



Council of Governors



TONY BLAIR
INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL
CHANGE

Kenya County Delivery Exchange 2021: Policy Brief

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Executive Summary

The principles and practice of delivery have been applied in the Kenyan devolved context for two electoral cycles (from 2013 to 2022) through the County Delivery System as established by the Governors in the first (2013–2017) and second cycle (2017–2022) of devolution. Valuable lessons can now be drawn from the experience of the 27 county governments who, over the course of the past nine years, established Service Delivery Units to accelerate the full implementation of county development agendas in line with the Governors’ campaign manifesto, the County Integrated Development Plans, the medium-term plans of Vision 2030 and the Big 4 Agenda.

On 5 August 2021, the Council of Governors – in close collaboration with the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change’s Kenya team (TBI) – hosted a County Delivery Exchange that revealed the impact of the County Delivery System, as integrated into county governance structures in supporting efforts towards the full implementation of development agendas. The County Delivery Exchange also highlighted gaps and challenges that, if addressed by relevant county governance actors and stakeholders, can transform the delivery landscape and accelerate progress on development agendas at the county level.

This policy brief, developed using insights from the 2021 County Delivery Exchange, documents the existing and emerging issues related to the delivery practice in the devolved context from 2017 to date, and makes recommendations on how to enhance current and future delivery policy and practice within the framework of the County Delivery System.

INTRODUCTION

The application of delivery principles and practice in devolved contexts is gaining traction and interest. Kenya is an example of an African country that has adopted the delivery approach as a strategy to accelerate the sustainable and transformative implementation of devolved/subnational development agendas through the development and progressive rollout of the County Delivery System, with 27 County Service Delivery Units currently established across the country.

As the end of the second cycle of devolution approaches, it is critical to reflect on and analyse the impact of this system in relation to the devolved development agenda, and to document this reflective and analytical process to inform the survival and continuity of the County Delivery System in 2022 and beyond.

This subject is of importance to the Council of Governors (who have a mandate to facilitate information sharing on the performance of counties in the execution of their functions), current and future Governors of the 47 counties (who will necessarily be concerned with the most effective and efficient strategies to deliver on their development agenda within their term of office), and development partners and donors (specifically those who are committed to supporting the full, transformative and sustainable implementation of county development agendas within the devolved Kenyan context).

OVERVIEW OF THE CDX

The Council of Governors, working closely with TBI's Kenya team, established the County Delivery Exchange¹ to serve as a platform to collaborate on existing and future delivery mechanisms within the County Delivery Systems framework, and to provide knowledge and information on what works at the county level to inform future delivery policy and practice within county governments.

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE 2021 CDX

Improved understanding of the role of Service Delivery Units in driving the delivery of core government services and completion of development projects at the devolved level, as well as key challenges that SDUs have faced. Best practices were drawn from the Mayor's Delivery Unit in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and the delivery approach applied by the Mayor of Kanifing in Kanifing Municipal Council, the Gambia.

Key challenges faced by County Service Delivery Units include:

- Poor understanding of the concept of delivery as a discipline and practice, leading to apathy towards the units and perceptions of delivery-unit staff as “watchdogs” of the Governor.
- Limited resources at the county level to facilitate the full functionality and effectiveness of the Service Delivery Units.
- Institutionalising a delivery culture across the delivery chain within county government administrations.

The achievements of the service delivery units from sampled counties include:

- The Nyeri Service Delivery Unit provided support to facilitate the full integration of performance contracting across all county departments.
- The Siaya Service Delivery Unit provided oversight for key projects, including those funded by the World Bank, which contributed to accelerated progress towards their completion. The completion rate of projects increased from 55 per cent in 2019/2020 to 89.5 per cent in 2020/2021.
- The Kakamega Service Delivery Unit facilitated monthly project-status meetings, improving the capacity of the government administration to evaluate the “delivery status” of projects and identify bottlenecks that threaten to derail the full implementation of projects.

“The Mayor’s Delivery Unit in Freetown, Sierra Leone, has successfully created a feedback loop between policy and performance-management functions within Freetown on key areas of development. One policy determined that every household in Freetown must have a waste-management service provider, which led to an increase of 40,000 households disposing of their waste in line with the “Transform Freetown” initiative – up from 8,000.”

MANJA KARGBO, HEAD OF MAYOR’S DELIVERY UNIT
IN FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

“The delivery mechanism in Kanifing Municipal Council provides resource-mobilisation support to meet funding shortfalls within the identified Key Priority Areas of the Kanifing Municipal Council. The Sanitary Landfill Key Priority Area, for example, involves the securing of development projects to upgrade infrastructure at the Bakoteh dumpsite and enable the diversion of organic waste from the dumpsite.”

MAYOR TALIB BENSOU DA, KANIFING MUNICIPAL
COUNCIL, THE GAMBIA

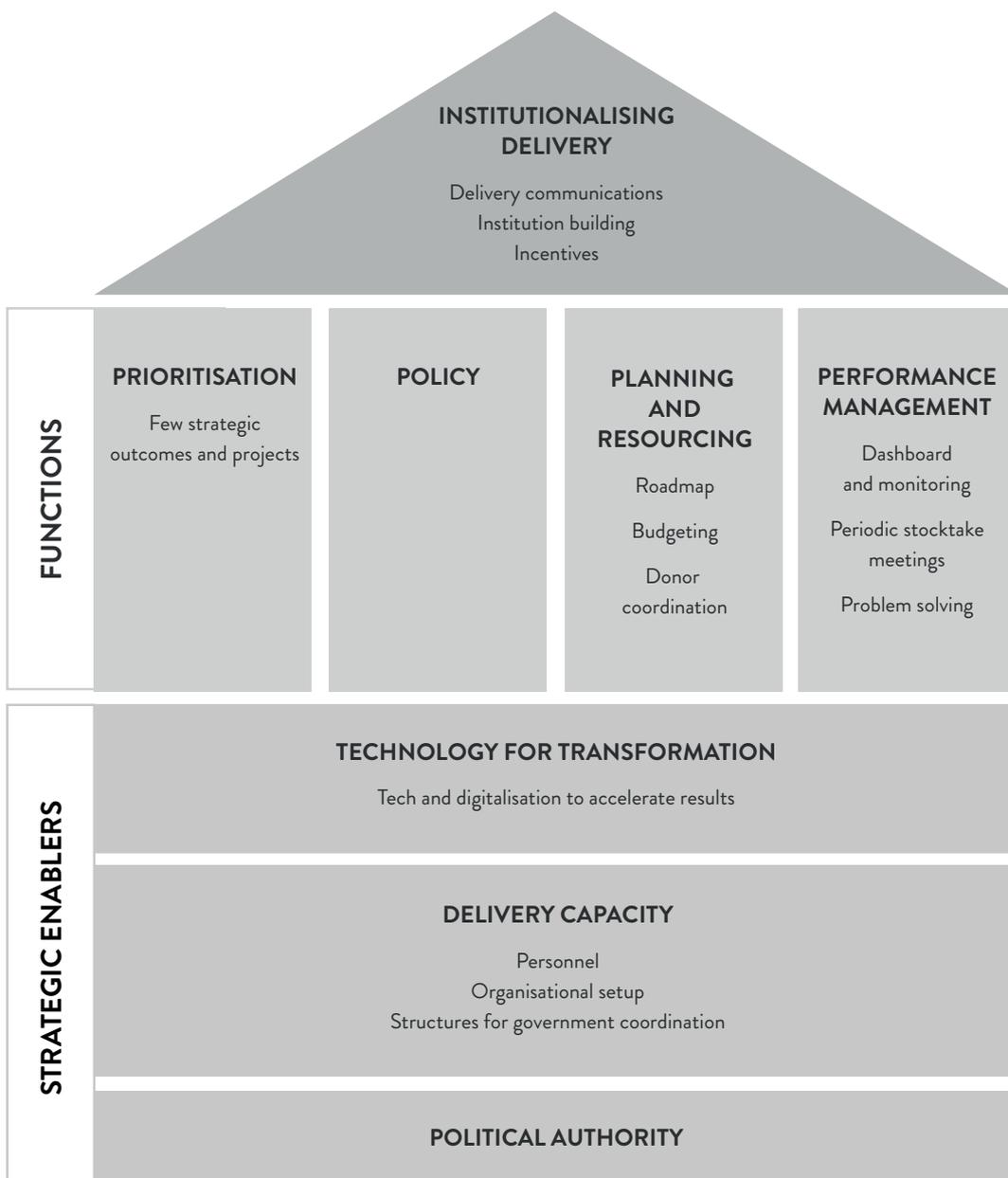
Improved understanding of ways in which Service Delivery Units can drive completion of the key county-level projects and initiatives that will have the most constructive, tangible and transformative impact on county residents in the period between August 2021 and the beginning of the next electoral cycle in 2022.

Key strategies proposed to drive completion of key projects include:

- Rapid-results initiatives
- Reviewing the performance of county departments against service-delivery charters
- Placing restrictions on the development of new projects to prioritise resources for those yet to be completed

Increased understanding of the tried-and-tested TBI delivery model, which is effective in transforming political rhetoric into tangible outcomes that citizens understand, value and appreciate.

TBI DELIVERY FRAMEWORK: PRIORITIES FOR LEADERS



Improved understanding of the criteria for the survival and continuity of delivery mechanisms in the next devolved governance administration.

- Ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) are more likely to retain delivery systems when delivery capacity is built within the delivery chain and MDA staff are more likely to retain delivery routines when they experience firsthand the transformative outputs and outcomes that delivery practice yields.
- Governments continue to feel pressure to deliver results for citizens through adoption of context-suitable delivery mechanisms due to a change in public expectations regarding the need for governments to deliver on campaign promises and national and devolved-level planning documents.
- Delivery units that make use of data on public services contribute to the institutionalisation of a culture of accountability and assist the government in its pursuit of tangible and transformative outcomes for citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to ensure that delivery mechanisms are well placed, structured and operationalised to support the full implementation of county development agendas and guarantee transformative and sustainable outcomes for the citizens of Kenya. The following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the County Delivery System and to inform future delivery policy.

Recommendations for County Governments

- Every county that has established a Service Delivery Unit should explore avenues to document the process of establishing and operationalising their delivery unit, along with related successes and challenges, with reference to their mandate to enhance delivery of priority services, projects and programmes, lessons learned and key strategies to overcome challenges. This information should be accessible to current and future county government administrations to inform their decisions on integration of delivery mechanisms within the county government, whether in the form of a delivery unit or another suitable delivery mechanism.
- County governments are encouraged to retain the concept of a County Delivery System, but not to fixate on one method of integrating delivery principles and practice within the county government administration – namely delivery units. County governments should be informed of the various options related to integrating delivery principles and practice within the county government administration. They should have the flexibility to choose which mechanism works best for each county, informed by context and needs, as well as past delivery experiences if they exist in the county context.

Recommendations for the Council of Governors

- The Council of Governors is encouraged to continue to facilitate the establishment of knowledge-exchange platforms, and to document best practices related to the adoption of the County Delivery System. The council should champion the creation of Service Delivery Units within the broader framework of performance management systems at the devolved level and strengthen partnerships with institutions that specialise in delivery, including TBI, and other delivery experts and practitioners.

Recommendations for Development Partners

- Development partners concerned with the role of county-level performance-management systems in delivering on the promise of devolution are encouraged to allocate resources towards strengthening and enhancing the existing concept of the County Delivery System, and building delivery capacity within the 47 counties, bearing in mind that counties should be granted the flexibility to adopt the most suitable mechanisms for institutionalisation of delivery principles and practice.
- Capacity-building efforts should centre around the enablers of delivery and the functions of delivery mechanisms, with specific emphasis on utilisation of delivery tools, building skills around policy, planning and resourcing, and performance-management functions of delivery mechanisms.

Recommendations for Delivery Practitioners

- Delivery practitioners within both county administrations and institutions that specialise in the delivery craft should dedicate resources towards raising awareness of different delivery mechanisms, including delivery units among devolved leaders (namely current and future Governors), and the potential they hold for translating political campaign promises into reality in the most meaningful way possible for citizens. Crucially, delivery practitioners should explore innovative strategies to access all 47 Governors (as TBI has done by working in close collaboration with the Council of Governors), and shorten the learning curve from introduction to the County Delivery System, delivery principles and practice and most suitable delivery mechanisms, towards adoption of the concept and efforts to institutionalise a delivery culture within their county administrations to deliver on their mission and vision for the county, aligned to County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and other national development frameworks and agendas.
 - Delivery practitioners should explore the most sustainable ways of financing delivery mechanisms within the County Delivery System. Establishing a delivery unit, however leanly staffed, may not be financially feasible in some counties, especially given ongoing conversations about reducing county wage costs. Development partners should explore alternative approaches, including seconding staff from institutions that specialise in the craft of delivery, to build delivery capacities within county government administrations during the five-year electoral term.
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Endnotes

¹ The 2021 CDX was a one-day virtual event, convened by the Council of Governors, and the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change's Kenya team, that brought together Heads of Delivery Units, Chiefs of Staff and Directors of Performance Management from 13 counties to participate in a strategic reflection exercise of the current role of Service Delivery Units within county administrations, and to chart a strategic way forward for the survival and continuity of delivery mechanisms within county governance structures. The Council of Governors and TBI subsequently produced a comprehensive report that captured the deliberations of each session of the 2021 CDX, key outcomes of the event and recommendations for various stakeholders concerned with implementation of the development agenda at the county level.
