

Service Delivery in Devolved Government System in Kenya: A Case Study of Isiolo County Government

Josephine Kirion Eregae
Isiolo County Government (Kenya)

Dr. Samuel Obino Mokaya
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (Kenya)

Raphael Mwiti Gikunda
Texas Tech University (USA)

Abstract: The study was intended to contribute to knowledge to linking public sector devolution to improved service delivery or lack of it. The target population comprised of 240 employees from Isiolo County. A sample of 148 employees selected through stratified random sampling was engaged in the study. The design adopted was descriptive which enabled the researcher to extract the most relevant and adequate information on the devolution and its influence on the service delivery. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. Peers and experts in the area of governance and leadership were used to review the instruments to ensure that the measures include an adequate and representative set of items that answered the research questions. Data analysis involved frequencies, percentages and mean to determine and measure variable characteristics while regression analysis was conducted to determine the relative importance of each of the four variables in relation to service delivery. The study covered a sample of 148 respondents drawn from a target population of 244 employees of Isiolo County; male 56.5% and female 43.5%. Majority respondents (54.5%) felt that the amount of resources allocated to the county government is inadequate to undertake planned projects and meet the administrative cost. A significant number of respondents (39.7%) agreed that citizens effectively participate in project identification. They indicated that members of the public are actively involved in initiating county projects (45%). It also emerged that resources were fairly managed in an accountable and transparent manner (43.5%), internal and external audits are conducted regularly to ensure accountability and transparency (41.7%) and there are policies and structures for exposing corruption (40.6%). Accountability and transparency were found to be the catalyst binding resource allocation and public participation to propel service delivery at Isiolo County. A linear multiple regression analysis revealed that all the independent variables significantly predicted service delivery, $F(4, 55) = 130.45$, $p = .01$. The R^2 value was .46, which displays the measure of how much of the variability in the outcome is accounted for by the predictors. This implies that the model accounts for 46% of the variations in service delivery. In order to improve service delivery, the County Government needs to improve staff capacity and provide more opportunities for citizen participation. There is also a need for speedy release of funds for quick and timely service delivery.

Keywords: Accountability and transparency, public participation, public sector, resource allocation, service delivery.

Introduction

Decentralization has been recognized as an important theme of governance in both developed and developing societies of the world (Dasgupta & Victoria, 2007). In the past two decades, there has been a renewed interest in decentralization, particularly in the context of developing countries that are seeking ways to promote accountability of government in public service delivery (Mookherjee, 2015). Rondinelli (1999) contends that devolved government entails the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations or the private sector. The transfer can be through de-concentration, delegation, devolution or privatization/deregulation and involves (a combination of) dimensions of fiscal, administrative, political and economic powers and functions (Phillip, 2009). Australia has adopted devolved governance in the administration of public resources and policy implementation.

Kenya's devolution system of governance is one of the most ambitious forms of decentralization involving large-scale political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization (Kenya School of Government (KSG), 2015). This is unlike other countries where the devolution process of the three powers has been sequentially attained. The experience has been a 'big bang' where the three types of decentralization were achieved at once with the ratification of the constitution (Kobia & Bagaka, 2014). Devolution in Kenya is based on the supremacy of the constitution, sovereignty of the people, and the principle of public participation (ICJ Kenya, 2013). Services whose delivery and financing is often decentralized include but are not limited to education, health, water, sanitation, public transport and infrastructure, roads maintenance, fire, housing and social welfare (Robinson, 2007).

Djordje (2013) observed that citizen participation in local government is the most tangible form of democratic government and also a layer of government with which they have most contact in their everyday life. Isiolo County is confronted with many challenges, including interference and political manipulation, corruption and lack of accountability and transparency, inadequate citizen participation, poor human resource policy, failure to manage change, lack of employee capacity, poor planning, and poor monitoring and evaluation; affecting effective service delivery. It is against this background that the study sought to determine the effect of devolution on service delivery at Isiolo County.

Purpose of the Study

This research sought to ascertain if a combination of resource allocation, public participation, accountability, and transparency significantly predicted better service delivery in county governments. It also aimed at describing resource allocation and use in county governments, the level public participation in county projects, and levels of county accountability and transparency regarding resource use and services in Isiolo County.

Methodology

The study took a quantitative approach that emphasizes objective measurements and statistical, numerical analysis of data. The study adopted a mix of descriptive and explanatory research designs to facilitate determination and explanation of variable relationships. The study covered a simple random sample of 148 respondents drawn from a target population of 240 employees of Isiolo County. A semi-structured questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. Peers and a panel of governance and leadership faculty members checked the instrument for face, construct and content validity. A pilot study involved 10 employees from Meru County was undertaken and Cronbach alpha thereafter computed to check internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$). Pearson product moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between resource allocation, public participation accountability and transparency, and service delivery while a multivariate regression model was applied to determine the relative importance of each of the four variables in relation to the study. The assumptions of linearity, normally distributed errors, and multicollinearity were checked and met (Field, 2013). Out of the total of 148 respondents issued with the questionnaires, 84 were filled and returned translating to 56.7% response rate. The response rate considered was good enough in line with Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) who contend that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting findings.

Results and Discussion

Resource Allocation

The first objective sought to describe resource allocation and use in county governments in Kenya. Table 1 indicates the percentage of respondents per each level of agreement in an item. The findings (Table 1) show that the majority of the respondents (54.5%) felt that the amount allocated to the County Government is inadequate to undertake planned projects and meet the administrative cost. Specifically, the amount of money allocated for projects is not enough (59.7%) and the money is not disbursed in good time (53.7%). However, the majority of respondents (56.6%) felt that the county had qualified human resource and that (52.7%) efficient service delivery was a product of adequate financial and qualified human resource. Resource allocation has been established as one of the major determinants of service delivery. Reson & Lydia, (2012) who found out that the existence of inadequate resources especially human power led to poor service delivery that was deficient in financial and management skills. An increase in resource allocation has an impact on service delivery in counties in Kenya.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Resource Allocation (N= 84)

Attribute	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
The amount allocated to the County Government is adequate to undertake the earmarked project and meet the administrative cost.	13.6	31.8	40.9	13.6
Adequacy of amount allocation on projects.	0.0	32.3	35.5	24.2
Timely disbursement of funds	11.9	34.	38.8	14.9
Qualified human resource	6.9	39.7	43.1	10.3
A buildup of human resource capacity	23.6	29.1	30.9	16.4
Misuse of funds	11.3	34.5	36.5	17.7
Accounting of funds	8.8	27.9	50.0	13.2
Depletion of funds allocated on projects	25.8	43.5	27.4	3.2

On utilization of funds, almost half of the respondents (45.8%) felt that the county funds were being misused and were not accounted for properly (36.7%), which was detrimental to service delivery. The respondents felt that an efficient service delivery required a combination of qualified human resource, adequate and timely resource allocation coupled with proper accountability. This confirms the findings of Samihah and Adelabu, (2010) who reported that that budget allocation or funds may be allocated adequately, but when there is no accountability or weak institutions, the execution may lead to poor service delivery.

When asked to indicate the level to which they thought resource allocation affected service delivery, a majority of the respondents (76.5%) felt that resources were the main drivers of services delivery. Very few staff members (23.5%) felt that resource allocation had little influence on service delivery (Figure 1). However, research has shown that funds alone should not be used as indicators of the supply of public services, especially in countries where there is no accountability or weak institutions (Samihah & Adelabu, 2010).

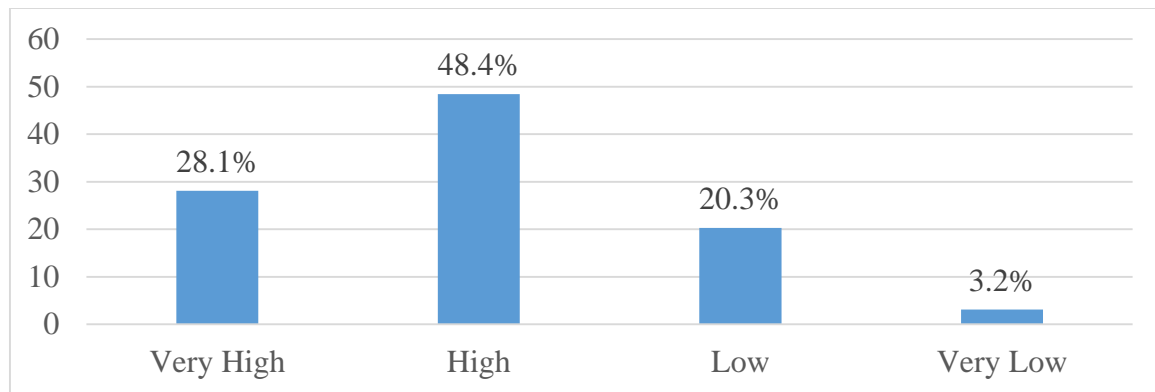


Figure 1: Staff perception on the relationship between of resource allocation and service delivery (N=84)

Public Participation and Service Delivery

Objective two sought to establish the extent to which stakeholders are involved in the design, planning, and implementation of county projects. According to (Table 2), the majority (39.7%) of respondents there were sufficient public fora for consultations on efficient and effective service delivery in the county. The respondents (39.7%) felt that citizens effectively participate in project identification. Members of the public were actively involved in initiating county projects (45%), and that the county government involves the members of the public on project implementation (48.1%). Further, members of the public are empowered through capacity building to monitor and evaluate county projects (43.5%). The study concurs with the findings done by Bertot and Janowski (2016), who found out that the community participation, has a positive significant influence on service delivery of public sector. The study further revealed that members of the public participate in county project closure and handing over as supported by 68.8% of the respondents. Citizen participation in governance and public service delivery has the objective of improving the performance of government projects and performance. Therefore improving the delivery of public services continues to be a key objective that has occupied the agenda of public administrators and researchers. The findings are supported by the research done by Bertot and Janowski, (2016) in Tanzania on the effect of public participation in community water supply, which revealed a positive relationship between community participation and service delivery.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Public Participation involving County Projects (N=84)

Public Participation	4(%)	3(%)	2(%)	1(%)
There are sufficient public forums consultations on efficient and effective Service delivery in the County.	20.5	39.7	30.1	9.6
Citizens effectively Participate in project identification.	21.8	30.8	39.7	7.7
Members of the public are actively involved in initiating County Projects.	20.0	45.0	25.0	10.0
The County government involves the members of the Public on project implementation	13.6	48.1	28.4	9.9
Members of the public are empowered through capacity building to monitor and evaluate the county projects.	15.2	43.5	40.0	1.3
Members of the Public participate in County project closure and handing over.	68.8	18.8	10.9	1.6

Note. ^a 1=strongly agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree and 4= Strongly Disagree

Accountability and Transparency

Objective three sought to describe accountability and transparency involving resource use and in service delivery in county governments. This was assessed using a number of statements in which respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement using 4-point Likert Scales; 1=strongly agree, 2=Agree, 3= Disagree and 4= Strongly Disagree. According to the study findings, majority of respondents (43.5%) agreed that county resources are managed in an accountable and transparent manner, internal and external audits are conducted regularly to ensure accountability and transparency (41.7%), and through the county assembly, there are policies and structures for exposing corruption (40.6%). Further, 8.4% of the respondents agreed that all stakeholders participate in the county budgetary process. However, 42.2% of the respondents disagreed that the county assembly approves and oversights all county expenditure and finance while 50.7% agreed that through stakeholder's form provided by the Finance Department provides reports on the financial status of the county at the end of every quarter. The study also revealed that that county assembly, the public, and stakeholders were involved, in identifying, initiating, implementing. Monitoring and

evaluating projects and appraisal is conducted at every department to motivate workers to be accountable respectively (43.9% and 43.3%).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Accountability of County Resources (N=84)

Statement	4 (%)	3(%)	2(%)	1(%)
County Resource is managed in an accountable transparent manner	23.3	26.7	41.7	8.3
Internal and external Audits are conducted regularly to ensure accountability and transparency	9.7	30.6	43.5	16.1
Through the county assembly, there are policies and structures for exposing corruption	15.6	26.6	40.6	17.2
All stakeholders participate in the County budgetary process.	4.7	28.1	48.4	18.8
The county assembly approves and oversights all county expenditure and finance.	10.9	42.2	25.0	21.9
Through stakeholders forums, the Finance department provides reports on the financial status of the county at the end of every quarter.	10.1	29.0	50.7	10.1
County assembly, the public, and stakeholders are involved, in identifying, initiating, implementing. monitoring and evaluating projects	10.6	33.3	43.9	12.1
An appraisal is conducted at every department to motivate workers to be accountable	11.7	23.3	43.3	21.7

Note. ^a 1=strongly agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree and 4= Strongly Disagree

Accountability and Transparency in Use of Public Resources

When asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with measures put to ensure accountability and transparency in the County Government systems, a majority (53.1%) of the respondents stated that measures put in place to ensure accountability and transparency were satisfactorily high. Whereas, 26.6% were of the view that accountability and transparency were low. This implies that many employees (57%) were satisfied with the accountability levels (Figure 2).

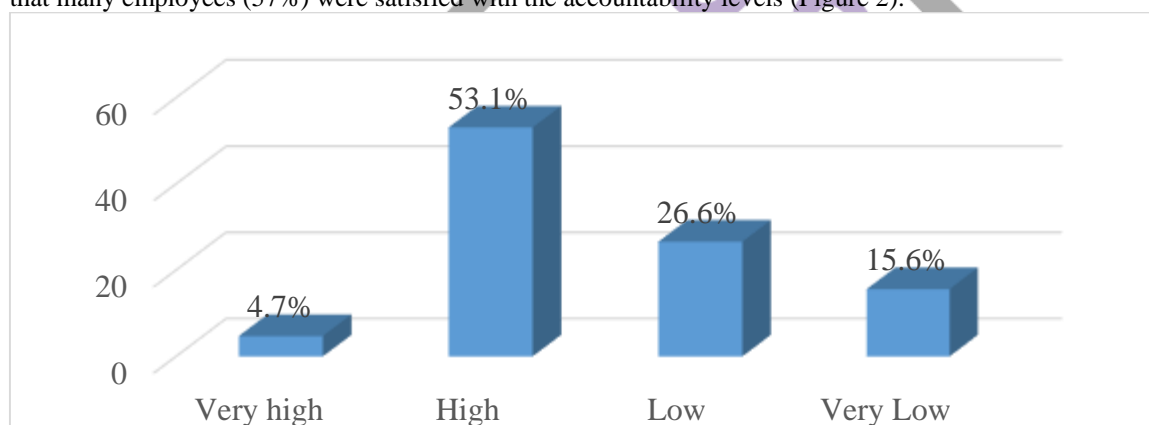


Figure 2: Level of accountability and transparency in the county (N=84)

Service Delivery in Isiolo County

The study sought to assess the level and quality of service delivery using a number of statements. The respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements using 4-point Likert Scales; 1=Strongly agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree and 4=Strongly disagree. From the study findings in Table 4, it emerged that the county government has invested a lot of resources on infrastructure. More than half of the respondents (56.4%) confirmed that proper infrastructure had been put in place since the inception of devolution but objected (65%) the claim that existing medical facilities as referral hospitals and dispensaries have been upgraded, equipped with drugs and equipment and new ones put in place.

Table 4: Service Delivery in Isiolo County (N=84)

Aspects of Service Delivery	4 (%)	3(%)	2(%)	1(%)
Proper infrastructure has been put in place since the inception of devolution	6.5	37.1	43.5	12.9
Existing Medical facilities as referral hospitals and dispensaries have been upgraded, equipped with drugs and equipment and new once put in place.	9.5	25.4	46.0	19.0
There are proper housing and welfare service in your Sub-County.	24.1	19.0	36.0	20.7
Citizens can now access clean water for domestic and animals consumption	13.3	36.7	31.7	18.3

Through the livestock department, there is a controlled animal disease outbreak due to early warning capacity building and provision of drugs and vaccines	15.0	41.7	35.0	8.3
Due to improved Agriculture, there is food security in my Sub-county	13.6	32.2	28.8	25.4
Increased provision of public Services has resulted in the improved livelihood of citizens in the Sub-County	4.9	45.9	37.7	11.5

Note. ^a 1=strongly agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree and 4= Strongly Disagree

Many of the respondents (56.7%) felt that the County Government is trying hard to ensure that employees have got access to proper housing and welfare service. They further (50%) indicated that citizens can now access clean water for domestic and animal's consumption out of the county government's effort. The findings also show that 41.7%, 32.2%, and 45.9% respectively disagreed that through the livestock department there is controlled animal disease outbreak due to early warning capacity building and provision of drugs and vaccines. Due to improved agriculture, there is food security in my sub-county and increased provision of public services has resulted in the improved livelihood of citizens in the County. The findings are in line with those of Onyinkwa, (2014) who states that transparency and accountability initiatives lead to greater empowerment of poor people, greater awareness of rights by users and greater engagement in service delivery through the practice of citizenship.

Resource Allocation, Public Participation Accountability, and Transparency, Service delivery

Multiple regression was conducted to determine the best linear combination of resource allocation, public participation, accountability and transparency for predicting better service delivery in county governments. The dependent and independent variables were measured using Likert-type items on a scale of 1 to 4; 1=strongly agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree and 4= Strongly Disagree. The assumption of independent errors was checked through the Durbin Watson test and it was found to be within the acceptable level (1.01) (Field, 2013). The VIF values ranged between 1.13 and 2.54 and Tolerance statistics ranged between .43 and .87 meaning that they were within the recommended ranges greater than 1 and greater than 0.2 (Field, 2013). Pearson correlation test was run to check multicollinearity among the variables. The assumption of no multicollinearity between predictor variables was not violated as the assessment indicated that the highest correlation between the predictors was $r=.56$, $p<.05$ as indicated in Table 5. There was a weak correlation between resource allocation and service delivery ($p=.36$), insignificant positive relationship between public participation and service delivery ($p=.12$), and substantial positive ($p=.56$) between accountability and transparency and service delivery.

Table 5: Relationship between Service Delivery, Resource Allocation, Public Participation, Accountability and Transparency (N=84)

Variables	Intercorrelations			
	1	2	3	4
1. Resource allocation	1	.32**	.43**	.36*
2. Public participation		1	.09	.12
3. Accountability and transparency			1	.56**
4. Service delivery				1

* $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

A combination of resource allocation, public participation, accountability, and transparency significantly predicted better service delivery, $F(4, 55) = 130.45$, $p = .01$. The R^2 (Coefficient of Determination) value was .46, a large effect (Cohen, 1988). This implies that the model accounted for 46% of the variations in service delivery. As shown in Table 6, an increase in resource allocation, public participation, and accountability by one unit would increase service delivery by .42, .32 and .54 respectively. Resource allocation and accountability were found to be significant predictors of service delivery ($p=.01$). The findings concur with those of Onyinkwa (2014) which revealed that transparency and accountability lead to increased responsiveness on the part of providers, improved access and quality of services, and consequently better developmental outcomes.

Table 6: Regression of Service Delivery^a on Resource Allocation^b, Public Participation^c, Accountability and Transparency^d (N=84)

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	β	SE	β		
(Constant)	-1.28	.28		-4.67	.00
Resource allocation	.42	.18	-.23	-1.71	.04
Public participation	.32	.18	.13	1.83	.07
Accountability and transparency	.54	.15	.71	5.84	.01

Note. ^{a, b, c, d} 1=strongly agree, 2=Agree, 3=Disagree and 4= Strongly Disagree; $R = .68$, $R^2 = .46$; $F(4, 55) = 130.45$; $p = .01$; * $p < .05$

The resultant model was as follows;

Public service delivery = $-.128 + .42(\text{resource allocation}) + .32(\text{public participation}) + .54(\text{accountability \& transparency})$

Conclusions

Better service delivery can be significantly be predicted by resource allocation, public participation, and accountability. Accountability and transparency were found to be the catalyst binding resource allocation and public participation to propel service delivery at Isiolo County. The amount allocated to the county government is inadequate to undertake planned projects and meet the administrative cost. Specifically, the amount of money allocated for projects is not enough and the money is not disbursed in good time. The county had qualified human resource and efficient service delivery was a product of adequate financial and qualified human resource. Despite the inadequacy, the county funds were being misused and were not accounted for properly, and this was detrimental to service delivery.

The County did not organize sufficient public opportunities for consultations on efficient and effective service delivery. Although citizens effectively participated in project identification and initiation, resources were not fully managed in an accountable and transparent manner even though internal and external audits are conducted regularly to ensure accountability and transparency. Although, stakeholders are involved in project programming their engagement in the budgetary process was not adequate. However, the County has put in place systems to ensure that employees have got access to proper housing and welfare services. Citizens can now access clean water for domestic and animal's consumption out of the county government's effort. The livestock department has been up to the task in curbing animal disease outbreaks and providing drugs and vaccines. The county has improved the food security situation and the provision of public services has resulted in the improved livelihood of citizens

Recommendations

In order to improve service delivery, County government officers should be more accountable and transparent in delivering the services. With accountability, scarce resources are likely to yield maximum results. It was found that a majority of employees had secondary education, thus county managers should focus on providing technical knowledge and skills to enable staff to perform their duties effectively. There is also a need for the national government to release adequate funds and in good time not to derail the planned projects; those being implemented and those in the process of being initiated. Though the County Government has developed the necessary infrastructure and medical facilities as referral hospitals and upgrading and equipping dispensaries with drugs, more resource allocations are needed to enable such facilities effectively perform their functions to the public.

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