

## Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Citizens Inputs into the Nyeri County Approved Budget for 2018/2019 Financial Year

### INTRODUCTION

Despite the very elaborate laws on public engagement, guidance to the public on how to mobilize themselves, collate their proposals and work in unison in providing input to the county planning and budget processes is slowly taking shape. Initially, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and citizens were presenting their wish list of the projects and areas that county governments should consider funding in each financial year. Often, these proposals were not informed by the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and Annual Operational Plan (AOP) hence most of them were not considered.

The Nyeri County Budget Coalition (NCBC), a loose coalition of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Nyeri county was established in 2016 to promote transparency and accountability in county government budget making process. The memberships comprises of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith Based Organization (FBOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and private sector players interested in budget works. The coalition engaged in budget making process for the County for 2018/2019 financial year by participating in public hearing meetings, developing and submitting budget proposals, memorandums and petitions to the county government for consideration. They sought to find out whether as a Coalition, they had any influence on the 2018/2019 approved county budget.

### APPROACH

#### 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 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 17 proposals, petitions and suggestions submitted to the county government by Coalition members, 7 of those proposals made it to the 2018/2019 approved budget. The seven successful proposals were:

1. Develop budget line for Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) to implement the community health strategy in Nyeri County: Kshs. 25,000,000 was allocated to cater for 2,510 CHVs stipend. However, the amount was below the recommended Kshs. 2,000 per month for each CHV.

2. Consider community based rehabilitation which will bring the services closer to the community: CHVs stipend was budgeted for so as to increase outreach services and strengthen of screening programs that will promote early detection of diseases and timely interventions.
3. Allocation of funds for the renovation of ward 10 at the Nyeri County Referral Hospital: The County Budget and Appropriation Committee recommended that CEC, Health Services ensures that the wards where the persons with mental illnesses are admitted are refurbished.
4. Increase of the budgetary allocation to mental health facilities to a minimum of the recommended by World Health Organization (WHO) to cater for health workers, improve the facilities and purchase of drugs and supplies. The County Budget and Appropriation Committee at the County Assembly made a recommendation to the County Executive Committee (CEC) responsible for Health to address this issue and ensure that drugs for persons with mental illnesses are prioritized.
5. Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) feeding programme should have an allocation in the budget estimates: Kshs. 1,000,000 was allocated for “food and rations” under ECDE vote.
6. Allocate finances to employ more human resources for Healthcare Services: Health department was allocated Kshs. 2, 323,353,400 following negotiations with the various union representatives.
7. Community owned empowerment centres to provide short courses to the youth: Kshs. 35,000,000 was allocated to fund facilities adapting programme to improve the ECDE, Skill development and youth empowerment centres.

## CONCLUSION

Where feedback from the County government is not forthcoming, CSOs and citizens should endeavor to take stock of how much of their contributions was actually useful and found way into the final policy documents. This should enable and inform future public participation processes. Success stories such as the 7 proposals that were considered are vital in enabling citizens to approach public participation with more vigor and hold county government more accountable for transparency in their engagements with the public.

On their part, the county government should broaden its mobilisation mechanisms to include inviting suggestions from the public through the social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, SMS and email correspondents among others. Such suggestions should be made public in order for the analysts to research and find out how many of them informed the final budget decisions. It was hoped that such opportunities would improve participation of the middle class citizens who rarely attend public hearing meeting due to other competing priorities or due to ignorance.



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