

Abstract

The preparation of Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plans (LASDAPs) through a participatory process is one of the conditions for local authorities to access Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) money. The process provides opportunities for promoting community involvement in the planning and budgeting process. This study examines the planning and budgeting process of LASDAP and especially the extent of local community involvement, and analyses the costing and cost control procedures in the financing of LASDAP. Using both primary and secondary data, it was found that, on average: local communities have not been made sufficiently aware of their roles and mandate; the quality of local participation is poor due to non-participation of the local elite in community development; councillors drive and use the process to gain political mileage; stakeholders are not well represented in different forums; the planning process does not follow a bottom up approach; resource allocations are not driven by policy priorities and are not constrained by budget realities; local authorities have inadequate capacity to champion development at the local levels; and there is no amicable relationship between the local authorities and the provincial administration. The study recommends that: funds should be provided under LATF for dissemination and capacity building; the roles of the provincial administration and district development officers in the preparation and implementation of LASDAP be specified in the LATF Act; the planning process should strictly follow a bottom up approach; funds allocated for the implementation of LASDAP be ring-fenced and auditing timely done; LASDAP accounts be established at ward level; number of projects that can be initiated by a local authority be restricted; local authority should prepare five-year development plans; funding at the local levels should be harmonised; councillors' influence on the LASDAP process should be checked; and independent project monitoring and evaluation committees should be established.