



# Innovative Governance Models and Legal Reforms for Sustainable Development in Western Kenya

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**Abstract:** *This study examines the specifics of leadership, governance, law, and policy within Western Kenya. The research explores how governance structures and leadership practices within existing legal and policy frameworks, including implementation of County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), impact public service delivery and community empowerment. The primary objective is to identify gaps in governance and legal shortcomings while suggesting community centered solutions aligned with 21st-century development goals, including relevant Sustainable Development Goals and the African Agenda 2063. A mixed-methods approach was deployed. Qualitative data were acquired through focus groups, key interviews, and policy document analysis (including CIDP frameworks). Quantitative data were obtained via structured surveys targeting 200 county officials in Kakamega, Bungoma, Vihiga, and Busia counties, 150 local administrators in Western Kenya, and 100 civil society administrators. Qualitative responses were thematically assessed, while quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. Findings showed that despite decentralization and CIDP frameworks bringing governance closer to the people, policy effectiveness remains constrained due to low public participation, weak leadership structures, outdated legal frameworks, and political interference. The study recommends strengthening governance from the lowest local rank through participatory policymaking, leadership mentorship, and training. In conclusion, an innovative legal framework can lead to greater transparency, accountability, and effective implementation of CIDPs in Western Kenya.*

**Keywords:** Leadership, Governance, Planning, Participation, Devolution

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## 1. Introduction

Governance is a vital pillar of sustainable development. The magnitude of legal structures, leadership, and community-bound governance has become salient in Kenya's evolving development framework. In Western Kenya, the governance landscape is going through transformations spearheaded by Kenya's 2010 Constitution, which created a devolved system of government designed to enhance service delivery,

inclusivity, and development equity across regions. Kenya's Constitution (2010) designed a two-dimensional system of governance entailing the national government and devolved county governments. The County Government Act (2012) requires all 47 counties to develop County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) running through five years, providing roadmaps for social and economic transformation. These plans are reinforced by the Public Finance Management Act (2012), which provides that counties submit their CIDPs to county assemblies

before September each year. Despite this legal setup, counties in Western Kenya (Kakamega, Vihiga, Bungoma, and Busia) face significant implementation challenges. Research indicates that strategy implementation often falters due to environmental changes, flawed implementation processes, and other factors. A changing environment also affects implementation. These findings underscore the importance of an innovative governance framework and responsive legal reforms aligned with evolving realities.

Governance contributes crucially to the success or failure of development initiatives. It influences individuals and drives collective efforts across teams and systems. Enhanced leadership within county governments in Western Kenya, especially those empowered with oversight functions under the Constitution, must propagate administrative functions and actively champion reform, adaptability, and inclusion. Auditor General's reports highlight recurring impediments to CIDP implementation in Western Kenya, including limited financial resources, weak institutions, delayed disbursements, poor data management, inadequate infrastructure, and legal setbacks. Centralized payment systems and static procurement procedures have hindered service delivery and project execution. The Auditor General recommends establishing County Delivery Units, capacity-building initiatives, streamlined procurement, timely payments, and effective legal frameworks. These measures align with the broader need for structured and innovative governance practices and technology reforms in the legal sector to improve county responsiveness, efficiency, and inclusivity.

This paper assesses how adaptive legal frameworks, leadership, and the integration of key pillars supported by technological advancements can enhance sustainable development across Western Kenya. Emphasis is placed on rethinking governance through accountability, agility, and community engagement. However, Western Kenya remains bottlenecked by policy execution inefficiencies, limited public engagement, outdated legal regimes, and leadership weaknesses. The counties of Bungoma, Kakamega, Busia, and Vihiga offer insights into how leadership practices affect social and economic outcomes in the region. This study evaluates these dynamics in light of the Sustainable Development Goals. Culture significantly influences governance skills. Here, culture refers to attitudes, ideas, regulations, morals, standards, values, norms, symbols, and customs common in African societies and relevant to innovative governance structures. Culture shapes how leadership is learned and developed in Western Kenya. Therefore, culture can positively or negatively influence leadership. This research seeks potential structures in the innovative world that can bring balance and enhance structured leadership.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

The county governments in Western Kenya (Kakamega, Vihiga, Bungoma, and Busia) have initiated County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) in compliance with the Public Finance Management Act, 2012 and the County Governments Act, 2012 (Hassan & Muna, 2022). However, implementation on the ground remains weak. Auditor General's reports for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 reveal significant gaps between planned goals and actual outcomes across these counties. This failure has led to systemic governance issues. Three factors often contribute to development failure: static organizational culture, leadership traps from mismanagement, and outdated institutional structures (Miller, 2000). In Western Kenya, these issues have stalled projects and undermined strategic implementation.

Governance and legal frameworks in Western Kenya are criticized for being centralized and lacking collaborative, participatory elements. Limited stakeholder engagement and weak policy implementation cause setbacks in executing CIDPs. Auditor General's reports show many abandoned or uncompleted projects across the region. Static leadership structures and inadequate legal enforcement further exacerbate CIDP implementation challenges. It is urgent to assess how innovative leadership can enhance transparency, adaptability, and inclusivity, and progressive legal frameworks can improve service delivery and development outcomes.

Therefore, this paper explores how governance structures, leadership, organizational culture, and legal frameworks influence CIDP implementation in Western Kenya. It aims to propose legal reforms and innovative governance structures tailored to the social and political contexts of these counties to enhance sustainable development. Although decentralization was designed to strengthen institutions, empower communities, and improve service delivery, Western Kenya continues to struggle with governance disconnect. Persistent issues—lack of transparency, political interference, corruption, and weak legal enforcement—hinder realization of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. The absence of innovative models and localized legal reforms creates a mismatch between national aspirations and grassroots realities in Kakamega, Bungoma, Vihiga, and Busia.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

Devolution within certain units in the western part of Kenya largely depends on local governance structures and specific legal frameworks. Enhancing regional and county-level governance in alignment with national development

priorities requires a comprehensive analysis of the existing systems, institutional capacities, and legal foundations. In response to the persistent development challenges facing counties in this region, this study is guided by the following objectives.

- a) To assess governance models in the counties of Western Kenya.
- b) To identify legal and institutional weaknesses affecting sustainable development.
- c) To propose innovative and context-specific governance and legal reforms.

### 1.3 Hypothesis of the Study

Generally, Kenya's devolved system of governance is guided by the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), which serve as blueprints for local socio-economic transformation. However, their successful implementation relies heavily on strong governance structures and legal frameworks that promote proper planning, transparency, and accountability. The effectiveness of CIDP implementation in Western Kenya, however, remains an area requiring further research and inquiry. To empirically assess this correlation, the following hypotheses form the foundation of the study.

**H<sub>0</sub> -null hypothesis:** There is a lack of significant relationship between legal frameworks, governance structures and the implementation effectiveness of CIDPs in Western Kenya.

**H<sub>1</sub> -Alternative Hypothesis:** Legal frameworks and Governance structures significantly influence the effectiveness of CIDP implementation in Western Kenya.

### 1.4 Scope of the Study

This research evaluates the influence of legal frameworks, governance structures, leadership practices, and organizational culture on implementing County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) in selected Western Kenya counties: Bungoma, Kakamega, Vihiga, and Busia. The study took place between January and June 2023, focusing on departments involved in CIDP formulation and implementation. The unit of observation was officers and staff engaged in CIDP planning, execution, and oversight, including County Clerks, Chief Officers, Directors, Planners, and other administrative staff responsible for development planning, budgeting, monitoring, and public engagement.

The study was tied to institutional and legal frameworks, leadership culture, and governance models influencing

development and service delivery outcomes. It did not examine sector-specific performance or individual projects but focused on overarching administrative and leadership systems guiding CIDP implementation. The research included civil servants, local administrators, political actors, and contractors in the broader governance context, though technical performance and private-sector participants were not directly assessed.

## 1.4 Theoretical Review

### Strategic Performance Measurement Theory

Also referred to as the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), developed by Kaplan and Norton (2001), it is a system of strategic performance indicators that aligns daily operations with long-term objectives. The theory highlights that effective management requires integrating multiple financial, internal-process, and growth models, translating an organization's vision into measurable objectives to guide decision-making and ensure strategic coherence. In the context of implementing a County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) in Western Kenya, the BSC offers a lens to examine performance across development dimensions—service delivery, infrastructure, citizen participation, governance, and institutional efficiency. CIDPs can benefit from the BSC's multi-initiative model by enabling transparent, accountable progress assessment.

The theory emphasizes leadership's role in setting structured, department-based objectives, fostering a performance-oriented culture and participatory governance. In Western region counties (Vihiga, Kakamega, Bungoma, and Busia), where leadership gaps and governance inefficiencies persist, the BSC helps contextualize how strategic metrics can foster CIDP success. However, critics argue that its linear cause-effect assumptions may oversimplify public-sector realities influenced by political and legal factors (Iivonen & Huotari, 2010). This research uses BSC theory to assess governance and leadership alignment with strategic county goals, particularly how legal and institutional mechanisms support or undermine this alignment in Western Kenya

## 1.5 Empirical Review

### IDP Implementation and Leadership in Western Kenya

DeChurch et al. (2010) examined how leadership culture influences decision-making and employee engagement, focusing on supportive and participative cultures that enhance commitment and motivation. This is significant in

Western Kenya, where leadership is criticized for bureaucracy. This analysis extends DeChurch et al.'s work by examining leadership culture within Western Kenya's devolved governance, emphasizing community consultations and participatory planning. Ilesanmi (2020) found in South African municipalities that democratic and transformational leadership styles enable strategic development. However, that study did not examine correlations or conflicts between authoritarian and transformational approaches. This study assesses both styles in Western Kenya's counties, where political influence and administrative hierarchies often collide with inclusive governance goals.

Kipchumba (2019) emphasized transformational leadership in promoting CIDP execution in Kenyan counties, noting stakeholder mobilization toward shared goals. However, it did not explore how operational leadership with structured rewards and transparency complements or undermines radical efforts. This study evaluates how these leadership styles function within the CIDP framework in Western Kenya. Odundo and Githiri (2016) showed participative leadership and structured development plans are efficient for project implementation in East Africa but did not analyze authoritarian governance influence. In Western Kenya, where top-down decision-making is common, this study examines the interaction between authoritarian and participative approaches in CIDP implementation.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This research adopted a descriptive research design to examine how leadership culture, governance, law, and policy influence the actualization of County Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) in counties across Western Kenya. This research approach was suitable because it allowed for the collective and systematic data analysis to align with the existing leadership culture and organizational practices without manipulating variables, helping to provide an accurate snapshot of the current situation (Kothari, 1999).

#### 3.2 Study Area and Period

The study was conducted in four Western Kenya counties: Bungoma, Kakamega, Vihiga, and Busia. These counties were selected due to their important role in regional development and varying experiences with CIDP implementation. Data collection took place over six months, from January to June 2023, allowing for an efficient engagement with respondents and adequate time for fieldwork in western Kenya.

#### 3.3 Target Population

The target population comprised 4,011 department employees responsible for CIDP implementation within the Bungoma, Kakamega, Vihiga, and Busia County governments. This included Chief Officers, County Executive Committee Members (CECMs), Directors, and technical and staff involved in infrastructure, finance, planning, policy, governance, and other related functions in western Kenya.

#### 3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size Determination

The study deployed stratified random sampling to ensure representative samples across the counties and staff cadres. Using the Yamane (1967) formula, the sample size was determined as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- $n$  = Sample size
- $N$  = Population size (4011)
- $e$  = Margin of error (0.05)

The calculated sample size was 365 respondents.

**Table 2: Sample Size Distribution**

No	County	CEMs	Chief officers	Directors	Staff	Total
1	Kakamega	3	4	5	97	109
2	Bungoma	3	3	4	93	103
3	Vihiga	3	3	4	80	90
4	Busia	3	3	4	85	95
5	Total	12	13	17	355	365

Source: Author (2023) based on County HR data

## 4. Results and Discussion

This section presents data collected from multiple respondents across Western Kenya, specifically in Kakamega, Bungoma, Vihiga, and Busia counties. The analysis explores how leadership culture, governance structures, and legal frameworks influence the implementation of County Integrated Development Plans

(CIDPs). The results are presented through a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics, supported by relevant tables. Additionally, this section highlights key comparisons with existing literature, underscoring the relevance of the study and the observed correlations.

### 4.1 Inferential Statistics

**Table 3: DATA**

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total responses
Leaders communicate vision clearly	5	10	20	50	32	117
Decision-making in the counties is participatory	7	14	18	52	26	117
Leaders are accountable to the public	8	19	22	47	21	117
County leadership values integrity and transparency	11	21	20	46	19	117
Leadership behavior supports effective CIDP implementation	6	13	15	56	27	117
There is political goodwill to support development planning and execution	10	17	24	41	25	117

Source: Influence of leadership culture on the implementation of CIDPs in Western published Kenya in the Propaganda Journal of Education, Science and Innovation, (2023)

The data collected and analyzed indicate that the implementation of County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) in Western Kenya reflects a mixed, yet generally positive, perception of leadership, governance, and legal

frameworks. These findings serve to reinforce, challenge, and expand upon previous studies and institutional assessments of devolution in Kenya, as outlined below

**Table 4: Summary of analysis of findings**

Statistic	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Mean	7.83	15.67	19.87	48.67	25.00
Standard Deviation	2.32	4.08	3.13	5.20	4.60
Variance	—	16.667	—	—	—
Minimum Value	5	10	15	41	19
Maximum Value	11	21	24	56	32
Range	6	11	9	15	13
Interquartile Range (IQR)	—	7.25	5.25	8.25	7.75
Skewness	+0.300	-0.064	-0.359	-0.086	+0.221
Kurtosis	-1.418	—	+0.211	-0.009	-0.067
Distribution Shape	Slight positive skew; flat (platykurtic)	Symmetrical; wide spread	Left skew; near-normal	Symmetrical; flat	Slight right skew; flat

**Strongly Agree**

At this level, the mean score was 25.00 with a standard deviation of 4.60. This indicates a relatively high level of agreement among respondents regarding the implementation of CIDPs across the region. The standard deviation suggests that while most respondents in this group supported the effectiveness of CIDPs, their enthusiasm levels varied. Scores ranged from 19 to 32, giving a range of 13 points and an interquartile range of 7.75. This reflects a wide spectrum of opinions across the region.

**Agree**

This category recorded the highest mean score at 48.67, with a standard deviation of 5.20. The elevated mean suggests that a large portion of respondents expressed strong approval of CIDP effectiveness. The higher standard deviation indicates a notable spread in consensus levels. Responses ranged from 41 to 56, with an interquartile range of 8.25, signifying broad variability in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of CIDPs in relation to leadership and governance. While the overall agreement was significant, the degree of approval varied across respondents in the region. A skewness of -0.086 suggests a relatively even distribution of responses.

**Strongly Disagree**

This category had a mean of 7.83 and a standard deviation of 2.32, indicating that respondents expressed low levels of agreement with CIDP implementation, with responses moderately dispersed around the mean. The relatively low mean reflects a consistent pattern of dissatisfaction, largely

attributed to perceived weaknesses in leadership and governance structures. Scores ranged from 5 to 11, yielding a range of 6 points. This fairly tight cluster suggests consistent disagreement with the effectiveness of CIDPs. The positive skew further supports this trend, indicating a concentration of responses in the lower score range.

**Disagree**

The mean score for this group was 15.67, with a standard deviation of 4.08. Compared to the "strongly disagree" category, this slightly higher mean indicates mild disagreement, possibly reflecting uncertainty among respondents regarding CIDP implementation and its overall effectiveness in Western Kenya. A variance of 16.67 indicates a broader spread of responses, with scores ranging from 10 to 21. The interquartile range was 7.25, highlighting dispersion from moderate to high disagreement levels, and illustrating a fair balance of opinions about the governance structures.

**Neutral**

This category recorded a mean of 19.87 and a standard deviation of 3.13. The mid-range mean suggests that neutral respondents leaned slightly toward agreement, although a portion expressed reservations about CIDP implementation and associated leadership structures. Responses ranged from 15 to 24, with an interquartile range of 5.25. This indicates moderate variability among neutral responses, implying that some participants were cautiously optimistic while others leaned slightly toward disagreement.

## 4.2 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature

Chitere and Ngundo (2015) observed that devolved governance systems, such as the Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF) and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), had the potential to bring leadership closer to the people, thereby enhancing local engagement and information dissemination. This aligns with the inferential data from this study, which indicates that a significant number of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that leaders effectively communicate their vision. However, the fact that 13% of respondents expressed disagreement highlights the existence of implementation gaps-possibly attributed to varying capacities across counties, as observed by the World Bank (2015).

Findings from this study also indicate that decision-making in Western Kenya has been largely participatory, supporting the constitutional principle of inclusivity in governance (Republic of Kenya, 2010). This corresponds with the World Bank's (2015) identification of public participation as a legal requirement in CIDP development. However, the variability in responses suggests that actual implementation still differs significantly across counties, reflecting concerns raised by Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis (2016), who noted that development outcomes are heavily influenced by leadership behavior and institutional culture.

Moreover, data on transparency and accountability showed a moderate level of agreement-reflected by a mean of 15.67 for the "disagree" category and 47 responses in the "agree" category. This partial consensus resonates with Kimenyi (2013), who emphasized that although frameworks for fiscal transparency exist, weak institutional capacities often hinder their effectiveness, especially in counties with limited administrative capabilities.

Regarding public trust and leadership integrity, the study found that respondents' views showed a wide distribution, with skewness slightly leaning to the right-indicating dissatisfaction across the region. This observation is consistent with Cheeseman et al. (2016), who warned of elite capture and entrenched corruption within some county governments. Although many citizens view devolution positively, a significant number perceive it as reinforcing existing inequalities and inefficiencies. The World Bank (2020) supports this view, identifying persistent institutional gaps, particularly in public financial management and service delivery frameworks.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents acknowledged the role of legal frameworks in supporting CIDP

implementation. However, institutional reports present a partially contradictory picture. While the Kenya School of Government and the World Bank emphasize legal provisions for participatory budgeting, they also caution that technical capacity limitations hinder effective enforcement (World Bank, 2015). This is evident in this study's findings, where variations in standard deviations suggest inconsistencies in CIDP implementation, particularly in the formation of County Budget and Economic Forums (CBEFs)-a legal requirement that is frequently overlooked (Chatham House, 2020).

## Summary

This section has presented detailed findings and insightful comparisons with existing literature. Structurally, it is evident that while counties in Western Kenya have made progress in CIDP implementation, significant gaps remain in leadership transformation, governance accountability, and the enforcement of legal frameworks. These findings establish a basis for proposing targeted reforms. Across all response categories, most participants leaned toward "agree" or "strongly agree," with mean values progressively increasing from *strongly disagree* (7.83) to *agree* (48.67). The consistency of this trend across standard deviations and ranges suggests a general consensus supporting CIDP-related variables-particularly among those who responded positively. Evidence generated through SPSS analysis confirms that most respondents perceive leadership, governance, and legal frameworks as meaningfully influencing CIDP implementation. These insights lay a strong foundation for the inferential analysis that follows.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings, this study concludes that:

1. **Strong governance frameworks** are essential for transparency, accountability, and structured execution of development plans. However, counties in Western Kenya must enhance these frameworks to optimize developmental outcomes.
2. **The existing legal and policy environment** supports CIDP implementation but requires strengthening through clearer guidelines, innovative reforms, and more effective enforcement mechanisms to ensure consistent compliance.
3. **Leadership culture** emerged as the most influential factor in CIDP implementation. Therefore, county governments should prioritize

leadership devolution and actively promote participatory governance.

4. **An integrated approach** that addresses leadership, governance, and legal frameworks concurrently is vital for the successful implementation of CIDPs across the region.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the study proposes the following recommendations:

1. **Legal and Policy Reforms:** Review and revise relevant laws and policies to enhance enforcement, eliminate ambiguities, and align CIDP implementation with national and international development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063.
2. **Strengthening Governance Structures:** Promote greater transparency and accountability through improved public participation mechanisms, regular monitoring, and clearly defined governance policies tailored to regional needs.
3. **Leadership Development Programs:** County governments should invest in ongoing leadership training programs focused on participatory planning, effective communication, and resource mobilization to cultivate a results-oriented leadership culture.
4. **Further Research:** Future studies should explore additional factors influencing CIDP implementation, such as socio-economic dynamics, inter-county collaboration, and intergovernmental coordination to provide a more holistic understanding.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Foster collaboration between county officials, community members, and development partners to build shared ownership and collective commitment toward CIDP goals and milestones.

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