

Journal of Public Policy & Governance



ISSN Online: 2616-8413

Citizen Participation in County Public Participation Forums in Shirere Ward, Kakamega County, Kenya

Humphrey Buradi Zadock & Daniel Muasya Nzengya

ISSN: 2616-8413

Citizen Participation in County Public Participation Forums in Shirere Ward, Kakamega County, Kenya

¹*Humphrey Buradi Zadock & ²Daniel Muasya Nzengya

¹School of Education and Social Sciences, St Paul's University, Kenya

²School of Education and Social Sciences, St Paul's University, Kenya

*Author Email Contact: humphreybz6910@gmail.com

How to cite this article: Zadock, H. B. & Nzengya, D., M. (2026). Citizen Participation in County Public Participation Forums in Shirere Ward, Kakamega County, Kenya. *Journal of Public Policy & Governance*, 10 (1), 18-28. <https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t3161>

Abstract

Public participation is a constitutional requirement and a cornerstone of Kenya's devolved governance system, intended to ensure inclusive, responsive, and citizen-driven development planning. Despite this mandate, participation outcomes at the ward level remain uneven and poorly understood. This study examined the determinants of citizen participation in County Public Participation Forums in Shirere Ward, Kakamega County, Kenya. Specifically, it assessed community sociodemographic characteristics, awareness of development priorities, institutional knowledge of participation frameworks, levels of participation, perceptions of participation benefits, and the role of local groups in mobilizing citizen engagement. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and collected quantitative data from 72 adult residents using an interviewer-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations were used to analyze participation patterns across gender, age, and education. Findings reveal a paradox of high civic capacity but low engagement. Although 79.2 percent of respondents possessed post-secondary education, only 30.6 percent had ever participated in a County Public Participation Forum. Awareness gaps emerged as a key barrier: 27.8 percent had never heard of participation forums, while 41.7 percent had only superficial knowledge; only 30.6 percent understood their purpose. Youth unemployment (72.2 percent extremely severe), drug abuse (88.9 percent very or extremely severe), poor access to clean water (80.6 percent), climate vulnerability (80.6 percent), and inadequate health facilities (77.8 percent) were identified as the most pressing development priorities. Despite low participation, belief in participation remained strong, with 61.1 percent agreeing that public participation ensures projects reflect real community needs. However, women and older respondents were significantly more skeptical about the equity outcomes of participation. The study recommends that county governments close the institutional awareness gap through targeted civic education, integrate trusted grassroots groups into formal participation frameworks, adopt gender- and age-responsive participation strategies, and strengthen feedback mechanisms to demonstrate how citizen input influences development decisions.

Keywords: *Citizen Participation, County, Public Participation Forums, Shirere Ward, Kakamega County, Kenya*

1.0 Introduction and Background

Globally, development planning has evolved significantly over the past three decades, moving away from centralized, technocratic models toward approaches that emphasize decentralization, citizen engagement, and participatory governance (Chambers, 1997; Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001). This shift has been driven by the recognition that top-down planning approaches often failed to address local needs, lacked legitimacy, and struggled to achieve sustainable outcomes (Scott, 1998). International development institutions, including the World Bank and UNDP, have increasingly promoted Participatory Development Planning (PDP) as an essential approach for enhancing development effectiveness, improving accountability, and strengthening citizen ownership of public investments (World Bank, 2004; UNDP, 2008). Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation remains a foundational framework in this discourse, illustrating the continuum from non-participation to genuine citizen power and highlighting the risk of participation being reduced to symbolic or tokenistic exercises when institutional structures are weak or inaccessible.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the call for meaningful public participation has been closely linked to democratization processes, governance reforms, and decentralization efforts across the region (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007). Many African countries have formally adopted participatory planning as part of their governance architecture, recognizing its potential to improve service delivery, promote equity, and enhance responsiveness to community priorities (Crook, 2003). However, the region continues to face persistent constraints that limit the realization of these ideals. Challenges such as limited civic awareness, weak institutional capacity, entrenched patronage systems, elite capture, and inadequate platforms for engagement often hinder the ability of citizens to participate effectively in local development processes (Platteau & Gaspart, 2003; Conyers, 2007). These systemic barriers contribute to a continued gap between the normative commitment to participation and its practical implementation (Work, 2002).

Kenya stands out within the SSA region for its strong constitutional and statutory commitment to public participation. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) enshrines participation as a national value and establishes it as a legal requirement in all phases of public decision-making. The implementation of devolution in 2013 further reinforced this commitment by creating 47 county governments, each mandated to engage citizens in the identification, prioritization, budgeting, and monitoring of development initiatives (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The County Governments Act (2012) outlines clear mechanisms and modalities for participation, including public hearings, citizen forums, dissemination of planning documents, and structured stakeholder consultations. Two central instruments in this framework are the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), which provides a five-year development roadmap for each county, and the Ward Development Committees (WDCs), which serve as grassroots structures intended to facilitate citizen engagement at the ward level (Kanyinga & Long, 2012). Through these instruments, devolution aims to ensure that local development reflects the priorities, knowledge, and aspirations of the communities it serves.

Despite this comprehensive legal and policy framework, public participation in Kenya continues to face a number of practical and institutional challenges. Studies across various counties point to difficulties such as inadequate communication on participatory opportunities, limited resources for facilitation, variable technical capacity among county officials, political interference, and the marginalization of certain groups during consultation processes (Kanyinga & Kimani, 2014; Mwangi, 2018). These challenges often lead to participation processes that fall short of the substantive engagement envisioned in the Constitution, raising

questions about the effectiveness and inclusivity of participatory development planning within devolved units (Cheeseman et al., 2016).

In Kakamega County, public participation is similarly structured around the CIDP and WDC mechanisms, which are designed to provide structured avenues through which citizens can influence local development planning and oversight (Kakamega County Government, 2018). The county's devolved governance system positions the ward as the primary point of contact between citizens and government, making WDCs central to grassroots engagement. As in other counties, Kakamega's ability to realize genuine participation is shaped by institutional capacity, information dissemination practices, the accessibility of participation platforms, and the degree to which local structures incorporate community-based institutions and social networks that hold legitimacy at the grassroots (World Bank, 2017). Taken together, the global emphasis on participatory governance, the evolving decentralization landscape in SSA, and Kenya's strong constitutional mandate for citizen engagement form the broader context within which public participation in Kakamega County should be understood. The county-level mechanisms for participation are designed to operationalize national policy commitments, but their effectiveness depends on how well they bridge the gap between formal institutional frameworks and the lived realities of citizens at the ward level. This study is situated within this wider context, seeking to contribute to ongoing scholarly and policy debates on the determinants of meaningful public participation in devolved governance systems.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Kenya's Constitution (2010) and County Governments Act (2012) mandate public participation as a core governance principle, operationalized through Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs). However, Shirere Ward exhibits a critical participation paradox: despite exceptional civic capacity, actual engagement remains persistently low. This paradox manifests in three dimensions. First, there exists a stark disconnect between high sociodemographic potential and low institutional engagement. Nearly 80 percent of respondents hold post-secondary qualifications educational attainment typically associated with higher civic literacy and political efficacy (Brady et al., 1995) yet 62.5 percent have never attended a County Public Participation Forum. This suggests low participation stems not from citizen apathy or incapacity, but from institutional failures to activate existing civic potential.

Second, a widespread institutional awareness gap constitutes a fundamental structural barrier. Approximately half of respondent's lack awareness of the WDC and CIDP, the primary mechanisms for grassroots engagement and county development planning. Without clear knowledge of when, where, and how to participate, citizens cannot progress beyond tokenistic engagement on Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969). This awareness deficit transforms participation into a preserve of informed minorities rather than a democratic right. Third, the county government critically underutilizes locally trusted grassroots institutions. While formal participation forums attract minimal attendance, over 76 percent of respondents affirm strong confidence in informal mobilizing actors particularly Chamas, women's ministry groups, and alumni associations. This discrepancy reveals not an absence of viable engagement channels, but the county's failure to integrate legitimate grassroots actors into formal participation frameworks.

The central research problem is therefore: How does Shirere Ward's substantial sociodemographic capital interact with institutional barriers specifically, limited awareness of participatory structures and weak incorporation of local mobilizing actors to produce

persistently low participation despite high educational attainment? Addressing this gap is urgent given the community's pressing development challenges requiring participatory planning and responsive governance. The findings will provide evidence-based insights to strengthen Kakamega County's public participation strategy and ensure devolution delivers genuine, citizen-driven development.

1.2 Purpose of The Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that shape citizen participation in County Public Participation Forums within Shirere Ward, Kakamega County.

1.3 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- i. Assess respondents' awareness and rating of major development issues affecting Shirere Ward.
- ii. Determine the level of public awareness of formal participation frameworks in Shirere Ward.
- iii. Establish the extent of citizens' participation in County Public Participation Forums in Shirere Ward.
- iv. Examine respondents' perceptions of the benefits of public participation in local development planning in Shirere Ward.
- v. Assess community support for leveraging local groups as potential mechanisms for enhancing citizen participation in Shirere Ward.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study employs a multi-theoretical framework integrating institutional, social, and participatory perspectives to explain citizen engagement in County Public Participation Forums in Shirere Ward. Three complementary theories Decentralization and Devolution Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Participatory Development Theory provide the analytical foundation for understanding how structural conditions and social dynamics shape participation within Kenya's devolved governance context.

2.1.1 Decentralization and Devolution Theory

Decentralization and Devolution Theory provides the institutional lens for examining how governance structures shape participation opportunities. The theory posits that transferring political, administrative, and fiscal authority to sub-national units enhances accountability, efficiency, and responsiveness in public service delivery (Kimenyi & Meagher, 2004; Platteau & Gaspart, 2003). Kenya operationalizes this framework through the Constitution (2010) and County Governments Act (2012), which mandate public participation in planning, budgeting, and decision-making. This theory informs analysis of institutional factors influencing participation, particularly the design, accessibility, and functionality of devolved structures including Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). It enables examination of how institutional arrangements facilitate or constrain citizen engagement, and how gaps between devolution's normative intent and operational reality contribute to low participation. The theory thus assesses whether institutional mechanisms are sufficiently robust, inclusive, and responsive to promote meaningful ward-level engagement.

2.1.2 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, rooted in Putnam's (1993) seminal work, emphasizes how social networks, reciprocity norms, and trust facilitate collective action. Social capital encompasses bonding ties within homogeneous groups and bridging ties connecting individuals across diverse networks. Higher social capital correlates with greater civic engagement, stronger information flows, and enhanced collective decision-making capacity. This theory illuminates how sociodemographic characteristics and community networks influence participation in CPP forums. Educational attainment, age, gender, and local association membership shape access to information, engagement confidence, and institutional trust. Critically, the theory highlights "linking social capital" connections between citizens and formal governance structures as essential for effective participation. Limited linking capital can suppress participation even among capable and informed citizens (Platteau & Gaspart, 2003). Social Capital Theory therefore explains participation variations based on community network embeddedness and institutional trust levels.

2.1.3 Participatory Development Theory

Participatory Development Theory provides the normative framework underpinning public participation in development planning. The theory argues that sustainable, contextually relevant development requires active local beneficiary involvement in priority identification, intervention planning, and results monitoring (Pretty, 1995). PDT emphasizes empowerment, ownership, and democratized development processes, aligning closely with Kenya's devolved planning instruments, particularly the CIDP. PDT informs assessment of participation depth and quality within CPP forums, enabling analysis of whether citizen involvement constitutes genuine empowerment through shared decision-making or remains confined to consultation or tokenism (UNDP, 2008). The theory also provides a framework for examining how perceptions of participation relevance, effectiveness, and impact influence engagement willingness. When citizens perceive limited influence over outcomes, participation may decline despite widespread acknowledgment of its importance. PDT thus supports nuanced evaluation of devolution-mandated participatory processes and their alignment with inclusive, transformative development principles.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study was conducted in Shirere Ward, Kakamega County, western Kenya, employing a cross-sectional survey design to collect data at a single point from adult residents. Understanding the ward's socio-economic context is essential, as local conditions strongly influence civic behaviour (Putnam, 1993). Kakamega County exhibits high population density, youthful demographics, and persistent multidimensional poverty (KNBS, 2019; 2020), with livelihoods depending on small-scale agriculture and informal sector activities. The ward benefits from proximity to Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology and numerous educational institutions, contributing to high literacy levels and active professional networks. Informal associations such as Chamas remain central to social life, constituting important civic engagement pathways. The target population comprised all adult residents aged 18 years and above, aligning with legal requirements for County Public Participation Forum participation under the County Governments Act (2012). A multi-stage cluster sampling approach guided sample selection, typical forward-level surveys (Babbie, 2016). Sub-locations were randomly selected as clusters, systematic sampling applied within clusters using household lists, and one eligible adult per household selected through random procedures such as the Kish grid.

The final sample comprised 72 completed questionnaires, sufficient for descriptive statistical analysis and reliable estimation of proportions across key variables. Data were collected using a structured, interviewer-administered questionnaire ensuring response accuracy and comprehension of technical terms (WDCs, CIDP). The questionnaire comprised four thematic sections: sociodemographic characteristics (age, gender, educational attainment); awareness and rating of development issues using five-point Likert scales; knowledge of participatory governance structures through dichotomous items assessing WDC and CIDP awareness; and participation attitudes using Likert scales to capture perceptions of public participation benefits and support for informal mobilizing actors. Data were coded, cleaned, and analysed using SPSS. Descriptive analysis summarized key variables through frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations examining associations between educational attainment and institutional awareness, establishing the empirical baseline for interpreting participation patterns in Shirere Ward.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

This section presents findings from the cross-sectional survey of 72 adult residents in Shirere Ward, Kakamega County. The analysis reveals a fundamental paradox: despite exceptionally high educational attainment and strong civic capacity, actual participation in County Public Participation Forums remains markedly low. Results are organized according to the study's five specific objectives, examining community development priorities, institutional awareness, participation levels, perceptions of participation benefits, and the role of local mobilizing groups.

4.1 Community Development Priorities in Shirere Ward

Respondents demonstrated clear awareness of development challenges affecting their community, rating most issues as severe or extremely severe across multiple domains.

Table 1: Participants' Awareness and Rating of Development Issues

Variable	Not Severe F (%)	Moderately Severe F (%)	Very Severe F (%)	Extremely Severe F (%)
Drug Abuse	4 (5.6%)	4 (5.6%)	24 (33.3%)	40 (55.6%)
Youth Unemployment	2 (2.8%)	6 (8.3%)	12 (16.7%)	52 (72.2%)
Poor Access to Clean Water	4 (5.6%)	10 (13.9%)	36 (50.0%)	22 (30.6%)
Climate Vulnerability	4 (5.6%)	10 (13.9%)	28 (38.9%)	30 (41.7%)
Inadequate Health Facilities	2 (2.8%)	14 (19.4%)	30 (41.7%)	26 (36.1%)
Gender-Based Violence	6 (8.3%)	12 (16.7%)	28 (38.9%)	26 (36.1%)

Community members identified youth unemployment as the most acute development challenge, with 72.2 percent rating it extremely severe and an additional 16.7 percent rating it very severe. Drug abuse emerged as the second most critical concern, rated very severe or extremely severe by 88.9 percent of respondents, reflecting its pervasive impact on households

and community stability. Access to clean water and climate vulnerability were each rated severe by 80.6 percent of participants, indicating critical infrastructural and environmental challenges. Inadequate health facilities (77.8 percent), gender-based violence (75.0 percent), and food insecurity (75.0 percent) similarly featured prominently. These findings demonstrate that respondents possess clear, articulated knowledge of local development deficits, establishing that low participation cannot be attributed to inability to identify priorities but rather reflects structural barriers preventing translation of this awareness into formal engagement with county planning processes.

4.2 Institutional Awareness and Participation in County Forums

Public awareness of formal participation mechanisms revealed substantial knowledge gaps with pronounced gender, age, and educational disparities constraining meaningful engagement.

Table 2: Gender and Participants' Knowledge About County Public Participation Forums

Gender	Never Heard About It F (%)	Heard but No Details F (%)	Heard and Knows Details F (%)
Male	8 (40.0%)	20 (66.7%)	12 (54.5%)
Female	12 (60.0%)	10 (33.3%)	10 (45.5%)

Institutional awareness emerged as a primary barrier to participation, with pronounced gendered patterns of information access. Among respondents who had never heard of County Public Participation Forums, women constituted 60.0 percent compared to 40.0 percent men, indicating structural exclusion from initial information flows about participatory mechanisms. Among those who had heard of forums but lacked details, men dominated at 66.7 percent, suggesting superficial exposure that fails to translate into actionable understanding. At the highest knowledge level, men held a slight advantage (54.5 percent versus 45.5 percent women). Overall, only 30.6 percent of all respondents possessed detailed knowledge of forum purposes, while 41.7 percent had superficial awareness and 27.8 percent had never heard of these structures. These patterns reveal a gendered knowledge gradient where women are overrepresented among the completely unaware while men dominate partial awareness categories, suggesting county communication strategies unintentionally reinforce gender inequalities by relying on channels privileging male-dominated civic spaces.

4.3 Educational Gradients in Participation Levels

Actual participation levels remained strikingly low despite high educational attainment, revealing that education facilitates but does not guarantee civic engagement without supportive institutional structures.

Table 3: Educational Categories and Participants' Involvement in County Public Participation Forums

Education Level	YES F (%)	NO F (%)
Primary School	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.1%)
Secondary School/High School	4 (19.0%)	3 (6.4%)
College/Technical Training/Diploma	9 (42.9%)	17 (36.2%)
University Degree (Bachelor's)	12 (57.1%)	19 (40.4%)
Postgraduate Degree (Masters/PhD)	1 (4.8%)	6 (12.8%)

Educational gradients revealed that university degree holders constituted 57.1 percent of participants, followed by college/diploma holders at 42.9 percent, demonstrating that higher education facilitates but does not guarantee participation. Paradoxically, postgraduate-educated individuals exhibited remarkably low participation rates, with only 4.8 percent of participants holding advanced degrees while 12.8 percent of non-participants possessed postgraduate qualifications. This suggests professional specialization, time constraints, or engagement with higher governance levels rather than county forums. Most critically, substantial proportions of highly educated respondents never participated: 40.4 percent of degree holders and 36.2 percent of college-educated individuals remained disengaged. Primary-educated individuals were effectively excluded with zero participation. This pattern challenges assumptions that education automatically drives civic engagement, instead highlighting that participatory governance cannot rely solely on educational capital but must address institutional design, accessibility, and perceived relevance to convert the ward's exceptional civic capacity into actual participation.

4.4 Gendered Perceptions of Participatory Equity and Budgeting

Respondents demonstrated belief in participatory principles, though significant gender-based skepticism emerged regarding whether participation translates into equitable development outcomes and responsive budgets.

Table 4: Gender and Level of Agreement That Community Input Leads to Equitable Project Distribution

Gender	Agree F (%)	Neutral F (%)	Disagree F (%)
Male	5 (62.5%)	5 (50.0%)	21 (38.2%)
Female	3 (37.5%)	5 (50.0%)	33 (61.8%)

Gendered perceptions of participatory equity revealed pronounced trust deficits, with women constituting 61.8 percent of those disagreeing that community input leads to equitable project distribution across villages, compared to 38.2 percent men. Among those agreeing, men dominated at 62.5 percent, suggesting male participants perceive participation forums as effective equity mechanisms, possibly reflecting greater access to decision-making spaces and higher likelihood of being heard during meetings. Women's overwhelming skepticism likely

stems from lived experiences where their priorities health services, water access, sanitation— remain underrepresented in final allocations despite participation. Neutral responses showed gender parity. Similarly, regarding participatory budgeting, women constituted 57.8 percent of those disagreeing that participation improves budget planning, compared to 42.2 percent men, and dominated neutral responses at 62.5 percent. These patterns point to a gendered trust deficit where formal participation exists procedurally but fails to ensure substantive equity or budget responsiveness from women's perspectives.

4.5 Effectiveness of Local Groups in Mobilizing Participation

Community-based organizations demonstrated substantially higher perceived effectiveness than formal structures, with women's ministry groups, chamas, and alumni networks serving as compensatory mechanisms bridging the capacity-structure gap.

Table 5: Gender and Perceptions of Women's Ministry Groups' Effectiveness in Supporting Participation

Gender	Agree F (%)	Neutral F (%)	Disagree F (%)
Male	6 (60.0%)	6 (42.9%)	19 (39.6%)
Female	4 (40.0%)	8 (57.1%)	29 (60.4%)

Women's ministry groups received the strongest overall effectiveness ratings (66.7 percent rated very effective), yet gender analysis revealed nuanced evaluation patterns. Among those agreeing these groups support participation, men constituted 60.0 percent, suggesting external recognition of women's collective mobilization even by non-beneficiaries. Women dominated neutral responses at 57.1 percent and disagreement at 60.4 percent, indicating critical assessment based on lived experience rather than uncritical endorsement. Women, as primary participants, evaluated effectiveness by whether groups translate support into tangible county-level influence, with majority disagreement reflecting unmet expectations regarding capacity building, advocacy strength, or sustained engagement outcomes. For chamas and self-help groups, 80.6 percent rated them moderately to very effective, demonstrating strong community confidence in their mobilization capacity. Graduate networks showed education-bounded influence, with 72.2 percent rating them effective but only 8.3 percent very effective, suggesting functional but socially limited impact. These findings identify informal institutions as critical participation enablers that succeed where formal county structures falter through embedded trust, accessibility, and psychosocial support networks.

5.0 Conclusion

This study examined citizen participation dynamics in County Public Participation Forums in Shirere Ward, revealing that low participation stems not from civic apathy or limited capacity but from structural failures to engage an informed, organized citizenry. Shirere Ward possesses significant civic assets high educational attainment (79.2 percent post-secondary), clear awareness of development challenges, and deep community organization yet formal participation remains weak, with only 30.6 percent ever attending forums. The central finding is that institutional design matters more than citizen capacity: awareness gaps, weak communication strategies, and absent feedback mechanisms undermine participation even among capable citizens. Women and older residents demonstrate particular disillusionment, with women constituting 61.8 percent of those skeptical about participatory equity outcomes, suggesting current models fail to address power asymmetries and lived constraints. Critically,

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t3161>

informal institutions women's ministry groups (66.7 percent rated very effective), chamas, and alumni networks function as civic incubators translating individual capacity into collective action, yet remain disconnected from formal county frameworks. Transforming participation requires shifting from procedural compliance to structural alignment: embedding participation within trusted social institutions, supporting transparent communication, and validating engagement through visible development outcomes to fulfill devolution's promise of inclusive, responsive local governance.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on study findings, four key recommendations are proposed to strengthen participatory governance in Kakamega County. First, county governments must close the institutional awareness gap through continuous, targeted civic education beyond forum announcements, simplifying information on Ward Development Committees, CIDPs, and participation timelines while disseminating through trusted community channels rather than relying on ad hoc, technical communication that currently excludes even educated citizens. Second, counties should formally integrate grassroots groups women's ministry groups, chamas, alumni associations, graduate networks into participation frameworks as recognized partners rather than informal observers, assigning structured roles in mobilization, agenda-setting, and feedback dissemination to leverage their demonstrated effectiveness. Third, participation processes must adopt gender- and age-responsive designs including accessible forum scheduling, safe spaces for women's voices, and facilitation methods valuing experiential knowledge alongside technical input to address the pronounced gendered trust deficits and age-based skepticism identified. Finally, counties must institutionalize feedback and accountability mechanisms clearly demonstrating how citizen input influences decisions, publishing simplified participation reports and project traceability tools to transform participation from symbolic consultation into consequential co-production that rebuilds trust and sustains engagement across demographic groups.

References

- Babbie, E. (2016). *The practice of social research* (14th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Brady, H. E., Schlozman, K. L., & Verba, S. (1995). Political resources, participation, and the civic community. In S. Verba, K. L. Schlozman, & H. E. Brady (Eds.), *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.
- Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last*. Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Cooke, B., & Kothari, U. (Eds.). (2001). *Participation: The new tyranny?* Zed Books.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the third world*. Princeton University Press.
- Gaventa, J. (2004). Power and participation: The history of a relationship. In S. Hickey & G. Mohan (Eds.), *Participation: From tyranny to transformation?* Zed Books.
- Gaventa, J., & Cornwall, A. (2006). Power and knowledge: Challenges to participatory action research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Concise paperback edition*. SAGE Publications.

- Kanyinga, K., & Kimani, M. (2014). The contradictions of devolution in Kenya. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(4), 624–637.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2019). *Kenya population and housing census (2019): Volume I, population by county and sub county*. KNBS.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2020). *Kakamega County poverty and inequality profile*. KNBS.
- Kimenyi, M. S., & Meagher, P. (2004). *Devolution and public service delivery in Kenya*. Brookings Institution.
- Platteau, J. P., & Gaspart, F. (2003). The risks of resource-flow decentralization for rural development. *World Development*, 31(10), 1787–1804.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903.
- Pretty, J. N. (1995). The many pathways to sustainability. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 8(2), 163–193.
- Putnam, R. D. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton University Press.
- Republic of Kenya. (2010). *The Constitution of Kenya*. Government Printer.
- Republic of Kenya. (2012). *The County Governments Act, 2012*. Government Printer.
- Republic of Kenya. (2012). *The Public Finance Management Act, 2012*. Government Printer.
- Rostow, W. W. (1960). *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto*. Cambridge University Press.
- Stiglitz, J. E. (2002). *Globalization and its discontents*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- UNDP. (2008). *The governance for development toolkit*. UNDP.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Harvard University Press.
- World Bank. (2017). *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the law*. World Bank Group.