Opening the Space for Every Voice: Inclusive Public Participation in Narok County

County:	**Narok County**		
Sector/s:	**Directorate of Legal Services and Gender Committee**	**Sub-sector/Theme:**	**Public Participation**
Keywords: (for search in the online platform)	**Public Participation, Women and Vulnerable Groups, Narok County, Maarifa Centre, Success Stories**		
Target Audience:	**County Governments, policy makers, development partners, Citizens, NGOs**		
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Introduction

A maternity facility closer to home. A borehole where water is needed. Better lighting in a neighbourhood. More support for women seeking to strengthen their livelihoods. These are different development priorities, but in Narok County they share an important starting point: communities having an opportunity to say what matters to them.

Women are particularly visible in these conversations. Community representatives described them as active participants in public forums, sometimes forming the majority of those attending. Their contributions bring everyday concerns into discussions on County planning, including maternal health, education, livelihoods, water and services that support families.

Yet being willing to participate does not always mean being able to do so. Household responsibilities, transport costs and patriarchal norms can restrict women's involvement, while persons with disabilities remain less represented despite measures intended to improve accessibility.

The challenge for Narok is therefore not simply to bring residents into public forums, but to create a process through which different voices can participate and find their way into County planning and decision-making.

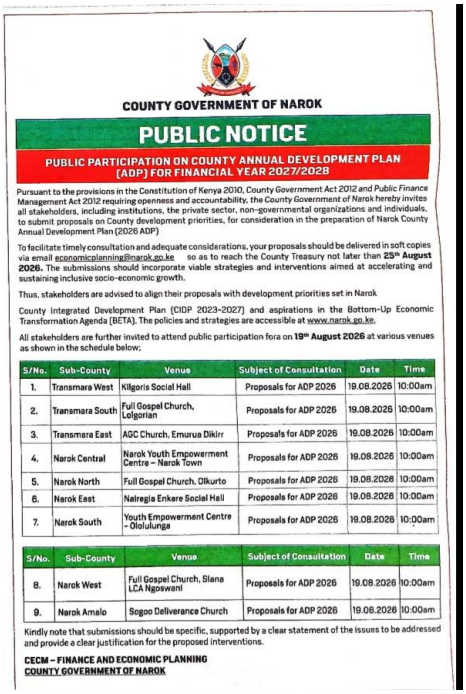
The County's response is taking shape through a combination of local structures, multiple communication channels, targeted support and partnerships that are helping communities better understand and engage with public participation.

Implementation of the practice

At the centre of Narok's approach is the Directorate of Public Participation and Civic Education, supported by 23 officers deployed across the County. With officers serving at ward and sub-county levels, the structure provides a local link between communities and the County's public participation process. Women's groups and caucuses further support mobilization at ward level, while youth and persons with disabilities are reached through their leaders and representatives.

Reaching these groups requires more than one communication channel. The County combines newspapers, its website and notice boards with local radio, Facebook broadcasts and direct communication through ward and sub-county administrators. Chiefs and village elders further extend information within communities. Officials indicated that advertisements are normally issued two to three weeks before a forum, followed by radio reminders as the date approaches.

The experience at community level, however, is not always the same. Some participants reported receiving notice four days to one week before a forum and identified local radio, social media and ward administrators as more effective ways of receiving information than newspapers. This difference between the intended notice period and residents' experience points to the importance of not only issuing information early, but ensuring that it reaches communities through channels they regularly use.



COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF NAROK

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON COUNTY ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (ADP) FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2027/2028

Pursuant to the provisions in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, County Government Act 2012 and Public Finance Management Act 2012 requiring openness and accountability, the County Government of Narok hereby invites all stakeholders, including institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and individuals, to submit proposals on County development priorities, for consideration in the preparation of Narok County Annual Development Plan (2026 ADP)

To facilitate timely consultation and adequate considerations, your proposals should be delivered in soft copies via email economicplanning@narok.go.ke so as to reach the County Treasury not later than **25th August 2026.** The submissions should incorporate viable strategies and interventions aimed at accelerating and sustaining inclusive socio-economic growth.

Thus, stakeholders are advised to align their proposals with development priorities set in Narok

County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP 2023-2027) and aspirations in the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA). The policies and strategies are accessible at www.narok.go.ke.

All stakeholders are further invited to attend public participation fora on **19th August 2026** at various venues as shown in the schedule below;

S/No.	Sub-County	Venue	Subject of Consultation	Date	Time
1.	Transmara West	Kilgoris Social Hall	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am
2.	Transmara South	Full Gospel Church, Lolgorian	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am
3.	Transmara East	AGC Church, Emurua Dikirr	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am
4.	Narok Central	Narok Youth Empowerment Centre – Narok Town	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am
5.	Narok North	Full Gospel Church, Olkurto	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am
6.	Narok East	Nairegia Enkare Social Hall	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am
7.	Narok South	Youth Empowerment Centre - Ololulunga	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am
8.	Narok West	Full Gospel Church, Siana LCA Ngoswani	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am
9.	Narok Amalo	Sogoo Deliverance Church	Proposals for ADP 2026	19.08.2026	10:00am

Kindly note that submissions should be specific, supported by a clear statement of the issues to be addressed and provide a clear justification for the proposed interventions.

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COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF NAROK

Figure 1: Notice on County Annual Development Plan (ADP) for FY 2027/2028

Once residents arrive, the County uses several measures to make participation more accessible. Forums are held in social halls with ramps, and officials reported the availability of sign-language interpreters. Participants who require additional support can use dedicated tools to record their views. Officials explained that women and men participate in separate discussion groups to address socio-cultural restrictions that may inhibit women from speaking freely in the presence of men. These discussions give women space to articulate their concerns and propose priorities for consideration in County planning and budgeting. Community representatives reported opportunities for women to speak, including in their preferred language. Some County materials have also been translated into Braille.

Another dimension of the County's approach is capacity building. Through an MoU with the International Labour Organization (ILO), support was provided to communities in Narok East, including Suswa, to strengthen their understanding of public participation. Rather than focusing only on attendance at forums, the initiative took participants through the process of identifying community needs, compiling and prioritizing them, and presenting them through public participation. Participants were also supported to understand the importance of the process so that they could share this knowledge with others in their communities. The initiative included facilitation to support participation.

This approach shifts civic education from simply telling residents when a forum will take place to helping them understand how to engage when they get there. The assessment documentation describes the Narok East initiative as taking communities through the process from identifying their needs to compiling and presenting them, with participants subsequently able to educate others on public participation.

Community input is then captured through minutes, reports and a standard format that records the ward, issue raised and proposed solution. Officials indicated that responses are incorporated into County reports and that feedback can be provided within 14 to 21 days. Attendance information is also disaggregated by sex, youth and disability status. Beyond formal forums, residents can raise enquiries through the County website or use a toll-free line linked to WhatsApp.



Figure 2: Ushanga Centre Sekenani

Results of the practice

The value of participation becomes clearer in the priorities residents and officials associate with the process. Rather than concentrating on one sector, the issues highlighted cut across health, economic empowerment, education, water and local infrastructure.

Maternal health is one example. Community representatives reported improvements in maternity services across the sub-counties, while County officials identified maternity facilities among the investments informed by community priorities.

During the assessment, facilities identified included Eor Ekule Health Centre, Enooseyia Health Centre, Entinki Health Centre and Ewaso Nyiro Health Centre. For the maternity facility at Eor Ekule in Ildamat Ward, County officials identified public participation held on 12 November 2021 and reported an approved budget of KES 5 million. The facility was reported complete, with improved access to maternal and newborn care and fewer referrals for expectant mothers.

Economic priorities raised by women are also reflected in initiatives highlighted by County officials. In Narok East, 487 groups received KES 36 million in women's empowerment support, while KES 26 million supported 240 groups in Narok North. The funds supported income-generating activities, including beadwork and other enterprises. Women's proposals were also linked to the Ushanga Hub at Sekenani Gate in Siana Ward. Officials cited page 179 of the CIDP 2023-2027 and phased ADP provision, reporting an approved allocation of KES 50 million in FY 2024/25 under a County-National Government partnership. As at October 2026, the hub was reported 80% complete, with furnishing outstanding. It is intended to provide facilities for producing, exhibiting and marketing Maasai beadwork and cultural products.

County officials linked Olerai Borehole in Narok Town Ward to public participation held on 18 February 2023, citing page 126 of the CIDP 2023–2027 and an approved allocation of KES 3 million in FY 2023/24. The borehole was reported fully complete and operational, improving access to clean water and livestock watering. In Ildamat Ward, Eor-Ekule ECDE Centre was linked to public participation held on 12 November 2021, with a reported approved budget of KES 1.5 million and completed status.

Attention to the circumstances affecting women is also visible within the County's own infrastructure. Officials highlighted the inclusion of a crèche in the County Headquarters complex, providing a space that can support caregivers with young children.

Taken together, these examples show the range of priorities that emerge when communities have avenues to contribute. They also illustrate why inclusive participation matters: the experiences brought forward by women and vulnerable groups can draw attention to needs that cut across both household wellbeing and wider community development.

Challenges:

Narok's experience also shows that establishing participation structures does not automatically remove the barriers that determine who can use them.

For some women, the first obstacle arises before they reach the forum. One of the participants during the assessment exercise noted that household responsibilities and the cost of travelling to engagement venues continue to affect women's ability to participate. Participants indicated that transport expenses are particularly difficult where individuals have to meet the cost themselves.

Social norms can create another layer of difficulty. County officials identified patriarchal attitudes as an ongoing concern, including restrictions on women speaking freely in the presence of men. The County responds by organizing separate discussion groups for women and men. While this arrangement supports freer expression, meaningful participation also depends on whether women's proposals receive consideration and influence the decisions that follow.

The experience of persons with disabilities presents a different challenge. Although ramps, sign-language interpretation and accessible materials are available within the County's approach, participants noted that PWD representation remains low. This suggests that physical accessibility needs to be accompanied by stronger mobilization and representation if participation is to reach those for whom the measures are intended.

Timing also matters. The difference between the County's stated two-to-three-week communication period and reports from residents who sometimes receive only a few days' notice can affect people's ability to plan for attendance. For women balancing household and livelihood responsibilities in particular, late communication can narrow an already limited opportunity to participate. Following up on priorities can also reveal gaps between residents' accounts and implementation records. While residents cited street lighting in Mwamba as an outcome, the County's subsequent response

recorded it as not yet implemented. Its status requires clarification before it can be presented as a completed project.

Underlying these concerns is the question of resources. The County has yet to complete the approval process for its proposed Public Participation and Civic Education Act, while budget constraints have affected the development of supporting guidelines and facilitation of participation activities. Addressing these institutional and financial gaps will be important to sustaining the mechanisms already established.

Lessons learnt and Recommendations:



One lesson emerging from Narok is that proximity matters. Ward-level officers provide an important bridge between communities and the County, but participants believe engagement should move even closer to residents. They recommended extending forums to the village level or mashinani, particularly for people who face transport, time or mobility constraints.

The Narok East experience provides another lesson: people participate more effectively when they understand the process before they enter it. Helping residents identify their needs, organize their priorities and understand how to present them can strengthen the quality of their engagement. Participants therefore recommended that the capacity-building approach implemented with ILO support in Narok East be replicated across the County, allowing communities in other areas to benefit from similar civic education and practical preparation for participation.

Communication should similarly be shaped by community experience. Radio, social media and local administrative structures emerged as important channels for residents, while participants called for earlier information and more frequent engagement. A larger meeting venue was also proposed to accommodate more participants.

For persons with disabilities, the next step is to complement existing accessibility measures with stronger mobilization and representation. This means ensuring that accessible venues and communication support translate into actual participation by PWDs rather than remaining measures that are available but underutilized.

At the institutional level, completing the County's public participation framework and securing predictable financing would provide a stronger foundation for these efforts. Officials also identified a need to strengthen staff capacity in data collection, mobilization and coordination, expand civic education and make greater use of technology to improve reporting and feedback.

Participants were equally clear that participation should not end when the forum closes. Strengthening feedback would allow communities to understand what happened to the priorities they presented, what was incorporated into County plans or budgets, what could not be accommodated and the reasons behind those decisions. This would make the journey from community voice to County response easier for residents to follow.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Narok County's experience shows that inclusive public participation is strongest when communities have both an opportunity to speak and the capacity to engage effectively. The County's ward-level structures, varied communication channels, accessibility measures and mechanisms for documenting public views provide important building blocks for that process.

The experience in Narok East adds another dimension. By helping communities understand how to identify, organize and present their priorities, capacity building can equip residents to engage with public participation more purposefully. Extending this approach across the County, while bringing forums closer to villages, strengthening PWD representation and improving communication and feedback, could broaden the opportunities available to women and vulnerable groups.

Ultimately, the significance of public participation lies beyond the number of people who attend a forum. It lies in whether different groups can reach the process, understand it, contribute to it and see how their voices travel beyond the meeting room into the decisions that shape their communities.

Further reading:

- https://narok.go.ke/public-notices/

Photo Gallery



Figure 3: Ntulele ESP Market, cited during the assessment as an initiative linked to women's public participation priorities



Figure 3: Representatives of the Council and the County Government during the Public Participation Assessment and Documentation exercise