

The **KENYA INSTITUTE** for **PUBLIC**
POLICY RESEARCH and **ANALYSIS**

Thinking Policy Together

Professionalization of the Public Service: Global and African Experiences

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Outline

- The dilemma facing Africa's public service
- Global and Africa's performance in public services
- Recent reforms offer a promise
- Embracing public service professionalism
- Kenya's focus areas during the 2026 Performance & Productivity Conf

The dilemma of Africa's public service

- The Afro-barometer survey 2025/26 gives a Pan-African profile of Africa's public service, and paints a grim picture.
- Significant disparities in access to public services by citizens, ongoing difficulties in securing crucial services, and the extent of corruption in their interaction with governments.
- Governments are not meeting expectations. Poor service del.
- *Good Governance Africa* shows budgeted corruption in Africa, through overpayment, nepotism, procurement fraud.
- About half of African citizens say it was easy to obtain an identity document from the government (50%), medical care at a public clinic or hospital (49%), and assistance from the police (48%), the other half reporting "difficult".
- Substantial proportions say they had to pay a bribe to avoid problems with the police (37%) and to obtain police assistance (36%), and an identity document (29%).

Global and Africa's performance of public services

- **Blavatnik Index of Public Administration 2024**
- Index has 4 main domains: - (1) Leadership & Strategy, (2) Public Policy, (3) National Delivery, and (4) People & Processes.
- Overall leaders in strategy and leadership: - Denmark, Finland, Norway, Canada, Singapore, and the USA.
- Leading country in SSA: - Mauritius (34th), Kenya (62nd), Rwanda & South Africa (69th), Benin, Botswana & Zambia (73rd).

Recent reforms offer a promise

- Not all is, however, lost for Africa; recent reforms and initiatives offer a promise for Africa's public service:
- Recent reforms in digitalizing the public service and digital transformation, such as the e-Citizen portal in Kenya
- Decentralization of public services, the shift to devolution eg in Kenya, and creation of county public service boards. Bringing services closer, such as the Huduma Centres.
- Instilling a performance and productivity culture or results-based management, and performance-based contracting. A productivity index score for all public institutions in Kenya.
- Linking national priorities with institutional work plans and service delivery, with reporting structures. Citizen centric
- Participatory governance – e.g., Bonga na Gava platform, though still at an infancy stage.

Enhancing PS professionalism

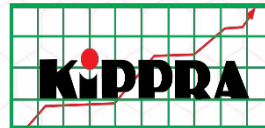
- **Four Leadership capabilities for public sector performance (OECD, 2022)**
- Values-based leadership – high standards of accountability, transparency, integrity, equality, and ethical behaviour. Values-driven culture and leadership
- Open inclusion – working with a diverse set of employees, colleagues, citizens, and stakeholders for better public services. managing diversity for better outcomes.
- Organizational stewardship – equipping the workforce with the right skills, tools, and working environments; rewards and sanctions, and building capability.
- Networked collaboration – collaborating through networks with other government actors, and beyond. Collaborate and coordinate to implement strategic objectives.
- Skilled and effective public servants, with soft skills.

Kenya's focus areas during the 2026 Performance & Productivity Conf

- **Performance over Presence:** Leaders are pushing to measure performance by tangible impacts on citizens' lives rather than time spent at desks.
- **Merit-Based Compensation:** African governments—including Kenya—are phasing out automatic salary progression and promotions. Compensation is being tied directly to key performance indicators (KPIs) to improve fiscal sustainability and efficiency.
- **Digital Transformation & AI:** Public administrations are rapidly integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital governance systems to modernize human resources, reduce bureaucratic red tape, and enhance transparency.
- **Sector-Specific Objectives:** Regional goals are being synchronized with the African Union's Agenda 2063. Major performance mandates are heavily focused on critical infrastructure, particularly universal water availability and safe sanitation.

THANK YOU

For your Attention



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