

Devolved Governance System and its Economic Development Impact to Rural Counties in Kenya: Case Study Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study aims at discussing how devolved governance system has an economic impact to rural counties in Kenya with Kakamega rural county as the case study. The Devolution is one of the most transformative changes to Kenya's governance system brought about by the Kenya Constitution, 2010. Article 174 of the Constitution provides that one of the key objectives of devolution is to promote social and economic development and provide proximate, easily accessible services throughout Kenya. Many rural Counties including Kakamega County faced with a myriad of challenges such as poverty, unemployment, disease, low agricultural productivity among others. Kakamega County through its short, medium and long term plans came up with an Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). The CIDP helps the county in identification of the projects and programmes through various consultative forums at the sub-county level vide Focused Ward Groups, community dialogues, County Stakeholders, such as the County Budget and Economic Forum, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce, Public Benefit Organizations such as GROOTS Kenya, ADS, and International development partners such as UNICEF, UNDP and USAID. Kakamega county has achieved much in terms of developments in various sectors such as education, health, infrastructure and urbanization. This study contributes in highlighting how devolved governance system has a positive impact to rural areas in Kenya. The study provides crucial insights on devolution as a tool to economic development changes in rural Kenya especially in Kakamega County.

Keywords: Devolution, County Governments, County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), Kakamega County, Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), County Executive, County Assembly.

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INTRODUCTION

Devolution under the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 comprises of two levels of government, namely the National and County Governments. The two levels of government are distinct and inter-dependent with constitutionally assigned and protected functions and powers as defined in the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution. The National Government comprises of the National Executive, Parliament and the Judiciary while the County Government comprises of the County Executive and County Assembly. The two levels are required to conduct their mutual relations on the basis of consultation and co-operation (County Governments Act (Kenya) 2017). Under the devolved system of government, citizens participate in their governance by exercising their sovereignty either directly or indirectly through elected and appointed representatives. This is a major departure from the past where power and resources were centralized and citizens had minimal participation in governance. One of the objectives of devolution as

provided for in Article 174 of the constitution is to promote social and economic development and the provision of proximate, easily accessible services throughout Kenya and to enhance government responsiveness to the needs of the citizens. The devolved system of government further aims at promoting equitable, efficient and prudent utilization of public resources. The history of Kakamega dates back to 1903, when British settlers, attracted to Kakamega by the fertile soils and the rich cultural heritage, established an administrative post in Kakamega town.

The growth of the town was attributed to the 'colonial gold rush' in the early 1930s which was fuelled by the reports of geologist Albert Ernest Kitson. In his report, Kitson suggested that there were huge deposits of gold in Kakamega and much of the gold being prospected was wasted through amateur techniques. As a result, Rosterman Mining Company was established by the colonialists. The growth prospects of the town were however derailed when the Roster mine was abandoned

in late 1940s (James Gathii, 'Implementing a New Constitution in a Competitive Authoritarian Context'). In 1970, Western Province was created and Kakamega town was designated the headquarters. Following the promulgation of the constitution in 2010, Kakamega was established as one of the 47 counties with Kakamega Town, within Lurambi Sub-County becoming the County Headquarter. The main economic activities of the people of Kakamega are crop production, livestock rearing, entrepreneurship and artisanal mining among others. Most residents of the County profess Christian and Muslim faith. Upon the implementation of the devolved system of government in 2013 there was need for collaboration among regional counties. This led to the establishment of The Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB) in 2015 where Kakamega County is a member. The Economic Bloc was established to enable the counties to leverage economies of scale, and facilitate the development, management and utilization of cross boundary economic resources and infrastructure (Michelle D'Arcy and Agnes Cornell, 'Devolution and Corruption in Kenya').

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The history of Devolution in Kenya goes back to the days of independence in 1963, the country decided to finally introduce such a devolved state structure with the new Constitution of 2010. With the promulgation of the new Constitution, of Kenya, 2010, 47 new devolved system of Government (Counties) have been created as a new (sub-national) level of Government. In the subsequent elections held in 2013, Kenyans elected, for the first time, their County Executive (Governor, Deputy Governor) and the County Legislative Bodies (County Assemblies) as well as the Members of the Senate who serve as the protectors of County interests at the National level (Cheeseman, Nic / Lynch, Gabrielle / Willis, Justin: Decentralisation in Kenya). Today a vast majority agrees that it brought positive change. Marginalized areas enjoy better infrastructure, increased economic development, improved access to healthcare and new ways to participate in decision making. On the other hand, several problems remain to be solved, such as capacities of County staff, corruption, funding, public financial management, civic engagement and intergovernmental relations. However, those challenges do not necessarily have to become problems. If stakeholders are working on them they can be transformed into opportunities. Kenya has entered the second phase of Devolution and it is necessary to ask if it lived up to those high expectations (Nic Cheeseman, Gabrielle Lynch and Justin Willis, 'Decentralisation in Kenya').

In general, it can be concluded that Devolution is working although its achievements are sometimes overshadowed by other shortcomings and challenges. However, the fundamental transformation of a country's governance system requires time and cannot be finalized in one day. Such a process requires constant learning and improvement. Therefore, it is important to take stock and

define those areas which need reform and concrete action. Kakamega County being one of the 47 new counties was amid widespread levels of poverty, weak economy characterized by poor infrastructure, a low industrial base and decreasing productivity across the sectors. There was a general feeling of neglect and marginalization of citizens by pre-devolution governments (Michael Chege, 'Kenya's Electoral Misfire' (2018)). Despite the many challenges encountered, including limited and irregular flow of resources, the County has achieved tremendous development milestones since the year 2013 under the First County Integrated Development Plan 2013-2017. These include, upgrading of over forty four kilometers of gravel roads to bitumen standards, construction of over three thousand kilometers of gravel roads and implementing an annual roads maintenance Programme. These initiatives have improved connectivity and enhanced access to markets, public institutions and other services. In the Health sector, the County government is constructing a state-of-art County Teaching and Referral Hospital, has improved hospital infrastructure in levels 4 and 5 hospitals and is partnering with Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology in establishing a school of Medicine (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022).

In the trade sector, modern markets and stalls have been constructed to create an enabling environment for business to thrive. The agricultural subsidy and diversification programmes have greatly improved food security, incomes and reduced poverty levels. The Second Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022 relied heavily on the achievements and lessons learnt from the First Plan. Integrated development planning is defined as a process through which efforts at national and devolved levels of government, other relevant public institutions and development partners are coordinated at various levels. Through this process, economic, social, environmental, legal and spatial aspects of development are brought together to produce a plan that meets the need and targets set for the benefit of local communities for poverty reduction and sustainable development. The process allows for allocation of scarce resources to priority projects and programmes, as determined by county stakeholders. This plan has been linked to the Kenya Vision 2030, Agenda 2063, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other agenda County (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027)

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most significant changes introduced to Kenya's national governance framework under the Constitutional 2010 is the creation of 47 new county governments with major responsibilities in agriculture, health, trade, roads, county planning and other functions. The Constitution of Kenya 2010, the Kenya Vision 2030, and short, Medium and long Term Plans provide the foundation for the preparation of the Kakamega County

Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). The identification of the projects and programmes in this CIDP is through various consultative forums at the sub-county level vide Focused Ward Groups, community dialogues, County Stakeholders, such as the County Budget and Economic Forum, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce, Public Benefit Organizations such as GROOTS Kenya, ADS, International development partners such as UNICEF, UNDP and USAID (Government of Kakamega, 2018).

Sector Programmes' Performance Review

This section provides a summary of key sector achievements realized during the previous plan period (2018 –2022). It was observed that with increased participation by a wide cross section of the people during identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes helped Kakamega County to enhance the key goal of devolution which is to empower citizens to exercise their democratic rights both at National and County levels to realize social, political and economic development. Some of the achieved developments are (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives

Agriculture is the main stay means of the people of Kakamega contributing to 52.2 percent of the Gross County Product. During the period under review, the sector purposed to improve food security through increased crops, livestock, and fisheries production. During the plan period, the County's food poverty index reduced from 47 percent to 33.3 percent against the targeted score of 40 percent. This over achievement is attributed to the prioritization and increased investment in the sector. However, it is important to note that the food poverty index is still higher than the national score of 32.0 percent (Government of Kakamega, 2013). The quantity of milk produced was 182.4 million litres against the targeted 200 million litres (91% achievements). Egg production stood at 93.2 million against a target of 70 million. The achievements in livestock production sub-sector are attributed to the operationalization of four (4) Smart Farms across the County; distribution of 1790 in-calf heifers; distribution of 127,000-day old chicks to farmer groups; serving of 58,028 cows with subsidized Artificial Insemination (AI) services; and vaccination of 892,214 animals against major diseases to improve animal breeds in the County. Employment and capacity building of extension workers and veterinary officers also contributed towards these achievements (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027). Under fisheries and aquaculture development, the sector targeted to increase the amount of fish production from 99.28 to nnes to 2,177 tonnes. However, only 1,245.6 tonnes were produced (57% achievement). The interventions that enhanced fish production were distribution of 9,534 (25kg) bags of fish feeds and 2,113,000 fingerlings to farmers. The sector also constructed and rehabilitated 727 fishponds and operationalized Lutonyi Fish Factory

through the Development of Aquaculture Support (DAS) Group.

In addition, 37 fish farming field schools were established, 73 seine nets supplied and 24 PVC liners provided to increase productivity. Under cash crop production, the sector planned to increase tea production from 2.9 million tonnes to 7 million tonnes; coffee production from 400,000 kgs to 650,000 kgs; and sugarcane production from 3.8 million tonnes to 6.0 million tonnes. During the period under review, a total of 5.9 million tonnes of tea; 519,000 kgs of coffee and 4.7 million tonnes of sugarcane were produced (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027). The rise in production was because of increased budgetary allocation to the subsector. For food crop production, the sector produced 2.5 million bags (90 kg) of maize up from 1.9 million bags (90Kg) in 2018. The achievement was attributed to the establishment of 134 demonstration plots and 9 green houses in Bukura ATC; distribution of 887,771 (25kg) bags of planting fertilizer, 784,943 (25kg) bags of topdressing fertilizer and 1,098,937 (2 kg) packets of maize seeds under the Farm Inputs Subsidy programme; and operationalization of Farm Mechanization Services across the County. To promote cooperative development across the County, the sector revived 338 cooperatives and operationalized the County Cooperative Grant where deserving cooperatives across the County were given funds to boost their operations (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022).

Roads, Public Works and Energy

The Roads Sector planned to improve roads network in the County by upgrading gravel roads to bitumen standards, maintenance of bitumen and gravel roads, construction of gravel roads, bridges, and box culverts. During the period under review, the sector ensured that 97 percent of the roads are all weather up from 95 percent in 2018 against a target of 100 percent. This was achieved through the upgrading of 122Km of gravel roads to bitumen standards against target of 200Km across the County; maintenance of 8 Km of bitumen road; construction of 2,987 km of gravel road; and maintenance of 2,746 Km gravel roads. This is in addition to construction of 22 bridges and 39 box culverts. The unmet targets under this sector were occasioned by inadequate budgetary allocation and technical staff (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027). The energy sub-sector focused on increasing access to clean energy among households and public institutions within the County. In the review period the sub-sector managed to increase access to electricity coverage from 50.4 percent to 67.2 percent due to installation of 66 strategic transformers across the County and connection of 1,150 households to electricity. Uptake of solar and alternative sources of energy is 19.3 percent as of December 2022 as per the Sustainable Energy. In addition, 91 high mast floodlights were installed in various trading centres to increase

business hours and security (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

Health Services

The health department is mandated to ensure access to affordable and quality medical services to all the citizens. In the 2018-2022 period, several measures were put in place to realize a healthy and productive population. The measures were, among others, geared to reduce the average distance to the nearest health facility from 4.5km to 2.45km. The status is at 4.5km, which is attributable to the changes in human settlement which is because of increasing population and focus of the department on completion of stalled projects at the expense of starting new facilities where there a new settlement. To promote and increase demand for health services at household level, the number of functional Community Health Units (CHUs) increased from 354 to 425 with a total of 4,250 Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) engaged (Kakamega County Fiscal Strategy Paper, 2019). However, effective service delivery at level 1 is hampered by lack of reporting tools, inadequate training of level I workforce, weak governance structures and delayed payment of CHVs stipends. HIV and AIDS prevalence was targeted to reduce from 4 percent to 2.8 percent by the end of the review period. However, only 3.9 percent prevalence was achieved due to erratic supply of commodities especially testing kits, increased new infections among adolescents and reduced funding by both national government and implementing partners.

Malaria prevalence reduced from 27 percent to 15.2 percent which is an over achievement against a target of 18 percent. Several factors contributed to this achievement including mass distribution of nets, intensified testing, and treatment, routine surveillance, and partnerships in terms of resource mobilization from partners and National Government. The target for patients completing tuberculosis (TB) treatment was projected at 90 percent but the percentage realized was 86 percent as of December 2021, a one (1) percent increase from the initial figure of 85 percent in 2018. The achievement is attributed to defaulter tracing (Walsh & Lipinski, 2009). Maternal mortality rate was targeted to reduce from 488/100,000 live births to 363/100,000 live births but reduced to 279/100,000 majorly due to active Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) committees in the County and active involvement of CHVs and birth companions. The percentage of mothers delivering in health facilities increased from 62 percent in 2018 to 74.1 percent in 2022 against a target of 70 percent. The increase is associated with collaboration with CHVs and birth companions and referrals as well as reduction in the population. The department however experienced prolonged stock outs of essential commodities, inadequate staffing and equipment which affected the quality of care. In partnership with UNICEF, approximately 66,000 mothers have been able to access safe delivery and full vaccination cycles under the 'Imarisha Afya Ya Mama

Na Mtoto' Programme from the initial figure of 38,000 mothers (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

Infant mortality rate reduced from 36.3/1000 to 19/1000 due to high impact interventions and improvement to quality of care; increased Antenatal Care (ANC), Pre-Natal Care (PNC) and exclusive breastfeeding practices; elimination of user fee for primary health care and accelerated introduction of life saving vaccines. Immunization coverage stood at 82 percent in 2018 and was targeted to increase to 90 percent by 2022, however, through a spirited effort and support from partners, the sector realized 91% percent coverage despite the stock outs of the rota vaccines; COVID-19 pandemic that shifted the focus of most partners and the government to address the Pandemic (Rosen HE, Lynam PF, Carr C, Reis V, Ricca J, Bazant ES, et al). The roll out of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by enrolling 8,840 indigents to the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) program has facilitated access to medical care though with challenges of delayed premium payments. Additionally, the National Government has also sponsored 51,737 indigents to the NHIF program. Increased infrastructural development has ensured provision of affordable and quality health services across the County. Referral cases increased from 5,929 to 6,038 due to availability of more services in level 4 health facilities such as operating theatres; reduced ambulance average response time from 57 minutes to 38 minutes that has improved the number of clients utilizing the ambulance services; and the introduction of other ambulance service providers by Jacaranda Health who complement the County E- plus services. The percentage of mothers accessing emergency ambulance services has increased from 43 percent to 49 percent (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

Education, Science and Technology

The sector increased ECDE enrolment from 117,266 pupils in 2017 to 124,750 pupils in 2022. The improvement in enrolment was attributed to the various initiatives undertaken by the sector including: construction of 316 ECDE centers; supply of chairs and tables to 612 ECDE centers; implementing the capitation program where each ECDE learner is allocated KES. 1,000 per year; promotional campaigns on ECDE enrollment; and training of ECDE teachers. The sector targeted to improve ECDE teacher to pupil ratio from 1:62 to 1:40. At the end of the review period, the ECDE teacher to pupil ratio remained at 1:62 due to increased enrollment rates but not with commensurate increase in ECDE teachers (Republic of Kenya. (2015). The sector also increased instructor trainee ratio from 1:30 to 1:27 and converted the terms of employment of both ECDE teachers and polytechnic instructors from contract to permanent and pensionable. The sector under County Polytechnics targeted to increase enrolment from 6,966 to 15,000 trainees. However, the sector achieved 9,765

trainees at the end of the review period. This was attributed to low uptake of vocational training occasioned by unaffordability of examination fees, long distances to county polytechnic, inadequate instructors, negative attitude towards trainings in County Polytechnics and inadequate infrastructural facilities such as training workshops and classrooms. The sector targeted to increase the tool kit ratio from 1:17 to 1:2, but attained a ratio of 1:5 due to grants received from the National Government. Diversification of courses in county polytechnics to match with the market demand, necessitated the need for more tools commensurate to increased demand (Kenya institute of Education, 2012).

Water, Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change

The sector realized an increase in access to clean and safe water from 71.3 percent in 2018 to 80 percent in 2022, against a target of 90 percent. Further, through the last mile connectivity programme, the sector targeted to increase the number of households accessing piped water schemes to 40 percent but realized 10.1 percent from 5.9 percent. The County established the following major water projects Musembe dam water supply project in Lugari; Lumino dam water supply in Likuyani, Kuvasali gravity scheme in Malava; Nandamanywa water project in Shinyalu; Lwakhupa water project in Navakholo; Yala Butwehe water supply project in Ikolomani; and Misango Hills community project in Khwisero (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022). The County also augmented, rehabilitated, expanded, solarized, and constructed other water schemes spread across the County. The clarion call being, “Amatsi khumukuru” translated as, “Water at the doorstep.” In the quest to enhance efficiency in water service delivery and following the separation of joint operations of water supplies between Kakamega and Busia Counties, Kakamega County established the Kakamega County Urban Water and Sanitation Company (KACUWASCO) as a water service provider for operating water schemes in Kakamega, Mumias, Shinyalu, Butere, Navakholo, Malava and Lugari (Souza *et al.*, 2001). This was after taking over the operations that were previously handled by the Lake Victoria North Water Service Board as per constitutional provisions. To enhance rural access to clean, safe, and affordable water and sanitation services in the County, the sub-sector established the Kakamega County Rural Water and Sanitation Company (KACRUWASCO) (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

The County in collaboration with various partners, prepared a County Water Master Plan (2018 – 2022) and developed a database for all water sources, which has improved planning for development and management of the water sector. To ensure that every person has access to clean and healthy environment, the sector was able to expand cleaning programmes from major urban areas to sub-County markets through the

women and youth empowerment programme. Through collaborations, the sub-sector contributed to increasing forest and tree cover by growing 500,000 tree seedlings through establishment of woodlots in public institutions, restoring degraded hillslopes and riparian areas, and supporting conservation groups to establish five (5) tree nurseries. In pursuit of instituting legal reforms and ensuring environmental sustainability compliance, the sector developed two (2) key legislations namely the Kakamega County Environmental Management Act, 2019 and Kakamega County Natural Resource Management Act, 2022. The sector further established key climate change frameworks including the Kakamega Climate Change Act 2020, County Climate Change Policy, County Climate Change Action Plan, County Climate Change Adaptation Plan and County Climate Information Service Plan (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027). Climate change governance structures have been put in place comprising of a Steering Committee, County Climate Change Secretariat, a Technical Working Group and Ward Based Climate Change Planning Committees. To strengthen Climate Information system, the sector has installed two automated weather stations in Matungu and Likuyani sub counties to provide accurate information on real time weather patterns.

Trade, Industrialization and Tourism

During the period under review (2018-2022), the sector planned to expand and diversify trade, promote fair trade practices, create environmentally sustainable industrialization, and develop tourism industry. To achieve this, the sector targeted to increase modern markets from nine (9) to 25. The sector has constructed 19 modern markets while six (6) are ongoing. In addition, refurbished 25 open air markets and constructed eight (8) modern ablution blocks, which increased modern ablution blocks from seven (7) to 15. Further, three (3) Jua kali sheds and five (5) modern stock rings were constructed (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022). The number of Micro and Small-Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) traders that were supported with affordable credit was 1,000 out of a target of 27,600 traders due to defaulting and management challenges. However, the uptake of affordable credit surpassed the previous target of Kshs.100 million to stand at Kshs. 113 million. This is attributed to higher client entitlement due to good credit scores. To sustain industrialization, employment creation, wealth creation and economic growth in the County, the sector targeted to develop an industrial park however, they only managed to acquire 49 acres of land for the purpose. The County also targeted to establish eight (8) factories for value addition on products. The County only established one (1) fish processing plant and is currently constructing the Malava Dairy Factory. Establishment of other factories has not been realized due to lack of investors, licensing, and taxation barriers (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027). In promoting fair trade, the sector conducted

verification of 3,500 weighing and measuring equipment annually. On tourism, the sector targeted to develop 12 tourists' sites within the review period. The County has designated six heritage sites (Nabongo shrines, Ikhongo Murwi, Mawe Tatu, Misango Hills, Mugai stones and Kambiri hills) that need to be fully developed. To improve the hospitality industry 240 hoteliers were trained in partnership with Utalii College.

Lands, Housing, Urban Areas, and Physical Planning

During the review period (2018-2022), the sector had planned to acquire land for development of projects, improve infrastructure within municipalities, prepare spatial plans and construct sewer systems within the Kakamega and Mumias municipalities. The County established and operationalized two municipalities namely, Kakamega and Mumias. The municipalities have promoted and improved infrastructural development and service delivery and provided key social amenities to the public (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022). In addition, the County is also in the process of improving infrastructure and social amenities in other towns in readiness for conferment to municipality status. Through the acquisition of two waste collection trucks and outsourcing of cleaning services, waste management and environmental cleanliness has been enhanced in the two established municipalities. In partnership with the World Bank, the County constructed Mumias and Kakamega bus parks which have improved traffic management and enhanced transportation of people and goods (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027). In relation to the availability of land for projects, the County acquired over 200 acres of land for development of strategic projects with high socio-economic impact. The sector has also ensured coordinated urban development through preparation of Spatial Plans for Kakamega and Mumias municipalities and it is in the process of developing a County Spatial Plan to guide the County in the sustainable use of land for socioeconomic development. To aid in Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, the County has established a GIS laboratory and purchased survey equipment. Further, to enhance own source revenue, the County is developing a valuation roll which is at 80 percent level of completion (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

Social Services, Sports, Youth, Women Empowerment and Culture

To promote social welfare, the sector improved housing conditions for 1,800 vulnerable households during the review period. The County supported 200 persons with disabilities against a target of 500 with various assistive devices over the last five years (40% achievement). The sector provided food, equipment, and various workshop tools to 26 vulnerable groups and children charitable institutions. Further to that, the sector planned to build two Gender-Based Violence Rescue Centers (GBVRCs) but only one was built in Shinyalu

sub-County to serve the entire County. In addition, the sector prepared the Kakamega County Disability Act, 2022, and the Kakamega County Children Policy, 2022 (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022). To promote sports, the sector upgraded Bukhungu stadium (Phase II) to 46 percent completion against 100 percent that had been targeted. Moreover, out of the targeted 60 fields, 14 were upgraded during the period under review. Similarly, 62 youth sports centers were supported with assorted sports equipment and uniforms. The sector supported clubs such as Sukari Deaf Football Club, Kakamega Homeboyz and the Mulembe Golf Tournament among others. The sector also hosted the 2021 Sports of the Year Award (SOYA), promoted raw sports talent through the Kenya Youth Inter County Sports games (KYISA) and supported County staff sports through Kenya Inter-County Sports and Cultural Association games (KICOSCA) (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027). On youth empowerment, the sector conducted mapping and registration of Bodaboda operators and youth groups in the County. This enabled training of 1,800 Bodaboda operators on road safety, issuance of driving licenses to 600 riders and also equipped them with entrepreneurial skills. In addition, 120 youths in the County were trained on leadership and governance. The sector developed the County Youth Service and Women Empowerment Act, 2019, through which 7,800 youth and women in the County were employed on contract and trained in various technical short courses. The target was to employ 15,000 youth and women but this was not achieved (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

Public Service and County Administration

The sector has been providing strategic leadership, guidance, and support to the County Public Service. In line with this, the department constructed two Sub County offices against a planned target of 12 offices; eight (8) ward offices. Under County disaster management programme, two (2) bridges and ten box culverts were constructed and one high mast flood light erected. In addition, the County Headquarter Annex Office was constructed and the Old Headquarter building refurbished. During the period, the County installed and operationalized 400 Community Area Administration Units and 400 Community Area Councils comprising of 8,000 members (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

County Public Service Board

During the plan period 2018-2022, the board targeted to have an optimal, efficient, and effective County Public Service. To achieve this, the board reviewed the County organization structure and staff establishment for all departments; recruited 2,621 employees; promoted over 800 employees across all cadres; developed and gazetted the Kakamega County Public Service Board Procedures for Administration of Part IV of the Public Officer Ethics Act on submission of

Declarations. Further, the board developed policy documents and manuals to guide and control human resource operations in the Public Service and determined 178 appeal cases and 331 disciplinary cases forwarded by County Human Resource Management and Advisory Committee (CHRMAC). In addition, the board reviewed its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and developed schemes of service for ECDE teachers County polytechnic instructors, County administrators and enforcement officers. It also carried out board evaluations for Kakamega and Mumias Municipalities, Kakamega Dairy Development Cooperation and Microfinance (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027)

Office of the Governor

In the previous plan period (2018-2022), the Office of the Governor targeted to effectively coordinate activities of the County Government and ensure effective implementation of County Government policies, programmes, and projects. To achieve this mandate, the department constructed and equipped the Governor's Northern Region Office in Lugari as planned; drafted a total of 86 bills, out of which 33 were enacted by the County Assembly; and 32 Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) were signed to improve effectiveness of governance processes. The Office also conducted public participation forums with stakeholders across the County. An Electronic County Integrated Project Management System (e-CIPMS) was acquired and operationalized to support real time monitoring and tracking of project's implementation progress. The County also acquired the Teammate Software and renovated Butere and Lugari audit offices to support audit services as per the planned target. However, due to unavailability of public land in Kakamega Municipality, the department was unable to construct the Governor's and Deputy Governor's residences in Kakamega town as per the plan (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027)

Finance and Economic Planning

In the review period (2018-2022), the Finance and Economic Planning sector improved the economic growth of the County by signing eight (8) Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to enhance local investments in the County. In addition, the sector offered accountable Public Finance Management system through the implementation of the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) and the Electronic County Project Management Information System (e-CPMIS).

It increased Own Source Revenue Collection from Kshs. 2.2 billion in 2017 to Kshs. 4.92 billion as of December 2022. The KCRA implemented the cashless revenue collection system and established a Public Sector Revenue Management System which improved revenue management. The sector also established and operationalized the Kakamega County Investment and Development Agency (KCIDA) responsible for County Investment Promotion and Facilitation. The agency has seen the County sign six (6) MOUs/JVAs, translating to

75 percent of the targeted Public Private Partnerships (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027). In accordance with the Public Finance Management Act of 2012, the sector prepared and timely filed budget and economic policy papers. It also established and administered sub-County Treasuries, which provided decentralized financial services throughout the County. Further, the sector initiated automation of Assets Information Systems which allows the County to track the value and status of its assets and liabilities. Lastly, the sector implemented an e-Procurement System and online payments to improve efficiency, accountability and transparency (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

ICT, e-Government, and Communication

The scope and scale of connectivity in the County accelerated with progression over years in the period under review. The adoption and use of ICT rose in the County because of numerous available opportunities. To enhance efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, the sector increased County connectivity from 10 percent to 35 percent against a target of 70 percent. It also developed and implemented the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, and two e-Government Portals (revenue and recruitment web portal). The sector also installed Security Surveillance Systems in strategic locations which enhanced security within the County. Further, the sector established helpdesks and user support services in all departments and enhanced visibility of County programs and projects through timely, accurate and efficient dissemination of information (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022).

Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Co-operatives

The sector is composed of six (6) directorates namely; Crop Development and Agricultural Extension, Livestock Development, Veterinary Services, Fisheries Development, Cooperatives Development and Smallholder Irrigation and Drainage Promotion. In addition, the sector has two agencies; Bukura Agricultural Training College responsible for offering residential and non-residential trainings on agriculture technologies, provision of training facilities to farmers & other stakeholders, and Kakamega Dairy Development Corporation (KDDC) responsible for commercial rearing and breeding of dairy livestock, promotion and adoption of best practices in the dairy value chain (Kakamega County Fiscal Strategy Paper, 2019).

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Historical and descriptive analytic method was mostly used by the study. The study primarily data was based from secondary data compiled from vast sources largely collected from devolution and county yearly reports, county websites, ministry and department of devolution websites, journals and various books.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the study indicated earlier, Kenya's model of devolution has two levels of government. These are the national government and county governments. A total of 47 county governments were established by the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Each county government has a legislative assembly, known as the County Assembly, and an executive arm. The executive arm is headed by the Governor, who is elected by residents of the county qualified to vote in an election. The two levels of government are distinct, meaning none is subordinate nor superior to the other. It is imperative at this point to observe that article 189 of the Constitution reiterates the need for the two levels of government to respect each other's functional and institutional integrity, the constitutional status and institutions and, in the case of county governments, the respective functions within each county (National Council for Law Reporting with the Authority of the Attorney General). The study found that as progressive a Constitution as the Constitution of Kenya 2010 is, devolution is the one aspect that has most captured the imagination of the people of Kenya. As has been alluded to previously, the previous governance structure was centralized, and thus regional development was dependent upon the goodwill of the centre, or political patronage whereby a region (or its political elite) was sufficiently close to the centre.

With the onset of devolution, rural areas, marginalized regions and communities have, in some cases, for the first time since independence received significant resources, enabling them to embark upon meaningful and long-overdue development projects. In some cases, just like Kakamega County and many more rural areas in Kenya, this has been manifested in the first kilometres of tarmac roads, opening the regions up to the tourism circuit, and much needed health and water projects. All this enables these regions to begin to feel more a part of the growing Kenyan nation, rather than a victim of a new constitutional order (Kangu, John Mutakha). While there is no question that Kenyans have come to accept and appreciate devolution, the sustainability and viability of 47 county governments and assemblies in a country with a population of roughly 44 million presents a different challenge altogether. While it may not be possible to adequately evaluate the merits and demerits of this particular model of devolution within the confines of this paper, suffice it to say that 47 regional units are a significant burden on the limited and precious resources of a developing country such as Kenya (Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan 2023-2027).

CONCLUSION

Devolution has taken root as a new system of governance in the country. It would seem that the beginnings of many solutions have begun to organically materialize. Various counties have begun to form

regional blocs, so as to promote and protect unified regional interests. Some regions, loosely based on former provinces, have begun to look at regional interests with a view to collaborating in the pursuit of those interests. The Commonwealth of Coast Counties (Jumuiya ya Kaunti za Pwani) was one of the first to emerge, bringing together the 6 coastal counties of Kwale, Mombasa, Kilifi, Tana River, Lamu and Taita Taveta. With historically marginalized populations, the coastal counties are also abundant in natural resources, perhaps prompting the desire to collectively leverage such a partnership. Recognizing that working in isolation was unlikely to achieve the kinds of results their residents yearned for, the Governors of the six counties came together resolving to seek meaningful sustainable development and equitable economic growth. The North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB) is another regional cooperation effort representing the geographical area on the northern-most part of the Rift Valley. An area of outstanding natural beauty, the bloc is made up of 8 counties, namely: Turkana, Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet, Nandi, Uasin Gishu, West Pokot, Samburu & Trans Nzoia.

NOREB, too, is awash with natural resources, and seeks to encourage investment within the region. Resources such as wildlife, beautiful scenery and agricultural potential remain largely untapped, presenting great opportunities for the region. Other regional groupings have also emerged. Some of these include the Mount Kenya and Aberdares Counties Trade and Investment Bloc (in formation) bringing together Kiambu, Embu, Kirinyaga, Laikipia, Meru, Murang'a, Nakuru, Nyandarua, Nyeri, Tharaka-Nithi and Isiolo in an economic bloc seeking to address employment creation and economic growth, tariff reconciliation and attraction of foreign investment. From the Western region of the country, the Regional County Forum on Trade and Investment in Western Kenya Region is a smaller collaboration between Kisumu, Busia, and Siaya Counties. This particular effort includes counties that all lie on the Lake Victoria Basin and share boundaries. Specifically, the objective of the collaboration is to catalyze the development of a regional trade and investment plan for the counties through identification of areas of synergy within the counties to spur economic trade and development.

Finally, the Lake Region Economic Blueprint (LREB) includes the counties in the greater Lake Victoria region, including Bungoma, Busia, Homa Bay, Kakamega, Kisii, Kisumu, Migori, Nyamira, Siaya, and Vihiga. These counties share similar ecological zones, natural resources, and cultural histories, making a partnership a natural occurrence. The blueprint presents the socio-economic aspirations of the ten counties and seeks to secure and share the regions destiny. The initiatives described above have all come about from a single underlying premise: that most counties in their current form are too small to leverage economies of

scale, and are thus unable to tap into the requisite pool of skilled labour or funding resources to make their aspirations a reality. Therefore, strategic cooperation between counties with shared interests seems to be becoming a necessity in order to realize the immense potential existing in the counties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Devolution in Kenya needs to go hand in hand with governance reforms and other reforms if efficiency and effectiveness of public spending are to be achieved. Devolution in Kenya needs to disseminate government policies and development agenda to the public, promote inclusivity in public development activities/programs and establish structures and coordinate public participation and civic education. Kakamega County should practice social cohesion, which in turn fosters cooperation is critical in sustaining pressure against corruption, coordinate County Government programmers and activities among other services at the grassroots. Kakamega County government should be closer to the people than the national government - implying better knowledge of local preferences. This may assist the county from the perspective of prioritization of programmes and projects at the local level through public participation. Kakamega County government should exercise intensive Public awareness which in return improves transparency in decision-making and this makes it difficult for official actors to collude and engage in corrupt practices.

Highlights of this paper

- Devolved governance system has had a significance economic impact on the development of rural counties in Kenya.
- Many rural Counties have achieved tremendous development milestones since the year 2013 under the County Integrated Development Plans including upgrade of roads, health sectors, trade and urbanizations of rural towns.
- Kakamega County being one of the 47 new counties, has recorded many achievements in devolution system with improved standards in various sectors like roads, health, trade, education and urban development.

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