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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POVERTY REDUCTION IN KENYA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO RURAL COUNTIES

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies

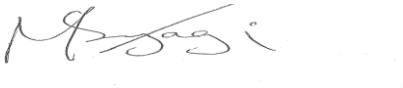
By

Sebastian Njagi Runguma

25 July 2014

DECLARATION

I declare that this Thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies at the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. To the best of my knowledge, this Thesis has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University.



Sebastian Njagi Runguma

Date: -----25/7/2014--------

Supervisor: Professor Gilbert M. Khadiagala

Date: ----------

ABSTRACT

Employing empirical findings from Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties, this thesis analyses the dynamics of citizen participation in development policy and planning process in Kenya and its effects on poverty reduction efforts in the rural parts of the country. The study is based on the premise that public participation enhances the quality and relevance of development processes and their outcomes and is, therefore, an important ingredient for achieving sustainable poverty reduction outcomes. It utilizes the political economy model and draws from the concepts of "power" and "interests" in understanding the poverty reduction 'enterprise' in the two rural communities in Kenya. The study finds that the elites, bureaucrats, and institutions have dominated Kenya's post-colonial development policy and planning space to the exclusion and disadvantage of ordinary citizens. The capture of public decision-making spaces, processes and development outcomes by elites is widespread and has affected the extent and quality of citizen participation in decision-making and poverty reduction in rural Kenya. Although ordinary citizens generally view themselves as the front line duty bearers in the fight against poverty, they hardly fulfilled their perceived role in poverty reduction. Faced with a web of dominating forces and constraints, ordinary citizens have become passive and peripheral actors in the poverty reduction 'enterprise' and local level development generally. As currently profiled, approached and directed, poverty reduction is an elitist project with its goals couched in populist terms, essentially in the service of powerful and influential people and institutions within the Kenyan society. This explains why, despite poverty reduction being a policy objective throughout the post-independence period, alarmingly high levels of poverty have persisted in Kenya, especially in the rural areas. The study concludes that the success of rural poverty reduction in Kenya is chiefly dependent on sufficient citizen participation in decision-making, quality of development planning, good leadership and the capacity and will of institutions at the grassroots to pursue sustainable development endeavors.

Key words: *Poverty reduction, citizen participation, development policy and planning, decision-making, leadership, elite capture, institutions, political economy, local level, Tharaka Nithi, Siaya, comparative analysis.*

DEDICATION

To my father Nta-Runguma wa-Nta-Rutugua
and my mother Julia Nceere (the Ciaikaracu). I am gratified my Uncle,
Makara wa-Nta-Rutugua, and my other "mothers" (Makelina Muthau, Gaterina
Muriuki, Marita Ndugo, Hellena Mukwanyaga and Ruth Kitondo),
have lived to see the completion of this work.

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I wish to thank all those who contributed in one way or another towards the realization of this thesis. For the sake of brevity, I will only name a few. To my thesis supervisor, Prof. Gilbert Khadiagala, I say thank you very much for your excellent guidance, patience, and support that came in many ways throughout the thesis project. I will forever be grateful.

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Finally, my siblings (Kayagi, Muriungi and Nkuru, and also Rita, Njeru, Kajira, Nyaga, Ciantugi, Late Gatiria, and Kanyua) "showered" me with love and encouragement throughout my studies. Together with Paul and Monica, I thank them for their contribution towards my well-being and this work.

The above acknowledgements notwithstanding, any errors in this thesis remain my sole responsibility.

ABBREVIATIONS

BSO	Business Sector Organisation
BWPI	Brooks World Poverty Institute
CAF	Constituency Aids Fund
CBF	Constituency Bursary Fund
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CDFC	Constituency Development Fund Committee
CDTF	Community Development Trust Fund
CPP	Core Poverty Program
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSP	Constituency Strategic Plan
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DAMER	District Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report
DC	District Commissioner
DDC	District Development Committee
DDO	District Development Officer
DDP	District Development Plan
DEC	District Executive Committee
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DFRD	District Focus for Rural Development
DGSDO	District Gender and Social Development Officer
DMEC	District Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
DMER	District Monitoring and Evaluation Report
DO	District Officer
DPEC	District Poverty Eradication Committee
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ERS-WEC	Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation
ESP	Economic Stimulus Programme
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOK	Government of Kenya
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation

HDR	Human Development Report
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
IBEA	Imperial British East Africa Company
IDGS	International Development Goals
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (Sussex)
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs (Kenya)
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KARI	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
KDHS	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey
KIHBS	Kenya Integrated Household and Budget Survey
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute of Public Policy and Research Analysis
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KWFT	Kenya Women Finance Trust
LAs	Local Authorities
LASDAP	Local Authorities Serve Delivery Action Plan
LATF	Local Authorities Transfer Fund
LICS	Low-Income Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MP	Member of Parliament
MPI	Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTP	Medium Term Plan
MVP	Millennium Village Project
NALEP	National Arid Lands and Environment Programme
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NMK	Njaa Marufuku Kenya
NPEP	National Poverty Eradication Plan

NTA	National Tax Association
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OVCs	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PEC	Poverty Eradication Commission
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RLF	Revolving Loans Fund
RMLF	Constituency Roads Maintenance Fund
RPRLGSP	Rural Poverty Reduction and Local Government Support Programme
SAPS	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SHG	Self Help Group
SID	Society for International Development
TISA	The Institute for Social Audit
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States of America International Development
WB	World Bank
WDF	Women Enterprise Fund
YEDF	Youth Enterprise Development Fund

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses primarily on poverty reduction in rural Kenya where poverty levels remain alarmingly high[1]. Using development policy and planning framework[2] as the main point of analysis and drawing largely from empirical evidence from Tharaka Nithi and Siaya Counties[3], the thesis examines links between citizen participation in decision-making on the one hand and the state of leadership and institutions on the other in an effort to understand their influences on poverty reduction in rural Kenya. The thesis argues that, the success of poverty reduction in Kenya chiefly depends on sufficient public participation in decision-making, the quality of development planning and leadership and the capacity and will of institutions to pursue inclusive and sustainable development endeavors.

Over the last four decades or so, the world has witnessed a growing interest by scholars and development practitioners in poverty reduction and the role of citizens in development. Underpinning this interest is the huge magnitude of global poverty, devastating effects poverty has on many developing economies, and the realization that state-led interventions alone are inadequate in tackling poverty.

Poverty is a "global public bad", and its eradication remains a top goal for contemporary development. Viewed in terms of the income or consumption threshold of one US dollar a day[4], about one billion people or approximately one sixth of the

[1] Poverty levels vary regionally in Kenya. According to the Kenya Integrated Household and Budget Survey (2005/6), the most affected districts are in the former North Eastern, Coast and Rift Valley provinces. Districts with absolute poverty rates of over 75 per cent include Turkana (94.3%), Marsabit (91.7%), Mandera (87.8%), Wajir (84%) and Tana River (76.9%) and Malindi (76%). These districts have since been subdivided.

[2] The framework is state-led but integrates the input of non-state actors (NSAs) who include a diverse range of organizations in the civil society, religious and private sectors as well as the input of local communities. NSAs play a crucial role in service provision and implementation of development projects particularly in the remote and marginal rural areas of Kenya.

[3] Created by the Constitution of Kenya 2010, counties are a new governance structure in the country. A county comprise several administrative (districts or sub-counties) and parliamentary units (constituencies). The county governance system envisages a shift of the focal point for development planning from the district to the county.

[4] This is the most widely referenced measure of absolute poverty. Other measures and thresholds for poverty that are commonly used include $1.25 per day and $2.15 per day income/consumption as well

global population are poor and three-quarters of these people live in rural areas where they depend mostly on agriculture for food and livelihood (Kanbur & Sumner, 2011)[5]. It is a disturbing fact that more than half a century of international commitment to development and the Declaration of Universal Human Rights in 1948, poverty thrives in many countries around the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa as the Kenyan case reveals.

Poverty is a national disaster[6] in Kenya and is one of the enduring features of the post-independence period. Estimates indicate that by 1990, which is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) baseline year, about 48.8 per cent of the national population was living in poverty. Fifteen years later, in 2005, the national absolute poverty rate had dropped only marginally to 46 per cent (GoK, 2010). Despite remarkable gains in economic growth in the last decade following the long slump of the 1980s[7], prospects for reducing poverty significantly in Kenya, in the near future look uncertain. For instance, the 2013 World Bank (WB) global monitoring report indicated that the country was likely to attain Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 on poverty and hunger only in 2050. This implies that Kenya will be thirty-five years behind the MDGs target date and twenty years behind the Vision 2030 target date when the country aims to achieve a middle-income status[8].

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as Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) introduced and used by the UNDP in its annual Human Development Reports.

[5] The authors note that the global geography of poverty has changed in that the majority of the world's poor now live in stable, non-poor countries. They note that while 93 per cent of the world's poor lived in Low Income (LICs) two decades back, about 72 per cent of them now live in middle income countries (MICs) with China and India accounting for 50 per cent of the global poverty statistics. In its Rural Poverty Report (2011), IFAD notes that South Asia has the greatest number of poor rural people, while Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest incidence of rural poverty.

[6] Leading manifestations of poverty in Kenya include begging and dependence on external assistance especially for food; poor shelter, clothing and health; engagement in odd jobs; child dropout from school and child labour; and idleness (Kiringai and Manda, 2002). Similarly, common manifestations of poverty in areas with high poverty levels have been noted to be food shortage, lack of access to land, difficulty in getting to healthcare centres; high levels of unemployment and underemployment, and lack of access to education. For more details on these dimensions, see Poverty Eradication Commission's (PEC) report: 10 Years of Fight against Poverty, 2009.

[7] The national economy performed below its potential since the 1980s. It was marked by low economic and employment growth rates, and a decline in productivity. The annual GDP growth rate was below 5 per cent and even negative during most of the 1980s and 1990s.

[8] This appears to be the tragedy encompassing much of Africa. In the foreword to the book, *Attacking Africa's Poverty: Experience from the Ground,* Callisto Madawo, a former Vice President of the World Bank responsible for Africa, notes that "by all measures, poverty in Africa as a whole has increased and deepened; and the prospects of meeting the Millennium Development Goals seems to be receding", (See Fox & Liebenthal, 2006:xiii).

Kenya's poverty situation is even more disturbing considering that there has been immense national discourse and efforts towards poverty reduction right from independence in 1963 where national leaders led by Jomo Kenyatta declared poverty, ignorance and disease as the principal priorities for the new state. Tackling poverty has since then, been a policy objective in all post-colonial development plans, sessional papers, presidential commissions, task forces, and economic policy documents (Nafula et al., 2005; Mutua & Oyugi, 2007; Bett & Kimuyu, 2008). Poverty reduction similarly has featured frequently in parliamentary debates, civil society programming, political party manifestos, political campaigns, media reports, and research projects by scholars and other interested parties.

Kenya has also witnessed a large number of state and non-state actors[9] spending enormous resources on anti-poverty programmes across the country. Furthermore, Kenya has received special recognition for developing excellent development policies[10,] and one therefore would expect these policies to translate into a significant decline in the poverty levels across the country. What then explains this contradictory development experience? Why has poverty been so difficult to deal with effectively despite the seemingly elaborate development policy and development planning mechanisms in the country throughout the post-independence period?

An important issue for policy analysis, yet one that appears to have received little attention in the anti-poverty discussions[11] is the role of ordinary citizens in poverty

[9] Kenya historically has had one of the largest numbers of civil society organizations in Africa. In 2005, the year when the Kenya Integrated Housing and Budget Survey was conducted, the country had 347,387 non-profit organizations. This included 4,099 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and 185,722 Self-help groups (SHGs), all carrying various development activities in the country (See Kanyinga, Mitullah & Njagi, 2007). Despite the large numbers, the indications are that the collective efforts of non-profit organizations in the country have not significantly reduced poverty. This makes it important for careful scrutiny to be made of their investment in development work, along that of state actors.

[10] A World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment report (2012) released in June 2013, ranks Kenya as the country with the best policies and institutions to support economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa. In light of the high poverty levels in the country in spite of the so-called "best policies", it is important to view such ratings judiciously. It is important to interrogate the criteria that institutions such as the World Bank use to decide what policies are good for development and poverty reduction. This is important especially because a large body of literature indicate that economic growth does not automatically lead to poverty reduction due, for example, to gross domestic product (GDP) distribution gaps.

[11] For instance, whereas many of Kenya's post-independence development policy and planning documents acknowledge the importance of citizen participation in development processes, careful review of these documents, including the Vision 2030 planning blueprint, reveals the in-exactitude of

reduction efforts, especially at the grassroots. As the most affected group, it is imperative that we understand the perceptions and actions of ordinary citizens towards poverty reduction. For instance, do ordinary Kenyans feel responsible for moving out of poverty? To what extent do they engage productively with other development actors in tackling poverty and within what context? It is these questions, which prompted this study, and they particularly bring into sharp focus the question of development and the role of citizens in decision-making processes at the grassroots.

A growing body of empirical evidence also indicates that citizen participation is important for the success of any development endeavour (Chambers, 1997; Diamond, 2005; Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Maathai, 2009; Grindle, 2010; Carroll, 2011). Drawing from this viewpoint, this thesis varolizes the efficacy of citizen participation in augmenting development outcomes, arguing that lack of meaningful participation in Kenya's development process could be one of the missing links in the country's fight against poverty.

Grounded on the concept of "common good" and "common interest", citizen participation is the hallmark of any democratic society, a vehicle for empowering citizens and an important practice that creates favourable conditions for economic improvement and social change (Manisbrudge, 1995; Hardina, 2003). By actively utilizing existing participation spaces and opportunities, or creating new ones, citizens are able to exercise their rights and power in the development discourse, to hold government accountable and to express and analyze their individual and shared realities with other development actors (Chambers, 1997; Grindle, 2010).

Although many governments, including Kenya, have in the recent past recognized citizen participation as a beneficial model for improving societies, it is apparent that such recognition does not necessarily translate into practice. This makes it important to scrutinize the policy declarations by governments, legal frameworks and policy-making practices. Kenya's post-independence development policy and planning

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the role of citizens, especially marginalised groups such as the poor, women, youth, and people with disabilities, in policy-making and poverty reduction efforts.

documents[12], for instance, tend to recognise "consultation" as the more acceptable form of citizen participation in public decision-making processes. However, merely "consulting" the public does not represent the empowered involvement of citizens in development processes, as anticipated in the rights based and participatory approaches to development.

On the other hand, key institutional mechanisms for fighting poverty tend to be less successful in meeting public expectations in local development as is apparently the case with decentralised processes and structures such as the district development planning and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF)[13]. These examples raise important questions around the citizens' voice and political agency in decision-making, the character of Kenya's development policy and planning practice, the quality of governance, and the capacity of institutions charged with poverty reduction responsibility.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The broad aim of the study was to analyse the dynamics of citizen participation in development policy and planning process in Kenya and its effects on poverty reduction efforts in the rural parts of the country. This aim was premised on the notion that genuine participation of citizens in decision-making enhances the quality and relevance of development processes and their outcomes and is, therefore, an important ingredient for achieving sustainable poverty reduction outcomes.

12 These include Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, National and District Development Plans, National Poverty Eradication Plan for 1999 – 2015, and the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) strategy introduced in 1983. Others are the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Annual Economic Survey reports, Participatory Poverty Assessments (1994, 1996, 2001, and 2005/6), Kenya Vision 2030 strategy launched in 2008, and the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

13 Despite being a powerful development tool for reducing poverty at the grassroots, the CDF has metamorphosed into one of the most contested and misused public development resources in the country. Regular audit reports by Government agencies and civil society organizations, for instance, the National Taxpayers Association's annual audit reports have consistently reported misappropriation, wastage or non-use of CDF funds in many constituencies.

The thesis has four specific objectives. These are to:

1. Examine how ordinary citizens at the grassroots perceive poverty and their role in tackling the problem. Under this objective, the thesis attempts to answer the following key questions: What are the local perceptions of poverty? What are the views of ordinary citizens about their responsibilities in tackling poverty? To what extent do ordinary citizens fulfill their responsibilities in tackling poverty?

2. Examine the nature of citizen participation in public decision-making and its effects on poverty reduction efforts at the local level. The thesis explores four key questions under this objective: How do citizens view public participation in decision-making? What channels exist for ordinary citizens to participate in public decision-making processes at the grassroots? What is the extent of citizen participation in decision-making at the local level? What constraints do ordinary citizens encounter in efforts to achieve genuine participation in decision-making at the grassroots?

3. Analyse the state of local leadership and its impact on citizen participation and poverty reduction efforts at the grassroots. Under this objective, the thesis addresses three key questions: How is the state of leadership at local level? How are the expectations of ordinary citizens towards leadership? How do leaders engage with ordinary citizens in tackling poverty?

4. Analyse the state of local institutions and their impact on citizen participation and poverty reduction efforts at the grassroots. The thesis investigate the following key research questions for this objective: How is the capacity of institutions involved in fighting poverty at the grassroots? To what extent do local institutions promote citizen participation in public decision-making? How do ordinary citizens perceive institutions created under the decentralization reforms and new constitution in terms of promoting citizen participation and tackling poverty?

1.3 Operational Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

Citizen Participation: The thesis uses this term synonymously with "public participation" and "public engagement" to refer to voluntary and non-coerced involvement of "ordinary" citizens at the grassroots, either individually or collectively in available decision-making structures, processes and mechanisms for community development purposes. Citizen participation focuses on achieving goals with potential benefit for the citizens as individuals, groups, or the wider society. Citizens may utilize available participation opportunities, or create new ones, to ensure their interests, concerns, and desired outcomes are incorporated in policy decisions and subsequent action. In practice, citizen participation takes two major forms: "direct participation" and "representative participation". In the former, citizens engage directly in public decision-making processes while in the latter, elected or nominated persons or institutions represent the views and interests of citizens. This study was concerned primarily with "direct participation" of citizens at the grassroots in development policy and planning processes[14].

Decision-making: Decision-making and policy-making are often used synonymously in development literature. Bibangambah (1977: 298) provides important insights on the connection between these terms. He views a decision as a 'prescription of what ought to be done to solve a problem' and decision-making as the making of choices that involves conscious action. Policy-making is the collectivity of intersecting decisions while problem solving, in his view, denotes tasks in which both the problem for solution and the alternative solutions are given or to processes of thinking and information sharing. Decision-making, in his view, involves all three: choice making, policy-making, and problem-solving and it can, therefore, be viewed as a 'process that selects a problem for decision (i.e. choice) and produce a limited number of alternatives from among which a particular alternative is selected for implementation and execution'. The study adopted Bibangambah's broad definition of decision-making as including all formal choice making, policy-making and problem-solving efforts at the local level.

[14] For further discussion on the meaning and different types of citizen participation, see Til & Til (1970), "Citizen Participation in Social Policy: The End of the Cycle", *Social Problems*, 17 (93): 313 – 323. The authors note that participation may mean elite coalition, politics of reform, citizen advice, popular participation, client participation or grassroots participation.

Ordinary Citizens: The thesis uses a power lens to distinguish ordinary citizens from other members of the rural society. Ordinary citizens refer to persons who belong to the social group commonly known as the "common people" or the "masses" or simply "Wanjiku[15]". These are people not in positions of authority (social, economic and political). They are to be found on the margins of the social, economic and political hierarchies and form the bulk of the rural society. They comprise the already poor people and marginally better-off persons who are nonetheless prone to slipping into poverty due to their unfavourable socio-economic conditions - low levels of education, lack of formal employment, and low or irregular incomes. The study focused on ordinary citizens, instead of the restrictive "poor" category thus ensuring the inclusion of the "vulnerable" people who are often left out in many poverty and policy studies.

Local Elites: This refers to all categories of non-ordinary people who were from the origin, live in or worked in the study areas. The main characteristic that distinguished elites from ordinary people is possession of or access to power and resources such as specialized knowledge, technological skills, wealth or formal positions that they use to acquire respect, social status, or influence. They are people in positions of authority (social, economic and political) and include public civil servants, scholars, and employees of non-state organizations, politicians, party leaders, progressive farmers, merchants, community leaders, and religious leaders. Elites have varying degrees of ability to influence local development processes. Those who lived or worked in the study areas are referred in the thesis as "rural elites" and those who lived and worked in towns and cities outside the two counties were categorized as "urban elites". Elites are associated with the phenomenon of "elite capture" which is discussed substantively in the thesis. Elite capture refers to acts or circumstances where elites, as individuals, groups (for example professional associations) or as a class dominate or control public development processes and institutions or grab benefits, opportunities, and services meant for the wider society, sections of society (such as the poor, children, youth, women, and the elderly) or certain geographic locations.

[15] The Constitution of Kenya 2010 introduced the term "Wanjiku" as a synonym for the "ordinary" person, male and female. Although the term is not widely used by ordinary people in daily conversations, its use is considerable among elites, especially government officials and leaders in both formal and informal discussions. The thesis uses the term widely especially in the presentation of the findings in chapters four and five.

Benefits may include projects or components of project deliverables, services or particular form of resources such as information or money. Elite capture is a manifestation of "elite-institutional hegemony" in which elites and the institutions they control or work for exert unparalleled influence on the local development space, in terms of policymaking and implementation.

Local Leaders: Local leaders are a sub category of the elites. They refer to persons in formal positions of authority who originated, lived or worked in the study areas. They include locally based employees of national and county governments, politicians, employees of non-state institutions (NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, and BSOs), prominent local people (community elders, religious leaders, and business people), and other members of the elite class. Since the leader class is wide, the study paid special attention to those who occupied formal positions of authority in government such as the local government administrators (District Commissioners, District Officers, Chiefs, and Assistant Chiefs) and staff serving in various state institutions, commissions and committees. This is because they are the ones who usually organized and coordinated development policy and planning processes at the grassroots.

Development Policy and Planning: Development policy[16] refers to decisions or choices the government makes, unitarily or with input from other actors, concerning a developmental issue such as poverty reduction. Development planning refers to the formal decision-making process for identification, discussion, prioritization, and deciding actionable choices to address development issues. Policy-making and development planning are both decision-making processes. Because the two processes are highly interlinked in practice, the thesis employs the two concepts in a combined form. The terms "development policy", 'development planning" or policy-planning, wherever they occur in the thesis, are used in reference to the combined form unless specified. To enable concrete analysis of citizen participation in decision-making, the study focused on four broad policy-planning processes. These were the District

16 Kenya's development policy is segmented along sectors and service areas of the public sphere. Thus, there is health policy, education policy, agriculture policy, housing policy and several others each aiming at achieving sector level goals that supposedly link and contribute to the national development objectives. Collectively, the sector level policies, often articulated through sessional papers and strategic plans drawn by line ministries make up what the thesis treats as Kenya's development policy.

Development Planning (DDP) process[17], Constituency Development Planning process (features the Constituency Development Fund and Constituency Strategic Plans), Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process introduced in Kenya in 2001, and the Local Government Development Planning process featuring the Local Authorities Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) and the Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF). The study examined citizen participation in the spectrum of these processes[18].

Local Institutions: Institutions refer to formal and informal rules that structure and regulate human interaction within the political, economic and social spheres (North, 1990: 97)[19.] As codes of conduct, norms of behaviour and conventions, institutions play an important role in the proper functioning of any society. Ellis and Allison (2003:17) describe institutions as "customs, rules and regulations, laws, public agencies and the way these habitually, and from precedence, go about doing what they do". Alsop and Kurey (2005: 5) notes that institutions are both embedded in and surround organizations, suggesting that the line between the two entities is thin. Drawing on these definitions, the thesis uses the term "institutions" in a broader sense to refer to public offices (for example, the District Development Office), public decision-making structures (for example, the District Development Committee), and service provisioning entities such as schools, health facilities and a diverse range of development organizations (NGOs, FBOs, and BSOs). The study placed special focus on governmental institutions, as they were the ones largely in charge of the development policy and planning processes at the local level.

[17] The DFRD is a decentralized planning mechanism introduced by the Government through the 1979 – 83 National Development plan and became operational on 1st July 1983. At the local level, there are four main DFRD based decentralized planning institutions: the District Development Committee (DDC), sub district development committee, location development committee (LDC) and the sub location development committee (SLDC) which have traditionally been headed by the local level government administrators (DC, DO, Chief and Assistant Chiefs).

[18] The four policy mechanisms provided an appropriate anchor for the study for several reasons. First, they are broad-based as they focus on all dimensions of development at the local level. Second, they are macro-level policy processes applied in Kenya in recent years at both national and local levels. Third, these mechanisms are part of the decentralization and governance reforms underway in the country since the 1980s and hence provide an opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of such reforms in terms of producing sustainable poverty reduction outcomes in rural Kenya. Although some of these mechanisms may be phased out upon the full implementation of the new constitution, there is merit to probe them for purposes of answering the underlying research questions as well as to gain insights with practical value for future efforts to tackle poverty at the grassroots. The four processes are described further in chapter 3 of the thesis.

[19] North (1990) identify formal rules as including constitutions, laws, and property rights while informal ones include sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

Anchored in the theories at the intersection of participation, development, and poverty reduction, this thesis probes the institutional and attitudinal landscapes in two rural communities of Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties to demonstrate how and why they impede or enhance the development enterprise. Most studies on these issues have taken a decidedly macro and national approach without specifying how these questions play out in local communities. This thesis contributes to an understanding of how local communities articulate the questions of livelihood, how national policies resonate at local levels, and whether there are any concrete influences on development policy from the local level upwards.

This study speaks directly to MDG 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and similarly to the post-2015 development agenda, which seeks to eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development by 2030[20]. Poverty reduction remains a top priority in contemporary development. However, to be successful, ongoing poverty reduction efforts at global, national and local levels require a thorough understanding of the critical factors that either foster or undermine the war against poverty and how these factors present themselves in specific locations. This study makes a scholarly contribution towards this understanding by providing insights based on empirical evidence from rural locations affected by high poverty levels. These insights could inform Kenya and other low and medium income countries pursuing poverty reduction goals and, in particular, in planning anti-poverty programmes targeting rural locations.

[20] In the report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, released in May 2013, the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel leading the process for developing the post-MDGs development agenda identified 12 goals. The first and the overarching goal is to (1) end poverty by the year 2030. The other goals are to (2) empower girls and women to achieve gender equality, (3) provide quality education and lifelong learning, (4) ensure healthy lives, (5) ensure food security and good nutrition, (6) achieve universal access to water and sanitation, and (7) secure sustainable energy. Others are (8) create jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth, (9) manage natural resources and assets sustainably, (10) ensure good governance and effective institutions, (11), ensure stable and peaceful societies, and (12) create a global enabling environment and catalyses long-term finance (See Report, UN 2013). Goals 1 (end poverty) and 10 (ensure good governance and effective institutions) are aligned with the themes at the core of this study.

Citizen participation is an important development discourse that has gained currency since the 1990s, spurred by growing enthusiasm among civil society organizations and development practitioners and scholars around the world. With time, governments have recognized citizen participation as important for achieving good governance and desired development outcomes. Some countries such as Bolivia have enacted popular laws aimed at enhancing citizens' participation in decision-making[21]. Kenya has similarly enacted a progressive constitution that provides for the participation of citizens in public decision-making. This thesis, therefore, seeks to generate new insights on an issue that is widely recognized as important for development.

In recent years, participatory processes and outcomes involving citizens have attracted increasing interest among scholars, development professionals and organizations (Silverman, 2005; Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Bowen, 2008; Grindle, 2010). The current effort is, therefore, not an exception. The thesis underscores the importance of citizen participation as a critical ingredient in development and underlines the importance of democratization of decision-making and decentralization in enhancing citizen participation. By placing participation at the centre of its analysis, the thesis succeeds in teasing out and probing the successes of Kenya's democratization and decentralization reforms project initiated in the country in the 1980s onwards that crystallized with the promulgation of the new constitution in August 2010. These two themes are emphasized in Kenya's constitution and other laws such as the County Governments Act of 2012.

Past policy and poverty studies[22] carried out in Kenya tend to confine the examination of public participation to the formulation phase of development policy. This study departs from that trend as it analyses citizen participation at the entire spectrum of development policy process. In doing so, the study makes an important contribution towards broadening the body of knowledge on citizen participation in decision-making. It is important to understand, for instance, how ordinary citizens and government officials perceive citizen participation and the context within which

[21] Bolivia promulgated its 'Law of Popular Participation (LPP)' in 1994. The law aimed to "create a more just distribution of and better administration of public resources, to promote economic growth and development in the countryside, and to advance political participation in general and the participation of local organizations in decision making processes in particular" (Jeppesen 2002:31).

[22] Included here are the numerous studies and reports on public participation in the PRSP process, the DFRD mechanism, and CDF processes.

citizens participate in government-led decision-making processes. Such understanding is important in enhancing and integrating the input of ordinary people in poverty reduction efforts better, in future development policies, plans and interventions.

While this thesis does not rule out other factors associated with poverty[23], it argues that development planning practice, participation, leadership and institutions are critical elements that may either foster or hinder poverty reduction efforts in Kenya. Dealing effectively with these macro issues could be the missing link in the fight against rural poverty. In the analysis of leadership, which is essentially a governance issue, the thesis pays special attention to the phenomenon of "elite capture" which scholars have identified as having potential effects on development outcomes (Plateau & Gaspart, 2003; Rajasekhar, Babu & Manjula, 2011; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). There exists little research in Kenya on the effect of the "elite capture" phenomenon at the local level, the conditions under which it thrives, and how citizens and institutions can deal with it in efforts to combat poverty. In this regard, the study is timely as it coincides with Kenya's implementation of devolved structures of governance created by the national Constitution. Insights from this thesis could help the Government and citizens to put in place mechanisms that ensure that local level development processes, institutions, and the elites do not dominate resources under the devolved governance system, at the expense of the wider society.

Furthermore, this study is justified in terms of its imaginative vigor in the choice of variables and methodological approach. Employing a qualitative research strategy, the study adopts an innovative approach that examines macro level issues of development policy and planning, public participation, leadership, institutional practices and poverty reduction through a local level perspective. This is an important angle because it is at the grassroots where poverty is most pronounced and where it is often tackled using local level initiatives and resources. It is indeed the local setting where

[23] There are many causes of poverty in Kenya, which cluster around human and non-human factors. They include low agricultural productivity, poor marketing of industrial and agricultural products, insecurity, unemployment, poor governance, misallocation of land, inequality of income and assets, inequality in access to economic opportunities, lack of education, unfavourable climatic conditions, HIV/AIDs, gender insensitive property rights regimes, and weak democratic institutions (See Nafula, et al., 2005).

local people, utilizing available resources, imagination, and participating meaningfully in public decision-making spaces can improve their lives.

Linked to the local angle, the thesis applies a comparative analytical approach that involves the analysis of empirical data from two rural counties with similar poverty reduction outcomes. This methodological approach has great potential to yield useful insights shedding light on the national outlook while also illuminating the extent to which and how the political economy of different locations and local factors, enhance or hinder poverty reduction efforts in rural Kenya.

1.5 Study Methodology

This section describes the general design and execution of the study and rationalizes choices for particular methods and procedures in data collection and analysis. The research design innovatively combines local and comparative analytic approaches (contextual approach within the comparative) to explore citizens' experiences and perspectives, and practices around the issues of public participation, leadership and institutions at the grassroots. Overall, the study has a strong qualitative orientation and takes a social constructionist approach in understanding and constructing meaning about how citizens in two rural communities in Kenya make sense of their multiple realities within development policy and planning spaces available to them.

1.5.1 Research Design: Study Variables and Analytical Approach

The study analysed select macro variables (citizen participation, leadership, institutions and development planning practice) which it perceived as critical factors influencing the outcomes of poverty reduction efforts at the grassroots. Thus, other factors that affect poverty reduction were held constant[24]. One practical reason for this was the need to ensure that the study remained focused and manageable. Indeed,

[24] Other factors that affect poverty reduction efforts in Kenya include limited political commitment by government; donor-driven policies that lack local ownership; weak resource base for policy implementing agencies; exclusion of local organizations from policy implementation programmes; and limited policy directions. Others are lack of transparency and accountability in some sections of government; exclusion of key institutions from implementation decisions; duplication of efforts by implementing institutions such as government, CSOs, and private sector; inadequate regional or sector coverage (see Manda et al., 2001 and Omiti & Obunde 2002).

students of comparative studies often use the method of holding other factors constant and concentrating on those they have established to be important (Barkan, 1984). The study examined these macro level issues through a local level perspective that consisted of the collection and analysis of empirical data from two rural communities. Linked to the local angle, the study applied a comparative analytic approach[25] with data from two study areas being analysed and the findings compared.

To ensure quality and comparability of data from the case studies, the study applied the same methods and instruments for data collection and analysis and interpreted the findings using the same theoretical framework. This "controlled comparison" enabled the recognition and explanation of the observed similarities and differences while taking cognizance of the local context.

1.5.2 Case Selection: Tharaka Nithi and Siaya Counties

Despite great intellectual benefit, comparative research encounters a variety of challenges including case selection, determining the appropriate unit of analysis, and choosing the appropriate level and scale of analysis[26]. Cases for comparative analysis must be carefully selected in order to be relevant and to allow sufficient comparability of findings. Productive comparative cases are often those with a potential to post findings that explain the issues of interest[27]. In other words, the selected cases must satisfy the goal and purpose for comparisons. Typically, these would be cases with similar conditions but different results or those with different conditions but which post similar outcomes. In between these, are cases which have certain similarities and differences but post similar results[28]. Cases that are largely similar (close enough)

[25] Comparative analysis is an intellectuality stimulating research method where two or more entities are compared against well-defined criteria, standard or variable in order to reveal, as the underlying goal, similarities and differences regarding the issue of interest (See Mills, Van de Bunt, & de Bruijn, 2006).

[26] See Mills, Van de Bunt, and de Bruijn (2006), *Comparative Research: Persistent Problems and Promoting Solutions*.

[27] See J. Seawright and J. Gerring (2007) for a discussion on the selection of case studies for comparative analysis. In their paper, *Case Selection Techniques in Case Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options*, they identify seven case study types that can be selected: typical, diverse, extreme, deviant, influential, most similar, and most different. They advise "the primary criterion for case selection should be relevance to the research objective of the study" and not "simply because they are 'interesting,' 'important,' or easily researched using readily available data".

[28] For example, in a seminal work on politics and public policy in Kenya and Tanzania (1984), Barkan compares two similar cases (Kenya and Tanzania) that had different results. Their conditions were similar at independence but took different policy paths that led to different results: Kenya became a

either in terms of conditions and outcomes makes good cases for systematic comparison.

The underlying reason for choosing Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties as the cases for this study was their closely similar poverty levels: 48.7 per cent and 40.1 per cent per cent absolute poverty rate, respectively. Both counties are within the same poverty bracket and represent rural areas of Kenya with traditionally moderate to high poverty levels. Apart from posting similar poverty outcomes[29], the two areas are similar in several respects. For example, their land area is nearly similar (2,638.8 square kilometre in the case of Tharaka Nithi and 2, 530.4 square kilometre for Siaya), and both are agricultural zones prone to food insecurity. However, the two areas differ on other variables such as demographics (population numbers, settlement patterns, and labourforce characteristics), culture (lifestyles, food, language, and customs) and social characteristics (education levels, among others).

Tharaka Nithi and Siaya were also appropriate cases for a comparative study on poverty as they are 'middle tier' counties. This is in the sense that their poverty levels are neither too high nor low and approximates the national average of 46 per cent. Good study cases to understand poverty issues in Kenya are not necessarily the areas with low or very high poverty levels because the influence of contextual factors such as climate and soils may explain their conditions to a large extent; rather it is those areas with moderate to high rates of poverty. These areas are most likely to swing either way when local circumstances such as economic conditions or implementation of anti-poverty programmes fundamentally change. Government and other poverty reduction actors can manipulate these factors to post good poverty reduction outcomes through citizen-centred policy and planning practice. This thinking underpinned this study. This reasoning, also tend to have informed the government's selection of the two counties, among others, to pilot the MDGs programme[30] in 2005

patron-client capitalistic state marked by high inequalities while Tanzania chose socialism, which led to higher poverty but a more equal society.

[29] They are similar in terms of food deficiencies, presence of Millennium Development Goals and Poverty Eradication Commission projects, and widespread perception of state neglect and marginalization.

[30] The initial nine-millennium districts included three districts, which fall within the two study sites - Bondo (now split into Bondo and Rarieda districts), Siaya (now split into Siaya, Gem, Ugunja and Ugenya) and Meru South (split into the current Meru South and Maara districts). The rest of the millennium districts are Bungoma, Garrisa, Kilifi, Murang'a, Suba and Turkana.

and the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) promoted by the Poverty Eradication Commission since 2002.

Another consideration that informed the choice of the two areas was my knowledge and familiarity with the two counties, which was important for achieving efficiency and effectiveness in data collection and in arriving at informed interpretation of the research findings. Tharaka Nithi was a natural choice as I was born in the county and I have been intrigued for years by the poverty situation in the area. In the case of Siaya, I was particularly curious to find out how the county fared in terms of citizen participation in decision-making given it is the home to senior political leaders in post-colonial Kenya with proclaimed social-democratic ideals. For example, Jaramogo Oginga, Kenya's first Vice President and Raila Odinga, his son who became Kenya's second Prime Minister in 2008, come from Siaya.

The two counties were also attractive for study due to the relative availability of secondary data that informed this study. In particular, both counties were covered in the KIHBS of 2005/6, this being the latest official poverty data on Kenya. Both were also MDGs and PEC counties in the sense that the two institutions have run anti-poverty programmes in the two areas since 2005 and 2002 respectively. Tharaka District was one of the areas covered in PPA-IV of 2005/6, while Siaya County was involved in PPA-V conducted in 2013. This ensured the availability of recent poverty-related data, an important factor for the success of this study.

1.5.3 Types and Sources of Data

The study sought historical and current data from various sources. The historical data were particularly useful for Chapter 2 (Literature Review) and Chapter 3 of the thesis, which probes the character of Kenya's postcolonial development policy and planning practice. Current data consisted of primary information collected on the two study sites as well as on the national level particularly in relation to Kenya's development policy and planning practice.

The main sources of primary data were ordinary citizens and elites from the two study areas. It also consisted of key informants drawn from non-state actors (civil society

organizations, religious organizations and business sector organizations), scholars with expertise in poverty-participation issues, and government officials at national and county levels. National level government officials were mainly bureaucrats in national ministries and agencies that were principally involved in the coordination of poverty and development planning issues. These included the then Ministries of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030; Ministry of Finance; and Poverty Eradication Commission. Local level government officials included district development officers, district statistical officers, and staff of the Millennium Development Goals Unit.

The principal sources of secondary data were Government of Kenya documents[31], academic writings (theses and dissertations), journal articles, books, media reports, and publications by civil society organisations, donors, businesses and private sector organizations.

Through triangulation of data types and sources rich insights on the research questions was achieved. It also became possible to crosscheck the validity and reliability of findings emanating from different sources.

1.5.4 Data Collection Methods

The primary data was obtained largely through semi-structured interviews, key informant discussions, direct observations, and a mailed questionnaire. Actual fieldwork took place between July 2012 and April 2013 and involved at least eight fieldwork trips[32] to each of the study sites.

I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews among three categories of study participants: ordinary citizens, local elites and representatives of non-state actors (NSAs) operating in the study areas. The interview questions (see Appendix VI) were

[31] These include policy documents, plans, budgets, and reports including national and district level development plans and guidelines; Vision 2030; PRSPs; participatory poverty assessments; welfare monitoring survey reports; poverty maps; national population and housing census reports; National constitution, among others. The list of official documents consulted is provided in Appendix I.

[32] Each of the trips took about 2 weeks. Cumulatively, I spent about three months in each of the study sites conducting interviews and other data collection activities.

structured around well-defined study themes. I also administered an email-based questionnaire containing open-ended questions to local elites based outside the study sites who could not be reached through face-to-face interviews. Application of this tool yielded 18 returns out of a posting of 40 requests.

Key informant discussions were held with people in the study areas and at national level. The selected individuals were those considered knowledgeable on issues relevant to the key research questions. The aim was to use the key informant data to understand the study issues more fully while also helping to validate and clarify data from the other sources. I used a structured checklist (key informant guide) with questions directly linked to the study themes and probed around these issues with ancillary questions.

Direct non-participant observations were conducted, especially during field trips to the study sites. These observations focused on several issues: the nature of the public participation that was taking place in real life, the poverty reduction efforts underway in the study areas, and how leaders and institutions interacted with citizens on development policy issues both in the study areas and nationally. Through this method, it became possible to collect useful information, for example, on the main actors, agendas, negotiations, and exchanges taking place in the government-led decision-making spaces (for example, the DDC, LDC, and DPEC meetings) available in the study sites[33]. At national level, observations were made, for example, on the public debates and decisions made by Parliament, media, judiciary, and academia on the implementation of the new constitution, role of the public in policymaking and the question of devolution. The non-participant observation method yielded rich current data that have complemented other primary data sources.

Secondary data were obtained through extensive review of available documentary sources especially Government of Kenya documents, academic writings and media reports. Important among the documents were the national development plans and district development plans for the two study sites; national budgets since

[33] I also made relevant observations in other opportunities and avenues that came up during the course of fieldwork - political meetings, community meetings, local market centres (goods on sale, prices, negotiations/exchanges taking place), and projects implementation, among others.

independence; performance expenditure reviews up to the 2012/2013 financial year; sessional papers touching on poverty, participation, and rural development issues; relevant Acts of Parliament; and media reports. These secondary sources provided rich background information especially for Chapters One, Three and Six of the thesis. The list of major Government documents consulted is provided as Appendix I.

1.5.5 Selection and Distribution of Study Participants

The primary data for this study is largely based on 140 individual data collection encounters with ordinary citizens, local elites, representatives of non-state actors, government officials at national and local levels (study sites) and poverty-participation experts. These study participants were identified through a combination of purposive and snow balling sampling techniques.

The vast majority of the participants had recent participation experience in one or more of the four-development policy and planning processes examined closely in the study. As such, lists of participants[34] contained in various policy and planning documents provided by government officials at national and local level were used to identify most of the ordinary citizens and local elites involved in the study. I supplemented this selection method with the snow balling technique in which people I had interviewed helped to identify other participants useful to the study. In addition, I used key informant sessions to identify and engage ordinary citizens and local elites with little or no recent participation experience in local level policy-planning processes. This boosted my understanding of the dynamics of public participation in government-led development processes in the two study sites.

I identified key informants (local and national) using two main criteria: those listed as participants in the development policy and planning processes examined in the thesis and those that served in institutions that were central in undertaking or coordinating public participation and poverty reduction activities at local or national level. Using

[34] I obtained these lists from the local development and planning offices, local provincial administrators, and from published reports. Available lists of members or participants of key local level participation spaces such as the district poverty eradication committee, district and location development committees, district gender and social development committee, and the district peace committees were also utilized.

these criteria, I was able to engage the district development officers based in the study sites, some staff at the Poverty Eradication Commission and Ministry of Planning and national development, and members of the District poverty eradication committees. In identifying the poverty and participation experts (key informants), I started with those I knew based on their publications on the two issues. Those interviewed helped to identify other participants for this category.

Based on the assumption that the study areas were internally homogenous, it was unnecessary to cover all parts of the two counties in the same breadth. Informed by the poverty levels of specific districts and constituencies in each county, I concentrated the fieldwork in Alego-Usonga and Gem constituencies (Siaya and Gem districts respectively) in Siaya County and Tharaka Constituency (Tharaka North and Tharaka South districts) in Tharaka Nithi County[35]. The four districts had relatively higher incidence of poverty. The remaining parts of each county were studied through existing secondary data.

1.5.6 Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study was mainly qualitative in the form of text and verbal narratives capturing perspectives, ideas, and experiences of the research participants. As such, qualitative approach in data analysis and specifically the thematic content analysis technique was applied. The aim was to achieve greater depth of interaction with the data, interrogating it throughout the fieldwork phase and during actual analysis in order to identify patterns and draw meanings from people's explanations about behaviour concerning the issues under examination.

Guided by theory-driven themes and research questions, I used the thematic content analysis technique to understand what people said about poverty reduction and

[35] The Kenya Integrated Household and Budget Survey (2005/6) show the absolute poverty rates for Tharaka constituency as 48.7 per cent and for Nithi Constituency as 31.2 per cent. The two were split into two districts each – Tharaka North and Tharaka South in Tharaka Constituency and Mara and Chuka districts in the former Nithi Constituency. This constituency has been split further into Mara and Chuka-Igambang'ombe constituencies. Clearly, poverty rates were much higher in the Tharaka areas. In Siaya, poverty rates were highest in Alego-Usonga and Gem constituencies, which stood at 42 per cent in both areas. Ugenya (37%), Rarieda (26%), and Bondo (25%) had much lower incidences of poverty in the county. Thus, the two districts covered in Siaya and those in Tharaka Nithi had nearly similar levels of poverty: 42 per cent and 49 per cent respectively.

participation in decision-making: their experiences, aspirations and the questions they raised. The study instruments were prepared around the theory-driven themes, which made it possible to examine the data and see how well it fitted the predetermined themes. The study had five principal themes that I used to organize and guide data analysis and structuring of the thesis. These were aligned to the research objectives, key questions and central concepts in the research. Each theme had several sub-themes or issues for investigation, which corresponded, largely, to the key research questions.

First, the *poverty reduction theme* focused on several issues: poverty perceptions, actors in poverty reduction, roles in poverty reduction, fulfillment of roles, and constraints in poverty reduction. Second, the *development policy and planning theme* explored the links between development policy-planning practices (with special reference to citizen participation) and poverty reduction. The specific issues examined included: development paradigms, policies, anti-poverty programmes, citizen participation in key policy-planning processes, and the overall effects on poverty reduction.

The third theme, *citizen participation*, focused on the links between citizen participation (with specific reference to participation in key development policy and planning processes) and poverty reduction. The fourth theme, *state of leadership*, focused on the links between leadership and citizen participation in development policy and participation and at the second level, the links between leadership and poverty reduction. Lastly, the quality of *institutions theme* focused on links between institutions and citizen participation in development policy and participation, and the links between institutions and poverty reduction.

Given the comparative nature of the study, data from the two study sites were analysed separately, but using the same procedures and data analysis tools (themes, sub-themes, research questions and display tables). Having interacted with data for each of the study sites, and established findings for the different study variables, the next move was to undertake a comparative analysis of the two areas. I developed a comparative frame that captured findings on each variable for the two counties. This made it possible to observe the similarities or differences in the two areas on each

variable investigated. The similarities and differences were noted and have informed the findings presented in Chapter 6 of the thesis.

In summary, the data analysis was an iterative process that begun at fieldwork and ended after the final write-up of the chapters. The data analysis process involved classifying, summarizing, displaying, verifying, and drawing meanings from the data. The back-and-forth interaction with data from all sources, and the effort to approach preliminary findings from different angles in order to verify and make amends, helped in coming up with concrete findings on the variables investigated in the study. Relying on further insights from literature review, my own understanding of the study topics and knowledge of the study areas, and the theoretical frameworks guiding the study, I was able to interpret and draw meanings from the findings, reconcile data from different findings, and draw reliable conclusions presented in this thesis.

1.5.7 Limitations and Challenges Encountered in the Research

Poverty has many causes and dimensions, yet this study isolates four variables for analysis – citizen participation in decision-making, development planning, leadership and institutions. Perhaps the study would have yielded broader insights if it had examined more factors associated with poverty. However, it is necessary that every research project pick its specific focus for investigation, which often entails holding other factors constant, a common methodological procedure in the social sciences, which allows the researcher to gain deeper insights through selecting fewer cases or variables based on particular peculiarities or goals of the investigation.

Another challenge associated with poverty studies of this nature is the inherent sensitivity of the topic. The study noted that respondents from the various research participant categories were keen to be seen to be doing something positive in fighting poverty, and often came out strongly to defend their positions. The study found that social actors in each of the study sites had divergent perspectives on poverty reduction to a considerable extent. In addition, the different respondent categories tended to shift the responsibility when explaining their roles in poverty reduction. Reconciling these perspectives from various actors with diverse expectations and interests proved to be a challenging task. Thus, where appropriate, convergence or differences in

opinion between the different research participant categories have been highlighted. At the same time, insights from other empirical studies and available literature were considered in coming up with the findings presented on the various issues investigated in the study.

Development policy and planning is the focal point used in the thesis to probe public participation in decision-making at the grassroots. However, there is no single framework that can be defined as Kenya's post-independence development policy and planning mechanism. One can only infer the country's development policy by looking at specific sector policies such as health, education, agriculture, housing, and economic policy, among others, with the latter being widely equated with development policy. Moreover, Kenya has had a considerable amount of 'spoken' or 'unwritten' policy particularly during the Kenyatta and Moi regimes with the Office of the President being a common source of "roadside policies"[36] which are difficult to locate for analysis. There is also a multiplicity of planning and budgeting mechanisms in the country. Prior knowledge of such policy complexities and multiplicities influenced the choice of the poverty reduction strategy paper process, district development planning, constituency development planning and local authorities' development planning as focal points of analysis. We considered these representative of the country's development policy and planning framework applied at the local level. However, they are themselves huge dimensions of policy and hence in-depth coverage of each, while desirable, could not be achieved.

A large part of fieldwork for this study took place at a time when Kenya was getting ready for the first general elections under the new constitution. Within the context of increasing political activity, it was important to complete fieldwork as quickly as possible in order to avoid being caught up in insecure situations, informed by the experiences of past general elections. On the positive side, the political context of the fieldwork presented an important opportunity to observe public participation in elective politics, which I compared with experiences in the development policy and planning processes. This provided useful insights on questions such as the level of

[36] These refer to roadside presidential announcements, which, in most cases concerned rural development issues. They became "instant" official policy with the provincial administration playing a major implementation role.

citizen participation in different development processes and how (political) leaders engaged with citizens in real life situations.

Finally, this study is largely based on self-reporting of behavior rather than deep analysis of specific decisions and consequences of those decisions, which would have yielded results that are more specific. Inferring from people's responses has its own limitations and this study is no exception. Related to this, responses from the study participants involved recalling the experiences of the last decision-making process or participation in poverty-reducing intervention. It is unlikely that people can fully recall what happened a year back and hence had to make reasonable estimates. This is a common limitation in any research that is focused on tapping the experiences and perspectives of people. This study is no exception to such gaps.

1.6 Conclusion and Structure of the Thesis

This study focused on issues of political economy and in particular, how social actors in the development space and key variables interact in the poverty reduction enterprise in rural Kenya where poverty remains deep and widespread. This is despite numerous state-led efforts since independence to tackle the problem. This raises serious questions concerning the political agency[37] of citizens and structural issues of poverty reduction efforts at the grassroots.

This chapter has introduced and provided background information on the research culminating in this thesis, establishing it to be a public policy analysis that problematises the nature of citizen participation in decision-making, development policy and planning practice and the quality of local leadership and institutions in tackling poverty. The thesis holds these variables as important in understanding why Kenya has not been successful in reducing poverty significantly over the years.

[37] Two study variables, namely, citizen participation and leadership/governance, fall under the agency dimension while institutions and development planning practice fall under the structural dimension of poverty reduction discourse pursued in the study.

The chapter has similarly laid the case on the selection of Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties as appropriate cases for comparative analysis and similarly argued for the benefits of situating development policy and planning at the centre of the analysis. Being the principal state mechanism applied in Kenya since independence to determine and articulate the allocation of available resources for development, development policy and planning mechanism represent one of the most important spaces where ordinary citizens can engage with other development actors in making choices and influencing decisions that affect their lives. The chapter has pointed to the existence of a direct relationship between participation, policy and poverty, at the centre of which are the citizens, leaders and institutions whose actions or inactions have implications for the fight against poverty at the grassroots.

This thesis is presented in seven chapters. Following this chapter, *Chapter 2* provides a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the participation – poverty debate that is at the centre of the analysis pursued in the study. This is achieved through careful analysis of theoretical and empirical literature on Kenya and other countries that speaks directly to the concepts of citizen participation and poverty reduction. The chapter also provides the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study.

Chapter 3 probes Kenya's post-independence development policy and planning practice. In this discussion, development paradigms, policies and anti-poverty programmes implemented during the postcolonial period are interrogated. This chapter reveals the institutional context within which citizen participation and poverty reduction have taken place in Kenya over the last five decades of political independence. *Chapters 4 and 5* present empirical findings on Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties respectively. These two chapters form the central nerve of the thesis. The narrative from the two areas enables us to understand how macro level policy issues translate at local level and the lessons we can learn for poverty reduction in rural Kenya and similar contexts.

Chapter 6 summarizes, compares and discusses the empirical findings from the two case studies, and indicates the links that exist between citizen participation in public decision-making on one hand and the state of leadership and institutions on the other in influencing poverty reduction outcomes in rural Kenya. The chapter draws

meanings from the findings that speak to wider social contexts beyond the two study areas. *Chapter 7* presents the conclusions and policy implications that emerge from this study. The chapter also highlights the conceptual and empirical contribution of this study to knowledge and efforts to tackle rural poverty.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In approaching the issue of poverty reduction, Haralambos and Heald (1980:140), advise researchers and practitioners to proceed in a particular way:

> The first step in the solution of a problem is to identify it and this requires a definition. The second step is to assess the size of the problem, which involves the construction of ways to measure it. Once the problem has been indentified, defined and measured, the next step is to discover what causes it. Only after the answers have been obtained to the questions, "what is poverty"? "what is the extent of poverty?", and "what are the causes of poverty?" can the question "what are the solutions to poverty? be asked".

Arguing on the benefits of participation to citizens within a democratic setup, Mansbridge (1995:1) makes a similarly important observation that is worth noting:

> Participation does make better citizens. I believe it, but I cannot prove it. And neither can anyone else. The kinds of subtle changes in character that come about, slowly, from active, powerful participation in democratic decisions cannot easily be measured with the blunt instruments of social science. Those who have actively participated in democratic governance, however, often feel that the experience has changed them. And those who observe the active participation of others often believe that they see its long-run effects on the citizens' character.

These observations capture the primary pillars of this thesis and the gist of this chapter, namely, a focused review of general and Kenya specific literature on the concepts of poverty reduction and citizen participation. The chapter begins by locating poverty reduction within the larger development and poverty debate. This discussion examines the definitions, understanding and the politics surrounding the definitions of the two concepts. This lays the foundation for the examination of the different meanings, goals and specific approaches employed in poverty reduction in contemporary development discourse. A review of literature on citizen participation in decision-making then takes a broad scope within which the concepts of leadership, elite capture, and institutions are discussed.

Informed by the rich theoretical and conceptual debates and issues established in the poverty and participation literature, the chapter articulates three analytical frameworks

(political economy approach, capability approach, and the ladder of participation) that serve as the principal lens for understanding the research findings and conclusions presented in the thesis.

2.2 Situating Poverty Reduction within the Development and Poverty Debate

Poverty reduction is one of the goals of contemporary development and is concerned with finding solutions to the poverty problem, an elusive development challenge that confronts citizens, leaders, government administrations and institutions globally. Clearly, any discussion of this subject must begin with an understanding of the intrinsically connected concepts of development and poverty.

As a concept, development cuts across many levels and concerns innumerable and intertwined economic, social, political, gender, cultural, religious and environmental issues. It is a multi-dimensional concept that scholars and development practitioners define and analyze in a variety of ways. Development is often viewed in terms of industrialization, urbanization, and increased use of technology (modernity theory) or as an economic process (macro economic growth viewpoint). UNDP's Human Development Index perceives it in terms of human development choosing to focus on socio-economic and cultural indicators of health, education, and economic status (UNDP, 1997).

For many years, development has been understood and measured mainly through an economic prism that equates it with economic growth indicated by rising levels of gross national product (GNP) and incomes (Todaro & Smith, 2006). This classical economic approach for defining development is exclusionist and inadequate as it leaves out social, cultural and political dimensions of human development, which are equally important. It portrays economic growth as an adequate solution to the development puzzle, a view that contradicts empirical evidence[38].

[38] A case in point is the experience of many developing countries, which, despite having high economic growth during the 1950s, 1960s and part of 1970s, failed to achieve tangible improvement in the lives of the majority of their citizens. These experiences triggered a move in the 1970s to redefine development in terms of the elimination of poverty, inequality, and unemployment within the context of a growing economy. See Todaro and Smith (2006) for further elaboration.

An innovative perspective on development is offered by Sen (1999) who defines it in terms of freedoms and expansion of human capabilities. These freedoms and capabilities are, in Sen's view, influenced by several factors including economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, and the enabling conditions of good health and basic education[39]. This means that development interventions must attempt to address these factors. Sen's view of development tends to agree with the definition advocated by Bryant and White (1980:13) who point out that "development means an effort to increase the capacity of citizens to determine their futures hence it is essential to involve them in the planning process".

Todaro (1992) defines development as a multi-dimensional process that involves changes in (social) structures, (popular) attitudes and (national) institutions, acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality, and eradication of (absolute) poverty. The objectives of development, according to Todaro, are concerned with increasing the availability and widening the distribution of basic life sustaining goods (food, shelter, health and protection), raising levels of living, and expanding the range of economic and social choices. This, as also underlined by Whaites (2000), means that the principal goal of development is the pursuit of the betterment of the human condition.

Todaro's definition is comprehensive and inclusive of the various facets of human development. Similarly, Sen's notion of human capabilities speaks to both the citizen participation and poverty reduction themes that underpin this study. As such, this thesis adopts the views of both authors in the analysis of poverty reduction undertaken in the ensuing chapters.

The different ways in which development is defined is informed by an equally large body of theories that seek to explain ways of achieving human development or why some countries make progress in their development goals while others stagnate or decline. These include modernization theories in the 1950s and 1960s; dependency

[39] In his book, *In-equality Reexamined*, Sen (1992) introduces the concepts of human freedoms and capabilities in the definition of development. This came to be known as the 'capabilities' approach.

theories, world systems and the state theories in the 1970s[40]; and neo-liberalism of the 1980s and onwards. The divergent theoretical conceptions of development propounded by these theories are a source of unending debates. However, these theories have contributed immensely to knowledge and development practice by providing the intellectual anchor for development models pursued by societies around the world today.

Since the Second World War, many developing countries have adopted centralized planning as the main framework for achieving desired development goals (Booth 1995; Gready & Ensor 2005). They regard this model as offering them essential institutional and organisational mechanism for overcoming major obstacles to development and hence sustained high rate of economic growth. Indeed, many developing countries attained increased economic growth through the 1950s to the 1970s[41] (Todaro & Smith, 2006).

As noted by Engberg-Pedersen (2002: 259), the 1980s saw state-led development efforts repeatedly rubbished for the inability to foster economic growth in the countries of Africa, Latin America and South Asia, which led to a push for liberal, free-market oriented economic system that crystallized in the 1980s around the so-called "Washington Consensus"[42].

[40] Proponents of the Modernization Theory include Walt Rostow who argues that to achieve a developed status, a country must follow through the processes of development (stages) used by the currently developed countries. The dependency theory on the other hand argues that to "develop", the underdeveloped nations must break their ties with developed nations and pursue internal growth. The World Systems Theory of Immanuel Wallerstein perceives a world economy consisting of the core, semi-periphery and periphery, all marked by inequalities. The State Theory presents the view that the economy and politics are intertwined and hence a developmentalist state is required for development by taking control of the development process within a given state (See, Todaro and Smith, 2006).

[41] A decline in economic growth occurred in these countries from the mid-1970s onwards due to several reasons. Todaro & Smith (2006) enumerates these reasons to include deficiencies in plans and their implementation, insufficient and unreliable data for planning, unanticipated economic disturbances (both external and internal), institutional weaknesses of planning process, and lack of political will or commitment among the leaders and high level decision makers.

[42] Promoted chiefly by economists working within the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and with strong backing from the policies of right wing governments in Britain and the United States, the Washington Consensus revolves around ten points, which describe what economies needed to do in order to grow sustainably. These are fiscal discipline; redirection of public expenditure priorities towards health, education and infrastructure; tax reform including broadening of the tax base and cutting marginal tax rates; unified and competitive exchange rates; secure property rights; deregulation; trade liberalization; privatization; elimination of barriers to direct foreign investment; and financial liberalization. However, critics have pointed that it ignores important issues of development – shared growth, poverty elimination, and reducing inequality as central ends and instruments for economic growth. This led to the emergence of The New (Santiago) Consensus, which

This neo-liberal development paradigm advocated the withdrawal of the state from the economy. Instead, the price mechanism based on the economic laws of demand and supply was to decide resource allocation, production, distribution, and thus tackling of poverty (Todaro & Smith, 2006). Application of neo-liberal ideas of development in the developing world resulted in a variety of policies such as liberalization, privatization and structural adjustment programmes. The World Bank and IMF promoted these policies in the 1980s with vigor, channeling them through the donor conditionalities widely known as the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). The efficacy of these neo-liberal policies has been widely challenged, with the implementation of SAPs in Africa, for example, being seen as an outright failure[43].

Perhaps in an attempt to deflect growing criticism, and as a response to pressures mounted by global frameworks such as the MDGs and the human rights approach to development, this capitalistic development theory has added into its vocabulary "feel good" concepts such as pro-poor growth, growth with equity, and balanced development. However, these terms and the modifications they tend to portray are rhetorical considering the huge social and economic inequalities that exist around the world, between and within countries. For example, whilst Kenya registered substantial economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s, and more recently since the early 2000s, the country remains poor and is one of the most unequal societies in the world (KNBS & SID, 2013).

Contemporary development based on neo-liberal ideas is problematic. For example, Ake (1994) views development in Africa as a non-starter arguing that it never actually started given its politically embedded nature. He argued that the political conditions in Africa acted as the greatest impediment to development. The post-development theory, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in the works of Escobar (1989; 1995), Rahnema (1997), Ferguson (1994; 1997), Sachs (1992), among others viewed contemporary development as outmoded and bankrupt and as a reflection of prevailing power relations, in which the powerful economies and institutions present their ideas as the correct ones while dismissing others. In their view, development was

appeared to revive the role of state in the economy by recognizing that markets do fail and that such failures cannot be addressed without significant and ongoing role for government (See Todaro & Smith, 2006 for more details).

43 See, for example, Ake, 1994; Mills, 2002; Meilink, 2003; Mkandawire & Soludo, 2003.

a means of reproducing a political hegemony thus hardly serving as a truthful framework for economic transformation. These arguments find semblance in Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony in which certain groups in society control or dominate others, often passing their definition of phenomenon, based on their worldviews, as the more acceptable one.

Therefore, development both as a concept and as practice is a contested issue. While conventional agents of development, notably the state governments, aspire to attain "development" and perceive development efforts as capable of improving the lives of citizens, others such as the post-development theorists contest the idea of development itself and root for "alternatives to development".

On balance, development endavours undertaken in the past few decades tend to have achieved little in tackling global problems such as poverty and inequality and achieving global "goods" such as peace and justice. Korten (1990: ix) underscores this viewpoint by demonstrating what appears to be serious deficits of the contemporary development practice:

> The development industry, created during the past four decades to respond to a global commitment to alleviating poverty, is in a state of disarray. The landscape is littered with evidence of the failures of official development efforts to reach the poor. The largest of the multi lateral and bilateral assistance agencies have responded to the failure by focusing once again on accelerating economic growth. They argue that if adequate rates can be sustained, the poor will be swept along with the tide of rising incomes. The argument is reassuring, but reflects more a hopeful myth than a pragmatic reality. While the poor are being carried along as on a tide, it is not that of rising of buoyant economies. Rather they are caught in the tides of flood and drought, desertification, communal violence, unrestrained population growth, and the ebbing of employment and income generating opportunities.

Like the concept of development, poverty is a broad, multi-dimensional and problematic concept to analyse adequately through a singular prism. Many perceive poverty as pronounced deprivation in wellbeing in which the "poor" lack access to basic needs such as food, water, shelter and health care and experiences of powerlessness and low self-esteem in their lives (Chambers, 1997). As already indicated in Chapter one, most of the world's poor live in rural areas and most of them are subsistence farmers. This largely explains why developing countries such as

Kenya have tended to give special attention to rural development in their development planning.

Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002:2) views poverty in terms of vulnerability, isolation and humiliation, explaining that "what may be labeled poverty covers a very wide and diverse range of experiences and processes of marginalization, which are excluded if one only considers economic issues such as income and consumption". Thus, poverty is less amenable to simple economic solutions as it encompasses economic, socio-political, psychological and environmental dimensions (World Bank, 2004; Sachs, 2005).

Poverty is disaggregated in numerous ways such as the age of those affected (for example, youth and child), length or periodicity of occurrence (new, temporary/transitory, and chronic), and the depth of poverty conditions (extreme poverty). Poverty is also categorized in terms of measurement levels (absolute, relative and subjective[44]), and nature of deprivation (monetary/income and non-monetary deprivations). Similarly, poverty is understood in terms of type (transitional, chronic, and intergeneration poverty) and in terms of condition (absolute and relative poverty and poverty as dependence, as exclusion, and as capabilities deprivation)[45].

These categorizations point to four main angles for describing the concept of poverty. The first is "income poverty" or 'economic poverty'. This view conceives poverty principally as an economic problem, which can be solved by improving individual and household incomes. This view is linked to the idea of measuring poverty through a nutrition-based poverty line such as the widely used $1 a day yardstick[46] (Martin,

[44] Haralambos and Heald (1980:142-3) explain these measures of poverty, thus: "…Absolute poverty usually involves a judgment of basic human needs and is measured in terms of the resources required to maintain health and physical efficiency…that is…the quality and amount of food, clothing, and shelter.... Relative poverty is measured in terms of judgments by members of a particular society of what is considered a reasonable and acceptable standard of living and style of life according to the conventions of the day. Just as conventions of the day change from time to time and place, so will definitions of poverty. Subjective poverty refers to whether or not individuals or groups feel they are poor and is closely related to relative poverty since those who are defined poor in terms of the standards of the day will probably see and feel themselves to be poor".

[45] See Loewen, (2009), A Compendium of Poverty Reduction Strategies and Frameworks for more details.

[46] Other measures and thresholds for poverty also used include $1.25 per day, $2.15 per day income/consumption, as well as the recent Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). See Greely Martin

1994). The second view of "human poverty" has gained prominence through the Annual Human Development Reports produced by UNDP. This view of poverty encompasses other fundamental dimensions of human life and development beyond income and consumption, for example, deprivation of education, health, and shelter. Third, there is "capability poverty" which is based on the concept of freedoms found in the work of Amartya Sen (1992, 1999, and 2002). Fourth, there are those who describe poverty from a human rights perspective as a state of powerlessness and voicelessness in which people are unable to exercise their human rights and to take control of their lives (Chambers, 1997). Under this view, poverty becomes a symptom of the deeply rooted inequalities and unequal relations in society.

In addition, poverty is viewed in terms of the absence of opportunities, alternatives and resources (Emiliani, 2003). For instance, Kurien (1978) defines poverty as a socio-economic phenomenon (deprivation) in which a society's available resources are used to satisfy the wants of a few while the basic needs of the many go unmet. Other analysts define poverty through a sustainable livelihood or vulnerability lens, which views the poor as powerless and voiceless people who lack sustainable livelihoods (Narayan, 1999). Another set of literature defines poverty through the dimensions of income, hunger, disease, lack of shelter, exclusion or what can be described as "the basic needs approach to defining poverty" (Chambers, 1983)[47].

The persistence of poverty in society has many explanations. Chambers (1983: 35 - 40) suggests that social scientists tend to explain rural poverty in social, economic, and political terms, while development practitioners explain the causes of poverty in physical and ecological terms. However, both views tend to cluster around what he calls the "political economy cluster of views" which perceives poverty primarily as a social problem and rural poverty "as a consequence of processes which concentrate wealth and power" on some people or groups in society. The physical ecological cluster on the other hand, views poverty primarily as a physical phenomenon, which can be explained by factors such as unfavourable climate or poor soils for crop production (Ibid).

(1994): "Measurement of Poverty and Poverty of Measurement", IDS Bulletin 25.2, 1994 for more discussion on poverty measurements.

[47] See Robert Chambers (1983), *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*, which discusses these issues in depth.

Haralambos and Heald (1980: 152 - 171) provide an insightful elaboration on various theories on the causes and persistence of poverty in society. Poverty is perceived as a positive feedback system (the "cycle of poverty theory"), the thrust of the argument being that "poverty breeds poverty, occurs through time, and transmits its effects from one generation to another, with no beginning or end to the cycle"[48]. Theorists such as Lewis (1959), Harrington (1963), Little (1965) and Mangin (1968) viewed poverty as a design or way for living (culture of poverty theory), in which poverty is a "response or reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class stratified and highly individualistic society"[49]. A third group of poverty theories[50] conceived poverty to be "a result of situational constraints of the poor which keep them in perpetual state of poverty". Other theorists, including Wedderburn (1974) and Townsend (1974) explained poverty as "a product of the social stratification in society where some people occupy lower strata than others hence lacking access to privileges, benefits and resources enjoyed by others higher up". Similarly, poverty was viewed as the result of inequalities in society (Marxian perspective), as being caused by unfavorable or restrictive individual market situations (Weberian perspective), and "as being maintained in society because it plays certain functions that serves the "non-poor" (Functional theory of poverty)[51].

Most development literature and studies on poverty[52] tend to focus their analyses on the effects of policy on a typically monolith group they call the poor. This tends to leave out the non-poor yet vulnerable category of people from the focus of policy and anti-poverty programmes. For example, a recent research on poverty dynamics in Kenya found that among the households studied, 20 percent had fallen into poverty yet they were non-poor only 15 years back (Kristjanson et al., 2005). This underscores the need, as this study does, to broaden the scope of policy focus to include all vulnerable groups (ordinary citizens), which are at great risk of slipping into poverty when their circumstances change.

[48] See, for example, Coates and Silburn (1970).
[49] See Haralambos and Heald (1980: 154) for an elaboration of this theory.
[50] See, for example, Liebow (1967) and Hannerz (1969).
[51] See Gan (1968; 1970; 1971) for more details on this theory.
[52] See, for example, Narayan and Nyamweya, 1996; Narayan, 1999; and numerous research studies and publications by the World Bank.

2.3 Goals and Approaches to Poverty Reduction

Increased interest in poverty reduction picked up in the 1990s and consolidated in the 2000s, propelled largely by the need for alternative ways to deal with poverty following frustrations with the economic reforms spearheaded by the Washington Consensus development orthodoxy. The search for alternatives led to the design of global anti-poverty frameworks such as the MDGs and PRSPs and other anti-poverty programmes funded or implemented by governments, donors and other non-state actors. These programmes were premised on the view that poverty had become a general problem of development, and action that went beyond the purview of the actions and behaviours of the poor people was required (Webster & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002:9).

In the last three decades, poverty reduction has been marketed on an unprecedented scale as the single most important business for the world. A wide range of commitments, policies, programmes, and poverty studies, with global and national scope, have since been developed, conducted or implemented. These include the UN-based Millennium Development Goals framework adopted in 2001, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) aid mechanism rolled out by the World Bank and IMF in 2000, Debt Relief Campaigns of the 2000s, and preparation of national poverty eradication action plans such as Kenya's 15-year (1999 – 2015) Poverty Eradication Plan. Within countries, governments and a number of institutions and scholars have also conducted poverty research and policy initiatives such as the Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) and welfare monitoring surveys.

Arguably, the adoption of the MDGs framework transformed the fight against poverty into a collective global endeavor anchored on a new "social norm" that treated poverty as morally unacceptable (Hulme, 2010). The first MDG is dedicated to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger while the first MDG target aims at halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who are poor. Like the MDGs framework, the post-MDG agenda, also built on a 15-year implementation time span,

seeks to eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development by the year 2030[53].

In Kenya, the goal to fight poverty has been on the country's development radar since independence. This followed the Government's commitment in 1963 to devote its efforts in tackling poverty, disease, and ignorance (GoK, 1965).Since then, tackling poverty has been a policy objective in virtually all post-colonial development plans, sessional papers, presidential commissions, task forces, and economic policy documents (Nafula et al., 2005; Mutua & Oyugi, 2007; Bett & Kimuyu, 2008).

The first three post-independence decades realized some improvement in social and economic indicators such as health status and educational attainment (Kirangai & Manda, 2002). However, educational attainment, health and poverty status of Kenyans revealed a declining trend in the 1990s, necessitating the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and a 15-year National Poverty Eradication Plan (1999 to 2015) in 1999. Later on, poverty became one of eight key priorities that the international community-led mediation process identified for action by the Grand Coalition Government following Kenya's 2007 disputed presidential elections.

Contemporary development literature points to poverty eradication, poverty reduction, and poverty alleviation as the principal terms widely used to describe the war against poverty. For a long time, the term poverty eradication, whose Kiswahili equivalent translates to "kuangamiza umaskini" has been in use in Kenya until the IMF/WB terminologies took over from late 1990s, not least through the entry of the PRSP approach that easily became the new theory for doing development. Although the three terms have a specific meaning, they tend to be used interchangeably and without distinction in daily discourse and in publications. This suggests either that the poverty agenda is not well-understood or that people do not place a lot of weight to the meanings behind terminologies promoted by key global institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and the UN.

[53] See the UN report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, released in May 2013 and prepared by the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel leading the process for developing the post-MDGs development agenda.

Hulme and Fukudu-Par (2011) conceives poverty eradication as the ultimate goal against poverty and poverty reduction as a halfway point on the way to attaining global poverty elimination whose inspirational deadline is the year 2025. Oyen (1999) views poverty reduction as a decline in poverty rates over time, poverty alleviation as the act of making human conditions better, and poverty eradication as connoting a world that is free of poverty. Rajasekhar (2002:183) lumps poverty reduction with poverty eradication, viewing them as "the long-term elimination of poor people's dependence on social relations and of vulnerability with respect to changes in their environment". He perceives poverty alleviation as "the short-term improvement of the capital endowment of the poor". Although poverty eradication tends to be the most comprehensive of the three terms "poverty reduction" is more widely used perhaps due to its prominence in the PRSP terminology and considering that this approach has become one of the main vehicles for contemporary development planning in the developing world since 2000.

The principal goals of poverty reduction are to alleviate the conditions of the poor people, to enable them to escape from the poverty trap and to build institutions and societies that prevent people from becoming poor or slipping further into poverty (Luyt, 2008). These goals are less ambitious than of poverty eradication, which seek to eliminate the existence of poverty conditions within a given population. However, the principle of poverty reduction tends to include the goals of poverty alleviation whose focus is to improve the living conditions of a given population without necessarily eliminating poverty (Ibid).

The poverty reduction goals also underscore that people may be trapped in a cycle of poverty for many years (chronic and inter generational poverty) while others can slip into poverty when their personal and household circumstances change radically. This has been noted by Krishna (2003) who in a survey covering 12 villages in Rajasthan, India, found that whilst a number of households had escaped the poverty trap, an even larger number of previously non-poor households had slipped into poverty. This implied minimal net gain in the poverty situation in the study area[54].

[54] Krishna (2003: 533) suggests, "reasons for people overcoming poverty are quite distinct from the reasons why they succumb to it". As such, different policy instruments are required to address these two poverty scenarios.

Approaches to poverty reduction come in many forms, even though three perspectives - *productionist* approach, international anti-poverty frameworks approach, and the human rights approach – stand out (Fortman, 2003)[55]. There is also what can be described as the *services provisioning*, *democratisation-governance* and the *urbanization* approaches to poverty reduction. These approaches correspond to various development approaches applied by governments and other development actors over the years. They are informed largely by the dominant theories on development and poverty and by the ideological positions and preferences of key global institutions and donors whose influence in the development sphere has become significant in recent decades.

The productionist or economic growth approach is the most widespread and enduring approaches to reducing poverty. It is premised on the notion that economic growth reduces poverty, a view that most mainstream economists and certain international development organizations tend to support. For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee guidelines on poverty reduction emphasise that economic growth is an absolute necessity for poverty reduction (OECD, 2001). This approach tends to view poverty as an "acquirement failure" (Fortman, 2003) and pursues neo-liberal, market friendly policies as a means to reducing poverty. It embraces private sector development, based on market operations, as a key poverty reduction strategy (Fox & Liebenthal, 2006). The approach assumes that the benefits from increased economic growth will trickle down to ordinary citizens and poor people and help in improving their conditions and removing them from the poverty trap. However, the experiences of the 1950s, 1960s and part of 1970s, when many developing countries registered high economic growth, yet failed to foster tangible improvement in the lives of their citizenry, tend to disapprove this assumption.

[55] See Bas De Gaay Fortman (2003), *Persistent Poverty and Inequality in an Era of Globalisation: Opportunities and Limitations of a Rights Approach*. Fortman views the productionist approach to include concepts and mechanisms such as the 'pro-poor growth and the PRSPs. The premise of this approach is that growth reduces poverty. He notes that the International development targets approach includes the MDGs and the IDGs frameworks promoted by supra national bodies notably the OECD/DAC and the UN. The Human rights approach comprises the human development, human security, and human dignity concepts promoted by CSOs and individuals such as Amartya Sen.

Increased economic growth is important, but not a sufficient condition for eliminating poverty. Beyond increased incomes or achieving a balance on macro-economic variables, it is critical to address the question about how the proceeds from growth are shared amongst the citizens. The productionist approach tends to be less concerned with this distributive-equity issue. Webster and Engberg-Perdesen (2002:2) makes a persuasive argument concerning the inadequacies of the economic growth theory of poverty reduction and state-led interventions:

> While economic growth and better access to markets are crucial requirements in reducing the number of people in economic poverty, they are not sufficient. Nor, as attempts at state-led development have revealed, is it sufficient to leave poverty reduction to the state…today, poverty reduction requires the generation and facilitation of opportunities for the poor and organizations working on their behalf to exert an influence on political and economic processes....the reduction of poverty therefore requires we begin by understanding processes of impoverishment. Here, we should take as our departure the actions and strategies of poor people themselves.

At the centre of the international development targets approach to poverty reduction are a set of internationally agreed and time-bound goals and targets, which countries pursue and provide periodic progress reports. This approach involves the PRSPs (introduced by the World Bank and IMF in the year 2000 based on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative) and the international development targets, the most notable of these being the MDGs and the International Development Goals (IDGs)[56].

This approach tends to be a 'gap filling' mission that is based on the economic growth theories of development-propounded by theorists such as Rodenstein-Rodan, Harrod-Domar and Rostow (Lopes, 2003). The idea is that developing countries such as Kenya can quickly improve their situations if they effectively utilize temporary support offered by donors, mostly in form of capital, skills and structures. The foundational thinking of this approach is, therefore, not radically different from the economic growth approach. Indeed, in both approaches, economic growth as the determinant of reducing poverty is the principal belief.

[56] The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) launched the IDGs in 1996 and subsequently harmonized them with the MDGs in 2000. The MDGs were adopted by the UN in 2001 and consist of eight goals: (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (40 reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) develop a global partnership for development.

The human rights[57] to development (rights-based) framework is anchored on the concept of rights which emphasizes that every human being has undeniable rights to participate in all matters affecting their lives, including the right to meaningful involvement in development processes. The approach sets the achievement of human rights as an objective of development and views poverty eradication as a rights issue (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). The first MDG (Eradicating poverty) is linked to the human rights standards provided in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 25 (i) and ICESCR article ii[58]. This approach tend to have gained momentum in the 1990s onwards due to the clear strong correlation between poverty and human rights' frustrations with the failures of the neo-liberal development theory, strong advocacy work of major NGOs and donors in the 1990s and the work of the UN agencies[59.]

The human rights perspective to development and poverty eradication has brought in useful concepts such as empowerment, justice, accountability and governance into the general development discourse (Patel, 2001)[60]. Terminologies such as 'participatory approach to development', 'bottom-up approach to development', 'people centred development', 'citizen-centred', 'community-based', 'growth with equity', 'pro-poor development' among others have become common parlance for describing the rights-based development approach.

[57] These are internationally agreed legal and moral standards that represent civil, cultural, economic, political and social entitlements of individuals in any part of the world.

[58] These articles provide for a variety of rights to individuals notably, "the right to an adequate standard of living (food, clothing, housing and medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

[59] For example, besides the adoption of the MDGs framework, which has a strong rights orientation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published "A Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies" document in 2002. This document established an 'international human rights normative framework' emphasizing the right of citizens to take part in the conduct of public affairs. See Fortman, 2003, for more discussion. For more discussion on conceptual and practical challenges in the implementation of human rights approach, see Darrow, M & Tomas, A (2005): Power, Capture, and Conflict: A Call for Human Rights Accountability in Development Cooperation, In Human Rights Quarterly, 27 (2): 471-538, The Johns Hopkins University Press.

[60] See Human Rights as an Emerging Development Paradigm and Some Implications for Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation by Mahesh Patel, Nairobi, May 2001 – Draft 2.0 (With Urban Jonsson, Rd Up To Version 1.6) Hrap M&E Workshop Update.

Redefining the objectives of development and poverty eradication efforts in broader human rights paradigm[61] not only provides a new method to confront poverty directly but also helps to put the concerns of poor people and the marginalised at the forefront of the national agenda (Mboya, 2001). Despite its great benefits, the rights based approach to development faces both conceptual and practical challenges in its implementation (Darrow & Tomas, 2005; Hulme and Scott, 2010). For instance, in discussing the political economy of the MDGs, Hulme and Scott (2010: 11) note the following in relation to the implementation of rights based approach to development:

> Rights-based approaches to development have met with technical resistance, particularly from neo-classical economists, who believe that the indivisibility of rights makes them ineffective for allocating the limited resources; they question, how spending priorities can be determined when human rights gives all goals the same status?

Participatory development centred on the principle of "participation" appears to be a cross cutting approach to achieving (inclusive) development and fighting poverty. The principal argument in favour of citizen participation in development processes is framed around the perceived benefits of participation: better articulation of citizen needs, quality of policies and their implementation, good governance, empowerment of citizens, legitimacy and sustainability of development programmes, and the right to inclusion of all actors in development processes[62]. The rise of NGOs in development work and humanitarian intervention in the late 1980s and 1990s, and their increasing visibility in supporting development programmes particularly in developing countries, has added to the internationalization of the poverty debate and serves to underscore the need for governments to work closely with all development actors in addressing the problem (Smillie, 2000).

Poverty reduction also tends to be approached in terms of service provisioning by the state and other development actors (World Bank, 2004). Here, poverty is tackled mostly through provisioning and increasing access and consumption of goods and services for citizens. Bauch (1996) notes that the prevalent strategy in the late 1990s

61 A rights-based approach to development and poverty eradication efforts sets the achievement of human rights as an objective of development and poverty eradication as a rights issue. It uses thinking about human rights as the scaffolding of development policy. It invokes the international apparatus of human rights accountability in support of development action.

62 See, for example, Sandercock, 1998; Mansbridge, 1995; McCracken, 2010 for the various benefits of participatory development to individuals and society in general.

was to reduce poverty by targeting basic social services and this called for careful scrutiny of the impact that development projects brought on the poor people they targeted. Moore and Putzel (1999) concurs with this view, noting that poverty is about access and consumption of state provided commodities. Thus, lack or inadequate access to essential services such as health becomes was key target for poverty reduction interventions. Narayan (1999) notes that the participatory poverty assessments (PPAs) conducted with the World Bank's input reveal that the poor view key social services such as roads, transportation, water, electricity, health care, and market place as important in their lives and rarely perceived poverty in terms of incomes.

There has been a clamor and efforts of improving public services in Kenya since the 1980s onwards through the public sector reforms among other interventions. This underscores the importance of services provisioning as a poverty reduction measure. A classic example is the Local Authority's Service Delivery Action Planning (LASDAP) process introduced in Kenya's 175 local authorities in 1999 (GoK, 2009). The emphasis was to ensure the local authorities utilized the local authorities transfer fund (LATF) effectively to meet the service needs of the citizens at local level. Recognition of service provisioning as an important poverty reducing approach in Kenya is also evident in the foreword to the PPA-IV report of 2007, where the Ministry for Planning and National Development restates "the enhancement of service provisions to effectively reduce poverty and improve the lives of citizens" (GoK, 2007:5).

Poverty reduction has been approached in terms of good governance particularly within the public sphere. Commonly assessed against four dimensions (accountability, transparency, rule of law and democracy), good governance is widely recognized as important for development (Sachs, 2005; Driscoll & Evans, 2005; Grindle, 2007). Specific components of good governance include the concepts of public participation, responsiveness of institutions to citizens' needs, equity and inclusiveness, and the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions and processes (Uraia and International Republican Institute, 2012). Over the years, "good governance" has become the focus for aid agencies globally, promoting its various components through their funding and linked accountability mechanisms. Freeman, Ellis and Allison (2003) underscore the

links between good governance and poverty by noting that poor governance tends to favour the better off members of society over the poor since the former can better deal with barriers and disabling contexts that others, notably the poor, struggle with in daily life.

Kenya's Interim PRSP of 2001, recognized poor governance as one of the key factors that contributed to the increase of poverty in the country (GoK, 2001). Likewise, the Kibaki administration recognized poor governance as a key element that affected development and poverty reduction and thus made commitments to tackle corruption, restore the rule of law and bring about equitable development in the country (GoK, 2004). Corruption was a significant hindrance to development and poverty reduction efforts as it distorted the rule of law and weakened the institutional foundation upon which economic growth depended (Ongaro & Abuom, 2006: 2).

Poverty reduction is linked to institutional reforms, especially in the public sector targeting political, judicial, economic, and governance systems and structures. The aim of these reforms is to tackle issues such as corruption, impunity, and inefficiencies in service delivery, which affect development and poverty reduction efforts.

There have been specific efforts to promote development and tackle poverty through the decentralization of governance structures and resources, and democratization by providing a wide range of rights, promotion of transparency and accountability, strengthening governance institutions as well as enhancing citizen participation in development processes. The decentralisation approach to poverty reduction picked up in Kenya in the 1980s onwards through democratization and decentralization reforms initiated during that period. These reforms led, for example, to the decentralization of development planning to district level and the channeling of devolved funds to districts to help meet local development needs. Such funds include the constituency development fund, local authorities transfer fund, women and youth enterprise funds, and various bursaries. Local institutions with a focus on poverty reduction and local development came up, including the district poverty eradication committees (DPEC) and the location development committees (LDC). In terms of development planning, decentralised forms of planning were introduced including the local authorities

service delivery action planning, constituency strategic planning, and district development planning.

Urbanisation appears to be a recent addition to approaches suggested to reduce global poverty. For example, a 2013 Global Monitoring Report by the World and IMF (World Bank & IMF, 2013)[63] suggests that an increase in the number of people living in towns helps to reduce poverty. This is because towns and cities have a higher chance of creating well-paying jobs compared to rural areas and that cities make public services more accessible at a cheaper cost.

On the other hand, DAC (2001: 101) notes that poverty reduction is closely associated with conflict prevention and resolution. The argument is that poverty drives people into conflict, which further worsens their socio-economic conditions. Preventing conflict and finding solutions to conflict therefore becomes an important poverty reduction effort.

In its World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty, the World Bank (2001) highlights the role of markets, participation, investment climate and social inclusion as important elements in poverty reduction[64]. The concept of the 'political space' has also been introduced to explain poverty reduction actions from the perspective of the poor and in particular assessing the role of grassroots people in tackling poverty (Webster & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002). Defined as "the types and range of possibilities present for pursuing poverty reduction by the poor or on behalf of the poor by local organizations", "political space" is a necessary ingredient for sustainable poverty reduction (Ibid, p.7).

Clearly, there is a wide diversity of approaches to tackling poverty, some direct and others in-direct. These approaches are accompanied by a wide range of strategies and specific anti-poverty programmes and activities. It is evidently a crowded field in which poverty reduction work is a heavily institutional setup or enterprise featuring supranationals like the UN agencies, international financial institutions (WB and

[63] See the report, *Global Monitoring Report 2013. Rural-Urban Dynamics and the Millennium Development Goals*, Washington D.C.: IMF/World Bank, for more details.
[64] See Fox & Liebenthal (2006: xvi): Fox, L & Liebenthal, R, eds), 2006, *Attacking Africa's Poverty: Experience from the Ground,* Washington: The World Bank.

IMF), governments, donors and a diverse range of non-state actors. Muyanga, et al. (2008:1) underline this multiplicity of poverty reduction approaches, especially in Africa by noting, thus:

> For the past half-century, African governments and development agencies have experimented with a series of alternative approaches for addressing rural poverty, each giving way to a new paradigm as the persistence of poverty created disillusionment with prevailing approaches. These broad strategies included, growth and trickle down in the 1960s; basic human needs and state-led integrated rural development in the 1970s; structural adjustment and economic liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s; and, since 2000, a heterodox mix of donor budget support to empower government ownership in the design of participatory poverty reduction strategies, and resurgent interest in agricultural development. However, rural poverty in most of Sub-Saharan Africa appears to be declining only marginally.

The wide array of policy positions, strategies, and interests propelled by an equally diverse range of actors appear to undermine coherence and effectiveness in dealing with poverty. In most instances, emphasis on the appropriateness of the different approaches varies and depends on the users. For example, while civil society organisations involved in advocacy work are generally inclined towards promoting the rights-based approach and linking it to MDGs, the PRSPs and national development-planning framework, and international financial institutions (IMF & WB) are more inclined towards promoting the productionist approach, which they link to PRSP and the MDGs and the national development-planning framework. Therefore, developing countries such as Kenya have to contend with several anti-poverty approaches in their development policy and planning framework.

The above discourse on poverty reduction also underscores the role of institutions in poverty reduction efforts around the globe. Indeed, many of the frameworks, programmes and policies for fighting poverty at global, national and local levels are organised around the institutional setup. The role of institutions is, therefore, at the core of analysing poverty reduction. Engberg-Pedersen and Webster (2002:4 & 18) demonstrates the importance of local institutions in poverty reduction noting:

> In connection with poverty reduction, local organizations and institutions have emerged in recent years as an important focus for development studies. People's associations, decentralized governments, the local offices of ministries and NGOs are the sorts of organizations that policy makers and aid practitioners have increasingly come to involve when seeking to address conditions of poverty..Institutions need to be examined in terms not merely of

> their institutional capacity, but also of the political and socio-economic interests they represent. We need to ask who sits in the office, what discourse and system of categories they use to carry out designated duties, what are the powers of inclusion and exclusion asserted by individuals and the socio-cultural practices they carry, and similar questions.

Evidently, many factors influence poverty reduction outcomes including governance, economic growth, peace, socio-economic inequalities, participation, policy reforms, and decentralization, among others. Of particular importance is the role that power and interests of development actors play in the poverty reduction practice. This has led to the perception that poverty is generally rooted in the politics of power and interests (Chambers 1997; Webster, 2002; Mills, 2002). Taking this viewpoint, it is arguable that within the development policy and planning space, ongoing conflicts occur among actors for control of available resources thus affecting policy choices and actions and eventually poverty reduction outcomes in a given country.

Existing literature generally treats poverty as an undesirable condition, loathed by both the poor and the rich, and portrays poverty reduction as an urgent and widely accepted goal, globally and within individual countries. Thus, Hulme (2010) talks of a new "social norm" that treats poverty as morally unacceptable. However, it is not enough to assume there is a genuinely shared goal on poverty reduction by the various development actors simply because of expressed intentions captured in policy and development plans. The poverty statistics, globally and for individual countries, suggest that this norm is barely respected. For example, the developed countries seem to have failed to honour their financing obligations of the MDG framework, thus compromising the achievement of the MDGs.

2.4 Citizen Participation in Decision-making

Participation is a common theme in contemporary development literature covering specific spheres such as policy-making, development planning and implementation, and donor policies. Two forms of participation emerge from contemporary development theory: participation of citizens in the utilization of benefits (for example, services), and participation of citizens in decision-making which is the principal focus of this thesis. As explained by Bryant and White (1980), the former

type of participation concerns the question of 'who gets what', while the latter is about 'who decides what'.

Public participation in decision-making processes has been the subject of much study and commentary leading to huge participation literature covering different dimensions, spheres and types of participation. These include participation in elective politics, in community development projects, and in public policy-making processes as citizens with rights to self-determination. However, studies indicate that public participation that goes beyond tokenism is often bound up with issues around power, privilege, self-interest, and resources and there are instances where influential groups, institutions or individuals initiate, support or block policies based on vested interests (Grindle, 2002).

The literature demonstrates that the participation discourse is associated with many "feel-good" buzzwords that have littered the development vocabulary in recent years. Included in this list are terms such as transparency, accountability, ownership, equality, empowerment, democracy, governance, 'growth with equity', human rights, decentralization, sustainability, and partnership. These concepts tend to be heavily rhetorical in as far as their application is concerned. Scholars have sought to demonstrate the links between participation and citizen rights, and have argued that citizen rights become real when citizens are engaged in decisions and processes, which affect their lives (Cornwall, 2000). The perspective that citizen participation in development and in matters that affect one's life is an undeniable human right is affirmed by the 'Declaration on the Right to Development'[65] adopted by General Assembly Resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986 (UN, 1986). National constitutions such as Kenya Constitution 2010 also affirm participation in public affairs as a citizen right that state and non-state institutions must strive to fulfill.

The emphasis on citizen participation in development brings out a number of issues concerning the attitudes and agency of ordinary people to engage meaningfully in

[65] The UN Declaration on the Right to Development defined the "right to development", as a "comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the wellbeing of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from" (See, UN, 1986)

decision-making, ensuring that their interests and desired outcomes are reflected in the final decisions (policies). First, the literature assumes that participation is a 'public good' that is valued and accepted by citizens. Second, it assumes that the goals and benefits of participation in a given situation are clear to the participants. Third, the participation perspective assumes that because participation is a right, people are available and willing to participate in order to improve their lives.

These assumptions may not always hold, which renders participation amenable to close scrutiny. In this regard, Irvin & Stansbury (2004) have raised questions concerning the clarity of objectives and the value and effectiveness of citizen participation in public policy and decision-making. Rosener (1978) challenges the often held assumption that greater citizen participation produces "better' public policy and underscores the need for concrete evidence to back up such widely held assumptions.

In a study on the Theory and Practice of Participation in Rural Bangladesh, Wietske van Betuv (2004) poses questions about the desirability of participation, including how and when participation should occur. The true necessity of direct participation of the masses in decision-making, especially in political spaces has also been questioned. As pointed out by Haralambos and Head (1980), there are arguments to the extent that a relatively small number of leaders can represent the interests of most members of society effectively. From a practical point of view, Chambers (1997) notes that given the diverse nature of poverty and lack of skills among the poor, it is often a complex and expensive affair to try to make the poor to participate in development processes particularly within bureaucratic settings. However, Bryant and White (1980:11) appear to have a contrasting view about the effectiveness of participation by faulting the 'assumption that participation would slow down a project and inject needless complications'.

A strong body of literature exists in support of participation in development. This literature views citizen participation as important for good governance and a democratic practice that benefits the participants and society. For instance, Shively (1997:114 -118) identifies 'active participation' as one of the common characteristics one should look for in a 'democratic citizen", in which citizens strive to do more than

just obey the laws the government lays down. Instead, "citizens must take concrete political actions to exercise their authority over the government". Stiglitz (2002: 168) makes a strong case why participation is a critical element for development:

> Development requires change of mindset and in particular an acceptance of change. Change is often threatening - and sufficiently risk adverse individuals are willing to pass up opportunities for expected gain to avoid the downside risks. Participation is essential to effect systematic change in mindset associated with the development transformation and to engender policies that make change more acceptable. Participation brings with it commitment and commitment brings with it greater effort that is required to make a project successful.

Despite the perceived, real and potential benefits, the literature reveals that genuine participation is difficult to achieve because of issues of power, privilege, self-interest, and resources. For example, there are instances where powerful decision-makers, influential groups or institutions have tended to initiate support or block policies based on their selfish interests, and often through institutions over which they have power and control (Illich, 1997; Grindle, 2002).

In their analysis of impediments to citizen participation in bureaucratic setups, Kweit and Kweit (1980) note that powerful actors tend to dominate development processes and spaces. In particular, bureaucrats tend to open up policy processes to citizens only when they perceive the latter to be conforming to the premises of bureaucratic decision-making. Moreover, powerful decision-makers can resist citizen participation, citizens' proposals or policy reforms if their positions or interests are threatened. This may also happen if the views of ordinary citizens are incompatible with the ideological orientations held by the bureaucrats (elites/government officials) pointing to the unequal relationships in the decision-making space. Echoing the role of bureaucrats in decision-making, Carvalho and White (1996) identify bureaucratic resistance, inadequate resources and lack of political commitment as some of the factors that have undermined recent efforts to increase decentralization and participation.

The domination of the development space, processes, resources and perspectives[66] by the powerful, either individually or through the institutions that they control can easily perpetuate clientele and patronage relationships in society. It can also entrench a culture of passivity and dependency among ordinary citizens leading to what Maathai (2009: 129) calls "the pathology of willed self-helplessness". The "dependency syndrome" is a serious bottleneck to development and required to be addressed alongside other hindrances such as corruption, and poor governance (Ibid). Kabeer (2002) provides some clarification on this behaviour, highlighting that when people lack the means to meet their daily survival needs, they often get into highly asymmetrical relationships with the more powerful or endowed persons in order to secure their livelihoods and support from the patron groups, persons or households. In this case, participation becomes a contested ground, which the powerful use to further their interests.

Because the powerful are essentially people in leadership or positions of privilege, participation is an important dimension of governance (Lewis, 2004). Freeman, Ellis and Allison (2003) suggest that poor governance tends to favour the better-off persons over the poor, since the former can easily deal with barriers and disabling contexts that others deal with in their day-to-day life. Faced with this reality, many countries have since the 1990s pursued new mechanisms to promote more direct citizen engagement in the processes of governance, ranging from the creation of new decentralized institutions, to a wide variety of participatory and consultative processes in national and global policy deliberations (Gaventa 2002). Such efforts are best represented by the promotion of community driven development approach, which emphasises greater participation of people in the design, implementation and evaluation of development projects.

[66] For example, the report Poverty analysis in Kenya: Ten Years On by Mukui (2005: 7 - 8) points to one major finding of Kenya's PPA-II conducted in 1996 in which there was a "sharp contrast between communities and district-level leaders and decision makers regarding the causes of poverty, poverty alleviation mechanisms and escape routes: "While communities point to a wide range of physical, economic, institutional factors, district level decision-makers emphasize community characteristics as the major causes of poverty. District-level leaders think the services provided are leading to poverty reduction while communities think otherwise. Communities see credit and institutional support as paths to poverty reduction while the decision-makers see the removal of socio-cultural obstacles as critical to poverty reduction."

In Kenya, many of the country's post-independence development policy and planning documents[67] acknowledge public participation in development spaces to be important. For example, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 dwells on the Bill of Rights and guarantees citizen's rights and fundamental freedoms. This includes the right to participation in public affairs. Further, Chapter 11 addresses devolution, and similar to the County Governments Act of 2012 emphasize the need for devolved county governments to promote and involve citizens in their affairs. Citizen participation is also one of the national values and principles enshrined in Article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya.

On paper, citizen participation in decision-making emerges as an important ingredient in the development process in Kenya. However, a review of the country's policy documents, including the Constitution and Vision 2030 development strategy, reveals that they fail to pinpoint the exact role of citizens and marginalized groups such as women, youth and the poor in development and poverty reduction efforts. There is little discussion in Kenya's development literature about the links between leadership and participation and yet the leaders are the ones in charge of public decision-making processes and spaces.

Leadership concerns governance and is a common theme discussed in contemporary development literature. Goldsmith (1998) underscores the importance of leadership, especially political leadership in development viewing it as a necessity for sustained economic reform and for fighting corruption. The concept of leadership conjures up important questions for analysis. This includes how leaders perceive and approach development and poverty, how leaders engage with citizens in the efforts to tackle poverty, and the extent to which the behaviour of leaders encourages public participation in development.

Such questions are important in any discussion of poverty reduction in light of the fact that leaders, by virtue of their power and influence, have the potential to determine policy choices and to block or support efforts that benefit the wider society.

[67] These include Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on "African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya", National and District Development Plans, and the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD).

Moreover, leaders form, lead, or control many of the institutions involved in development policy and planning processes and poverty reduction efforts at national and local levels. By virtue of this positioning, leaders therefore, have the ability to foster or hinder genuine citizen participation in development.

Power and interests appear to be crucial concepts for understanding the role of leaders in poverty reduction and the behaviour of citizens in the public development space. Societies are made up of individuals and social groups who have their own interests which they tend to pursue within the available political spaces and through the exercise of power (Ochieng', 1989). Recent studies on participation (Grindle, 2000; Francis & James, 2003) suggest that the more educated and technically competent community members often dominate decision-making at the grassroots. This predatory behaviour, commonly described as "elite capture", has numerous negative consequences for equitable development.

Empirical studies in a number of countries have demonstrated that elite capture is an impediment to development and poverty reduction efforts (Dasgupta & Beard, 2007; Dutta, 2009; Beard & Phakphian, 2009; Wong, 2010; Rajasekhar, Babu & Manjula, 2011; Beath, Fotini, & Enikolopov, 2011). Based on evidence gathered from an analysis of nearly 500 World Bank development projects, Mansuri and Rao (2013: 6) point out that the people who benefited most from development projects over the years tended to be the elites, namely, the most literate and the least isolated citizens and those that were most connected to wealthy and powerful people.

Elite capture presents itself in various forms and is evident where corruption is rampant, accountability of officials lacking, where there is skewed allocation of development resources and benefits, and where there is rent-seeking behaviour. There is evidence of elite capture when powerful decision-makers define development and set its goals in familiar terms, which they use to satisfy their own needs, often through institutions they have power and control (Illich, 1997).

Commenting on the process of Kenya's participatory poverty assessment (PPA-I) conducted in 1994, Narayan and Nyamwaya (1996) report sharp differences between how district leaders' understood poverty and the perceptions and experiences

presented by the local people in many of the districts covered. This indicated the case of power and interests at play in terms of poverty perception, and in no small way had implications for anti-poverty policies and interventions.

The second PPA-II conducted in 1996 also found sharp differences between community and local leaders' perceptions about various aspects of poverty. Mukui (2005: 7 -8) notes as follows:

> While communities point to a wide range of physical, economic, institutional factors, district level decision-makers emphasize community characteristics as the major causes of poverty. District-level leaders think the services provided are leading to poverty reduction while communities think otherwise. Communities see credit and institutional support as paths to poverty reduction while the decision-makers see the removal of socio-cultural obstacles as critical to poverty reduction.

Although Kweit and Kweit (1980) suggest that bureaucrats dominate decision-making processes, they (bureaucrats) do not form a homogeneous group that is free of internal contestations in the decision-making space. Indeed, intra-power competition within the bureaucratic setup occurs, taking the form of negotiations and compromises in the process of deciding on particular policy choices (Shively, 1987).

One of the earliest and enduring conceptions of power is Max Weber's view of power as an aspect of social relationships. According to Weber, "power is the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Haralambos & Heald, 1980: 98). This implies that the power holders or the dominant group tend to use power to further their own interests, often to the disadvantage of the less powerful groups. The elite theory[68] sheds light on the concept of power and how elites (leader class) use it to serve their own interests, often at the expense of the masses. Elite theorists imagine the majority of people are apathetic and unconcerned with the major issues of the day being largely controlled and manipulated by the elite, and passively accepting the propaganda which justifies elite rule (Ibid).

The foregoing literature review suggests that participation is beneficial to development and is an undeniable right for citizens. The implicit assumption is that

68 The theory was first developed by Vilfredo Pareto (1848 – 1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1853 – 1941)

citizens would be willing to exercise this right and responsibly. At the same time, other literature questions the appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness and benefits of participation in certain contexts. Participation literature also tends to pay little attention to the constraints to citizen participation rooted in ordinary citizens. Where low citizen participation occurs, the literature indicated that it is generally those in powerful positions in society such as the elite, bureaucrats and institutions that were blamed. While this may be justified to some extent, the literature tends to pay little attention to the constraints and capacities of the dominant groups and institutions in society to promote citizen participation. In addition, organic participation, based on citizens own will, desire and efforts to create or demand participation opportunities are barely analysed in most participation literature.

Whilst the literature tends to over-emphasize the role of citizen participation and decentralization in development and what these processes and reforms can achieve, a few studies like the recent World Bank study (Mansuri & Rao, 2013) have interrogated this position through concrete evidence. The results tend to challenge the assumption that (induced) participation is important in determining poverty reduction outcomes at the local level. This thesis notes these gaps and contradictions, and attempts to address them through a careful analysis of comparative data from two communities in rural Kenya.

2.5 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

The concepts of "power" and "interests"[69] as raised in the literature are important analytical lenses for understanding and explaining many of the issues investigated in this study. Power and interests are integral to and support the relevance of the general political economy orientation of this thesis. The two concepts are connected; power is a means to achieve one's interests, and these interests are often based on material considerations or ideas (ideologies).

[69] The concepts of power is defined in terms of authority and influence and the concept of "interests" as political, economic and social considerations or preferences of individuals, groups or institutions in society. See Webster, 2002, for more details.

Webster (2002) notes that poverty is rooted in the politics of power and interests. This means that the interests of the poor may be contested, sidelined and subordinated by the more powerful social actors within the formal, institutionalized decision-making spaces for poverty reduction. Powerful decision-makers may also co-opt those who they perceive as a challenge to their power. There are therefore, historical struggles among social classes, an argument well established among the Marxist perspective of development. Underscoring the role of power and interests in society and the inescapable nature of conflicts, Ochieng' (1989:205) notes that 'people differ in a number of ways: they have different interests, needs, aspirations and values'. Similarly, Vallarreal (2002: 87) notes that 'interests change, conflicts take place and leaders are co-opted'.

Because the concepts of power and interests cut across and form the core building blocks of several theoretical strands, the thesis utilizes three mutually supporting theoretical approaches linked to these concepts to guide the study.

2.5.1 The Political Economy Approach: Explaining Contestations in the Decision-making Space

The political economy approach is an important tool for examining development problems, and in particular, to explain decision-making within a given democratic setup. As a concept, political economy has been analysed variously by authors who use concepts such as "exchange and authority" (Lindborn, 1977), "exchange and coercion" (Blau, 1964), "power and money" (Baldwin, 1971), "power and wealth" (Knorr, 1973), "markets and hierarchies" (Williamson, 1975), "market and territoriality" (Rosecrance, 1986), and "state and society" (Hegel, 1821).

Political economy analysis may be understood as a set of questions emanating from the interaction of economic and political spheres which, scholars explore using whatever theoretical and methodological means at their disposal (Tooze, 1984). Grindle (1999:2) takes a similar view, and use the term to refer to "efforts to investigate the intersection of economics and politics in policy choice and in policy and institutional change". She further argues that political economy analysis should be concerned with policy issues "that go beyond traditional concerns with economic

interests and policies to focus on the reform of the state and the emergence of demands related to social policy" (Ibid, p.2).

Put simply, political economy analysis concerns the questions of "who gains" and "who loses" and its central issue is decision making: understanding the dynamics of making decisions or policies and their social outcomes (Gilpin, 1987). This conception gives it perfect connection to the concepts of power and interests discussed above. The political economy approach revolves around how political and economic considerations shape the allocation of society's resources (Gilpin, 1987). This viewpoint underscore that the development policy and planning mechanism applied in this thesis an important factor in any political economy analysis.

The central argument of the political economy approach is that those with access to economic resources are able to control political power and in turn, those who have control of power are able to determine the allocation and distribution of a society's scarce resources (Oatley, 2004). It is therefore a broad lens that allows the question of power and interests to be used productively in understanding decision-making processes within a given democratic set up and how the outcome of such processes affect individuals and societies generally.

By centering the concept of power and interests in its form, the political economy approach bridges its focus with that of the public choice theory[70] which dwells on how public decisions and choices are made and situates self-interest (political and economic) at the centre of public policy and decision-making processes (Shively, 1997; Todaro & Smith 2006). It may be assumed then that elitist groups and the institutions they control as well as ordinary citizens, act solely from self-interest perspective, and use their power and authority to serve own interests. The approach

[70] See Todaro & Smith (2006) for more discussion. In their view, the political choice theory assumes that: "politicians, bureaucrats, citizens and states act solely from self-interested perspective, using their power and the authority of government for their own selfish ends; citizens use political influence to obtain special benefits from government policies that restrict access to important resources; politicians use government resources to consolidate and maintain positions of power and authority; bureaucrats and public officials use their positions to extract bribes from rent-seeking citizens and to operate protected businesses on the side; and states use their power to confiscate private property from individuals…thus… misallocation of resources ... a general reduction in individual freedoms".

also relates to the post-developmentalist viewpoint that views development, as a concept, to be a product of a particular set of power relations at any time[71].

The political economy approach is useful for this study as it provides a framework for analysing how the dynamics of power and interests shape the practices and outcomes of public participation in decision-making at the grassroots and how this impend or foster poverty reduction.

2.5.2 The Capabilities Approach

Rooted in the works of Amartya Sen (1992; 1999; 2002)[72], the capability approach has become a central focus of development theory and a useful concept for policy analysis. It attempts to advance the meaning of development beyond the economic measures (economic growth, per capita income) propagated by classical economists. The approach 'emphasizes the need to focus on all facets of human welfare as integral parts of development'. This matches what is called 'human development' which 'stresses two aspects: the formation of human capabilities, and the utilisation of acquired capabilities (or their functionings).

In his book, *Inequality Re-examined*, Sen (1992) argues that although human beings are born free and equal, they are different in many ways and because of this human diversity, each person should be supported to pursue and achieve to the highest level possible of the life choices they choose for themselves. He argues that development is more concerned with the expanding people's capabilities, freedom and choices. He defines capabilities as "the freedom that a person has in terms of the choice of functionings, given his personal features (conversion of characteristics into functionings) and his command over "commodities". This means that "it is what a person succeeds in doing with the commodities and characteristics at his or her command that defines his or her capability" (Sen, 2002). Similar to Sen's view,

[71] See, for example, Escobar, 1992; Esteva, 1992; and Ferguson, 1997.

[72] Arguably, the capability approach resonates to a great deal with the liberal ideology which, as noted by Shively (1997), has as its central assumption that the highest good of society is the ability of the members of that society to develop their individual capacities to the fullest extent…that in a good society, all individuals should be able to develop their minds…talents and that people be maximally responsible for their own actions.

Chambers (1997) defines capability as "the quality of being capable" or "the ability to do something".

The capability concept recognizes that there are alternative courses that a person's life may take and that the choice between these courses is an important value for those capable of such a choice (Bilchitz, 2007). The central issue of this approach is whether a person is capable of being or doing a particular thing that he/she chose. This may include, for example, negotiating effectively with other poverty reduction actors, participating in the phases of development policy and planning process, contributing towards desired poverty reduction outcomes in the public and private spheres, to demanding and enforcing accountability for services and expected public actions. This is an important angle, especially in the context of poor people who are often viewed as powerless and unable to take full control of their lives.

The capability approach proceeds from the rationalistic view that citizens are inclined towards seeking the fullest enjoyment of their freedoms and rights. In addition, it suggest that citizens will use their capabilities (knowledge, skills, values, social capital, experience, rights, among other resources) to pursue those interests. This prompts one to examine whether or not citizens actually utilize their individual and collective resources to pursue common goals in poverty reduction or to resist undue influence and "capture" by other actors such as the elites, local institutions and state officials. Thus, this approach allows us to pose sensitive and often neglected questions: are there instances where poverty is a direct result of an individual's choice? Are the poor responsible for their own conditions? To what extent do the poor feel responsible for moving out of poverty? These constitute some of the assumptions and questions this study will attempt to confirm or interrogate through analysis of empirical data from the two research sites.

This approach has a broad scope that is relevant to the four study objectives. It provides an important lens for investigating issues raised in the study such as the ability of ordinary citizens to fulfill their poverty reduction roles and the capacity and the "will" of leaders and institutions to enhance public participation in decision-making. The concept allows for an investigation of the reasons behind citizens' actions or inactions in the public development and poverty reduction space. This

approach aligns with the central view of this study that ordinary citizens are key players in poverty reduction efforts and that they possess certain capabilities to tackle poverty.

2.5.3 The Ladder of Participation Framework

Writing on levels of participation over four decades ago, Arnstein (1969) argues that power to control and influence the development outcomes lies at the heart of participation. Asserting that citizen participation is citizen power, Arnstein depicts participation as an 8-rung ladder, with each rung corresponding to the extent of the citizens' decision-making responsibility or power in determining a desired outcome. The ladder uses levels (rungs) to categorize the different ways of participation of individuals or groups in a given social setting. Arnstein's conception of participation brings power and empowerment of citizens as principal concepts.

Table 2.1 The 8 rungs in Arnstein's ladder of participation[73]

8	Citizen control	Degrees of citizen power
7	Delegated power	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Degrees of tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Non-participation
1	Manipulation	

Source: Arnstein (1969), A Ladder of Citizen Participation

Of the eight rungs in the ladder, only the top three (citizen control, delegated power, and partnership) are considered to represent genuine and meaningful citizen participation. Here, citizens have the "political agency" to determine their own

[73] This is not the only model on levels of participation. Other versions have been developed by scholars and researchers, who take their cue from Arnstein's ladder. These include Paul's model (1987) focused on community participation in World Bank projects; and Chogull (1996) model focused on community participation in decision-making. However, the study adopted Arnstein's model, as it is simple and straightforward to use. It also focuses on citizen participation rather than community participation as most participation models do.

choices. According to this framework, merely informing or consulting citizens for their views in development and poverty reduction issues is pure tokenism. Claims of participation where citizens have limited say or where decision-making spaces are dominated by officials, elites and institutions do not, therefore, count as 'genuine participation'. This is the central issue of participation in this ladder. We can equate genuine participation with situations where citizens have 'power and voice' in the entire decision-making process. Arnstein (1969:216) argues that:

> Participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo.

Deshler and Sock (1985) distinguish 'genuine participation" with delegated power or partnership agreements between citizens and agencies from "pseudo participation". They argue further that genuine participation at all levels provides a foundation for democratic and responsive government although it is often not in the interests of national or local officials and other elites.

The ladder of participation recognizes the diversity of interests and inequalities within society and that groups and individuals, involved in the poverty reduction discourse are likely to compete for access, control and fulfillment of their interests often at the expense of the public good. This view is supported by the Conceptual Framework developed by Kweit and Kweit (1980) in their analysis of impediments to citizen participation in bureaucratic decision-making. They identify three important variables that determine the willingness of bureaucrats to entertain participation by citizens in decision-making: bureaucratic tolerance for participation, citizen resources, and bureaucratic environment. On the other hand, the amount and kind of resources the citizens possess and the presence of certain environmental conditions are viewed as determinants of bureaucratic tolerance.

The thrust of the argument by Kweit and Kweit (Ibid) is that participation will be most effective when the bureaucrats consider participation as an important component of their decision-making since they possess the means to obstruct citizen participation. This implies that self-interest plays a key role in guiding individual behaviour and

therefore, is relevant in explaining the behaviour of elitist groups and institutions on one hand and that of ordinary citizens on the other, in the public spaces.

Theoretically, any framework that has levels of participation, assumes that participants are interested in increasing their power and control over their lives and resources. This implies that ordinary citizens will be rationally inclined to take advantage of the opportunities and means available to them to exert or claim power, exercise their rights and to promote their interests.

The ladder of participation framework is useful in that it can be easily applied to test this assumption across all the different phases of development policy from agenda setting, formulation, adoption, implementation, to evaluation and revision. It is also useful for understanding power relationships between the different actors in the development and poverty reduction space, and how this impact on rural poverty reduction. The framework is specifically relevant to the second objective of the study that focuses on citizen participation in decision-making processes.

2.6 Conclusion

Drawing from general and comparative literature, as well as literature specific to Kenya, the chapter has discussed central concepts in the study, including poverty reduction, within the larger development and poverty debate. In this discussion, gaps have been highlighted that emerge and the study has indicated how to treat such issues.

Informed by the rich theoretical and conceptual debates established in the literature on the broader themes of development, poverty and participation, the chapter has articulated three analytical frameworks that underpin the study. These frameworks (political economy model, the ladder of participation and the capability approach) are based on the two concepts of power and interests. These concepts form an important analytical lens for the four study objectives.

Drawing on the two concepts, the thesis suggests that within the development policy and planning space, different actors exercise power in their attempts to control the

available resources, which often lead to conflicts. Such conflicts, often based on ideologies, values, and beliefs, shape preferences (interests) and tend to affect policy choices and actions and eventually poverty reduction outcomes. This means that the more powerful social actors within the formal, institutionalized decision-making spaces may undermine the interests of ordinary people. In this way, poverty reduction becomes a purely political economy question as it concerns the making of decisions (both private and public in nature), on the allocation of scarce resources to address the problem. As will be evident later in the thesis, an "elitist" frame of decision-making and implementation of development endavours in post-independence Kenya tends to have structurally excluded the meaningful participation of local citizens in the development process.

The literature review has revealed that poverty is conceived in multiple ways, which, in turn, calls for divergent approaches in tackling the problem. However, three approaches (the economic growth, human rights and capability approaches) emerge as the most dominant. Although a large body of literature generally tends to treat participation as a critical factor in development, other literature questions the appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness and benefits of participation in certain contexts. Where low citizen participation occurs, literature indicates that it is generally those in powerful positions in society such as elites, bureaucrats and institutions that are often blamed. While this may be justified, to some extent, the literature presupposes that citizens are available and capable of exercising their rights to participate and to negotiate and legitimize their interests and priorities in competition with other actors in society. The extent to which this happens is tested in the thesis through empirical data from Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties.

The literature review suggests there is a link between poverty, participation, leadership and institutions. The review also suggests that the poverty 'industry' and the anti-poverty 'profession' is a contested arena shaped by the power and interests of various poverty reduction actors. This makes it important to interrogate how development policy and planning processes are conducted within a given country. This is the principal focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: ARTICULATION OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PLANNING IN KENYA: FRAMEWORKS, PROCESSES AND PROGRAMMES

3.1 Introduction

Development policy and planning process is an important public space through which citizens can engage with one another and institutions to make choices and influence decisions that affect individual and societal well being. It is the principal mechanism through which the state usually determines and articulates the allocation of available public resources for development. It is unlikely that any country can prosper and achieve good standards of living for its people if its policies and plans for development are wrong in terms of priorities and their implementation. Development policy and planning practice has a direct relationship with poverty reduction outcomes. Thus, scholars and researchers have often questioned 'whether strategic policy documents formulate the poverty reduction problem in a way that addresses the real barriers that rural citizens confront in their efforts to construct pathways out of poverty" (Freeman, Ellis & Allison, 2003: 20).

This chapter examines the links between policy, citizen participation and poverty reduction in Kenya extending the discussion initiated in the previous chapters on these variables. Specifically, the chapter probes the character of Kenya's post-independence development policy and planning practice and in so doing enables our understanding of the institutional context within which poverty reduction efforts take place in Kenya. The chapter also reveals how key development policies during 50 years of the country's political independence have treated citizen participation in decision-making. This information helps in contextualizing and gaining better understanding of the empirical findings provided later in the thesis.

The chapter is largely historical and descriptive and draws considerably from literature review, key informant information and our observations as members of the Kenyan society. It traces Kenya's post-independence development policy and planning practice from the early 1960s to the post-2010 period across the country's four post-colonial political regimes: Jomo Kenyatta (1963 – 1978), Daniel Arap Moi

(1978 – 2002), Mwai Kibaki (2003 – 2013), and Uhuru Kenyatta's new regime that came into office in April, 2013. Within this, the chapter examines key government policies, highlighting how they address the conceptual issues on poverty reduction and citizen participation as teased out in the previous chapters.

This discussion is captured more succinctly through an analytical model of development policy and planning practice in Kenya, which illustrates the links between different actors, factors and their influence on poverty reduction efforts. This chapter is the backbone of the thesis as it bridges the first two chapters (Introduction and literature review) with empirical findings from the two case studies that follow in chapters four and five.

3.2 Organising Development in Kenya: A Scan of the Policy Environment across Five Decades

An enabling policy environment and empowerment of people in development processes is an important ingredient for poverty reduction. The World Bank's 1997 *World Development Report, f*or example, identifies a "benign policy environment" as one of five crucial ingredients for sustainable, shared poverty reducing development[74.] These observations underscore the need to interrogate Kenya's policy environment and in the context of this study, how development policy and planning process has treated and influenced poverty reduction and citizen participation in the country over the last 5 decades. One may pose several relevant questions to guide such an interrogation: How has development been organized in Kenya? What are the main policy frameworks? Who are the key players in policy-making? What factors influence the various policy choices and development programmes relevant to poverty reduction? This section reflects on these questions by scanning through the five decades of Kenya's post-colonial development history.

Kenya's post-colonial development space indicates a multiplicity of policy and planning frameworks and guidelines, of internal and external origins, which have guided the country's development practice. Eight major policy frameworks have

74. The other elements are a foundation of law; investment in people and infrastructure; protection of the vulnerable; and the protection of the natural environment. See World Bank report 1997 for more information.

played a significant role in guiding Kenya's development endavours. These are the Harambee philosophy, African Socialism Philosophy (Sessional Paper Number 10 of 1965), Kenyanisation policy, and the District Focus for Rural Development Strategy. Others are the Structural Adjustment Programmes (Privatization and Liberalization of the economy) of the 1980s, Human Rights to Development Framework of the 1990s, Poverty Reduction Strategy of the 2000s, and the Millennium Development Goals Framework of the 2000s. The Constitution promulgated in August 2010 has similarly played a critical role in guiding development efforts in Kenya.

Of these policy frameworks, the Harambee philosophy and, Session Paper Number 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya, are the earliest and most enduring guides for development planning and practice in the country. Introduced in the early years of independence, these two policy frameworks held sway throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and are still influential today.

In general, the 1960s to the 1970s were decades in Kenya's development trajectory marked by the vibrancy of citizen involvement in development implementation through the Harambee movement and small-scale local development initiatives. During this period, formal policy-making and planning processes remained top-down. There was heavy state involvement in the economy and economic GDP per capita was the main measure of development. Poverty reduction was pursued mainly through Harambee projects and agricultural led-development programmes, notably the Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP), among others.

The introduction of the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) strategy in the 1980s represented a significant step in Kenya's development history. The policy laid the foundation for decentralization of development planning and resources to the grassroots. The period was also marked by the introduction of the influential neo-liberal donor conditionalities, notably the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). Much of the policies of the 1980s continued in the 1990s. In particular, SAPs, and the privatization and liberalization of the economy along the neo-liberal policy positions pushed by the WB, IMF and other donors through the aid mechanism were notable. There was also the clamor for good governance, human rights and increased emphasis on decentralization during the 1990s. It is during this period that the Government

developed the 15-year national poverty eradication plan (1999 - 2015) and subsequently established a Poverty Eradication Commission to spearhead the implementation of the plan.

Increased privatization and greater involvement of the market in the economy characterized the 2000s. Besides national development planning, the district and constituency planning were notable development planning frameworks. In addition to the CDF mechanism instituted in 2003, several devolved funds were introduced to support local development, mitigate the effects of poverty on the population, and to support development initiatives of marginalized groups in society such as the youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Kenya's first full PRSP (2001 - 4) was developed during this period and the MDGs framework was formally adopted in 2004. The country's first long range development plan, Kenya Vision 2030, was launched in 2008 while in August 2010, Kenya promulgated a Constitution which provides progressive guarantees on citizen participation in public affairs and other rights.

We examine briefly some of the key policy frameworks in order to gain insights on how Kenya's post-independence development policy and planning framework has treated and approached the issues of citizen participation and poverty reduction.

Harambee: The Policy of Rural Self-help

Conceptualised in a variety of ways - as a movement, spirit, philosophy and motto – Harambee is a key and an early guiding principle in development planning and implementation in post-independence Kenya. For close to five decades, the "Harambee" practice has traversed the Kenyan development landscape like a colossus, providing citizens with an opportunity to help one another and to pursue a wide variety of development projects.

Harambee can be described as a policy of rural self-help in the light of its immense application in rural Kenya. Hyden (1984:118) notes that Harambee was a Kenyan way of making policy: "people in the villages, sub locations, or locations come together to do self-help work and use their own contributions as a leverage to bargain for

government funds". Harambee is associated with the popular participation of the citizens in the development discourse[75], and is a manifestation of Kenyan volunteerism in which citizens pooled resources together for purposes of addressing service needs and societal development difficulties (Kanyinga, Mitullah and Njagi, 2007).

The Harambee movement gathered immense momentum through the 1960s to 2004 when the Kibaki Government abolished it on the recommendations of a taskforce report that found that politicians had hijacked and messed the Harambee movement[76]. However, this was not the first time the movement got into trouble with officialdom. Holmquist (1984: 176) provides an insightful account of how government officials attempted to control Harambee activities during the early years of independence:

> After a year or two after independence, there was a proliferation of self-help projects and bureaucrats saw that development was almost out of control…the problem was now one of trying to partially demobilize the peasantry because they were doing too much rather than too little. The bureaucratic counter attack was couched in terms of the rationale and structures of planning. By channeling local development projects into planning structures, peasant initiative could be gradually eroded while bureaucratic power could be augmented and its control over local development reasserted. In Kenya, the rural petty bourgeoisie will only encourage rural self-help when they can dominate it through their role as the intermediary between peasants and the government.

Citizen participation has been a central pillar of the Harambee policy. Similarly, local development, including poverty reduction efforts was an underlying objective of the Harambee practice. It is the manner, in which "Harambee" was practiced, especially by elites and other powerful members of the Kenyan society that was problematic leading to the intervention of the state.

[75] For example, in introducing the 5th National Development Plan (1984 – 1988), President Moi stated, then: "I call upon all Kenyans to implement this plan in the spirit of our national motto, Harambee and in accordance with the Nyayo philosophy of peace, love and unity" (GoK, 1984: ix).

[76] For example, residents of Mandera District told the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission during a hearing in Mandera Town of how President Moi's regime misused the spirit of Harambee leading to high poverty levels and injustices against Mandera residents. The residents narrated of 'how their livestock were confiscated by members of the Provincial Administration and ferried to Nairobi, leading to their economic marginalisation. They informed the Commission that 120 camels from Mandera District were ferried to Kabarak (President Moi's home) in 1985. See article by Hussein, , *Harambee rule led to poverty, Truth team told*, Daily Nation Newspaper, 25 April 2011.

However, the harambee movement has survived the state banishment and remains strong through the self-help and cooperative movements. Many institutions (state and non-state) use self-help groups and cooperatives as a strategy of choice in initiating or implementing development programmes in the country. Also, many Kenyans, including politicians and state officials continue to participate in harambees despite the official ban signifying that not much has changed in terms of the vibrancy of the harambee movement.

The resilience and strength of the Harambee spirit within the Kenyan development landscape is notable, considering that Kenya has one of the largest number of self-help groups in Africa numbering over 330,000[77] in 2007 (Kanyinga, Mitullah & Njagi, 2007). Most institutional actors (NGOs, Government, FBOs and BSOs) use self-help groups (SHG approach[78]) and community-based organizations (CBOs) as the entry points and as the implementers of anti-poverty interventions.

Sessional Paper Number of 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya

The Kenyan Government published Sessional Paper Number 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and Its Application in Kenya in May 1965 (GoK, 1965). This policy document had a strong pro-capitalist orientation and explicitly emphasized economic growth as the principal goal of development. To attain fast economic growth along the lines of the policy, the Kenyatta Government encouraged massive investment in the resource-endowed areas and sectors of the economy by state corporations, private individuals, and firms. Echoing the harambee declaration, the document also placed strong emphasis on greater participation of citizens in the national development effort.

Sessional Paper Number 10 of 1965 became the blue print that guided the preparation of the 1966 – 1970 development plan and subsequent plans throughout Kenyatta's

[77] Refers to those registered as SHGs, women groups and youth groups.

78 The Poverty Eradication Commission notes that the SHG approach has been operational in Kenya since 2006 and defines the approach as a "strategy for fighting poverty by empowering the poor people who are in groups through capacity building and mutual support they receive from their peers in groups". The approach targets social, economic and political empowerment of the SHGs and their members. See PEC's newsletter, *Poverty Alleviation News*, Volume 3 of January - June 2009:6, and Volume 4 of July – December 2009 for more details.

fifteen-year rule. It has since become, arguably, the country's most referenced development policy document in the postcolonial era. Its influence in policy-making is huge and its pro-capitalist orientation is discernible in various planning and policy documents[79] including Kenya's long-term plan, Vision 2030.

Through its emphasis on the need for citizens to participate in their private and national development endeavors, Sessional Paper Number 10 of 1965 became one of earliest development policy documents that entrenched the concepts of "participatory development" in Kenya's policy discourse. Reference to this theme is evident in nearly all major state policy documents, including the development plans and budget speeches, which speak, though rhetorically, of the importance of citizen participation in national development endeavors.

In pursuit of fast economic growth, this policy ended up favouring the development of areas that had abundant natural resources, good land and rainfall, transport and power facilities (Sisule, 2001). Its highly pro-market orientation also tended to sideline the role of ordinary citizens in development processes as many of them lacked the capital and means needed to spur the levels of economic growth desired by the state.

This pro-capitalist orientation angered part of KANU's leadership led by Oginga Odinga and Bildad Kaggia who opposed the launch of the policy document in 1966 (Ochieng', 1989). In their view, the Kenyatta government did not intend, through this policy, to dismantle the colonial economic and social structures inherited at independence but was advocating capitalism under the guise of African socialism. Kagia's own words in reaction to the document capture the anger and disillusionment building up in the KANU party and country at that time:

> "I do not mind calling our socialism African socialism, Kenyan socialism, Kikuyu socialism, or even Luo socialism, but I believe that whatever prefixes we use it must be socialism and not capitalism" (Ochieng', 1989: 208).

Kagia's sentiments pointed to one of the most notable shortcomings of this policy in the context of poverty reduction: its failure to entrench pro-poor programming culture

[79] These include five-year national development plans, Economic Recovery Strategy for Employment and Wealth Creation 2003 – 2007, the First Medium Term Plan 2008 – 2012, Vision 2030 strategy, among others.

in Kenya's planning system. Similarly, the policy failed to emphasise equity in the sharing of the proceeds from economic growth.

Sessional Paper Number 10 of 1965 had a strong connection with the "Kenyanisation Policy"[80] also pursued by the Kenyan Government since the early 1960s. This policy was triggered by the need to empower African peoples in the young nation so that they could participate actively in the national economy, public service and in running of the affairs of the state generally. The government deemed these efforts important given that at independence in 1963, the role of the African in the public sphere was minimal (Bennett, 1978; Hazzlewood, 1979). The economy and public management was in the hands of outsiders, notably the colonial settlers and administrators and, Asians, to some extent.

The government pursued the Kenyanisation policy vigorously from the 1960s to the 1980s and particularly under the regimen of the 1966 – 1970 and 1970 - 1974 national development plans. The policy focused on the recruitment of Kenyans into government offices and in greater ownership of economic resources including businesses and land by Kenyans. The 1984 – 88 national development plan (GoK, 1984: 4) summarizes the focus of this policy as follows:

> The transfer of economic power to citizens and the removal of social discrimination has been a primary objective of government policy since independence. This objective has been promoted through various policy measures in the fields of employment, ownership of land and businesses, investment in parastatals, expenditure in education and training, and strengthening of cooperative form of organization.

Just like in the harambee policy and Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965, participation of citizens in the public sphere was a major emphasis in the Kenyanisation policy, although, again, the beneficiaries tended to be the educated, experienced and skilled African Kenyan capable of fitting into the public service. The policy also benefited those who had the interest, skills and other means to exploit the economic opportunities it created. The ordinary citizen in the rural villages, especially those already caught up in the cycle of poverty did not have these advantages.

[80] "Africanisation', "indigenization' and 'localization' are other terms used in reference to this policy.

DFRD: Anchoring Popular Participation in Policy-making

By 1982, Kenya was facing widespread deterioration in citizens' standard of living and this was causing anxieties within the political class (Opata, 2004). To look into the issue of the management of development resources, the Government appointed a commission headed by Phillip Ndegwa in 1982. Drawing from past reports that addressed rural development and poverty[81], the commission came up with the DFRD strategy (Ibid). This was a new policy for development planning and administration in Kenya, which sought to apply the principle of decentralized planning at district level (GoK, 1995). The government-commenced implementation of the policy on 1st July 1983, and thus DFRD became the main policy anchor for decentralized development planning in Kenya[82.]

The DRFD aimed at achieving national development goals by decentralizing development planning and implementation to lower levels. It emphasized the need for development programmes to prioritize community participation and to ensure that communities played an active role in all phases of programmes and decision-making (GoK, 2006). The DFRD policy institutionalised formal decision-making structures at village level (village Barazas), sub location level (Sub-location development committees), location level (Location Development Committees), division level (Sub-District Development Committees) and finally district level (District Development Committees). Views, proposals and decisions from these structures were to inform the development of integrated development plans in the districts. Thus, the DRFD process involved an elaborate planning chain led by the state-machinery. The District Development Plan (DDP) was the main local level output of the DRFD process,

[81] These included the Kericho Conference Report of 1966, the Duncan Ndegwa commission report of 1971, and the Special Programme for Rural Development Programme (1976).

[82] The policy was introduced in the 1984 – 8 national development plan which devotes pages 91 – 98 to describing the policy. It should be noted, however, that the Kenya Government had already proposed the rationale for decentralized development planning in the 1979 – 1983 development plan in order to address the problems of rural development. Therefore, the Phillip Ndegwa Commission appears to have taken from the Government proposals in drafting the DFRD policy framework. It should be noted that development of DDPs did not start with the introduction of the DRFD. Rather, the first DDPs were developed in 1970 during the 1970 – 1974 national development plan epoch. Also, DDCs that are widely associated with the DFRD had existed before 1983 in form of District Development Committees in as early as 1966 to 'control development at local level' (GoK, 1974). What the DFRD did was that it changed the earlier planning model where technocrats based in Nairobi developed DDPs with little input from the countryside. Also, participation of local citizens in the process of developing the DDPs was minimal and without a policy back up, a situation that the DFRD sought to rectify.

which was then consolidated into national development plans. The DFRD, therefore, marked a significant departure from the earlier centralised planning model utilized in the country.

Whilst the DRFD policy is widely judged as a failure, its application continues to date, based on the revised DFRD guidelines published in 2006, further revised in June 2008 in order to conform with the ideals of Vision 2030 and the implementation of the first Medium Term Plan (2008 – 2012). However, the revision appears cosmetic, as the DFRD structure remained almost intact; all over Kenya districts continued to prepare DDPs under the coordination of the District Development and Planning Office, and the local DFRD structures (DDC, Sub-DDC, LDC and SLDC) remained. The devolved plans (DDPs) built into the national development plans which, following the launch of the Vision 2030 blue print in 2007, the Government renamed Medium Term Plans (MTPs). The DFRD is, therefore, a live policy that has been modified severally to address emerging implementation challenges.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) Mechanism

Kenya's compliance with the PRSP conditionality resulted in the PRSP for the 2001-4 period. This document was largely informed by Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) undertaken in select districts in the country: PPA-I in 1994, PPA-II in 1996, and PPA-III in 2005/6, and PPA-IV in 2007 (Mukui, 2005). PPA-V process commenced in 2012 and was underway during the fieldwork for this thesis.

Kenya does not appear to strictly follow the PRSP template of developing a PRSP every 3 years. Instead, the country continues with a national planning model of 5-year national development plans, annual plans and targets. Nonetheless, the country makes efforts to incorporate the PRSP elements into its national development plans and anti-poverty programmes. For example, Chapter 183 of the Investment Programme for the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003-7, notes the following concerning the application of PRSPs in policy and planning processes:

> The Government of Kenya subscribed to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) in 2000 and embarked on the preparation of the Poverty

> Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) at the same time…The District PRSP reports and PPA reports together with inputs from the Sector Working Groups were synthesized into the PRSP (2001-2004). The PRSP formed the basis for the 2002/03 budget. In December 2002, a new government under the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) took office and immediately embarked on the process of preparing an economic recovery strategy, focusing on reviving the economy and creating employment. The ERS presents a road map for economic recovery during the next five years. The ERS takes into account existing Government policy documents, particularly the PRSP and NARC's Manifesto and Post-Election Action Plan (GoK, 2003a).

Kiringai and Manda (2002), writing on Kenya's PRSP process, refer to the bureaucracy and the process which resulted in the people's voices being lost along the way. They note further that while the 2001 PRSP process was arguably a good opportunity, there was demonstrated abuse of process. This is because parliament was not involved, the poor rarely participated (tokenism), district data were lost in the PRSP as it evolved and social issues were isolated from economic and macroeconomic issues.

Despite mounting criticism such as PSRP being an imposition and donor conditionality that ignores past failures and disregards individual country circumstances, the PRSP took a centre stage in development assistance (Maxwell, 2003; Driscoll & Evans, 2005) essentially the new theory or paradigm of development and poverty reduction in the developing world.

The MDGs Framework: Centering Poverty in the Development Discourse

The MDGs are the strongest international commitment to ending global poverty and they acknowledge the multi-dimensional nature of development and poverty alleviation, noting that an end to poverty requires more than just increasing the incomes of the poor (Todaro & Smith, 2006: 22). Kenya adopted the MDG framework within the national planning framework in May 2004.

With support from the Government of Finland and UNDP, the Government since 2005, has implemented the programme: "Mainstreaming, Coordinating and Accelerating MDGs in Kenya's Development Process" (GoK, 2013). The principal aim of the programme is to attain MDGs in the country. This includes increasing the

visibility and mainstreaming MDGs in development planning, budgeting and implementation in state as well as non-state development interventions. A MDG Unit was established within the Ministry of Planning and National Development in 2005 to spearhead the programme, ensuring that all Government institutions and interventions covered all the MDG goals, and especially the overarching goal of poverty eradication in their work.

The MDG programme was implemented in two phases with phase I covering the period 2005 – 8 and phase II between 2011 and 2013 period. District level programme activities were implemented in nine millennium districts84 across the country selected on the basis of high poverty levels. These districts were subsequently, increased to 12 and MDGs mainstreaming work is ongoing in these areas. The success of these efforts is the mainstreaming of MDGs in district development plans and local level development interventions by the state and non-state actors

Based on the experiences of the MDGs implementation in Kenya, there is reason to believe that the Kenya Government will make efforts to integrate the post-MDGs development agenda, now featuring 12 goals, into the country's development planning and implementation framework. This will represent continuity of the influence of global development frameworks in the country's development practice. The overarching goal for both the MDGs and post-MDGs development agenda is to end poverty[85], a theme that speaks directly to the objectives of this study.

3.3 Development Planning in Kenya: An Appraisal of Key Planning Mechanisms

The principal interest in this discussion is to explore how development planning in Kenya has treated the concept of citizen participation and to gauge its successes in fighting poverty. Formal development planning in Kenya started during the colonial period, precisely upon the commissioning of the British Colonial Department and Welfare Act of 1945 (Bennett, 1978; Hazzlewood, 1979; Ochieng', 1989). This Act

85 See the report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development* released by the UN in May 2013.

aimed at guiding the preparation of plans for post-war economic recovery. Subsequently, the colonial government developed a ten-year development plan (1946-55) which it used to obtain finance under the Act[86]. Afterwards, the colonial Government embarked on developing three-year plans, an exercise that continued up to independence in 1963. Colonial development planning was centralized with bureaucrats in Nairobi playing a major role in drawing up the plans. These plans were greatly influenced by the demands of the white settler community and had virtually no input from the African population in the reserves[87].

Like many other developing countries, the Kenya Government under Kenyatta believed at independence that the centralized development planning model offered the essential institutional and organizational mechanism for overcoming the major obstacles to development and for ensuring a sustained high rate of economic growth. The country's first post-independence national development plan covered the period 1964 – 1970 (the red plan), based primarily on the independence party's (KANU) manifesto. The Government revised the plan into the 1966 – 1970 Development Plan (green plan) now based on Sessional Paper Number 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya. Since then, there has been a 5-year cycle of national development plans.

The national development plans sets out priorities in terms of development objectives, targets, budget and major programmes and projects for implementation over a five-year period. These plans are usually developed through a process led by bureaucrats, mainly trained economists in the Ministry of Planning and National Development.

Analysis of various plans developed during the independence period indicates remarkable change in naming of the plans. The early plans (1964 -1970; 1966 - 1970; 1970 – 1974; and 1974 – 8) were known as 'development plans' and did not have

86 It should be noted that before this, there were some form of colonial plans upon which Kenya, like other colonial territories, was administered. However, these plans, especially those in the early post war period, were criticized as being mainly shopping lists of government projects rather than proper plans (See Hazzlewood, 1979).

87 The white settlers exerted great influence on development planning and governance in the colony through their representatives in the Legislative Council (LEGCO) and demands of the settler associations. Prominent personalities in the settler community included Lord Deramere and Captain Grogan. See Bennett (1978) for detailed discussion on the political history of Kenya during the colonial period.

themes to describe their focus. They were renamed to 'national development plans' during the Moi's era (1979 – 1983; 1984 – 1988; 1989 – 1993; 1994 – 1996; 1997 – 2001). Kibaki's first development plan (2003 – 2007) was named the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERSWEC), while the subsequent plans (2008 – 2012; and 2013 – 2017) assumed the title medium term plan as they were meant to operationalise Kenya Vision 2030 that was developed in 2007.

The 1974 – 8 and 1989 – 1993 development plans are particularly notable in being explicit in emphasizing their goal as, the promotion of citizen participation in development planning and work[88]. The 1974 – 1978 Plan emphasizes that it will pursue the participation of all citizens in development activities under the plan, and specifically through two ways; district planning and the special rural development programme begun in 1971 in 6 pilot districts (GoK, 1974:47).

The 1989 – 1983 national development carries as its theme the title "Participation for Progress'. The plan is based on the philosophy of Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya (GoK, 1989). Unlike previous plans that dealt with issues on a sectoral basis, the 1989-1983 plan claims an integrated approach[89].

Analysis of the national plans indicates there are no major differences in the structure, priorities, approach, and performance of Kenya's postcolonial plans and planning process apart from slight differences in the strategy to pursue the plan goals. The plans follow almost the same template, have economic growth as the overarching development objective, and mention poverty reduction and participation as development objectives.

[88] However, it is arguable that participation of citizens in development was a key policy theme throughout Kenya's post colonial history. The participation theme emphasized in Sessional paper No. 10 of 1965 continued to be the foundation of policy-making and planning in the country. What has been different is the extent to which participation has been explicitly articulated in policy and development documents as these two plans did.

[89] This approach "underscores the need for all participants in the economy and particularly government ministries and other agencies to carry out their functions in ways that recognize and promote complementarity and mutual supportiveness, thereby avoiding duplication of effort that would otherwise result in conflict and wastage of resources" (GOK, 1989: xviii).

An assessment of the national development plans by government analysts indicates that each succeeding plan is more ambitious than the previous one and that the plans achieve most of their targets. However, this is contestable in that nearly all the goals pursued by these plans, despite being remarkably similar – economic independence, social justice and improved standards of living – are largely unmet in the country. The same applies to the specific objectives and targets pursued by these plans, such as growth with equity, industrialization, participation, poverty reduction, good governance, sustainable development, among others. Interestingly, these plans record certain challenges in their implementation, which are also largely similar: population growth, and rainfall shortage, among others.

To demonstrate the above points, I quote part of the foreword by President Moi to the 1989 - 93 national development plan (it emphasizes public participation as a critical ingredient for development):

> Our achievements so far have been remarkable by any standards and have been facilitated by the unbroken run of political stability and peace which we have enjoyed over the last twenty five years. During the same period, the welfare of our people has improved tremendously in all fields and it is our desire and hope that this positive trend will continue in the years ahead…Much of the credit for the good progress achieved is due to the wisdom and maturity of the leaders of this country and also to the people of Kenya whose energies, determination to excel, hard work, peaceful co-existence and a sense of common purpose have laid the foundation for Kenya's growth and development. Furthermore, the guidance provided by the ruling party KANU has imbued the Nation with the necessary spirit and motivation and enhanced our unity and self-determination" (GoK, 1989: v).

The above statement reveals the erroneous assessment by government functionaries of the achievement of Government programmes and objectives stated in the plans. It is difficult to be persuaded there was improvement in the lives of the citizens or the "wisdom and maturity" of the leaders, given the high levels of poverty, political detentions, hegemonic character of the political party and politicians in the national public space, among other governance deficits during the pre-plan period.

District Development Planning

Kenya developed the first District Development Plan (DDP) in 1974 in order to operationalise the 1974 - 1978 National development Plan into specific projects and

programmes for district level implementation. This practice continued through a five-year cycle. The process for developing the DDPs up until 1983 was, centralized in practice: they were a reaction to the National Development Plan (NDP) and were largely products of technocrats in the capital city. The 1984 - 88 plan cycle realized the first integrated local level (district) plans and NDP under a decentralized planning system. Instead of DDPs reacting to an already prepared NDP, they were now supposed to contribute to the development of the NDP through a "bottom-up" arrangement outlined in the DFRD policy.

Although the DFRD guidelines required citizens to participate in all the planning phases – formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and revision – the multi-layered planning framework was by design, a state-led mechanism, with the provincial administration, district level public officers and national level bureaucrats playing key facilitation and decision-making roles in the process and contents of the DDPs. Since 2004, the Government required DDPs and NDPs to be guided or built around the Mid Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) in efforts to link district, ministerial and national budget with planning.

Introduced by the Government in 2003, the MTEF was part of budgetary reforms aimed at strengthening financial discipline, accountability and efficient delivery of services to the people. In implementing the MTEF, the government hoped to deal with problems in the preparation of ministerial budgets and the management of public expenditure (Mukui, 2005).

The MTEF identified the development sectors, which development plans (NDPs and DDPs) should follow in the selection of programmes and activities and corresponding budgets. It was a tool or framework for guiding planning[90]. The nine MTEF sectors listed are agriculture and rural development; trade, tourism and industry; physical infrastructure; environment, water and sanitation; human resource development; research, innovation and technology; public administration; and Special programmes. With the new county governments, focus has now shifted from the district to the county as the budgeting unit.

[90] It is important to note that the MTEF is not unique to Kenya as the framework is applied in a number of other African countries including Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, and Ghana.

Local Authorities Development Planning

Local Authorities (LAs) have been in existence in Kenya since 1966. As at the end of 2012, there were 175 local authorities countrywide and these included the City Council of Nairobi, town councils, municipal councils, and county councils[91]. A major component of the LAs structure was the Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF) created in 1999 through an Act of Parliament (The LATF Act, No. 8 of 1998). The objective of LATF was to improve service delivery, financial management and reduce outstanding debts of local authorities (GoK, 2009). The fund comprised 5 per cent of the national income tax collection in any fiscal year. Because of its location at the local levels, the LATF was one of the key resources for fighting rural poverty.

Projects for funding through LATF were to supposed to be identified through the Local Authorities Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) process, in a participatory manner involving local citizens. Introduced in 2001[92] by the then Ministry of Local Government, the LASDAP articulated projects for LATF funding and the LASDAP guidelines were issued in July 2005 and subsequently revised in May 2009 in order to incorporate lessons from implementation (GoK, 2009). In short, the LASDAP process emphasized participation and was supposed to be 'inclusive, issue-based, poverty-focused and results-orientated' (Ibid). The LASDAP process has been viewed as an important development planning innovation with the potential to improve services delivery at local level (Mukui, 2005).

This study sought to test the extent to which the ideals of the LASDAP process and compliance with the process guidelines actually took place. Although the LATF and the LASDAP mechanisms have underpinned development planning and

[91] With phasing out of local authorities under the new constitution, their functions will be undertaken by the County government as spelt out in the Transition Act of 2012.

[92] This was vide Ministerial Circular MLG No. 11/2001 of 19th July 2001. The revised LASDAP guidelines (GoK, 2009: 2) enumerates the purposes of the LASDAPs as to; (1) assist local authorities in planning and prioritising the use of LA resources; (2) encourage local authorities to spend resources on service delivery to citizens; (3) encourage local authorities to meet the needs of the poor; (4) enable stakeholder groups and local citizens to participate in service delivery choices; (5) help build local accountability and transparency in use of resources; and (6) create a harmonious relationship between citizens and the respective LAs to enhance service delivery.

implementation at local level since 2002, their impact in terms of enhanced poverty reduction and citizen participation was minimal, as will be seen in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 based on the experiences of Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties.

Constituency Development Planning

The visibility and importance of planning for development at constituency level, distinctively from the district, came into being in the early 2000s. This followed the establishment of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) by the Kenya Government in 2003 through the Constituency Development Fund Act of 2003. The Act became operational on 15th April, 2004 through Legal Notice 25/2004. The principal purpose of the CDF was to tackle poverty. It was hoped that the fund would help to 'bridge imbalances in regional development caused by the partisan disbursement of funds since independence' (Mukui, 2005). This had led to ongoing complaints by Kenyans, as noted by Maathai (2009: 133 – 4), that their taxes were being misused by the ruling elite and hence there was little in terms of efficient and effective service delivery, especially for the rural poor. By 2008, the CDF allocation had reached KES. 10.1 billion from KES. 1.26 billion allotted in 2004 (Ibid). These allocations represented 2.5 per cent of the Government revenue for distribution to all Kenya's political constituencies using a formula based on the official levels of poverty.

To implement the CDF properly and achieve the greatest value for money, Constituency Development Fund Committees (CDFCs) in most constituencies developed 3 to 5 year Constituency Strategic Plans. However, the preparation of these policy documents has not significantly helped to curtail the mismanagement and misuse of the CDF in many constituencies. The operations of the fund has over the years revealed a long list of weaknesses including misuse of funds, incomplete projects, technical capacity limitations, poor planning, and political patronage. Regular audit reports by government agencies and civil society organizations (for example, the National Taxpayers Association's annual audit reports) have consistently reported misappropriation, wastage or non-use of CDF funds in many Kenyan constituencies. However, the vision and objectives of the CDF are noble and if implemented well can contribute immensely to poverty reduction.

Long range development planning: Vision 2030 and its medium term plans

Kenya's national development policy and planning took a more long-term perspective with the release of Vision 2030 in 2007. This is the country's long-range development blueprint for transforming Kenya into a newly industrialized and middle-income economy characterized by high quality of life for all citizens in a clean and secure environment (GoK, 2007). The plan is operationalised through 5-year plans (medium term plans). The Vision 2030 strategy is anchored on three pillars: economic goal of achieving a sustained growth of 10 per cent per annum; a social target of a just and cohesive society, and a political goal of a transparent democratic system.

Similar to Sessional Paper Number 10 of 1965, Vision 2030 Strategy emphasizes increased economic growth as the core engine of development. It takes a neo-liberal approach to development in which the market and private sector plays a major role. Although the document recognizes the role of citizens in development, it still raises many questions around the extent to which it truly promotes genuine public engagement in key development processes.

The Vision 2030 document generated widespread national appeal setting the hopes of the Kenyan people to high levels. However, its potential to achieve the stated ambitious goals remains to be tested. What is clear is that the plan is hinged on the old economic growth as engine of development school of thought. It lacks vigor in emphasizing human rights in development as does the Constitution and hence there is lack of synch. Neither does it incorporate voluntary action in development strategy yet, this is crucial for fostering greater participation and hence the widest possible benefits for citizens.

The strategy tends to assume that the identified flagship projects will spur and disperse growth elsewhere, yet this may not be the case as past experiences of market-driven development efforts have revealed.

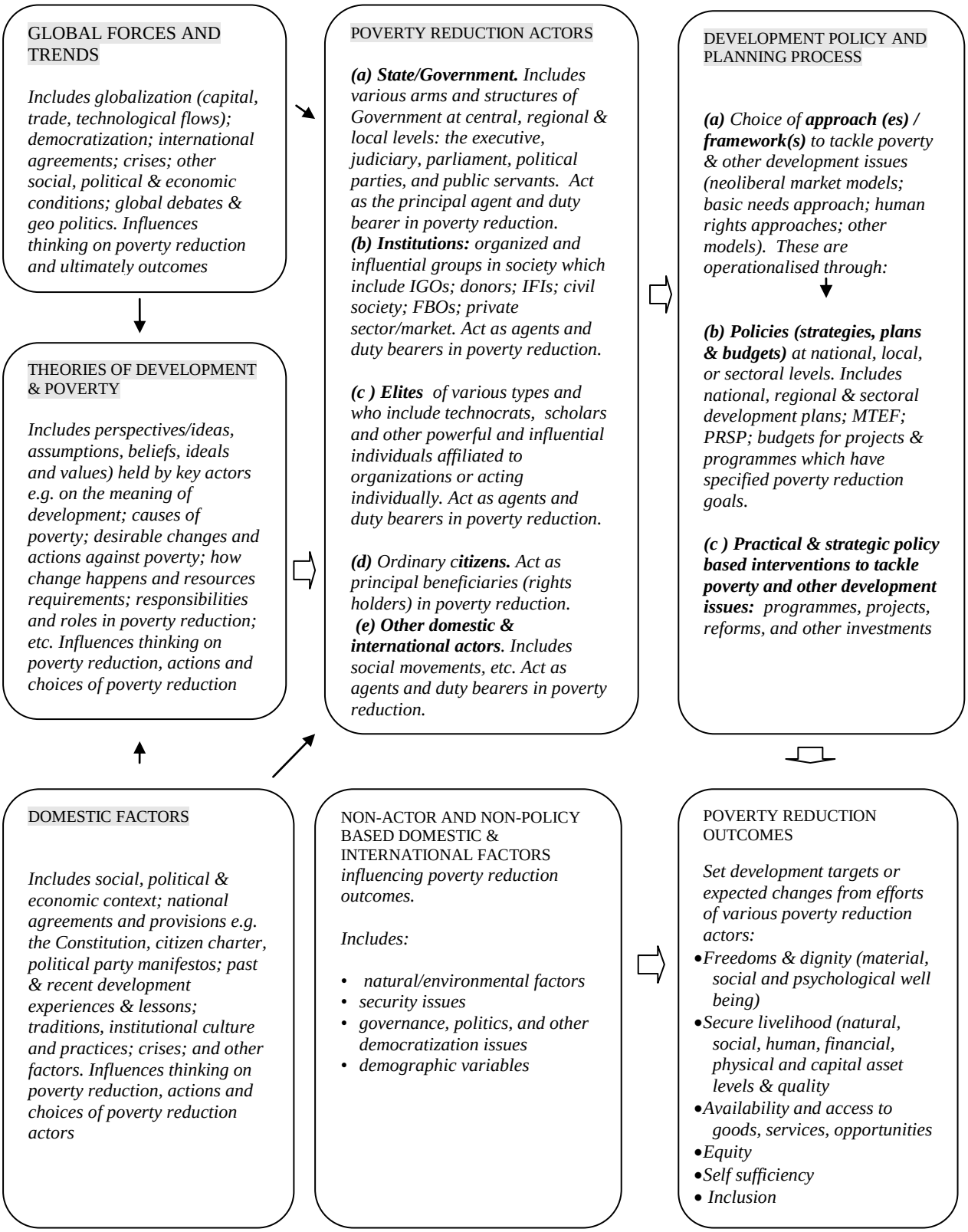
3.4 Conceptual model of development policy and planning practice in Kenya

The character of Kenya's development policy and planning practice alluded above is captured succinctly through the model in Figure 3.1 which demonstrate relationships

between the various policies, factors and actors within the national development space in influencing poverty reduction efforts in the country over the last 50 years. This model describes different actors in the poverty reduction discourse in the country and the various factors that influence the choice of development policy positions and formulation of plans to fight poverty. It depicts connections between four main elements, which have implications for poverty reduction efforts: the development policy and planning process, factors influencing development policy choices and actions, poverty reduction actors and their perceived obligations in fighting poverty, and major poverty reduction outcomes.

The model outlines the actors, factors and interests of domestic and international nature that come into play within the poverty reduction enterprise. Understanding each of the elements and how they are connected is critical for gaining insights on the institutional context of poverty reduction and citizen participation in the country. The role of each of these elements is explained within the boxes in Figure 3.1 and through links indicated by the arrows.

Figure 3.1 Kenya's development policy and planning practice in the context of poverty reduction



Source: Own construction based on primary and secondary data on Kenya

The first component, *poverty reduction actors*, is captured as the central box. These are the social actors within Kenya's development space who are involved directly in poverty reduction efforts. These actors are diverse in terms of interests, values, power, experience and knowledge and also in terms of capabilities in tackling poverty. The actors may be domestic or foreign. Involvement and influence by actors from outside Kenya, through policies and frameworks such as the SAPs and PRSP has indeed been a common feature in the country, and Africa generally as observed by Mkandawire and Soludo (2003: 2 - 3) :

> There has been hardly any development program in much of Africa without tacit or explicit involvement/endorsement of the donors. In several important aspects, many of the policies/programs which have turned out to be 'bad' were at their insistence'. Africa turned out to be an arena for experimentation...development policy experiments of the last 3 decades…the BWIs dictated policies and programmes for Africa, through SAPs and before and after they failed...there was kind of continuation of the surrender of national policy-making to the ever changing ideas of the international experts.

It cannot be taken for granted that the preferences, decisions and actions of these actors are genuinely geared towards poverty reduction or that they prioritise citizen participation in decision-making as critical in fighting poverty. This is because, as already indicated in Chapter 2, power and interests play a key role in influencing the development landscape, including the definition and choice of approaches, policies and programmes for tackling poverty. The poverty 'industry' is, therefore competitive space shaped by power and interests of a diverse range of actors playing it out with certain actors, especially the state, tending to dominate the development space[93]. Indeed, political economy analyses carried out in Kenya (Leys, 1975; Kitching 1980; Hyden, 1984) suggest that vested interests, politics and influence from local and foreign sources have characterized the country's post-colonial development discourse. This has in turn affected the country's development prospects. The decisions and actions of the various actors are influenced by several factors, the major ones being: the values, beliefs and ideas that they have about poverty; their interests and preferences; and domestic and international factors and dynamics.

[93] For example, Sisule (2001),argues that 'inadequate consultation in policy formulation coupled with haphazard implementation and the inability of people and their representatives to influence decisions and allocation of resources" that is one of the sources of the growing problem of poverty in Kenya with the national government being the sole decision- makers in development matters at all levels.

The second component, *development policy and planning process*, comprises three interlinked elements: (1) approaches adopted by the actors to tackle poverty, for example the economic growth productionist approach that Kenya has relied on throughout the independence period; (2) specific policies, strategies, plans and budgets that are decided at national, sector and local levels for tackling poverty, for example the CDF introduced in the country in 2003; and (3) specific interventions, informed or anchored on policy positions or other considerations[94] that are undertaken by various actors to tackle poverty. The policy process has several steps - identification, formulation, adoption, implementation, and monitoring, evaluation and revision of policy positions. These steps offer multiple spaces for deliberation, negotiation and decision-making by the actors in poverty reduction.

The third component, *factors influencing development policy choices and actions*, underscores the point that policymaking is influenced by various factors, global and domestic; and by theories (perspectives/ideas, assumptions, beliefs, ideals and values) held by poverty reduction actors about development. It is evident that Kenya's policy choices and action are informed considerably by the prevailing theories about development and poverty and by the ideological positions and preferences of key global institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and a variety of donors whose influence in the development sphere has been significant in the recent past. Such prolonged preoccupation in Kenya's and Africa's development scene without achieving significant reduction in poverty brings into question the appropriateness and quality of policy advice given by foreign institutions[95].

[94] In Kenya, policy is not always followed or been implemented fully. For example, the Treasury has been accused of sometimes allocating funds to ministries and programmes based on political considerations rather than following or adhering to the published development plans (See Planning Bulletin of March 2013 for more information on this problem). As late as March 2013, the Minister for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030 noted serious weaknesses in the country's planning system which included lack of commitment to plans by line ministries, disregard of the NDP by the Treasury in allocating resources as it often allocates to non-planned activities/programmes based on other considerations, and lack of mechanisms to enforce the budget and implementation of plans. As such, he proposed the formation of a National Planning authority in 2012 to ensure these challenges are dealt with. The cabinet approved the sessional paper anchoring this proposal in 2012.

[95] For more details, see Mills, G (2002: 185-6) who, for instance, notes that the IMF faces two notable credibility concerns: "the soundness of the architecture, personnel and decision making processes within the Fund, particularly the influence of shareholders" and the "the efficacy of policy advice handed out, the nature of its delivery, and its impact".

Poverty reduction outcomes is the fourth component in the model. Poverty-based policy choices and subsequent actions are made in pursuit of improvements or positive changes in particular sectors, dimensions of life, groups of people or the general society. Policies are, therefore, goal-based, focusing on specific changes or outcomes. These outcomes are framed on the basis of Sen's concept of development as freedoms.

In highlighting the main elements of the development and planning process in Kenya, the model helps us to better understand the dynamics of citizen's participation and the behaviour of other poverty reduction actors in the public development space and the implications for rural poverty reduction. We can begin to question why citizens are often defined as principal beneficiaries rather than active participants in fighting poverty. The model prompts us to reflect on the commonly held assumptions that decentralizing government allows increased participation of citizens in local decision-making or allow citizens to more effectively influence policy and development decisions at the local level.

3.5 Major Programmes for Poverty Reduction

The content of the development plans indicate that poverty reduction has been in the national radar agenda throughout Kenya's independence period. More recently, poverty was one of eight key priorities that the international community-led mediation rocess identified for action or reform by the Grand Coalition Government following Kenya's 2007 disputed presidential elections[96].

State-led poverty reduction efforts have been pursued within the national development planning and implementation framework[97]. Implementation of such programmes has mostly been under specific line ministries and government institutions, with the core mandate to fight poverty, including the Poverty Eradication Commission. Many of

[96] The full list of agendas is as follows; constitutional reforms; land reforms; electoral reforms; boundary reforms; police reforms; judicial reforms; employment and poverty reduction; and national cohesion and integration.

[97] Beyond the DDPS and NDPs, many of the programs have been designed under four key planning mechanisms: the larger rural development policy in place since mid-1960s, poverty reduction strategy paper of 2001-4, the National Poverty Eradication Plan (1999 – 2015), and the ERS-WEC launched by the Kibaki government in 2004.

these programmes targeted rural areas although there have also been attempts at tackling urban poverty especially in the slums of major towns and cities. Although information on poverty reduction programmes in Kenya is rather scattered for proper analysis,[98] the major ones are identified in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1 Major government anti-poverty programmes

- *Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) initiated in 1967 in 6 select pilot districts*
- *Core Poverty Program (CPP) initiated in 'the MTEF budget cycle of 2000/1 Financial year to impact positively on the lives of the poor'*
- *Poverty Eradication Commission Programmes such as the Revolving Loans Fund since 2002 and the District Table Baking Services (DTBS) since 2007.*
- *Rural Poverty Reduction and Local Government Support Programme (RPRLGSP) covering the period 2006 – 2010 and included a Ksh. 500 Million Poverty Reduction Fund*
- *Njaa Marufuku Kenya[99] (make hunger history) initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2006*
- *The Slums and Urban upgrading programme initiated by the Government in1999 to tackle poverty (poor housing) in urban areas.*
- *Kazi kwa vijana programme (Employment for the youth) initiated by the government in 2008/9*
- *Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) introduced by the government in 2008/9 to spur economic growth in the rural areas.*
- *ASALs programmes such as the NALEP*
- *Rehabilitation of street children and social protection programme to meet the needs of elderly people*

Source: Developed from secondary data on Kenya

In terms of resources for poverty reduction, government spending at national and local levels has been through the national budget and line ministry budgets and a variety of devolved funds. Poverty funding has been contained within the development budget of the annual national budget and within specific ministry allocations. This allocation has been generally low, usually less than 45 per cent of the total budget, with the rest going to recurrent expenditure where the wage bill takes a huge chunk. In the latest national budget 2013/2014 approved by parliament in July 2013, 43 per cent of KES. 1.6 trillion went to the development budget and the rest to recurrent expenditure. This included KES.13.4 billion for social protection programmes targeting the poor. This development budget allocation marks the highest allocation since independence, both in terms of amount and relative proportion.

[98] For this matter, Omiti and Obunde (2002:22) note that 'to a large extent, data and information on poverty alleviation programmes are either lacking, scattered for comprehensive analyses, participatory planning, budgeting and implementation'.

[99] Njaa Marufuku Kenya programme is one of the key anti-poverty interventions mentioned widely and positively in both Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties. It is a programme initiated and implemented by the then Ministry of Agriculture in the 2005/6 financial year, focused largely on MDG1: specifically 'to reduce poverty, hunger and food insecurity among poor and vulnerable groups' (see PEC's *Poverty Alleviation News*, Vol 4 (July – December 2009) p.7.

Serious problems continue in terms of budget absorption which is historically low and which result in a lot of funds earmarked for development being returned to the national treasury. In the 2012/3 financial year, for instance, only 70 per cent of money allocated to ministries were utilized and only 46 per cent of the development expenditure[100]. As such, citizens, have a right to question why they are taxed in the first place if money was not utilized fully to provide services to them.

Several funds for general development programmes, poverty specific programmes, and special funds are devolved to the grassroots to cater for specific needs. These include the Constituency Development Fund, the Local Authority Transfer Fund, the Constituency Bursary Fund (CBF), Constituency Aids Fund, Community Development Trust Fund, and the Women Enterprise Fund. Others include the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, Constituency Roads Maintenance Fund (RMLF), Fund for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), among others to directly address the MDGs at this level.

Evidently, these devolved funds have different loci; some are devolved and target district level, while others focus either the constituency, county, ward or individual levels. A wide focus such as this is likely to diminish effectiveness of these funds in tackling rural poverty.

3.6 Key Features of Kenya's Development Policy and Planning Practice

State domination of the policy space: Kenya's post-colonial policy and planning history has been characterised by heavy state involvement in the economy through the national planning framework and policies. State control through its officers and institutions in the policy and planning arenas are evident and has affected citizen participation in development. For example, although the guidelines for implementing the DFRD policy required citizens to participate in all the policy phases – formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and revision – the multi-layered planning framework, by design was a state-led mechanism, with the

[100] See, for example, article by Omwenga (2003), *Ministries fail to spend KES. 300 billion*, Daily Nation Newspaper, 9 September 2013.

provincial administration and district level public officers playing the key facilitation and decision-making roles.

Centralization and bureaucratic control of planning: Kenya's post-colonial planning framework can be described as a mixed system, which combined centralized development planning from independence up to the 1980s and a semblance of a decentralized planning model based on the DFRD policy instituted in 1983. Even during the decentralized regime, the tenets of a centralized system did not disappear. For instance, although planning was undertaken at the district level, (decentralized planning) since 1983, the whole process was guided by nationally selected themes and guidelines in order to ensure conformity of district plans to the national goals. District level plans, therefore, cover the same themes, follow the same process, and are presented in the same format. The same elitist groups - mostly economists at district levels, government officials working within different ministries, and the provincial administration led the planning process and determined the content of the final outputs. The state, therefore, played an immense role in development planning at the grassroots and the entire planning process that culminates in a national development plan.

Economic growth approach to development: Undue prominence continued to be placed on a "pro-economic growth for all development model" where market forces of demand and supply played the central role of directing the economy as opposed to a model that emphasized pro-poor economic growth and equitable distribution orientation. The latter so far has received less attention and this is evident in the Investment Programme for Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation and Vision 2030 documents[101]. Economic growth has been the main and enduring development objective pursued in almost all independence national development plans, with slight differences in terms of strategy. No major attempts have been made on the redistribution of this growth, which had led to high social and economic inequalities in the country. The implication of this has been that economic growth, and more generally the neo-liberal ideas propagated under the Washington

[101] Kenya Vision 2030 Strategy document was published by the Kenya Government in October 2007. The Vision strategy is implemented by a semi-autonomous government set secretariat under the stewardship of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), an advisory body formed by the Government in 2004.

consensus have not provided answers to Kenya's development problems, pointing to "paradigm paralysis' and thus the need for alternative development models for the country.

Donor/foreign influence: Since the early 2000s, state–led development planning and the resultant policies and programmes have been founded on donor impetus, especially the conditionality requirements of the World Bank and IMF. The main guide here is the poverty reduction strategy instituted by the WB and IMF in 1999 as conditionality for development aid to low and heavily indebted countries. Kenya has attempted to comply with this conditionality, as evident in its PRSP for the 2001-4 period. Kenya's PRSP framework has evidently faced the challenge of achieving meaningful and democratic participation and the ownership at domestic level.

Limited impact of planning: The existence and implementation of neatly crafted development policies and plans has yielded little success in tackling poverty in Kenya. The Kenyan people have found themselves the target of many development and anti-poverty policy papers (Mboya, 2001) whose implementation has been problematic. The performance expenditure reviews on the development plans, undertaken by the Ministry of Planning and National Development reveals historically low absorption of expenditure for development set for the different line ministries under the plans. This means that money for development is available but is underutilized year after year.

Kenya Vision 2030: While it may be too early to judge the viability of this new strategy in achieving where previous centralized development planning and implementation have failed, it is not immediately clear how different this new development planning model is from previous ones. The fact that increased economic growth is the main emphasis means that the strategy is hinged on the old paradigm of economic growth as the engine of development. The development strategy also tends to assume that identified flagship projects will spur and disperse growth elsewhere, yet this may not be the case as past experiences of market driven development efforts have demonstrated. Emphasis on the rights of people to development, the role of enterprises and CSOs in development, or the incorporation of voluntary action in the development strategy also seems to be lacking or not given emphasizes.

Whether Kenya has truly made progress since political independence is a contested question. To those in power, the Kenyan society has made significant social, political and economic advancement. On the other side the mass of citizens disillusioned with Kenya state. This, as Ochieng' (1989:202) notes, has led to Kenya's history being approached from three different perspectives. The first perspective views Kenya as a "continuing and expanding continuum reflecting institutions and ideas that trace their origins to the colonial period and argues that African nationalism was merely concerned with eliminating the colonial barriers to its rise within the structure of monopolistic exchange, rather than with changing the structure itself". The second perspective is more radical and scathing: it views Kenya as a good example of a neo-colonial African state. The third perspective views Kenya as a success story, and points to general economic and social stability and highly developed system of hotels and other amenities, evidence that it is a successful country in black Africa.

Whatever perspective one takes, it is clear that the Kenyan state has not achieved its dreams at independence of a free and democratic society, characterized by high standards of living for the majority of citizens. The independence leaders set to lead the country towards eliminating poverty, illiteracy and disease. Fifty years later, these issues remain unresolved.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has articulated the character of Kenya's post-independence development policy and planning practice. It has teased out links between development policy and planning practice and poverty reduction. It has described the key elements of Kenya's independence policy and planning history, including key development paradigms and policies that have guided the country's policy and planning processes, and the main anti-poverty programmes that the country pursued in the post-colonial era. The analytical model of development policy and planning practice captured and summarised this discussion more succinctly, and revealed the links between different actors and the factors that influence citizen participation in decision-making and poverty reduction.

The chapter illustrated that development policy and planning practice has a direct relationship with poverty reduction outcomes. It revealed that Kenya has a history of top-down planning and power structures that have not been in favor of the masses. There has been a notable foreign influence on the development space, through policy frameworks of foreign origin that influenced the country policy and planning behaviour, and not least, implementation of development. This influence started with inherited colonial policies and structures at independence, and was evident in the influence by supra national agencies and global institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and the UN system through later day policy frameworks notably the SAPs, PRSP, MDGs and Human Rights development framework. In this class will be found multi-lateral donors including the European Union, DFID, USAID, among others whose recommendations have always found their way into development policy mostly through choice and implementation of specific programmes.

A scan across the five decades of Kenya's political independence revealed striking similarities in terms of the dominance of neo-liberal development thinking, the varying participation level of citizens in development and the shifting in approaches to poverty reduction. These issues are illuminated in the two chapters that follow drawing on concrete evidence from Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties.

CHAPTER FOUR: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN THARAKA NITHI COUNTY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents empirical findings on Tharaka Nithi County, which is one of the two case studies. The chapter begins with an overview of the county where information on the geography, social organisation, state of development and administrative status of the county is outlined. This information is drawn mainly from existing literature, supplemented by relevant observations made in the course of fieldwork. This overview is important because it provides the contextual background for understanding the findings presented in the chapter.

The chapter presents major findings under four broad themes: local perspectives on poverty, public participation in decision-making, state of leadership and quality of institutions in the context of poverty reduction. These themes are directly aligned to the four study objectives. The findings on the poverty theme are particularly critical as they provide the contextual basis for understanding the rest of the Tharaka Nithi citizen participation - poverty reduction narrative.

As suggested by Haralambos and Heald (1980), any serious effort at understanding issues around poverty reduction must first begin by clearly defining the problem. In the present case, it means constructing the local meanings and reflections on poverty and poverty reduction. The chapter devotes a large portion to the presentation of findings on the citizen participation theme, which is the principal issue running throughout the thesis; connecting poverty reduction with the macro level variables of leadership, institutions and development planning. Findings on this theme cover several dimensions including an examination of the public decision-making channels available to ordinary people, the extent and quality of participation in these spaces, and the constraints faced by ordinary citizens in achieving genuine participation in decision-making within the available spaces.

One of the principal interests in analyzing the local decision-making spaces is to understand the extent to which they form a critical locus for decision-making in

poverty reduction. This is an important aspect in the narrative, especially in recognition of the fact that power, interests and thus social conflicts are inherent in the development space as noted in Chapters 2 and 3 and thus likely to affect performance of ordinary citizens in decision-making and poverty reduction efforts.

The content and quality of the local spaces and opportunities for participation is done generally, and more specifically through an examination of four selected processes (DDP process, PRSP process, CDF process and LASDAP process). This examination draws more carefully from the citizen participation framework (Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation) discussed in Chapter 2. Findings on the citizen participation theme demonstrate the relationship between citizen participation in local decision-making and poverty reduction and distil positive examples of how citizen participation has enhanced poverty reduction in the county.

In the presentation of the findings, tables and boxes that are based largely on the study data have been used to summarise findings on some of the issues investigated in the study. Throughout the chapter, real voices, transcripts of interviews and observations are used to support or expound on the findings. This enables better capture of the perspectives of the study participants and, in so doing give them a voice in this thesis. For confidentially purposes, the dates and where appropriate the location of the interviews and key informant discussions are provided instead of the names of the study participants.

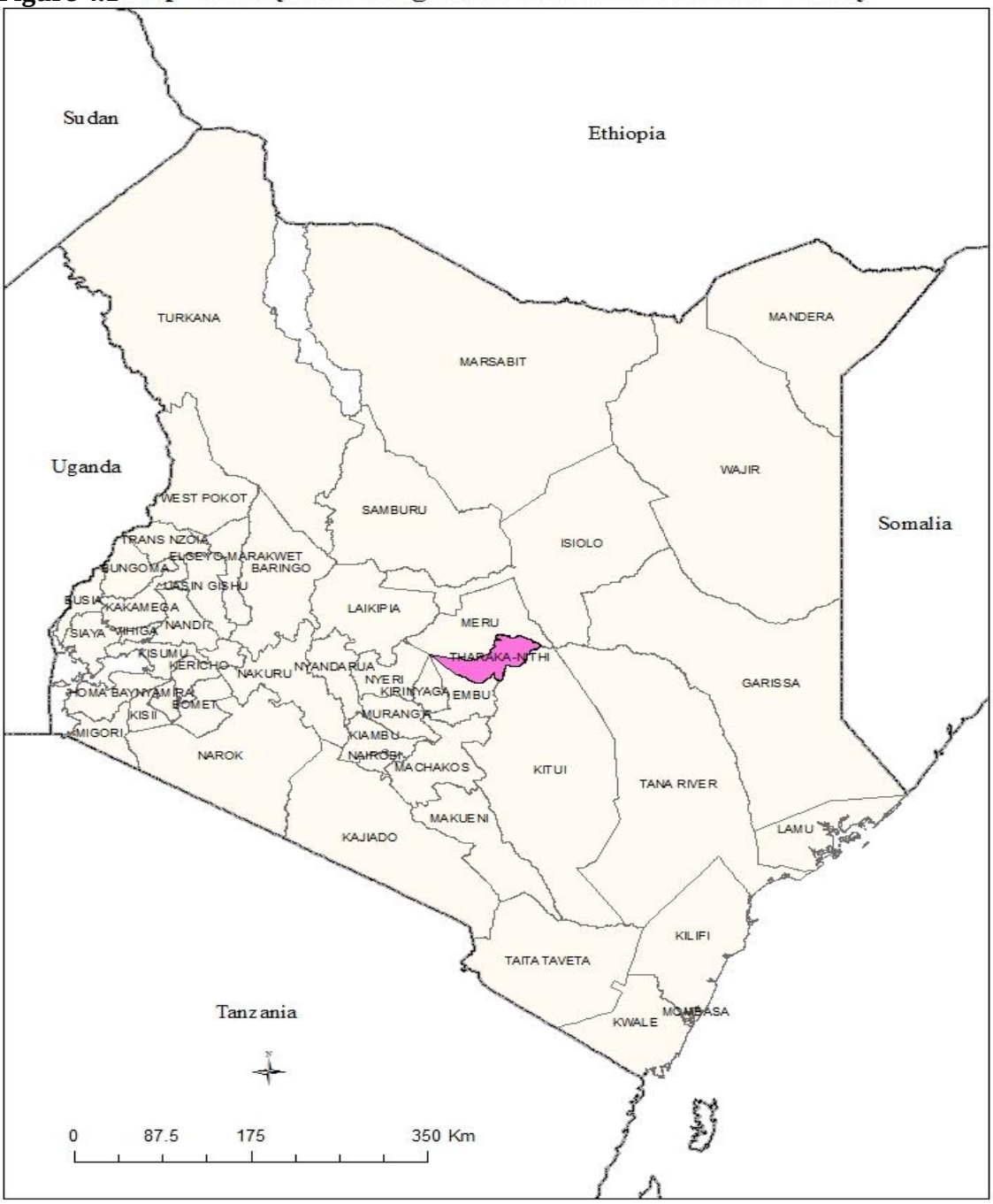
4.2 An Overview of Tharaka Nithi County

Tharaka Nithi County is located almost at the centre of Kenya, astride the equator and within the "Mount Kenya East Region". It comprises the former Tharaka Nithi District carved from the larger Meru District in April 1992. The County consists of four districts (Tharaka North, Tharaka South, Maara and Meru South[102]), three constituencies (Tharaka, Maara and Chuka–Igambang'ombe), 15 electoral wards, 60 administrative locations, and 164 sub-locations (GOK, 2013a).

[102] The district headquarters are at Gatunga, Marimanti, Chogoria and Chuka townships respectively.

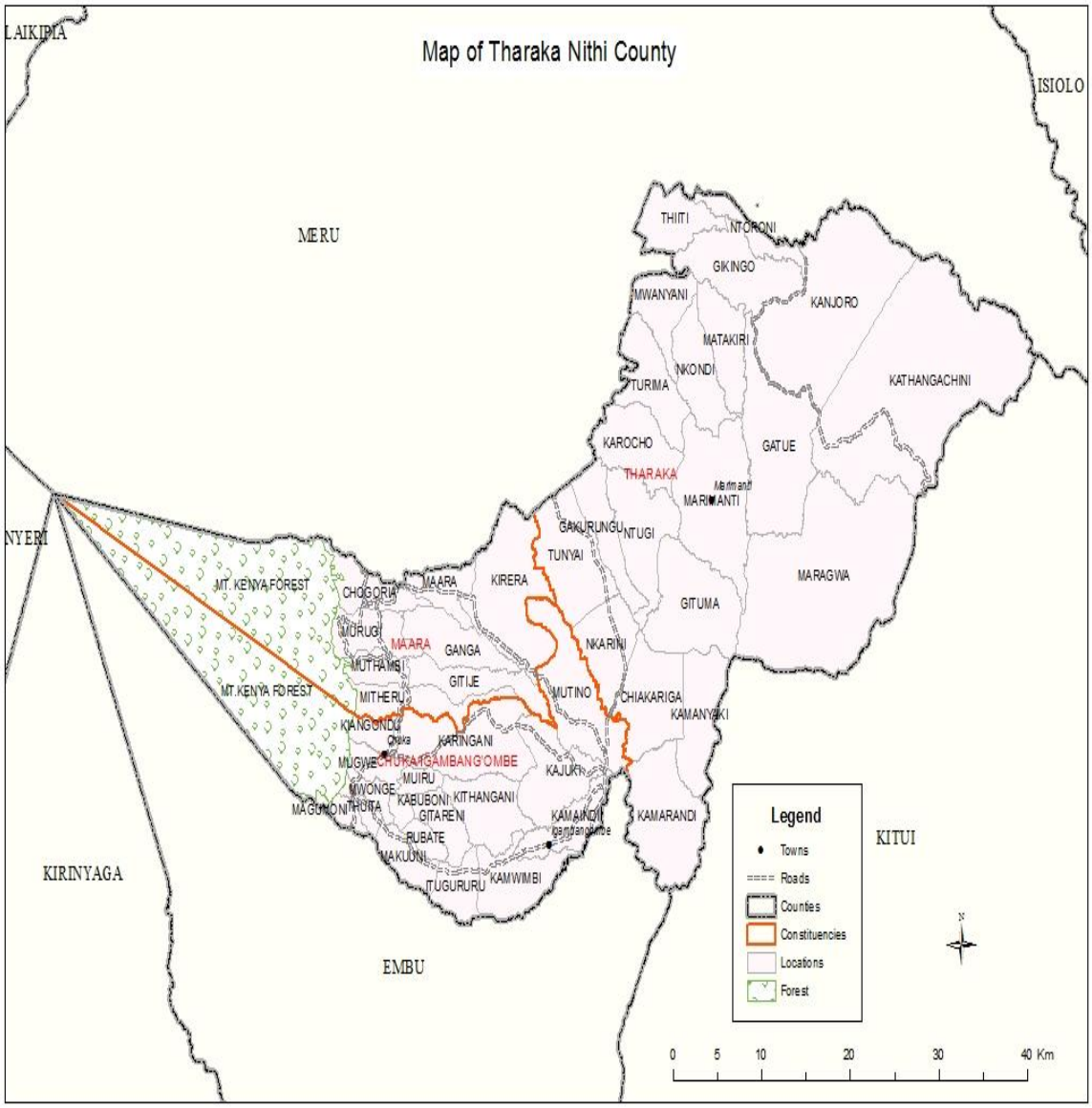
The Tharaka Nithi County Development Profile gives the location of the area as latitude 000 07’ and 000 26’ South and between longitude 370 19’ and 370 46’ East. The county borders Mt Kenya to the West and three other counties: Meru to the North and North East, Embu to the South and South West, and Kitui to the East and South East (GOK, 2013a). Tharaka Nithi County has a total area of 2,638.8 km² and its administrative headquarter is at Kathwana township within Tharaka South District. The 2009 National Population and Housing Census Report (GOK, 2010) gives the county population as 365,330 (178,451 males and 186,879 females) which represent 0.95 per cent of the national population (38,610,097). Tharaka Nithi is therefore one of the smallest counties in Kenya in terms of population.

Figure 4.1 Map of Kenya Showing Position of Tharaka Nithi County



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics Maps, 2014

Figure 4.2



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics Maps, 2014

The inhabitants of Tharaka Nithi County belong to four related communities: the Tharaka who inhabit Tharaka constituency, Chuka who occupy Chuka-Igambang'ombe constituency, and Muthambi and Mwimbi communities found in Maara constituency. The culture of these communities, especially language, marriage, food and livelihood activities are similar. Their social organisation and customs have notable aspects such as the clan system, age set system ('Gaaru"), council of elders

(Njuri), circumcision rites for males and females[103], payment of bride price, and practice of witchcraft. Although lumped within the larger Meru ethnic group[104], the Tharaka and Chuka communities are, according to oral traditions, related and distinct tribes, while the Muthambi and Mwimbi belong to the Ameru grouping (Nyaga, 1997).

The County has an agricultural base with an economy revolving around the production and marketing of tea, coffee and dairy products in the upper zone (Chuka-Igambang'ombe and Maara constituencies) and millet, sorghum, green grams, pigeon peas and cowpeas in the lower zone comprising Tharaka constituency[105.] Livestock keeping and trade are also notable in Tharaka constituency. The County has deposits of gemstones, sand and quarries[106]. The Meru National Park is located in the northern part of the county, specifically in Tharaka North District[107]. There are several landmarks in the county with potential to boost local development. For example, the gentle eastern slopes of Mt. Kenya border Chuka and Maara districts and the area has several potential sites for tourism development. Major hills in the county including Kirigicha, Gikingo, Kiagu, Kijege, Ntugi, and Mutijwa are potential sites for tourism, wildlife conservation, and forest products. There is also great potential for irrigated agriculture in the county as over 13 permanent rivers and streams flow through the area, especially in Tharaka constituency, before draining into Tana River[108].

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[103] The County is one of the major areas in Kenya where female genital mutilation (FGM) was once rampant. The tradition has declined significantly following awareness and sensitization campaigns in the area by the government and non-state institutions since the early 1990s.

[104] The Ameru ethnic group comprises seven related sub-tribes that inhabit the two counties of Meru and Tharaka Nithi. These are the Imenti (including the Igoji and Miutini), Tigania and Igembe, who occupy Meru County and the Tharaka, Chuka, Muthambi and Mwimbi, who are found in Tharaka Nithi County.

[105] The two Tharaka districts are good for cotton farming and this crop thrived as a major crop in the area in the 1980s and early 1990s but its production declined in the mid-1990s chiefly due to marketing problems that faced the cotton sector during that period. Over the years, millet and green grams, considered traditional food of the Atharaka, have increasingly become the major trading items in the area's burgeoning cereal market.

106 See the Tharaka Nithi County Profile (2013) and the local districts development plans for 2008 – 2012 for more details.

[107] Both Meru and Tharaka Nithi counties claim ownership of the Park. In 2012, and as part of the preparations for the 2013 General Elections, the Independent Boundaries and Electoral Commission (IBEC) demarcated the Park to Meru County, which prompted the people of Tharaka Nithi to challenge the decision at the High Court. The IEBC decision stoked old feelings and claims of marginalisation among the people of Tharaka Nithi and aggravated the long-standing problem of land disputes between the two counties. Land ownership and unclear administration boundaries, as well as the Meru national park question remain unresolved issues in the region.

[108] These include rivers Tana, Ura, Thangatha, Mukothima, Thanantu, Kathita, Thingithu, Mutonga and Maara.

A number of civil society organisations (including NGOs, CBOs and SHGs[109]) operate in the county, besides FBOs, the main one being the Tharaka Nithi Deanery Development Office (TNDDO) that carries out economic empowerment activities throughout the county. Tharaka Nithi is also one of the few counties where the piloting of poverty reducing interventions (MDG Quick Win Initiatives) under the MDGs unit in the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, and Poverty Eradication Commission have taken place since the early 2000s.

The County Development Profile estimates the absolute county poverty level at 35 per cent, rural absolute poverty at 40 per cent, and absolute food poverty at 48.9 per cent (GoK, 2013)[110] . The latest official poverty statistics (2005/6 KIHBS report) give absolute poverty in Tharaka constituency as 48.7 per cent and 31 per cent in Nithi constituency. However, the local people are of the view that the poverty level is much higher than that depicted in official statistics and has been increasing over the years. It is estimated that a large part of the population in the county, about 30-50 per cent is food insecure[111] implying food poverty is a major issue in the area besides land ownership disputes, and poor infrastructural development particularly roads and electricity.

It is important to understand that Tharaka Nithi County comprise two parts with different ecological conditions and thus economic potentials. While the upper zone (Maara and Chuka-Igambang'ombe constituencies) is endowed with good climate and soils that support the growing of major cash crops such as tea and coffee, as well as horticultural farming, bee keeping, and dairy farming, the lower part of the county (Tharaka Constituency) is semi-arid hence accounting for the highest incidence of

[109] These include NGOs such as Save the Children Canada, GTZ Germany, Care International, Plan International, Christian Children Fund, Kenya Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services, Compassion, among others. The Tharaka Nithi County Development Profile indicate there were over 200 CBOs, over 10 FBOs, over 500 registered SHGs and 6 active NGOs in the County in 2013.

[110] The County poverty statistics appear to be unreliable and tend to be lifted from the local district development plans for the 2008 – 2012 period. Key informants and records at the district statistical office revealed that the county poverty level could be higher than the stated government statistics. This is likely to be the case considering the widely held view that the 2005/6 KIHBS figures were an under estimate of the true poverty situation in the area.

[111] See, for example, Brewin (2007), Njiro (1994) and GoK (2008) for more details on the food situation in the area.

poverty in the county[112]. Tharaka is a marginalised constituency and perhaps one of the least developed areas in the Mount Kenya region (Smucker & Wisner, 2008). Food shortage in this drought-prone area is frequent (Njiro, 1994; GoK, 2008).

The differentiation of the two areas is important in order for us to understand the findings discussed in this chapter. As indicated in the methodology section in Chapter 1, a large part of the primary data informing the findings was obtained from Tharaka Constituency, where poverty is most pronounced. Thus, the findings and conclusions of this chapter should be interpreted with this fact in mind.

There are signs of a lack of structured programmes since independence in the county, and especially so in Tharaka Constituency, to curb local poverty despite a growing population. The local community has experienced conflict with neighbouring communities for a long time, resulting in a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who eventually become impoverished. Private investment and development projects by CSOs, FBOs, BSOs, and even government institutions, are few and thus have little impact on 'services poverty' in the county.

4.3 Local Perspectives on Poverty and Poverty Reduction

The local dialects (Ki-tharaka, Ki-chuka, Ki-mwimbi and Ki-muthambi) have largely similar terms for describing poverty: "ukea" (poverty), "thiina" (having a difficulty), "kuaga" (lacking), and "ubatu" (being needy). Ukea was the more commonly used term. Accordingly, a person experiencing poverty conditions is referred to as "nkea" (poor), 'muthiini' (one with a lot of needs), "murombi" (one who begs or perennially seeks assistance) and "ndaca" (one who is useless or of no good use to society).

"Nkea' and 'muthini' are considered polite and all encompassing, and were, therefore, commonly used to describe the poor. Persons perceived as having the 'potential' or ability to move out of their present poverty conditions were not generally defined as

[112] Tharaka Constituency has generally low agricultural productivity, high geographical and seasonal variability in rainfall availability, faces frequent droughts, and has poor physical and industrial infrastructure. The local people eke a living mainly by practising marginal farming where they cultivate drought resistant crops such as millet, sorghum, and legumes (mainly green grams, cow peas, and pigeon peas), and maize and beans in a few areas. Local people also rear a variety of animals (cattle, goats, sheep and poultry) and practise bee keeping.

poor. Instead, they were perceived to be facing 'difficulties' of a temporary nature. This category included the youth and people known to be hard working but who had slipped into poverty for one reason or another. This application of the 'potentiality' concept within the Tharaka Nithi poverty discourse resonates well with Sen's (2002) concept of 'capability', which refers to one's ability to do something. The local view, therefore, takes into consideration a person's past experiences and future prospects in determining whether they are classified as poor or not.

The local people perceived poverty to be widespread, high and increasing. Official poverty data on the area were widely viewed as underreported and were therefore contested especially in the marginalised areas of Tharaka. Here, it was felt the Government had manipulated poverty data on the area for political reasons or other considerations. The statistical records obtained during the fieldwork estimate the poverty levels in Tharaka Constituency to be about 64 per cent, implying a 15 percentage points above the KIHBS figures of 48.7 per cent. However, the latter continue to be the basis for development planning for the area.

Local perceptions on the etiology and persistence of poverty fit four broad categories of factors: physical-ecological (rainfall, soils, pests and diseases), socio-cultural (beliefs, values, and lifestyles), economic (low income, high costs for services and landlessness) and political explanations (poor leadership, lack of services, and insecurity/conflicts). Physical-ecological factors were viewed as the main causes of poverty, understandably because Tharaka Nithi County is a predominantly agricultural area. This viewpoint concurs with the findings of a study on Chronic Poverty in Kenya (Brewin, 2007) which found inadequate and unpredictable rainfall to be the greatest cause of chronic poverty in Tharaka and the neighbouring Kitui County[113]. Poverty in the study area is not new but is historical and entrenched as indicated by an ordinary citizen involved in the study who explained the concept as follows:

> Poverty is not new here but an old problem. We inherited it from our ancestors. They had accepted poverty as part of life... people could come and stay at your home, eat, and work for you until life caught up with them. People

113 Brewin's study found a large number of causes of chronic poverty, which it grouped into seven sometimes over-lapping categories: environmental/natural; social/cultural; spatial; economic; political; historical and health/lifecycle.

> started realizing we are poor when our children began to join secondary schools as we faced difficulties in raising fees. While the rich can afford university fees, you cannot so you realize you are poor! Life was not expensive in the old days, and you could stay and go without 'coins' in your pocket for days. You also did not require expensive clothing, good housing or to wear shoes. People were also benevolent those days. Those in need of food were fed and those in need of other kinds of help obtained it without being chastised. This is impossible today; you have to toil to feed yourself and your family (Interview, 17/6/2012).

Explanations why poverty persists in Tharaka Nithi County generally tend to match the known causes of rural poverty in Kenya. For example, the 2009 report "10 years in the fight against poverty" by PEC identifies the causes of poverty as poor physical infrastructure (e.g. roads); low returns from agriculture; lack of industries and hence lack of employment; lack of access to capital for investments; high cost of inputs; and insecurity in some areas[114].

Ordinary citizens defined poverty reduction within the purview of normal living. Thus, dealing with poverty was not a special task or activity. Local leaders and elites conceived poverty reduction in terms of engaging in positive 'extra-ordinary' or 'extra-normal' activities and behaviour in a sustained manner. This meant, for example, working harder and practicing improved way of farming and other economic activities. There was convergence of opinion among elites, leaders and institutions that only a minority of the local ordinary citizens were actively involved in tackling poverty because most were undertaking farming activities on small land holdings with little diversification, or use of improved technology. At the same time, some ordinary citizens made 'extra efforts" to fight poverty, especially through increased investment in education[115] and housing.

[114] Many of the causes of poverty identified above tend to match views contained in the Tharaka District Vision and Strategy document for the 2005 – 2015 period which identifies various weaknesses (low investment in education, infrastructure such as roads, irrigation canals, factories, hospitals and telecommunications pushed to the limit; policies from the centre; difficulties in uptake of new ideas such as attitude towards the girl child and attachment to cattle) and threats (population, investment, shocks) in the area which, as can be expected, have implications for poverty.

[115] Education as a widely accepted pathway out of poverty deserves further elaboration. Education is one of the largest cost areas for most households in the study area. Private academies have emerged in the area as a mitigation to low of standard education offered in public schools. Located mostly near public primary schools, private academies attract learners from both well-to-do and ordinary households. Local people enroll their children into private academies in the hope that the children will perform well in national examinations and go on to do well in life than they would within the public education system. However, such efforts appear to lead some households to slip into poverty in the short term because disposable income available for non-school costs become significantly reduced; the

Generally, local citizens' poverty reducing efforts were more visible and successful in certain sectors. There was, for example, increased activity and notable improvements in the education, housing and income dimensions of poverty, indicating that local people were addressing these dimensions of development and poverty reduction. Health, food and water poverty however appeared to be still high.

Box 4.1 Observations on poverty status in selected sectors in Tharaka Nithi County

1. ***Education:*** *Good education increasingly seen as an important indicator of wealth and non-poor status and as a major pathway out of poverty. Most families made efforts to educate their children; more adults going for higher education; education-related costs took large proportions of income for most of the ordinary households; education per capita (no. of people with form 4 level of education and above) increased rapidly since 2000s onwards; falling school dropout rates; and increasing school retention.*
2. ***Shelter/housing:*** *Good housing increasingly seen as an important indicator of wealth and non-poor status; most households (over 60 per cent) have 'mabati' roofs (corrugated iron sheets) for most houses in a homestead; rapid decrease in "traditional" houses (mud huts); high cost of house construction materials and low incomes affecting improvements in housing.*
3. ***Income:*** *Rain fed agriculture still main economic activity for vast majority of households; increasing adoption of new technologies e.g. seed varieties – watermelon, sorghum; ox-ploughing used by most farming households, seasonal leasing of farms common. New commercial activities such as running of shops and cereal trading; more people taking credits and loans from banks and institutions like KWFT; increased commercial activities in local markets which are also expanding ; increasing migration of youth and educated people to towns in search of employment; more people getting into regular jobs – police, army, and teaching.*
4. ***Food and water:*** *Little differentiation between cash crops and food crops especially in Tharaka constituency; selling of farm produce at low prices, occasional famines that leave most ordinary households devastated; traditional food storage methods such as "mururu" abandoned by most households; rivers and streams still main sources of water for most households; water borne diseases especially typhoid a main cause of morbidity for many households.*
5. ***Health:*** *Most households seeking medical help for serious illnesses; preventable diseases like malaria still a big problem, hygiene related illnesses common, medical care takes large proportions of income for most of the ordinary households.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

Ordinary citizens perceived themselves as the first line responsibility in tackling poverty because "it was they who were most affected by poverty". The poverty reducing responsibilities of ordinary citizens was in two major forms: the first is what we describe as the "commission side" responsibilities. These entailed local citizens engaging in activities that pulled them out of poverty or prevented them from descending into poverty.

cost per child in academies is comparatively higher than in public primary schools. This implies the welfare status of such households drops in the short term. The question emerges as to whether or not proliferation of academies is contributing to increased poverty status in the study area in the short term. This may be an important question for further research.

This included efforts such as working hard in one's livelihood activities, undertaking savings and investments, participating actively in anti-poverty programmes, and making appropriate family planning, income and expenditure choices. The second set of responsibilities ("omission side" behaviours) concerns personal lifestyle. This involved avoiding actions that are likely to aggravate an individual's poverty conditions or those that push people into poverty. These include laziness, alcoholism, crime, wasting of property, and large family sizes.

Ordinary people barely fulfilled these responsibilities and gave a variety of reasons. The common reason was that their socio-economic circumstances (cycle of poverty) acted as a barrier and hence they required adequate support from other actors, especially the government and non-state institutions, elites and leaders. They accused these development agents of failing to offer adequate support, for example, access to credits and grants required to initiate economic projects.

While not denying that they could do more to tackle poverty or to help ordinary citizens improve their conditions, the leaders, elites and institutions pointed out that the attitude and lifestyles of ordinary people, in particular their dependence on the government and other third parties for solutions is a major contributor to the persistence of poverty in the area. One key informant noted that local politicians are aware of the "dependency syndrome" and "government-support" mindset of the ordinary citizens and exploit it to obtain votes. Perhaps this explains why poverty reduction features in every election cycle as a major campaign issue in the study area.

4.4 Perspectives and Spaces for Citizen Participation in Decision-making

There was convergence of opinion among respondents from the different study participant categories that citizen participation is important for development for two main reasons: it enhances project ownership and sustainability and second, because participation is a human rights issue enshrined in the Kenya Constitution. Of the two reasons, the project ownership and sustainability issues tend to be more significant among local government officials and development institutions, as explained by a local government official:

> Involving common people in decision-making is truly important because development projects are meant to improve lives of the masses (common people). A development project that does not involve them is not an effective project. When common people (Wanjiku) participate, there is ownership and there will be change (Key informant discussion, 25/6/2012).

The contribution of ordinary people is generally viewed as important throughout the policy process although some elites and leaders feel that such input is critical at the policy formulation stage. The explanation is that ordinary citizens, and also other residents, have good insights of the local environment and problems that need to be tapped in coming up with practical solutions. This requires the genuine participation of ordinary people in policy-planning processes whose local definition includes the concepts of mutual respect, accountability, transparency, and fair representation as indicated in Box 4.2.

Box 4.2 Key features of genuine participation

- *Local citizens have un-hindered opportunity to 'voice' and explain their thoughts;*
- *Views of common people are listened to, respected and included in final decisions;*
- *Agendas and decisions originate from local citizens not officials and elites alone;*
- *Representatives of local people are elected transparently;*
- *Common people participate in all phases of development not just some spaces and stages;*
- *Having majority representation in decision-making forums;*
- *Environment where transparency and accountability are evident.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

The concept tends to be defined in practical terms such as what should happen or take place for the meaningful involvement of citizens to occur. According to the findings, there is consensus that achieving optimal participation of the ordinary citizen in policy-planning processes is difficult in the absence of civic education and training for citizens as well as transparent and accountable government officials and systems. The specific constraints will be described shortly in the ensuing presentation.

As in many other rural locations in Kenya, there are a variety of formal spaces and opportunities for decision-making in Tharaka Nithi County. This significantly demonstrates the local reach of the decentralisation reforms undertaken in Kenya beginning in the early 1980s and highlighted in Chapter 3. Policy and planning processes such as PRSP, District development plan process, and most recently the

County Development Profile process of 2012 have taken place. Box 4.3 identifies major citizen participation spaces for decision-making in the county.

Box 4.3 Formal participation spaces for decision-making in Tharaka Nithi County

Policy/planning processes: *Poverty reduction strategy paper process, District development plan process, County development profile preparation process, Local authorities service delivery action plan process, Local authorities strategic plan process, Constituency strategic plan process, MTEF budget process, and the Community action plan process.*
Development committees (structures*): District development committee, District executive committee, Sub- District (divisional) development committee, District Gender Social Development committee, Location development committee, Sub location development committees, District poverty eradication committee, Focal area development committee, Peace committees, Ward development committees ,Bursaries committees, CDF Committee, and the CDF Project management committees.*
Development meetings/forums*: County development forum, County investment forum, Community meetings (Barazas), Project/programme meetings, and CBOs/SHGs meetings.*
Workshops, conferences and training sessions
Development research and evaluations: *Participatory poverty assessments, Participatory rural appraisals, Government surveys, Project monitoring and evaluations, and Research projects by scholars, CSOs and government.*
Development projects/programmes: *Harambee projects, programmers by State and non-state actors.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

Ordinary people were not generally aware of how most of these spaces operate nor have they engaged in them. They were more familiar with a few spaces: community barazas, SHGs and CBO meetings, and the CDF processes. This means critical processes such as the DDP, County Profile, LASDAP, PRSP, and MTEF budget process remained unknown. As such, the ordinary people did not advance their interests or exercise the right to meaningful participation as enshrined in the Constitution and human rights conventions.

Many of the available decision-making spaces were dominated by elites, leaders and institutions as revealed from probing few critical decision-making spaces described shortly. These actors were mostly the ones who draw up the agenda, decide on the venues and participants, facilitate the deliberations, document and publish the decisions, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of the decisions. The content and quality of participation in these decision-making avenues is, therefore, questionable. Input of ordinary people is mostly through representatives who, as it will be discussed later in the chapter do not appear to fully serve the interests of the

common people. The ensuing examination of a few decision-making spaces for poverty reduction will illuminate the above issues.

Ordinary People's Experiences in the District Development Planning Process

Meaningful citizen participation is the cornerstone of the DFRD policy upon which district development planning in Kenya is based. The policy champions an elaborate mechanism that seeks people's participation in decision-making at village level, sub-location level, location level, divisional level and finally district level leading to an integrated district development plan. The DDP process for Tharaka District for the period 2008 – 2012 is a good example for illustrating the extent and quality of ordinary people's participation in development policy and planning at the grassroots. The foreword to the DDP notes that it was a product of broad based and participatory consultations among a cross section of stakeholders. The plan was developed through workshops or consultative forums held at the division and district headquarters. However, the process that was followed, as explained by a key informant based at the Tharaka District Development Office, appeared to be less inclusive than anticipated in the DFRD manual. The participants of that DDP process were mostly the elites and officials nominated by local level government officials.

Box 4.4 A snapshot of the Tharaka District Development Plan process, 2008 – 2012
The process of obtaining views was done by division i.e. in all 7 divisions of Tharaka. Fifty stakeholders were invited per division. The District Officer, education staff, and technical heads of departments were instrumental in selecting the 50 stakeholders per division. Those selected were mostly local people who were active in development matters e.g. leaders of successful women groups and opinion leaders. Attempts were made to follow the DFRD manual guidelines although not to the letter because of time and other constraints. In the divisional workshop the 50 stakeholders who attended listed their priorities and resolutions which were captured in 7 reports. The contents of these reports made up the DDP community consultations, which ended with the submission of the reports to the District Development Officer (DDO). Compilation and publication was organized by the DDO's Office and the national planning office in Nairobi (Key informant discussion, 21/6/2012).

Source: Research data (2012-3)

While the DPP process described above appears to be a systematic planning process, there are three notable issues with implications for the quality of citizen participation. First, those who attended the divisional consultations to represent community interests were typically "elites" who, as alluded to in Chapter 1 and 2, could not be expected to fully represent the interest of the common man. Second, they were selected by government officials based on their involvement in local development. As such, they

tend to lack the broad mandate of the local people. Third, the local and national development and planning office undertook the final steps in the plan preparation without any recourse to local citizens, whether directly or indirectly. Instructively, neither does the DFRD guideline provide for a process where citizens validate the project proposals before publication of the plan.

A BSO representative involved in the study commented on ordinary citizens' experiences in the DDP process, thus:

> Planning and selection of participants for the DDP process should be at lower levels and not District level as is usually done. At the District level, the District Commissioner writes to the District Officer, who then write to the Chief who next asks the Assistant Chief to give the names of people to attend the DPP process at division or district level. The sub-chief and chief choose participants based on their own criteria. There is no representation of the common people. Ordinary citizens need feedback about what is happening but this does not occur (Key informant discussion, 21/6/2012).

A considerable number of the study participants including the local elites had not seen a District Development Plan before and were keen to peruse the copy we had, confirming that the Government made limited effort to disseminate DDPs locally after they were published. This finding tends to contradict the Ministry of Planning, National Development and Vision 2030 claim that serious dissemination exercises took place. For this matter, the Ministry pointed out as follows out:

> The ministry developed 148 DDPs 2008-2012, and in the month of December embarked on nationwide dissemination programme of the DDPs together with the Kenya Vision 2030 and its first MTP. The programme involved conducting public forums at all provincial headquarters and some district headquarters to sensitize the masses on the policy documents and their implications on national development agenda. The objectives were to ensure that the ordinary mwananchi understands and owns the documents, which aim at providing guidance on policy implementation at district and constituency levels (GoK, 2009: 26)[116].

Direct observations suggested the absence or limited opportunities for ordinary citizens, and local elites to access important policy documents such as the DDPs. Yet, an important component of the district planning process was the availability of information to citizens to ensure that they were informed about government policies and progress made against the development plans. This was supposed to be enhanced

[116] See the Ministry's Planning Bulletin of July – December 2009.

by the establishment and equipping of a district information and documentation centre (DIDC) at the district level. No functional DIDCs were observed in the four districts in the study area.

Key DFRD structures (DDC, LDC and sub-LDCs) were found to be dysfunctional, with limited capacity or un-conducive avenues for participatory decision-making in local development. A perusal of records and key informants revealed, for example, that DDC and LDC meetings had not taken place in a number of administrative units for as long as a year[117]. The same was found among a number of LDCs. Review of minutes of LDCs and observations on local LDCs[118] revealed several weaknesses (but also some strengths) for these spaces as critical loci for local decision-making. Notable strengths and weaknesses are identified in Box 4.5.

Box 4.5 Some observations on local LDC processes relevant to citizen participation for poverty reduction (strengths and weaknesses)

Strengths: *Composition of membership sensitive to gender balance and special groups; comprise representatives from various interest groups – government, community , and local institutions; deliberations were broad in terms of sector coverage; robust discussion on certain issues, especially those affecting elites (electricity; security; fertilizers; and grants);and considerable reference made to ordinary citizen issues.*
Weaknesses: *Lack of proper recording of decisions; lack of clear decisions with time frame and responsibilities; lateness of participants and frequent absences; irregularity of meetings sometimes up to one year; some participants, especially government officials not prepared well for meeting*.

Source: Research data (2012-3)

The DDPs were usually developed through 'consultative' processes involving mostly the local elites, government officials and representatives of institutions and special interest groups. There was no feedback or validation process involving the common people. Decision-making structures that fed into the DDP process were lacking in certain important respects as indicated in Box 4.5. Implementation of the DDPs was also problematic and largely marked by laxity or inefficiency among government officials and limited input of ordinary people.

[117] Notable examples include Tharaka North District DDC that failed to meet for most of 2011/2012
[118] This is in reference to a LDC meeting attended in Tharaka Constituency in 2012.

A key informant summarized the extent and quality of participation of ordinary people in the DDP process thus:

> Participation of ordinary citizens in LDC, DDC and DDP processes is very low compared to the CDF process, which involves ordinary citizen through proposal submission and giving views to CDF committees formed at sub-location, location, division and district level. Local government administrators are not happy with the CDF way of doing things as it exposes them (Key informant discussion, 6/4/2013).

However, the Community Action Plan (CAP) process, which has links to the DDP process (implementation phase) appears to demonstrate some fair degree of local citizens' involvement in government-led policy processes.

Box 4.6 The Community Action Plan process at a glance

The CAP process was introduced and utilized mainly by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and especially the National Arid Lands Environment Programme (NALEP). Following the NALEP/MOA guidelines, the local officials of the Ministry led communities every financial year in developing the CAP for each location. The CAP process was based on participatory rural appraisals (PRAs) and broad based survey where communities provided views on poverty, key local development needs and what should be done to address them. All sector issues linked to poverty are discussed, prioritized and included in the CAP. A community level structure - Focal Area Development Committee (FADC) - is constituted in each location to develop, promote and monitor the implementation of the CAP. The CAP was supposed to guide other development processes in a given location, for example, the development priorities of LASDAP, CDF, LDC, NGOs and FBOs, among other development actors. It was also supposed to be a key document for informing and feeding into the DDP process, PRSP, CDF, Constituency Strategic Plans, among others (Key informant discussion 6/12/2012; NALEP/MOA guidelines).

Source: Research data (2012-3)

The CAP process represents a good example of government-led spaces and decision-making processes that involve ordinary citizens' voices, to some extent. Although local people are involved in the formulation of the CAP on the basis of NALEP/MOA guidelines, and have a role in the implementation of the plan (through the Focal Area Development Committee), they have no real say in influencing the actual implementation and outcomes. This is because the financing of the implementation of CAPs is always dependent on Government funding.

Participation Dynamics within the LASDAP Process

The LASDAP process provided ordinary citizens with an opportunity to participate in local development planning. As already indicated in Chapter 3, the LASDAP process

articulated the projects to be funded through the LATF funds. The process leading to the plan was supposed to be participatory, inclusive and transparent. Knowledge on the operations and development initiatives of the local county council, including details on how the LASDAP process and the LATF worked were found to be minimal among local ordinary citizens with a considerable number of those involved in the study referring to these critical local development institutions as 'councilors' meetings' or 'projects'.

Analysis of the available LASDAP attendance reports indicated very low participation of ordinary citizens in this important decision making process. Ward[119] attendance lists for the year 2011/2012 indicates that attendance was more in Chuka and Maara constituencies compared to LASDAP processes in Tharaka Constituency where most wards registered less than 50 participants. The 2008/9 LASDAP ward process report for Tharaka shows some wards had attendance of as few as 10 to 20 people within a ward population of over 4,000 adults[120.] Key informants explained that this was the situation with the past LASDAP processes, irrespective of changes in the staffing (councilors and regular staff) of the local county and municipal councils and revision of the LASDAP guidelines in 2009.

A representative of the Tharaka County Council explained the following concerning the conduct of local LASDAP processes:

> We usually hold LASDAP meetings in every ward as required by the LASDAP guidelines. Here, we present the size of the resource envelop[121] and people choose their priority projects for LATF funding. The meetings are facilitated by the council clerk and other officials and attended by the ward representative (councilor) and local citizens. Only a few people usually attend the meetings. This is not because of lack of information on the meeting but ignorance. We then hold the district forum comprising invited resourceful people to work through the ward priorities and finalise the LASDAP. In this forum, we give participants some little allowance to cover transport cost, etc.

[119] These refer to political units (equivalent to a location) that existed prior to the reconfiguration of political units by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) in 2012, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. This process resulted in fewer and larger units going by the same name. The new units served as electoral areas during the 2013 General Elections. Fieldwork for this study took place prior to the operationalisation of the new wards.

[120] This estimate is based on the 2008 population projections for Tharaka District. There were about 60,000 adults residing in 15 wards. The figure will be much higher when the more populated figures for Maara and Chuka-Igambang'ombe are added.

121 This refers to total money determined by a local authority's staff to be available for financing community projects in the council's jurisdiction each area.

> Most of those invited usually come and it seems local people go where there is money/allowances. Recently, we even used Radio, Muga FM, to invite local people to attend this year's budget (2012/3). However, only about 40 turned up from the two Tharaka districts (Key informant discussion, 27/7/2012).

Such wide publicizing of the ward meetings was commendable although the results were disappointing because few common people came to the meetings. As such, local LASDAPs were developed by a few people and lacked broad participation. The quality of the plans was further hampered because there was no feedback or validation process involving the common people.

Ordinary citizens' explanations for their limited participation in LASDAP process revolve around lack of information, and negative attitude towards local County council led initiatives. LATF funded projects were said to be few and inconsequential to local development as well as being shrouded in secrecy. Key informants revealed that ordinary people were not keen on planning (formulation) stages of policy because it was leaders and elites who historically played this role. Their involvement was mainly at the implementation of projects where beneficiaries mostly offered labour.

Local citizens' experiences in the PRSP Process

Only one PRSP process took place in the county, precisely the PRSP process of 2001, which led to the national PRSP published in September 2001. For a deeper analysis, we concentrate on the PRSP process in Tharaka constituency whose consultation meeting took place at Marimanti Township in a one-day process coordinated by the District development and planning office. Facilitated by consultants (non-government officials), this workshop was attended by 145 participants drawn from all the administrative divisions although it was not possible from the list of participants to gauge the distribution by division. There were 113 (78 per cent) males and 32 (22 per cent) females.

A vast majority of the participants were people working within government institutions at the time. The organizers (mainly locally based government officials) set the 'criteria for participation with emphasis on inclusiveness and fair representation. The distribution of the final composition was as follows:

- 35 per cent were Government heads of departments
- 35 per cent were politicians and local leaders (including "opinion" leaders)
- 10 per cent were representatives of people with disabilities
- 20 per cent were representatives of civil society, religious organizations and NGOs

In reality, the majority of the participants were either local elites or officials representing different stakeholder groups in the local society. Some of the participants were involved in this study, to gauge their perspectives on several issues including; the content and quality of participation, how the meeting arrived at decisions, whether there was a feedback mechanism, and how they felt about the entire PRSP process.

It emerged from the interviews that the participants were not aware of the agenda in advance, the consultation workshop took about 6 hours of deliberations, despite covering many issues[122], and participants were not engaged later to validate the report of the meeting. In addition, the meeting was conducted mainly in English. Commenting on ordinary citizens' participation in the PRSP process, a local elite who participated in this study as well as the consultation meeting explained as follows:

> Wanjiku did not participate in that process directly but the so-called "representatives". Participation of these representatives in the deliberations was also limited because they were asked leading questions...they were asked to respond as guided, meaning their opinions were directed the way "staff" i.e. organizers of the forum wanted. Representatives of Wanjiku felt intimidated and did not stand up to demand space to air their views freely. Proper planning meetings for Wanjiku are very important as it is here their voice, needs and priorities can be heard, discussed and decided. This meeting was not (Interview, 19/6/2012).

Three important observations emerge from the above description of the Tharaka PRSP workshop. The first was that ordinary people's voice was perceived as absent, despite the presence of representatives. The second is the view that the ordinary people's "representatives" did not have adequate voice in that forum, suggesting uncertainties in the quality of the participation of ordinary people through the "representative participation" model.

[122] The participants were supposed to "define poverty; rank sectors according to priority; rank activities in each sector according to priority; identify the problems, constraints and issues for the sector; and present proposed strategies of the sector and spell out what needed to be done in each sectoral activity to help reduce poverty", See Tharaka PRSP consultation report 2001- 4 (GOK, 2001d).

Thirdly, the manner in which local participation spaces were structured either fostered or hindered genuine participation of ordinary people in these spaces.

The local PRSP process was largely problematic. It was carried out at the level of "consultation' which is itself tokenistic according to Arnstein's participation model, underpinning this study. It was undertaken through a half-day workshop based on an agenda prepared by officials and without ordinary people's input. The consultation was attended mostly by elites and local level officials. Ordinary citizens' interests or input were supposedly 'represented' by all other actors present whose voice in the process emerged as uncertain. The consultation process took place at the district headquarters and there was no feedback or validation process involving common people. Implementation of the decisions of the PRSP also appeared questionable as there was little reference to local PRSP documents (such as the report of the consultantion workshops) by subsequent policy documents (DDPs and strategic plans relevant to the study area.

Despite these gaps, the PRSP workshop demonstrated some good practices such as the inclusion of representatives of special interests groups, even though there was notable domination, in terms of numbers, by government officials and local leaders. The process and ensuing documentation was solely focused on poverty, which helped to bring up the poverty reduction agenda into the local development discourse. The PRSP is a good example of national and macro level policies that filter down to local level for action, although, as the above analysis reveals, implementation of such policies is not without its problems.

Local participation in the Constituency Development Planning

Coordinated development planning at the constituency level came into being upon the operationalisation of the CDF in the 2003/4 financial year. Prior to that, constituency level planning was virtually non-existent and the local Members of Parliament and their associates held sway. Prior to 2013, Tharaka Nithi County had two political

constituencies - Tharaka and Nithi[123] both of which had functional CDF offices[124]. The local CDF Committees engaged the public and institutions mostly at the implementation phase where local citizens submitted project proposals for funding.

The CDF was one of the most known, talked about and appreciated of the government institutions and funds in the county. One of the local elites involved in the study commented that the fund had made other devolved funds and the work of line ministries almost invisible. In her view, this was not good for local development as it created room for embezzlement and misuse of other devolved funds 'since the CDF was viewed as a fund for doing everything' (Interview, 13/3/2013). Scrutiny of project proposals submitted to CDFC in the area confirmed this was indeed the case; many of such proposals should have gone to line ministries and other local institutions for funding.

The local CDFCs demonstrated some good aspects of participatory development which accounted, in part, for the considerable appreciation by the local population as noted above. There was, for instance, the involvement of local ordinary people as members of the project management committees. Information regarding CDF funded projects was fairly available to local citizens.

Box 4.7 The CDF Project Management Committee (PMC)

To implement successful project proposals, CDFC required communities (community groups who submitted proposals) to form a PMC with a fair gender balance to manage approved projects. The funds (usually cheques) for the project were handed over to the PMC in a public ceremony where key details such as funding level (actual amount), project duration, expected results, project management, and role of the community members are publicised. Such meetings emphasized compliance with core national values such as transparency, accountability and efficiency in the project implementation. This provided useful information to ordinary citizens that they could use to hold the PMC and CDFC to account. The PMC was usually drawn from the local community members, although, these were in most cases the more prominent villagers and thus typically elites. The PMC mobilized the local community for project implementation and was supposed to keep the latter up to date with developments that relate to the project.

Source: Research data (2012-3)

[123] Following the review of boundaries and constituencies by the IEBC in 2011, Nithi constituency was split into Chuka-Igambang'ombe and Maara constituencies resulting in 3 constituencies in the county.

[124] The new CDF Act enacted in 2012 institutes fundamental changes to the management of the CDF. The MPs are no longer in charge of the Fund as Patrons, nor are they mandated to nominate CDFC officials. Instead, these are to be elected through transparent constituency wide process. However, the newly elected MPs are unhappy with this arrangement and have threatened to repeal the Act so as to give themselves the overall management of the Fund as it was before. There are other calls to disband the fund and channel the money to the County governments. The CDF matter remains inconclusive.

The PMC arrangement described above represents an example of a good local model of citizen participation, although not optimal, that has benefits for poverty reduction. At the same time, local CDF projects have not escaped mismanagement and corrupt practices, leading to stalled projects, poorly implemented projects, exaggerated costs, among other problems. This is a common problem with CDF projects across the country.

Apart from the proposals mechanism, constituencies in the area had developed strategic plans (CSP) to articulate the direction and implementation of the CDF and other resources available for constituency development. Tharaka constituency, for instance, developed its first five-year CSP in 2010 covering the period 2011 – 2015. The focus of the CSP is to improve the socio-economic status of the local people through the prudent use of CDF resources. Linked to this focus was the constituency's vision of "an empowered, just and prosperous Tharaka community"[125].

The plan is holistic as it covers all the sectors of the economy and identifies problems and strategies to address them. The SWOT analysis identifies a number of strengths, key among them being the "acceptability of the CDF by the Tharaka people and other stakeholders". The plan identifies several substantial weaknesses. These include marginalisation due to poor past policies from the centre, weak human capital base due to low investment in education, lack of income generating activities, cultural practices that render uptake of new ideas difficult, gender inequality on all fronts of development, high dependency syndrome, and limited production skills. The plan has no mention or focus on promoting the participation of citizens and communities in the CDFC but lays emphasis on implementing programmes and hence community participation is assumed as given.

The process leading to the plan was supposed to be consultative and inclusive of the views of ordinary citizens. However, the plan was prepared through a workshop held

[125] The mission of the CSP is two-fold: "to mobilize and empower the Tharaka community to source and prudently utilize resources equitably and sustainably for poverty alleviation and improved services", and "to promote equitable and sustainable socio-economic development of Tharaka constituents through mobilisation and prudent use of resources for poverty alleviation".

for key persons in the district who generated the content and format of the plan. The plan notes the following concerning the process:

> Attending the workshop were officers from the ministries in government at the district level…Also in attendance were members of the CDFC, women and youth representatives. During the workshop, the participants were taken through the strategic planning process, where different concepts were clarified before breaking into sector based groups to identify key strategic issues/challenges that needed to be addressed. It was agreed that the strategic plan should address all the central issues identified and the log frame approach used to develop monitoring and evaluation indicators for the identified activities…The CDFC provided background documents that have informed the constituency context analysis (GoK 2011f:3).

Although the Strategic plan document claims that the process was inclusive, the persons and institutions indicated as having participated were predominantly elites drawn from the local community and from institutions. On probing, it became clear that consultants led the process and that the CSP preparation workshop was held in Nyeri Town which is far away from the ordinary citizen's environment[126]. There was no mechanism in-built into the CSP process to elicit feedback from the local citizens.

Although much appreciated, local people claimed they knew less about the inner working of the CDF in the county. This is particularly so concerning the criteria used to award funds to the project proposals. However, they note an improved utilization of the fund over the last five years, especially in supporting the development of the education infrastructure. Local ordinary people were involved in the generation of proposals for funding and project implementation as implementers but they hardly participated in the design and implementation of project monitoring and evaluation exercises, which was the forte of project management committees and the constituency level CDF committee. Neither were ordinary citizens involved in making decisions on the selection of beneficiaries of CDF funds.

[126] Nyeri Town serves as the Headquarters of the former Central province and is over 150 kilometers by road away from the Tharaka Nithi County Headquarters. It is difficult to justify why officials choose to hold meetings there in light of the fact that seminar facilities are available within the county as well as in the nearby Meru and Embu counties. It is not only plans and strategies developed in the district and county, which are prepared by consultants and away from the concerned area. For example, the three day workshop leading to the Tharaka District Vision and Strategy: 2005 – 2015 prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers (consultant) was held in Nyeri in March 2005 and attended by various stakeholders involved in the district's socio-economic development.

Similarly, the PPA-IV survey conducted in Kenya in 2005/6 (GoK, 2007c) and which covered the study area found institutional performance in terms of citizen participation as wanting. Reporting on 'Governance and Partnerships between Government and Communities', the report notes that the relevance and impact of the activities of devolved funds such as the CDF was likely to be compromised by the limited participation by local communities in their management.

The status of ordinary citizens' participation in policy-planning processes appears problematic. This is so because common people's input is largely missing although it is purported to be incorporated through representation by elites nominated by government officials. Ordinary people's views on their own participation in key policy-planning processes reveal deep frustration. There is a general feeling that processes such as the DDP were conducted outside their reach (away from the villages and in a process they did not understand) and that participants were mainly handpicked by government officials. Interestingly, ordinary citizens hardly demand inclusion in the local government-led decision-making processes or for these processes to be conducted in a language and through procedures they understood. An ordinary citizen explained that this laid-back behaviour was because ordinary citizens felt that their complaints and views are inconsequential: "it is of no use complaining because our voice cannot reverse what has already been decided by the officials" (Interview, 20/6/2012).

The local ordinary person in Tharaka Nithi County emerges as a passive individual, behaviour that a key informant elaborated as follows:

> Wanjiku cannot mobilize themselves...the elite will punish or harass them if they revolt…there is nothing he can do unless NGOs and churches educate them properly on the importance of standing up for their rights. Civic education by independent institutions like NGOs, if well funded, can help the ordinary citizen. They need this more than anything else especially in the new devolved government structure (Key informant discussion, 17/6/2012).

This suggests that the local citizen is disempowered perhaps by the unequal relationships within the local development space, which has eroded their political agency to negotiate effectively with other development actors and to assert their rights. Power and self-interests are common factors in any social relations and can, therefore, be utilized to explain such behaviour as suggested by several authors

(Maathai, 2009; Kweit and Kweit, 1980; Haralambos and Heald, 1980). The experiences of the various development actors in the local decision-making spaces are summarized in Box 4.8.

Box 4.8 Experiences of different development actors in key spaces for decision- making

- ***Ordinary citizens:*** *Low participation level in formal forums such as CDF, PRSP, DDC, LDC and LASDAP processes. Most of these spaces have restricted membership. Citizens face various constraints that prevent them from participating. Usually "represented" in deliberations by the elite-leaders. High participation in traditional structures such as CBOs, SHGs and community barazas. Relatively higher participation in implementation stage, mostly as beneficiaries and contributors of resources. Limited voice in monitoring and evaluation. Have little voice in making formal decisions with impact on poverty reduction.*
- ***Politicians:*** *Invited or are members of decision-making committees/structures/forums (e.g. DDC, LDC, CDF, County Council, Bursary committee) where decision-making takes place. Participates at will and have voice in all phases of local level decision making, directly and through their representatives. Influence most decisions with impact on poverty reduction or are consulted before decisions are made.*
- ***Local elites based in study area (Opinion leaders):*** *High participation level as they receive regular invites to most decision-making events or forums; or are members of the committees/structures, which organize such processes. They have voice in local decision-making and influence most local decisions with impact on poverty reduction.*
- ***Local elites based outside study area:*** *Low participation level as they are mostly away, are not aware of decision-making events, do not see such spaces as important, or other reason. They have voice in local decision-making but rarely exercise their rights.*
- ***Local government officials:*** *High level of participation in local decision-making processes. They are often the organizers of most decision-making spaces or are institutionally required to participate in decision-making. They have voice and influence most local decisions with impact on poverty reduction.*
- ***Elites working with CSOs, FBOs, and PSOs:*** *Low participation levels unless they are the leaders of such institutions who then participate as representatives. They have some voice in influencing local decisions with impact on poverty reduction.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

There are notable gender and age differentials in ordinary citizens' participation in decision-making. As noted already, women, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs) were often represented in most decision-making processes. However, the representatives were mainly elites from these categories. At the same time, their numbers were small as in the case of the Tharaka PRSP process and membership in local decision-making structures such as the LDC, DPEC and DDC indicates. The effectiveness of the women, youth and PWDs representatives in these structures is also not guaranteed. It was observed in a local LDC meeting and in a community meeting convened by Kenya Power Company at Mukothima Township in Tharaka North District on 26/6/2012 that women and youth had low participation in such forums in terms of the level of engagement in the deliberations. This alludes to gender bias in local decision-making and points to local power dynamics.

4.5 Common Constraints to Participation in Decision-making

Ordinary people face various challenges, both external and internal, which limited their extent and quality of participation in local decision-making and development discourse. The common constraints are captured in Box 4.9.

Box 4.9 Local explanations on the state of ordinary citizens' participation in decision making

- ***Structural and operational weaknesses of decision-making spaces:*** *(i)these spaces are generally restrictive and controlled as most of them such as the LDC and DEPC are either membership based or required invitation; (ii) leaders are often late for meetings; (iii) frequent postponement of decision- making events by organizers; (iv) agendas and final decisions are determined by elites/leaders. These issues tend to undermine the interest and regular participation of ordinary citizens in government-led decision-making processes.*
- ***Knowledge gaps*** *especially among the youth on issues discussed in key decision-making processes;*
- ***Reliance on representative participation*** *model coupled with availability of "opinion leaders" as representatives;*
- ***Financial costs*** *(e.g. transport costs) associated with engagement in decision-making events on a regular basis. Decision-making deliberations, such as Sub-DDCs are conducted outside the villages hence attendance require substantial expenditure (e.g. transport costs) by the ordinary citizen;*
- ***Lack of feedback*** *from previous participation events hence apathy for participation;*
- ***Lack of voice*** *in deliberations or views ignored hence apathy for participation;*
- ***Lack of information*** *about available decision-making opportunities. Also, short notices/invitations, unclear information, or hoarding of information by officials;*
- ***Lack of time*** *to engage in public processes because "survival activities come first" ;*
- *Poor performance of officials and institutions which diminish ordinary citizen's interest to participate in processes and projects. Thus participation in government -led processes generally seen as waste of time;-Perception that decisions have already been made by officials hence no need to participate in flawed processes;*
- ***Perceived lack of capacity*** *to participate meaningfully (articulation issues due use of English language in deliberations);*
- ***Dependency syndrome:*** *reliance on others to make decisions.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

Most of the challenges have to do with the practices or inactions of government officials, state and non-state institutions and local leadership. There were also a few significant internal constraints, such as dependency syndrome among the common people in which they "denoted" decision-making responsibilities to other parties notably the local "opinion" leaders and institutions.

An important and common constraint was the character of the formal spaces available for participation. These spaces, as already noted were mostly state initiated, funded, organized and directed. They were mostly restricted spaces and processes that required invitation or membership. These spaces usually transact business in venues

away from ordinary people's reach. This is usually at division, district and county headquarters, and sometimes in venues outside the county as indicated by the case of the process leading to the Tharaka Constituency Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015. English was the language of transaction and hence hindered quality discussion by some of the common people.

However, not only ordinary citizens faced hurdles in realizing meaningful participation in local decision-making processes. Local elites, excluding those classified as "opinion leaders", also tended to register low participation levels as experienced in the last PRSP, LASDAP, DDC, LDC, CDF, DDP, MTEF processes in the study area. They hardly attend development meetings and forums organized by local provincial administrators or NGOs. In addition, they hardly visit the offices of the local administrators.

Moreover, it emerged that local level government officials were late or inconsistent participants in crucial decision-making spaces such as the LDC and DDC. The implication of these findings is that certain categories of local elites were an "absentee" class in local decision-making and development processes, and that some of the local government officials were not taking decision-making forums seriously. In a LDC we observed in Tharaka Constituency, government technical officials failed to share written reports with other participants yet this was a standard requirement. Key informants revealed this was a common practice.

Local elites identified lack of knowledge (not aware) as some of the reasons why they did not participate directly and regularly in some of the local decision-making events and opportunities. Those based outside the study area were disadvantaged as they were unable to be physically present. Other explanations were that organizers sometimes excluded elites in order to avoid being challenged during deliberations. Elites also avoided some of the government led decision-making processes, seeing no clear benefits for participating in such processes. Perceived high financial costs for participating in such processes also affected elites' participation in decision-making processes.

Elites, however, provide critical input in the policy process for example influencing government policy through their professional associations, by linking up and lobbying "opinion leaders" (the most active group of elites) to act as channels for their views, and by directly calling, writing or approaching government officials to present views in reaction to whatever they perceived as unfavorable decisions. Their role in local development is discussed further under the section on leadership.

There is consensus that efforts have been underway, particularly by CSOs to empower ordinary citizens to realize their rights to participation. This included the organizing of awareness and sensitization workshops by several NGOs, particularly Plan International and FBOs, notably the Tharaka Nithi Deanery Development Office. The approach has been to enlighten the ordinary citizen, often not only through SHGs and NGOs but also in community meetings, that they have a role and right to participate meaningfully in development processes in the county.

There are traces of a few cases of what could pass as models of good citizen participation in local decision-making processes as demonstrated by the case of Nkumburu-Ngage Community Bridge project in Tharaka North District.

Box 4.10 Case study on local participation in decision-making and leadership: Nkuburu - Ngage Community Bridge [127]

The residents of Nkumburu and Ngage villages in Tharaka Constituency were in need of a bridge across Mukothima River to ease transport especially the movement of goods between the two villages and thus improve their social and economic status. Following a series of meetings in 2004 and 2005, the villagers decided to mobilize resources locally to construct a permanent bridge. They constituted a project committee of seven people (including both women and men) who they saw as having "servant" leadership qualities. The committee included a village "engineer" and a village "volunteer". The former was to guide on the technical aspects of the bridge construction while the volunteer's role was to liaise with key external stakeholders such as the government for support. Other project officials concentrated on resource mobilisation, resource management, and conflict management. Guided by this committee, the local community, who comprised villagers belonging to at least 5 ethnic groups, mobilized the required resources (cement, sand, ballast, murram, labour, etc) internally. At a later stage in the project, the villagers received some support from the local county council (technical advice, cement and ballast). The project was completed in a record 4 months. Following this rare experience, the local community initiated other small-scale projects – irrigation projects, opening up rural access roads, tree planting, among others – which in the course of time attracted support from the government, NGOs, FBOs and private individuals. The bridge project was outstanding for the high degree of community participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring progress; and access to all villagers to the project benefits i.e. free use of the bridge. The project is a first in Tharaka Constituency and serves as a model of a participatory development project involving local people (villagers) at all the stages of the project cycle. The project demonstrated that to solve local problems, citizens needed to dream big, plan, seek partnerships with

[127] The author was involved in this project from initiation to completion. Inspired by this rare achievement by the local community, he has been engaged in supporting local development projects in the two villages over the last 10 years.

other stakeholders and implement their development ventures without expecting things to be done for them. The project helped the local people to appreciate that direct participation, voluntary spirit, and unity were critical ingredients in every development effort.

Source: Research data (2012-3)

While there are many cases of failures of meaningful participation in efforts to reduce poverty in the county, the Nkumburu – Ngage Bridge Project demonstrates there are, albeit few, successful cases. The bridge project had a direct positive impact on poverty reduction as it opened the area to other development initiatives. It directly helped the villagers to boost their agricultural activities as farm machinery (tractors) could now access farms while local people could transport their produce to the market easily. The two villages also became better connected to other villages and urban centers in the Tharaka Nithi – Meru region.

4.6 Local Power Dynamics and Citizen Participation

Power and interests are critical factors that influence the content and quality of development processes as alluded to in previous chapters. In order to understand participation dynamics within the local development landscape it is necessary to explore the power hierarchies in the local society. Understanding the local power matrix helps us to appreciate the potential role of the different social actors, the social context within which ordinary people participate in decision-making and, therefore, their political agency and behaviour in local decision-making.

There was a convergence of opinion from the study participants that power and influence in decision-making is concentrated within the elitist groups and key institutions. Government officials, notably the provincial administration were considered to be at the top of the power hierarchy, followed by the political class and thirdly by other government officials (line ministry staff, local county council staff, staff of other government institutions and structures). The ordinary citizen is at the bottom of the local power hierarchy although they too are viewed as having the 'power of information'. This is in the sense that they are the ones who provide, although in an extractive relationship, information for PPAs, PRAs and other policy based research and evaluation exercises.

They were "powerful" as they could choose to give information or withhold it, and thus determine, to some extent, the quality of research results[128]. A key informant explained the local power hierarchy in the county as follows:

> At the top of the power hierarchy sits the provincial administrators (DC). They are very powerful because they coordinate development and security issues in the district. They have access to information that other leaders do not have. They have staff from the district to the village and hence call the shots. Nothing happens without them being informed. Elected politicians use all methods to influence decisions. Sometimes local administrators bend rules to accommodate their wishes. The elites, the so-called professionals are powerful and a few names are mentioned everywhere you go. These highly educated and "connected" people influence the chiefs, councilors and other local leaders to do them favors. Business elites have immense power in the market. They control business environment and are key players in government tender processes (Key informant discussion, 19/6/2012).

Box 4.11 Explanations on perceived power hierarchy in Tharaka Nithi

1. Government officials: *Government is the main service provider and has huge resources. Key government officials sit in, organize, or control critical decision-making spaces (committees and processes) such as the DDP, CDF, DDC, and DPEC. They are the local links with the centre i.e. national officials and structures. Provincial administrators are seen as 'wearing' two 'hats' – security and development coordination - which enables them to participate in almost all development matters. Line ministry officials control ministerial budgets.*

2. Politicians: *They have popular mandate and hence can question anyone (individuals and institutions) without fear. They are accomplished local elites (educated, rich, etc.) and have followers whom they can mobilize easily to support their proposals. They are local and hence understand problems and issues better.*

3. Business class: *They are rich and control the local market (prices and supply of goods) where ordinary people sell their produce. They have "economic muscle" to influence and even sabotage decisions and operations of other social actors. They influence government-tendering processes and hence win contracts.*

4. Elites / professionals: *Educated with respectable or well paying good jobs. Have easy access to information. They are respected and listened to by everyone. Have links with local opinion leaders who they use to influence local decisions.*

5. Local institutions: *NGOs have resources to undertake development projects they have information and good relations with provincial administration and other government institutions. They sit / are members of key decision-making spaces e.g. the DDC, CDF committees and market/town management committees. They have resources (money) that ordinary citizens need.*

6. Ordinary people: *Development activities of other social actors are pursued in their name hence they are at the centre of attention. They have information (local knowledge) that others need and hence their cooperation is critical for other social actors to succeed.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

[128] In practice, the impact of the ordinary citizens' action in withholding information tends to be limited. This is because, as noted by some of the respondents of the reports written in Tharaka Nithi County and Tharaka constituency in particular were not faithful: 'reports are written anyway, sometimes giving false information yet they serve their purpose, and are rarely shared with the ordinary citizen to validate or for feedback' (Interview 5/12/2012).

Power had several sources; for some, power derived from authority or formal positions held, while for others it was the control of resources. Further, there was what tends to be an urban-power distribution bias: those based within the urban settings appeared to have more power to influence local decision-making and development discourse compared to those in the villages, significantly due to access to information and regular interaction with other power holders based in urban settings. Proximity to "power institutions" and potential to interact regularly with other powerful persons was an important factor in local power dynamics.

Age is also a factor in the local power dynamics. It emerged that the perceptively powerful people were older persons over 35 years. The youth felt that they have limited power in local decision making, in spite of the fact that they have representation in committees and processes as required by the Constitution. Women leaders of CBOs and businesses were members of most decision-making committees but they were always outnumbered by men. However, there were few instances where women occupied powerful positions within the local decision-making positions although their ability to push through the equity agenda was uncertain as most spaces were dominated, numerically, by men. For example, the Chairperson of the Tharaka DPEC is a woman against six men and one additional women member. The list of PRSP participants in Tharaka in 2001 indicates there were 32 women against 113 men. The vast majority of those who attended LASDAP ward consultations were men, as were most members of past and current LDCs. This revealed notable gender imbalance in the composition of major decision-making committees and forums.

Local people viewed and understood power from different angles. Power was manifested in terms of the ability or authority to issue a command; degree to which the issued command became binding or was obeyed; and ability to mobilize resources and distribute benefits to the local citizens. Other manifestations of power include the ability to effectively sabotage, question, delay or cause alteration or postponement of a decision, process, or command; ability to punish an actor for failure to obey a command or order; and ability to provide a particular benefit that was of high demand. Therefore, authority, resources and benefits are key elements defining the power hierarchy in Tharaka Nithi County. This leads to what we identify as three interconnected power perspectives in the local community: 'resources perspective',

‘authority perspective’, and ‘benefits perspective’. Local people and institutions used the three dimensions in defining the local power hierarchy only that the emphasis varied.

The elites and non-state institutions approached power mostly from the resources point of view. Here, they viewed the government operatives as the most powerful because the government had the most resources and was the legitimate first line duty bearer in the provision of services to citizens. State operatives and politicians viewed power from the authority perspective. In this case, they viewed the government as the most legitimate representative of the people and therefore the front line actor in local development and poverty reduction. On their part, politicians occupying elective positions viewed themselves as the true representatives of the people and hence were supposed to be involved in all major decision-making processes. Ordinary citizens tended to view power largely from a benefits perspective. In other words, the ability of an actor to mobilise or distribute resources to meet citizen needs. In this view, ordinary people perceived government officials as the most powerful because the government was the main services provider. Thus, government officials including heads of institutions such as schools and health facilities were considered powerful individuals.

There was a tendency for cooperation in decision-making among the powerful persons in certain circumstances, for example, when local elites supported the activities of NGOs in a given area. At the same time, there may be direct competition and confrontation in other situations, for example, when politicians questioned the practices of technical line ministry officials or provincial administrators about the utilization of funds, implementation of decisions and so forth. Even then, it emerged that power dealing at the local level, whether through cooperation or confrontation, was an elites -institutions issue with the ordinary citizen featuring peripherally.

Analysis of power dynamics indicates that whilst local people valued and sought positions of power, they did not always utilize it (power) positively to boost local development or fight poverty. This was indicated by negative practices such as corruption, and in some cases laxity in serving the local people. In the case of the latter, for example, it appeared there was widespread absenteeism by government

officials from duty for up to 2 days each week in the county, and especially in Tharaka Constituency.

The role of power is an important resource that influenced the outcomes of development discourses in Tharaka Nithi County and was demonstrated at a IDPs meeting at Gatithini Market in Tharaka North District on 22/6/2012. The objective of the meeting was to form a committee of 10 village representatives who would lobby the Government to resettle local IDPs from Ntoroni sub-location in Tharaka North District who were affected during the 1996/7 ethnic clashes in the area. Selection of the 10 representatives was a heated debate and at several points, the meeting appeared to go out of hand due to what appeared to be competing perceptions among IDPs in a given village as to who was best placed to represent them. Organizers of the meeting had to intervene severally to ensure the selection process went through. This clearly demonstrated that power and interests played out in most decision-making spaces at local level, involving different social groups in society, including ordinary people themselves.

The Tharaka Nithi experiences point to a situation where those in powerful positions (elites, government officials and representatives of local institutions) tend to participate more regularly in the local decision-making spaces and structures. They often dominate these avenues either as participants, organizers, funders or custodians of funds meant to sponsor these processes. The ordinary citizen appeared to be less involved and has a peripheral role in government- led decision-making processes.

4.7 State of local leadership and impact on poverty reduction

The local definition of a leader takes both a narrow and broader focus and uses possession of formal authority and ability to influence others as key characteristics for distinguishing leaders from other local citizens. An ordinary citizen who participated in the study defined a leader in the following way:

> A leader is mutongeria[129]". It is anybody who organizes, directs, and helps people in development projects or activities. He/she can be a government

129 'Mutongeria' in the language(s) means the one "who is at the front" or "comes first".

> official or someone given the mandate by people for example the leaders of self-help groups or CBOs (Interview, 22/6/2012).

Local people have various expectations from the leader class. The principal business of leaders was viewed as the improvement of the lives of the local people. Leaders had a duty to mobilize people and resources to uplift lives; to provide insights, fresh ideas and advice; to stand up and speak up for the people; to act as a role model for others to emulate; and to interact regularly with people, sharing information and giving feedback. In short, local people expect leaders to be responsive to local needs, to be transparent in their dealings, and to be accountable for their actions or inactions. Leaders were expected to be just, fair and honest individuals who served, rather than being masters of the people.

It is apparent these expectations were unmet because the local people had a generally low rating of the local leadership. This was the common view not only among ordinary people but strangely, among members of the leader class itself. Here, different elite categories tended to blame the other categories for shortcomings within the local development space. This "blame-the-other" or buck-passing attitude alluded to elite competition and unwillingness to take responsibility[130].

Ordinary citizens viewed local leaders as an obstacle to local development because of a variety of negative practices: hoarding information, perpetuating corrupt practices, among others. An ordinary person captured these sentiments as follows:

> Leaders will only use you. They like you only when you are giving what they want. Very rarely do leaders here (especially provincial administrators) plan and implement projects that help villagers. But pastors and FBO leaders are good. They listen and are willing to assist us. They support us in Harambees. Administrators cannot do anything free in absence of bribes. For example, to get a birth certificate, they ask for 'kalamu" (pen) which in this case means parting with at least Ksh. 100 per case (Interview, 24/6/2012).

The dominant view indicates that leadership in Tharaka Nithi County was problematic, especially with regard to five leader categories: politicians who were viewed as mostly corrupt; government administrators who were viewed as corrupt and

[130] We observed for this matter that most of the leaders involved in this study, especially the government officials, usually passed the buck to some other leaders, ordinary people, or certain challenges and circumstances to explain what appeared like failure in their roles in local decision making dynamics.

ruthless; and wealthy business people who were viewed as exploitative. Residents perceived local authority staff (now county government staff) as ineffective and brutal; and government line ministry officials as inefficient or indifferent to local development issues. There was the perception of a slight improvement in leadership in some areas such as in the utilization of CDF funds, but largely, the local leadership had a low rating. Box 4.12 identifies major collective shortcomings of the local leadership.

Box 4.12 Perceived leadership gaps affecting citizen participation and poverty reduction

- *Leaders engage in corruption e.g. in government tendering processes (exaggerated project quotations, etc);*
- *Failure to convene regular and open development meetings/forums;*
- *Lack of transparency e.g. how project tenders were awarded;*
- *Leaders control decision-making spaces hence limited voices for ordinary citizens;*
- *Leaders exclude ordinary people in decision-making (when leaders/elites plan, they hardly involve people on the ground);*
- *Operational weaknesses in local decision-making processes e.g. leaders often come late for meetings;*
- *Leaders co-opt or force ordinary people into corruption;*
- *Representatives of common people in decision-making processes pursue own interests;*
- *Leaders are indifferent to local suffering e.g. seeds and fertilizer supplied late which affect agricultural production;*
- *Leaders do not engage each other even when they have the opportunity;*
- *Unavailability or inaccessibility of leaders (often ignore "Wanjiku" or are away most of the time).*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

The leaders- citizens relationships was therefore not conducive for local development. Ordinary people interacted with leaders mostly in a formal way in what could be described as a problem-solving – benefits seeking relationship. It was mostly a transactional type of relationship where parties sought benefits of one kind or another from the other party. They also interacted in less formal avenues such as during research activities (such as PPAs and PRAs), church services, institutional gatherings, harambees, family gatherings, group meetings, and when travelling in public vehicles. They also interact at eating places, in the neighborhood, funerals and in social events of different kinds.

In general, when common people's – leaders' interaction is of a social-informal rather than official nature, these tended to be short and conducted mostly at the level of greetings, unless the common person and leader had some special connection such as being a relative, neighbour, or an old acquaintance. Interactions between common

people and the leaders were not easy but constrained in a number of ways. In general, inter-personal dynamics and the circumstances under which interaction took place played a significant part in determining the quality and outcomes of such interactions. Both sides faced challenges; on one side, leaders had to deal with common people in ways that they and others deemed appropriate and beneficial. On the other side, ordinary citizens recognized that they were dealing with people with power and influence and hence approached them in what can be viewed as polite and un-provocative manner. It is not uncommon to see an old man stand up or pull down their cap as a show of respect when exchanging greetings with a leader, even those far much younger than they are.

Leaders and elites did not always have an upper hand in the relationship with common people. In some cases, ordinary citizens appeared to be the ones in charge of the interaction as described by a key informant using the example of an elite – common person's interaction at the market place:

> The common person and elites interact often at the local market where the common people were the ones selling, for example, groceries and fruits and elites were the buyers. Some common people exploit the non-business elites by hiking prices if the elite is unfamiliar to them. They know that the elite will not haggle for price reduction due to pride, lack of time or some other reason. Common people use polite language when selling to elites and this results in more profitable sales (Key informant discussion, 27/7/2012).

The above suggests exploitative tendencies among some of the common people similar to those of the business elite who often undercut the local people by offering low prices for farm produce. This scenario is captured in the words of one of the key informants who commented, thus: "ours is a man eat man society where taking advantage of the weaker being is the rule of business" (Key informant discussion, 15/6/2012). This perhaps alludes to problems in the value system underpinning social and economic relationships in the local community.

4.8 Elites and Local Development

Elites are typically an influential class in local society. An important question in the ensuing discussion is why and how should elites foster local development. Part of the reasons why elites have an important role in local development is the fact that they

can mobilize themselves quickly through professional groups and associations to lobby and influence the government on behalf of the local people or to counter negative practices in the local society.

In general, local citizens perceived elites as people with certain qualities and resources (knowledge, skills, experience and other resources) and expected them to use these to enhance local development. Local perceptions on the role of elites in local development are captured in Box 4.13.

Box 4.13 What ordinary citizens in Tharaka Nithi expect of the local elites

- *Be innovators of development ideas and share these with local people*
- *Provide leadership that local community can depend on*
- *Be active doers of things that benefit community*
- *Create awareness about development and opportunities*
- *Act as role models in areas such as agriculture*
- *Transmit information regarding local development issues to authorities*
- *Package and share information*
- *Initiate and facilitate development projects*
- *Undertake personal interventions to assist those in need*
- *Link other professionals and government to resources that can help community*
- *Serve as spokesmen on issues concerning community*
- *Invest locally*.

Source: Research data (2012-3)

Some of the elites supported local development and tackled poverty in various ways. This includes providing financial support to individuals, families and institutions mainly through Harambee contributions. Generally, elites served as the local leaders, owned businesses that supplied local goods and services, and played crucial roles in all sectors of the local economy: education, trade, transport, agriculture, among others.

Despite these roles, the dominant view was that local elites did little and were not keen to fight poverty at community level. Ordinary people accused the elites of engaging in activities that produced only private benefit, focusing largely on personal interests, and being involved in negative practices that undermined the common people's interests and wider societal wellbeing. These included engaging in corruption in collusion with government officials, being absent or giving little support to local development activities targeting the wider community, buying land from the poor at low prices, paying low prices for farm produce, and hoarding information,

which they used to capture public benefits. Elites were also accused of out competing ordinary citizens for the available short-term employment opportunities under the guise of allowing merit to work, paying low salaries to workers in total disregard of labour laws on minimum salaries, and blocking, diverting, delaying and cancelling services or benefits meant for the ordinary citizens.

The picture of elites that emerges from the Tharaka Nithi County is largely negative. It is one in which the elite have failed to fulfill their role in local development, but rather they operate an exploitative relationship with the common people. Elites tended to be interested more in their personal development activities and were largely lax in spearheading development efforts that benefited the entire community[131].

The negative elite practices identified above point to the prevalence of two major levels of elite capture in the County. The first was "official" or "formal" capture (dealings with government, government officials or other poverty reduction actors) and "personal" or "private" elite capture, characterised, for example, by unequal or exploitative relationship between an elite and an ordinary citizen. Both types undermined local development, poverty reduction and personal progress of ordinary citizens because benefits or resources meant to flow to local citizens (services, income, employment, or projects) were blocked, diverted, delayed, reduced, modified or cancelled.

Elite capture tends to thrive in Tharaka Nithi County for a variety of reasons, the most pronounced being the domination of the decision-making spaces by elites and institutions. In this case, decisions made in common spaces for participation at local level may not always be favourable to the interests of the wider community. This collusion of the powerful local elites and institutions is what we identify as the "elite-institutional hegemony". Other factors are identified in Box 4.14.

[131] This has been noted by persons from outside the local community. A good example is the case where elites from Tharaka, acting under the Tharaka Professionals Association, engaged national government officials in Nairobi (Safari Park Hotel) in 2010 in what appeared to be a lobbying session. Following candid discussions, it emerged that local elites were doing little in local development and were challenged to be good role models and to desist from accusing other development actors for the poor state of development in the area (Key informant interview, 15/3/2013). A government official based in the study area and who attended the discussion was of the opinion that following the meeting, some of the local elites started visiting and engaging more in development activities in the study area (Key informant discussion, 5/4/2013).

Box 4.14 Reasons why elite capture thrive in Tharaka Nithi County

- ***Elite-institutional hegemony:*** *elites and institutions are powerful actors who control processes and resources for development at local level and sometimes make decisions that are not always favourable to ordinary people. Often, they deflect accountability questions directed at them by, for example, keeping minimal documentation and co-opting local opinion leaders for support to compromise them.*
- ***Procurement regulations:*** *tender specifications often favour well-established actors and hence technically knock out ordinary people from government contracts. In addition, due to corruption, quotations are exaggerated which implies that less services and goods are supplied for the same value.*
- ***Emphasis on merit:*** *the educated, experienced and more skilled local elites usually secure opportunities at local level such as short-term contracts during the electoral process. Some of these are already working people. Rarely do other criteria such as 'need' given weight yet this would provide a window of opportunity to ordinary citizens.*
- ***Ignorance:*** *because of information gaps occasioned sometimes by hoarding of information by elites, ordinary citizens come to learn of opportunities and benefits when it is late.*
- ***Misplaced faith in leaders:*** *common people often leave out crucial decision-making responsibilities (such as agenda setting, monitoring and evaluation, reviewing of policies) to elites believing they will, contrary to past experiences, act honestly. It is as if common people never learn or are indifferent to their suffering.*
- ***Attitude towards public resources:*** *ordinary people often view projects initiated by institutions and by other actors as belonging to the initiators or funders. Such attitude diminishes common people's motivation to participate in and monitor project implementation and to demand accountability. This may lead to poor project implementation or misuse of project resources hence denied benefits.*
- ***Apathy towards participation:*** *Apparent acceptance of "business as usual" or acceptance of exclusion ordinary people. This gives elites/leaders confidence there will be no serious challenge from local community and hence act with impunity.*
- ***Normalisation of elite capture:*** *local people letting things remain the way they are (elite capture / negative elite practices) due to acceptance of status quo or putting no challenge due to the perception that nothing will change.*
- ***Remoteness:*** *the study area, especially Tharaka Constituency, is remote and hence 'far away" from official scrutiny.*
- ***Role of 'opinion leaders'*** *as local brokers.*
- *Local people's* ***glorification of wealth*** *irrespective of means of acquisition.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

It is important to explain the elite-institutional hegemony a little. Rooted in the works of the Italian political scientist Antonio Gramsci (1971), hegemony describes a situation where one group in society, either because of social or economic status or other sources of power, control, dominate and control others, often to the disadvantage of the less powerful group. Control can be in form of dominating the available development processes, determining the allocation and utilisation of development resources and projects, having an upper hand in determining methods and ways of fighting poverty, and in the definitions of poverty in normal day to day discourses.

In the case of Tharaka Nithi County, the elites and the institutions that they control or work for, exert unparalleled influence on how local development is defined, approached and practiced. As noted in the first bullet in Box 4.14, the hegemonic practices of local elites and institutions have had a dramatic effect on citizen participation, rendering citizens marginal and ineffective in the local development space.

4.9 Local Institutions and Poverty Reduction

A wide variety of institutions involved in poverty reduction operated in the county[132]. These included several government programmes (Quick Win Initiatives, the activities of the District Poverty Eradication Committee, among others). In general, most local institutions contribute to reducing the spread and effects of poverty in the county by pursuing long, medium and short-term pathways out of poverty. Some of the institutions provided short-term benefits or relief (seeds, water, and bursaries) while others implemented interventions that took longer time to have impact on poverty. These interventions included education grants, training activities, gender-diversity projects, micro-credits, and infrastructural projects (roads, water systems, and electricity, among others). In a survey conducted in the county by PEC in 2012 with the aim of profiling poverty stakeholders, it emerged that local organizations believed that their programmers, including those on poverty were meeting set objectives.

The CDF Committee was perceived favourably as uplifting education standards through sustained support to primary and secondary schools and for projects in the health and infrastructure sectors. The CDF approach to development represents a good example, although it is not without its own shortcomings[133] of the ideal model of citizen participation in decision-making. Njaa Marufuku Kenya (eliminate hunger in Kenya) project[134] and NALEP which are both associated with the Ministry of

[132] These include high capacity CSOs some with annual budgets of KES. 150 Million upwards. Notable examples are Care International, Plan International, Kenya Red Cross, local CDF mechanisms, and FBOs like Tharaka Nithi Deanery Development Office.

[133] These include perceived corruption, focus on mainly infrastructural and less social projects, and perceptively exaggerated project budgets.

[134] The programme is formulated and implemented by the Agriculture sector ministries in collaboration with ministries of education, health and development partners to fast track the fulfillment of MDG 1. Its interventions are geared towards increased productivity, generation of rural incomes, health and nutrition improvement and conservation of natural resource base' (PEC, 2009).

Agriculture were mentioned favourably by residents for their work in fighting local poverty. Both projects utilized the Community Action Planning process promoted by MOA at local level, which, as already noted, emerge as a fair example of citizen participation in decision-making for poverty reduction.

Most of the CSOs in the area have run projects with links to poverty reduction. The government's efforts in poverty reduction was evident through the work of line ministries, projects and special funds such as PEC's revolving loans fund, CDF, LATF, MDG funds, Njaa Marufuku Kenya, economic stimulus fund, women and youth enterprise fund, and social protection kitty. At the same time there were concerns regarding the Government's contribution, with questions raised on the under-utilization of budgeted development funds, leading to return of un-used funds to Treasury every financial year.

The market did not feature as a major actor in fighting poverty, mainly because its full potential remained underutilized due to the low prices offered for local produce and other marketing-related problems. Local people barely perceived CBOs, SHGs, and traditional structures such as the council of elders to be key actors in poverty reduction. This was strange because these institutions tended to be vibrant and open spaces for citizen participation in decision-making for poverty reduction. It seems that their role is less recognized due to a relatively low resource base.

Besides direct work in poverty reduction, institutions contributed to poverty reduction through the documentation they generate, collect or disseminate. For example, most NGOs generated annual reports and commissioned research, project reviews and evaluations, which contained important information on the study area. Although most of the publications were not easily accessible to ordinary citizens, or were not up to date[135], they were an important contribution towards poverty reduction as they offered information on the county, and informed local decision-making and design of anti-poverty interventions.

[135] For example, DDPs appear to be largely cut-and-paste publications without much new information or relying on same figures over the years. A classic example is the Tharaka DDP for the period 2008 – 2012 and the County Development Profile developed in March 2013, which are similar in many ways (see data in the fact sheet) yet the latter covers 4 districts in the county rather than the two Tharaka districts covered by the DDP.

Although the local people highly appreciated the Constitution, and its institutions, viewing them as relevant and useful in the long term, their impact was not yet felt, nearly three years after promulgation. There was a general feeling that implementation of these institutions and structures had not been prioritised or executed well by those in positions of power and authority. An ordinary citizen involved in the study commented as follows:

> The new constitution and what it says is good but what change has it brought to us? It gives some rights, yes, but it is not helping us because those rights have to be enforced. How can they be enforced properly when those in positions are breaking the law, contrary to the ethics and integrity bill? Officials have continued to act the same way although with minimal change in behaviour, here and there. We have faith in the new institutions as on paper but not in terms of implementation. We have the same people with old mentality who are implementing the constitution. They have not changed so it has not brought meaningful change. We can only wait to see what will happen (Interview, 7/4/2013).

These sentiments reflect the high expectations ordinary people at the grassroots have and at the same time the depth of frustration, they face concerning the implementation of the new constitution and its institutions. It appears these frustrations hardly come out in official communication channels. Despite what appeared to be a remarkable focus of local institutions on poverty reduction, there is widespread concern around their performance. Complaints range from doing little in providing essential services[136], harbouring corrupt practices, lack of transparency and accountability to local people, to restrictions on citizen participation in institutional processes. Concerning the latter, it was evident that most institutions, including NGOs, excluded local people in decision-making in certain institutional operations, particularly regarding designing of projects, budgeting, recruitment of staff and procurement.

[136] In this regard, we observed for example that government offices in Tharaka Constituency barely operate on Fridays and Mondays because officers were mostly travelling out of the county for the weekends and travelling back to work respectively. Citizens usually seek services from Tuesday to Thursday, and noticeably during the market days. The rest of the days, government offices are hardly visited. Even during the market days, few ordinary citizens seek services. Also noted was that officers report to office late (9 am) and close early, often at 4pm. It is not rare to find a district level office closed even at 3pm. It appears that local people are used to this scenario and hardly follow up or demand accountability.

4.10 Institutions - Citizen Relations

In general, local people viewed institutions as important in poverty reduction despite the various gaps identified above. Citizens cooperated with institutions particularly in project implementation where they offered labour and indigenous knowledge to improve project design and implementation. Local people demonstrated great appreciation of new institutions created under the decentralisation reforms and the Constitution, which they viewed as capable of fostering local development in the long term. This is understandable considering that the local community tends to have been marginalized for a long time as indicated by the poor infrastructural development (absence of tarmac roads, murram roads, piped water, electricity), poor services (absence of sufficient schools, health facilities, banks, land adjudication), lack of industries, and insecurity.

There are few notable instances in which the local people have challenged the legitimacy of local institutions (both state and non-state) and the policy/planning processes they organised or financed. Institutions and processes were accepted and assumed to be good. Even in the face of poor performance, the legitimacy of the government structures, was barely challenged. Institutions established themselves in the area without resistance from the local population. In the words of one of the key informants, an institution wishing to establish itself in Tharaka Nithi County can be assured of un-encumbered entry and space for 'experimenting' its ideas as long as it obtains the necessary government clearance (Key informant discussion, 9/8/2012).

However, beneath this seemingly cooperative and appreciative disposition, there were hidden layers of local people's frustration with some of the state-associated institutions due to their perceived poor performance and practices such as corruption. These tend to undermine the common people's interests. In an open and honest discussion, ordinary people acknowledge the importance of institutions in fighting poverty, but at the same time presented largely negative views about them. Local government administrators, NGOs, and elites were not challenged in the open, but were heavily criticized in the spaces that ordinary people considered safe.

Communication between local people, institutions and their leaders took a 'laid back' character and local people hardly stood up to challenge institutional malpractices in the open field. Relations between the local people and institutions cannot therefore be assumed cordial.

4.11 The 'will' and "capacity" of local institutions to promote public participation and fight poverty

Institutions involved in development and anti-poverty work in the study area identify the participation of citizens in their publications (strategic papers/plans, reports, among others) as a core value, approach or specific programme of work that they pursue. PEC, for example, identifies the participatory approach as one of its core values[137]. However, this expressed recognition of participation as important, which serves as an indicator of the existence of 'will' to promote participation in local development processes tended not to be translated into practice. As already indicated, it is usually the officials and elites-leaders who tend generate agendas (decisions) and design projects, towards which ordinary people react or respond. In addition, certain areas of institutional operations, such decisions around budgeting, budget utilization, recruitment, project site selection and procurement were not open to public participation.

The shortcomings of translating expressed "willingness" into practice was perhaps because local institutions faced several constraints in these efforts, some internal to institutions, while others were external in nature. Institutions capture most of these challenges in their reports, including bureaucracy and resource limitations. Other constraints are difficulties in the prioritisation[138] and harmonisation of projects, coordination gaps[139], legal framework issues, differences in institutional approaches

[137] A key aspect of this participatory approach, according to PEC, is the "direct participation by the poor in decision making and recognition of indigenous knowledge as a prerequisite to combating poverty". See PEC's 10 years evaluation report, 2009.

[138] Often, large priority projects covering several wards or the whole district (such as capacity building of local communities through targeted training, road network, irrigation schemes, etc) obtain small allocations from say CDF, LATF or line ministry allocations or do not obtain any funding at all. Instead, available funds go to several small projects with little impact on poverty reduction. This reveals weaknesses in planning.

[139] For example, the PEC survey of poverty stakeholders in the study area in 2012 revealed coordination to be one of the challenges facing poverty programmes in the area. It was noted that some

to poverty, and logistical challenges. For example, in the PEC survey of 2012 carried out in the study area[140], local organisations reported illiteracy, cultural beliefs and practices, financial limitations, limited staff, poor roads network and communications as the major constraints in poverty reduction.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has presented empirical findings from Tharaka Nithi County, a poor, agricultural county in Eastern Kenya. The presentation concentrated on the citizen perceptions on select poverty reduction issues, the extent and quality of citizen participation in policy and planning processes, and the state of local leadership and institutions.

The nature of citizen participation in decision-making processes in Tharaka Nithi County is clearly problematic, and this has been an issue for a long time. The findings tend to corroborate the theoretical arguments of this thesis with respect to the efficacy of citizen participation in development planning and outcomes. Citizen participation in Tharaka Nithi County was marginal, ineffective and compromised through elite capture, which through defective elite-driven governance mechanisms, corruption and the passivity of ordinary people trapped local citizens into a vicious cycle of deprivation. In the few instances where citizens participated in policy formulation, such as certain stages of the CDF, the citizens tended to view such processes and institutions as most beneficial and helpful in local development and fighting poverty.

The chapter highlighted a few successful examples of how participation has enhanced poverty reduction, citing the example of the CDF process, the Community Action Planning process promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Nkumburu-Ngage Community Bridge project. These represent local mechanisms and projects that come closer to the conceptual ideal of participation and poverty reduction alluded to in chapters 1, 2 and 3. These examples demonstrate that despite what looks like

actors were working without consulting government offices charged with development coordination. PEC's report acknowledges that lack of coordination as one of the key factors hindering efforts in the fight against poverty and hence its move to build a countrywide data bank of poverty stakeholders.

[140] PEC conducted the survey in all the districts it is piloting or implementing its poverty reducing interventions through the DPEC, its district level structure. The DDOs in these areas coordinated the survey, which was based on a standard self-administered questionnaire.

widespread failure in achieving genuine citizen participation and less than satisfactory efforts at poverty reduction, there are potential cases of successful mobilization of local efforts to meet some of the goals of development.

Leadership and local institutions were engaging in poverty reduction efforts, but just like the ordinary citizens, they tended to be less successful in fulfilling their responsibilities. Elites were generally a critical input for local development, but their contribution was compromised by the widespread culture of elite capture. Common people also faced self-doubt, described as internal factors, which created problems for achieving meaningful public participation in local decision making.

Tharaka Nithi County appears to be open ground for institutions to explore, establish and implement their agenda with little accountability demands from the local population, even when certain institutional practices were clearly against the local people's interests. The local communities indeed tend to be overly passive. The County's narrative calls for reforms in the public decision-making space so that ordinary citizens and other social actors play their respective roles effectively. It is also a narrative where power and interests exert considerable influence on local decision-making and development endavours in general. The next chapter explores citizen participation and poverty reduction experiences in Siaya County along similar lines as this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN SIAYA COUNTY

5.1 Introduction

The concepts of citizen participation and poverty reduction continue to generate considerable theoretical debates among scholars and development practitioners. In Chapter 2, we noted, for example, a new global "social norm" that treats poverty as morally unacceptable (Hulme, 2010). This implied that tackling poverty is a widely accepted goal around the world, and social actors within the development space make significant efforts to tackle poverty. The extent to which this happens in Siaya County is examined in this chapter.

This chapter takes similar structure as the previous one on Tharaka Nithi County, and opens with an overview of the socio-political map of Siaya. It illuminates the links between citizen participation, leadership and institutions and poverty reduction through concrete data from the County. Existing literature and field data are used to construct the Siaya landscape, which, in turn, help us to better understand the findings on the county.

The findings are organized around four broad themes: local perspectives on poverty, public participation in decision-making, state of leadership and quality of institutions in the context of poverty reduction. The chapter devotes a large section in examining the citizen participation theme and analysing the content and quality of the local participation spaces, indicating the extent to which they represent important loci for decision-making for poverty reduction. Good examples of citizen participation in decision-making and leadership and how these have enhanced poverty reduction in the county are highlighted.

In describing the findings, real voices and the transcripts of interviews and observations are used to articulate the experiences and perspectives of the study participants. In such instances and for purposes of confidentiality the date and location of the interview is indicated instead of the actual names of the study participants. Tables and Boxes that are based on the study data are used extensively in

the presentation of the findings. The chapter concludes by restating what can be learnt from the Siaya case study in light of the conceptual and empirical debates teased out in the previous chapters on poverty reduction and citizen participation.

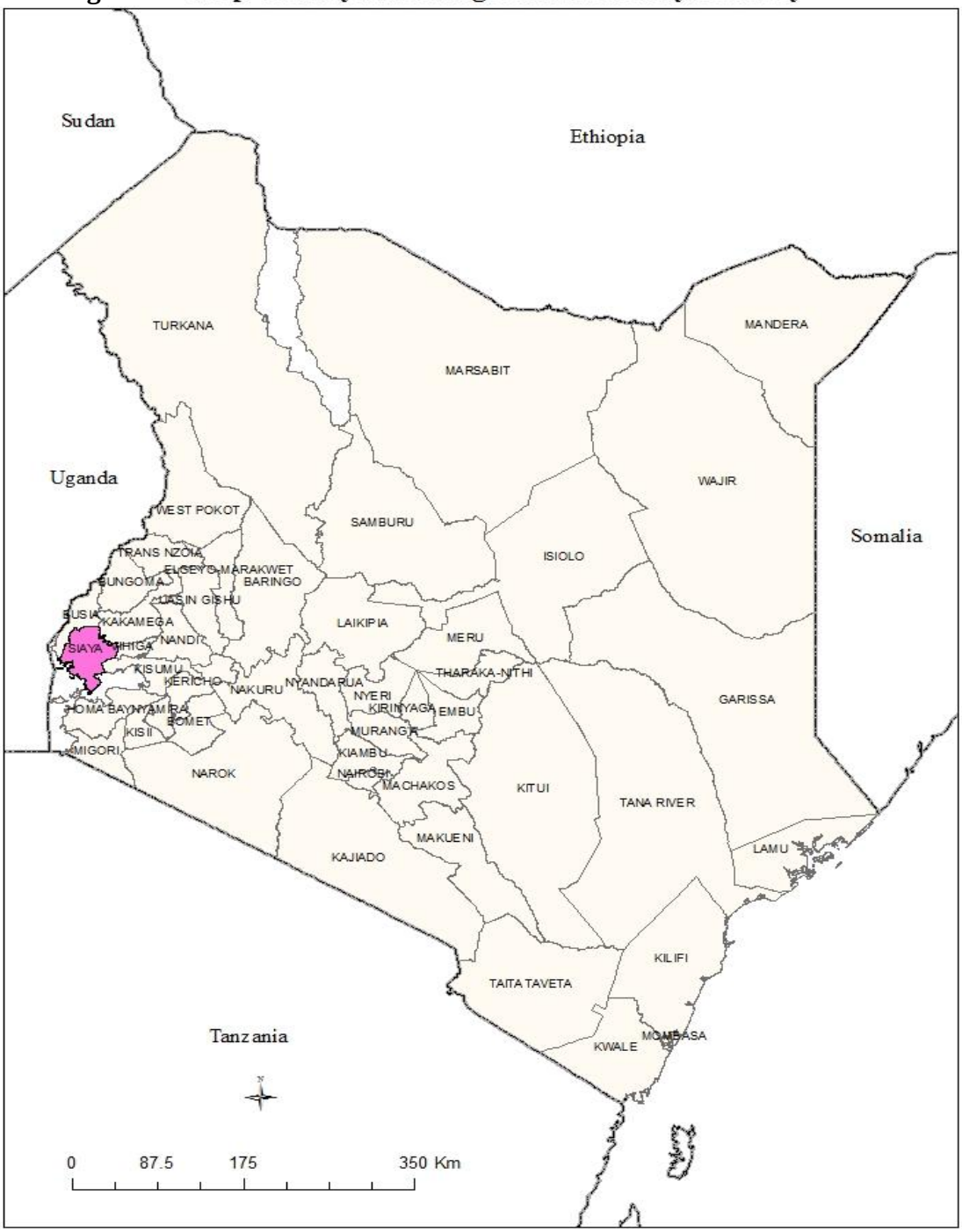
5.2 The Setting: Siaya County

Located in the southwest part of Kenya, Siaya is one of six counties in the former Nyanza Province. The other counties are Kisumu, Homabay, Migori, Nyamira and Kisii. Apart from the last two, these counties, including Siaya, border Lake Victoria, and they are thus the "Lake Basin" counties. The 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census Report gives the population of Siaya as 842, 304 (398,652 males and 443,652 females) in an area of 2,530.4 km². Siaya's population represents about 2.2 per cent of the national population totaling 38,610,097 (GoK, 2010). Siaya is therefore one of the largest counties in Kenya.

The County lies between Latitude 00 26' South and 00 18' North and Longitude 330 58' and 340 33 East and comprises six administrative districts (Siaya, Gem, Ugunja, Ugenya, Bondo and Rarieda) and six constituencies, which go by the same names apart from Alego-Usonga constituency, which covers Siaya District (GoK, 2013b). This means that each district translates into a constituency. There are 30 assembly wards and seven major urban centres in Siaya: Siaya, Bondo, Usenge, Ugunja, Yala, Ukwala, Madiany, Sega, Wagai and Asembo Bay. Two lakes (Victoria and Kanyaboli) and over 10 rivers including River Yala and River Nzoia are found in the county. The county administrative headquarter is Siaya Town[141] located about 70 kilometres north of Kisumu City.

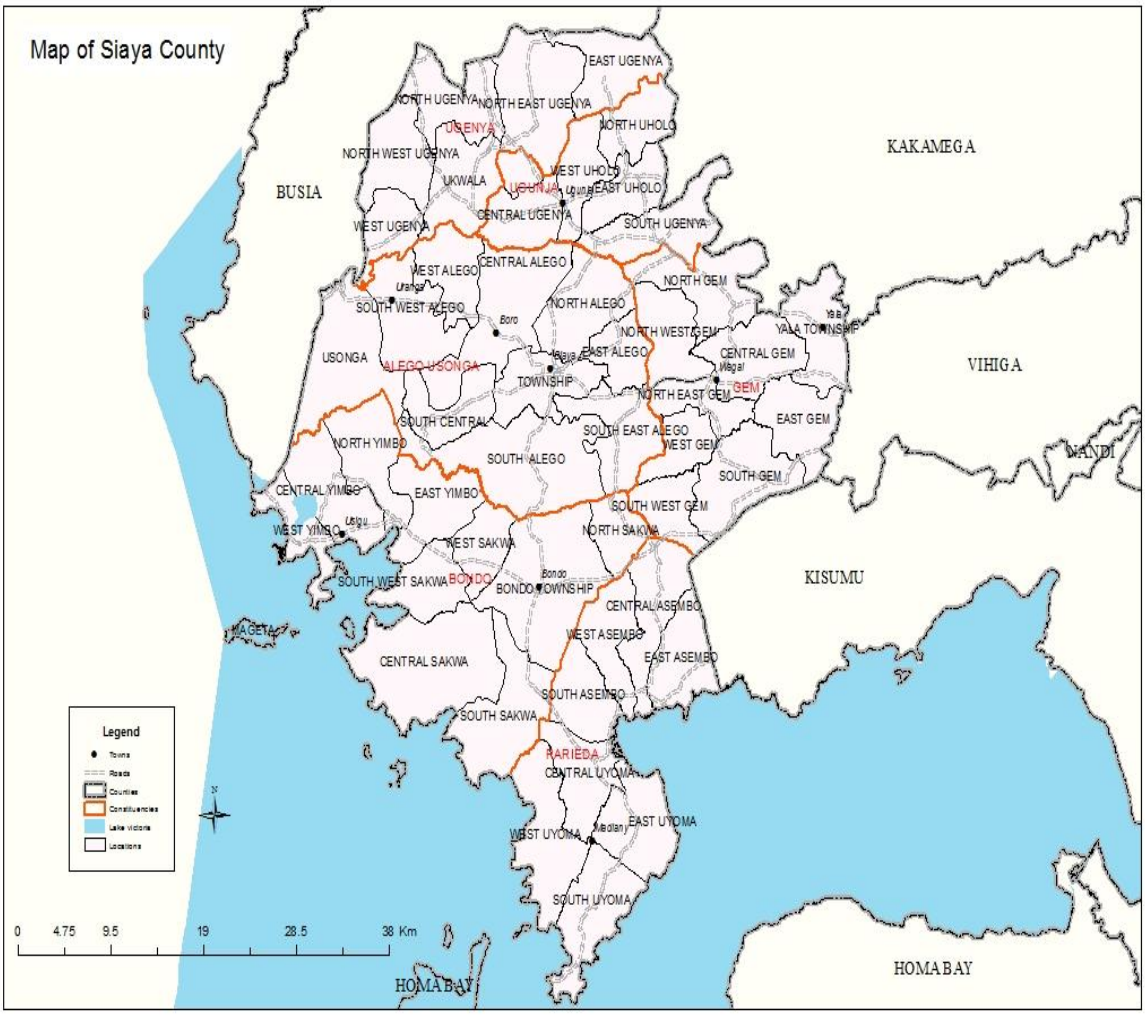
141 Siaya town, formerly a market, has served as the headquarters for Siaya District, now county, and Alego-Usonga constituency since1967. The administrative headquarters for Gem, Ugunja, Ugenya, Bondo and Rarieda districts are at Nyangweso (Sawagongo) Market Centre, Ugunja Town, Ukwala Town, Bondo Town, and Madiany Market Centre respectively.

Figure 5.1 Map of Kenya Showing Position of Siaya County



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics Maps, 2014

Figure 5.2



Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics Maps, 2014

The inhabitants of Siaya are predominantly Luo, a Nilotic people with blood relation with the Dinka of South Sudan and the Lango and Padhola of Uganda[142.] The County occupies a special place in the history of the Luo of Kenya as it is their cradle land. After migrating from the Sudan and a brief sojourn in Uganda, the Kenya Luo settled in the area that is today Siaya County, from where some moved to south Nyanza and beyond.

The Luo of Siaya belong to nine communities or what can be described as major clans: Yimbo, Asembo and Uyoma Rarieda District; Alego and Usonga in Siaya District; Gem in Gem District; Ugenya in Ugenya District; Sakwa in Bondo; and the Uholo in Ugunja District. These communities have a well-established clan system, strict marriage customs that prohibit marriage within the same clan, and special recognition of the council of elders as the ultimate authority on cultural issues. Polygamy, wife inheritance and witchcraft are notable traditional practices in the county although observance of these practices has declined over the years.

The County has three geomorphological areas with different relief, soils and land use patterns: dissected uplands (Ugenya, Gem and Ugunja areas), moderate lowlands (for example, Boro, Uyoma, and Wagai areas) and the Yala swamp[143.] Influenced by the local environment, the staple food in Siaya comprises a variety of cereals and tubers (maize, sorghum, millets, beans, simsim, and sweet potatoes), animal products and fish obtained from Lakes Victoria and Kanyaboli, private fishponds, and the rivers that flow through the county. Although sorghum and millet are the traditional crops of the Luo of Siaya, maize is prominent crop in the county. Maize is at the same time a "bad" crop as it is widely associated with perennial food shortages[144.]

The economy of Siaya is focused on subsistence farming. The land is generally good for agricultural production although with varying levels of fertility. It is also good for irrigation due to the low terrain in most parts and the availability of water from rivers flowing through the county, River Yala and River Nzoia being the main ones. Annual

[142] See, also, Cohen and Odhiambo, 1988.
[143] For more details, see Siaya County Development Profile, May 2013.
[144] Cohen and Odhiambo (1988: 66) explain this observation, thus: 'the introduction of maize into the texture of Siaya life (eating white maize seen as westernisation) by colonial government through pressure/force; this replaced sorghum which did well and was the mainstay of the Luo food economy, also causes food shortage. Hence maize in Siaya means hunger".

rainfall in Siaya range between 1,170 mm and 1,450 mm with a mean annual temperature of 21.75 0C and a range of 15 0C and 30 0C[145]. Despite these endowments, there is no major cash crop farming in the County following the collapse of cotton farming in late 1990s. The county has no major industrial activity apart from the large-scale rice farming and milling by the Dominion Farms Limited[146] at Ratuoro about 20 kilometres north of Siaya Town.

Besides farming, keeping of livestock (cows, sheep and goats), fishing in the major water bodies and small scale trading within urban centres and along major roads in the county are other sources of income in the county. Local people also receive remittances from the diaspora (out-migrating population) that are employed in major towns and cities in Kenya and beyond. Indeed Siaya County is a classic example of a labour reserve owing to its high levels of out-migration of able-bodied people to towns and cities in Kenya and beyond[147]. There is also gold mining, though on a small scale in Siaya, Rarieda, Ugunja and Gem districts, as well as fluorite in Asembo and granite and black sands in Yala valley (GoK, 2013b).

Despite these resource endowments, Siaya is a poor county and some commentators have described it as a "wasteland" dominated by poverty and underdevelopment[148]. Indeed, a ride through the villages of Siaya reveals widespread scarcity amidst what appears to be relatively good natural resource endowments: land for agricultural production, water for irrigation; fish resources; and good climate. One sees potentially arable land dotted with small-sized farms of about 1 to 2 acres surrounded by bushes, grass thatched homesteads, and vibrant petty trading along major roads in the area (Field observations, 2012 - 3).

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[145] This information is derived from the Siaya County Development Profile. See GoK, 2013b.

[146] Key informant information reveals what is commonly described as the "the politics of Yala Swamp" part of which the Dominion firm has leased from the Siaya County Council. There have been on-going contestations by local communities and interest groups regarding the activities of the firm, with part of the local population questioning the wisdom of leasing out tens of thousands of one of the best fertile lands in the county to a foreign owned firm. There is even a local NGO (Friends of Yala Swamp) which is dedicated to development issues concerning the swamp, including the area under the Dominion Farm.

[147] Cohen and Odhiambo (1988) provide the example of Siaya district to illustrate this. They note that the 1979 census, for example, showed Siaya had a net-out migration of 133,717 people which was the highest district out migration figure and the highest as a ratio of 'out migrants' to district population.

[148] For example, see "Jukwaa" a blog dedicated to discussing political and development issues in Siaya and in other counties, http://jukwaa.proboards.com/

Based on the 2005/6 KIHBS, poverty levels in Siaya are highest in Alego Usonga (42 per cent) and Gem (42 per cent) constituencies and lowest in Bondo constituency (25 per cent), followed by Rarieda (26 per cent) and Ugenya constituency (37 per cent). The 2013 County Development Profile estimates poverty in the county to be 47.56 per cent as at the end of 2012, with 400,599 people living below the poverty line. This implies a slightly over 7 per cent increase in poverty levels over a 7-year period and hence 1 per cent annual increase. Rural poverty in Siaya is estimated at 57.93 per cent as of 2012 while urban poverty is 20 percent points lower at 37.91 per cent (GoK, 2013b). These estimates are similar to those posted for Siaya District in 2002; the district's rural poverty rate stood at 57.9 per cent for rural areas and urban poverty at 37.9 per cent in 2002[149]. There is a general feeling that local poverty levels have always been higher than the levels portrayed in official statistics (Field interviews, 2012 - 3).

Siaya is a perennially food insecure county[150] whose inhabitants rely heavily on the market for food supply. Most of the food supplies come from outside the county, and across the border in Uganda (Field interviews, 2012/2013). The magnitude of food insufficiency in the county is captured in the Siaya DDP for the 2002 – 2008 period, which indicate that food was enough for only four months in a year in the district. The economy of Siaya is typically a "gorogoro economy" characterised by reliance on the market for food, especially maize, which is usually purchased in small quantities[151] for most of the year. This scenario represent a deterioration in the fortunes of the county whose inhabitants used to feed from their own production although there were periodic outbreaks of famine almost every ten years as indicated in Box 5.2.

[149] See the Siaya District Development plan for the period 2002 – 2008.

[150] The Siaya County MTP consultations held in Siaya Town in November 2012 identified food security as one of the key concerns in the county and these were to be addressed within the Vision 2030 framework (See Planning Bulletin, March 2013). Also, in a meeting in Nairobi in April 2013 under the banner of Nyanza Development Forum, Luo professionals identified food security as key priority for Siaya County. The professionals noted there was an urgent need for investment in irrigation and for construction of dams in Siaya (See Daily Nation Newspaper, 1 May 2013).

[151] The term "gorogoro economy" is adopted from Cohen and Odhiambo (1988). Reporting on their empirical work in Siaya, they note that following the failure of short rains at end of 1983, local people coped by buying maize in tins (gorogoro). The gorogoro economy is indicative of the inability of the local households to enjoy acceptable levels of subsistence.

Box 5.2 Food security in Siaya County: A history of periodic outbreak of famine[152]

1903 – Madhara. Cows could not move because there was no grass.
1913 – Mbita famine.
1923 – Oligi famine. This was a big famine, people were eating the bark of trees hence the name.
1933 – Nyangweso famine. Many locusts came hence famine named after them.
1943 – Ladhruok. Means people scrambling for the scarce food that was available.
1953 – Oginyi famine. There was an a trader of Indian origin at Ndere who sold flour and people survived by buying from him.
1963 – Uhuru famine. Named so because it was the year of independence.
1973 – There was no famine.
1983 – Gorogoro famine. One tin of maize (gorogoro) cost KSh. 18 and a bag cost KSh. 1,860. This is the year when prices of food commodities started going up.
1993 – Shika kiuno ya mzee wako famine. This is because you needed to unite to survive. It was a very tough famine.
2003 – (local name not available)
2013 – Predicates famine because men were idling in towns, more concerned with political events.

Source: Milkazadek Rando Larondo Opiyo (Interview, 20/3/2013)

Another notable feature of Siaya in the context of poverty reduction is the high number of civil society organisations in the districts of the county. By early 2013, there were 105 registered cooperatives (65 of these dormant), 1,497 registered CBOs/NGOs, 9,320 women groups and 2,263 youth groups in the county (GoK, 2013b). The high concentration of CSOs is evident, for example, in Bondo where 18 registered NGOs operate in the district. Most of the CSOs were involved in agriculture, health (STDs, HIV/AIDs), Water and Sanitation and children welfare activities and environment issues. A few CSOs, such as the League of Kenya Women Voters were involved in promoting public participation especially in the management of decentralised funds. Poverty thrives in this county despite the heavy concentration of CSOs and, particularly because, most of the CSOs were engaged in anti-poverty initiatives. This discussion will be pursued later in the chapter.

The socio-political map of Siaya would be incomplete without a mention that Siaya is the home county of many political leaders and eminent personalities in the public, private and non-profit sectors service in Kenya. Notable sons and daughters of Siaya include the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, who was Kenya's first Vice President, Ex-

[152] Cohen and Odhiambo (1988) report of a famine in 1918 -9 (Kanga famine) and another called Obalo in 1980.

Prime Minister, Raila Odinga and renowned freedom fighter, Ramogi Achieng Oneko. US President Barrack Obama also traces his roots in this County[153].

Siaya County has remarkable connections with poverty reduction efforts in Kenya. It is famous for hosting the first Millennium Village[154], Bar Sauri, at Sauri Sub location in Gem District. It is also one of the few counties where, since 2004, the piloting of various MDGs interventions (MDGs Quick Win Initiatives) has been underway. The Poverty Eradication Commission (PEC) likewise, is piloting and implementing a number of poverty reduction interventions in the county, including the Revolving Loans Funds and the District Table Banking schemes. However, despite having considerable resource endowments and high socio-political profile, Siaya has the unfortunate tag of a perennially poor and food insecure County.

5.3 Local Perspectives on Poverty and Poverty Reduction

In the local Luo language, the common term for poverty is "chan" or "dhier". A 'poor' person translates to jachan or jadhier, and poverty reduction to kedogichan or kedogidhier. Poverty is locally defined as a 'state of helplessness and powerlessness' and a lack of essential basic requirements such as medical services, food, education, shelter, and water[155]. Ordinary citizens generally talk about poverty with bitterness, perceiving it to be a socio-political phenomenon, rooted in neglect, marginalisation, inefficiency and the practices of the more powerful actors (government, institutions and leaders) in the local development space.

[153] His father's family comes from Nyang'oma Kogelo area of Central Alego Division of Siaya District, about 15 Kilometres from Siaya Town.

[154] The Sauri MVP comprises a group of eight villages in Sauri Sub location selected in 2004 to serve as UN Millennium Project's Model Villages. These villages were to help the UN Millennium Project to identify ways local communities can achieve the worldwide Millennium Development Goals of reducing poverty, hunger, disease, and lack of access to safe water and sanitation. Interventions touching on all MDGs areas are implemented in the project. Kenya has another MVP at Darti in Garissa County and another seven in Africa (See Sachs, 2005 for more details).

[155] Those affected most by poverty were elderly people, widows and widowers, orphans, children from poor families, and people with disabilities. See the Siaya and Bondo districts PRSP consultation reports for the period 2001 – 2004, published by the then ministry of finance and planning (www.treasury.go.ke/prsp).

The terms poverty eradication, poverty alleviation and poverty reduction are used interchangeably in every day conversation and in reports and publications[156] by local institutions. Of the three terms, poverty eradication tends to be less popular due to a perception that poverty cannot be reduced to zero level. Poverty levels are perceptively high and increasing, and there is an apparent 'normalisation' of poverty, perhaps due to long experience of the problem. A local government administrator in Bondo District explained the local poverty situation, thus:

> Poverty is very high in Siaya County beyond what official statistics indicate. If you look at Bondo your eyes might tell you poverty levels are low. However, majority of households here are poor; there are so many orphans who have to be fed, go to school and obtain medical help, and other support. This burden falls on their benefactors many of who are not well off. Some of the households here are child headed (Interview, 9/7/2012).

The view that poverty is high in Bondo is interesting in light of the KIHBS report of 2005/6 that placed the constituency's poverty rate at 25 per cent and thus the view that it was the least poor area in Siaya County. However, direct observations made in the course of fieldwork tended to confirm this viewpoint. Major urban centres in the county such as Kopiyo, Misori and Usenge in Bondo; Yala, Sauri, Akala and Sawagongo in Gem; Ukwala and Sega in Ugenya; Boro and Uranga in Siaya; and Asembo Bay and Madiany in Rarieda reveal considerable decline in the wealth and the vibrancy of economic activity. Old buildings that once stood magnificently have little economic activity. This observation is confirmed by a 2012 District Development Committee (DDC) for Siaya District, which noted that the economy of the district was relatively to that of compared with the national economy. The experiences of the Siaya County Council also point to a similar situation. The Council has had serious problems over the years in raising enough revenue locally due to what was viewed as low economic production in the area (Key informant interview, 14/10/2012)[157].

The poverty situation in Siaya is attributed to many natural and human factors. During the PRSP process of 2000/1, the consultation meeting in Boro Division in Siaya District identified 27 causes of poverty in the area. These included lack of cash crops,

[156] This is evident, for example, in DDPs, DDC minutes, DPEC Minutes, DAMER reports, NGOs reports, and Siaya County Council reports.

[157] However, corruption and inefficiency in the collection of County revenue among others, is perhaps one of the major contributing factors.

theft and laziness, poor attitude of youth towards work, high levels of dependency, exploitation of farmers by intermediaries, corruption, high cost of education, and insecurity (GOK, 2001). Poor soil fertility leading to low yields, over-reliance on traditional methods of agriculture, unpredictable rainfall patterns, high death rates due to HIV/AIDs, collapse of the main cash crops in the district, and lack of industries and cultural beliefs and practices were noted as some of the causes of increased poverty in the county. Key informants engaged in this study isolated poor performance of agriculture to be a chief cause of local poverty[158] because agriculture was the mainstay of the county's economy. Perennially low agricultural production trapped many households into a cycle of poverty.

Ordinary citizens' views on why poverty persists in Siaya converge on the perspective that poverty was a socio-political phenomenon, directly linked to failure of government, institutions and local leadership to support equitable local development, provide essential services and help the poor to pull out of a cycle of deprivation. On the other hand, government and local institutions point to leadership gaps and inhibitive cultural attitudes and practices. Local leaders explain the persistence of poverty in Siaya in terms of government failure and to some extent, out-migration of able-bodied people and lack of personal drive (initiative) among the ordinary people.

[158]Local people blame poor performance in the agricultural sector on various factors: high cost of farm inputs, poor extension services, and inadequate access to loans, low prices for farm produce, lack of irrigation services, poor soils, and livestock diseases, among others. The net effect is inadequate food, low incomes, inability to secure services, which are among the common manifestations of poverty in the county (Field data, 2012-3).

Table 5.1 Local explanations for the persistence of poverty in Siaya County

Factors underlying the persistence of poverty	Local explanations and examples
Government / Institutional failure	Neglect and marginalization by past regimes; Lack of major government investments; Cotton industry scuttled by Government for political reasons; Government not helping with fertilizer and seed distribution; Poverty not taken seriously by government line ministries; Inefficiencies and lack of essential services e.g. health care; Low government absorption capacity hence incompletion of development projects; NGOs spend enormous resources with little results; Lopsided priorities and unnecessary expenditures by government officials;[159]
Negative politics	Rivalries between local politicians; Local politicians scuttle private investments coming into county; Local rich businesspeople block investors from outside the county; Politics of hate: 'those who bring good things to county seen as the enemy'; Clanism: a few clans dominate politics, economy and leadership; People discuss politics daily.
Poor leadership	Paramount chiefs dominated local scene; Activist tendencies of local leaders; Leaders pursue self-interests instead of development that benefits wider society; Failure by local political leaders to initiate development projects; Corruption and misuse of public resources by leaders; Culture of silence: failure by leaders to question malpractices of elites and government officials; Elites hardly bother with local development; Frequent transfer of government officials such as the DDOs, which affect development coordination.
Out –migration	Historical out-migration of young, able bodied and educated people to towns and cities (especially Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu) in search of employment and to escape from hatred and witchcraft; Migrants hardly come back to invest locally or to support local development projects; Migration causes underutilisation of land resources hence food shortages: women and older people left behind to work the farms.
Disease pandemic	HIV/AIDs pandemic of 1980s and 1990s and early 2000s caused deaths of many resourceful people; People living with HIV/AIDs unable to work on the farms optimally; High dependency ratio: orphans and people living with HIV.
Low agricultural production	Food eaten in Siaya (vegetables, grains, fruits, etc) come largely from outside; Farm inputs (tractors, seeds and fertilizer) are largely unavailable, expensive or come late; Yala swamp used to be the granary of Siaya county but taken over by private investor; Peasant farming practices (rain fed, low fertilizer application, un-certified seeds, and small farm sizes) undermine farm productivity; Negative attitude towards fertilizer applications due to believe that continuous fertilizers application reduce soil fertility.
Lack of investments	Limited capacity gaps to utilise funds (loans, grants) effectively: local people go for similar small businesses hence low earnings. Local people are averse to loans fearing auctions of their property if they default;

[159] One of the observations in government offices in the County was a display of wealth, power and comfort in form of large compound, expensive furniture, television sets, and other official "supplies" in almost all offices of main officials at the County and district headquarters: DC's, DDO's, and CDF offices across Siaya. It would be difficult for the bureaucracy to justify such high degree of comfort amidst the great discomfort endured by the majority of the people they serve. This "comfort" and big man syndrome" appears to be a defining characteristic of most of Kenya's bureaucracy.

	Failure to invest locally by elites; Most of produce brought from outside (fruits, vegetables, grains, etc) could be produced locally. This practice gives no impetus for local economy to grow.
Culture of dependency	Local people are used to receiving hand outs "Gonyo";. NGOs have entrenched dependency syndrome by giving free things; Reliance on remittances from sons who migrated to towns and cities; Failure by local people to hold leaders accountable.
Laziness and idleness	Lack of personal drive to move out of poverty; Laziness and idling at market centres and towns by men and youth talking politics or playing 'Ajua' game; Leaving farming work to women, children and the old; Presence of many unemployed graduates in villages discourages investment in education hence high dropout rates.
Retrogressive cultural practices	People seeking to harm others through witchcraft due to hatred leads to out-migration of those who become successful; Use of ponds for cooking and drinking water hence water borne diseases; Marrying several wives hence large families to feed and educate; Wife inheritance hence spread of diseases, increased household budget and family feuds.
Youth behaviour and unemployment	Negative youth behaviour: spending money mostly on drinking and luxuries; Most youth are lazy (not working hard); Dropout of school to engage in fishing, bodaboda business or migrate; Unwilling to take loans from the youth fund because they want free things, Youth have job seeking mentality; few want to be self-employed.

Source: Research data (2012-3)

Ordinary people view poverty reduction as a 'song' they have heard many times. A study participant from Siaya District involved in a government-led antipoverty programme in the county explained this view as follows:

> It is not easy to convince local people that Government anti-poverty programmes can work. Local people generally feel the government has talked loudly about reducing poverty since independence but has done very little. Instead, poverty is increasing and people are disillusioned. I encourage them to apply for loans by sharing success stories but I sense a lot of frustration in them. They blame the government for neglect and the local leadership for doing little to resolve the poverty situation. Here in Siaya, there is nothing for leaders or government to control…there is not much investment in terms of industry...local leaders can only control our minds (Interview, 19/3/2013).

Local citizens tackled poverty by engaging in farming (mainly maize and sorghum in 1 to 2 acres), fishing in Lake Victoria, and running small-scale businesses in urban centres[160] and along the major roads. The youth run bodaboda transport[161] services in

[160] These include Aram, Ndori, Asembo and Madiany in Rarieda District; Ukwala and Sega in Ugenya District; Akara, Yala and Sawagongo in Gem District; Bondo, Seme and Misori in Bondo; and Ugunja and Sigomere in Ugunja District.

[161] Bodaboda is a Kiswahili word used in reference to use of "motorcycles" to transport people and goods from one place to another. This mode of transport has become prominent in rural as well as

most villages, markets and towns in the county. Others engage in causal labour or sought formal employment outside the county (migrating out of poverty).

Although ordinary citizens viewed themselves as having major responsibilities in reducing poverty, the dominant view was that the greatest responsibility lay with the government, institutions and leaders. This view is based on the premise that common people lacked the capacity to move out of the cycle of poverty on their own and hence required adequate support from local leaders and other institutional actors. It was also based on the view that the local poverty situation was caused or aggravated principally by the actions and inactions of government officials, elites and institutions.

Box 5.3 Perceived responsibilities of ordinary people in tackling poverty: what should they do?

- *Adopt modern methods of agriculture and change to high value crops;*
- *Try out perceived "risky" investments and be patient for results;*
- *Drop retrogressive habits and practices that perpetuate poverty such as out-migration;*
- *Practice integrity in their day to day life e.g. shunning corruption and nepotism;*
- *Exercise their rights enshrined in the constitution e.g. right to participate in decision making;*
- *Demand services, transparency and accountability from leaders, government and institutions;*
- *Stop over-relying on leaders (politicians), government and institutions to fight poverty i.e. take destiny into own hands;*
- *Monitor and make petitions on public expenditure;*
- *Have a mind-set that is ready to start small, to save, invest and pool resources for cooperative development;*
- *Change lifestyle: adopt hard work, shun laziness and cut wasteful expenditures;*
- *Participate in rural development projects;*
- *Be active citizens who look for and participate in available decision-making processes*
- *Strive for knowledge and skills e.g. starting up business (youth);*
- *Elect leaders of high integrity who serve people well;*
- *Form associations in order to create awareness and advocate for the rights of the poor.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

Some ordinary citizens, leaders, elites and local institutions were of the view that many ordinary citizens were not doing enough to improve their conditions and were therefore doing little to tackle poverty. A local elite from Ugunja District explained this viewpoint in the following way:

> Some people have adequate land for farming but did nothing or little feigning lack of money to buy seeds, fertilizer, etc. The local common person is not development conscious but operates on *sukuma maisha* (hand to mouth) mind-set. They are used to life of poverty and exclusion, and hence do not demand accountability and transparency from government officials, leaders and institutions. Most ordinary people are after quick results and are an impatient

urban areas since 2010 following the Government's reduction of import duty for motorcycles and spare parts.

> lot. They are used to receiving handouts ("G'onyo"). Most want to be helped but are not prepared to work hard or to do what you advise them. Many think that unless you are doing something on a large scale, you cannot make it in life (Interview, 19/3/2013).

Expounding on why common people appeared to do little to fight poverty, a respondent from Gem District, explained as follows:

> Common people could be doing little or failing to meet popular expectations. This is because they lack someone to educate them, to show them the way, what to do and how to do things well...we need knowledge and exposure. Common people need to understand practical things...how to do things and not mere ideas. The people in power have neglected us and have not involved us in development decisions (Interview, 5/7/2012).

Perhaps the low profile of ordinary citizens in tackling poverty explains the notable absence of homegrown poverty reduction innovations in Siaya County. The study identified a few local initiatives but these were introduced mainly by local institutions particularly government agencies and NGOs. These included the millennium and digital villages concept that has worked well in some areas, a drive to revive traditional crops by KARI, and working with widows and OVCs towards poverty reduction. Others include the 'table banking'[162] concept promoted by PEC in Siaya and Bondo districts and the introduction of drought resistance millet and sweet potatoes and cassava in Bondo.

5.4 Citizen Participation in Decision-making in Siaya

Citizen participation in decision-making is generally perceived to be important in Siaya and explanations for this view revolve around three main issues: ownership, performance and sustainability of development activities. In addition, local people justify citizen participation in decision-making "as a constitutional right". The latter viewpoint explains why local people, although usually local elites, sometimes sneaked

[162] This is one of the poverty reduction innovations piloted by the Poverty Eradication Commission since 2007. The concept has since been rolled out to several districts including Siaya and Bondo districts in Siaya County. It is a funding strategy where members save and borrow immediately to improve their economic activities, and sometimes to meet immediate financial needs. Its operation is linked to PEC's revolving loan fund managed by the District Poverty Eradication Committees (DPECs).

into decision-making spaces where they had been excluded as a way of protesting their exclusion[163].

Box 5.4 Reasons why citizen participation in public decision-making is important

- *Local people have indigenous knowledge which helps to identify root causes of poverty and resources available within community to tackle local problems;*
- *Participation enhances project ownership and sustainability;*
- *Participation is critical for buy-in of government policies and strategies;*
- *Participation demystifies government programmes and brings common people closer to government;*
- *Participation enables local people to provide oversight of public funds like CDF and LATF;*
- *Local people's participation is important because it is a constitutional right;*
- *Local people must participate to safeguard their interests although leaders can still ignore their views.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

However, in order to add value to the quality of development choices, genuine participation is needed. Local people defined the concept of 'genuine' participation' as 'where citizens feel free and valuable' and 'where views of citizens count in the final decisions'. Box 5.5 outlines how local people understood the concept of genuine participation.

Box 5.5 Local understandings of genuine participation in decision-making

- *Voluntary and informed participation that is not motivated by corruption, allowances or political patronage;*
- *Where traditional knowledge comes out, is harnessed and improved upon;*
- *Where local resources are identified and actually used in local development;*
- *Where local communities develop their own action plans;*
- *Where leaders and institutions have no prior agenda but help community to develop own plans;*
- *Where leaders and institutions talk to local people, listen to their views, and incorporate those views into policy and plans;*
- *Where there is accountability and good governance;*
- *Where local people's views become part of final decisions;*
- *When participants have ample time to discuss and agree on issues*.

Source: Research data (2012-3)

[163] This was reported to have happened during the Siaya County MTP forum held in November 2012 in Siaya Town. It is also a common practice in local DDCs, as I observed in a DDC meeting in Ugunja in 2012.

The dominant view was that genuine participation is important but difficult to achieve because of a variety of constraints, which we highlight later in the chapter. To begin to understand the nature of citizen participation in decision-making we now examine the institutional context within which participation took place in Siaya.

5.5 Spaces and Avenues for Citizen Participation in Decision-making

Genuine participation in the decision-making process requires appropriate avenues, where citizens can interact with their leaders and other social actors in making development choices. The study found that many formal decision-making avenues exist in Siaya. These included a variety of policy and planning processes such as the DDP process; commissions and committees (structures); development projects/programmes; development meetings and forums; and development research and evaluation projects. These outlets were connected with the formal development policy and planning process, and were therefore, legitimate decision-making avenues. Some were scheduled spaces (for example, DDC, DPEC, LASDAP or CDFC meetings) while others, such as public meetings (barazas), were ad hoc and took place depending on the need. A few spaces, such as the County forums and ward development committees were new, having been introduced by the Constitution. These were hardly functional at the time of the fieldwork for this study. Some spaces opened for business within the villages (e.g. the sub-LDC) but most transacted business away from the villages, often in the local administrative headquarters, as was the case with District development committee, district poverty eradication committee and the CDF Committee[164].

Many of the key decision-making spaces, including the DDP process, were hierarchical. This meant that the voice of the common people, irrespective of how many attended such processes, was restricted. First, others (government officials) drew the guidelines and agendas followed in those avenues. Second, officials directed the actual deliberations. Third, the views of the common people could be ignored in the final decisions because they were not given an opportunity to validate the decisions before they were finalised. The implementation of the decisions was

[164] These are the sub location, location, divisional, district, constituency and county headquarters offices or venues near those offices.

directed by others, notably officials, elites and local institutions who often controlled the resources required, for example, to undertake specific interventions to address a particular service need. These restrictions were amply revealed in the following decision-making spaces: the district development planning process, poverty reduction strategic process, local authorities' development planning process, constituency development planning process, and the MTEF budgeting process.

The DDP process for Siaya for the 2008-2012 period is a good case to illustrate the nature of citizen participation in decision-making in Siaya County. That particular DDP process was led by the local DDO and drew information from the sub LDC, LDC, DDC and DEC structures which, were spaces dominated by government officials, local elites and representatives of institutions in the area. A consultant undertook the actual plan preparation and there was no opportunity for ordinary citizens to directly offer their views. Local citizens did not even have an opportunity to validate the development proposals in the plan prior to its publication. Monitoring of the plan implementation was undertaken by the DMEC, which produced annual review reports (DAMER), and midterm review report (DMER) to indicate progress made in the plan implementation and the challenges.

The outstanding feature of the DDP process was its lack of local people's 'direct" voice and significant input in the plan process. The main output of the DDP process (DDP) therefore could not be viewed as based on broad and genuine participation of local citizens. A similar experience was noted with the 2013 – 2017 county level MTP consultations that took place in November 2012 and the County development profile preparation forums. The participants in the County MTP process were mostly elites, officials and institutional representatives invited by the County MTP secretariat whose membership comprised mainly of Government officials and representatives of the main NGOs in the county. The vast majority of participants to the County Development Profile process in 2012 were also government officials, select local elites and representatives of major CSOs, in a process coordinated by the DDO for Rarieda. Input of ordinary citizens in these processes was largely missing.

Similarly, the annual LASDAP processes undertaken by the Siaya County Council revealed a lack of citizen voice in the process. Although most local people were aware

of the existence of the LASDAP process and its purpose as the process through which projects for funding by the LATF were identified, only a few ordinary people participated in the formulation stage of the process as revealed in the participant lists for the 2010 and 2011 ward level "consultations". This, was despite claims by the Siaya County Council that it usually advertised the meetings widely, including at all major markets, newspapers and through the radio. The implementation of the LASDAP projects was problematic as the plans were either never implemented or the completion rate was poor. The council, for example, acknowledged these weaknesses in its first Strategic Plan covering 2007- 2012 period. The main constraints given for poor plan performance were limited funds and staff shortage[165].

Consultants hired by the Council facilitated the development of the Strategic Plans through what the Council describes as a "participatory process that entailed consultations with civic leaders, council staff, government ministries, and other relevant stakeholders"[166]. In the preamble to the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan (revised version of the 2007 -2012 Strategic Plan), the Council Clerk notes of the process:

> In preparing this strategic plan, the council has adopted a participatory approach where both external and internal stakeholder's views and comments were sought at various stages. This involved a number of workshops under the guidance of the consultants and subjecting the draft Strategic Plan to peer review by various professionals, government ministries, private sector players, development partners and other stakeholders. Preparation of the document was inclusive and participatory. The document therefore has inputs from a cross section of council stakeholders, detailed and implementable (GoK 2009e: vi).

These statements reveal awareness by the Council, its officials and consultants that participation was an important ingredient for local development. However, this awareness did not translate into practice because ordinary people were hardly involved in the process. Their participation, where it occurred, was mostly representative rather than direct, with a category of rural elites called the "opinion leaders" playing a key representative role.

[165] The first of these five year Strategic Plans covered the period 2007 - 2012 aligned to the Economic Recovery for Wealth Creation and Employment by then Kenya's National Development Plan framework. The plan was amended to cover the 2009 -2013 period in order to align with Vision 2030 launched in August 2008. For more details, see the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan, pp. 8.

[166] See the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan, pp. viii.

Similar experiences can be noted in development planning at the constituency level and in particular the CDF process[167]. The local CDF Committees engaged the public (local people) and institutions mostly at the implementation phase, where local people submitted project proposals for funding. Project proposals served as the principal channel for local people and institutions to provide input into CDF priorities. CDF offices in the county also developed strategic plans to guide their work over a 5-year period. These were achieved through processes led by consultants, who together with CDF officials approved the plans. There were limited opportunities for common people to participate directly in CDF affairs. This was confirmed by a Siaya DDC sitting on 25/2/2011, which noted that community participation in community affairs was unsatisfactory, and that there was poor working relationship between CDF and government officials in the district.

The PRSP process is another local decision-making space directly linked to poverty reduction. As in other rural parts of the country, only one dedicated PRSP process took place in Siaya County. Divisional consultation meetings took place in March 2001 in the then Siaya and Bondo districts. For the sake of focused analysis, we will concentrate on the Siaya district PRSP process where consultations targeted 1,100 local people residing in the seven divisions in the district – Karemo, Boro, Uranga (in the current Siaya District), Yala and Wagai in the current Gem district, and Ugunja and Ukwala divisions in the current Ugunja and Ugenya districts respectively.

Out of the 1,100 targeted participants, only 488 (44.4%) were covered hence a short fall of 612 (55.6%) whose views were missed. Of the 488 actual participants, seventy were from special interest groups[168.] It is difficult to gauge the gender distribution of the participants from the available records. Trained facilitators split into teams of three to four members, led the divisional consultative meetings, each allocated one

[167] The new CDF Act enacted in 2012 institutes fundamental changes to the management of the CDF. The MPs are no longer in charge of the Fund as Patrons, nor are they mandated to nominate CDFC officials. Instead, these are to be elected through transparent constituency wide process. However, newly elected MPs are unhappy with this arrangement and have threatened to repeal the Act so as to give themselves the overall management of the Fund as it was before. There are other calls to disband the fund and channel the money to County government. The CDF matter remains inconclusive.

[168] This comprised people living with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities, youth, single mothers, widows, orphans, the deaf and the dumb.

day. The meetings focused on understanding poverty dynamics and possible poverty alleviation interventions in the divisions.

Attendance of the consultative meetings was by invitation, sent out by the district secretariat for the process. The vast majority of participants were government officials, opinions leaders and representatives of institutions and special groups. The Siaya PRSP consultations took place within a single day with a seemingly crowded agenda. As such, thorough discussions and consensus building on the topics covered could not be achieved. In addition, the participants were not provided with an opportunity to validate the report of the meetings prior, to publication. However, the participants appreciated the efforts to seek the views of people with special needs in separate forums, and to consult local people at division rather than district levels, as happened in some districts[169].

Although the PRSP is not a regular decision-making avenue, its decisions have far reaching impact on fighting poverty when implemented. A review of major policy documents in the County produced, subsequent to the consultations, however, hardly mention or refer to the results of the PRSP consultations. The nature of the key decision-making spaces in Siaya can be summarised in Table 5.2.

[169]An example of this is Tharaka District, where the organisers held the consultation on a single day at the district headquarters and attended by 145 people who were mainly elites, officials and representatives of local institutions.

Table 5.2: The character of key public decision-making spaces in Siaya County

Local decision-making space	Main organisers	Main actors: Who often contribute to decisions	Main decision-making venue	Type of space	Agenda: Who normally generates agenda	Ordinary people's input in final decisions	Level of local citizens' participation according to Arnstein's participation scale
Poverty reduction strategy paper process	Officials	Officials Rural elites Leaders Institutions & reps	Division/ District Hqs	Invited	Officials Consultants	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Consultation
District development planning process	Officials	Officials Rural elites Leaders Institution reps	Division/ District/County Hqs	Invited	Officials Elites Leaders	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Consultation
County profile preparation process	Officials	Officials Rural elites Leaders Institutions reps	Division/ District/County Hqs	Invited	Officials Elites Leaders	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Consultation
Local authorities service delivery action planning process	Officials	Officials Rural elites Politicians Consultants	Ward level	Open	Officials, rural Elites Politicians	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Consultation
Local authorities strategic planning	Officials	Officials Rural elites Politicians	District Hqs	Open	Officials, rural Elites Politicians	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Consultation
Constituency strategic planning process	Officials	Officials Rural elites Politicians Institutions reps Consultants	Constituency Hqs	Invited	Officials Politicians	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Consultation
CDF Committee	Officials	Officials Rural elites Politicians Institutions reps	Constituency Hqs	Invited	Officials Politicians	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Information
Budget preparation (MTEF) process	Officials	Officials Rural elites politicians-Institutions reps	District/County Hqs	Invited	Officials Elites Leaders	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Consultation
Community action planning (MOA)	Officials	Officials Rural elites Institutions reps	Area (location)	Invited	Officials Elites Leaders	No opportunity to validate final	Partnership

		Common People				decisions	
DFRD committees (DDC, Sub DDC, LDC, SLDC, VDC)	Officials	Officials Rural elites Leaders Institution reps	Division/ District/County Hqs	Membership	Officials Elites Leaders	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Consultation
District executive committee	Officials	Officials	District	Membership	Officials	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Information
District Gender Social Development committee	Officials	Officials Rural elites Leaders Institution reps	Division/ District/County Hqs	Membership	Officials Elites Leaders	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Information
District poverty eradication committee (DPEC)	Officials	Officials Rural elites Leaders Institution reps	District Hqs	Membership	Officials Elites Leaders	No opportunity to validate final decisions	Information

Source: Research data (2012 -3)

The extent and quality of ordinary citizens' involvement in decision-making was low and inconsequential. There was absence of genuine participation, which according to Arnstein's ladder of participation would be at the empowerment and partnership levels. Information sharing and consultations were tokenism forms of participation with little impact on the final decisions reached or their implementation. However, certain processes within the District poverty eradication committee activities, and table banking appeared to be good examples of empowered citizen participation with positive implications for poverty reduction.

Box 5.6 The table banking concept at a glance

Table banking is one of the poverty reduction innovations piloted by the Poverty Eradication Commission since 2007. The concept has since been rolled out to several districts including Siaya and Bondo districts in Siaya County. Table banking is a funding strategy in which members save and borrow immediately to improve their economic activities, and sometimes to meet immediate financial needs. Its operation is linked to PEC's revolving loan fund managed by the District Poverty Eradication Committees (DPECs). Through a selected intermediary (Micro Finance Institution – MFI), DPECs provides loans ranging KES. 50,000 – 2500,000 to groups to assist members undertake income-generating activities such as small scale businesses, farming activities and others. The group members decide how to share the loan amount between themselves and come together at agreed dates in a month to submit loan repayment amount, which they submit to DPEC through the MFI. DPEC uses the repaid loans to provide another round of loans to more groups. The group members place part of their profits (savings from the proceeds of their individual projects) on the table during the monthly meeting and immediately borrow to grow their businesses and to meet other financial needs.

Source: Research data (2012-3)

Table banking is an example of poverty reduction projects based on Government financing and operational guidelines that represent features of good citizen participation in decision-making and poverty reduction at local level. Ordinary citizens are involved in making decisions at the group level such as the amount of loan to apply from the Micro Finance Institution (MFI), the distribution of the loan to individual members, expected members' monthly savings, and who and under what terms should receive additional cash from the pooled members' savings. It is a good example of how policies from the centre (PEC guidelines and the revolving fund and table banking concepts) are translated at local level, with ordinary people's participation, even though this is mostly at the implementation stage. Table banking is a relevant concept for this study as it is principally an innovative poverty reducing intervention.

Strong wave of evidence reveals the perception that ordinary citizens are passive actors in government-led decision-making spaces and processes because they did little to demand their rights and they lacked assertiveness. A youthful participant from Gem viewed local ordinary citizens as 'mumblers' who did little to exercise their participation rights, and explaining his view as follows:

> When unhappy with malpractices of elites, officials, or institutions, local people just mumbled. They hardly speak out loudly and openly because they fear that the powerful will withdraw benefits or even blame them as the principal cause of local poverty situation and other development gaps Those who speak out consistently against the powerful are targeted for co-option (compromised) or punished (Interview, 10/10/2012).

An ordinary citizen from Siaya District explained that local people were discouraged from demanding inclusion or having interest in official decision-making processes because the views of common people have no power and hence are hardly incorporated into the final decisions (Interview, 20/3/2013). This point to the fact that ordinary citizens faced certain constraints in their attempts to engage meaningfully with other social actors within the local development space.

5.6 Common Constraints to citizen participation in local decision-making process

Several factors or constraints inhibited the local people of Siaya County from meaningful participation in the available decision-making spaces. Most of the constraints were external, but there were others touching on the common people's behaviour. The main constraints are described below.

Restrictive spaces and institutional practices: Many of the public policy spaces available operated based on official guidelines and legal frameworks that specified membership, venue, agenda, frequency and implementation of decisions. This was the case with the LDC, DDC, DPEC, and CDFC. These spaces were hardly open to citizens who were not members or those who were not invited to meetings. Local people participated mostly through representation by elites and institutions. Most of the policy spaces also took place at local administrative headquarters and hence were not easily accessible to ordinary citizens. In the LASDAP processes, only a few participants turned up for meetings. As already indicated, the process seemed rushed, with officials holding up to two separate meetings in a day, and thus not according people enough time for deliberations and consensus building. In the constituency strategic plan preparation for Siaya County Council, for instance, consultants led the process and there was limited involvement of the ordinary citizens. DMEC conducts monitoring and evaluation of district development plans and the team comprises mostly of government officials with local citizens engaging only as informants.

Leadership gaps: Leaders did not always keep time during meetings and sometimes the discussions did not lead to clear decisions with responsibilities and deadlines. Postponement of meetings was frequent and some of the leaders tended to skip meetings without sufficient reasons or notice. This discouraged participation by ordinary citizens.

Personal incapacities: This has to do with the ability to attend decision-making spaces (e.g. transport costs) or the ability to effectively articulate one's views during the deliberations. The level of education, for a considerable proportion of local people was low and some could not speak fluently in English yet deliberations in the

available policy spaces were mostly conducted in English. Others were unable to fully comprehend complicated subject matters.

Impact gaps: Decisions were not always implemented fully and on time. This discouraged local people's active participation in the policy process. Related to this was the feeling by local ordinary people that their views are often ignored in the framing of the final decisions or implementation of decisions such as the use of CDF and LATF funds. Local people wanted to realise positive impact of the decisions they make and the absence of this, discouraged their continued participation in policy.

Information gaps: Often, information about important public meetings where deliberations take place either failed to reach the ordinary citizens or was received late. This reduced the level and quality of participation. Many of the local people, including elites, indicated unawareness and late information as the main reasons for failing to participate in the last PRSP process, MTP consultations in 2013, and annual LASDAP consultations. Local leaders were accused of hoarding information, thus deterring local people's ability to participate meaningfully in policy spaces. Lack of feedback mechanism for sharing information regarding actions taken on the local people's suggestions or the decisions reached by various committees also discouraged participation. Reports detailing decisions arrived at, follow up actions, implementation status or proposals made by different committees were not easily accessible to the local people.

Elite capture of institutions: By design, legal frameworks and guidelines on the operations of key policy spaces at local level (PRSP, DDP, MTP, MTEF, CDF, LASDAP, DPEC, DDC, LDC) favoured the elites, officials and institutions who participate in decision-making spaces as organisers, funders, "opinion leaders" or representatives of some of the groups in local society. Where public participation is required, there was no requirement for direct participation of ordinary citizens, or the election of those who will represent them. Many elite-based institutions based in Siaya are keen to lobby and influence local development. These include the Siaya County Civil Society Forum, Siaya Strategic Forum, Siaya Investment Forum, etc. These forums are elitist-institutional avenues and seldom take up the voice of the common people whose well-being they purport to champion.

Time Constraints: One of the common explanations given for not attending meetings or project implementation activities was 'lack of time'. Ordinary people have to prioritize attending public policy deliberations or attending to their survival activities. On the other hand, the limited time allocated to decision-making processes inhibited the quality of participation. For example, DDC meetings often took 2-3 hours of discussing and reaching decisions on a wide range of development issues involving a wide array of actors in a given district. Local people often find that they do not have enough time to present and lead discussions on issues of concern. This inhibits the quality of the discussions, the decisions, subsequent implementation and ultimately, the policy outcomes.

Negative attitudes: A dominant local view is that local people, especially the youth, lack interest in development matters, including forums where decisions are reached. The culture of handouts or the "gonyo" mind-set is reportedly the most important cause of this attitude. Gonyo, in Dholuo, means "un tie me". This means that when some of the local people only attend policy spaces, they expect some direct benefits. Therefore, they attend decision-making processes where they perceive high prospects of handouts (political meetings and NGOs' meetings) rather than government led processes and meetings, where there is little possibility of a handout.

Negative experiences: Common people barely demand their rights to participation out of fear of retribution from the powerful and influential actors. The culture of leaders ignoring and shunning their voices as was the case in the immediate past, discouraged them from deep involvement in public decision-making processes. Local people cherished a quiet life and interpreted many of the activities within the public sphere as politics.

Analysis of reports, minutes and memoranda for key government led decision-making processes and structures reveals that there is wide awareness about the level and quality of local citizens' participation being a constraint to local development. For example, the DDPs have a section on Challenges and Constraints that explains the reasons behind the status of plan performance. One of the common constraints

mentioned is low participation of target groups and local communities in project implementation[170].

The Constitution is the most widely cited mechanism for addressing the constraints facing local people's participation in decision-making, particularly, Chapter 6 on public participation. Because the Constitution and its provisions are supreme, it implies that any guidelines or by-laws that restrict public participation are invalid. This appears to mitigate the problem of lack of legal frameworks cited by Government officials in explaining why local people are not always involved in policy matters. How the rights to participation were exercised at the grassroots was the forte of those who controlled the various policy spaces; they determine who is to be invited or left out. Often, this is based on elitist and self-interested interpretation of the process guidelines.

The media, particularly the local FM radio station (Ramogi FM) has raised awareness among the people of Siaya on the importance of public participation and the rights enshrined in the Constitution. Ramogi FM discussed poverty, development, participation, and rights and requests people to call in and participate in the deliberations. These discussions were important in that they raise awareness about participation and tackling poverty, and have the potential to improve local people's interest in poverty and development.

The Government addresses the participation constraints through institutionalising guidelines on all major policy and planning processes and structures at local level such as the operations of the CDF and LATF projects, DDPs, LASDAP, ward development committees, among others. However, the problem remains that of applying these guidelines. The local level officials usually interpret and apply these guidelines, sometimes contrary to expectations. Government officials dominated local level committees and other decision-making structures. Thus, it cannot be assumed that community representatives will have an equal voice when they are outnumbered, as is the case in DPEC and DDC.

[170] See, for example, DDPs for 2002-8 and 2008-2012 periods.

In general, many of the participation constraints faced by the local people, especially the ordinary citizens, remain. There is a need to address these constraints in order to increase local people's participation in decision-making at local level. Specific actions may include targeted civic education on participation and poverty reduction efforts, providing access to and adequate and timely information on policy spaces so that local people can participate meaningfully, acting on decisions made, and regular feedback to local people, among others.

5.7 State of Leadership in Siaya County

The concept of leadership in Siaya is synonymous with political leadership. As such, how local people perceived politicians influenced the general perception of leadership in the county. Local perspectives on leadership vary from one category of the leader class to the other. Even within the same leader category, officials in similar positions, at different points in time, were perceptively favourable while others were not. Surprisingly, the leaders tended to be perceived favourably at the individual level, and within the social context, but viewed in a bad light in the official, public sphere where they were accused of a variety of governance deficits. Box 5.7 captures this succinctly.

Box 5.7 Ordinary people's perceptions of local leadership

- *Political leaders (MPs, other elected leaders): Powerful, influential and selfish. Dominates local scene and do not bother with people's expectations. Break promises at will. Interact with ordinary people mostly during campaigns.*
- *Provincial Administration (Chief, DO, DC, etc): Feared, inefficient and indifferent to local suffering. Hardly interact with ordinary people (the 'subjects'). They have general aversion towards public administration.*
- *Government Ministry officials/employees: Control resources but are ineffective. They treat people as 'beneficiaries' and hardly interact with ordinary people beyond services.*
- *Local Authority officials/employees: Ruthless when collecting taxes. Ineffective and have limited resources or do not use available resources prudently to provide services.*
- *NGO officials: Major actors in development projects although they can do more. Interact with ordinary people through SHGs and CBOs.*
- *Officials of religious based organizations: Respect and interact with local people. Guided by Christian morals.*
- *Religious leaders: Held in high esteem. Act as moral beacon of the community. Notable opinion shapers.*
- *Business sector leaders (chairmen of markets, middle men, etc): Have economic prowess. Exploiters in market dealings. Agents of local politicians.*
- *CBO leaders: Community mobilisers and spokespeople in local development discourse. Ineffective due to limited resources.*
- *Professional elites (highly educated, professionals, etc): Proud and absent. Feel they know better than others. Hardly interact with ordinary people. Undercuts ordinary people at individual level. Source of development funds (Harambee) and future members of parliament.*
- *Women leaders: Influential in mobilising women for development. Misused by local politicians.*
- *Traditional leaders/elders: Respected. Gives direction and advice to community.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

There was general dissatisfaction with the local leadership, described in mostly negative terms: corrupt, insensitive, biased, dominating, proud, self-gratifying, insincere, absent and vastly inept. The perceptions on political leaders are particularly scathing. A study participant from Ugunja, a local leader, had this to say regarding the local political class:

> Political leaders are self-centred and cause us to rely on them. They behave as if they own our lives. They have done little to uplift the lives of local people. Before they say something, nothing used to move, they owned us but this is changing due to the new constitution. They used to tell people what they think and ask us to do so. They do not know much about local things because they are rarely here. They live in Nairobi and 'vomit' ideas from there to us when they come. The MP closes or opens the door for you. They dominate the local scene. They have created fear among people including local elites who have to be very careful in anything lest they antagonise the politicians' ego (Interview, 19/3/2013).

Local government officials, especially line ministry staff, the provincial administration and local authorities' staff were perceived as not providing adequate services, as inefficient, unaccountable and unresponsive to local needs. A widely

expressed frustration was that government funds disbursed to the County accomplished little as most of it is unspent and was returned to the Treasury at the end of each financial year. Officials were accused of being away from their workstations most of the time, attending workshops, or attending to their studies and other private business. Absenteeism from office by officials in Siaya has been observed by other researchers. Cohen and Adhiambo (1988:47) provides a glimpse on this issue by highlighting "routine absence of officials from Boro" in Siaya District:

> Perhaps 7 or 8 civil and police officials may be found on the rosters of Boro's administrative apparatus, but it is sometimes difficult to find the official you need. The officials are away on long and short leaves. And their constant attention at the regional offices 12 kms away is customary, if not required.

Leadership problems in Siaya are widely believed to be historical, stretching back to the era of the paramount and senior chiefs who were viewed as the original perpetrators of the seeds of corruption, nepotism, exploitation, and discrimination (based on clans and friendship connections). Local people's expectations of the leaders cluster around two principal issues. The first concerns the behaviour of leaders; they are expected to uphold the principles of transparency, accountability, honesty, integrity, punctuality, responsibility and respect for law and order. Second, leaders are expected to fulfill their roles. The common expectations are captured in Box 5.8.

Box 5.8 Local expectations of leaders: what should leaders do?
Leaders are supposed to have regular and genuine interactions with local citizens;
Leaders are supposed to be knowledgeable;
Leaders should work hard and involve people in eradicating poverty;
Leaders are supposed to have passion to eradicate poverty;
Leaders should have skills to be able to do these things well;
Leaders should be able to see things differently;
Leaders should set pace for local people to follow / should be role models;
Leaders must fulfill promises and be honest.

Source: Research data (2012-3)

The dominant view is that leaders did not generally meet these expectations. The relationship between leaders and ordinary citizens was generally restrained and described in negative terms: lukewarm, remote, extractive, exploitative, problem-based and patron-clientele. Drawing from personal experience in the area, a local government official pointed that local people had no time for or the will to engage

with officials in a discussion about development beyond the 'problem' that they wanted solved (Interview, 6/7/2012).

This observation underlined an emerging view among local government officials and some local elites that ordinary citizens were self-interested individuals, impatient for results and were not engaging enough with the leaders for a variety of reasons. These included gaps in knowledge about services that were on offer, laxity (less interest in interacting and getting support from officials but rather struggle on their own), and fear of engaging with officials because of previous experiences or perception that they would not be treated well. Their interaction was problem-based and hence they saw no need to visit offices unless there was a problem to be solved. Box 5.9 highlights the relationship between the local leaders and the ordinary citizenry.

Box 5.9 Category of local leaders and their relationship with the common people

- ***Political leaders (MP, Councilors, etc.):*** *Seen as powerful and influential. Dominate local scene. People have high expectations that are hardly met.*
- ***Prov. Administration (Chief, DO, DC, etc.):*** *Feared. Minimal interaction with ordinary people who they see as 'subjects'. There is always an aversion for public administration.*
- ***Government Ministry officials/employees****: Seen as having resources but not effective. Low interaction with ordinary people who they see as 'beneficiaries'.*
- ***Local Authority officials/employees:*** *Ruthless when collecting taxes. Have limited resources!*
- ***NGO officials:*** *Major actors in development projects. Listens to people's needs. Attempt to interact with people especially through SHGs and CBOs.*
- ***Officials of religious based organizations:*** *Listens and acts on people's needs where possible. Respect local people. Are guided by Christian morals. Interact freely with ordinary people.*
- ***Religious leaders:*** *held in high esteem. seen as the moral fabric of the community. Notable opinion shapers Business sector leaders (chairmen of markets, middle men, etc): Respected for economic prowess. Exploiters in market dealings. Agents of local politicians.*
- ***CBO leaders:*** *Are community mobilisers and spokespeople in local development discourse.*
- ***Professional elites*** *(highly educated, professionals, etc): Mostly proud. Feel they know better than others. Hardly interact with ordinary people. Are a source of development funds (Harambee) and future members of parliament.*
- ***Women leaders:*** *Influential in mobilising women for development. Often seen as agents of local politicians.*
- ***Traditional leaders/elders:*** *offer direction and advice to community. They are respected.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

As can be expected, the commonest spaces where common people and leaders interacted were in controlled institutional set ups: offices whenever the former sought services and during meetings organised by local government administrators (chiefs, DOs, DCs). They also interacted during political campaign meetings, public holiday events and institutional gatherings such as school prize giving days, and during research and evaluation exercises.

The relationship between the different categories of the local leader class appeared to be restrained and unequal. Political leaders reportedly dominated the local scene and demanded loyalty and respect from everyone including other elites and officials. The relationship between politicians and the rural based academic elites was a particularly uneasy one. A study participant from Ugunja District (Interview, 4/7/2012) noted that local communities often called upon the elites (professionals) to support development initiatives through Harambees. However, participation in such ventures often made elites the target of politicians who accused them of undermining their political popularity. Perceiving that politicians could interfere with their jobs, many professionals shun local development engagements (Interview, 19/3/2013).

These experiences point to local power contests, which have the potential to undermine local development and poverty reduction efforts in particular. They confirm an earlier finding that negative politics and local rivalries is one of the factors that explain the persistence of poverty in Siaya County.

5.8 Local power hierarchies

Politicians were widely believed to be top of the local power hierarchy. This is because of various reasons: they controlled local development funds (CDF, LATF, etc) and hence have money to spend around; have the people's mandate which gives them authority and protection; they are usually wealthy individuals who command respect and fear.

Local government officials (local administrators[171] and line ministry officials) are the next most powerful leader class in Siaya; they coordinate key decision-making structures such as the DDC, DEC, DMEC, DPEC, LDC, CDFC, and security committee, and therefore have the power to influence development and anti-poverty work in the County. The local government administrators are particularly powerful as they 'wear' two powerful "hats" (development and security dockets) which offer them opportunities to be involved in almost all local issues.

[171] These officials comprises of the DC, DO, Chief and Assistant Chief. They are in charge of development and security matters at district, divisional, locational and sub locational levels respectively. In transacting their work, these officials rely mostly on the DFRD structures – DDC and LDC – and regular public and committee meetings.

Church leaders, particularly those heading the main denominations in the county (Catholic and ACK) are the third most powerful class in Siaya. They are viewed as having crucial advantages that other development actors lack; they have platforms, which they often use to educate or advocate or issues that they deem important for society. The platform allows them access to local people at least once a week to promote their ideas.

Business people are another powerful class because they are rich and often use their wealth to gain access and respect of the local people. They control the fish trade in the county, which then become an important source of power because fish is a highly valued commodity in the county. Business people obtain most of the government contracts and control the local prices of goods and services. They work closely or are connected to politicians. Although they have no direct control over local people, they often use their connections to influence local level decisions.

Professionals (elites) are perceived as the fourth powerful class in Siaya. They command respect and loyalty from the local citizens because of their education and their positions that they hold in society. They are well connected to powerful people and institutions within and outside the County it is they who attend most of the local level policy spaces such as DDC meetings. Government officials rely on the input of the professionals in decision-making and implementation of decisions, in most cases through CBOs, SHGs and other institutions, which are led by the local elites. Local elites often influence decisions and actions indirectly through their politicians and government officials.

NGOs are an important player on the local scene, because they implement programmes that offer essential services to the local people. They have financial and human resources that supplement those of the government and communities. They tend to have innovative ideas and approaches to local development and therefore they are regular participants in local level public decision-making. Some NGOs operate in several districts in the county and therefore have a big reach.

Cultural leaders, notably the Luo council of elders (county and district council members), are recognised as the cultural spokespeople for the Luo community in

Siaya. They speak out on a wide range of issues affecting the community, and are regular speakers during public holidays and cultural events. As the custodians of the Luo culture in the county their advice or demands on particularly cultural issues cannot be contradicted at will.

Witchdoctors in Siaya are also powerful because they control people's minds through fear of negative experiences. Witchcraft is one of the causal factors for the high outmigration of young, able bodied and educated people from Siaya. This cultural practice also explains why some of the migrants barely return to build homes and invest locally. Lastly, some local elites perceive the *National Intelligence Service* (NIS) to be a powerful group in the county. They perceive the service as responsible for the suspicious transfers of high performing government officials from the County. In this way, the service is viewed as playing an invisible anti-development role in Siaya.

Given that 'poverty is rooted in the politics of power and interests' (Webster, 1980), it is conceivable that the persistence of high levels of poverty in Siaya County, is to a large extent, as a result of how those with power utilise it in decision-making processes and implementation of anti-poverty programmes. In this respect, a study participant from Rarieda District commented on how a few business people, working closely with politicians and government officials, dominated government contracts. They had the final word on most local issues and the ordinary people in the area seemed to have accepted the futility of contradicting these powerful people, often lamenting "jope sao sewacho" (the rich have said) (Interview, 26/3/2013). This issue of 'elite capture' is illustrated in a probe on how elites engage in local development processes in Siaya.

5.9 Elites and Local Development

Elites in Siaya have an important role to play in local development because they command vast resources that can foster development: they have experience, skills, connections, finances, and other endowments. Most local elites support local development in various ways: mobilising communities for project implementation; capacity building of local people and groups in areas, advocacy on gender and youth;

lobbying institutions on particular policy positions; supporting local development projects through generous contributions in Harambees and running these institutions by sitting in the management committees.

At the same time, ordinary citizens accuse the local elites of grabbing development opportunities through brief case NGOs, failing to invest locally, and blocking otherwise beneficial development policies or programmers. A widely quoted example of the latter being a complex of abandoned buildings at Ugunja Town in Ugunja District, which was meant to be a health centre but, local politics pushed until the investor abandoned the project. The elite practices that have influenced poverty reduction negatively are highlighted in Box 5.10.

Box 5.10 Negative elite practices that affect poverty reduction

- *Form briefcase NGOs for grabbing development opportunities and benefits;*
- *Star up political debates about policies and development projects hence blocking or scuttling them;*
- *Influence the transfers of Government officers they do not like;*
- *Place undue influence on development activities of NGOs and government;*
- *Culture of silence: they keep quite when they are supposed to stand up and talk about corrupt dealings in institutions;*
- *Fail to attend development forums or meetings perceiving them as being of low priority;*
- *Negative elite competition: some elites view their counterparts as competitors and hence shun them;*
- *Influence skewed distribution of NGOs and government projects hence neglect of some areas;*
- *Buy land from poor people, fence and leave it idle and thus contribute to food insecurity;*
- *Hardly involved in farming hence shortage of role models for local farmers;*
- *Dominate development because they have information, hoard information, share information late, or share information with few people;*
- *Local politicians exert undue pressure on government officials;*
- *Engage in corrupt practices which hurt ordinary people e.g. steal or distribute seeds, fertilizers, bursaries, project funds etc. in a biased manner;*
- *Grab benefits (e.g. fish ponds under the economic stimulus programme) hence antagonise common people who sometimes react in criminal ways (stealing fish at night);*
- *Migrate to cities and towns and thus deny Siaya of investments, skills, etc.;*
- *Failure to invest locally hence deny local people employment opportunities;*
- *Grab land from the common man who can do nothing;*
- *Give youth hand-outs (G'onyo) during campaigns to cause problems;*
- *Dominate government tenders yet fail to provide adequate and timely services;*
- *Nepotism in use of resources and opportunities thus undermining merit.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

There is convergence of opinion between ordinary citizens and local government officials that elite capture is prevalent in all districts of the county and has contributed significantly to the state of poverty and development in the area. The elite capture phenomenon manifested itself in various ways, mostly at the level of services

provision and distribution of development projects. Box 5.11 illustrates the common manifestations of elite capture in Siaya County.

Box 5.11 Local manifestations and methods of elite capture in Siaya County

- ***Capture of projects:*** *Elites have better access to information hence compete out common people for project benefits; collusion with those in charge of benefits (corruption[172], elites servicing other elites) or failure to deliver services in good quality and quantity when they secure contracts.*
- ***Capture of processes:*** *representatives of common people in decision-making (leaders/elites) pursue own selfish interests; domination of decision-making spaces; modification or failure to follow process guidelines in full e.g. CDF, LASDAP, DFRD guidelines.*
- ***Capture by exclusion:*** *in the formation of local decision-making structures (e.g. LDC, Peace Committees, etc.) it is usually the leader in charge (e.g. Chief) who picks participants or members. Common people are often left out. Also, where guidelines dictate who are to be members of committees/ structures (e.g. DPEC and CDFC) meaning some categories of people already given undue advantage. Guidelines mostly emphasise representative participation rather than direct participation of ordinary people. The 'reps' are always elites.*
- ***Capture of positions:*** *Presence of super-active-elites i.e. local elites who attended or sought to attend all-important decision-making processes or held many positions, nominated or elected, in local community. These tended to be powerful, well connected power brokers / intermediaries who used these positions to achieve their interests.*
- ***Control of local economy:*** *Few prominent people control businesses and obtain government contracts*
- ***Capture of common people's minds and actions****: Common people's mind and actions captured through the concept of 'respect': 'you must respect your leaders", "you must obey the Government", "you must follow the rule of law". This is despite blatant violations by elites and institutions (the powerful). Common people shy from challenging elites/leaders even when they know elites are not right because they fear retribution and hence careful on what they say and who they challenge.*
- ***Capture through false pretence:*** *Some elites attend crucial meetings where decisions are made, but if the decisions are against their interests, they mobilise community members later on to resist sometimes-good policies/programmes.*
- ***Capture through documentation gaps****: Most officials and elites fail to write minutes and decisions of development meetings to avoid audit trail. Also gives them leeway to change decisions, as they will.*

Source: Research data (2012-3)

Elite capture thrived in Siaya through a web of connections between the elites, leaders and institutions. On the other hand, the ordinary people barely challenged this hegemony openly and consistently, demonstrating some degree of passivity and normalisation of exclusion within the local population. Faced with the futility of open confrontation with the powerful, common people found other ways to react against elite' malpractices, some of them criminal in nature. A study participant from Bondo District highlighted some form of local reaction to elite capture involving a fishpond project in the area:

[172] Ordinary people view corruption in Siaya to be perpetrated to a large extent by the powerful and influential, where they cut deals to the detriment of local development. This view tend to be corroborated by the *National Anti-Corruption Survey 2010/2011 Financial Year,* which shows that with 15.6 per cent bribery index, Siaya had "the lowest number of people who will be influenced by money". See Article: "Kisii counties top new bribery index" by E-M Gekara, Daily Nation, 16 February, 2012.

> When the fishponds programme under the economic stimulus programme came, it was not rolled out in a transparent manner hence elites-leaders and well-connected local people ended up as beneficiaries. Those who felt left out or that the programme was elitist and discriminative in terms of implementation, lack sense of ownership and could be stealing fish from the ponds as a way of reacting against corruption. They are saying that those who benefited from the programme are elites or associated with elites and hence are demonstrating bitterness and frustration with corruption. (Interview, 8/7/2012).

5.10 Institutions and Poverty Reduction in Siaya

There is a wide variety of state and non-state institutions in Siaya involved in poverty reduction activities spanning several sectors. The government and institutions are undoubtedly the main development investor in the county, and most infrastructural developments are associated with government. Other state-institutions tackling poverty in the county include the MDG project which has been operational in the county since 2005; local authorities' structures and peace committees. Outstanding government anti-poverty programmes in the area include Njaa Marufuku Kenya, NALEP and CDF projects. The National Irrigation Board is also a key player, particularly because of its recent efforts to establish irrigation farming in Asembo and Yimbo areas of Rarieda Constituency.

There are many NGOs operating in Siaya. These NGOs focus on selected sectors especially health, water and sanitation, livelihoods, governance and education. A vast number of NGOs covers three or more sectors, a considerable number concentrate in particular districts, while a few large ones (such as Action Aid, World Vision, AMREF, ADRA, Plan international, CDC, Techno Serve, Millennium Promise and Kenya Red Cross Society) cover two or more districts. Nearly all NGOs in the county fight poverty through their sector-focused programmes. The Millennium Village Project (MVP) at Sauri sub location in Yala Division of Gem District is notable for covering all the MDGs. NGOs are represented in major state-led decision-making structures such as the LDC, DDC, DPEC and Peace Committees. There is was an NGOs forum at district level through which NGOs met with government officials to review progress of work, the challenges in implementing of projects, and to work out consensus action plans. NGOs also participated in government led research and evaluation exercises in relation to poverty such as the PPA and PRAs.

There are many CBOs, including self-help groups, youth growth groups and women groups in the county. These work closely with NGOs and government structures undertaking activities that are related to poverty reduction. Business sector organisations (BSOs) such as the KNCCI are present in the county; they promote the business interests of their members. Banks (mainly KCB and Cooperative Bank of Kenya) and micro finance institutions (KWFT) are present, advancing loans to local people and institutions, some of which is used for poverty reduction. The KWFT office in Rarieda, for example, approves 300 loans monthly, and over 100 people visit the offices on a daily basis either seeking information or repaying loans.

Another notable BSO in the county is Dominion Farms Limited, a company that is involved mainly in irrigated rice farming and milling at Ratuoro, in Siaya District. The Company is the main industrial investment in the County offering employment opportunities to the local people, and supporting local development for example through maintenance of the roads connecting the farm with major towns, training the youth in agriculture, and giving education bursaries to local children who are bright but needy. A few faith-based organizations (FBOs) are operating in the county, these are mainly associated with the Anglican, Methodist and Catholic churches.

Besides direct work in poverty reduction, institutions also contribute towards poverty reduction through generation, collection or dissemination and documentation of information. For example, most NGOs generate annual reports and commission research, project reviews and evaluations, which contain important information on Siaya. Some CSOs are involved in enhancing citizen participation in poverty reduction efforts in the county through building the capacity of local citizens and officials in transparency and accountability. TISA and NTA have been conducting audits of devolved funds in parts of the country; in Siaya they work with local citizens to gather information and implement the findings. TISA's project "Improving the governance of decentralised funds in Kenya" (2010 – 2012) implemented a social audit[173] in Alego Usonga constituency, and trained the local "decentralised funds

[173] As defined by TISA, a social audit is the process through which beneficiaries scrutinise all details of a public scheme or project (management of finances, officers responsible, recordkeeping, access to information, accountability, levels of public involvement, etc.) in order evaluate how well public resources are being used to meet the real needs of target beneficiaries. See TISA Website, www.tisa.co.ke.

committee to enhance their efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability" of funds. NTA has also conducted and produced audit reports on the CDF in Bondo, Alego Usonga, GEM and Ugenya with participation of local citizens, mostly as sources of information.

The local perceptions concerning the capacity, will and performance of local institutions in fighting poverty and promoting citizen participation in decision-making varied from institution to institution and across sectors. Institutions involved in the health sector, particularly those engaged in HIV/AIDS work (health centres, hospitals, NGO health programmes) are said to be raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and providing services and support. There is appreciation of certain government-led institutions and structures whose work is perceived as important in fighting local poverty. Of particular mention are the Njaa Marufuku Kenya and NALEP projects associated with the former Ministry of Agriculture. These projects provided grants to local people for investment in improved farming, livestock keeping and small-scale businesses.

Services offered by government line ministries are believed to be demand driven, and hence a significant shift from the previous supply side approach. There are nonetheless serious concerns regarding in adequacy and inefficiencies in the provision of crucial services in the county, including certified seeds and fertilizers to farmers. This emerged as one of the factors identified to explain low agricultural production in Siaya.

The CDF is perceived as an important institution that has supported various projects especially in education. These projects are viewed as having a long-term impact on local poverty. At the same time, there are concerns relating to perceived corruption and lack of transparency and accountability in the operations of CDF across the County. PEC's revolving fund has provided loans to individuals through groups in Siaya, Gem and Bondo districts since 2001/2 and is perceived as an important anti-poverty measure. However, the loans are small (an average of KES. 50,000 per beneficiary group) and few groups benefit during each lending cycle. Local authority

and structures, such as the LASDAP process and LATF funds, are perceived as inefficient and ineffective, having little impact on local poverty. There is generally a high level of dissatisfaction with the performance of the local authorities with concerns that most LATF projects are either not implemented properly or are delayed.

NGOs are generally perceived as source of innovative ideas for development, which they share with government officials, CBOs and communities. Government officials particularly, value the input of NGOs in decision-making structures such as the DDC and DPEC, and in processes such as the PPAs and PRAs. However, there are concerns that the impact of NGO work is minimal, despite their large numbers and budgets. During the PRSP consultations in March 2001, there were concerns on "discrimination by NGOs in project implementation and the non-involvement of local communities"[174].

Local institutions promoted citizen participation in decision-making in Siaya in a variety of ways, although the dominant view was that their efforts were inadequate and therefore they should do more. The 'will" of the government institutions to promote citizen participation is demonstrated through the LASDAP, CDF, DPEC and MTEF guidelines, and the DRFD manual, that directs how specific participation spaces and processes are to be conducted. These guidelines emphasize participatory and inclusive methodologies. In general, government institutions recognised the importance of citizen participation in policy processes that have a bearing on poverty reduction. However, this 'will' to promote citizen participation does not seem to have been achieved in practice.

Non-state institutions, especially the NGOs claim the use of a 'bottom-up' approach to development in their work in the county. The dominant view among ordinary citizens was that it was mostly the elites (opinion leaders) who were involved in most of the CSO processes. NGOs also tend to exclude ordinary people in operational issues such as budgeting, recruitment, procurement, or in the development of crucial

[174] This complaint came from particularly Uranga division of Siaya district and the participants suggested, among others, that; "NGOs should consider working with individuals as well as groups; NGOs should work with group members when implementing projects; GOK and NGOs should stop giving conditions that may hinder the progress of groups" . See Siaya District Consultation PRSP Report for the Period 2001 – 2004.

policy documents such as the strategic plans or drawing up of annual budgets. Despite the 'will' to promote citizen participation in their work, as captured in policy documents, process guidelines, and reports, it is evident that local institutions do not translate this "will" fully into practice alluding to difficulties that institutions face in promoting citizen participation and in tackling poverty.

The capacity of institutions to undertake poverty reduction efforts successfully in Siaya appeared problematic. This was the case especially among government institutions; their absorption of expenditure was low, characterised by low completion of projects and failure to meet many of the set targets. A considerable proportion of budgeted development funds were also unused due to bureaucracy and returned to the Treasury at the end of the financial year. The Bondo development plan for the period 2008-2012, for example, reports of huge under achievement of the previous plan (2002 – 2007), a situation that is evident in other districts, implying that this was a countywide problem.

Explanations for the low performance revolves around capacity gaps such as limited funding of projects, low staff establishment, personnel skills gaps, and lack of proper systems such as credible monitoring and evaluation framework. Low ownership of the plans by project implementers, weak collaboration between various development partners hence duplication and wastage of resources, and poor alignment of plans with government policies were other common constraints cited. Other constraints that government and non-state actors in the county faced in their fight against poverty included negative attitude and non-cooperation by some members of the beneficiary groups and communities. For example, some of the local people were blamed for lacking interest in use of fertilizer or to take up loans from commercial outlets such as the Banks and micro finance institutions.

Collectively, the major capacity constraints facing local institutions in fighting poverty and promoting citizen participation revolved around internal constraints of finances, personnel and internal systems. The second set of constraints was on the coordination and partnerships gaps. Thirdly, there were constraints around operational issues associated with bureaucracy and legal frameworks. Fourthly, there were gaps concerning the beneficiary groups and local communities such as the extent to which

they embraced projects and the benefits accruing which has implications for the level and quality of participation, impact on poverty and sustainability of projects.

These constraints tended to limit institutional performance in reducing poverty in Siaya, which in turn tended to affect institutions - citizen relations that could be described as calm but distant, unequal, and of a patron – client nature. Institutions had the power and resources to implement projects, often involving ordinary people in the implementation phase, and minimally in other stages of their work. Institutions operated without interference from the common people who appeared to perceive them suspiciously on one hand and as valuable providers of services and benefits on the other hand. However, many local people perceived institutions, especially, government and NGOs to have done little to tackle poverty despite controlling huge resources. There tended to be a growing awareness and consciousness that local people's participation level in the institutional domain was low, and yet this is where decision-making with relevance to poverty reduction takes place.

5.11 Conclusion

The presentation of findings in this chapter has concentrated on local perspectives on poverty, poverty reduction, citizen participation in decision-making, and the state of local leadership and institutions in the context of poverty reduction. The findings illuminate the political economy of poverty reduction and decision-making in Siaya, and help us to understand why poverty levels and food insecurity are widespread in a county that boasts of an outstanding socio-political profile and resource endowments.

The chapter has indicated the extent and quality of ordinary citizens' participation in key development policy and planning processes and the constraints that ordinary citizens face. It has illustrated a few good examples of citizen participation and poverty reduction initiatives that could be replicated within and outside the county. The findings indicate that poverty levels are perceptively higher in Siaya than portrayed in official statistics and that poverty persists in the area due to a wide variety of natural and human factors, with government, leadership and institutional failure being a major contributor. Practices of ordinary citizens as well as of local elites also emerged as important underlying factors. Although literature presents

poverty reduction as a widely accepted norm, it does not appear that powerful members of society (elites, institutions), as well as ordinary citizens were committed to the norm given that they were generally not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Participation in decision-making for poverty reduction is valued but problematic. It is embraced for different reasons by actors; for elites, leaders and institutions, it enhances project outcomes due to improved ownership and sustainability of project benefits, while for ordinary citizens, participation presented opportunities to obtain direct benefits including hand-outs ("gonyo"). Leadership and local institutions are a hindrance to citizen participation in local development and contributed to the persistence of poverty in Siaya County. Of particular concern was the role of elites in local development. Elite practices undermined citizen participation, maintained a culture of elite capture, and affected the overall development of the area. Ordinary citizens were not keen to take advantage of all decision-making opportunities nor were they keen on confronting elites, leaders and institutions to demand inclusion in decision-making.

The issue of citizen participation is therefore complex matter that is influenced by the socio-political context within which it takes place. Although ordinary citizens were rational in their approach to participation, the assumption that they will use their capabilities (knowledge, skills, values, social capital, experience, rights, among other resources) to participate meaningfully in pursuit of those interests was uncertain.

The widely accepted view that decentralisation generally improves citizen participation does not seem to be the case in Siaya, where the level and quality of ordinary citizens' participation in local level processes such as the DDP, DPEC and LDC was low. The availability of many spaces and avenues for decision-making was not sufficient and did not assure that useful decision-making with positive impact on poverty reduction occurred.

Many of the local decision-making spaces were largely hierarchical events or mechanisms of control and hence citizen participation was, by design, restricted. The voice of the common people, irrespective of how many people attended was inconsequential in determining the outcome (decision). It is true that institutional

innovations and decentralisation made decision-making structures available but these did not seem to improve the quality of citizen participation in Siaya.

State and non-state institutions played a significant yet inadequate role in fighting poverty and providing avenues for citizen participation in decision-making and for leaders and citizens to interact. Links between citizen participation, leadership and institutions were complex and directly influenced poverty reduction efforts.

There was no single institution, state or non-state, that the local people did not voice concerns over. This was a pointer to some kind of institutional hegemony in the county. The picture emerging from Siaya's narrative is one bounded with power and interests, and one where, the failure of the more powerful actors in local society as well as the inadequacies of ordinary citizens contributed to the state of poverty. The extent to which the Siaya narrative compares with that of Tharaka Nithi is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION AT THE GRASSROOTS: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

6.1 Introduction

Mills, Van de Bunt, and de Bruijn (2006) conceive comparative analysis in terms of quantitative and qualitative comparison of social entities with the goal of searching for similarity and variance. Barkan (1984:12) conceives comparative analysis as a "discussion where two or more societies are compared against some common standard". Hantrais (1995:1) notes that "comparative research methods have long been used in cross-cultural studies to identify, analyze and explain similarities and differences across societies". Clearly, comparative analysis is a tool to uncover not only differences but also to reveal unique aspects of the social entities under investigation. The chapter utilizes this understanding of comparative analysis.

This chapter summarizes, compares and discusses empirical findings from Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties against the core themes established in the previous chapters. The comparison of findings from the two case studies illuminates whether or not the macro level variables explored in the study translate to poverty reduction in the same way in the two areas and why. Further, the comparison of the findings shed light on the validity of the principal thesis of this study: that the success of poverty reduction in Kenya depends chiefly on sufficient public participation in decision-making, the quality of development planning practice, leadership and the capacity and will of institutions to pursue inclusive and sustainable development.

The chapter discusses the findings by using evidence and insights from available information on the two study sites in addition to empirical and theoretical evidence from Kenya and other contexts. Conceptual and empirical materials analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3 were particularly useful in creating understanding of the similarities, differences and patterns emerging from the case studies. Another set of insights that enriches the discussion was the analysis of interviews, which were held with poverty and participation experts and government officials at national level, our knowledge of the two study areas and observations made in the course of fieldwork.

6.2 Local perceptions of poverty and poverty reduction efforts

The residents of both Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties regarded poverty as a serious problem. It was evident that due to widespread and long experience, they had 'normalized' poverty, viewing it as part of the local culture. Citizens in the two counties treated official poverty statistics with skepticism, viewing them as grossly underreported for political and institutional reasons[175]. In both areas, the local people view poverty as high and increasing[176]. Data kept at district statistical offices and that published on major government surveys indicated significant difference, with the former tending to be closer to the local people's estimates. Poverty is an emotive issue and one needs to approach Kenya's poverty diagnostics with caution.

A closer look at the findings from the two areas reveals certain differences in local perceptions of poverty. In Tharaka Nithi County, poverty is widely believed to be an economic condition whose major manifestations are low incomes and lack of access to essential goods and services such as health services and education opportunities. This tended to explain the local people's inclination towards an individual- economic approach to poverty reduction focused on economic variables. In the approach, people strive, at individual level to pull out of poverty and believe that their personal efforts and improvements in livelihood strategies such as farming techniques and trade were important measures for dealing with poverty in the county.

[175] This view cannot be ignored as there has been similar contestation on the authenticity of Kenya's poverty figures and in particular, those contained in the 2005/6 KIHBS report, which represent the latest official data on poverty. The then Member of Parliament for Rarieda in Siaya County, for instance, questioned how the Constituency's pre-2005/6 poverty rate of 76 per cent dropped to 44 per cent within a short period. Another MP from the former Nyanza province wondered how poverty levels in the province showed a drastic decline 'while several factors had collapsed in the region'. This was in relation to the use of a 'poverty index' based on the KIHBS report to allocate the Constituency Development Fund. The MPs' sentiments alluded to gaps in official poverty data. See The Standard Newspaper article: "MPs divided over constituency rankings", 22/9/2010. It is evident that poverty estimates in Siaya County tend to vary from one Government report to another. For example, the Siaya District Strategic Plan 2005 – 2010 gives absolute poverty level in the district (same coverage as the Alego-Usonga constituency) as 57.93 per cent compared to KIHBS estimate of 42 per cent implying a 16 per cent difference.

[176] These views tend to agree with findings of a national survey conducted in 2010 by a research firm, Synovate Pan-Africa (Poverty in Kenya; what the people think). The survey found that 50 per cent of the respondents perceived poverty has having increased during the last three years of the survey while 30 and 20 per cent were of the view that poverty levels had declined or not changed at all respectively. See Article: "Poll: Kenyans want Government action on poverty" by Walter Menya, Daily Nation Newspaper, 23 October 2010.

The inhabitants of Tharaka Nithi County, especially those from Tharaka Constituency, blamed the persistence of poverty mainly on physical–ecological factors[177], and in particular, inadequate rainfall. However, they also identified political (bad governance, corruption, marginalization, and conflict), economic (poor prices for farm produce, low capital investments, low savings, high cost of living) and socio-cultural factors (alcoholism, large families, etc)[178] as the causes of poverty. The viewpoint that poverty is an economic-ecological problem is widespread in the county, tending to correspond with the Kenya poverty profiles for the period 1982 – 1992, which hold nature (ecological factors), and culture as having influence on poverty situations in different locations in Kenya (GoK, 1982; 1992; Kinyanjui, 2007).

On the other hand, the people of Siaya perceive poverty principally as a socio-political phenomenon. They view the failure by government, institutions and leaders in discharging their development responsibilities, as the principal causes of the persistence of poverty in the county. There is a widespread perception that the Government historically has neglected the area especially in terms of the provision of essential services (especially health care), productive inputs (seeds and fertilizers) and support to economic investments in the county. The Siaya viewpoint can be described as the "structural – governance" perspective of poverty reduction. This view suggested that structural changes and good governance were required in order to effectively deal with poverty. Analysis of local opinion suggests that the political route was a preferred way to achieve that change. This is where local leaders, on assuming political power, are supposed to act decisively to end government neglect, and to influence the state and non-state institutions operating in the county to perform their development roles effectively.

There are greater tendencies of 'politicization' of poverty in Siaya ("political contextualization for poverty reduction") than in Tharaka Nithi County. This implies differences in awareness of poverty as a problem rooted in the politics of power and interests in societies. The perspective that poverty is a structural problem, which is a dominant view in

[177] The view that rainfall is a major cause of poverty in Tharaka Nithi County has been noted by studies in the area. See, for example, Brewin (2007).
[178] These findings tend to match the results of Kenya's PPA-IV conducted in 2005/6 which revealed that people fell into poverty due to social, natural and economic factors while diversification of income sources, crop/ livestock-related and social factors were associated with escaping poverty (GoK, 2007c).

Siaya County, places a considerable burden on government, institutions and leaders to work harder and more closely with local citizens to tackle poverty.

6.3 Responsibilities in tackling poverty and extent of fulfillment

In Chapter 1 and 2, the thesis argued that poverty can not be fought, as alluded to by Kenya's key policy and planning documents, through the actions of the government, private sector, civil society organizations and donors without putting citizens at the centre. Therefore, citizens must take charge of their lives, exercising their rights to meaningful involvement in development processes and in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The concept of 'fighting poverty' tends to be a generally irritating subject in both study areas especially when discussed in relation to the role of government officials, institutions, and leaders. Residents of Siaya County, for example, viewed the government and institutions-led 'poverty reduction' efforts with mockery, terming it as a 'song'. They viewed the fight against poverty as an old promise and commitment made at independence by Kenya's nationalist leaders and one that is repeated often by leaders and institutions without matching action. This view finds strong support in Ongaro (2005:9), who points out that while Kenya's successive governments have risen to power on the promise to stamp out poverty, disease and ignorance this has not worked out, , particularly in rural areas.

There is convergence of opinion in both case studies of the need for ordinary citizens, individually and collectively, to engage more and be active players in tackling poverty. It is suggested that citizens must work in order to move out of poverty and to desist from acts or inactions that either pulled people into poverty, aggravated poverty conditions or increased the levels of poverty in the local community. It is appreciated that rural people have the potential to contribute to poverty or undermine poverty reduction efforts through their actions or inactions[179] and thus the need for all citizens to take poverty reduction seriously.

[179] This view finds support in Ongaro (2005) who points out that citizens have played an important role in contributing to the poverty situation in rural Kenya. He notes the following: "While the government should be held responsible and accountable for the way it manages the country's meager resources, the citizens are not blameless. As they shout from the rooftops that they need development, the same are unwilling to conform to measures that reduce poverty, leading to development. Most rural folks have been enslaved by retrogressive cultural practices. These include, among others, bearing many children, marrying many wives, barring women from inheriting property, failing to take the girl child to school and electing leaders with questionable characters" (p. 9).

The two case studies confirm the presence of a culture of dependency at the grassroots, which undermines poverty reduction efforts. For example, although most residents in the two areas put some effort in tackling poverty, there were those who did little due to a variety of reasons including laziness and perpetual heaping of blame on government failure. Local people in the two areas tackled poverty in largely 'normal ways'; employing individual livelihood strategies. These included subsistence farming, livestock keeping, petty trading and migration. Poverty was widely viewed as a normal condition and personal matter. The dominant view in both study areas was that 'fighting poverty" could be defined as taking 'extra' actions or efforts beyond the 'normal' day-to-day life activities. Based on this understanding, a majority of the ordinary people were merely coping with and not fighting poverty as they lacked what could be described as concerted anti-poverty initiatives. Individual perceptions of poverty reduction tended to influence, to a fair degree, the actions that local people made to fight poverty.

Ordinary citizens and other development actors in both study areas concurred that leaders, government, CSOs, FBOs, BSOs, among others had the responsibility to support ordinary people to deal with poverty. This included provision of essential services and initiating development projects with long-term benefits. However, just like the ordinary people, other local development actors did not seem to fulfill their poverty reduction responsibilities, although a few institutions such as the Njaa Marufuku Kenya programme in Tharaka Nithi and Sauri Millennium Villages Project (MVP) in Siaya County were mentioned favourably. Njaa Maruku Kenya programme provided small grants to local people, through organized groups, in both areas. These grants supported income-generating activities including livestock keeping, horticulture, bee keeping, and petty trading among others. The MVP project at Sauri was involved in supporting poverty reduction projects in all MDGs areas including health, education, water and sanitation, among others. The two were good examples not only of poverty reducing initiatives in the two counties but also because they had significant involvement of local citizens especially in the implementation of interventions.

6.4 Local Innovations and Pathways out of Poverty

There is a general invisibility in the study areas of what we describe as "homegrown" poverty reduction innovations. These were new ideas, values, practices or simply local anti-poverty initiatives. Ordinary people in the two study areas had difficulties identifying concrete poverty reduction innovations. As already mentioned they dealt with poverty through normal livelihood strategies and through a variety of anti-poverty initiatives introduced by state and non-state institutions operating in the two areas. These included Njaa Marufuku Kenya (grants to SHGs and CBOs), NALEP (grants), Economic stimulus package programme (fishponds intervention), MDG Unit (loans), PEC/DPEC (loans), KARI (improved crop cultivars) and non-state organizations, especially the NGOs.

Institutional dominance in the anti-poverty effort was evident through the poverty reduction innovations introduced in the two case studies. Of the various institutional innovations, the use of self-help groups (SHG approach) and community-based organizations (CBOs) as the entry points and main implementers of anti-poverty interventions was common. However, not all institutional innovations at the grassroots were embraced or produced the expected benefits. For instance, during the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) IV of 2005/6, residents in Tharaka Nithi County complained that (livestock) drugs recommended under the Government extension services were 'too expensive and of poor quality' (GOK: 2007c: 48 – 49).

There were striking similarities but also differences in terms of the main pathways out of poverty applied in Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties. The economic route was preferred in Tharaka Nithi while the political route appeared to be the more accepted approach to poverty reduction in Siaya County. Improvement in individual and household incomes (economic perspective of poverty reduction) is a major pathway out of poverty in Tharaka Nithi County while service provisioning (services approach to poverty reduction), especially adequate and quality health services, is the major focus in Siaya County. Investment in education is an important pathway in Tharaka Nithi County, while out-migration and acquisition of political power for improved development are important pathways out of poverty in Siaya. These findings imply the influence of local factors as considerations in informing poverty reduction approaches. They also indicate that local people in both study areas pursued short term, medium term and long-term pathways out of poverty.

6.5 Citizen Participation in Decision-making: Does it matter?

Institutions like the World Bank, USAID, and the UNDP, as well as development researchers have stressed the importance of poor people's participation in development planning and participation in civil life as one of the necessary means of overcoming poverty (WB, 1997; Atal & Oyen, 1997; Jespersen, 2002). At the same time, some scholars (Rosener, 1978; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004) have raised questions on the value and effectiveness of citizen participation in public policy and decision-making. Based on empirical evidence, other researchers (Mansuri & Rao, 2013) argue that although participation is critical for development, it is not necessarily a critical factor for determining development outcomes. These divergent positions underline the need to scrutinize rather than take the links between citizen participation and poverty reduction for granted.

The participation-poverty reduction narrative of Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties reveal many similarities than differences. In general, the two narratives indicated that the participation of ordinary citizens in development policy processes, as well as in other available policy spaces – formulation, implementation, and monitoring – was inadequate in both the extent (regularity and intensity) and quality. This generally undermined participatory, broad based and sustainable poverty reducing efforts in the two areas. There were major similarities in almost all participation-related variables explored in the study.

Findings from both study areas indicated that ordinary people and other actors perceived citizen participation as important for development and thus confirm the overwhelming support for participation in development processes that we highlighted in Chapter 1 and 2. Several explanations for this view emerge from the two case studies. First, meaningful participation of local people in decision-making was critical as they had indigenous knowledge, which helped poverty reduction actors to gain adequate understanding of the local context of poverty and hence finding appropriate solutions. Second, participation is understood as a human right enshrined in the Constitution. As such, most of the guidelines for policy processes in recent years emphasize public participation. Third, local people viewed participation as important for increasing project ownership, which, in turn, helped to achieve efficiency and effectiveness of results and the sustainability of development outcomes. The rationale for citizen participation was therefore framed in terms of the exercise of rights (as an end) and as a means to better development outcomes.

Generally, citizen participation in both study cases tended to be more at the implementation phase than at formulation or other phases of the policy process (agenda setting, monitoring, evaluation, review, and adjustment of policy). Perhaps this explains why, despite the broad and wide appreciation, the status of citizen participation in the policy process was low in both areas, when assessed from a holistic point of view.

Another similarity was the shared perception that 'genuine' participation of citizens in government-led policy processes was important but hard to achieve. Local people lacked a straight definition of this concept but understood genuine participation correctly to mean the empowered level of participation depicted in rungs 6 (Partnership), 7 (Delegated power) and 8 (Citizen Control) of Arnstein's ladder of participation discussed in Chapter 2. These were the levels of participation where ordinary people had the ability to make decisions and choices concerning local development matters, often in negotiation and cooperation with other actors. Although there were traces of efforts to achieve these levels (for example the Community Action Plan process in Tharaka Nithi and "Table Banking" in Siaya County), a culture of genuine participation of ordinary citizens in government-led policy processes was hardly present in the two study areas.

In both locations, ordinary people barely demanded inclusion. Instead, there was widespread 'normalization' of exclusion, save for isolated cases of the mobilization of ordinary citizens by elites to contest unfavorable decisions or the inactions of government, institutions, and leaders. The passive nature of the citizens in the two areas appeared to negate what researchers such as Jeppessen (2002:31) view as the combative character of the poor in demanding and exercising their rights and interests. In such instances, the political space for poverty is characterized by "negotiation, contestation, confrontation, resistance, and local power-relations rather than by government politics and consent". The opposite situation emerged from the two case studies.

It is important to scrutinize the underlying reasons for the observed failure of ordinary citizens to demand inclusion or to challenge the status quo in Siaya and Tharaka Nithi counties. The first reason tends to be structural in nature and concerns the long experience of unfavorable conditions and domination by others to the extent that exclusion was 'normalised' and thus offered little motivation for ordinary citizens to challenge the more powerful actors. The second reason was the perceived personal incapacity of ordinary

citizens to participate effectively in public decision-making processes. A considerable number of local people in both areas felt that they had difficulties articulating issues during policy deliberations because of language problems[180] and/or intimidation by the more powerful development actors. Thirdly, there were observations that leaders, officials, elites or institutions owned or controlled the resources required to implement decisions and therefore there was no need to be antagonistic. This implied that possession or control of resources required for local development legitimized the domination of policy processes by the powerful (elites and institutions). Fourthly, the availability of local opinion leaders (rural elites), who this study found were common participants in local decision-making spaces in both areas, tended to reduce the need among ordinary people to demand inclusion or to exercise their right to participate in local decision-making processes.

The ordinary citizens in both areas were acutely aware of their capacities and the contexts under which they operated. Perceiving that their actions would be inconsequential or likely to cost relatively more compared to the perceived benefits, they gave way for the more powerful actors to dominate the poverty reduction and participation spaces and discourses. Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002: 6) provide insights that help in understanding this citizen behaviour. They note that:

> In many contexts, however, apart from foot-dragging and other forms of low-intensity resistance, the poor are reluctant to influence processes of policy-making affecting broader social groupings. From the perspective of the poor, there are several problems with political endeavors: they tend not to deliver immediate material gains; they are often dangerous, in that they exacerbate the vulnerability of the poor; and they require resources that the poor seldom possess. Thus attempts to influence policies and decisions affecting the conditions of the poor are typically, but not exclusively, undertaken by various kinds of organization on their behalf.

With the Constitution and perhaps through well-targeted civic education, the level of awareness is bound to increase and this might increase demand for participation. As observed in Siaya County, some local people, although these are mostly elites, have already started exerting their rights to participate in decision making by attending public policy meetings that they deem important regardless of whether they are invited or not.

[180] In nearly all local decision making spaces outside the village, deliberations were conducted mostly in English which a considerable number of ordinary people lacked command of. Although Kiswahili is allowed in such places, it was hardly used because officials often spoke in English as observed during DDC, DPEC, and LDC meetings I attended during the fieldwork.

6.6 When and Where Ordinary Citizens Participate in Decision-making Processes

Local people's willingness to participate actively in all phases of policy-making was uncertain in both study sites. Their involvement was mainly in the implementation of decisions (implementation phase). Thus, the leaders and institutions held sway in other policy phases, namely generating agendas and ideas (agenda setting phase), formulation of policy (formulation phase), monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation (monitoring and evaluation phase), and review and adjustment of policy (review phase).

It was evident that the local people in both areas perceived participation as a "livelihood investment" to meet their individual or collective goals or objectives. Therefore, participation opportunities that lacked the prospects of immediate or long-term benefits, or those that involved high investments (costs) in terms of money, time and other scarce resources were avoided. This explains, to a large degree the 'Gonyo ' mindset observed in Siaya County, which was indicated as one of the impediment to genuine participation of local people in formal decision-making processes.

This selective behaviour was a clear dilemma in participation. On the one hand, participation was accepted as critical for development but on the other ordinary citizens were not entirely keen to take advantage of the available spaces to exercise their right to engage with other actors in decision-making on development. Bryant and White (1980) have observed this challenge in their examination of the participation of peasant farmers in rural development where they suggest that peasant farmers' participation in rural development activities was goal-based; they tended to participate in an activity when they sensed that the benefits outweighed the time and effort they were expected to expend. Yet, ordinary people's behaviour in participation spaces emerges as rational based on careful consideration of perceived benefits and costs to be borne. Thus, Gonyo is a local 'strategy of evasion' used by the people of Siaya County to prioritize and rationalize their participation investment.

In summary, the participation of ordinary people in decision-making in the study areas was torpid; it was irregular, inconsequential and occurred in particular segments rather than the entire policy spectrum. It was an 'induced participation" type where the level of participation was influenced by the prospects of benefits. In both areas, ordinary people did little to address the domination of the policy spaces by leaders and institutions. Instead, they viewed

these actors as having the legitimate right to play greater decision-making roles. The findings in Chapter 3 indicated that the state held monopoly over policy and that institutions dominated development policy and planning practice, an indication that this is a national phenomenon replicated at local level.

6.7 Institutional Channels for Citizen Participation: Spaces and Actors

Citizen participation presumes the existence of avenues or spaces[181] where ordinary citizens, leaders, officials, elites and institutions engage in deciding the policy and plans for development. Through these spaces, citizens can voice their concerns, table their priorities and demand accountability in service delivery and other poverty reduction priorities. It is also in these spaces that macro level questions, issues or processes can be negotiated and adopted to the local situations. Engberg-Pedersen and Webster (2002:20) underscore this point by noting as follows: "although the macro is typically beyond control or direct influence of actors in a locality, it can be negotiated, disputed, and transformed by them".

A diverse range of institutional avenues exists in both study areas for ordinary citizens to engage in decision-making on matters relating to poverty reduction[182].These included policy processes such as the PRSP, DDP, LASDAP, MTEF and the constituency development fund as well as official structures such as the DDC, LDC, SLDC, and DPEC. In addition, there are various research and evaluation opportunities (PPAs, PRAs and project evaluations) whose results often fed into policy. There were also meetings, forums, workshops and conferences, which came up with policy level decisions targeting poverty reduction.

These participation spaces were organised by local level government officials, elites and institutions. Some of the spaces, such as the LDC, DDC, and LASDAP process were the standard participation avenues evident in other rural locations in Kenya. Most of the available formal participation avenues were 'invited' spaces in the sense that attendance was by

[181] It is worth noting that decision-making spaces might take many forms. They may be traditional structures such as clan meetings, formal or informal spaces, new or existing spaces, open or restricted spaces, temporary or permanent spaces for participation. The interest in the study was on formal/official spaces where public decisions are made. The level of use and effectiveness of these spaces as structures for public participation vary, from time to time, place to place, and depending on issues involved.

[182] This fact seems to contradict a contention by Blom (2002:104) that many African states have very limited or lack 'institutional channels through which policies and decision-making can be influenced and challenged by the poor'. He points out that this is "often seen as being closely related to the African state being distant, prebendal and neopatrimonial leaving little space for the political demands of the poor in society"

invitation. These forums, such as the DDC, transacted business away from the villages and therefore not easily accessible to common people. Poverty reduction actors, mostly government officials (elites), generated the agenda, which was hardly sent to invited participants in advance. Moreover, full discussions and consensus seeking did not always take place during such deliberations due to lack of time or because facilitation of the deliberations was problematic.

The main actors in most of the local, institutional decision-making spaces in the study areas were Government officials, representatives of key non-state institutions (lead NGOs), representatives of special groups (youth, women and disabled people), leaders (those in formal positions of authority), and opinion leaders (elites). Direct participation of ordinary citizen in the vast majority of decision-making processes was low or lacking. Participation of ordinary citizens, where it occurred, was mainly through the representative model with opinion leaders and officials assuming the responsibility. Common people's input (feedback or approval of decisions) was barely sought.

One would expect local decision-making spaces to be characterised by beneficial interactions between the different social actors (including ordinary citizens) as each seek to legitimize their interests into rights for policy action. In the study areas, this did not occur because the various decision-making spaces were more of elitist arenas in which ordinary citizens were neither present nor had adequate voice.

State officials (local bureaucracy) exerted huge control of local level decision-making spaces in the study areas. Established policy guidelines on the DDP, MTEF, DPEC or CDF processes were not always followed in full but instead were modified or ignored to suit the wishes or circumstances of officials. This is a form of "soft" or officially "justified" impunity. For example, DPECs in the two areas were not following guidelines in constituting teams or disbursing funds[183]. The observed control of local decision-making spaces by government officials concur with the widely held view on the high degree of institutional autonomy and greater influence of bureaucrats over policy-making. For instance, Hyden (1984:103) argues that the bureaucracy in developing countries enjoys a high degree of institutional autonomy that makes it therefore a dominant class with more influence over

[183] This led PEC, for example, to issue a memo to all DDOs (DPEC secretaries) across the country in May 2011 warning against acting outside the PEC policy guidelines.

policy-making than any other group. Similarly, Pye (1963: 106) notes; "power and authority are concentrated in the realm of administrative officialdom". The implication of this finding is that bureaucracy is one of the greatest impediments to genuine citizen participation in decision-making at local level. This structural constraint is a common phenomenon in most rural locations in Kenya and in other countries. For example, Robino (2009) found an almost similar situation in South Africa where involving people in development was hampered by a variety of structural constraints including bureaucracy. Thus, this issue is not unique to Kenya but a general problem of contemporary development practice.

6.8 Political agency and common constraints to citizen participation in decision-making

The perspectives of ordinary people in both case studies concerning the nature of their participation in key policy and planning processes revealed deep frustration. The dominant view was that majority of the local citizens did not participate in key local level decision-making processes: the district development planning, local authorities' service delivery action planning, poverty reduction strategic paper, constituency development fund, and the mid-term expenditure framework. Most ordinary people were unaware of these processes. It was the "opinion" leaders (intermediaries), who engaged in these processes, usually on invitation by government officials. There was little evidence in both study sites to indicate that ordinary citizens demanded inclusion or questioned official malpractices. An ordinary citizen from Siaya County commented on this matter thus:

> Even if we protest exclusion, it is all meaningless because selection had been done anyway and so nothing will change. Therefore, our voice is inconsequential, as it cannot reverse what has already been decided! I feel disappointed and disempowered because my chances to contribute views to development decisions are blocked and I am unable to stand up for fairness (Interview, 20/3/2013).

In both study areas, the ordinary citizens faced largely similar constraints in their attempts to participate meaningfully in local decision-making processes. There were internal constraints that could be attributed to common people themselves as well as external constraints, which were essentially structural. Other constraints emanated from the attitudes and practices of other development actors, and the nature of the local decision-making spaces and contexts. Specifically, they had more to do with how participation was set up, understood, and practiced and the character of institutions and leaders who directed the local decision-making spaces.

The most significant internal constraint was capacity to participate meaningfully. This was due to, for example, to the challenges of articulating oneself adequately in English during the decision-making deliberations. It was not that the issues discussed in decision-making forums were technical and beyond the comprehension of the ordinary citizens but rather, they had to express their views in a language that they had no command over.

Ordinary citizens were also constrained by lack of time. This was in the sense that engaging in decision-making processes required that they spend time away from their survival activities. Thus regular participation in local government-led decision-making was not a priority for most ordinary people, especially so, considering that "opinion" leaders would dominate participation anyway. This reflected the passive nature and dependency syndrome among ordinary citizens in the two case studies, confirming observations from other empirical studies that were highlighted in Chapter 2 of the thesis.

External constraints included restrictions associated with the locally available decision-making spaces (avenues) noted above. The not-so good experiences of local people in decision-making processes were also a hindrance to their participation. This factor presented in form of perceived lack of benefit or impact, failure by government officials and institutions to implement decisions that had received common people's input or even being given limited information about processes and time to prepare and make informed contributions[184]. This discouraged future participation.

An entrenched culture of passivity and normalization of exclusion among ordinary people were evident in the study areas. The culture underpinned the finding that local ordinary citizens hardly contested local power relations and appeared to have little room for maneuver[185] as the more powerful social actors controlled the decision-making processes.

[184] This appears to be a nation-wide problem where those responsible for ensuring public participation undermine it at the same time. For example, during the vetting of Cabinet Secretaries appointed by the President, and which required public participation in the process, parliament gave the public only 1 week to present their views on the candidates, either orally or in writing, in Nairobi. For more details, see Leftie, 2013, *Public given one week to present views on top jobs*, Daily Nation Newspaper, 21 April 2013.

[185] Clay and Schaffer (1984) introduced the concept of room for maneuver in order to discuss the space that is assumed to exist in making policy choices – choice assumes alternatives – and the space in which individuals can find themselves with respect to the implementation of policy and programmes. Engberg-Pedersen (2002: 19) explains that the concept is useful in the analysis of the ability of poor people to influence public policy or implementation of development programme; to "explore how individuals negotiate their way to an objective within a given political and social context by using personal connections, kinship, networks and so on"; and to understand the constraints and limitations experienced by the individual actors.

This appears to be a national problem, alluded to by Maathai (2009: 137) in discussing local participation in CDF projects in Kenya:

> Although guidelines dictate against, and although leaders and even some reports might claim otherwise, it is evident that 'government representatives and other elites imposed their views on the people, and for most part, people have remained passive and endorsed what the government's representatives decreed.

The discussion reveals that participation in decision-making is a political activity that requires the will and agency of ordinary citizens to engage and negotiate effectively with other social actors. The two cases indicated that the willingness of ordinary people to participate in decision-making was influenced by various considerations, especially the perceived benefits and costs, associated with participating in a decision-making process. In terms of agency, the two case studies indicated limitations in common people's ability to determine their choices and actions. Their voice in decision-making at local level was largely absent.

6.9 The Dilemmas of "Representative" Participation Model

A probe into local people's participation in the study areas reveals that local people's views and input were channeled mostly through representatives, with the "opinion leaders" being the key player. The use of representatives in public decision-making was evident in process guidelines for decision-making mechanisms and structures such as the district development planning process and the district poverty eradication committee.

Representative participation based on the opinion leaders' model (use of intermediaries) was a hindrance to the quality of ordinary people's participation in two major ways. In the first place, it was the opinion leaders who usually received invitations from government officials to participate in most decision-making processes pointing to institutional exclusion of ordinary people in local decision-making. Second, opinion leaders were not broadly chosen representatives and, given the elite capture practices already discussed, it was unlikely they fully and faithfully represented the interests of the common people.

Found mostly within the proximity of the local markets and towns, opinion leaders were alert, seeking, digesting, interpreting, and using the information that they acquired to pursue their

interests. They tended to be well connected with other elites at the next levels of authority and institutions from which they often obtained favours. An elite from Tharaka Nithi County viewed opinion leaders as a cadre of self-seekers whose activities were politicising the local environment and this affected the local economy; "everyone was trying to catch up and looking for the latest information to fulfill their aims". He explained this viewpoint through attributed what was perceived to be increasing number of people idling, canvassing and chasing news at Mukothima Town in Tharaka Nithi County:

> On a single day, there are about 500 people coming in and out of Mukothima Township. The human traffic of the town is very high and one should try to understand why. What do they do? Do they do anything useful? My guess is that petty politics is the order of the day here...politics is getting ahead of the economy...people chasing opportunities and money irregularly. I think it will be in order to investigate this because the local opinion shapers appear to be undercutting the local community…they are capturing information and collude with officials for benefits. They are holding local development hostage (Interview, 27/7/2012).

The use of the representative model of participation appeared to be an effective tactic used by officials to circumvent local people's right to genuine participation in local policy processes, and fundamentally to efficient delivery of public services. While representative participation in democratic set up is a legitimate decision-making mechanism, the local 'opinion" leaders model applied in the study areas represented a clear dilemma: while representation is desirable, it is ineffective in securing ordinary people's interests.

Engberg-Pedersen and Webster (2002:255) underscore this dilemma by noting that representatives of the poor "sometimes pursue individual strategies of enrichment to the detriment of their constituencies". Other researchers have also raised questions about the legitimacy of representation of the poor in decision-making spaces. For example, writing on the voice and representation of the poor in Western Mexico, Villarreal (2002: 80) argues as follows:

> Within political spaces, many kinds of negotiations are taking place, including the legitimacy of representation itself. The issue of who is to define the interests of the poor and act on their behalf is frequently an object of contestation. One cannot assume that those acting to represent the poor are actually promoting their interests. And because we cannot define a priori who the 'legitimate' representatives of the poor are, we can speak only of the ways in which struggles over poverty alleviation encounter other interests and struggles within political spaces.

The Tharaka Nithi and Siaya case studies revealed ongoing practices of co-opting local citizens (opinion leaders and other elites) in decision-making, which enabled the bureaucracy

to deflect the pressures and scrutiny that would otherwise have emanated from the local elite class. Writing on class structure, peasant participation and rural self- help in Kenya and Tanzania, Holmquist (1984:172) concurs with this observation. He notes that "participation may be a means by which the ruling class co-opts dissent, provides an illusion of progress, and deflects attention from all important policies and mechanisms of appropriating peasant surplus".

From the foregoing, one could question whether 'direct participation' is more desirable and beneficial to ordinary citizens. Would direct participation add greater value in presumably democratic set ups? There is reason to believe that in cases where elite capture is imminent, or where existing institutional arrangements are inadequate in serving the interests of the masses, direct participation may yield better and more practical decisions for action than is possible through representative participation at the grassroots. For this matter, it is worth paying attention to the observations of the meeting of the African Learning Group on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, organized by the Economic Commission for Africa in 2001. The meeting stressed the need to incorporate the voice of the poor in decision-making on poverty, noting that although the poor have spokespersons, they hardly get the chance to express their needs. A Sierra Leonean representative explained this gap as follows:

> I can assure you that their priorities will be totally different from what we list as priorities in our PRSPs. Their priorities will definitely be food on their tables or in their villages, improved housing - they are living in deplorable conditions. But we, the spokespersons will come out with grander priorities, which at the end of the day may not even meet their needs. We therefore need some kind of introspection between governments and civil society organizations (ECA, 2001: 5).

However, direct participation can yield better results only if common people were ready and willing to participate actively in the available decision-making spaces. This means dealing with the 'dependency syndrome" and "pathology of willed helplessness" observed by Maathai (2009) where common people leave their fate to third parties or stubbornly refuse to take responsibility for their own welfare. This trait was found among some of the inhabitants in the study sites who chose to idle around doing nothing important about their poverty conditions.

6.10 Leadership: The Influence of Bureaucrats and Politicians

The people of Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties generally conceived leadership from a 'formal' authority viewpoint, defining leaders as those who occupied presently or previously, formal positions of authority. As noted in Chapter 1, these included local politicians, government officials, and employees of non-state institutions. The degree of authority and power in decision-making tended to increase with formalization of the position one held. This local conception of leadership approximates the view by Schulze & Blumberg (1957: 290) who noted the following about leadership more than six decades back:

> The commonest techniques for identifying a community's power elites are focused either upon position, delineating elites on the basis of formal status in the local economic or political-civic structures, or upon reputation, determining elites through nomination by "juries" of presumably knowledgeable local informants.

However, there were certain differences in local perceptions of leadership between the two study sites. The people of Tharaka Nithi County viewed local government administrators (provincial administration officials) as the typical embodiment of the leader class. Their common reference point when discussing leadership was the provincial administration officials (civil servants/bureaucrats). In Siaya County, politicians or the political elites were the typical representative of the leader class. This construction matched the perceived power hierarchy in the two areas. In Tharaka Nithi County, provincial administrators were perceived as the most powerful actors in the local development space, followed by local politicians, other government officials, business people, elites (professionals), NGOs and committees in that order.

In Siaya County, politicians were the most powerful people, followed by provincial administrators, other government officials, church leaders, business people, elites (professionals), NGOs, cultural leaders, and the national intelligence service in that order. The two areas had similar perspectives of power on two major considerations: they constructed a local power hierarchy largely based on formal authority (this enhanced visibility and legitimacy of commands) and resource base, which determined a leader's ability to confer benefits or successful implementation of decisions.

An interesting point is that the way the local people perceived the main leader class (provincial administration in Tharaka Nithi and politicians in Siaya) determined, to a large

extent, their general outlook on local leadership. The provincial administrators were perceived as ruthless, corrupt, and less interested in meaningful local development while the political class was viewed as corrupt and overbearing. Local perceptions on both categories of leaders were negative, and this explains largely the low and negative rating of leadership in both study areas. The top two categories of leaders called shots in the two areas leading to what we describe as the 'bureaucratization'[186] and 'politicization' of the development space in Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties, respectively.

However, the two categories of a leader tend to work closely with each other in making decisions and to some extent with the other leader categories. Ordinary citizens' expected their leaders to uplift the standard of living. In the two case studies, local expectations for leaders clustered into three dimensions: behavioural, performance and trustworthiness. Ordinary people expected leaders to behave in accordance with their status (role models), to perform their responsibilities effectively (servant, give fresh ideas, uplift local people's lives, stand up for people, be responsive and regularly interact with people), and to fulfill promises made to local people (service-related, monetary, or other types of promises to individuals, groups or society in general).

There was unanimity in both areas that these expectations remained largely unmet and that local leaders failed to utilize their influence properly for the benefit of the wider society, and in particular, to tackling poverty. The local citizens were looking for "shared leadership" where leaders worked closely with them, and shared in the exercise of power. Local people desired leaders who were responsive, transparent, accountable and cooperative; people with a clear vision and mission; and persons who could inspire trust and optimism.

The narrative on leadership that emerges from the two study areas is largely similar and negative, suggesting that special attention needs to be paid on this factor in the future design of anti-poverty policies and programmes. This resonates with what we noted in Chapter 2, concerning unequal relationships within the development space, where either public arenas were dominated by elites or through the institutions that they control, easily perpetuate a culture of passivity and dependency among ordinary citizens. The discussions allude to an

[186] See Hyden (1984:103) and Pye (1963:106) for further discussion how bureaucrats (civil servants), as a dominant social class with power and authority tend to dominate and policy-making than any other group. These observations tend to match the situation in the study areas, especially in Tharaka Nithi County.

ambiguous and seemingly bad relationship between leaders and ordinary citizens. Both continued to co-exist and interact in decision-making processes and other development spaces despite the shortcomings mentioned above.

There were similarities in the two areas in terms of how local people, especially the ordinary ones, interacted with their leaders. Although there were variations depending on the leader category, issue at hand and venue, the interaction between leaders and ordinary people was essentially formal. Interaction took place mostly during problem-solving encounters initiated by ordinary people or during information seeking moments initiated by leaders, for example, consultative meetings or research (PPAs, PRAs, etc) and evaluation exercises. Such interaction was essentially a "problem-solving– benefits seeking" kind of relationship. It was a transactional relationship (aimed at certain outcomes) that was also short in nature. Ordinary people in both areas barely visited government officials for services; thus served to limit the frequency of such interactions. When they visited, their interaction with officials was confined to the service issue at hand and thus there was limited interaction.

Apart from the office setting, leaders and ordinary people also interacted in a variety of social settings. These included the market place, project sites, public meetings, committee consultations, village tours and institutional gatherings. However, the interactions were short lived and restrictive. The common constraints faced were largely similar in both areas. These ranged from level of formality (the more formal the venue and issue the more restrictive the interaction), interpersonal dynamics (such as unfamiliarity or distrust of the other party), the context of interaction (whether peaceful moments or during crisis), to experiences in previous participation efforts.

6.11 Elite Capture: Avenues, methods and forms

Elites have an important role to play in local development given their experience, skills, connections, finances, and other resources, which they could utilize to fight poverty. Despite this, the image of elites that emerged from the study areas was generally negative, fundamentally due to the high prevalence of elite capture in both locations. This was mostly at the level of services, projects and decision-making. The intensity of elite capture in the study areas tended to increase with remoteness (distance from the centre, and hence less scrutiny of elite malpractices), elite concentration (larger number of elites in an area represent

steeper competition for available benefits and opportunities), and low non-profit sector activity (absence of non-state actors such as influential NGOs minimizes scrutiny of government conduct).

Elite capture was manifested in many forms that for the most part were similar in the study areas: elite domination of decision-making spaces and institutions, information hoarding, corrupt practices, controlled access to leadership positions, domination of short-term employment opportunities and tenders, and capture of development projects. Elites also dominated the definition of local problems including the causes of poverty, because they participated in most public discourses on poverty. Elite capture was also manifested in maintenance of the status quo through intra-elites cooperation and patron-clientele relationships as demonstrated in the relations between government officials and opinion leaders.

In addition, there was the issue of skewed distribution of development projects in favour of certain areas. Also, elite capture exhibited itself in the two areas, and particularly in Tharaka Nithi County, through a "culture of silence". This is where local elites (opinion leaders) failed to speak up regularly and honestly on issues affecting the local community, for example, during DDC, DPEC and other decision-making forums. This may be because they were mostly perpetrators or beneficiaries of corrupt practices or in a patronage relationship with the affected officials or institutions. Such leaders tend to be co-opted by officialdom, at the disadvantage of local people. Bryant and White (1980: 37) point to such a possibility, when discussing the ambiguities in the role of project staff and local leaders in the context of rural development:

> One should pursue a strategy of working with local leaders, bringing them into the decision-making process, and giving them responsibility. Once this choice is made, the problem becomes one of avoiding the cooption of local leaders. As local leaders assume responsibility, they are often lured into abandoning their role as advocates and watchdogs for their communities.

In the study areas, there was the presence of what we describe as 'super–active elites' who represented the epitome of elite capture at the grassroots. This cadre occupied many local leadership positions acquired through nominations by government officials, other local elites and in some cases through legitimate elections involving the local people. The super-active-elites participated in nearly all major decision-making processes in the two areas, boosted by

the fact that some occupied as many as 20 leadership positions at any time. They served as members or chairpersons in school management boards, CDF project committees, church management committees, CBOs leadership, NGO leadership, peace and security committees, project committees, council of elders and other civil society forums. They were powerful local actors comprising men and women in the study areas, and were mostly serving or past political leaders, progressive farmers, retired civil servants, and prominent business people.

The opinion leaders category discussed earlier in this chapter are a common example of the 'super–active elites'. They tended to be information brokers and sources, and local level collaborators and facilitators of official interventions in the study areas. They represented emergent power elites and interest groups (organized and non-organized) at local level and together with other categories of local leaders tend to be an obstacle to genuine participation of the ordinary citizens in decision-making processes at the grassroots.

However, the elite capture phenomenon is not unique to the two study sites. It seems to be a widespread problem in Kenya, officially sanctioned from the early years of in independence when civil servants became involved in private enterprises while employed as public servants, leading to conflict of interest, corruption and domination by officials[187].

6.12 Local Institutions: Are they allies or exploiters of the poor?

A wide variety of institutions operated in the study areas. They pursued long term, medium term and short-term pathways out of poverty through various projects and interventions within which they introduced and promoted various poverty reduction innovations. There was appreciation for some of the institutions, for their efforts to uplift local people's lives. The notable ones were FBOs, Njaa Marufuku Kenya, and NALEP programmes, and DPEC in both study areas. In addition, the people of Tharaka Nithi had a fair appreciation of the local CDF Committee, which supported the education infrastructure, while the Millennium Village Project at Bar Sauri in Gem Constituency had taken bold moves in tackling poverty in all its facets.

[187] See the recommendations of the Ndegwa Commission Report of 1971, and Hyden (1984:117) who notes that "the effort to preempt opportunities for others, which is such a key feature of Kenyan policy making, is no longer directed only toward securing jobs for the boys but more toward extracting services and benefits from various public institutions". Also, see Sisule (2001) who argues that in many cases, public policies in Kenya have depended on which group of people has the greatest influence in articulating its interests.

Most NGOs in both areas run projects with links to poverty reduction in both areas. The Poverty Eradication Commission (PEC), through the District Poverty Eradication Committees (DPECs) active in the two counties since 2002, and their activities, especially the grants programme, were well received. In Siaya, PEC's district table - banking initiative involving mostly women and youth groups was a clear poverty reduction initiative with potential for replication in other rural areas. It also represented a successful model of ordinary people's participation in decision-making for poverty reduction.

At the same time, in both areas, there was a long list of complaints against local institutions ranging from claims of doing little to tackle poverty, poor services provisioning[188] to perpetuating corrupt practices. Although most institutions claim in their annual and donor reports that they had met targets and objectives, their collective efforts in poverty reduction revealed little impact in the two areas whose poverty levels have traditionally been high.

Local institutions were also perceptively less transparent and accountable to local people. Sometimes, they used inappropriate project approaches, focused on effects rather than root causes of poverty, and placed restrictions on citizen participation in institutional processes. In the latter point, institutions tended to exclude local people's participation in decision-making in certain aspects of their operations, particularly project design, budgeting, and recruitment processes viewing these as internal processes, that did not require public involvement. Such restrictive behaviour, especially by NGOs that are widely viewed as champions of participatory development, has been noted by other researchers thus suggesting a that proclaimed ideals did not always translate into practice.

Institutional failure in poverty reduction was echoed in a study by Rajasekhar, in Tamil Nadu, India[189.] In their summary of that study, Engberg-Pedersen and Webster (2002: 26 -7) note as follows:

> The presence of institutional channels in the form of local government and of NGOs in particular, with programmes and resources directed towards poverty reduction, is not enough. Since the identification of and design of such programmes remains far

[188] PPA-IV report of 2007 notes, for instance, that communities in Tharaka 'were generally not satisfied with the healthcare in their areas due to cost of drugs in private facilities and lack of the same in dispensaries, and the tendency to detain patients when they are not able to pay" (GoK, 2007c:76).

[189] See Rajasekhar, 2002, Where Local organizations do not work: problems of poverty reduction in Tamil Nadu, India, In Engberg-Pedersen and Webster, 2002: In the Name of the Poor: Contesting Political Space for Poverty Reduction.

> removed from the locality, and since the marginalized and the excluded fail to become involved, the potential for poverty reduction cannot be realized.

Gaps in institutional practices concerning citizen participation has been noted by other authors, for example, Todaro and Smith (2006: 557 - 8) who observe that:

> Genuine participation is often not in the interests of national or local government officials and other elites...But many NGOs are committed to the more complete forms of participation at least on paper. But there are significant dilemmas even when these NGOs are involved. Staff even with the best of motives may not view genuine participation as a priority but more as a distraction.

Poor performance of local institutions, in terms of both poverty reduction and enhancing citizen participation, and thus citizen's negative perceptions towards them has been noted in Kenya by other researchers. In their research on Livelihoods and Rural Poverty Reduction in Kenya, Freeman, Ellis and Allison (2003:17) argue that:

> Rural Kenyans characterize government agencies and office holders of all kinds (include local government administration, DCs, MPs, chiefs, councilors etc) as the least helpful institutions. Villagers have clear notions of public service and about their rights as citizens and they express indignation at perceived service failures and bribes culture. Many taxes to which rural people are subjected, most of them illegal.

Similarly, Gaventa (2002:1) argues in a more general sense that institutions have serious governance and performance gaps, which makes citizens unhappy and notes that:

> Around the world, a growing crisis of legitimacy characterises the relationship between citizens and the institutions that affect their lives. Both in the south and north, citizens speak of mounting disillusionment with government, based on concerns about corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor and the absence of a sense of connection with elected representatives and bureaucrats.

Researchers in other developing country contexts have also noted the poor performance of institutions at the local level. Writing on the function and performance of local organizations in India, Alsop and Kurey (2005: 1) observe:

> Local organizations are central actors in the rural development strategies sponsored by governments and donor agencies in India…However, many of these local organizations do not perform as expected, and development practitioners are uncertain about their effectiveness, fairness, and sustainability. Given the prevalence of local organizations and their high profile in contemporary development programs, these uncertainties need to be addressed.

However, the performance of institutions in reducing poverty and promoting citizen participation in the two areas was to some extent subject to their capacities[190] to act. Indeed, institutional capacity is a critical factor for the success of poverty reduction programmes (Manda, Mwabu & Kimenyi 2001; Omiti & Obunde, 2002). The main challenges faced by institutions in the study areas included technical, economic and managerial capacity gaps. In Bolivia, for example, Jeppesen (2002: 47) found institutional capacity limitations with local governments lacking technical skills to plan, implement and supervise projects. Faced with these constraints, institutions became dependent on the knowledge of consultancy firms or outside planners and donors.

On the positive side, the people of Tharaka Nithi and Siaya demonstrated a positive attitude towards the new institutions created by the Constitution, especially the devolved governance structure. They embraced these institutions in hope of reaping long-term benefits. The perception on the devolved Governance structure was positive in the study areas because residents felt that the new system would cure the historical marginalization and neglect associated with past regimes. The hope for a better future anchored on better performing institutions was not limited to ordinary people and indeed there was convergence of opinion with other study participants categories engaged in the study areas.

Kenya's former Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, himself an elite from Siaya County, captures this hope eloquently in a 2010 media article[191]:

> Poverty is still a national scourge. Yet at independence, Kenya was one of the most hopeful nations on earth. It was at par with South Korea. Today, South Korea is one of the top industrialised countries in the world. Kenya is still mired in the Third World. Corruption and abuse of power by political leaders and high officials is to blame. Good news is, the new Constitution gives us a clear mandate to tackle these issues....Our new Constitution gives us a start...I see in this new constitution and the Second Republic that it creates, an enormous potential for our self-renewal; our moment to overleap our own failures.

However, the fact that local people embraced these institutions did not translate into full confidence that these institutions would deliver as expected. Their perspectives were basically anchored on 'hope'. This clarification is important particularly in light of recent

[190] There are various dimensions of capacity issue that face institutions. These may be in respect to technical capacity (personnel skill issues, etc), socially determined capacities (e.g. taboo restrictions), economic capacities (such as financial gaps), managerial capacities, administrative capacities, among others.
[191] See Article, *Free at last, from the tyranny of the State, Daily Natio*n Newspaper, 26 August 2010

findings that citizens' confidence level across the country towards the new constitutional institutions was low, especially concerning the parliament, police, judiciary, and electoral commissions, whose performance fell below public expectation[192]. A case in point are revelations that the Kenyan state was losing a lot of its annual budget through wasteful spending by state institutions and officials on seminars, workshops, foreign trips and flawed procurement[193].

In summary, the local institutions in Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties emerged as allies (they support local development), exploiters (they dominate local development space), and wasters (they use enormous resources without returning commensurate results). Institutions tended to be less keen in promoting citizen participation in their own operations. Their expressed dedication to engage in promoting citizen participation and fighting poverty tended to be less effective, partly because of financial and human capacity limitations they experienced.

6.13 Local Factors influencing poverty reduction outcomes

Several contextual factors associated with poverty reduction efforts emerged in the two study areas. The main ones were local politics, economy, and culture. There were certain similarities but also differences in local politics and political orientation in the two areas. In Tharaka Nithi County, there was low visibility of local political leadership unlike Siaya County, which displays high political consciousness and activity. The political leadership in Siaya County was highly visible and vocal up to national level. There was also high local awareness of the Constitution and reforms thereof. As already indicated, the people of Siaya viewed poverty to be a socio-political problem, linking poverty to structural and power relations in the society. Tharaka Nithi appeared different: local people viewed poverty more as a physical-ecological issue and hence concentrated on economics rather than a political approach to poverty reduction.

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[192] A May 2013 survey by Infotrack Research and Consulting, revealed that 'only 25 per cent of Kenyans had confidence in MPS and that the same trend was seen in several other institutions including the police, IEBC (44%)%), and the Supreme Court (48%)%). The approval rating for the most positively perceived institution, the media, stood at 57 per cent.

[193] See article, *Kenya Government loses shillings 500 Billion to wasteful spending,* The *Standard* Newspaper, 21 June 2013.

[193] See article, *Kenya Government loses shillings 500 Billion to wasteful spending,* The *Standard* Newspaper, 21 June 2013.

There were striking similarities as well as some slight differences in the economic context of the two areas. Both were agricultural based economies. Loans and income generating activities for economic empowerment was well rooted in Tharaka Nithi. Moreover, while the people of Tharaka Nithi tended to be more receptive to loans, those in Siaya tended to be averse to risk taking (loans). There are nonetheless low industrial investments in both areas, as well as low application of irrigation farming despite the high potential. For example, over 13 rivers flow through Tharaka Nithi, but these are hardly used for irrigation. Similarly, the big rivers - Yala and Nzoia – that flow through Siaya were not fully utilized for irrigation.

Although out-migration was perceived as a contributing factor to high poverty levels in Siaya, there is still a high level of labour available for agricultural production. However, the problem is that the youth generally are less inclined to farming, while most men shun farming, leaving agricultural activities to women.

Certain cultural practices (witchcraft and clanism), dependency syndrome, 'Gonyo mindset, laziness and idleness among the youth and men are prevalent in Siaya and these tended to affect local development. Similarly, the persistence of poverty was blamed on laziness among the youth and some of the ordinary people in Tharaka Nithi. In both areas, there was clear 'normalization' of poverty with some of the local people doing little to combat poverty.

With a shared history and status of poverty, the two areas bore striking similarities in their view of the main development issues, which needed to be tackled in order to address the question of poverty more sustainably. Increased poverty reduction efforts, food security, provision of essential services (health care, water, among others), governance (leadership), institutional performance, investments/ industry, and infrastructural development (roads, electricity connection) were key issues in both areas.

In Siaya, dealing with retrogressive cultural practices (witchcraft, clanism, regional hatred, and negative politics), high dependency syndrome, and G'onyo factor remained important priorities. In Tharaka Nithi, the issue of prices for local produce (marketing) and exploitative practices of local business people, security (addressing social conflicts due to border and land issues) and civic education to build greater awareness on the constitution and associated reforms remain priority intervention areas.

6.14 Conclusion

This chapter summarised, compared and discussed the main empirical findings from Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties. It used a grounded approach to understand the politics of poverty reduction and citizen participation in decision-making in the study areas. The chapter revealed that Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties exhibit remarkable similarities. In particular, the extent and quality of citizen participation in decision-making processes was low, there were serious leadership deficits, and the performance of local institutions in promoting citizen participation and tackling poverty was less than satisfactory. The three variables, participation, leadership and institutions were connected to and affected each other in a web of relationships, which tended to influence poverty reduction efforts in the two counties.

Scrutiny of the main organizers, key attendants, venues, ease of access, and how final decisions are arrived and acted upon revealed that ordinary citizens were irregular and peripheral players. Their participation was by design "induced" (invitation to participate), often achieved through representation by others. These were mostly elites and government officials who, in typical government language go by the generic name 'key stakeholders, "representatives of interest groups", "opinion leaders" and "community leaders".

Although institutional innovation (decision-making spaces are institutional structures) and decentralisation (taking development decision-making loci to the grassroots) made available more decision-making opportunities, these, in practice, did not seem to improve the quality of citizen participation. Drawing on the presentation of this chapter and the previous ones, the next chapter presents the conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This thesis pursued research questions with theoretical and practical import to the study of poverty reduction in a developing country context. It explored the extent and quality of citizen participation in development policy and planning process in Kenya and how this has affected poverty reduction efforts in rural parts of the country. Linked to the participation theme, three other macro level variables thought to affect poverty reduction outcomes as well as citizen participation were analysed: development policy and planning practice, leadership, and institutions. Probing these macro level variables was undertaken through a political economy model and within the context of Kenya's development policy and planning framework over the last 50 years of political independence.

This chapter presents specific conclusions of the study and teases out critical areas that the case studies reveal as missing in contemporary literature on development, poverty reduction and citizen participation. The chapter revisits these issues indicating their relevance to Kenya and, where literature has argued wrongly or rightly, based on the empirical findings from the case studies. In addition, the chapter highlights the conceptual and empirical contribution of the study to knowledge and efforts to reduce poverty in Kenya and the developing world in general.

7.2 Broad insights from the Tharaka Nithi and Siaya Case Studies

Tharaka Nithi and Siaya Counties have similar political economies that explain the persistence of poverty in the two areas. The findings demonstrate that political, institutional, and bureaucratic practices at the local level constrain rather than enhance effective citizen participation in decision-making, poverty reduction as well as inclusive development. The following conclusions emerge from this study.

Ordinary citizens as both "victims" and contributors to the poverty problem

Poverty is an economic and socio-political problem that continues to weigh down equitable human development in rural Kenya. Although ordinary people have favourable perceptions towards poverty reduction, and recognize their responsibilities in tackling the problem, these

perceptions did not translate into practice. Ordinary citizens barely fulfilled their poverty reducing roles largely due to a variety of internal and external constraints. Whilst perceptions influenced how people dealt with their challenges, the constraints faced by the grassroots population played a much more critical role in influencing their actions and successes in poverty reduction. Ordinary citizens tackled poverty in "normal ways" mainly through the available livelihood options, while incorporating poverty reduction innovations introduced by local institutions. Some of the ordinary citizens did little to tackle poverty. Their actions and inactions appeared to contribute to the persistence of poverty at the grassroots. This issue received little attention in general literature on poverty.

In order to move out of poverty, to avoid slipping into it and to minimize its effects, the ordinary citizens required support from other development actors, especially the government, local institutions, leaders and elites. However, these other "poverty reduction actors" did not also fulfill their poverty reducing responsibilities (including adequate support to ordinary citizens). Arguably, the persistence of poverty in Kenya, especially in the rural areas is the collective failure of all the development actors[194] operating within the local and national development space over the past five decades. There is need for all to work in a cooperative and dedicated manner to combat poverty.

Poverty reduction as an elite project shaped by power and self-interests

Power and interests influenced Kenya's poverty reduction project. In the name of reducing poverty, politicians rode to power, development professionals honed careers and rose through the ranks in the non-profit sector, and private enterprises earned exorbitant profits, while many ordinary citizens remained trapped in a cycle of deprivation. The assumption alluded to in development literature that there is a widely shared goal to fight poverty, is therefore questionable. Poverty tends to have functions[195] within the Kenyan society and its existence served the rich, powerful and influential members. This underlines why 50 years of elaborate development planning and poverty discourse has not significantly tackled this national catastrophe in Kenya. Poverty reduction enterprise is a classical "milk cow" for the elites and institutions that control the development process, and the productive forces in the country.

[194] Webster & Engberg-Pedersen (2002:9) notes for this matter that many donor agencies (bilateral and multi lateral) treated poverty reduction as a priority development objective in the 1990s which served to underline the view that poverty was not the poor's own fault.
[195] The idea is adopted from Gan's functional theory of poverty. See Gan 1968; 1970; & 1971 for details.

It is important that ordinary citizens assume greater roles in fighting poverty. Their rights and obligations in poverty reduction need to be articulated in policy documents and incorporated into plans. It is no longer feasible, as argued by Engber-Pedersen and Webster (2002:260), for the government and state officials to "assert an exclusive or superior responsibility for all development activities within a society". To this, one can add the elites and institutions, including non-state institutions, who emerge in this study as the other big players in the poverty reduction enterprise.

Development policy and planning process as a captured space shaped by neo-liberal thinking

The prevailing poverty situation in Kenya could have been different if all citizens, especially ordinary citizens, played a greater role in decision-making processes that mattered for poverty reduction. However, this was not possible due to the historically hierarchical[196] and elitist nature of the country's development policy and planning framework, which served as an instrument of control. This is despite well meaning public sector reforms and decentralization policies initiated in the country in the 1980s onwards. At the same time, there was significant influence of global and foreign factors in the country's development discourse as shown in Chapter 3, and in particular, the neo-liberal development paradigm that was pre-occupied with economic growth as the principal engine of development.

The impact of the post-colonial development and planning practice in Kenya, based on the "economic growth" theory of development is clearly limited. A testimony of its gaps is the enduring face of poverty and high social and economic inequalities that today confronts one in every corner of the country. The result is that Kenya has a battered image with an increasing number of national and global surveys describing the country as a failed state, a country with the most unhappy people on earth, second worst country under the sun for a child to be born as of 2013, and as one of the most corrupt countries in the world[197].

[196] For instance, the development planning system connected the national actors (mainly the Office of the President, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Planning) to the provincial planning office, to district development and planning office (DC-DDO-district development committee) and to development committees at divisional, locational and sub locational levels.

[197] For full details, see article by Joe Kiarie *"Are we unlucky to be born here in Kenya?", The Standard* Newspaper, 2 February 2013.

The neoliberal approach to development has not only failed to rescue Kenya from increasing levels of poverty but has bred high degrees of social and economic inequalities. There is a link between neo-liberalism and poverty. Indeed, the persistence of poverty, alongside the preponderance of a neoliberal approach to development anchored on an economic growth mindset and the market and private property rights as its key tenets is not a coincidence. Yet, Kenya continues to cling to a development orthodoxy that has not helped the masses out of poverty.

In light of this, citizens and those at the helm of Kenya's development policy and planning process (technocrats, politicians and international financial institutions such as the Word Bank and IMF that purportedly support the country's development efforts) need serious reflection about how the country can better organize its development efforts. It is hardly convincing to the citizens to be told that their country has one of the best development policies in Africa, as noted in Chapter 1 of this thesis. In reality, not much of evidence exists in terms of true transformation of the lives of the masses to support such claims.

Citizen participation in decision-making encounter with multiple structural and practical impediments at the grassroots

The participation of ordinary citizens in decision-making processes that matter in the fight against poverty was marginal, ineffective and compromised through elite capture of these processes and their outcomes. Spaces for participation that registered high citizen involvement were the same institutions that local citizens viewed as most beneficial and helpful in fighting poverty. There are too few examples of institutional practices and development programmes that represent the conceptual ideal of genuine citizen participation in development practice and poverty reduction, in particular. The few institutional mechanisms that pass as good examples, such as the CDF process, are themselves faced with certain shortcomings including corruption, elite capture and skewed implementation of policy.

Achieving genuine participation in decision-making at the grassroots level is a dilemma because of many constraints: social, class, gender, personal and political reasons. An "elitist" frame of decision-making and implementation of development endavours in post-independence Kenya tends to have structurally excluded the meaningful participation of local

citizens in the development process. The various formal spaces and opportunities for decision-making for poverty reduction at local level do not serve, in themselves, as important loci for meaningful citizen participation in decision-making. This is because they are restricted and controlled spaces where elites, government officials and institutions dominate.

One of the issues that emerge from this study concerns the appropriate participation model that ensured effective citizen participation in decision-making. Whilst representative participation tends to be the model of choice at the grassroots, it is problematic. There was little evidence to show that the representatives, who are usually handpicked "opinion" leaders, do pursue the interests of the ordinary citizens. The legitimacy of representation of the poor in decision-making spaces is therefore questionable, especially due to the hegemonic conditions and malpractices of elites/leaders and institutions. As such, there is need to identify and utilize a mix of both models of participation ("direct" and "representative") in order to increase the extent and quality of participation of ordinary citizens in decision-making and hence maximize benefits that accrue from participatory development.

Terminology as a tool for disempowerment and maintaining status quo

The terminology used in Kenya's participation and development discourse is problematic and it undermines citizen participation in decision-making, and ultimately the fight against poverty. The use of terms such as "consultation" and "bottom – up approach" tends to entrench the culture of domination of the development space by elites and institutions. The term 'consultation' is common government-speak and is even used in Kenya's Constitution to mean 'public participation'. This is not appropriate because consultation is a low level of participation. It is actually a form of tokenism according to Arnstein's participation framework described in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Similarly, the use of the term "bottom – up approach" to denote 'participatory development' tends to undermine the genuine participation of ordinary citizens in decision-making. 'Bottom' is associated or connotes powerless-ness or voiceless-ness while 'up' connotes high degrees of power and capabilities. The masses are usually perceived as occupying the 'bottom' position while the leaders and the institutions occupy the 'upper' echelon in the power hierarchy. While this conception might appear plausible from a practical point of view,

it contradicts the provisions of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, which viewed citizens as the sovereign power holders.

A reversal of mindset and how these terms are applied in the development discourse is needed because ordinary citizens, especially within the context of progressive constitutions such as Kenya's, have immense legitimate power. The issue is not whether they have power or not, but rather whether they exercise it and the outcomes of such endeavors. The two case studies demonstrate passivity at the grassroots indicating that citizen power is grossly underutilized.

Poor leadership and elite capture as key impediments to citizen participation and poverty reduction at the grassroots

Local leadership was not helping people enough to move out of poverty or to exercise their rights to participation. This pointed to the existence of the "Wrong Bus Syndrome" in rural Kenya, which Maathai (2009:5) describes as follows:

> Like travelers who have boarded the wrong bus, many people and communities are heading in the worn direction or travelling on the wrong path, while allowing others (often their leaders) to lead them further from their desired destination. It is my analysis that much of Africa is on the "wrong bus".

The case studies indicate that rural society is not egalitarian. Leaders and institutions have the upper hand in the public space, which has resulted, perhaps, to leaders and ordinary people demonstrating ambivalent and lukewarm relationships. The image of leaders is that of enemies of the people. Yet, ordinary citizens seldom confront leaders, directly, over the various governance deficits that they are unhappy with, demonstrating a widespread culture of passivity.

Elite capture is a significant problem for participatory development and poverty reduction at the grassroots. It is widespread and takes a variety of forms including diversion of projects, corruption and purported "representation" of mass interests by "opinion" leaders. Viewed more broadly, the elites in power during the Kenyatta, Moi and Kibaki regimes, including at the local level tend to have been unwilling to cede power to the masses. Instead, they consolidated power along the lines of the power hierarchies noted in the case studies.

Dealing with elite capture is, therefore, an important step towards fighting poverty and enhancing participatory development at the grassroots. Because the views of ordinary citizens are often filtered through the perspectives of the elites and institutions, it is critical that Kenyans interrogate the question of development and poverty reduction efforts underway in the country. This is because much of what we know about these concepts has elitist connotations reflecting the power relations prevailing in the Kenyan society.

Institutions need to do more in promoting citizen participation and fighting poverty reduction at the grassroots

Institutions are powerful and useful local actors; they can build, nurture and unlock the local people's potential in development. Institutions engaged in poverty reduction efforts and attempted to promote citizen participation although this was inadequate. Although the existence of institutions opened up more space and opportunities for participation, this did not significantly increase prospects for empowered citizen participation in decision-making processes. This is because local institutions often excluded citizen participation in some of their operations. Institutions seem to have joined hands with the elites and leaders to squeeze out the common people, through the mechanics of corruption, myriad elite capture practices, and gaps in services provision. Institutions have not pursued maximum benefits for the common people understandably because elites who have their own interests, some of which run counter to those of the common people, control these institutions. Institutions needed to do more; they need to open up their spaces for greater public participation and to pursue poverty reduction efforts with dedication.

In conclusion, the thesis demonstrate that sufficient public participation in decision-making and the quality of development planning practice, leadership and institutions are critical factors for the success of poverty reduction in Kenya. As such, it is important that development agents, and the Government in particular pay attention to these issues when designing and implementing poverty reducing interventions.

7.3 Conceptual and Empirical Contribution to the Understanding of Citizen Participation in Decision-making and Poverty Reduction

This thesis is a stimulating research endavour, which contribute to the development of knowledge in Africa and about Africa. It adds to the growing research on participation, poverty reduction, governance and development dynamics within a developing country context. The thesis has catalogued the failures of meaningful citizen participation in the efforts to reduce poverty and connected the macro with local level in the context of development and poverty reduction in Kenya. The findings from the two case studies re-affirm the arguments in theoretical discussions of citizen participation including its efficacies and constraints in development processes, as well as the importance of good leadership and effective institutions in tackling poverty.

This thesis has demonstrated how development is organised in Kenya and the institutional context of poverty reduction efforts. It has provided a comprehensive account of development planning in Kenya over a span of five decades, identifying the key policy frameworks and actors that defined the country's development trajectory. The thesis has demonstrated that poverty reduction and the pursuit of economic growth has been a permanent feature in Kenya's development policies and official documentation. The insights from the probe of Kenya's development policy and planning practice form an important contribution of this thesis, coming within four years into Kenya's new constitutional order.

The thesis has made an important contribution in revealing how the concepts of power and interests have informed and influenced Kenya's development and poverty reduction efforts. It underscores the need to use the power – interests lens in appraising poverty reduction interventions in countries faced with high levels of poverty. The thesis has also revealed the contested and defective nature of citizen participation and indicated the extent and quality of participation as well as the common constraints that face ordinary people as they attempt to achieve meaningful participation in decision-making processes at local level.

This thesis questioned the current development practice and literature that treats ordinary citizens as "victims" and rights holders, and on the other hand treats the government, institutions and leaders as duty bearers. It has argued that this conception of poverty reduction model is plausible but not entirely correct. This is because ordinary citizens have a

duty to contribute to fighting poverty; a duty that is generally neglected in development and poverty literature.

Another important contribution of this thesis that has practical import for poverty reduction was the revelation of the dilemma of the representative participation model. Representative participation especially that based on the opinion leaders model was a hindrance to the quality of ordinary people's participation in decision-making at the grassroots. This problem has not been interrogated with vigor in Kenya, despite what appeared to be widespread failure by the leaders and institutions to act on and promote the interests of the masses. There was reason to believe that direct participation can yield more practical, nuanced priorities and decisions requiring urgent action than perhaps that achieved through representative participation. Kenya's Constitution root for some degree of "direct participatory democracy", for example, by requiring devolved governments to institute citizens' fora (for example, stakeholder forums, village councils, etc) at different levels where local people can deliberate and take decisions on issues affecting them. However, the case studies demonstrate that direct participation can yield results only if common people are ready and willing to participate in available decision-making spaces or create new ones that allow them to exercise their right to participation in development and governance processes.

Furthermore, the thesis demonstrates that although decentralization is important for improving participation, it does not always work because of elite capture and institutional attitudes. There is need to move beyond decentralization and develop mechanisms that ensure that real power and voice flow to the ordinary citizens. This included enforcing constitutional provisions for citizen participation and addressing the various constraints that act as barriers to meaningful citizen participation.

The study contributes to understanding the influence of macro-level factors on poverty reduction at the grassroots. It sought to understand how select macro factors translated at local level and the links and influence that they have in determining poverty reduction efforts at the local level. A related contribution of this thesis is revealing that the local perspective is important in approaching the issue of poverty reduction. The thesis underlines that since poverty is most pronounced at the grassroots, it is incumbent upon the local poverty reduction actors to contribute in tackling the problem using available local level resources and participate meaningfully in available public decision-making spaces.

The thesis underlined the important role that elites can play in local development given their experience, skills, connections, finances, and other resources, which they could utilise to fight poverty. It also mapped out the contours of defective governance mechanism that are elite driven, self seeking in contexts of marginal and poor communities who are trapped in a vicious cycle of deprivation. The findings from this study boost our understanding of the conditions and circumstances under which elite capture practices occur and how ordinary citizens attempt to handle the phenomenon.

The thesis rooted for a conceptual framework in the analysis of poverty reduction that placed citizen participation (especially 'direct participation") in decision making and perceived the "macro" and "micro" and the "national" and "local" factors as both important areas for policy analysis in the context of poverty reduction. The two dichotomies are intrinsically connected. In this way, the study opened a new frontier for the study of poverty reduction.

7.4 What Next for Poverty Reduction? A Conclusion

The two case studies revealed public apathy and mistrust towards the discourse of development. Its failure to bring significant changes in the lives of local people tends to galvanise negative perceptions about its very potential. The future of poverty reduction in Kenya lies, largely, in the faithful implementation of the Constitution, and particularly the devolved governance structures, which have responsibilities to encourage and support meaningful participation of ordinary citizens in decision-making.

The elite - institutional hegemony in the public space and poverty reduction discourse has not helped the masses and has to be dismantled. A shift in value orientation and reversal of goals by those in power must occur, putting emphasis on optimal realisation of citizens' rights and the implementation of development policies that work for all citizens.

While the Constitution provides reason for ordinary citizens to be hopeful that these developments will take place, they must at the same time take destiny into their hands, make efforts to exercise "citizen power" enshrined in the Constitution, as well as make positive poverty reducing efforts within their micro spaces (as households and in the neighbourhood) using all available resources.

The words of the late Cpt. Ntwiga[198], the former MP for Nithi in Tharaka Nithi County are a suitable final word on the citizen participation - poverty reduction discourse pursued in this thesis:

> Poverty eradication cannot start from nowhere. The efforts to eradicate poverty in this country must start at the grassroots level. The common person at the grassroots level carries all the wealth of this nation. If we address these issues right from the grassroots level, we can eradicate poverty effectively in this country. Let us not look at the big projects. Let us come down to earth and look for ways of improving the standards of living of the common person at the village level. As I have said, the wealth of this nation originates there; without those people, we could not be here (Hansard, Parliamentary debates, pp.1548 - 19549).

This is the message that runs through this thesis. It is befitting that Ntwiga, a leader from Tharaka Nithi County, recognized the novelty of fighting poverty in Kenya from the grassroots. Unfortunately, poverty continues to thrive in his own backyard more than a decade later.

[198] The Late Cpt. Ntwiga, the former MP for Nithi Constituency in Tharaka Nithi County was contributing to a parliamentary motion touching on poverty eradication ('Implementation of Pre-feasibility Study in Taita Taveta') moved by Mr. Mwakirango on July 12, 2000.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: MAJOR OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

1. National Planning Documents

National development plans/medium term plans (1963 to 2013)

Ministerial/sector development/strategic plans

National poverty eradication plan (1999 - 2015)

Kenya Vision 2030

National PRSP reports

Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs 1 - 5)

Annual economic surveys

Annual statistical abstracts

DFRD strategy (Versions 1983; 1995)

2. County Planning Documents (Tharaka Nithi & Siaya Counties)

County development profile (2013)

County integrated development plan (2014)

Constituency strategic plans

District development plans

District strategic plans

Siaya Social, economic and cultural profile

CDF strategic plans

Annual LASDAPs

3. Relevant Sessional papers

Sessional paper no. 10 of 1965 on African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya

Sessional paper no. 1 of 1986 on economic management for renewed growth

Sessional paper no. 2 of 1996 on Industrial transformation to the Year 2020

Sessional paper no. 3 of 1999 on National Poverty Eradication

Sessional paper no. 2 of 2005 on development of micro and small enterprises for wealth and employment for poverty reduction

Sessional paper no.10 of 2008 on Kenya Vision 2030

4. Major budget/financial documents

National budgets/ budget speeches, Financial 1963/4 - 2013/4

MTF Budget guidelines

MTEF county reports, March 2013

Development and employment in Kenya: A strategy for the transformation of the economy, 1991

5. Major reports (surveys/census, Taskforce/committee/commission)

Kenya Population and Housing Reports

Annual economic survey reports

Annual statistical abstracts

KIHBS 2005/6

KIHBS Basic report on well being in Kenya 2007

KDHS 2008/9

Well being in Kenya: A socio-economic profile 2008

District socio-economic profiles 1990

Constituency report on well being in Kenya based on KIHBS

District Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports

Task force report on 'Harambee', 2004

MTP Country consultation reports, March 2013

Provincial annual reports (Eastern & Nyanza); 1968/9; 1974

End term review of ERS-WEC, 2009

Planning Bulletins

DDCs records

DPEC records

CDF audit reports

CDF allocation/proposals summary documents

LASDAP process reports

District PRSP consultation report

District socio-economic profiles 1990 – 2012

6. Relevant Kenya Laws

Constitution of Kenya (1963 & 2010)

The Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act, 2011

Urban Areas and Cities Act, 2011

The Leadership and Integrity Act, 2012

County Governments Act, 2012

Intergovernmental Relations Act, 2012

Transition to Devolved Government Act, 2012

Public Finance Management Act, 2013

Transition County Allocation Revenue Act, 2013

County Development Bills (2014)

CDF Act, 2003

LATF Act, 1998

7. Other relevant documents (Reports, papers, etc)

PPAs for 1994; 1996; 2005/6; 2007

PRA reports 1963 – 2012

KIPPRA Discussion papers

MDG reports (2000 to 2012)

Parliamentary departmental reports on poverty, citizen participation, and planning)

Working papers, discussion papers and reports by various organizations involved in policy, poverty, participation issues (IDS, KIPPRA, IPAR, TISA, NTA, CEDGG, TI-Kenya, NEPAD-Kenya)

APPENDIX II: NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Daily Nation Newspaper

The Standard Newspaper

The Star Newspaper

The Planning Bulletins (Ministry of Planning, National Development & Vision 2030)

Participatory Learning and Action

Poverty Alleviation Newsletters (Poverty Eradication Commission)

The Broker Magazine

APPENDIX III: INTRODUCTION AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear ……Greetings. My name is Sebastian Njagi Runguma. I am a Kenyan pursuing a PhD in Development Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. As part of my studies, I am carrying out my research project in Kenya. The research examines the nature of public participation in decision-making and how this affects poverty reduction in rural areas of the country. I have carefully selected Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties as the specific study sites. Both areas have traditionally high poverty rates. Findings from the two areas will be compared and used to understand the national picture as well as the extent to which local factors such as culture, politics, and economy explain the poverty situation in the two counties.

I have identified you as a potential participant in the research and request your participation in an interview / key informant discussion which will take about one hour. For accuracy and reliability reasons, I request your consent to tape record the interview/discussion. I wish to guarantee you that I will retain and safely store audio tapes and interview/discussion notes using pseudonyms and that these materials will not be accessible to other parties without your written consent. If necessary, I will send you a transcript of the interview / discussion via email for clarification, at which point you may request to add / adjust the information to better reflect your views.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you have rights to decline to answer questions you are not comfortable with or to pull out of the research at any time. If you agree to participate in the study and to be tape recorded, please sign the attached consent forms.
Should you require any clarification regarding this research or regarding your rights as a participant, please feel free to discuss this further with me. My contact details are as follows: Telephone number: +254 720 953288 (Kenya); +27 791 9525 89 (South Africa) and email: srnjagi@yahoo.com / srnjagi@gmail.com / Sebastian.Runguma@students.wits.ac.za.

APPENDIX IV: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This research project has been explained to me orally. My specific role as a participant has been explained fully and I voluntarily agree to participate in the study. I understand the procedures and I can choose to withdraw at any time or refuse to answer particular questions. I am willing to provide my experience and knowledge pertaining to this research through an in-depth interview / key informant discussion, which will be tape-recorded and thereafter transcribed for purposes of accuracy and reliability of this study. I have also been assured by the researcher that all the information collected will be treated and kept confidentially.

I have no objection for the thesis from this research using my real name/ I do not want the thesis from this research to use using my real name (Please cross whichever does not apply).

Name: _____
Email Address: _____
Telephone: _____
Signature of the participant_____ Date_____
Researcher's signature _____ Date _____
Place_____

APPENDIX V: CONSENT TO TAPE-RECORD INTERVIEW/DISCUSSION

I ……hereby consent to be interviewed and tape-recorded. I have been informed that the purpose of tape-recording the interview is for accuracy and reliability reasons of this study. I have also been informed that the tape records will be retained and kept securely in the custody of the researcher and the information will remain confidential.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Participant's email: _____

Telephone:_____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Place_____

APPENDIX VI: GENERAL CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS

Information for this research is collected from a variety of study participants who include ordinary citizens, local elites/leaders, and government officials, among others. This checklist serves as a general guide for the researcher in collection of data using specific data collection tools (interview guides, key informant guides, and observation guides). The checklist is organised into themes pursued in the study. Some of the questions only apply to some of the research participant categories while other questions apply to all categories. The main thematic questions are bolded while the bulleted and italicised ones are probe questions that are adapted depending on the amount of information the participants shall provide. Questions will be packaged into specific data collection tools, pre-tested and refined prior to implementation.

1. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND DETAILS

Name (optional)	
Age	
Sex	
Marital status	
Highest educational level	
Profession / trade	
Present work and location e.g. in study area	
Type and name of organization / practice e.g. Government	
Number of years participant has lived in the Study area (if applicable)	
Leadership positions held in the Study area in last 12 years i.e. since the year 2000	

Past participation in development policy & planning processes (District development planning, poverty reduction strategy paper, and constituency development fund processes) at national or local level. Indicate participation (and exact role played) or non-participation in the last cycle	
Other relevant information	

2. POVERTY DYNAMICS

- **How is the current poverty situation (Kenya and in the study areas)?**
- How are the historical trends of the poverty situation (nationally and in the study counties)?
- How is the state of health, education, food (including water), income levels, and housing, nationally and in the two study sites?
- What is the magnitude of non-poor people/households that slip into poverty and why?
- **What accounts for the high poverty rates in Kenya (nationally and in the study sites)?**
- What influences the poverty situation or non-achievement of desired poverty reduction outcomes particularly in rural areas?
- **How has poverty been tackled in Kenya during the independence period (1963 – present)?**
- **What are the major policies / plans during the different development decades for tackling poverty?**
- **What are the major poverty reduction activities/programmes/initiatives?**
- **Who are the major players and what role did each play?**
- What are the similarities or differences in anti-poverty approaches, policies, activities, players and outcomes during the different post-colonial development decades and political regimes (Kenyatta, 1963 - 1978; Moi, 1978 - 2002; and Kibaki, 2002 - 2013?
- **What are the common terms used in reference to the fight against poverty in Kenya generally and in the study sites) during the independence period?**
- To what extent and when were the terms poverty eradication, poverty reduction and poverty alleviation used?
- How are these terms understood and used?

- How is the relationship between the adoption of these terms in development policy and poverty programmes during the different post-colonial development decades and poverty situation in rural Kenya?

3. DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PLANNING PRACTICE

- **What are the main features of Kenya's independence "development policy" used to fight poverty?**
- What are the main issues/focus of the policy during the different post-colonial development decade and why?
- **Who are the main players (drivers) of the policy-making process and implementation?**
- What is the ideological orientation of the policy during the different post-colonial development decades?
- **How is the nature of development policy-making process in the study counties?**
- **Who are the key actors in the District development planning, PRSP, CDF and LASDAP processes? What is their exact role?**
- How is the process through which the needs and priorities of ordinary citizens are assessed and decided for inclusion into policy, local level development strategies, plans and budgets for tackling poverty?
- **Are there certain issues expressed by ordinary citizens that do not get discussed during the planning processes at either local or national level and why?**
- What assumptions or criteria inform public decision-makers (Government officials and technocrats) when interpreting and dealing with needs and priorities expressed by ordinary people during development policy-making and planning processes?
- **Are there instances when influential groups/institutions/individuals blocked or supported certain policy positions and why?**

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

- **What is the extent of public participation in the development policy and planning process (generally and in the two counties)?**
- What is the perceived level and quality (meaningfulness) of ordinary citizens' participation in the District development planning, PRSP, CDF and LASDAP processes?

- **Are there instances or stages in these three processes when ordinary citizens engage or do not engage with and why?**
- **What are the common constraints that influence ordinary citizens' meaningful participation in these processes?**
- **What are the major expectations from ordinary people's participation in these processes?**
- To what extent are these expectations achieved?
- **To what extent do grassroots people demand inclusion in these processes?**
- What means/methods do ordinary citizens use to demand inclusion or to protest exclusion in these processes?
- **How is public participation in decision-making viewed at the grassroots?**
- **What is considered to be the main defining features of genuine public participation?**
- **To what extent is public participation in development policy-making and planning processes considered important for sustainable poverty reduction in rural Kenya?**
- **What decision-making spaces and opportunities exist at the study counties for citizen participation**
- **To what extent are these spaces and opportunities conducive (content and quality) for genuine citizen participation in decision-making for poverty reduction?**
- **How is the past participation experience of the respondent in development policy & planning processes?**
- **Did the respondent participate in the last cycle of either the District development planning, poverty reduction strategy paper, or constituency development fund processes at national or local level?**
- What exact role did they play and how was their experience?
- Did anything prevent them from participating or to achieve desired level of participation?
- **How are the common constraints faced by ordinary citizens in public decision-making (District development planning, PRSP, CDF and LASDAP processes) addressed?**
- To what extent is civic education offered to ordinary citizens?

- How is the impact of civic education on levels and quality of the participation of ordinary citizens in public decision-making (District development planning, PRSP, and CDF processes)?
- **What efforts and channels/opportunities have been put or built into the District development planning, PRSP, and CDF processes to enhance public participation in decision-making i.e. to exert or claim power, to exercise rights and to promote their interests?**

5. POVERTY REDUCTION ACTORS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS ABOUT POVERTY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

- **How is the concept of "development" understood by ordinary citizens and the local "elites"?**
- What about by other key poverty reduction actors in the study counties?
- **Which type of individuals or groups is considered at the grassroots to belong to "elites" and "ordinary citizens"?**
- What are the main defining characteristics of the two categories of citizens?
- How do local citizens define and use the term "marginalised"?
- **How is "poverty reduction" defined by the ordinary citizens and the local "elites?**
- What are their views on the concept of "poverty eradication" Is it achievable?
- **What role do ordinary citizens have in tackling poverty?**
- What do ordinary citizens perceive to be their role (responsibilities) in talking poverty?
- **To what extent do ordinary citizens actually fulfill their perceived roles in poverty reduction?**
- How do ordinary citizens define an "active citizen"?
- **What do other poverty reduction actors perceive as their roles and to what extent do they fulfill these?**
- **To what extent is tackling poverty perceived to be a rights issue in Kenya?**
- How is the poverty reduction outlook for the post 2010 period i.e. under the new constitutional order which guarantees greater public participation in development?

6. INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR ROLE IN FIGHTING POVERTY AND FOSTERING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

- **Which institutions are considered as key for tackling poverty at local level?**
- **What capacities (strengths and gaps) do these local institutions have?**
- **To what extent have grassroots people embraced and support these institutions?**
- To what extent do these institutions respond to aspirations and needs of the ordinary citizens?
- **To what extent do local institutions created under the decentralization reforms and new constitution enhance public participation in decision-making at local level?**
- **How do ordinary citizens and leaders interact within these institutions?**
- To what extent do local citizens feel that these institutions value public participation and are pro-ordinary citizens?
- What opportunities are created through or in these institutions for ordinary citizens to express their desires, fears and frustration in regard to participation and poverty reduction efforts?
- **What are the prospects for the devolved governments (county governments) in enhancing citizen participation in development and poverty reduction efforts at local level?**
- **How well does the new national constitution address constraints faced by ordinary citizens in public participation in development and poverty reduction efforts at the local level?**

7. LEADERSHIP: TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESPONSIVENESS TO CITIZEN NEEDS

- **Has the respondent held any leadership positions in the Study area in last 12 years i.e. since the year 2000?**
- What position or role did they play?
- How has been their experience in terms of fighting poverty?
- **How transparent and responsive are the local leaders when dealing with ordinary citizens and their needs?**
- **To what extent and how do leaders engage with citizens in development policy and planning process and anti-poverty programmes?**

- How is the behaviour (actions or inactions) of bureaucrats (government officials) and other leaders at local level (political, non-profit, private sector and religious leaders) in relation to poverty reduction efforts?
- **What specific expectations do grassroots people have about leaders?**
- **How do ordinary people perceive leaders?**
- Where do leaders and ordinary people interact?
- **What role do local elites play in tackling poverty?**
- What are the common activities of local elites?
- **In which ways do ordinary citizens attempt to tackle influence by elites at local level?**
- **How is the behaviour of bureaucrats (Government officials) at local level in relation to tackling poverty?**
- Are there certain policies/actions relating poverty reduction they have supported or blocked in the past?
- When and how do bureaucrats consider participation by ordinary citizens to be important for poverty reduction?

8. LOCAL CONTEXT ISSUES INFLUENCING POVERTY REDUCTION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

- **How does the Tharaka Nithi and Siaya counties poverty map look like and what explains this?**
- What do local people feel about poverty levels?
- **What are the key developmental concerns?**
- What is being done to address these concerns?
- **What recommendations do local people have to tackle poverty and to address other development challenges?**
- **What local level issues or factors influence poverty reduction outcomes in the study sites?**
- How have ordinary citizens reacted or addressed these issues?
- Are there instances when influential groups, institutions or individuals initiated, supported or blocked certain anti-poverty policies or programmes at national or local levels?
- What were the underlying reasons for such actions?