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Committed to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Advocacy



# POSITION PAPER ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN KISUMU COUNTY

## PRESENTED TO COUNTY POLICY, RESEARCH AND STRATEGY OFFICER

WE, young people from the Network for Adolescent and Youth of Africa (NAYA KENYA) would like to issue this statement as regards the state of public participation in Kisumu County, Kenya. NAYA KENYA is a youth led advocacy network founded in October 2001 during the Second Adolescent International Conference convened by the African Regional Office of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA).

NAYA enlists the support of policy makers, opinion leaders, media, like-minded organizations and individuals in advocating for reforms and implementation of policies and legislation to improve the quality, affordability and accessibility of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights information and services and to ensure meaningful youth participation in governance in line with legal and policy provisions.

On 27th August 2010, Kenyans unanimously welcomed a new constitution to respond to historical challenges such as poverty, slow economic growth and disease among others and to usher our nation into an era of unprecedented economic, social and political prosperity. This new constitution, especially on the Chapters on Bill of Rights, Leadership, Representation of People, Legislature, Executive and Devolution, also cast the long held belief that people are just but subjects and elevated the citizens to equal partners in decision making in governance including in management of public finance.

This could later be reinforced by the Public Finance Management Act, 2012, Population Policy for National Development, National Youth Policy among other policies and guidelines that further defined the very tenets of Public Participation including that young people should be protagonists of their own development and not merely recipients of government support. But public participation is not just a Kenyan idea, neither is it new.

International instruments as early as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the African Youth Charter to the recently adopted Sustainable

Development Goals, strongly call for involvement of citizens in governance and particularly people centric policies, strategies and approaches.

The County Government's Act 2012, further mandated the county governments, as the basic unit of governance to realize involvement at the very lowest level possible. We appreciate and strongly applaud the mechanisms the Kisumu County Government has put into place to ensure that Public Participation becomes a reality including the development of the Public Participation Act 2015, public involvement in preparation of the annual development plan and the budget making process.

However, three years later, we feel that the quality and the nature of public participations should be improved not just to realize the minimum standards as required by law but to cast Kisumu as the epitome of Public Participation and good governance.

Public participation is however not just an option, it is very important if we are to realize people centered progress in Kisumu County and achieve the economic, political and social pillars of Vision 2030, Kenya's development blueprint and contribute to the highly

# WE THEREFORE CALL UPON THE KISUMU COUNTY GOVERNMENT TO:

1. Disseminate, popularize and resource the Public Participation Act 2015 and involve the public and young people in developing its regulations and implementation.

2. Ensure meaningful participation of young people at all levels of governance and provide access to information such that young people become aware of their rights and of opportunities to participate in decision-making and civic life.

3. Build the capacity of the public to effectively engage in this process and remove structural and procedural hurdles that impedes effective public participation including delaying in releasing crucial information and minimal

feedback on state of submissions.

4. Recognize the oversight role of non-state actors and open up space for meaningful engagement of civil society organizations as the body that manifest interests and will of citizens and promote public-private partnerships, such as joint committees and technical teams.

5. Deliberately factor in minorities and special groups such as Persons Living with Disabilities, the elderly, adolescents and young women, in planning and implementation of public participation.

6. Increase scope of public participation from just planning but also implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development agenda.

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**ON BEHALF OF: NETWORK FOR  
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