

INFLUENCE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY TRANSFER FUND ON SERVICE DELIVERY BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF) is an intergovernmental transfer system, supplementing the financing of service delivery within the framework of fiscal decentralization. LATF's objectives are to improve service delivery, enhance financial management and accountability as well as reduce debts accumulated by local authorities. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of LATF on service delivery by local authorities, focusing on Siaya Municipal Council. We gauged residents' perspectives about improvement of water supply, garbage collection, and sewerage services. We sourced primary data from 188 household heads and 202 market traders. The study found that 63.2% of the participants believed that there was no change in water supply consistency, while 69.5% reported the same about adequacy of water provided by the Council. Besides, 55.6% of the participants indicated that garbage collection had deteriorated, while 63.8% said the same about sewerage services. The findings suggest that access to LATF resources over the preceding decade had not improved service delivery in Siaya Municipality. Delivery of services was constrained by political interference (57.4%), procurement malpractices (44.1%), weak revenue base (38.7%), and understaffing (33.1%), among other factors. In view of this, local authorities should shape up to meet the current service demand, as well as gear up to address the needs of urban population, which is set to grow over the coming years.

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KEYWORDS: Local Authority, Service Delivery, Municipality, Decentralization, Fiscal Decentralization

INTRODUCTION

The Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF) was established through the Local Authorities Transfer Fund Act, No. 8 of 1998 (Government of Kenya [GoK], 1999) to improve service delivery, enhance financial management and accountability, as well as reduce debts accumulated by local authorities. LATF draws from the national revenues and replenishes through 5% of the national annual income tax (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008; Institute of Economic Affairs [IEA], 2009). The allocation criteria ensure consistency, fairness, and transparency. The criteria include the following terms: a basic minimum lump sum of KES 1.5 million (6.6%) is shared equally among the country's 175 local authorities, while 60% of the fund is disbursed according to relative population sizes of local authorities. Accessing the remaining 33.4% depends on local authorities meeting set financial management and accountability threshold (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008; IEA, 2009). The money disbursed through LATF supplements local authorities' revenues (IEA, 2009). In this regard, Article 4 of the Act indicates that LATF was established 'to supplement the financing of services and facilities they are required to provide under the Local Government Act' (GoK, 1999).

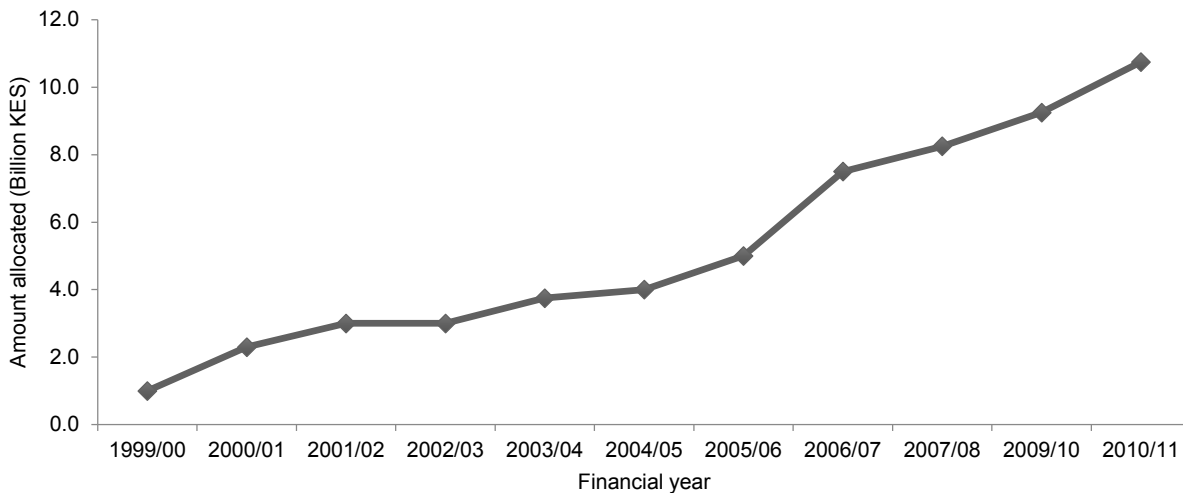
In order to access LATF resources, local authorities are required to develop action plans, known as Local Authority Service Delivery Plans (LASDAP), which are prepared through participatory processes, involving various stakeholder groups and community members. The participatory approach amplifies local communities' voice in project identification, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability

processes. It also cultivates a sense of ownership of LATF projects (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008; Menon et al., 2008; Bonoff & Zimmerman, 2010). LASDAP prioritizes projects and activities that should receive funding. Besides, they are founded on key pillars of poverty reduction, in line with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) whose priority focus include health, education, infrastructure, and informal settlement upgrading (IEA, 2009).

Local authorities adopt complete plans as a resolution, before submission to the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG). It is however, the responsibility of stakeholders to hold councilors and chief public officers accountable for LASDAP's implementation; hence, the primacy of their monitoring role (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008; IEA, 2009). The Ministry encourages transparency by disbursing 60% of LATF upon submission of necessary budgetary and technical proposals. The Ministry further emphasizes performance by distributing the remaining 40% of the funds based on LASDAP's performance targets (Bonoff & Zimmerman, 2010). In the event of delayed filing of returns, local authorities are subject to penalties. For instance, delays of up to 30 days attracts 15% loss of allocated funds; 31 to 60 days leads to the loss of up to 40% of allocations, while delays of more than 60 days may lead to complete loss of LATF (GoK, 1999; Bonoff & Zimmerman, 2010).

Furthermore, legal provisions for transparency to citizens enhance accountability. In this regard, local authorities are required to publish reports about funds received from the central government each year in national newspapers. The authorities are further required to hold annual budget days in the month of June, which provide forums for engagement with citizens about revenue and expenditure reports, as well as planned budgets for subsequent financial years (GoK, 1999; Bonoff & Zimmerman, 2010). A review of annual LATF reports reveals that disbursements are increasing steadily from Kenya Shillings (KES) 1 billion in Financial Year (FY) 1999/2000, to KES 10.8 billion in the FY 2010/2011, as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: National LATF Allocation Trend (1999/00-2010/11)



Presented in Figure 1 are data, which we obtained from the annual LATF reports for the period 1999 to 2011. The data shows that disbursements are increasing steadily from KES 1 billion in Financial Year (FY) 1999/2000, to KES 10.8 billion in FY 2010/201. The data reveals significant increments between the FY 2005/06 and FY 2006/07.

In Siaya Municipality, the data show that the amount allocated has increased from KES 11.7 million in the FY 1999/00 to KES 57.4 million in the FY 2010/11, with significant increment noted between the years 2004/05 and 2005/06.

Figure 2: Siaya Municipal Council LATF Allocation Trend (1999/00-2010/11)

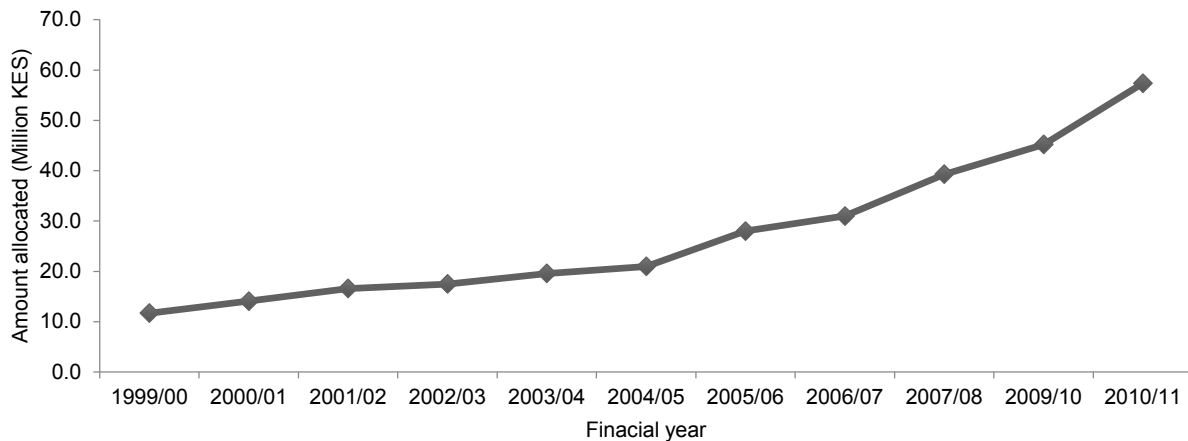


Figure 2 shows the data obtained from the annual LATF reports about amounts allocated to Siaya Municipal Council. The data show that the amount allocated has increased from KES 11.7 million in the FY 1999/00 to KES 57.4 million in the FY 2010/11, with significant increment noted between the years 2004/05 and 2005/06.

By the end of 2010, local authorities had received a total of KES 69 billion from the Government since LATF's inception in 1999. However, Oywa and Opiyo (2011) point out that most of them do not have much to show for the amounts received so far. Instead, persistent complaints about poor service delivery have emerged repeatedly in the media and in public forums (Bonoff & Zimmerman, 2010; Oywa & Opiyo, 2011). Available literature suggest that local authorities are not only failing to provide a satisfactory level of services but are also poorly managed and have departments that are among the most corrupt within the Kenyan public sector (IEA, 2005; Nyangena, Misati & Naburi, 2010). Unprecedented proliferation of residents' associations is also an indicator of growing dissatisfaction with the quality of services that local authorities provide. The purpose of such associations is to mobilize residents to demand quality services from local authorities as well as pursue legal actions against authorities that fail to improve services (IEA, 2005). The decentralization of LATF resources to local authorities should improve services such as supply of clean water for domestic and industrial use, sanitation, waste management, as well as healthcare and education services, among others (IEA, 2005).

A review of pertinent literature reveals that various studies, including Smoke (2000), IEA (2005), Kageri (2010) and Nyangena et al. (2010) have documented issues associated with service delivery in various local authorities in Kenya. For instance, Kageri (2010) found that water supply in Nyeri Municipality was inconsistent, while the amount supplied fell below the water demand by about 30%. In their study, Nyangena et al. (2010) found that four out of eight local authorities accessing LATF experienced difficulties providing necessary services to residents due to financial deficits. Such findings suggest that after a decade of LATF's operation, a significant proportion of local authorities are yet meet the demand for quality services by their residents. Nonetheless, the literature reveals a paucity of information on the linkage between access to LATF resources and service delivery, particularly in Siaya Municipality. Against this constraint, we conducted this study to establish residents' perspectives about the quality of essential services, including water, sanitation, and waste management over the preceding two-year period (2007-2009). The paper has four key sections, including literature review, data, and methodology, results, as well as concluding comments, which culminates to limitations and recommendation for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since independence, the Government of Kenya has been pursuing decentralized development policies, with a view to improving the quality of life for its citizens. In this regard, the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya was the first policy document outlining the decentralization agenda, targeting districts and local government authorities across the country (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008). In 1983, the government introduced the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) strategy to further the interests of decentralized development agenda (Alila & Omosa, 1996; Chitere & Ileri, 2008), with districts becoming the key planning units. However, Chitere and Ileri (2008) point out that DFRD's performance was constrained by factors such as limited involvement of community members in project prioritization, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. According to Bonoff and Zimmerman (2010), fiscal decentralization anchors on the premise that local communities can prioritize projects in line with their needs and that, local resources are easy to tap where community members are involved in development processes.

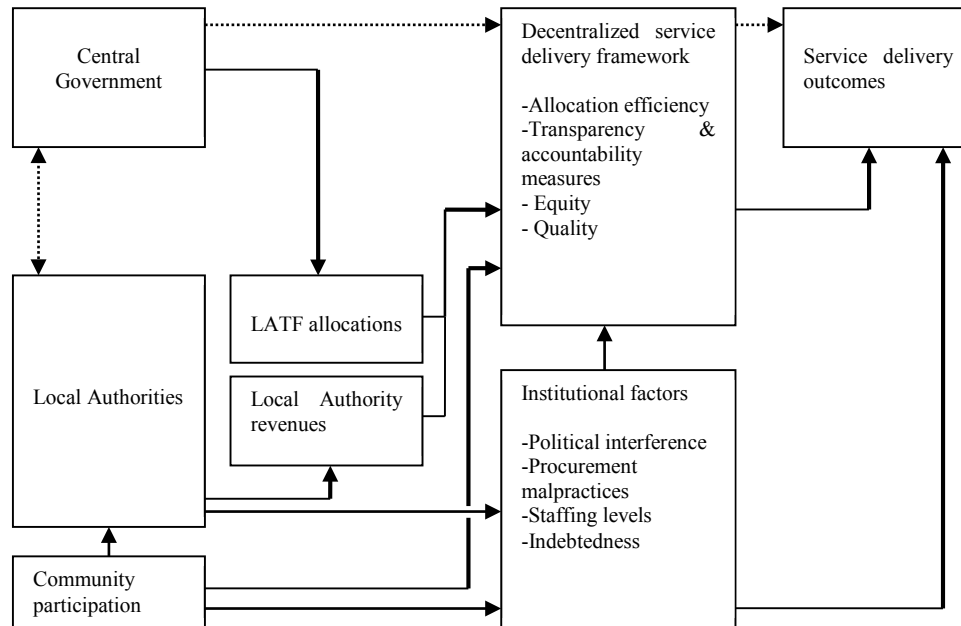
The Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERSWEC) 2003-2007 is perhaps, the Government's policy document providing the best framework for fiscal decentralization, within which subsidiary public institutions such as local authorities receive public funds (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008; GoK, 2003). Fiscal decentralization framework is further set out in the First Medium Term Plan (MTP) 2008-2012 (GoK, 2008), as well as Kenya's Vision 2030 (GoK, 2010). These policy efforts paved way for the initiation of various devolved funds, including the Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF), which was established through the Local Authorities Transfer Fund Act, No. 8 of 1998 (GoK, 1999) to among other objectives, improve service delivery. Decentralization is the process of dispersing functions, powers, or resources away from central governance systems to subsidiary or quasi-independent government structures at the regional, municipal, or local levels (Rondinelli, 1999; Cheema, 2007; Conyers, 2007). Its purpose is to enhance efficiency and increase community participation in decision-making, improve equity in resource sharing, improve the quality of service delivery, as well as enhance accountability in fund administration (Devas & Grant, 2003; Conyers, 2007).

The transfer of such authority and responsibility may assume various dimensions, including fiscal, administrative, political, as well as economic powers and functions (Rondinelli, 1999; Phillip, 2009; Muriu, 2013). As noted by Conyers (2007), scholars have applied the concept of decentralization in various fields, including public administration, economics, management science, law, and public finance, among others. Whatever the field of application, the common denominator is that it responds to limitations and challenges associated with centralized governance and management systems (Conyers, 2007). The dispersion of authority and responsibility in the management of public funds is a key component of decentralization, whose aim is to improve efficiency, accountability, and better service delivery. Fiscal decentralization involves passing of budgetary, revenue and expenditure authority from centralized systems to quasi-autonomous government institutions (Menon, Mutero & Macharia, 2008).

The key attributes of fiscal decentralization includes assigning clear expenditure and revenue responsibilities; initiating intergovernmental fiscal transfer mechanisms from central to local governments; and authorizing borrowing and revenue mobilization through loan guarantees from central governments (Phillip, 2009; Muriu, 2013). The quality of services delivered by local authorities within the decentralization framework depends on the available resources and discretion over them, as well as institutional factors such as political interference, procurement malpractices, and staffing levels, among others (Saavedra-Costas, 2009). Figure 3 shows the perceived linkage between LATF resources and service delivery outcomes within a decentralized framework. The central government influences the quality of services through LATF resources or other forms of devolved funds such as Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Constituency Bursary Fund (CBF), as well as direct disbursement to government ministries at the district level. The central government also provides guidelines for planning, budgeting, expenditure,

as well as transparency and accountability measures. An additional role includes the enforcement of policy guidelines to ensure compliance. As recipients, local authorities develop plans in line with guidelines provided by the central government, which they submit for funding considerations. The planning process should be participatory, involving various stakeholder groups and community members. The participatory approach amplifies local communities' voice in project identification, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability processes, as well as cultivates a sense of ownership of LATF projects (Kibua & Mwabu, 2008; Menon et al., 2008; Bonoff & Zimmerman, 2010). Local authorities also compile and file their expenditure returns with the central government.

Figure 3: Perceived Linkage between LATF and Service Delivery Outcomes



This figure shows the linkage between LATF and service delivery outcomes, as adapted and modified from Muriu (2013). The figure shows that LATF resources complement local authority revenues and expenditure should prioritize in line with expenditure guidelines within decentralized service delivery framework. Community involvement in planning and oversight of local authorities also influence service delivery outcomes.

Furthermore, community participation is important in the planning process, oversight of local authorities, which is likely to influence governance issues such as political interference, procurement malpractices, as well as staffing challenges such as shortage, motivation, and high turnover of technical staff. Community participation is also crucial in ensuring compliance with transparency and accountability guidelines, allocation efficiency, as well as equity. As noted by Saavedra-Costas (2009), decentralization can help in strengthening accountability, which is a necessary ingredient for better service delivery. In this regard, where elected leaders are involved in making policy decisions about the delivery of essential services, decentralization grants opportunity for such leaders to hold public servants accountable to citizens. Under such circumstances, elected leaders can agitate for the removal of public officials who fail to deliver quality services (Saavedra-Costas, 2009).

The influence of decentralization on service delivery is a subject that has attracted empirical studies in various socio-economic contexts across the globe. For instance, Alderman (1998) found that decentralization improved efficiency and consistency in the supply of water for domestic use, waste management, education, health, and public transport services in Albania. Habibi, Huang, Miranda, Murillo, Ranis, Sarkar, and Stewart (2001), who assessed the influence of devolution on social sector outcomes for the period 1970-94 in Argentina, also reported similar findings. The study concluded that fiscal decentralization improved the delivery of education and health services as well as reduced intra-regional

disparities in development indicators. In India, Bardhan and Mookherjee (2003) reported that decentralized management of public resources strengthened poverty reduction interventions by improving the timeliness of decision-making, feedback, and ensuring consistency between interventions and community priorities. An empirical study, which focused on 16 municipalities in Colombia, reported that about two-thirds of participants indicated a higher level of trust for local authorities than for the national government in the delivery of services. The study further revealed that allocation of resources by local governments was more consistent with community preferences than allocations by the national government (World Bank, 2004).

In Bolivia, Faguet (2001) performed an in-depth study of fiscal decentralization with the objective of evaluating its influence on changes in expenditure patterns at the local level. The study showed that spending patterns changed in favor of education, water and sanitation, agriculture and urban development, in response to fiscal decentralization. Like, Bardhan and Mookherjee (2003), the study also noted that decentralization improved the consistency of public services with community priorities, particularly due to improved involvement in project planning and implementation. In the same country, Kaufmann, Mehrez, and Gurgur (2002) noted that local authority services were more accessible to citizens than services provided by the central government.

In a multi-country study, Estache and Sinha (1995) also associated decentralization with increased spending on public infrastructure and improved delivery of public services, including water supply and sewerage management. Similarly, Arze and Martinez-Vazquez (2003) noted a change in expenditure composition with increasing fiscal decentralization. More specifically, the study reported a significant correlation between the level of expenditure in service delivery and decentralization, with the results being stronger in developing than developed countries. The literature further reveals that the relationship between decentralization and service delivery is not always positive. For instance, Azfar and Livingston (2002) did not find any positive effects of decentralization on efficiency and equity of public service provision in Uganda. Similarly, a study conducted in rural China found that decentralization lowered the quality of public services in poor regions (West & Wong, 1995). Nonetheless, there remains a paucity of similar literature in Kenya and more specifically in Siaya County.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

We applied the cross-sectional survey design to guide the research process, including planning, training and pretesting, data sourcing, data processing and analysis, as well as reporting. The study targeted residents of Siaya Municipality, including household heads and market traders. It focused on household heads who had been residents of the municipality for at least three years. Market traders included those who had conducted business activities within Siaya Municipal Market for at least three years and owning business premises within the market. Those excluded from the study were household heads and traders who had ever vied for political positions, as well as employees of the Council.

We collected primary data in the month of June 2011 and the process involved identification of eligible participants, consenting and interviewing. We applied cluster random and purposive sampling procedures to select household heads and market traders. We also applied a survey questionnaire with structured and semi-structured questions to source the data. At the end of data collection, 390 people were successfully interviewed, including 188 (48.2%) household heads and 202 (51.8%) market traders. Furthermore, we employed quantitative and qualitative techniques to process and analyze the data. In this regard, quantitative analysis obtained frequency distributions with percentages and cross-tabulation, we also transcribed, clustered into nodes and explored qualitative data for patterns and meaning to the role of LATF in service delivery in the Municipality. Detailed description of the design and methods used in this study are available in publications such as Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), Bryman and Cramer (1997), American Statistical Association (1999), Owens (2002), Rindfleisch, Malter, Ganesan and Moorman (2008), among others.

RESULTS

The study covered two groups of participants, including household heads and market traders at the Siaya Municipal Market. Participants in both groups are consumers of essential services provided by the Council, including water, garbage collection, and sanitation. In this regard, household heads provided their perspectives about domestic services, while traders indicated their views about services provided at the Municipal Market. The results in Table 1 show that most household heads, 111 (59.0%) had stayed within the Municipality for at least 10 years, while at the market, 128 (63.4%) traders had operated at the Market for the same duration. This suggests that most participants were likely to be familiar with the history of service delivery by the Council, making them better placed to judge the quality of services.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile of Participants

Participants' Socio-economic Attributes	Household heads		Market Traders		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Duration of stay/trade at the market						
3-5 years	26	13.8	23	11.4	49	12.6
6-10 years	51	27.1	51	25.2	102	26.2
>10 years	111	59.0	128	63.4	239	61.3
Total	188	100	202	100	390	100.0
Gender						
Male	91	48.4	91	45.0	182	46.7
Female	97	51.6	111	55.0	208	53.3
Total	188	100	202	100	390	100.0
Age						
<20 years	9	4.8	15	7.4	24	6.2
20-29 years	84	44.7	79	39.1	163	41.8
30-39 years	70	37.2	75	37.1	145	37.2
40-49 years	19	10.1	19	9.4	38	9.7
50 years+	6	3.2	14	6.9	20	5.1
Total	188	100	202	100	390	100.0
Education level						
None	3	1.6	2	1.0	5	1.3
Primary	65	34.6	55	27.2	120	30.8
Secondary	96	51.1	115	56.9	211	54.1
College	18	9.6	24	11.9	42	10.8
University	6	3.2	6	3.0	12	3.1
Total	188	100	202	100	390	100.0
Average income						
<KES 20,000	11	5.9	28	13.9	39	10.0
KES 20,000-29,000	34	18.1	33	16.3	67	17.2
KES 30,000-39,000	24	12.8	41	20.3	65	16.7
KES 40,000-49,000	29	15.4	26	12.9	55	14.1
KES 50,000-59,000	17	9.0	24	11.9	41	10.5
KES 60,000-69,000	24	12.8	19	9.4	43	11.0
KES 70,000-79,000	21	11.2	16	7.9	37	9.5
KES 80,000+	28	14.9	15	7.4	43	11.0
Total	188	100	202	100	390	100.0

This Table shows the distribution of participants based on various attributes, such as duration of stay at the current place of residence, duration of trade at the Municipal Market, gender, age, educational attainment and average income level. The last column provides statistics for the whole lot of participants.

In terms of gender, the household heads included 97 (51.6%) women and 91 (48.4%) men, while the traders included 111 (55.0%) women and 91 (45.0%) men. Besides, most household heads, 84 (44.7%) were aged between 20 and 29 years, and so were 79 (39.1%) traders. Those aged 30 to 39 years included 70 (37.2%) household heads and 75 (37.1%) traders. Regarding educational attainment, 96 (51.1%) household heads and 115 (56.9%) traders reported having secondary education; 65 (34.6%) household heads and 55 (27.2%) traders indicated primary education, while 18 (9.6%) household heads compared to 24 (11.9%) traders stated college education. Regarding the average monthly income, 34 (18.1%) household heads and 33 (16.3%) traders were in the bracket of KES 20,000 to 29,000; another 24 (12.8%) household heads and 40

(20.3%) traders indicated KES 30,000 to 39,000, while those earning between KES 40,000 and 49,000 included 29 (15.4%) household heads and 26 (12.9%) traders.

Regarding perspectives on the quality of services provided by Siaya Municipal Council, participants were requested to rate their judgment on a three-point scale on whether the quality of essential services, including water, garbage collection and sanitation had improved or not over the preceding two-years period. The results presented in Table 2 show that out of 188 household heads, 98 (52.1%) indicated that there was no change in the consistency of domestic water supply, 75 (39.9%) said the consistency had deteriorated, while only 15 (8.0%) participants were of the view that the consistency of water supply had improved over the reference period. At the market, the results suggest that no participant believed that water supply consistency had improved over the preceding two-years period, instead, 150 (74.3%) participants felt that there was no change on water supply consistency, while 52 (25.7%) were of the view that consistency had deteriorated over the reference period.

Table 2: Perspectives of Participants Regarding Water Supply Services

Participants' perspectives	Household heads		Traders		Overall	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<i>Water supply consistency</i>						
Improved	15	8.0	0	0.0	16	4.0
No change	98	52.1	150	74.3	246	63.2
Deteriorated	75	39.9	52	25.7	128	32.8
Total	188	100.0	202	100.0	390	100.0
<i>Water adequacy</i>						
Improved	16	8.5	28	13.9	44	11.2
No change	143	76.1	127	62.9	271	69.5
Deteriorated	29	15.4	47	23.3	75	19.3
Total	188	100.0	202	100.0	390	100.0

This Table presents results about participants' perspectives about water supply consistency and water adequacy. The results suggest that more than two-thirds (63.2%) of the participants believe that there was no change in water supply consistency. Regarding water adequacy, up to 69.5% expressed indifference.

Still on water supply, Table 2 shows that 143 (76.1%) household heads reported lack of change in the adequacy of water received at home, 29 (15.4%) others indicated that water adequacy had deteriorated, while 16 (8.5%) hinted that water adequacy had improved over the reference period. In addition, 127 (62.9%) market traders felt that there was no change on the adequacy of water received, vis-à-vis their family needs; while 47 (23.3%) felt that the quantity of water received at the market had deteriorated over the reference period. Only 28 (13.9%) were affirmative that water quantity had improved. Table 3 further shows that up to 101 (53.7%) household heads indicated that collection of domestic garbage had deteriorated, 78 (41.5%) had not seen any change, while only 9 (4.8%) felt that the service had improved. Among market traders, the results show that about two-thirds of participants, 116 (57.4%), were of the view that garbage collection at the market had deteriorated over the reference period; 74 (36.6%) said there was no change, while 12 (5.9%) believed that the service had improved.

Furthermore, 103 (54.8%) household heads were of the view that sewerage services had deteriorated, 59 (31.4%) indicated lack of change, while only 26 (13.8%) believed that some improvement had been realized. At the market, most traders, 147 (72.8%), were of the view that the service had deteriorated, 45 (22.3%) said there was no change, while 10 (5.0%) thought that sewerage services at the market had improved. Furthermore, we requested participants to indicate factors influencing service delivery at the Council.

Table 3: Perspectives of Participants Regarding Garbage Collection and Sanitation Services

Participants' perspectives	Household heads		Traders		Overall	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
<i>Garbage collection</i>						
Improved	9	4.8	12	5.9	21	5.4
No change	78	41.5	74	36.6	152	39.1
Deteriorated	101	53.7	116	57.4	217	55.6
Total	188	100.0	202	100.0	390	100.0
<i>Sewerage services</i>						
Improved	26	13.8	10	5.0	37	9.4
No change	59	31.4	45	22.3	105	26.8
Deteriorated	103	54.8	147	72.8	249	63.8
Total	188	100.0	202	100.0	390	100.0

This Table presents results about participants' perspectives about garbage collection, and sewerage services. The results suggest that up to 55.6% of the participants indicated that garbage collection had deteriorated, while another 63.8% stated that sewerage services had also deteriorated.

The results presented in Table 4 show that out of 390 participants, 224 (57.4%) cited political interference as the main constraint. Participants noted that service delivery was impeded by interference by political leaders both from within the Council as well as from outside, including councilors, members of parliament, Minister for Local Government and in some instances, the President. Since the Local Government Act (Cap 265) allows for the nomination of councilors by higher authorities such as the Minister or the President. Many times councilors so nominated find it hard to submit to the authority of Council staff and other leaders.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Service Delivery in Siaya Municipality

Valid responses	Frequency	Percent of Response	Percent of Cases
Political interference	224	22.4	57.4
Procurement malpractices	172	17.2	44.1
Heavy indebtedness	78	7.8	20.0
Weak revenue base	151	15.1	38.7
Revenue collection inefficiency	66	6.6	16.9
Understaffing	129	12.9	33.1
Other human resource issues	38	3.8	9.7
Unmotivated council workers	94	9.4	24.1
High turnover of professional staff	49	4.9	12.6
Total	1001	100.0	256.7

This Table presents multiple responses on factors influencing service delivery within Siaya Municipality. The results show that up to 57.4% (sample size = 390) indicated that delivery was impeded by interference by political leaders both from within the Council as well as from outside. Other factors influencing service delivery include procurement malpractices (44.1%), weak revenue base (38.7%), and understaffing, among others.

Where councilors are elected, participants cited political party influences infiltrating into the Council to determine who receives particularly services, when and how much. Under such circumstances, service delivery skews in favor of areas perceived to be politically loyal to key decision-makers within the Council. Furthermore, 172 (44.1%) participants reported that service delivery in the Council was affected by procurement malpractices, manifesting through situations where some tender committee members acted in favor of particular candidates, tendering documents designed in favor of particular bidders, including political loyalists, business associates or family members, as well as single sourcing of service providers, against the legal provisions. In addition, participants noted that some politically connected bidders often collude with tender committee officials to overprice materials and works. Such practices often culminated to loss of millions of public funds. Table 4 further shows that 151 (38.7%) participants indicated that service delivery was constrained by a narrow revenue base because the Council had not fully exploited available economic opportunities. This affected the amount of internally generated revenue, thus, constraining the Council's capacity to meet the expectations of residents in terms of service delivery as well as meet its financial obligations to suppliers and contractors. It is important to note that LATF resources only supplements local authorities' revenues to improve service delivery (IEA, 2009); thus, making it crucial for local authorities to initiate appropriate measures to generate additional resources. Still tied to

weak revenue base, some participants, 66 (16.9%), noted that the Council lacks effective internal control measures to prevent leakages of revenues at various stages, including in the hands of collectors, financial management department and chief accounting officers. In view of this, participants noted that the financial management system of the Council is grossly inefficient.

More still, 129 (33.1%) participants identified understaffing as one of the key human resource issues constraining service delivery at the Council. Understaffing was further linked to delayed replacement of professional and technical staff leaving the station through transfers as well as those absent due to prolonged illness or natural attrition. Instead, the Council encouraged available staff to cope with the resultant heavy workload through multi-tasking, sometimes performing tasks for which they had no training at all. Moreover, up to 94 (24.1%) participants linked service delivery with lack of staff motivation, particularly due to low pay and delayed salaries, which at the time of the study, had run into several months. The results in Table 4 further indicate that 78 (20.0%) participants associated poor service delivery with heavy indebtedness to suppliers of goods, services, and works. Participants attributed the high level of debts to mismanagement of public resources due to political interference, limited enforcement of transparency and accountability regulations by the Minister. Participants also linked heavy indebtedness to the narrow revenue base and revenue collection inefficiencies.

The results show that 49 (12.6%) participants cited high turnover of technical staff as one of the key factors weakening service delivery, particularly due to conflict between technocrats and councilors. Participants cited cases where councilors harassed, intimidated, assaulted and even manipulated the system to have technical staff standing on their way transferred to other stations, which in turn, affected the continuity of projects initiated to improve service delivery, as well as provide loopholes for diversion of funds to private accounts. Other human resource issues cited by 38 (9.7%) participants included hiring of unqualified people to perform technical duties and payment of 'ghost' workers. In this regard, participants cited instances where some Council workers were hired without due consideration of their ability to perform the tasks entailed in effective service provision. Participants also cited cases where particulars of elected leaders' relatives were sneaked into workers payroll; thus, siphoning out resources that could be used to improve service delivery.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of LATF on service delivery by local government authorities, focusing on Siaya Municipal Council. We set the study to achieve this through residents' perspectives about the quality of essential services, including water, garbage collection, and sanitation, over the preceding two years period (2007-2009). The study found that more than two-thirds (63.2%) of the participants believed that there was no change in water supply consistency, while 69.5% indicated that there was no change regarding the adequacy of water. Even worse is that up to 32.8% believed that water supply consistency had deteriorated, while 19.3% reported the same about water adequacy. In addition, 55.6% of the participants indicated that garbage collection had deteriorated, while 63.8% stated the same about sewerage services. These findings suggest that the disbursement of LATF resources to Siaya Municipal Council for about ten years had not improved the delivery of essential services. Rather, service delivery is constrained by a number of factors including interference by political leaders, non-adherence to public procurement regulations, weak revenue base, and understaffing, among other factors.

As urban populations grow at an unprecedented rate, so is the demand for services from local authorities. There is no doubt that rapid growth of population will require a higher measure of infrastructural and capacity expansion to deliver services. Based on the findings of this study, it may be incorrect to state that the Council is prepared to accommodate the growth of its population, which the 2009 National Population and Housing Census analytical report placed at 2.4% per annum. Kenyan local authorities, including Siaya Municipal Council should shape up to meet the current demand for services, as well as gear up to respond to the challenges associated with the anticipated population growth.

Although local authorities have been clamoring for greater autonomy, public reactions regarding the quality of services and pervasive corruption remain key factors undermining the logic to amend the law to grant such autonomy. Without adequate adherence to existing regulations, the Council, alongside other local authorities in Kenya, is likely to experience more aggression from members of the public, demanding for better quality services. The unprecedented proliferation of residents' associations is a suggestive indication that members of the public are not receiving value for their money in terms of services. This situation may culminate to public unrest and disruption of life and livelihoods in affected local authorities. Consequently, the Government should take necessary action in time to enforce accountability measures to improve service delivery by local authorities. The Government should give citizens more oversight power by opening up reporting channels, establishing hotlines and circulating these widely as well as decentralizing witness protection institutions to enhance accountability at the Council and other local authorities.

The Government should further enhance accountability by ensuring that local authorities comply with section 82 of the Local Authorities Act (Cap 265), which requires that all minutes of local authority proceedings should be available to all tax payers and voters. In addition, there is need for public engagements between the authorities and residents because increased exchange of information is likely to cultivate a sense of responsibility and accountability. The study relied on community members' perspectives to judge whether the quality of services delivered by the Council had improved or not, over the preceding two-year period. This approach has three inherent limitations. First, community perspectives are vulnerable to distortion by political beliefs, leading to prejudicial judgments. Even though we minimized the influence of this challenge by excluding previous political aspirants and Council employees, political bias remains a potential influence on community's perspectives about service delivery. Secondly, the study focuses on a reference period of two years; thus, the information sourced may be vulnerable to memory biases. Thirdly, the study is limited in terms of the scope of services – water supply, garbage collection, and sanitation. Future studies should adopt better approaches for gauging actual changes in service delivery, rather than rely on community perspectives. Besides, future studies should expand the scope in terms of service types to include other service areas such as education, health, housing, and transport, among others.

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