



Press Release
8 October 2017

Only 1 out of 10 citizens think national or county governments consider their opinions in decision-making
But 9 out of 10 citizens express strong support for devolution

8 October 2017, Nairobi: When it comes to both national and county governments, only 1 in 10 citizens think their opinions are considered in decision making to a large extent. Further, 5 out of 10 think their opinions are only considered to a small extent by county governments (55%) and national government (53%).

Nonetheless, 9 out of 10 citizens are strongly (55%) or somewhat (33%) in support of devolution. This is consistent across demographic groups including gender, age and location. Close to half of citizens (44%) say that devolution is their favorite aspect of the new constitution.

These findings were released by Twaweza in a research brief titled *Is government closer to the people? Kenyan views on devolution*. The brief is based on data from *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa's first nationally representative high-frequency mobile phone survey. The findings are based on data collected from 1,704 respondents across Kenya between April and May 2017.

Despite the strong support for devolution, 7 out of 10 citizens find it hard to meet county leaders (72%), influence county decision-making (69%) and to access information on county activities (73%). Urban residents appear to find all of these much more difficult than their rural peers.

While Kenyans report finding it difficult to participate actively, one in four report having attended a county government meeting (27%). This is higher among men (33%) than women (21%). This number is also higher than those who reported attending these meetings in December 2015 (19%). The main reason that citizens give for not attending the meetings is that they are not informed of them (30%).

When attending these meetings, half of citizens report raising an issue (52%) or asking a question (52%). Again men are more likely to participate actively than women (58% raised an issue and 59% asked a question compared to 42% of women who raised an issue and asked a question). In 2015, 41% of men and women reported asking a question at a meeting again showing a positive trend in terms of participation.

At the meetings, water (55%), roads (52%) and education (38%) are the topics most likely to be discussed, although more rural citizens mention water being discussed while urban citizens are more likely to mention roads.

Further, 4 out of 10 citizens (41%) say that the issues discussed at the meetings contributed to local planning and 3 out of 10 say the projects discussed have been initiated or implemented (34%).

On specific issues around the management of services and financial issues, citizen reviews continue to be mixed. Half say that county governments should manage health services (48%) while the other half (46%) say that the national government should do so. This varies between groups: poorer (55%) and rural (52%) Kenyans are more likely to want county governments to manage health services while wealthier (53%) and urban (50%) Kenyans are more likely to want the national government to run these.

Further, half of Kenyans (52%) are unhappy with county revenue collection; wealthier citizens (59%) are much more likely to be unhappy than poorer ones (40%). Citizens are happy with local taxes because they see improved service delivery (25%) or unhappy because they think there are too many taxes (30%).

Victor Rateng of *Sauti za Wananchi* at Twaweza, said: *“There are two sides to the devolution story. More citizens are attending and actively participating in meetings which cover citizen priority sectors and from which plans and projects are being implemented. But, citizens also feel disconnected from leaders, decisions and information at the county level. We need to exert more effort into ensuring that citizens feel their views are meaningfully considered in decisions, most especially for women.”*

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Notes to Editors

- This brief and the data contained can be accessed at www.twaweza.org, or www.twaweza.org/sauti
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