



Vol. 10 | Social and development concerns in Africa (c)

Vol. 10 Article 1/10 | October 2019

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(An International Publisher for Academic and Scientific Resources)

EAC INTEGRATION AND PEOPLE-CENTEREDNESS: ASSESSMENT OF EFFORTS MADE BY KENYA AS MEMBER STATE

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Editing Oversight

Impericals Consultants
International Limited

Abstract: *Lack of people-centeredness has been mentioned widely in the literature of the old EAC Integration as among the major factors for the organization's collapse in 1977. This paper is based on a study that was conducted to examine EAC Integration and People-Centeredness and assessed efforts made by Kenya as Member State. I use both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from four institutions: Ministry of EAC and Regional Development, Media, Civil society and the Private sector and from 40 Kenyan citizens purposely selected from small scale traders and Women groups and Associations. I find that there are no policies on people-centeredness for both state and non-state actors which has challenged their efforts in enhancing the principle of people-centeredness and the success of the EAC integration process in general. I recommend continuous sensitization through local media to enhance people-centeredness amongst Kenyan citizens and the EAC citizens in general.*

Key words: *Integration, People-centeredness*

1.1 Introduction

The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community guides the work of the community. In principle, ordinary citizens are the driving force behind the integration process. Article 5 (1) of the Treaty for the establishment of the East African Community calls for “*people-centered economic, political, social, and cultural development on the basis of balance, equity, and mutual benefit of the member states.*” From the treaty, the following was noted in Article 7 as the key objectives for the establishment of the community, which appear to be directly linked to people centeredness: Improving the standard of living and quality of life of the people of East Africa; Promoting the active participation and benefit of the people in development; and Strengthening

and improving the role of women in development. It is important to note that the involvement of the people stood out as the key element of people-centeredness from the findings of the study.

1.2 Statement of Problem

EAC Integration efforts suffered a severe blow with its collapse in 1977. The Preamble of the EAC Treaty notes that one of the reasons for the collapse of the old EAC was non adherence to the people-centered principle. According to Onyango (2005), there was no attempt to involve the citizens in the old EAC. Kivuva (2014), confirms Onyango's sentiments by indicating that lack of involvement of the people with concentration of power on major decisions to governmental institutions was among the factors that led to the collapse of the old EAC. From the new EAC Treaty, the game has changed with people-centeredness emphasized as an operational principle for the success of the new EAC. According to Protas and Romward (2015), the principle of people-centeredness aims at bringing mutual development to the EAC citizens. However, findings from a study conducted by Arita (2014), themed "*Awareness levels of the integration process in East Africa; A case study of Kenya*" contradicts that. The study concluded that the ordinary Kenyan citizens were oblivious of the EAC Integration process.

1.3 Research Objectives

The paper was guided by the following objectives:

- a) To identify the actors involved in sensitizing the citizens about EAC integration in Kenya and if they have achieved their objectives.
- b) To analyze strategies already in place to enhance people-centeredness in Kenya.
- c) To propose strategies that can be used to improve the principle of people-centeredness in Kenya

1.4 Definition of Keyword

People-Centeredness

People-centeredness is a complex process. According to Raeburn and Rootman (1997), It refers to an approach of planning, running and implementing certain projects by incorporating the opinions and values of the people for whose interests the project is established.

On the same line, Korten (1984), defines people-centeredness as an approach to international development that focuses on improving local communities' self-reliance, social justice, and participatory decision making. It incorporates the values of justice, sustainability, and inclusiveness. Korten further lists four central elements of people-centeredness as listed below:

- a. Democratic processes.
- b. Government accountability.
- c. Access to relevant information.
- d. Gender equality.

In the context of regional integration, people-centeredness refers to the "special glue" that holds the Community and its people together. It refers to the involvement of EAC citizens in any activity that is expected to require their opinions (Protas and Romward, 2015). In the EAC Treaty, the following was noted in Article 7 as the key objectives for the establishment of the community,

which appear to be directly linked to people centeredness: Improving the standard of living and quality of life of the people of East Africa; Promoting the active participation and benefit of the people in development and Strengthening and improving the role of women in development.

1.5 Theoretical and Literature Review

Theoretical Review

This study is grounded on the Neo functionalism theory. The major proponent of neo-functionalism theory is Ernst Haas in his study, *The uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces 1950-1957* (Cini, 2004). This theory is a theory of international relations that places major emphasis on the role of non-state actors in providing the dynamic for further integration. Member states remain important actors in the process of regional integration. The theory emphasizes on states integrating their functional economic areas which further leads to integration in political areas.

The theory is therefore applicable to this study because it derives that non- state actor in this case key actors involved in enhancing people-centeredness in Kenya plays an important role in Regional process. It emphasizes the fact that Ministry of EAC and Regional Development in Kenya as a state actor and the EAC cannot be left with the sole responsibility of driving the regional integration agenda without the key inputs of non-sate actors namely: The Civil society, Private sector and the media for this study. This therefore is important in explaining involvement of people in the integration process as required by the EAC treaty.

Literature Review

Involvement of the People

Mwapachu (2013), posits that successful Regional Integration of the EAC has to start from the grassroots. He supports his argument from Jain (1985), who wrote the book, “*Grass Without Roots*”. He concludes this argument by: “*The EAC must be driven by a ‘grassroots’ ethos and thrust based on broad citizen participation at all levels of the East African society.*” From a report, “*Participation of Citizens in the East African Community Integration Process*” (2013), indicates that the EAC Treaty has no established modalities on citizen participation in the EAC Integration and notes that the term “citizens” rarely appears on the Treaty. The report further notes that there are three groups that feature prominently in the EAC Treaty as follows:

- I. Private sector.
- II. Civil Society Organizations.
- III. Women.

The report states that the EAC promotes peoples’ participation largely through the above three groups. From the report, citizens’ or peoples’ involvement in the EAC Integration process can be achieved through collecting their opinion on a particular issue. The shortcoming of this is that only provides an opportunity for some EAC citizens to participate, instead of involving all EAC citizens.

Women Empowerment and People- Centeredness in EAC

Articles 121 and 122 of the EAC Treaty acknowledges that women make a significant contribution

towards the process of socio-economic transformation and sustainable growth. It is therefore critical to involve women in economic and social development programs of the partner states. Article 5 (e) of the Treaty further emphasizes on the mainstreaming of gender in all its endeavors and the enhancement of the role of women in cultural, social, political, economic and technological development.

There are various EAC policy framework documents that recognize the significant role of women in driving the EAC Integration forward such as the EAC Gender and Community Development Strategic Plan and the 4th EAC Development Strategy (2011-2016). It is also important to note that the EAC organizes Conferences on the Role of Women in Socio-Economic Development in Business with a main aim of addressing challenges facing business women in the EAC region. The first ever Conference was held in Kigali, Rwanda in August 2011 and the second in Nairobi, Kenya in August 2015.

Improving the standard of living and quality of life of the people of East Africa

According to Article 5 (1) of the Treaty, the EAC aims at widening and deepening cooperation among Partner States in political, economic, social, cultural, research, technology, security, defense and judicial affairs fields. There is no doubt that the beneficiaries of these initiatives by EAC Partner States are the common people in the community. To that effect, the EAC Treaty states that cooperation among Partner States would accelerate economic development in the region and as a result the standard of living and quality of life of the people would be improved (Article 5, 3b). Among many strategies worked out to realize these objectives, was the adoption of the Protocol on the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market.

Actors in EAC Integration in Kenya

The Civil Society

The 5th EAC Development Strategy (2018), states two expectations of the Civil society from the Community in pursuit to enhance people-centeredness and ultimately, the process of EAC Integration as follows:

- I. Participation in the democratisation process and in advocacy support for all good causes of the Community.
- II. Effective feedback reporting mechanisms, especially at the level of national parliaments, civil society, the media, as well as grassroots levels.

Article 127 of the EAC Treaty recognizes the important role of CSOs in promoting EAC Integration and stipulates that partner states should create an enabling environment for them. According to Landberg (2006), civil society promotes consultation between various stakeholders so as to constantly safeguard the interests of the ordinary citizens in the integration agenda and enable decision making about integration issues. According to Koech (2005), the civil society and the media complement each other as a vehicle for disseminating information about the benefits of EAC Integration pillars.

This study focused on the East African Civil Society Organizations' Forum (EACSOFF), which was founded in 2007. EACSOFF's vision is an empowered citizenry in East Africa. It is a central point for CSO's whose major aims are to promote an East African society based on friendship, solidarity and mutual respect; that endeavors to build an independent, self-reliant economy; upholds respect

of human rights; fosters healthy traditions and cultural norms; and fights for democracy, rule of law, social justice, good governance and people centered development and protects the interests of the forum (EACSOE Annual General Meeting Report, 2017).

Private sector

Article 127 of the EAC Treaty calls the member states to create and promote an enabling environment for participation of non- state actors including the private sector in the EAC Integration process. The private sector is therefore recognized as an actor in the EAC integration process by the treaty. The 5th EAC Development Strategy (2018), recognizes the Private sector, particularly the business community as one of the key stakeholders and states its major expectation from the Community in pursuit to enhance people-centeredness and ultimately, the process of EAC Integration as: Effective feedback reporting mechanisms, especially at the level of national parliaments, private sector and the media.

The Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) is the apex body and single voice of the private sector, with a membership that comprises more than sixty business membership organizations, and in excess of 180 corporate organizations. According to the organization's mission its strategic focus is advocacy on behalf of the private sector on high level cross-cutting areas, and the coordination of private sector engagement in private-public sector dialogue (KEPSA, 2019).

Ministry of EAC and Regional Development

Kenya's Ministry of EAC and Regional Development creation is in tandem with the Treaty for establishment of EAC and directives of the Summit. The government of Kenya through MEACRD's strategic plan, shows commitment to creation and promotion of an enabling environment for the participation of non-state actors in the EAC Integration process.

From Article 127 of the EAC Treaty, the Partner states commit themselves to adopt programs that would strengthen and promote participation of the private sector in formulation and implementation of the integration process policies. MEACRD's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 whose theme is. "*Deepening and widening East African Integration and enhancing Regional development for improved livelihoods for all Kenyans.*" Prioritizes EAC Integration at the national level as an important policy instrument for initiating and fast-tracking economic growth for the Government of Kenya.

The main goal of this strategic plan is to guide the Ministry's operations in the mission for effective and effective service delivery to Kenyan citizens.

Among the mandates of the Ministry includes: Implementation of the EAC Treaty; Promotion and fast tracking of EAC Integration; Co-ordination of government's participation in EAC affairs and co-ordination of Regional Development Authorities and Policy on East African Community.

Media

According to Nasir (2013), the media is almost as necessary as food and clothing today, and has a role to inform people about the latest happenings around them and also around the world. Oranga (2014), posit that for the EAC citizens to appreciate and understand the EAC, the media must constantly inform about the process. Alot (2009), identified four ways in which the EAC

Secretariat intends to use the media in implementing the objectives of the Community as follows: Promoting awareness about EAC Integration; Demonstrating the achievements of the Community; Encouraging dialogues about key EAC issues among various stakeholders and Promoting the visibility of EAC efficiency and effectiveness.

Regional integration information about the EAC in Kenya is obtained from various sources such as radio, television, newspaper (The East African), magazines and films play a vital role in spreading information, propagating, educating, enlightening and strengthening national integration, creating national identity etc.

1.6 Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in the study. It describes the research design, the target population, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis methods and ethical considerations of the study.

Research Design

This is the general plan that was used to conduct the study in order to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study. This study used mixed methods survey design. According to Bergman (2008), mixed methods research involves collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data.

Target Population

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define target population as that population to which a researcher wants to generalize the results of a study. The population of interest in this study consisted of actors involved in enhancing the principle of people-centeredness as required by the EAC Treaty in the government, civil society and the private sector in Kenya.

Table 1 Target Population

Categories	Target Population
Ministry of EAC and Regional Development	4
Media	2
Civil society	3
Private sector	3
Kenyan citizens (Small scale traders and Women groups and Associations)	40
Total	52

Source; Author (2019)

Sampling Techniques

The study adopted both purposive, stratified and random sampling procedures where the population was divided into homogenous strata of EAC Integration actors in Kenya in the government, private sector, civil society and Kenyan citizens.

Research Instruments

The study utilized published work by scholars on the EAC Integration, publications, official government, private sector and civil society records, interviews with representatives of actors of EAC Integration in Kenya and questionnaires distributed to Kenyan citizens randomly as the major tools of data collection. The research interview guide assessed the perceptions of respondents on the various factors identified by the researcher and the relative importance of the factors. The interviews and questionnaires had both the structured and unstructured questions.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Validity of a questionnaire refers to the extent to which it measures what it claims to measure, Mugenda & Mugenda (2003). To improve validity, the instruments were pilot-tested among some actors before wider distribution. Mugenda & Mugenda further defines reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results for data after repeated trials. The researcher used consistent and systematic questions in the questionnaire which were related to the subject of the study. The reliability of the instruments was tested through a test-retest approach where some respondents were issued with questionnaires to fill and the same was repeated after a week as a retest for the reliability of the questionnaire.

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Strategies Already in Place to Enhance People Centeredness in Kenya

The Ministry has been conducting public awareness campaigns such as the “Ushirika Digital Campaign”, “Connect, Vuka Border” among others on the EAC integration process. This is in line with Article 7 of the Treaty for the establishment of the EAC which provides that the EAC should be people-centered and private and civil society driven. Events such as regional shows are provided with the Ministry with an opportunity for nationwide advocacy and sensitization of Kenyan citizens on the EAC Integration process and its benefits.

An interview with the Assistant Director, Political Affairs, MEACRD indicated that the Ministry developed a simple guide to the Community’s Trade Rules, Regulations and Procedures for women traders across borders, the youth and People with Disabilities with a main aim and commitment of improving their standards of living.

An EAC Conference on, “*The Role of Women in Socio-Economic Development and Women in Business*” was held in Nairobi, August 2015. The main aim of the conference was to sensitize Kenyan women on the benefits and opportunities from EAC Integration and how best they can engage and make good use of those opportunities. When Kenyan or the EAC women engages in cross border trade for instance, their role in EAC Integration and Development in general is improved and strengthened.

The media respondents interviewed in this study indicated that they believe that the media in Kenya has shown a growing interest in EAC Integration and their audiences are interested in EAC Integration news. According to the findings of the study, issues of economy in regards to EAC Integration received significant coverage by the two media houses. The media acts as a watchdog on behalf of the Kenyan citizens by monitoring EAC activities. This promotes accountability, transparency and good governance through investigative journalism of EAC Integration issues. From to an interview with the Youth Program Assistant, EACSO, institutionalizing youth

participation through regional network and events was a strategy which EACSO uses and thinks would help achieve people centeredness in Kenya. This is through coordination of preparation, planning facilitation and reporting of youth EAC participation initiatives.

Citizen empowerment was another strategy mentioned by the respondent from the civil society. The respondent gave an example of June 2018 when they underwent a training done by Green Light Project on community awareness Program for people centeredness whereby it hoped to capture and educate the citizens on people centeredness.

Kenyan Citizens Involvement in EAC in EAC Integration

The researcher wished to get the information about the age of the respondents. This part was meant to find out which age category most of the respondents fall into. The age of the respondents was summarized in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Age of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-28	9	30.0	30.0	30.0
29-39	10	33.3	33.3	63.3
Valid 39-49	6	20.0	20.0	83.3
50 Plus	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data (2019)

Education level of the respondent

The highest level of education of the respondents influences how well the respondents can execute the job and further provide feedback when need be. The respondent level of education was summarized by the table 3 below.

Table 3: Educational level of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
Secondary	10	33.3	33.3	56.7
Valid Tertiary/College	7	23.3	23.3	80.0
University	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data (2019)

The findings indicated that 33.3% of the respondents had secondary level of education while 23.3% had primary and tertiary/college level of education. Only 20% of the respondents had university level of education. This depicted that majority of the respondents had basic secondary education. This indicated that most respondents were well knowledgeable to understand and able to respond to the questionnaire in the manner intended.

Awareness of EAC Integration process

The study sought to find out what the EAC Integration process meant to Kenyan Citizens. Most respondents were of the view that the EAC enables East African citizens to move freely within the Partner States, using a minimum of identification papers such as national identity cards. This was expressed by 50% of the respondents interviewed. 30% of the respondents indicated that the EAC would enable them as East African citizens to work anywhere in the region. However, about 20% of the respondents interviewed said that they did not know if there were any benefits associated with EAC Integration. The information obtained from the respondents is as summarized in the table 4 below.

Table 4: What does EAC Integration process mean to you?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	Free movement from Kenya to Uganda for trade	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Working anywhere in EAC region	9	30.0	30.0	80.0
	I don't know any benefit	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data (2019)

Access to Information regarding EAC

Access to information and dissemination of information is essential for making any meaningful contribution or advantage of an endeavor. In order for Kenyan citizens to embrace the EAC integration process, they must have the access to adequate information about it. In this section, the study tried to establish whether Kenyans receive adequate information regarding the EAC integration process, how frequently they get it and through which channels. The findings are summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5: How often do you receive information regarding EAC?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	Everyday	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Weekly	4	13.3	13.3	20.0
	Monthly	14	46.7	46.7	66.7
	Yearly	4	13.3	13.3	80.0
	Never	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data (2019)

The findings indicated that 46.7% of the respondents receive information about EAC Monthly, while 13.3% indicated that they receive EAC information weekly and yearly respectively. It can therefore be concluded that most respondents receive EAC information monthly and that the respondents have an idea about EAC Integration.

1.8 Conclusion

The involvement of different actors or stakeholders or actors in the EAC Integration process is vital for the achievement of the principle of people-centeredness, and the overall success of the

EAC Integration initiative. The actors focused on this research study were; the Ministry of EAC and Regional Development, Civil society organizations (EACSO Kenyan chapter), private sector (KEPSA) and the media. The non-state actors are not involved in the EAC Integration in Kenya and the EAC in general as expected. The states are dominant in the EAC Integration process, which contradicts what is stipulated in the Treaty to involve and create an enabling environment for the civil society and the private sector.

1.9 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and arguments raised in this study, the following recommendations are made;

Kenya and other EAC Partner states should come up with policies and institutional and legal frameworks for the principle of people-centeredness. The major actors in EAC Integration in Kenya are handicapped because of lack of well-defined frameworks spelling out exactly how they should participate in EAC Integration in an effort to promote the principle of people-centeredness. From interview with respondent from the Private sector, he acknowledged that a majority of micro enterprises in Kenya are informal and don't have defined legal and institutional frameworks which is a challenge for KEPSA as the private sector umbrella organization in Kenya in their efforts to create a conducive environment.

There should be more involvement of the Kenyan people in many programs and activities of the community. The involvement should give an avenue through which citizens can air out their views and opinions. This can be implemented by using local televisions and radios as explained earlier in Kenya and the rest of EAC Partner States.

A civil society advisory council should be created with a permanent position in the EAC that could guide, monitor and challenge decision making processes in the EAC institutions. Creating such a council would give CSO's a powerful instrument to influence public policy processes which are key in ensuring increased influence of civil society actors in enhancing the principle of people-centeredness principle in the EAC Integration in general.

There should be continuous sensitization through local media to enhance people-centeredness amongst Kenyan citizens and the EAC citizens in general. There should be regular training sessions and workshops for both the state and non-state actors involved in EAC Integration process in Kenya and across the EAC region to sensitize them on the importance of EAC Integration and how they can in turn pass the same information to their citizens, enhancing the principle of people-centeredness further. Development of programs for the Kenyan and EAC citizens at large should be made a priority. The both are necessary in enhancing the principle of people-centeredness.

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