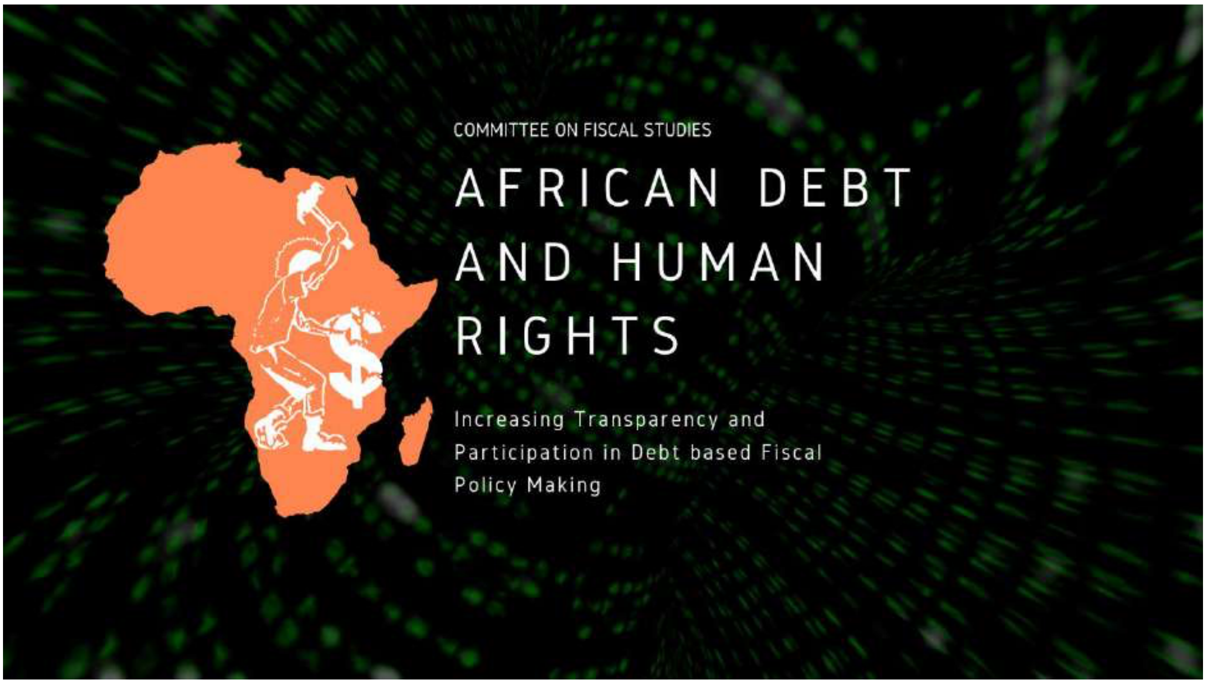
Research Paper 04/06 (July 2022)
Committee of Fiscal Studies, ADHR

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN FISCAL DECISIONS ON FOREIGN DEBT



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Public Participation in Fiscal Decisions on Foreign Debt

Summary

This study reviews the legal framework on public participation in six Sub-Saharan African countries to establish whether public participation impacts the state's decision on accruing external debt. The need for public participation in fiscal decisions related to debt is crucial since it acts as a check against potential future welfare implication of debt piling, default risk and any macro-economic implications posed by debt. Although several African countries have recorded remarkable progress in legislations aimed at promoting public participation, recorded scores do not reflect a remarkable growth in public participation. Therefore, this paper addresses whether the lack of public participation in fiscal policy making has implications for fiscal decisions on debt. The paper argues that with public participation being a fundamental right, it is recommended that African countries should act beyond legislation to actual and effective implementation of public participation in fiscal decisions. Moreover, authorities in Africa should embrace open and inclusive public participation to offer the public and civil society a chance to submit their inputs when government policies are formulated, to enhance fiscal transparency, accountability, and better fiscal outcomes.

Key words: African states, fiscal transparency, public debt, public participation

1. INTRODUCTION

Public participation is an important aspect of fiscal transparency, and it has received increased attention globally. The Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) defines public participation as the different ways through which the public directly interacts with public authorities in the design, implementation, and review of policies.[1] Channels for public participation vary from one-off engagements to more institutionalised relationship that give citizens access to information. GIFT's High-Level *Principles of Fiscal Transparency, Participation and Accountability* recognize direct public participation in fiscal policy making and the budget making process as a fundamental right. Open and inclusive public participation is preferred over private lobbying of government officials because it assures greater transparency and gives a voice to members of the public and civil society organisations (CSOs) that may be directly impacted by a government policy.

Direct engagement between governments and the citizens plays an important role in linking fiscal transparency, accountability, and better fiscal outcomes.[2] This role is premised on the understanding that citizens and civil society are complementary agents for good governance and sustainable development together with markets and the State.[3] Public

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[1] Fiona, C. 2021. *Fostering transparency and participation for accountable public contracts: OCP*. Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT).
[2] G Struić & V Bratić, 'Public Participation in the Budgetary Process in the Republic of Croatia', (2018) *Public Sector Economics*, vol. *42*, no. 1, p. 67-92.
[3] ibid.

participation encompasses both fiscal and macro policies including the size of the fiscal deficit, tax administration, and allocation of public resources. Citizen engagement covers three core areas:

- First, as part of the budget cycle. This consists of the budget preparation phase, approval by the legislature, followed by the review and audit of the budget).
- Second, is the involvement in the design, production, and delivery of public goods and services.
- Third, is the citizens engagement in the planning, appraisal, and implementation of public investment projects.[4]

The OECD reports that citizen engagement plays an important role in promoting accountable fiscal principles.[5] It serves as both a means and an end to a functional democratic government and plays a critical role in promoting inclusivity in fiscal decision making. This is achieved through open sharing of information on the part of the government. The primary function of any government is to raise, allocate and spend public resources. Government budgets and off-budget fiscal operations have far-reaching repercussions for economies and societies. However, government decisions on revenues and expenditures have been kept from the public and have often been a preserve for heads of government, ministers in charge of finance, heads of central banks and a few other persons in the executive arm of governments. In many cases, other members of the executive, other arms of government, the private sector, civil society and the wider public have had little or no access to public finance management information.[6] Additionally, the quality and level of engagement of non-executive actors in fiscal decision making and general oversight has been very minimal.

In this regard, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency adopted in 1998 set the pace for the adaption of international standards on fiscal policy management.[7] The document has undergone several reviews and has since been renamed

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[4] Petrie, M., 2021. *The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Government Accountability for Environmental Stewardship. In Environmental Governance and Greening Fiscal Policy (pp. 143-166)*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
[5] OECD, *Recommendation of the Council on Budgetary Governance* (Paris: OECD, 2015).
[6] S Khagram, P De Renzio, & A Fung, 'Overview and Synthesis: The Political Economy of Fiscal Transparency, Participation, and Accountability Around the World', Open Budgets: The Political Economy of Transparency, Participation, and Accountability (2013), 1-50.
[7] R Hemming, The IMF Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency (Commonwealth Ministers Reference Book, 2000)

the Fiscal Transparency Code and outlines consequences of budget policies as well opportunities for participating in budget deliberations. Other international organization such the OECD incorporated the principle of public participation in the OECD Recommendation on Budgetary Governance.[8] One of the key recommendations is the need for effective opportunities in participating in public discourse on fiscal policies. The United Nations General Assembly recognizes these recommendations by calling for enhanced efforts in promoting transparency, accountability, and public participation.

There is substantial evidence on the benefits of fiscal transparency. These include enhanced transparency, lowering the cost of borrowing, restricting the enabling environment that fosters corruption, and reduces chances of manipulation of accounting records.[9] Public participation in the budget making process allows citizens to be engaged in the allocation of public resources. This is a critical aspect of public participation in fiscal decision making in so far as it is related to the mobilisation of revenue by recourse to foreign debt. Foreign debt has been linked to reduced spending on public goods and services. The significance of public participation, therefore, in fiscal decisions on foreign debt acts as a measure to curtail against future budget cuts of key areas necessary for the progressive realisation of human rights.

Decisions on public debt have far-reaching consequences for economies. Public debt is normally the largest financial portfolio for any country and is often defined by complex and risk financial structures. Therefore, public debt can generate significant risk to the government's balance sheet and financial stability of a country. Recent evidence points to the need for governments to limit liquidity exposures that generate risks.[10] This calls for proactive management of risks associated with public debt. An important aspect of prudent management of public debt is transparency and as explained above, public participation plays a critical role in promoting such fiscal transparency. It is against this background that this study reviews Africa specific approaches towards containing public debt and evaluates how knowledge and awareness of fiscal issues resulting out of public participation in fiscal decision making relate to foreign debt. This will contribute to generating evidence based qualitative data management of public debt.

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[8] OECD (2015). *Recommendation of the Council on Budgetary Governance*. Paris: OECD
[9] J, Wehner, & P, De Renzio, 'Citizens, Legislators, and Executive Disclosure: The Political Determinants of Fiscal Transparency', (2013) World Development, vol. 41, p. 96-108.
10 F Hameed, 'Fiscal Transparency and Economic Outcomes', (2005). International Monetary Fund

2. THE DEBT PROBLEM IN AFRICA

Debt is an increasing problem across Sub-Sahara Africa.[11] African countries have been borrowing heavily from the global financial markets. Borrowing has now become a trend that has created both new opportunities and new challenges.[12] Rising debt levels have corresponded with rising debt service cost, but countries have not necessarily improved their ability to finance such obligations. Heitzig *et al* observed that failure to meet debt service obligations will have devastating impacts, including downgrading of credit ratings (and, hence, future higher costs), heightened pressure on foreign exchange reserves and domestic currency depreciation, and the real possibility of being rationed out of the market and negative reputational consequences.[13]

Further, statistics from the World Bank for 31 African countries[14] shows that external debt as a percentage of GNI increased to 56 percent in 2020 from 35 percent in 2015.[15] This not only increases the risk of default but also increases external vulnerability. The Open Budget Survey has reported that while debt has recorded such a huge increase, the level of transparency, public participation and strength of oversight institutions dropped significantly from 38 in 2015 to 35 in 2019.[16] Limited or lack of public participation in fiscal decisions, the potential future welfare implication of debt piling, default risk and the macroeconomic implication of debt poses a challenge to policy makers across the African continent. For example:

- In Kenya, lawmakers approved an upward revision of the debt ceiling from USD75.35 billion to USD83.72 billion to finance the rising budget deficit amid warnings that the country is at high risk of debt distress.[17] Over the past decade, growth in debt service has outpaced growth in exports. Though the National Treasury has attributed the rising

[11] R Glennerster & Y Shin, 'Does Transparency Pay?', (2008) *IMF Staff Papers*, vol.55, no.1, pp.183-209.
[12] ibid.
[13] C Heitzig, A Uche Ordu, & L Senbet, 'Sub-Saharan Africa's Debt Problem. Mapping the Pandemic's Effect and the Way Forward', (2021) Oct:1-29. Africa Growth Initiative, Brookings.
[14] Benin, Botswana, Congo, Dem. Rep., Cameroon, Egypt, Arab Rep., Kenya, Mali, Sudan, Chad, Tunisia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Angola, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Morocco, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Sao Tome and Principe, Uganda, South Africa, Zambia.
[15] World Bank, *Data Bank: World Development Indicators* (2021).
[16] International Budget Partnership, *Open Budget Survey* (2019).
[17] The East African, *Africa's Risk of Debt Piles as Countries Fight Inflation* (2022)

public debt partly to the Covid-19 pandemic, public debt was on rising trend even before the pandemic.[18] Kenya's public debt is expected to rise further as the National Treasury explores options to finance a (USD7.48 billion) deficit in USD28.31 billion) spending plan for 2022/2023.[19]

- In Tanzania, there has been a rising concern against debt management. The stock of national debt amounted to USD37.57 billion by the end of January 2022, an increase of USD133.2 million from December 2021 and USD6.27 billion from the amount recorded in January 2021.[20] External debt accounted for 75.4 percent ($28.17 billion) of the national debt stock.[21] Of the external debt, 33 percent (USD9.29 billion) are commercial loans.[22] In recent years Sansa used a Multiple Linear Regression approach to investigate the link between the public external debt, agriculture and the level of poverty in Tanzania over the period 2000 to 2018.[23] The findings of this study confirm that the link between government debt and the incident of poverty is insignificantly negative. This shows that an increase in public debt in Tanzania worsened the incidence of poverty over the period.

- In Zambia, the amount spent on debt servicing, which includes interest payments as well as payments on principal payments has increased significantly since 2022.[24] According to the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research, the Government spent $0.86 billion on debt servicing for the first half of 2018, which was more than the planned budgeted amount of $0.59 billion.[25] This $0.86 billion on debt servicing for the first half of 2018 is almost equivalent to the entire amount spent on debt servicing payments for the year 2017, which amounted to $0.93 billion. During the first six months of 2018 personal emoluments, that is, wages and salaries, accounted for 42 per cent of domestic revenues, while 29 per cent accounted for interest payments.[26]

[18] ibid.
[19] Parliamentary Budget Office. 2021. *Unpacking of the 2022 Budget Policy Statement*. Parliament of the Republic of Kenya.
[20] Supra, n17.
[21] Supra, n17.
[22] International Monetary Fund. 2022. *World Economic Outlook, April 2022*. IMF
[23] Supra, n 17.
[24] Ernst &Young, *Zambia* (2022).
[25] ZIPPAR, *Understanding the Impact of Zambia's Growing Debt on Different Stakeholders*, 2022.
[26] Ernst &Young, *Zambia* (2022).

As such, Sub-Saharan African governments use public debt as a major tool to finance their expenditures. Economic efficiency explain that proper and efficient utilization of resources is the most reliable way to fuel the economic growth.[27] However, poor utilization of the public debt would restrict economic growth and create the biggest curse for the economy. Governments should resolve to implement active economic reform measures that will significantly raise economic growth, alongside urgent measures to stabilize the debt-to-GDP ratio. Against this background of rising debt, this research sought to review Africa's response to rising public debt and the role of public participation on decisions on public debt.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Any procedure that directly involves the public in decision-making and fully considers public input while making that choice might be considered public participation. It entails a set of measures taken by the implementing entity over the duration of a project to inform the public and solicit their feedback. To increase fiscal transparency, improve public financial management accountability, and improve fiscal and development results, direct contact amongst citizens and governments is increasingly acknowledged as a key link in the chain. The value placed on public engagement reflects the understanding that citizens and civil society organizations play a significant role as drivers of good governance and sustainable development in a country.

Micro-fiscal concerns such as tax administration, expenditure allocation and effectiveness are encompassed under public participation along with macro-fiscal policy matters such as optimization of public debt, the primary fiscal aggregates, and the optimal level of deficit.[28] It includes participation in four thematic areas: budget formulation, legislative approval, implementation, and audit. In terms of fiscal policy formulation and implementation, public participation encompasses a broad range of ways that members of the public, which would include citizens, civil society groups, community organizations, corporate entities, and other non-state actors, communicate and interact with state agencies. The encounters vary from one-time consultations to continuous, institutionalized partnerships to face-to-face deliberations.

[27] Supra, n13.

[28] M Petrie, *Public Participation in Fiscal Policy,* (2017) [Online] Available at: https://blog-pfm.imf.org/pfmblog/2017/06/public-participation-in-fiscal-policy-posted-by-murray-petrie1-direct-engagement-between-citizens-and-governments-is-incr.html#_ftn1
[Accessed 13 August 2022].

The numerous forms that public involvement may take based on the likelihood of public impact on a decision are addressed in selecting the right level of public participation.[29] These forms consist of:

i. Engaging the public in ensuring their concerns are considered at every stage of the decision-making process, especially when developing decision criteria and options.
ii. Educating the public by giving information to assist them know the needs, issues, options, and solutions.
iii. Consulting with the public to get their input on alternative solutions or decisions.
iv. Developing decision criteria and options in collaboration with the public to choose the preferable course of action.
v. By giving the people the final say in decisions, the public is empowered.

Depending on the type of involvement sought, public participation employs a suite of strategies and approaches such as meetings and hearings held in public, for the public, participation on advisory committees, interactive workshops and seminars, interviews, surveys, focus groups, and other techniques to inform the public, elicit public input, and, in certain situations, create consensus and agreement.[30] At this point, public participation indices of two countries from West Africa, two from East Africa and two from Southern Africa are analysed to establish existing trend over time. Later in the text, public participation scores will be applied empirically to highlight the role of public participation in fiscal decisions.

In figure 1, change in two scores is shown between 2015 and 2019. These scores are participation, rights and inclusion from Mo Ibrahim and open budget score from the International Budget Partnership. Countries with high participation, rights and inclusion also uphold openness and public participation in the budget process. Nigeria and Zambia consistently score low in open budget, and participation, rights, and inclusion. That is, the open budget score for Nigeria dropped from 24 in 2015 to 21 in 2019 while Zambia has the highest decline from 39 in 2015 to 30 in 2019.

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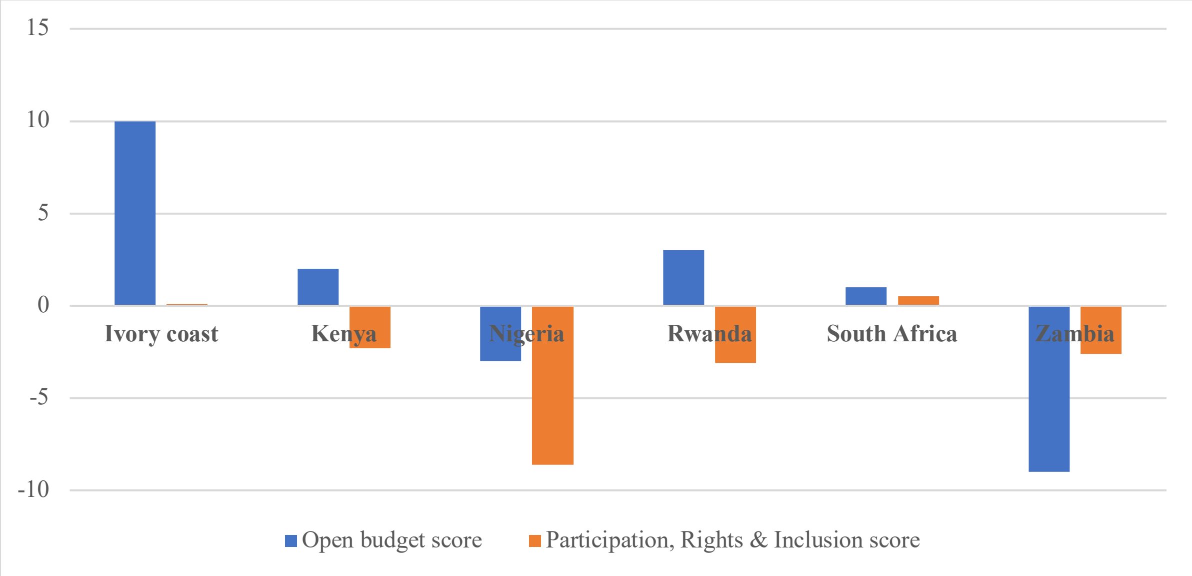
[29] EPA, *Public Participation Guide: Introduction to Public Participation,* (2022) [Online] Available at: https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-introduction-public-participation#:~:text=Public%20participation%20can%20be%20any,process%2C%20not%20a%20single%20event [Accessed 13 August 2022].
[30] ibid.

Figure 1: Change in Open budget score, and Participation, Rights, and Inclusion between 2015 and 2019



Source: Open budget score from International Budget Partnership and are Participation, Rights, and Inclusion from Mo Ibrahim Foundation[31]

Moreover, a comparative analysis of public participation performance is critical as it will be mapped with analysis of public participation legislations in respective countries. The goal is to later demonstrate empirically whether the legal grounding of public participation has resulted in evidence-based engagement by the public in decisions relating to foreign debt.

3.1 Kenya

Kenya, the third largest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, trailing behind Nigeria and South Africa places public participation as a constitutional requirement. The country commenced on an incredibly ambitious decentralization strategy that aspires to fundamentally transform the relationship between the government and citizens under the Constitution of Kenya, 2010. Specifically, the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 offers a solid constitutional and legal framework for advancing participatory governance. Article 1 (2) states that all sovereign authority belongs to the people of Kenya. Whether directly or through elected representative, the people have the right to assert their sovereignty. As a fundamental value and guiding principle of governance, public participation is firmly established in Articles 10 (2) (a) and 232 (1) (d).[32] In accordance with the constitution, the demands of the citizens must be met, and

[31] Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG). 2020. *The most comprehensive dataset of African Governance*. IIAG. [Retrieved from: https://iiag.online/#]
[32] The Republic of Kenya, *The Constitution of Kenya, 2010* (Nairobi: National Council for Law Reporting).

their public participation in determining policy must be promoted. The national government, county governments, as well as all state corporations are obliged by Article 232 (2) to encourage and promote public participation in policymaking, while Article 10 (1) (b) mandates that state officials, and state organs adhere to the ideals and principles of public service in interpreting national laws or developing as well as executing public policy. Public engagement is crucial to advancing and deepening democratic governance.

Public participation in legislative actions of the Parliament, particularly the National Assembly, is a fundamental constitutional requirement. In the National Assembly, the people of the constituency and special interests are represented. Part 4 of Chapter 8 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 requires the National Assembly to enact legislation. The National Assembly allocates national revenue among tiers of government and appropriates funds for the national government expenditure and other state organs. Also, the National Assembly conducts oversight over national revenue and expenditure. Among the oversight function encompasses their oversight over public debt and public debt management, the budgeting process, scrutinizing and overseeing executive and administrative action.[33] Article 118 (1) (b) of the Constitution mandates Parliament to enable public participation in legislative and other committee and parliamentary business. It further states that parliament shall conduct its affairs openly and convene parliamentary meetings in public.

After a legislative bill is presented in Parliament and referred to the appropriate Parliamentary committee, such committee then publishes advertisements seeking public input on the bill. The committee is then mandated by law to consider the suggestions and opinions of the public when debating the bill. The National Assembly oversees the National Government Executive by holding it to account, approving appointments, processing removal from office of state officers, reviewing statutory instruments, among other actions. The public can participate in the activities by expressing their views on legislation, suitability of public officers and provide grounds for their removal by petitioning parliament. Similarly, the Public Finance Management (PFM), 2012 has many clauses on public participation that are related to Chapter 12 of the Constitution on Public Finance. Under this Act, Section 10 (2) obliges the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) to incorporate public participation in carrying out its

[33] Parliament of Kenya, *Public Participation in the Legislative Process Fact Sheet No 27,* (Nairobi: The National Assembly, 2017)

mandate. Additionally, Section 35(2) requires the Cabinet Secretary for Finance to facilitate public engagement in the budget-making process specified under Section 35(1). Moreover, Section 125(2) of the PFM Act (2012) mandates the County Executive Committee member in charge of finance to ensure public engagement in the county government's budget process as allowed for in Section 125(1).

The budgeting process incorporates public engagement in accordance with the public finance framework established under Articles 201, 221 and 232 of the Constitution. This is operationalised in the PFM Act, 2012 and the National Assembly Standing Orders. The PFM Act, 2012 extends the role of the legislature by establishing and clearly defining the duties and obligations of Parliament in the oversight, management, and control of financial affairs. The PFMA also outlines how the committees of the National Assembly observe, assess, and approve budget proposals. As such, the public may submit comments on the budget or participate in public hearing sessions on the Finance Bill and the budget.

3.2 Rwanda

One of the fundamental elements of governance, according to the 2003 Constitution of Rwanda is the involvement of the citizenry in the decision-making process. Transformational Governance Pillar of Rwanda’s National Strategy for Transformation (NST1 2017–2024) identifies increase in citizens’ participation, engagement, and partnerships in development as important strategy for improving livelihood and social welfare. Rwanda's Constitution Article 27 under Chapter IV of the constitution guarantees human rights and freedoms. It stipulates the right to participate in Government and public services. It mandates that according to the law, every Rwandan has the right to take part in the nation's government, whether directly or through representatives they have willingly chosen. Article 48 provides for participation in the development of the country. It provides that every Rwandan has an obligation to participate and contribute to the nation's development through labours, upholding democracy, equality, and social justice, as well as participating part in national defence.

Section 162 of Rwanda's Constitution, as revised in 2015, and the regulations outlined in Organic Law No. 12/2013/OL of September 12, 2013, on State Finances and Property, both provide a legal requirement for the national budget. To distribute public resources among priorities identified through various public consultation forums in which citizens participate and which are meant to hasten socioeconomic transition, the budget is produced to display the government's income and review expenditure plans. Citizens and other stakeholders are involved in several processes in the planning and budgeting process, including selecting national priorities, relating them to NST1 (2017- 2024), and allocating resources. At the national level, citizens participate in the preparation and submission of the finance law to Parliament, as well as the identification of national priorities.[34] Additionally, citizens, through their elected representatives in Parliament, monitor the execution of programs and projects to hold responsible institutions accountable for their execution, reporting, audit, and oversight. Inputs for budget formation are provided by private sector, and civil society groups by taking part in sector working groups, joint sector reviews, and joint action development forums; speaking up during Parliamentary budget hearings through position papers; and advancing issues that pertain to the interests of citizens.

Rwanda's Decentralization Policy was inspired and informed by fundamental human rights, freedom, dignity, and development principles.[35] In the pursuit of effective governance, the policy was enacted in 2000, following a series of discourse sessions with communities and engagement with players in the governance arena. It was later amended in 2012 to remain focused and in line with shifting political agendas and socioeconomic aspirations. A phased implementation strategy was used by the Government. The third phase fixates on sectoral decentralization, citizen participation, local economic development, accountability measures, and capacity building for local governance specifically for Public Finance Management, following the consent of the Fiscal and Financial Decentralization Policy (2011) to sufficiently resource local governments in accordance with their responsibilities. The revised policy of 2012 emphasized on high citizen empowerment to improve active participation of citizens, creating long-term impact, and establishing stronger and more self-sufficient local governance capable of upholding the democratization process.[36]

The Government of Rwanda and relevant development partners have recognized enhancing decentralization implementation, notably by strengthening public engagement, as being required to hasten poverty reduction. Promoting Citizen Engagement (CE) is advised by the Rwanda Governance Board, particularly regarding bottom-up planning.[37] The social justice

[34] Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, *Citizen's Guide: Understanding the FY2020/2021 Budget.*
[35] Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Local Government, *National Decentralization Policy* (2021).
[36] Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Local Government, *National Decentralization Policy* (2022).
[37] RGB, *Good Governance and Decentralization in Rwanda,* (Kigali: Rwanda Governance Board, 2018).

NGO, Never Again Rwanda [38] has shown that many populations are underrepresented as local leaders do not devote adequate efforts to listening to the communities they represent. This results in low community participation. The Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC)'s Local Administrative Entities Agency (LODA) has also drawn attention to the current centralized nature of decision-making in Rwanda and affirmed that community planning systems need to be enhanced to help ensure that community leaders adequately represent communities' needs.[39] LODA is the Ministry of Local Government's implementation arm. It oversees citizen mobilization and participatory planning and decision - making through decentralized local governance.

3.3 Côte d’Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire, the largest economy in the West African Economic and Monetary Union continues to remain Francophone West Africa's economic hub, wielding significant regional influence.[40] The country is the world's leading exporter of cocoa and raw cashew nuts, a net exporter of oil, and has a substantial manufacturing sector.[41] The Ivorian post-election crisis of 2010-2011 makes democracy, inclusivity, and participation in the country’s state affairs a subject of interest. Following the re- election of President Alassane Ouattara in 2020, democratic institutions in Côte d'Ivoire continues to remain fragile and lacked significant vertical and horizontal accountability. The several years of political polarization, territorial division, and brutal warfare weakened the already limited participation of civil society groups in the political process.

The 2021 Open Budget Survey report scored Côte d'Ivoire as having a public participation score of 4 (out of 100) in the budget process, a drop from a score of 7 (out of 100).[42] The extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process was generally few (0- 17) at formulation stage by the executive, approval stage by the legislative arm, implementation, and oversight by the supreme audit institution. The 3rd Open Government Partnership (OGP 2020- 2022) Action Plan of Côte d'Ivoire calls for changes to the national and local budget processes to increase transparency and civic participation. The Open

[38] NAR, *Governing with and for Citizens* (Never Again Rwanda, 2016).
[39] World Bank, *Rwanda: Advancing Citizen Engagement Project* (The World Bank, 2022).
[40] World Bank, *The World Bank in Côte d’Ivoire,* (2021) [Online] Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cotedivoire/overview [Accessed 13 August 2022].
[41] ibid.
[42] IBP, *Open Budget Survey Report Cote d' Ivoire, 2017* (International Budget Partnership, 2017).

Government Partnership (OGP) is a global joint initiative which brings state leaders and civil society representatives together to develop action plans for making governments more inclusive, accountable, and responsive as a commitment to developing citizen's budget. It improves budget transparency by making budget information more accessible to the public. The citizen's budget gives any citizen the chance and opportunity of learning more about the state budget and its operation. It must also ensure citizen participation in the administration of public affairs. Furthermore, civil society participation and involvement are expected in the citizen's Budget planning process.

Côte d'Ivoire's 2016 Constitution provides lawful grounds for public participation.[43] According to Article 34, the State and public institutions shall develop environments that support young people's civic and moral education to ensure that the participation of the youth in the social, economic, and political advancement of the country. According to Article 37, the State promotes women to positions of decision-making in public entities and administrations and also at the enterprise level.

3.4 South Africa

Following the end of apartheid, the adoption of South Africa's 1996 Constitution marked a milestone in the country's efforts to increase public participation in decision-making. This process began with the government using a participatory approach in drafting the new Constitution, which has since incorporated public participation in legislative and governance processes.[44] Based on specific criteria in the country's 1996 Constitution, the functioning of the South African Parliament exemplifies excellent techniques in institutionalizing and anchoring public participation as an essential component of good governance. Chapter 2 of the Constitution on Bill of Rights is a pillar of South African democracy. It institutionalizes the rights of all persons in the society and upholds the democratic principles of human dignity, freedom, and equality. Every person has the right to free, fair, and regular elections for any legislative body established by the Constitution.[45]

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[43] Constituteproject, *Cote d' Ivoire's Constitution of 2016.*
[44] Inter- Parliamentary Union, *South Africa: Mainstreaming citizen engagement in the constitution,* (2022) [Online] Available at: https://www.ipu.org/news/case-studies/2022-06/south-africa-mainstreaming-citizen-engagement-in-constitution [Accessed 13 August 2022].
[45] Government of South Africa, *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Chapter 2 Bill of Rights.*

According to Section 42(3) of the Constitution, the National Assembly is chosen through democratic elections to represent the people and to guarantee governance by the people. Parliament fulfils its role through passing legislation, overseeing government action, and promoting public and international participation. The National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces are the two components of Parliament, according to Chapter 4 on Parliament. Section 57 (1) (b) states that the National Assembly may develop regulations governing its operations while taking into consideration a representative and participatory democracy, transparency, and public participation.

Section 57 (2) (b) specifies that the rules and regulations of the National Assembly need to provide for minority parties represented in the Assembly to participate in the Assembly's sessions and its committees democratically. Additionally, in accordance with Section 59 (1), the National Assembly must encourage public participation in its committee meetings as well as in its other legislative activities. It also must operate in an open way and hold its sittings publicly. According to Section 59 (2), the National Assembly must not keep members of the public, including the media, out of a committee meeting unless doing so would be appropriate and justified in a free and democratic society. Likewise, Section 118 of Chapter 6 on Provinces mandates that a provincial legislature must enable public participation in the legislative and other procedures of the legislature and its committees, and control public access, including access by the media to the legislature and its committees.[46]

The public, civil society groups and the private sector participation in legislative functions are constitutionally institutionalized. Making laws, oversight of the functioning of the Executive and state agencies, enabling public involvement, international participation, and cooperative governance are all basic functions of Parliament. The legislative authority of the national government is vested in Parliament by Section 43(a) of the Constitution. One of the pillars of democracy is the Parliamentary oversight role. It holds the Executive responsible for its actions and ensures that policies are implemented in conformity with legislation and budgets enacted by Parliament. Participatory democracy is premised on the idea that active public participation in fiscal decision-making processes strengthens structures of representative democracy. The National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) are

[46] ibid.

required by the Constitution to enable public participation in the legislative and other procedures of the houses and their committees by doing their work publicly.

Deliberate methods and structures are required for effective public participation. The Legislative Sector Public Participation Framework for South Africa has become the overall policy guide, outlining norms and requirements for public participation in the Legislative Sector.[47] The fundamentals for facilitating public involvement are considered in the public participation framework for the Parliament and provincial legislatures. These factors are based on what is suitable given the particular procedure, relevance, and urgency, and also the general public's reaction. This framework covers the promotion of public participation as a constitutional imperative, the right to participate in law-making and all other legislative processes, and the South African Legislative Sector Governance Structures, which include public participation by facilitating public involvement in legislative and other processes of legislatures and their committees. The separate Houses or committees must perform their respective business in an open and transparent way.

The South African Parliament has additionally created a Public Participation Model (PPM). The Model aims to describe and mainstream minimum standards and criteria for public participation procedures. This is targeted to achieve meaningful public engagement in Parliament's legislative and other operations. Some of the public participation approaches described in the model include the Taking Parliament to the People Program (TPTTP) of the National Council of Provinces, the People's Assembly, oversight visits by parliamentary committees, sectoral engagements including youth and women's parliaments, petitions, and other opportunities for participation in legislative procedures. TPTTP program moves the legislature around the nation, typically to rural areas with inadequate infrastructure. The program enables direct communication between the public and their representatives at all levels by bringing together members of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), members of Cabinet (national), the Executive Council (provincial), and municipal councils to enable the conversation on inclusive decision making regarding fiscal concerns. The PPM is implemented through several continuous institutionalized initiatives. Language and connection with rural areas that are not digitally connected are all designed as means to improve access and social cohesion.

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[47] Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, *Public Participation Framework for the South African Legislative Sector* (Parliament of South Africa, 2013)

3.5 Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution lists citizen participation in decision-making as one of the fundamental components of government.[48] It is spelled forth in Chapter II (14) (2c) on Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy that the people's participation in their government must be guaranteed in conformity with this Constitution's provisions. The authority to legislate is vested in Nigeria's National Assembly, which is bi-cameral and consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate, according to the 1999 Nigerian constitution as amended. Making legislation requires the approval of both legislatures. The National Assembly, on the other hand, has the authority to govern its own procedure. As a result, the Nigerian legislative process is controlled by Standing Rules and procedures in addition to the Constitution.

In Nigeria, the 1999 Constitution as revised established the Executive and the Legislature as primary actors in the budget process. Sections 4, 59, 80-81 of the 1999 Federal Republic of Nigerian Constitution precisely states the duties and responsibilities of the two bodies of government regarding how revenues flowing to the country may be spent over time. These clauses are incorporated in the constitution to give effect to the idea of separation of powers and checks and balances here between two branches of government. To guarantee that public resources are used efficiently and prudently by state officials for the benefit of the public, the National Assembly, in exercising its responsibilities under Sections 80 and 81 of the 1999 Constitution is mandated to perform an oversight role on the Executive arm of government by ensuring that budget rules are enforced.

The National Action Plan (NAP) seeks to strengthen and mainstream transparency methods, as well as citizen participation in the administration of public resources across all sectors. The first NAP (2017-2019) focused on four themes: budgetary transparency; information access; anti-corruption and asset disclosure; and citizen involvement and empowerment. The NAP II (2019-2022), an enhancement to the first NAP, identifies the expected impact, outcome, milestones, and activities that will deliver the expected impact. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) NAP II is driven by the need to make a measurable

[48] The Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999 with Amendments through 2011.*

positive impact on the ordinary citizens of Nigeria by identifying the issues that restrict effective citizens' participation in government.[49]

The NAP II has thematic areas addressing fiscal transparency. These are aimed at ensuring more effective public participation throughout the entire budget cycle, promoting citizens engagement by fostering an environment free from fear or intimidation where individuals, citizen organizations, human rights advocates, and the media may express themselves, and participate in the various phases of policy formation. The NAP II addresses structural impediments to public participation while promoting inclusive services in governance, administration decision-making processes.

3.6 Zambia

Some Zambian laws and regulations encourage public participation, such as freedom of expression, association, and assembly, as well as the ability to run for and vote in elections.[50] There are additional policy provisions on several initiatives aimed at encouraging community engagement and the inclusion of specific marginalized groups. The legal structure also includes articles in its Penal Code and other Statutes that limit some rights, such as freedom of expression. The Constitution of the Republic of Zambia (Cap 1 of 1996 of the Laws of Zambia), has several articles that are related and interdependent to the right to public participation. Some of this includes the freedom of expression, but it has limits that protect the president's dignity and the office of the president, the right to peaceful assembly and association. The right to vote, where it offers periodic elections to elect the President of the Republic of Zambia, Members of Parliament (MPs), and Local Representatives in Councils.

In Zambia, policy is developed by the Executive branch of government. Parliamentarians, acting as the people's representatives, are those to whom the people's interests and concerns are delegated. As a result, the activity of Parliament directly affects the people to whom legislators are, in principle, accountable. The chambers of Parliament are designed to allow public scrutiny of ongoing activities and debates as a standard measure of a government's openness. This is affirmed by the Zambian Parliament's Standing Orders. Standing Orders (2005:130)[51] provide that National Assembly Committees should be open to the public by

[49] Open Government Patnership, *Nigeria Action Plan (2019- 2022).*
[50] Republic of Zambia, *Constitution of the Republic of Zambia 1991, as amended in 2016.*
[51] National Assembly of Zambia, *Standing Orders of the National Assembly* (2016).

holding their meetings in public. The Local Government Act (Cap 281 of Zambian Laws) establishes a three-tiered local administration structure and outlines the tasks of local authorities.[52] The Act, like the Standing Orders of Parliament, requires that documents generated by local governments be made available to the public.

The National Decentralization Policy (2002) of Zambia was created to address the colonial era's excessively centralized governance institutions.[53] The strategy reflects the idea of people empowerment by requiring the strengthening of local government to promote more effective citizen participation in governance and responsible delivery of public services as the foundation for decentralization. The long-term goal of this strategy is to create a completely decentralized, democratically elected form of government that is characterized by open, predictable, and transparent policymaking and implementation procedures at all levels of the public service, as well as by greater local community participation in decision-making and development operations while keeping adequate links between central and local governments.

A general summary of the nations examined above emphasizes that these African nations have public participation laws in place and the significance of these laws in ensuring transparency and accountability across state officials and institutions that are grounded in legitimacy when formulating fiscal policy. To ensure effective governance, this is accomplished by giving the public a chance to voice their opinions. A good way to keep an eye on the rising level of African debt is for African nations to implement public participation legislation, as decisions regarding debt should be made with the participation of the public.

4. THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON PUBLIC DEBT SUSTAINABILITY IN AFRICA

Public debt becomes unsustainable when debt to GDP ratio reaches an excessive threshold which is the general case in almost all Africa countries. Public debt sustainability is a country's ability to meet its foreign and local obligation.[54] In two studies on debt management in the case of Kenya, the studies concluded that debt management is very vital in making sure

[52] National Assembly of Zambia, *The Local Government Act* (2019).
[53] Republic of Zambia, *The National Decentralisation Policy: Towards Empowering the People* (Office of the President, Cabinet Office, 2002).
[54] V Yilanci & B Ozcan, 'External Debt Sustainability of Turkey: A Nonlinear Approach', (2008) *International Research Journal of Finance and Economics*, *20*(10), pp.91-99.

that there exist stable financial market and continuous economic growth in Kenya.[55] While reviewing the Legal and Policy framework on debt management in Kenya, the study emphasized the need for the National Treasury of Kenya to ensure that debt growth is at sustainable threshold in order to reduce the risk of default and sovereign debt crisis. The study found Kenya to be at economic peril since as from 2018, the ratio of public debt to GDP was approximately 53%. It expounded that even though the country has a comprehensive legal framework that govern public borrowing, there is extensive lack of external borrowing process in terms of public participation thus leading to increased chances of misuse of public funds which are not made available to the common citizen to give in their inputs.

In Rwanda, a study focusing on determinants of debt sustainability over 1995-2009 reported fiscal deficit the main macroeconomic variable that influences increase in external debt.[56] It also expounded that Rwanda needs to stimulate its economic growth through promotion of good macroeconomic management that allows for both private and external investors to grow. At the same time, the study underpinned that there is always need for the government and the debt management office to draw up guidelines that edge growth in future external debt. Finally, the study proposed effective fiscal policy tools that will maximize exposure to risk and restructure debt accumulation to maintain debt in a sustainable manner.

At the same time, state authorities, with the help of public engagement should redirect loans towards productive investments than using them to for the debt service payment purposes. In the sustainability of the fiscal policy in Ghana using a fiscal reaction approach on ARDL model between the year 1970 and 1993, the study found that there was a presence of the fiscal pressure due to fiscal excess during election period.[57] As a result of pressure on fiscal policy during election period, economic growth will always decrease while debt services increase leading to crowd-out effect. Its findings were emphasized in the study that concluded that there is a positive relationship between debt sustainability and economic growth in Ghana

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[55] JK Bett, 'Public Debt Management in Kenya: A Case for Review of the Legal and Policy Framework' (2018). Available at http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3187272; Latif, LA, "Is Africa's Fiscal Space Undermined by Debt related Illicit Financial Flows? A Case Study of Selected SADC Member States", Working Paper 01/03 ADHR (CFS 2022)
[56] Battaile, B, Hernandez, F and Norambuena, V. 2015. *Debt Sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa: Unraveling Country-Specific Risks* (December 21, 2015). World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 7523
[57] J Asiama, N Akosah & E Owusu-Afriyie, 'An Assessment of Fiscal Sustainability in Ghana', (2014) *Bank of Ghana Research Working Paper, WP/BOG-2014/09.*

and recommended that there is need to use public debt to finance vital projects that can help the country to realize the full advantage of its public debt.[58]

In analysing Nigeria's debt sustainability using a general macroeconomic framework, the study found that the country had macroeconomic policies which lead to accumulation of debt more than what was sustainable in relation to its net export performance thus leaving a country in debt crisis.[59] As a result of inadequate fiscal policy instrument effectiveness, the country experienced a higher rate of borrowing in the period between 1970 and 1988which was unsustainable. The incapability of many SSA countries in meeting their social needs from debt is because the borrowed funds are not used productively. Thus, instead of the funds being used to finance domestic investment and consumptions, a substantial amount of the borrowed funds is majorly captured by Africa political elites who re-channel the same amount abroad in form of capital flight, thus leading to ballooned debt accumulation.[60] The study also argued that in order to witness effective debt sustainability in Africa, there is need for increased accountability and public participation through establishment of mechanisms of transparency in decision making process with regard to how and when the funds will be used.

In the study of South Africa and Nigeria, the study examined the impact of the enormous public debt on the economies in relation to its service requirements using both Ordinary Least Square (OLS) and Generalized Least Square (GLS) techniques of estimation for the year 2000 and 2007.[61] The study found that huge debt with no clear fiscal policies and public participation has a negative impact on economic growth of on the two economies. In addition, the study expounded the need of optimal utilization of the external debt to receive marginal return on investment which should always be greater than the cost of borrowing. The paper thus recommended that for optimal use of the external debts to be realized, there is need for fiscal policy mechanisms that will help to service the debts and public participation should be used as an integral factor in mapping the areas of need basis on the debt received.

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[58] V Owusu-Nantwi & C Erickson, 'Public Debt and Economic Growth in Ghana', (2016) *African Development Review*, *28*(1), pp.116-126.
[59] RA Ajayi, '*On the Simultaneous Interactions of External Debt, Exchange Rates, and Other Macroeconomic Variables: The Case of Nigeria* (1991) Center for Economic Research on Africa, Department of Economics, School of Business Administration, Montclair State College.
[60] J Boyce & L Ndikumana, 'Africa's Debt: Who owes Whom?' (2002) *Department of Economics and Political Economy Research Institute,* University of Massachusetts, Working Paper Series, No. 48, November.
[61] FS Ayadi & FO Ayadi, 'The Impact of External Debt on Economic Growth: A Comparative Study of Nigeria and South Africa', (2008) *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, *10*(3), pp.234-264.

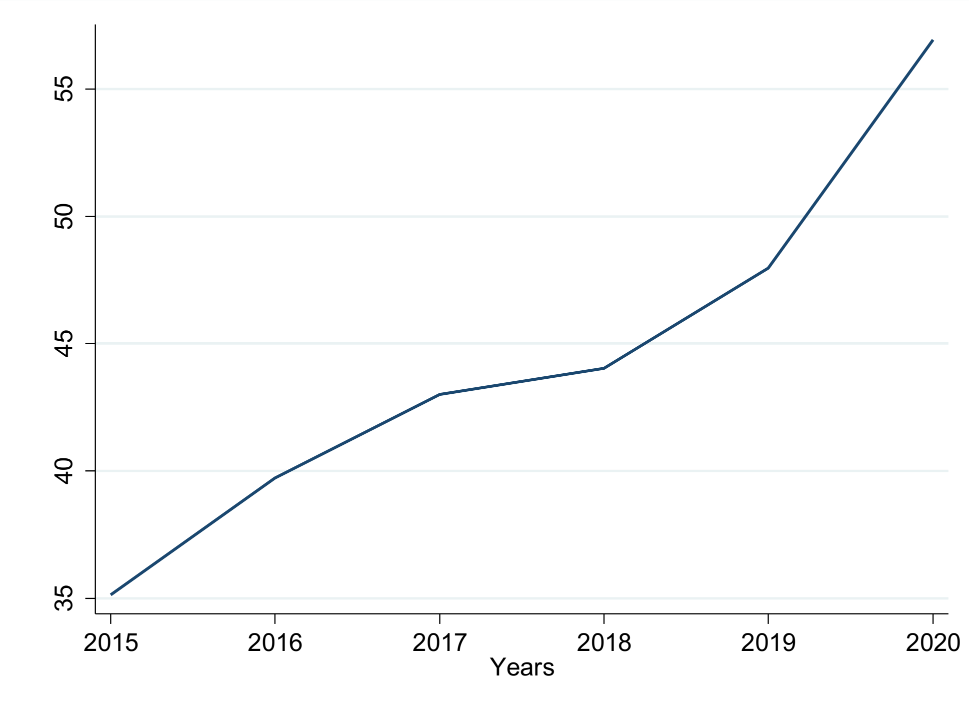
In examining the dynamics of public debt servicing, both domestic and foreign in Zambia, tracing the trends, reforms and challenges over the period from 1964 to 2015, the study found that exceptional rise in public debt in Zambia has been due to high domestic and foreign interest rates, frequent debt rescheduling at commercial rates.[62] The paper recommended for a structural adjustment in foreign exchange management, fiscal and monetary reforms, and aggressive engagement of traditional creditors. In addition, the paper recommended alignment of the public sector infrastructure spending with revenue that ensures that there is debt sustainability. In opining those developing economies, including Ivory Coast, the study emphasized that they will continue to face impasse as a result of their need base for financial priority for economic development and the need to maintain a long-term debt sustainability.[63] As a result, the study advised that for Africa to achieve debt sustainability there is need to maintain a deepen reform on their fiscal policy including institutional framework development, strengthening of debt management policies, enhancement of domestic revenue collection strategies, and finally, the need to create a conducive environment that can attract foreign direct investment.

5. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The objective of this section is to make evidence-driven contribution to the existing knowledge and awareness of fiscal issues resulting out of public participation. In this respect, the impact of public participation on foreign debt is analysed on select African countries. As shown in Figure 2, external debt as a percentage of GNI in 31 African countries increased by more than 20 percent between 2015 and 2020.[64] That is, external debt as a percentage of GNI increased to 56 percent in 2020 from 35 percent in 2015. This not only increases the risk of default but also increases external vulnerability.

[62] T Saungweme & NM Odhiambo, 'An Analysis of Public Debt Servicing in Zambia: Trends, Reforms and Challenges', (2018) *Croatian International Relations Review*, *24*(81), pp.113-136.
[63] A Schclarek, *Debt and Economic Growth in Developing and Industrial Countries* (No. 2005: 34). Working Paper.
[64] Benin, Botswana, Congo, Dem. Rep., Cameroon, Egypt, Arab Rep., Kenya, Mali, Sudan, Chad, Tunisia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Angola, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Morocco, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Sao Tome and Principe, Uganda, South Africa, Zambia

Figure 2: External debt to GNI for 31 African countries



Source: World Bank

In the next stage, an empirical relationship between debt sustainability (proxied by total external debt to GDP), fiscal policy (proxied by fiscal balance and revenue) and public participation is investigated. Economic performance and the level of financial development are also included as control variables. This is because expansion in GDP can result to increased borrowing as repayment ability improves while countries with developed financial markets can access external financing with ease. Given the potential degree of interdependence between the variables, a method that considers their mutual influence is applied first to avoid severe errors of specification. Consequently, a full system for the joint determination of debt sustainability, fiscal policy and public participation shall be considered.

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$$D_{i,t} = \alpha_0 + \beta \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} X_{i,t} + \sum_{j=1}^{m-1} (\gamma_j - \gamma_m) FP_{i,t} + \in 1_{i,t} \quad \ldots \ldots (1)$$

Where $D_{i,t}$ represents debt sustainability, $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of control variables (GDP growth and financial development index), $FP_{i,t}$ represents fiscal policy and $\in 1_{i,t}$ is the error term. Each country is denoted by i. Next is public participation equation that has a non-fiscal vector Z.

$$PP_{i,t} = \delta_0 + \phi \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} Z_{i,t} + \sum_{j=1}^{m-1} (\mu_j - \mu_m) FP_{i,t} + \in 2_{i,t} \quad \ldots \ldots (2)$$

Where $PP_{i,t}$ is a proxy for public participation in country i. Last is the fiscal policy equation expressed as follows:

$$FP_{i,t} = \eta_0 + \Psi PP_{i,t-1} + \xi \sum_{g=1}^{g} W_{i,t} + \in 3_{i,t} \quad \ldots \ldots (3)$$

Where $W_{i,t}$ is a set of control variables (revenue, GDP growth and financial development index). The set of seemingly unrelated regressions (SUR) **1-3** is advantageous in that it allows for interdependence between the key variables. However, these regressions fail to account for the influence of relevant endogenous variables on the right-hand side of each equation. For this reason, a simultaneous equation model (SEM) will also be considered. SEM takes the form:

$$PP_{i,t} = \delta_0 + \theta D_{i,t} + \phi \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} Z_{i,t} + \sum_{j=1}^{m-1} (\mu_j - \mu_m) FP_{i,t} + \upsilon 1_{i,t} \quad \ldots \ldots (4)$$

$$\Delta D_{i,t} = \alpha_0 + \sigma PP_{i,t} + \beta \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} X_{i,t} + \sum_{j=1}^{m-1} (\gamma_j - \gamma_m) FP_{i,t} + \upsilon 2_{i,t} \quad \ldots \ldots (5)$$

$$\Delta D_{i,t} = \alpha_0 + \beta \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} X_{i,t} + \sum_{j=1}^{m-1} (\gamma_j - \gamma_m) FP_{i,t} + \upsilon 3_{i,t} \quad \ldots \ldots (6)$$

In this study, the sample of African countries to be included are Kenya, Rwanda, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia and South Africa. The analysis will use annual data collected from respective countries agencies such as central banks, government publications, the World Bank, International Financial Statistics and the Mo Ibrahim. Summary statistics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
GDP growth	60	4.81	3.06	-5.37	10.76
External debt/GDP	60	32.32	21.57	4.66	118.95
Public participation index	60	53.00	7.02	43.60	68.40
Fiscal balance	60	-3.99	2.20	-9.54	0.43
Revenue/GDP	60	18.11	5.52	5.12	26.79
Financial development index	60	0.24	0.17	0.10	0.64

On average, real GDP in the sampled countries expanded by 4.8% annually over 2010 to 2020 while fiscal deficit averaged 3.9%. Public participation score is slightly above average (53) and much lower than that of South Africa (67) over the sample period. A comparison between external debt for all the six countries (32.3%), as shown in Table 1, establishes that South Africa has a relatively high debt level at 37.6%.

Table 2: Seemingly Unrelated Regression Results

	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z
GDP growth				
Public participation index	-0.22	0.05	-4.16	0.00
Fiscal balance/GDP	0.44	0.15	2.96	0.00
Revenue/GDP	0.15	0.07	2.27	0.02
Constant	15.46	2.53	6.10	0.00
External debt/GDP				
Public participation index	-0.52	0.97	-0.54	0.59
Financial development index	29.08	41.28	0.70	0.48
Constant	52.91	42.58	1.24	0.21

SUR results in Table 2 confirms that revenue mobilization and fiscal deficit have a positive and significant impact on GDP growth while raising the level of public participation does not translate to better economic performance. However, increased public participation has a negative impact on external debt. Although the results on the impact of public participation on debt is not statistically significant, this figure is economically significant considering the small size of African economies. Therefore, authorities in Africa should embrace public participation in fiscal decisions.

6. CONCLUSION

This study establishes that external debt as a percentage of GNI for 31 African countries increased to 56 percent in 2020 from 35 percent in 2015. Such a jump in external debt position not only increases the risk of default but also external vulnerability. Potential future welfare implication of debt piling, default risk and the macro-economic implications posed by debt underscored the need for engagement of the public in fiscal decisions. Trend analysis of public participation index in six select African countries over 2015 to 2019 confirm that countries with high participation, rights and inclusion also uphold openness and public participation in the budget process. These scores are participation, rights and inclusion from Mo Ibrahim and open budget score from the International Budget Partnership. Nigeria and Zambia consistently score low in open budget, and participation, rights, and inclusion. That is, the open budget score for Nigeria dropped from 24 in 2015 to 21 in 2019 while Zambia has the highest decline from 39 in 2015 to 30 in 2019. Turning to empirical results, evidence emerges that increased public participation has a negative impact on external debt. Although the results on the impact of public participation on debt is not statistically significant, this figure is economically significant considering the small size of African economies.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Empirical evidence shows that public participation has an economically significant impact on external debt. As *Principles of Fiscal Transparency, Participation and Accountability* recognizes, direct public participation in fiscal policy making and the budget making process as a fundamental right. Based on the situational analysis of legislative transformations in six Sub-Saharan African countries, significance of public participation and generated evidence, this study recommends that:

- African countries should act beyond legislation to actual and effective implementation of public participation in fiscal decisions. For instance, Kenya has provisions for public participation in the budget making process but there is no requirement to seek public opinion on debt levels. Other instances include Nigeria and Zambia where public participation has been declining despite the countries having legal frameworks aimed at promoting public participation.

- Authorities in Africa should embrace open and inclusive public participation over private lobbying to offer the public and CSOs a chance to be heard and make informed influence on government policy. Engaging the citizens directly plays an important role in linking fiscal transparency, accountability, and better fiscal outcomes.

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