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# County Governments In Kenya: People's Awareness and Perceptions of their Governance Systems and Participation in their Leadership and Poverty Reduction Projects

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**ABSTRACT**
**County governments are relatively new in Kenya having been started in 2013. This study is a follow up on an earlier study of devolved governance in Kenya which we recently published. The objective of this study is to examine people's awareness and perceptions of the county governance systems and participation in their leadership and poverty reduction projects. We purposively sampled 150 businesspersons and farmers and a few key informants from major towns of the three counties of Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado and interviewed them using interview schedules and interview guides. We also collected data from documentary sources. The counties and a majority of their residents were poor. Most of the respondents were aware of the leaders, responsibilities, advantages and problems of their county governments. Whereas the counties, especially Kakamega were implementing poverty reduction projects which were known by the respondents, about 95 per cent of them did not participate in them. Whereas Kakamega county system was positively- those of Kisumu and Kajiado were negatively perceived negatively by majority of the respondents as characterized by vices such as inefficiency, corruption and nepotism. There was urgent need for continuous education of the county leaders about good governance and residents about tolerance of other ethnic communities.**

**Keywords:** Devolution, governance, awareness, perceptions, participation, respondents, business, locals, non-locals and poverty.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

This article has been compiled from data gathered though a "follow-up" of an earlier study. The earlier study was published in the *International Journal of Social Work and Human Services Practice* an article entitled: "Devolution as a means for self-governance: Its potential for poverty reduction in Kenya" (Chitere and Ngundo, 2015). The publication presented results of a study that had examined devolution which had been introduced in Kenya at the beginning of 2013. The main objective of the study was to review progress that had been made in establishment of county governments and their potential for effective delivery of services and reduction of poverty. Data was collected from the three counties of Kakamega and Kisumu in western Kenya and Kajiado in the southern part of the country from interviews of senior staff and leaders of the counties and from documentary sources. The socio-economic profiles of the counties, organizational structure of their governments, human and financial resources, development projects they had planned or were implementing and peoples' participation in the projects were examined.

The profiles of the counties showed them to be poor on the basis of various indicators of poverty such as high population density, especially for Kakamega and Kisumu, low literacy level, especially in Kajiado, high teacher: pupil ratio, lack of enough training facilities, high infant and child mortality, high doctor: patient ratio, few kilometers of paved roads, low electricity consumption and low urbanization rate, especially for Kakamega.

Organizationally, the counties had established their institutional frameworks of assemblies and executive as well as ward offices which were key in decision making relating to mobilization and use of resources for poverty reduction.

Human resources were abundant and included, the former national government and local authority staff and the new staff that the counties were recruiting. Harmonization of the staff was being undertaken and was, when completed, likely to provide the human capacity needed in planning and implementation of poverty reduction projects.

Financial resources were directly allocated by the national treasury to the counties making it easier for them to plan and implement various projects that were likely to reduce poverty. It was evident that the vast amounts of monies allocated to the counties were stimulating economic activities by households including selling of building materials such as stones, sand, poles and timber. Expenditures by the counties were beginning to impact positively on local businesses such as hardwares, boutiques and hotels while local contractors were using local labour in construction of infrastructural facilities such as schools and access roads funded by the counties.

It was conclusive from the study that major transformations in society and its communities can come through decisive macro-level change, such as the Republic of Kenya constitution (2010) which had brought far reaching structural and operational changes in the country's governance with considerable potential for faster development and reduction of poverty.

A main shortcoming of the study was that we did not examine devolution from the perspective of the people of the counties whom it was meant to benefit. This article presents results from a follow-up study which examined devolution from the perspective of the residents of the counties in terms of the socio-economic situation of the counties, their poverty situation including that of their individual residents and households, development projects planned and implemented and people's awareness and perceptions of the system and their participation in its leadership, planning and budgeting processes.

## Research Questions and objectives

While counties, their assemblies and executives were created and started their operations including planning and implementing projects seeking to reduce poverty of their communities and residents, a number of research questions can be posed: a) What is the level of poverty of the counties and that of their residents? b) How far are people aware and what are their perceptions of the county governance system; and c) How far have people participated in the counties' planning and budgeting processes as well as in their leadership? The main objective is to examine people's awareness and perceptions of the counties' governance systems and their participation in the operations of the systems.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

### Literature review and theoretical framework

Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) defined decentralization as transfer of legal or political authority from central government and its agencies to their subordinate units, semi-autonomous public corporations, development authorities, local government or non-governmental organizations. Collins (1973) noted that there were two main types of decentralization: deconcentration which is delegation of authority to staff of a central government ministry posted outside headquarters for performance of specified functions and devolution which is delegation of authority to formerly constituted local government bodies for performance of specified or residual functions. Other types of decentralization are discretion where an agency gives powers to an entity to perform certain functions and privatization where an agency contracts some of its functions to private service providers. Kenya's county governments are products of a type of decentralization known as "devolution". Chweya (2006) observes that there are three models of decentralization: First, Integrated prefectoral administration which refers to a multi-layered structured administration where reporting is to a single area supervisor or prefect, for example, Uganda's system of district administration. Secondly, Tiered loosely integrated area administration which involves two or more streams of local administration with little or no coordination among them, for example, the District Focus in Kenya which involved government ministries, and municipal, county and town councils. Finally, comprehensive area administration with a single decision making council or hierarchy of councils and a unified executive or their hierarchy working within a given territorial unit, for example, Kenya's county governments.

Whereas Kenya got her independence (1963) on the basis of a devolved constitution termed Majimbo that provided for a federal government with a bicameral legislature of the national assembly and senate and elected regional governments, the constitution was not fully adopted by the Kenya African National Union (KANU) government which was opposed to it (Chitere, et al., 2006). In 1964, the government adopted a republican constitution which was gradually amended so that by 1969 a centralized system of governance was fully established led by one political party.

Local government authorities which were also strong and responsible for collection of the Graduated personal Tax (GPT) and other taxes and levies and which provided services such as health, road maintenance and schools were also weakened through transfer of their tax collection powers and services to the central government.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, several efforts were made to decentralize decision making in what is known as deconcentration and culminated in the launching of the District Focus For Rural development in 1983 (Chitere and Ireri, 2008). The strategy adopted the district as the local level unit for planning and implementation of programmes with funds coming largely from line ministries.

A major shortcoming of this centralized system was the drop in performance of the economy to 0.6 per cent by 2002 and poverty level of 56 per cent (Republic of Kenya ERS, 2003). One major change introduced by the new NARC government in 2003 was the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and the Local Authority Transfer funds (LATF) which helped to reduce poverty to about 46 per cent by 2006.

Chapter eleven of the Republic Kenya Constitution (2010) provides for devolution of the country's governance system. The objectives of devolution are to: (a) Promote democratic and accountable exercise of power; (b) Foster national unity by recognizing diversity; (c) Give powers of self-governance to the people to enhance their participation in their exercise of powers of the state and in making decisions affecting them; (d) Recognize the right of communities to manage their own affairs and further their development; (e) Protect and promote interests and rights of minorities and marginalized communities; (f) Promote social and economic development and provision of easily accessible services; (g) Ensure equitable sharing of national and local resources: (h) Ensure decentralization of state organs, their functions and services from the capital, Nairobi; and (i) Enhance checks and balances and separation of powers.

Article 176 establishes county governments… " (1) There shall be a county government for each county consisting of an assembly and an executive; (2) Every county government shall decentralize its functions and the provision of its services to the extent that it is efficient and practicable to do so".

Fourty seven (47) counties were created headed by elected governors and deputy governors and the county assembly comprising elected Members of County Assembly (MCAs), a speaker and an executive committee headed by the governor and deputy governor and the executive comprising persons appointed by the governor and approved by the assembly.

Article 175 (b) provides that… "county governments shall have reliable sources of revenue to enable them govern and deliver services effectively.

Chapter 12 of the Republic of Kenya Constitution (2010) on public finance provides for sharing of revenue between the national and county governments. Article 203 provides that the share of the revenue raised nationally allocated to county governments shall not be less than 15 per cent. In addition, an equalization fund of 1.5 per cent of funds collected nationally was set aside for support of marginalized areas.

The Fourth Schedule of the Republic of Kenya, Constitution (2010) provides for responsibilities of the county governments which are: Agriculture; health services; control of air and noise pollution, other public nuisances and outdoor advertising; cultural activities, public entertainment and amenities; transport; animal control and welfare; trade development and regulation; county planning and development; pre-primary education, village polytechnics, homecraft centres and childcare facilities; Implementation of national government policies on natural resources and environmental conservation; county public works and services; fire fighting services and disaster management; control of drugs and phonography; and ensuring and coordinating the participation of communities in governance and helping them to develop administrative capacity for participation in governance at the local level.

These responsibilities show that Kenya's devolution is partial since important institutions such as the judiciary, education and security are not devolved.

In Ethiopia, Beyene (1999) observes that the country formulated its constitution and elected a federal government comprising 11 states in 1994. The regional states were empowered to formulate and execute policies, strategies and plans for economic and social development; collect taxes and duties, recruit staff, administer state police force and maintain public order and peace. The state's executive committee supervises bureaus that are counterparts of central government ministries and that provide services in the state including agriculture, water, construction and urbanization and industry and trade.

Mugabi (2001) observes that Uganda's constitution (1995) provides for development through the country's local government system with the district as the key local level unit with both legislative and executive powers. Services such as construction and maintenance of feeder roads, primary and secondary education and health are entrusted to the districts and are overseen by government line ministries.

These discussions of devolution in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda do not bring out people's awareness and perceptions of their devolved governance systems and their participation in the leadership, planning and other aspects of such systems.

Counties in Kenya could benefit greatly if they based their development on the model of "self-reliant cities". Marris (1982) talks of a trend toward local self-reliance of cities in the U.S.A. He sees such cities as closed loop systems or as inward looking where they see themselves as nations. He notes that faced with the problem of closure of factories, the cities were beginning to favour development that comes from within and which relied on hundreds of small businesses rather than on one or two large factories. The city emphasizes recycling of waste materials where wastes of one process become raw materials for another. They encourage use of local sources of energy, food and raw materials.

Marris observes further… "such a city sees itself as a nation with an economy…analyses flow of capital within its borders and evaluates its balance of payments…emphasizes value addition as a source of its wealth… strives to stop leakages of raw materials… (reduces) branch stores that take the bulk of their earnings out of the community… keep retired people busy… see individuals as producers of wealth and as active participants in the process of resource management…emphasizes products rather than consumption… takes care of its own transport needs, requires employees to live within and not outside and limits its population growth…"(page---).

Marris gives examples of actions taken by some of such self-reliant cities. Boston had to grow its own tomatoes in green houses rather than import them from California. Oceanside in California whose energy costs were rising invested in a solar energy system to lower hot water bills while Carbondale in Illinois which depended on imports of fuel for its vehicle fleet, converted them to operate on alcohol which was produced locally.

These trends show that this new thinking challenges city-states to operate entrepreneurially.
For Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado counties sampled as is the case in other Kenyan counties this conception of the county as a nation state with an economy, its people as an asset, and as a production rather than consumption entity is yet to be appreciated. This entrepreneurial approach if embrassed, could provide a better start in the governance, especially development of the counties.

Whereas we focus on people's awareness and perceptions of their counties' governance, we will make inferences in regard to whether there are signs of a move toward self-reliant cities model in any of the counties studied.

## Conceptual framework

The study holds that the counties sampled and their residents are poor. We set out to confirm the poverty situation of both the larger counties and the individual respondents sampled for this study. We thereafter examine the development projects that the counties have been/are implementing aimed at reducing poverty. We follow this up by examining people's participation in the counties' leadership and planning and budgeting processes and lastly by examining factors that influence their participation in the governance system with emphasis on their profiles and awareness and perceptions of the systems and their operations.

## METHODS USED IN THIS STUDY

**Study sites and sub-sites**: Data were collected from residents of the capital towns which bear the same names as their counties; i.e., Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado towns as well as from those of selected satellite towns of Mumias for Kakamega, Maseno for Kisumu and Kitengela and Isinya for Kajiado county. In both the capital and satellite towns, we placed emphasis on business operators for two reasons: First, we felt that they were better informed about their counties and their governance systems than their counterparts in rural areas of the counties and secondly the study was self-sponsored by the first author and hence based on a very limited resource envelop.

In all of the capital towns and their satellites, as is the case in all other Kenyan towns, there was a mix of both formal and informal businesses with formal ones operating in rental buildings while informal ones operating largely in the streets as vendors or in temporary shelters. The businesses included; hardwares, butcheries, boutiques, clothing shops, groceries, banks, m-pesa, mobile phone, car-wash, garages, tyre dealers, tailoring shops, hotels and food kiosks. There were also freelance operators who included, carpenters, masons, electricians and painters who hanged around some street to pick clients as they came by. On the streets were also vendors who included, vegetable and fruit sellers, second hand clothes and shoes, milk, fish and chicken sellers as well as ready made local foods such as *githeri (*boiled maize and beans*), mandazi (bans) and chapati*.

In each town there were also market facilities being constructed or improved by the counties, bus termini, open air markets and livestock markets which were centres of economic activities. In each town, the open air and livestock markets were held on specific days of the week.

One of the satellite towns, Mumias had the largest sugar factory in Kenya although its operations had declined implying lack of or to low incomes for nearly 100,000 households that had depended on the factory as outgrowers of the sugarcane crop. Kakamega town had a large public university. While Kisumu is a regional city in western Kenya, its satellite town of Maseno has a large public university, while Kitengela which is on the outskirts of the city of Nairobi is even more affluent than the county capital, Kajiado—it had a large number of high rise building and a large fairly affluent residential areas on its outskirts.

**Business persons and farmers**: We identified the main streets in these towns and purposively sampled businesspersons operating from buildings, on pavements or those moving around with various types of merchandise. We also visited market areas/facilities of each town and sampled a number of business operators from each of them. The sub-samples, especially the one from Kakamega included a few farmers who had come to the town. Fourty four (44), 56 and 50 business persons/farmers were sampled in Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado, respectively giving a sample of 150 respondents.

**Key informants**: In Kisumu, the first author interviewed the county secretary (KI 1), Minister for Agriculture, livestock, fisheries and veterinary services (KI 2) and the Minister of education, youth, culture and social services (KI 3).

Data is presented descriptively. Respondents' remarks, especially on their poverty situation, and perceptions of advantages, and problems of their county governments were captured during the interviews and are presented as quotations. The respondents were numbered from 1 to 44 in Kakamega, 45 to 100 in Kisumu and 101 to 150 in Kajiado. The quotations from specific respondents are cited on the basis of these serial numbers (e.g., Kajiado, R 140).

Majority of the respondents being urban-based traders were fairly literate and shifted during their interview from Swahili to English and vice-versa. We present the quotations in both languages and provide the English equivalents of the Swahili words used.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In this section, we avoid mentioning specific ethnic groups and use the terms "local" to refer to the indigenous ethnic communities and "non-local" to people from other ethnic communities that resided and worked in the counties.

### The counties and their governance systems

In their earlier study, Chitere and Ngundo (2015) found, among other things, that the three counties of Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado were among Kenya's 47 counties. Whereas Kakamega and Kisumu counties are in western Kenya with their indigenous inhabitants being Luhya and Luo, respectively while Kajiado to the southern part of the country is a semi-arid pastoralist whose indigenous inhabitants are Masaai. The size of Kakamega was 3,244; Kisumu was 2,086; and Kajiado was 21,293 square kilometers with populations of 1.7 million, 960,000 and 690,000 persons, respectively. Population density was higher (515) for Kakamega, 460 for Kisumu and 31 for Kajiado persons per square kilometer. Administratively, there were 12, 7 and 5 sub-counties and 60, 35 and 25 wards in Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado counties, respectively.

The city of Kisumu which is the headquarters of the county is the largest urban centre in western Kenya and is located on the eastern shore of Lake Victoria. Both Kisumu and Kkamega are smallhoder farming areas with sufficient rainfall and fairly fertile soils while Kajiado is pastoralist, its northern part borders the city of Nairobi and is much more commercial.

To be able to effectively discharge their responsibilities, counties had created departments headed by ministers. For example, Kisumu had created ten departments of: County treasury; Environment management; water, energy and natural resources; health services; education, youth, culture and social services; agriculture, livestock and fisheries; physical planning roads and public works; communications, planning and development; commerce, tourism and heritage; and industrialization and enterprise development. The departments were headed by appointed ministers and below them were chief officers. For example, the department of agriculture, livestock, fisheries and veterinary services had established four directorates covering these divisions and each was headed by a director. The minister of this department said… "My position is mainly concerned with policies" (KI 2).

Each county had also established a county public service board for recruitment of its staff.
The counties were sub-divided into sub-counties and these in turn into wards headed by appointed administrators. Kisumu had 7 sub-counties (Nyakach, Seme, Kisumu west, Kisumu east, Kisumu central and Muhoroni and 45 wards each headed by an administrator (KI 1).

Guided by the national ministry of devolution and planning, the counties had developed the county Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), 2013-2017 highlighting, among other things, the development projects they were to implement.

Part of the funds received from the national treasury and from local taxes were allocated to the departments for implementation of the counties' projects (KI 1). A total of Ksh 195.67, 231.06 and 272.10 billion were disbursed by the national treasury to the 47 counties in 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 financial years. The disbursements to the three counties of Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado were Ksh 6.9, 3.25 and 4.62 billion for 2013/2014, Ksh 8.09, 3.89 and 5.26 billion for 2014-2015, and Ksh 9.58, 4.59 and 6.26 billion for the 2025-2016 financial year, respectively ( www/treasury.go.ke). The counties supplemented these allocations by their own local revenue collections from rates, business licenses, levies and from other related sources.

## Poverty situation of the counties and the individual respondents and their households

### *Poverty situation of the counties*

In their earlier study, Chitere and Ngundo (2015) found that the three counties were poor when examined on the basis of indicators such as high population density, especially in Kakamega and Kisumu, low literacy rate, teacher: pupil ratio and infant and child mortality. This poverty situation was examined further by asking respondents about the needs/problems of their towns.

The main problems mentioned by the 150 respondents were lack of clean piped water (15.4%) followed by poor roads and bridges (14.5%), insecurity in the form of thefts, thuggery and stock theft (12.3%), poor markets, kiosks, public toilets and bus termini (9.6%); poor sanitation—some towns such as Mumias and Kitengela had no public sewers (9.6%); and lack of or unreliable electricity supply (7.7%) which contributed to insecurity and reduced business operations. Other needs included; poor schools and polytechnics, poor agriculture and business with agriculture associated with food insecurity and lack of jobs.

For Kakamega, the main needs mentioned by the 44 respondents were insecurity (14.1%), poor roads/bridges (13.9%) and poor agriculture/business (11.9%), poor/inadequate health facilities and services (8.9%) and lack of jobs (8.9%). For the 56 respondents from Kisumu, the main needs were: insecurity (17.5%); poor sanitation (14.9%); lack of clean/piped water (14.0%); and poor markets, kiosks, public toilets and bus termini (13.2%), poor roads and bridges (8.8% and lack of/unreliable electricity supply (8.8%). For Kajiado 50 respondents, the main needs were: lack of clean/piped water (23.9%); poor roads/bridges (21.1%), lack of/poor condition of market, kiosks, public toilets and bus termini (11.0%), poor sanitation (9.7%) and lack of/ unreliable electricity supply 7.3%).

These views imply that the respondents perceived their three counties as poor.

### *Profiles of the respondents with emphasis on their poverty situation*

The profiles were: Gender, age, level of schooling, marital status, number of children, occupation and wealth status (Tables 1).

**Gender**: Nearly two-thirds of the sample comprised men and the remainder were women. Whereas slightly fewer women were sampled in Kajiado than those in the other two counties, there was no marked difference in the distribution of the sample by gender.

**Age**: Nearly two-thirds of the sub-samples from Kisumu and Kajiado were comprised of younger persons below 39 years while more (43.2%) middle-aged persons 40-59 were sampled in Kakamega compared to 32.1 and 26 per cent in in Kisumu and Kajiado, respectively.

**Level of schooling**: About a quarter of the 150 respondents had had some primary schooling, about half had had some secondary, and the remainder had had some diploma and university education. Whereas a third of those in Kakamega had had primary and an equal number had had some secondary compared to slightly fewer numbers who had had some primary, there was no marked difference in distribution of the respondents in the three counties according to their level of schooling. Whereas the level of education in a pastoralist area like Kajiado was likely to be lower than in the agricultural counties of Kakamega and Kisumu, this was not the case owing to the fact that nearly 95 per cent of the respondents interviewed in the county towns of Kajiado and Kitengela were non-locals from other Kenyan communities.

**Occupation**: Of the 150 respondents, a large number (82.7%) were in self-employment carrying out businesses such as selling shoes, fruits, vegetables, charcoal, hardware, saloons, pharmacy, tailoring and groceries (shops), 7.3 per cent were in regular employment as teachers, chiefs or as workers in the sampled businesses; 4.7% per cent were farmers/housewives and remainder were retirees and casual workers. There was no marked difference in the distribution of the respondents according to their occupations in the three counties.

**Marital status**: This was held to be an indicator of responsibilities and obligations for the respondents. Of the 150 respondents, those that were married were 88.0 per cent, 6.0 per cent were single, 5.3 per cent were widowed and 0.7 per cent were divorced/separated. The single respondents were mainly university students who were also operating or working in the small businesses sampled. There was no marked difference in marital status among the respondents sampled from the three counties.

**Number of children**: This was held to be another indicator of responsibilities of the respondents and also of poverty with those with more children likely to be poorer than those with a few. Of the 150 respondents, half reported having fewer children (less than 3) , 22.7 per cent had an average number of 4 – 5, 14.7 per cent had more than 6 children while 12.6 per cent had no children. More of the respondents in Kisumu and especially Kajiado had fewer children. A few of the respondents, especially those that were single had no children.

**Table 1: Profiles of the respondents**

| Profile | Kakamega (%) | Kisumu (%) | Kajiado (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender:** | | | | |
| Males | 63.6 | 60.7 | 72.0 | 65.3 |
| Females | 36.4 | 39.3 | 28.0 | 34.7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Age in years:** | | | | |
| Below 29 | 15.9 | 35.7 | 38.0 | 30.7 |
| 30-39 | 29.5 | 30.4 | 32.0 | 30.7 |
| 40-49 | 20.5 | 25.0 | 20.0 | 22.0 |
| 50-59 | 22.7 | 7.1 | 6.0 | 11.3 |
| Above 60 | 11.4 | 1.8 | 4.0 | 5.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Level of schooling:** | | | | |
| Primary (1-8 years) | 34.1 | 26.8 | 14.0 | 24.7 |
| Secondary (9-12) | 36.4 | 53.6 | 54.0 | 48.7 |
| Diploma | 20.4 | 7.1 | 18.0 | 14.7 |
| University | 9.1 | 10.7 | 8.0 | 9.3 |
| None | 0 | 1.8 | 2.0 | 1.3 |
| No response | 0 | 0 | 4.0 | 1.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Occupation**: | | | | |
| Regular employment | 11.4 | 5.4 | 6.0 | 7.3 |
| Self-employment | 70.4 | 85.7 | 90.0 | 82.7 |
| Farmer/housewife | 13.6 | 0 | 2.0 | 4.7 |
| Others (casual labourer, retiree) | 4.6 | 8.9 | 2.0 | 5.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Marital status:** | | | | |
| Married | 88.6 | 82.1 | 94.0 | 88.0 |
| Widowed | 6.8 | 8.9 | 0 | 5.3 |
| Divorced/separated | 2.3 | 0 | 0 | 0.7 |
| Single | 2.3 | 8.9 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Number of children**: | | | | |
| Less than 3 | 36.4 | 48.2 | 64.0 | 75 |
| 4 – 5 | 31.8 | 19.6 | 18.0 | 22.7 |
| More than 6 | 25.0 | 16.1 | 4.0 | 14.7 |
| None | 6.8 | 16.1 | 14.0 | 12.6 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |

**Wealth status**: We examined the wealth situation of the individual respondents and their households. We started by asking them what their needs or those of their households were. The needs mentioned by more of the 150 respondents were those of basics such as expenses related to education of their children (24.6%), food (22.8%), clothing (12.6%), shelter (8.7%) and health care (6.0%). Other needs mentioned included, lack of or unstable employment, lack of income, rent payment for business premises and residential units and lack of water, especially in the semi-arid pastoralist area of Kajiado.

For the 44 respondents sampled from Kakamega, the most mentioned need was food (24.5%) followed by education of children (22.6%), clothing (13.2%) and shelter (11.3%). For the 56 respondents from Kisumu, education of children was the most mentioned (27.6%) followed by food (21.3%), clothing (12.6%) and shelter (7.9%). For the 50 respondents from Kajiado, food (22.8%) and education of children (22.8%) were the most mentioned followed by clothing (11.9%) and rent payments (7.9%).

Might these responses imply that majority of the respondents were poor?

To be able to answer this question, we made efforts to establish the respondents' wealth status by asking them to enumerate the assets they possessed. The assets that were owned by more of the 150 respondents were mobile phones (95.1%), radios (88.2%), television (68.2%), cookers (43.3%) and computers (28.9%). Other assets owned included bicycles and motorcycles often used for public transportation (*boda bodas*), sewing machines, vehicle, commercial buildings, donkeys and oxen.

In Kakamega, the assets that were mentioned by more respondents were, mobile phones (93.2%), radios (84.1%), television (63.6%), wheelbarrows (56.8%), bicycles (45.5%), refrigerators (40.9%) and cookers (40.9%). In Kisumu, all of the respondents reported owning mobile phones, radios (94.6%), television (75%), wheelbarrows (33.9%), refrigerators (33.9%) and cookers (32.1%). In Kajiado, mobile phones were owned by more respondents (92.0%) followed by radios (86.0%), television (66.0%), wheelbarrows (44.0%), computers (36.0%) and cookers (30%).

Some of the assets were used by the respondents to generate income for example, computers used in cyber cafés, sewing machines in tailoring shops or boutiques, motorcycles or bicycles (*boda boda*) used for public transport and refrigerators and cookers used in hotels, bars and sellers of soft drinks. These income generating assets were however owned by less that 25 per cent of the respondents in each of the study counties.

Incidentally mobile phones were the single most important asset owned by all respondents in Kisumu, 93.2 per cent in Kakamega and 92.0 per cent in Kajiado.

We asked the respondents about the type of house they lived in. The question was developed in the field and was not administered to all of the 150 respondents. About 30 per cent of those in Kakamega lived in permanent houses with brick or stone walls, cemented floors and with tiled or corrugated iron sheets roofs while 18.2 per cent lived in semi-permanent mainly with corrugated iron sheet roofs and mudded walls. In Kisumu, 16.9 per cent lived in permanent, 21.4 per cent in semi-permanent while 1.8 per cent in local with mudded walls and grass thatch. In Kajiado, 16.0 per cent lived in permanent and 10.0 per cent in semi-permanent. The remainder were not asked. Most of the dwelling units were rented and a few were owned by the respondents.

The main sources of income by the respondents were self-employment as business persons reported by 94.6 per cent of the 150 respondents while the remainder were in formal employment/retiree and farming/housewife. The main businesses that were operated by the respondents were: food/green grocery (12.7%), boutique/shoes/bags/clothes (10.7%), transport (8.7%, grocery/shop/kiosk (8.7%) and artisanship as carpenters, masons, mechanics, painters and contractors (6.7%). Other businesses included, medical supplies/clinic/pharmacy, hardware, tailoring, agrovet, welding/metal work and cyber café.

Estimated amount of income reported by the respondents is presented in Table 2. The question was developed in the field and was not administered to all of the 150 respondents. If we take incomes of more than Ksh. 50,000 (US$ 500) per month which came largely from the businesses and which in our view were adequate to meet household needs and to be reinvested back into the businesses then these were reported by only 9.1% of the respondents in Kakamega, 3.4% in Kisumu and 16.0% in Kajiado.

**Table 2: Estimated income earned by the respondents per month**

| Income (Kshs) | Kakamega (%) | Kisumu (%) | Kajiado (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 9,999 | 22.7 | 14.3 | 8.0 | 14.7 |
| 10,000 – 29,999 | 29.6 | 17.8 | 16.0 | 20.7 |
| 30,000 – 49,999 | 13.6 | 10.7 | 14.0 | 12.7 |
| 50,000 – 99,999 | 0 | 3.6 | 12.0 | 5.3 |
| More than 100,000 | 6.8 | 0 | 4.0 | 3.3 |
| Not interviewed | 27.3 | 53.6 | 46.0 | 43.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |

The respondents were asked to rate themselves based on the assets they owned and their income as either "well-off", "average" or "poor" (Table 3). The question was developed in the field and was not administered to all of the respondents. Table 8 shows the ratings.

Most of the respondents did not like rating themselves as poor even those who appeared to the authors to be poor rated themselves as average. Asked why they rated themselves as "average", one respondent who rated himself as "average" said… "I can afford to take care of my family. I never go without food…poor people are those who do nothing.. (they) depend on other people hiring them.. (are) lazy…they just wait…drink whole day…can't afford food" (Kisumu, R 77).

Another respondent in Kakamega town who used his bicycle for *boda boda* transport said… "My bicycle *boda boda* gives me mang'o*ndo* (ten cent coins/money)…on a good day, I get about Ksh 100 (US $ 1)" (Kakamega, R 23). Asked to rank his household, he ranked it as average. A retired secondary school teacher with more assets and pension, equally ranked his household as average, while another respondent with one of the leading hardwares in Mumias town, commercial buildings and other assets equally ranked her household as average. The authors would have ranked the boda boda rider as poor, the retired secondary school teacher as average and the hardware operator as well-off.

**Table 3: Self-ratings on wealth indicators by the respondents**

| **Rating** | **Kakamega (%)** | **Kisumu (%)** | **Kajiado (%)** | **Total (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Well-off | 0 | 0 | 2.0 | 0.7 |
| Average | 36.4 | 25.0 | 24.0 | 21.3 |
| Poor | 18.2 | 10.7 | 2.0 | 10.0 |
| Not interviewed | 59.1 | 71.4 | 72.0 | 68.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |

Using the assets that were owned, income and the authors' own observations, it was clear that majority (about two-thirds) of the respondents in all the three study counties and their households were poor. However, within their own context and on the basis of what is termed as "relative poverty", our view is that about 10 per cent were well of, two-thirds were average and the remainder were poor.

### *Farming and business as the main sources of livelihood and poverty indicators*

**Farming:** Of the 150 respondents, 68.2 per cent in Kakamega, 41.1 per cent in Kisumu and 42.0 per cent in Kajiado owned land (Table 4). However, the farm units were very small. The respondents grew food crops such as maize, beans, bananas, peas and vegetables and some used inputs such as certified seeds, and fertilizers recommended by the extension service. None reported practicing commercial farming using a green house. Asked whether the yied they had realized from their crops during the long rains last season could take them to the next similar harvest this year, only 27.3 per cent in Kakamega, 23.0 per cent in Kisumu and 30.0 per cent in Kajiado responded affirmatively, that is they were self-sufficient in their crop production.

The respondents also kept livestock from which they realized, especially milk and eggs. Very few kept improved dairy cows and poultry. Asked whether they were self-sufficient, especially in milk and egg production, 6.8 per cent in Kakamega, 1.8 per cent in Kisumu and 20.0 per cent in Kajiado responded positively that they were self-sufficient in these products.

**Table 4: Size of farms in acres owned by the respondents**

| Acreage | Kakamega (%) | Kisumu (%) | Kajiado (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 2 acres | 22.7 | 23.2 | 6.0 | 17.3 |
| 2-4 | 25.0 | 5.4 | 20.0 | 16.0 |
| More than 5 acres | 9.1 | 3.6 | 10.0 | 7.3 |
| Not sure | 13.6 | 8.9 | 6.0 | 9.3 |
| Not applicable | 31.8 | 58.9 | 58.0 | 46.7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |

These results show that majority of respondents' households were food insecure in terms of their own production and may have used income earned from their businesses and other sources to buy food for their households. When food self-sufficiency is taken as an indicator of poverty, then nearly two third of the respondents were, in terms of food, poor.

**Business**: More (12.7%) of the 150 respondents operated food/green grocery followed by boutique/shoes/bags/clothes (10.7%), transport (8.7%), grocery/shop/kiosk (8.7% and as electrician, mechanic, etc. (6.7%) (Annex Table I). In Kakamega, more (13.6%) operated food/green groceries, transport (9.1%), and as electrician, mechanic, painter, etc. (9.1%). In Kisumu, more (17.9%) operated food/green groceries, boutiques (12.5%), and grocery/shop (10.7%) while in Kajiado, more (14.0%) of them operated boutiques, transport (12.0%), grocery/shop (8.0%) and medical supplies/pharmacy (8.0%).

These types of businesses reflect the widespread informal (Jua kali) sector which is the largest employer of Kenya's labour force.

**Development projects implemented by the counties**

In an earlier study, Chitere and Ngundo's (2015) found that the counties had prepared their County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP), 2013-2017 on the basis of which projects were being planned and implemented funded by disbursements from the national treasury and from counties' own tax collections. In Kakamega, projects that were being implemented included:Agricultural such as horticulture, dairying, fish and tea farming; soft loans for farming and business; improvement of market facilities and construction or improvement of health facilities and roads. In Kisumu, emphasis was on eradication of water hyacinth in Lake Victoria, improvement of fishing technology and development of Kisumu as a regional city. In Kajiado, there was emphasis on improvement of horticulture, support of industries, real estate development and mining of limestone and soda ash.

When we asked the 150 respondents about the projects that their counties were implementing, 24.2% mentioned construction and repair of roads followed by installation of electricity and street lights (15.0%), construction and improvement of markets, stalls, kiosks, public toilet and bus termini (13.5%), water and sanitation (9.6), construction and improvement of schools and support of needy children (7.8%) and support of farming and business using loans and subsidies (7.1%).

For Kakamega, the most mentioned projects were: construction and repair of access roads (25.4%), construction and improvement of markets, stalls, kiosks, public toilets and bus termini (12.7%), construction and improvement of schools and support of needy children (11.0%), support of farming and business using loans and subsidies (11.0%), installation of electricity including street lights (10.2%) and construction and improvement of health facilities and services (9.3%). For Kisumu, the most mentioned projects were: construction and repair of access roads (23.7%), installation of electricity including street lights (23.7%), water and sanitation (17.5%), support of farming and business using loans and subsidies (7.0%) and construction and improvement of schools and support of needy children (6.3%). For Kajiado, the most mentioned projects were: construction and repair of access roads (22.9%), construction and improvement of markets, stalls, kiosks, public toilets and bus termini (22.9%), installation of electricity including street lights (13.3%), water and sanitation (9.6%), and construction and improvement of health facilities and services (6.0%).

Whereas nearly a third (28.6%) of the respondents in Kisumu were not aware of development projects that had been/were being implemented by their county, only 4.5 per cent of those in Kakamega and 12 per cent in Kajiado were not aware. These perceptions are substantiated by the authors' direct observations of a number of newly tarmacked roads in Kakamega and Mumias towns, a large number of kiosks/bandas that had been installed by the county, improved bus parks, markets and health facilities. There were no similar visible projects in the city of Kisumu or its satellite towns like Maseno.

A characteristic of these projects was that they were community-wide in nature seeking to benefit the larger community rather than individual households. Livelihood projects in agriculture and business targeting individual households were reported by very few respondents—11 per cent in Kakamega, 7.4 per cent in Kisumu and 1.2 per cent in Kajiado. A few reported empowerment of the youth and it was true that most of the construction and improvement projects made use of local labour, especially of unemployed youth.

The projects appeared targeted to meet the needs of the counties.

Asked what development projects had their county government started to meet the needs of their area, one respondent in Kisumu said… "Nothing… (they) use money badly…start project, for example, a nearby road and leave it incomplete" (Kisumu, R 45). Another respondent from the same county put it… "For us small business, nothing has been done to help us do our business…there is need to re-start stalled companies/projects such as Kikomi textiles, Kenya mattresses and Kenya breweries (Kisumu, R 37).

Another respondent from the same town said… "It (county government) chased me from oile market where I used to operate. It destroyed my banda and all the assets my husband left me with. I could not raise school fees for my child to go back to school…I have never seen any project from them (county). I have had a lot of *shida* (problems) from this county government" (Kisumu, R 65). The respondent expressed a lot of anger toward the county government.

**Respondents' awareness and perceptions of their county governance systems, problems and opportunities**

***Respondents' awareness of existence of county governments, year they were started, their leaders and sources of funds***

When we asked the respondents a number of questions seeking to establish their awareness and understanding of their county governments, they answered as presented in Table 5.

**Existence of county governments**: This was known of 97.7, 96.4 and 98.0 per cent of the respondents in Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado.

**Table 5: Respondents' awareness of the county governance system**

| Item | Kakamega (%) | Kisumu (%) | Kajiado (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Existence of county governments:** | | | | |
| Yes | 97.7 | 96.4 | 98.0 | 97.3 |
| No | 2.3 | 3.6 | 2.0 | 2.7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Year county governments were started:** | | | | |
| Yes | 77.3 | 75.0 | 80.0 | 77.3 |
| No | 22.7 | 25.0 | 20.0 | 22.7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Names of governor of their county:** | | | | |
| Yes | 100.0 | 91.1 | 92.0 | 94.0 |
| No | 0 | 8.9 | 8.0 | 6.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Names of other leaders of their county:** | 38 | 48 | 39 | 83.3 |
| Yes | 86.4 | 85.7 | 78.0 | 83.3 |
| No | 13.6 | 14.3 | 22.0 | 16.7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | (100) |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (15)0 |
| **Sources of county funds:** | | | | |
| ▪ National government | 18.2 | 30.4 | 20.0 | 23.3 |
| ▪ Local taxes, rates, licenses | 22.7 | 14.3 | 48.0 | 28.0 |
| ▪ National government, local sources and donors | 45.5 | 39.3 | 28.0 | 37.3 |
| ▪ Not sure | 13.6 | 16.0 | 4.0 | 11.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **County's Annual Budget:** | | | | |
| ▪ Yes | 68.2 | 78.6 | 64.0 | 70.1 |
| ▪ No | 31.4 | 21.4 | 36.0 | 29.9 |
| xii. Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| xiii. (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |

**Year county governments were started**: Following the national referendum of 2010 which approved the current country's constitution, a national election was held at the end of 2012—county leaders were elected alongside other national leaders and the county governments became operational at the beginning of 2013. Asked when the county governments were stated, 77.3 per cent in Kakamega, 73 per cent in Kisumu and 80 per cent in Kajiado mentioned 2013 as the year the county governments were operationalized. A few mentioned 2012 while others simply said that this was done when the current government of Uhuru Kenyatta assumed power following last elections.

**Name of their governor**: All the respondents in Kakmega knew their governor whose name they clearly mentioned as Wickliff Ambetsa Oparanya, 91.1 per cent of those in Kisumu mentioned the name of their governor as Jack Ranungo Ranguma while 92 per cent of those in Kajiado knew the name of their governor, David Nkedienye.

**Name of county leaders**: Apart from the governor, other leaders included, the senator, the women representative, members of County Assembly (MCAs), county ministers and ward administrators. In Kakamega, these other leaders were known by name and position by 86.4 per cent, 85.7 per cent in Kisumu and 78 per cent of those in Kajiado.

**Sources of county funds**: The sources were: national government, local sources such as taxes, licenses, rates and donors. Table 5 shows that the level of awareness of the sources of the funds was high in all the counties with those who mentioned both national and local sources and who were a majority being more aware than their counterparts who mentioned only one source.

**County's annual budget**: Counties are required by the Republic of Kenya Finance Act (2012) to prepare their annual budgets and to establish consultative forums that meet to propose projects to be funded. When asked whether they were aware of annual budgets prepared by their counties, a majority (78.6% in Kisumu, 68.2% in Kakamega and 64.0 % in Kajiado) responded affirmatively (Table 5).

Asked whether county governments prepared budgets for this financial year, one respondent put it… "I understand they have a Ministry of Finance…they can't spend money without budget" (24). Asked whether he had participated in giving views on the budget, he answered "No".

***Respondents' awareness of the responsibilities of their county governments***

Schedule 4 of the Republic of Kenya Constitution (2010) sets out responsibilities of county governments which include: Agriculture; health services; control of air and noise pollution, other public nuisances and outdoor advertising; and cultural activities, public entertainment and amenities.

When the 150 respondents were asked to indicate what the responsibilities of their county governments which were most mentioned were; construct and improve road networks (14.6%), construct and improve health and sanitation facilities and services (13.9%), bring development services close to people (13.3%) and ensure security to reduce theft and thuggery (7.4%).

For Kakamega, the most mentioned responsibilities were: construct and improve health and sanitation facilities and services (15.7%), construct and improve roads (13.7%), provide and improve education facilities and services (12.7%) and support business and farming (12.7%). In Kisumu, more respondents mentioned; bring development services close to people (16.8%), construct and improve road networks (12.2%) and create employment opportunities (9.3%). In Kajiado, the most mentioned responsibilities were: construct and improve health and sanitation facilities and services (18.0%), construct and improve road networks (18.0%) and bring development services close to people (17.0%).

 

These comments show that the respondents were well informed of the responsibilities of their county governments as well as about some objectives of devolution such as bringing governance and development close to the people.

***Respondents' perceptions of advantages of their county governments***

When asked to point out the advantages of county governments, the respondents provided answers which were not markedly different from those on responsibilities of the county government. In Kakamega, services nearer/accessible (14.3%), improve roads/bridges/drainage (12.9%), improve/provide health facilities and services (10.4%), bring resources/fund from the government (7.8%), carry out projects (7.8%), create employment/contracts (6.5%) and improve education and support school children (6.%%) were the most mentioned. In Kisumu, the most mentioned were; provide electricity, including street lights (16.7%), bring services nearer/ accessible to people (15.4%), improve roads/bridges/drainage (12.8%), create employment/give contracts (8.9%) and improve education and support school children (7.7%). In Kajiado, bring services nearer/accessible to people (17.3%), create employment and give contracts (15.4%), improve education and support school children (9.6%) and bring governance close to people (7.7%) were the most mentioned.

Asked about advantages of county governments, one respondent from Kisumu put it… "Initially Nyanza (former province) was an opposition zone and most development activities never reached here. Now things are devolved and we are seeing change. The national government has been forced to distribute resources to counties" (Kisumu, R 47). Another respondent from the same county said… "Leaders are near…if you want the governor and other leaders, they are here. They will listen to your *shida* (problem)…Member of parliament, governor and MCAs are near…" (Kisumu, R 74).

There were, however, more pessimistic views from, especially Kisumu and Kajiado counties. An elderly widow respondent in Kisumu who was operating a soft drinks business put it… "I don't understand it (county government)…It has not helped me. I hear they help people such as children to be educated…I have not been helped" (Kisumu, R 60). Another respondent from the same county said… "County *haisaidi kitu chochote* (county does not help in anyway)…It is the cause of our problems… (There is) corruption which makes everything hard…has made it difficult for jobs to be got. You have to bribe to get a job" (Kisumu, R 84)

Remarks from a number of respondents in Kajiado were equally pessimistic. One respondent from the county said… "I have not seen any (advantage)…*hii county haina uzuri. Imekuja kuharibu mambo yote. Hata heri yakitambo. Hata garbage pekee hawaokoti. Hii county ndiyo iko nyuma kwa county zote"* (there is nothing good in this county. It came to spoil everything. Even the past (centralized) government was better. It does not collect garbage and is behind relative to other counties)".

He added… "*Kodi tunalipa, hakuna barabara…angalia uchafu hapo nje…sewer system hakuna…sioni kitu wanafanya…bure kabisa* (We pay taxes, yet there are no roads…look at garbage out there…there is no sewer system…I don't see anything they have done…nothing completely) …these people don't seek our opinions…they say we don't belong here…*hata* (even) public toilet *hakuna* (is not there)…*Haijalishi kama umesoma so long as wewe sio local hakuna kazi yako* (it does not matter whether you are educated so long as you are a non-local there will be no employment for you)" (Kajiado, R 145) .

Another respondent said…. "Hata hatuwezi kusema hawajafanya kitu kabisa kwa sababu huko Kajiado tunasikia wanafanya… wameleta maji huko (we can't say they have done nothing since we have heard that they have done, e.g., water projetcs in other parts of the county)" (Kajiado, R 146). This respondent was a non-local and seemed to be intimating that the county was providing services discriminatively to areas inhabited by locals and not those by non-locals.

The remarks show that whereas the respondents were aware of advantages of county governments, the manner of operation of the governments, especially Kisumu and Kajiado was perceived as characterized by bad governance including corruption and nepotism which were unconstitutional.

The perceptions are justified owing to the fact that there have been major corruption scandals in Kenya including chicken gate where electoral commission officials were accused of taking bribes when acquiring election equipment and materials in 2012 (see Daily Nation Issue of 9th February, 2017). There was also the National Youth Service scandal where the cabinet secretary of the Ministry of devolution and Planning was forced out of office for massive swindling and misuse of public funds. There have been similar scandals in the Ministry of Health and even in a number of counties that have made Kenya to be recently ranked globally as one of the most corrupt countries.

Consequently, the respondents' perceptions reflect awareness and reactions not only to the bad governance in their counties but also the larger Kenyan nation. These negative perceptions came out even more clearly when the respondents were asked about problems of their counties.

***Respondents' Perceptions of problems of their county governments***

The problems that were mentioned by the 150 respondents varied from county to another and included, corruption which was most mentioned (16.6%), inadequate or poor health and sanitation facilities and services (10.1%), selfish and inaccessible leaders (9.0%), tribalism/nepotism in employment and award of tenders (8.0%), lack of enough funds and delays in their disbursement by the national government (6.5%) and lack of involvement of people in planning (6.0%). In Kakamega, corruption (13.2%), lack of enough funds and delays in paying for tendered goods and services (11.3%), inadequate and poor health and sanitation facilities and services (7.5%) and high poverty and unemployment (5.7%) were the most mentioned. In Kisumu, corruption (23.1%), selfish and inaccessible leaders (17.2%), inadequate health and sanitation services (9.4%), tribalism and nepotism in employment and award of tenders (7.8%), empty promises/incomplete projects (6.2%), lack of enough funds and delays in their allocation by national government (6.2%) and lack of involvement of people in planning (6.2%) were the most mentioned. And, in Kajiado, corruption (13.4%), tribalism/nepotism in employment and award of tenders (12.2%), inadequate health and sanitation facilities and services (12.2%), lack of involvement of people in planning (7.3%), selfish and inaccessible leaders (6.1%) and high license fees and other taxes (6.1%) were the most mentioned.

Several respondents commented about their county governments as under:
"County government is the only hope…they must be corruption free to provide essential services at the people's door steps" (Kakamega, R 19).

"Should improve by providing information to citizens and engaging them in public forums" (Kakamega, R 26).

 

"County leaders need to come to the ground and see challenges residents are going through" (Kakamega, R 27).

"National government should increase funding to the counties… (there should) be strict auditing of county government…those found embezzling funds (should) be reprimanded in accordance with the law" (Kakamega, R 32).

"Devolved government is good so long as we have better governance system and reduction of corruption practices in county and central government" (Kakamega, R 35).

"Money should be used *kikamilifu* (properly)…should not inflate… something built for Ksh 600,000 (US$ 6,000) should not be put at Ksh 1 million (US$ 10,000)… project be done well, e.g., road be properly murrumed or tarmacked…water pans be done well". Governors and MCAs should not serve as contractors…(they) often claim that they have done such and such in a project when they have done little… should put priority on education and build enough classrooms and road infrastructure" (Kisumu, R 69).

"*Pesa inakuja, lakini inafaidi wao* (money comes but benefits them—county leaders)…money for youth…they register their companies…devolution is good, but when money comes, they divert it… Look at a road being constructed…amount of money claimed is high while that actually used is low" (Kisumu, R 69).

"I am a non-local. If you get a local, he/she can explain well. *Mambo yahapa inatakiwa wenyewe*" (affairs around here have their owners) (Kisumu, R 59).

"Governor employs key people from his clan/home area…the same people are biased and behave as sycophants. Tenders are also awarded to the same clan" (Kisumu, R 46). Asked what needed to be done to reduce the problems, the respondent… the governor must mix people from various local communities"

" I am in thought how I will educate and support my children. I lost my assets at Oile market…I had business at the market…it was destroyed by the county governor….I don't know how to move…I had a loan by CRB, Eclof. I paid bit by bit. I am still paying. I can't get another loan. My husband died ten years ago leaving me with children (Kisumu, R 55).

"I have struggled to get my two children complete secondary school…I was denied bursary support for the children despite my being a disabled person…. Yet I do not have the ability to take them to college or to bribe for them to get jobs" (Kisumu, R 54).

"The governor sees himself as put in that position by the… (the leader of the opposition party)…He does not care about *wanainchi* (citizens)…employs people from his home area and supporters" (Kisumu, R 67).

"Initially we had *vibandas* (kiosks) here which were destroyed by county *askaris* (county guards). Now we operate in the open opposite the main bus park. They said they would reconstruct the *vibandas*…until now nothing has been done (Kisumu, R 38).
"We have no *huduma* (services) such as electricity and *maji* (water), no street lights, bus stage is not tarmacked…they say we are foreigners (Kajiado, R 75).

"Highly corrupt. Here majority are locals. Tribalism takes place here. *Akuna anandikwa kama si* (no one can be employed unless he/she is ) local even if he/she has qualifications (Kajiado, R 81).

"(In Kitengela, public) toilet construction has been going on for two years. It is not complete. People are chased from there. If you ask, they tell you to look at the back of your identity card to see the county you come from" (Kajiado, R 82). Asked what a solution to this problem could be, the respondent said…" viongozi (leaders) should cooperate and see us all as Kenyans".

"(County) raised our license fees from Ksh. 2,500 to 5,000-7,000 (US$ 25 to 50-70). There are no drugs in hospitals. For diagnosis you are referred to a private clinic or chemist…If we could go back to centralized system…now we pay more tax and we don't see development work it does…(Kajiado, R 70).

"*Hata kuinvest* in property *imekuwa ngumu kwa* (to invest in property has become difficult for) non-locals here but the worst hit are…(one ethnic group of non-locals)"(Kajiado, R 149).

"*Siyo ati sipendi kulima..lakini sina pa kulima*… (locals) *hawataki kuuzia* (don't want to sell land)…to… (one ethnic group of non-locals)… *na wakiuza hakuna* transfer of title deeds… *sisi tunaishi kwa hofu juu tunajua hatutakikani hapa* (we live in anxiety because we know we are not wanted here)" (Kajiado, R 150).

"(County has been) increasing annual rates…now, they are three times higher than previously…(from) Ksh.5,000 (US$ 50) in 2013 to Ksh 15,000 (US$ 150) for annual license…one also pays a practicing license of ksh 3,000 (US$ 30) to the national government" ( Kajiado, R 143).

"*ukabila unatembea na kwa vile sisi sio wenyewe tunanyamaza"* (tribalism is practiced and since we are not local people of the county, we keep quiet) (R 103).

Whereas remarks from Kakamega were few and proposed ways of strengthening the county government, those from respondents in Kisumu and Kajiado were more negative. Whereas locals in Kisumu complained of corruption and clanism, non-locals hesitated to talk about the county problems and saw themselves as excluded.

In Kajiado, the remarks show not only discrimination in facilities and services, but also underlying feelings of insecurity among members of the non-locals operating business in the county. It can be explained by the fact that devolution is a political process and also that politics in Kenya is ethnically-based. County governments are elected by their residents who expect to benefit from them. Whereas majority local people of Kajiado were in the opposition political parties, majority non-locals supported and voted for the ruling party, especially the current Kenya's President who is from their ethnic community and this partly explains their being resented by the locals.

County governments are political entities. Some people see a solution to their problems through voting out their leaders in the election to be held later this year (2017).

***Respondents perceptions of opportunities counties could create for their residents***

When the 150 respondents were asked about the opportunities that the counties could create for their residents, affordable loans was the most mentioned opportunity by (23.7%) of the

150 respondents followed by reduction of local licenses/levies/taxes/rents (12.0%), support of businesses through loans and training (9.1%), creation of employment (7.5%), support of farming (6.2%) and construction and improvement of market facilities, kiosks, public toilets and bus stages and termini (5.2%) . In Kakamega, provision of affordable loans (25.7%), support of farming (17.6%), support of business (12.2%) and creation of employment (10.8%) were the most mentioned. In Kisumu, provision of affordable loans (37.3%), , support of business (9.6%), creation of employment (9.6%) and reduction of licenses (6.0%) were the most mentioned while in Kajiado, reduction of licenses/levies/taxes/rents (23.8%), construct and improve markets, stalls, public toilet and bus termini (9.5%), construction and improvement of roads (9.5%) provision of affordable loans (8.3%), support of business (6.0%) and reduce corruption and mismanagement (6.0%) were the most mentioned.

**Respondents' participation in the counties' leadership, planning and budgeting processes**

We looked at participation in terms of leadership positions held in the county government which had likelihood of involvement in decision making, participation in planning of projects that were being implemented by the county, and participation in budget forums (Table 6).

Leadership positions in county governments were not held by 93.2 per cent in Kakamega, 96.4 per cent in Kisumu and 96.0 per cent in Kajiado. The very few who mentioned holding leadership positions reported holding peripheral positions such as *nyumba kumi*, member of county veterinary committee, Uwezo Fund, community policing and as chairperson of ward administration.

Participation in planning of projects that were being implemented by the counties was only mentioned by 15.9, 14.3 and 20.0 per cent while participation in budgeting was reported by 18.2, 10.9 and 2.0 per cent in Kakamega, Kisumu and Kajiado, respectively

**Table 6: Respondents' participation in leadership, planning and budgeting of their counties**

| **Type of Participation** | **Kakamega (%)** | **Kisumu (%)** | **Kajiado (%)** | **Total (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Leadership position in county**: | | | | |
| Yes | 6.8 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 4.7 |
| No | 93.2 | 96.4 | 96.0 | 95.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Planning of county projects**: | | | | |
| Yes4 | 15.9 | 14.3 | 20.0 | 16.7 |
| No | 84.1 | 85.7 | 80.0 | 83.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |
| **Budgeting process**: | | | | |
| Yes | 18.2 | 10.7 | 2.0 | 10.0 |
| No | 81.8 | 89.3 | 98.0 | 90.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (44) | (56) | (50) | (150) |

**Respondents' perception of performance of their county governments**

When asked to rate the performance of their county governments in terms of whether they were doing "very well", "well" and "poorly", the respondents did so as shown in Table 7. The question was developed in the field and was consequently not posed to all the respondents.

**Table 7: Respondents' rating of the performance of their county governments**

| Rating | Kakamega (%) | Kisumu (%) | Kajiado (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very well | 12.0 | 4.8 | 7.1 | 8.3 |
| Well | 72.0 | 57.1 | 28.6 | 56.7 |
| Poorly | 12.0 | 19.1 | 64.3 | 26.7 |
| Not sure | 4.0 | 19.1 | 0 | 8.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (25) | (21) | (14) | (60) |

Of the 25 respondents in Kakamega who answered the question, 12.0% said the county government was doing very well, 72.0% said it was doing well, 12.0% said it was doing poorly and 4.0% were not sure. Of Kisumu's 21 respondents who answered the question, 4.8% said their government was doing very well, 57.1% said it was doing well, 19.1% said it was doing poorly and 19.1% were not sure. For the 14 respondents in Kajiado who answered the question, 7.1% said the county government was doing very well, 28.6% said it was doing well and 64.3% said it was doing poorly. That is, while a large number (84%) of the respondents in Kakamega perceived their government as doing very well and well, 61.9% of those in Kisumu did so followed by much fewer (35.7%) in Kajiado.

Asked if their towns would be "better off", "remain the same" or become "poorer" if their current county governments continued for another 5 years, the respondents answered as shown in Table 8.

The trend evident in rating of performance of their county governments was continued with more (88%) of the respondents from Kakamega saying that they would be much better off compared to 42.9% from Kisumu and 7.1% of those from Kajiado.

**Table 8: Respondents' perceptions of whether their towns would the state of their towns if the current county government continued for another 5 years.**

| Response | Kakamega (%) | Kisumu (%) | Kajiado (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Better off | 88.0 | 742.9 | 7.1 | 53.3 |
| Remain the same | 4.0 | 33.3 | 28.6 | 20.0 |
| Become poorer | 8.0 | 4.8 | 57.1 | 18.3 |
| Don't know | 0 | 19.1 | 7.1 | 8.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| (N) | (25) | (21) | (14) | (60) |

These perceptions confirm those on advantages and problems of the county governments we have presented above.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Approach used in anti-poverty projects**: Whereas poverty reduction is one of the key concerns of county governments, their approach focuses on community-wide projects. A few respondents in Kakamega reported being given small loans (Ksh. 5,000) for business as well as farm inputs such as seeds and fertilizers and dairy animals. In this type of approach Household benefits are largely indirect, e.g., high demand for bricks, poles and sand and increased construction work. Direct support of such livelihood would reduce poverty considerably.

**Governors' Role**: Governors as heads of the counties are pointed out by the respondents as responsible for the counties' problems of corruption, nepotism, etc., especially in Kisumu and Kajiado and some of them see the solution as voting them and their administrations out in the forthcoming election. Both corruption and ethnicity are major national problems in Kenya and what is happening in some of these counties is a reflection of the larger national problem and implies the need for a search for a fair and committed leadership not just at the county but also the larger nation.

**Educational programs in good governance practices**: There is urgent need for these types of programs that target leaders of counties—governors, deputy governors, county ministers, MCAs, senators, sub-county administrators and other staff. Civic education targeting the citizens would equally help them appreciate efforts of their counties. Such civic education would also need to focus at helping non-locals to identify with the county where they live and work and support its leaders rather than identify and support their ethnic leaders elsewhere.

**Discrimination in employment and award of tenders to non-locals**: This is unconstitutional and against the recommendations of the Task Force on devolution. Whereas counties might give more priority to locals in lower level jobs and small tenders, this will discriminate non-local low level workers and small business operators.

Non-locals' perceptions of being discriminated leads to open or hidden tensions and suspicions which in the past have led to ethnic clashes, the worst was in 2008 following an election crisis at the end of the previous year.

Discrimination was also noted in award of tenders—there was a likelihood that county leaders and their staff either formed companies and awarded tenders to such companies or to their fiends and relatives. Future studies will help to show the magnitude of this problem and associated consequences.

**Citizen participation in planning and budgeting processes**: Whereas the constitution and the Finance Act 2012 emphasize involvement of citizens in these processes and forums are often announced in local radio and newspapers, majority respondents had not participated in the processes. In Kakamega, budget forums had been formed at sub-county and ward levels (Chitere and Ngundo, 2015). The problem was the extent of their representativeness. Lack of participation meant that the very few who attended such forums merely endorsed plans made by the county governments and there was no mechanism for ensuring that their views were taken seriously. This implies that county planning and budgeting processes tended to be top-down rather than participatory.

**Model counties**: This study, owing to inadequate financial resources, was restricted to the three counties. A study of more counties could reveal some of their best practices that could serve as lessons for others. There were for example some good lessons from Kakamega county which could benefit other counties as well as from other countries such as the self-reliant cities in the U.S.A.

The overall authors' impression is that being in their first 5 year span of existence, many of the problems that have been mentioned, especially in Kajiado and Kisumu are teething problems. Even Kakamega which appeared to do much better still had a long way to go to make its development participatory and people-centred with a focus on developing the human resource potential. Having succeeded in bringing the financial resource envelop to the counties, with potential for reducing poverty, the counties' major constraint appears to be leadership which in our view will gradually change through various national/county elections as the citizenry increasingly become aware of their responsibilities and as they wake up and make demands on the counties for better governance. Already a large number of individuals have realized the importance of governors' positions and are, at the time of writing this article, declaring their candidature for the positions in the national/county elections to be help later this year.

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