

DEAFOP

Deaf outreach Program

Opportunities for persons with Disability and Women
in Embu County Public participation Act of 2015



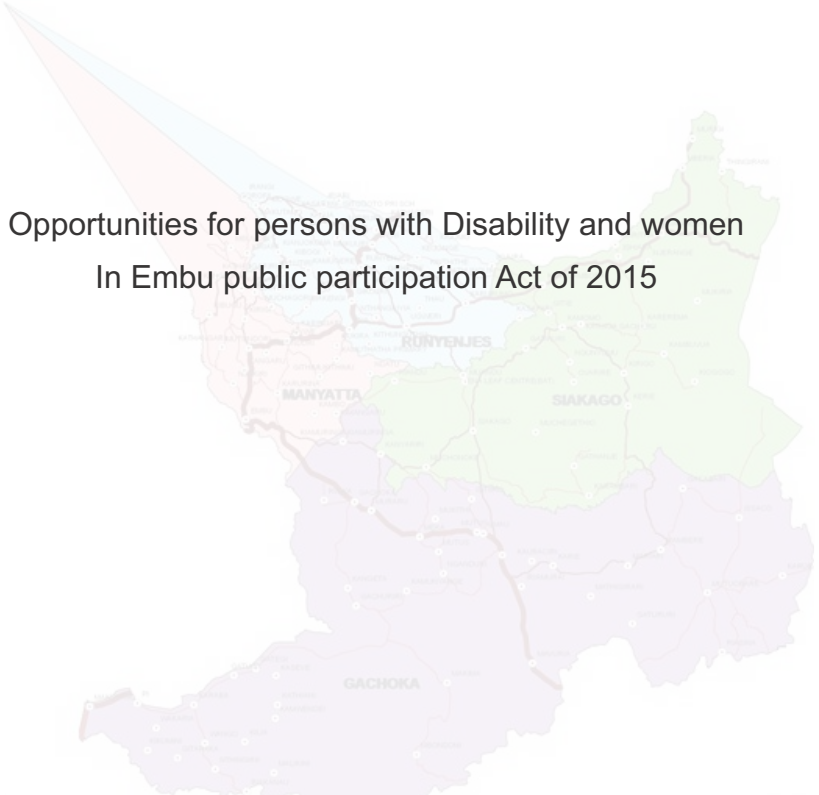
@ Deafop 2015

This is a documentation of our work in lobbying for women and disability inclusion enablers in Embu public participation Act of 2015 ,the material can be freely disseminated and used for educational or any other purpose with due acknowledgment from Deafop

The work was fully supported by Urgent Action Fund-Africa and the views/opinion expressed herein are of Deaf Outreach Program and do not necessarily reflect the views of Urgent Action Fund-Africa



For more information contact
Deaf Outreach Program (DEAFOP)
PO BOX 1229-10101
Karatina-Kenya
Email: info@deafopkenya.org
www.deafopkenya.org



Opportunities for persons with Disability and women
In Embu public participation Act of 2015



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Deaf Outreach Program (DEAFOP) could not have accomplished this work without the support and involvement of different stakeholders.

Our appreciation is extended to the following: Embu civil society organizations, department of Gender, culture, children and social development Embu County, administration committee in charge of public participation bill at the Embu county assembly and Embu women and persons with disability contributions

Special gratitude and acknowledgment goes to Urgent Action Fund-Africa for funding this noble project. Your trust and confidence towards our work in advocating for women and persons with disability rights is much appreciated.

We wish to recognize the project consultant Mr. Job Orina for his work and contribution and DEAFOP team comprising of Ann Gloria Njoki, Pauline Mbodze and Christine Kinya Kathaara for their efforts in ensuring full completion of the project.

PREFACE

This is a final report of our advocacy work in the development of Embu county Public participation Act of 2015, where our main focus was on advocating for women and persons with disability inclusion. The report details some of key successes of enablers that will facilitate Persons with Disability and women to participate effectively in successive public participation forums in the county.

The report also gives some recommendations that would enhance effective public participation within the county in addressing the priorities of the community. It also seeks to highlight current challenges that limit effective public participation in Embu County especially for persons with disability and women.

As an organization it is our hope that the Act shall be implemented while ensuring that disability enablers are adopted in enhancing the participation of persons with disability and the community of Embu County.

Ann Gloria Njoki
Deaf Outreach Program

1. INTRODUCTION

Women and persons with disability issues have continued to be silent and not being effectively addressed by the county governments, this is largely contributed by their exclusion in public participation forums. Public participation is every citizen right as enshrined in the Kenyan constitution 2010 and one of the best approaches in addressing issues that affect women and persons with disability.

This report highlights some of the advocacy enablers that will enhance persons with disability and women active involvement in Embu county public participation exercises which in turn will set a platform for them to present their priorities and needs.

2. UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation can be defined as the practice or principle by which the community is incorporated in decision making in issues concerning them. Creighton (2005) defines public participation as a process by which public concerns, Needs and values are incorporated into government and corporate decision making.

Study and practice have shown that when done correctly public participation has the power to

- I. Bring government closer to its community
- II. Produce more transparent public polices and decision
- III. Enable citizen to hold its leaders and government accountable
- IV. Build ownership and sustainability for development initiatives
- V. Gives voices to marginalized groups
- VI. Link development initiative to people real need

3. WOMEN AND PERSON WITH DISABILITY INCLUSION IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

Marginalized groups including (women, persons with disability and youth) do not always have access to necessary resources or positions for their voices to be heard due to economic, social and political barriers.

Public participation is one way to ensure that the group has been given a voice where it can contribute effectively during budget preparation process and in development of policies.

Inclusion of persons with disability and women in public participation can be a catalyst for:

- I. Accountable ,gender and disability sensitive governance
- II. Increased Gender and disability aware governance and community
- III. Increased opportunity and choice for women and PWD
- IV. More empowered women and persons with disability to influence change
- V. Improved wellbeing outcome for persons with disability in relation to employment ,education ,health and social resources
- VI. Improved mainstream of disability issues in development

Some of the platforms for public participation in Embu County includes but not limited to; counties forums, Sub-counties forums, Ward level forums, budgeting committee, participation in counties bill and policies and public petitioning

Advocacy Enablers for women and persons with disability in Embu county public participation Act of 2015

1.1 Embu county public participation committee

The composition of Embu county public participation committee shall adhere to the two third gender rule and shall have the following persons representing special interest groups

- I. One person representing persons with disabilities
- II. One person representing nongovernmental organization in the county
- III. One person representing the Youth
- IV. One person representing faith based organization

1.2 Citizen participation forums

- I. The committee shall ensure full engagement and participation of all person including women and persons with disability through effective and full publicization of the forums .
- II. The committee shall ensure that the venue selected shall be accessible to all person including person with disabilities
- III. The committee shall ensure that the language used is understandable by all participants including person with disability which gives an allowance of including Kenya sign language

1.3 Affirmative Actions in Embu public participation Act of 2015

The Embu public participation Act of 2015 has provided for an affirmative action to include participation of minority and marginalized group to

- (a) Participate in all matters that affect them and are represented in governance and other spheres of life;
- (b) Be provided with special opportunities in all areas of economic, educational, social, religious and political fields;
- (c) Be provided with special opportunities for access to employment;
- (d) Develop their ethnic and cultural values, languages and practices;
- (e) Have reasonable access to water, health services and infrastructure;
- (f) Pursue their personal development;
- (g) Live in dignity and respect and be free from abuse;
- (h) Be free from discrimination including but not limited on the basis of language, religion, culture, national or social origin, sex, caste, birth, descent or other status;
- (i) Be free from hostility, violence and abuse as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious or other identity.

4 POLICY RECOMMEDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IMPLIMENTATION IN EMBU COUNTY

Some of the Key elements that are necessary for effective public participation by women and person with disability as well as general public in Embu County include the following

1. Enhanced participation through Awareness creation and access to information

Access to information is crucial as a right in its own regard and is also central to the functioning of democracy and enforcement of other rights. Without it the principles of devolution as enshrined in Article 174 of the constitution will not be realized.

The County government of Embu should adopt proactive disclosure of information to enhance meaningful participation by all members of the community. Some of the recommendations from the community to enhance access to information were

- Use of market notice board and Local radio station as well as Sign language caption in calling for meeting and disseminating any other relevant counties information.
- Provide timely information and sufficient notice for forthcoming meeting.
- Provide information in format accessible to wide group of people including persons with disability and translate to local language where necessary.

II. Civic education programmes to promote public participation

An observation in relation to civic education was that majority of persons with disability and women are not conversant with the functions of the county government and their right towards influencing change for themselves and their communities hence their issues remain unvoiced and unaddressed.

Active participation of marginalized group requires capacity building to both the community groupings as well as the administrative persons in charge of public participation forums. We recommend that the public participation committee and other stakeholders invest on civic education specifically to women and person with disability of Embu County.

III. Shift from passive public participation to active participation

It was noted that the current public participation in Embu County does not encourage active participation by the participant through the following:

- Short notice for calling meeting hence participant not prepared for meeting
- No prior information on agenda of the meeting

- Facilitating participants with monies for attending
- Pre conceived decision which are read and explained to public without considering their inputs

IV. Citizen participation in monitoring and evaluation

Community participation in all stages of development is necessary in ensuring sustainable development and ownership. Mechanism of social audit in evaluating the counties development progress and performance need to be put in place in Embu County.

This is currently lacking mainly because of; poor feedback reporting mechanism, lack of civic education, weak grassroots organization in matters of governance and inaccessible information which can lead to misappropriation of fund and uninformed priorities.

V. Strengthening of civil society working with women and person with disabilities

Civil societies are key players in establishing effective public participation systems and proper governance. A weak civil society means a weak society, strengthening of grassroots civil society is needed in Embu County in the area of advocacy and activism.

The County government and civil society should also establish mechanism and platform for engagement in complimenting each other.

Civil society organizations especially those working with women and persons with disability at the county level are encouraged to deepen and strengthen their civic education programs in order to promote active citizenship. They should also strengthen their capacity and that of their community to participate in devolved governance processes, review of performance by their county governments and to exact accountability and improved service delivery.