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Siasa Talks Report

Machakos County





Siasa Talks - Machakos

19th October, 2018

Venue: Machakos Youth Resource Center

Program Overview

'Siasa Talks' are forums that are open, diverse and inclusive forums bringing youth and the public together to discuss everyday issues that affect them and to unpack how these issues are politically related. It's a forum where we educate people on constitutional provisions, such as their right to engage in governance issues and why it is important for them to not shy away from Political participation- but in fact to throw themselves into it. Only through citizen participation can we start to hold our leaders to account and strengthen devolution. For devolution to work the people must be involved in the decision-making and oversight functions.

Executive Summary

This report is a compilation of the Siasa Talks training on Public Participation held on the 19th October, 2018 at Machakos Youth Resource Center, Machakos town. The training was attended by Youth leaders from the different sub counties in Machakos County. A total of 48 Participants- 21 Female and 27 Male were trained on Public Participation and how they can hold their leaders accountable especially in the County government. The training began at 2:30PM and ended at 4:25PM.

Participants were welcomed to the forum by Ezra Maingi, the mobilizer on the ground. Grayson Marwa, the facilitator for the training introduced himself, alongside Hellen Abatoni from the Communications Department. Mr. Marwa gave a brief on what Siasa Place does and highlighted the organization's focus on the 3Ps - Public Participation, Policy and the People. He also explained to the participants the purpose of Siasa Talks - an open forum that equips young people with the knowledge on how they can take part in politics, and also influence policy decision making processes on issues that affect them directly.

Introductory Session

At the beginning of the session; Marwa engaged with the participants on the following areas:

Definition of public participation

Q1. What is your understanding of Public Participation?

The Participants felt that Public participation meant the following to them;

- Involvement of the entire community in matters concerning development.
- Engagement in public meetings such as, the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and Annual Development Plan (ADP).
- Attending Public Barazas called by the local leaders to discuss issues in the Community
- Incorporation of views from the people to influence decision making.
- Leaders and the people sitting together to discuss societal issues.

The facilitator highlighted the difference between Public engagement and Public participation -

- Public engagement: It is initiated by the government
- Public participation: It is initiated by the people

Both are aimed at giving solutions to problems affecting the society.

Q2. What does political participation entail?

Responses from audience:

1. Voting for the leaders
2. Taking part in Political campaigns
3. Holding leaders accountable after electing them
4. Political party primaries and nominations
5. Attending public forums

Q3. Why is public participation important?

1. **Constitutional provisions** – it was clear from the participants that public participation is a constitutional provision and that they should take part in the forums.
2. **Largely contributes to the promotion of democracy** – many felt that by taking part in the forums they contribute to self-governance in the county
3. Provides opportunities to align government choices/priorities with people's needs.
4. **Helps in curbing corruption** – the youth felt that by taking part in public forums helps reduce/do away with corruption since all issues pertaining projects are made public and they can follow up and track
5. Creates a platform for citizens to get to know their leaders.
6. Allows the government to set priorities to focus on.
7. Leads to better decision making.

Q4. What are the challenges of public participation?

Responses:

1. Issues for discussion are pre-determined by the leaders
2. There is lack of information on the processes of public participation
3. Citizens are not given enough time to go through documents that are also extremely long.
4. There is likely to be victimization of citizens that are very vocal about a particular issue.
5. There is lack of tangible feedback given to citizens after a public participation forum.

6. There is lack of participatory approach from the leadership.
7. The language used in the documents does not appeal to the masses.
8. Public participation is never allocated resources.

Q5. Voting as an integral part of public participation:

Voting is an integral part in a Political process as it provides an opportunity to the people to elect their leaders, and choose whom they would want to serve them for a specific period.

Among the participants, only 18 out of 48 participants cast their vote in the October 2017 repeat elections. When asked about the reasons to why most of them did not vote, these were their responses:

1. "I felt disappointed in the system"
2. "I relocated"
3. "I felt cheated"
4. "I was working for IEBC."

What are impact of politics on young people?

1. **Insecurity** – Most youth felt that during campaign periods/elections, they are affected by violence, chaos or tribal conflicts or fights.
2. **Poor infrastructure** – It was clear from the participants that infrastructural developments are dependent on Politics as politicians choose or decide what happens at a specific time in an area.
3. **High cost of living** – the youth felt that the high cost of living is pegged to politics or policies of the day
4. **Corruption** – Corruption was mentioned as a result of leaders not being accountable to the people.

Gallery



For more information, please contact us on:

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