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# Corruption Devolved: People's Perceptions on Devolutions Impact on Transparency, Accountability and Service Delivery by the Government of Kisumu County, Kenya

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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Corruption Devolved:  
People's Perceptions on Devolutions Impact on Transparency,  
Accountability and Service Delivery By the Government of  
Kisumu County, Kenya.

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Kenya: Urbanization, Health and Human Rights  
Spring 2018

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## **Abstract**

In 2010, Kenya introduced a new constitution and with it the introduction of the concept of a decentralized government. The devolved system of government was implemented in 2013 and granted each of the 47 counties in Kenya, such as Kisumu County, greater autonomy, resources and ability to serve its people. This study aims to compile a thorough understanding of people's perception on how devolution has impacted transparency, accountability and service delivery of the government of Kisumu County, Kenya within its five years.

The study is comprised of a series of interviews on the premises of the Kisumu County Assembly with members of Kisumu County's legislature as well as focus groups discussions in each of its seven sub counties. The study elucidates that although government leaders and citizens have a mutual understanding of the needs of Kisumu County there is still a large disconnect in expectations from citizens and representatives toward how to solve them. The study also reveals that many of the forms of communication government leaders rely on to disseminate information to their constituencies are not the most convenient or preferred methods for citizens. Above all, this study shows that all constituents and government leaders believe corruption is a big issue in Kenya, one that takes many more mechanisms than devolution alone, such as civic education and responsible governance, to eradicate. Ultimately, it is concluded that devolution has been an unprecedented tool in granting services to Kisumu County's people. There are, however, still many more ways its structures and practices must be improved before it reaches its full potential.

## **Introduction**

Misuse of power has been an illness plaguing the Government of Kenya since its independence from colonialism in 1963. Empowered Heads of State and centralization only further perpetuated the harmful corruption that occurred throughout Kenya's history. It was not until 2010, when Kenya implemented a new landmark constitution, that the concept of devolution was introduced. Now the duties of Kenya's bureaucracy fall upon its 47 county governments. Theoretically, this act of decentralization should guarantee lower incidences of corruption and higher levels of accountability for local leaders and actors. In principle, however, these improvements are not necessarily inherent. The following will illustrate the trend of governmental corruption in Kenya and other African countries, the objectives for switching to a devolved system of government and the research found to determine a correlation between devolution (interchangeably referred to as decentralization hereafter) and accountable leaders.

### **Centralization as a Catalyst for Corruption**

In 1963, Kenya gained independence from British colonization and by doing so became its own state. At the time, Kenya adopted a parliamentary system of government in which the executive branch consisted of a prime minister and a cabinet, answerable to the legislature. However, Kenya quickly shifted to a presidential system as its first leader, President Jomo Kenyatta, worked on passing constitutional amendments to amass more power for the executive in the late 1960s. (Akech, 2011). The power of the executive was technically to be distributed among all executive actors, i.e. the President and his cabinet which consisted of the vice president, prime minister, two deputy prime ministers and ministers of government. In actuality, the President never consulted his cabinet and even often bypassed the vice president, working primarily through the office of the Public Service. He also continuously passed constitutional amendments granting him even more control such as the ability to appoint and remove members without consulting other parties. These actions did not only create an incredibly powerful and unmitigated national executive, but it also affected the actions of the Public Service for decades thereafter. Additionally, and most monumentally, this disregard for the Rule of Law and significant abuse of power set a precedent among Kenya's system of leadership that still lingers today (Akech, 2011).

That said, it is not just the executive branch that lacks the proper accountability mechanisms. Public servants are often intimidated into silence about unlawful activity, as the

absence of any form of tenure means their seniors could easily fire or replace them for snitching (Akech, 2011). Furthermore, one would assume that legislator's actions are always held accountable as their power is derived from the election by, and satisfaction of, the people. That however is not always the case. The legislature can be severely influenced by special interest groups. On another note, although the Chief Justice enjoys an immense level of power, the President could still hire and remove officers at his will and without consultation. This ultimately hinders judges' ability to serve as unbiased actors as they must remain in the President's favor to retain their job (Akech, 2011). The bottom line is, corruption can be seen in every facet of daily life in Kenya, from citizens' interactions with police officers to the choices made by government officials. Additionally, it is estimated that corruption accounts for 8% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product and the 2012 Kenyan treasury estimates showed that 20-30 percent of the budget was lost each year due to dishonest acts such as fraudulent procurement (Harrington et. al., 2012).

### **Devolution: A Trend in Africa**

Kenya's high propensity for abuse of power is, although significant, not unique. Examples of various forms of centralization, and subsequently high levels of political corruption, can be found all over the developing world, especially in Africa. However, many African nations have yet to implement any significant reforms due to their leaders' fear of losing power. Most governments that have attempted to reform to a devolved system have done so unsuccessfully and instead simply transfer the issues they were facing on a national level to a regional one, paradoxically reinforcing central authority. One example of this is the case of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, the People's Revolutionary Democratic Front introduced a federalist system that split opposition from ethno-regional groups with the potential to secede. Nevertheless, the responsibilities given to sub-national governments were not matched by adequate resources, which weakened their credibility with electorates and increased their reliance on central government anyway (D'Arcy et. al, 2016). It is hypothesized that devolution of central government will result in greater participation by the citizens at the local levels of government and therefore higher levels of governmental accountability (Monaco, 2015). As countries have begun to implement devolution, however, this ideal has not always been realized. Kenya's experience with devolution is unlike most other African nations. Kenya holds the exclusive company of countries like South Africa, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, whose constitutional reforms

were a result of political crisis. Its execution is also unusually comprehensive. The new constitution's provisions are very thorough and outline the redistribution of power clearly and efficiently. This is far more extensive than most other decentralized reforms in Africa, which has made Kenya a very exceptional case for devolved government reformation.

### **The Attraction of Devolution**

Devolution is defined as “the transfer of authority, resources, and personnel from the national level to the subnational jurisdictions” (D’Arcy et. al, 2016). When executed properly, devolution can be an incredible tool for bringing the power of the government back into the people’s hands. It can be an institutional solution for the problems facing most African states such as protecting minorities, diffusing conflict, promoting local development, and bringing politics to the public’s level (D’arcy et. al., 2016). There are numerous other benefits of devolution as well. Keep in mind that each of these potential benefits listed are theoretical and products of the ideal execution of decentralization. These benefits may not be guaranteed without negative externalities and are not specifically listed in reference to devolution in Kenya.

First, decentralization is a means of bringing the government to the people and therefore will result in greater responsiveness by public servants to local needs. On the same note, officials responsible for the delivery of public service to local communities can enjoy more efficient delivery and reduced costs as all delivery will be much more local. Delivery problems that need to be resolved could be recognized and fixed more rapidly and some of the bureaucratic red tape associated with said services would be reduced. Second, decentralization is a means of increasing citizen participation in governmental decision making. This is because the government agenda would now only be about local affairs. Citizens are more likely to have an opinion and become activists on these issues as they are more pertinent to them. Consequently, citizen welfare will improve. Third, regional inequalities, instability and poverty should reduce as a result of decentralization. This is because leaders will now have a greater knowledge of the need within counties and can more appropriately allocate resources. They would also be able to utilize stronger partnerships between key public, private and community actors from the region. This is particularly interesting when considering devolution in Kenya because there is such a strong loyalty and wide variety of ethnic groups all across the country. More centralized governments may help improve race relations nationwide, as each group may finally be able to advocate for their own needs. It may, on the other hand, increase conflict between each group if,



for instance, favoritism occurs. Finally, government accountability could be enhanced under devolution. This is because citizens can closely monitor and evaluate their leader's compliance (Hope, 2014).

### **Establishment of Devolution in Kenya**

After Kenya's independence in the early 1960s, the nation faced a period of young and fragile democracy in which leaders, such as President Kenyatta, took advantage of amassing large amounts of power. Mild reforms, amendments and acts were enacted during this time in an effort to curtail the massive abuses of power. These were, for the most part, insignificant, as there were no real mechanisms in place to punish violators. Then, in 2007-2008, violence after a hotly debated election resulted in the tragic death of over 1000 victims and the expulsion of almost half a million citizens from their homes, farms and businesses based on their ethnic background (Harrington et. al., 2012). Devolution was a key part of the compromise that emerged from the 2008 peace deal following the deadly violence. The new Kenyan Constitution of 2010 established a system of devolved government with 47 lower level county governments. The operation of these county governments began soon after the March 2013 elections.

### **Mechanisms Designed to End Corruption**

The new constitution and the provisions of devolution address new mechanisms to enhance governmental accountability. For example, articles 135 and 153 of the new constitution declare that all decisions of the cabinet and President be in writing. This empowers public officers to resist following illegal instructions of their superiors as they can now have tangible proof of written instructions before taking action. Additionally, Article 79 requires parliament to enact a law to establish an independent ethics and anti-corruption committee (Akech, 2011). These improvements however, mean nothing if the public is not empowered by legal education to hold their leaders accountable. Additionally, vulnerable groups still lack the presence of an advocate in government and patronage and rent seeking among ethnic groups is still preventing equity across Kenya (D'Arcy et al., 2016).

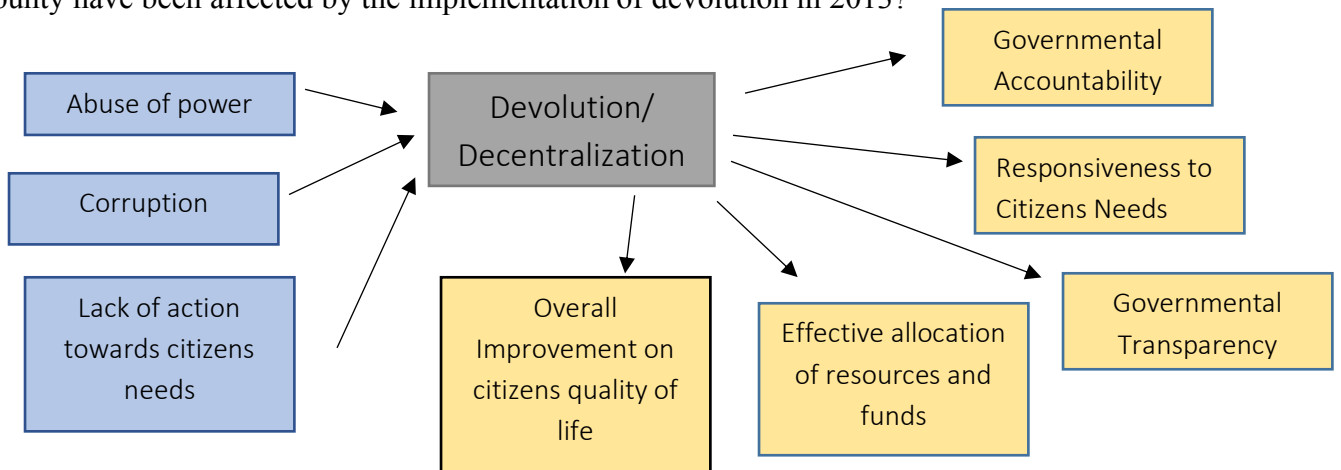
### **Justification**

Devolution is a step many African nations are utilizing to pass power from the hands of a single leader back to that of the people. Unless people are educated and empowered to utilize their new constitutions to their advantage, however, little change can be expected. Overall, devolution and Kenya's new constitution is a pragmatic step toward increasing accountability in

Kenya's government. As 2018 marks the five-year anniversary of decentralization it is important to evaluate exactly how effective it has truly been in reforming the culture of political corruption in Kisumu County.

### Objectives and Conceptual Framework

This study aims to gather a thorough report on people's perception of how devolution has impacted transparency, accountability and service delivery of the government of Kisumu County, Kenya. Through a series of interviews with members of Kisumu County's legislature and focus group discussions in each of its seven sub counties this study plans to create a profile on successes or failures that both government leaders and citizens of Kisumu County perceive to be a result of the implementation of devolution. As this study coincides with the fifth anniversary of devolution in Kenya, this study also hopes to create a record on what devolution has achieved thus far, and how the system can be improved to better serve Kisumu County going forward. Additionally, this study plans to uncover what obstacles still persist to prevent devolution from affectively fulfilling its purpose. The ultimate question asked is this: to what extent do people believe transparency, accountability and service delivery within the government of Kisumu County have been affected by the implementation of devolution in 2013?

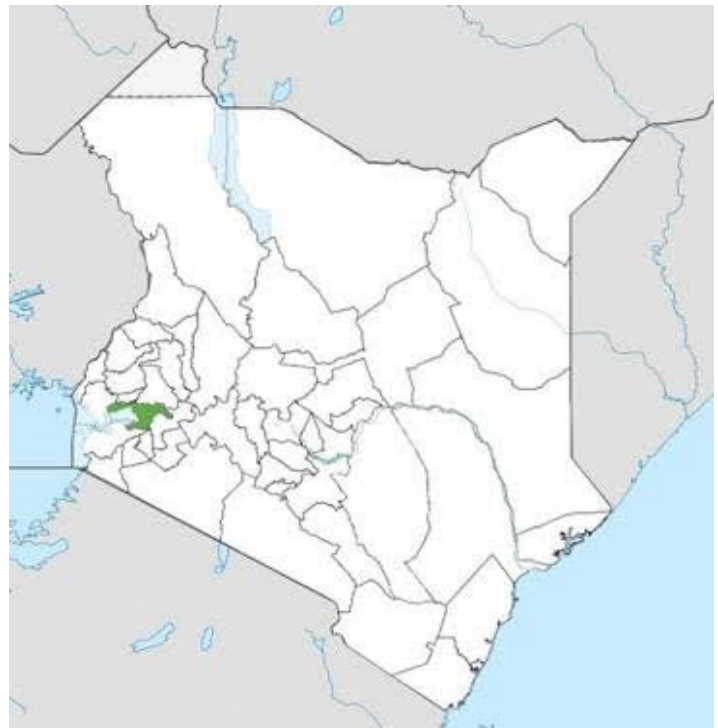


## Setting

This study took place in Kisumu County, Kenya. Kisumu County is one of Kenya's 47 counties and is located in the western part of the country, along Lake Victoria. Fishing, sugarcane farming, livestock keeping and rice farming are the county's largest industries and it covers an area of 2,085.9  $Km^2$ . Additionally, Kisumu county has a population of about 968,909 (Kisumu County, n.d.) which is diverse in regard to wealth and education levels of its citizens and has its urban city center of Kisumu Town as well as its rural farming constituencies.

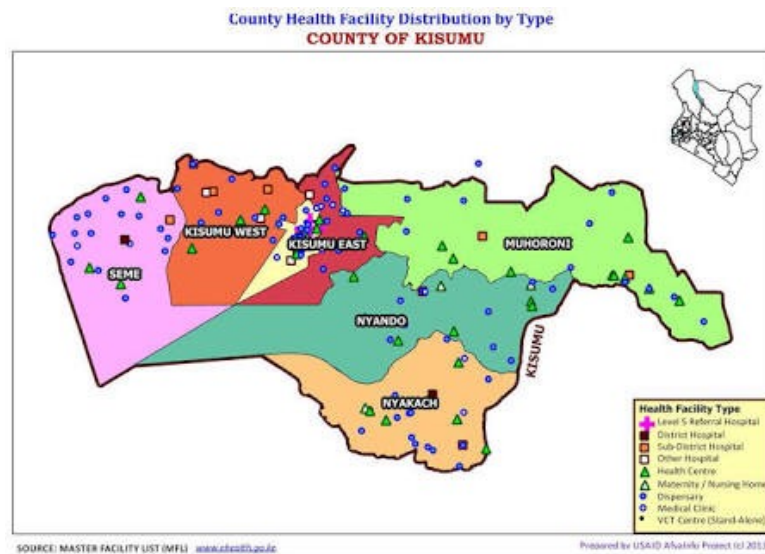


: Location Of Kisumu Town (Price, 2015):



Location Of Kisumu County (Kisumu County Location Map, 2013).

The seven constituencies or sub counties of Kisumu County include Seme, Nyakach, Nyando, Muhoroni, Kisumu Central, Kisumu West and Kisumu East. Each of these sub counties further breakdown into smaller electoral wards and there are 35 electoral wards in total, of which are represented by Members of the County Assembly (MCAs). While conducting the study the researcher traveled and conducted focus groups in various locations in each of the seven sub counties. These focus groups were typically located within meeting rooms of district hospitals or in a shaded outdoor location nearby the hospital.



*Sub Counties Kisumu County (Distribution of Kisumu County Health Facilities, 2017).*

Additionally, interviews of county government leaders were held on the premises of the Kisumu County Assembly in Kisumu Town. Members of the county assembly are representatives either by election or nomination. There are 35 elected MCAs and 14 nominated representatives. The nominated representatives ensure that all groups have representation in decision making and nominees in the Kisumu County Assembly represent minorities such as the Asian Community, Muslims, the disabled, youths and women (Okode, 2017). The leaders interviewed for this study had been elected during the 2017 election and were within the first year of the new term.

The duties of the members of the county assembly are to provide legislation, representation and oversight on behalf of their constituents. Prior to the implementation of devolution following the 2013 election, the national government was responsible for most functions pertinent to daily life to residents of the Nyanza Province, now Kisumu County. After devolution, the responsibilities of the counties executive and legislative are numerous, as seen listed below:

*Agriculture*

1. *Crop and animal husbandry*
2. *Livestock sale*
3. *Plant and animal disease control*
4. *Fisheries*

*County Health Services*

1. *Facilities and pharmacies*
2. *Ambulance services*
3. *Promotion of primary healthcare*
4. *Veterinary services*
5. *Waste disposal*
6. *Cemeteries, funerals, crematoria*

*Pollution Control*

1. *Air pollution*
2. *Noise pollution*
3. *Other public nuisance and outdoor ads*

*Education*

1. *Pre-primary education (ECDs)*
2. *Village Polytechnics*
3. *Childcare Facilities*

*Cultural Activities, public entertainment, and public amenities*

1. *Gambling*
2. *Racing*
3. *Liquor licensing*
4. *Cinema*
5. *Libraries*
6. *Museums*
7. *County parks, beaches, and recreational facilities*

*County transportation*

1. *County Roads*
2. *Street lighting*
3. *Traffic and parking*
4. *Public road transport*
5. *Ferries and harbors*

*Animal Control and Welfare*

1. *Licensing of dogs*
2. *Facilities for the care and burial of animals*

*County Public Works*

1. *Storm water management systems*
2. *Water and sanitation services*

*County Planning and Developing*

1. *Statistics*
2. *Land surveys and mapping*
3. *Boundaries and fencing*
4. *Housing*
5. *Electricity, gas and energy regulation*

*Natural Resources*

1. *Soil and water conservation*
2. *Forestry*

*Firefighting services*

1. *Firefighting*
2. *Disaster management*

*Monitoring of illegal substances*

1. *Drugs*
2. *Pornography*

*Smooth Governance*

1. *Ensure administrative capacity in communities*
2. *Effective exercise of functions at the local level*

*Powers Devolved to County Governments (Constitutions of Kenya, 2018).*

## **Methodology**

There are two main methods of which this study gathered information. The first is a series of individual interviews with members of Kisumu County's legislative body. With the help of project advisor and employee of the Kisumu County Assembly's Hansard Department, Grace Kunga, nine members of the county assembly were interviewed. Each of these interviews were conducted one-on-one and in English on the premises or within the offices of the Kisumu County Assembly. The study is centered on the Kisumu County Assembly because it is the legislative arm of the county government of which democratically elected representatives must carry out duties on behalf of their constituency. The interview questions and conversation guideline aimed to gather a thorough understanding of the subject's role and background in Kisumu county, issues most pressing in their constituency, methods and obstacles to communicate with citizens, accountability mechanisms in the county and devolutions effect on all of the above (see appendix F for full questionnaire).

The second method of data gathering is the use of focus groups consisting of Kisumu County citizens and constituents. With the assistance of Vincent Obiero of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching and Referral Hospital, research assistant Fred Misach and community health workers from each community, this study utilized a focus group discussion in each of the seven sub-counties of Kisumu County. Each of these focus groups aimed to have between eight and thirteen participants of all genders, ages, and community groups in order to gain a comprehensive sampling of the sub county. Ultimately, the study consisted of seven focus groups and a total of 84 citizens of Kisumu county. Each focus group met just once for sessions lasting no longer than an hour and a half.

Demographic and background related information was gathered through a sign in sheet (see appendix A) and all participants were referred to by a number assigned to them to ensure their anonymity. The focus group discussions were conducted primarily in English, though some Swahili and Luo were also used. The focus group discussion followed a discussion guideline and questionnaire designed to gather an understanding of people perception on topics such as public participation, governmental accountability, major areas of concern, access to information and devolutions impact on their relationships with their leaders (see Appendix E for full interview guideline). The subjects of each focus group were compensated 300 shillings for any travel expenditures and were provided complimentary soft drinks throughout the discussion.

Both focus group participants and individual interview subjects signed consent forms (see appendix B, C & D) before partaking in the survey. All subjects' identities will remain anonymous and confidential. Furthermore, the questions asked in interviews and in focus group discussions follow the same themes with the goal of comparing and contrasting their perspectives on devolution and governmental accountability from both parties. All of these interviews and focus group discussions were also recorded using a recording device and transcribed later into by the researcher and research assistants. The data compiled is primarily qualitative and the study is a descriptive study. Additionally, the information has been triangulated with other sources such as newspapers, TV news clips, historical records, public court records etc. to get a thorough understanding of government action in the given time period being discussed.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

After conducting interviews with government leaders and focus groups with members of each of Kisumu Counties seven sub counties common themes presented themselves in regard to issues of priority, communication strategy and corruption and accountability practices in Kisumu County, as well as devolutions impact on all of the above. The study consisted of seven focus groups, one from each constituency or sub county of Kisumu County. Each group had 8-13 participants from the sub county from a variety of backgrounds in order to provide an appropriate sample of the community. Participants included church leaders, business community members, retirees, teaches, elders, youth leaders, community chiefs, disabled representatives and community health volunteers of all ages and genders ( See Appendix G for demographic details). The majority of focus group participants said they are involved in politics in some way and are typically engaged in politics by voting, campaigning, attending rallies, vying for candidacy and participating in public participation forums.

Additionally, nine interviews of Kisumu County government leaders were conducted on the premises of the Kisumu County Assembly. These participants included the majority whip, elected Members of the County Assembly (MCA) and nominated special interest representatives on behalf of women and the independent/minority party. These leaders were also all chairs, vice-chairs or members of a number of committees such as the committees of budget and appropriation, liaison, law and justice and good governance, health sanitation, education and road transport and structure.

## **Concerns of Kisumu County**

One of the purposes of devolution was to ensure that each of the 47 counties of Kenya would be able to address their most pressing needs in a more timely, efficient and effective manner. On the whole, both the government leaders interviewed and the citizens apart of the focus groups ultimately agreed on the most urgent issues currently facing Kisumu County. Elevating the living standards of citizens, through projects such as waste management infrastructure, reducing poverty and food insecurity were big issues for both parties. Healthcare was another area of concern for all groups especially that of implementing universal health care, improving health facilities and compensating Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) for their work. Improving infrastructure, especially poor or inaccessible roads, was another priority for all participants. Another major concern for both citizens and government leaders were that of accessing clean and safe water. Some participants suggested preventing overcrowding in urban areas, building boreholes, and harvesting rainwater as remedies during our discussions. Education was another priority for all participants and all parties agreed that Early Childhood Development (ECDs), affordable education, particularly for orphans and single mothers, vocational training and improved educational facilities are of the utmost importance.

The most universally, and most passionately held concern for all participants was that of unemployment. Government leaders understood the need for creating employment opportunities especially for young people and one interviewee cited that of the 65% of Kisumu County's population that are youth, 80% of them are unemployed. Many citizens were concerned that the job market is too impossible to enter, forcing unemployed youth to turn to informal jobs such as Boda- Boda (motorbike) driving and to become dependent on drugs and other substances. Both parties suggest increasing the possibility for young people to gain internships and job experiences as a solution. The focus groups also universally agreed that the job market is very corrupt, as it is almost impossible to get a job without knowing someone or bribing someone for it and called on government leaders to put an end to this corruption.

Moreover, the floods that were devastating the county was of concern to many participants as livestock were being killed, people displaced, roads swept away and crops destroyed. Participants also firmly agreed that corruption is a major issue for Kisumu County and Kenya as a whole. Ultimately, both citizens and government leaders were of the understanding



that corruption is entrenched in the political and business sectors of the country and will take a considerable amount of societal change to put an end to it.

### **Service Delivery and Problem Solving**

Despite the fact that both citizens and government leaders have shared goals and priorities, when asked how responsive government leaders are in solving these issues many of the focus group participants said their representatives were of little to no help. Focus group participants pointed to promises made by politicians during their campaign season that have yet to be fulfilled, such as paying CHVs and providing free education. That said, most focus group discussion did concede that a handful of their concerns were met, such as some renovations in schools for example, and they understand that most of their greater concerns will take time to complete. The government leaders interviewed did in fact, state time and bureaucracy as two big obstacles in delivering services to their constituents. One particular interview subject also expressed his perception that constituents have little knowledge about how policy change takes place and no understanding of how long it takes for projects to be accomplished and thus grow impatient with their leaders. Lack of resource allocation from the national level was another challenge stated by many interviewees. Many government leaders feel the counties 15% resource allocation from the national government is too little and that projects must be delayed when resources are not distributed as planned. Nevertheless, most focus group participants agreed that even when budgets have been allocated for a project, they still see no action from their leaders and are kept waiting for results.

Despite these conflicting opinions, all of the study's participants agreed that devolution has improved both service delivery and resource allocation in some way since its implementation. County Government leaders stated that after devolution Kisumu County enjoyed greater levels of autonomy and resource allocation. No longer relying on and fighting with the national government for aid, the Kisumu County Government now utilizes resources and solves problems within its borders as they see fit. Citizens agree that because their representatives are more familiar with local issues and concerns, funds can now be channeled where they are most needed within the community. For example, both focus group participants and interview subjects agreed that infrastructure has been improved as a result of devolution. For instance, many previously inaccessible rural villages now have new roads and electricity. Additionally, they noted that new and improved health facilities were built, increasing access to

health care all over the county. They both even stated that education has improved as the county has been able to buy new chairs and a feeding program for the Early Childhood Development (ECD) schools and implement more student scholarships. Some focus groups said that despite employment being a problem, they also appreciate that after devolution, more local employees have been hired by the county.

### **Communication and Public Participation**

Because devolution brings politics down to the grassroots level, it is also believed to increase efficient communication and public participation in governance. In regard to communication, both government leaders and citizens stated that media, such as television, radios, newspapers, Twitter, Facebook and email, are prime forms of communication between representatives and their constituency. Government leaders also noted that they themselves or their assistants, secretaries or managers go into the community to spread information. Community groups and village councils were two other notable venues of information sharing for both government leaders and citizens.

The most mentioned method of communication by all participants in the study was that of public participation forums. Government leaders note public participation forums as a very informative way to engage community members and exchange ideas, with high levels of involvement from their constituents. Community members also agree that public participation forums create the opportunity to hear what politicians intend to do and allow community members to express their concerns in turn. However, the majority of the study's focus groups said that public participation forums are rarely fruitful as leaders do not usually follow through on the comments made by citizens. Focus group participants also stated that when leaders organize public participation forums they only do so to fulfill the resolution in the constitution and to impart their own agenda on the community, failing to hear the community's needs. The majority of citizens said that most people do not participate in public participation forums, citing leaders not representing their needs or acting on their comments as one of the greatest reasons. Focus group participants also said their representatives are unreachable and unapproachable. The overwhelming consensus was that only citizens who campaign, vote or work for politicians can truly have their issue addressed. Sometimes the public participation forums can also be physically unreachable as they may be difficult and expensive to access for citizens living far away or in more rural settings. They also said that leaders do not respond to their phone calls,

change their contact information handed out during campaign season after winning the election, and do not manage their own social media accounts, preventing affective communication through these mediums.

Furthermore, low average per capita income was another factor mentioned by both government leaders and citizens in this study as a factor hindering communication between both parties. For example, the majority of participants reported that not being able to afford to miss work to attend public participation forums prevents them from participating. They also said that not being able to afford smart phones, internet, credit or bundles for calling prevents them from partaking in virtual forms of communication with their leaders. Additionally, both leaders and citizens agree that many people will not attend a community meeting or public participation forum without being compensated or paid an incentive, something most forum coordinators do not offer. Focus group participants also cite tribalism as a barrier to affective communication as only people of the same tribe as the leadership are able to have their voice heard.

Additionally, almost every county leader interviewed in this study said that their most impactful form of reaching their constituents is spending their weekends in the community. Many of these representatives said they return home on Fridays, attend funerals on Saturdays, church Sunday mornings and accept visitors Sunday afternoons thus spending their whole weekend hearing from their constituents.

When asked if they agree that this is affective, however, the majority of focus groups in this study said they rarely see their leaders at these times. Ultimately, citizens said, leaders are unable to reach a large number of people during these weekend trips. This is because the wards can often be large, and some places cannot be easily accessed, so leaders typically visit the same easily accessible location and only hear the needs of the same constituents. Additionally, most focus group participants concede that even if they do see their leader at a funeral it is not typically an affective place to express their concerns. These participants suggest to leaders that next time they attend funerals or return to their constituency for a weekend, inform people of where they will be beforehand, spend a significant amount of time in a variety of places and be sure to honor the promises made during their time there.

At the same time, both government leaders and citizens vehemently agree that the effectiveness of representation and communication has been improved greatly in Kisumu County because of devolution. Many of the MCAs interviewed said that they created committees and

community groups in their wards to be able to answer the needs of their constituents to the best of their ability. Community members mentioned these community led forums as a reliable way to communicate as well. They also said government leaders involve offices up to the ward level so that they can easily disseminate information to the community such as through village chiefs and provincial administrators. Basically, leaders have their own trusted team of people on the ground to whom citizens can address their grievances. Devolution has now allowed the County Government of Kisumu to have control over all functions within its seven sub counties. Leaders also spend more time in their constituencies and mechanisms such as ward administrators and public participation forums allow citizens to talk to their leaders like they had never been able to before. For this reason, more pressing concerns are addressed and previously underrepresented territories and parties are able to have their opinions heard.

### **Corruption**

Ending governmental corruption was one of the main prerogatives of implementing devolution in Kenya. Since Kenya's independence, corruption has been an unbreakable trend in leadership and Kisumu County has not been exempt. Moreover, every one of this study's participants, both MCAs and citizens, agreed that corruption is in fact an issue in Kenya. In fact, the majority of focus groups participants said that when the government devolved, so did the corruption along with it.

As mentioned before, unemployment is a major concern in Kisumu County at the moment and corruption in the job market is one of the greatest causes. Many focus group participants stated that in order to be employed one must have an unreasonable amount of job experience, bribe someone hiring or know someone personally in the field. Consequently, many unqualified people are working in place of the common person and completing shoddy work as a result. Bribery does not just end within the job market, according to the study's participants, it is difficult to get anything efficiently done without some form of nepotism or bribery. For example, although education is supposed to be free, families often have to pay teachers or principals to get their children into a school. Citizens in this study's focus groups also claim unfulfilled promises by government leaders as another instance of corruption in Kisumu County, such as the unfulfilled promise of paying Community Health Volunteers.

Another common form of corruption many focus group participants cited was that of police corruption, particularly when enforcing road and traffic laws. Furthermore, many citizens

cited the mishandling of funds in the forms of tendering, procurement and embezzlement, as frequently seen forms of corruption. They claimed, for instance, that politicians or private contractors may use less money to complete a project and keep the leftover budget for personal use. One government leader interviewed concurs and shared a story of a pending 345 Billion Shilling bill from the past government regime that is still unaccounted for. Even he, as a Member of the County Assembly, has yet to see the report for this tender. Focus group participants urged leaders to focus on their responsibilities of auditing and oversight to curb these instances.

As aforementioned, all of the studies participants, including both citizens and government representatives, universally agreed that corruption is a major concern in Kenya. Corruption in the form of unequal representation in the county assembly, for example, was a common theme shared in many interviews with government leaders. Women representatives face a great deal of backlash and must work hard to balance societal barriers with their duties as a leader, and responsibilities of family life. Minority and independent party members also struggle having their needs addressed in the county assembly, which continues to reinforce the perception that tribalism greatly affects representation.

The new constitution of Kenya has numerous mechanisms in place to prevent corruption, promote transparency and to encourage citizens to hold their leaders accountable. That said, when asked if they are confident in their ability to hold their leaders accountable, study participants gave mixed responses. Most government leaders responded positively that there are numerous mechanisms in place and leaders are held to a certain standard as a result. Financial management structures at the national level such as an act in parliament describing how money can be used and the nationally integrated financial management system enforce a responsible use of funds all over the country. The legislatures role of oversight was noted as playing an integral role in governmental accountability in most interviews as well and so were offices such as the office of the budget controller and audit team. The media, such as newspapers and TV, can also play the role of whistleblower when cases of corruption are exposed. Above all else, the public was mentioned as the primary watchdogs for corruption by most government leaders. According to leadership, the constitution and other structures in place, the public can call leaders out in various forums and communication venues and serve on project committee management teams to monitor the implementation of projects in their communities. They can also use their power of the vote to not re-elect unresponsive or corrupt leaders.

Many citizen participants in this study's focus group, however, disagreed. The majority stated that although the structures to hold their leaders accountable are in existence, corruption is ultimately too imbedded in leadership and society for them to effectively do so. Citizens also said they lack the understanding and civic education to carry out this role. When asked directly if instances of corruption are lower, higher, or the same after devolution, citizens gave mixed answers, with slightly more participants saying corruption is now higher. Above all, citizens agreed that corruption in Kenya is a deep cultural and societal issue that requires both an attitude change from the government and citizens alike.

### **Conclusion**

In short, it is universally understood amongst all citizens and government leaders involved in this study that devolution has successfully improved the quality of life for citizens in Kisumu County since its implementation five years ago. Because of devolution, leaders of the Kisumu County Government now have more autonomy from the national government than ever before. This has allowed the entire county to enjoy more effective resource allocation, governmental representation and county wide communication. Consequently, the county has also seen improvements to infrastructure, education, employment, and healthcare. Nevertheless, all participants in this study universally agreed that there is still much work to be done and improvements to be made before devolution is fully serving its intended purpose.

On the whole, both the government leaders and citizens that participated in this study are in full agreement in regard to the goals, needs and issues that are most concerning for Kisumu County. These key issues concern improving infrastructure, food security, waste management, access to clean and safe drinking water, access to and quality of education and health care, level of unemployment (particularly among the youth) and flood relief. Devolution has allowed representatives to have a greater understanding of the needs of their constituents and has increased the amount of funding and resources Kisumu County has available to solve these problems. Many improvements have been made already such as the delivery of electricity and roads in rural villages, new and improved health facilities, increased access to health care, better educational facilities and a feeding program for the Early Childhood Development (ECD) schools. Nevertheless, government leaders still list limited resources, time constraints and bureaucracy as the largest obstacles to overcome when delivering services to their constituents. Government leaders also concede that the public can be impatient and often have unrealistic

expectations on the speed of which projects can be completed. Meanwhile, community members demand that their leaders actually fulfill the promises they made during campaign season.

Furthermore, all of this study's participants completely agree that devolution has greatly improved government leaders and community members ability to communicate with each other. This is because of the increased number of mechanisms to facilitate communication now in place and because representatives are now able to spend more time in their constituencies. Nevertheless, there are still many outside factors that prevent these structures from being successful. For example, a direct result of devolution, and the most commonly referenced method of governmental to community level communication by this study's participants was that of public participation forums. Both parties involved agree that public participation forums are a venue for government leaders and community members to exchange grievances and ideas. The government leaders interviewed were of the consensus that these forums are generally successful and have a high level of participation from the public. Citizens, on the other hand, disagreed. They stated that government leaders typically only attend forums to share with the community their own agenda and rarely listen to the community's needs, let alone act on them. This, along with transportation costs and not being able to afford skipping work to attend, deters community members from participating in forums at all. Furthermore, every county government leader interviewed in this study said the time they are able to connect with citizens the most affectively is when they interact with their communities in person on weekends. Most focus group participants, on the other hand, said they are usually unable to connect with their representatives at these times, mostly because leaders typically visit only one location within their large ward.

Additionally, every focus group participant and interview subject firmly agreed that corruption is an issue in Kenya and named numerous instances of corruption they are aware of in their daily and professional lives. The introduction of a devolved system of government in Kenya also introduced a number of mechanisms to increase the citizens role in governmental accountability. Nevertheless, most citizens believe that the level of corruption in Kisumu County is still very high and most citizens stated that devolution has done little to nothing in stopping it. For instance, even though the county may have greater funds and resources to complete projects, corruption in the form of tendering, embezzlement and misuse of funds prevents real action from occurring. Furthermore, community members are not always the workers employed when a new project, such as the construction of a new road, is implemented. Corruption in the form of

nepotism and bribery leads to non-community members and sometimes unqualified workers to be hired for the job.

All in all, in its five years since implementation, devolution has led to a great deal of improvement in the quality of life, service delivery and relationship building between government leaders and community members alike in Kisumu County. While this may be true, there are still many gaps in service, communication, and governmental accountability that have yet to be remedied. Corruption is still a major problem in Kenya as well and although devolution is a pragmatic step toward breaking this tradition, it cannot be the only step made. This study elucidated that representatives are making an honest effort to serve their constituents to the best of their ability. Nevertheless, citizens are still demanding of more from their leaders and there are more steps leaders can take to increase transparency while in office in order to decrease instances of corruption. One suggestion on how to do so is releasing a written budgetary report in newspapers or online and working even closer with community groups to ensure a “bottom up” approach to communication. Additionally, accountability is a concerted effort between all citizens of Kisumu County. Community members need to be empowered with the education and knowledge to be able to do so. Therefore, it is imperative to increase civic education for citizens in order to empower them to vote for better leaders, thoroughly comprehend their rights and end the harmful cycle of corruption. Although devolution has had numerous successes thus far in its five year lifespan, Kisumu County still needs more time to implement programs and alleviate obstacles before it can function at its full potential.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

One limitation on this study was the time. Given more time, the researcher recommends increasing the sample size of both focus group participants and interview subjects to gather a more significant sampling of community members in Kisumu County. Ideally, a focus group could be held in each of the 35 wards in the county and interviews with each of the 35 MCAs, however time simply would not allow it.

Additionally, the researcher believes it would have been ideal to be able to return to interviews with government leaders following focus group discussions to gather a defense or reasoning behind some citizens accusations. It also would have been helpful to be able to attend a public participation forum in order to observe as a third-party perspective however again, time simply did not allow.



Language barriers were another challenge during this study. Even though each participant spoke English the researcher believes the researchers accent was sometimes difficult to understand causing participants to miss the point of some questions. Additionally, the researcher faced issues with the recording device which in turn made transcribing challenging and unprecise. In fact, eight total focus group discussion were conducted though only seven had recorded material and data that was able to be used. Furthermore, this study was conducted with a sole researcher with limited funds. The amount of focus groups conducted were only the amount the research stipend could cover therefore, given clearer guidance and more data could have been collected.

Furthermore, this study occurred on the fifth anniversary since the implementation of devolution. Given the “growing pains” associated with decentralizing government, such as time needed to implement projects and forums, understand roles of government and disseminate information to the community, five years is still too early to tell what devolutions full impact on service delivery and corruption truly is. The researcher recommends returning to the field in five or ten more years in order to fully comprehend how successful devolution in Kenya has been.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A- Example Demographic Sign in Sheet (English and Swahili)

#	Age	Gender	Highest Level of Education	Occupation	Place of Residency	How long have you resided here?	Are you from this location?	If not Where are you from?
#	Una miaka ngapi?	Wewe ni mwanamke au mwanamume?	Ulisoma mpaka wapi?	Unafanya kazi gani?	Unakaa wapi?	Umekaa pale kw muda gani?	Ulizaliwa Pale?	Ikiwa hapana, ulizaliwa wapi?
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								

Appendix B- Focus Group Consent Form (English)



**FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM**

**Principal Investigator:** Julia Fonshell

**Brief description of the purpose of this study:** This research is designed to evaluate governmental accountability in Kisumu County. Participation in this research study involves a focus group which lasting no longer than one and a half hours. The interviews will be audio-taped and the researcher will transcribe these into written transcripts at a later date for the purpose of analysis.

**Costs and/or Payments to Subject for Participation in Research:** There will be no costs for participating in the research and participants will be compensated 300 shillings each for transportation expenditures. Will also be complimentary refreshments available for participants.

**Risks:** There are no physical risks associated with participation in this study. In the event of an emergency during participation, you will be aided in accessing necessary healthcare services.

**Questions:** Any questions concerning the research project call at +254 746 613796

**Rights Notice:** In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

- a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
- b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
- c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

---

Participant's name printed

---

Participant's signature and date

---

Interviewer's name printed

---

Interviewer's signature and date

## Appendix C- Focus Group Consent Form (Swahili)

### SIT Study Abroad

a program of World Learning



#### Fomu Ya Idhini

**Maelezo mafupi kuhusu huu uchunguzi:** Huu utafiti umeundwa kukagua uwazi wa serikali ya kaunti ya Kisumu. Kuhusika katika huu utafiti inahusisha kikundi ambayo itachukua si Zaidi ya saa moja na nusu. Mahojiano haya yatarekodiwa na mtafiti atabadilisha haya mahojiano kwa maandishi baadaye kwa lengo ya kuyapitia.

**Gharama au malipo kwa muhusika katika huu utafiti:** Hakutakuwa na gharama yoyote kwa kushiriki katika huu utafiti na muhusika katika mradi wa huu utafiti hatalipwa. Kutakuwa na kitu cha kunywa kwa muhusika.

**Madhara:** Hakuna madhara yoyote kwa kuhusika katika huu uchunguzi kama kutakuwa na hali ya dharura wakati wa kushiriki katika uchunguzi huu muhusika atasaidiwa na huduma za afya zinazohitajika.

**Maswali:** Kama una maswali yoyote kuhusu mradi wa huu utafiti mpigie Julia Fonshell kwa hii namba +254 746613796

**Haki za ilani:** Katika juhudi za kutekeleza viwango vya maadili ya mapendekezo yote ya SIT. Uchunguzi huu umekaguliwa na kupasishwa na kamati au taasisi ya uangalizi ya SIT, kwa wakati wowote ule, unahisi / unasikia uko hatarini au umewekwa katika hali yenye madhara unaweza kukatisha mahojiano haya. Tafadhali chukua wakati wako kwa makini usome maelezo hapo chini.

a. **Faragha** - maelezo yote utakayotoa katika mahojiano haya yanaweza kurekodiwa na kuhifadhiwa. Kama hutaki maelezo haya kurekodiwa unahitaji kumwelezea mwenye kukuhoji.

b. **Kutojulikana** – majina yote katika huu uchunguzi hayatajulikana isipokuwa muhusika aamue yajulikane.

c. **Usiri** – majina yote yatawekwa kwa siri kabisa na kulindwa kabisa na mwenye kukuhoji. Kwa kutia sahihi hapo chini unampa mwenye kukuhoji jukumu kamili la kutekeleza huu mkataba na yaliyomo. Mwenye kukuhoji atatia sahihi kwenye hii nakala na kumkabidhi muhusika.

---

Jina la muhusika

---

Sahihi ya muhusika na tarehe

---

Jina la mwenye kuhoji

---

Sahihi ya mwenye kuhoji na tarehe

## Appendix D- Government Leader Interview Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM

#### KISUMU COUNTY GOVERNMENT LEADERS

**Principle Investigator:** Julia Fonshell

**Brief description of the purpose of this study:** This research is designed to evaluate governmental accountability in Kisumu County. Participation in this research study involves a one on one interview which is expected to last no longer than 45 minutes. The interviews will be audio-taped and the researcher will transcribe these into written transcripts at a later date for the purpose of analysis.

**Costs and/or Payments to Subject for Participation in Research:** There will be no costs for participating in the research and participants will not be paid to participate in this research project.

**Risks:** There are no physical risks associated with participation in this study. In the event of an emergency during participation, you will be aided in accessing necessary healthcare services.

**Questions:** Any questions concerning the research project call Julia Fonshell at +254 0746 61 37 96

**Rights Notice:** In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

- a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
- b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
- c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

---

Participant's Name Printed

Participant's Signature

Date

---

Interviewer's Name Printed

Interviewer's Signature

Date

## Appendix E- Focus Group Questionnaire

### Focus Group Questionnaire

Swali la kundi

**Focus Group Location:**

Mahali pa kikunji cha maelezo:

**Date:**

Tarehe:

**Time:**

Saa:

### Participation in Government

Kushiriki katika Serikali

**1. Would you consider yourself engaged in local politics?**

Je, wewe unaona kuwa unashiriki katika siasa za mitaa?

**2. Did you participate in the most recent county election?**

Je, ulishiriki katika uchaguzi wa hivi karibuni katika kaunti/kata?

**3. To what extent would you say you are aware with the manifestos/ goals of the current county leadership?**

Je kwa kiwango gani unaeza sema unafahamu maelezo/malengo ya uongozi wa sasa wa kaunti/kata?

### Access to Information

Upatikanaji wa Maelezo

**4. From where do you typically get information about county government activity?**

Unapata habari za serikali za kaunti/kata kuhusu shughuli za serikali kutoka wapi?

**5. Have you ever attended a Public Forum or Public Legislature Meeting in Kisumu County?**

Je umewahi kuhudhuria jukwaa la umma au mkutano wa wabunge katika kaunti/kata ya Kisumu.

**6. In what ways do you believe political leaders actively try to hear from citizens?**

Kwa njia gani unaamini kuwa viongozi wa kisiasa wanajaribu kusikia kutoka kwa wannchi?

**7. What do you believe are the greatest obstacles in public participation/ governmental communication?**

Unaamini nini ni vikwazo kubwa zaidi katika ushiriki wa umma/mawasiliano ya serikali?

### Areas of Concern in Kisumu County

Maeneo ya wasiwasi katika kaunti/kata ya Kisumu.

**8. What do you believe are the most pressing issues facing Kisumu County today?**

Je, ni masuala yepi unaamini ni makubwa zaidi yanayowakabili kaunti/kata ya Kisumu?

**9. What would you suggest the county government should do regarding these issues?**



Je, ungesema serikali ya kaunti ifanye nini kuhusu masuala haya?

### **Governmental Accountability**

Uwajibikaji wa Serikali

**10. Yes or No: County Governmental Corruption is an issue in Kenya.**

Ndio au Hapana: Ufisadi katika serikali ya kaunti ni swala kuu Nchini Kenya.

**11. What instances of excess of power come to mind when considering Kisumu County?**

Je, ni matukio gani ya nguvu nyingi huja akilini wakati wa kuzingatia kaunti ya Kisumu?

**12. Do you feel you can trust your politicians?**

Je, unajiskia unaeza amini mwanasiasa wako?

### **Devolution**

Ugatuji

**13. In what ways do you feel Devolution has increased...**

Je, kwa njia gani unajiskia kwamba ugatuji umeongeza...

**a. political efficacy:**

Ufanisi wa kisiasa:

**b. governmental accountability:**

Uwajibikaji wa kiserikali:

## **Appendix F- Interview Guide for Government Leaders**

### **Interview Guide for Government Leaders**

**Date:**                      **Time:**                      **Location:**

#### **Background Information**

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Gender: M F
4. Highest Level of Education:
5. Current Place of Residency:
6. How long have you been a resident?
7. Are you from this location? Y N
8. If not Where are you From?
9. How did you begin your career in Politics?
10. As Speaker, what is your role in relation to the Kisumu County Government ?
11. Is there a political party you particularly identify with?
12. Can you please describe the manifestos/ goals of the current county leadership?

#### **Access to Information**

13. How do you typically distribute information to citizens? Do you feel these methods are affective?
14. To what extent does the public participate in politics (examples- attending a Public Forum or Public Legislature Meeting)
15. In what ways do you as a political leader actively try to communicate with citizens?
16. What do you believe are the greatest obstacles in public participation/ governmental communication?

#### **Areas of Concern in Kisumu County**

17. What do you believe are the most pressing issues facing Kisumu County today?
18. How do you believe the government is handling these issues?

#### **Governmental Accountability (Checks and Balances)**

19. Can you describe the checks and balances present on the duties of government officers in Kisumu County?
20. What mechanisms do you feel are most effective in keeping governmental actors accountable in Kisumu County.

#### **Devolution**

21. In what ways do you feel Devolution has increased...
  - a. political efficacy:
  - b. governmental accountability:
22. How has Devolution changed the relationship between politicians at the county level, constituents and the national government?

## Appendix G- Chart of Demographics of Focus Group Participants

Sub- County	# of Participants	Participant Ages Range and Average (years old)	Gender Breakdown of Participants	Breakdown of Education Level of Participants	Breakdown of Participants Born and Raised in this Sub-County
<b>Muhoroni</b>	13	24-68 Avg= 37.4	61.5% Men 38.5% Women	92.3% Some college or higher 7.7% Primary School Education	100%
<b>Seme</b>	8	30-67 Avg= 48.3	50% Men 50% Women	50% Form 4 25% Some College or higher 12.5% Form 2 12.5% Primary School	50%
<b>Nyakach</b>	13	17-69 Avg=47	61.5% Women 38.5% Men	76.9% Some College or higher 15.4% Class 8 7.7% Not listed	92.3%
<b>Kisumu West</b>	13	25-70 Avg= 41.2	53.8% Women 46.2% Men	61.5% Some College or higher 30.8% Form 4 7.7% Class 8	84.6%
<b>Kisumu East</b>	12	25-60 Avg= 41.4	58.3% Men 41.7% Women	50% Some College or higher 16.7% Class 8 16.7% Form 4 8.3% Class 7 8.3% Form 3	33.33%
<b>Kisumu Central</b>	12	24- 55 Avg= 37.6	75% Women 25% Men	58.3% Some College or higher 41.7% High School	33.33%
<b>Nyando</b>	13	18-78 Avg= 35	53.8% Women 46.2% Men	69.2% Some College or higher 30.8% Form 4	76.9%

## Appendix H- Journal of Activity During ISP Period

Week of April 1-7	Return to Kisumu and establish research base.
	Review ISP proposal, paper and content.
	Email advisors, community health volunteers, research assistants and staff members to establish meetings.
Week of April 8-14	Print all consent forms, sign in sheets, interview guide and focus group guides for Focus Group Discussions and Interviews.
	Meet with Advisor to establish plan.
	Meet with Community Health Volunteers and Research Assistant to establish plan.
	Edit content of paper thus far and prepare all materials for field work.
Week of April 15- 21	Conduct all interviews of government leaders at the Kisumu County Assembly.
	Conduct focus group discussions in two sub counties.
	Transcribe content.
Week of April 22- 28	Conduct focus group discussions in six sub counties.
	Transcribe content.
Week of April 29- May 5	Complete all transcriptions.
	Edit and write final paper.
	Conduct final meetings with advisors, community health volunteers and research assistant.
	Prepare final research presentation.
	Travel to Jinja, Uganda to present research findings.