Information Technology In Government Services Delivery: A Case Study Of Huduma Center Kenya

Consolata Gakii, Victoria Florence Mukiri, Maurice Murimi

Abstract: The Huduma Kenya program was developed by the Kenyan government with an aim of using technology to improve the service delivery to the citizens. The Program uses many channels to meet different and varied needs of the citizens by having a one stop shop environment. The main objective of this paper is to examine a successful information technology project in Kenya that has changed the government service delivery due to the advancement in technology. The case study in this paper is Huduma Kenya program, under which the Government of Kenya has advanced citizen-centered public service delivery through a variety of channels, including deploying digital technology and establishing citizen service centers across the country. The project was initiated by Kenyan government who are also the main sponsors since 2013. The success of this project can be attributed to the use of existing infrastructure in Post offices of Kenya and the support from the Kenyan government. Information communication technology (ICT) enabled communication between centers and the Secretariat, automated data collection and closed-circuit television monitoring, are major contributors to Huduma Kenya's positioning as an antithesis to inefficiency and corruption.

Key words: Huduma Kenya, Result based management system, ICT, integrated service platform

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1.0 INTRODUCTION
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) became one among of the key enabler of the quality service delivery to the citizens by the government. Use of ICT is positively correlated with overall improvement of the organizational performance [1] ICT is comprised of technologies that are designed to access, process and transmit information. Electronic governance or e-governance is the application of ICT to deliver government service through the exchange of information, communication transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems and services between government-to-citizen (G2C) government-to-business (G2B), government-to-government (G2G),government-to-employees (G2E) as well as back-office processes and interactions within the entire government framework[1].Through e-governance, government services are made available to citizens in a convenient, efficient, and transparent manner [2] Public Service delivery in Kenya was riddled with lengthy and manual processes, long queues, poor customer service etc. and this had to be transformed. The Huduma Kenya Program which is a Vision 2030 project was established by the Kenyan Government. The reason for the government to establish the Huduma Kenya Program was to provide fast, high quality, dignifying and convenient services to customers to improve efficiency and effectiveness; to reduce the cost of providing and accessing public services, to deliver customer excellence in service delivery; to develop and maintain globally competitive by developing an integrated service delivery ICT system [3] The Government of Kenya had explored a variety of strategies for improving public service delivery for more than two decades.

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In the mid-1990s and early 2000s there were structural adjustment programs that the government moved away from to focus on the citizen-centric approaches. The amount of interaction between citizens and their government at all levels of the recently devolved political system was dramatically increased by this shift. At the same time, rising mobile and internet penetration around the world including Kenya, brought about higher expectations around government service delivery. This proved the global trend toward citizen-centric service delivery models whose main purpose is to meet the expectations, needs, and preferences of citizens of that country at the same or minimal government's cost [4]. he Pasha Center Digital Villages Project was studied and the lessons and experiences that the Kenyan government got from it informed in establishment of the Huduma Kenya program. A technical visit to Brazil that the Kenyan government undertook to understand how Brazil's Poupatempo citizen service centers worked also played a key role in designing of Huduma Center. This case study looks at the Huduma Kenya program, under which Kenya has, among other things, used citizen service centers to enhance citizen-centered service delivery through the deployment of digital technology. The aim behind the Huduma Center service delivery model is to simplify transaction processes through automated services[5].The purpose of this paper is to contribute to a better understanding of how Kenyan Government has adopted technologies in improving service delivery to its citizens through Huduma centers.

1.2 Scope
The Huduma Kenya Program adopted an Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) model which incorporates various government services and information which is provided to citizens in a one-stop shop environment using several channels to meet different and varied and different needs of citizens. These six channels that the program focuses on are; a) A Physical office, Huduma (Service) Centers which gives variety of services to citizens at the same location. b) An e-Huduma' portal which is an online service that enables customers with IT literacy and internet to access to use various government services. c) 'm-Huduma' which is a mobile phone platform which provides M-government services to customers from the comfort of their smart phones. d) Huduma Call center which is a 24-hour service that listens and responds to customer

inquiries and concerns on all government services. e) A prepaid smart card which is used to disburse funds to citizens and helps in basic services access. f) A mobile outreach programs organized by Huduma Centers where staff physically go to areas far from the one shop location of the Huduma Centers and give citizens the same services as those provided at Huduma Center. This outreach is called Huduma Mashinani.

Table 1. Overview of the Huduma Program

Start Date	November 2013
No. of Centers	52 (as of August 2018)
Average number of transactions	More than 30,000 per day nation wide
Average annual budget	2.4 Billion KSh ($23 million)

1.3 Funding

The Huduma program budget is allocated by the National Treasury since is a government project that is assigned as part of the overall national budget and as a programmatic directive of the Kenyan president. This makes the sole sponsor of the Huduma Kenya program the Kenyan Government The average annual budget for the centers is 2.4 billion KSh (US$23 million), of which 1.5 billion Kenyan KSh (US$14.5 million) are directed to the development of new centers and 900 million KSh (US$8.7 million) for regular/ recurrent expenditures. The cost of running a center differs from one another because it depends on the number of services provided at that specific center. The range is between 10 and 15 million KSh per month (US$97,000–145,000). While funding for the program is provided from the national level, the cost of support staff salaries and materials that are used at the service desks is catered for by the county administrations where specific centers are located. The Huduma Secretariat manages the funds for Huduma Center building construction and repair, CISCO networking systems to connect Huduma Centers, power and ICT infrastructure, utility payments etc. A study done by [6]. Indicated that the government service delivery had improved with incidences of corruption reducing. Therefore, Huduma centers have played a great role in reduction of corruption in service delivery. Further study was recommended so as to   assess the level of skills and competence of Huduma center employees [6].

2.0 Literature Review

A research done by [7] an Egyptian government decided to improve service delivery to the investors in its capital city which is Cairo. At that time, the investors were not favored by the   Egyptian complex registration and licensing process which was being used. The Ministry of State for Administrative Development carried out a study that exposed massive delays in service delivery by the government employees .the results of the study also exposed corrupt bureaucracy and unproductive process oriented that resulted to poor service delivery. General Authority on Investments and Free zone (GAFI) carried out another study to verify the finding [7] This program takes a form of all in one location model that pays attention on the customer service delivery excellence. The access of numerous government services on one location is an approach that empowers the citizens since there is an integrated   public service delivery platform. Under the secretariat, the Kenyan government through the planning and

devolution ministry has been running the Huduma Center program. The Centers have enabled the government provide service closer through an online e-Huduma web in one place [8] Before Huduma centers were established citizens moved from one government office to another which led to time and resources wastage because usually the government departments are not situated together. Actually, some government services were available from Nairobi which is the capital city and people had to travel to get those services. This brought the need to look for a way the technology could be used to improve service delivery and Huduma Center was born. Since Huduma is a Swahili name meaning service, the main role of Huduma was to transform the public sector's services delivery [8] The concept of Huduma Centers was introduced by the government in 2013 and so far, the government has established 52 Centers in Nairobi, Machakos, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kakamega, Kisumu, Nyeri, Embu, Meru, Mombasa and other parts of the country. Clearly, the implementation of the Huduma center services is a big success for Kenyan Government . However, many questions have been raised on whether Huduma Centers having been established due to the advancement of technology has added any value to service delivery. Establishing a devolution and digital acceleration were among the major priority areas in 2013 when the new government came to power. Huduma Kenya was launched in November 2013 as a flagship program initiated by the national government and since then the program has rapidly grown in scale. As of August 2018, the Huduma Kenya program is running 52 centers [9]

3.0 ICT in the Huduma Centers

Through Safaricom and Telkom Kenya wide area network, computers that are used to serve customers at the Huduma centers are virtually linked mother ministries. The sharing of data among Huduma data centers is achieved by connecting through the government's common core network to the ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) back-end systems which are in turn managed by the ICT Authority. An information technology networking team is assigned at the Technology Operating Center of the Huduma Secretariat and are required to monitor all Huduma ICT systems in real time. The networking team also provides the centers with continued support by responding to issues which are raised via electronic tickets, helping through remote access or walk-in support depending on the need and the nature of the problem. The major technological contributors to the success of the Huduma Kenya's positioning as an antithesis to corruption and inefficiency are, ICT-enabled communication between centers and the Secretariat, closed-circuit television monitoring, and automated data collection. The CISCO collaboration system architecture has facilitated group and individual conferencing between the Secretariat and the Huduma Centers and also among the individual centers. The WhatsApp application chats between the Secretariat's chief executive officer and center managers makes it possible to have immediate responses to challenges. WhatsApp forums for center managers enables them to share best practices and create a working community which is characterized by teamwork and creative problem solving. Closed-circuit television footage from cameras situated in each center enables full-time police monitoring in details and is also viewable from the Secretariat offices in capital city, Nairobi. In January 2016, data collection infrastructure through IBM's WebSphere technology took

Huduma Center transparency and individual staff accountability a step further by recording the transaction activity of each staff computer in real-time. The data of interest is the number of transactions conducted every hour at the various service counters, customer waiting time, time taken to complete transactions, and the time each employee is logged on to their respective desktop computer. In addition, a real-time report on the number of customers served is provided by the queue management system. The customer satisfaction levels are provided to the secretariat through a customer feedback device that are linked to every counter.

3.1 Major Technological advances that has contributed to success of Huduma program

Huduma Kenya represents a major break from the past government's service delivery through the use of digital channels that support the connection to the mother ministries and offer one-stop shop service delivery to citizens. The use of the digital or electronic ID, and supporting customers using a digital platform is clear demonstration of the government's commitment to digitizing of service delivery wherever possible. mPesa's which is a money transfer service provided by Safaricom is another major contributor to the Huduma Centers 'quick customer. The availability of mobile money transfer had already accustomed Kenyan citizens to approaching agents for services even before the Huduma Kenya program was launched. Kenyan economy and society had rapidly changed and transitioned to using mobile and digital services, enables Huduma Kenya to offer multitude of pathways that enable services access [5]

4.0 Conclusion

Huduma Kenya's citizen services centers have offered a remarkable amalgamation of devolution and digitization, and they have already set the stage for even further innovation in future. Building on the experience of the earlier Pasha Centers, the Huduma Centers carefully incorporate a sustainable and ongoing funding stream so that front-line providers can focus entirely on service delivery. The decision by the government to invest public resources on the Program was brilliant idea that was informed by the belief that improved service delivery would lead to the realization of the vision. To this end the Huduma Kenya Program as a flagship project is spearheaded by the Presidency through the Ministry of Devolution and Planning spearheaded under the Kenya Vision 2030. The Huduma Kenya project has been a success because each Kenyan citizen has experienced efficiency in terms of government services access. The availability of mobile money transfer, the trained manpower in information technology and the installation of the fiber optic across the country by the government has been a major catalyst for the success of the Huduma program. Another key aspect that cannot be ignored is the use of the existing Post office infrastructure that made it possible for the program to access even remote areas. There are many successful information technology projects in the developed countries but based on the efficiency and quality delivery of the services accessed by Kenyans through Huduma program, this can be said to be one of the Kenya's most successful digital project that has made an impact on her citizens.

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