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**TEGEMEO INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL
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**Community's Voice/Presence in Governance of Food Security
Related Initiatives: The Case of Kirinyaga West and Mbeere South
Districts in Central Kenya**

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**Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development
P. O. Box 20498-00200, Nairobi, Kenya.
Tel: +254-20-2717818/76; Fax: +254-20-2717819
Email: Egerton@tegemeo.org**

Tegemeo Institute

Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development is a Policy Research Institute under Egerton University with a mandate to undertake empirical research and analysis on contemporary economic and agricultural policy issues in Kenya. The institute is widely recognized as a centre of excellence in policy analysis on the topical agricultural issues of the day, and in its wide dissemination of findings to government and other key stakeholders with a view to influencing policy direction and the decision making process. Tegemeo's empirically based analytical work, and its objective stance in reporting and disseminating findings has over the past decade won the acceptance of government, the private sector, civil society, academia, and others interested in the performance of Kenya's agricultural sector.

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Kindaruma Lane, off Ngong Road

P.O. Box 20498, 00200, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254 20 2717818/76; Fax: +254 20 2717819

E-mail: egerton@tegemeo.org

URL: <http://www.tegemeo.org>

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Abstract

Efforts to increase responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency of food security related projects that are geared towards mitigating food insecurity and poverty reduction, include decentralized to the local levels (district level and below), functions in steering and implementation of the programs/projects. In Kenya, as in other countries in the region, this has been achieved through the establishment of organs through which various functions are effected and, by involvement of various stakeholders, including the farmers. To ensure that initiatives are/remain relevant to the needs of local communities particularly the poor and vulnerable, it is important to continually review the governance mechanisms that are in place at these local levels. It is against this backdrop that studies to establish the local level structures that are instituted to steer or manage the implementation of various food security-related initiatives, their composition and the existing linkages both upstream and downstream were undertaken. In addition, the perception of local stakeholders on dimensions of governance that are relevant to making agri-food systems work for the poor and vulnerable namely, the satisfaction, participation and their influence were elicited from farmers and other stakeholders. Results show that the structures in place limit farmers' involvement in decision making, in resource allocation and in ensuring programs and projects remain accountable. In addition, the level of funding towards facilitation of these decentralized structures appear to be curtailing the convening of key organs/committees and the wider farmer representation. Farmers on the other hand seem to have minimal understanding of the projects in which they participate in although there was an above average perception on satisfaction with benefits derived from the projects. There was little knowledge on existing civil society groups, their agenda/mandate and influence on the various organs/committees.

Key words: *farmer empowerment, perception-based, participation, influence, satisfaction, Kenya*

Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

- ACK – Anglican Church of Kenya
- CBO – Community Based Organization
- CCG – Common Cluster Group
- CDF – Constituency Development Fund
- CIGs – Common Interest Groups
- DAC – District Agricultural Committee
- DAO – District Agriculture Officer
- DCU – District Coordinating Unit
- DDC, LDC, VDC – District, Location Village Development Committee**
- DEC – District Environmental Committee
- DMT – District Management Team
- DSG – District Steering Group
- SACCO Saving and Credit Cooperatives
- SHF – Stakeholder Forum
- DTCs- Drought Tolerant Crops
- FADC – Focal Area Development Committee
- FAO – Food Agriculture Organization
- FBO – Faith Based Organization
- FLEO/ FEO – Field Extension Officer
- GoK – Government of Kenya
- IDRC – International Development Research Centre
- KADI - Kamurugu Agricultural Development Initiative
- KENFAP – Kenya Federation of Agricultural Producers
- L.C – Local Committees
- M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation
- MoA – Ministry of Agriculture
- NALEP – National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Program
- NGOs – Non Governmental Organizations
- NMK – Njaa Marufuku Kenya

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1. Introduction

According to the 2009 Global Hunger Index (GHI), Kenya has made marginal progress towards the elimination of hunger. The report associates vulnerability to hunger with poverty and gender dis-empowerment. Almost every program and project being implemented in Kenya spells out elimination of hunger, improved food security and poverty eradication as its goal. Yet, progress made towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number one has been slow or marginal. This brings sharp focus on formulation of policies and their strategies for implementation (programs and projects). The newer development policies in Kenya (Vision 2030, Agricultural Sector Development Strategy, Food and Nutrition Security Policy etc) call for a more equitable approach to development. We can translate this to mean for example focusing on crops, enterprises and environments that do not promise maximum returns to investments (immediate), but are immediately relevant to the needs and circumstances of the poor and vulnerable in society and exploit the opportunities available in their environment. For the poor and vulnerable groups as well as the vulnerable environments to benefit from this paradigm shift, it will entail amongst others, effective participation of the poor and vulnerable so that they may inform the decisions and implementation of policies and programs (and their voices can be heard and for ownership). It also means that programs and projects would need to be accountable to the people they purport to serve. In summary, it entails the pursuance of the ideals of good governance.

In Kenya, like most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, principles of good governance are mainly enforced at the macro-level. Beyond good macro-level governance, decision making and implementation processes at the local level and the interaction between the public sector, the local community, the civil society and other players are important in ensuring that good governance enforced at the macro level is fruitful in regard to the realization of the country's development objectives. In particular, it is highly unlikely that without micro-level accountability, programs and projects will translate into the desired outcomes at the local level or become sustainable. This is evidenced by the pervasive problem of hunger and poverty in Africa. The hypothesis of the agri-food systems project, within which this study falls is that good

governance mechanisms in the agri-food system is key to adequately meeting the food needs and other economic aspirations particularly the poor and vulnerable groups.

The objective of this study was therefore to identify and promote good and responsive governance mechanisms in the agri-food system, by assessing citizen awareness, satisfaction, participation and perception of their influence on the governance of the system.

2. Methods

2.1. Approach

Governance relates to decision making processes with regard to: defining expectations, the granting of power and the verification of performance. It may also refer to the process through which decisions are implemented by looking at institutions or structures with authority to allocate resources, coordinate and control actions in a system. The dimensions¹ of governance discussed in this paper are: effectiveness and efficiency; and micro-level accountability. We use ‘process’ indicators (Table 1) as opposed to ‘outcome’ indicators with an assumption that there’s a close link between process and outcome. One of the criteria for selection of the indicators was that these should be comparable over time and space.

Table 1: Selected indicators

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Farmer awareness of projects and & satisfaction with interventions and benefits2. Farmer perception on management in projects and in decision organs3. Participation of farmers and civil society in decision organs and in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of project interventions and outcomes4. Extent and quality of participation e.g. proportion of farmers/civil society in decision organs; frequency of meetings, attendance	<p><i>Also whether respondents were aware of :</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The guiding principles of the project i.e. entry, exit, dispute resolution and how (process) proposals are approved2. The role of various organs in project including the district and national secretariat3. The members of specific organs and their role/responsibility in the committee4. The decisions that various organs can influence (power)
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¹ Adequate resource support, which is also an important dimension of governance is not part of this paper.

5. Empowerment of farmers and of civil society	5. The higher organs where decisions are differed to
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We adopted a ‘perception-based’ approach in measuring governance mainly because agents base their decisions and actions on perceptions, impressions and views (Kaufmann. 2010), and also because of the difficulty and costs involved in measuring the selected aspects of governance. Objective measures of governance were used in assessing representation, frequency of holding meetings and attendance. Information on decision organs, the linkages between them (vertical and horizontal) and their composition was obtained from a mapping exercise of the local level governance structures of food security initiatives. Stakeholder workshops were held for validation and to chart the way forward.

2.2. Study Sites

Although the study was carried out in three study areas, this paper reports research findings from two study sites namely, Kirinyaga West and Mbeere South districts in Kenya. In Kirinyaga West, the lower and drier parts (Sagana and Thirigichi sub-locations) were selected. This area is faced by inadequate/erratic rains, increase in temperatures, over-reliance on maize for food and low use of inputs (MoA) which puts the area at a high risk of being food insecure. Mbeere District, is classified as a low potential dry zone with acute food and livelihood crisis and at high risk of falling into humanitarian emergency. In a normal year 20 – 30% of households in the district rely on the market for food. This proportion rose to 80-90% in the 2011 long rain season while food prices rose 120 – 130% higher than the 5 year average (GOK, 2011). The study was based in Kiritiri and Mutuobare sub-locations. Both districts have great potential for increased production of drought tolerant crops and for the production of fruits, oil crops and tuber crops such as cassava that would enhance their food and nutrition security and household incomes (KARI).

A wide array of food security projects are being implemented in the two study sites. The National Agricultural and Livestock Extension Program (NALEP) was selected because it was being implemented in all the Agri-food systems project sites and was at least 2 years (old since its inception. The farmers also preferred to discuss the NALEP program during the interviews. Lists were made of all CBOs/groups which had benefitted from the NALEP project and groups that were at least 2 years in the project and had not wound-up more than 1 year before survey

period selected. In each site, a sample comprising of about 20 ordinary farmers and 5 farmer representatives or committee members was drawn from the lists of group members. Discussions were also held with key Informants. The key informants comprised of agricultural officers at the district and division levels, representatives of the civil society and chairs of district specific stakeholder forum (SHF). Data were collected between June and August 2010 using pre-tested checklists and structured questionnaires.

3. Results

3.1. Awareness

Generally, farmers were knowledgeable about the aims of the projects that they were involved in. Most farmers indicated the general aim of project as being to provide extension services to the community (52% and 46% in Kirinyaga and Mbeere respectively). A few farmers could also indicate specific interventions of the project. In Kirinyaga, farmers identified: promoting farming as a business, supporting or promoting new agricultural technologies, sustainable practices and value addition (8%, 12%, 12% & 3% respectively). In Mbeere farmers identified: promotion of new technologies, sustainable practices, management & organisational skills (12%, 15% & 8% respectively). Mbeere had the highest level of farmers who were ignorant of the aims of the project. It was noteworthy that none of the farmers were aware that the project is based on the involvement of multiple stakeholders in achieving its objectives.

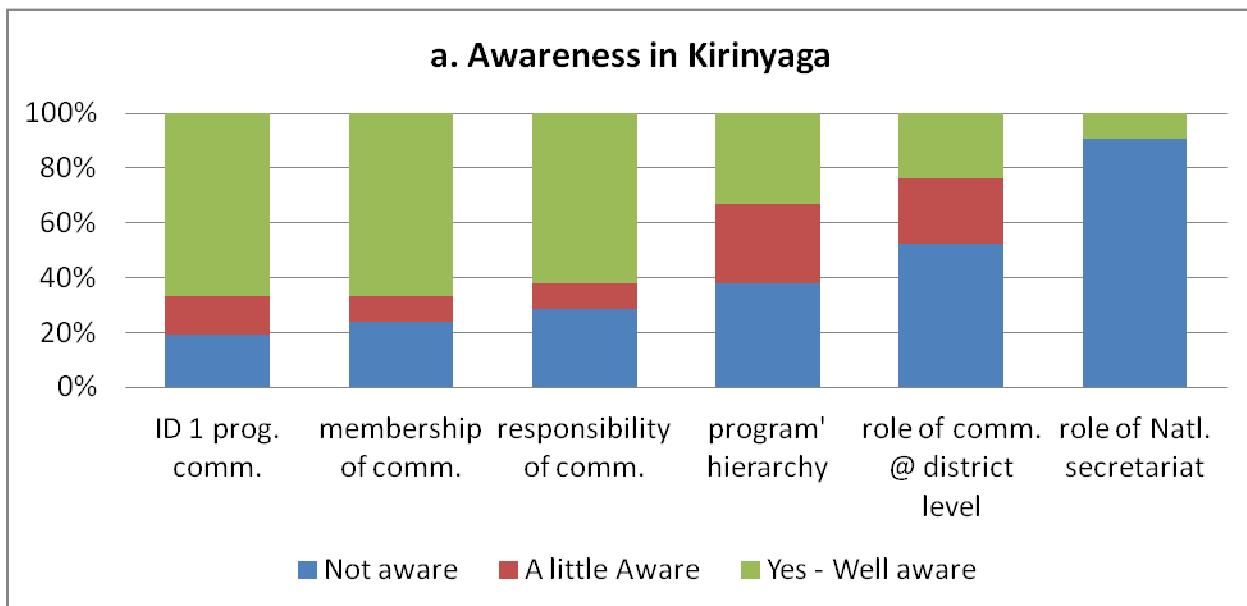
Farmers' knowledge of the guiding principles of the projects in which their group was participating in was assessed using three indicators namely: awareness of the entry and exit strategy; knowledge of dispute resolution (i.e. project enquiries, clarifications and settling differences on matters regarding the project; and in selection of farmers to participate in the project). According to NALEP's guideline procedures, the program duration in a focal area is one year for capacity building while the second year is meant for follow- up. The follow up after capacity building is demand-driven and can extend to the third year depending on how active farmer groups are in demanding for services. In Kirinyaga 61% of farmers thought NALEP operated for 1 year in a focal area. Only 9% and 5% knew that the project operates for 2 and 3 years respectively. 20% of farmers indicated that they did not know the strategy of NALEP. In Mbeere, the proportion of farmers who knew the project's strategy was lower (45%) with 40%

indicating that the project operates in focal area for 1 year while 4% indicated 4 years. A large proportion (55%) did not know the strategy of NALEP. On awareness of the channels for dispute resolution within the project, 20% and 50% of respondents in Kirinyaga and Mbeere respectively did not know whom to contact if a dispute arose in their project. Most however, would contact the ministry of agriculture officers (district officers, technical officers, division level staff and field staff) to resolve a dispute. A few mentioned the location level program committee such as the Focal Area Development Committee (FADC) and other stakeholders. The high number of respondents who did not know the channel for dispute resolution could be attributed to dispute resolution not being given much attention at program inception. Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) remains to be the most widely used for dispute resolution (i.e. project enquiries, clarifications and settling differences according to the perceptions of the interviewees). This underscores the importance of building capacity of MoA staff at all levels on people skills e.g. dispute resolution, communication etc. The option of approaching other collaborators was mentioned by just a few respondents. A collaborative scheme could not only reduce the burden on MOA staff but also bring on-board fresh ideas and strategies for settling disputes.

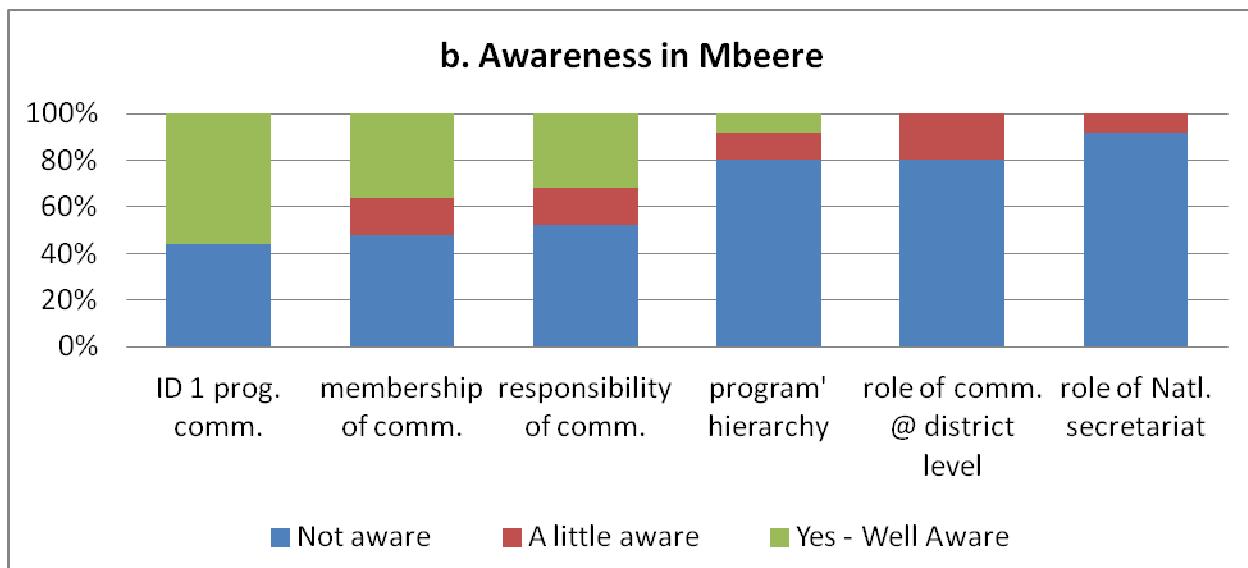
On the project's method of choosing the farmers to work with, 56% and 26% of farmers in Mbeere and Kirinyaga respectively did not know how their groups were chosen to participate in NALEP activities. Perception of most farmers in Kirinyaga was that opportunities are flagged through common interest groups (CIGs) while a few believe only existing groups are chosen. Fulfillment of guidelines provided was one of the ways identified by farmers in Mbeere suggesting that farmers are aware that a proposal needs to be written. Fifteen percent in both Kirinyaga and Mbeere believe that only existing groups are selected. Over 75% of farmers in Mbeere, and 24% in Kirinyaga do not know how NALEP interventions are monitored and evaluated or believe that it is not carried out at all/nor part of project activities. Farmers who had an idea that M&E forms part of project activities indicated that the following areas are monitored. In Kirinyaga district the activities monitored included; impact on farm & on the farmer and technical training while in Mbeere they included; organization & coordination, technical training, project plan, impact on-farm, and the running of committees.

On awareness concerning the structure of program they chose to discuss, respondents were asked to rank them , on a scale of 1-3², their awareness/knowledge on: membership and responsibilities of the committees at various administrative levels; to whom committee reports to in programs' hierarchy; committee's role at division or district level; and role played by the program's secretariat at national level.

Figure 1: Awareness of oversight committees in NALEP



² The value increases with awareness,1= no awareness, 2= little awareness and 3= yes/well aware ,



In Kirinyaga, 80% of the farmers could identify at least one committee of NALEP program while an impressive 75% had some knowledge on the membership of a committee. The figure shows that the level of farmers' awareness declines up the hierarchy with 52% and 90% not aware of the role of the divisional committee and national secretariat respectively (Figure 1a, b). In Mbeere, a similar trend to that in Kirinyaga was observed although the proportion of the farmers that were aware was much lower. Farmers were not aware about the roles of committees higher up the hierarchy. Only 10% were aware to whom the committee they identified reported to up the program's administrative hierarchy.

3.2. Benefits and Satisfaction Derived From Programs

Respondents were asked to list the benefits they perceived they would get/obtain from the project and on a scale of 1 – 7 to indicate their level of satisfaction with project interventions and benefits from the project. The respondents had the option of selecting more than one development program to discuss. The benefits derived from development projects included: training and capacity building, provision of inputs, infrastructural development, grants/seed money, exposure tours and visits amongst others. The respondents expressed an above average level of satisfaction with project activities and in the benefits derived from the NALEP program. Farmers in Kirinyaga expressed greater satisfaction compared with those in Mbeere.

3.2.1. Project/program oversight committees

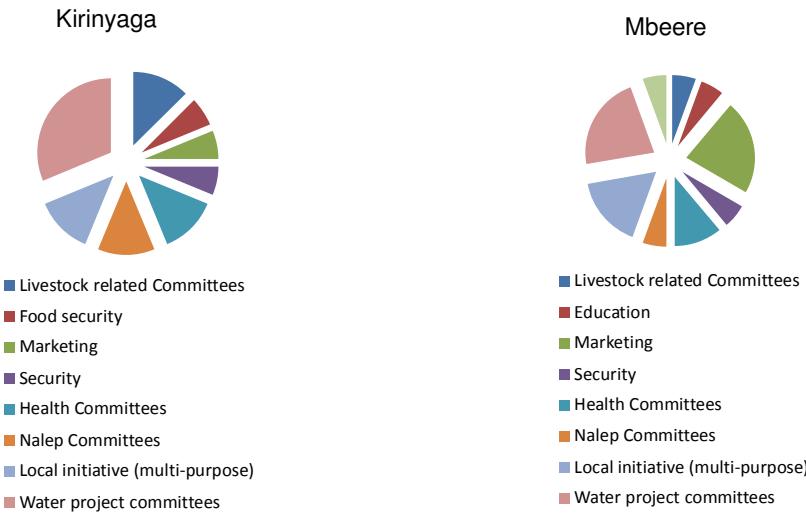
Farmers first mentioned/identified at least one oversight committee at each of the administrative levels (village, location, division and district levels) and then, based on their perception, ranked the management in each committee identified. Committees comprise of persons elected by group members or appointed by another authority to steer the activities of a group or a project. Such committees normally comprise a chair person, a treasurer, a secretary and committee members. A committee may also be a legal entity charged with the execution of certain responsibilities. A wide array of committees was identified.

Group level committees: the groups comprised of people with a common interest and membership was by registration at a fee. Membership was restricted to persons whom according to group members fitted in well with groups aspirations/principles/rules. There were numerous groups in the two study sites and hence numerous committees.

Village level committees: These too were numerous in the two sites. The committees were grouped according to: their purpose such as marketing, security, health, water etc (Figure 2); or the programs under which they were formed (e.g. NALEP committees). The most common were groups related to water resource development or management, NALEP and health related issues. In addition there were village level committees with multiple purposes.

Figure 2: Committees found at the village

Village Level Committees

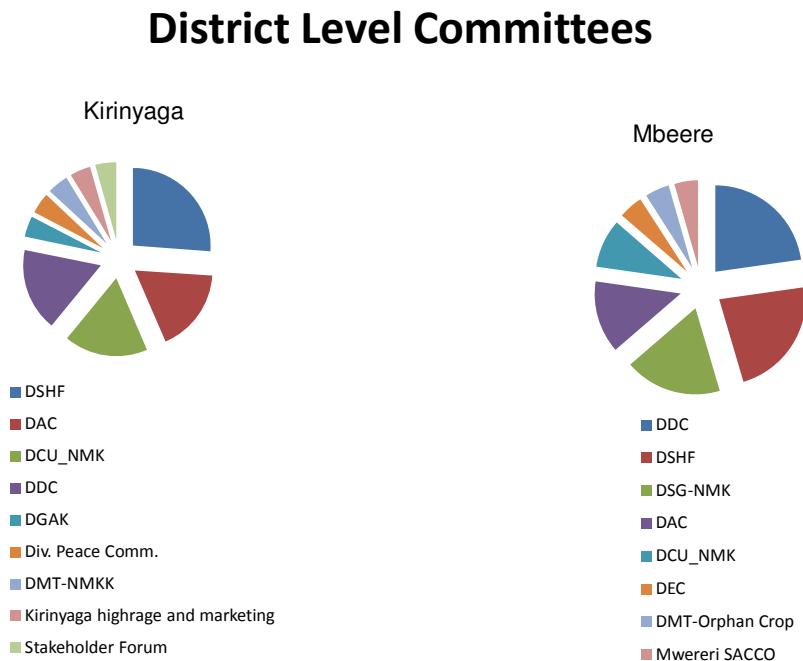


Location and division level committees: In Kirinyaga, respondents identified eight location and eight division level committees. Most respondents mentioned FADC followed by the local leaders meeting. Other committees mentioned were water-project related or others like Kenya Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP). At the division level the most commonly mentioned were: the Stakeholder Forums (SHF), Sub- district Development Committee (sub DDC), Sub- District Agricultural Committees (sub DAC), Division Implementation Team and the Sub- District Coordinating Unit (sub-DCU) for Njaa Marufuku Kenya (NMK) project. In Mbeere, 14 different committees were identified at the location level. Like in Kirinyaga, FADC was most commonly mentioned followed by the local leaders meeting. Others were committees of local initiatives as well as project related initiatives. At the division level, committees mentioned were the District Development Committees (DDC), District Stakeholder Forum (DSHF), District Steering Group (DSG), District Agricultural Committee (DAC), District Coordinating Unit (DCU), District Environmental Committee (DEC), District Management Team (DMT)-orphan crop & Mwireri Saving and Credit Cooperatives SACCO.

District level committees: Eight and nine district level committees were identified in Mbeere and Kirinyaga districts (Figure 3) respectively. The main committees were the Stakeholders Forum,

District Development Committee, District Agricultural Committee and the District Coordination Unit for NMK. Others mentioned were specific to a district e.g. the peace and marketing committees in Kirinyaga; and the orphan crop and Mwireri SACCO committees in Mbeere. Nearly all the district level committees are replicated at the division level. Very few farmers could mention any NALEP committees at the district or division levels indicating there is little awareness of the oversight committees which are at higher administrative levels.

Figure 3: Committees at the district level

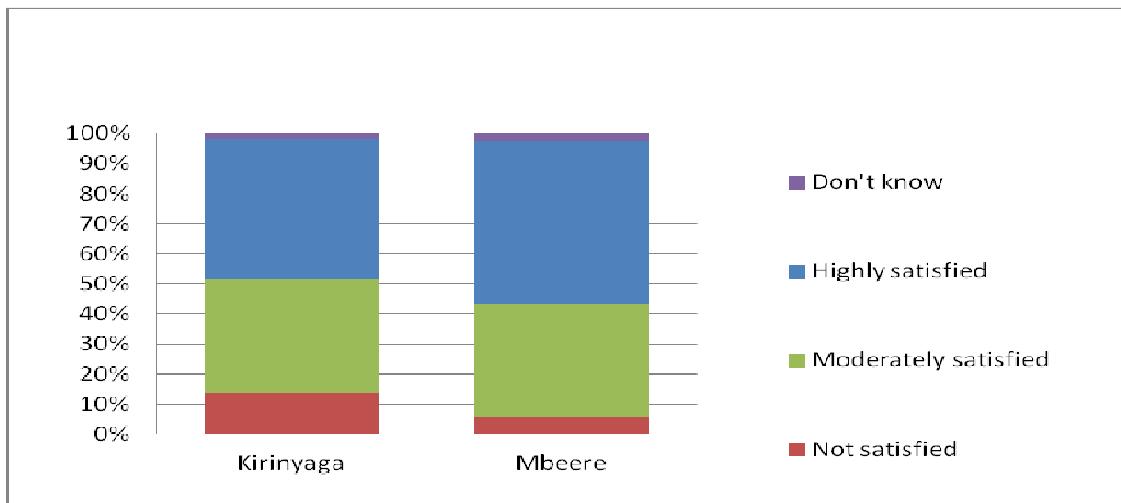


3.2.2. Satisfaction with management in committees

Following the listing of committees, farmers were asked, on a scale of 0 to 3 to rank their satisfaction with the management of the project committees they had listed. Most of them indicated that they were moderately to highly satisfied with the management (Figure 4). Further dis-aggregation of this information revealed that most farmers were highly satisfied with management in group and village level committees. Their satisfaction however falls slightly with the management of committees that are higher up the administrative level. A stronger picture is observed in Kirinyaga where farmers satisfaction with management drastically reduced up the

administrative heirachy. It was however noted that whereas most farmers were comfortable ranking management at the group, village and location committees, this was not the case for committees at division and district levels. This may be an indication of their ignorance/lack of information regarding committees that are further away or removed from them.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with management in project committees

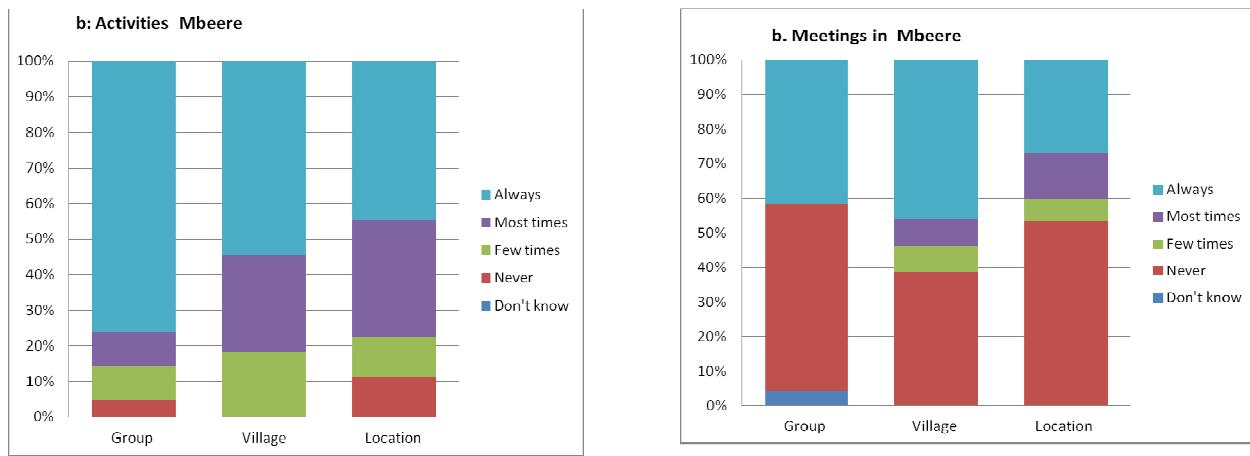


3.3. Participation of the community

3.3.1. In project activities & committee meetings

Farmers' involvement in project activities and management meetings is vital because: it creates a sense of ownership in the activities being undertaken and in decisions taken thereby increasing the likelihood of success of projects in terms of being relevant and meeting the community's/farmer felt needs or priorities. Respondents were asked to indicate their involvement in activities and meetings at three administrative levels for the projects they had identified. Figure 5a, b shows that farmers mostly participated in project activities at the group level. Their participation was least at location level project activities an indication that participation is lower in project activities that are further from them.

Figure 5a, b: Farmer participation in project meetings and activities in Mbeere

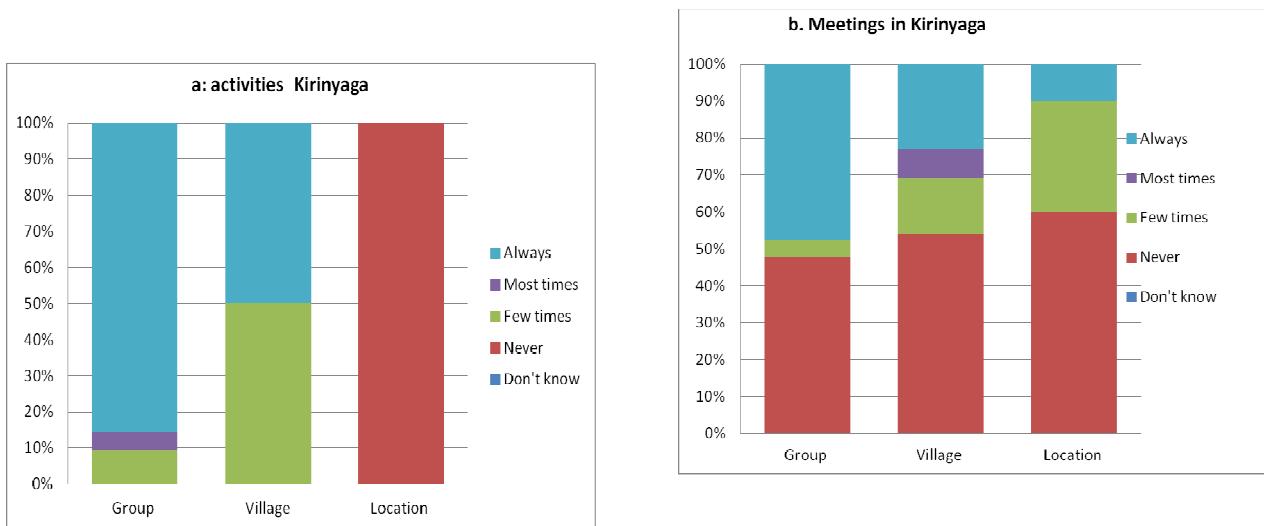


In Mbeere, farmer participation was high in project activities (Figure 5a) with only a small proportion indicating that they were never involved. Their involvement was highest in group activities (over 75% said they are always involved; 85% are involved most or all times; less than 5% are never involved), followed by village level activities and lastly location level activities (46% always, 76% most times to always but 10% never involved). Farmer involvement in meetings called by management committees (i.e. where resolutions are made or important decisions related to project ratified) was relatively lower across all the administrative levels (Figure 5b). Involvement was lowest at group (41%) and location (40%) levels and highest at the village level meetings. The proportion of farmers indicating that they were never involved in such meetings was alarmingly high (38%, 50%, 59% at village, location and group level meetings respectively).

In Kirinyaga, farmer participation in project activities was at group and village level but not at the location level activities. Their participation was highest at the group level where 90% of them participated always or most times. Their participation in village level project activities was much lower (50% always involved and the rest only a few times). Farmer participation in meetings called by management committees was declining up the administration hierarchy (Figure 6b). Participation was highest in group level meetings with 50% always being involved while at the village and location level involvement was 30% and 10% respectively. A large proportion 50%

and 60%, indicated they never participate in project meetings at village and location levels respectively. Low participation in meetings beyond the group level committees has serious implications since these are the levels where scaling-up is affected and where resolutions are made or important decisions ratified.

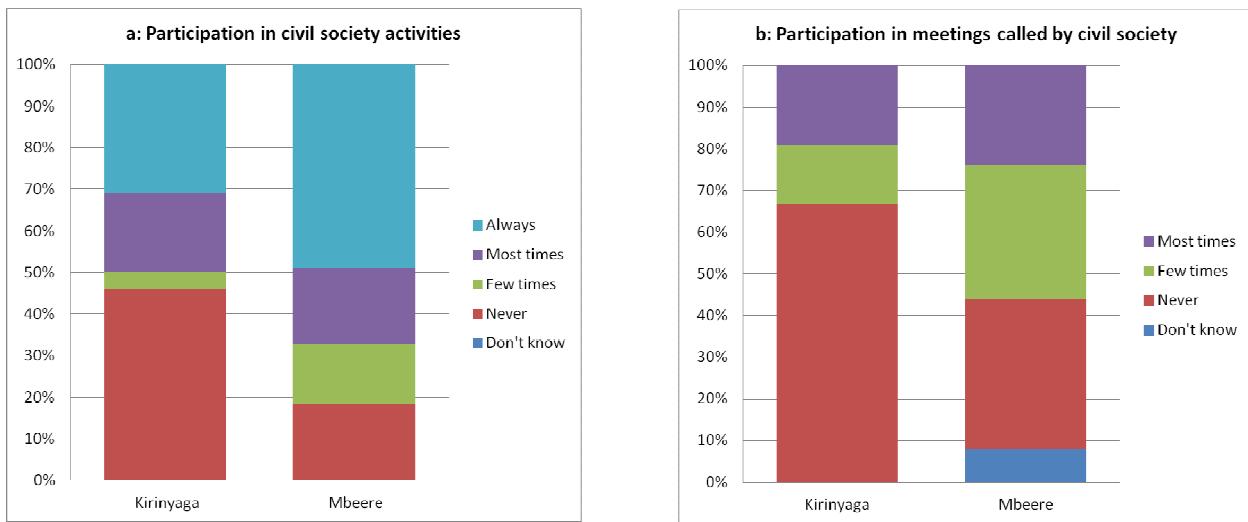
Figure 6a, b: Farmer participation in project meetings and activities in Kirinyaga



3.3.2. In activities and meetings organized by civil society (NGOs)

The overall picture was that there are various types of non-governmental organizations or civil society present in the study sites. About 31% are local initiatives such as village water projects, 11% are faith based and 48% are initiatives of outsiders. The latter are for example water projects supported by the government and run or started by the locals whilst others are initiatives supported or affiliated with international institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Figure 7a, b: Farmer involvement in activities and meetings organized by non-governmental organizations



Farmer involvement in project activities initiated by non-governmental organizations was lowest in Kirinyaga (30% always, 50% always to most of the time, 50% never or just a few times) and highest in Mbeere South (50% always, 70% most times or always, 30% never or few times). Farmer involvement in meetings of project under the civil society was much lower with upto 68% and 40% in Kirinyaga and Mbeere respectively indicating that they never attended or attended just a few times (Figure 7a, b). The level of participation could be a reflection of community's level of awareness of civil society's presence in the two districts or/and the interventions.

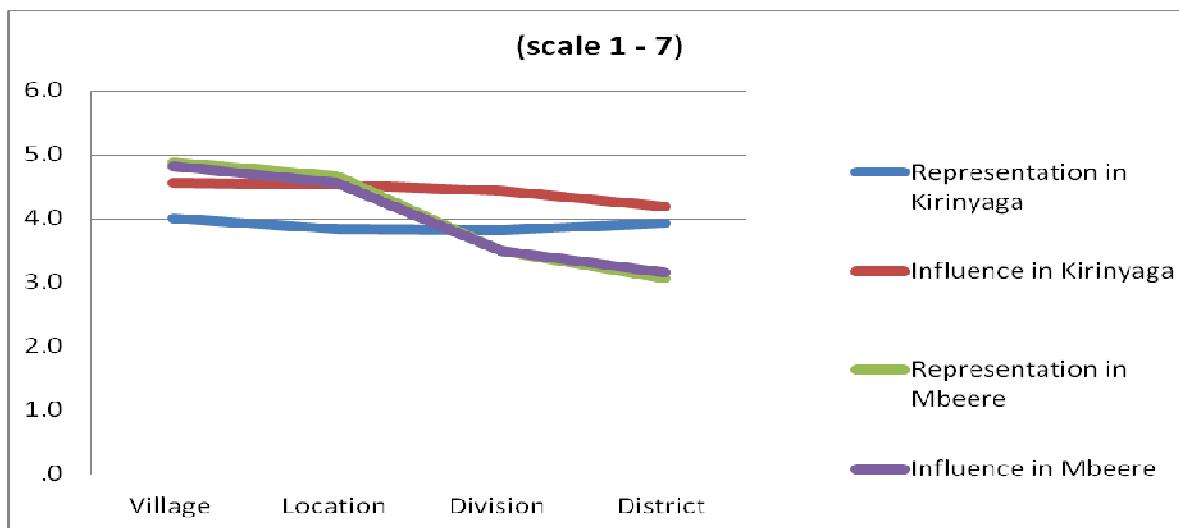
3.4. Perception of community representation and influence

3.4.1. Farmer representation and farmers influence

On a scale of 1-7, farmers were asked to rank their their representation and influence in the local committees.

Farmers perceive their representation to be highest in village and location level committees (Figure 8). In Mbeere farmers perceived their representation to decline steadily in committees at the division and district levels whilst in Kirinyaga, the perception was that their representation was quite even across the administrative levels. Regarding their influence, Figure 8 shows that they perceived their influence to be lower in higher administration levels. In Mbeere the decline is quite steep as one moves up the administrative hierarchy. A surprising finding was that Kirinyaga farmers' perceived their influence to be higher than their representation.

Figure 8: Farmer perception on their representation and influence in committees at different administrative levels



The issues perceived to be influenced by committees at various administrative levels are listed in Table 2.

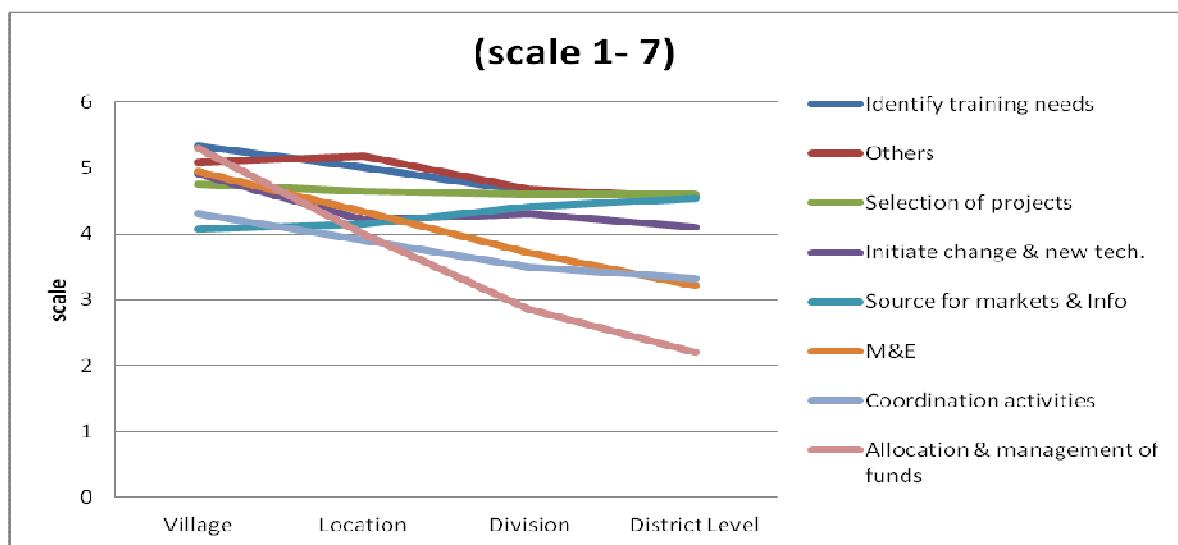
Table 2: Farmers perception on issues influenced by local committees

1. Selection of suitable projects and distribution of resources
2. Mobilization of members
3. Allocation and management of project funds
4. Monitoring, Audits and supervises use of project funds
5. Source for markets and market information
6. Communicate change, upgrade and facilitate new technologies

7. Identify training needs and lobby for project inclusion in future interventions
8. Promote awareness on environment conservation, nutrition and or epidemic control
9. Coordinates and oversees project-groups-community activities
10. Provision of access to inputs
11. Quality of extension services and access

The perception by respondents was that the influence of local committees on most issues is highest at the village level but declines as one goes up the administrative hierarchy (Figure 9). Farmers perceived their greatest influence to be in identifying training needs and in selection of projects. Their influence in monitoring, audit and supervision of use of funds was perceived to greatly decline in higher levels.

Figure 9: Farmer perception on issues influenced by local committees



Site specific perceptions on influence of different committees, on issues discussed at various levels, are shown/discussed next.

Mbeere: Group level committees in Mbeere were perceived to have low influence on issues beyond the group (Figure 10). Moreover, the group committee was perceived to have the lowest influence across all administrative levels. The influence of the village level committees was

perceived to be at par with location committees on matters at the village and location levels, however it was perceived to have greater influence at division and district levels. The location level committees' influence was high at both the village and location but fell drastically beyond the location i.e. at division and district levels. Division level committees have greater influence on issues discussed at the village and location level but its influence was lower than that of the district committee at the district level. Finally, the influence of district level committee was perceived to be even on issues discussed at all administrative levels particularly location going up to district level. It has the highest influence on matters discussed at the district level.

Figure 10: Influence of various committees at different administrative levels in Mbeere

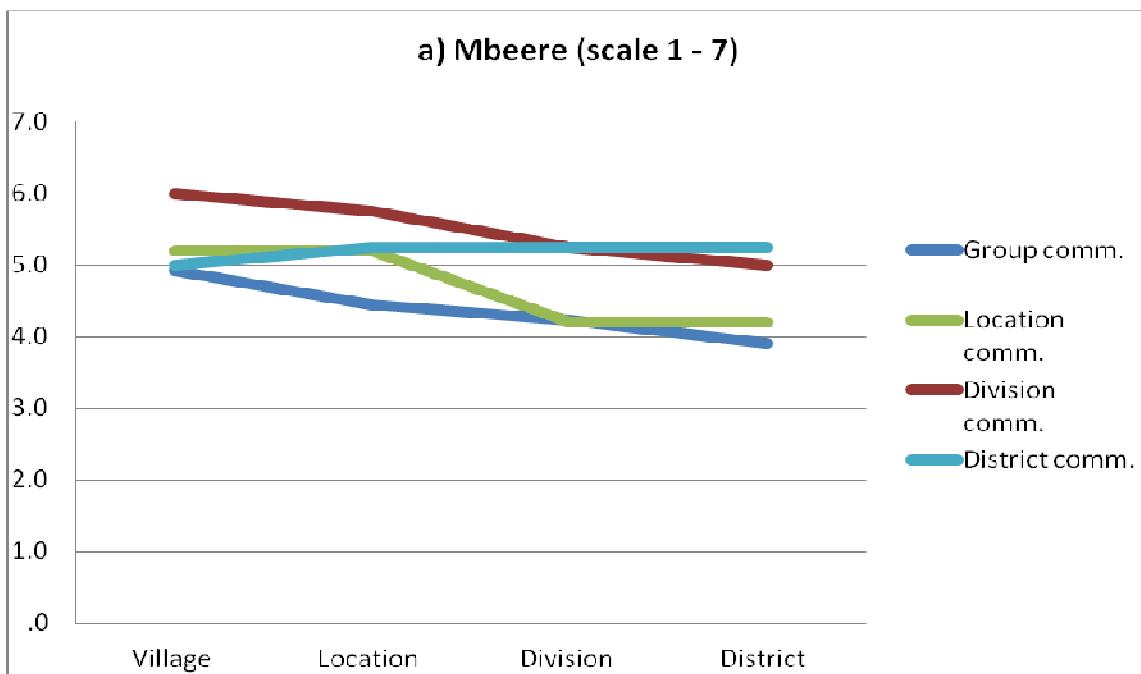
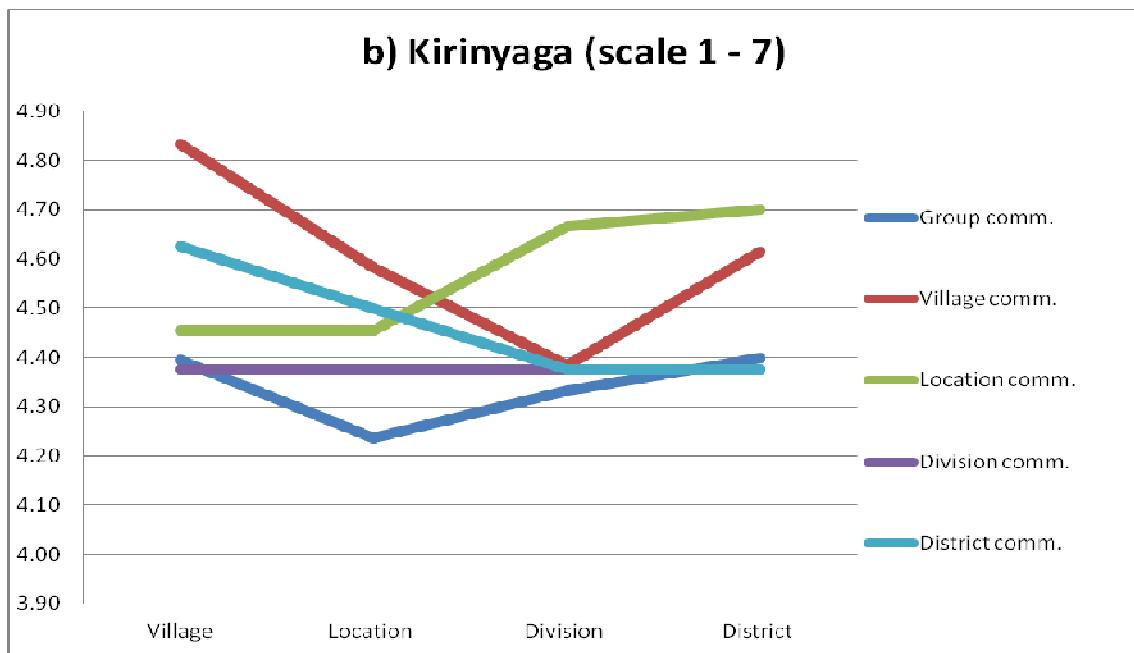


Figure 11: Influence of various committees at different administrative levels in Kirinyaga

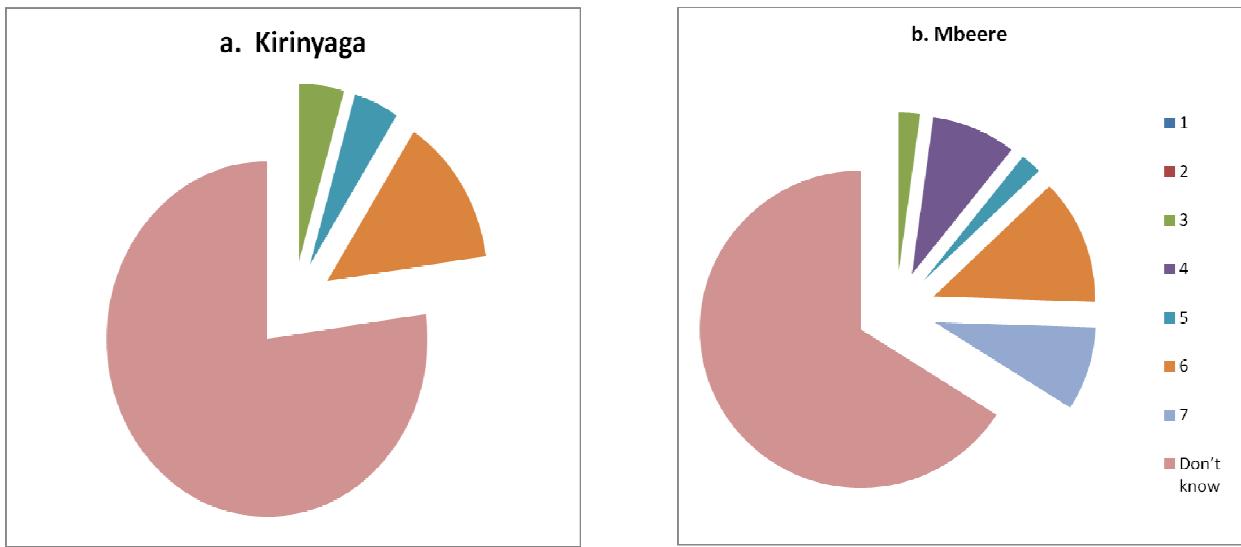


In *Kirinyaga*: The perception was that group level committees' influence on issues declines outside the village but was perceived to be high at division and district levels (Figure 11). This may be because their group leaders were farmer representatives at the higher level committees. Location level committee' influence was high at both the division and district levels. District and division level committees had the same level of influence on issues discussed at the division and district level. The influence of division level committee was even across all administrative levels. Surprisingly, district level committees were perceived to have a high influence on matters discussed at the village and location levels.

3.4.2. Influence of Civil Society

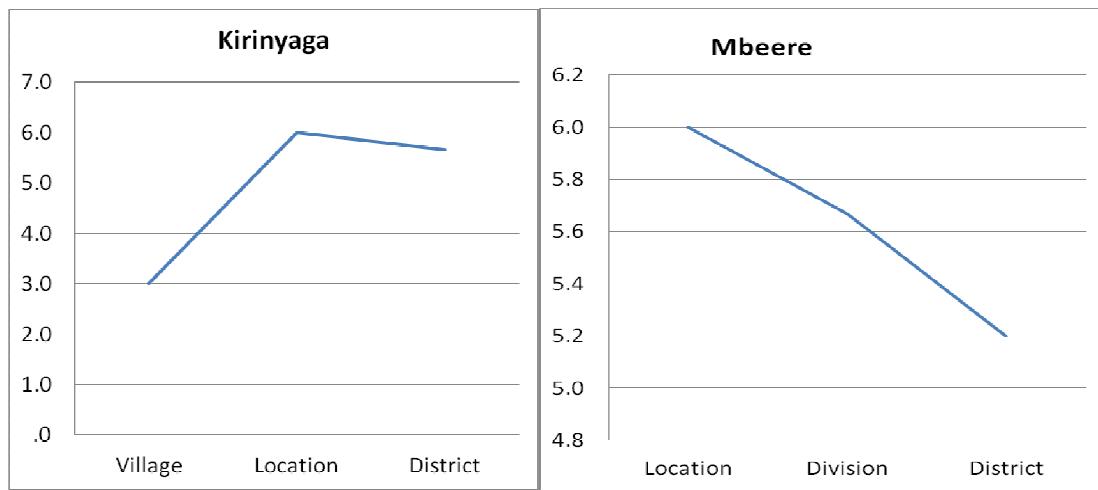
Our assessment is that there was some level of awareness, among farmers, regarding the civil society, however, there was also a significant number who were unaware/did not know (Figure 12 a, b). According to respondents, the committees influenced by the civil society were: DSHF, DAC, DDC, DIV. SHF, sub- DAC, DSG and DMT. Among the initiatives categorised as the civil society, local initiatives and farmer based organisations (FBOs) were perceived to influence a whole range of committees (10 – 14) while international organisations, research institutions and farmer unions are perceived to influence fewer (1 – 3) committees. There was a significant number of respondents who did not know which committees are influenced by the civil society.

Figure 12a, b: Perception (scale 1 – 7) on NGO influence on committees



In Mbeere, farmer perception was that the civil society influence was highest at the location level and the influence declines up the administrative hierarchy. Conversely, in Kirinyaga, the influence of civil society was perceived to be highest at the district level and lowest at the village (Figure 13a, b). There were however many who selected the option '*'don't know'*' (45% in Mbeere and 70% in Kirinyaga). This indicates the low level of awareness of the civil society's level of influence. Alternatively it could mean that the civil society has low influence.

Figure 13a, b: Farmer perception of NGOs' influence at different administrative levels.



3.5. Evidence of Representation and Participation in Oversight Organs at the District Level

Using minutes of meetings of the various committees at the district level, the actual representation and participation of various stakeholders in district level agricultural sector committees was established.

Table 3: Membership in oversight (governing or management) committees at the District level

Name of committee	Total Number in Committee	Representation in Committee (%)					
		male	female	Govt. Ministries	Farmer Representatives	Civil Society	
Stakeholders Forum (SHF)-KIR	30	70	30	33	53	7	
District Coordination Unit (DCU)-KIR	8	50	50	75	13	13	
District Agricultural Committee (DAC)-KIR	15	73	27	73	27	0	
District Coordination Unit (DCU)-MB	15	80	20	87	7	7	
District Agricultural Committee DAC)-MB	21	76	24	81	19	0	

District Agricultural Committee (DAC); Stakeholders Forum (SHF); District Coordination Unit (DCU);

KIR=Kirinyaga;MB=Mbeere

The public sector was represented in oversight committees for DAC, NALEP and NMK by a wide range of government departments including: Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock, Probation, Social Services, Gender and Sport, Education and Fisheries. The private sector was represented by farmers and private companies. There was only one private company participating in Kirinyaga (a bank) but none in the agricultural committees in Mbeere. There were a few NGOs participating in oversight committees, with KADI participating in Mbeere and ACK, CDM and CAAAs in Kirinyaga.

Membership in the three oversight bodies at the district level ranges from 8 to 30 members (Table 3). The SHF in Kirinyaga had the greatest membership while DCUs in Kirinyaga had the lowest membership. In terms of gender representation, the district coordination unit in Kirinyaga had well balanced representation of males and females (50:50) while the DCU and DAC in Mbeere had low female representation with females comprising 20 and 24% respectively. In terms of stakeholder representation, we found the private sector was the least represented in all committees while government departments formed the bulk of the membership in all but the SHF. Membership in DCUs was overwhelmingly government departments and so was the membership in all committees in Mbeere. Farmer representation in district committees ranged from only 7% in Mbeere's DCU to 53% in Kirinyaga's SHF. The highest representation of civil society was 13% in Kirinyaga's DCU but was totally absent in some key committees.

Table 4: Frequency of District Level Committee Meetings

	Name of committee	No. of planned meetings July 2009-June 2010	No. of times committee met over 12 months			
			1st quarter	2nd quarter	3rd quarter	4th quarter
Kirinyaga	Stakeholder Forum	4	1	1	1	1
	DCU	4	1	1	1	1
	DAC	1	0	0	0	0
Mbeere	DCU	1	0	1	0	0
	DAC	1	0	0	1	0

In terms of scheduling of district level committee meetings, Table 4 indicates that the SHF and DCU in Kirinyaga had planned for quarterly meetings and only one meeting for DAC. All but the DAC met as planned. In Mbeere, the one meeting which was planned for DCU and for DAC was held. DAC meetings were less frequent and the main reason given for not meeting more frequently was lack of adequate funding to support travel expenses for stakeholders. On the attendance in meetings of different oversight committees, government ministries were always represented and the farmer representative too except in Kirinyaga DCU where no farmer was present in any meeting during the year. Attendance was low for the civil society and the private sector (Table 5).

Table 5: Stakeholders Attendance in Committee Meetings

District	Name of committee	Total No. of meetings held	No. of meetings a category of stakeholder was represented				
			NGO	Farmer Rep	Private sector	Parastatal	Govt.
Kirinyaga	Stakeholders	4	4	4	3	0	4
	DCU	4	1	0	0	0	4
	DAC	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mbeere	DCU	1	1	1	0	0	1
	DAC	1	0	1	0	0	1

4. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

It is evident from the numerous committees or organs formed at various levels for governing initiatives by government/development partners and for tackling challenges facing the community that there have been real efforts to decentralize governance in the agri-food system. Moreover, it is evident from the wide array of issues handled by committees, including: health, water, food, education and infrastructural development e.g. roads, that the committees are addressing the needs of the community. These committees, particularly the ones initiated as oversight bodies for development projects, have been charged with similar tasks of vetting proposals and M & E. The membership of the committees is drawn from government departments, farmer representatives and civil society. Each government department sits in each

of the committees or organs operating at the district or division levels. Greater efficiency may be achieved by consolidating these functions to one oversight committee. We observed vertical linkages between the organs at higher administrative levels (district, division) and the organs in lower administrative levels (village, group with clear lines of communication between them. However, we found little or no formal horizontal linkages between organs or committees serving different development programs. There were however linked through departmental heads who sat in almost all the committees.

Key committees do not meet as often as they should or as schedule due to lack of funding.. Low/poor funding of local committees also curtails good/effective farmer representation and gender balance in committees. It emerged that committees at the lowest levels (group to location level) mainly influence the identification of community needs while their influence on resource/fund allocation and in accountability (M&E) is low. Meanwhile, committees at the district level influence selection of activities and actions, but are particularly influential in resource allocation and in M&E (accountability).

Farmer representatives are found in each of the committees at all administrative levels, however their representation reduces to only one or two in the highly influential district committees like DAC and DCU. Consequently, farmers perceive their influence to be high at the lower administrative levels but this influence declines up the administrative hierarchy. And although the civil society is also assumed to represent farmers at higher levels, farmers had little knowledge on the issues influenced by the civil society and quite a number were unaware of the civil society operating in their areas or their agenda/activities.

Given the status of farmer presence and voice in governance of the agri-food system, the following is recommended. Merge/harmonize oversight committees to avoid duplication of efforts, reduce costs and overburdening staff & community representatives. Increase in resource allocation at the district and division level oversight committees to enhance representation and participation in governance of the agri-food system. Conduct civic education for farmer groups emphasizing on ways of increasing their influence beyond identification of activities/actions to the important realm of resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation (accountability). In addition, it is necessary to sensitize them (farmer groups) on issues that they can influence and

how to lobby effectively. A strengthened civil society at the district and lower administrative levels in rural areas can contribute to increased food security and incomes. Civic education is therefore needed on the roles and importance of a strong civil society in rural areas.

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Annexes

A1: Mandates of committees at the group, village and location³ levels

Mandate of Committees		
Group Level	Village Level	Location Level
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate day to day activities 2. Prioritizing project and exploring opportunity for advancement 3. Supervise, settle conflicts and report back on activities 4. Mobilizing and maintaining membership registry 5. Plan, Dev. strategies and organize project activities 6. Awareness creation and offering advice on cross-cutting issues 7. Proposal writing, sourcing and utilization of funds 8. Train and disseminate information 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mobilizing & keep members registry 2. Coordinate day to day activities 3. Project Prioritization 4. Sourcing for fund 5. Community welfare 6. Plan project activities 7. Allocation of tasks 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awareness creation and offering advice on cross-cutting issues 2. Coordinate day to day activities 3. Improve gen. welfare of the community 4. Mobilizing and maintaining membership registry 5. Plan, Dev. strategies and organize project activities 6. Prioritizing project and exploring opportunity for advancement 7. Proposal writing, sourcing and utilization of funds 8. Represents group interests in different fora 9. Supervise, settle conflicts and report back on activities 10. Train and disseminate information

³ Awareness of grass root committees at sub location level was repetitive since most committees at the sub-location levels were also present at the location or amalgamated to form bigger location committees.