

Development Cooperation Sweden and Kenya

Reforms in governance key to success



KENYANS ARE YEARNING FOR A GOVERNMENT AND A PUBLIC SECTOR, WHICH IN A DEMOCRATIC AND EFFECTIVE WAY CAN LEAD THE COUNTRY TO PROGRESS. OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS CRUCIAL REFORMS HAVE STARTED TO BE IMPLEMENTED. THE SUCCESS OF THE REFORM PROCESS WILL DEPEND ON THE RESOLVE OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, AND ON THE STRENGTH OF CIVIL SOCIETY.

Sweden, together with a number of other donors, has since the early 1990s emphasized the need for democratic governance reforms in Kenya. Since 2003 there has also been cooperation with the government as the new political dispensation made urgently needed reforms possible in under-resourced institutions. A number of steps were taken to create a more effective and accountable public sector. Plans were also made for reforms that would strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

The election in December 2007 and the post election crisis clearly showed the vulnerability and weakness of state institutions that are there to uphold democracy and human rights and to ensure justice and protection. It further revealed the consequences of a lack of brave political decisions and actions to tackle the causes of the crisis.

The National Accord and Reconciliation Agreement from early 2008, sets a comprehensive framework for reforms that gives Kenya the possibility to remake itself.

Attacking root causes

Sweden supports the implementation of the National Accord and the reforms to tackle the long term underlying causes. Special emphasis is given to development of a new constitution, electoral-, police- and land reforms as well as the establishment of a truth, justice and reconciliation commission.

While there are positive signs that the power sharing arrangement holds, there are worrying expressions of party factionalism and political patronage which threaten to defeat the reform process, increase political and even ethnic strife among citizens.

Actions have been taken in order to address the root causes of crises and conflicts in Kenya, but they have been slower than expected. What is needed and partly lacking in the eyes of many Kenyans, is the complete commitment of the country's political leadership to make hard decisions for these reforms.

Governance, Justice, Law and Order

The government, with donor support, in 2004 embarked on an ambitious



Photo: Camilla Redner

By-election in Shinyalu, western Kenya, August 2009.

democratic governance reform. This would in particular reform the whole chain of justice including the judiciary and the police and improve access to justice, law and order as well as the respect for human rights.

The ambitious programme has shown some progress mainly on an output level. Ministries and departments have been restructured and capacitated. Policies and a significant amount of legislation have been developed and revised. However, the political high level decisions that were

needed for substantial reform were never taken and still remain the biggest challenge.

Public sector reform

A well functioning and responsive public sector is key to poverty reduction and economic growth. With fiscal stability more or less achieved, the focus is on efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector. Since 2006 the Government, with support of Sweden and other donors, has made remarkable progress in results based management. Capacity building in various areas have been undertaken. These initiatives, though still at their formative stages, have resulted in better performance and improved service delivery.

These reform efforts have earned Kenya global recognition and awards, such as the United Nations Public Service Reforms award in 2007.

Public financial management reforms

At the core of good governance is a transparent, accountable and efficient Public Financial Management (PFM) system. A number of development partners, Sweden included, have therefore embarked on a long-term support to Kenya's Public Financial Management Reform strategy.

The PFM reform is instrumental in the fight against wasteful spending and corruption. Various studies show positive results and an improved performance by the public financial systems, although challenges still remain in key areas.

Social protection and gender

Vulnerability and human suffering are major challenges facing large sections of Kenyan society. Sweden, in collaboration with the United Nations,



Photo: Petrut Calinescu

In 2004, the Kenyan Government embarked on a governance reform which included access to justice, law and order.

is contributing to policy reforms to address social protection issues affecting particularly the most vulnerable groups. To do this, ways in which to address economic growth and its distribution are key. Sweden contributes to social protection through a cash transfer programme for orphans and vulnerable children through UNICEF.

Gender inequality undermines development and governance. Attaining equality between women and men, manifested in their rights and roles in society, is a question of rights. Sweden supports gender equality issues through government and civil society, mainstreaming of gender issues in all sector programmes and through dialogue with different partners.

Civil society pressure for reforms

Sweden further contributes to reforms through funding civil society organisations to engage and exert pressure on the Government. Civil society must have an impact and be able to influence political and developmental reforms. Building a movement from the bottom-up is the surest way to ensure broad consensus and popular pressure from within.

The Civil Society and Democratic Governance Facility, the National Civic Education Programme and the

Gender and Governance programme are some of the programmes funded.

Time and commitment essential

Ambitious reforms like these take a long time to implement. The political crisis in 2008 also hampered the process. Results so far are thus piecemeal and inconclusive. It is Sweden's conviction that the success of the reforms fully hinges on a strong and persistent leadership from the centre of government.

It is lamentable that stronger measures have not yet been taken against high-level corruption and the instigators of ethnic violence after the elections. Sweden believes that a truly democratic culture needs to take root and grow within the institutions, and that change of attitudes and behaviour is a major challenge to achieve real change. Well functioning legal institutions lead by individuals with high integrity, are fundamental for people's trust in government, for an end to corruption and impunity and for the creation of an investment-friendly climate.

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