

# An Assessment of Level of Awareness of County Budgeting and Planning, Legal Policy and Structures, A Study of Rural based People with Disability: Case of Muhoroni Sub- County, Kenya

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**Abstract:-** In the 21st century, disability issues have gained significant attention in discussions surrounding inclusive development, with global development frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national policies reflecting this emphasis. However, despite these policy advancements, evidence suggests that development processes often fall short in addressing the unique needs of people with disabilities (PWDs). In Kenya, the introduction of the devolved system of governance in 2013 aimed to bring policymaking and decision-making closer to all citizens, including PWDs. Despite numerous studies examining public participation in county governance processes, there is a research gap in understanding the extent of PWDs' engagement in county-level planning and budgeting processes. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on the participation of rural-based PWDs in county planning and budgeting, with a specific focus on their levels of awareness on policy, legislative and structures that guide county budgeting and planning in Kisumu County. The primary research objectives is to assess the level of awareness among rural-based PWDs regarding legal and policy frameworks related to planning and budgeting. Employing a mixed-methods research design and drawing upon the Social Model Theory of Disability, the study involved 775 PWDs from Muhoroni sub-county, with a sample size of 30% chosen for surveys. Additionally, 11 key informants representing various PWD organizations were interviewed. Data collection methods included survey questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGDs) with PWDs and self-help group leaders, and key informant interviews (KIIs). The findings underwent qualitative thematic content analysis and quantitative descriptive analysis using SPSS v.20. The study revealed low awareness among PWDs regarding legal provisions, ineffective inclusion strategies hindering their participation, and mixed success in mobilization efforts. In conclusion, PWDs' participation in county planning and budgeting faced multifaceted challenges,

**emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to promote their inclusion.**

**Keywords:-** People with Disabilities, Muhoroni Sub-County, Status of Awareness, Budgeting and Planning, Kisumu County.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The global recognition of disability as a critical developmental issue is underscored by international initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, with their principle of "leaving no one behind," explicitly mention disability and persons with disabilities 11 times, emphasizing the importance of PWDs' inclusion in achieving sustainable development (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2022; Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2022). In developing countries, where the challenges facing PWDs are more acute, addressing disability-related issues is vital to ending extreme poverty (Government of Kenya (GoK), 2021 Institute for Social Accountability, 2020; Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2015). Unfortunately, as these countries become wealthier, the disability inclusion gap tends to widen despite the fact that 1 in every 6 are disabled in these countries, highlighting the need for inclusive development processes that consider the specific needs of PWDs. (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018; Mitra & Vick, 2013).

Efforts to make development processes disability-friendly have been global, regional, and national, recognizing the centrality of disability inclusion for sustainable and inclusive development (Government of Kenya, 2021). This study focuses on exploring the factors that determine the participation of PWDs in county planning and budgeting processes, with a specific focus on rural-based PWDs with limited formal education and employment opportunities in Kisumu County. The study aims to fill gaps

in existing research by examining PWDs' awareness of policy and legal frameworks. The study's chosen site, Muhoroni sub-County, exemplifies these rural characteristics, implying need for more evidence on awareness for more extent of inclusion.

Kenyan laws and policies emphasize the importance of citizen participation in county planning and budgeting (Government of Kenya (2003; Government of Kenya (GoK), 2010). The County Government Act, Public Finance Management Act, and the Constitution of Kenya all highlight the need for public participation and inclusion of marginalized groups, including PWDs, in development processes. Constitutional provisions explicitly call for equal opportunities and social justice, prohibiting discrimination on various grounds, including disability. Despite these legal and policy frameworks, the disability inclusion gap persists in Kenya's development efforts, prompting the need for a scientific study to understand the reasons behind this contradiction and inform more inclusive policies and practices.

In Kenya, constitutional provisions promoting public participation have been integrated into various case laws and policies, making citizen engagement a prerequisite for county planning and budgeting processes (Government of Kenya (GoK), 2012a; Government of Kenya (GoK), 2012b). The County Government Act outlines specific avenues and strategies to ensure meaningful engagement of citizens, including PWDs, in these processes, such as the County Budget and Economic Forum (CBEF) and the County Citizen Engagement Framework (CCEF) (The Institute for Social Accountability, 2020). These mechanisms aim to facilitate inclusive and participatory development at the county level.

Prior research has predominantly centered on the engagement of the general public in county planning and budgeting processes (Opondo, 2017; Wacera, 2016; Trocaire Kenya, 2019). These studies have provided valuable insights into the challenges and certain effective practices concerning public participation in developmental endeavors within specific counties. However, they have predominantly disregarded the extent of awareness among Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) regarding policies and regulations pertaining to public participation, their comprehension of planning and budgeting procedures, and the obstacles they confront when attempting to engage in these processes. This study adopts a unique approach by addressing these specific objectives through the perspectives of PWDs residing in rural areas, a demographic frequently marginalized and excluded from county planning and budgeting processes.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND THE RESEARCH GAP

The Constitution of Kenya (CoK, 2010) unequivocally enshrines the principle of public participation, emphasizing its pivotal role in national values and governance. Article 10 of the CoK, 2010, underscores the significance of public

involvement in policy formulation, monitoring, and implementation. It is explicitly stated that both the legislative and executive branches, at both national and county levels, must engage the public in these processes. Furthermore, Article 174(c) of the CoK, 2010, highlights one of the key objectives of devolution as the empowerment of the people and their enhanced participation in state affairs and decision-making processes.

The CoK, 2010, assigns the responsibility for promoting public participation to county governments through function 14 as outlined in Schedule 4 Part 2. County governments are mandated to create mechanisms that facilitate community and location involvement in governance while simultaneously building capacity to ensure effective exercise of functions and powers. These guidelines define public participation as an inclusive process involving both state and non-state actors in communication, access to information, capacity building, and active engagement in county governance.

Notably, the concept of public participation has evolved to incorporate specific provisions for marginalized groups, with particular emphasis on Persons With Disabilities (PWDs). Article 27(4) of the CoK, 2010, explicitly prohibits discrimination based on various grounds, including disability. Article 54 further outlines the entitlements of PWDs, including reasonable access, sign language, and access to assistive devices.

Citizen participation is legally mandated in the planning process. The County Government Act (CGA), 2012, stipulates that county planning must include citizen participation, emphasizing meaningful engagement (CGA, Section 106(4)). The CGA introduces several mechanisms to facilitate this, such as the County Budget and Economic Forum (CB&EF), County Citizen Engagement Framework, County Communication Platform and Strategy, and County Civic Education Strategy. County assemblies are also required to develop laws and regulations to promote effective citizen participation, adhering to national requirements.

Furthermore, the Public Finance Management Act, 2012, obligates county governments to develop integrated development plans, reflecting strategic priorities and economic changes. The principles guiding public participation in county development processes, as set out in CGA Section 87, include timely access to information, protection of minorities' rights, multiple opportunities for participation, and a balance between county governance and non-state actors.

Despite the comprehensive policy and legal frameworks promoting public participation, including that of PWDs, it remains unclear whether rural-based PWDs are aware of these provisions. This knowledge gap is crucial, as it impacts their informed and effective participation in county budgeting and planning processes. While some studies have identified a lack of awareness as a barrier to public participation, there is a dearth of systematic research

focused specifically on PWDs' awareness of these instruments.

Existing studies have primarily focused on public participation in county planning and budgeting processes among the general population (Opondo, 2017; Wacera, 2016; Trocaire Kenya, 2019). These studies have shed light on the challenges and some successful practices related to public involvement in developmental activities within specific counties. However, they have largely overlooked the awareness of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) regarding policies and laws related to public participation, their understanding of planning and budgeting processes, and the barriers they face when trying to participate. This study takes a distinct approach by delving into these objectives through the experiences of rural-based PWDs, a group that is often marginalized and excluded from county planning and budgeting processes.

Trocaire Kenya's study (2019) evaluated public participation levels in the formulation and implementation of County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and Annual Development Plans (ADPs) in five counties. It revealed a general lack of awareness about the existence of CIDPs and ADPs, as well as the avenues for public participation outlined in County Government Act (CGA) Section 87, across all five counties. Furthermore, there was limited participation in the formulation of CIDPs in these counties. Given the absence of a similar assessment in Kisumu County, particularly concerning PWDs' participation in budgeting and planning processes, there is a clear need for a scientifically grounded study. This study aims to uncover the factors influencing PWDs' participation in these underexplored areas, which have been largely neglected in prior research.

Opondo's research (2017) focused on assessing the effectiveness of the legal framework for community participation in Nairobi City County Government. It found that only 37% of the respondents were aware of the Nairobi County Budget and Economic Forum (CBEF), and only 36% of those who were aware had participated in the budget process. This highlights the necessity for systematic studies that investigate public awareness of budget and planning processes and tools like CBEFs, CIDPs, and ADPs as key determinants of public participation in county planning and budgeting. This study aims to address this gap in Kisumu County by specifically targeting PWDs as a marginalized segment of the population (United Nations (UN). (2015); United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018; World Health Organization [WHO] & World Bank, 2011).

Wacera's study (2016) examined the effects of citizen participation in budget implementation in Nyandarua County. It revealed a lack of a systematic approach to engaging the public in budget implementation. While the reasons for this lack of systematic engagement were not fully explored, the study did identify a lack of awareness among the public regarding the laws and policies related to public participation, budgeting, and planning processes. The

current study, focusing on PWDs, seeks to systematically investigate the factors influencing their meaningful participation in county budgeting and planning processes, aiming to provide policy recommendations tailored to this specific group.

This study concentrates on PWDs, particularly those residing in rural areas without formal employment. This choice is driven by the assumption that this subgroup may be more vulnerable, as they often live far from urban centers where most public participation meetings occur (Opondo, 2017). Moreover, Hasan (2019) found that lack of formal employment and lower education levels hinder PWDs' participation, as recruitment into public participation platforms tends to target educated individuals. Non-employment also restricts their ability to travel to city centers, where most public meetings take place (Hasan, 2019; TISA, nd.).

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section introduces the methodology used in the study to address the research questions. It covers various aspects, including research design, study area, study population, sampling procedures, data collection techniques, reliability and validity, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

The research design chosen for this study is a mixed method design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach enables the use of primary and secondary data, as well as analysis methods from both qualitative and quantitative domains (Ayiro, 2021; Bhattacharjee, 2012; Cresswell, 2008). It allows for triangulation, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The study is conducted in Muhoroni Sub-County, Kisumu County, Kenya. Kisumu County was selected due to its significant disability prevalence, ranking fifth nationally (Government of Kenya, 2019). Additionally, Kisumu County has implemented policies and frameworks aimed at enhancing public participation, including PWDs. This makes it an ideal location for exploring PWDs' inclusion in county development processes.

The study primarily targets Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) for quantitative aspects and involves policy-makers, PWDs leaders, and representatives at various levels for qualitative data collection. The sample size of PWDs is determined based on the total population (775) of PWDs in Muhoroni Sub-County, with 12% (233) of the total population representing the study sample. Efforts are made to ensure representation from different PWDs categories.

The study uses purposive sampling to select PWDs leaders, officials, and representatives for qualitative data collection. For quantitative data, a representative sample of 93 PWDs is chosen from different wards in Muhoroni Sub-County based on a proportion of 12% of the total PWD population in each ward.

Data collection involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. Secondary data is obtained from various sources, including government documents and academic literature. Primary data is collected through semi-structured survey questionnaires administered to PWDs, in-depth interviews with key informants, and focus group discussions (FGDs). These methods allow for a comprehensive exploration of PWDs' awareness, challenges, and participation in county planning and budgeting. Reliability and Validity: To ensure reliability and validity, enumerators are trained, and pre-tests of survey tools are conducted. Qualitative data is carefully recorded to prevent data loss during analysis. These steps are taken to enhance the internal validity of the study's constructs.

Quantitative data is analyzed using SPSS v.23 and presented through descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, cross-tabs, and graphical representations. Qualitative data is analyzed through thematic content analysis, categorizing main themes and sub-themes to provide a deeper understanding of the research objectives. Overall, the chosen mixed-method approach, along with rigorous data collection and analysis techniques, aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of PWDs' participation in county planning and budgeting processes in Muhoroni Sub-County, Kisumu County, Kenya.

**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section of the paper presents findings that reveal the status of PWDs awareness on four key county budgeting and planning frameworks including; Kisumu County Annual

Development Plan (ADP); the county budget and economic forum [CBEF]; Kisumu Disability Act (KCDA); Kisumu County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP); the County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP); the County Budget Proposal (CBP); County Appropriation Act (CAA); County Budget Implementation Reports (CBIR); County Budget Review and Outlook Papers (CBROP); the County Audit Report (CAR). According Institute of Economic Affairs (2017) it is impossible to attain equitable and effective public participation if vulnerable categories are not awareness of instruments that place their participation within the domain of rights, hence placing the responsibility for awareness creation to certain right-bearers. Therefore, to effectively explore the factors that account for the inclusion of rural-based PWDs in Kisumu County planning and budgeting processes, it is imperative that such an analysis begin at the point of establishing the status of awareness. Findings and discussions are as presented below.

➤ *Awareness of Kisumu Annual Development Plan*

Table 1 below shows that most participants 170(85%) did not know about that while only 30(15%) knew about the same. The meager inclusion of the PWDs is a worrying condition because while this is among the critical steps after the county budget review and outlook paper (CBROP) on budgeting, that sets the yearly budget as extract from the CIDP.

- *Do you know what the Kisumu Annual Development Plan is?*

Table 1 Awareness of Kisumu Annual Development

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	20	10	10	10
	No	180	90	90	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

The Annual Development Plan (ADP) is the second step in the county budget calendar and should be should be tabled in County assembly latest by 1<sup>st</sup> September. Counties are required to create and present the Annual Development Plan (ADP) in the County Assembly by the specified deadline. Important to this study is the fact the plan must be made accessible to the public within a period of 7 days. The ADP serves as the principal planning document that directs the budget preparation for the upcoming year. It represents a one-year segment of the larger County Integrated Development Plan, a five-year plan that each county is obligated to develop (GoK, 2012).

According to the expected standard procedure, the county presents these plans to the assembly annually before September 1, outlining their strategic priorities, responses to economic changes, and the proposed programs and capital projects for the relevant fiscal year, as stipulated in the Public Finance Management Act, Section 126. It is crucial to emphasize that all projects in the budget must align with county plans. The ADP serves as a valuable occasion for the

public to influence and refine the proposals within the five-year County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), specifying the sectors and programs they wish to prioritize for the upcoming fiscal year.

➤ *Awareness on County Integrated Development Plan*

As shown in table 2 below, most participants 130(65%) have never heard of the, as only 70 (35%) knew about the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). This shows a relatively higher levels of awareness than the ADP and all other policies concerned with county budgeting. Most PWDs reported that this was a common word during their meetings and that's how they had heard of it. These meetings included mainly market place and NGO-sponsored meetings such as during research organized by NGOs. One PWD said during the interviews:

I recall this thing called CIDP. Research was done by some NGO and the consultants also asked us about CIPD and we learnt that it was a policy of the county government.



The research was called cost of disability and was done by Leonard Cheshire [Male PWD, 12 May 2023].

programs, including research albeit sometimes unintentionally.

This reveals two things. Awareness does not imply participation necessarily. Secondly that, NGOs are planning an important role in creating awareness through their

- *Are you aware of the Kisumu County Integrated Development Plans?*

Table 2 Awareness on County Integrated Development Plan

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	12.5	12.5	12.5
	No	175	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

➤ *Awareness of the County Budget and Economic Forum (CBEF)*

As indicated in table 3 below, most participants (87.5%) were not aware of CBEF as compared to only 12.5% who knew about the same.

- *Do you Know the County Budget and Economic Forum [CBEF]?*

Table 3 Awareness of the County Budget and Economic Forum

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	12.5	12.5	12.5
	No	175	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

The CBEF, established under Section 137 of the Public Finance Management Act, 2012, is a key public participation platform within the counties and has the potential to be an opportunity to highlight views of vulnerable categories such as PWDs and better the responsiveness of county governments to the needs and interests of such categories in the spirit of leaving no one behind. However, this finding appears to show the reverse because if the simple logic that participation is impossible without proper awareness of what one is participation in is followed, it follows that the CBEF is either turned into something else or the PWDs leaders or representatives to this platform do so under their own motivation and for their own interests rather than the interests of the PWDs community they represent.

professionals, business, labor, women, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and faith-based groups. This way, many critical views place the CBEF as a setup that serves nothing but a mere façade to create an illusion of citizen participation while ensuring the Governor's absolute control. Therefore, representatives from the DPOs asserted, whether CBEF truly assists the county in meaningful analysis and prioritization of programs is highly questionable, given the evident lack of independence and representation within the forum.

Both of these contracting sides of the CBEF were expressed during the key informant interviews with Organizations of Persons with Disability (DPOs) and grassroots PWDs leadership. A cross-cutting understanding revolved a critical perspective of the CBEF. Most interviews expressed a bitter perspective on this platform agreeing that the while in principle the County Budget and Economic Forum (CBEF) operates under the stringent regulations of Section 137 of the Public Finance Management Act, 2012 and is supposedly established to gather public opinions during the budgeting process, it pretentiously poses as a think-tank for the County government, overseeing financial and economic policies. In reality, the CBEF merely serves as a puppet to the Governor, who chairs the forum, and is composed of hand-picked CEC members and token representatives from various organizations, including

One leader from a DPO of national scope argued that the problem causing under awareness of CBEF among rural-based PWDs was that the PWDs representatives to this forum were simply those handpicked by politicians, and completely detached from the realities of the rural-based PWDs. Moreover, it was not seen a key item the need to have the rural-based largely uneducated PWDs to be part of this processes because, argued one grassroots leaders, “the process of budget-making was so elicited to open up for the views of the poor”.

The further explored the nature of those who were aware of it as asked them how they were involved in the platform. As table 4 below shows, most (87.5%) have never been part of CBEF as opposed to only 12.5% who have been part of it. These coincide with the data in the previous table and shows that awareness in deed affects participation in CBEF.

- *Have you ever been part of it?*

Table 4 Level of Participation in CBEF

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	12.5	12.5	12.5
	No	175	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

However when the nature of involvement of PWDs in CBEF was examined further during FGDs held at the ward levels, it emerged that this was through indirect participation which again suffered the lack of seriousness already discussed. Most of the 12.5% who said they had participated argued that this participation was not effective as they were represented by handpicked, primarily on political not representative ground. One holder of college certificate and rural based PWD expressed that:

Yes we have participated but indirectly. This means that I know what CBEF is about and what purposes it should serve. However, I don't say that this indirect participation is effective. What is that out representative was a person who walked with the Governor's team as he sought to be elected and later was appointed as our rep at CBEF and as the governor's advisor on PWDs issues. Nothing has been done and it is expected within the context of her appointment [A P1 Teacher and a PWD leaving in Muhoroni Koru Ward, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023].

➤ *Awareness on the Kisumu Disability Act*

The foundation for the legality of all disability related issues, including PWDs participation and need for it is the Kisumu County Disability Act (KCDA). As the PFMA and the Kenya National Public Participation Policy requires, county governments do not only have the responsibility to make disability policies and laws, the also have the responsibility to ensure that PWDs are aware of such frameworks. The KCDA was launched in 2016 with the sole aim of localizing the national PWD Act by mainstreaming PWDs issues into county governance and developmental issues. It aims to transform among other things, other things interventions targeted at PWDs from charity-based approaches to rights-based approaches through their inclusion.

However, as shown in table 5 below, county government of Kisumu seems not to have launched enough campaign or no campaign at all as most PWDs 180 (90%) have never heard of the act as compared to only 20 (10%) who have heard Kisumu Disability Act.

- *Do you know or have you ever heard of what the county of Kisumu Disability Act is about and/or read about it?*

Table 5 Awareness on the Kisumu Disability Act

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	20	10	10	10
	No	180	90	90	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

This raises the question of what really compels the PWDs to participate if they are not aware of the Act that touches on their right to participate and be included in county processes, key among which is the budgeting and planning process. Examining this worrying finding during the FGDs with representatives of PWDs from each wards, the researcher realized that even the grassroots leaders themselves were wallowing in a state of unawareness. The question that became traumatizing to the researcher being; how can a blind man lead a blind man? If grassroots leaders who should serve as the mouth-pieces of rural-based PWDs by attending and bringing back feedback on this such as laws are unaware what can be so unexpected? This finding is consistent with the social model perspective that argues that the problem facing disability is not impairment but the social construction of impairment as disability which leads to the view of PWDs as those should only be dealt with on charity basis not as actively and proactive individuals partaking in their own development. One class-eight dropout asserted this view during a phone call-administered questionnaire thus:

What policymakers think is that they know our problem. They can sit, think fir us and do what we need. This cannot happen. We say nothing is for us without us. We must be involved for our lives to change [A participant PWD during a survey on Phone, 3th May 2023]

However, upon cross-tabulating this question on awareness of KCDA with the socio-demographic variable of level of education, it emerged very interestingly that all 20(10%) those PWDs who had college/university education across the wards had heard and read the Act. This further shows us the need for proper education of the PWDs. Education, seems to be a determinant of their participation in county budgeting and planning processes, as those aware will likely participate in the processes.

- *Level of education \* Do you know or have you ever heard of what the county of Kisumu Disability Act is about and or/read it? Cross-tabulation*

Table 6 Effect of PWD Level of Education on Awareness on Kisumu County Disability Act

		Count		Total
		Do you know or have you ever heard of what the county of Kisumu Disability Act is about?		
		Yes	No	
Level of education	No formal education	0	100	100
	Primary completed	0	35	35
	Secondary not completed	0	30	30
	College/university completed	20	15	35
Total		20	175	200

Source: Field Data (2023).

➤ Awareness of the County Fiscal Strategy Paper

The County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP) is another important budget planning policy paper. PWDs awareness of it therefore, is part and parcel of the determinants of their inclusion in county budgeting processes. However, the study established that only 2% (four PWDs) were aware or had heard about this policy paper. This shows that awareness of this paper was poorest compared to the CBEF and the Disability Act. This shows the need for even a huge investment in public awareness creation. In deed the two were tracked through the questions and interviewed as key

informants. The study established that they were all university graduates one in social work and another in sociology and were employed and all had had some experiences with working at county-related departments. This shows that had they been just the common PWDs, they would exhibit the lack of awareness faced b their colleagues.

- Do you know or have you ever heard of what the County Fiscal Strategy Paper is?

Table 7 Awareness [have heard] of the County Fiscal Strategy Paper

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	2	2	2
	No	196	98	98	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

What does the CFSP mean? The document provides an overview of the county's performance during the current half-year, along with financial projections, sector priorities, and sector ceilings for the upcoming year. It also includes essential economic data and assumptions used in developing the budget for the next fiscal year, as outlined in the Public Finance Management Act, Section 117 (GoK, 2012). It is crucial to emphasize that the County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP) represents the government's initial budgetary thinking for the following year, acknowledging the possibility of accommodating new developments that may arise during the budget formulation period. Moreover, the CFSP considers feedback from various stakeholders, such as the cabinet, legislature, civil society, and the public – including the PWDs. However, the sector ceilings outlined

in the Budget Policy Statement (BPS) should generally remain unchanged throughout the budgeting process.

Since the CFSP has a window of opportunity for public participation, the study explored if those who were aware participated in this platform through giving their feedback in terms of suggestions of what allocations they think should go to the PWDs sub-sector. As the table below shows, none of the PWDs, including those that were aware of the CFSP was had took part in it. This further highlights the gap that exists in terms of PWDs inclusion into County Planning and Budgeting Processes (CPBP) in Kisumu County.

- Have you ever participated in the County Fiscal Strategy Paper is?

Table 8 Level of Participation in County Fiscal Strategy Paper is

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	0	0	0	0
	No	200	100	100	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

➤ Awareness of the County Budget Proposal

As the table 9 below summarizes, the study established that awareness of the County Budget Proposal (CBP) was very low with only 10 PWDs (5%) saying that they aware of this policy paper.

- *Do you know or have you ever heard of what the County Budget Proposal is?*

Table 9 Awareness of the County Budget Proposal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	5	5	5
	No	190	95	95	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

However, turning to the policymakers at the department of Social services, gender and PWDs through Key Informant Interviews, the study found that awareness was high and with in-depth understanding of the Proposal almost closer to how it is described in the PFMA. One policymaker, at the National Gender Focal Person’s Office asserted:

The budget proposal is a comprehensive document that is submitted to Parliament and should be made accessible to the public in a timely manner. It encompasses a range of crucial information, including revenue and expenditure estimates, macroeconomic indicators, debt details, multi-year budget data, and public policy information [Policy Maker at County, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023]

This begs the question of what are policymakers doing in terms of disseminating critical information for members to come and participate.

Significantly, the budget proposal plays a vital role as it serves as the principal means through which the government translates its key policy objectives into actionable plans. It is important to note that, in Kenya, the revenue collection measures are presented separately in the Finance Bill. Nevertheless, the level of expenditure is founded on the revenue estimates already presented in the

County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP) or the Budget Policy Statement (BPS).

Given that the government makes decisions regarding revenues, expenditures, and debt on behalf of all citizens, it becomes imperative for the government to offer a comprehensive justification for its taxation, borrowing, and spending plans well before the budget is enacted. This approach enables informed public debate and facilitates informed legislative discussions and approvals. Moreover, it allows citizens to gain insights into how their hard-earned money is being collected and allocated. Additionally, According to the PFMA (GoK, 2012), the government should produce a more accessible version of the budget, known as the CITIZENS BUDGET, in non-technical language. This version is specifically tailored to ease the process of public deliberation, ensuring that citizens can engage more effectively with the budgetary information and actively participate in the decision-making process. Upon examining this provision of the citizen’s version, during KIIs and FGDs. The results show that PWDs don’t care about these platforms. The few they tried it was misunderstanding.

- *Have you ever got a copy of the CITIZEN’s BUDGET?*

Table 10 Access to Citizens Versions of the County Budget Proposal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	0	0	0	0
	No	200	100	100	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

The study went ahead to examine the levels of participation of PWDs in the County Budget Proposal The study established that 5% (10 PWDs) had participated in the CBP with majority reporting that they had not been part of this process [table . This is the same number of those who were aware further hinting to us that awareness affects participation. Moreover this shows that those PWDs that attend this discussions are not provided with copies of the popular version. Secondly most PWDs lamented that:

We are forced to sit at the very back of the town hall. The CBP is only discussed at the town hall I don’t think it comes to the sub-county. So when we are at the back, only a few copies are also brought and the able bodied scramble for them. Us we cannot struggle that way [A formerly employed PWD narrates during an FDG held at Chemelil Sugar Chief’s Camp, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023].

- *Have you Participated in the County Budget Proposal?*

Table 11 Participation of PWDs in the County Budget Proposal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	5	5	5
	No	190	95	95	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)



➤ *Awareness of County Appropriation Act*

The study then examined the levels of awareness of the PWDs of the budget appropriation Act. As table 12 below shows, the status of awareness of this piece of legal framework was more or less the same as the CBP. Only 5% knew of it, moreover, based on physical analysis of the questionnaires, the same PWDs who were aware of the CBP and had participated in it were the same who were aware of

the CAA. Their characteristics in terms of socio-demographic variables was that they had college and university education and were formerly employed. This further shows that those empowered PWDs were able to follow through county processes.

- *Are you Aware of what the Budget Appropriation Act is?*

Table 12 Awareness of County Budget Appropriation Act (CBAA)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	5	5	5
	No	190	95	95	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

This budget document, also referred to as the enacted budget, is the official legal instrument that becomes law and serves as the framework for implementation during the upcoming fiscal year. It holds significant importance as the definitive law of the land, providing the fundamental information required for any analysis carried out throughout the budgetary period. Essentially, it forms the baseline against which the implementation phase of the budget is monitored and assessed.

Going beyond the survey, the researcher attempted to qualitative (through open ended survey questions) examine if the PWDs who had participated in the CBP and were aware of the appropriation acts understood the boundaries between the two. The researcher found that this even this more enlightened category of PWDs were not aware of the boundaries between these two documents. All of them perceived that the “appropriation act preceded the CBP” which was the exact reverse in reality.

Understanding the distinctions between the budget proposal and the appropriation acts is crucial, as the latter reflects the modifications introduced by the legislature to the executive's initial budget proposal and so PWDs can effectively engage even at this level by asking questions as whether these additions are appropriate or not. This comprehension helps to grasp the actual budgetary allocations and priorities that have been approved and ratified by the legislative body, shaping the course of public expenditures and fiscal activities for the specified fiscal year. A key informant interviewee from United Persons with Disability Kenya (UPD-K) asserted that the confusion the PWDs had was basically due to the lack of the political class

and those in the administrative wings at social departments to empower the PWDs for effective participation. He asserted:

We the PWDs wish to be part and parcel of the processes. But this as much our responsibility as it is for those political leaders and the people they have put in the social departments to push for our rights – key being inclusion in budgeting processes. We cannot effectively involve in this if measures are not put in place to educate us on the process from first stage to the last. We have to understanding the county budgeting calendar to keep vigil of what times we need to participate [Disability Leader from UPD-K, Key Informant Interview, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023].

➤ *Awareness of County Budget Implementation Reports*

One the budget proposal is ready and is effectively legalized through the budget appropriation act, implementation begins. The counties and the Controller of Budget and the national government generate and release quarterly reports, as mandated by the Constitution (Article 228). The PWDs as well as other components of public have a right to follow through the implementation of the county budget and keep the implementers on watch especially on issues that touch on PWDs. The study, however, established that this perhaps the level where participation is lowest. As table 13 summarizes, none of the rural-based PWDs were aware of the existence of the County Budget Implementation Report (CBIR).

- *Are you aware of the County budget Implementation Reports?*

Table 13 Awareness of County Budget Implementation Reports

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	0	0	0	0
	No	200	100	100	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

The need for awareness of the CBIR owes to their significance in the process, especially at the implementation stage. These reports serve to update and inform stakeholders about the current state of affairs, encompassing actual

revenues and expenditures compared to the original targets set in the budget, recent economic developments like growth and inflation, financial strategies to manage the budget deficit, and the status of public debt (IBP Kenya, 2022).

The significance of these reports lies in their ability to offer detailed insights into the progress of budget implementation throughout the budgetary year. By presenting periodic assessments of revenue and expenditure trends up to the present date, they provide a comprehensive understanding of any noteworthy deviations from anticipated expectations. This facilitates a proactive approach to address any issues in the execution of the budget before the year comes to a close, aligning with the principles set forth in the Public Finance Management Act of 2012, Section 101 (GoK, 2012).

Furthermore, these reports play a critical role in offering timely and regular information to policymakers, the press, and the public. Interviewing the County Director for Finance, he asserted that:

Such transparency allows for prompt identification and resolution of challenges that may arise during the budget execution process, promoting fiscal responsibility and effective governance. The availability of this valuable data enables stakeholders to make informed decisions, make

necessary adjustments, and ensure efficient utilization of resources in accordance with the budgetary plans, thereby contributing to sound financial management and accountability within the county and national administration. This is impossible if the public especially the vulnerable such as PWDs don't follow-up with the process [County Director for Finance and Administration, 2nd May 2023].

➤ *Awareness of County Budget Review and Outlook Papers (CBROP)*

The study also sought to understand the state of PWDs awareness of yet another important policy document – the CBROP. As table below summarizes, only 19 out of 200 (9%) of the PWDs sampled were aware of the CBROP. This however is higher than those aware of the CBIR, CBAA, CBP, and even the CFSP. This signifies a trend whereby participation could be somewhat easier or emphasized at the beginning, and lower during implementation.

- *Do you know or have you ever heard of what the County Budget review and Outlook Paper Looks Like?*

Table 14 Awareness of County Budget Review and Outlook Papers (CBROP)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	19	9	9	9
	No	181	91	91	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

The study found that once the fiscal year (FY) ends, a new one starts. The CBROP serves as a comprehensive review of the actual fiscal performance of the previous financial year while also updating the economic and financial forecast information in comparison to the County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP) (see e.g., IBP-Kenya, 2022 for similar procedure). This paper spans two critical stages: the formulation stage, as it examines past performance, and the evaluation stage, as it outlines the outlook for the forthcoming year. Its importance lies in providing essential performance information that allows the government, the public, and other stakeholders to actively engage in the next fiscal year's budget cycle from an informed standpoint. For PWDs, this is of immense value. A PWDs researcher with affiliations to Lenard Cheshire – a PWD programming organization with offices in Kisumu – elaborated on what value awareness and involvement in the CBROP has to PWDs.

Most of the times, PWDs projects are not implemented or halfway done. Worse, without any explanations. If PWDs can get involved in the CBROP, they can then ask difficult questions to policy makers and implementers on why and push them to complete stalled projects in the previous FY (PWD Research Expert – Leonard Cheshire, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023).

The County Budget Review and Outlook Paper (CBROP) further plays a significant role by offering provisional sector ceilings for each sector, enabling informed sector hearings that subsequently lead to the

preparation and approval of the CFSP (GoK, 2012). In essence, it operates akin to a draft version of the CFSP, empowering various sectors to develop well-grounded proposals for the upcoming year's budget. This aligns with the provisions of the Public Finance Management Act (Section 117), which seeks to facilitate a well-informed and participatory budgetary process, fostering accountability and effective resource allocation at the county level.

Seeking to understand what value forecasting helps with in terms of stakeholders' engagement, the study sought for explanations from key sectorial policy makers such as the County-concerned policy maker on Social Services, Youth Gender and PWDs. The policymaker argued that;

By analyzing past performance and providing projected data, the CBROP enables stakeholders to make informed decisions, improve financial planning, and ensure that budgetary priorities align with the county's long-term development objectives (Key Informant Interviewee – a Kisumu County policymaker from the department of Social Services, Youth, Gender, and PWDs, 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).

In terms of participation in the CBROP the study established that almost similar number (20 PWDs/10%) as those aware reported to had participated in the CBROP further showing that there are some levels of participation in budgeting and planning at the initial stages.

- *Do you know or have you ever heard of what the County of Kisumu Disability Act is about and/or read about it?*

Table 15 Participation in County Budget Review and Outlook Papers (CBROP)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	20	10	10	10
	No	180	90	90	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

➤ *Awareness of the County Audit Report*

Auditing or budget expenses evaluation is the last stage in county budgeting and planning processes. The document, issued annually by the country's Supreme Audit Institution, which is the Auditor-General, serves as an assessment of the government's year-end final accounts, gauging the effectiveness of utilizing public resources.

The significance of the Audit Reports (AR) lies in providing the public with an independent and credible account of the accuracy of the government's financial reporting concerning revenue generation, such as taxes, and the allocation of public funds during the preceding year. Additionally, it verifies whether the government has adhered to financial management laws and regulations.

The AR plays a pivotal role in completing the accountability loop, ensuring that at the onset of the year, when the legislature approves the budget outlining the government's intentions regarding taxation, borrowing, and expenditure of public funds, there is a subsequent need for

credible assurance at the year-end. This assurance is required by both the legislature and the public to ascertain the accuracy of the government's account on the implementation of the budget, ensuring it was done lawfully at all stages. The AR, thus, becomes an essential instrument in ensuring transparency, trust, and accountability within the government's financial operations, safeguarding the prudent use of public funds for the betterment of society.

Awareness and participation of the PWDs, like other parts of the publics should be maximum here, because the AR is what reveals what happened and what did not happen, where monies were misappropriated and where monies were prudently put into their intended activities. Unfortunately, 0% of the PWDs were neither aware nor had interacted with the AR for Kisumu.

- *Have you interacted with any Audit Reports for Kisumu County since devolution, 2013 or participated in the review of any audit report review public seminars?*

Table 16 Awareness or and Participation in Audit Report Review Seminars

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	0	0	0	0
	No	200	100	100	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data (2023)

**V. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore significant challenges in the awareness and participation levels of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Kisumu County's budgeting and planning processes. The low levels of awareness among PWDs regarding key county budgeting frameworks, such as the Annual Development Plan (ADP), County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), County Budget and Economic Forum (CBEF), Kisumu Disability Act (KCDA), County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP), and County Budget Proposal (CBP), are particularly concerning. These frameworks are essential for transparent and inclusive governance, allowing citizens to actively engage in shaping their county's development agenda. The lack of awareness not only hinders PWDs from effectively participating but also raises questions about the county's commitment to upholding their rights and ensuring equitable public participation. It is evident that awareness is a critical prerequisite for meaningful participation, and as such, there is an urgent need for targeted awareness campaigns aimed at educating PWDs about their rights, available frameworks, and the importance of their active involvement in county planning and budgeting processes.

Furthermore, the study reveals systemic challenges that hinder PWDs' participation even when they are aware of these frameworks. The perceived lack of independence and representation within the County Budget and Economic Forum (CBEF) highlights the need for structural reforms to ensure that PWDs' voices are genuinely heard and considered in decision-making processes. Additionally, physical barriers and limited access to budget-related discussions and documents pose significant obstacles to PWDs' effective participation. To address these issues and promote inclusivity, county authorities should prioritize creating accessible and inclusive spaces for engagement and disseminating simplified, easy-to-understand budget documents, such as Citizens' Budgets. Ultimately, enhancing the awareness and participation of PWDs in Kisumu County's budgeting and planning processes is not only a matter of social justice but also crucial for fostering inclusive and sustainable development that leaves no one behind.

The findings of the study regarding the awareness and participation levels of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Kisumu County's budgeting and planning processes underscore several critical points. Firstly, it is evident that PWDs in the region have limited awareness of key

budgetary documents, such as the County Budget Appropriation Act (CBAA). With only 5% of respondents acknowledging its existence, there is a concerning lack of understanding of the foundational legal framework that underpins the county's budget implementation. This limited awareness can be attributed to a lack of educational initiatives and outreach programs targeting PWDs. Without adequate knowledge of budgetary laws and regulations, PWDs are at a disadvantage when it comes to engaging in the budgeting process effectively. Therefore, there is an urgent need for targeted awareness campaigns and capacity-building programs to empower PWDs with the necessary information to participate meaningfully.

Secondly, the study reveals a perplexing misunderstanding among the PWDs who are aware of the CBAA and have participated in the County Budget Proposal (CBP). These individuals believe that the appropriation act precedes the CBP, which is the reverse of the actual process. This confusion highlights a significant gap in their comprehension of the relationships between budgetary documents. Such misconceptions could hinder their ability to scrutinize and question budget modifications introduced by the legislature effectively. Consequently, there is a clear imperative for comprehensive education initiatives that not only raise awareness of these documents but also provide a nuanced understanding of their interplay in the budgeting process. Policymakers and administrative officials bear the responsibility of rectifying these knowledge gaps and promoting transparency by ensuring PWDs are well-equipped to engage with budgetary matters.

In addition to these findings, the study emphasizes the broader issue of low awareness and participation among PWDs in other critical budget-related areas, including County Budget Implementation Reports (CBIR), County Budget Review and Outlook Papers (CBROP), and County Audit Reports (AR). These documents are instrumental in tracking budget implementation, assessing fiscal performance, and ensuring accountability. The complete lack of awareness in these areas highlights a systemic problem that needs to be urgently addressed. Policymakers and county administrators should invest in comprehensive awareness and capacity-building programs tailored specifically for PWDs. These initiatives would not only empower PWDs to actively participate in all stages of the budgeting and planning process but also promote inclusivity, transparency, and accountability within Kisumu County's financial governance. Ultimately, addressing these challenges will contribute to more equitable and effective budgeting and planning processes that benefit the entire community, including Persons with Disabilities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations can be made to various stakeholders to enhance the participation and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the budgeting and planning processes within Kisumu County and similar rural areas:

### ➤ *Kisumu County Government:*

- The county government should prioritize the development and implementation of educational programs tailored to PWDs, aimed at increasing their awareness and understanding of budgetary documents, including the County Budget Appropriation Act (CBAA), County Budget Implementation Reports (CBIR), and County Budget Review and Outlook Papers (CBROP).
- Budget documents should be made more accessible and simplified for PWDs, using plain language and visual aids to aid comprehension.
- The county government should ensure representation of PWDs in budget formulation and oversight committees to provide firsthand input and perspectives in the budgeting process.
- Infrastructure and facilities, including public buildings and meeting venues, should be made disability-friendly to enable PWDs' physical participation in budgeting-related activities.
- Future researchers should conduct more in-depth studies to explore the specific needs, challenges, and opportunities faced by PWDs in rural areas, especially their unique circumstances and how they intersect with budgetary processes.
- DPOs should intensify their advocacy efforts to push for the inclusion of PWDs in budgetary processes. They should also conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members about budgeting and planning matters.

### ➤ *Grassroots Organizations:*

Grassroots organizations should collaborate with DPOs to reach and empower PWDs at the community level, providing them with the necessary information and resources to engage effectively in budgeting and planning processes.

### ➤ *Kisumu County Directorate of Disability:*

The Directorate of Disability should organize regular capacity-building workshops and training sessions for PWDs, focused on budgetary matters and legal frameworks. They should also work closely with other county departments to ensure the implementation of disability-inclusive policies.

### ➤ *Kenyan Government:*

The national government should develop and enforce policies that promote the inclusion of PWDs in budgeting and planning processes at both county and national levels.

### ➤ *Donors and Organizations with Programs on Disability in Rural Areas:*

Donors and organizations should provide financial and technical support to initiatives that promote the inclusion of PWDs in rural budgetary processes. This support can be channeled into awareness campaigns, training, and capacity-building programs.



➤ **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Donors and organizations should incorporate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their programs on the participation of PWDs in budgeting and planning processes.

In conclusion, these recommendations aim to address the significant gaps in awareness and participation of PWDs in Kisumu County's budgeting and planning processes. By implementing these measures, stakeholders can work collectively to ensure that PWDs are not only aware of budgetary matters but also actively engage in shaping the financial governance of their communities, ultimately leading to more inclusive and equitable development.

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