



# **Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Youth Participation in Local Government Planning and Budgeting in Iringa Municipality**

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focused at exploring the socio-economic factors influencing youth participation in planning and budgeting in Local Government Authorities (LGA) in Iringa Municipal Council. The study employed a mixed approach where data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Findings from the study indicated that the youth did not participate in any activity in their LGA in the past three years whereby it was only 31(19.1%) of the youth respondents who participated in at least one of the local government activities in the past three years. Findings further indicated more male participation in planning and budgeting than female. On the other hand findings revealed that education has influence on youth participation in planning and budgeting whereby the more educated youth participated more than none educated youth. Based on the findings, it was concluded that there was an information gap between leaders and youth especially on local government planning and budgeting; hence the study recommended for creation of awareness on the right of the youth to participate in planning and budgeting. The study also recommended regular meetings with the youth in the wards/ streets to hear out their challenges and needs. Furthermore, the study urged the government to use youth friendly tools to create awareness to the youth on planning and budgeting processes and opportunities available in their locality and how they can tap into that pool of opportunity.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Young people constitute one quarter of the world's population, and one third of the population in developing nations [1]. This signals a vibrant and hopeful resource for the world. But young people are more than numbers as their struggles for social justice and equality are increasingly visible and articulate (Heland et al., 2015); [2]. They have demonstrated their progressive vision for the world in multiple ways, be it as citizens, as voters or in organized youth movements [3]. As the youth have the greatest stake in equitable and sustainable development, they should hence be well positioned to contribute meaningfully to development.

In Africa, where the youth constitute one to one third of the total population of the continent [2] the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have put much emphasis on the importance of youth participation in local government planning as well as budgeting. This is because youth-focused budgeting and youth participation in budget assessment and planning is a central means to ensure that young people obtain equitable outcomes from development processes [1]. On the other hand, the East African Community Youth Policy which is the regional framework with the overall objective of is to guiding the East African Community on the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes to address youth issues in the region while ensuring sustainable social, economic, and political development stresses on the importance of youth participation in local government planning and development activities [4].

While the role of youth in the sustainable development processes cannot be overstated considering the part they play in the demographic transition, their more meaningful involvement is undermined by several institutional, economic, social, and environmental constraints [5]. In Tanzania, the Local Government (Urban Authorities) Act of 1982 and its amendment Local Government (Miscellaneous) Act of 1998 and Regional Administration Acts of 1997 (URT 1997, 1998) provides for the establishment of *Mtaa*, a structure of local governance that is intended to facilitate community participation in local planning and governance.

Mulikuza, Buhori & Kowa [6] highlight that, despite recognition of the importance of young

people's place in development, and increasing efforts to bring them to the table in development planning through a range of platforms, procedures and policies in Tanzania, still youth representation and participation in local government planning and budgeting is very low [7]. Much emphasis has been directed towards electoral participation and the incidence of effective participation of the youth in practice has been rather tokenistic [8]. Iringa municipality for example, which is among the LGAs in Tanzania that implements policies, procedures and guidelines for participatory planning and budgeting has recorded low levels of youth participation in planning and budgeting. In terms of data, there is no specific information on youth participation in local government planning and budgeting (CAG report, 2021).

Based on the arguments above, it is a fact that youths face challenges which hinder effective participation in budgeting and planning. Studies by Mulikiza et al. [6] and Mutwiri, [9] highlight the socio-economic environment and the political context that contributes to the level of youth participation in planning and budgeting. These studies however have not been able to identify the link as to why despite having youth participation recognized by the government, private organization and international community still participation in planning and budgeting is very low. On top of that, there is little evidence on youth participation in local government planning and budgeting, a situation that has raised an academic debate. It is therefore for these reasons that through this study the researcher sought to explore the socio-economic factors influencing Youth Participation in Planning and Budgeting (YPPB) in LGA in Iringa Municipal Council.

## 2. REVIEWED LITERATURE

### 2.1 The Social Systems Theory

This is the theory that looks at the existing situation of the youth in the community and the various sub-systems such as peer group, information availability culture and social perspectives that in one way or another influence the level of youth participation in local government planning and budgeting. This study therefore, borrowed some of the insights from the system theory to analyse the motives of youth participation in planning and budgeting.

According to Max Weber, as cited by Friedman et al. [10] a system is defined as “a complex of elements or components that are related directly in a specific network such that each component is related to at least some others in a more or less constant way within a period of time.” A social system is a special order of system that is composed of persons or groups of persons who interact and influence each other’s behavior and hence this order includes friends, organizations, communities, societies and cultures (Ibid). Social system theory emphasizes the socialization process and a close relation between the individual and society because it affects the involvement of individuals in the participation of group activities. This in turn affects the productivity and worthiness of the projects within the social system in the society. This theory is therefore important to this study as it adds value to the need for the youth to be part of the social system in the society and hence dedicate their resources towards efficiency and long-lasting impacts of a given project. This will enhance YPPB in their local governments. Not only that but also, the theory urges project developers and implementers to ensure that their projects are directly touching the interest of the society and youth, this can be done by directly identifying the community’s felt needs.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

Siala [11] indicated that socio economic factors influence public participation in local government activities. Findings from descriptive analysis revealed that education had the highest influence on the effectiveness of public participation in budget formulation with 69.48% of the respondents acknowledging that education level influences the effectiveness of public participation. The study recommended that the county government of Nairobi put in place a policy framework to guide future public participation that guarantees meaningful public engagement in decision making and negotiation of process as a way to improve decentralization factors.

A study by Mutwiri, [9] established that the level of community awareness determines the level of public participation in county integrated development planning process. The study also revealed that behavioral factors like the quality of policies guiding citizens’ participation process through aspects such as public attitude toward local government, allocation of resources, level of coordination and engagement and the

perceived community value in the participation process all determine the level of public participation in county integrated development planning process. Further the study noted that economic factors like the perceived economic benefits from benefits to from the county development project, estimated time for revenue generation, level of individual income, and awareness of the other economic generating opportunities all determine the level of public participation in the county integrated development planning process. From the findings, it was concluded that behavioral factors had the greatest influence on Public Participation in the County Integrated Development Planning Process (CIDP) followed by demographic factors, then economic factors while the level of community awareness had the least effect. The study recommended initiation of strong measures that promote public awareness in integrated development planning; the CIDP, CIDP program should be tailored to encompass the dynamic nature in demographic characteristics of citizens.

## 2.3 Methodological Approach to the Study

This study was conducted at Iringa Municipality. The municipality has 18 wards which include: Kihesa, Mkwawa, Mwangata, Kitwiri, Ruaha, Mtwivila, Ilala, Makorongoni, Mivinjeni, Kitanzini, Mshindo, Gangilonga, Kwakilosa, Nduli, Isakalilo, Igumbilo, Mkimbizi, and Mlandege (Iringa Municipal Profile, 2018).The choice of this area was influenced by the fact that Iringa Municipal Council is one of the local government authorities that adopted participatory budgeting but still there is low youth participation in planning and budgeting. The selection of the area of study has also been influenced by the fact that most of the youth lives in urban areas than in rural areas hence Iringa Municipality serves as a suitable study area for this study.

The study employed a cross sectional research design and employed purposive sampling method to select one Municipal Executive Director of Iringa, 6 staff from the planning department, 6 ward officers selected from 3 wards with more level of participation and 3 wards with low participation, 6 WCDO and one Youth Development Officer, 6 mtaa executive officers, as well as 6 mtaa chair persons. These were purposely selected because they are directly involved in planning and budgeting and hence possess information about youth

participation in planning and budgeting. The Pyne & Pyne [12] sampling technique was used to select the youths aged 15- 35 from the selected wards in Iringa municipality. A total number of 201 respondents were selected in this study.

Interviews, questionnaires and documentary review were employed in data collection for this study. Interviews were held to obtain primary data (qualitative) from the local authorities' leaders including the Municipal Executive Director (MD) for Iringa municipal council, Officers from the planning department, Youth Development Officer, Ward officers and *Mtaa* Chairpersons. Questionnaires were administered to the youth whereas documentary review was done at the Iringa Municipal Council library to obtain documents for further review such as the IDC profiles.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Results (Table 1) revealed that, most of the respondents almost 59% (95) were males and 41% (67) were females. This implies that, despite other factors, gender might have a greater influence on youths' participation in local government planning and budgeting. Mutwiri [9] showed that most male's youth were involved in different community activities as compared to females, because females were more dedicated to family ties and relationships and hence have no time to participate in planning and budgeting. This is also supported by the TGNP report (2020) which highlighted that in most societies planning and budgeting activity is considered to be the practice of men rather than women.

Results also showed that most of the respondents 99.4% (161) were aged between 15 to 30 years old with only one youth (0.4%) being above 30 years. These results concurred with the definition of youth adopted by this study which defined a youth to be a person of the age of 15-35 years.

Results (Table 1) show that 50 % of the respondents were single and 50% were married. This implied that marital status was a neutral factor in influencing YPPB at the local government level. Contrary to the findings by Mulikiza *et al.* (2024) who highlighted that marital status had influence towards youth participation

in local government and community activities as the couple had to seek permission from their partners, husband or wife before participating in any sort of activity.

On the level of education of youths' respondents, findings show that most of the respondents in this study were literate where 29% where by 29% had a university degree, 24.7% were high school graduates, 30.9% were secondary school leavers and 15.4% with primary school education. This implies that education had influence in YPPB whereby the educated youth had more information about local government activities than the illiterate ones. These data concur with data from the study by Siala (2015) who argued that education had an influence in youth participation in local government activities whereby the more the level of education one attained was translated to the more his/her involvement in different activities at the local government level. These results are supported by Table 1 as follows.

#### 3.2 Socio-economic Factors Influencing Youth Participation in Local Government Planning and Budgeting

##### 3.2.1 Influence of the level of education on the youth participation in local government planning and budgeting

Results (Table 2) indicated that most 60.5% (98) and 14.2% (23) of youth members strongly agreed and agreed that the youth who had attained different levels of education participated differently in planning and budgeting processes while 25.3% (41) of youth members disagreed that youth who had attained different levels of education never participated differently in local government planning and budgeting processes. These findings concur with findings by Siala (2015) in which 69.48% of the respondents acknowledged that education level influences the effectiveness of participation in planning and budgeting.

Furthermore, findings from the interview with an officer from the planning and budgeting department of the municipal council of Iringa indicated that the higher the level of education the higher the awareness and willingness of the YPPB processes. The planning officer had this to comment:-

*"Statistics from the ward development committees indicate that educated youth are more likely to participate in local government*

forums and public meetings initiated by the local government authorities as compared to the non-educated ones. This might be caused by the fact that the youth in schools are taught on the importance of their participation in local government planning and budgeting to their development and the development of the society at large.” (Interview with the officer from the planning department IMC, 12/08/2021).

The officer from the planning department further indicated that youth who had low education were not willing to participate in the community-based youth projects an observation that was seconded by the youth officer.

Findings (Table 4) show that the most 77.2% (125) of youth strongly agreed that the differences in education levels hinders effective youth participation in local government planning and budgeting. Data also shows that 18.5% (30)

of the youth agreed while 3% (5) and 1.2% (2) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. This indicates that the level of education was a determinant of how youth understood planning and budgeting in the local government authorities which also motivates them to get involved. These responses are shown in Table 3 below.

### 3.2.2 Influence of Sex on the youth participation in local government planning and budgeting

Results show that most 92.6% (150) of youth respondents strongly agreed that male youths participated in the community-based youth projects more than female. On the other hand, data from the questionnaires shows that 7.4 % (12) of the youths strongly disagreed with the statement that, male youths participated in planning and budgeting more than female youths.

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the youth**

Demographic information	Frequency (n=162)	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	95	58.6
Female	67	41.4
<b>Age</b>		
15-18	36	22.2
19-22	45	27.8
23-26	48	29.6
27-30	32	19.8
31-35	1	0.6
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	81	50
Married	81	50
Widowed	0	0
Divorced	0	0
<b>Level of Education</b>		
Illiterate	0	0
Primary	25	15.4
Secondary	50	30.9
High school	40	24.7
University/ College	47	29

Source: Field data 2021

**Table 2. Youth’s response on whether level of education had influence on youth participation in local government planning and budgeting**

Responses	Frequency (n=162)	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	98	60.5
Agree	23	14.2
Disagree	41	25.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2021

**Table 3. Youth responses on whether differences in education levels hinder youth participation**

Responses	Frequency (n=162)	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	125	77.2
Agree	30	18.5
Disagree	5	3.1
Strongly disagree	2	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2021

**Table 4. Whether male youths participated more in local government planning and budgeting more than female**

Responses	Frequency (n=162)	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	150	92.6
Agree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	12	7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2021

**Table 5. The influence of age on YPPB**

Responses	Frequency (n=162)	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	52	32.1
Agree	27	16.7
Disagree	36	22.2
Strongly disagree	47	29.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2021

These results were supported by the interview's response from the key informants such as the ward officers, *mtaa* chairs and the officers from the municipal council. For example during an interview with the youth officer and the planning and budgeting officer of the municipality, the planning officer said, "*Women always give more emphasis to family ties and relationships than participation in community development activities and this is reflected in their low participation in planning and budgeting processes at the local government level.*" (Interview with the officer from the planning department IMC, 12/08/2021). This is supported by the findings by Mutwiri, (2016) who indicated that men participate more in Local Government Activities than women due to the roles that women have in family care and household activities.

### 3.2.3 Influence of age on YPPB

The findings (Table 5) showed that 32.1% (52) and 16.7% (27) of the youth strongly agreed and agreed with the statement that younger people

participated more effectively in local government planning and budgeting than older people. On the other hand, 22.2% (36) and 29.1% (47) of the youth strongly disagreed with the statement. This indicates that to some extent age influences the ability to effectively participate in local government planning and budgeting. This is in line with the findings by Mulikiza, Buhori and Kowa (2014) who argued that the higher the age the more the interest and ability to participate and the lower the age the lesser the interest and the ability to participate in local government planning and budgeting processes.

The researcher also conducted an interview with the youth officer at IMC and the officer highlighted that, older people are more likely to participate in planning and budgeting due to their high interest in the welfare of the community than the young people who consider local government meetings as a waste of their time. The youth officer gave an example of the activities that people with younger ages are interested in doing as follows:-

**Table 6. Level of income influences on YPPB**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency (n=162)</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Strongly agree	2	12
Agree	30	18.5
Disagree	5	3.1
Strongly Disagree	125	77.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data 2021

*“When one is young their interest is making quick money and since most of the youth are not in formal sectors their income is also not formally determined. They would rather ride a ‘boda-boda’ to get a thousand shillings than participating in local government forums and not being paid a penny. This is unlike the old people who have experienced all these and they are determined to see their community prospering. Old people participate more in budgeting and planning than the young people due to their age and experience.”* (Interview with the youth officer IMC, 12/08/2021)

Making a point on the same direction the planning and budgeting officer from the IMC had this to say:-

*“Statistics from the ward offices and the WCDOs show that the number of the youths participating in these council and public gatherings to discuss the priorities and challenges facing the streets and wards is very low. If you see a youth in those meetings, it is either he/ she is part of the leadership at the local level or has the ambitions to be the leader soon. The youth are so busy with many things and they do not participate in these kind meetings.”* (Interview with the Planning and Budgeting Officer) IMC, 12/08/2021)

### 3.2.4 Influence of income level on YPPB

Findings (Table 6) revealed that the most 77.2% (125) of the youth strongly disagreed with the statement that the level of income influenced one’s participation in local government planning and budget processes. Only 12% (2) of the youths strongly agreed with the statement that the level of income influenced one’s participation in local government planning and budgeting.

The researcher also interviewed the ward officers, *mtaa* chairpersons and to obtain their responses on the same. Results from the

interviews indicated that the level of income was not a determining factor for youth participation or not participation. One of the *mtaa* Chairs further commented: *“I have not seen youth participating or not participating due to their income level. Both poor and rich youth have a very little participation when it comes to local government meetings.”* (Interview with *mtaa* Chairperson, 12/08/2021).

## 4. CONCLUSION

Findings from this study revealed that social factors such as the level of education, gender and age have a high influence of youths’ participation on local government planning and budgeting processes. Data on the influence of the level of education on YPPB have shown that youth officials, *mtaa* chairpersons and the ward officers indicated that the youth who had attained different levels of education participated differently in the local government planning and budgeting. For example, ward officers, *mtaa* chairs and youth officers indicated that youth with university degrees are more eager to participate in local government planning and budgeting forums than those with low level of education. This implies that the level of education had an influence on youth participation in local government planning and budgeting.

Furthermore, majority 121(74.7%) of youth members indicated that the youth who had attained different levels of education participated differently in planning and budgeting processes while 41(25.3%) of youth members indicated that youth who had attained different levels of education never participated differently in local government planning and budgeting processes. This implies that the level of education had a substantial influence on the level of youth participation in budgeting and planning at the local government level. On top of that, most of the youth strongly agreed that the difference in education levels hinders effective youth participation in local government planning and budgeting.

Basing on the findings from this study, it can be concluded that education, age and gender had influence on youth participation. Youth participated differently in local government planning and budgeting as they had different levels of education. It was further concluded that education encouraged the youth to participate in planning and budgeting as the youths who had low level education were not willing to participate as compared to the educated ones. The study concluded that the level of education motivates the youth to get involved in local government activities including planning and budgeting as the respondents established that educated youth were better empowered for participation than the non-educated ones. Not only have that but also gender and age been concluded by this study to have influence on YPPB at the local government level. Young males are more likely to participate in budgeting than females. This is due to the fact that women are more dedicated to their families and relationships, a situation that hinders them from participating in the local government activities especially with regards to planning and budgeting. Age has also been concluded as a factor influencing youth participation in local government planning and budgeting whereas older people seem to participate more than the younger people. On the influence of income on youth participation in planning and budgeting, the study concluded that the level of income did not have influence on youth participation in planning and budgeting.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the youth to get familiarized with government policies and instructions with regards to YPPB at the local government level. The youth are also encouraged to visit the local government officers to get information on how they can participate in budgeting. On the other hand, female youth are encouraged to take more interest in planning and budgeting instead of only committing to family ties and relationships. Women participation is important as they are most of the population and hence their participation is crucial not only to the success of the budget process but also to their families and communities.

## CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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