

The effects of the devolution on the provision of veterinary services in Kenya

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INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Republic of Kenya promulgated a new constitution. The new constitution made provision for the creation of 47 administrative units known as counties. The constitution defined the devolution of various services, including veterinary services, from the central government to county governments.

Following the promulgation of the new constitution, the Government of Kenya devolved veterinary services in August, 2013. This meant that the 47 counties were to take care of Kenya's animal resources comprising of 17.5 million cattle, 27.7 million goats, 17 million sheep, 3 million camels, 31.8million domestic birds, 1.8 million donkeys and an undetermined number of companion, game and aquatic animals (KNBS, 2009).

By the end of 2013, the counties had taken charge in delivering veterinary services previously handled nationally by the Director of Veterinary Services. Among these included disease surveillance and disease control, provision of clinical services and facilitation of trade in animals and animal products. The shift in the delivery of veterinary services led to several challenges as all counties carried out their mandates differently leading to divergence between counties. The devolution of these services was done before the infrastructure of the counties to handle such services was put in place. This study was therefore devised to assess the situation of livestock service provision at the county level and the challenges faced by the county and national governments.

STUDY DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES

This study was carried out in six counties namely; Nairobi, Mombasa, Narok, Kilifi, Laikipia and Kiambu. These were selected depending on the levels of urbanization, livestock populations and accessibility.

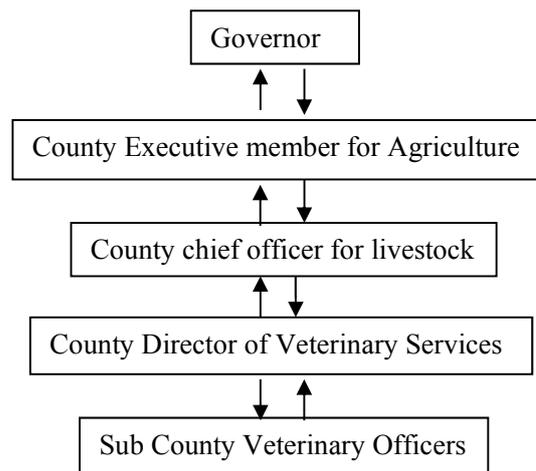
The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of decentralization on the provision of veterinary services at the county.

- I. Chain of command linking the various officials in the counties with national government services
- II. Effect of decentralization on legal documentation for quarantine measures, animal transport and transport of animal products.

KEY FINDINGS

I. Chain of command

At the county level, new offices were established within the livestock department. Typically, the hierarchy would be as follows:



As shown in the county chain of command, the most senior officer is the Governor to whom all officers would be answerable to. This arrangement was established for accountability purposes since human resource matters such as payment of salaries and promotions of all the officers would be handled at the county level.

At the national level, the Director of Veterinary Services is the Country's chief veterinary officer (CVO), the only country officer recognized internationally on matters of Veterinary Services. The CVO is a delegate member of the Assembly of Delegates in international organizations such as the OIE and the FAO. The CVO is responsible for all

communication to these organizations, depending on the mandates of these organizations. Any break in the chain of command from the county veterinary officers to the CVO is likely to lead to a breach in the country meeting its international obligations such as disease surveillance and reporting.

There seems however, to exist some ambiguity as to when and how information should flow through the different levels of government to the CVO. This is because the highest authority on communication within the county government is the governor, a political office holder. In most cases, the Governor would be unfamiliar with technical veterinary matters apart from possibly, the county veterinary policy.

In all the counties visited (except Nairobi), there seems to be a serious weak link in the chain of command between the national government and the County governments. This, according to county veterinary officials, has been brought about by lack of proper consultation by the CVO with the various levels of officers in the counties as the communication channels are not well defined. Junior veterinary officers being the technical staff on the ground, and being the ones who handle actual delivery of various veterinary services and generate reports, have therefore ended up having two levels to report to; the CVO and the Governor. The result of this arrangement is an uncoordinated and non-inclusive reporting from the counties to the CVO. In some cases, some reports have been disowned and or disregarded by senior county officials. While such reports from junior officers are usually a true reflection of the situation at the county, Governors have been known to reject and disown them for political or economic reasons.

In the case of Nairobi County, the situation is different. The county hosts the CVO and this easily facilitates communication between the different levels of national and county governments thus negating the discord seen in other counties.

II. Legal documentation in animal transport and transport of meat

Before the promulgation of the new constitution and decentralization, veterinary services were provided by the national government through district veterinary officers in the 168 districts. The legal documents used in animal transport and transport of meat respectively include the Animal Movement Permit and the Certificate of Transport (CoT). The two documents serve the purpose of reducing criminal activities in the livestock trade and enhancing disease control to ensure adherence to public health guidelines.

On devolution of veterinary services, the issuance of these documents was shifted to the county governments. Immediately following the transfer of roles to the counties, most counties designed and printed their own documents with the county logos. These

politically motivated moves are thought to have affected inter – county animal trade and is also believed to facilitate faking, counterfeiting or falsification of such documents due to lack of security features.

The office of the CVO stepped in to correct this anomaly and in consultation with the council of governors, it issued templates that were to be used by all the counties. All the documents would have the logo of the Republic of Kenya as well as county information, among other details, depending on the purpose of the document. The Government printer was tasked to print these documents for all counties to ensure uniformity and presence of security features as well as document traceability since all serial numbers of permits sent to every county would be deposited with the CVO for reference.

At the time of this study Nairobi, Laikipia and Narok counties were using the two newly designed documents to facilitate transport of animals and meat. Mombasa and Kilifi counties do not have these documents and issue a receipt on payment of a fee of Ksh 50. The receipts are hand written either as Movement permit or Certificate of Transport. This practice is said to have been adopted because the government printer was not able to meet the demands of printing the documents for all counties.

In 2014, the office of the CVO reportedly requested the government printer to devolve such roles to various regions of the country and so as to ensure the availability of these documents whenever needed in good time.

There are concerns with respect to variations in the fees charged for the two documents in various counties. Some counties charge fees higher than that recommended by the national government as a form of revenue generation. The high costs of these documents could deter the public from applying for them thus compromising disease prevention and public health.

III. Quarantine measures, disease prevention and control

In the new county systems, the county director of veterinary services imposes quarantine on areas with suspected disease outbreaks. . The County DVS is thereafter expected to inform the CVO as samples to confirm outbreak are submitted to the laboratories. The County DVS then reports to the county superiors and later sends the CVO a report with copies of confirmed diagnosis. Once a diagnosis is confirmed, the county mobilizes its own resources to carry out control strategies such as mass vaccination and monitoring. For fear of loss of livestockmarkets and - by extension – negatively affecting the county's economy, small disease outbreaks may go unreported by the county due to political interference.

Following devolution, various counties allocated important sums of money to the livestock sector. This led to counties being able to afford vaccines in larger quantities than those previously allocated. The increased demand for vaccines has led to increased pressure on the national vaccine manufacturing institute Kenya Veterinary Vaccine Production Institute (KEVEVAPI) to enhance their production. KEVEVAPI has struggled to cater for increased demands for vaccines. Since vaccine transport requires a cold chain, peripheral counties are not able to conveniently transport vaccines from the Nairobi based KEVEVAPI. To mitigate this, the CVO's office has therefore suggested to the Institute to also devolve its storage facilities to various regions so as to facilitate vaccine availability and quality assurance.

GUIDELINES FOR DELIVERY OF VETERINARY SERVICES IN KENYA

Following the challenges experienced with the coming of the devolution of veterinary services, the CVO's office in 2014 convened a consultative meeting with the Council of Governors in which they agreed to compile guidelines to improve efficiency and coordination in the provision of livestock services.

The guidelines drafted as a result of this meeting (appendix 1) outline among other things national veterinary services, county veterinary services, control of notifiable diseases, quarantines, livestock identification and traceability.

These guidelines aim to streamline the provision of veterinary services and enhance the coordination of veterinary services across the different levels of government. The veterinary officers from all the counties visited regretted that the consultative meeting to define the guidelines was not inclusive. Only the council of governors was consulted and there was no representation of technical personnel from the counties. County veterinary staffs feel that since the process was not all inclusive, they are reluctant to implement the guidelines.

CONCLUSION

The devolution of veterinary services was implemented before plans such as standard operating procedures were put in place and the stakeholders offered training on how such should be handled.

Various government agencies that synergistically aid the delivery of veterinary services were ill prepared to manage devolved systems.

The veterinary guidelines despite being thought to be a result of non-inclusive consultations could provide solutions to all the challenges brought about by the devolution process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

More consultation should be carried out on the Guidelines so that it can be implemented by all counties so that it can entrench harmony in the provision of veterinary services.