

The Rise of Kilifi County Citizen's Forum

INTRODUCTION

Kilifi County Citizen Forum (KCCF) was initiated in 2012 for the purposes of promoting and fostering purposive solidarity, synergy building and strengthening marginalized groups for genuine democratic, political, social and economic transformation. Popularly known as Kilifi Bunge la Mwananchi, KCCF is a people driven organization that promotes the fulfillment of citizen power of self-governance and enhance people's participation in exercise of the power of state and in making sound decisions on issues affecting them. The Forum engaged in budget making process for the County for 2018/2019 financial year. The Forum adopted the following strategies to improve public participation.

METHODOLOGY

Members mobilisation

Members were mobilized to participate in the budget making process through information sharing including budget documents, dates, venues and timings for public hearing meetings.

Capacity Building

CSOs capacity to interrogate the Budget Circulars, County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), the Annual Development Plan (ADP) and the County Budget Review and Outlook Paper (CBROP) were enhanced through training. The capacity trainings enabled them to comprehend each of these policy documents and their effect on the County government budget for each financial year.

Planning Documents Analysis

The Forum commissioned critiques and analyses of CIDP, ADP, budget circulars and the County Budget Review and Outlook Paper (CBROP) to fully understand each in regards to the overall County budget. Each of the analysis reports including its impact in each sector was disseminated to enable CSOs to be well informed on the impact of the

policy document to the proposed budget and to ensure their proposals were in line with the planning documents.

Planning and consultation meeting

Consultation and budget prioritization meetings brought together CSOs and stakeholders from the various departments in the County – Health, Education, Agriculture and Tourism to review the CIDP and ADP in order to decide and prioritize investments proposals for each department.

Pre budget Forums

Informed by the analysis of the budget documents, the Forum engaged with Economic Planning and Budget Department and the County Executives for Health, Budget and Appropriation committees to discuss policies and development plans informing the County budget. This enabled the members to come up with draft investment proposals that they sought for consideration by the Economic Planning and Budget team. Several round table and dialogue meetings were held with both County Executive and County Assembly Committees to interrogate the coalition member's positions further.

Approval of Budget Proposals, Petitions and Memorandums

The coalition members reached out to the County Assembly who are mandated by law to approve and pass the County Budget. As this is the last window of opportunity for advocacy, the members accessed the official budget estimates presented to the County Assembly by the Executive. They reviewed and critiqued the budget estimates to explore whether citizen's departmental views were put into consideration. Round table meetings with Kilifi County Assembly Budget and Appropriation committees were conducted to give their views and urged them to ensure CSOs suggestions were reflected in the approved budgets.

To ensure that CSOs views were officially registered with the Clerk of the County Assembly, departmental views were consolidated into one memorandum and presented to the County Assembly Clerk. A round table meeting was conducted between Bunge la Mwanachi and the County Assembly Budget and Appropriation committee to formally present the memorandum and urge them to ensure suggestions made are reflected in the final budget.

Formal and informal advocacy meetings with County Assembly members were conducted by individual CSOs to draw their attention to the CSOs proposals in order to influence their voting when the budget is tabled in the County Assembly for approval. Members of the coalition purposed to attend the sessions of the County Assembly to listen and document members' contribution and views in regards to their proposed suggestions.

Post Budget Forums

Once the budget was officially approved by the County Assembly and the gazette notice issued, the Forum converged to critique the budget and take stock of their contributions to the process. These discussions were guided by a report on the analysis of the approved 2018/2019 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 for the County Government of Kilifi. The final budget analysis report was disseminated and discussed in post- County budget dialogue forums.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Through awareness and sensitization forums of the budget process, Bunge la Mwanachi:

- Organized communities from all the 7 Sub Counties in Kilifi County (Kaloleni, Ganze, Rabai, Magarini, Malindi, Kilifi South and Kilifi North Sub Counties) to discuss Kilifi CIDP and the CSFP.
- Economic Planning and Finance department involved community resource persons drawn from Bunge la Mwananchi at Sub County level as part of the team involved on matters of budget making process including organising for public hearing meetings for 2018/2019 budget. This enabled public hearings meetings to take place in each of the wards for the first time with a sizable number of county residents.
- Facilitated each of the 7 sub counties to develop budget memorandums which were then consolidated into one memoranda which was submitted to County Assembly for action.

CONCLUSION

Feedback to the citizens on the outcome of their contributions during public participation forums remained inadequate. Despite been mobilized and providing their inputs on the budget, Kilifi County residents were not provided with feedback on usefulness or reasons why their recommendations may not have informed the final budget. This lack of feedback makes citizens to view public participation as a mere public trick with no genuine concern but to circumvent the Constitutional requirements in budget making processes. If this is not checked it has the potential of discouraging future public participation.

