



# Social Accountability Through Community Contracting: The Case of Baringo County

## Baringo County Civil Society Organizations Forum (BACSO Forum)

### Background

Baringo County Assembly enacted the Baringo County Projects Implementation and Management Act in 2020. The law provides for community involvement in implementing government development projects. It establishes the relevant structures for citizen participation, namely the Sub-Localational Projects Implementation and Management Units and Projects Management Committees. The community members nominate the seven-member committees, including the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. At the same time, the respective Ward and Village Administrators serve in these structures as ex-officio members. The committees are responsible for overseeing the implementation and management of the projects and preparing progress reports while ensuring the citizens' meaningful engagement. While the law was passed in 2020, there were uncertainties over its implementation due to concerns from the County Executive that the rollout would take their procurement functions.

In March 2022, the Baringo County Civil Society Organizations Forum (BACSO Forum) agreed on a partnership with the County Departments for Health and Water to pilot implementation of the law with a focus on two projects, namely: construction of a water tank for Keben Water Project and building of a new dispensary at Ketindui. The partnership sought to pilot Community Contracting as a framework for active and meaningful engagement of the citizens in implementing and monitoring government development interventions and was supported by the Kenya Devolution Programme – Timiza Ugatuzi funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The pilot also adopted innovative and cost-effective monitoring through a digital platform by setting up WhatsApp Groups, which included the Project Implementation and Management Committees (PIMCs), relevant government officials, and citizens. The piloting sought to achieve the following three objectives:



1 Improve timely completion of the pilot county government-funded projects subjected to community contracting.



2 Improve the quality of the projects due to informed supervision by PIMCs guided by the project documents.



3 Promote value for money and community ownership and utility of the completed projects, leading to access to reliable and safe water and health services.

## Key Summary Data Keben Water Project

53

community participants in the community entry meeting familiarised themselves with the budget process, the role of citizens and the benefits of community contracting (Keben Water Project site, Marigat Ward, Baringo County)

7

members of the Project implementation and management committee capacity built on the community contracting process

40

households accessing clean, safe, and reliable water for household use

10

households using water for small-scale irrigation

583

school pupils accessing water for drinking and washing, saving them travelling time to distant

3000

patients at Sabor dispensary accessing water services

The construction of the Keben Water Tank in the Sabor location of Marigat Ward was one of the projects under the piloting that was completed in time. The implementation work plan stipulated that the project would start on 1st January 2022 and end on 30th June 2022; however, construction was completed on 15th June 2022, fifteen days before the indicated completion date. Consultations with the local communities showed that previously, projects in the area rarely got completed on time. The Project Management and Implementation Committee and the local community were satisfied with the quality of the work despite critical gaps in project documents, e.g. the Bills of Quantity lacked key specifications such as the structural design, dimensions and quantity of the materials. This gap affected the effectiveness of the committee and communities in monitoring and oversight project implementation since they needed the relevant specifications and amounts, critical information in monitoring. The tank has been serving the community since June 2022 and has led to improved access to clean, safe and reliable water for over 40 Households in Sabor location. In addition to access to water for household use, over ten households have also initiated small-scale irrigation for vegetables and fruits, thus improving food security and income for the farmers in the location. The water is also accessed by the local Sabor Secondary School, which has a student population of 310, and Sabor Primary School, which has a student population of 273. Pupils from the two schools no longer venture out of the learning institutions in search of water, increasing their time for school work. The water is also utilised by Sabor Dispensary, which serves the area.

At Ketindui, the pilot involved the construction of a new dispensary. Commencement of the structure was meant to start on 12th April 2022 and end on 28th September 2023. However, it was delayed, forcing the community under the leadership of BASCOF to demand cancellation of the contract through a petition to the Chief Officer for Health and County Secretary on 30th June 2022. The contractor was obliged and commenced the work on 20th July 2022. By October 2022, at the end of KDP support, the dispensary construction was about 80% complete. The PIMC received all the relevant documents, including the bills of quantity, structural drawings and implementation work plan, which enabled effective monitoring. At one point, implementation had been suspended when the committee challenged key quality concerns in the ceiling board and only resumed after the issue was resolved.

## Key Summary Data – Ketindui Dispensary

49 community participants in the community entry meeting familiarised with the budget process, the role of citizens and the benefits of community contracting (Ketindui Dispensary Project site, Kabarnet Ward, Baringo County)

7 of the Project implementation and management committee capacity built on the community contracting process

PIMC intervened after a delayed start by the contractor in kicking off the project


2500 patients are expected to benefit on completion of the facility

PIMC effectively monitors the project and intervenes after identifying quality issues with the ceiling, forcing a replacement

Enhanced use of digital approaches to get citizen views on county service delivery (10 PIMCs members, 10 BACSOFF members and about 5000 citizens participated in an online session improving service delivery in health)




## Key Learning Points



Empowerment and meaningful involvement of the beneficiaries of public services in implementation strengthens oversight, resulting in timely completion and improved quality of the projects. It was evident that when citizens are sensitised and appreciate their responsibility in public development, and when they are equipped with monitoring skills and provided with the relevant information for use in oversight, e.g. implementation work plans, then they will most likely engage actively in monitoring the implementation while demanding for speedy completion and quality of public projects. Meaningful community follow-up through regular visits to the project sites and persistent challenges to the contractors and government officials on progress and quality tended to pressure the contractors to comply with the timelines and deliver better quality. In addition, the engagement of communities increases their understanding of the county budget process and ownership. They can appreciate the need for progressive allocations in subsequent budget allocation decisions. Without this understanding, communities may jump from one project to another, leaving some partially complete and thus limiting value for money. In Ketindui Dispensary, the community is now deliberating its operationalisation as a budget priority in the next financial year.


Collaboration between the government and citizens enhances the cost-effective monitoring of public services. The partnership between the County Government of Baringo and citizens under the leadership of the two Project Implementation and Management Committees delivered benefits to both parties. While the government received real-time information on the progress of implementation and emerging complaints that enabled them to take timely corrective actions, the citizens benefitted from quality services. At Ketindui Dispensary, the construction work was suspended until the community's concerns over the quality of the materials used in the ceiling board were resolved. The collaboration assures the government of continued access to critical information without necessarily having to be at the project or service delivery sites. This ensures continuity in monitoring during funding shortfalls, e.g., delayed disbursements of sharable revenue, which often affect service delivery and monitoring and evaluation processes.



Using digital platforms is cost-effective and saves money in service delivery monitoring. The objective use of WhatsApp Groups during the piloting, which included the local community and relevant government officials as members, ensured seamless sharing of information, both positive developments and the issues of concern in the implementation. The community regularly posted the photos, making it easy for government officials to monitor progress and take corrective actions where necessary without travelling or being at the project sites. The use of such platforms, therefore, offers cost-effective and participatory monitoring mechanisms.

Goodwill from the government is critical for the success of community contracting. The goodwill from the Chief Officers of Health Services and Water in Baringo County and the Civic Education and Public Participation Unit was critical in successfully piloting the community contracting. Despite the county law and relevant provisions of the Constitution of Kenya and the statutes on citizen participation and access to information, the involvement of citizens has primarily remained a significant challenge. Without the willingness and leadership of the two Chief Officers to subject their departments to this process, which included sharing of government documents that are often considered secretive within government circles, including the bills of quantity, structural designs, schedule of materials and implementation work plans, implementation of the Baringo County Projects Implementation and Management Act may have remained a protracted exercise which could have involved legal litigation as is often the case in Kenya with laws on accountability and citizen engagement. Goodwill should be accompanied by the requisite skills, which is sometimes a challenge within the government. Providing technical support to a progressive government is critical in strengthening accountability and improving the quality of services.





Effective advocacy delivers positive results on timely project implementation and quality. Upon their selection, the PIMCs were trained on advocacy skills by the BASCOF and mentored to build relevant experience during the piloting period. The skills enabled the members to mobilise and organise their communities for meaningful oversight of the two development projects. In the case of Ketindui Dispensary, where the commencement of construction was delayed, the committee-led advocacy interventions with mentorship from BASCOF influenced the commencement of the building in July 2022, which would otherwise have been delayed for an unforeseen period. In both projects, effective integration of advocacy with the mentorship of BASCOF put sustained pressure on the contractors and government, resulting in timely completion while upholding quality. Further, the Network enlightened the community members on the budget-making process. They were in a position to make informed contributions during the budget process to ensure that the Ketindui dispensary is funded in the next financial year.

## Recommendations



1. Support expansion and entrenching of community contracting in Baringo County, riding on the political goodwill that facilitated the piloting process.
2. Facilitate continuous documentation of the lessons learnt and use the experience to strengthen the practice while addressing any gaps observed through innovations.
3. Sharing of the lessons and good practices from Baringo County with other counties (County Governments, CSOs and citizens) for replication to strengthen accountability.
4. Influencing uptake of Community Contracting Model by County Governments for improving service delivery and support progressive County Governments to adopt the practice.



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