



Experience by DESECE
In Bungoma, KENYA

Background: Public participation forums for policy, legislative and other planning processes in Bungoma County in Kenya failed to reach a wide audience. Notifications were not adequately disseminated and due to limited resources they were held only at the sub-county level. Moreover, inefficiencies in the use of available resources further exacerbated non-participation of communities, and the forums did not include stakeholders from diverse political backgrounds but favoured the government.

The solution was

1. Addressing the gaps in community participation by emphasizing a bottom up approach to policy dialogue
2. Strengthening good governance
3. Empowering communities with knowledge about their civil rights
4. Enabling local leaders and community members to track development issues in their areas

Experience description

Low public participation led to a lack of inclusion of views from other stakeholders as well as the beneficiaries of county government programs. Furthermore, citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with the provision of goods and services by the county government mainly through demonstrations, which only called for emergency responses and did not lead to meaningful county programming. Because of the project, communities became more aware of the services specific government institutions are mandated to provide. Community members also learned to use dialogue instead of combative approaches, when engaging with leaders. This approach improved community cohesion as the members joined forces in order to address issues.



Other characteristics



IMPACTS

- o Greater awareness of government's responsibility regarding certain services
- o Dialogue instead of combative approaches
- o Community members joined forces for common cause
- o Improved intergenerational relations due to collaboration
- o Recognition of government officials



CHALLENGES

- o Some issues regarding community-government relations remain: some leaders expect allowances
- o Access to information is critical, as political leaders keep info from citizens



LESSONS LEARNED

- o Investing in good relationships with the policy makers and implementers is effective
- o Building synergies in the county through CSO platforms and networks is effective