

# *Community Participation in Decision Making Process in Mogadishu Municipality*

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## *Abstract*

This paper discusses the community participation in the decision-making process in Mogadishu Municipality. The main purpose of the study is to indicate the level of community participation in the decision-making process in Mogadishu municipality. The paper employed qualitative research approach by using random and purposive sample techniques. The study found that the local communities in Mogadishu municipality are willing and able to participate the local government decision-making process. The paper revealed such factors hindered local community to take part in decision-making process which includes mistrust between local government officials and the community in Mogadishu city, insecurity, limited resource of local government institutions, and lack of training of local officials. However, the study discovered that the level of community participation in the decision-making process in Mogadishu municipality is very minimal and limited. Finally, the study concluded that the community participation in decision making is very weak.

**Keywords:** Community, Participation, Decision Mogadishu Municipality

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

Community participation in decision-making processes in Mogadishu Municipality is a necessary in post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building of Somalia with respect to the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of comprehensive developmental plans, programmes, and policies at the local or grassroots level. As Silverman (2006) highlighted that community participation is a fundamental element of local public policy formulation and execution in democratic societies.

The participation of communities in the decision making processes is one of the central element of transparency governance, and enhances local officials commitment. It is a continuous process that covers the time between the two elections, where the information concerning the municipal decisions and policies occurs in both passages; local residents voice their concerns about local government and municipal authorities in its turn informs on the execution of the municipal policies (OSCE, 2013). However, citizens' involvement might take in different forms: The local community may take part in development actions by giving information concerning themselves, identifying problems, priorities, needs and contributing developmental policies, goals and strategies. Therefore, decentralization is one of the key option to encourage participation and community involvement in local governance as well as to promote the stability and security of the local population. It is based on the principle of subsidiarity which implies bring authority and power nearer to the communities.

On the other hand, The local government which is assigned to implement public involvement is seen failing because of lack of information sharing to the local population, ineffective programmes and incapability of its human resources (Ngcamu, 2014). Though, Participatory local government mechanisms are always supported and advocated in developing nations. It is believed that citizen involvement brings about several policy advantages including improved accountability, responsive government, and high-quality public services delivery.

From 1960-1969, the administrative rule in Somalia was decentralized and performed by the local organs of the State and by public bodies”, and all over of the country, popularly elected local councils had been responsible for local and district administrations. The elected government of the Somali Youth League Party (S.Y.L) managed that form of decentralization. In 1969 Military coup of Mohamed Siad Barre nullified this form of elected local governments and dissolved all the elected local and district councils. Though the military failed to enable the local communities to manage their local affairs, they establish a system of government which promoted nationalism, patriotism, and national identity.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

After the breakdown of Somali Central Government in 1991, formal central, regional, and local authorities ceased to exist. In 2004 the established Transitional Federal Government of Somalia adopted a federalism form of governance reflecting the Charter of Transitional Federal Government (2004). This indicates that government has to give

local communities a chance to take part in development activities including involving citizens in identifying needs, problems and priorities, involving in determining developmental goals, policies and strategies.

The Federal Government (2012) also restated the same principles of federalism and devolution of authority. This implies that both official documents recognized the significance of local self-governance and community involvement in key decision-making processes which directly or indirectly affect their lives.

Mogadishu (known locally as Xamar) is the capital and most populous city of Somalia. It composes 17 districts, each one has its own local District Authority (DA). It has divisions, subdivisions and neighbourhoods. Nominated district commissioners runs the business of the district. The mayor of the city appoints the commissioners of the different districts. The president of the Federal Government of Somalia appoints the Mayor of Mogadishu Municipality and his deputies in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. The nomination of the Mayor, his deputies, and the district commissioners are based on clan power sharing. Therefore, this implies that community involvement in municipality operation is very limited.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to describe the level of community participation in the decision-making process in Mogadishu municipality.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The researchers try in this article to find out answers to the following research questions:

1. Is the Community involvement in the decision-making processes necessary for developing a sense of ownership in local authority's programs, policies and plans?
2. What are the Factors influencing community participation in local government decision-making processes?

How is the Level and quality of community participation in the decision-making process for service delivery in Mogadishu Municipality?

### **1.5 The Concept of Community Participation**

The terms participation, community participation, popular participation, people's participation, and democratic participation are often used interchangeably in current development phraseology (Kuye, 2005). Community participation refers a practice of involving people, with identical needs and objectives, in decisions influencing their lives. Charles Abrams defines community participation as "the concept that the local citizens must be given an active role in the programmes and improvements directly touching them. Its rational is to transfer the power to control affairs and decisions to people most affected by them.

Furthermore, since no national or local authority has the financial means to solve all the problems that influence its communities sufficiently, it is essential to involve local people in the situation that affect them (Turner, Bank, & Wates, 2012). Nabeel Hamdi defines community participation as a more influential idea which "refers to the principle by which experts, families, community members, local government officials, and others come together to do something out, preferably in an official or informal partnership".

Additionally, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (2013) underlined that “the main prerequisite for pursuing a sustainable democratic reform processes is the ability to make the citizens trust the elected leadership” The more productive and more democratic municipality will be developed, when there is a strong link between the two sides( local citizens from one side and their elected local officials from another side). Local elected officials should have the spirit and ability to respond the vital needs of their local communities, represent their real interest and develop their condition of life. Those individuals and communities who participate in the decision-making process of their locality are known stakeholders. Unquestionably, they have a strong interest in the formulation and execution of local municipal policies, because it concerns their wellbeing and daily lives. This paper explores the Public involvement in the decision-making process in Mogadishu municipality.

Despite that, the establishment of local government anyplace in the world is based on the need to make easy the development at the grassroots. Local authorities create a sense of ownership, belongingness, safety, and satisfaction among its population(Abe, Monisola, & State, 2014). The right of local citizens to participate in the political affairs of their locality without undue influence or pressure is another key characteristic of political decentralization. This is promoted by the necessities on the local authorities to give information on the plans and policies for their citizens and to provide open platforms for dialogue of important issues, A method to ensure this community participation is through neighbourhood associations, the formation of citizen committees

dealing with local issues, such as education, health, water, sanitation, infrastructure development and physical planning of the citizens (Wright, 2013).

Naturally, involving citizens in local government decision-making processes is a significant worth and priority in democratic and civilized societies. Most countries of the world, Governments are restructuring and strengthening their system of local governments, transferring responsibilities and resources to lower levels of governments. Nations have different driving factors such as, Political, social and economic as well as external and internal. The shared assumption is that transferring responsibility for service provision to the third tier of government should help to ensure that resource use and decision match the priorities and needs of local communities (Devas and Grant, 2003). Alternatively, citizens should stand as producers and shapers rather than as users and choosers of local government policies and plans or services designed by others. Old-fashioned forms of political representation should be re-assessed and direct democratic methods should increasingly be drawn upon to allow citizens to play a more active role in decisions which have an effect on their lives (Maloka, 2014).

## **2 Literature Review**

There are numerous debates and discussions around the world concerning the community involvement in local government decision-making processes and its influence on developing local authorities. There are various research studies about the community involvement in local governments.

As Idasa:African Democracy Institute (2010) contended local government is the nearest tier of government to the people at the grassroots level. As a result, it is delegated to play a crucial role in formulating effective service delivery mechanisms for the people to achieve a high level of standard living. The arguments for improved community participation often based on the benefits of the process and the confidence of scholars that engaged communities is more active than a passive one. With the community participation, drafted policies might be more rationally reflect citizen's preferences and choices, the communities might enthusiastically become evaluators of the tough choices that city managers have to take. As result, the enhanced support from the local residents might create a less divisive and hostility, combative population to manage and control(Irvin and Stansbury,2004). Moreover, another study reveals that, in every community, elected or appointed representative democracy requires to be supplemented by means of public participation, to allow those appointed or elected to know better what are the preferences and needs of local citizens, as well as to inculcate a sense of ownership on the part of communities of the services and goods provided by local government(Enshassi and Kullab, 2014).

Nzimakwe& Reddy (2008) in their research article asserted that public participation forms part of local community involvement and citizenship which is central to the value of good local governance. It facilitates the participation of local poor people and marginalized into local affairs, creates sense ownership of locally available resources and makes suitable decisions to use such resources in a sustainable manner.



Consequently, citizen participation means empowering local communities by equipping skills and abilities that qualify them to take part and make informed decisions concerned with their developmental needs (Reddy, 2008).

In addition, Silverman (2006) investigated the socioeconomic features and public participation strategies of municipalities in Canada and USA. The research aimed at to study the instruments used by both municipalities to inspire public participation and to argue the contrasts exist between the socioeconomic makeup of central cities in the United States and Canada and to explain these different mechanisms used for community participation. The findings revealed that Canadian Municipality Authorities use broader range of community participation instruments including; voluntarism and community engagement, neighbourhood and strategic planning, and electronic government. On the other hand, the articles result showed that United States municipalities are more likely to stimulate public participation via community meetings and referendum on public issues.

Not only the above studies noted the significance of public participation but also Yvonne (2010) carried out another recent study on public participation for sustainable development in local cities in Kenya. According to him, the composition of community and its attitude towards local governance will affect the type and level of community participation in local government decision-making processes. He further added, the mechanisms already adopted are public hearings in government meetings, whereby individual citizens can voice their concern on local government policies and programmes. Besides, Ammar

et al (2012) conducted a research which examined the effect of residents' participation in management and maintenance works on residents' satisfaction in new multi-story housing projects in Gaza, Palestine. Their findings revealed a strong relation between the level of the citizen's participation and their satisfaction (Ammar & Hj, 2012).

To sum up, in Somalia, the researchers do not come across any study article that had been written about community participation and decision-making process in local authorities. Therefore, this gap gives the researchers of the study a chance to carry out a descriptive research study about the community participation in decision making process in Mogadishu Municipality. Particularly, this article aims to describe the extent to which Mogadishu local communities participate in decision-making processes in Mogadishu Municipality.

### **3. Methods of Data Collection**

This paper applied qualitative research approach both simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques are utilized to select study respondents. The first technique adopted community members and civil society representatives, while Banadir regional government officials, District Commissioners, traditional elders, religious leaders, experts on governance and decentralization, women and youth representatives are used to select purposive sampling technique for the reason of their expertise and information.

Geographically, the study conducted in Mogadishu Municipality also known as Banadir Regional Administration which is comprising 17 districts. However, for the reason of time and budget limitations as well as security problems, only 5 districts was conducted the study. The

selected districts are Hamarweyne, Yaqshid, Hodan, Wartanabada and Wadajir district. The selection of the districts was based on such factors including those far from regional administration headquarter, district located the administration headquarter its self, the size of the district, and those considered to be most marginalized. The total number of the respondents was 340 in all five selected districts. Each district was selected a sample representatives including all the above mentioned participant's categories as indicated the following table:

*Table 1: Sample Distribution*

SN	Participants	Total	Sampling technique
1	Community members	200	Random sampling
2	District government officials	45	Purposive
3	Traditional/community leaders	25	Purposive
4	Religious leaders	15	Purposive
5	Experts of decentralization,	10	Purposive
6	Civil society representatives	30	Random sampling
7	District Commissioners and division and sub-division Heads	15	Purposive
	<b>Total</b>	<b>340</b>	

Source: Primary

### 3.1 Demographic Information

This section concludes the demographic information of the study subject in terms of sex, age and qualifications. The following table indicates each variable with their percentage level which ensures that participants are mixed with their gender both male and female, age variances and different qualifications to ensure the insertion of all different participants are included the study participants as summarized the table below:

**Table 2: Demographic Information of the Respondents**

Gender		Qualifications				Age			
Male	Female	S.S	Diploma	Bach	Other	18-31	31-40	41-50	50+
54%	46%	39.5%	1%	54%	5.5%	58.5 %	58.5 %	58.5 %	58.5 %

Source: Primary

In addition, in case of implementing primary data collection, in depth interview for community members and selected local government officials has been used, while focus group discussion was conducted in grass roots level for the districts population. Additionally, key informant discussion was conducted for decentralization experts, academicians and civil society representatives and finally observation checklist was used as supplementary data collection. Secondary data was collected in journal articles in post conflict affected countries, relevant government reports and newspapers.

In order to ensure the validity of the instruments, the researchers evaluated the questions raised against the contents and objectives of the study. The instruments was also professionally examined the researcher's advisor and other experts of the field to develop the validity content of the instruments. Reliability was ensured through testing the study question in two different time and locations and produced similar and consistence results. Therefore, to be ethical upright, the researchers applied critically ethical issues to the study respondents and giving proper identification of the research objectives, gave them clear information, confirmed to them free and informed consent as well as protected their right of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality.

### **3.2 Method of Data Analysis**

Collected primary data through interview, focus group discussions, key informant discussion and observation was analysed carefully along with eliminated the data errors. Data was broken down themes and sub-themes and deeply focused research objectives. Each theme was analyzed and examined in detail until produced the main idea of investigation. Data information collected by interview and FGD were analyzed qualitatively in a systematic way, whereby the researchers established patterns, trends and relationships in the information gathered and came up with useful conclusion and recommendations. Coding was expected to organize and reduce research data into manageable conclusion. The researchers applied statistical Package for social science in a qualitative data analysis.

## **4. Results and Discussions**

Based on the research questions, the researchers present and discuss their answers in accordance with the findings:

The results of this study revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed that community participation facilitates information sharing, increases public awareness, and enhances efficient allocation of resources by matching to citizens' preferences and priorities. It creates a sense of public ownership of the municipal's policy and decisions. As a result, their willingness to pay for services increases. This implies the promotion of the inclusion of the poor and marginalized people in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it signifies when citizens are active and are fully involved, they can come up with new ideas, add legitimacy to the process of local governance, and improve energy for follow-up on the

outcomes obtained in such community participation processes. In addition, there is a common desire among the respondents in all districts to exercise their democratic rights by electing local leaders at district level which facilitates accountability and transparency as well as an increased belongingness of the policies of the local authorities. The majority of focus group and interview participants expressed their views as follows:

*“As we are the local communities, we like to elect our district commissioners and the governor of Mogadishu municipality to hold accountable for their decision and actions. Community involvement in the decision-making processes is necessary for developing a sense of ownership in local decision-making processes and policies”*

In the same way, many participants throughout focus group discussions and interview acknowledged the importance and necessity of citizen participation in the decision-making processes and how their participation enhances the quality of service delivery. They strongly suggested to the Mogadishu municipality to create platforms through which they can engage decision-making processes which influences their daily lives. Such platforms will help the local officials in the municipality to be informed the urgent and long-term service delivery expectations of the citizens. Most important is that consultations with local people will empower the local authorities to provide feedback to the communities, promote ‘checks and balances’ and provide space for communities to hold their local government officials accountable. Therefore, the majority of the respondents frequently stated the community participation in local government decision-making process improves the quality of services

delivery since the community and the local government officials identify the problems and needs together. The results indicated that public involvement in local government policies and service provision help in problem solving in the community and create trust between the public and the local authorities. At the same time, the evidence confirms that increased participation and better accountability can result from democratic decentralization, and that these substantive benefits should not be underestimated.

#### **4.1 Factors influencing community participation in local governance decision making process**

Findings from focus group discussions and interview revealed a number of challenges faced the local community to participate the decision-making process. These barriers include; lack of trust between the local authorities and community members and fear of community members to associate with the local government institutions and its agents due to the insecurity that Mogadishu municipality has been experiencing. Concurrently, this is accompanying to the Mogadishu municipal official who are unskilled, lack the required training and knowledge base in public and development administration policy to function optimally. As pointed out one participant of focus group discussion meetings and mentioned as follows:

*“In general there is no community participation in the local government decisions in the Mogadishu municipality, particularly in my district, I haven't participated or any member of my relatives or friends not contributed any consultation meeting with local administration at district level for the reason of insecurity and mistrust between local government officials and community.”*

The majority of focus group and community interview participants showed that there is no notable community participation in the decision-making process in Mogadishu districts authorities. On the other hand, an interview with local government officials in all 5 districts confirmed that community participation in the decision-making processes is very weak and needs to be improved as mentioned one of the local government officials:

*"In our district, there is no effective community participation in decisions regarding service delivery to ensure the local government institutions covered the priority needs of local community. The reason is insecurity and lack of enough resource to allocate community consultation"*

Therefore, this implies that there is no cooperation and collaboration between the local community members and district authorities. Meaning that local government officials have no clear input and information to serve their community at the district level and to identify their priority needs and preferences.

#### **4.2 Level and quality of community participation in decision making process for service delivery in Mogadishu Municipality**

Similarly, the evidence provided by key informants interview and focus group discussants in the study show that there is limited community participation in decision making process. The majority of respondents both in FGD and KIIs agreed in the same way that there is little contribution for community members in the decision-making process. According to them, they revealed traditional leaders help local leaders in conflict resolution on land disputes and family affairs, while



district youth participate in a district football competition. Additionally, the study demonstrated that women also take part district cleaning and sometimes they are organized for participation in political demonstrations. However this does not equate to meaningful participation in decision making around municipal service delivery. For instance, one of the focus group discussants expressed his concern on this issue of community participation in decision making process and said:

*“When we attempt to engage the local government office at district level it is not easy to us, even to meet the district commissioners, therefore, I am shocked how they are representing our district. We aware that there is a problem of security in our country which makes local leaders uneasy about being accessible”*

The evidence provided by Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussion (FGDs) participants argued that there is limited information accessible to the citizens that would enable them play a key role in demanding accountability and transparency. They disclosed the executive officials of Mogadishu municipality authorities are appointed by the federal government which means that they owe allegiance upwards and are not obligated to account to the citizens. In addition to that, each District Commissioner is appointed by the Governor/Mayor of local government in consultation of the relevant stakeholders including clans and sub-clans leaders and members of parliament who come from that district. Most respondents of this study mentioned that there are no procedures and channels for accessing information. For instance, one of the focus group discussants said:

*“Access to information on the actions and performance of local government is critical for the promotion of government accountability. As Mogadishu residents, we do not know what goods and services are provided by the local government, how well they are provided, who the beneficiaries are, and how much they cost. In addition to that, we demand meaningful and effective participation from the local authorities, you know access to information allowing us to monitor the local government’s subsequent actions, and it also enhances the impact of participation by creating a pressure on the local government to take into account our preferences in decision-making”*

Transparency of local government service delivery and financial information is essential for the local authorities and the general public to be adequately informed about the performance of the locality. It is essential that information not only be provided but that it is relevant and understandable to all stakeholders. The concerns of participants are largely based on the belief that the local government institutions neither have transparency mechanisms, nor are they held accountable. An interview with a local District Administrator mentioned whether his department involved community members in decision making process, he conveyed his view as follows:

*“We do not plan any thing, all programs and plans are top down - come from the headquarters of Mogadishu municipality- and the local communities are unaware what happens in the district. He further added that there are no systems in his department which encourage accountability and transparency”.*

The local District Administrator was asked to mention the channels that his department uses to share information with members of the community, he showed his voice as follows:

*“We share information with members of the community in our district through radio, televisions, and newspapers and through community elders”*

Sharing information with the local communities through media is a very good starting point, but this is not enough and it's not adequate to meet the communities' need to ensure transparency and accountability. For making sure transparency and opens and subsequently accountability there should be direct community participation in decision making processes to improve local service delivery.

The participants were asked to suggest how citizens could attempt to hold officials accountable; the majority of the participants suggested that regular local elections are the most appropriate mechanism by which citizens at large can hold accountable to local public officials at regional, district, division, subdivision and neighbourhoods level. The current local authorities come in power through a selection process, as result, citizens cannot able to hold accountable for their actions and decisions rather than participating in the decision- making process in the local district.

## **Conclusion**

This paper intended to explore the community's participation in the decision-making process in Mogadishu municipality. Its aim is to indicate the importance of community participation in Mogadishu municipality, factors hindering the effective local community participation in decision-making processes and along with the level of

society involvement as well as the general status of community contribution in the decision-making process. The study was carried out in 5 districts of Mogadishu city for the reason of limited resources and time. The study concludes the majority of the local community in the Mogadishu city that was very interesting to its effectiveness participation and contribution of the activities in their respective local governments in terms of the decision-making process, planning local government activities as well as other community contribution. Furthermore, the study indicated factors hindered the local community to effectively participate the activities in local government. Such factors includes mistrust between local officials and community, insecurity, limited resource of the local government institutions to organize community meetings as well as limited knowledge of local government officials for community participation processes. Finally, the study revealed, the level of community participation in the decision-making process in the Mogadishu municipality is very negligible.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study concerning the community participation in the decision-making processes in Mogadishu Municipality, it is recommended to :

- Enforce Mogadishu community to select thier own leaders
- Encourage decentralised local governance. It is the only way community participation can be enhanced.
- Create community forums to facilitate local population participation in local government decsion making process.

- Mogadishu Municipality meetings should be open to the public; this creates community confidence and trust to the local authorities.
- Organize community integration meetings to re-build trust between local government officials and community in Mogadishu municipality.
- Training on developing performance and quality service delivered.

Each district of Mogadishu city should create a website through which they can update, network with the public, and

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- Each district of Mogadishu city should create a website through which they can update, network with the public, and show its activities and services.

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