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**PRESS RELEASE**

**ELECTED LEADERS REMAIN INACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC**

**Nairobi, Kenya – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020:** Elected leaders have remained largely inaccessible to Kenyans, and some of their roles as articulated in the Constitution are yet to be fully understood raising challenges in citizens' ability to hold them to account. This is according to the [County Governance Status Report \(CGSR\)](#) launched today by Transparency International Kenya (TI-Kenya). The study which assesses the levels of transparency, accountability, integrity and service delivery at county level, drew respondents from 16 counties distributed across all regions representing former provinces in Kenya. It also drew respondents from county governments, both the executive and legislative arms.

TI-Kenya carried out the first [CGSR in 2016](#) when devolution was still in its infancy. Since then, there have been several changes in county governance including leadership transitions resulting from the 2017 general election. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to measure the progress made and challenges registered in regard to transparency, accountability, integrity and service delivery within the counties.

**Key Findings**

**Accountability**

The findings from the report revealed that Members of County Assembly (MCAs) were the most contacted leaders with almost a quarter (24%) of respondents stating that they had contacted their MCAs in 2019, which is a 12 points drop from those who contacted their MCAs in 2016. Senators were the least contacted leaders with only three percent of respondents stating that they contacted them. The respondents rated the performance of Senators and Women Representatives as poor. The performance of Governors, Members of Parliament (MPs) and MCAs was rated as average.

**Transparency**

Regarding access to information, more than half of the respondents (56%) stated that they had not received any information from their counties while 43% stated that they had, out of which 38% received the information through mainstream media (radio, TV and newspaper) with only 15% receiving information through social media. Regarding awareness of vital documents, the Constitution of Kenya 2010 emerged as the most popular document with 76% of the respondents citing they were aware of the document compared to 2016 where 87% were aware of it. Remarkably, the popularity of the County Finance Act increased by eight points, with 20% of the respondents aware of the document compared to 2016 where 12% were aware of it. Fifteen out

of 16 counties had a simplified version of the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). In relation to County Government meetings, only 27% of respondents indicated that they had heard of meetings convened by county governments. Out of those who heard of meetings convened by their county governments, 42% attended while 58% did not. Those who did not attend the meetings cited being busy (62%), the meeting was called on short notice (10%) and distance to the venue (eight percent) as the main reasons for not attending.

### **Service Delivery**

Twenty-two percent of the respondents mentioned road infrastructure and health services as the most pressing problems county governments should address. Notably, road infrastructure remained a top persistent problem, while health moved from third in the 2016 survey to the top pressing problem in the 2019 survey. The county governments' performance in provision of health and education (pre-primary, village polytechnics and childcare centres) services was rated as good by 34% of the respondents. More than half (56%) of the respondents rated the county governments' performance in control of drugs and pornography as poor. On the challenges the County Executive experience while delivering services to the people, 36% of the respondents from the County Executive mentioned inadequate funds as the main challenge. Regarding citizen action on bribery and poor services, 15% of the respondents stated that they had complained about poor services from government offices while eight percent had complained about bribery experiences at service delivery points.

### **Integrity**

Two-thirds (66%) of the respondents in the study felt that corruption had increased in the last one year with more than half (56%) of the respondents opining that corruption would increase in the next one year. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents opined that the government is committed to fighting corruption, stating intensification of arrests and prosecution of perpetrators as evidence of government commitment to fighting corruption. Regarding integrity management structures, the study found out that 12 counties out of the 16 assessed had established audit committees in their County Executive while 11 out of 16 had established corruption reporting mechanisms, asset registers and complaints and feedback mechanisms. Only three out of 16 County Assemblies had recruited integrity assurance officers.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Accountability**

1. Elected leaders at the County levels should ensure that they set up specific days within the week when citizens can contact them in their offices and publicise this information to reach as many people as possible. They should ensure that they are personally available on those days to engage the citizens.
2. County governments should conduct civic education on the roles of the different leaders so that they are equipped to hold the leaders accountable based on their roles and functions.

## **Transparency**

3. The use of Short Message Services (SMS) should be embraced by counties while conveying information to the citizens. From the study, 95% of those interviewed had access to mobile phones which would be a very convenient tool of communication.
4. The County Executive should consider the socio-economic activities of their citizens while calling for public participation meetings to increase the number of people participating since according to the study, a large proportion of the respondents missed public participation meetings because they were busy.
5. County governments should conduct thorough research of the various communication channels available for each County before using them to invite citizens to public participation fora. Channels with maximum audience reach per County should be used and the communication should be relayed in advance to allow citizens time to plan and prepare to attend meetings.
6. County Governments should enhance the capacity of their public participation units and civic education programmes to share more information on County budgets and receive and give feedback from the public.

## **Integrity**

7. County governments, with the help of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) should fast-track appointment of Integrity Assurance Officers as part of the integrity management initiatives. The officers should help in identifying corruption loopholes and devising ways of sealing them as a preventive measure in the fight against graft.

## **Service Delivery**

8. The study identifies health care as one of the most pressing problems that the county governments should address. Therefore, there is need to boost both the affordability and accessibility of health services by all citizens. This can be fast-tracked through rolling out the Universal Health Coverage to all counties and ensuring accountability in the implementation.
9. County governments should come up with creative ways to increase their revenues. This will increase the pool of funds accessible to the county governments in addition to the allocations from the national government and therefore help in addressing inadequate funding as identified in the study. This will also improve service delivery.
10. County governments, through the public participation units, should embrace public participation in the County development planning process. This will ensure the development needs of communities are addressed as identified among the most pressing needs that the counties should address.
11. Counties should strive to adhere to the Public Finance Management regulations and ensure timely submission of financial reports with supporting documentation to facilitate disbursements from the Treasury. This will partly address the problem of late disbursements and attendant effects to service delivery.

“The objects of devolution as articulated in the Constitution include giving powers of self-governance to the people and enhancing public participation. However, the low level of citizens’ involvement in decision making at the County level is a great concern with only 27% of the sampled respondents reporting to have heard of a public participation meeting convened by the counties. County governments need to invest in and utilise interactive communication channels with broad reach and provide adequate notice for such fora to enable citizens to plan accordingly for the meetings. In regard to engagement between elected leaders and citizens, there is a clear need for leaders to set aside specific days to engage directly with citizens as low opportunities of engagement diminish the citizens’ ability to hold their leaders to account,” said Sheila Masinde, Executive Director, Transparency International Kenya during the launch. "We will broadly disseminate this report to county governments, oversight institutions and other stakeholders to advocate for the recommendations with the aim of improving accountability, transparency, integrity and service delivery at county level."

Sheila Masinde  
**Executive Director**

**Media contact:** Issabelah Mutuku 0729584812 or email: [imutuku@tikenya.org](mailto:imutuku@tikenya.org)