The Devolution Revolution in Kenya

By Auscar Wambiya

The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 ushered in devolution that completely revolutionized decision making and key aspects of development that addresses the current ongoing debate on economic models that best address poverty issues continuing to bedevil our country Kenya. The devolved governments in their conceptualization and overall architecture are best placed to undertake rural transformation and initiate development at the grassroots from design to execution of development projects.

The rural transformation economic approach has been defined by economists as that development that targets to improve support systems at the very rural areas and boost infrastructural development of roads, education, health and water sectors in a manner that rural folks then have enablers to generate enough income to meet their own needs and also pay taxes to help meet community needs. Increased payment of taxes means increased infrastructural development which translates to improved living standards in the continuum.

From the County Integrated Development Planning, the County budgeting process, to the public participation aspects embedded in The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 and its related documents, one needs not to go too far to conceive that Kenya's devolution is the ultimate rural transformation economic approach that Kenya has been waiting for. All aspects of development including revenue generation and allocation are activities done by the people at the very lowest level of communities under the devolved government system of development planning.

The County Integrated Development Plan that runs for five years captures the needs and aspirations of the people as identified and prioritized by them through a rigorous process that involves all levels of people participation conceivable within a County set up. The mama mboga, the transport operators, the Jua Kali operators, the small scale farmers, religious leaders among all other sectors of the rural economy are represented in this consultative forums convened by both the executive and the assembly at different stages to plan together on community priorities based on identified rural needs. Avenues for funding of these needs are also developed and integrated in the plan which is further reduced to County Strategic Plans.

Then comes the County Budget Development Process that involves the identification and prioritization of needs by the rural communities in the context of devolved functions with the facilitation of executive and the assembly arms of the County Governments. These needs are then taken through a series of processes that crystalize the people's needs based on the people's resources. These budget development processes include the County Annual Development Plans, The County Budget Outlook Paper, The County Fiscal Strategy Paper, and The County Program Based Budgets.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 and its enabling legislative acts has very clear provisions for public participation as the center piece of the whole planning and budgeting processes. With clear cut provisions on the need for people involvement from the village units of administration, to the

Wards through to the sub county and the county levels, the people are expected to dictate what they want done and how to source for funding to undertake such priorities.

Without a doubt, with challenges here and there, devolution remains the most successful model of economic transformation working for Kenya. Success stories abound of rural factories springing up to provide employment for locals, talent development ongoing at accelerated pace and improved infrastructural architecture that continue to revolutionize how communities are doing things generally. What needs to be done is to entrench devolution without necessarily disrupting it with economic models that could jeopardize the progress that has been reported.

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