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Exploring the Effects of Development of Policy Alternatives by the Public on Policy Formulation in Kericho County

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Abstract

Public participation in Kenya has not been achieved especially at county level in which Kericho County is one of them. This study sought to explore the effects of development of policy alternatives by the public on policy formulation in Kericho County. This study was guided by public participation and policy formulation theory and adopted descriptive research design. The study targeted 30 ward administrators, 30 members of the county assembly, 85 village elders, and local residents of Kericho County. Using simple random sampling technique, the study obtained a sample size of 196 respondents who participated in the study. Primary data for the study was gathered through the use of an interview guide and a questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis of the quantitative data obtained through the use of a questionnaire and SPSS version 25. Frequency and percentage were the precise descriptive statistics that were employed, and regression analysis and correlation were the inferential statistics. The study found that development of policy alternatives by the public had positive and significant effect on policy formulation ($\beta = 0.465$, $p = 0.000$). The study concludes that the government, citizens, special interest groups, the media, and the private sector all have a role to play in the policy-making process. Thus, policy makers should consider the input of these stakeholders when making decisions, as their actions can have a large impact on the implementation of policies. In view of the findings, the study recommended that policy makers should ensure that policies are reflective of the opinions of all stakeholders in order to ensure their successful implementation.

Keywords: *Public Participation, Policy Formulation, Community Engagement, Governance, Kericho County*

1.0 Introduction

Public participation happens when there is interaction between the government and the stakeholders with a common interest using different mechanism to design, evaluate, and implement policies, projects and mechanism (Churchman 2012). While shareholders are individuals or organizations influencing or pretentious of policy decisions (Freeman 2010) also claims organizations or other institutions, assets or products (Bryson 2004). Participation can be done directly or indirectly through legitimate institutions and representatives and it has to be well informed and well structured (Quick and Bryson 2016). Taking part can be limited to discrete act which involves town hall meetings or citizens meetings or described as certain norms such as convening other public hearing or other types.

Public participation has been in existence since early 1960s in the United Kingdom and the United States and it has now spread to different countries in different context, public participation has advanced in some western countries while other countries are still struggling. In Africa, especially the sub-Saharan Africa public participation and accountability has not been fully achieved. In Kenya the public participation started in early 1980s (Oyugi 2000) with several attempts by the government at various levels. The promulgation of the 2010 constitution in Kenya brings a new face on budgeting process and public participation through the decentralized government. Kericho County is among them, several reports on budgeting process, public participation have been reported in many counties but has not been fully utilized. Therefore, causing several challenges in Kericho County during policy formulation. However, co-joint efforts of the representatives, democrats, bureaucrats' organization and the privilege professionals as the guardians of the public interest in effect creates an infantilized public (Gyford, 1991). Moreover, there is need to involve all the residents of Kericho county during policy formulation process via public participation.

Public participation is formed to channel citizens' inputs through the established channels whose access is denied to a greater number due to imbalance, marginalization of groups and sections thus failing to benefit the vulnerable individuals who has been side-lines (Manor 2004). In Kericho County the less privileged sub counties such as Soin ward and Kipkelion lags behind in many developments yet the policies are there that all people should participate in budgeting process. Therefore, putting more emphasis on the deepening democracy which involve focusing on governance institution, civil society and interface between the two. To have a good participatory by communities in government decision making requires strengthening of representatives, democracy and participatory mechanism. As well as civilization outward that face authority. This includes conducting non-states to shape service bearer (Holmes and Scones 2000). Not forgetting implementers of policy process and being part of decision-making process through discussion and concurrence (Fung and Wright 2001).

The governing model of policy formulation in developing countries is the bureaucratic government among the interrupted equilibrium, administrative process and logical actors (Hai Do 2010). Public policy formulation in developing countries varies based on their potential and readiness to map out and instrument plans that create growth (Joan Corkery 1996). Policy formulation involves problem identification among the public in budgeting process and the effects of public agenda setting. This helps in reducing the gap in the final generation of policies. Policy formulation on the other hand helps in dealing with problems, goals and priorities and also solutions for the achievement of policy objectives (Cochran and Malone 1996).

Kenyans consider budgeting process as for the chosen few in the government and its process is only confined to officials. Budgeting process and public participation impact the welfare of its citizens, looking at how to plan for policy formulation. Several frameworks have to be involved which includes political tools. Politics influence the outcome of choice in the achievement of goals by many entities. Thus the elected politicians influence in the outcome by exerting power (Mason 1998). Media also influence the public on policy priorities by making the public to see some issues as more important than the others (Bachen & Robert, 1981). Electronic media has the capacity to change attitude of different groups within the public on how they perceived some issues. Therefore, influencing policy choice on the agenda setting with those the media putting more emphasis are found to be more appealing than the other. Elite class also have more say on agenda setting this is because the society takes them to be more knowledgeable on many issues than the other citizens thus their ideas are being incorporated in agenda setting.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Civic participation uses quite a number of mechanisms to design, evaluate, and implement policies and projects. However, the process of participation during preparation of budgets has shown to affect negatively the common citizens while favouring the elite in any society. In addition, they have been serious concerns that there is poor public participation in development of policies in Kericho County (Korir, 2015). Therefore, there is a disconnection between the government of Kericho and the residents in formulation of policies. This has led to disparity in development in some sub counties. The participation of all citizens in formulation of policies and budgeting is advantageous to the county since the public will be involved in the entire process thus reducing challenges that occur that could have been captured by a few.

Despite the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution that address public policy making, budgeting process and opening up channels on how policies are to be addressed, this appears as a mirage in Kericho County. Members of the county assembly, the elite and allies to the governor whom most of them has been employed as ward administrators interfere with the proceeding both in the house and in various wards during budget process. (Ogweno, 2015) Those favouring them are given a priority as compared to the need of the public. Therefore, this investigation look for impact of citizen's lack of participation in policy formulation in budgeting process in the county. Secondly researchers have not established where the status of citizens and participatory affects the development of policies. This made it necessary to explore the effects of development of policy alternatives by the public on policy formulation in Kericho County.

1.2 Research Objective

To explore the effects of development of policy alternatives by the public on policy formulation in Kericho county.

1.3 Research Question

Which development policy alternatives should be incorporated in policy formulation in Kericho County?

2.1 Theoretical framework

It will be directed by two theories, public participation and policy formulation.

2.1.1 Public participation theory

According to Freeman (2010), is a process of engaging directly and indirectly in the public in decision making and ensuring their concern are considered in final decision. . Here the concerned stakeholders mingle with authorities', representatives, non-profit organization and corporation to form or implement public policies and programs. Taking part maybe disconnected in situation where only meeting among few individuals are involved or set out by some practices such summoning group for communal hearing therefore participation is the process of linking citizens directly.

Democratic taxpayers are taken as worth stakeholders since they are capable of engaging straight publicly in decision making, acquisition and formulation of policies influencing them, (Jacobs *et al* 2009) Citizen engagement is the basic part of communal and executive connection in elective government. Governances encompass traditional and casual process of policy making process and control of empire of common interest (Kooiman 2003).This happens through broader networks that often includes agencies. As power align towards authority in order to range above authority and have taxpayer for citizen engagement. (Osborne 2010; Bryson *et al.*, 2014). Public participation theory will be relevant factors to this study as it will provide the benefits to the county assembly specifically highlighting factors relevant to the study.

2.1.2 Policy formulation theory

Policy theories encompass the need to identify issues, discuss potential policy adjustments, or forecast outcomes (Jones and Baumgartner 2012). They involve devising studies, presenting testable theories regarding policy processes and outcomes, and prompting inquiries into new areas of research. Policies emerge from strategic interactions among various stakeholders, each with their own perspectives on the situation and potential solutions, as well as their own agendas, preferences, capabilities, and resources. Public actors typically shape policies, although a multitude of private entities also play a role, complicating the policymaking process. This process also involves the functioning of institutions such as parliament, government, courts, political parties, and interest groups, as well as behaviors like voting and negotiations. (Jones and Baumgartner 2012).

2.2 Empirical Review

When selecting which alternative to adopt it is important to consider whether a particular policy fits the unique characteristic of a specific state. Policy should be considered in terms of; Promise which is the benefits we expect to gain from implementing a particular policy. Efficacy is the evidence that the policy works and appropriate to the population targeted in the community. Feasibility shows whether the community have human, economic and social resources to carry out the policy. Benefit /cost; whether the community afford to implement the policy. Sustainability; does the community have enough resources to sustain the policy.

Policy alternatives require a clear identification of problems, goals and objectives. When the goal objectives or problems is considered worthy of analysis then creating alternative starts. Developed countries issues requires incremental changes and also have few problems as compared to the developing countries. Thus there is need for extensive consultation dialogue, discussion and participation to be hold on to agreement for the identification of objectives and generation. On the other hand developing countries is different from developed nations their situation is difficult this

is because they have no discussion to identify policy problems and alternatives for example citizens hardly participate to give feedback to the policy makers.

In Kenya policy approach is influenced by several actors; the political class and government structure of a country, the elite and the civil servants. The constitution of Kenya 2010 is changing the legal framework to ensure every citizen has a right to freedom of speech, even though the constitution has convenient its citizen the identification of policy alternatives is still under the control of political class, civil servants and the elite in the community. Kericho county is not left behind from this the politicians support from identifying those issues that affects them leaving those that affect the normal citizen, also the civil servants believe that for them they have a lot of experience and knowledge over the ordinary citizens thus during policy analysis they give no time to the policy alternatives therefore, not giving citizens enough time to scrutinize the whole process. The elite also believe that they know much thus they are given opportunity to design for the citizens the policy alternatives. Therefore there exist a gap in the government of Kericho on policy alternatives formulation.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

In this research the independent variable is the public participation and the variables being problem identification, public agenda setting, policy alternatives and developments of models and the dependent variables will be policy formulation in budgeting process which will be measured based on effective citizen participation on budgeting process, citizens making informed decision.

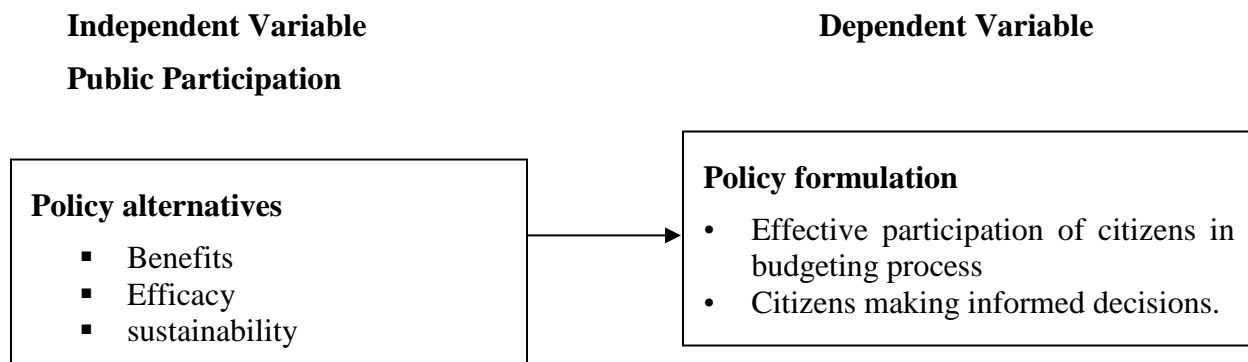


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3.0 Research Design

The research adopted a descriptive research design, as suggested by Grey (2014) which sets the process for obtaining data, applying methods, collecting and analyzing statistics, and ultimately answering the research question. Kericho County, one of the counties in the Kenyan government established after the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya on 27th August 2010, is renowned for its lushness. The research focused on Kericho County and its administrative headquarter, Kericho Town. The county has a population of 901,177 and an area of 2111 kilometres. The target population for this research was comprised of 30 ward administrators, 30 members of the county assembly, 85 village elders, and 51 local residents of Kericho County, for a total of 196. Inference was made from this target population to form an aggregation of study elements (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). The stratified random sampling technique used in this social science study provides an opportunity for the researcher to interpret information about the

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population based on the results from the subjects of the population without investigating every individual (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). This study utilized census sampling by selecting all respondents to participate in the main research. This ensured equal representation of the respondents and enhanced the quality of data sourced. Cochran's formula for sample size determination (Cochran, 1963) was applied.

Both quantitative and qualitative information was gathered. SPSS version 25 was utilised for the analysis of the quantitative data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis. The frequency and percentage were among the particular descriptive statistics that were produced. Furthermore, the study used inferential statistics, such as regression analysis and correlation, to evaluate the significance and connection of the link between the study variables, respectively.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

A total of 196 questionnaires were administered to the sampled respondents. All the administered questionnaires were dully filled and returned yielding a response rate of 100%. This was a strong overall response rate, indicating that the collected data was an excellent overall representation of the views and experiences across all groups. Out of a total of 196 participants, 116 were male and 80 were female, indicating a 59.2% male participation rate and a 40.8% female participation rate. There was a higher level of male participation in the budgeting process in Kericho County compared to female participation. The study further found that the majority of participants in the budgeting process in Kericho County were aged 51 and above. Specifically, out of a total of 196 participants, 85 were aged 51 or above, indicating a 43.4% participation rate in that age group. Majority of participants in the budgeting process in Kericho County have at least a secondary level of education. Specifically, out of a total of 196 participants, 70 had a secondary level of education, indicating a 35.7% participation rate in that educational level. Furthermore, 60 participants had a college level of education and 30 participants had a university level of education. Out of a total of 196 participants, 35 were business people and 27 were civil servants, indicating a 17.8% participation rate for business people and a 13.8% participation rate for civil servants.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The study sought to explore the effects of development of policy alternatives by the public on policy formulation in Kericho County. The study sought to understand the policy alternatives on public policy formulation on budgeting process in Kericho County and results discussed below. The respondents were asked if there were policy alternatives on public budgeting process. The responses were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Presence of Policy Alternatives on Public Budgeting Process

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	62%
No	32	16%
Don't know	43	22%
Total	196	100%

Source: Field Data, 2023

The results of Table 1 show that the majority of respondents, 62%, agreed that there are policy alternatives on public policy formulation on budgeting process. 16% disagreed and 22% stated

they did not know. Overall, the results indicated that there is support for policy alternatives on public policy formulation on budgeting process. The respondents were also asked to indicate policy formulation alternatives and the responses were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Policy Formulation Alternatives

	Frequency	Percentage
Developing a clear and transparent budgeting process	112	57%
Provide adequate resources and training	78	40%
Seek public input	150	77%
Automate budgeting process	54	28%
Provide incentives for officials to adhere to budget	29	15%
Create independent budget office for oversight	11	6%

Source: Field Data, 2023

The results of the table show that the most popular policy formulation alternatives among the respondents are seeking public input (77%) and developing a clear and transparent budgeting process (57%). This suggests that the respondents believe that involving the public in the budgeting process and having a clear and transparent process is important. The third most popular policy formulation alternative is providing adequate resources and training (40%). This indicates that the respondents believe that budgeting officials need to be adequately trained and have the necessary resources to be able to effectively carry out their duties.

Automating the budgeting process is the fourth most popular policy formulation alternative (28%), suggesting that the respondents believe that technology can help streamline the budgeting process. Providing incentives for officials to adhere to the budget is the fifth most popular policy formulation alternative (15%). This suggests that the respondents believe that officials need to be held accountable in order to ensure that they stick to the budget. Finally, creating an independent budget office for oversight is the least popular policy formulation alternative (6%). This indicates that the respondents may not believe that an independent budget office is necessary for effective budgeting.

The respondents were further asked to indicate budget policy influencers in Kericho County. The results are in Figure 2.

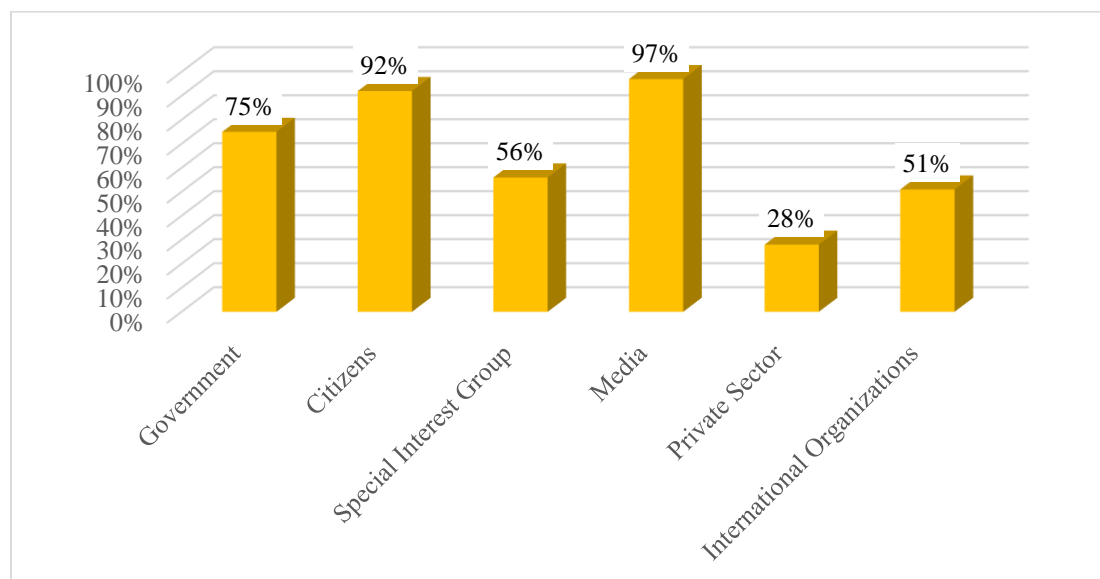


Figure 2: Budgeting Policy Influencers

Source: Field Data, 2023

The government was identified by a significant majority (75%) of respondents as a key influencer in budget policy. This result implies that the government typically plays a central role in shaping budgetary decisions, policies, and allocations. The high percentage suggests that respondents recognize the government's authority and responsibility in this regard. Additionally, majority (92%) of respondents considered citizens as influential in budget policy indicating that there is a strong belief in the importance of public participation and input in the budgeting process. It reflects a democratic approach where the voices and needs of the community are considered significant.

Moreover, more than half of the respondents (56%) acknowledge the influence of special interest groups in budget policy. This suggests that these groups, which may represent specific sectors or causes, have a notable impact on budget decisions. It's important to note that their influence is seen as substantial, but not as dominant as the government or citizens. The media is perceived as an extremely influential factor in budget policy, with nearly all respondents (97%) recognizing its importance. This indicates that media coverage, reporting, and public awareness campaigns can significantly shape budgetary discussions and decisions. The media plays a crucial role in informing and engaging the public on budget-related matters.

While a smaller percentage of respondents identify the private sector as an influencer, it still represents a notable segment. This suggests that businesses and private enterprises have some influence, albeit to a lesser extent compared to other stakeholders. Just over half (51%) of the respondents believe that international organizations have an impact on budget policy. This reflects the global nature of development projects and funding, where international organizations may provide support and guidance to local budgetary processes.

From the results, it is clear that citizens and media have the most influence on policy alternatives. This has implications for policy makers, as citizens and media can have a large impact on the implementation of policies. Policy makers need to ensure that the policies they create are reflective of the opinions of citizens and media, and consider their input when making decisions. Special interest groups and international organizations also have a significant influence on policy

alternatives, although to a lesser extent than citizens and media. Private sector organizations have the least influence on policy alternatives, indicating that policy makers should take into account the needs of the private sector as well when creating policies. The government, citizens, special interest groups, the media, and the private sector all have a role to play in the policy-making process. Resources, public input, advocacy, attention, scrutiny, investments, partnerships, and contributions can all shape the policy alternatives presented in the table. Through their actions, these stakeholders can influence the outcome of policy decisions.

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis findings above are consistent with findings by Rondinelli (1983) which highlighted the challenges faced by developing nations in policy formulation, including limited data, expertise, and resources for technical analysis. This agrees with the efforts of Kenyan officials to involve various stakeholders in the budgeting process, despite the challenges in implementing comprehensive plans. The attempt to include a wide range of issues in policy documents, often for popularity, even with poor implementation, is reflective of the constraints described by Rondinelli. Similarly, Anderson (2000) notes the high degree of uncertainty and complexity in the governance systems of economically underdeveloped nations, often due to political and economic instability. This observation is mirrored in the Kenyan context, where county assembly members, village elders, and administrators strive to represent their constituents' interests in a potentially unstable political environment. Furthermore, Brinkerhoff (1997) discusses the tendency of government officials in developing countries to rapidly introduce politically motivated projects without thorough study or public consultation. This is evident in the Kenyan scenario, where there is a struggle to balance political interests with the actual needs of the citizens.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

In this study correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and nature of the association between public participation (problem identification among the public, public agenda setting, development of policy alternatives by the public and models used in public participation) and the dependent variable which is policy formulation in budgeting process in Kericho County. The correlation results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

		Policy Formulation	Development of Policy Alternatives
Policy Formulation	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Development of Policy Alternatives	Pearson Correlation	.757**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data, 2023

The findings in Table 3 show that there was a positive and significant correlation between development of policy alternatives by the public and policy formulation ($r = 0.757$, $p = 0.000$),

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indicating a strong correlation between the development of policy alternatives by the public and the actual formulation of policies in budgeting process in the county. The findings agrees with the observations of McCombs (2014) that, agenda setting have foreseen that salience objects will transfer from news media to the public mind thus media influence other media by transferring issues (Reese and Danielian 1989).

Regression Analysis

The ANOVA results revealed that the overall model was statistically significant, implying that the development of policy alternatives by the public serve as strong indicator of policy formulation in the budgeting process in Kericho County. The regression of coefficient results revealed that development of policy alternatives by the public was positively and significantly related to policy formulation ($\beta = 0.465$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates a strong and positive influence of the public's involvement in developing policy alternatives on the actual formulation of policies. It implies that when development of policy alternatives by the public improves by 1 unit, policy formulation improves significantly by approximately 0.465 units. This signifies that when the public actively contributes to the development of policy alternatives, there is a substantial positive impact on the overall policy formulation process.

5.0 Conclusions

The conclusion of this finding is that the government, citizens, special interest groups, the media, and the private sector all have a role to play in the policy-making process. It is important for policy makers to consider the input of these stakeholders when making decisions, as their actions can have a large impact on the implementation of policies. In particular, citizens and the media have the most influence on policy alternatives, while the private sector has the least. It is essential for policy makers to take into account the needs of the private sector when creating policies, as well as the opinions of citizens and the media. As a consequence, policy makers must take into account the input of citizens and the media when making decisions, as they have the most influence on policy alternatives. Special interest groups and international organizations also have a significant influence on policy alternatives, though to a lesser extent than citizens and media. Private sector organizations have the least influence on policy alternatives, so policy makers should also take into account their needs when creating policies. Additionally, stakeholders can shape policy alternatives through their resources, public input, advocacy, attention, scrutiny, investments, partnerships, and contributions. Ultimately, policy makers need to ensure that the policies they create are reflective of the opinions of all stakeholders in order to ensure their successful implementation.

6.0 Recommendations

In view of the findings, the study recommends that policy makers should ensure that policies are reflective of the opinions of all stakeholders in order to ensure their successful implementation. This includes taking into account the input of citizens and the media, who have the most influence on policy alternatives, as well as special interest groups and international organizations, who have a significant influence on policy alternatives, albeit to a lesser extent. Private sector organizations should also be considered, as they have the least influence on policy alternatives. Additionally, stakeholders should be aware of how their resources, public input, advocacy, attention, scrutiny, investments, partnerships, and contributions can shape policy alternatives. Ultimately, policy makers need to ensure that the policies they create are reflective of the opinions of all stakeholders for successful implementation.

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This study in addition recommends that the County of Kericho should enhance public participation in the budgeting process through the use of public hearings, workshops, citizen advisory committees, and online surveys. In addition to this, the budgeting process should be transparent, easy to understand, and incorporate public feedback. It is also important to create a system of public accountability to ensure that public feedback is taken into account in the budgeting process. Furthermore, the public should be educated on the budgeting process and how their feedback can help shape the budget. Finally, the budgeting process should be equitable and accessible to all members of the public, regardless of their socio-economic status.

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