

Research Article

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Impact of citizen participation in catalysing sustainable development in Bungoma County, 1950-2022

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Abstract: Citizen participation in development has existed since the colonial period with the establishment of community development schemes that encouraged African participation in colonial economic development. After independence in 1963, citizen engagement in development was encouraged through development programs and policies that aimed at achieving sustainable development. The purpose of the study is to assess the impact of citizen participation in catalyzing sustainable development in Bungoma County, 1950-2022. The study adopted a qualitative approach which employed a historical research design based on participatory development theory. The study used quota and purposive sampling techniques to select one hundred and sixty respondents. Primary data was collected through archival sources, oral interviews, focus group discussions, and qualitative questionnaires. Secondary data was collected from books, journals, newspapers, and selected websites. Data was analyzed and presented thematically. Study findings revealed socio-economic transformation and psychological satisfaction as results of citizen participation in promoting sustainable development. Improved agricultural activities, improved transport systems, creation of employment, and economic empowerment led to improved standards of living. Improved health and education infrastructures were achieved as well as promoting a sense of ownership. The study concluded that citizen engagement in sustainable development led to social, economic, and environmental transformation of the society.

Keywords – Citizen engagement, Citizen participation, Community development, Societal transformation, Sustainable development

1. INTRODUCTION

Citizen participation a fundamental aspect of democracy has its origin in Ancient Greece in the city-state of Athens. The common people first used the term democracy to describe the governance practices of the Ancient Athenian city-state, which meant rule or government by the people. The Athenians devised a system of decision-making that was unique and distinct from the autocratic practices prevalent in the early times (Ball et al., 2014). During the eighteenth century, the French and American revolutions shifted the tide of the world in favor of democracy. In Latin America, the large-scale development projects implemented in communities resulted in economic growth. Since these projects influenced the livelihood of the people in communities, they had the right to be consulted and informed (Nickson, 2011). The legal framework of Latin American countries laid the groundwork for a mechanism of citizen participation (Nickson, 2011).

In the United States of America, citizens' participation in public affairs is considered critical and a fundamental part of the country's philosophic tradition. It is argued that the cultural history of the United States includes ongoing efforts to strengthen citizens' active participation in community and governmental concerns that have emerged as a matter of the rights of citizens (Burke, 1979). As quoted by Arnstein in her oft-quoted article 'a ladder of citizen participation' the idea of citizens is a little like eating spinach that no one is against it in principle because it is good for everyone (Arnstein, 1967).

In Africa, citizens' engagement in sustainable development activities is an essential prerequisite for democratic development where the contribution of the people counts in societal transformation. Ghana's decentralization policy was developed to encourage popular grassroots participation in the administration of service planning, implementation, and supervision in order to improve the standards of living of the rural poor (Krawczyk & Sweet-Kushman, 2017). The link between citizen participation and local governance is important in empowering people to participate in sustainable development activities that affect their lives. Article 35 (6) (d) of Ghana's constitution calls for a decentralization policy that provides opportunities for greater citizen participation at all levels of decision-making (Ahenkan et al., 2013). Through citizen's participation in local governance, attempts were made to eliminate the economic, social, cultural, and political challenges that contribute to poverty (Ahenkan et al., 2013).

In Rwanda, the government undertook the participation approach to improve the well-being of its citizens. Various development programs including the Vision 2030 Umurenge Programmes (VUP) and Ubedehe used the participatory approach in which citizens at the village level decide the social economic development projects to be prioritized (Ministry for Local Government, 2018). This approach produced positive results and therefore local economic development and community development were critical components in the realization of Rwanda Vision 2020 (Murebwayire, 2021).

In Kenya, the enactment of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (1940-1945) encouraged the initiation of community development schemes that promoted social and economic development in agriculture, health, and education (Symth, 2004). After independence in 1963, the Government of Kenya developed the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 that outlined measures towards economic development with people's participation through self-initiatives for local development (Republic of Kenya, 1965). It was declared that the country would develop on the basis of the philosophy of Democratic African Socialism. African Socialism demanded voluntary participation in development that called for people's willingness and mutual social responsibility. Based on the principles of African Socialism, the government of Kenya designed programs and policies in commitment to certain economic objectives which included freedom from want, diseases, ignorance, exploitation, and equal opportunities for advancement. To ensure citizens' participation in the country's development, much effort was directed to the rural areas where sustainable development activities depended on the combined effort of the central government, local authorities, and individual communities (Republic of Kenya, 1965).

In Makueni County, the citizen participation model is an all-inclusive bottom-up system that involves the public from the village level to the county level. The public is engaged through elected development committee members representing villages, a cluster of villages, sub-wards, wards, wards sub-counties, and the County. The development committee members at every level are custodians of progress within their respective areas. The structures provide Makueni County with a solid foundation for comprehensively involving the public in the Inception, budgeting, implementation, and oversight of development projects (World Bank, 2016). The Makueni participatory model resulted in ownership and sustainability of the development projects by the people (Council of Governors, 2020).

In Bungoma County, citizen participation in sustainable development was instituted during the colonial period with the introduction of community development schemes in 1950. Since 1950, a myriad of community-initiated and government intervention programmes were introduced that put the people at the center of development. They aimed at addressing the economic and social challenges that affected the people. The Constitution of Kenya under Article 174(d) recognizes the right of communities to manage their own affairs and further their social, economic, and

political development. The Bungoma County Public Participation Bill, 2015 provides for the establishment of a legal framework for facilitating citizen participation in governance (the Republic of Kenya, 2020).

According to Oduaran (1994), the government intervention development programs provided organizational frameworks through which citizens expressed their concerns, which contributed significantly to the success of grassroots projects. Citizen participation in catalyzing sustainable development is considered to be effective when the local people are involved in the development processes of project identification and prioritization, planning, and implementation. Citizen engagement entails embracing the views, ideas, opinions, and perceptions of stakeholders positively impacts development projects. Based on the analyzed historical situation, it is evident that citizen participation in development programs in Bungoma County was key in mainstreaming, localizing, and domesticating the sustainable development goals of eradication of poverty, eradication of hunger, good health and well-being, provision of quality education, provision of clean and safe water as well as action to combat climate change. However, little has been done to assess the contribution of the people in bolstering sustainable development. It is against this background that this study assesses the impact of citizen participation in catalyzing sustainable development in Bungoma County, 1950-2022.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Murombo (2008) studied “Beyond participation the disjuncture between South Africa’s Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), law and sustainable development” who argued that public participation was a strategy to implement integrated environmental management and that it further nurtures transparency and accountability. Zogeye and Nuwatuhaire (2020) researched on “Success of community participation in development planning for socio-economic transformation in Rwanda, Gakenke District” who revealed the impact of non-participatory development on the people. They observed that low community participation accelerates poverty, and creates dissatisfaction and lack of sense of ownership of the community to the projects. These works concentrated on the impact of citizen participation in relation to the legal frameworks. Similarly, the negative impact of citizen participation was pointed out as a result of non-participatory approach to development. However, the current study delved into assessing the positive impact resulting from active participation in catalyzing sustainable development in Bungoma County. In a study carried out in Makeni County, Mutisya (2018) examined the impact of public participation on Makeni County’s development programs and concentrated on the effects of public participation on the implementation of development programs using both quantitative and qualitative data. However, little has been revealed about the contribution of the people in bolstering sustainable development. In a study on ‘Socio-economic status and participatory development in Kenya’ by Kinyanjui and Misaro (2013), it was revealed that Constituency Development Fund projects made significant contributions to the alleviation of poverty levels through health, education, and water projects that received the most participation. The study concluded that resource decentralization through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was an effective tool for combating rural poverty. It therefore provides a lacuna to assess the more positive impact of citizen participation in catalyzing sustainable development in Bungoma County using qualitative research methods.

Hao, Simiyu and Hongo (2022) researched on “Enhancing Public Participation in Governance for Sustainable Development in Bungoma County” based on participatory mechanisms or frameworks in the county government that either strengthened or weakened citizen participation. They revealed that non-existent government structures weakened citizen participation therefore negatively affecting development sustainability. Researchers examined the independent variable of public participation in governance and how it enhanced sustainable development. They also employed quantitative research methods using descriptive statistics to analyze data. From the reviewed literature, the knowledge gap was identified based on the specific objective, the research design, and the geographical region. The cited works concentrated on the impact of citizen participation based on the legal frameworks and participatory mechanisms, the negative impact of non-participatory development, and the effects of public participation on the implementation of projects using quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. However, little was

mentioned about the vital contribution of citizens to sustainable development. This study therefore delved into assessing the impact of citizen participation in catalyzing sustainable development in Bungoma County, 1950-2022, which adopted a qualitative approach using historical research design.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Citizen participation was legally designed and therefore recognized in promoting sustainable development since the colonial period. Citizens organized themselves at grassroots levels in collaborative frameworks to influence decision-making in sustainable development processes. During the colonial period, community development schemes were introduced in 1950 to encourage African participation in socio-economic development. After independence in 1963, development plans and programs were introduced with people's participation at the center of development therefore promoting sustainable development. Scholars have studied various participatory components in devolved governance, budgetary processes, and determinants of participation in different geographical regions globally and Bungoma in particular. However, little was done to assess the contribution of citizens in promoting sustainable development in Bungoma County. It is against this background that this study sought to assess the impact of citizen participation in promoting sustainable development in Bungoma County, 1950-2022.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach using a historical research design. Data was systematically collected and analyzed. Interpretive research philosophy was employed to understand the actions and experiences of citizen participation. Purposive and quota sampling techniques were used to select respondents in this qualitative study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Ohei & Chukwuere, 2022). Non-probability sampling was used to select one hundred and sixty respondents from ward administrators, village administrators, Community-Based Organizations, women groups, farmers, civil servants, and businessmen and women from the target population of 816,780 adults of Bungoma County (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Data was collected through qualitative questionnaires, qualitative interviews, and focus group discussions. Archival sources provided information on the achievements in sustainable developments since independence. Secondary data was collected from books, theses, county government document reports, journals, and internet sources. Using content analysis, data was corroborated, analyzed, and finally presented thematically in themes and sub-themes based on the objective of the study.

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the Participatory Development Theory propounded by Robert Chambers (1802-1871) in the nineteenth century which advocated for the empowerment of the people to participate in decision-making processes over matters that affected them. It aimed at enabling communities to take control over their own development (Chambers, 1994). The theory expansively describes individuals' active participation in decisions about the implementation of processes, programs, and projects that affect their lives (Slocum et al., 1995). The fundamental aspect of participatory development is participation viewed as the exercise of people's power in thinking and acting in a collaborative framework. This study envisages that citizen participation is critical in decision-making and plays a significant role in achieving long-term sustainable development. According to participatory development approaches, all stakeholders participate in all development activities beginning with project identification, prioritization, planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring. The study anchored on this theory assessed the critical role of citizens in decision-making for sustainable development in Bungoma County.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

6.1. Citizen Participation and Economic Impact

Participation of citizens or the community in decision-making programs as pertains sustainable development enables the community to achieve economic development. Community participation in development programs stimulates change to improve people's living standards in society. Transformation of society depends on the people's perception and readiness to be part of the development process. Meaningful change comes from the people of the community and therefore for the relevance and sustainability of this change, citizen participation is pivotal (Agwu & Aruma, 2019). The transition from a traditional or primitive state to a transformed state depends on the active participation of the community in the development process.

6.1.1. Improved Agricultural Production

Agriculture is one of the major economic activities of the people in Bungoma County. The region is well endowed with fertile soils and good rainfall that boosts agricultural production. Therefore, the participation of the citizens in decision-making in various development programs and strategies promoted agricultural production and therefore increasing farm yields. Archival evidence in Rural Development Programme for Western Province Progress Report, 1973-1976 showed that participation of the community members in the Integrated Agricultural Development Programme initiatives by the government in collaboration with development agencies improved the production in agriculture due to the improved methods of farming. Farmers were able to access the credit schemes that were provided at affordable conditions and therefore achieving better farm yields such as increased maize production. Archival sources further indicated that the establishment of Co-operative Societies played a big role in increasing farm production. The co-operative societies provided farm inputs to community members who registered with them as well as providing ready market for the farm production. This corroborates with oral interview findings which revealed that co-operative societies were started in regions that yielded highly in crops such as maize and coffee. The co-operative societies offered a ready market to the farmers and this was therefore an incentive enough for increased participation in agricultural production (OI, Dalizu, 2023).

Focus Group Discussions revealed that horticulture production was boosted through active community participation. Through Community Based Organizations, they engaged in production of vegetables and fruits which were consumed on the local market. Apart from horticulture, poultry farming was also undertaken by most of the Community Based Organizations where members were encouraged to take up the activity at individual levels. It was further revealed that there was improved food security and reduced hunger risks as a result of improved food production. Respondents asserted that with the provision of free farm inputs such as seeds and fertilizer by the County Government as well as subsidized fertilizers for farmers increased farm yields. Due to training on best farming practices, there was improved food production (FGD, AGEFA, 2023).

District Development Committees Projects Progress Reports, 1978-1984 revealed that the construction of cattle dips saw to the increase in livestock production. Citizen participation and community involvement in the construction of cattle dips was evident since independence. The Rural Development Strategy prioritized this projects that were critical in improving livestock health and therefore reduction in animal deaths. Archival sources showed that, cattle dips were constructed in various sub-locations and villages by the District Development Committees in collaboration with the community members who made financial contributions. The construction of cattle dips led to the eradication of tick-borne diseases which resulted in the survival of livestock. Successful livestock keeping enabled farmers to earn income through sale of milk and livestock itself hence improving their standard of living. It also encouraged the initiation of the dairy cattle programme or rearing of exotic animals. This concurs with a discussion that the provision of dairy animals by non-governmental organizations and the County Government to community – based organizations as well as Dairy Farmers Co-operative Societies increased dairy production. Through participation, farmers requested for better breeds of dairy animals that produced higher yields (FGD, Village Administrators, 2023). Direct involvement of citizens in the development programs for sustainable development in

agriculture increased farm yields or outputs and therefore alleviating hunger, increasing income and improving agricultural methods of production.

6.1.2. Improved Transport System

Oral interviews revealed that there was improved transport system network. Using the interpretive approach, knowledge is derived that people enjoyed improved road transport network resulting from their decision-making in development programs. Before and after independence, most of the feeder roads were impassable especially during the rain seasons and therefore, posed a big challenge to agricultural production and consequent economic development. However, with the decentralization strategies that brought development closer to the people, transport systems improved. As reported, before devolution and the introduction of Constituency Development Fund, most of the roads in the rural areas posed a risk of travelling during the rain seasons since they were impassable. It was a big challenge for farmers to transport their farm produce to the market or even just traveling to town. Devolution brought development closer to the people who identified their own needs and therefore most of the roads are murrum or tarmacked. (OI, Simiyu, 2023).

In a Focus Group Discussion with village administrators in Sirisia Sub-county, it was further revealed that citizen engagement in decision making led to the construction or upgrading of roads that opened up interior regions that were inaccessible for agricultural development. Upgraded feeder roads in various sub-counties improved the transportation of farm products to market places as well as improving the bodaboda transport sector. Citizens enjoyed the improved systems of transport which is an indication of happiness and joy in their actions of participating in development programs. Through the County Governments Integrated Development Plan, most of the feeder roads in the villages are murramed and therefore easy access to schools, health centres and market places. Apart from roads, bridges have also been constructed. According to the District Development Committee Projects Progress report, 1978-1984, Rural Access Roads Programme which was initiated in the 1970s led to improved road transport system. This programme targeted inaccessible regions. It opened up some regions for settlement and agricultural production for instance, Chebyuk Sub-location in Mt. Elgon. The opening of the roads ensured speedy delivery of farm commodities to market places.

6.1.3. Creation of Employment

Employment in Kenya is a major challenge especially to the youth. Citizen participation in development programs as government planned strategies or self-initiatives created employment opportunities to the community members. A discussion with village administrators in Sirisia Sub-County confirmed that the rural development strategies through various development agencies initiated and implemented at the local level provided employment opportunities to the community. This is anchored on the social construct that the promotion of development of physical resources in rural areas is dependent on the participation of the local people who play a greater role. In this sense, the local human and material resources are utilized in the implementation processes of the projects. The local people provided unskilled paid labour on the projects for instance, the construction of roads, classrooms in schools, water projects, health facilities and administration offices. Further details of these were provided to the effect that:

People in the community were employed on the construction sites when putting up either classrooms, a water project or construction of a road to provide unskilled labour force. The technical experts or contractors sourced for labour from the community where most of the youth took up the jobs and were paid. Sometimes women were engaged in fetching water and some dug the foundation for the building. I feel this engagement provided seasonal employment for our people (OI, Wamalwa, 2023).

The knowledge and understanding in the voice were interpreted to reveal that citizen participation in development projects played a key role in providing employment opportunities to the local people. In consideration of the people's views during participatory forums for the provision of labour, casual jobs were provided during the implementation of the projects.

Apart from unskilled labour, respondents also revealed that technical experts or contractors sourced for skilled labour from the community for masonry, carpentry and plumbing jobs. Creation of employment among the local population is in itself desirable and satisfying and therefore improved the living standards of the people. The consequence of taking part in decision making towards development programs is right and correct since it provides pleasure by solving economic problems of want of the local people. Therefore, the participants' experiences in sustainable development projects were interpreted to be beneficial in transforming the lives of the people through creation of employment. In an oral interview with Kimakuti, 2023, he revealed that the completed projects such as water schemes, bridges and roads required maintenance and security for the case of water projects. In this case local leaders mobilized the community to pool their financial resources together to engage people in the maintenance hence the provision of employment.

Archival sources revealed that under the Rural Development Strategy and District Focus for Rural Development, local people were engaged in provision of unskilled labour. Under the Rural Access Roads Programme, the local people were employed in the construction of roads hence boosting their economic lives. More so, the financial contributions made by the community towards the construction of cattle dips were used to pay off the unskilled labour in starting of the projects. Through citizen participation in catalysing sustainable development, employment opportunities were provided therefore improving people's lives.

6.1.4. Economic Empowerment

The improvement of the local people's lives was dependent on the economic opportunities available to generate income. Citizen participation in catalysing sustainable development programs generated income through the sale of local building materials. FGD with village administrators in Musikoma Ward pointed out that building materials such as sand, stones, murram and timber was sourced locally from the community members. Through the procurement system, people were awarded tenders to supply building materials on project sites. This concurs with oral interview with Mukhebi, 2023 who reinforced and asserted that according to the Constituency Development Fund guidelines, acquisition of building materials is done through the procurement system. In this case, the local people are considered for supply of these materials. He reported:

The Project Management Committees undertake all stages of project implementation including the procurement procedures. The local people are encouraged to apply for the tenders of which the committee needs to put them in consideration. Even the people who win the tenders through competitive bidding acquire building materials from the community members and therefore generating income for them (OI, Mukhebi, 2023).

This documented verbal language is, therefore, interpreted to reveal that an integral part of citizen participation in catalysing sustainable development was resource mobilization in the form of the provision of building materials. This was, therefore, pertinent in increasing the people's income and in itself achieving happiness as postulated in the utilitarianism philosophy.

Apart from the sale of locally available resources, some development projects required the purchase of a large acreage of land. In this case, the community surrendered land by selling it to the project developers such as the County Government or CDF. A respondent in the FGD asserted that:

When the government wants to establish a learning institution such as a school, college or university, the location of the project is identified through public participation. When implementation of the project is ripe, the local leaders will communicate to the affected members of the community whose land will be purchased and compensated to relocate elsewhere (OI, Muse, 2023).

From the viewpoints and experiences of these respondents, the subjective interpretation is that the community people stand to benefit from their participation in development projects through the sale of their land resources. This enables them to relocate elsewhere and invest the surplus to sustain their livelihoods.

The improvement of people's economic capabilities was realized through the creation or upgrading of marketplaces. In an interview with Ndinyo, it was reported that there were expanded market facilities as a result of citizen participation in identifying their needs in county development participatory forums. This included the expansion of markets such as Namwela, Kimilili and Bungoma (Chebkube) Municipal markets. This was a milestone in improving people's businesses resulting in better living standards. Apart from upgrading the markets, lighting or security lights were installed in the municipal markets and other marketplaces for the purpose of enhancing security. Good security in marketplaces necessitated prolonged business hours. The truth and knowledge gathered from the respondents' experiences portray an understanding that the economic empowerment of the people was through their participation in development projects where they expressed their views and challenges and therefore identified the areas of need. With the intervention of various development agencies and collaboration with the community people, development was realized therefore increasing the capacity of the citizens, which in itself people achieve happiness and pleasure.

6.2. Citizen Participation and Social Impact

Agwu and Aruma (2019) contend that social problems within communities can only be solved through co-operative and collaborative efforts within the society and community participation is an important collectivist tool to promote sustainable development in communities. Imhabekhai (2009) further emphasized that citizen participation which is viewed as a community development tool promotes individual and collective responsibility among the communities to stimulate greater collaborative problem-solving mechanisms. Therefore, the potentialities within the community provide a good foundation on which sustainable development is realized. The achievement of sustainable development projects such as schools, health facilities and safe drinking water is a driving and motivating factor for citizen participation since it enables the people to achieve satisfaction and pleasure when problems that brought pain to them are addressed. Imhabekhai (2009) concluded that citizen participation in sustainable development programs and activities has a positive impact on people in various participating communities in promoting their social lives.

6.2.1. Improvement in Education Sector

Citizen participation promoted the growth of the education sector through various development programs. The harambee movement played a crucial role in the provision of both primary and secondary education to the Kenyan children. Archival evidence as revealed in Bungoma District Annual Report 1969, showed that harambee funds drives were organized at various societal levels thus location, division and at the district level to pool financial resources together for the establishment of learning institutions. The annual report further indicated that prioritization of schools was done at the location and divisional levels in District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) then submitted to the district level on the District Development Committee (DDC). The district then organized for harambee funds in collaboration with the community members. Most schools were started on a harambee basis but later on taken up by the government.

Mbithi and Rasmusson (1977) revealed that the educational institutions initiated through the harambee spirit enabled parents to take their children to schools and therefore saving them from engaging house helpers. They further revealed that literacy levels went up due to the accessibility of learning institutions that were now within the vicinity of the children. Increase of literacy levels meant a literate society that resulted into long term benefits of employment and therefore improving the living standards of the people. These learning institutions include nursery schools, primary schools, harambee secondary schools, village polytechnics and institutes of science and technology. In corroboration with archival sources, oral sources revealed that citizen participation in development programs promoted education through the establishment of many schools within the vicinity of many rural families and bringing it closer to the children. This meant that the distance was shortened and saved them from walking long distance to access education. However, earlier on, it was realized that long distances to access education was an impediment to learning and therefore most children dropped out of school. This therefore drove them into early marriages or seeking for jobs in the well-off families.

The local people advocated for the establishment of primary schools in the rural areas where most of the poor parents hailed from. This helped children to go to school and therefore reduced on early pregnancies leading to early marriages for girls who eloped through sugarcane plantations. It also saved children from child labour where most of them were taken by their poor parents to work in the well-off families either in towns or homes. Boys were employed to look after cattle and other domestic work while girls were employed to take care of children or babies (OI, Wafula, 2023).

Apart from accessibility to education by the child, there were improved infrastructural facilities in schools and learners were saved from the trouble of maintaining semi-permanent structures made of mud and grass. Wafula further said:

We have experienced the construction of permanent structures in most of our primary and secondary schools. Compared to the period just after independence, most of the buildings were semi-permanent made of mud and iron-sheets or grass-thatched structures. It was hectic and cumbersome for learners to maintain such structures since they were compelled to carry cow dung from home to smear the floors of their classroom (OI, Wafula, 2023).

The understanding of humans and their social interactions in the responses is revealed to imply that citizen participation in development programs brought in a new worldview of education by the community. It is interpreted that both the boy and girl child were salvaged from early marriages for girls and child-labour for both boys and girls. Infrastructural development was improved in most primary and secondary schools where permanent structures were put up. Establishment of more schools with permanent structures was a manifestation of a transformed society as a result of people's participatory actions. Acquisition of education was an implication of social change and therefore people moved away from their traditional lifestyles characterized by illiteracy and poverty. Education had a long-term effect of employment and consequently alleviating poverty. The infrastructural development in learning institutions in terms of permanent classrooms, modern laboratories and dormitories, purchase of institutional land and acquisition of institutional buses was a result of stakeholders' participation in the identification of development projects in schools (OI, Juma, 2023). These revolutionized learning institutions and therefore embracing societal transformation.

Respondents further pointed out that Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and the County Government funded the education of children from poor and vulnerable backgrounds. Citizens' participation in forums for allocation of bursaries and scholarships advocated for the needy children who were assisted to go through their secondary and university education successfully. A respondent confirmed to be a product or beneficiary of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) bursary fund, sponsored through the secondary and university education.

Citizen participation in development projects and programs impacted positively on education therefore promoting literacy in the community, a fundamental feature of social change.

6.2.3. Improvement in the Health Sector

The provision of good health services is important for the promotion of a healthy society. Respondents revealed that citizen participation in the identification and prioritization of projects improved the provision of health services. In a Focus Group Discussion with teachers in Kimilili Sub-County, health services were brought closer to the community members as evidenced by the establishment and construction of health centres and dispensaries by various development institutions such as the Constituency Development Fund and the County Government. Apart from establishing new health facilities in locations or sub-counties, the existing ones were upgraded by constructing additional health facilities such as maternity wings or wards. This helped in addressing maternal care and therefore reducing childbirth mortalities that were caused by the unavailability of maternity services in rural areas. Children's wings have also been established in sub-county hospitals to address the health challenges of children. All these were realized through citizen participation in the County Government development programs (OI, Simiyu, 2023).

In concurrence with secondary data, Chieni (1998) found out that the Harambee spirit was used to mobilize resources to establish health facilities whose success depended on government support. Therefore, it was the community initiative to establish health facilities that benefited the surrounding communities. Consequently, it helped to manage illnesses or diseases, therefore improving the health of the community people. In corroboration with archival sources as proven in Tongaren Divisional Development Committee Meeting Minutes, local people mobilized financial and land resources to build health centres and dispensaries. Government support depended on the community's willingness to pool their resources together to achieve a certain target, for instance, in Tongaren Division, the community contributed funds to build Tongaren Cottage Hospital in 1974. This facility served people within the division that helped to improve the health status of the community members.

6.2.4. Provision of Water

Archival evidence as indicated in the District Development Committee Progress Report 1978-1984, reveal that through citizen participation, a number of water schemes were initiated and developed in many communities. For instance, under the Rural Development Strategy, 1971 and the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD), 1983 with the Rural Development Fund, a number of water projects were developed in many sub-locations. The community people made self-help contributions towards the water schemes of which the District Development Committee financed the balance of the project. The availability of safe and clean drinking water led to improved healthcare and therefore alleviating waterborne diseases. Chieni (1998) further confirms that the vicinity of water points to the people or homes saved the women from the trouble of collecting water over long distances and saved time to engage in other income-generating activities. Equally, archival sources revealed that the availability of water necessitated the construction of cattle dips that improved livestock keeping. Oral evidence in a Focus Group Discussion with village administrators of Musikoma Ward indicated that community involvement in project identification saw to the development of water schemes. Respondents pointed out that in most of the sub-locations and locations, there were established water schemes. For instance, protected water springs such as Kangabasi in Kanduyi Sub-county existed for a long time. Others such as Sasuri water scheme and many others led to the provision of clean and safe drinking water in Bungoma County. According to one respondent:

The construction of protected water springs led to the provision and availability of safe drinking water that saw to the reduction of mortality rates in the community, caused by water related diseases such as typhoid, bilharzia and dysentery (OI, Wafula, 2023).

This resonates well with disclosure via archival sources in the District Development Committee Meetings 1984-1988, to the effect that clean and safe drinking water was a big challenge since independence in Bungoma County. Local leaders often send memoranda to the District Commissioner seeking intervention to alleviate the predicament.

6.3. Sense of Ownership

Citizen participation in development programs entails engaging the people at all stages of the project development. Successful implementation of every project stage is a result of a set of elements emerging from the perceptions, ideas, opinions and view of all stakeholders and the local people being at the centre stage (Chambers, 2012). Uphoff (1985) argues that a sense of ownership of the development projects within the community results from better access to the services, greater participation in decision making and deeper involvement in the organizing process. Ngugi (2018) further affirms that the systematic efforts to involve citizens through consultations, planning and even implementation, results in social acceptance hence sustainability of the projects. Social acceptability necessitates easier resource mobilization in terms of finances and labour for project maintenance.

Oral evidence in Focus Group Discussion with teachers from Kimilili sub-county revealed that engaging citizens in participatory processes of development projects created a sense of ownership and belonging. This was as a result of involving people in decision making about identification and prioritization of their needs, eliciting their contributions to the development programs and consequently sharing the benefits. Respondents further observed that involving citizens in resource mobilization in form of paid labour and even provision of locally available building materials through procurement procedures instilled a sense of ownership. Participation in decision-making created a sense of ownership of the development projects. Since the community members participated in resource mobilization through the provision of land, they owned and protected the projects against corruption and misuse hence promoting sustainability of the same (OI, Munialo, 2023).

Community-based initiated development projects instilled a sense of ownership and belonging resulting to their sustainability since they matched the community needs. The consequence of citizen participation allows the people to partake of the benefits and therefore becomes convincingly right to participate in decision making. Developing a sense of ownership is interpreted to be a result of people's social actions as well as social interaction between individuals and the development project providers during the development process. The inclusivity of individuals from diverse social backgrounds cultivated self-confidence and the desire for a close interaction with development projects. More so, sharing of benefits by all individuals was a satisfying action which included the poor and vulnerable in society. This corroborates with secondary data which revealed that a fair and equitable distribution of benefits and redistribution of goods and services enables poor people to get a fairer share of the society's wealth and to participate fully in the development processes (Abiodium, 2020).

It was pointed out that community members utilized the development projects since they addressed their social and economic needs. Citizen participation created a sense of ownership as people benefited from development projects such as schools, water schemes and health centres which saved them from their social and economic challenges (OI, Khaemba, 2023). Abiodium (2020) further contended that ownership of the development projects resulted in sustainability and community dedication to maintaining the projects which was dependent on the active participation of community members during the development processes. In the same vein, respondents revealed that local leaders organized for the maintenance of the projects such as water schemes, bridges and roads. Development projects were meant to serve and benefit the community and maintenance and security was left to the community. The village elders organized for community meetings to plan how to maintain water projects through financial contribution of payment of a certain fee per household to maintain the water projects. People were appointed to be in charge of the maintenance and security (OI, Wafula, 2023).

The internal logic in individuals' action is interpreted to show that the positive response of ownership of development projects and subsequent sustainability is a clear product of citizen engagement and participation in the development processes. The adherence to the maintenance strategies of the projects further justifies the philosophy

in the study of utility or benefits that are derived from people's actions. It is, therefore, concluded that the economic and social benefits such as the provision of clean water, good health services, and access to education derive happiness to the community members.

6.4. Creation of Awareness

Agwu and Aruma (2019) postulate that community empowerment entails engaging individuals in the community to acquire knowledge and skills that will enable them to take an active role in the decision-making processes in development programs. Empowerment which starts with community needs assessment, identification, planning, implementation, mobilization, evaluation, and monitoring of development projects eventually improves individuals' social and economic lives. Mulwa (2008) adds that it means building individuals' capabilities and capacities to actively participate in decision-making about the living conditions within their communities.

In cognizance of the aforementioned, it was revealed in an oral interview with Simiyu that citizen participation in decision-making in organized participatory forums provided a learning opportunity for individuals to understand their environment through assessment of their needs. Further in Focus Group Discussion with village administrators of Bumula Sub-County, respondents asserted that most of the local people were ignorant about their environment and what they required, and therefore, through citizen participation in development programs most of them were made to understand their environmental needs. This revelation corroborates with Aruma and Olumati (2017) who remarked that the focus on participatory learning stimulates awareness among the stakeholders to adopt the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to explore the environment through community needs assessment while identifying problems and subsequent prioritization, planning, and implementation.

Through participatory rural appraisal, community members acquired knowledge about the realities in their localities and sought ways of addressing them. In an oral interview with Kitonini, he commented that the inclusion of persons with disabilities in various development committees such as the Constituency Development Fund program enabled them to sensitize others in their groups to understand the rights to participate in assessing the local needs. Apart from understanding the local environment, citizen participation created awareness among community members and other stakeholders on the management and utilization of government funds in development projects. It is also confirmed that through the project management committees under the Constituency Development Fund programs, the expenditure of the allocated funds is made known to the community members. It was further revealed that citizen participation empowered the community to embrace participatory forums since they are important in determining their socio-economic lives in terms of development planning for their communities. Public participation created awareness among residents who then understood the utilization of their tax through progressive development agendas. It was also a way of allowing people to interact and share new ideas (OI, Juma, 2023). Therefore, empowering the community with knowledge and skills on citizen participation in development processes helped them to address local challenges and therefore, reducing on dependence on bureaucratic institutions.

6.5. Environmental Conservation

Environmental conservation is the protection, preservation and management of natural environments and ecological communities that inhabit them. It also includes the management of human use of natural resources for sustainable social and economic utilization. Environmental conservation can suit best to address environmental problems at the local levels such as unsafe water, depleted soils and forests that result due to increasing population as well as the desire to solve social and economic problems. According to Ademola (2022), community participation is key in achieving the success of environmental conservation as people interact with the environment in trying to make sustainable livelihood. He further shows that conservation measures need to be planned in full partnership with indigenous people and local communities and with respect for the rights, equitable governance and benefits to their cultures and livelihoods and therefore community participation is fundamental in conserving and protecting the environment.

Study findings through Focus Group Discussion with Namubila Tomato CBO in Sirisia Sub-County revealed that community-based organizations such as women and youth groups developed and established tree nurseries where seedlings were generated and prepared for planting. The community participated in afforestation to restore back the depleted environment due to cutting down of trees for settlement or for timber. Agroforestry was therefore a prevalent activity among the community members aimed at conserving the environment. Archival evidence as proven in the District Executive Committee Meeting minutes also revealed that in 1970, through the rural development strategy, women groups were funded to engage in the production of fruit seedlings. These women groups included Kaliyesa and Nangeni women groups in Bungoma County. The establishment of tree nurseries for production of seedlings allowed community members to plant more trees. Dams were also constructed in various divisions to boost the afforestation measures. Further, Bungoma Annual Report showed that afforestation projects were implemented such as the Webuye waterfalls where five acres of the land hill was afforested. Similarly, Sangalo tree nursery also produced seedlings that expanded the afforestation program.

Archival evidence reports from the Bungoma District Development Committee meetings further proved that church organizations participated in environmental conservation that led to improved agriculture and afforestation. In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Salvation Army Church under the 4K Club organization taught the youth about improved farming practices. The Salvation Army Rural Development Programme focused on providing skills and training for in-farm and off-farm enterprises to the rural youth. The principal production of the 4K club activities consisted of vegetable gardening, field crops, soil conservation and re-afforestation. Focus Group Discussion with Kitomaka Energy Saving Community Based Organization and archival sources revealed that community members under the community development schemes were trained on how to make and use energy saving stoves. This was a fundamental aspect in environmental conservation as people saved on energy by reducing on the consumption of firewood. As such, the community reduced on cutting down of trees for firewood and in the long run conserved the forests.

Citizen participation played a greater role in the development of water schemes. Archival evidence from the Bungoma District Development Committee reports showed that for a long time, most regions in Bungoma County were faced with acute shortage of safe and clean water that caused misery and frustration among the local people. It also consumed a lot of time for women who went for long distances searching for water. However, with citizen participation in development programs, water projects were established and developed through collaboration between the community and the rural development programs. This resulted in the provision of safe and clean water in most of the divisions in Bungoma County. The community was involved in the construction and maintenance of protected water springs through self-help contributions. Through the district development committee, funds were raised by the community to subsidize government funding. Similarly, under the Social Dimensions of Development programs in 1994, improvement and protection of water springs was done through community participation. Such protected water springs included Kangabasi, Samoya, Nabunulu, Wanyitikha and Sasuri. All these measures progressively provided safe and clean water to the community that resulted in the reduction of waterborne diseases.

7. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The historical trajectory of citizen participation in the study elucidates on the fundamental contribution of the citizens towards sustainable development. People's social actions in development have shaped the society socially and economically and therefore achieving societal transformation hence aligning with the sustainable development goals. Further, it draws lessons to the governing bodies for inclusivity of social groups in the development processes.

8. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It provides knowledge to the academic field in the discipline of history on the historical development of citizen participation toward achieving sustainable development. The study therefore sets a base for further interrogation in the history of non-governmental organizations in promoting sustainable development.

9. CONCLUSION

The study interrogated the impact of citizen participation in catalyzing sustainable development in Bungoma County, 1950-2022. The study concludes that citizen participation in development programs achieved social, economic and environmental transformations. This resulted in mainstreaming the implementation of the sustainable development goals while engaging community participation. In cognizance of the Sustainable Development Goals, these development programs and strategies aimed at alleviating poverty through economic empowerment, alleviating hunger by increasing agricultural production hence food security. The focus was also on ensuring quality health lives through improved infrastructural health facilities. To ensure inclusivity and equitable quality education, more schools were established with good infrastructure across the County in rural areas. The rural development strategy advocated for the establishment of water schemes or projects in villages, which ultimately led to the provision of safe and clean water. The mainstreaming and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals were achieved through the development strategies initiated since independence and consequently through the County Integrated Development Plans with the devolved system of government. The historical calibration of developmental initiatives by the people as well as the government provided a pathway to societal transformation. The participatory development theory is aptly manifested in people's participation to change the social and economic institutions hence improving peoples' way of life. In itself, the improved ways of life among the people were quite fulfilling and pleasurable. The study, therefore, concludes that citizen participation impacts positively on sustainable development hence achieving societal transformation.

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