The Oscillating State's Role in the Provision of Social Welfare Services in Kenya

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Abstract

The provision of social services in the global south has largely remained the role of governments with the private sector playing a peripheral role. At Kenya's independence in 1963, provision of social services was solely the role of government. This was to remain so until the adoption of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as prescribed by World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), which called on government to roll back in provision of social services. Guided by neoliberal theory, provision of social services was later to be characterized by the introduction of user charges, cost sharing initiatives and privatization to augment the role of the private sector in this regard. However, over time Kenya has witnessed the resurgence of the state, especially during the President Mwai Kibaki era (2002-2012), in the provision of these services. Since then the Government of Kenya has continuously strengthened its role in this endeavor as it were conceived at independence. The gist of this paper is to examine the oscillation of the state in provision of social welfare services in independent Kenya. It is observed that politics has weighed heavily on the provision of social welfare services even as external prescriptive pressure has undermined state functioning in this regard. Nevertheless, increased tax collection has given Kenyan state leverage to sustain provision of welfare services. However institutionalization of welfare provision still faces challenges of resources, capacity and accountability. Finally, the paper evaluates merits and demerits of each welfare regime and recommends the way forward to revitalize provision of social welfare services and augment human welfare in the country.

Key Words: Policy, social welfare, state, services.

Introduction

The role of the state in provision of goods and services has been a contested arena in both theory and practice. This contestation is witnessed in policy debates exemplified by differing viewpoints on who is best placed, between state and market to provide public goods and services. Theorists, policy makers, political parties, interest and pressure groups amongst other actors have held different opinion on whom, and how optimum goods and services can be distributed to citizens. In the developed world opposing opinion is manifested in economic and political ideologies positioning labelled as right, centre and left with varying degree of orientations. Debate on whom between state and market is most efficient and effective to provide goods and a service has had implication on electoral politics in both the developed and developing economies.

The role of market in provision of goods and service is relatively a new phenomenon in developing economies, and especially in Africa. This is due to the fact that market as an alternative player in the provision of goods and services is still nascent. It is in this regard that in much of independent Africa, the state has always played a pivotal role in provision of goods and services. It is until towards end of 20th century that the role of African states in service provisions would be put under scrutiny. This is a post-cold war development and attendant triumph of neo-liberalism as a dominant dogma worldwide. Neo-liberal philosophy called for the withdrawal of state and strengthening of market as the best mechanism for the provision of goods and services. For a long time African governments had dependent on external donor support to provide goods and services.

Ideological and policy shift amongst donor countries would expose the fragility of African governments in service provision. As a result, external donor pressure and conditionality on budgetary support challenged hitherto ubiquitous role of African states in service provision. The state had to withdraw provision of welfare services witnessed through privatization, decentralization, budget cuts, and public sector staff downsizing among other measures (Nsibambi, 1998; Chesire, 2013). These changes were informed by neoliberal assumptions that market forces of demand and supply, are the most efficient and effective in provision and distribution of goods and services (Rothstein, 2001). However, the caveat that escaped drafters of such policies was the fact that, the private sector largely driven by the profit motive, would not necessarily give the necessary impetus for development particularly in poor economies like Kenya. Hence, with the foregoing in mind, developing economies selfishly kept some social services tightly under their armpit to safeguard human welfare.

Just like other African countries, Kenya has experienced the same path and had its fare share in withdrawing and ushering the market to determine provision of goods and services in various sectors. However, since 2003 the country has witnessed unprecedented resurgence of the state in provision of goods and services and especially areas considered welfare services. Apart from going back in providing social welfare services it had withdrawn, the government is also venturing into new ones. From the foregoing, this paper attempts to respond to the following questions. What has been the role of state in provision of social welfare services in independent Kenya? What explains the resurgence of the Kenyan state in the provision of social welfare services? Arising from the two questions, the study has a twofold objective, to examine the role of Kenyan state and to analyze its oscillation in the provision of social welfare services using secondary data obtained through review of government policies and other relevant documents. This paper does not in any way support or opposes state involvement in provision of any welfare services rather, it attempts to put into perspective the behaviour of the state and what informs its conduct in this endeavour.

Theoretical and Conceptual Appreciation of Social Welfare

It is imperative to put into perspective the concept of social welfare services and its meaning in line with this paper. Bahle (2003) defines social welfare services as personal services that are meant to satisfy an individual needs, focused on social roles undertaken through social interactions. Bahle further considers the term social as an indication of something that is beyond private relationship to that which has social significance (ibid, 2003). The import of this definition is that provision of social welfare service is embedded and regulated in a people's way of life. Indeed, provision of welfare service differs from one political system to another informed by societal culture be it political or economic or a combination of the two.

While there is no agreed standard definition on what qualifies a state to be considered a welfare one, attempts have been made to define a welfare state. Briggs (2011) defines it as the one characterized by market intervention to safeguard citizens' minimum income irrespective of job, minimising level of insecurity and providing citizens with different kinds of social services and market interventions to insure citizens' access to social services for an enhanced lifestyle. The foregoing notwithstanding, the extent to which a state intervenes in the market and regulates provision of goods and services determines its welfare labelling. It is on this background that Scandinavian/Nordic countries are regarded as welfare states because of their high level of intervention in the market. Nevertheless, a number of developed economies are involved in provision of social welfare service in one way or another, yet they are not considered welfare states.

Roots of Social Welfare Policies

The objective in any welfare policy is to address a societal social economic and by extension political challenges like poverty, unemployment and old age among others. The concept welfare state can be traced back to post war period in western world. It is argued the objective of the introduction of welfare services was to safeguard family against harsh realities in labour market (Bonoli, 2007). The idea was to protect the male head of the family so that he could provide for the family irrespective of employment status. The emphasis placed on male bread winner was because the female gender had not yet been absorbed in the labour market. Females were left with responsibility of nurturing back at homes. On their part, men risked losing family livelihood courtesy of illness, invalidity and old age among others.

The foregoing necessitated the formulation and implementation of social policies to safeguard men and their families from vulnerability to hardships (Bonoli, 2007). Behind this was economic growth witnessed in western world that would make it possible for states to fund the welfare programme (Kuhnle, 2000).

On the other front, development and provision of social welfare services to citizens was considered part of state and nation building in western world (Kuhnle, 2000; Rokkan, 1970; Titmus, 1974; Flora, 1986). The extent to which the assertion that development of welfare policies can be associated with state and nation building endeavour is a question worth examining in developing economies. Whether development of welfare services in these economies can play part in nation building, can be a valid claim in interrogating state and nation building initiatives especially in Africa.

Scandinavian/Nordic Welfare Experiences

To sustain a welfare state, one needs to examine how Scandinavian countries have for a long time been associated with welfarism. Unique features associated with Scandinavian and Nordic countries have made them model welfare states. As alluded, state and nation building and the idea of national identity has played a key role in constructing model welfare states, while their belief system and social welfare organization have played part in the spread of social democracy tenets around the world (Kuisama, 2007). Scandinavian welfare system has been a model that many political system and especially in Africa have admired and hoped to implement. This is informed by the assumption that welfare services do reduce social inequalities by providing basic necessities of life. As such in Third World countries where inequalities are marked, provision of welfare services is seen as part of the panacea.

Attempts to introduce welfare policies in many political systems are made not acknowledging country specific features that are present in Nordic countries. Kumlin and Rothstein, (2005) identify three features that have made Scandinavian welfare state to work: proportion of gross national product spent on welfare, proportion of citizens covered by welfare services irrespective of the benefits and the different stage in life at which a citizen comes into contact with state's welfare services. The extent to which political system want to enhance and strengthen welfare provisions should therefore be guided with these features in mind if Scandinavian model is anything to go by.

Pro-Welfare/Anti-Welfare Divide: A Synthesis

Provision of welfare services by government is political process manifested in ideological and policy positions by political players-there are those for and against a welfare state. Apart from solving societal challenges, welfare services are associated with having an impact on citizens-government relationship and state institutions. Rothstein (1998) argues that provision of welfare service makes citizens to trust, support and give legitimacy to government. This argument is premised on the belief that a citizen who access state-provided benefits is more likely to have a positive attitude and opinion on the government. Supporter of welfare provision also posit that a government that provides social services is an indication of its commitment to its citizens (Taydas and Peksen, 2012). The commitment extended to citizens through welfare services has potential for reducing likelihood of citizen rebellion against government. It is the basis of this narrative that Taydas and Peksen (2012) argue state welfare initiative can be vital in maintaining peace and tranquillity in a country as citizens enjoy enhanced living standards.

On the other hand, opposition to state-propelled provision of welfare services is anchored on different perspectives. On a neo-liberal theoretical grounding, it is argued that social welfare services are private and should therefore be left to the private sector or civil society (Fukuyama, 2001). If welfare services are indeed private and individual in nature, its justified that market forces of demand and supply should determine their distribution and provision. A further argument is that market forces are efficient and effective in distribution of welfare goods and services than government agencies (Rothstein, 2001). Opposition to state-sponsored social welfare services is also premised on the argument that welfare state is informed by public choice theory, which asserts that government agencies justify their existence with huge budgets which do not necessary translate into citizen welfare but satisfaction of elite interests (Rothstein, 2001).

In addition, governments are also associated with inefficiencies, wastages, corruption, political interference and misallocation of inventive talent, which undermine optimum services provision (Gakuru, Mwenzwa & Bikuri, 2007). Neo-liberals also believe that goods and services provided by government are economic goods that attract costs in their production, distribution and provision and therefore it is in order to impose costs. It is on this premise that claims exist to the effect that the amount spent on welfare service is the cause of economic meltdown. This explains why welfare services are the targeted expenditures in implementing austerity measures in countries facing budgetary constraints. This was the case in Africa with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s that saw the state withdraw in provision of social services.

In Europe as it has been the case with Greece facing debt crisis, social services expenditure has been the target. However the link between provision of welfare services and debt crisis has also been challenged. In synthesis, Eiermann (2012) argues that provision of welfare services is informed by economic growth. Hence, how resources are mis/appropriated on social welfare remains a political question given that political expediency is an intervening factor. Provided expenditure on welfare services does not exceed economic growth, welfare regimes are financially viable. He further asserts that there is no connection between a state's debt and size of welfare expenditures drawing examples from the European economies of Denmark, France and Sweden whose welfare spending does not correlate to their debts. Moreover, Eierman, sums up that welfare is here to stay because of a sustainable way of funding it as well as prospects of economic growth[1]. Nonetheless, against these arguments welfare expenditures have been the target in implementing austerity measures.

Reduced budgetary allocations to welfare services, privatization, decentralization and increased dependence on the market have been the hallmark of withdrawal in welfare provision (Bahle, 2003). However, a closer look reveals that the state has not really withdrawn from market, but adjusted accordingly with new realities-recalibration (Bonoli, 2007; Pierson, 2001; Ferrare and Rhodes, 2000). Nonetheless, in an environment where one gets the necessities of life from state makes the need to associate with others not a must, hence undermining the social network necessary for a cohesive society. All said and done, in developing economies, policy debate is highly influenced by external actors who support national budget. For example, courtesy of high level of inequality in Africa, a welfare state is most welcomed to intervene. Based on the foregoing exposition, it is important to narrow down to Kenya where the state has oscillated in provision of welfare services.

State and Social Welfare in Kenya

Background

To examine how the Kenyan state has fared in provision of social welfare services, this paper narrows to specific services that the government has tried to provide to its citizenry. The paper has identified key services in education and health care sectors as services that the Kenyan government has committed itself to. Hence, explanations on why the state has oscillated in provision of welfare services and reasons behind state venturing in new social welfare arena are provided. How provision of welfare services is institutionalised is also examined pointing out challenges and opportunities. Kenya gained her independence from Britain in 1963 and became a republic in 1964. The colonial and independent state were highly centralised in economic and political realm. At independence the role of private sector in guiding the country's development path was quite minimal. Development being conceived as any positive transformation, state was the only apparatus to guide it. One of the objectives of the independent government under Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and diseases. This was conceived in the *Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application in Kenya* (Republic of Kenya, 1965). This was to inform government decisions in various sectors of the economy and accordingly, the provision of free education was considered an avenue to deal with post-independence challenges. The government had the obligation to provide basic education to its citizens so that they could participate in development agenda and lead meaningful lifestyles (Sifuna, 2004). Essentially education is a private endeavour undertaken to improve individual wellbeing and as such it goes without saying that state's education expenditure benefits private individuals as well as the society at large.

Education

Acknowledging the role of education in development the Government of Kenya declared universal free primary education (Republic of Kenya, 1965). This declaration was informed by continental commitment to provide free education to African populace as a means to surmount the challenges the continent faced. Expansion in education provisions was later to be informed by a number of commissions established to find ways of improving its access for all (Chabari, 2010). Provision of universal free primary education was to stay until a number of challenges started emerging. There was inadequate teaching staff and relevant infrastructure to sustain the process. Nevertheless, the most important issue was government commitment to provide the service irrespective of the challenges. In any case how the state responded to address these challenges was a political question. The intent for government was to provide free basic education within its means.

[1] For more on this discussion see Martin Eiermann
http://www1.realclearmarkets.com/2012/10/28/the_myth_of_the_exploding_welfare_state_133198.html

In early 1960s to late 1970s enrolment to primary school had increased tremendously and government was at pain to match its budgetary allocation to education demands. Government challenge of meeting the expanding education sector was to remain so until early 1970s (Sifuna, 2004). To address the challenges, the government sanctioned introduction of building levy as way to reduce the ever expanding budgetary needs of education sector. These levies would later keep on fluctuating with new one being introduced time and again notwithstanding government budget allocation to the sector. To compound the problem are the events of the late 1980 that culminated in the fall of communism and triumph of neo-liberalism as a dominant politico-economic dogma.

African government had for long time been involved in provision of goods and services either for free or at a highly subsidized rate. Since they did not have an alternative superpower, Western World would prove influential on policy debate in the Third World in general and Africa in particular. Neo-liberal economic ideology was to inform Breton Wood Institutions' policy prescription for Third World countries development. The ideology fashioned in Structural Adjustment Programme (SAPs) had a number of *must dos* for the Third World including Kenya. In particular, there were introduced measures to liberalize economies, privatize state-owned enterprises, reduce government expenditure on social services, downsize public labour force and introduce cost-sharing in social services including education and health (Dellapenna, 2000).

SAPs saw gradual state withdrawal in key socio-economic sectors that it had played a pivotal role since independence, which in turn led to the introduction of user charges where there were none and the privatization of key sector of the economy. In the education sector, matters become worse as there was the re-introduction of tuition fees apart from building levy that had been imposed earlier on. This meant that access to education services was more or less based on affordability-making it like any other commodity to be determined by market forces of demand and supply. The situation was to remain until early 2000 when there was a paradigm shift due to the failure of the SAPs. This explains why many African governments re-entered the social welfare services provision arena. Hence, in 2003 the Government of Kenya reverted to the independence policies and introduced Free Primary School Education (FPSE) Programme backed by the same donors (Mwenzwa & Masese, 2011; UNESCO, 2005; UNDP, 2006).

In Kenya its worth to put into perspective state provision of free primary and secondary school education at independence and in the recent past. As pointed out and as has always been the case, public policy formulation and implementation remains a political process. At independence, the government had promised a universal free primary education as means to tackle three challenges of ignorance, poverty and diseases (Republic of Kenya, 1965; Sifuna, 2004). National politics would play a key role on the decision to provide free primary education. However external donor support to finance national budget would later undermine local autonomy on decision making on public expenditure. This is premised on the fact that its international donor support that called the state to introduce reform measures that would undermine provision of free education among other social services. Indeed this explains the introduction of school fees among other charges as government tried to address budget challenges in financing social welfare services in the education sector.

Politics veiled in charity and government responsibility was to inform policy decision in 2002 elections when National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) ran a campaign promising the electorate universal free primary education. On their part, the opponents particularly Kenya African National Union (KANU) questioned the promise on grounds of viability and sustainability, arguing that such a move would definitely lead to increased taxation. NARC won the hearts of the electorate and therefore the 2002 elections and immediately started implementing the universal free primary programme in public primary schools. Indeed, the present Jubilee Government riding on a digital platform, promised to take the education notch higher by providing yet-to-be delivered laptops to standard one pupils (Jubilee Coalition, 2013)

While it was the donor community that exerted pressure on state to retreat in late in 1980s, in 2003, the same donor community are seen supporting the initiative. It is worth acknowledging the international regime that might have played part in informing provision of universal free education. The 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) proclaimed that everyone has a right to social services including education. A number of initiatives were to follow to see full realization of this declaration. Most recent is UN Millennium Declaration on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2000), whose Goal 1 is the achievement on a global scale, universal basic education by 2015. However, the extent to which regional and global commitment play part in decision making with regard to provision of welfare services seem to not have much bearing on education front.

This is due to the fact that commitment to international regimes without requisite funding and a compelling legal regime reduces the pronouncements to mere wishes. This has been the case with so many international pledges that have not been realised including gender equality.

Health

Another sector that the Government of Kenya has committed itself to provide as a welfare service is health care. Indeed, disease, ignorance and poverty that the independent government had promised to crash still persist more than half a century into self-rule. Nevertheless, the government proposed providing universal free healthcare as a means to greater economic development. In 1965, the government abolished user fees charged in public health institutions (Bliss, 2014). These were health institutions that were mainly providing primary health care services targeting rural populace. As a means to augment provision of healthcare services, in 1970 the government centralised the institutional structure in health sector (Keriga and Bujra, 2009), making the government responsible for running public health facilities. These developments saw the rise in number of health institutions i.e health centres increased from 187 in 1973 to 242 in 1982 while dispensaries rose from 416 to 872 in the same period (Keriga & Bujra, 2009).

Like the education sector though, global events have had an impact in health provision including SAPs that effectively reduced government and donor funding to the health sector. A number of measures were implemented in the sector including cost-sharing. In 1992 as part of reform process, District Health Management Boards (DHMBs) were introduced that formalised cost-sharing initiative and management of health institutions across the country (Bliss, 2014). SAPs agenda also acknowledged the role of market in provision of health care service informed by the fact that health is a privately enjoyed. Since then the number of health institutions both public and private have increased tremendously.

While the Abuja Declaration obliged African government to commit fifteen per cent of national budget to health, Kenya has never met the threshold (Keriga and Bujra, 2009). Challenges witnessed in public health institutions have given room for private run institutions to thrive. While the government is in process of implementing devolved health services, health consumers have to incur expenses in accessing public health services. At the risk of sounding pessimistic, the health sector under county governments is likely to deteriorate with regard to provision of quality services given that political expediency and ethnic seem to override professionalism.

Currently the government provides free maternity services in addition to other freely-provided services in public health facilities including tuberculosis treatment. The provision of free maternity service by the government is considered a demonstration of the state going back to its initial position of providing free healthcare. The need to introduce free maternity services was informed by the MDG 5 on Improving Maternal Health. In its first year of implementation the government committed about 46 Million US Dollars to the programme (Standard Newspaper, 2004). It has also been reported that since the inception of the policy, there has been an increase in number of births recorded at public health facilities from 44 % to 66% (Standard Newspaper, 2004). In neo-liberal lens, maternal health care is private affair and therefore qualifies to be determined by market forces. Just like the independent government had promised in its manifesto of free education and health services in immediate post independent politics, NARC and now Jubilee Coalition government shows that the provision of social services is and remains a political process.

Other social Welfare Schemes

Evidence in the strengthening of welfare state in Kenya is recent attempts to introduce social protection programmes (Republic of Kenya, 2011) in the form of cash transfer programmes to vulnerable segments of the population among them the old, orphans and people living with disabilities. This is a demonstration of the state acknowledging of how vulnerable groups in the country face livelihood challenges. After a number of years of piloting, both by donor agencies and the government, the Government of Kenya officially launched a programme which would see persons beyond 65 years receive a monthly stipend of about 23 US Dollars (Business Daily, 2004). The cash transfer programme objective is to protect senior citizens, orphans and those with disability from abject poverty and enable them access basic amenities for a modest life. It is argued that the cash transfer programme faces a number of challenges including beneficiary selection criteria and under-funding although supported by the neo-liberal World Bank.

However, since cash transfer programme was launched, there has been concern over corruption allegations in recruiting beneficiaries and the argument the amount is hardly enough to make a sustainable difference to one's life. However this paper is interested with government acknowledgement of a social problem and attempts to address it. How social programme is administered and its efficacy is a political problem beyond the purview of this paper. Nevertheless there are instances where the cash transfers have been positively credited. For example, Handa et al, (2014) carried out a study in selected areas in Kenya and established it had reduced albeit slightly the risk of sexual debut among the youth. The foregoing shows that social welfare policy targeted at poverty can indeed bring out unintended, but positive outcomes.

Synthesis

The debate around how social welfare provision in Kenya is institutionalised is worth exploring. The social welfare services discussed in the paper; education, health and cash transfer to the vulnerable segments of the population have been institutionalised differently. Lepsius (1990) considers institutionalization to mean the manner in which social services are socially regulated and controlled. Lipeius further indentifies four challenges in the process of institutionalization: the need to identify actors to be involved and their competency, how resources are allocated, how the developed system is controlled and the legitimacy of the established institution and how it deals with the social problem (Lepsius, 1990).This paper has adopted Lepsius institutionalization criterion in examining Kenya's welfare provisions. The criterion looks simple and straight forward in evaluating strength and sustainability of social welfare service provision. Institutionalization of social welfare provisions in Kenya seem to have both succeeded and failed in part in meeting Lepsius criteria for a successful welfare regime in the country. These welfare services seem to enjoy popular support and legitimacy while missing on other benchmarks. On education sector, there seem to be a problem with availability of resources, actors and their role in the provision of quality education. There have always been challenges of inadequate personnel, financial resources and facilities to match the growing demand. Accountability in education sector especially in public schools has always been a challenge, which explains consistent poor performance in public primary schools compared to the private ones. Hence, while the system enjoys popular support and legitimacy, control mechanism to ensure quality services is more or less a mirage. In some regions particularly the arid areas, understaffing in schools is so glaring that education as a social service hardly has any impact (Mwenzwa & Masese, 2011).

Regarding the health sector, the same problems persist and especially so with health services are being devolved to county governments that seem less ready to take off. Some of the challenges include personnel shortfalls and under-funding. Further, they still lack capacity to manage and integrate health services as part of County Government mandate as provided for in the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya. The same problems of transparency and accountability as manifested in cash transfer programme bedevil the other sectors. Moreover, the most important challenge to the institutionalization of the provision of social welfare services in Kenya is politics particularly political commitment As Pierson (1996) opines, the legitimacy social welfare policies enjoy, make them hard target for state to withdraw even in dire need for fiscal austerity. In Kenya while we acknowledge social welfare provision is not well institutionalised, attempts to undo them will attract fierce opposition. Matters are complex when one has to balance between austerity measures and the envisaged political backlash if social services are withdrawn.

Tying the Loose Ends

Formulation of social policies, their implementation and hence the provision of social welfare services is a political process, which has generated debate as to who between state and market best fits the bill for their provision. Although it is arguable that social welfare services are private in nature and hence are best left to the market forces of demand and supply, the involvement of the state in this endeavour may therefore be seen as a deviation. This is more so given the inefficiencies associated with the government in the provision of social services particularly in developing economies like Kenya. Given the financial indiscipline in developing countries amid donor dependence, developing economies remain undermined by the donor community, a practice akin to neo-colonialism. At independent Africa states committed themselves to providing welfare services as means to achieve meaningful development. Relying on donor support the situation would remain the same until towards the end of 20th century, when the state had to sit back. Just like other African government, Kenya government had the same experience, with both national and international politics playing a major role with respect to the type of policies, their formulation and implementation.

The foregoing assertion points to the inseparability of politics from public policy making and implementation. Indeed, the social welfare policies implemented in Kenya since independence draw largely from ruling political party manifestos.

As literature attests, an important challenge to social welfare policy implementation is the wobbly institutionalization of welfare services in Kenya in addition to political commitment. Other challenges include waning transparency and accountability, corruption and under-funding amid increasing demand and emerging social welfare needs. To offset the foregoing and augment social welfare service provision, it is recommended that stakeholder plan strategically in order to not only increase its capacity to provide social welfare services but also institutionalize a sustainable mechanism that guarantees continuous funding independent of external support. However, while such a social welfare provision may work well in the developed world, in the developing economies this is difficult. The foregoing springs from the pedestal that to marry austerity, prosperity and political expediency without compromising either amid resource scarcity and attendant financial indiscipline is a catch-22 situation.

Nonetheless, to augment the provision of welfare services it would be prudent to embrace participatory democracy in the development of policies and institutionalize the participation of all stakeholders as envisaged in various acts of parliament particularly those related to devolution. This would ensure that policies are in tandem with felt needs of the people they are directed and hence upping the probability of civic support and participation. In addition, social welfare services have been implemented in several countries in the west from where Kenya can learn vital lessons. As such, benchmarking in other countries is recommended in order to reap best practices in social welfare and protection programmes in health, education, agriculture, cash transfer programmes and civic empowerment among others.

Given that social welfare programmes have always been under-funded sometimes experiencing budget cuts as austerity measures, it is recommended that social protection kitties should be enhanced to widen their coverage and scope. It is expected that increasing budgetary allocation to National Women and Youth Enterprise Development funds, Constituencies Development Fund and Uwezo Fund among others and institutionalizing them is part of the panacea to augment social services provision and minimize maladies associated with material dispossession.

That information is power cannot be gainsaid if a state has to come up with policies that stand the test of time. As such, it is recommended that an audit and mapping is carried out on the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable among the vulnerable groups not only to determine their specific needs and the factors that push them into want. The foregoing may be done by looking at regional, gender, age and socio-economic status among other criteria in order to determine where there is greater need for more budgetary allocation and the issues at play. This information can be used to ensure that we concentrate development efforts on activities that enhance employability and employment opportunities of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Moreover, the foregoing must go hand in hand with the institutionalized and continuous monitoring and evaluation to determine level of objective and goal achievement in social welfare provision.

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