

Strengthening the role of CSOs through COFs to ensure controls & accountability

KAS Kenya in collaboration with its implementing partner MAPACA organized a training forum in Makueni County on 25th June 2019 aimed at empowering citizen oversight forums (COFs) to play their oversight role effectively in the budget making process, information gathering and dissemination. The forum themed “*Strengthening the role of CSOs through COFs to ensure controls & accountability*” brought together members of citizen oversight forums, civil society and county officials for the one-day event.



Figure 1 One of the facilitators from MAPACA takes participants through a session

The training entailed capacity building of the COFs by enlightening them on public finance management, financial report analyses, access to information principles and cooperative relationships with county officials. To realize the role of meaningful citizen engagement, COFs will provide constant oversight by analyzing county budgets in addition to creating awareness and mobilizing stakeholders. The training forum will improve citizens’ role in decision making through enhanced capacities of the COFs.



Figure 2 Participants during the forum in Makueni County

Through open discussions, the participants brought to attention issues that were impeding effective utilization of controls and accountability measure by the COFs. Key among them: COFs have capacity gaps in the monitoring and evaluation which hinder effective representation; lack of information from the county government; limited mass means of passing messages to constituents; inadequate funding of CSOs to carry out COF activities; mistrust between county officials and CSOs involved in monitoring; and the inadequate anchoring of the role of CSOs in county policies. It came out that these problematic issues have a negative net effect in enforcing accountability within the county from the COFs.



Figure 3 A facilitator makes her presentation on the theme of the forum

As a result of the successful deliberations in the forum, there was increased knowledge in the budget-making process and accountability measure among the COF members present. A key observation noted was the increased dissemination of information regarding county budget activities at the grassroots as a result of the proliferation of COFs in Makueni County. The relationship between COFs and county officials was greatly enhanced as a result of synergies created and better understanding of their roles. To promote further linkage, the COFs will be liaising with county governments during budget hearing to promote public participation during these forums. The county officials encouraged COFs to be part of development committees' right from the grass root levels in order to vitalize locals to participate in decision-making processes within the county.