

Evaluating Citizens Inputs into the Elgeyo Marakwet County Approved Budget

INTRODUCTION

Elgeyo Marakwet Civil Society Organizations (EMCSO) Network was established in 2015 to coordinate non-state actors, conduct and coordinate civic education, capacity build citizens and the County government officials, conduct citizen mobilization and galvanizing citizen participation in governance activities, support mechanisms for citizen feedback to government and monitor service delivery and ensure there is value for money in the development projects conducted in the county. The network comprises of coalition members including professionals, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith based Organization (FBOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Elgeyo Marakwet County citizens

METHODOLOGY

Approved Budget Analysis

The Coalition analysed the approved 2018/19 budget with the support of a budget analysis consultant. The analysis considered all the inputs and suggestions made by coalition members during public hearing meetings, memorandums and petitions that they had presented to the County Executive and County Assembly for consideration. The purpose was to find out how much of these contributions, actually found their way into the final

budget. The final budget analysis report was disseminated and discussed in post- County budget dialogue forums.

RESULTS

Out of all the 10 proposals submitted to the county government, 4 of those proposals made it to the 2018/19 approved budget. The Table below presents each of the proposals made and how they were incorporated to the 2018/2019 Budget for Elgeyo Marakwet County government.

PROPOSAL	INCORPORATION INTO THE 2018/19 BUDGET
Local revenue collection in the county was performing poorly having collected 27.3% of the local revenue target in the first half of the previous financial year of 2017/18. IIEC urged the County Assembly to take decisive measures in regards to the capacity of the county to collect revenue.	The County Assembly allocated Ksh 7 million to the enforcement unit with an aim of enhancing revenue collection and this would serve as a short term measure to achieve the revenue target
Implored upon the County Assembly to ensure that the Executive provides specific locations or facilities that would benefit from the acquirement of assorted medical equipment to enhance outpatient and maternity services	The Budget and Appropriations Committee (BAC) Report highlighted Kiptulos, Chororget Dispensary and Kaptagat Dispensary as the locations that would benefit from the acquirement of assorted medical equipment

<p>Recurrent expenditure was high, especially in the Health department and there were challenges of shortage of staff. The recommendation was to distribute staff to ensure quality service delivery to the citizens in Elgeyo Marakwet</p>	<p>The committee pointed out that there is need to conduct a staff audit to unlock the issue of skyrocketing wage bill. It has allocated an additional Ksh 12 million from Ksh 47,525,783 to Ksh 59, 525, 783 to the County Public Service Board for this exercise.</p>
<p>Requested for an allocation of Kshs 5 million to improve the efficacy of the Artificial Insemination (AI) services in the county.</p>	<p>In the Budget Estimates FY2018/19 presented before the County Assembly, there was an allocation of Ksh10,355,000 for AI services under Livestock Production, fisheries and cooperatives development. This amount was reduced by 22.74% by the BAC to Ksh 8 million.</p>

Challenges in Citizen Participation

1. While the county has passed a Public Participation Act of 2014 and made efforts to involve its citizens in decision making at all levels of development, there are still great challenges that impede an ideal and successful public participation. These include;
2. Elgeyo Marakwet County provided incomprehensible technical, voluminous budget and planning documents that were not easily understood by the citizens. The training on to interrogating the Budget Circulars, County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), the Annual Development Plan (ADP) and the County Budget Review and Outlook Paper (CBROP) enabled the CSOs to comprehend the budget documents and provide adequate input.
3. The county availed budget documents at the last minute in most cases disseminated on the actual dates of the public hearings. This presented difficulties for the public to critically evaluate the budget document and provide meaningful input.
4. The County coordinated the public forums poorly and did not get the people's real input as they used subordination tactics and forced the public to give input rather than treating them (residents) as equal partners in decision making. There was also dominance of some people in public participation events and not all the citizens had an equal opportunity to air their views. Coalition members had to shout out and firmly voice out their opinions.
5. The County government did not provide any feedback on how citizens inputs were considered in the budget. Poor feedback may result to citizen apathy hence fewer citizens attended the public participation forums. Holding a post budget forum enabled CSOs understand why some of their proposals were not considered in the final budget.
6. The County failed to utilise the county administrative structures that have presence up to the Ward levels and continued to use public

participation venues that were inaccessible to a majority of citizens. Most of the public fora took place at a central point, making it difficult for far flung citizens' participation.

7. There were also last minute venue changes leading to citizen confusion and absence in attending the forums.
8. Poor time keeping. The officers responsible often, arrived late to the public hearing meetings venues long after community members were settled. As result discussions were rushed and not everyone got a chance to air their views.

CONCLUSION

Timing is everything while influencing government decisions. Budgeting follows a systematic cycle throughout the financial year and it is broken down into four stages which include; formulation, approval, execution and oversight. To properly influence the budget, CSOs, need to have knowledge on the budget cycle so as to determine timing required to meet their targets during budget interventions.

To circumvent lack of feedback from the County government, CSOs should embrace creative strategies to explore whether their participation is taken seriously by the government. From its inception, the EMSCO Network had never had a way of identifying whether their proposals were incorporated into the approved budget documents. The introduction of the citizen's budget proposals analysis on the approved County budget was an eye opener that at least some of the public suggestions were important. Out of the 10 proposals that were submitted by the EMSCO Network for inclusion to the 2018/19 County Budget, 4 were prioritized in the final approved budget for 2018/19. This is a plus for the coalition that their budget engagements initiatives have not gone to waste and should motivate the public to engage in the budget making process even more.