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An Assessment Of Factors Influencing Service Delivery In County Governments In Kenya: A Study Of County Government Of Kitui, Kenya

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Abstract: ***The long struggle for a new constitutional dispensation was finally realized upon the promulgation of the constitution 2010; this document came along with a promise for not only a new but a better Kenya. Chief among its provisions was the migration from unitary to dual system of government this constitution also provides for the transfer of services and the financing of the county governments. It was envisioned that devolution would take governance to the grassroots and enable an enhance citizen participation in decisions making and over sighting which would potentiality translate to equitable distribution of resources as well as better, reliable and efficient public services to the citizens. However in as much as the national government devolved financial resources, there is scanty and apparent realization of the objectives that were envisioned. Even the few gains made so far seem to be overshadowed and threatened by a number of challenges five years down the line. It is clear therefore that there is a problem in terms of service delivery by the county governments despite the support of the national government. However there is hardly any study to provide empirical evidence for thorough understanding of this situation. Considering the amount of public resources that go into the county governments and their position in affecting the lives of the common mwananchi, there was need to assess the factors influencing service delivery in county Governments in Kenya so as offer guidance and suggest appropriate solutions to the challenges and potential complexities that exists. The aim of this study was therefore to assess the factors influencing service delivery in County Governments in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study's target population were residence of Matinyani ward in Kitui County. The study used simple random sampling technique .The researcher collected primary data using questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, using measures of central tendency, frequency and percentages aided by statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Data is presented through tables, charts, polygons, and a consortium of graphs. The study concludes that Kitui County Government (KCG) fairly allocates financial resources to key community issues which includes access to clean water, education, health facilities, roads and electricity and chief among them is access to roads and health facilities; indeed the county government has improved access to roads. However the county's efforts remain low; KCG poorly allocates contracts through procurement; furthermore, the county poorly allocates 30% of all procurement to women, youth and people living with disabilities; KCG did not hold consultative meetings on development issues, neither did they publicizes such consultative forums through media nor did citizens attend such forums. However residences are aware of their constitutional/legal right to participate in public participation. KCG does not adequately inform residence of public participation forums furthermore such forums were held very far from their reach; however such forums have satisfactorily improved service delivery within the county. The study also concludes that KCG leaders are poorly transparent on public resources and furthermore did not hold meetings to explain to Wanainchi how County Finances were used, neither did projects initiated by county Government get complete in time nor did KCG publish reports on County Expenditure on projects. Therefore the study concludes that resource mobilization, public publication and accountability influences the level of service delivery in county Governments in Kenya. Based on the study's findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations: KCG to increases allocation of financial resources to key community concerns/issues in the priority of access to health facilities, accessible roads, access to clean and safe water and access to education and electricity; KCG to observe the government legislation of allocating contracts as required by Public Procurement and Disposals Act 2006; and the government policy of allocating 30% of all procurement to women, youth and people living with disabilities; KCG to abide by the constitution 2010 and County Governments Act 2012 by ensuring that they hold public participation consultative meetings on development issues which should be widely publicized.***

Keywords: Service Delivery, Accountability, Citizen Participation,

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Devolution is generally defined as the process of transfer of political, administrative and fiscal management powers between central government and lower levels of government, who operate primarily at city and regional levels. (Potter, 2011). Devolution can therefore be seen as a form of decentralization that puts power close to the citizens so that local voices are recognized better in making decisions that affect the wider public.

Devolution has been successfully practiced in, among world countries, the United States of America (Brazil), India and United Kingdom among others. Internationally studies indicate that devolution influences service delivery however, these countries have had different experiences from devolution for example in Brazil; from 1989 when the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) won the municipal elections, local assemblies were organized to suggest, discuss and choose on distributions and spending of the municipal investment financial resources. This by 1996 resulted in increased units of households with access to water services 18 per cent, the expansion of municipal sewage system by 39 per cent and increase in number of children registered in public schools increased two-fold. (Cheema, 2007). Similarly, in his study, Besley and Burgess, (2002) found out that in the federal government of India decentralization promoted government responsiveness in service delivery.

In Africa, it has been practiced in South Africa, Nigeria and Ethiopia (World Bank, 2012). South Africa, and Nigeria have relatively implemented devolution with some degree of success, however Tewfik (2010) in his study on Transition to Federalism; The Ethiopian Experience established that Ethiopia faced several challenges at the onset of the implementation of the devolved governance, similarly Bardhan and Mookherjee (2000) in their study on Capture and governance at local and national levels, observed that improved access of local elite to public resources increase opportunities for corruption in Ethiopia.

In his study on analyzing the Impact of Devolution on Economic Development Potentialities in Kenya, Ndung'u, (2014) established that Kenya as a country had no experience in devolution, an examination of Kenya's history discloses that Kenya has for the better part of its independent life been a unitary state with a highly centralized government that had an imperious control over the sub – national governments and the other arms of government, namely the legislature and the judiciary. Kenya is therefore new to devolution with a slight attempt in 1963 through the then regionalism, dubbed 'Majimboism' which did not last long. The first government of the independent Kenya, under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta, amended the constitution soon after the independence in 1964, effectively scrapping the regional governments and replacing them with the central – controlled Provincial Administration and the local government system. Second, the governments established under the Local Government Act cap 265 of the laws of Kenya were not granted significant political, administrative and fiscal powers. Instead, central government retained control of the local governments through the administration officers (Ndung'u, 2014).

Since independence, Kenya has experienced episodes of political instability, which have had adverse effect on the country's economic performance and social cohesion. Kenya also experiences other failures from time to time. Such failures include – corruption, economic stagnation, inequalities and poverty. These failures and episodic instability can be linked to the quality of governance (d and Meagher, 2004). Kenya has for a long time attempted to get a new constitution, one of the main reasons why Kenyans wanted such a constitution was to have a legal framework through which vices such as inequitable and unfair sharing and distribution of resources and corresponding inequities in access to social services brought by centralization of political and economic power in the hands of a few will be comfortable dealt with (Mukabi, et. al., 2015).

So why the haste about devolution in Kenya? Devolution affects governance in several ways; it checks corruption particularly on sharing of public utility goods as well as collection of revenues. Second, it can improve effective cooperation within the devolved units where devolution of authority takes place along regional and communal lines, enabling local communities to marshal social pressure against unethical practices. Indeed, a growing number of countries have over the last three decades further decentralized administrative, fiscal and political functions of central government to sub – national governments.

From the foregoing, it is evident then that Devolution is at the heart of the new Constitution and a key means for addressing spatial inequities of the past. It is generally doubted that a more decentralized government makes important sense given Kenya's diversity and past experience with political use of central power as well as presenting an opportunity to address the diversity of local needs, choices and constraints. County government may be better placed than the national centralized government to deliver on social services since each county has specific challenges that required an institution that has local knowledge on how to go about providing more realistic solutions having considered all the factors within the locality (Mukabi, et. al., 2015).

Despite the fact that the Kenya's devolution structure promised a lot to citizens better lives ahead, the first five years of its implementation suggests otherwise. In as much as the national government has send resources down to the local level, hardly any real and tangible benefits can be singled out at least as far as the common *mwananchi* is concerned. This may leave citizens worse off if local elites will capture resources to the detriment of the majority, or when the newly established counties fail to put in place the systems needed for effective and transparent service delivery.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The long struggle for a new constitutional dispensation was finally realized upon the promulgation of the constitution 2010; this document came along with a promise for not only a new but a better Kenya (Mukabi, et. al., 2015). Chief among its provisions was the migration from unitary to dual system of government; with it came the national and forty seven county governments. It was envisioned that devolution would take governance to the grassroots and enable an enhance citizen participation in decisions making and over sighting which would potentiality translate to equitable distribution of resources as well as better, reliable and efficient public services to the citizens. With all these in place, it would be expected that Kenyans would have already started benefiting from devolution. However, despite the fact that the Kenya's devolution system 'promised' Kenyan citizens better lives ahead, Kenyans are yet to benefit from devolution five years after the promulgation of the constitution 2010 (Mukabi, et. al., 2015). Similarly, despite the national government

devolving financial resources to the county government, it is not clear how and whether such resources are being used in the interest of the Kenyan citizens. The constitution and the county Governments Act 2012 clearly makes it mandatory for the government to involve citizens through public participation, however there are no adequate mechanisms to enable the citizens to fully participate through public participation in shaping development agenda, furthermore the county government has not put in place mechanisms to disclose information of expenditure (Mwamuye, & Nyamu, 2014).. These concerns require immediate attention, however, there is hardly any research based empirical evidence on the progress and challenges of devolution. If these concerns are not addressed, the public, county and national government will suffer; *wananchi* will not fully benefit from devolution nor resources, whereas the national and even county government will not be able to fully deliver the services as per expectations (Mwamuye, & Nyamu, 2014). The commission for administrative justice through the ombudsman is awash with numerous reports of concerns for example in 2012, the commission handled 4062 complaints and inquiries which included 2440 complaints inherited from Public Complaints Committee. (CAJ, 2012).

There have been reports of some governors facing impeachment for abuse of office, the Kenya Auditor general has complained of huge impropriety in some Counties, the Kenyan senate has also summoned a section of Governors to account for some specified allegations. A study by Mwamuye, & Nyamu, (2014) on Devolution of health care system in Kenya established that, the health sector has had a high number of strikes and boycotts in some counties in Kenya. It is clear therefore from the above that there is a problem in terms of service delivery by the county governments despite the support of the national government. Such challenges have however been noted in other countries operating devolved system, in his study on analysis of the comparative performance of local public services in England and Wales, Martin (2007) observed that devolution in England, Scotland and Wales did not inevitably lead to regional centralism and that central-local relations at the regional or intermediate levels became less competitive. Similarly Tewfik (2010) established that Ethiopia faced several challenges at the outset of the implementation of the devolved governments while Bardhan and Mookherjee (2000) observe that improved access of local elite to public resources increase opportunities for corruption.

Considering the amount of public resources that go into the county governments and their position in influencing the lives of the common *mwanainchi*, there is need to assess factors influencing service delivery in county Governments in Kenya so as offer guidance and suggest solutions to the challenges that exists. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to assess the factors influencing service delivery in County Governments in Kenya.

C. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study was to assess the factors influencing service delivery in county Governments in Kenya. The specific objectives of this study were:

- ✓ To establish how resource mobilization influences service delivery in county Governments in Kenya.
- ✓ To establish the how public participation influences service delivery in county Governments in Kenya.
- ✓ To determine how accountability by local leadership influences service delivery in county Governments in Kenya.

D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- ✓ How does resource mobilization influence service delivery in county Governments in Kenya?
- ✓ How does public participation influence service delivery in county Governments in Kenya?
- ✓ How does accountability by local leadership influence service delivery in county Governments in Kenya?

E. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

To realize the Kenyan vision 2030 and other national objectives, Kenya will require for herself vibrant and a very good level of performance by county Governments. Understanding the influence of service delivery on devolved system of governance enables the County Government managers to maximize resources towards the achievement of predetermined objectives which aims to benefit the Kenyan citizens. Considering the strategic roles they have to play, there is need for this information so as to enable county governments' adequately put in place mechanisms to foster their performance. It is for this reason therefore that a study is necessary to bridge this gap this much needed gap hence this study to assess the influence of service delivery on devolved system of Governance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is bases on three theories namely: Agency theory, Contract theory and Stakeholders' theory.

B. SERVICE DELIVERY IN DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS

The fundamental objective of devolution is to ensure that the citizens benefit from efficient, effective reliable and quality public goods and services by taking governance closer to the people in the spirit of government of the people by the people for the people. Sarkar (2003) in his study reiterates that devolution, through its governance is a means through which governments provides high quality services valued by citizens.

Devolution does not only devolve power but also resources that are meant to enhance service devilry to citizens. A study by World Bank (2003), reiterates that devolution has both an explicit and implicit inspiration for improving service

delivery for dual reasons: First, these basic services, all of which are the responsibility of the state, are steadily failing and especially failing the poor people and secondly, since these services are consumed locally, there is need enhance service delivery through devolution. This clearly indicates that the national Government recognizes the challenge of delivering services to particularly the poor.

Internationally studies indicate that devolution influences service delivery. In his study, Besley and Burgess, (2002) found out that in the federal government of India decentralization promoted government responsiveness in service delivery, this happens especially if the mass media is very active at the grassroots. This finding is consistent with Fauget (2001), whom in his study on decentralization in Bolivia established that there has been noticeable increase in public investment in urban agriculture, water management, water and sanitation and education, since the 1994 decentralization reform. The ability of devolution to deliver to the expectations depends on how it emerges, in their study Olowu and Wunsch (2004) argues that their exists in idealized process by which devolution emerges from decentralization process, this form of devolution has the greatest chances of succeeding, they however note that the frequent actual experience of decentralization reforms especially in Africa deviates from the ideal situation often failing to deliver its expectations and in some cases leading to recentralization as a result of its weaknesses and inefficiencies. The table below summarizes such differences.

There is an indication of clear contrast between devolution intentions of many developing countries and the real or actual policy outputs/outcomes in developing countries as opposed to developed world (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004). Similarly by the year 2004, Kenya relative to its African peers seemed to have been doing badly especially in terms of local autonomy and authority, resources availability to local units (the then municipal councils), effective open and accountable local political process and governance, indeed Olowu and Wunsch (2004) summarizes how these issues vary between, Chad, Botswana, Uganda, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya.

Indeed Saito (2000) concurs with the findings; in his study, he found out that service delivery had not meaningfully improved in Uganda as result of devolution. When devolution is in place without meaningful improvements in service delivery a question always remains: what is the problem? (Oyugi, 2009). However Obwona et al (2000) in his study concluded that financial and institutional constraints have adversely affected the ability of the devolved governments to adequately deliver quality services to the citizens.

C. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Resource allocation and mobilization remains a key feature in devolved units. The national Government is required constitutionally in Kenya to allocate financial resources to county government through which public goods and services are provided to the citizens. The amount of this financial allocation is probably an issue that may be contentious in counties practicing devolution. In the world over, Brazil other than being one of the most decentralized democracies have their subnational governments accounting for about half of public expenditure. (Ndung'u, 2014).

Devolution therefore remains a key vehicle of enabling local units to access resources, in his study Kayima (2009) found out that in Uganda monetary decentralization policy that is being practiced has facilitated local governments to access additional finances to facilitate delivery of services to their citizens. Indeed Akai and Sakata (2002) in their study point out that the design and implementation of a devolved system of government can meaningfully influence the overall resource allocation in the countries. Indeed, the success of devolution usually depends on the fiscal decentralization framework, which defines how the local governments spend and how national tax is shared among the different levels of government (Shah and Thompson, 2004). It is imperative that for development to occur Devolved governments are expected to make public expenditure more efficient (Vasquez and McNab, 2005).

A key contribution of devolution is economic growth; devolution provides a certain degree of autonomy for investment and expenditure decisions which enables county governments to pursue domesticated policies for economic development customized to their own and specific local needs and endowments (Pose & Gill, 2004). A key example in this case is Brazil; from 1989 when the Brazilian Workers Party (BWP) won the municipal elections, local assemblies were organized to suggest, discuss and choose on distributions and spending of the municipal investment financial resources. This by 1996 resulted in increased units of households with access to water services 18 per cent, the expansion of municipal sewage system by 39 per cent and increase in number of children registered in public schools increased two-fold (Cheema, 2007).

On the flip side though, devolution especially in Kenya is yet to realize optimal monetary allocation, mobilization and utilization. Resource mobilization influences economic growth as well as service delivery differently, In Italy for example a study indicated that devolution may have exacerbated regional inequalities in public spending and economic outcomes (Calamal, 2009). Indeed, there are substantial arguments warning against fiscal decentralization, based on the fact that devolution may reinforce regional disparities, which may hamper economic growth (Thiessen, 2001). Researchers have however recognized certain common problems related to decentralization's impact on service delivery. Frequently mentioned problem is the lack of capacity at the local governments to exercise responsibility for public services, for example, in his study Akin, Hutchinson and Strump (2001) found out that in Uganda and Tanzania lower levels of governments lack the capacity to manage public finances and maintain appropriate accounting procedures. In Uganda particularly expenditure on primary healthcare dropped from 33% to 16% during decentralization, while in Ethiopia people in their third tier or *woreda* level suffers illiteracy.

But why does this happen? Azfar et al (2001) established that local administrators have inadequate authority to influence service delivery and at the same time citizens' influence at the local level is hindered by inadequate information. As a result, devolution does not achieve the

anticipated effects of resource allocation efficacy. Overdependence on national government may also have contributed to such failures, the county governments should avoid this so as not to national government for breakdowns in service delivery (Rodden, 2007; Khemani, 2004). Devolution reduces the national government's role in attracting and allocating industry and the assignment to regions of the responsibility for their own revenue generation and economic development, since devolved units can directly execute this, devolution can inter-county competition for the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI). (Pose and Gill, 2004).

A case in point was in Brazil, Pose and Arbix, (2001) point that this competition took the form of "Guerra fiscal" between different states resulting in detrimental effects in the attraction of FDI; this was notable in the automobile industry especially between 1995 and 1999, and car manufacturers invested over US $12 billion in Brazil. This however failed to yield growth and instead, this investment spurred a fierce and wasteful rivalry between Brazilian states,

Pose and Arbix, (2001) argue that:

… in trying to influence companies' location decisions in exchange for locating within a region, firms were increasingly offered tax breaks, favorable loan agreements, donations of land, grants, etc. The car companies encouraged such competition and played Brazilian states off against each other in order to achieve the best possible deal. The final outcome of these bidding wars was pure waste, since any possible increase in local welfare was neutralized by the costs of attracting FDI, leading, in the long – run "towards greater dependency, greater instability, greater disparities and probably greater poverty" (Pose and Arbix, 2001, p. 152).

From this incident then, it is clear that devolution can reinforce regional disparities among the county governments, which may prove disadvantageous to economic development due to their undesirable welfare consequences (Cheshire and Gordon 1996, cited in Agnew, 2000) and the under – utilization or waste of resources, such as infrastructure and human resources, in lagging regions (Armstrong and Taylor, 2000). When this occurs regions become worried since spatial equality usually often comes second to the main objective of promoting an economic dividend within each county (Agnew, 2000). The rate at which this development is realized in important, Devolution carries with it inherent fiscal, political and administrative costs which fall more heavily upon those counties with inadequate adjustment capacities, resulting in different rates at which counties can capitalize upon the opportunities it offers which may lead to superior development of originally rich and powerful counties to the disadvantage of poorer zones (Pose and Gill, 2004).

Furthermore the formula used in allocating county governments resources can bring about a repressiveness in the allocation of government expenditure, as this formula dictates how funds are allocated which often lead to unequal negotiating strength to the richer ones, whose degree of influence over the central government is higher, permitting them to obtain a unequal share (Pose and Gill, 2003). When this occur, it worsens poverty in the remote areas and enhance spatial inequality, further more giving different strengths to local councilors (MCAs). This discretionary distribution of resources to the local governments has constrained them greatly in many countries (Shuna and Yao, 2007; Trillo and Rabling, 2008).

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Public participation in Kenya is a constitutional right via the Kenya constitution 2010 and the county governments Act 2012. In his study Warner (2003) affirms that Successful decentralization other than needing administrative and financial capacity equally requires effective citizen participation, Shah and Thompson (2004) concurs that decentralization is a silent revolution in the public sector governance as it takes decision making to local public service closer to the citizens.

Internationally, a significant internationally documented successful case of local participation is that of participatory budgeting and auditing in Brazil's southern city of Porto Allegre (United Nations (UN), 2005; Cheema, 2007; Van Speier, 2009). In Africa, Public participation do occur but at low different degrees in different African countries. A study by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) (2009) noted that only 45% of respondents in Cape Verde felt that their local governments are moderately effective mechanisms for citizen participation and as high as 70% of respondents in Egypt, 66% in Gabon and Kenya, 69% in Nigeria, 62% in Togo and 67% in Zambia rate Local Government (LG) low in as far as citizen participation is concerned (Parnell, 2002 and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) study, 2009).

So what is the problem here? In as much as public participation is practices in countries running on decentralized units, there remain a myriad of challenges. According to Warner (2003) many local governments lack an adequate revenue base or sufficient expert management capacity which is fundamental in encouraging public participation. This implies that it is not only imperative to promote the citizen voice, but citizen voice must also be heard (Crook, 2003). In their study Azfar et. al. (2004) identified the following as means through which citizens can participate in shaping service delivery: Regular local elections – through which citizens can vote out errant local political leaders, Surveys to solicit citizens' feedback on improving service delivery, Public hearings and call – in lines – for soliciting feedback on local policies, Legal Recourse through which citizens can petition government, Demonstrations, 'Exit' – where citizens discontinue the use of services that they are dissatisfied with and Ombudsman – by lodging complaints relating to public service delivery. However, for effective results of decentralization to be attained, there must be adequate capacity in the form of labour, essential equipment and technology, and incentives to encourage government officials to produce the anticipated. (Azfar et. al. 2004). In Kenya, Devas and Grant (2003) established a positive shift in expenditure priorities in local authorities in Kenya as a result of citizen involvement in decision making through Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP).

E. COUNTY LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Accountability is a virtuous practice where service delivery agents make public, and are responsible for their actions in the process of discharging responsibilities. In this case it is the extent to which officials of the County government give account to the citizens on the resources at their disposal and how they have been used in service delivery. Devolution, as an advancement of the good governance theory is a form of decentralization that has been successfully practiced by many countries across the world (World Bank, 2012). Improved citizen participation can reinforce accountability. In so doing 'citizens should have accurate and accessible information about local government: about available resources, performance, service levels, budgets, accounts and other financial indicators' (Devas and Grant, 2003).

The hope of decentralization in county government is by narrowing the prerogative served by a local government, and the scope of public activities in their responsibility, local citizens will find it easier to hold government accountable (Ahmad, 2005). Accountability was found to be a vital determinant in identifying officers during voting, Khemani (2001) found evidence that Indian voters use such information in appraising contestants in local elections than they do in national elections. Similarly Azfar et al (2001) established that citizens in Uganda and Philippines, both countries with decentralization reforms, depend on community leaders and local social networks for update about local corruption and local elections.

Is accountability lacking in devolved units? A number of studies seem to suggest this. For example, the interviews conducted in Lesotho readily confirm that there are weak mechanisms for accountability. There are several indicators supporting this. 'Grants-in-aid have become substantial but lose helpfulness due to lack of information about what is available, slowness to release funds, 'use it or lose it' budget provisions, multiple budgetary requirements, unsuitable accounting requirements, rigid stipulation about use of funds, corrupt practices, lack of qualified personnel and inadequate supervision.' Daemane, (2012).

Just like in most African countries and particularly in Kenya, Administrative efficiency in the county governments has also been thwarted by outrageous reports of widespread corruption particularly by the opportunistic senior politicians. Accountability and other essential elements of good governance beside the establishment of good structures and legislations for decentralization lack serious implementation and enforcement (Olowu, 2003). There is urgent need to look into this if any meaningful gains are to be made both at national and county governments.

F. ANALYSIS OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH GAP

Empirical evidence on the impact of devolution depicts mixed results and in some cases, it is inconclusive. For instance, a study of the federal state of India advocates that decentralization encourages government responsiveness in service delivery, (Besley and Burgess, 2002). While another study in Italy indicates that devolution may aggravate regional inequalities in public spending and economic outcomes (Calamai, 2009). While other establishes that success at local level is disadvantaged by limited information and as a result, devolution does not achieve the desired effects of efficiency. Azfar et al (2001). Furthermore, despite the theoretical underpinnings and advocacy for citizen participation in decentralized service delivery, there is a scarcity of data on the relationship between public participation and service delivery outcomes; evidence on the resulting impact is mixed at best especially in a developing country's context. Robinson (2007) notes that 'there is no systematic or comparative evidence on whether increased citizen participation in decentralized local governance produces better outputs in provision of education, health, drinking water and sanitation services'. Where data is available it is 'from single countries and sector or is anecdotal and temporarily specific and highly localized thus rendering generalization problematic'. Notably, few studies have examined the direct impact of participation on decentralized service delivery outcomes especially in the developing countries (Putnam, 1993 cited in Azfar, et al., 1999; Fiszbein, 1997; Isham and Kähkönen, 1999; Devas and Grant, 2003; Oyugi and Kibua, 2008). Available research studies look at how decentralization enhances participation (Von Braun and Grote, 2002; Ahmad, et al., 2005;; Brinkerhoff, et al., 2007); design and emerging mechanisms of participation in sub-national governments (Azfar, et al., 1999; 2008; John, 2009; Matovu, 2011; Joshi and Houtzager, 2012); and, factors influencing citizen participation in local governments (Esonu and Kavanamur, 2011; Yang and Pandey, 2011; Bay, 2011; Michels, 2012).

It is against this backdrop that the increasing support of devolution particularly in Kenya and its ability to deliver effective, efficient, reliable and quality public goods and services warrants a closer look. This is particularly so in the face of limited empirical evidence to support the theoretically based positive effects attributed to devolution in Kenya. Thus the question is, how does resource mobilization, public participation and accountability by local leadership influence service delivery in County Governments in Kenya and particularly in County Government of Kitui?

G. OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONCEPTS

To carry out this inquiry, the study presumes the argument that resource mobilization, public participation and accountability by local leadership influence service delivery in County Governments in Kenya based on Azfar, et al., (1999); Von Braun and Grote, (2002) argument that service delivery outcomes are impacted by characteristics that include efficient allocation of resources, equity in service delivery, accountability and reduction of corruption. Pieterse, (2002) postulates that developmental local governments depends on attaining good and effective governance, participatory local democratic governance, capability, viability, accountability purpose-driven municipalities and participatory development, integrated development and equitable access to resources and opportunities. The researcher proposed to limit this study to

resource mobilization, public participation and accountability by local leadership from the above.

Decentralized service delivery the dependent variable, decentralized service delivery, is operationalized by indicators of resource mobilization, public participation and accountability of county government leadership. These are picked as key indicators of whether service delivery has improved or not, in line with the common objectives of decentralization. In this study these indicators are measured in terms of Access to clean water, Education, Health facilities, Electricity, and Accessible to Roads.

Resource mobilization this refers to the how the county government obtain and mobilize or allocate and raise revenue to the benefit of the citizens in an effort to influence service delivery in the county governments, it is operationalized in terms of allocations of financial resources, Timely transfer of this resources, Revenue collection to areas as identified by local people. In this resource mobilization efficiency is measured as the degree to which services provided match citizen preferences and the satisfaction level of citizens with it.

Citizen participation this study assumes the argument that citizen participation influences service delivery outcomes through impacting its determinants or characteristics and is measured through the number and frequency of Meetings/Barazas, Consultations during budgeting and Gender Considerations and engagements in county development.

Accountability is the practice where service delivery agents make public, and are responsible for their actions. In this study, it is the extent to which leadership of the county government give account to the citizens on the resources at their disposal and how they have been used in service delivery. It is expected that those charged with decentralized service delivery apply all resources for the intended purposes only. According to Devas and Grant (2003), enhanced citizen participation can strengthen accountability. In so doing 'citizens should have accurate and accessible information about local government: about available resources, performance, service levels, budgets, accounts and other financial indicators'. This indicator is assessed and measured based on Records of information, Transparency Reports on expenditures and the adherence to budgets.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey research design and was conducted in Kitui County in Kenya with a total population of 1,012,709 people in 205,491 households. The study's target population were Kenyan citizens while the study population were residents of Matinyani Ward in Kitui County drawn from 2,006 households within Matinyani ward. (KNBS Census, 2009). Simple random sampling techniques was used where 200 respondents were sampled (Neuman, 2003) suggests that, for descriptive research the sample should be 10% - 20% of the study population. Data was collected by use of a questionnaire administered using 'drop and pick' method.

Instruments reliability, was tested in a pilot study through test-retest method on a sample of 10 respondents who were not be used in the final analysis, and was validated through peer and expert review. Filled-up the questionnaires were collected and coded in preparation for data analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, through measures of central tendency. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) computer package tool was used to aid this analysis. Data was presented by the use of tables, charts, polygons, and graphs.

V. FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The study obtained a response rate of 95%. Respondents were largely composed of female at 55.3% while male were at 44.7%. Majority of the respondents were aged between 36-45 years which stood at 28.4%. 26-35 years accounted for 27.4%, those between 46-55 years accounted for 23.7% and those between 18-25 years accounted for 11.1% and those over 55 years accounted for 9.5%. The majority of the respondents were therefore aged between the age of 36-45 years probably a mature aged to understand dynamics under the study. Majority of the respondents had college certification of a diploma or certificate (55.3 %,) followed by those who held undergraduate degrees (14.7%), while other respondents held Secondary school certificate (12.6%), Postgraduate degrees (10%) and Primary (7.4%).

B. INFLUENCE OF COUNTY RESOURCE MOBILIZATION ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN KCG

The study established that the majority of the respondents (41.6%) held that KCG fairly allocates financial resources to key community concerns/issues. However a significant proportion of the respondents (31.6%) felt that KCG poorly allocates financial resources to key community concerns/issues. 18.4% and 8.4% of the respondents felt that KCG had done well (a rate of Good and very good respectively) in allocating financial resources to key community concerns/issues.

The study established that majority of the respondents (54.7%) felt that Access to clean water, Education, Health facilities, Roads and electricity were the key concerns/Issues/problems facing residents within KCG. Priority wise, 18.4% of the respondents indicated access to roads, 12.6% access to Health facilities, 11.1% access to clean water, and 1.6% cited access to Education and electricity. From these findings, is clear that access to roads remains the biggest challenge in KCG.

The study established that majority of the respondents (32.1%) felt that KCG has improved Access to clean water, Education, Health facilities, Roads and electricity. KCG has particularly improved access to roads (18.9%) followed by access to Health facilities (14.2%) and access to Electricity (11.6%), Education (10.5%), and clean water (5.8%). However the percentage is low indicating that such improvement are notably low and indeed 6.8% of the respondent indicated that KCG had not improved Key community concerns.

The study established that majority of the respondents (44.7%) indicated that KCG poorly allocates contracts through procurement. However a significantly high proportion (36.8%) indicated that KCG fairly allocates contracts through procurement, furthermore 11.6% (Good) and 6.8% (Very good) indicated that the county does well in terms of allocating contracts through procurement.

The study found out that majority of the respondents (42.6%) indicated that KCG poorly allocates 30% of all procurement to women, youth and people living with disabilities. However a significantly high proportion (36.3%) indicated that KCG fairly allocates 30% of all procurement to women, youth and people living with disabilities, furthermore 11.1% (Good) and 10% (Very good) indicated that the county does well in terms of allocating 30% of all procurement to women, youth and people living with disabilities.

Majority of the respondents (53.7%) indicated that KCG is doing enough to collect its own revenue within the county. However a significantly high proportion (46.3%) felt that KCG is not doing enough to collect its own revenue within the county. going by the majority it can be deduced that KCG is doing enough to collect its own revenue within the county. The study established that Majority of the respondents (80.0%) were readily willing to pay county government taxes if they were doing business within Kitui County; however 20% of the respondents were not readily willing to pay such taxes. This clearly indicates the citizen readiness to honour their obligations towards the county governance.

The study establishes that Majority of the respondents (47.9%) held that KCG had satisfactorily improved service delivery within the county; however a significantly high proportion (40.5%) felt that KCG has had no effect on service delivery within the county. this opinion not withstanding 11.6% of the respondents were highly satisfied with the KCG service delivery.

The study establishes that Majority of the respondents (27.4%) held that KCG had but to a small extent improved infrastructure in schools and improved roads within KCG (26.8%) and improved hospital service to a very small extent (24.2%). However majority of the respondents held that KCG had not improved communities access to clean and safe water (28.9%) neither expanded electricity connection (26.8%). The findings of this study agrees with the findings of World Bank (2003), that reiterates that devolution has both an explicit and implicit inspiration for improving service delivery for dual reasons: First, these basic services, all of which are the responsibility of the state, are steadily failing and especially failing the poor people and secondly, since these services are consumed locally, there is need enhance service delivery through devolution. It further agrees with a study by Sarkar (2003) reiterating that devolution, through its governance is a means through which governments provides high quality services valued by citizens, and similarly Besley and Burgess, (2002) that established that federal government of India decentralization promoted government responsiveness in service delivery.

C. INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN KCG

The study established that majority of the respondents (52.1%) indicated that KCG did not hold consultative Baraza/meetings on development issues, neither did they publicizes such consultative forums through media (57.1%) nor did citizens attend such forums (66.8%). However majority of these respondents (87.4%) were aware of their constitutional/legal right to participate in public participation. The study established that majority of the respondents (37.7%) indicated that they were never informed of such forums, while 34.4% indicated that such forums were held very far from their reach while 22.2% indicated that such forums are never held and a small percentage (3.2%) indicated that they lacked transport to the venue of such forums. 0.5% had other reasons. The study established that majority of the respondents (59.5%) indicated that they wanted county government to prioritize access to clean and safe water, education, health facilities, electricity and accessible roads. However such services were preferred in the order of access to Health facilities (15.8%), accessible roads (11.6%), access to clean and safe water (7.9%) and access to education and electricity (2.6%).

The study established that majority of the respondents (51.4%) indicated that KCG had fairly given women adequate representation indeed a further 18.5% (Good) and 10.6% (Very Good) indicated that KCG was doing well in terms of women representation. However 19.5% held a contrary opinion that KCG had poorly given women adequate representation. The study establishes that Majority of the respondents (47.9%) held that public participation had satisfactorily improved service delivery within the county; however a significantly high proportion (36.8%) felt that public participation has had no effect on service delivery within the county; this opinion not withstanding 15.3% of the respondents indicated that public participation had enhanced service delivery to a very good extent.

The findings above agrees with the finding of Warner's, (2003) affirming that Successful decentralization other than needing administrative and financial capacity equally requires effective citizen participation, and equally Shah and Thompson (2004) concurring that decentralization is a silent revolution in the public sector governance as it takes decision making to local public service closer to the citizens and equally Valenzuela (2002) who argues that if given opportunity, the poor and marginalized people can shape robust and sustainable organizations, build huge generosity and unity, positively improve their quality of life, cause participation and accountability mechanisms and arouse the emergence of democratic leadership in their locality.

D. INFLUENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN KCG

The study established that majority of the respondents (53.7%) indicated that KCG leaders are poorly transparent on public resources. However 27.9% of the respondents indicated that county leaders were fairly transparent on county public resources and indeed a further 7.9% (Good) and 10.5% (Very

Good) indicated that county leaders are transparent on county public resources. The study established that majority of the respondents (76.2%) indicated that KCG did not hold Barazas/meetings to explain to *Wananchi* how County Finances were used, neither did projects initiated by county Government get complete in time (78.4%) nor did KCG publish reports on County Expenditure on projects (64.2%).

The study established that majority of the respondents (35.8%) proposed that KCG should strictly stick to financial budgets, 33.7% proposed that KCG should publish Expenditure periodically and 24.2% proposed that KCG should arrest and prosecute resource embezzlers. However 6.3% proposed that KCG should employ all the three strategies in an effort to improve county financial resource accountability. The study establishes that Majority of the respondents (51.1%) held that leaders accountability had satisfactorily improved service delivery within the county; however a significantly high proportion (45.8%) held that leaders accountability has had no effect on service delivery within the county; this opinion not withstanding 3.2% of the respondents indicated that leaders accountability had enhanced service delivery to a very good extent.

The findings above agrees with the findings of previous studies such as Devas and Grant (2003) who argues that improved citizen participation can reinforce accountability. In so doing 'citizens will have accurate and accessible information about local government: about available resources, performance, service levels, budgets, accounts and other financial indicators'. However it does support the findings of Olowu (2003) who argues that accountability and other essential elements of good governance beside the establishment of good structures and legislations for decentralization lack serious implementation and enforcement.

E. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that KCG fairly allocates financial resources to key community concerns/issues which includes access to clean water, Education, Health facilities, Roads and electricity and chief among them is access to roads and Health facilities; indeed the county government has improved access to roads. However the county's efforts remain low. The study also concludes that KCG poorly allocates contracts through procurement; furthermore, the county poorly allocates 30% of all procurement to women, youth and people living with disabilities. However the county is doing enough to collect its own revenue within the county and indeed, residence are readily willing to pay county government taxes if they were doing business within Kitui County. Similarly KCG has satisfactorily improved service delivery within the county and particularly improved roads and infrastructure in schools.

The study also concludes that KCG did not hold consultative Baraza/meetings on development issues, neither did they publicizes such consultative forums through media nor did citizens attend such forums. However residence are aware of their constitutional/legal right to participate in public participation. KCG does not adequately inform residence of public participation forums furthermore such forums were held very far from their reach; however such forums have satisfactorily improved service delivery within the county. The study also concludes that KCG fairly gives women adequate representation.

The study also concludes that KCG leaders are poorly transparent on public resources and furthermore did not hold Barazas/meetings to explain to Wananchi how County Finances were used, neither did projects initiated by county Government get complete in time nor did KCG publish reports on County Expenditure on projects. KCG should strictly stick to financial budgets, publish Expenditure periodically arrest and prosecute resource embezzlers.

F. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations

- ✓ It was found out that county's allocation of resources to key community issues remains low, it is therefore recommended that KCG increases allocation of financial resources to key community concerns/issues in the priority of access to Health facilities, accessible roads, access to clean and safe water and access to education and electricity.
- ✓ It is also recommended that KCG observes the government legislation of allocating contracts as required by Public Procurement and Disposals Act 2006; and the government policy of allocating 30% of all procurement to women, youth and people living with disabilities.
- ✓ It is also recommended that KCG abides by the constitution 2010 and County Governments' Act 2012 by ensuring that they hold public participation consultative Baraza/meetings on development issues.
- ✓ It is also recommended that for KCG to increase participation by county residence, they should widely publicizes such consultative forums through media as well as ensuring that such forums are held closer to the residence.

It is also recommended that in order to improve county financial resource accountability, KCG should hold Barazas/meetings to explain to Wananchi how County Finances were used, publish reports on County Expenditure on projects periodically, strictly stick to financial budgets and arrest and prosecute resource embezzlers.

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