

Youth Public Participation On Governance At Grassroot Level

Survey In Jomvu - Mombasa County

About Us

Alpha and Omega is a youth-led community-based organisation, registered under the ministry of gender, children and social services. Alpha and Omega is based in the Bangladesh slums in Jomvu sub-county, Mombasa, Kenya. It works with young people to address the social vices, encourage public participation, and confront the HIV/AIDS pandemic through behaviour change interventions. Alpha and Omega also works with the wider community to address different challenges, including environmental waste management strategies within the slum.

Acknowledgement

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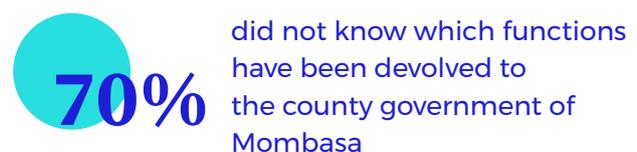
Introduction

This report summarises the results of a survey project investigating youth public participation in local governance in Jomvu, a sub-county located in Mombasa, Kenya. To help understand how young people participate in civic processes, the project team surveyed young residents of Jomvu, aged 19-24, who have attained at least form four level of education. This research helped inform a wider project that aimed to increase youth involvement in civic processes in Jomvu, something that is seriously lacking across the sub-county. **This research explored the barriers to youth participation, including challenges with access, knowledge and perceptions of the civic processes and the role of youth in Jomvu.** The research team has used the survey results to inform trainings and activities to help engage more young people, and they wish to publish them in hopes that others may do the same.

The survey employed a descriptive research design through which 120 people, aged 19-24, were engaged through an online survey. The reliability and validity of research instruments were checked through a pilot study. Data was collected online using google forms.

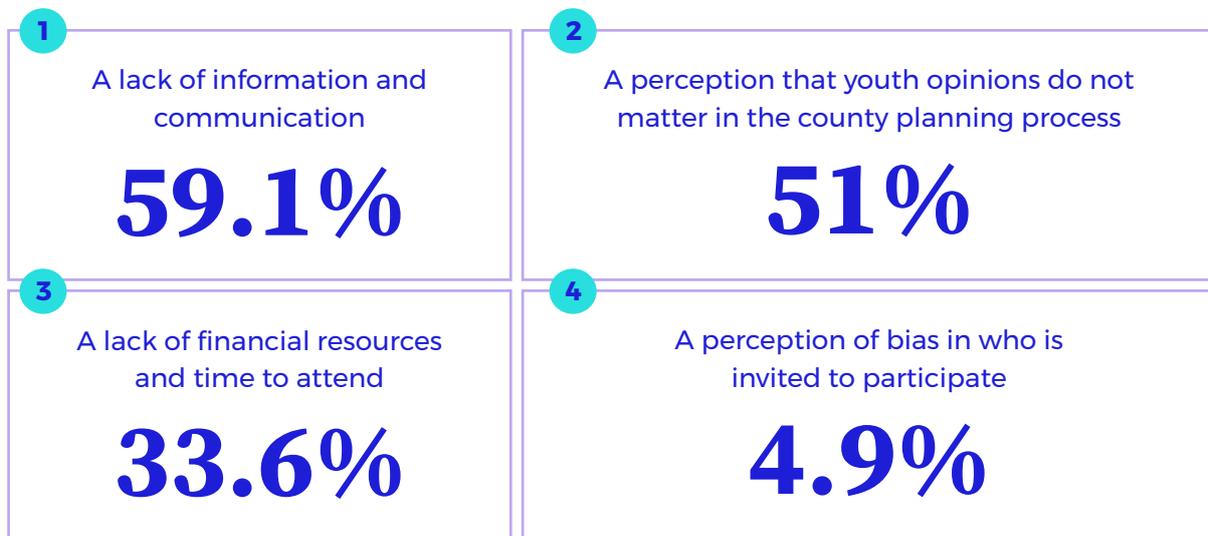
Key Findings

The survey suggests that **many young citizens in Jomvu have limited awareness and understanding of the government and its organisation.** While the majority (68%) of young people surveyed were aware that there was devolution process in place, the majority had minimal knowledge about how that process or other process in the government worked.

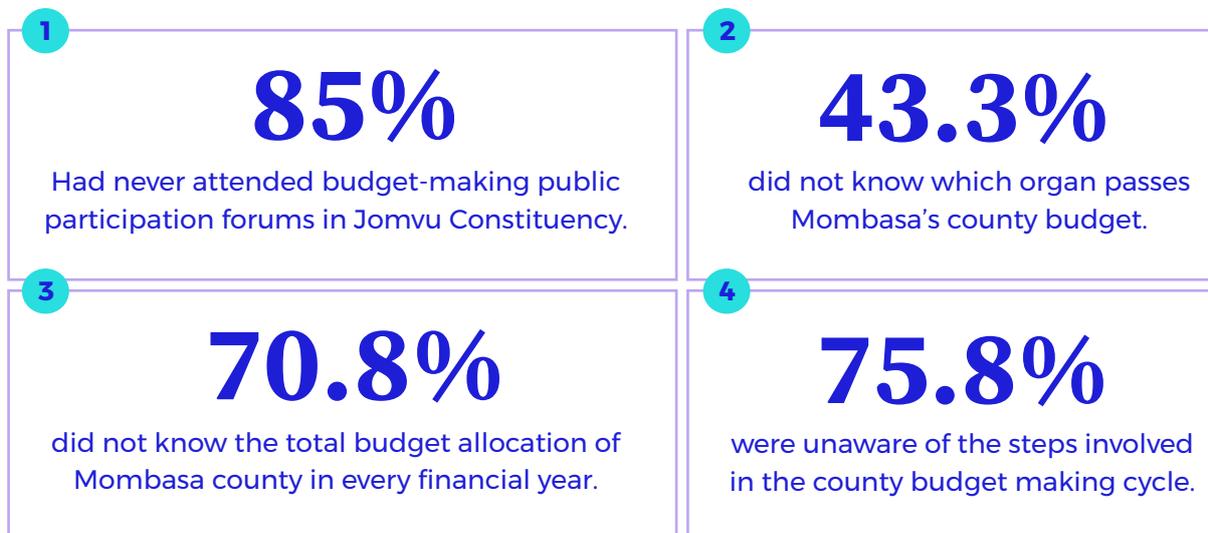


It was clear from this survey than young people across Jomvu need more civic education in order to participate fully and meaningfully in local or national governance.

With regard to public participation, **less than 45% of the youth surveyed had ever engaged in Mombasa county public participation processes.** Many barriers might prevent youth from participating; this survey's participants named the following:



Youth in Jomvu were also conspicuously absent and uninformed in the budget-making process. Of the young people surveyed,



Such limited levels of knowledge in planning and budgeting processes compromise young people's ability to participate meaningfully in subsequent budget processes as they often lack knowledge of original plans, targets, benchmarks and agreed standards against which to compare actual performance.

Recommendations

Although this research was relatively limited, the results were striking and lead to some clear recommendations.

- 1 There is a clear and pertinent need for more civic education** in order to increase the chances of a successful implementation and understanding of devolution and subsequent county planning. Civic education interventions could focus on the Constitution of Kenya- 2010 (CoK 2010), devolution functions and processes, leaders and accountable roles and public financial management. These could be done by organising trainings at ward, location and village level and using people-friendly language in explaining key information about devolution.
- 2** If citizens are to participate actively in governance, more than just via the ballot box, then they need **proper access to information, meaningful consultation and opportunities to take an active part in policy-making and other administrative processes**. Mombasa County government should publish and widely disseminate all information of public significance; strengthen communication mechanisms by establishing desk offices and calendars of activities; give sufficient notice of meetings and explore alternative methods of information dissemination such as SMS, social media and use of local radio stations.
- 3 There needs to be a greater effort to share information about civic process and opportunities for young people's involvement**. Local governments should make better use of social media to reach youth. This survey found that 85% of the young people who participated are active on social media, including Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube and actively use these platforms to seek information. Local government should also look into ICT-based interaction and feedback channels, including mobile phone-based SMS.
- 4 The media should also be encouraged to play a facilitative role** in promoting civic awareness on devolution processes.
- 5** In addition to traditional civic education about government processes and citizen rights and responsibilities, this research recommends **additional, specialised training related to the budget process**. Training should increase awareness of how, when and where to engage with devolved planning and budgeting processes, complemented with the training of citizens in a simple, contextualised project planning, management and procurement, thus building a cadre of future leaders at the local level.



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