CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

A Selection of Case Studies

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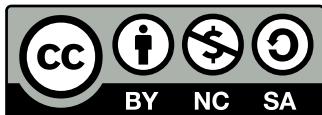
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Abbreviations

ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
AHADI	Agile and Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions
ATGL	Tunisian Association of Local Governance
CBO	Community-based organization
CDA	Community development association
CDC	Community development council
CFAD	Centre de Formation et d'Appui à La Décentralisation (Centre for Training and Support for Decentralization)
CIG	Common initiative group
CSO	Civil society organization
EAC	East African Community
EALGF	East African Local Government Forum
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FBO	Faith-based organization
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
INGO	International non-governmental organization
JADF	Joint Action Development Forum
LGAs	Local government areas
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NDCO	Neighbourhood development committee
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OBS	Open Budget Survey
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPIMA	Public Policy Information Monitoring and Advocacy
PSIMT	Plan Stratégique Indicatif à Moyen Terme (Medium Term Indicative Strategic Plan)
SADC	Southern African Development Community

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TACID	Toile des Associations pour le Civisme et le Développement (Tunisian Associations for Citizenship and Development)
TPTTP	Taking Parliament to the People
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCPs	Village community projects
VIDCOs	Village development committees
WADCOs	Ward development committees
ZIMCODD	Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

Acknowledgements

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report is the result of an exploratory study which adopted several strategies to try to understand the issues, perspectives and results from citizen participation in local governance across various countries and regions in Africa. The approach involved a desk-based literature review, where published information, grey literature and project reports on citizen participation in local governance in selected countries were reviewed. This was further complemented with virtual consultations, targeting respondents based on their knowledge or experience in the seven countries prioritized for this study. The seven countries comprise: Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. The criteria used to identify those countries includes regional coverage of the African continent as follows: Cameroon representing Central Africa; Tunisia representing North Africa; Nigeria West Africa; Kenya and Rwanda East Africa; and South Africa and Zimbabwe Southern Africa. Countries that have local governance systems and decentralized structures, as well as countries that provide a combination of well-performing and less well-performing local government administrations, also informed the choice of the list of countries selected for in-depth study. A case study approach was adopted, to guide the research. The study also sought evidence linking national legal frameworks with continental and regional frameworks, and how (if at all) these have provided a guide on the operationalization of public participation in local governance, particularly in the seven case study countries.

The study had the following objectives:

1. Review continental and regional frameworks guiding public participation in local governance.
2. Assess the guiding legislative frameworks for public participation in the selected countries.
3. Assess the existing platforms and mechanisms for public participation in local governance in the selected countries.
4. Assess the role of civil society and other non-state actors in enhancing citizen participation in local governance in the selected countries.
5. Recommend policy strategies and mechanisms to enhance public participation in local governance.

As is typical of case study research, the findings from this study are not generalizable to reflect other countries on the African continent, but they provide an in-depth understanding of the broad issues, patterns and trends across the regions, and the circumstances that have an impact on the effectiveness of public participation in local governance. These factors are discussed briefly below.

HIGHLIGHT OF KEY FINDINGS

The comparative analysis of the platforms and mechanisms for public participation across the seven case study countries reveals that there are several factors that are critical for the success of public participation in local governance across the jurisdictions studied. The main factors are: (a) the political economy and nature of the government; (b) adequacy of the provisions in the policy and legal framework; (c) the capacity of local governments; (d) citizen awareness and civic education; (e) citizens' access to information; and (f) civil society organizations' (CSOs') capacity and engagement in social accountability processes (the processes where citizens hold the government accountable).

Country-level political economy and nature of the government
The country case studies show that the nature of the government and the dominant political ideology determine the effectiveness of decentralization and also the design of the citizen engagement

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activities. In Cameroon, the longstanding conflict has inevitably contributed to the rise of the dominant centralized government and a tendency to recentralize. For Kenya, historical marginalization and inequalities, coupled with successive ethnically polarized politics, inevitably culminated in the civil strife of 2007–2008. The creation of the new Constitution (2010) was a process designed to address these longstanding grievances and it then paved the way for the radical decentralization reforms in place today. In Rwanda, post-genocide, there was a need to resolve the fractured social fabric and spur rapid economic development, which has contributed to the strong central government and authoritarian regime. For South Africa, as it is the most unequal country in the world, with its apartheid history and its present-day extreme inequality that favours the minority white race, the massive efforts to create a legal framework through the 1996 Constitution have not enabled an authentic and meaningful citizen engagement in local governance processes. In Tunisia, the autocratic regimes prior to the 2011 revolution, as well as afterwards, have heavily controlled public participation in governance. Despite attempts to strengthen local governance after the revolution, the post-revolution structures were undermined following the 2021 political shifts that led to a new Constitution in June 2022. With Zimbabwe's continued trajectory of centralization and recentralization, and its limited finances for effective local governance, the administrative structure has not created a good environment for effective citizen participation in local governance.

Adequacy of the provisions in the policy and legal framework

While only a handful of countries in Africa have ratified the regional and continental frameworks that support decentralization and local governance, most countries have adopted important provisions from the continental charters and protocols, as evident in their national legislation. Despite being the only country among the seven that has ratified the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development, Cameroon has made the least progress on decentralization and public participation in local governance. Other countries, such as Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa, have national legal frameworks that support decentralization and citizen engagement in local governance, but the operationalization of these frameworks is problematic and ineffective. For Tunisia, progress made earlier in the legal framework

later regressed as a new political administration changed the laws and governmental structures. The presence of legal and policy frameworks at continental, regional or national levels does not guarantee effective public participation in local governance. These are merely formal provisions in law, which are often overridden by less visible factors such as those that define the political economy of the country.

Capacity of local governments

Capacity concerns include the limited financial, human and structural resources of local governments, hampering their ability to effectively facilitate citizen engagement activities. It is notable that local authorities in several countries carry out public participation activities to simply comply with the laws and policy requirements and not necessarily to achieve any meaningful consultation. In Zimbabwe and Kenya, weak public participation was reported arising from citizen disengagement with local governance processes and a lack of adequate interface mechanisms between citizens and local governments. As a result, the public participation activities are tokenistic in nature—often poorly organized and poorly attended by citizens. Local governments often lack the capacity needed to facilitate such public meetings and thus generate value from interacting with the public. The existence of guiding legal frameworks, whether at a continental, regional or national level, is not enough by itself. The legal framework assigns roles to local government officials but does not spell out the actual processes and budget provisions to secure meaningful citizen engagement. In the absence of formally defined and budgeted structures for citizen participation, local government officials are largely left to invent their own processes, but mainly they simply comply with legal requirements for public participation. Further, gender concerns are given only tokenistic attention, with most local government officials understanding 'gender inclusion' to imply the mere presence of women at public meetings and not the meaningful engagement that seeks to transform gender disparities, address gender needs and build empowerment towards transformation.

Capacity concerns include the limited financial, human and structural resources of local governments, hampering their ability to effectively facilitate citizen engagement activities.

Citizen awareness and civic education

In many instances across most jurisdictions, where public forums and citizen engagement meetings have been organized, they often

turn out to be mere platforms for complaints and grievances. Often, political manipulation also takes place and this erodes the core intention of public participation in local governance processes. Citizens' limited understanding of local governance processes, their own role responsibilities, undermines their participation. Inadequate civic education for citizens also significantly limits the quality of people's interactions with local governance processes. Further, the expectation for reward as a precondition for citizens' participation erodes their engagement. The need for a comprehensive civic education curriculum, which is effectively rolled out and adequately financed, is a key recommendation from this study.

Transparent governance is a core provision in the continental, regional and national legal frameworks for decentralization and local governance.

Citizens' access to information

Corruption perception is high in local governments across many jurisdictions in Africa. Where corruption is less overt in countries like Rwanda, the decision making process is still opaque, with citizens often not confident that their contribution to the local governance process is considered at all. Transparent governance, which implies accountability, openness, access to government information and unobstructed communication, is a core provision in the continental, regional and national legal frameworks for decentralization and local governance. Considering that public participation is intended to check the excesses in governance, among other things, local government officials are reluctant to provide citizens with the requisite information. Subsequently, as seen in Kenya, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, local government officials provide bulky planning and budgeting documents written in inaccessible technical language just hours before formal public forums—a practice that ensures that citizens cannot effectively read, interpret and provide meaningful contributions to these documents to influence planning, budgeting and service delivery processes.

CSOs' capacity and engagement in social accountability processes

Various studies across the different regions confirm that CSOs have made significant contributions to enhancing citizen engagement in public policy processes, including local governance. CSO networks have been noted to shore up greater impact than those CSOs that work on their own. This is because networks capitalize on strength in numbers, are able to agitate for change in sensitive areas, such

as accountability and transparency in governance, and can map themselves across different geographical localities to push for social accountability. Given that they have institutional-style organization but no bureaucratic limitations, CSOs are able to mobilize themselves quickly and can organize meetings with citizens and roll out programmes, such as purpose-driven civic education, more efficiently than government institutions can.

In Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda, civil society engagement in social accountability processes proved to be highly effective, where there was adequate funding for their work. Social accountability activities initiated by CSOs—such as public expenditure tracking (Kenya), citizen score cards (Kenya and Rwanda), participatory and gender responsive budgets (Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe)—were all highly effective, albeit implemented at a small scale due to funding limitations. However, CSOs struggle to access financing to maintain their activities and sustain the gains made during their work. They are also often subject to political interference and manipulation, in more restrictive governance environments. As seen in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, there is a need to build skills for CSOs operating at a subnational level, as they are often not on a par with those at the national level. This study found that most CSOs at local levels do not always understand the right entry points to influence local governance processes and they do not always understand the public expenditure management processes. A majority are also not familiar with existing legal frameworks that guide public participation and civic engagement, and they require sessions to familiarize themselves with these. Areas where CSO capacity strengthening is required range from institutional and organizational development to issue-building and policy advocacy, as well as civic education on citizen responsibilities in local governance, resource mobilization, monitoring and outcome tracking, financial management, local government policy planning and budgeting, among others.

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There are strong and supportive provisions available to African countries in global, continental and regional charters, conventions, declarations and protocols that seek to enhance public participation in decentralized governance.

CONCLUSION

Provisions that exist in continental and regional frameworks in Africa for public participation in local governance

There are strong and supportive provisions available to African countries in global, continental and regional charters, conventions, declarations and protocols that seek to enhance public participation in decentralized governance. Key among these at the global level are the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The main continental frameworks are the African Union's Agenda 2063, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development, among others. The last is perhaps the foremost charter providing guidance on decentralization, local-level governance and civic engagement. This study found that only a few countries have signed, ratified or deposited their Charter with the African Union Commission. Despite this, the national-level legislation on local governance still reflects the provisions in the regional, continental and global frameworks, implying that there has been some level of adoption.

Extent to which existing frameworks provide guidance on public participation

From the review of the country case studies, by adopting provisions in external guiding legal and policy frameworks in countries' own national legal frameworks, this may not necessarily have translated to implementation and operationalization of these provisions at country level. Countries with national legal frameworks have an additional requirement that local government authorities should localize these to the local context in order to give effect to the provisions. This requirement for localization has not been fully realized in any of the seven countries reviewed and this may be a true reflection of the situation in many other countries on the African continent.

Results of using different frameworks

Nearly all countries have some level of national and local legislation on decentralization and local governance. It is also clear that even those that have not ratified external legal frameworks can

demonstrate the inclusion of provisions from these frameworks in their own national laws. This, by itself, does not mean much, however, as there are external factors that determine the how citizen participation in local governance is operationalized. Some form of public participation is taking place and some of the successful cases may be attributed to the provisions in the regional and continental frameworks. However, the link is blurred and can only be assumed, given that very few countries have formally ratified these frameworks. In the case of Cameroon, despite being the only one of the seven countries in this study that has ratified the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development, the actual operationalization of decentralization and citizen engagement in the country is among the poorest in the region.

Existing formal mechanisms and platforms for public participation in local governance

Countries have demonstrated a variety of mechanisms and platforms for public participation. Some are anchored in law and others have come about as a result of a country's existing circumstances. The mechanisms and platforms have also been determined by contextual issues, as seen in the following examples: the community peace forums in Cameroon; the social accountability processes in Kenya; the local-level electoral processes in Nigeria; the tradition-informed home-grown solutions in Rwanda; the people's assemblies in South Africa; the e-spaces in Tunisia; and the neighbourhood and resident associations in Zimbabwe. While there is evidence of innovation by local governments and contributions by the civil society, this study did not find any country with a fully effective programme on public participation in local governance, particularly where this translates to citizens influencing service delivery.

Contributions from civil society and non-state actors

Evidence from the seven case study countries suggests that CSOs work more effectively and are more able to efficiently operationalize their mandate, than local government bureaucracies. This is particularly evident in CSOs' work in rolling out civic education, which may be attributed to various factors, including CSOs' economies of scale and apolitical nature. With more certainty in their financing, CSOs offer great prospects for positively influencing public participation in local governance as a partner complementing local governments.

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **To strengthen the enabling environment for public participation, government ministries that oversee decentralization should develop and roll out a national curriculum for civic education** at both levels of government, in order to address the poor outcomes in public participation. The need to support both the 'supply side' and the 'demand side' with regard to citizen engagement is urgent. Civic education sensitizes the public on their role as rights holders, builds skills to interpret devolution processes and nurtures citizen agency (including for women and youth) to advocate for accountability in local governance. Civic education for both duty bearers (local government authorities) and rights holders (citizens and CSOs) requires greater attention and an innovative approach. Cumulatively, if ignored, inadequate civic competence undermines the outcomes from citizen engagement in many countries, which calls for a structured, innovative and sustainable approach to the delivery of civic education. Partnership with civil society and other non-state actors has been seen in some jurisdictions to offer innovations in the delivery of civic education. Where citizens expect to be compensated for participating in local government activities, which has been detrimental to the processes that seek meaningful engagement, effective civic education would be one way to address this challenge. Local governments should also increase the budget available for public engagement activities and also innovate where possible, using social media platforms and other information and communications technology and traditional platforms to engage citizens in less costly ways.

2. **Secure access to information.** Countries that have enacted access to information laws should enforce and fully operationalize them. Making procedures, processes and policy and planning documents available, as well as simplifying them and presenting them in a citizen-friendly format, is a critical enabler of public participation.

3. **In order to fully comply with the legal and policy frameworks for public participation, including the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development, national and local governments should guarantee gender, age, (dis)ability and ethnic diversity inclusion.**

Given the diversity within populations and the differences in citizens' opinions, interests, priorities and perceptions, failing to recognize such diversity and to ensure gender and social inclusion may create conflict. Securing diversity-sensitive citizen engagement and the adoption of diverse needs in policy, planning and budgeting processes at local levels should be assured. Laws and policies at a decentralized level should be cognizant of these diversities and needs, and make provisions for full inclusivity. Where countries require local governments to enact their own legislation in order to give effect to the provisions in national laws relating to gender and social inclusion, this should be carried out immediately.

4. **Enact national policy and legislation on citizen engagement in local governance that also provides for setting enforceable norms and standards for public participation.** Given the weak policy and legal environment, with laws that merely indicate the general intention but do not provide for enforcement measures, the current experience of 'tokenistic' and citizen engagement 'for compliance' is likely to continue. Enforceable measures include legally setting a budget proportion that should be made available for public participation and linking public participation with performance management, as seen in the Rwanda example, replete with sanctions (for poor performance) and incentives (for well-performing local governments). Other enforceable measures include ensuring that the legal framework provides guidelines on the institutional structures (financing, staffing and facilities), procedures and systems that enable effective citizen engagement to actually happen. Without enforcement of the laws and policies, meaningful public participation may not be achieved.

5. **Political economy issues**, including manipulation of citizen engagement activities by diverse interests, would also be addressed if standard operating procedures for citizen participation were provided for in law. If in place, these standards of operation would also guide the behaviour of elected and executive officers, and civil society actors, to limit the negative impacts of sectarian interests on the effectiveness of citizen engagement activities.

6. The **capacity building** of different actors and their institutions, as part of strengthening the enabling environment for citizen engagement in local governance, remains a critical linchpin in

anchoring national and local governments' decentralization policy. This includes: the capacity development of CSOs, community-based organizations, women's organizations, informal citizen associations and local government authorities at all levels; and the provision of tools and methodologies for public participation, to complement and strengthen the existing mechanisms. CSOs and women's organizations will particularly need **organizational strengthening** to build institutional agency that understands the political economy of local governance and the place of civic engagement for enhanced service delivery. Organizational strengthening goes beyond training to include: mentorship over the longer term; access to small grants to facilitate actual activities and engagements, and platforms for peer learning, knowledge development and dissemination; and policy dialogue platforms at decentralized levels of governance.

7. International and local development organizations keen to support public participation in local governance should consider **system-wide interventions** that include **multi-stakeholder, multi-level and multi-sector engagement** to bolster civic engagement in local governance. In all seven countries, it is clear that even if some form of citizen engagement in local governance is taking place, as this is currently operationalized across all countries, it has not been effective due to the inter-connected challenges. Subsequently, a system-wide all-inclusive approach is recommended to address the systemic challenges associated with capacity and financing, centralism-related effects, coordination and planning.

8. Countries that have not **signed and ratified existing regional frameworks**—specifically, the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development—should be encouraged to do so. The African Union Commission, development organizations such as International IDEA and CSOs with national-level leverage should use their lobbying and advocacy structures to encourage host African Union member states to *sign and ratify*. Their work should not, however, stop there, since merely ratifying does not guarantee effective public participation and decentralization, as seen in the Cameroon example. There should be an additional step towards formulation of institutional arrangements to enforce citizens' participation at all levels of decentralized governance.

Chapter 1
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Local governance comprises a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs and mediate their differences, while exercising their rights and obligations at the local level (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). Public participation in local governance refers to 'situations whereby localities are effectively able to manage their affairs in a way that is accountable to residents' (West 2014). For local governance to be effective, there must be an institutional and legal organization whose job it is to ensure that citizens also fulfil their responsibilities with regard to local governance. The participation of citizens in governance is one of the underlying components of democracy. It connects citizens and the higher tiers of government and supports citizens' meaningful contribution to the democratic process at the local level (Amakihe, Ikhianosimhe and Fasanu 2017). Engaging citizens in the act of governance engenders transparency, improves accountability and public resource management and brings about good policy outcomes, development and the social well-being of citizens. When done effectively, it encourages inclusiveness and cohesiveness, speeds up problem-solving through community initiatives and generally improves the effectiveness of local authorities. It is also an important process for the democratization of social values. By involving citizens in decision-making processes, it allows for better planning and citizen ownership, increases perceptions of fairness and stimulates social innovation (Herian et al. 2012). The terms 'citizen participation', 'citizen engagement' and 'public participation' have been used interchangeably in this Report, but they refer to the same thing.

This is the report of an exploratory study, which adopted various approaches, to try to understand the issues, perspectives and results from citizen participation in local governance across various countries and regions in Africa. A desk-based literature review, where published information, grey literature and project reports on citizen participation in local governance was assessed, was at the core of the study. The literature review was further complemented with virtual consultations, targeting respondents based on their knowledge or experience in the seven countries prioritized for this study. The seven countries in the study are: Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. The criteria used to identify those countries included geographical coverage of the main regions of Africa, specifically: Central Africa, represented by Cameroon; North Africa, represented by Tunisia; West Africa, represented by Nigeria; East Africa, represented by Kenya and Rwanda; and Southern Africa, represented by South Africa and Zimbabwe.[1] Other criteria included the existence of local governance systems and decentralized structures, as well as a combination of well-performing and less well-performing local government administrations.

Respondents were drawn from civil society organizations (CSOs), local government authorities and development organizations operating in the decentralized governance space. A case study approach was also adopted, to guide the 'mode of inquiry' (Rini 2020: 9). In this case, the case study approach enabled an exploration of public participation in local governance by considering and comparing various experiences, data points for political economies within the African context. The study also sought evidence linking national legal frameworks to continental and regional frameworks and how (if at all) these have provided a guide on the operationalization of public participation in local governance, particularly in the seven case study countries.

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1   Central Africa is defined as the 11 members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), including Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, among others. North African states include Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. West Africa is defined as the 15 countries in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including Ghana, Liberia, Mali and Nigeria, among others. East Africa is defined as the seven members of the East African Community (EAC), including Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, among others. Southern Africa is defined as the 16 members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), including Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa and Zimbabwe, among others.

Through the individual country case studies, this study has achieved the following:

- a deeper illumination into the legal and policy frameworks anchoring public participation in local governments across different jurisdictions;

- an understanding of the enablers of effective public participation, including political economy issues and dynamics in each country; and

- context-specific comparisons, through a reflection on several case studies representing different African regions, and from several data points, enabling a pan-Africanist view of public participation in local governance.

The study methodology followed the steps in Figure 1, derived from Eisenhardt (1989).

Figure 1. **Study methodology**

Defining the study questions
Selecting study countries
Stakeholder consultations and desk-based review

Data collation and analysis

Comparative cross-country and cross-region analysis
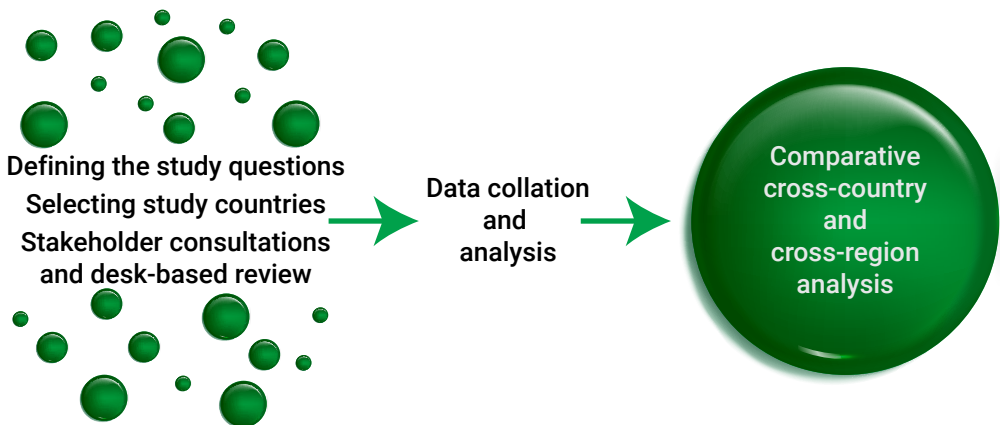
Image by vectorpocket on Freepik
Source: Derived from: Eisenhardt, K. M., 'Building theories from case study research', *The Academy of Management Review*, 14/4 (1989), pp. 532–50, <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4308385>.

1.1. **STUDY QUESTIONS**

The following study questions guided this study:

1. What provisions exist in continental and regional frameworks in Africa to enhance public participation in local governance?
2. What is the status of the domestication of continental and regional frameworks across Africa?
3. To what extent do existing regional frameworks provide guidance on public participation in local governance in Africa?
4. What is the evidence of the results of the different frameworks and practices/approaches occurring across the countries of study, in terms of their benefits or meeting their intended purpose, such as improved local governance, better responsiveness and transparency, community ownership, trust, perceived legitimacy or social cohesion?
5. What other legal frameworks or policies have been instituted in selected countries, to foster public participation in local governance?
6. What are the existing mechanisms or platforms for public participation instituted in selected countries?
7. To what extent has civil society and other non-state actors contributed to active citizen participation in local government in the selected countries?

1.2. **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study were:

1. Review continental and regional frameworks guiding public participation in local governance.
2. Assess the guiding legislative frameworks for public participation in the selected countries.
3. Assess the existing platforms and mechanisms for public participation in local governance in the selected countries.
4. Assess the role of civil society and other non-state actors in enhancing citizen participation in local governance in the selected countries.

5. Recommend policy strategies and mechanisms to enhance public participation in local governance.

As is typical of case study research, the findings from this study are not generalizable to reflect other countries on the African continent, but they provide an in-depth understanding of the broad issues, patterns and trends across the regions, and the circumstances that have an impact on the effectiveness of public participation in local governance. From the case studies, the impact of public participation on service delivery (where notable) can be determined.

The rest of this Report is organized as follows:
Chapter 2 provides a contextual overview of governance institutions and decentralization in Africa, particularly zeroing in on the historical aspects of governance that determine how decentralization has been framed and citizen participation operationalized within each country.

Chapter 3 provides the continental and regional frameworks that support decentralized governance and citizen participation in Africa and the extent to which these have been domesticated.

Chapter 4 discusses the extent to which the existing frameworks provide guidance on public participation in local governance in the selected countries.

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the existing formal institutions, mechanisms and practices relating to public participation in the selected countries.

Chapter 6 highlights the contributions of CSOs and non-state actors to citizen participation in local governance.

Chapter 7 provides an analytical interpretation and a comparative analysis of public participation in local governance in Africa.

Chapter 8 presents summaries of the country case studies.

Chapter 9 provides the conclusion from this study and policy recommendations.

Chapter 2

THE CONTEXT OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

The effectiveness of local governance and decentralization programmes is determined by many factors, not least the nature of the government in the country. Democracies, autocracies, developmental regimes and monarchies will each have a different experience of decentralization and, by extension, of citizen participation. Other factors that determine the institutions of local governance are the country's history, which shapes the ideology of the people and the political class to a large extent. Kenya's political ideology is shaped by post-colonial experiences and inequalities that contributed to the post-election violence of 2007–2008, which then led to the generation and eventual promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya (2010). Rwanda's 1994 genocide and the post-genocide cultural, social and economic degeneration has shaped the present political ideology and central government's dominance in the country. Cameroon has had a history dotted with internal and cross-border conflict, while South Africa's history and apartheid regime has shaped the nature of governance and the country's present political ideology. Tunisia has had its experience of the Arab Uprising that swept across North African nations, which has contributed to its present structure of governance. This mapping of historical experiences can be replicated across all the African regions, outlining how history has had an impact on constitutional, legislative and policy reforms, including those that shape local governance and, by extension, how citizen participation is anchored in decentralized governance.

Most of the governments in Africa are parliamentary democracies characterized by regular cycles of elections for presidential and legislative competitions, and with one dominant ruling party

alongside opposition parties. However, some have dominant party systems that often translate into repressive regimes. Rwanda has been ruled through a unitary presidential system, with a dominant central government bearing supreme authority over other units of government. The Rwanda Patriotic Front is the ruling party. In Cameroon, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement is the ruling party, with a full presidential system. Kenya is governed as a democracy under the 2010 Constitution, with a president, and an independent legislature and judiciary. The 2010 Constitution also ushered in Kenya's extensive decentralization reforms, which took the form of devolution. Devolution is considered a 'true' or 'complete' form of decentralization, where power, fiscal authority and autonomy are transferred from the central government to a local authority or government. Subsequently, 47 county autonomous governments were formed to govern alongside the national government.

The rest of this chapter provides a summary of the governance factors that have shaped the design of the decentralization and citizen engagement in the seven countries reviewed in this study.

2.1. **CAMEROON**

Cameroon has a dominant centralized governance structure, with its origins in the post-colonial state. Cameroon was initially a German colony, but, after World War I, it was split (unequally) between France and Britain, who took over the two regions as 'trust territories' under the League of Nations, with France taking the bigger portion (Konings and Nyamjoh 1997). This sowed the seeds of conflict in Cameroon—a conflict popularly referred to as the 'Anglophone problem'. Upon independence, the two regions were united to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon in 1961. A period of gradual centralization of power followed and the federal regions (Francophone and Anglophone) were dissolved to form a unilateral state dominated by the French-speaking government. With time, the Anglophone Cameroonians began to feel marginalized and isolated under the central government, and thus began a season of protests and agitation for political space. This was met with a military crackdown in the 1990s, leading to more repression and stronger central government domination. In 2016, the longstanding Anglophone

protests re-emerged, triggered by the government's perceived erosion of the education system in Anglophone zones, when French-speaking teachers were posted to teach in English-speaking schools. Prior to this, French-speaking judges had also been sent to preside over court sessions in the Anglophone regions, which was also seen to erode the judicial process in those regions (International Crisis Group 2010, 2017; Ateki 2017). However, in response to the agitation, the government security forces supressed the peaceful protests, leading to a prolonged conflict that has lasted up until the present time. In 2017, separatist groups emerged seeking secession of the Anglophone region and the creation of the Republic of the Ambazonia (International Crisis Group 2017; Ateki 2017). Under these circumstances, decentralization cannot take hold and, as a survival strategy, the central government becomes even more dominant as it mobilizes all policy and legal ways to ward off dissent. Meaningful public participation in governance processes would also not take root in these circumstances, where the central government and the social fabric are threatened by internal conflicts.

2.2. KENYA

Several factors inform Kenya's political economy. These include regional imbalances and ethnic inequalities in development, which claim their origins from the colonial era where the colonial administration concentrated development and service delivery in specific regions, to the exclusion of others, primarily to attract settler investments (Ghai 1973; Kanyinga 2019). However, upon independence, successive governments did not address the inequalities in development but continued with policies that further exacerbated these regional imbalances. This explains why some regions have better basic infrastructure (roads, railways, markets, hospitals and schools) than others. Poverty levels are also comparatively higher in some regions. The inequalities carry an ethnic dimension, as they follow specific ethnic settlement patterns, and this has directly contributed to politically charged and ethnically polarized national politics in Kenya.

While agitation for constitutional reform in Kenya started in the early 1990s, it was not until 2010 that a new constitution was created and

then promulgated in August. This was propelled by the post-election violence of 2007–2008, which was fuelled by ethnic polarization. The new Constitution (2010) gave consideration to historical grievances, ethnic divisions and regional imbalances and inequalities. Decentralization through devolution is one of the most important components of the new Constitution and was intended to cure the regional imbalances and diffuse power from the centre outwards to county governments. Therefore, the 2010 Constitution radically altered the structure of government and two levels of government were established—one national government and 47 county governments. The powers of the executive were also significantly reduced. More importantly, the 2010 Constitution has addressed the grievances related to exclusion, where marginalized counties that had been bypassed for development since independence can now access additional grants to address this inequality. Residents in counties now elect their own governments, which are led by a governor, members of the county legislative assemblies, a senator to represent the county at the national senate and a woman member of the national assembly. Devolution made provisions for decentralization of both resources (financial and human) and political power (autonomy) to help address the development distortions and imbalances of the past (Kanyinga 2019). Public participation is emphasized in the 2010 Constitution and in all supplementary laws from which devolution in Kenya derives, such as the County Governments Act (2012), the Public Finance Management Act (2012), Intergovernmental Relations Act (2012), among others.

2.3. **NIGERIA**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a West African nation, which operates a federal government system, with 36 states. Nigeria is presently the largest economy in Africa, with a population of over 200 million, and has at least 500 different ethnic groups and languages (World Population Prospects 2019). Nigeria is a former colony of the United Kingdom, and gained its independence in 1960. The country has experienced many conflicts, particularly in the period after independence, with the main internal conflict being the power struggle between the Igbo and Hausa-Fulani groups, as shown in the Biafra Civil War of 1967–1970, several coup d'états

and subsequent military rules (Ikwuyatum 2016). The last military head of state was Sani Abacha, who died in 1998, paving the way for an era of democratic governance and a return to civilian rule. Shortly afterwards, in 1999, Nigeria promulgated a new constitution that entrenched civilian rule. Over 62 per cent of Nigerians still live in extreme poverty (Ikwuyatum 2016). Among the priorities of governance include: fighting terrorism and the Boko Haram threat, reducing corruption, fostering economic development and encouraging youth employment. Other outstanding social and economic challenges facing Nigeria include population growth, poor governance, urbanization, unemployment, deteriorating socio-economic conditions, deepening poverty and a high level of wealth inequality.

Socially, an important factor in the political economy of Nigeria is the regional differentiation and inequalities that contributed to socio-economic marginalization and the conflict between the Muslim north and the Christian south of the country. This is evidenced in the distinct patterns of class groupings and elite formation seen between communities in southern Nigeria and northern Nigeria (Bienen 1983). Because of the south's proximity to the coast, residents there had earlier contact with Portuguese and other European slave masters from the 1600s and then with the British colonial administrators from 1861, and later again, with the Christian missionaries—all of which exposed them to trade opportunities and Western education (Bienen 1983). This meant that the south developed faster than the north, which remained under Islamic control into the 20th century, with less access to the opportunities available to southerners. As a result, the south had a higher concentration of educated Nigerians by the time of independence—an emerging social, economic and political elite that easily took over the reins of power at independence. While the formation of the elite preceded the discovery of oil in Nigeria, the colonial patterns of this elite formation gained root during the oil boom of the 1970s (Usman 2020, 2022). Unsurprisingly, the educated elite in the south had greater access to the new opportunities created by the oil economy, to the exclusion of the population in the north. Oil revenues provided new resources to state agencies, which made bureaucratic and political leadership a more lucrative proposition, which in turn led to political strife (Usman 2020, 2022). Continued conflict between the two regions and internal rebel groups,

including Boko Haram, as well as challenges related to governance have continued to undermine the effectiveness of decentralization in Nigeria. Public participation in local governance has also faced challenges.

2.4. RWANDA

Having emerged from the devastating economic, political and social impacts of the 1994 genocide, the government of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, with the current President Paul Kagame at the helm (then, Vice President), pursued a development model that would guarantee sustained development and quick results for the vulnerable citizens. To achieve this, Rwanda's leadership resorted to concentrating power at the top with the 'country run by a small resolute group of leaders, constituting a visionary developmentally committed elite' (Hasselskog 2018: 313). Subsequently, the country's ambitions, as previously espoused in the 'Vision 2020' and now in the 'Vision 2050', are clear—a state-led, top-down developmentalist agenda that seeks to advance and modernize Rwanda into an upper-middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050 (Rwanda 2020). Exploring the viability of a participatory model in the Rwandan state, Hasselskog (2018) found that, although Rwanda is committed to achieving public participation in local governance, its 'developmental state' approach makes this a Herculean task.

The Rwandan model of governance is marked by strong political leadership, an efficient bureaucratic political enterprise, and the rapid implementation of social and economic reforms, ensuring minimal corruption (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012). The social and economic meltdown that took place after the genocide resulted in a vulnerable population and a country in need of a full rebuild, advancing rapidly to meet urgent needs. By effectively suppressing the forces behind the genocide and sustaining complete control over those forces, the country's leadership gained legitimacy and an unchallenged autonomy in repositioning Rwanda on a rapid development trajectory (Hasselskog 2015, 2018). Therefore, to achieve this level of development at relative speed and with great efficiency in the state bureaucracy, Rwanda had to adopt a top-down approach to development, led by a lean political elite with background

support from a highly disciplined corruption-averse public service in pursuit of radical transformation. Embracing democratic public participation in its ideal form would not be compatible with this model, as it would 'disperse power and slow down decision making as well as implementation' (Hasselskog 2018).

A political economy analysis of Rwanda's decentralization in 2021 found that governance is weaved through a mesh of elected and appointed positions that carry varying levels of power and authority (Henn 2021). The more authoritative and powerful positions are those that are appointed, while elected officials have comparatively less influence. The elected Cell, Sector and District leaders wield less power compared with the executive secretaries at those same levels, who have been appointed and are thus paid and play administrative roles. This may be attributed to the fact that the accountability of appointed roles is vertical (upwards) to the central government, which also distributes resources, while elected leaders are accountable downwards to their voters (constituency). For example, District Development Plans written by District Development Committees tend to align with national priorities and objectives, often in sector ministry strategies, rather than the priorities stated by citizens through the various platforms for citizen engagement (Henn 2021).

2.5. SOUTH AFRICA

Colonial subjugation and apartheid rule in South Africa was characterized by exclusion and marginalization of the African communities underpinned by a local government system that was racist. The advent of a fully democratic system in 1994 in South Africa brought the idea of public participation in governance and public policy into the spotlight. The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that the objectives of local government are: to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities; and to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner. However, the challenges of governance and administration were complex. The notion of citizen participation in public policy emerged in the context of responding to struggles related to inequality, poverty, social justice and human rights. Significant legal provisions were made to entrench public

participation in post-apartheid South Africa. However, the authenticity of public participation in local governance through existing platforms and mechanisms has been the subject of substantial research. Notwithstanding, public participation is widely considered to be essential for South Africa, given the numerous challenges in the operationalization of public policy in post-apartheid South Africa. Arguably, decision making at the local government level is supposed to be grounded in public participation, but the realization of an authentic form of public participation in in local governance has remained a challenge.

2.6. TUNISIA

Before the 2011 revolution, the autocratic regime heavily controlled public participation in Tunisia. Even though small clusters of CSOs and civic activists managed to exist, focusing primarily on political and civic rights and freedoms, the overall public participation scene was strongly restricted or else used to reinforce the regime's resilience. Under pressure from the international community to allow more liberalization and democratization, the regime adopted tailored frameworks for civil society, notionally showing signs of openness but actually using CSOs to reinforce the controlling environment, and repressing organizations acting beyond these strictly established limits (Deane 2013). Before 2010, the only framework that existed was the governing law on associations (Law 154 of 1959), which required CSOs to be approved by the Ministry of Interior and which delineated strict boundaries within which they were allowed to operate, narrowing the opportunity for effective and independent public participation (ICNL 2022). It was only after the uprising, as the country engaged in a transformative democratic process, that a new era for public participation began, with the introduction of several legal frameworks and the emergence of multiple initiatives on public participation.

After 2011, successive governments included a Ministry of Local Affairs, to give prominence to local governance in the post-revolution context and to dissociate it from the security approach, as it had been historically residing under the Ministry of Interior. Similarly,

the government established a Ministry of Citizens and Civil Society Engagement to formalize the participatory approach in democracy.

However, following the political shift on 25 July 2021, as President Kais Saied formed a new government, these structures were removed. Moreover, the President dissolved the constitutional authority for good governance and the fight against corruption before adopting a new constitution on 25 July 2022, through a referendum. The new Constitution does not include any provisions regarding institutions that overlook issues such as public participation or local governance (Tunisia 2022). The remaining institutions that are still relevant in the current context are: the Centre for Training and Support for Decentralization (Centre de Formation et d'Appui à La Décentralisation; CFAD), which is in charge of providing training and capacity building to local authorities; and the General Authority for Prospecting and Support for Decentralized Processes, which is in charge of conducting participatory research on decentralization.

2.7. ZIMBABWE

Fundamentally, the promulgation of the Constitution of Zimbabwe of 2013, with its inclusion of devolution, ushered in a new democratic era, in which citizen participation was enshrined as both a constitutional principle and a yardstick of democratic governance. From a constitutional standpoint, the concept of public participation was being linked to the rights of citizens and to democratic governance. In principle, the Constitution has, through devolution, handed down executive powers to local authorities, thereby bringing decision-making processes closer to the people. In practice, however, Zimbabwe has continued the trajectory of centralization and in some instances recentralization. Whereas the Constitution of Zimbabwe entrenches public participation, studies show that public participation in the local government process is underpinned by contextual, demographic, political and administrative factors, with cultural norms, class, gender and education levels all influencing levels of public participation (Mapuva 2010; Bland 2011; Chikerema 2013; Mapfumo 2019; Kanyane, Mutema and Zikhali 2020).

Chapter 3

GLOBAL, CONTINENTAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS IN AFRICA TO ENHANCE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There are various policy and legal frameworks that provide guidance for adopting public participation on national and subnational levels. These include global, continental and regional frameworks, some of which are presented in brief summaries below.

3.1. GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) rallies countries to 'build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels', with specific targets to: (a) 'develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels' (Target 16.6); (b) 'ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels' (Target 16.7); and (c) 'ensure public access to information' (Target 16.10). All the 54 African countries that are UN member states signed up to this and agreed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides safeguards to public participation on civil and political rights, including citizen participation. Article 25 of the Covenant provides that 'every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity ... without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be

by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country'.

3.2. CONTINENTAL FRAMEWORKS

Africa Union's Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063 is founded on pan-Africanism, with its Aspiration 6 calling for: 'An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children' (African Union 2015). The Aspiration specifically calls for a continent where all citizens will be actively involved in decision making in all aspects of development, including social, economic, political and environmental development. All African countries (except Morocco[2]) are members of the African Union and are unanimously in agreement with the Agenda 2063.

The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development

The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development (known as the African Charter on Decentralisation; African Union 2014) makes reference to and builds on other African Union charters and conventions, including:

• African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981);

• African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (2003);

• African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007); and

• African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration (2011).

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2   Morocco withdrew from the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1985, after the admission of Western Sahara as a member. It is the only African country that is not a member of the African Union.

The African Charter on Decentralisation seeks, among other objectives, to 'promote civil society, private sector and people participation in decentralisation, local governance and local development initiatives' (African Union 2014: article 2(i)), a provision for public participation in decentralized governance and service delivery. Article 10 of the Charter is entitled 'Inclusion, Equity and Equality' and seeks to secure inclusion and equitable treatment for all citizens, as well as equal access to decentralized services. Provisions include gender and social inclusion, irrespective of sex, age, dis(ability), ethnicity and other intersecting identities. Article 12 makes provision for 'Participation' in public local governance as a foundational principle. It specifically states: 'Local governments or local authorities shall promote participation of all segments of society in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects through structured platforms and other forms of participation to ensure delivery of quality services' (African Union 2014: article 12(3)). It requires local and national governments to guarantee the rights to, and outline citizens' responsibilities in, participating fully at the local level. It calls for the enactment of national and subnational legislation, the creation of the necessary structures for citizen participation and the facilitation (and financing) of various mechanisms and platforms for public participation in local governance. Article 15 specifically requires local governments to be 'Mainstreaming Gender, Youth and Disability' into policy planning and service delivery at a local level. Further recognizing the importance of capacity and skills in implementing effective decentralized programmes, article 16(3.d) provides for, among other things, capacity development of communities and civil society to enable them to contribute to local public administration and local development. This implies the provision of civic education, to ensure that citizens have the skills to effectively participate and influence local governance.

Only Mauritania officially signed this Charter in 2014, on its adoption by the African Union (African Union 2014). It is not the case for many other African countries, including Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, despite making progress on their national frameworks. By March 2022, 18 countries had signed the Charter, but only 8 had both signed and ratified the Charter: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia and Seychelles. At

least 15 member states need to sign, ratify and file (or deposit) the Charter with the African Union Commission, for it to be in force as an instrument of the African Union. The lack of formal buy-in can speak to these countries' commitment towards and prioritization of public participation in local governance at the regional level. Despite the low formal buy-in, several countries have adopted the provisions in the Charter and included these in their national or subnational legislation and policies. Of the seven countries considered in this study, only Cameroon has ratified the Charter (in 2020) (African Union 2022b). And even then, the national legislation does not directly give evidence of the domestication of provisions from this Charter. The strong centralist governance in Cameroon is also not in tandem with the requirements for decentralization and citizen empowerment envisaged in the Charter (Annan et al. 2021).

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) was adopted in 2017 and provides a framework through which African Union member states can improve democratic governance. It highlights public participation as a key pillar of democratic governance at both the national and local levels. The Charter had been signed by 46 and ratified by 36 African countries by March 2022 (African Union 2022a). This implies that, for the ACDEG, there has been better buy-in from various countries, including the seven in this study, than for the African Charter on Decentralisation. Cameroon ratified the ACDEG in 2011 and deposited it with the African Union Commission in 2012. Kenya signed the ACDEG in 2008, but did not ratify and deposit it until 2021 and 2022, respectively. Nigeria signed the ACDEG in 2007, ratified it in 2011 and deposited it in 2012. Rwanda signed the ACDEG in 2007, ratified it in 2010 and deposited it in 2010. South Africa signed and ratified the ACDEG in 2010, then deposited it with the African Union Commission in 2011. However, Tunisia and Zimbabwe signed the Charter in 2013 and 2018, respectively, but did not ratify it.

Declaration of the International Conference on Public Participation

This Declaration was made at a meeting held in Gauteng in South Africa in 2012 and as a consequence is also referred to as the Gauteng Declaration of March 2012. The participating international

actors stressed the importance of public participation as an essential ingredient in good governance and human development, of which the ultimate objective is to improve active citizenry.

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, also known as the Banjul Charter, promotes human rights and basic freedoms in the African continent, and came into effect in October 1986 (OAU 1981). It makes provisions for public participation and indicates that 'every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country' (OAU 1981: article 13(1)). By June 2017, 45 countries had signed the Charter (except Botswana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and Tunisia) (African Union 2017). In total, 54 of the 55 countries in the African Union have both ratified the Charter and deposited it with the African Union Commission—with the exception of Morocco. Curiously, countries can ratify and deposit the Charter without signing it.

3.3. REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Northern Africa

The MENA-OECD Governance Programme

This programme is one of two components of the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development, which aims to frame the cooperation between the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) around issues of sustainable development and inclusive growth (OECD n.d.a). The local governance part of the Governance Programme aims to promote the modernization and empowerment of local authorities, enhance transparency and accountability, and foster public participation. Only Morocco and Tunisia have country-specific local governance and public participation projects, focusing on OpenGov and modernizing local governance in Morocco, and on OpenGov, decentralization and public participation in Tunisia (OECD n.d.b).

The European Neighbourhood Policy

In 2021, the European Union adopted a new Agenda for the Mediterranean, which aims to frame its 2030 partnership with countries on the south of the Mediterranean, including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia (European Commission 2021). Participation is a critical component of this agenda, focusing on youth participation in policy and decision-making processes, and the engagement of civil society, the private sector and citizens in local governance. The agenda also anticipates the implementation of these different components through country-specific programmes.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' South-Med Partnership

The Congress is part of the European Council and aims to reinforce local and regional democracy in the EU. In response to the Arab Uprisings, the Congress established a South-Med Partnership to support countries on the south of the Mediterranean, by exchanging know-how, increasing dialogue and providing capacity-building programmes related to local governance and participatory democracy. A key mechanism of this partnership is the Status of Local Democracy Partner, from which both Morocco and Tunisia benefit (Council of Europe n.d.).

East Africa

East African Community's Vision 2050

The *EAC Vision 2050* aims 'to attain a prosperous, competitive, secure and politically united East Africa' (EAC 2015: 42). EAC member states made a commitment to become a globally competitive upper-middle-income region with a high quality of life for its population, based on the principles of inclusiveness and accountability. Strategic targets in the *EAC Vision 2050* include:

- to have a region with empowered citizens who can spur growth and accelerate poverty reduction; and

- to enhance citizens' capacity at the local level by establishing appropriate mechanisms, systems and policies that promote participatory planning, budgeting and demand for accountability from local administrations.

Notably, several East African countries, including Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, have adopted these targets in their respective national legal frameworks for decentralization.

East African Local Government Forum Strategic Plan 2015–2020

The East African Local Government Forum (EALGF) sought to unite local governments and their stakeholders in East Africa through their representative bodies, in order to promote the social and economic well-being of all citizens through just and democratic local governance and development. Provisions in the EALGF related to citizen participation include:

- Devolution is extended to a point where citizens are empowered and are proactive on issues concerning local development.

- Citizenry is strongly engaged in income-generating activities that are taxable, to support service delivery and local development, which means that locally generated revenue from local enterprises increases.

- Local services meet service delivery standards and are easily accessible by all citizens.

- All citizenry is satisfied with local government service delivery.

For the EAC countries, it is clear that their national guiding framework for decentralization reflects these objectives.

West Africa

Revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993)

The ECOWAS Treaty of 1993 (ECOWAS 1993) is a revision of the original treaty that established ECOWAS in 1975. This treaty does not expressly make provisions for decentralization, local governance or citizen engagement, but it makes reference to African charters, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Article 4(g) particularly expresses that member states make 'recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights'. Article 4(h) highlights that member states seek to

promote 'accountability, economic and social justice and popular participation in development'; and article 4(j) proposes the 'promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of governance in each Member State, as envisaged by the Declaration of Political Principles adopted in Abuja [in] 1991'.

ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles (1991)

The Declaration of Political Principles was adopted by ECOWAS members in 1991, as a non-binding agreement. It reaffirmed their commitments to eight principles, which include: respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; the peaceful settlement of disputes and non-aggression; the promotion of democracy in the region; political pluralism; and respect for fundamental human rights. This declaration was said to form the basis for subsequent, more developed—and also legally binding—norms and standards on democratic governance, unconstitutional changes of government, elections and human rights in the region.

Southern Africa

At the time of this study, it was not clear whether there were any prominent guiding frameworks on decentralization and local governance for the Southern Africa region, guiding the SADC countries. This is an area that requires more in-depth review to understand the circumstances and issues.

Chapter 4

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING FRAMEWORKS ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Countries have adopted different approaches, mechanisms and platforms to enhance public participation in local governance processes. Several factors—including historical experiences drawn from a country's past, the nature and type of government, the political economy and the type of decentralization in place—have all had an impact on the adoption/domestication of frameworks.

The country case studies show that, despite the existence of regional and continental frameworks on public participation in local governance, only a few countries have followed the various steps towards signing, ratifying and depositing the various instruments with the African Union Commission. African Union member states are required to follow these steps for the instruments to be legally binding and enforceable. Domestication of the provisions in these instruments is also needed to enable enforcement at the national level. However, a few of these countries have developed their own national legal frameworks regarding decentralization and citizen engagement which are influenced by the African Charter on Decentralisation (2014). Indeed, as seen in Kenya, Rwanda and Tunisia, the national local governance laws directly reflect the provisions in the international frameworks, despite the countries not having ratified the Charter.

It can be argued that, while the link between the existing frameworks at the regional and continental level and how public participation is actually conducted at the national level is blurred, evidence in the national laws of the respective countries indicates that provisions in these frameworks are also reflected at the national level, even in

countries that have not ratified the Charter. In a similar but opposing way, Cameroon has already signed, ratified and deposited the African Charter on Decentralisation with the African Union Commission, but has an underdeveloped decentralization programme and has made limited effort to enhance citizen participation in local governance. In other words, ratifying the Charter has had no influence on local governance and public participation in Cameroon. This study submits that other factors, particularly political economy issues, play a much more profound role in determining the effectiveness of local governance processes than regional and continental legal frameworks and instruments.

Chapter 5

EXISTING INSTITUTIONS, MECHANISMS AND PRACTICES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Different countries have adopted various institutional measures, mechanisms and practices for public participation, based on the respective country's legal and policy framework. While the general intention is similar across the board—primarily to enhance citizens' input into local governance processes and policies—the operationalization differs. Similarly, the political, economic and social interests in each country context to a large extent determine the effectiveness of the public participation in local governance, irrespective of the legal and policy framework in place.

The section below summarizes the institutions, mechanisms and practices for public participation in the seven study countries and also provides a comparative analysis.

5.1. VILLAGE COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND COMMON INITIATIVE GROUPS IN CAMEROON

Cameroon has various platforms and mechanisms for public participation in local governance. These are varied and designed to meet different purposes and needs. Most prominent among these are the village community projects (VCPs) and common initiative groups (CIGs) (Fonchingong and Fonjong 2002; Njoh 2011). The VCPs specifically have a distinct purpose—to enhance citizen engagement in development projects at village level. The CIGs, on the other hand, are sectoral in nature and are designed to meet shared interests for specific projects, such as health or education projects. Citizen participation in Cameroon is also achieved through representation

via elected officials referred to as councillors in urban, city and rural councils. Integrated health committees, specific to the management of health centres, are additional areas through which citizens participate in local development processes. The extent to which these have been effective in enhancing public participation in local governance is not clear, however.

5.2. ELABORATE MECHANISMS AND PLATFORMS FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN KENYA

Kenya has adopted various mechanisms to promote public participation in devolution, as anchored in the legal framework. These include public forums, which are a requirement by law and are publicized mainly through newspapers and local community and vernacular radio stations. Additionally, announcements are also posted on county websites and social media platforms, calling citizens to attend public forums. Although all county assemblies and executives hold public forums, they remain formal, ad hoc and infrequent. The majority of counties undertake activities more simply to comply with regulations than as a hardwired principle and method of good governance and service delivery (AHADI 2020). Another frequently utilized mechanism is the oral submission, which refers to oral contributions made by citizens as input into county government development plans, budget estimates, bills or other public expenditure management policy documents that, by law, must be subject to public participation. Recent consultations with key informants from county executives and assemblies point to dissatisfaction with the quality of the oral submissions made during public hearings. One informant reported that during forums 'people just come to heckle and make noise'. The sessions are also often manipulated, making them political and, in some cases, forums for civic education. Participants also expect handouts (payments) in the form of transport allowances and refreshments, as a prerequisite for their participation at the public forums.

Memorandums and petitions are another mechanism through which citizens contribute to county processes. Counties often receive written memoranda and petitions during the planning and budgeting processes. Notably, written submissions are preferred by the county

governments as they are considered easier to document, act upon and follow up, as well as being cheaper than holding actual physical public forums with citizens. The flip side is that written submissions tend to come from groups and individuals who understand the issues they are advocating for and not 'the average citizen', which likely excludes some segments of the population.

In addition, there are other initiatives to enhance public participation from non-state actors, such as CSOs and development organizations. Some notable initiatives are:

- strengthening access to information held by county governments through the simplification of documents (budgets, policies and bills) into citizen-friendly formats or citizen versions;

- deepening citizens' oversight of public expenditure, through tracking and social accountability in a variety of initiatives, including public expenditure tracking, citizen score cards and gender-responsive budgeting—although disparate and ad hoc, these are largely successful;[3] and

- undertaking and deepening purpose-driven civic education, to sensitize the public on their role, build skills in social accountability and increase people's agency as proactive participants in county governance.

5.3. MECHANISMS AND PLATFORMS FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

Electoral processes: National and local government laws provide for citizens to elect their local leaders to represent them in governance processes. However, citizens are disappointed by governance systems and subsequently alienated from the process of selecting their leaders, which defeats the purpose of inclusive governance at the grassroots. Often voter apathy ensues, as citizens feel that their votes do not count. It is usual for state governments to administer

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3   Examples are seen in the work of Agile and Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions (AHADI), the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and The Institute for Social Accountability (TISA), among others.

local governments using caretaker committees. In fact, between 1999 and 2017, only 17 states[4] and the Federal Capital Territory conducted elections for their local government areas (LGAs), with the remaining 19 states utilizing caretaker committees to administer the leadership of local government. The fact that local government officials lack security of tenure means that they are beholden to their appointer, not to the people.

Community development associations (CDAs) and community development councils (CDCs): Both of these act as a bridge between citizens and traditional councils. CDAs are voluntary long-term standing organizations formed by community members for the purpose of the development of their localities. CDAs have legislative backings at the federal and state levels, as they are included in the local government framework. Both perform similar functions of ensuring effective information exchange, mobilization of community support and providing representational inputs. The CDAs have been the most effective structure driving development at the local level, with Lagos state serving as a pioneer for participation in local governance.

Participatory budgeting: This approach was realized after consultations between councillors and citizens, where citizens' needs were discussed, and which culminated in the local government budget. This was followed by stakeholder[5] meetings to discuss the draft budget and plans for the fiscal year. The stakeholders in turn actively monitored the budget implementation process. As a result, the citizens and the government co-created programmes that benefited local communities until the change of leadership following the expiration of the term of the state executives.

Notable challenges of local governance in Nigeria are listed below.

Poor framework for decentralization and lack of autonomy: Nigeria operates a single tier of local government, with each area determined

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4   Enugu, Ebonyi, Lagos, Sokoto, Niger, Kwara, Akwa Ibom, Benue, Jigawa, Adamawa, Kaduna, Cross River, Rivers, Kebbi, Ogun, Taraba, Zamfara and the Federal Capacity Territory, Abuja.

5   The stakeholders include the district heads, *ulamas*, women's groups, youth and people with disabilities, community-based organizations (CBOs), mainly farming groups, and artisans.

by geographic size and population. While the constitutional provision is clear on this, it also gives room for difference, by allowing for expansion—so long as permission is sought through the appropriate channel. Furthermore, the policies on the conditions of services of the local government as contained in the Constitution are also vague; therefore, the interpretation and implementation are left for the various Local Government Service Commissions,[6] as they see fit (Okoli 2000).

Lack of consultative forum/public hearing: Citizens are unaware of the government allocations and what they are meant for (Unegbu 2013). The local chairpersons are not accountable and rarely organize public forums or consultations to discuss their plans or expenditure or receive feedback from citizens. Unlike at the state or federal levels, there are few CSO interventions, whether hosting consultative forums or establishing accountability platforms, at the level of the LGA. According to a traditional leader in Ogun state, 'They do call us for meetings, but you are only invited if you are on good terms with the people in power. Traditional leaders have been turned into people with authority but without power. I also hold meetings to tell my people what little I learn but I cannot intervene because I lack the power.'[7]

A lack of grassroots connections: Elected or appointed officials at the local government level do not have a connection to their local communities. Nor do they have independent agendas, curated in partnership with the communities they seek to serve during their time in office. In fact, according to several respondents, once elected, local government officials move out of their previous abode. The challenges of leadership recruitment and activities in office also help to limit citizens' engagement with their leaders, while dissuading many from joining politics in the LGA, which ordinarily should be a foundation for a political career.

Insufficient scrutiny: Local organizations promoting democratic accountability are almost non-existent at the LGA level. The emphasis of CSOs is more towards humanitarian support or service delivery, with a push for accountability largely ignored. At the same time,

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6   The Local Government Service Commissions are responsible for the training, retraining and development of employees at the local government, including the posting, promotion and discipline of the staff.

7   Key informant interview with traditional ruler, Ogun state, 23 September 2022.

local media is also weak, leaving citizens without the access to information (except via social media) to engage in local governance.

Administrative inefficiency: Poor local governance output is attributed to the low skills and capacities of local government officials. As a result, they have insufficient capacity to handle effective public participation in local governance.

5.4. INNOVATING FROM TRADITIONAL PRACTICES TO ENHANCE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RWANDA

Rwanda's decentralization policy and legal framework has identified various mechanisms and platforms for public participation. All the mechanisms are inspired by Rwanda's traditional practices and are typically referred to as 'home-grown solutions', with the exception of the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF). The JADF was initiated by the central government to monitor participation of non-state actors and was formalized in 2007 to serve as a consultative forum for all district stakeholders, including CSOs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), development partners, private sector organizations and public institutions. Essentially, the JADF was designed to encourage peer review of district operations, programmes and budgets, and to increase accountability across all players. It has been a forum for contributing to local programmes, by aligning with the priorities in the District Development Plans, which are further broken down and realized through Annual Action Plans (Munyangadamutsa 2018). The JADF has not been fully effective, however, as stakeholder engagement is not consistent due to low capacity among some of the stakeholders and poor understanding of the local development needs and dynamics (Murasi 2018).

Another mechanism is the *imihigo* (performance contracts), a form of participatory performance contract aimed at holding local authorities accountable for delivering value to their communities. The *imihigo* ensures that citizen priorities are included in district budgets. Rooted in Rwanda's tradition of accountability, the focus of the *imihigo* is the planning process between central government and the district, and vice versa, as Rwanda's accountability mechanisms are vertical

(Goodwin 2021) rather than citizen-focused (Strauss and Waldorf 2011; Sentama 2021). The performance negotiations are mainly between the district government and the central government, to arrive at a final set of targets. *Imihigo* targets are framed in line with the Annual Action Plans and are monitored annually. The *imihigo* are considered effective in improving development outcomes and building professionalism in district governance, which has given legitimacy to governance structures, although citizen participation does not get adequate attention.[8] It has been felt that the greatest achievement of *imihigo* processes has ultimately been the top-down pressure on local government authorities to deliver and not making local governments more accountable to citizens. Often, citizens have a limited role in setting *imihigo* priorities, given that they have to choose from a list of already determined priorities for their district (Henn 2021; NAR 2020) and so they have limited leeway to influence the district budget.

Another initiative in Rwanda is the Citizen Report Card, introduced by the Rwanda Governance Board in 2010, to collate citizens' feedback on local government service delivery. It serves as a 'tool for quality assurance and evaluation' on local governments' adherence to citizen charters (UNDP 2019). In 2015, the Citizen Report Card revealed that citizen satisfaction with participation in the *imihigo* was low. Like the *imihigo*, *umuganda* is rooted in the Rwandan culture of solidarity and collective responsibility. During *umuganda*, community members come together on the last Saturday of the month for a common task, which might include cleaning or clearing neighbourhoods. Another initiative is the *inteko z'abaturage* (citizen assemblies) established in 2010 to provide guidance to decentralized activities in collecting and handling citizens' priorities (RALGA 2017). These are held at cell level and allow consultations between citizens and various local leaders. *Inteko z'abaturage* consultations are particularly useful forums for citizen consultations and feedback; but they do not function optimally and effectively, however (Kantengwa, Interayamahanga and Mahoro 2019). Another platform is the *inama njyama* (local councils), which comprise elected representatives, who contribute to decision making and all have a maximum of two terms of office (RGB 2018). Another important platform in Rwanda is *ubudehe* (collective action

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8   Consultations with stakeholders in Rwanda.

for mutual support activities), which adopts a social stratification approach, by identifying individuals based on income levels, to anchor social protection programmes. Households, including the more vulnerable ones, are categorized from those with the lowest incomes to those with higher incomes. Two of the challenges associated with *ubudehe* are mismanagement and potential manipulation—with some households preferring to remain in the lower income category, at 'more needy' levels, to keep receiving support, even when their socio-economic situation has improved.

5.5. PEOPLE-FRIENDLY ASSEMBLIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Key mechanisms for public participation in South Africa include people's assemblies, Taking Parliament to the People (*Batho Pele* principle), citizen satisfaction surveys and citizens' forums. The people's assembly is a platform for dialogue between parliament and the people it represents. The people's assembly is a public participation process that starts at a national level and moves through provincial and district levels, down to the municipal level. It is designed to reach out across the length and breadth of the country to all the citizens in South Africa to tap into ordinary people's wisdom in seeking solutions for the challenges faced. The Speakers' Forum adopted the people's assemblies as a programme for the forum and it is part of the legislative sector's political programme (Malemane and Nel-Sanders 2021).

Taking Parliament to the People literally implies the occasional shifting of parliamentary proceedings to remote rural regions, so that citizens can participate in parliamentary debates and interact with members of the cabinet, and executive councils at the national, provincial and municipal levels (Malemane and Nel-Sanders 2021). However, the effectiveness of this initiative is affected by several factors, including the dire socio-economic conditions of a large proportion of South Africans, and the mode of implementation of these activities. Time constraints, limited access to the media and lack of civic education affects the level and quality of public participation. While it is evident that parliament has made attempts to contribute to creating a 'Parliament for the People', these initiatives

have become meaningless as parliamentarians lack the political will to enhance public participation. Therefore, parliament should strengthen these initiatives to ensure broader public participation if it is to play a meaningful role in promoting public accountability (Kanyane, Mutema and Zikhali 2020).

Citizen satisfaction surveys aim to collect citizens' feedback on the quality and adequacy of public services. The surveys are initiated by local government departments to collect feedback on the quality of service delivery. However, they are reported to be ineffective due to various factors, including: poor design of the surveys making them unreliable and lacking validity; a lack of an acceptable threshold for what the response rate should be; and non-response bias. The Citizens' forums model facilitates public participation with the aim to evaluate the delivery of particular services throughout the country and to enable active involvement of people affected by government programmes and service delivery improvement processes.

Citizens' forums have the potential for impact on service delivery, but also carry several risks, which need to be tightly managed, such as: ensuring manageable citizen groups, devoid of domination or elite capture; avoiding political manipulation; managing community expectations; and ensuring citizen feedback mechanisms after the engagement processes (PSC Reports 2005, 2008). Another mechanism is the ward committees, where citizens are mobilized in forums where they join elected councillors and local government officials to deliberate and plan for local development. Ward committees, however, have been reported to be dysfunctional, and subject to resource constraints, citizen disinterest, partisan political interests and manipulation.

5.6. CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PHYSICAL AND E-SPACES IN TUNISIA

Laws and policies in Tunisia formalize the legal framework guiding the mechanisms and platforms for public participation. Of the seven case studies, Tunisia stands out in its use of e-platforms and online spaces for public participation in local governance (IRM 2022). The most prominent platforms and mechanisms include

online portals and citizen spaces often used to file complaints, participatory budgeting forums, and Youth Action Plans active in at least 12 municipalities. The e-spaces have mainly been utilized by citizens for filing complaints on various aspects of service delivery, including corruption practices and reporting incidents, and much less for proactive contributions to local development processes or planning and budgeting. In participatory budgeting, citizens give input to municipal budgets, expressing their needs and priorities. Participatory budgeting was launched in 2013 through a Tunisian CSO, Action Associative (OECD 2017). It has gradually gained traction, with at least 19 municipalities adopting this process by 2018, a feat attributed to the involvement of the central government, the National Federation of Tunisian Cities, international development and financing organizations, other CSOs and the municipalities themselves.

5.7. WARD, VILLAGE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES IN ZIMBABWE

In Zimbabwe, platforms and mechanisms for public participation include ward development committees (WADCOs), village development committees (VIDCOs) and neighbourhood development committees (NDCOs). Studies have shown that there are additional platforms and mechanisms to facilitate public participation in local governance in Zimbabwe, which include budget consultation forums, community feedback meetings, policy dialogue platforms, duty bearer engagement meetings and strategic plan review meetings (Chikerema 2013). Despite the existence of these platforms, the absence of a standard framework for citizen participation presents a challenge, subjecting the processes to the innovative capability of individual local government authorities. Given the lack of a threshold for what constitutes effective citizen participation, and without supporting legislation, local authorities are left with the discretion to convene them or not. NDCOs, VIDCOs and WADCOs are the lowest level of public participation and are often more operational in rural local governments. Urban councils have adopted similar models for WADCOs as engines for citizen engagement in local development processes. Despite their utility, these structures are often misused for political expediency, which makes them ineffective vehicles for

public participation in local governance. VIDCOs and WADCOs in rural areas were modelled to mirror Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) and thus could not perform their roles in terms of the legal provisions (Chikerema 2013). Ideally, these structures should be apolitical and active in matters related to council performance management, the annual budget processes and identification of priority local projects.

Chapter 6

CONTRIBUTIONS OF CSOS AND NON-STATE ACTORS TO CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

CSOs and non-state actors are common features across Africa, both in the more dictatorial and restrictive regimes, and in the relatively liberal and democratic jurisdictions. However, the space allowed for them to operate varies, a factor that is largely dependent on the system of government in place and the prevailing political economy issues. CSOs also share many similarities in the pan-African context, particularly the type of challenges they face and the opportunities available to them. A scan of the areas of operation for CSOs in Africa shows enhanced activity in community mobilization for development in poor rural contexts, humanitarian response in conflict-prone regions, and advocacy work in areas where governance is poor. CSOs tend to struggle with overdependence on external funding for their sustenance and continued existence. Where there is uncertainty in funding, their resources become limited. The rest of this chapter explores the contributions that CSOs and other non-state actors have made to enhance public participation in local governance in the seven case study countries. While the approach by the CSOs is largely similar across the countries, it is clear that the leeway available for civic action is dependent on several factors besides financial resources, including political interests and manipulation, organizations' skills and capacity to engage with the government and citizens, and the existence of CSO networks to articulate issues and amplify the voice against different aspects of (mis)governance, among others.

6.1. **CAMEROON**

Studies on civil society activities in Cameroon indicate that the government is increasingly on a trajectory to shrink civic space—a path that has also been experienced elsewhere in Africa (CIVICUS 2011). Government pushback on civil society space, particularly in fragile countries, is usually associated with autocratic government regimes, often as an excuse to tackle terrorism, external aggression, internal conflict (such as in Cameroon) and developmental states, such as with Ethiopia and Rwanda (Annan et al. 2021). Despite the shrinking space and the ongoing internal conflict in Cameroon, civil society has been active in peacebuilding campaigns, humanitarian assistance and documentation of human rights violations. A 2020 study that sought to, among other things, identify the existing collaboration between CSOs and government institutions in Cameroon found an ineffective and restrictive relationship, aimed at either propagating government propaganda (for CSOs collaborating with government) or constraining CSOs' work (for the more credible and genuine ones), but hardly any complementary and healthy collaboration (Benjamin Esone 2020; Hearn 2007; Dupuy, Ron and Prakash 2015).

Credible CSOs that could complement the work of local governments face constant threats and funding challenges. From the foregoing, the extent to which CSOs in Cameroon contribute to local development and governance processes is not clear. What is clear is that, given the constrained environment within which CSOs operate and the autocratic centralist regime in Cameroon, the potential for civil society is severely limited. Further, in light of the relatively urgent local needs related to peace campaigns and humanitarian assistance, CSOs' role in local governance may not have received the attention it deserves, or where it is in place, it may not have been adequately documented.

6.2. **KENYA**

Kenya has arguably had a vibrant civil society over the years preceding the clamour for multiparty democracy; and then, during the 1990s, while in pursuit of a new constitutional system; and

finally up until 2010 when Kenya's new Constitution was enacted—however, much of the activity has remained at the national level. Largely perceived to be elite led, and comprising urban-based non-profit organizations, Kenya's civil society has had its share of successes and pitfalls. With a relatively free media, an expanded citizen–state interaction and an increasing partnership between the government and CSOs, as well as a significant source of funding coming from international donors, various gains have been realized. In partnership with opposition leaders in successive governments, some of the high moments have included: the repeal of section 2A of Kenya's independence Constitution in 1991, which effectively made the country a multi party democracy; and the promulgation of Kenya's new Constitution in August 2010. The reform journey was not smooth, with civil society often conflicting with the ruling regimes, experiencing inadequate funding and political capture, and undergoing internal divisions occasioned by political, ethnic and other polarizations.

With devolution, there is a notable shift of attention from national issues to those at the county level, and the emergence of a new crop of local-level CSOs, including community-based organizations (CBOs), FBOs, informal loose associations including residents' associations, savings groups, and others. Devolution has also ushered in a new type of CSO, interested in the delivery, oversight and social accountability processes targeting county-level public expenditure management and service delivery. Notably, some of these have sought partnership with county governments and have even entered into 'co-governance' relationships with county governments to jointly plan and manage service delivery, as well as manage county-level natural resources (AHADI 2020). CBOs and FBOs and some of the informal (not legally registered but visible and legitimately acknowledged) organizations lack institutional capacity in areas related to planning, and also are in need of the requisite technical skills to pursue their respective mandate. However, with high levels of legitimacy and sustainability, being rooted in their communities and dependent on the voluntary contributions of their members for sustenance, they have proven to be effective stakeholders in county governance, in contrast with the national-level CSOs that depend almost entirely on external funding.

CSOs' contribution to devolution in Kenya is documented in the working paper series from the Centre for Devolution Studies at the Kenya School of Government, in conjunction with the World Bank (CDS 2015), particularly CSOs' work in building partnerships with counties to establish participatory processes. There is evidence of counties reaching out to CSOs to assist in rolling out participatory processes. CSOs' involvement includes forming and utilizing networks and issue-based coalitions for advocacy, social accountability and monitoring government transparency. Some CSOs reviewed during this study revealed significant contributions through social accountability interventions, which has been a fairly effective entry point. Through various CSO interventions, there is evidence of actual influencing of service delivery and the performance of county governments (AHADI 2020). In instances where CSOs had adopted an apolitical and non-adversarial approach to social accountability processes, they gained trust and goodwill from the county assemblies and executives.

Organizations such as The Institute for Social Accountability (TISA), the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), the Centre for Economic Governance (CEG) and Act Change Transform (ACT!), among many others, are at the forefront of devolution, supporting various aspects of citizen engagement, including social accountability. The Agile and Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions (AHADI) programme, implemented in Kenya between 2014 and 2021 to support devolution, stands out.[9] It adopted a multi-sectoral, multi-actor and system-wide approach in providing technical assistance to county governments and CSOs, to strengthen devolution. It also provided small grants to CSOs to improve their capacity and role in supporting citizen engagement. Individually, these organizations have participated in advocacy activities to influence the performance of county assemblies and executives aimed at improved service delivery. However, CSOs are largely dependent on donor funding, and while this has enabled them to explore various approaches, tools, innovations and modalities of bolstering public participation—particularly the more challenging aspects that relate to civic education—their scope of influence has been limited. Challenges with CSOs' involvement emanate from this donor dependence and

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9   AHADI was a USD 50 million programme jointly funded by USAID and UKAid to support devolution in Kenya.

are demonstrated in their small scope, short-term nature and limited depth of their engagement. Sometimes, adversarial relationships with the county governments further limit their involvement.

6.3. **NIGERIA**

In Nigeria, civil society plays a significant part in improving democratic processes by mediating between citizens and the government, and in promoting good governance by pushing for transparency, accountability, effectiveness, openness and responsiveness (Elstub 2010). CSOs also play an important role through policy analysis and advocacy; regulation and monitoring of public administration and the performance of actors; building citizens' social capital to enable them to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms and democratic practices; mobilizing the vulnerable and the marginalized to exercise their rights; and finally undertaking development work and research into ways of improving the community (John 2012).

In Kano state, the CSO Mobilizing for Development trained local government administrations and CBOs in participatory governance. According to an interview with a woman leader in Kano state, the training she got from them in 2016 empowered her to train other women to ask questions at town hall meetings.[10] The Centre for Information Technology and Development also trains youth, women and CBOs on the cost of corruption and citizens' engagements with constituency projects and social inclusion in Kano. Participation depends not just on active citizens but also on government initiatives. Despite their potential for delivering good governance at the local level, CSOs face the following challenges when it comes to supporting local governance in Nigeria:

- a lack of competency at the local level, to engender robust advocacy and monitoring of the administration of the LGA;

- a weak organizational base and lack of a secure financial base to engage in development work at the local level;

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10   Key informant interview with woman, 42, Sumaila, Kano state, 22 September 2022.

- a negative community mentality and civic attitudes towards CSOs and low initiative among people; and

- a lack of a legal framework making it difficult for the state and LGA to recognize and accommodate CSOs in the structures of local governance.

6.4. RWANDA

There are initiatives in Rwanda to support CSOs in enhancing citizen engagement in governance and public policy engagement. These include the Public Policy Information Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project (Hayman, Bucyensenge and Namanya 2019). PPIMA aims to strengthen engagement of Rwandan CSOs and was implemented in three phases between 2009 and 2019. PPIMA's overarching goals were two-pronged: (a) to support citizen engagement in public policy; and (b) to build CSOs' capacity to hold decision makers to account with regard to policy implementation. Through PPIMA, CSOs were equipped with tools for decision making in service delivery and for social accountability, such as the Community Score Card. Citizens' engagement was strengthened using tools such as District and National Dialogue Forums, radio call-ins, the Anti-Corruption and Justice Information Centre, Gender Budget Statements, Citizens' Alternative Budgets, among others (Hayman Bucyensenge and Namanya 2019).

Initiatives like the PPIMA and Never Again Rwanda's citizen forums point to the need for longer-term investment by CSOs and their funders in building citizens' voice and skills in social accountability processes. While CSOs in Rwanda have great potential to impact social accountability, given the government's strong commitment to development and service delivery, the reality is that they operate in an environment that 'constraints on their freedom of expression, therefore criticism of the government is muted' (Ismail 2018: 2). In addition, CSOs are donor-dependent (like elsewhere in Africa), with at least 75 per cent of Rwandan CSOs depending on international aid (Transparency International Rwanda 2015). Despite these challenges, CSOs in Rwanda have played a commendable role in peace building

and post-genocide reconciliation and have been reported to be 'very effective' in this role (CIVICUS 2011).

The JADF provides a platform through which CSOs and other non-state actors contribute to the *imihigo*, or engage district authorities to influence the Annual Action Plans and decentralized governance. Notably, local government officials welcome CSOs that provide tangible contributions to the district *imihigo*, rather those whose objectives are less tangible (Henn 2021). To harmonize development and service delivery activities at the district level, CSOs and development partners are encouraged to take up responsibility for some of the service delivery targets (Kantengwa, Interayamahanga and Mahoro 2019). CSOs whose work seeks to build the capacity of citizens or local government, or engage in policy advocacy, are 'less acknowledged' or 'appreciated' (Kantengwa, Interayamahanga and Mahoro 2019). Analysis from Never Again Rwanda and Interpeace (2019) and USAID (2021) found that there are several CSOs with many roles and mandates, ranging from service delivery to citizen capacity development in various areas, influencing policy and citizen mobilization for collective action. However, the studies found that CSOs remain weak and not vocal enough in advocating and demanding for citizens' interests. With regard to social accountability for service delivery or public expenditure management in Rwanda, studies on CSOs' role are limited. A study by CIVICUS in 2011 found that social accountability in Rwanda was effective, not because of CSOs' work but because of the political will and commitment by the central government to deliver to its citizens (CIVICUS 2011). Rwandan CSOs could further support social accountability work in various ways, including by: producing public information in accessible and simplified user-friendly formats; directly demanding accountability from local governments; and supporting elected leaders, such as district councillors, to demand accountability from district authorities (Ismail 2018).

6.5. **SOUTH AFRICA**

The rise of CSOs in South Africa was crucial to development as it contributed to the bridging of the communication gap between civil society and municipalities, and promoted access to resources

(Kapundu 2017). The contribution of CSOs to development has been widely acknowledged, as they are involved in service delivery, advocacy, innovation and poverty reduction initiatives. CSOs in South Africa have become effective agents of service delivery due to their comparative advantage over government agencies, as they are endowed with greater market orientation, established communication systems and operating systems, and the technical skills to support people in communities.

According to the 2019 Open Budget Survey (OBS) (ZIMCODD 2019), CSOs work as intermediaries for budget accountability at the local level. The Public Service Accountability Monitor is one good example of a CSO that took on the task of tracking actions taken by the provincial administration in response to reported cases of corruption by the Auditor General. The Public Service Accountability Monitor also systematically monitors provincial administrative agencies for compliance with public finance regulations and administrative directives. This enables public participation by residents in marginalized communities to have equal opportunities in influencing decision making.

Despite the development work done by CSOs in South Africa, they still face challenges in promoting development, which include organizational weaknesses, a lack of management capacity, and issues related to basic visibility and legitimacy. In addition, they also struggle to access sustainable funding for their activities. Without external financial support, they cannot implement programmes effectively.

6.6. **TUNISIA**

Civil society has been the backbone of all efforts around public participation in Tunisia at the central and local levels. After the 2011 revolution, Tunisia witnessed the emergence of a young, dynamic and eager civil society, spread across the country, and more than 25 per cent of it was focused on citizenship and social development issues (IFEDA 2022). Civil society's role is structured around advocacy, monitoring and partnerships. Civil society efforts have made contributions to constitutional review processes, such as in 2014 and

in the drafting process of the decentralization code, with a focus on participatory democracy provisions through taking part in national consultations, conducting research to inform recommendations and advocating for those recommendations with government and the Assembly of the People's Representatives. CSOs include Al Bawsala (OECD 2017), the Jasmine Foundation (Kherigi 2015) and Solidar.

Civil society has also played a critical watchdog role in implementing the different legal frameworks and mechanisms. For example, Al Bawsala, through its project Marsad Baladia, monitored the performance of municipalities and passed on information to citizens in a simplified and accessible way, to increase their awareness and inform their participation (OECD 2017). Another example is the work done by the CSO Smart Solution in two of the most disadvantaged regions of Tunisia (Kasserine and Sidi Bouzid), as they held more than 20 workshops and surveyed 6,500 citizens about the performances of their municipalities (Yerkes and Muasher 2018). In addition to CSOs focusing on governance and civic engagement, media-focused associations, such as Barr al Aman, are also playing a role in informing citizens about existing participation mechanisms and holding local decision makers accountable.

The civil society in Tunisia has also contributed to building the capabilities of municipalities, including developing a guide on how to implement participatory budget initiatives. Another successful partnership is the involvement of civil society in the design and implementation of the Open Government Partnership action plans at the local level, through the work of the Tunisian Associations for Citizenship and Development (TACID) network, which includes a community of 253 local associations focusing on local governance, and the Tunisian Association of Local Governance (Association Tunisienne de Gouverneance Locale, ATGL). TACID and ATGL trained 12 municipalities across the country on the principles of transparency and participation, and partnered with these municipalities to develop their OpenGov plans (Cherifi 2020).

6.7. **ZIMBABWE**

Masunungure (2015) argues that historically, and in contemporary development discourse, sustainable democracy can hardly be developed or crafted organically without a vibrant civil society. It is hardly disputable that civil society has emerged as a widely discussed facet of democracy in contemporary development. It is also celebrated as 'the missing middle' in democratic consolidation and transformation processes. Muchadenyika (2017) submits that the role of CSOs in engendering social accountability, transparency and integrity in Zimbabwe is well documented and appreciated. As public watchdogs on good governance, CSOs interact with local authorities in a way that has had an impact, and has led to an increased demand for accountability, especially relating to budgetary oversight by both CSOs and local governments. Such interaction will strengthen a country's governance framework and the effectiveness and efficiency of its anti-poverty programmes. Most CSOs have demonstrated their ability to foster people-centred development through promoting ownership, inclusivity and participation. Social movements, such as the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ) and others, have attempted to mobilize citizens in large numbers to claim their rights and pressure for accountability and social justice. Kademaunga and Saki (2020) also identified a number of roles of civil society in promoting citizen participation and sustainable local governance, and these include advocacy and lobbying for enhanced public accountability and transparency, and research as the basis for evidence-based advocacy.

An analysis of the findings of the 2019 OBS by ZIMCODD (2019) shows that CSOs have a role in improving the accountability of public service providers. However, the study shows that about 35 per cent of CSOs, in particular residents' associations, are not institutionalized due to limited financial resources. As such, their efforts to hold the duty bearers accountable remain minimal, as they do not have a significant contribution to the local authority governance processes. While CSOs generally, and residents' associations specifically, have the potential to be a viable voice of the voiceless and the eyes and ears of the urban citizenry, the OBS results indicate that there is often

a discord in the policy direction of residents' associations in areas where there is more than one association due to competition for donor funding. Key informant interviews with leaders of residents' associations from ZIMCODD (2019) reveal that there is less policy process integration among the wider civil society spectrum, and competition among these institutions is often rife. This weakens their capacity to leverage their collective potential to advocate for a better local government system.

Studies on public participation in local government budgeting and financial management involving 10 major urban areas by Kademaunga and Saki (2020), ZIMCODD (2019) and Muchadenyika (2017) show that the available spaces for public participation in budgeting do not give local citizens a genuine opportunity to input productively into the budget. The budget participation meetings are disguised as participatory processes, yet councils would already have drafted the budget and they are simply meant to legitimize the budget. Citizens who believe that their views will be taken into account are more likely to participate than those who do not. Results of the 2019 OBS presented by ZIMCODD (2019) show that, of the 3,500 respondents, the majority (66.1 per cent) do not believe that their contributions during the pre-budget consultation sessions will be adopted in any way by the local government in the consolidation of the final budget, and this therefore makes public consultations an exercise in futility. The same survey shows that about 71 per cent of young women aged between 18 and 35 years do not believe that their views matter in the budget-making process.

However, some studies (Manduna, Zinyama and Nhema 2015; Urban Councils of Zimbabwe 2006) on public participation in local government policymaking and budgeting as a thematic area show that, despite these aforementioned weaknesses, CSOs have the potential to play a vital role in both national and local government policy value chains, including budgeting. The following were identified as some strategic areas that CSOs (or residents' associations) can contribute towards financial transparency and accountability:

- contributing positively to public expenditure management and oversight, since they are strategic sources of critical and independent information on the impact of the budget;

- building literacy on public finances among citizens, and facilitating discussions and debates on budgetary issues;

- adding new data into the budget process by collecting, synthesizing and disseminating information on public finances;

- providing training on public finances to citizens' groups, the media and the legislature, which strengthens the capacity of all these groups to have oversight and to demand accountability from government agencies; and

- examining the passage of the budget through the legislature and its subsequent implementation.

Chapter 7

OPERATIONALIZATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

A comparative analysis of the platforms and mechanisms for public participation across the seven case study countries reveals that there are several critical success factors for public participation that cut across all jurisdictions. These are determined by various factors, particularly: (a) the political economy and nature of the government; (b) the adequacy of the provisions in the policy and legal framework; (c) the capacity of local governments; (d) citizen awareness and civic education; (e) citizens' access to information; and (f) CSOs' capacity and engagement in social accountability processes.

These factors are discussed in more detail in the following sections..

7.1. COUNTRY-LEVEL POLITICAL ECONOMY AND NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT

The country case studies reviewed above show that the nature of the government and the dominant political ideology determine the effectiveness of decentralization and also the design of the citizen engagement activities. In Cameroon, the longstanding conflict has inevitably contributed to the rise of the dominant centralized government and a tendency to recentralize (the dissolution of the two federal regions), rather than strengthen and grant autonomy to decentralized structures. For Kenya, historical marginalization and inequalities, coupled with successive ethnically polarized politics, inevitably culminated in the civil strife of 2007–2008. The creation of the new Constitution (2010) was a process designed to address

these longstanding grievances and it then paved the way for the radical decentralization reforms in place today.

For Rwanda, post-genocide, there was a need to resolve the fractured social fabric and spur rapid economic development, which has contributed to the strong central government and authoritarian regime. The government has maintained legitimacy for suppressing the genocidal forces and for its rapid economic development and transformation, despite its authoritarian stronghold, top-down autocratic rule and weakened citizen engagement in governance processes.

South Africa is the most unequal country in the world, with the minority 10 per cent controlling at least 80 per cent of the country's wealth (Sulla, Zikhali and Facundo 2022). With its apartheid history and present-day extreme inequality that favours the minority white race, the massive efforts to create a legal framework through the 1996 Constitution have not enabled an authentic and meaningful citizen engagement in local governance processes.

In Tunisia, the autocratic regimes prior to the 2011 revolution, as well as afterwards, have heavily controlled public participation in governance. Despite attempts to strengthen local governance after the revolution, the post-revolution structures were undermined following the 2021 political shifts that led to a new Constitution in June 2022. The environment for effective public participation in local governance has not been stable.

With Zimbabwe's continued trajectory of centralization and recentralization, and its limited finances for effective local governance, the administrative structures have not created a good environment for effective citizen participation in local governance. The legal framework in place has not helped in creating the needed traction for meaningful public participation to effectively influence local service delivery.

7.2. **ADEQUACY OF THE PROVISIONS IN THE POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

While only a handful of countries in Africa have ratified the regional and continental frameworks that support decentralization and local governance, most countries have adopted important provisions from the continental charters and protocols, as evident in their national legislation. Despite being the only country among the seven that has ratified the African Charter on Decentralisation, Cameroon has made the least progress on decentralization and public participation in local governance. Other countries, such as Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa, have national legal frameworks that support decentralization and citizen engagement in local governance, but the operationalization of these frameworks is problematic and ineffective. This has been attributed to various factors, including the lack of formalized, financed and politically supported structures of public participation. For Tunisia, progress made earlier in the legal framework later regressed as a new political administration changed the laws and governmental structures. The presence of legal and policy frameworks at continental, regional or national levels does not guarantee effective public participation in local governance. From this study, it can be concluded that these are merely formal provisions in law, which are often overridden by less visible factors such as those that define the political economy of the country.

7.3. **CAPACITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

Capacity concerns include the limited financial, human and structural resources of local governments, hampering their ability to effectively facilitate citizen engagement activities. It is notable that local authorities in several countries (for example, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe) carry out public participation activities simply to comply with the laws and policy requirements and not necessarily to achieve any meaningful consultation. In Zimbabwe and Kenya, weak public participation was reported arising from citizen disengagement with local governance processes and a lack of adequate interface mechanisms between citizens and local governments. As a result, the public participation activities are tokenistic in nature—often poorly organized and poorly attended

by citizens. As seen in various platforms and mechanisms in place across the seven countries studied, where physical public forums are held, they end up building a 'shopping list' for citizens, or a platform for raising complaints and grievances, rather than contributing to policy formulation or the planning and budgeting processes. On their part, local governments often lack the capacity needed to facilitate such public meetings and thus generate value from interacting with the public.

The existence of guiding legal frameworks, whether at a continental, regional or national level, is not enough by itself. The legal framework assigns roles to local government officials but does not spell out the actual processes and budget provisions to secure meaningful citizen engagement. In the absence of formally defined and budgeted structures for citizen participation, local government officials are largely left to invent their own processes, but mainly they simply comply with legal requirements for public participation. Additional factors, such as low political will among both elected and executive officials to carry out meaningful citizen engagement activities, and a reluctance by local government officials to provide access to information and feedback to citizens, further reduce the effectiveness of citizen engagement activities. Where present, citizens' complaints and grievance handling mechanisms are largely inadequate and ineffective across all the jurisdictions reviewed in this study.

In addition, while most countries have gender support machinery in existence, and even a supportive legal and policy framework for gender mainstreaming in local governance processes, actual integration of gender and social inclusion, gender needs and priorities remains invisible across the case studies. It is also possible that the reality might be that it has been under-documented. Often gender concerns are given only tokenistic attention, with most local government officials understanding 'gender inclusion' to imply the mere presence of women at public meetings and not the meaningful engagement that seeks to transform gender disparities, address gender needs and build empowerment towards transformation.

7.4. CITIZEN AWARENESS AND CIVIC EDUCATION

As already indicated, where public forums and citizen engagement meetings have been organized, they often turn out to be mere platforms for complaints and grievances. Often, political manipulation also takes place and this erodes the core intention of public participation in local governance processes. Citizens' limited understanding of local governance processes, their own role and responsibilities, all contribute significantly to this challenge. Inadequate civic education for citizens also significantly limits the quality of people's interactions with local governance processes. Further, the expectation by citizens for reward as a precondition for their participation erodes their engagement. The need for a comprehensive civic education curriculum, which is effectively rolled out and adequately financed, cannot be emphasized enough.

7.5. CITIZENS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Corruption perception is high in many local governments across many jurisdictions in Africa. Where corruption is less overt in countries like Rwanda, the decision-making process is still opaque, with citizens often not confident that their contribution to local governance is considered in policy, planning and budget formulation processes. Transparent governance, which implies accountability, openness, access to government information and unobstructed communication, is a core provision in the continental, regional and national legal frameworks for decentralization and local governance reviewed above. Considering that public participation is intended to check the excesses in governance, among other things, local government officials are reluctant to provide citizens with the requisite information. Subsequently, as seen in Kenya, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, local government officials provide bulky planning and budgeting documents written in inaccessible technical language just hours before formal public forums—a practice that ensures that citizens cannot effectively read, interpret and provide meaningful contributions to these documents. Despite enactment of access to information laws, and the existence of supportive legal frameworks, citizens hardly access timely, simplified and citizen-

friendly information from their local authorities in order to engage and effectively influence service delivery processes.

7.6. CSOS' CAPACITY AND ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES

Various studies across the different regions confirm that CSOs have made significant contributions to enhancing citizen engagement in public policy processes, including local governance (John 2012; NAR and Interpeace 2019, NAR 2020; AHADI 2020; IFEDA 2022). CSO networks have been noted to shore up greater impact than those CSOs that work on their own. This is because networks capitalize on strength in numbers, are able to agitate for change in sensitive areas, such as accountability and transparency in governance, and can map themselves across different geographical regions. Given that they have institutional-style organization, but no bureaucratic factors such as those that affect the efficiency of government institutions, CSOs are able to mobilize themselves quickly and can organize meetings with citizens and roll out programmes, such as purpose-driven civic education, more efficiently than government institutions can.

In Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda, civil society engagement in social accountability processes proved to be highly effective, where there was adequate funding for their work. Social accountability activities initiated by CSOs—such as public expenditure tracking (Kenya), citizen score cards (Kenya and Rwanda), participatory and gender responsive budgets (Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe)—were all highly effective, albeit implemented at a small scale due to funding limitations. However, despite these advantages, CSOs struggle to access financing to maintain their activities and sustain the gains made during their work. They are also often subject to political interference and manipulation in more restrictive governance environments. However, as seen in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, there is a need to build skills for CSOs operating at a subnational level, as they are often not on a par with those at the national level. This study found that most CSOs at local levels do not always understand the right entry points to influence local governance processes, and they do not always understand the public expenditure management processes.

A majority are also not familiar with existing legal frameworks that guide public participation and civic engagement, and they require sessions to familiarize themselves with these. Areas where CSO capacity strengthening is required range from institutional and organizational development to issue-building and policy advocacy, as well as civic education on citizen responsibilities in local governance, resource mobilization, monitoring and outcome tracking, financial management, local government policy planning and budgeting, among others.

Chapter 8

SUMMARY OF COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

This section provides a summary of individual case studies of Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, relating to each country's experience of public participation and local governance.[11]

8.1. CAMEROON

Conflict and insecurity have hindered progress on governance and public participation. The uptake of citizen participation in local governance has been lethargic, primarily because of the centralized, top-down presidential political system in the country since independence. This top-down centralized governance system was exemplified by the one-party state in place from 1966, when the main political parties were dissolved as separate entities and merged into a single party of government, the Cameroon National Union.

Regional and national frameworks for public participation in local governance

There are several frameworks at regional and national level which have been adopted to enhance citizen participation in the Central Africa region and Cameroon in particular. Table 1 details the frameworks in place that Cameroon aligns with, which promote public participation.

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11   The full case studies were developed by different authors as follows: Cameroon by Nicasius Achu Check; Kenya and Rwanda by Margaret Wanjiku Ngunjiri; Nigeria by Idayat Hassan; South Africa and Zimbabwe by Vincent Chakunda; and Tunisia by Ons Ben Abdelkarim.

Table 1. **Frameworks for public participation in local governance with which Cameroon aligns**

Framework	Provisions and status
Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS)	The primary objective of ECCAS is to direct the course of cooperation and physical, economic and monetary integration in Central Africa.
Plan Stratégique Indicatif à Moyen Terme, PSIMT (ECCAS)	The PSIMT aims to harmonize the legal and institutional framework of ECCAS, and all the components of the regional integration process within it. The PSIMT strives to contribute to the acceleration of the process of rationalization of the Regional Economic Commissions in the region, so as to create and enable a single Regional Economic Commission in the region, as prescribed by the African Union Banjul Summit of 2006.
The Non-Aggression Pact (ECCAS)	This forbids any member of ECCAS from attacking or overtly expressing bellicose tendencies towards another member of ECCAS.
The Mutual Assistance Pact (ECCAS)	Urges ECCAS member states to collectively come to the aid of an ECCAS member whose security has been threatened by a third party.
Treaty on Regional Cooperation Strategy Paper for 2003–2007	This treaty between the EU and Central Africa is meant to facilitate trade talks and institutional capacity among the region's entities. It also strives to combine economic resources, strengthen the customs union, and advance the free movement of goods, services, capital and people.
Constitution of Cameroon	Article 1(1)(2) of the 1996 Constitution declares the Republic of Cameroon a decentralized unitary state, with three distinct governance levels—central government, plus regions and local councils. The Constitution further devotes eight articles to regional and local establishments as the basis of decentralization in Cameroon. Article 55(2) of the Constitution states that regions and local councils are public corporate bodies that are supposed to be freely administered by elected councils, although article 55(3) gives the government supervisory powers over the councils.
Law No. 2004/017 of 22 July 2004	Law on the operation of decentralization, which lays down the general rules applicable to councils.
Law No. 2004/018 of 22 July 2004	Law laying down the rules applicable to local councils.

Table 1. **Frameworks for public participation in local governance with which Cameroon aligns (cont.)**

Framework	Provisions and status
Law No. 2004/019 of 22 July 2004	Law laying down the rules applicable to regions.
Law No. 2009/019 of 15 December 2009	Law on the local fiscal system.
Forest Law 1994	This law makes the state the sole custodian and chief manager of all forests in the country and the region, and granted the state special rights to exploit forest resources and to apportion the rights to access and exploit forest resources to both corporate companies and the local population.
Law on Freedom of Association 1990	This law states that political parties shall be formed and shall freely carry out their activities within the framework of the Constitution.

Domestication of international and regional frameworks

The domestication of frameworks to facilitate the involvement of citizens in local governance structures in ECCAS has been a challenge over recent decades. While CSOs and other non-state actors are generally allowed to operate in all ECCAS member countries, the overbearing stature of the ruling party coalitions in these countries has limited the free and voluntary participation of ordinary citizens in governance structures at the local level.

Mechanisms and platforms for public participation

Due to the conflicts in the region, the mechanisms in place are also geared towards peace and security to ensure that there is a platform for public participation and local governance. The following is a list of the mechanisms in place in the region:

1. **The Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX).** This is the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution.
2. **The Central African Early Warning System (MARAC).** This mechanism has a primary function to collect and analyse data for the early detection and prevention of conflicts.
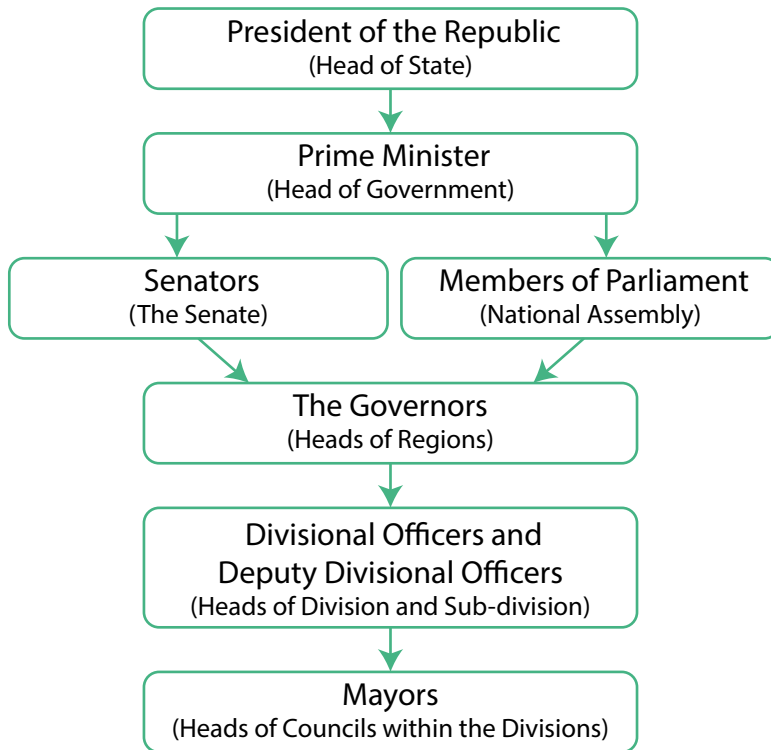
3. **The Defence and Security Commission.** This consists of the chiefs of staff of the national armies and commanders in chief for the police and gendarmerie forces from member states.
4. **The ECCAS–UN Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.** Based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, this body aims to ensure that government departments and CBOs are schooled in the fields of human rights and democracy, and to raise public awareness of human rights and democratic values in all 11 member states of ECCAS.
5. **The World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) on the sustainable administration of tropical forests and biodiversity.** This World Bank initiative swiftly followed the 1974 Land Ordinance in Cameroon, which put the country at the centre of forest management in the region. An important aspect of citizen participation in local governance in Cameroon is the role of communities in managing land and forest administration. Therefore, the SAP was key to ensure the management and involvement of communities.
6. **Village community projects and common initiative groups.** In many rural areas in Cameroon, VCPs and CIGs are platforms through which citizens participate in local governance and development projects in their communities. While VCPs have a distinct purpose—popular participation in village development projects—CIGs are dedicated to enhancing the development of sectoral endeavours with specific interests.

Another fundamental area that has shaped citizen participation in local governance and development in Cameroon is that of self-reliance. According to Fonchingong and Fonjong (2002), self-reliance or community development is a major factor in triggering the utilization of home-grown resources and is therefore one of the most important approaches for promoting people's participation in determining their own development.

The decentralization process in Cameroon is another important way in which ordinary citizens have been able to participate in local governance structures. Devolution of competence in Cameroon is anchored on three pillars—the state, regional authorities and local authorities. A key route through which ordinary citizens participate in local governance in Cameroon is at the level of city councils. City

councils are special councils created from an urban centre. City councillors are indirectly elected among local councillors that make up the city council.

Figure 2. **Administrative structure in Cameroon**

```
                    President of the Republic
                         (Head of State)
                               │
                               ▼
                        Prime Minister
                      (Head of Government)
                         │            │
                         ▼            ▼
               Senators        Members of Parliament
             (The Senate)        (National Assembly)
                    │                    │
                    ▼                    ▼
                      The Governors
                    (Heads of Regions)
                           │
                           ▼
                  Divisional Officers and
                 Deputy Divisional Officers
               (Heads of Division and Sub-division)
                           │
                           ▼
                         Mayors
            (Heads of Councils within the Divisions)
```

Source: Author's recreation based on Cameroon's Constitution of 1972 (amended in 2008).
Note: Both the Anglophone and Francophone regions are infused and not autonomous or independent.

Another key area that rural dwellers have been involved in governance processes in the country is in the management of healthcare in the rural areas. The involvement of the community through the integrated health committees approach presupposes the formation of support groups, inspiring and engaging whole communities to get involved in health intervention for the purpose of changing norms and habits to improve their health at the local level.

The role of political parties in mobilizing people to participate in the sociocultural and political life of Cameroon has been significant. One of the fundamental achievements of the liberation of the sociocultural and political space in Cameroon was the ability of people with specific interests to demand the protection of their interests within the Cameroon polity.

The role of civil society in public participation and local governance

CSOs are important actors in the development process of countries and have increasingly played a significant role in shaping and driving government policies in various areas of public life. Citizen participation in local governance processes in Cameroon has been impacted negatively by decades of one-party rule in the region. The legislative framework for civil society participation in the public sphere is equally constrained by repressive laws that restrict fundamental liberties and freedoms. Although good practices from other parts of the world should serve as examples, an ECCAS and a Cameroon framework for citizen participation in local governance processes and structures should be developed.

Recommendations

The government should ensure that the forces of law and order are neutral in the exercise of their functions, that the independence of the judiciary is maintained and appointments to the bench are managed by an independent judiciary board, that there is a constitutional provision on the status of the leader of the official opposition, and that such a person should have the same rights and privileges accorded to ministers. The establishment of an independent and well-resourced electoral management board, whose members are appointed by political parties represented in parliament, is also key.

The government of Cameroon should also ensure that there is effective devolution of competencies to local authorities. Governors of regions should be elected and entrusted with executive and fiduciary powers, and also ensure that minority rights—both linguistic and ethnic—are protected by the Constitution.

8.2. **KENYA**

In Kenya, there is general consensus that the public participation initially envisaged in the Constitution (2010), and also in the corresponding laws, has not been achieved at either the national or the county level. This is despite the fact that significant public participation efforts have been made at both levels of government. Recent and ongoing assessments of the extent of public participation reveal that there is some form of citizen engagement in county governance already taking place in the devolved system of government, but this is not properly coordinated. Similarly, the extent to which this public engagement has been successful in influencing service delivery is not being documented. Notably, many counties have developed and enacted the necessary legislation on public participation, yet little has been done to develop regulations that will operationalize the legislation.

International and regional frameworks for public participation in local governance
Public participation takes prominence as one of the national values and principles of governance, as articulated in the Constitution of Kenya (2010) in articles 10(2.a) and 232(1). Therefore, it is important to look at how the various frameworks in place promote public participation as an essential component of good governance, as shown in Table 2.

National frameworks for public participation in local governance
It is evident that international and regional frameworks play a key role in influencing and promoting good governance through the adoption and ratification of covenants and charters that guide and inform national legislation, as seen in Kenya. Despite not having signed or ratified some of these charters, legislation has included some of these provisions and as such they form part of Kenyan laws and policies that provide for good governance, as shown in Table 3.

With the adoption of devolution in Kenya and the various associated legislation, there has been an improvement in terms of public participation. There has been increased awareness and appreciation of how public participation can make governance easier, and the

Table 2. **Frameworks for public participation in local governance with which Kenya aligns**

Framework	Provisions and status
Declaration of the International Conference on Public Participation	Also referred to as the Gauteng Declaration of March 2012, this emphasizes the importance of public participation as an essential ingredient in good governance and also for the improvement of livelihoods for all.
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	Article 25 provides that: 'Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without ... unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.' Kenya has not signed or ratified the ICCPR; however, provisions in the ICCPR have been adopted and operationalized through subsidiary legislation.
African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG)	Adopted in 2017 by African Union member states, this Charter stresses the importance of public participation as a key pillar for achieving good governance. Kenya has signed and ratified this Charter.
African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development (African Charter on Decentralisation)	This Charter was adopted in 2014 by the African Union as a framework for implementing public participation in local governance. Kenya has not signed or ratified the Charter, but has adopted most of the provisions in the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and subsidiary legislation. Article 10 of the Charter seeks to secure 'Inclusion, Equity and Equality'. Article 12 makes provision for 'Participation' in public local governance as a foundational principle. It specifically states: 'Local governments or local authorities shall promote participation of all segments of society in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects through structured platforms and other forms of participation to ensure delivery of quality services' (article 12(3)).
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter)	Adopted in 1986, this Charter promotes human rights and freedoms in Africa and provides for public participation. Kenya ratified the Charter in 1992.

Source: Author's own compilation.

Table 3. **National legislation with provision for public participation in local governance**

Constitutional and legal provisions	Main provisions and selected examples
Constitution of Kenya (2010)	Article 1: 'Sovereign power belongs to the people of Kenya' and this may be exercised directly or indirectly. Article 10: 'Public participation is one of the national values and principles of governance'. Article 27: Provides for equality and non-discrimination; and thus public participation should uphold this principle. Article 35: Guarantees the right to citizens' access to information. Article 174(c): States that the goal of devolution is to 'give powers of self-governance to the people and enhance their participation in the exercise of powers of the State'. Article 196: The County Assembly must conduct its business openly, hold its sittings and those of its committees in public, and facilitate public participation. Article 201(b): Public participation is an essential component in the management of public resources and in promoting openness and accountability. Function 14 (Schedule 4 Part 2) of the Constitution assigns the responsibility to ensure, facilitate and build the capacity of the public to participate in the affairs of the county governments.
County Governments Act (2012)	Section 87: Provides the principles of public participation in county governments, which include: timely access to information; access to the process of formulating laws and regulations; including approving development plans and budgets, among others. Section 88: Gives citizens the right to petition or challenge the county government on matters under its responsibility. Section 91: Requires county governments to establish modalities, structures and platforms for public participation. Sections 94–96: Requires county governments to facilitate public communication and access to information using any media with the 'widest public outreach', and to ensure access to information. Sections 98–99: Outlines the principles of civic education, which includes the empowerment of citizens and government for greater citizen engagement in county governance. Sections 100–101: Provides for counties to develop an institutional framework for civic education. Section 115: Makes public participation mandatory in county planning.

Table 3. **National legislation with provision for public participation in local governance (cont.)**

Constitutional and legal provisions	Main provisions and selected examples
Public Finance Management Act (2012)	Section 125: The County Executive Committee Member for Finance must ensure public participation in the budget-making process. Section 117(5): Requires the County Treasury to seek and take into account citizens' views during the development of the County Fiscal Strategy Paper. Section 207: Requires county governments to establish structures, mechanisms and guidelines for citizen participation.
Urban Areas and Cities Act (2011)	Section 3(c): Provides for citizen participation in the governance of urban areas and cities. Section 11: On principles of governance and management of urban areas and cities, makes provisions for active participation of residents in the management of the urban areas and city affairs. Section 22: Gives provisions for residents of urban areas to participate in provision of services, enactment of county policies and legislation, and development of budgets and development plans, among others.
Intergovernmental Relations Act (2012)	Section 3: Makes provisions for consultation between the two levels of government, and mandates both to widely consult citizens before advancing any positions. Section 5(d): Requires that one of the structures under intergovernmental relations is a forum for sharing and disclosing data and information to the public. Section 38: Empowers the Cabinet Secretary to make regulations for public participation.
Policies on public participation	Ministry of Devolution and Planning's Draft Devolution Policy (2015): The policy provides the direction on the implementation of devolution, as well as pillars to guide devolution. Public Participation Guidelines for County Governments by the Ministry of Devolution and Planning: The guidelines outline the rationale for public participation, including constitutional and legal foundations.

Source: Author's own compilation.

consequent institutionalization of public participation through various mechanisms, such as the enactment of laws, the formulation of policies and guidelines to govern public participation, and the establishment of public participation directorates in the counties. As a result, county assemblies and executives are engaging the public in various issues and, on occasions, communities have influenced

projects. There has also been ongoing civic education for citizens through CSOs and, as a result, there has been an increase in access to information on devolution.

However, with regard to gender and social inclusion (the inclusion of socially excluded groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, among others) in county governance in Kenya, it is clear that the authorities do not have adequate capacity to address gender concerns. These issues, along with limited resources, are some of the major challenges to effective public participation.

Mechanisms and platforms for public participation

To enhance public participation, various platforms have been put in place by law, to facilitate citizens' engagement with governance matters:

1. Public forums. The forums are publicized mainly through newspapers and local community and vernacular radio stations. Additionally, announcements are also posted on county websites and Facebook, calling citizens to attend public forums.
2. Oral submissions. These are oral contributions made by citizens as input into draft county development plans, budget estimates, bills or other documents that by law must be subjected to public participation.
3. Memorandums and petitions. Counties often receive written memorandums and petitions during the planning and budgeting processes, such as legislation making and planning.
4. Civic education. CSOs have taken up civic education on the roles and responsibilities of every citizen, social accountability, capacity building through trainings, and ensuring access of information through simplification of materials for public consumption.
5. Citizen complaints and grievance mechanisms. These include platforms where citizens lodge complaints and receive feedback from local government authorities.
6. County budget and economic forums. These are legal structures put in place to encourage stakeholder engagement in county planning and budgeting processes, and policy planning.

Conclusion

Activities and interventions aimed at creating a facilitative ecosystem should be enhanced, anchored and sustained, prioritizing the setting up of the constitutionally and statutorily prescribed decentralized facilitative structures up to the village level. Evidence strongly indicates that CSOs work more effectively and are able to more efficiently operationalize their mandate, compared with the government bureaucracies that are counties. This is particularly evident in CSOs' work in rolling out civic education, which may be attributed to various factors, including CSOs' economies of scale and apolitical nature. Subsequently, CSOs should be equipped and facilitated with adequate incentives to partner with county governments and others through funding and joint programmes to undertake civic engagement projects and activities together. Public expenditure management and specifically the county planning and budgeting process as an entry point for public participation work is effective. In both the national and county bureaucracies, it is notable that procurement is the main avenue through which public funds leak and are misused. Therefore, training citizens to understand public procurement in addition to the broader county planning and budgeting framework is critical in equipping them with useful information to keep the counties in check on corruption.

Recommendations

Securing greater access to information at county level has been reported to be a big struggle across all counties. The simplification of complex county planning and budgeting documents into more accessible and accurate formats, and in a timely manner, is nearly impossible without external (CSO or other development partner) intervention. Civic engagement approaches and processes should also be designed to facilitate the participation of different demographics. Meaningful public participation requires finances, human resources and plenty of time. Budget limitations will need to be addressed at both the national and county levels, as a strategy to cure the 'tokenistic' nature of citizen engagement activities as they are presently operationalized. The need to support both the 'supply side' and the 'demand side' with regard to citizen engagement cannot be emphasized enough. Civic education that sensitizes the public on their role as rights-holders, builds skills to interpret devolution processes, and nurtures citizen agency (including for women and

youth) to advocate for accountability in local governance, is critical for the achievement of meaningful public participation in devolution in Kenya.

8.3. **NIGERIA**

Regional frameworks guiding public participation in local governance in the ECOWAS region

The requirement for public participation in local governance in West Africa is drawn from several regional and international policies and frameworks. However, member states are only legally bound by these instruments when they ratify them. The lack of ratification of policy instruments by member states is linked to the highly consultative and cost-intensive process involved in doing so. A lack of political will and frequent changes in government also delay the ratification of charters or domestication of them. Nigeria has ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) but has only domesticated the former. The ratification and enforcement of the Banjul Charter in 1983 was reflected in the reform of the administration of justice policies and the use of provisions in the Charter in settling human rights disputes, among others (ACHPR 2008). The Charter sets out a regional human rights system, which recognizes universally accepted civil and political rights, in addition to individual and collective rights. It obligated member states not just to respect the rights and freedoms contained in the Charter, but also to promote them and to educate citizens about these rights (OAU 1981).

The lack of domestication of the ACDEG—despite its ratification— means that it is yet to be adopted into a body of laws. However, the principles of the Charter are reflected in different pieces of legislation, such as the Nigerian Constitution, and the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy (ActionAid 2020). Nigeria is yet to ratify the African Charter on Decentralisation, which, along with the ACDEG, was adopted to enhance the establishment of effective decentralized systems of government on the continent. The African Charter on Decentralisation was the region's first attempt to provide a decentralization framework for local government in member states that would serve as the vehicle for improving the livelihood of people.

It clearly states that the key cornerstone of any democratic system is effective local governance, democracy and development through decentralization (African Union 2014).

Table 4. **Policy frameworks guiding public participation in local governance and their ratification by Nigeria**

Instruments	Date of signature	Date of ratification	Date deposited
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) (1981)	31 August 1982	22 June 1983	22 July 1983
African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (1990)	Not yet	March 2003	Not yet
African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007)	2 July 2007	1 December 2011	9 January 2012
African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development (African Charter on Decentralisation) (2014)	–	–	–

Source: Author's own compilation.

Decentralization: Legal frameworks for the establishment of local government in Nigeria

The African Charter on Decentralisation stipulates that 'state parties shall enact domestic laws/regulations, recognizing different levels of government with the mandate to exercise their competencies through clearly defined regulatory mechanisms' (African Union 2014: article 5(1)). Although the Charter is yet to be signed or ratified in Nigeria, there is an existing legal framework for the establishment and implementation of local governments—the Nigerian Constitution. Since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, the issue of decentralization has always been a focal point in political discourse, in part due to the increasing decline in the delivery of social

Table 5. **Other policy documents guiding public participation in local governance in the West Africa region**

Instruments	Date and place of adoption	Date of entry into force
African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation[1] (1990)	February 1990	March 2003
Declaration of Political Principles (July 1991)	July 1991	–
Revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993)	1993	23 August 1995
Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping, and Security (1999)	1999	–
Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2004)	2004	–

Source: Author's own compilation.

1   The 1990 African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation made provisions for the role of public participation in democratic governance and economic and human development.

services at the local government level. This is due to widespread corruption, weak institutions and a lack of monitoring mechanisms. The 1976 local government reform was conceived to, among other objectives, facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government at the grassroots, mobilize human resources and provide improved channels of communication between the state, federal and local governments. It was this reform that led to the introduction of local government as a third tier of governance in Nigeria's governmental structure in the 1979 Constitution—a commitment reaffirmed in the 1999 Constitution (as amended in 2011, and hereafter referred to as 'the 1999 Constitution as amended'). In section 7 of the 1999 Constitution as amended, local government is conceived as separate—and independent—from state governments.[12] Nigeria has 774 LGAs that each consist of an executive and a legislature (Zanna 2015).

12   This is a verbatim repeat of the same provision in section 7 of the 1979 Constitution.

The 1999 Constitution as amended enumerated in its Fourth Schedule the functions of the local government council. It clearly outlines the exclusive functions of a local government, details those that must be dealt with concurrently by the state and local government, and identifies how other functions may be conferred on the local governments by the State Houses of Assembly. The functions of the local government include the collection of rates, the provision of licences, and the establishment of burial grounds, slaughterhouses and motor parks. Others include the provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education, the development of agriculture and natural resources other than the exploitation of minerals, and the provision and maintenance of health services. However, the 1999 Constitution as amended does not make these functions of the local government council to be self-executing; they must be conferred upon the local government council by law (section 7(5)). Therefore, if the State House of Assembly does not make a law conferring the functions to the local government council, the council cannot perform those functions. Another uncertainty is whether the state government can concurrently exercise the above functions with the local government councils after they have been conferred on the councils. This has made it very easy for the states to take over the functions that the Constitution may have envisaged as the sole preserve of LGAs.

Democratic governance at the local level

The African Charter on Decentralisation provides for democratic governance at the local level, stating that 'local governments or local authorities shall in accordance with the national law, have the powers, to in an accountable and transparent manner, manage their administration and finances through democratically elected, deliberative assemblies and executive organs' (African Union 2014: article 5(2)). Many elections that are held lack integrity and remain controlled by state officials who ensure that their political allies are elected. In Ekiti's 2017 local council elections, the ruling party won all 16 chair seats. Therefore, 'if you ask people, they can tell you what is going on at the presidential or gubernatorial elections but know nothing of the local government elections,' argued one respondent.[13] The consequence of this is that citizens are alienated from the

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13   Key informant interview with community member, Sumaila, Kano state, 21 September 2022.

process of selecting their leaders, thereby defeating the purpose of inclusive governance at the grassroots. This creates voter apathy as people feel their votes do not count.

Challenges of local governance in Nigeria

Poor framework for decentralization and lack of autonomy: Nigeria operates a single tier of local government, with each area determined by geographic size and population. While the constitutional provision is clear on this, it also gives room for contradiction by allowing for expansion so long as permission is sought through the appropriate channel.

Lack of consultative forum/public hearing: Citizens are unaware of the government allocations and what they are meant for (Unegbu 2013). The local chairpersons are not accountable, and rarely organize public forums or consultations to discuss their plans or expenditure or to receive feedback from citizens. Unlike at the state or federal levels, there are few CSO interventions, whether hosting consultative forums or establishing accountability platforms, at the level of the LGA.

A lack of grassroots connections: Elected or appointed officials at the local government level do not have a connection to their local communities. Nor do they have independent agendas, curated in partnership with the communities they seek to serve during their time in office. In fact, according to several respondents, once elected, local government officials move out of their previous abode.

Insufficient scrutiny of policy and planning processes: Local organizations promoting democratic accountability are almost non-existent at the LGA level. The emphasis of CSOs is more towards humanitarian support or service delivery, rather than accountability, which is largely ignored. At the same time, local media is also weak, leaving citizens without the access to information they need to be more engaged in the process of local governance, even if there are local town halls. 'Most media focus on the state and national level. Except for Facebook, you hardly even find people talking about what is happening in LGAs'.[14]

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14   Key informant interview with community member, Jigawa, 21 September 2022.

Lack of financial autonomy: LGA statutory allocations are withheld by the state governors, in some cases, or excessive deductions are made before the balance is shared in others.

Administrative inefficiency: The qualification to be considered for election of the chairperson and councillors according to the 1999 Constitution are the same as that of the State House of Assembly representatives—a post-primary school certificate. This suggests that the average political office holder in the LGA is not expected to be a technocrat. Low educational qualifications of staff and low pay, in addition to poor working conditions, affect the quality of work done by those in positions of power at the LGA.

The role of civil society and other non-state actors in enhancing citizen participation in local governance

Civil society plays a significant part in improving democratic processes (Elstub 2010) by mediating between citizens and the government, and in promoting good governance by pushing for transparency, accountability, effectiveness, openness and responsiveness. Not only that, CSOs also play an important role through policy analysis and advocacy. However, low CSO capacity, a weak organizational base, the uncertainty in CSO financing, limited community engagement due to people's poor civic understanding of their roles and of local governance processes—these all affect the performance of CSOs at the local level in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The framework for decentralization in Nigeria is weak and the implementation challenges are systemic. The lack of ratification of continental and regional laws, the incoherent legal framework for decentralization and weak fiscal policies all compound these challenges for local government administration in Nigeria (Amah 2018). The framework provided by the Constitution relating to the creation, functions, tenure, finance and conduct of elections in local government is contradictory and mostly unimplemented. The challenges of corruption, the imposition of leaders and a lack of citizen participation and interest in the administration of local governments in Nigeria have all helped to decimate the powers and influence of the LGAs. Citizens are rarely involved in budgetary planning and, as such, there are instances where projects are being

forced on citizens without their input. This partially explains the challenges of local governance in Nigeria. The uncertainty created by conflicting constitutional amendments, the failure to implement available laws, the encroachments of state governments into the functions of the LGAs, and, in some instances, the gradual curtailment and hijack of the functions of LGAs, are also inhibiting its growth.

Recommended policy strategies and mechanisms in local government

- Nigeria should sign and ratify existing regional frameworks, specifically the African Charter on Decentralisation, to leverage the institutional arrangement to enforce citizens' participation at the grassroots.

- A constitutional review is required to ensure that the autonomy of the LGAs is consolidated, to enhance their effectiveness.

- The government needs to proceed with the reorganization and integration of states' Independent Electoral Commissions into the Independent National Electoral Commission, to improve the integrity of elections and also ensure that periodic elections are held.

- Awareness campaigns by stakeholders, including government, media and CSOs, are required, to inform citizens about their rights to public participation.

- The capacity building of local government personnel in terms of administration is needed if effective citizen participation is to be achieved. CSOs and CBOs should also be trained on civil and political rights to create awareness among citizens.

- Further studies on community participation within LGA structures should be carried out to bring about evidence-based policies on public participation in local governance across the country. In addition, they should be used to highlight the LGAs where more accountable and participatory local governance is being practised.

8.4. **RWANDA**

Rwanda is one of the countries in the Great Lakes region on the eastern part of Central Africa. Rwanda has emerged with great social, economic and political promise from the devastating effects of the 1994 genocide. Following the genocide that destroyed the physical infrastructure and social fabric of the Rwandan population, the government prioritized policies and initiatives to promote social cohesion. The country has, over the past 20 years, experienced stability and peace and made concerted efforts to stamp out corruption, and provide for inclusiveness in governance. However, despite the general government commitment and efforts to spearhead citizen participation in governance, challenges still abound, including an overriding culture of centralism, gaps in the coordination of central and local government planning processes, inadequate inclusion of women and other socially excluded groups, and a low level of demand by citizens for social accountability from local governments. The effectiveness of decentralization may be affected by the socialization process, which renders citizens passive bystanders of the development process. To entrench decentralization at the lowest level, the Decentralization Policy seeks to strengthen citizen mobilization at the village level.

Regional frameworks with which Rwanda's decentralization programme aligns

Rwanda began an ambitious decentralization reform programme in 2000, with the aim of strengthening local service delivery and improving citizen participation in governance, while at the same time building cohesion. This decentralization programme is now in its third phase and is anchored in the legal framework discussed in Table 6.

National frameworks for public participation in local governance

Table 7 lists the national frameworks that have been put in place to strengthen public participation and enhance local governance.

Mechanisms and platforms for public participation in Rwanda

The Decentralization Policy and legal framework has identified several mechanisms and platforms for public participation in local governance in Rwanda. These are discussed briefly here:

Table 6. **Regional frameworks with which Rwanda's decentralization programme aligns**

Framework	Provisions and status
African Union's Agenda 2063	This is founded on pan-Africanism, with its Aspiration 6 calling for: 'An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children' (African Union 2015).
The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG 16 rallies countries to 'build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions', with specific targets to: (a) 'develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels' (Target 16.6); (b) 'ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels' (Target 16.7); and (c) 'ensure public access to information' (Target 16.10).
East African Community (EAC) Vision 2050	Vision 2050 includes targets to attain a prosperous, competitive, secure and politically united East Africa.
East African Local Government Forum (EALGF) (Strategic Plan 2015–2020)	The EALGF Strategic Plan seeks to unite local governments and their stakeholders in East Africa through their representative bodies, to promote the social and economic well-being of all citizens through just and democratic local governance and development.

Source: Author's own compilation.

- Joint Action Development Forum (JADF). This is initiated by the central government to monitor the participation of non-state actors to encourage peer review of district operations. The JADF was formalized in 2007 to serve as a consultative forum for all district stakeholders inclusive of CSOs, NGOs, FBOs, development partners, private sector organizations and public institutions.

- *Imihigo* (performance contracts). These are a form of participatory performance contracts, and the main instrument for holding local authorities accountable for delivering value to their communities. They represent the planning process between central government and the districts and vice versa, as Rwanda's accountability mechanisms are vertical rather than to the citizenry, which would be the ideal for democratic governance. *Imihigo* targets are framed in line with the Annual Action Plans and are monitored annually.

Table 7. **National frameworks for public participation in local governance**

Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda (2003, revised in 2015)	Article 5 provides that the territory of Rwanda is divided into administrative entities determined by an organic law that also sets their number, boundaries and structures. Article 6 stipulates that public powers are decentralized at local administrative entities in accordance with the provisions of law. Article 27 stipulates that all Rwandans have the right to participate in the government of the country, either directly or through their freely chosen representatives, in accordance with the law. Article 27 also stipulates that all Rwandans have the right of equal access to public service in accordance with their competence and abilities.
Rwanda's Vision 2050	With regard to citizen participation, the Vision 2050 indicates: 'Over early years of Vision 2050, decentralization will be fully achieved with equal participation of men and women in decentralized government entities, private sector and civil society. It will yield in capable local service delivery and revenue and job creation led at the local level' (Rwanda 2020).
Rwanda's Decentralization Policy (2012)	The Decentralization Policy has a focus on good governance, service delivery for the poor and sustainable development.
Rwanda's National Urbanization Policy (2015)	This aims to enhance institutional capacity to anchor urbanization in order to, among other things, improve the quality of citizens' lives in urban areas.
Fiscal and Financial Decentralization Policy (2011)	To promote fiscal and financial transparency, accountability and public outreach, facilitate the effective engagement of civil society and the private sector in the fiscal and financial decentralization policy implementation.
Volunteerism Policy (2012)	This aims to provide operational guidance for volunteers and to anchor the concept of volunteerism in the national development process, so as to access human resources and bolster social and economic transformation.
Umuganda Policy (2005)	This makes it mandatory for everyone between the ages of 18 and 65 (excluding expatriates, the elderly and others unable to work) to participate in community activities once a month on the last Saturday. The aim of *umuganda* is for community members to take ownership of development initiatives and processes.

Table 7. **National frameworks for public participation in local governance (cont.)**

Home Grown Solutions Policy (2003, amended in 2015)	Home-grown solutions (HGSs) are largely believed to contribute significantly to the promotion of democratic decision making, and collective community action, and are hence a prime platform for citizen engagement in local governance in Rwanda. The *imihigo, umuganda, inteko z'abaturage, inama njyama, ubudehe* and *gacaca* are key among Rwanda's home-grown solutions, where cultural and traditional practices have been fused with modern practices to provide solutions to present development and governance challenges.

Source: Author's own compilation.

- Citizen Report Card. This collates citizens' feedback on local governments' service delivery. It serves as a tool for quality assurance and evaluation on local governments' adherence to citizen charters.

- *Umuganda* (community public works). This concept is rooted in Rwandan culture of solidarity and collective responsibility. During *umuganda*, community members come together on the last Saturday of the month for a common task, which might include cleaning or clearing neighbourhoods.

- *Inteko z'abaturage* (citizen assemblies). These were established in 2010 to provide guidance to decentralized activities in collecting and handling citizens' priorities. They are held at cell level and allow consultations between citizens and various local leaders.

- *Inama njyama* (local councils). These the most legitimized participatory structures, as they comprise elected representatives, who contribute to decision making and all have a maximum of two terms of office.

- *Ubudehe* (collective action for mutual support activities). This is a social stratification approach based on income levels, which identifies households from those with the lowest incomes to those with higher incomes, including the more vulnerable ones who need support.

Hasselskog (2018), in his exploration of the viability of a participatory model in the Rwandan developmental state, argues that, as much as Rwanda is committed to achieving public participation in local governance, this may not be achieved precisely because of its 'developmental state' approach. The suggestion is that, as long as Rwanda remains committed to the current model, it will struggle to achieve meaningful public participation.

Rwanda demonstrates commitment to and support for gender equality through various modalities, including the national gender machinery tasked with promoting, mainstreaming and tracking gender equality. The central government institution coordinating policy implementation on gender rests with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, which also plays a lead role in driving the gender equality agenda at both the national and subnational levels. Rwanda also promotes and protects the rights of people with disabilities, and their access to basic services. Rwanda's record of achievements on women's access to leadership positions stands out both in Africa and globally. Women held 64 per cent of seats in the parliament in 2013, 42 per cent in cabinet, 32 per cent in the senate, 43.5 per cent in the city and district council seats, and represented 50 per cent of judges.

There are some initiatives in Rwanda to support CSOs in enhancing citizen engagement in governance and public policy engagement. Some of these include:

- The Public Policy Information Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project. This aims to strengthen the engagement of Rwandan CSOs. PPIMA's overarching goals are to support citizen engagement in public policy and to build CSOs' capacity to hold decision makers to account with regard to policy implementation.

- Community Score Card. Citizens' engagement was strengthened using tools such as District and National Dialogue Forums, radio call-ins, the Anti-Corruption and Justice Information Centre, Gender Budget Statements, Citizens' Alternative Budgets, among others.

A study by CIVICUS in 2011 found that social accountability in Rwanda was effective, not because of the CSOs' work but because of political will and commitment by the central government to deliver to citizens. The study indicates that there is a high level of public trust in the leader of the country, the government and the armed forces of Rwanda, shown respectively by 84.2 per cent, 63.1 per cent and 61.5 per cent (CIVICUS 2011). There is also a view that the central government prioritizes strengthening the capacity of local government staff rather than that of citizens, in order to mitigate the possible risks of decentralization associated with inefficiency and local elite capture. This would imply that a well-intended policy approach may inadvertently undermine the noble ideals of decentralization and effective service delivery.

Conclusion

Rwanda has an elaborate legal and policy framework for enhanced local governance and public participation. The initial post-genocide intentions to rapidly transform the country economically, to achieve social cohesion and to strengthen political governance have, to a large extent, been achieved. This is evident in various ways, including in the current peace and security enjoyed by citizens, as well as a selection of good governance indicators, such as strong corruption suppression measures, fiscal prudence and a general commitment to service delivery. Some obvious achievements, such as the reconstruction of a national identity, the positive impacts of social protection programmes, and financial and fiscal decentralization, stand out for Rwanda. However, despite social mobilization activities and innovation through home-grown solutions, effective and inclusive public participation has still not been achieved and this requires more attention. The prevailing good will at the central government level is already an enabler through which additional efforts to boost public participation at lower levels of governance should be leveraged.

Recommendations

• CSOs and women's organizations will particularly need organizational strengthening to build institutional agency that understands the political economy of local governance and the place of civic engagement in enhanced service delivery.

- Subsequently, a system-wide all-inclusive approach is recommended to address the systemic challenges associated with capacity and financing, centralism-related effects, coordination and planning challenges, among others.

- Gender and social inclusion in local governance should gain further attention, in tandem with the national goals of gender equality and women's empowerment. Government and non-state actors should enhance empowerment initiatives, as women's numbers do not always translate to transformative changes—in the absence of actual skills-building—or the amplification of women's voice and agency in local governance processes.

- Civic education needs to be provided targeting citizens, to sensitize them on the importance of participating in matters affecting them and also to make them aware of the opportunities available to them to influence local government processes, including planning and budgeting.

8.5. **SOUTH AFRICA**

Colonial subjugation and apartheid rule in South Africa was characterized by the exclusion and marginalization of the African communities, underpinned by a local government system that was racist. The advent of a democratic system in 1994 in South Africa ushered the idea of public participation in public policy and governance into the spotlight. The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that the objectives of local government are to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities and to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner. The notion of public participation in local governance emerged in the context of the government's failure to ensure to address the welfare of citizens.

National frameworks for public participation in local governance in South Africa

South Africa has an adequate legal framework for public participation in local governance. This is evident in Table 8, which summarizes the laws and policies guiding South Africa's public participation in local governance.

Table 8. **Legal framework for public participation in local governance in South Africa**

Framework	Provisions and status
Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)	Section 152(1)(e): 'The objects of local government are: ... to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government'. Section 195(1)(e): In terms of the 'basic values and principles governing public administration', 'people's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making'. Section 118(1): This section provides the public with access to provincial legislatures and involvement in legislative processes. It states that provincial legislatures must facilitate such public involvement. It also maintains that legislatures must openly conduct their business and may only block access on reasonable grounds. Section 59(2) provides that the National Assembly may not exclude the public including the media 'unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society'.
Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 (as amended in 2000 and 2003)	This allows for a Category A municipality with a subcouncil or ward participatory system or a Category B municipality with a ward participatory system, and executive committees or executive mayors who must annually report on the involvement of communities and community organizations in the affairs of the municipality. Section 72 states that the object of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government.
Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000	Section 4(2) states that a municipality council has the duty 'to encourage the involvement of the local community' and 'to consult the community about the level, quality, range and impact of municipal services provided by the municipality, either directly or through another service provider'. Section 5 states that members of the community have the right 'to contribute to the decision-making processes of the municipality and submit written or oral recommendations, representations and complaints to the municipal council' and 'to be informed of decisions of the municipal council' and 'to regular disclosure of the affairs of the municipality, including its finances'.
White Paper on Local Government of 1998	This states that 'municipalities should develop mechanisms to ensure citizen participation in policy initiation and formulation, and the M&E [monitoring and evaluation] of decision-making and implementation'.
The Batho Pele Principles (Sotho phrase meaning 'People First')	This is a simple and transparent mechanism, which allows citizens to hold public servants accountable for the level of services they deliver.

Table 8. Legal framework for public participation in local governance in South Africa (cont.)

Framework	Provisions and status
Community-based planning	Community-based planning seeks the active involvement of the community, especially poor people, to improve the quality of plans and services, extend community control over development and empower communities so that they take action and become less dependent.

Source: Author's own compilation.

Mechanisms and platforms for public participation in South Africa

There are different mechanisms through which the public can participate in the processes and activities of local government. Parliament uses the following mechanisms in South Africa:

1. People's Assembly. The People's Assembly is a public participation process that starts at a national level and moves through provincial and district levels, down to the municipal level. The People's Assembly promotes the notion of participatory and representative democracy, as the initiative provides a platform for people's voices to be heard.

2. Taking Parliament to the People (TPTTP). The programme involves sittings of the House and its committees outside the ordinary precincts of parliament in the most remote areas, where there is little or no infrastructure to accommodate public hearings and sittings of the House. It includes public hearings, public meetings, oversight visits by committees to predetermined sites, and ordinary sittings of the House.

3. Citizen satisfaction surveys. These provide a thorough basis and proactive agenda for citizens and government to engage in dialogue to improve the delivery of services to the public. Most departments apply citizen satisfaction surveys to solicit feedback from the citizens on the quality of the services they render.

4. The Citizens' forums model. This is a mechanism to facilitate public participation in public service and to evaluate the delivery of particular services throughout the country and to enable active

involvement of people affected by government programmes and service delivery improvement processes.

5. Integrated Development Planning. This is a vital tool for planning and development, and it ensures that available resources are optimally used to promote sustainable economic and social development through the engagement of relevant stakeholders.

6. Ward committees. These create a cooperative governance framework, where citizens, councillors and officials take collective responsibility for development at the local level.

The place of civil society in enhancing citizen participation in local governance

CSOs are vital in confronting, complementing and reforming the state, thus being watchdogs of government action. CSOs can meaningfully add value to economic and social development in any third-world country through their work. The government, the market and civil society can complement each other, and add value to the development of a country. CSOs promote liberal notions of representative or participatory democracy, to link citizens with the institutions and processes of the state, thereby impacting on the quality and vibrancy of democracy and resulting in increased accountability.

The rise of CSOs in South Africa was crucial to development as it contributed to the bridging of the communication gap between civil society and municipalities and promotes access to resources. The intermediary role helps in bridging the gap between residents and government through making published information more accessible and user-friendly, interpreting budget information and distributing findings. Many CSOs and CBOs in South Africa also help poor communities advocate for change and mobilize direct accountability, by supporting grassroots engagement in improved service delivery.

Benefits of public participation in local governance

Public participation promotes a sense of ownership and citizenship in South African communities: through the involvement in local government programmes communities partake in policy formulation and development as co-originators of policies rather than endorsers. Public participation creates high prospects for sustainable, quality and quantity service delivery, as this depends heavily on who

participates in devising solutions as well as on the delivery and governance of services.

Conclusion

Public participation in local government policy processes is key, and necessary in promoting public influence on decisions made at the local level. This study established that South Africa has a fairly robust legal and institutional framework for public participation in local government policy. However, public consultation platforms are usually hijacked by political parties, and, in the process, have destabilized the utility of such platforms and mechanisms in promoting sustainable citizen participation. Weak public knowledge of key policy documents that form the basis of public participation, such as legal frameworks and budgets, affects the role of the public in influencing policy decisions. Fundamentally, the knowledge and information gap affects the quality of public input into policies, while creating space for the executive to design policies with minimal public interventions. Breaking the information gap therefore becomes a key recommendation for sustainable public participation in local government policy processes.

Recommendations

- Parliament should spearhead the creation of an enabling environment for citizen participation. Executive policymaking processes need to be made more accessible and accountable to affected communities. The TPTTP model needs reframing and realigning so as to promote active and representative participation, and should collaborate with local authorities and development partners to promote budget and financial literacy among citizens. This is key in developing community capacity to input productively into the budgeting and financial management process.

- The National Treasury should introduce pilot mechanisms to encourage the public to monitor budget implementation and actively engage with vulnerable and under-represented communities, directly or through CSOs representing them. South Africa's Auditor-General should establish formal mechanisms for the public to assist in developing its audit programme and to contribute to its relevant audit investigations. Currently, the

Auditor-General does engage the public in its audit investigations but is not formally required by law to do so.

- Building strong social capital entails creating an enabling environment that encourages local citizens to belong to CSOs, such as NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, labour movements, citizens' forums and clubs. Strong social capital is an imperative that enables local communities to collectively participate in public affairs.

- Local authorities should implement inclusive and universally accepted policies that are gender responsive and youth friendly, as well as rights-based citizen engagement strategies to ensure that the local government policies address the social and economic needs of the vulnerable groups in society in South Africa. They should also build strong ward committees, which are critical mechanisms for citizens' participation in local government affairs.

- Local government officials must create an enabling environment that encourages and promotes public participation in decision-making processes on matters of local governance. Holding regular public meetings for deliberations, communicating changes to public policies and giving feedback to local communities may also go a long way in strengthening participatory local governance.

8.6. TUNISIA

The domestic realities of North African countries and how they approach issues related to participation in local governance vary substantially, especially following the Arab Uprisings. While some countries, such as Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, engaged—to varying degrees—in local governance and public participation reforms, others remained in pre-Arab Uprisings paradigms. These structural disparities can explain the lack of regional frameworks that North African countries could adhere to and the dominant tendency to develop country-specific programmes when part of regional initiatives or agreements. Concerning public participation in general and local governance, Tunisia stands out in North Africa as it adopted transformative legal frameworks, including the 2014 Constitution and Local Authorities Code, which formalized these concepts. Tunisia

also engaged in national and international initiatives promoting local participatory democracy. This section discusses Tunisia's pathways towards the promotion of local governance through public participation.

Regional frameworks of public participation in local governance in North Africa

The significant disparities between North African countries explain the lack of regional frameworks that all countries in the region are part of. Instead, existing initiatives and frameworks are either continental (such as the African Charter) or broader initiatives that cover either the MENA, Maghreb or Mediterranean region—to which not all North African countries adhere. Also, the majority of the frameworks, as detailed below, only offer general principles and intentions and leave it to the states, bilateral agreements and country-specific projects to decide on the implementation details.

African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development

Even though the African Charter on Decentralisation, which the Government of the African Union adopted in 2014, offers a distinctive regional framework to implement public participation in local governance mechanisms, only Mauritania officially signed it. Although Tunisia and Morocco did not sign it, they made significant progress on their national frameworks. The lack of formal buy-in can speak to these countries' commitment and prioritization towards public participation in local governance at the regional levels.

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance

The African Union adopted the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) in 2017, and it represents a central regional framework through which the African Union proposes mechanisms to improve democratic governance in the continent. It also highlights public participation as a critical component of efficient democratic governance at the central and local levels. For the ACDEG, there is better buy-in from the countries in North Africa, compared with other regions, as Algeria, Mauritania and Sudan signed and ratified the Charter, and Tunisia finalized the first step of signing it.

European Neighbourhood Policy (2021)

The EU adopted a New Agenda for the Mediterranean that aims to frame the 2030 partnership with countries of the South Mediterranean, including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Participation is a critical component of this agenda, focusing on youth participation in policy- and decision-making processes and the engagement of civil society, the private sector and citizens in local governance. The agenda also anticipates the implementation of these different components through country-specific programmes. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is part of the European Council and aims to reinforce local and regional democracy in the EU. In response to the Arab Uprisings, the Congress established a South-Med Partnership to support the South Mediterranean countries, through exchanging know-how, increasing dialogue and providing capacity-building programmes related to local governance and participatory democracy. A key mechanism of this partnership is the Status of Local Democracy Partner, from which both Morocco and Tunisia benefit.

The domestication of regional frameworks to enhance public participation in local governance

Tunisia is the most advanced country in North Africa in terms of public participation in local government through the existing frameworks that were put in place by the state, in collaboration with civil society and the international community. However, Tunisia did not rely on a regional framework as a starting point but rather as a tool to complement its domestic local governance and participation strategy. For example, even though Tunisia did not sign the African Charter on Decentralisation, the country still developed a substantive domestic legal framework on this issue.

Tunisia, therefore, developed a country programme with the OECD as part of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, which includes a focus on public participation at the local level. Also, Tunisia was granted, in 2019, the Status of Local Democracy Partner, following a formal request submitted to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities within the European Council. Based on this status, Tunisia committed to organizing regular local and regional elections and adopting a participatory legal framework for decentralization.

Existing national frameworks and mechanisms for public participation

Legal frameworks

Under the international community's pressure for more liberalization and democratization, the Tunisian regime adopted tailored frameworks for civil society to show signs of openness, used CSOs to reinforce the controlling environment, and repressed those organizations acting beyond the strictly established limits. Before 2010, the only framework that existed was the governing law on associations (Law 154 of 1959), which required CSOs to be approved by the Ministry of Interior and which stipulated strict boundaries to operate within, narrowing the opportunity for effective and independent public participation.

2014 Constitution

The 2014 Constitution represented the first ground-breaking legal framework regarding decentralization and public participation in local governance. Article 139 made public participation a constitutional right. It stated: 'Local authorities shall adopt the mechanisms of participatory democracy and the principles of open governance to ensure broader participation by citizens and civil society in the preparation of development programs and land management and monitoring of their implementation, in accordance with the law.'

Decree Law No. 88 of 2011 related to governing the regulation of associations

This framework is a landmark in Tunisia's public participation process and offers the most progressive and enabling environment for civil society in North Africa. It replaced Law 154 after the revolution and signalled a change in how the authorities approached civil society and civic engagement. The decree includes provisions on organizational forms and public funding, and prohibitions on state overview and interference in CSOs' activities and processes.

Decree Law No. 744 of 2018 on the standard bylaws for municipal councils

This decree provides standard bylaws for municipal councils. It includes provisions regarding public participation and highlights that each session needs to be open to the public and CSOs according to

the available seats. It also mandates municipal councils to inform residents of when the sessions will be taking place and to promote participation.

Local Authorities Code—Organic Law No. 48 of 2017
This regulates, for the 350 municipalities within 24 governorates, the roles and responsibilities of the municipalities and regions concerning the central state. It also includes substantive provisions related to public participation and local governance, with a chapter (Chapter 5) on participatory and open governance**.**

Organic Law on the right to access information (adopted 2016)
This law is a cornerstone of the public participation framework and is one of the most progressive laws on access to information in North Africa and the whole continent. The law provides free access to information and the ability to use it, narrows the scope of exceptions, and requires public entities to publish and disseminate information proactively.

Circular No. 31 of 2014 related to adopting a participatory process in preparing legal texts
This text, issued by the Prime Minister in October 2014, offers a framework allowing public participation in the review of draft legislative and regulatory texts. It specifies using a digital platform (legislation.tn) to allow governmental entities to publish a copy of the texts they wish to open for public reviews and to enable citizens to review and comment for at least 20 days.

Government Decree No. 328 of 2018 on the organization of public consultations
This decree expands the public consultations required on documents from more than legal texts to include public policies, strategic plans, and different types of programmes and projects of public interest at the central and local levels. It specifies that the process is open to all citizens, including experts, academics, specialists, CSOs, economic institutions and public structures.

Circular No. 12 of 2011 related to engaging citizens with the public administration
This circular aims to establish a process through which citizens can

evaluate the public services delivered by the various stakeholders and introduce more transparency and accountability in how the administration functions.

Circular No. 13 of 2011 related to implementing the participatory approach in the delivery of community services
This circular promotes a participatory approach to health, education and social services, by identifying relevant experts within the communities and involving them in the design of policies and the implementation and monitoring and strategies.

The Rule of Procedures of the Assembly of People's Representatives (2015)
The 2015 Rule of Procedures includes specific provisions related to public participation.

Additional mechanisms and tools promoting public participation
The MENA-OECD Governance Programme
This programme is one of the two components of the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development that aims to frame the cooperation between the MENA countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, and the OECD around issues of sustainable development and inclusive growth. Only Morocco and Tunisia have country-specific local governance and public participation projects, focusing on OpenGov and modernizing local governance in Morocco, and on OpenGov, decentralization and public participation in Tunisia.

The presidential public consultation platform
Following the decision to dissolve the Assembly of People's Representatives, President Kais Saied announced the process of reviewing the Constitution, and an open consultation took place through a new platform, <http://www.e-istichara.tn>. This process was open for two months and included 30 questions about constitutional reforms, as well as open space for comments and suggestions.

Use of online portals to enhance public participation
The government developed two additional portals to foster public participation, in addition to <http://legislation.tn>. The e-participation

portal offers a platform for the government to organize public consultations and for citizens to share suggestions and participate in forums and dialogues. The e-people portal is more focused on allowing citizens to file complaints, report incidents (including those related to corruption cases), and request information.

Design of an inclusive OpenGov plan at the national level
As part of its responsibilities as a member of the Open Government Partnership since 2014, Tunisia has been periodically developing action plans with commitments focused on transparency, public participation and accountability issues. A critical commitment that Tunisia has included as part of its 2021–2023 plan is to design an inclusive OpenGov plan at the central level, with the participation of civil society and the wider public.

Action plans on the involvement of youth at the municipal level
This mechanism consists of building youth action plans in 12 municipalities to allow youth to engage in a participatory approach in designing and monitoring public projects at the municipal level.

Marsad Baladia
In partnership with municipalities, Marsad Baladia created a network of citizens operating as local observers. Volunteers across 167 municipalities participate with citizens in municipal sessions, observe their progress, and write reports that Al Bawsala publishes as a way to increase accountability through citizens' involvement.

Benefits of mechanisms/approaches in public participation
Since creating these mechanisms, municipalities have engaged more in participatory approaches to get more resources. The participatory budget initiative involved more than 6,500 citizens, and 130 trainers from civil society, and trained at least 90 administrative and political officials in the participatory budgeting approach. As a result, the participants selected 29 projects across the municipalities of Menzel Bourguiba, La Marsa, Tozeur and Gabes for their 2015 municipal budgets, with a total value of TND 1,400,000.

The municipal development initiative programme also developed youth engagement plans in 29 municipalities and supported women networks in 6 municipalities leading to 150 women trained and ready

to engage other women at the local level. Also, citizen spaces were created in 12 municipalities and are expected to rise to 22 in 2023. So far, 734,080 people are supposedly benefiting from these spaces.

Conclusion

Tunisia achieved significant milestones on the path of public participation in local governance, by adopting transformative and progressive legal frameworks, and through the engagement of citizens, civil society, the government and the international community in a series of initiatives and mechanisms. However, much more can still be done to enhance citizens' engagement at the local level, especially as the country has been witnessing a constitutional and democratic regression since July 2021, confirmed by a new Constitution that confirms the authoritarian trends that have been shaping the country's landscape for over a year now.

Recommendations

The following recommendations target central and local governments, CSOs and the international community:

- A critical step for the administration is to reinforce the existing framework by releasing implementation decrees needed to apply the public participation provisions within the Local Authorities Code, such as the decree required for article 29. It is also essential to reinforce the correlation between the performance of municipalities on participatory approaches and funding allocations from the central government, as this delivered positive results and incentivized local authorities to prioritize public participation. A step forward means attributing more weight to participation criteria concerning fund attribution.

- Local authorities need to have enough power and prerogatives to engage in participatory approaches, commit and respond to the outcomes of citizens' engagement processes, and be accountable for any results. A key priority should be providing technical assistance to local authorities through training, resources and equipment. Entry points could be allocating resources to CFAD to lead this effort, expanding financial and technical assistance programmes through donor agencies and international non-

governmental organizations (INGOs), and enhancing partnerships with CSOs.

- Financial resources and technical knowledge to learn new approaches and adapt them to the local context are necessary for CSOs. Therefore, it is a priority to normalize citizens' participation by promoting and tailoring public participation tools, especially for marginalized groups (youth, women, people with disabilities, and rural populations). Creating structures overseeing participation and local governance at the central levels, such as a ministry for local affairs, a ministry for good governance, and engaging with civil society, would be a significant change in the institutional architecture.

Following 2011, Tunisia was a central focus for donor organizations and INGOs. The issue of public participation in local governance was a key priority within the development and technical assistance programmes, as donors and INGOs provided funds, capacity building, technical expertise, and tools and equipment for central and local government and civil society. A key focus point to enhance these resources is to ensure coordination within the international community ecosystem to avoid duplication, build on existing initiatives and amplify the overall impact.

8.7. ZIMBABWE

Citizen participation in local governance is largely viewed as a hallmark of democracy and good governance. Fundamentally, the promulgation of the Constitution of Zimbabwe of 2013, with its inclusion of devolution, ushered in a new democratic area, in which citizen participation was enshrined as both a constitutional principle and a yardstick for democratic governance. In principle, the Constitution had, through devolution, handed down executive powers to local authorities, thereby bringing decision-making processes closer to the people. In practice, however, Zimbabwe has continued the trajectory of centralization and in some instances recentralization. Although Zimbabwe has a long history of local governance, its track record in the actual participation of citizens is chequered, mainly because, in the past, citizens were sidelined

as councils were getting financial resources from grants as well as from developmental partners. Further, it is observed that the practice of citizen participation in local governments is poor and generally shallow, as it is done for legitimizing processes, such as budget-making. This study therefore assesses citizen participation in Zimbabwe in terms of legislation and institutions, platforms, challenges and opportunities, and makes recommendations for enhancing public participation.

National frameworks for public participation and local governance

Over the past three decades, countries have developed legislation and policies that entrench opportunities for citizen participation in governance. The right to participate at the local level is guaranteed in the Constitution of Zimbabwe, as well as in enabling legislation, and includes direct, indirect and joint participation in public processes, whether initiated by citizens themselves or by government. The Constitution expresses the people's commitment to building a just, democratic and prosperous nation founded on the values and principles of constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, equality and good governance. The Bill of Rights contained in Chapter 4 of the Constitution guarantees a number of justiciable rights. The rights guaranteed include access to information and political rights, freedom of assembly and association, property rights, the freedom to demonstrate and petition, the right to healthcare, and the right to food and water.

To bring government closer to the people and ensure decentralized planning and development, local authorities are recognized constitutionally as a tier of government in Zimbabwe. Chapter 14 contains provisions on the devolution of power to provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities. Two key objectives of the devolution of governmental powers, as stated in the Constitution, are: (a) to give powers of local governance to the people and enhance their participation in the exercise of the powers of the state and in making decisions affecting them; and (b) to promote democratic, accountable and transparent government.

Section 194(1) of the Constitution stipulates that public administration must respond to people's needs within a reasonable time and encourage the public to participate in decision making.

This is attainable if citizens are provided with timely, accessible and accurate information in a transparent manner. There are also statutory provisions captured in the primary and subsidiary legislation governing local authorities. The Urban Councils Act (Chapter 29:15), the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13) and the Public Finance Management Act (Chapter 22:19) lay out minimum conditions for citizen participation in critical local government processes. These include:

- the development of local authority bylaws;

- consultations on budget proposals and estimates;

- the participation of citizens in council meetings;

- periodic village and ward development committee feedback and planning meetings;

- the solicitation of citizens' views on some key local authority functions; and

- the inclusion of citizens in some local authority development committees, e.g. school development committees, health centre committees and other special committees.
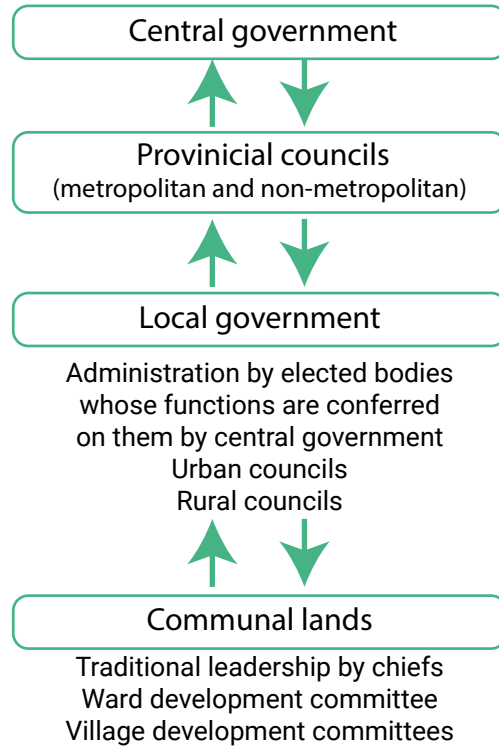
Mechanisms and platforms for public participation in local governance in Zimbabwe

The following are various platforms that have been put in place to enhance and facilitate public participation.

Village development committees and ward development committees

The lowest formal local government institutions in Zimbabwe are VIDCOs and WADCOs. They are most defined in rural local governance and are established through the Rural District Councils Act. They are structures for decentralized planning and development, and they play a significant role in coming up with development plans. They are participatory platforms and the principle is that the development plans should emanate from robust debate by the communities.

Figure 3. **Budget consultations and strategic planning platforms in Zimbabwe**

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │   Central government    │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                            ↑   ↓
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │   Provinicial councils   │
                    │ (metropolitan and non-metropolitan) │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                            ↑   ↓
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │    Local government     │
                    └─────────────────────────┘

              Administration by elected bodies
                whose functions are conferred
                on them by central government
                       Urban councils
                       Rural councils

                            ↑   ↓
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │     Communal lands      │
                    └─────────────────────────┘

              Traditional leadership by chiefs
                Ward development committee
              Village development committees
```

Despite the existence of progressive legal frameworks, which set out the basic budget processes that need to be followed, citizen participation and engagement in local budget processes is relatively low. Generally, there is apathy in budget consultative meetings. Results from the ZIMCODD (2021) OBS show that, of the 3,500 participants in the survey, 31.7 per cent (18.1 per cent male and 13.6 per cent female) participated in the 2021 local government budget consultation meetings, while 68.3 per cent (35 per cent female and 33.3 per cent male) did not participate in the budget-making process.

Community feedback meetings, policy dialogue platforms and duty bearer engagement meetings

As a measure of promoting public participation, local authorities are expected to convene feedback meetings and policy dialogues. However, studies have shown that feedback meetings are irregularly convened, and, where they are, there is weak disclosure of key council policy and operational information.

The role of CSOs in engendering social accountability, transparency and integrity in Zimbabwe is well documented and appreciated. As public watchdogs on good governance, CSOs' interaction with local authorities has led to an increased demand for accountability, especially relating to budgetary oversight by local government institutions. Such interaction will strengthen a country's governance framework and the effectiveness and efficiency of its anti-poverty programmes. CSOs have demonstrated their ability to foster people-centred development through promoting ownership, inclusivity and participation.

Benefits of citizen participation to sustainable local governance

An active citizenry not only is necessary for demanding services, but also serves as an important gatekeeper in questioning acts of financial abuse and stopping an unmitigated slide into autocracy. The ZIMCODD-initiated 'how far' campaign, for example, has ignited public participation in local policy processes and in monitoring the behaviour of local executives for abuse of public resources.

Budget consultations as part of a participatory budgeting system are one standard that can promote local democracy and inculcate civic interest and participation in local governance. The involvement of stakeholders also promotes accountability and transparency in public finance management.

Conclusion

The study reveals that, whereas Zimbabwe enshrined devolution in the Constitution with wide provisions for public participation, the absence of corresponding relevant legislation to anchor devolution and realign legislation with the Constitution presents a challenge in promoting participation as envisaged in the Constitution. In addition,

major participation platforms, such as VIDCOs and WADCOs, were modelled along party political lines and have thus suffered from manipulation by political elites. This distorts the role and efficacy of these platforms as they are hijacked for political expediency. In the same context, the exclusion of women in key positions in the committees leads to inequity in decentralized planning and development. This reinforces the call for inclusivity in the framing of participatory platforms. Limited public knowledge and access to key policy documents, such as strategic plans and budgets, have equally led to weak public input into policies.

Recommendations

Parliament should create the necessary legislation for the implementation of devolution. Devolved grassroots structures with a legal backing are the basis for the sustainable participation of communities in decentralized planning and development. Parliament should create a standard framework for citizen participation, with standard indicators that can be used to track how citizen participation is performing, and mainstream mechanisms for engendering citizen participation through a specific quota in terms of women's representation should be put in place.

Local authorities should improve the generation and dissemination of public policy performance reports and financial statements to ensure transparency and accountability. Local authorities should also implement gender-responsive, child-friendly and rights-based citizen engagement approaches in order to ensure that the local government policies become effective tools for addressing the social and economic needs of vulnerable groups.

Civil society should conduct public awareness campaigns on the legal provisions for citizen participation and mobilize the public to attend public consultations on key policy areas, such as budgeting, and also extend the reach of studies on public participation, such as the Zimbabwe OBS, so that they include rural areas, to allow scientific discourse on citizen participation in marginalized communities.

Chapter 9
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

Provisions that exist in continental and regional frameworks in Africa for public participation in local governance

There are strong and supportive provisions available to African countries in global, continental and regional charters, conventions, declarations and protocols that seek to enhance public participation in decentralized governance. Key among these at a global level are the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, the ICCPR, the African Union's Agenda 2063, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and the African Charter on Decentralisation, among others. The last is perhaps the foremost Charter providing guidance on decentralization, local-level governance and civic engagement. However, this study finds that only a few countries have signed, ratified or deposited their Charter with the African Union Commission. Despite this, the national-level legislation on local governance reflects the provisions in the regional, continental and global frameworks.

Extent to which existing frameworks provide guidance on public participation

From the review of the country case studies, adopting provisions in external guiding legal and policy frameworks in countries' own national legal frameworks has not necessarily translated into the implementation and operationalization of these provisions at a country level. Countries with national legal frameworks have an

additional requirement that local government authorities should localize these to the local context in order to give effect to the provisions. This requirement for localization has not been fully realized in any of the seven countries reviewed, and this may be a true reflection of the situation in many other countries on the continent. And where some local government authorities have enacted local laws supporting public participation in local governance, the laws are not fully supportive.

Ratification and domestication of regional frameworks

Nearly all countries have some level of national and local legislation on decentralization and local governance. It is also clear that even those that have not ratified any external legal frameworks have included provisions from these frameworks in their own national laws. This, by itself, does not mean much, however, as there are other external determinants that affect the outcome from the different frameworks. Again, due to low political will to operationalize effective public participation in local governance, authorities are often hesitant to fully embrace a supportive guiding framework, under the guise of having limited resources, or citizen disinterest. Further, the local political economy that is determined by a country's history and governance system also affects the outcomes that may accrue from the various frameworks in place. The study finds that some form of public participation is taking place, and some of the successful cases may be attributed to the provisions in the regional and continental frameworks. However, the link is blurred and can only be assumed, given that very few countries have formally ratified any frameworks. In the case of Cameroon, despite being the only one among the seven countries in this study that has ratified the Charter on Decentralisation, its operationalization of decentralization and citizen engagement is among the poorest in terms of actual performance.

Existing formal mechanisms and platforms for public participation in local governance

Countries have demonstrated a variety of mechanisms and platforms for public participation. Some are anchored in law and others have innovated based on individual country circumstances. The mechanisms and platforms have also been determined by contextual issues, as seen in the following examples: the community peace forums in Cameroon; the social accountability processes in Kenya;

the local-level electoral processes in Nigeria; the tradition-informed home-grown solutions in Rwanda; the people's assemblies in South Africa; the e-spaces in Tunisia; and the neighbourhood and resident associations in Zimbabwe. While there is evidence of innovation by local governments and contributions by the civil society, this study did not find any country with a fully effective programme on public participation in local governance, particularly where this translates to citizens influencing service delivery. Poor civic competence in the absence of civic education also limits citizens' interest, capacity and motivation to participate in local governance processes. Citizens also lack access to the information that is needed for them to meaningfully participate in policy planning and budgeting at a decentralized government level. In addition, low capacity of local government officials and low levels of financing for public participation activities by local governments also undermine the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms and platforms for public participation.

Contributions from civil society and non-state actors
Evidence from the seven case study countries suggests that CSOs work more effectively, and are more able to efficiently operationalize their mandate, than local government bureaucracies. This is particularly evident in CSOs' work in rolling out civic education, which may be attributed to various factors, including CSOs' economies of scale and apolitical nature. Subsequently, CSOs should be equipped and facilitated with adequate incentives to partner with local governments and other stakeholders to fully participate as key actors in local governance. CSOs require funding and, being local-level actors, may offer their social networks to international development organizations for joint programmes to undertake civic engagement projects.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **To strengthen the enabling environment for public participation, government ministries that oversee decentralization should develop and roll out a national curriculum for civic education** at both levels of government, in order to address the poor outcomes in public participation. The need to support both the 'supply side' and the 'demand side' with regard to citizen engagement is urgent. Civic education sensitizes the public on their role as rights holders, builds skills to interpret devolution processes, and nurtures citizen agency (including for women and youth) to advocate for accountability in local governance. Civic education for both duty bearers (local government authorities) and rights holders (citizens and CSOs) requires greater attention and an innovative approach. Data from all the seven country case studies points to central government interference with decentralized governance, and local government officials who are not really keen on facilitating effective public participation. There is also systematic evidence of inadequate information sharing with citizens, yet if the relevant information was made available it would enable the effective scrutiny of local government planning and budgeting processes. Cumulatively, if ignored, inadequate civic competence undermines the outcomes from citizen engagement in many countries, which calls for a structured, innovative and sustainable approach to the delivery of civic education. As discussed in this Report, partnership with civil society and other non-state actors has been seen to offer innovative approaches to the delivery of civic education.

   In addition, where citizens expect to be compensated for participating in local government activities, this has been detrimental to the processes that seek meaningful engagement. This is a concern across all seven case study countries, where citizens expect some form of incentive to participate. The Kenya case study points to a twin challenge, where even county government officials also compensate themselves when they leave their offices to go to the communities to facilitate public participation. Effective civic education is one way to address this challenge. Local governments should also increase the budget available for public engagement activities and also

innovate where possible, using social media platforms and other information and communication technology-based and traditional platforms to engage the public in policy formulation, and in local government planning and budgeting. Where adequately provided, civic education would sensitize the public on their role as rights holders, and cumulatively cultivate citizen and CSO agency to engage in social accountability activities, and effectively demand local government accountability.

2. **Secure access to information**. Despite countries enacting access to information laws, this has still not been fully operationalized across the seven case study countries, a pointer to the possible reality from a pan-Africanist perspective. Making procedures, processes and policy and planning documents available, as well as simplifying them and presenting them in a citizen-friendly format, is a critical enabler of public participation. The Kenyan case study revealed that, due to low political will, and with local government officials keen to limit the level of scrutiny by CSOs and citizens, the bulky, technical documents are often uploaded on the county government websites just hours before the public forums where citizens are supposed to give their inputs. To cure this, timely release of such information is a critical success factor for public participation.

3. **In order to fully comply with the legal and policy frameworks for public participation, including the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development, national and local governments should guarantee gender, age, (dis)ability and ethnic diversity inclusion**. Members of the public are diverse, with different opinions, interests, priorities and perceptions. Failing to recognize these various needs and interests, and to ensure full social inclusion for all the diverse needs, may create conflict. Securing diversity-sensitive citizen engagement and the adoption of diverse needs in policy, planning and budgeting processes at local levels should be assured, in order for the processes to cater for respective needs. Laws and policies at a decentralized level should be cognizant of these diversities and needs, and make provisions for full inclusivity. Where countries require local governments to enact their own legislation in order to give effect to the provisions in national laws relating to gender and social inclusion, this should be carried out immediately. The way local governance and public

participation are presently structured, empowerment may not be achieved, as women's numbers do not always translate to transformative changes—in the absence of actual skills-building—or the amplification of women's voice and agency in local governance processes. Skills-building for youth, women, people with disabilities and for CSOs must be prioritized, as meaningful public participation of these groups is critical.

4. **Enact national policy and legislation on citizen engagement in local governance that also provides for setting enforceable norms and standards for public participation.** Given the weak policy and legal environment, with laws that merely indicate the general intention but do not provide for enforcement measures, the current experience of 'tokenistic' citizen engagement that is 'for compliance'—rather than any meaningful engagement that may impact service delivery—is likely to continue. Enforceable measures include legally setting a budget proportion that should be made available for public participation, and linking public participation with performance management, as seen in the Rwanda example, replete with sanctions (for poor performance) and incentives (for well-performing local governments). Other enforceable measures include ensuring that the legal framework provides guidelines on the institutional structures (financing, staffing and facilities), procedures and systems that enable effective citizen engagement to actually happen. Without enforcement of the laws and policies, meaningful public participation may not be achieved.

5. **Political economy issues**, including manipulation of citizen engagement activities by diverse interests, would also be addressed if standard operating procedures for citizen participation were provided for in law. If in place, these standards of operation would also guide the behaviour of elected and executive officers, and civil society actors, to limit the negative impacts of sectarian interests on the effectiveness of citizen engagement activities.

6. The **capacity building** of different actors and their institutions, as part of strengthening the enabling environment for citizen engagement in local governance, remains a critical linchpin in anchoring national and local government decentralization policies This includes: the capacity development of CSOs, community-based organizations, women's organizations, informal citizen

associations and local government authorities at all levels; and the provision of tools and methodologies for public participation, to complement and strengthen the existing mechanisms. CSOs and women's organizations will particularly need organizational strengthening to build institutional agency that understands the political economy of local governance and the place of civic engagement for enhanced service delivery. Organizational strengthening goes beyond training to include: mentorship over the longer term; access to small grants to facilitate actual activities and engagements, and platforms for peer learning, knowledge development and dissemination; and policy dialogue platforms at decentralized levels of governance.

7. International and local development organizations keen to support public participation in local governance should consider **system-wide interventions** that include **multi-stakeholder, multi-level and multi-sector engagement** to bolster civic engagement in local governance. In all seven countries, it is clear from the literature reviewed and from stakeholder consultations that some form of citizen engagement in local governance is taking place. As presently operationalized across the board, however, public participation has not been effective due to the inter-connected challenges mentioned in Chapter 7, which extend from the central government level all the way to the village level. Subsequently, a system-wide all-inclusive approach is recommended to address the systemic challenges associated with capacity and financing, centralism-related effects, coordination and planning challenges, among others.

8. Countries that have not **signed and ratified existing regional frameworks**—specifically the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development—should be encouraged to do so. The African Union Commission, development organizations such as International IDEA and CSOs with national-level leverage should use their lobbying and advocacy structures to encourage host African Union member states to **sign and ratify**. Their work should not, however, stop there, since merely ratifying does not guarantee effective public participation and decentralization, as seen in the Cameroon example. There should be an additional step towards formulation of institutional arrangements to enforce citizens' participation at all levels of decentralized governance.

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Local governance comprises a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs and mediate their differences. The participation of citizens in governance is one of the underlying components of democracy. Engaging citizens in the act of governance engenders transparency, improves accountability and public resource management and brings about good policy outcomes, development and the social well-being of citizens. When done effectively, it encourages inclusiveness and cohesiveness, speeds up problem-solving through community initiatives and generally improves the effectiveness of local authorities.

This Report is an exploratory study which adopted various strategies to try to understand the issues, perspectives and results from citizen participation in local governance across various countries and regions in Africa.