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Effectiveness of County Communication Approaches in Facilitating Public Participation in Kenya's Devolved Governments

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this research was to evaluate the efficacy of county communication frameworks in fostering public participation in Kenya's 47 devolved governments. Effective communication is both a function and proof of good governance. Thus the significance of county communication facilitating enduring citizen participation in policy making and implementation processes cannot be overstated. The evaluation of county communication approaches was conducted in alignment with overall objectives outlined in the County Government Act of 2012. These objectives include: creating awareness on devolution and governance; promotion of peace and cohesion; advocacy for development, and promotion of the freedom of the media.

Methodology: The present study adopted a qualitative research approach. The research targeted 8 counties clustered in county economic blocs of North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB), Lake Region Economic Bloc LREB, Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) , South Eastern Kenya Economic Block (SEKEB), Mt Kenya and Aberdares Economic Bloc, Jumuiya ya Kaunti za Pwani(JKP), Narok and Kajiado Economic Block(NAKAEB) and Nairobi City County. The counties purposely selected to represent each of these economic blocs include: Trans Nzoia, Kisumu, Mandera, Makueni, Meru, Kwale, Narok and Nairobi. This study used both primary and secondary methods to collect data. In-depth interviews were used to collect primary data from 26 participants, specifically, from Council of Governors, Sub-County Administrators, County Assemblies Forum, County Directors of Communication and Community Based Organizations. They were purposively chosen for their role in communicating, facilitating, and monitoring public participation. Secondary data was collected mainly from national dataset, surveys, and reports from ministries, departments, and agencies.

Findings: The findings show that concept of public participation is deeply rooted in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. County communication frameworks embed strategic communication approaches for policy making and implementation in devolved governments. The finds show that the level of understanding of devolution among Kenyans varies. Those in urban and city counties have a greater appreciation of decentralization while those in rural counties have limited understanding of devolution and its implication. Majority of Kenyans have difficulty distinguishing functions of devolved governments from those assigned to the national government by the CoK 2010. Additionally, county governments are required to promote peace and cohesion among the residents. The findings show that this objective receives less emphasis and is not a priority of counties, with the exception of frontier counties. However, counties promote development in their jurisdiction recognizing that they have a responsibility to stimulate investments that create jobs for unemployed and generally improve living standards of the residents. Finally, county governments have a role to play in ensuring media practice remain free from any interference even though this responsibility lie with the national government.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Based on the review of the literature and findings of this study, the study recommends that county governments should meaningfully engage citizens in governance by first, empowering them to understand their responsibility and secondly, allowing them to engage meaningfully in issues that affect them. To achieve this, county governments should establish mechanisms that promote civic education, public participation and access to information as provided in the County Government Act 2012.

Keywords: *Public Participation, Devolved Governments, County Communication Frameworks, Objectives of County Communication*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The strategic significance of communication in facilitating public participation is within Kenya's devolved governments is indisputable. The devolved structure of governance comprises one national government and 47 county governments. One of the objectives of devolution is to enhance citizens' involvement in decisions impacting their well-being. The Constitution of Kenya 2010, Article 10, recognizes public participation as a fundamental national value and principle of governance. The success of public participation endeavours hinges on robust information and communication frameworks. Specifically, county communication framework represents a practical approach to communication within and beyond county governance system. County governments are thus obligated to establish effective, integrated and well-coordinated communication strategies that guarantee meaningful public participation. Despite more than a decade of devolution implementation, limited attention has been directed toward county communication as a critical imperative to participatory processes.

At the heart of public participation, are communication processes and structures that allow the public to have a say about how they are governed, decisions made and how those decisions are implemented. Public participation as a principle and value of governance remain a critical issue to be prioritized by Kenya's 47 devolved governments. County governments are thus obligated to create opportunities for citizens to safely and freely influence decision making in governance affairs. The Constitution of Kenya (CoK) 2010 and relevant Acts of Parliaments, enshrines the right to communication and access to information. Article 33, 34 and 35 guarantee freedom of expression, freedom of the media, and right of access to information, respectively. The Access to Information Act of 2016 solidifies citizens' right to access information requiring regular and periodic publication of crucial national information.

The County Government Act (CGA) of Kenya (2012) sets forth a county communication framework meant to facilitate continuous exchange of public interest information between counties and residents. Additionally, Urban Areas and Cities Act of Kenya (2011) mandate the management boards of cities and municipalities to publish and publicize important information within their mandate. Moreover, Public Participation Guidelines 2016 advocate for a strategic communication approach integrated in all county policies, legislative and development agendas.

The concept of public participation is deeply rooted in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Article 10, identifies public participation as a fundamental national value and principle of governance. Despite the centrality of public participation principle in county governance, defining it within the framework of the CoK 2010 has been problematic due to legal ambiguity and vagueness. However, emerging jurisprudence from Kenyan Courts necessitates that the enforcement and implementation of public participation meet two criteria: qualitative and quantitative assessments.

The qualitative test primarily focuses on ensuring citizens access information and relevant documents for meaningful engagement. Conversely, the quantitative test necessitates comprehensive public notification through extensive forums to maximize participation. Thus,

county public participation endeavors must be proficient in both qualitative and quantitative aspects to be effective. In broad terms, public participation is commonly understood as the collective involvement of citizens and communities in goal oriented activities. The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA, 2015) defines public participation as an open and accountable process through which individuals and groups exchange views and influence decision making. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP) defines it as any mechanism that enlists public involvement in problem-solving or decision-formulation. Public participation entails a multifaceted process wherein individuals, government entities and non-governmental organizations exert influence over decisions pertaining to policies, legislation, service delivery, oversight, and developmental initiatives (Ministry of Devolution). Public participation of county residents in devolution offers incredible localized barometers to address pressing needs of the people with homegrown solutions.

Consequently, it is imperative for counties to establish a citizen-centred model of engagement built on an effective, reliable and appropriate communication framework. However, a significant number of counties continue to undervalue and underutilize communication as a crucial element of devolution (Nyabuga, 2018). Moreover, strategic communication approaches aimed at enhancing participation are often lacking (TI, 2018). According to IEA (2015), tools and techniques required to engage the public remains largely unexplored. Numerous counties offer limited opportunities for citizens to engage making and implementing policies (Thomas, Bosire & Eysin, 2018).

The Devolution Report of 2016 identified communication as a hindrance to public participation, often serving ad hoc functions. Magina (2015) observed that most counties failed to fully embrace two-way communication, impeding citizens' capacity to effectively monitor county activities. Additionally, Mokku (2018) noted that majority of county government lacked comprehensive strategies for providing and disseminating public information. Nyabuga (2017) pointed out bureaucratic obstacles as a significant barrier to participation. Thomas et al (2018) found that public involvement in devolved governments lacked substantive outcomes, with flawed access to information. Wainaina (2009) criticizes the media for insufficiently enabling meaning public participation within a predictable communication landscape. Ronoh, Mulongo and Kurgat (2018) observed that most counties still adhered to top-down communication approaches limiting participation. The Institute of Economic Affairs (2015) noted information dissemination gaps in county governments. Specifically, Kisumu County had broad information sharing platforms among them ICT based. However, the challenge with toll free number 21142 was in its funding. Withdrawal of financial support by the Ecumenical Church Organization would mean the platform seizes to function. The County of Isiolo is reported to have in place notice boards, press releases and newspaper adverts. However, these are largely for information sharing and provide minimal interaction opportunities for participatory processes.

Makueni County public participation model is lauded as one of the best models of participation. The key highlight of the models is that involves the public in developing policies, identification of projects and are also involved in implementation. Residents are furnished with information to help them understand issues, options and solutions, are consulted regularly to obtain feedback on alternatives or decisions, they involved to ensure their concerns are considered throughout decision

making processes, and are empowered to develop decision criteria and identify the preferred solutions. The final decision making authority lie in the hands of the public.

What make the model even exceptional is the frequency of the meetings and the composition of the participants. The Village Peoples Forum holds meetings quarterly with an elected or selected committee of 11 person's members. The Village Cluster Forum meets at least once quarterly and coalesces to form Sub Ward Peoples Forum which holds meets bi-annually. This consists of eleven persons elected from the Ward Development Committee members and 20 people nominated to the forum by the Sub-County Administration. At the tail end of consultative process is The County Peoples Forum consisting of 11 members from each Sub-Ward Development Committee. The Governor and the Deputy Governor co-chairs the forum. Other elected leaders in the county attend this forum which is convened once annually.

While Counties have achieved laudable success in delivering devolved functions, the evaluation of communication, as a crucial component of participation has not been fully evaluated based on objectives outlined in CGA 2012. These objectives include: (a) creating awareness on devolution and governance; (b) promoting citizens understanding for the purposes of peace and national cohesion; (c) undertaking advocacy on core development issues; and (d) promotion of the freedom of the media. Against this background, this paper seeks to examine county communication frameworks, concentrating on these four parameters, as a pathway to enhancing effective participation in devolved governments.

Problem Statement

Public participation in Kenya's devolved governments remains the biggest challenge. Ineffective communication stands out as one of the key barriers to achieving meaningful citizen engagement. Recent surveys reveal that flawed communication approaches significantly undermine participation processes. For instance, the Institute of Economic Affairs (2015) exposed deficiencies in information and communication strategies in the counties of Isiolo, Kisumu, Makueni, and Turkana. Moreover, findings from the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) Survey Report of 2020 highlighted practical difficulties in accessing government-held information. Similarly, a survey conducted by the World Bank in 2014 revealed that most county governments provided limited information to the public during budget making processes. Additionally, the 2021 report by the International Budget Partnership Kenya unveiled inconsistencies in how counties published budget documents, with only 9 out of 47 counties meeting the required standards.

Related studies examining the implication of communication for public participation have revealed important insights. Magina (2015) observed a prevalent failure among counties to fully embrace two-way communication, thereby hindering citizens' ability to actively monitor county activities. Mokku (2018) highlighted the lack of comprehensive strategies among majority of counties for providing and disseminating information effectively. Furthermore, Ronoh, Mulongo, and Kurgat (2018) noted that most counties still adhered to top-down communication approaches, which inherently limit participation. A World Bank report titled "Devolution in Kenya: Basic Requirements for Public Participation in Kenya's Legal Framework" (2015) found that only a few counties had effective communication mechanisms for timely information sharing.

Currently, there is notable absence of thorough academic investigation into how counties have promoted participation in key areas such as devolution and governance, peace and cohesion, advocacy for development, and the promotion of media freedom. It is on this basis that there was a need to study county communication frameworks as a first step towards implementing people centred decisions in Kenya's 47 devolved governments.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

County communication ecosystems are imperative for effective public participation. Strategic communication enables county governments share information critical for participation in county process (World Bank 2015). The use of communication as a primary instrument of enhancing devolution and facilitating participation subscribes to broader theory that individuals make informed choices and hold those in power to account when they access information (UNESCO (2018). The utilization of strategic communication serves to promote good governance, enhance transparency, and foster accountability within county governments (KIPPRA, 2021).

Scholars acknowledge the centrality of communication as a tool of good governance. Alter (2020) argues, through communication, citizens are able to set their own agenda, demand policy action, and suggest solutions to challenges they face. Wanyande (2016) avers that with communication, people meaningfully inform decisions, scrutinize delivery, and incentivize or sanction good over poor performance. Nyabuga (2017) argues that counties use communication to build agenda, mobilize the public (and public opinion) for various causes, and provide the platform for articulation, aggregation and formulation of public opinion. Mamokhere (2020) considers communication as a stabilizer of democracy. Nyabuga (2017) consents communication is a precursor to engagements, and undoubtedly crucial to the growth of democracy. According to Carpentier (2019) collaborative communicative approaches are critical in participation processes. On their part, McLoughlin and Scot (2010) acknowledge that communication promotes accountability, openness, receptivity, public order, solidity, value and integrity, empowerment, and broad participation.

Public participation is both a key promise and provision of the Constitution of Kenya (CoK) 2010. It obligates county governments to ensure they set in place structures and mechanisms for public participation. Every decision county government make should be undertaken with population participation and for the wellbeing of the people (Sihanya, 2013). Participation holds considerable promise and benefits for county governments. Meaningful public participation is key to successful devolution and good governance (Mbithi, 2018). Building bottom-up participatory initiatives is good for sustainable development (World Bank, 2015). Structured way of consulting citizens, groups and entities in counties give voice to the public to influence decisions that affect them. Participation allows concerns, needs and values of the public incorporated into government and corporate decision making.

The introduction of the devolved system of government in Kenya heralded one of the most significant transformations ushered by the Constitution of Kenya in 2010. Devolution, as defined, involves the equitable transfers of public authority and resources among the 47 counties (Bigambo and Keya (2022). This transfer encompasses decision-making capabilities, implementation powers, functions, responsibilities, and resources to legally constituted, and popularly elected

governments (ICJ, 2013). The constitutional protection of devolution is enshrined in Article 255 of CoK 2010, and any amendment to this fundamental norm requires the approval of the people through a referendum (Aketch, 2010)

Kenya's devolution is firmly grounded in the supremacy of the Constitution, sovereignty of the people and the principle of public participation. The objective of devolution, as outlined in Article 174 of the Constitution is to bring services closer to the people and establish for enhanced participation of women, marginalized communities, and minorities in decisions that impact their economic and political well-being (Kimani, 2020)

Engaging the public in making decisions processes at the county level comes with significant advantages. Global experiences underscore the value of grassroots participatory approaches in fostering development (World Bank, 2015). The main goals of public participation are inform, engage, consult and empower the citizenry (Mbithi, 2018). Participation reinforces the link between governments and people at grassroots by eliminating possible divisions (Casula, 2015). public participation builds constructive relationships between the people and county governments that make engagements not only desirable, but necessary and viable as it leads to more equitable, sustainable public decisions. Participation works to strengthen the bond between county residents and county governments. Public participation enhances the process and legitimacy of decisions taken by county governments.

Participation increases acceptance of decisions and commitment to outcomes from such a process. It increases the likelihood that actions taken or services provided by counties adequately reflect the needs of the people. Meaningful public participation is a key to successful devolution and good governance at the county level (Mbithi, 2018). Public participation promotes transparency, encourage openness and build ownership of development decisions (IEA, 2015). Every decision county government make should be undertaken with population participation and for the wellbeing of the people (Sihanya, 2021). Participation facilitates comprehensive reviews and revisions of policies before they are approved. Public participation gives people at the grassroots the opportunity to contribute towards identifying, planning and managing their development. Active participation enables people to realize their power in making changes (Greenberg & Mathoho, 2010).

The effectiveness of county communication frameworks for fostering participation in devolved governments remains uncertain. Specifically, there is lack of comprehensive academic inquiry on how county communication approaches promotes participation in various aspects such as devolution and governance, peace and cohesion, advocacy for development, and promotion of the freedom of the media. This study seeks to inform policy and practice of fostering inclusive governance processes at the county level through strategic communication.

Review of Relevant Theories

The study adopted deliberative democracy theory and functional group communication theory. These theories are relevant as they provide criteria against which communication for public participation is measured.

Deliberative Democracy Theory

Deliberative democracy theory focuses attention on the institutionalization of the procedures that facilitate deliberation. Deliberation involves discussion, debate, and interchanges between members of the public. The theory emphasizes the necessity of governance practices in which public officials and citizens work together. Deliberative democracy embraces the idea of maximum participation of citizens in public decisions, emphasizes an upward flow of communication from the public to political elites, and empowers public participation in civic actions.

Deliberative democracy theorists vouch for institutionalization of the procedures that facilitate participation that lead to better decision making. They try to identify a set of principles that prescribe terms of cooperation. The objective of this study was to investigate effectiveness of county communication in support of participation. The features of deliberative processes such as reasoning, openness to refutation, reformation of issues and arguments, creation of consensual agreements among participants are important in county public participation processes. The theory is relevant to the extent that it requires counties to consult and built consensus with citizens in the making and implementation of policies. County communication is the means to achieve this constitutional promise provided in Article 10 of CoK 2010.

Functional Group Communication Theory

The functional group communication theory is a unified and coherent set of propositions, assumptions, and claims that attempt to explain how and why communication is related to the qualities of the decisions group make (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009). The theory refer how communication affects group decision making and how it might be structured to increase the likelihood that groups will arrive at high-quality decisions. The proponents of the theory are two known scholars: Dennis Gouran and Randy Hirokawa. In proposing the theory, these researchers acknowledge various influences notably the work of John Dewey on reflective thinking, Robert Bales and his work on interaction process and finally, Irving Janos and his work on vigilant decision making.

The arguments of functional group communication theory are consistent with overall objectives of this study that seeks understand communication for participation in Kenya's devolved units. Communication is an absolute prerequisite in arriving at quality decision making which is a consistent indicator of performance when using the functional theory. Quality policy direction is the end result of the functional decision making processes because it requires citizens to build a reservoir of possible solutions and proceeds to work through those solutions to arrive at a consensus on policy directions.

The underpinning arguments of functional group communication theory demand for an audit of the role of communication in decision making. As such, this theory is useful in assessing principles, structures and processes of communication in support of public of public participation in 47 devolved governments. This theory is critical in guiding this research on how communication affects group decision making and how it can be structured to increase the potentiality of arriving at high quality decisions in public participation initiatives within Counties.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a qualitative research approach. Researchers applying qualitative research focus on observing, describing, interpreting, and analyzing the way people experience, act on, or think about themselves and the world around them.To gain a deeper understanding of the specific strategies, primary and secondary data was considered. For the primary data, structured and unstructured interviews of 26 participants from 8 economic blocs of NOREB, LREB, FCDC, SEKEB, JKP, NAKAEB, Mt Kenya and Aberdares Economic Bloc, and Nairobi
City County. The counties selected purposely to represent each of the economic bloc were Trans Nzoia, Kisumu, Mandera, Makueni, Meru, Kwale, Narok and Nairobi. In-depth interviews were used to gather views from representatives of Council of Governors (CoG), Sub-County Administrators, the County Assemblies Forum (CAF), County Directorates of Communications, and Non-Governmental Organizations, purposely selected on their role in planning, coordinating, communicating, and monitoring public participation.

Document analysis complemented data generated from in-depth interviews. It included a review of constitutional and legal framework put in place by counties to facilitate participation. Therefore, this study makes reference to Constitution of Kenya 2010, relevant Acts of Parliament, Policy Guidelines, County Public Participation Acts, County Communication
Policies, Council of Governors Reports, as well as Publications by Civil Society Organizations. Accordingly, this study was able to gather rich data from different cadres of county personnel, community based organization, and documents relating to communication approaches for effective county public participation processes.

4.0 FINDINGS

The assessment of county communications was conducted in line with Section 94 of County Government Act 2012, which outlines the objectives of county communication. These objectives are at the heart of participation processes in devolved governments. They include creating awareness of devolution and governance, promoting peace and cohesion, advocating for developmental issues, and promoting freedom of the media. Interviews and document analysis yielded data that was interpreted based on each of these stated objectives.

Creating Awareness on Devolution and Governance

The findings show that the level of understanding of devolution among citizens varies. Participants acknowledged that a significant portion of Kenyans, particularly in the rural areas, are not well informed devolution, devolved functions and their responsibility in attainment of devolution. Many still struggle to distinguish functions assigned to the national and county governments. This confusion is attributed to overlaps and duplication of roles between these two levels of governments that incentivize shifting of blame on who renders what services. Participants suggested that county governments have not conducted sufficient civic education among citizens to help them understand the functions counties, their own rights, and responsibility for informed participation.

While county governments have established the necessary structures for implementing devolution, communication approaches remain a weak link. Participants decried the failure of personnel responsible for communication, directors of county communication, deputy directors, information officers, communication assistants, and their support staff, to effectively disseminate information regarding devolution and good governance

Promoting Citizen Understanding of Peace and Cohesion

One of the objectives of devolution is to foster peace and cohesion. Participants underscored the value of peace and cohesion in development of county governments. The preamble of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 establishes a strong foundation for national cohesion and integration of all communities to coexist harmoniously. Additionally, Article 10 outlines national values and principles of governance encompassing national unity, human rights, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized, good governance among other rights. These values, along with Chapter 6 on Leadership and Integrity promote cohesive and integration of all citizens.

Participants observed that socio-economic and political factors are the primary catalysts for ethnicity and conflict in the country. Ethnicity is widespread in homogeneous counties, while tribalism prevails in ethnically heterogeneous ones. Despite being envisioned as a mechanism for addressing such challenges, county communication, crucial for promoting national cohesion and integration, has not achieved its intended objectives within devolved system of government.

Advocacy of County Development

Participants affirmed the efforts of county governments to implement devolution, highlighting its role in tailoring development investments to the specific needs of the people at the lowest devolved unit, namely the Ward. Devolved units have indeed become crucial hubs of development, providing services in closer proximity to the people.

Analysis of documents reveals that all counties have adhered to The Public Finance Management Act of 2012 which prohibits the appropriation of public funds outside a county's planning framework. Following each election cycle, every county is mandated to prepare The County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) which guides development over a five-year period. The CIDP is the framework that synthesizes priorities of county government showing goals and objectives, implementation plan, provisions for monitoring and evaluation, and clear reporting mechanisms.

Participants acknowledged the crucial role of communication as vital tool in CIDP development. They emphasized that newspapers serve as the primary media for communication participatory initiatives, despite being inaccessible by majority of Kenyans. They also voiced concerns regarding the development process of CIDPs, which ideally should involve citizen participation. However, they concluded that citizen involvement in CIDP development is often a mere public relations exercise, done solely to comply with dictates of the law.

Promotion of the Freedom of the Media

Participants held varying views on how counties have promoted freedom of the media. Some, particularly working within counties, argued that counties have expanded access to information through both information communication technologies and non- ICT means. They contended that

counties consistently collaborate with the media as sign of promoting freedom of the media. However, other participants noted that the majority of counties have made little effort to demonstrate their support for freedom of the media.

Discussion

County governments exist to deliver on the functions outlined in the constitution and the law. The findings presented confirm that county governments have established communication framework as described in Section 95 of County Government Act, 2012. With increasingly informed citizens and expansion of media, counties have diverse and sophisticated media for their communication needs. The current communication frameworks are deemed adequate to foster participation, and achieve the objectives of county communication outlined in Section 94 of CGA, 2012. However, individuals responsible for county communication, particularly personnel in the directorate of communication and governors' media teams, have not fulfilled their civic duty to empower citizens understand devolution and their own responsibility in demanding good governance.

The objective of county communication is to enhance citizen understanding of peace and cohesion, recognizing negative impacts of conflicts. Counties have not effectively utilized media as a means of addressing both longstanding and emerging conflicts. Apart from the media, counties also require participation of a wide array of state and non-state actors, including NonGovernment Organizations (NGO's), Community-Based Organizations (CBO's), Faith Based Organization (FBO's), others. Public participation as provided in the CoK 2010 promotes national dialogue process, promote social and ethnic cohesion, protect civic and democratic space, and monitor the implementation of strong governance practices.

The objective of devolution was to guarantee equitable share of resources for even development of the country. Devolution was intended to bring services closer to the people and create a platform from which women, marginalized communities and minorities could participate more effectively in decisions that affected their economic and political well-being (Kimani, 2020). Despite the mandatory requirement for public participation in design and implementation of County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP's), this study's finding indicate that it has not been meaningful due to various factors including poor communication, economic, cultural, political and behavioral factors. County governments face significant challenge in addressing these challenges if citizens are to be effectively involved in the development of CIDPs, County Sectoral Plans, Spatial Plans and Annual Development Plans (ADPs) which serve as the blueprints for developing county governments.

Media and communication are appreciated as the main vehicles for public participation. The media provide an arena and channel for wide debate, distributing diverse information and opinion. They facilitate democracy by enabling expression of popular will and public opinion. The rapid development of information and communication technologies has made it possible for citizens to take part in county governance. The CoK 2010 guarantees freedom and independence of electronic, print and other types of media. It is for county governments to uphold this right and become champions of free press, and also fashion their communication structures in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS Conclusion

The study establishes that devolved governments exist to deliver functions specified in the constitution and the law. However, the level of citizen understanding of devolution varies, with majority of Kenyans having difficulty distinguishing functions of decentralized governments from those assigned to the national government by the CoK 2010. This implicates counties, a decade later; they have not provided enough civic education about their role, functions and their responsibilities to the public. Similarly, most counties have not done enough to promote peace and cohesion, except for frontier counties, that have prolonged history of ethnic conflict, violence, and marginalization. Positively, counties actively promote themselves, locally and internationally, as investment destinations. This is out of recognition that they have a responsibility to encourage economic activities create jobs and improve living standards of the people. Finally, county governments play an important role in ensuring freedom of the media is encouraged. There was consensus that continued partnerships of counties with the media, through advertising and sponsorship is a mark of promotion of freedom of the media. The counties can do more to support policies and practices, locally and nationally, if they have to rely on the media for the delivery of the promise of devolution. In deed effective county communication is crucial in achieving objectives of governance, peace building, development and media freedom.

Recommendation

To encourage public participation within devolved governments necessitates communication approaches that are both strategically and practically oriented towards fulfilling the objectives of devolution. This entails adopting communication mechanisms accessible to the majority of residents and providing continuous civic education. Such education is crucial for citizens to understand their civic duty and to foster increased interest in governance.

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