duties and national issues." Man, 45, Makueni.



Some listeners (15.8% n=57) were also keen to note that the county government should implement projects prioritised by citizens - in other words **public participation should lead to concrete outcomes at the government level and not just serve as a tick box exercise in the county planning processes**. One participant particularly highlighted her frustration in the perceived lack of government response to citizen proposals:

"There is a problem that when we propose a project we wait and it never actualizes, and when it happens it gets stalled." Woman, 27, Makueni.

"projects are mostly not implemented to satisfaction, for instance, the water project in our ward that served the people for a very short period and broke down. it has caused people to walk 6 kms in search of water" Woman, Kitui.

"Kindly I request that the priorities of the people not be changed after the participation" Man, 55, Makueni.

"Ensure that what the people have suggested is done on time" Woman, 29, Kitui.

Greater transparency around how county authorities prioritise public projects, including clarity on how citizen priorities are incorporated into decision-making would likely significantly improve public trust in, and support for, local government.

Finally, a small number of listeners (7.5% n=27) also suggested that the county government should increase civic education efforts, focusing on raising community awareness on issues such as the difference between county government duties and the national government, and the importance of citizen participation in decision making and resource allocation. The theme was mentioned more by participants aged 36 - 54 compared to those aged 18 - 35 years²⁵. Though public awareness forums were organised country-wide when devolution was first coming into effect, this finding may be attributed to the limited participation of the then youth who are currently between ages 36 - 54. In order to address this, county governments should increase civic education efforts regarding devolution and the right of citizens to public participation, particularly targeting youth with these awareness creation activities.

Week 4: Citizen awareness of existing government feedback mechanisms

The dialogue in the fourth week intended to establish the extent to which citizens are aware of the existing feedback mechanisms between citizens and the authorities. This episode had the lowest engagement across the series, comprising 244 participants who sent 354 messages, of which only 62 listeners and 65 messages were deemed relevant for analysis. **The low engagement, particularly in comparison to the dialogue earlier in the series, is potentially indicative of low community awareness levels of the existing feedback and grievance redress mechanisms** available to citizens to escalate challenges or complaints regarding certain

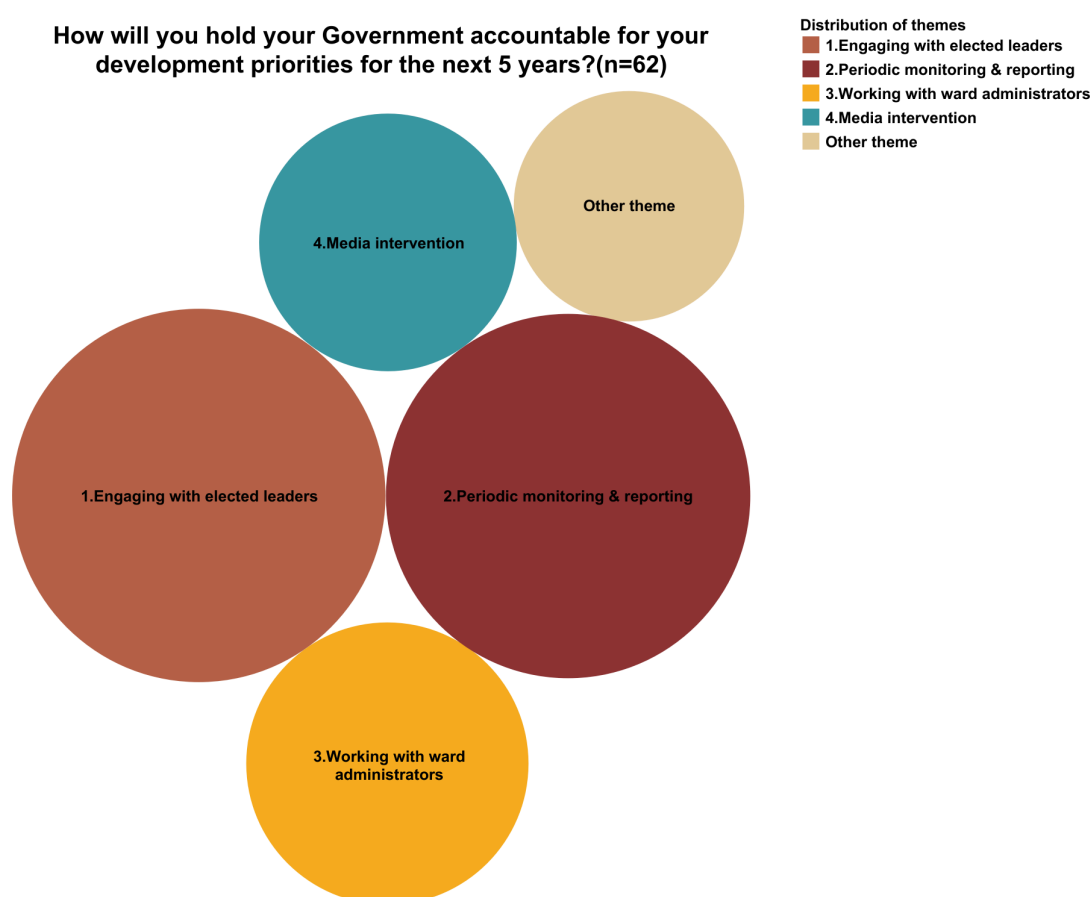
²⁵ Participants aged 36-54 years (p - value = 0.0449) significantly mentioned increasing civic education compared to those aged 18-35 years.

development projects. The radio question was: ***How will you hold your county government accountable for your development priorities for the next 5 years?***

The CoK 2010 presents a legal space to elevate participatory governance which facilitates access to power and shift control of resources. Article 47 constitutionalised the right to be given reasons for administrative actions and decisions. Additionally, the Fair Administrative Action 2015 Guide Book also provides direction to the public officers to comply with article 47 as they execute their decision making and administrative actions.²⁶

In the studio Mr. Shadrack Musyoki, the Assistant Director of Civic Engagement for Kitui County, highlighted the various feedback and grievance redress mechanisms available to citizens to demand accountability from their leaders. In particular he urged the public to protect their right to administrative actions that are just, reasonable and fair through three mechanisms: petition, memorandum and/or litigation.

Figure 4: *Thematic distribution of messages in Week 4 dialogue*



The most prevalent theme during this episode was engaging with elected leaders (33.9% n=21), within which citizens predominantly suggested interacting with their elected leader, MCAs

²⁶ [The fair Administrative Action Act](#)



through discussions in public forums. **Again this indicates that citizens place significant emphasis on being given the opportunity to directly interact with their elected leaders.** The elected officials should set up structures that allow members of their wards to interact with them on development matters as one of the roles of an MCA is oversight on projects' allocation and their commissioning in the wards.

"Holding discussions regarding ongoing projects with the closest leader near me, the area MCA." Man, 55, Machakos.

"Holding talks and discussions with MCAs and other leaders in the ward and ensuring that we turn up to the public participation sessions" Man, 48, Makueni.

Almost a third of participants (32.3% n=20) also mentioned the need for local authorities to improve their monitoring of projects through periodic site visits and holding regular feedback sessions that citizens can input into.

"By visiting every project site and making inquiries as a member of the public" Male, 48, Makueni

"To ensure accountability by visiting the ward administrators and the village administrators to establish the state of the projects. There is need for civic education to empower the citizens." Man, 39, Kitui.

"It would be helpful for the government to hold feedback sessions after every 3 months especially on matters water, agriculture, education and health." Man, 49

Finally, a small number of listeners (19.4% n=12) indicated the importance of working with their ward administrators, who are representatives of the county government at the grassroots level thus should be easily accessible. Whilst these suggestions add value to the discussion, the low engagement numbers in this week's dialogue likely illustrate a lack of awareness among the general public of existing avenues available to them to hold their county administration to account. The counties' public participation/citizen engagement functions should include aspects of feedback and grievance redress mechanisms in their training materials as they plan and undertake civic education efforts.

Week 5: Citizens' understanding of an inclusive government.

The commitment to inclusive governance was endorsed by the 2010 Constitution; Article 27 (1) and (3) qualifies all Kenyans to equal treatment regardless of political, economic, cultural and social status, whilst Article 27 (6) and (8) obligates the state to correct the marginalisation of various groups. As such the government should ensure not more than two thirds of any gender in elective and nominative posts. Furthermore women, PLWD, youth and ethnic minorities are entitled to representation in parliament in the constitution. Article 54 (1) (b) particularly supports PLWD access to educational institutions and device materials and practical access to all places.²⁷

²⁷ The Community Advocacy and Awareness (CRAWN) Trust - [Call for inclusion in Governance](#)

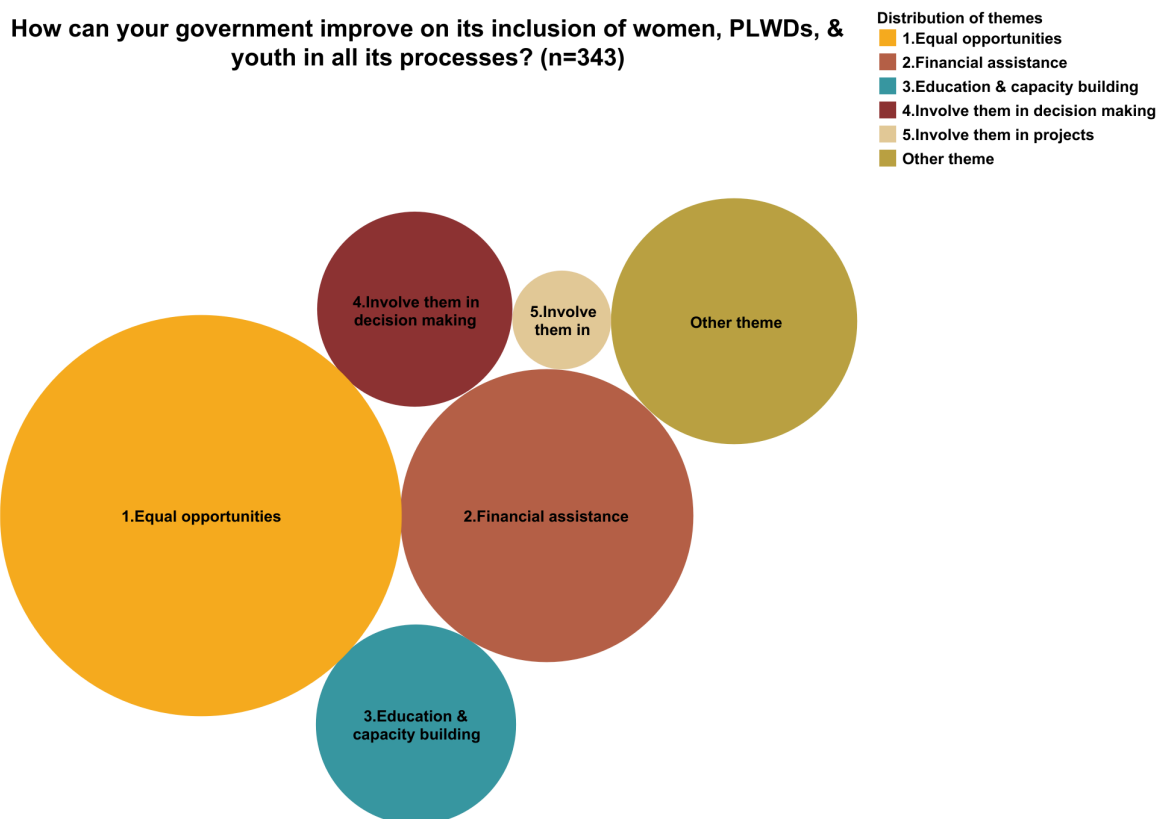


The National Council of Persons With Disabilities (NCPWD) is constantly advocating for the 5% reservation on all appointments by the County Service Board (CSB).

Taking note of these Constitutional provisions, the final radio episode was designed to gauge citizens' awareness of these provisions, as well as gather their suggestions on other ways the county governments can mainstream inclusion of marginalised groups, PLWDs, women and youths, in the county processes. The radio question was: ***How can your county government improve on its inclusion of women, PLWDs and youths in all its processes?***

In the studio, Jacob Ndambuki Ngumi, from the NGO Young Professionals for Development, stated that the county governments have a duty to ensure inclusivity of all marginalised groups. The county governments have gone further in their inclusivity efforts by developing inclusion acts and policies to serve the interests of the marginalised groups. However, these provisions are yet to be fully enacted.

Figure 5: *Thematic distribution of messages in Week 5 dialogue*



Slightly under half of listeners (48.1% n=165) participating in the radio dialogue recommended that county governments ensure marginalised groups are given equal



opportunities, from job access and contract awarding, to representation in government, to the establishment and/or rehabilitation of already existing education institutions for the differently abled.

"Providing job opportunities, providing education to people with disabilities and according to me we lack schools for the people with disabilities" Woman, 29, Makueni

"Should follow the direction of the Kenyan constitution regarding gender and people with disabilities" Man, 44, Makueni

"There should be a woman, plwd and youth in every department" Man, 44, Machakos

Financial assistance (25.7% n=88) was cited as another way of promoting inclusion, with some participants proposing the provision of loans with no interest to support small business. Other listeners proposed financial assistance to the PLWDs as well as help to access assistive devices.

"The county should give non-profitable loans to the marginalised groups to start small businesses" Woman, 55, Makueni.

"Responding to needs like money, wheelchairs, clothes, FOOD." Man, 19, Kitui.

"Empower PLWDs and youth with loans at affordable rates to start business and agribusiness." Woman, 33, Machakos.

In addition, participants mentioned the need for marginalised groups to be given access to education and capacity building programs (12% n=41), and to be involved in decision making (11.4% n=39) as well as being considered in projects (2.9% n=10). This indicates that there is **strong public support for county governments to fully enact the constitutional provisions for inclusion. Further, participants proposed that county governments should ensure due diligence when allocating bursaries to ensure the support is reaching those most in need.**

"Let bursaries be awarded to the most deserving learners because mostly they are awarded to those that work in the offices or those that know the officers and are able to cater for their children's education without the bursaries." Woman, Machakos.

"Our children find jobs after their primary education because they lack school fees for further education. Please respond to this as we need them in the future" Woman, 32, Kitui.

"Support them in their studies by giving them a bursary" Man, 17, Kitui.

"On talent, equip them with learning materials, business capital and working mechanisms." Man, 46, Machakos.



"Engage youth, women and PLWDs more frequently to get their unique needs and include them in all governance and decision making structures." Man, 38, Machakos

"Involving them in decision making through organised groups of both youth and women that's vikundi." Man, 46, Makueni

5. VALIDATION OF FINDINGS THROUGH ON-THE-GROUND FORUMS

Following the completion of the interactive radio dialogue, AVF collaborated with the three county governments through the offices of citizens engagement to organise three public forums in three different sub counties in each county. The purpose of these forums was to deepen the findings and validate them against the completed CIDPs. Participants in the forum were mobilised from a range of demographic groups, particularly targeting those who could not easily engage in the radio dialogue such as PLWD, elderly women and men, and youths with low literacy levels. A total of 255 participants were brought together across the three forums, of which more than a quarter (**26.2% n=67**) were PLWD. Of the PLWDs participants **35.8%(n=24)** were women and generally women made up **45%(n=115)** of the participants.

The forums were led by the county officials and took the format of participatory discussions centred around the five radio questions. The below excerpt, taken from the Kitui forum transcript, indicates the discussion format:

Woman, Kitui Township: *"Speaking on behalf of the youth, we would like to be provided with economic activities."*

Facilitator: *"please give an example of these activities or projects."*

Woman, Kitui Township: *"I propose poultry keeping projects, the government can Provide youth with training on modern and profitable poultry farming practices"*

Man, Mulango: *"The project that I would prioritise is education to empower the public because knowledge is power."*

Facilitator: *"So what should the county do regarding education?"*

Man, Mulango: *"People should be enlightened on the projects that are viable and of unvaried benefit to them- provide civic education"*

In an indication of the validity of the community level trends emerging in the radio dialogue, the top three priorities for ward development were in alignment with the responses from the participants in the forum discussions; water and irrigation, road and transport infrastructure and healthcare. This was the case across all three counties.

"I would like the county to prioritise afforestation and provide us with tree seedlings for



planting." Man, Mulango,

"I would like to know the progress on Thwake Dam construction, because it would be great if water from the dam is distributed across the county to complement the distribution from Masinga dam" Woman, Kitui Township.

During the discussion participants expressed their concerns on the perceived wastage of resources that results from abandonment of development projects started by the previous administration. This indicates that **citizens do not view development projects as being linked to specific elected officials and therefore expect continuity of development projects across administrations, even following a national election.**

The majority of the participants from across the three forums were not aware of the existence of SEKEB and its mandate when they were asked week two's question. The county officers took the participants through the background of the bloc and its mandate. Once the participants appreciated the role of the bloc, their feedback was in line with the findings from the radio dialogue, namely that SEKEB should prioritise transport, water and agricultural activities which will benefit the entire region. One participant, after confirming the importance of the construction of intercounty roads in order to open up trade in the region, added:

"Establish and regulate market for agricultural produce and eliminate brokers" Woman, Kyangwithya East

another said:

"The region should go back to farming cotton, sisal & tobacco as well embracing brick laying, basketry and pottery." Man, disabled, Kitui Township.

This was a clear indication of the richness in solutions to the various problems that the citizens encounter in their lives, and suggests that county governments ought to work with their citizens to find citizens-led solutions.

During the discussion on access to public participation methods (week 3 of the radio series) forum participants similarly emphasised the need for public meetings to be better advertised and more accessible. Several forum participants also indicated that the lack of transparency over how projects are prioritised has caused citizens to lose trust in local authorities, which in turn limits their willingness to participate in public meetings.

"It would be good if announcements for these meetings be done in public spaces like churches, schools or even through radio." Man, Kikumbulyu south.

"A Lot of people do not go because the projects they prioritise are not implemented." Woman, disabled, Kathiani.

Again this **highlights the importance of the government providing feedback to citizens on the prioritised development projects following a period of public participation, both to**



strengthen trust and to avoid fatigue of participants. In the spirit of consultative governance, the SEKEB county governments should share information with citizens on which priority projects were selected for funding, the reasons why and the way forward to those that did not make it into the CIDP and subsequently into the ADP.

With regards to week four's radio question, the majority of forum participants confirmed that they were unaware of any existing feedback mechanisms available to them. During the discussion participants focused on providing feedback on projects that were promised to them but did not start, or that were started but were never completed - **again indicating frustration and a loss of trust in local authorities when they fail to deliver.**

"Projects are not implemented to satisfaction for instance, we proposed the KICOTEC and the ballast crusher which were implemented but there has been resource mismanagement. In my village- Mutuni village, there was a proposed market toilet that was constructed along the road reserve; it is bound to be demolished once the grading of that road commences." Man, Kyangwithya East

Following these responses the county officers took time to educate the participants on the various feedback and grievance redress mechanisms that exist in their counties that the citizens can use to conduct social audits on development projects. Alongside these existing mechanisms participants shared suggestions for additional feedback processes that county governments could implement;

"Quarterly review so that we curb mismanagement of public funds. we can halt a project if it is substandard." Woman, Makindu.

"Just like public participation was convened for the public to share views and opinions on development projects, the county should convene meetings to give feedback to the public on what has been done, what is pending and why." Man, Machakos

During the final discussion topic, the majority of forum participants confirmed that they were also not aware of the CoK provisions on inclusion of marginalised groups in all county government processes. Once the forum facilitators elaborated on these provisions the participants then pointed out other overlooked inclusion aspects such as;

"There are no interpreters in public spaces to assist the deaf, for instance some patients have been given the wrong medication because of miscommunication. When we go to public participation there is never an interpreter and so we are forced to walk out because we cannot participate in the forums." Man, Disabled, Machakos central.

Further, whilst the CoK provides for a reservation of 5% of appointments to PLWDs by the County Service Board, the PLWD participants mentioned that **there is also need for county administration staff to be provided with training to tackle discrimination and stigmatisation at the county offices.**





6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Citizen priorities for development

Big infrastructure projects, such as water services, roads and energy provision were key priorities for citizens across all three SEKEB counties, with significantly higher proportions of listeners raising these issues over social development concerns, such as health and education. Water and hygiene projects were the most commonly identified priority, which likely reflects the impact of the ongoing drought on water scarcity in the region.

Citizens repeatedly emphasised the value of regional cooperation to boost collective economic growth, and suggested a wide range of joint projects perceived to have the potential to advance welfare across the three counties. Again citizens particularly highlighted water and irrigation solutions, road links and agricultural development as having the greatest potential for regional growth. Additionally citizens do not view development projects as being linked to specific elected officials and therefore expect continuity of development projects across administrations, even following a national election.

This suggests that there is significant public support for the newly formed SEKEB and a clear desire amongst citizens to input into the strategy of the economic bloc.

Opportunities for improved public participation

A quarter of listeners suggested that county administrations need to go further to improve the inclusivity of their current public participation processes, particularly for marginalised groups. In particular, citizens mentioned that county administrations should strengthen the involvement of youth and women in public forums, and improve opportunities for rural populations to participate. Additionally, in order to further the inclusivity of in-person participation, citizens suggested that the county governments of Kitui, Machakos and Makueni should “start at the village level”.

In addition to their suggestions for improving in-person mechanisms, citizens also emphasised the need to diversify spaces for public participation by utilising digital platforms such as radio and social media, to encourage greater engagement with youth.

Unfortunately the majority of participants in both the radio dialogue and in the forum discussions indicated little or no awareness of existing feedback and grievance redress mechanisms. Additionally, the perceived lack of transparency around how local authorities make decisions has resulted in a loss of trust and a sense that county governments do not act on the feedback and priorities raised by citizens in existing public participation forums. Despite this, citizens indicate a clear desire for more opportunities to directly interact with their elected leaders.



Lastly, there is strong public support for greater inclusion of marginalised groups, in particular PLWD, women and youth, in county processes such as employment, appointments, tendering process and in public forums.

Recommendations

On the basis of this study the Africa's Voices project team makes the following recommendations to the county governments of Kitui, Machakos and Makueni.

1. County administrations, in partnership with SEKEB leadership, should work closely with their constituents to identify key wards where investments in sustainable water solutions, such as rain water harvesting or drilling boreholes, would have the greatest impact. Additionally administrations should consult citizens to identify key roads requiring repair and development. Within this, county administrations should aim to create safe spaces in which citizens are able to directly engage with them and share their feedback on existing development projects with an aim of enhancing transparency and accountability.
2. The county administrations, in partnership with SEKEB leadership, should work collaboratively on larger scale infrastructure projects, specifically on irrigation, transport and agriculture, which will benefit citizens across the bloc. Additionally, it would be beneficial for the three administrations to develop collective water and soil conservation policies and practices applicable across the region in order to jointly tackle the ongoing impact of the drought.
3. The county governments should work with the Ministry of Land at the national government to ensure curb all manners of land disputes by survey mapping and land titling.
4. Greater transparency around how county authorities prioritise public projects, including clarity on how citizen priorities are incorporated into decision-making would likely significantly improve public trust in, and support for, local government. This demonstrates to constituents that public participation can lead to concrete outcomes in project delivery, and not just serve as a tick box exercise in the county planning processes.
5. In order to tackle low community awareness of feedback mechanisms, the counties should undertake a coordinated civic education programme to create awareness around the existing feedback and grievance redress mechanisms in the counties that are available for citizens' use to escalate challenges or complaints regarding certain development projects. This should also include providing information on the role and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the county including the citizens themselves.
6. PLWD significantly highlighted the lack of accessible education institutions within the SEKEB region. As a result county governments should aim to improve the accessibility of education institutions for PLWD, especially those with mobility challenges and/or those using wheelchairs.



7. To effectively deepen and expand citizen engagement spaces the SEKEB counties should continue using diverse multi-media channels and approaches to reach the target population up to the lowest level possible (i.e. village level). This should include targeting remote populations, women, and people living with disabilities, youth and the illiterate. For instance using AVF's bespoke methodology which combines interactive radio, SMS, and social media platforms among other capabilities. The Interactive methodology builds trust by demonstrating county government's willingness to listen and respond to people's feedback. This proved to be an effective mechanism for strengthening the legitimacy of the CIDPs - for example, during the Machakos CIDP validation workshop it emerged that two of the top citizens' development priorities identified in the radio discussion directly aligned to the CIDP priorities; these were water and sanitation, and roads and infrastructure. The absence of two-way communications leaves citizens feeling excluded from decision making processes.



ANNEXES

1. Think description
2. Radio scripts