

Devolution is Working; The case of Siaya County

By Cornel Rasanga Amoth

Eight years into devolution, the counties continue to implement high impact projects with a view to improving the socio-economic wellbeing of the citizens while changing the physical and social features of Kenya's landscape. These projects undertaken with resources from the consolidated fund and in partnership with others have provided real meaning to devolution.

Devolution is working. This statement was recently underscored by the National Government's Cabinet Secretary for Devolution and Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Hon. Eugene Ludovic Wamalwa, EGH, when he opened a series of projects in Siaya County, built to standards, using modest resources and of high impact to the livelihoods of Mwananchi as a result of the devolution miracle.

The Ambira Hospital Maternity Wing, the magnificent County Government Headquarters, the 300 bed capacity COVID-19 isolation centers spread across the County, the Ahindi and Siaya Governor's Recreation Parks opened by the Cabinet Secretary and spread across the County are just but a tip of the various life changing programs we have undertaken together with partners like the National Government, the World Bank among others.

In the 2018/2019 Financial Year, the County Government of Siaya received KShs. 103 Million as investment grant from World Bank through Kenya Devolution Support Program. These funds were invested in the Agriculture sector with KShs. 28 Million having been used to rehabilitate five (5) water pans to promote horticulture while KShs. 75 Million was used to construct three Maternity Wings with a Theatre in Ambira, Ukwala and Madiany Sub-County Hospitals at an estimated cost of KShs. 25 Million for each.

During the 2019/2020 Financial Year, the County Government of Siaya further received KShs. 50 Million from World Bank through the Kenya Urban Support Program and invested the funds in the upgrading of recreational facilities in Siaya Municipality namely The Siaya Governor's Recreational Park and Ahindi Gardens Recreation Park.

While enjoying the above support from World Bank, the County Government of Siaya has also invested its own funds in numerous other key infrastructural projects, among them being, the Siaya County Stadium at an estimated cost of KShs. 400 Million which is work in progress.

In our continued efforts towards preparedness to fight COVID-19 pandemic in the county, we recently invested KShs. 97 Million which we received as a conditional grant from the National Government and a further KShs. 30 Million from World Bank through Kenya Devolution Support Program to construct 300 bed capacity COVID-19 Isolation Units at Siaya County Referral Hospital with 200 Beds, Bondo Sub-County Hospital with 50 Beds and Ambira Sub-County Hospital with 50 Beds. This is additional isolation bed capacity over and above our existing 66 bed isolation capacity bringing our total isolation bed capacity to 366 beds.

The commissioning of a new Maternity Wing at Ambira Sub County Hospital will significantly increase the number of hospital deliveries in Ugunja Sub County and its environs. This will enhance safe deliveries hence lead to reduced mother and child mortality rates during deliveries as the facility now has increased bed capacity and modern Theater arising from the establishment of the Wing.

The improvement of Ahindi Garden Recreation Park and Siaya Governor's Recreation Park have significantly improved the image of Siaya Town. The two Parks have now undergone proper landscaping and have various services including storm water drainage, garden benches, fountains, washrooms and walkways which have greatly enhanced their value and use.

The green and serene environments created by the two Parks will improve on environmental health of residents within Siaya Municipality and our visitors. Additionally, it will increase the property value of buildings within the surrounding areas of both Parks.

To safeguard the aesthetics and nature of the Parks, my government has developed a Park Management Policy to ensure proper management and sustainability of the projects. I therefore urge all Park users to adhere to the Park guidelines and to keep our Parks clean and safe for all.

The need for a central and modern working station for effective governance and service delivery cannot be gainsaid. A county headquarter building consolidates the main offices of County Government thereby making public service easily accessible to the ordinary Mwananchi. It should be recalled that the core objective of devolution was to bring services closer to the people.

There are people who have questioned our near inordinate delay to construct a modern office, eight long years after the County Government of Siaya came into being. To this lot, it should be emphasized that in the last eight years, Counties prioritized provision of basic services to the

citizens. Because of this, it would have been insensitive to undertake the construction of magnificent buildings earlier instead of addressing the myriad pressing needs of the general populace. The construction of the County Headquarters Office Building at this time when we have already endeavored to mitigate against a number of basic needs of our people, is therefore, timely and justified. That the Building Bridges Initiative proposes to provide an additional allocation of resources to the counties is, therefore, justifiable because evidently, DEVOLUTION, IS WORKING.

The Writer is the Governor, County Government of Siaya