



Laikipia

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SPECIAL EDITION

Professionalizing the Laikipia County Public Service

.....the journey from *political promises to Action*



Last year, HE Governor Ndiritu Muriithi made a sudden visit to various county executive offices. Here, he met with the team from the County Treasury.

By Muchiri Gitonga

Just ten days after his election, Governor Ndiritu Muriithi gathered all other newly-elected Laikipia leaders for a retreat in Naivasha.

For critics, mainly those in the social media, the retreat marked the beginning of reckless spending of taxpayers' money. But for deep thinkers and those close to the meeting, it was an innovative forum, unprecedented anywhere in the nation.

The Governor-elect had a presentation rightly titled:

"From political promises to implementation." In the retreat were almost all MCAs-elect, MPs-elect Patrick Mariru (Laikipia West), Sarah Korere (Laikipia North) and Catherine Waru-

guru (Women Representative), local leaders like Francis ole Kaparo and a senior county government managers.

With a generous support from the Office of the President and the National Cohesion and integration Commission (NCIC), the key objective of this unique retreat was to have the newly-elected leaders to reflect on the enormous task ahead of remaining faithful to the promises they had just made to the electorate. Each of the leaders in the room had an opportunity to share his or her manifesto. "We realized that the great people of Laikipia elected us on the basis of the same priorities like provision of water and improvement of roads," Governor Muriithi recalls.

The thrust of the retreat was basically to harmonize all the promises made by each of

these leaders into one implementable plan. The leaders were able to identify common priorities that they committed to pursue for the next five years. By the time, the meeting was over on 18th August 2018, the road map of Laikipia's development in the next five years was clear. The political promises that the Governor and the other elected leaders had made during the grueling campaign were crystallized into implementable projects within the five-year period. It is here that the 2018-2022 Laikipia County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) was born. Another unique outcome of this retreat was the 'Laikipia Leadership Charter' that encompasses these joint priorities and leaders' commitment to work together.

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How Tainted CSPB Bungled Recruitment of Chief Officers

Immediately after assuming office, Governor Ndiritu Muriithi began process of forming his government which would spearhead the conversion of the political promises into action.

While global Human Resource consultancy brand, Deloitte, was tasked with the delicate task of recruiting the county executive committee members, the board was to pick the chief officers.

This was not a simple task. The recruitment of these top government officers had to mirror the diversity of Laikipia which literally reflects the face of Kenya. Key appointments had to consider ethnic, regional and gender balance besides professional and academic qualifications.

The county public service board, then chaired by Mrs Mary Wairimu Mutonyi, messed up the exercise to recruit the chief officers by ignoring a list of heavily qualified applicants and shortlisted those from the previous administration.

Data from the board indicated that 338 males and 165 females applied for the eight positions. Of these 187 were youth, while 25 were diploma holders, 305 first degree holders, 151 had masters and six had PHDs.

From this rich pool of applicants, the board shortlisted the chief officers from the previous administration betraying its partisan interest and unprofessional conduct!

It would emerge a month or two later, the Ms Mutonyi's board could not drive the envisaged reforms aimed at modernizing the public service. Apart from being incompetent, the board had too big a baggage to carry out the reforms.

On 20th February 2018, the Governor tabled a petition to the county assembly asking it to remove the board to pave way for the desired reforms.

"I regret to inform the house that we have encountered a most unexpected obstacle - a highly paid, full time but incompetent, obstructionist public service board, incapable of change or driving change," he said in his petition.

The board itself was unprofessional in its conduct. For instance, one of the senior members held three public service jobs. At one the SRC had to intervene to stop irregular payments and benefits including payments for private club memberships and extraneous allowances to the member.

"The board sought to impose the outgoing chief officers on the new regime by shortlisting them, clearly demonstrating partisan interests. This is particularly appalling considering that these same officers were responsible for over Kes 500 million pending bills of fictitious projects!" the Governor told the House.

Haphazard Promotions

The sins of omission and commission by the board had greatly undermined the work of the august House. For instance, the Assembly had enacted the County Development Authority Act in 2014. But the board was not willing to delegate to the Authority, as provided by law, the power to hire its own staff. As a result, the authority had been rendered moribund with only one junior staff seconded to it. The same fate had befallen the County Revenue Board and the Enterprise Fund.

"This unhelpful circumstance, this mill-stone, that is choking the efforts to transform Laikipia cannot, and must not, be allowed to continue," he said. Despite being a full time board, being in office for 5 years, had not done any staff performance appraisal. As a



Laikipia County Government workers collect staff badges as part of the efforts to modernize the service

result an estimated 25% of staff did not know their supervisors and there was no way of establishing whether they work at all.

There is no performance management system in the public service. As a result, performers were not rewarded and there was no clear process of separating them from non-performers.

Promotions of staff were haphazard and unsupported by performance appraisals, leading to demotivation of staff who felt that there is favoritism in the service. Also some jobs had multiple office holders. For instance, you had a director of livestock production and a county director of livestock production! You could also have a director of veterinary services and a county director of veterinary services!

In addition, the board was presiding over a skewed service with a 54% of the staff being in only in one department and only 1% in the key department of trade, tourism, enterprise and cooperative development. It was clear the board was unable or unwilling to complete a right placement exercise.

Corrective Measure

The service lacked technical skills particularly in the engineering fields - electrical, roads, water and irrigation. No corrective measure had been taken to attract talent. Again, 45% of the workforce was about to retire yet the board did not have any strategy to manage the looming crisis.

After a serious debate on the petition, the county assembly finally sent the board packing and paved the way for recruitment of a new one.

Governor Muriithi strongly believed that transformation of societies, whether in Rwanda, Singapore or South Korea has been driven by a small band of visionary, committed and dedicated public sector leaders and managers.

So two months prior to lodging the petition, specifically on December 8, 2017, the Governor had hosted a human capital round table bringing together policy and development experts, top county managers and the board as well as veteran public service managers like Mr Titus Gateere.

To transform Laikipia, his hopes were pegged on this group of 50 senior county managers herded at Storms Resort in Laikipia North.

He wanted the team to craft the most professional, responsive and best performing public service never seen anywhere in Kenya.

"It's on you that the destiny of Laikipia and her people depends. The service is 1,800-strong, but you are the leadership. The million-dollar question is, will you inspire or demotivate them?" he exhorted the team.

In this meeting, the initial elements of the county performance management system were laid out.

Savouring Early Fruits of the Reforms



A delegation from the County Government of Makueni that was on a benchmarking visit on revenue collection. Steady growth in own source revenue was among the early fruits of reforming the county public service

While releasing the county quarterly financial results to the public in April 2019, Governor Ndiritu Muriithi announced the significant growth in own source revenue in the third quarter of the financial year.

By the end of June 2019, his administration had collected Kes. 815 million-almost double of the Kes 468 million that the previous administration had collected in 2016/2017. This surprised revenue rich neighbours like Meru who came to learn a few tricks on revenue collection. Kiambu, Makueni, also came calling.

The feat was attributed to operationalization of the County Revenue Board, high staff morale, automation, use of integrated county operations management system iCOMS, implementation of a performance-based management sys-

tem, opening of new revenue streams, enforcement, and innovation countywide public awareness meetings and rallies across all wards.

LCRB's strategy has been to widen the revenue net horizontally rather than vertically-meaning it does not need to increase fees and rates but rather have higher compliance rate. So despite the steady growth in revenue citizens remain unburdened as no taxes or additional charges have ever been introduced

Between January and March 2018 the county increased its own source revenue to Kshs 572.8 million-a 40% increase compared to the same period in 2017/2018 which stood at 408 million.

Notably, this increase came days after the county was ranked 5th on fiscal responsibility by the World Bank in its annual capacity per-

formance rank and 2nd in a budget transparency survey conducted by International Partnership Kenya.

Revenue streams that recorded a huge growth included liquor license at 311.7%, land rates 89.4%, county natural resources 102% and technical and external services at 882% and 105% respectively.

The highest source of revenue came from health facilities raking in 224,795,198 accounting for 39.2% of own source revenue. This in itself is an indicator of the level of confidence the citizens have in the county health system.

In addition, the growth in the single business permits stream which accounted for 12.57 % of the revenue also showed growth of confidence among local entrepreneurs.

Many counties among them Meru, Kiambu, Narok, Makueni, Nakuru, Bungoma,came to benchmark with Laikipia.

The county is among the few, if any, public organizations that release quarterly financial reports. This has earned it high credit rating score.

It has the highest life expectancy nationally at 71.9 years. It was also ranked second in terms of having the lowest under five mortality rate.

Laikipia has the highest percentage of households with a form of medical insurance which makes it easier to access quality healthcare. More than half of households have are covered under NHIF.

The county had already broken new grounds in terms of governance. All key decision is driven by data. To avail data, the county in conjunction with Kenya National Bureau of Statistics published the first county statistical abstract in 2018. Other subsequent editions have since followed. There have been evident change in organisational culture and improved attitude towards work.

Rank	Governor	County	Own Source Revenue Growth (%)	County Accountability Index	Weighted Average (%)
1	Wycliffe Oparanya	Kakamega	100.6%	73.87%	87.23%
2	Ndiritu Muriithi	Laikipia	94.9%	73.31%	84.12%
3	Muthomi Njuki	Tharaka Nithi	84.7%	72.40%	78.54%
4	Kivutha Kibwana	Makueni	53.1%	99.21%	76.15%
5	Zacharia Obado	Migori	78.9%	70.82%	74.88%
6	John Ngagarama	Nyamira	73.7%	73.65%	73.69%
7	Joseph Ole Lenku	Kajiado	70.1%	73.42%	71.78%

Learning from the Best Practices



A delegation from Ethiopia toured Solio water project which was successfully implemented by the County Government of Laikipia and Water Service Trust Fund



HE Governor Ndiritu Muriithi with some Meru MCAs who came to Laikipia to learn about effective revenue collection



HE Governor Ndiritu Muriithi taking members of Kiambu County Assembly Budget Committee through the process of reforming the county public service for higher productivity

What the Governor said on Reforms a Year Later

Over the past year, my Government has embarked on a major delivery effort which has involved aligning the Government agenda from political promises to action.

This delivery agenda has been anchored on these key pillars;

a). An organizational performance is the sum total of individual performance. We are reforming the public service to present a credible, accountable and efficient government.

To this end we have instituted the first ever performance appraisal, right sizing of our departments, as well as right placement of our staff to ensure they are placed in jobs that utilize their competences. We have also introduced a Spot Award program as our way of saying well done to high performers in the public service.

b). Efficiency, efficacy and quality in the delivery of public service. In May, we held the first suppliers' development conference where we engaged with all the suppliers who are prequalified to do business with our government. They represented a mix of different business categories and sectors.

Our focus is to build a lasting partnership with the business community and to understand their needs and interests and more importantly present to them in a deeper manner the programme of work that my government has and the procedural and process issues involved. In addition, we are investing in technology to streamline public service delivery by increasing speed and efficiency.

c) A commitment to promote confidence and self-belief in our people so as to imprint an active citizenry that finds its space in engaging on the development outcome that we all seek. We have embarked on mind-set change programme because we believe that the greatest path to development involves the rigors of attitude change, self-belief, motivation and the general conviction that an idea can actually be developed to work.

It's all about People, Systems and Processes



Senior County Government of Laikipia officers undergo results management framework training at KPMG in 2018

Having in place a well-defined action plan to achieve something is one thing, and realizing it a different. The whole plan and vision requires a medium; a vehicle to take you to the desired goal. To achieve the goals aspired in the CIDP, a professional county public service was needed in Laikipia.

In one of the meetings aimed at refocusing the senior county managers, Mr Titus J. Gateere, a former chairman, Public Service Commission, (2005-2011) described public administration as an instrument for providing services and implementing social change and economic development.

According to Mr Gateere, public administration is the basis of a government and a stabilizing force in society.

Prior to Governor Ndiritu Muriithi assuming office, Laikipia public service was different from what it is today. Contrary to the public service code of conduct, a number of officers were politically aligned and had indeed been actively involved in the just-concluded campaigns.

Others were mired in corrupt dealings with county wheeler dealers. A big chunk of the county public was demoralized.

To get the depth of how dire the situation was, you just needed to call a meeting. Any meeting-whether of senior or junior staff- would start late. The lateness could range from minutes to hours.

A staff member recalls one day when an envoy from EU country came for a scheduled appointment and there was no senior person to receive him. He had to wait at the reception with his delegation for senior officers to arrive. This was a symptom of

how dire the situation was.

In his first general staff meeting on December 18, 2017, some staff freely expressed their discontent to him.

"You can't know how promotions are given (sic). Somebody employed far much later than you is promoted before you. Some of us have spent years and years in the same position," lamented one lady.

Worse still, as found out in staff audit conducted in between June and August 2019, a significant number of those in the service could not name or pinpoint who their supervisors were or their form of engagement; permanent and pensionable, contract or casual. So the big question: how could they deliver when they do not have anybody supervising them?

Before the onset of the reforms, the county staff were interacting with 17 different systems in the course of their work. These included 1. SENSEPAY 2. IFMIS 3. County Operations Management System- COMS 4. Hospital Management Information System 5. County GIS 6. Nyahuwasco SmartPeople System 7. NAWASCO PROMICS 8. NAWASCO GIS 9. CIMES 10. GHRIS 11. IPPD 12. PRESSCOM 13. HMIS 14. DHIS 15. E_PROMIS 16. FLEET MANAGEMENT 17. Records Management System.

How efficient were they? Was there duplication? There was also the need for a review or audit of the systems to optimize their use and organizational efficiency.



A NEW CULTURE: November 2019 Infrastructure Department workers went out of their way to work overnight to repair the Nanyuki-Rumuruti Road at the Ol Pejeta Gate. Heavy rains had destroyed the road cutting off communication.

Human Resource Development: A Key Aspect of the County Reforms



Orientation of Cohort 1 of the post-graduate diploma in Project Management class comprising senior county government of Laikipia officers at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology

The reforms being witnessed in the Laikipia county public service are mainly hinged on developing the human resource to make it more productive.

Staff in every department have been undergoing skills development trainings that are relevant to their respective fields. These trainings give the county staff the requisite knowhow to run the administration in a modern way. This translates to improved service delivery. The trainings range from the top-most positions to the lowest cadres.

“The aim of these trainings is to create a competent workforce in the county with relevant skills, right attitude and mindset,” said Rose Maitai, the CECM in charge of Administration and Public Service. The need to develop the county human resource has seen the county government partnering with institutions such as Dedan Kimathi university of Technology and the Kenya School of Government to train the staff. In 2019, 25 senior county managers underwent a training course on Strategic Leadership Development Programme (SLDP). The training was facilitated by KDSP and was conducted by Kenya School of Government.

Middle-levels leaders in the administration have been taken through a course on management to improve on their different managerial responsibilities in various departments. One hundred (100) of them benefited last year from Senior Management Course (SMC) carried out by Kenya School of Government. On project management, 50 senior officers have been enrolled in a Post Graduate Diploma in Project Management at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (Dekut). The target is to have trained 100 members by the end of this financial year. Last year, 12 of the county fire fighters were trained on tactical and specialized skills in fire management, and Emergency Vehicle Operations and Water Supply by

Africa Fire Mission for a period of one week. The training offered advanced skills in fire management while keeping safe. Other firemen were trained on safe ways of running a rescue mission dubbed Basic Rope Rescue Training which was sponsored by Polish Aid. Early August 2020, top officials in the government underwent a self-assessment workshop meant to enable them implement the county’s development plan through the FY2020/2021 budget.

On 5th and 6th August 2020, the governor together with the deputy governor led a team of top managers in the county from the directors to CECs for a senior management workshop. The aim was to direct county projects under Kenya Climate Smart Agricultural Project Workshop (KCSAP) to be in line with the year’s budget. To modernize service delivery and improve efficiency, 120 staff members who were not computer literate were trained on basic computer literacy through a partnership with Laikipia University and ICT Authority. The county government has also facilitated some workers who do not have KCPE OR KCSE certificates enroll in adult

literacy classes. Within the county government, there is a program called Employee Welfare Program that aims at helping those in physiological problems while on duty. Such a program offers training through guidance and help motivate workers get back to work.

In October 2018, two water department workers were trained for three weeks on rain water harvesting. The objective was to add knowledge on rain water harvesting technology and skills. Away from county-sponsored trainings, the county staffs have adopted a culture of ever advancing their skills for better yields in their line of work. A significant number of workers have voluntarily enrolled in colleges and universities for up to date skills. Workers have realized that when you’re learning, you are growing to avoid stagnation. It is through the relevant trainings to make every worker competent in their work station that has seen some other counties benchmark with Laikipia on service delivery.



Workers who had no KCPE or KCSE certificates were supported to enroll in adult literacy classes in various centres across the county

Discipline, Integrity are Now the Norm for the Reforming Service



HE Governor Ndiritu Muriithi talks to senior county managers during a training at KPMG offices, Nairobi

For the last three years, Laikipia County Government has been consistent in making crucial reforms aimed at transforming public service to global standards. The reforms are meant to cultivate a new work culture that embraces high standards of professionalism in the workforce. As the reform process gathers steam, the quest to instill discipline, ethics and integrity has not been without casualties. There has been zero-tolerant on corruption and integrity issue. The first county public service board was the first casualty of the new organizational culture. The county assembly removed it after a successful petition by the governor citing incompetence and

lack of integrity, among other issues. High ranking officers whose integrity was questionable have fallen on the way too. An acting chief officer and a sub-county Works Officer were interdicted for approving payments for non-existent market projects in Olmoran Ward. The purge also saw a former managing director of Nyahururu Water and Sanitation Company lose his position after allegations of abuse of office. The court upheld the decision by the firm's board of directors to send him on a compulsory leave to pave way for investigations into his conduct. Another casualty was former acting chief officer for Water, Environment and Natural Resources. Joseph Mwangi Maina who was

hailed to a Nanyuki court sometime in 2019 facing three charges of demanding bribes from contractors. He was accused of soliciting for Ksh. 220,000 from the director of Korna General Contractors in January 2018, after the firm won a contract to rehabilitate Solio Four earth dam. The case is still before a Nanyuki court.

A director was also sent packing for conduct. Unbecoming of a public servant.

Another was sent home after three consecutive adverse opinions from auditors on her books of account. Twenty-seven doctors were also dismissed after failing to report on duty.

In July 2020, a member of Rumuruti Municipality Board was removed after serious allegations were raised touching on her integrity when she worked as a county physical planner.

Ordinarily, the government employs early verbal and written warnings to tame indiscipline. It may resort to salary withdrawal where there is an extreme breach of the code of conduct.

"Our goal is not always to let our staff go immediately. We try to understand their situation first," CECM for Administration Rose Maitai said.

The government first reaches out to the affected staff member to understand the cause of their unsatisfactory performance or behaviour. It's for this reason that the Employee Welfare Programme was formed to give psychosocial support to the affected employees.



A HR roundtable at the County House

Time Management- the Brand that is Defining Laikipia

They say time is money, but that may not apply for occupants of public offices, if the experiences from those seeking government services are anything to go by.

For a long time citizens have associated the government offices with poor time-keeping, lethargy or complete absence from duty stations and other unprofessional conduct that have given civil service undesirable ratings.

But the more prominent vice that comes out in any such conversation is poor time management.

Tales are rife of public officers who make technical appearances in their work stations before making a dash to attend to private affairs, leaving a coat hanging on a chair to disguise their absence.

Time-keeping was the first manifestation of the culture in the Laikipia public service.

Meetings, whether physical or virtual, start on time. There's no vocabulary like 'there's no quorum.' Meetings start with those people who are there.

The phrase 'Laikipia Time' is spreading fast even among the citizens. Senior leadership led by HE Governor Ndiritu Muriithi has been consistent in setting the pace on time management. The leaders have continually arrived at meetings many times earlier than agreed time, much to the surprise of mwananchi sometimes.



Laikipia County Secretary Karanja Njora during a quarterly general staff meeting in Nanyuki

Time management has been part of the critical aspects on cultivating a culture on accountability and meaningful engagement.

Progressive nations across the world manage their time well. In Laikipia, gone are the days that the public was thought to be a place for employees to sit at comfort without being resourcefully engaged.

"We have seen the impact of time wastage on service deliver and we want to move away from that," said Rose Maitai, CEC for Administration and public service.

The need for better time management is what informed the adoption of systems to ensure staff members can account for the time spent in their place of work.

The Integrated County Operations Manage-

ment System, ICOMS, is an online timesheet that employees fill on a weekly basis to show their work.

Thanks to consistency, the new culture of time keeping is sweeping across the public service, and is continually being felt in public and government functions within and outside Laikipia. Now, more than ever before, thanks to punctuality, Laikipia county government officials are setting the pace on time management. It is now a common occurrence for other government officials to find their colleagues from Laikipia county government already seated during intergovernmental or multi-agency functions. It is now common to hear of government officials attending functions outside the county.

Rallying the County Public Service to Become Innovative



Governor Ndiritu Muriithi tries his hand on drums made locally

Promoting innovative solutions to challenges facing citizens has been a prominent feature of the county public service. Laikipia county government believes that every employee has a role in making a positive change on the citizens.

"We want to retool our workforce to impact to

Laikipians positively," Governor Ndiritu Muriithi said of the consistent trainings of staff recently. Spot Awards targets staff who go out of their way to provide innovative solutions in service delivery. They are awarded quarterly to outstanding individuals or teams.

The need to promote local innovations led to the formation of the Laikipia County In-

novation and Enterprise Development Programme . It involves the hand-holding of about 300 local SMEs to scale up their production and their linkage to markets. The programme also seeks to promote financial literacy and patenting among the innovators. About 200 business development officers have been tasked with handholding nascent SMEs to grow their production. They will also steer existing businesses that qualify for subsidized loans meant to cushion them from the impact of Covid-19. Laikipia continues to blaze the trail of innovation, with significant gains on equipment leasing programme. This has led to rapid improvement of rural roads.

The innovative trend was also seen when the government sponsored the training on how to make PPEs for local SMEs at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, a move that would later be instrumental in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic.