SJIF Impact Factor (2024): 8.675| ISI I.F. Value: 1.241| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2016 ISSN: 2455-7838(Online)
EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)
Volume: 9 | Issue: 8 | August 2024 - Peer Reviewed Journal

ENHANCING SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ISIOLO COUNTY THROUGH COLLABORATIVE SYNERGY BETWEEN THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes an alternative developmental framework that synergizes the roles of both the state and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to achieve sustainable socio-economic development in Isiolo County. The guiding research question was: What kind of developmental model can enhance the partnership between the state and CSOs for sustainable socioeconomic progress in Isiolo County? Challenging the neoliberal and donor-driven notion that non-state actors alone can drive socioeconomic development, this article asserts that the state's role remains crucial. Using the developmental state theory to analyze findings and a descriptive design for its methodology, data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources through snowball and purposive non-probability sampling techniques. The results reveal that CSOs working independently are insufficient for achieving sustainable socioeconomic development without the state's regulatory and coordinating involvement. Moreover, existing complementarity strategies, where the state and CSOs pursue similar objectives with different approaches, have not been successful. This paper advocates for a collaborative state-CSO approach, where both entities share aligned goals and methods to effectively drive socioeconomic transformation in Isiolo County.

KEY WORDS: *socioeconomic development, Isiolo County, Northern ASALs, Policies, CSOs, state-CSO collaboration.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Socioeconomic development, as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), aims to improve the economic and social conditions of individuals and communities by focusing on economic growth, access to education and healthcare, reducing inequality, and promoting sustainability (UNDP, 1990; 2000; 2010). Historically, the state has primarily driven this process. In Kenya, the government led socioeconomic development efforts from independence until the mid-1970s. The first national policy, Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965, emphasized agriculture as the cornerstone of the economy. However, this strategy failed to address the unique challenges of the Northern Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), including Isiolo County, which faces unique challenges like marginalization, climate variability, poverty, and socioeconomic inequality. Consequently, the strategy did not effectively reduce inequality and poverty, as highlighted in various government and development reports.

From the 1980s, Kenya encountered economic challenges due to the global oil crisis, inflation, a drop in agricultural exports, and a burgeoning debt crisis. In response, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) imposed Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that promoted market-led solutions, reduced government intervention in socioeconomic development, and elevated the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). As a result, CSOs became prominent in public life, complementing state efforts. CSOs encompass a broad spectrum of non-profit entities, including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), labor unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, and other non-profit institutions (Diamond, 1994; 2008; World Bank, 2006; UN General Assembly, 2005). While NGOs are often the most recognizable form of CSOs, the terms are used interchangeably in this paper to denote entities engaged in advocacy, service provision, and community development. This article specifically focuses on International Civil Society Organizations (ICSOs) active in Isiolo County.

The aid community also adopted the New Policy Agenda (NPA), shifting aid from states to CSOs, perceived as more effective, flexible, participatory, and accountable (Edwards & Hulme, 1992; Hearn, 2007; Brass, 2012). This shift reinforced CSOs as key stakeholders in driving socioeconomic progress, particularly for the poor and marginalized. In Isiolo County, data from the NGO Board shows that over 500 NGOs, both local and international, were registered between 2014 and 2020. Among these, more than 100 were ICSOs actively engaged in socioeconomic development alone (NGO Board, 2019). This extensive presence underscores the critical role of CSOs in complementing state efforts where traditional government interventions have often fallen short.

Despite increased CSO involvement, the Kenyan government continued to promote socioeconomic policies, such as the District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) in 1988, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) in 2000, Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) in

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2003, Kenya Vision 2030 in 2008, and the 2010 constitution. These initiatives aimed to address the unique conditions of Northern ASALs, with the 2010 constitution decentralizing development funds to counties and establishing a rights frameworks for marginalized groups (GOK, 2003; 2008; 2010).

Despite these efforts, the socioeconomic indicators in Northern ASALs, including Isiolo County, remain poor. Reports such as the Kenya National Human Development (KNHDR) (1990, 1999, 2001, 2006, and 2009), Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS) 2005/2006, Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA) (2011), and the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP, 2015) reveal persistent disparities. This scenario prompts a reevaluation of the state's role in socioeconomic development alongside CSOs. The state has a crucial responsibility towards its citizens as the primary duty bearer, even with diminishing resources since the 1970s. Consequently, this paper advocates for a collaborative framework between the state, CSOs, and other non-state actors that can synchronize socioeconomic efforts in a long-term and sustainable manner. This approach emphasizes coordinated strategies, resource allocation, and leveraging the strengths of both the state and CSOs to achieve these goals in Isiolo County.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this article is to propose a developmental framework that aligns the objectives and strategies of both the state and CSOs to maximize and accelerate sustainable socioeconomic development in Isiolo County. The central research question is: What kind of developmental model can enhance engagement between the state and CSOs for effective and sustainable socioeconomic development in Isiolo County? This paper challenges the neoliberal and donor-driven notion by asserting the crucial role of the state in socioeconomic development despite the rise of various non-state actors. Focusing on Isiolo County, part of Kenya's Northern ASALs, the research faced challenges such as security threats, vast and sparsely populated areas, poor infrastructure, and high illiteracy rates among pastoralist communities. These were mitigated using local guides, translators, and triangulation methods to validate data from multiple sources.

Framed within the developmental state theory, which emphasizes the state's pivotal role in guiding and coordinating socioeconomic efforts, the paper employed a descriptive research design and was conducted in Nairobi and Isiolo Counties, covering the period from 1963 to 2015. The target population included the entire civil society involved in socioeconomic development in Isiolo County, including ICSO officials, state officials, development agencies, project beneficiaries, and Key Informants. Snowball and purposive sampling techniques were used to identify ICSOs, resulting in access to 47 representatives. For project beneficiaries, purposive sampling was employed to organize Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) that included both men and women. Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources, using questionnaires, interview schedules, and an FGD guide. The research process was authorized by relevant authorities before data collection commenced.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines the feasibility of an alternative socioeconomic development framework that aligns the goals and strategies of the state and CSOs in Isiolo County, aimed at fostering sustainable socioeconomic progress. The discussion is informed by the developmental state theory, with Mkandawire (2001) being a key scholar who laid the foundation for comprehending the modern concept. The developmental state theory underscores the state's pivotal role in steering economic development and industrialization within the political economy context. Key principles include a strong role of the state in economic development, an efficient and independent bureaucracy crucial for policy formulation and implementation, strategic planning that targets pivotal industries for growth, and close collaboration between the state and private sector to foster industrial innovation. This theory is pertinent to this work as it illustrates how the state can actively shape socioeconomic progress through strategic planning and execution, diverging from a reliance on neoliberal policies. It also emphasizes economic growth with a focus on redistribution, leading to societal benefits such as improved living standards. By acknowledging the contributions of various stakeholders in socioeconomic advancement, this theory highlights opportunities for CSOs to address the needs of marginalized populations, such as those in Isiolo County, alongside state initiatives.

Socioeconomic development in this paper encompassed health, education, water, sanitation, and livelihood interventions. Agriculture, livestock management, relief efforts, and welfare projects were considered essential strategies for promoting livelihoods. Specifically, welfare initiatives entailed providing financial support to small-scale enterprises, facilitating income-generating activities, and distributing cash transfers to vulnerable families, as reported by ICSO officials.

The findings reveal persistent challenges in socioeconomic development in Isiolo County, as the independent efforts by ICSOs and various state policies have failed to achieve sustainable progress. This is evidenced by human development indicators. The current approach to socioeconomic development is characterized by complementary strategies between the state and ICSOs, albeit with distinct methodologies. According to the UNDP (2010) and Amartya Sen (1999), there is an inherent connection between human development and socioeconomic indicators. Human development is the process of enhancing people's well-being by broadening their choices, with

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the most critical aspects being living a long and healthy life, being educated, and having access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. Human development is evaluated through the Human Development Index (HDI), which considers these crucial aspects of human life. The HDI indicators compare individuals' access to these essentials. Other metrics of human development include the Gender Development Index (GDI), which focuses on gender-related disparities, and the Human Poverty Index (HPI) and Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), both of which assess the distribution of progress and deficits across various dimensions of the HDI. Both the HDI and GDI use a scale from 0 to 1, where 1 represents the highest level of human development and 0 the lowest. The HPI and MPI use percentages to gauge poverty, evaluating the extent of deprivation across various dimensions of human life.

According to the KNHDR (1994), the HDI for Northern ASALs was 0.311, and the GDI for the same period was 0.301, compared to the national averages of 0.504 and 0.501, respectively. The national MPI was 26.5%, while Northern ASALs had the highest MPI of 43.3%. The KNHDR (2001) demonstrates a national HDI value of 0.539 and a GDI of 0.519. The Northern ASAL region had the lowest HDI of 0.413, and the GDI was 0.401. The HPI of Northern ASALs was the highest at 44.8% against the national average of 34.5%. The KNHDR (2006) indicates that the national HDI was 0.532, and the GDI was 0.547. The national HPI was 37%. The Northern ASALs combined achieved the lowest HDI of 0.285. Northern ASALs had the lowest GDI score of 0.285 in the country. The HPI of Northern ASALs was again the highest at 50.5% against the national average of 37%. According to the KNHDR (2009), the national HDI was 0.561. Northern ASALs scored 0.417, the lowest in the country. The national GDI value was estimated at 0.492. Northern ASALs scored the lowest GDI at 0.347. The national HPI for the period was 29.1%, and Northern ASALs had the highest HPI of 56.8%.

Furthermore, the Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS) of 2005/2006 reveals that the literacy rate in Northern ASALs was the lowest in the country at 24.8%. Nationally, the average access to clean water sources was 57.0%, while Northern ASALs lagged at 34.6%. Additionally, the CRA report (2011) highlights a poverty incidence rate of 72.6% in Isiolo County, compared to the national average of 66%. The county was ranked 40th among the 47 counties in terms of poverty level. According to the Isiolo County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) (2015), 93% of the population in Isiolo County lacks access to clean water within a five-kilometer radius, 56% face inadequate sanitation, and 85% are illiterate. Furthermore, over 70% of rural residents lack sufficient, accessible, and affordable healthcare, and more than 80% rely solely on emergency food aid from NGOs and the government due to severe food shortages, especially during floods and droughts.

These statistics demonstrate that residents of Northern ASALs have limited access to health and education, as well as low purchasing power, compared to other regions in the country. They also indicate growing socioeconomic disparity over time, illustrating ongoing marginalization. Thus, there is a critical need to reassess both the complementary model and the state's role in promoting socioeconomic advancement in Isiolo County. Historical examples, such as the Great Depression of the 1930s, demonstrate how socioeconomic stagnation led developed capitalist countries to adopt state-centered solutions inspired by Keynesian economics (Willis, 2011). Similarly, Khan and Christiansen (2011) highlight that the global financial crises of the 1990s and late 2000s prompted significant state intervention in most Western countries. These instances underscore the necessity of reconsidering the state's role in addressing socioeconomic development challenges, particularly in Africa and Kenya.

Persistent economic stagnation, rising poverty rates, and widening socioeconomic disparities, particularly exacerbated by SAPs, underscore the imperative for renewed state intervention (Ake, 1996; Musamba, 2010; Andreasson, 2010; Wade, 2011; UNDP, 2013). According to the UNDP (2013), socioeconomic indicators in African nations consistently lag behind global averages. Wade (2011) notes that the number of people living in absolute poverty in Africa (earning less than $2 per day) increased significantly after 1980. Moreover, the income inequality gap between Africa and industrialized regions has continued to widen, with Africa failing to narrow this disparity both pre- and post-1980. This trend contrasts sharply with other regions like East and South Asia, which have seen notable reductions in poverty levels during the same period. These observations highlight the inadequacy of the conventional developmental path of market-driven strategies in Africa and Kenya. Such approaches have typically diminished the state's role in socioeconomic development and have failed to stimulate meaningful socioeconomic transformation, particularly in marginalized regions like Isiolo County.

In light of these insights, several scholars have argued that Africa should adopt the developmental state model, incorporating certain key features (Mkandawire, 2001; Edigheji, 2005; Kalinowski, 2009; Musamba, 2010; Andreasson, 2010; Wade, 2011; UNDP, 2013; Nwapi and Andrews, 2017). According to Mkandawire (2001) and Musamba (2010), this model is not entirely unfamiliar to the continent. Mkandawire (2001) asserts that this was a primary concern of immediate post-colonial leaders, and African states should have been considered 'developmental' based on their aspirations and economic performance. For example, Kenya achieved growth rates comparable to those of East Asian developmental states from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s. Mkandawire insists that failed developmental outcomes may be due to external or unforeseeable factors beyond the state's control or simply ill luck. Therefore, he

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adds, the definition of a developmental state should account for these factors that may obstruct genuine developmental commitments and state efforts.

Nevertheless, several scholars have contested these claims (Ake, 1996; Van de Walle, 2001; Olukoshi, 2004; Musamba, 2010). According to Ake (1996), post-colonial ruling elites prioritized consolidating their power over nation-building and socioeconomic development. Van de Walle (2001), Olukoshi (2004), and Musamba (2010) contend that the developmental state ambitions pursued were not supported by sustainable visions of development. This was evident in the overbearing state intervention in the economy, dependence on income from the export of primary products, and the maintenance of non-performing state-run projects by the treasury, which drained limited foreign exchange reserves. Additionally, corruption, a lack of an autonomous and efficient bureaucracy, and a disregard for the importance of the private sector in economic growth contributed to the failed developmentalism.

Some scholars have also challenged the feasibility of the developmental state model in Africa under existing circumstances (WB, 1993; Diamond, 1999; Johnson, 1999; Hewitt, 2001; Beeson, 2004). According to the WB (1993), Hewitt (2001), Stein (2000), UNCTAD (2007), and Fritz and Menocal (2007), the concept is not viable because the East Asian development model is not replicable. The WB (1993) report demonstrates that this is due to limitations in African states, such as a lack of ideology, dependency, susceptibility to predatory rule, and state capture by vested interests. Johnson (1999) argues that the Japanese development model is difficult to emulate unless a state shares a similar commitment "to the mobilization of industry" (p. 52). Hewitt (2001) contends that the institutions associated with East Asian developmental states are highly contextual and time-specific. Beeson (2004) argues that the effects of globalization and liberalism present challenges to developmental states that wish to pursue policy options for the protection of their nascent industries. Additionally, the interrelationship between industrial, technocratic, and political players crucial for the development of East Asian governments has been eroded by the emphasis on governance reforms and the expanded roles of non-state actors like CSOs, IFIs, and business networks.

Furthermore, questions have arisen regarding Africa's institutional framework and the state's ability to create, implement, and oversee the complex and demanding policies that formed the basis of East Asian success (UNCTAD, 2007; Stein, 2000). As a result, the state's ruling class often lacks the commitment to fulfilling its development obligations (Fritz and Menocal, 2007). Stein (2000) asserts that the state-business relationship is underdeveloped, and the private sector is poorly coordinated and fragmented. With the exception of Botswana, Mauritius, and South Africa, Diamond (1999) argues that African nations lack three crucial political governance prerequisites for becoming a developmental state: a viable state, a secure lawful political order, and an appropriate state authority.

The observations above indicate that post-colonial African developmental efforts lacked the core characteristics of a developmental state and prospects for adopting this model are fraught with challenges. While the developmental state model has its critics, I support its approach of re-centering the state’s role in socioeconomic development in African nations. This approach focuses on achieving targeted economic growth to boost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and address structural inequalities, contrasting with dominant liberal and trickle-down strategies that have often neglected marginalized populations. Despite facing criticism, CSO activities have delivered short-term benefits to marginalized groups such as the residents of Isiolo County. Therefore, both CSOs and the state play crucial roles in advancing socioeconomic development. The critical challenge, however, is devising effective strategies that enable the state to enhance the standard of living for its population. To maintain its crucial role in socioeconomic development, the state must strengthen and reinforce its position. Therefore, this paper extends beyond the traditional developmental state model by building on its strengths and incorporating new elements to foster synergy between the state and CSOs for sustainable development in Isiolo County.

Firstly, this paper proposes a collaborative framework between the state and CSOs in Isiolo County to optimize synergies. This entails aligning state and CSO strategies toward socioeconomic development to promote sustainability. By harmonizing their goals, visions, and agendas, and pooling resources such as funds, expertise, and manpower, they can collectively address complex societal challenges more effectively than they could separately. This approach allows both entities to leverage their unique strengths within a capacity-building framework, fostering a more cohesive and impactful effort. This approach is distinct from the current complementarity strategies, which have not yielded the desired outcomes, indicating a need for an alternative method. It is worth noting that starting in the 1990s, multilateral institutions like the UNDP (1991), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), and the WB (1997) began to highlight the importance of partnerships between CSOs and the state as crucial conditions for receiving aid. This marked a shift from the earlier minimalist view of the state’s role in providing socioeconomic services, recognizing instead the essential role of the state. In light of these developments, CSOs involved in socioeconomic development in Isiolo should reassess their relationship with the state to align effectively with this renewed emphasis on collaboration, ensuring effective synergy. By building on the strengths of both the state and CSOs, this proposed framework aims to create a sustainable and inclusive model of development that addresses the needs of all residents, particularly the most vulnerable.

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To facilitate effective collaboration, a comprehensive regulatory framework must be established. This framework should engage key stakeholders such as the national NGO Coordination Board, the county government, NGOs involved in socioeconomic services, and local Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). Given the state's pivotal role in socioeconomic development, it must lead in establishing this cooperative policy framework. Through its regulatory mandate, the state can oversee and coordinate the activities of non-state actors, ensuring cohesive efforts that are aligned with overarching socioeconomic development objectives. The persistent socioeconomic inequality in Isiolo County, despite the significant presence of CSOs generally, may be partly due to the state's inadequate regulatory oversight of these organizations. Although there is a national regulatory body, its main function is limited to the registration of NGOs that have submitted their annual returns. This oversight measure is insufficient, as findings in this research have revealed the presence of unregistered NGOs operating in Isiolo County. This observation is consistent with findings by Kameri-Mbote (2002) and Omiti et al. (2002), who also identified similar regulatory gaps. These anomalies suggest that the national registration body is not fully enforcing its regulations. Furthermore, there is a weak connection between the national NGO Coordination Board and the Isiolo County government, exacerbating the challenges in effectively overseeing and coordinating NGO activities at the local level.

The state is also uniquely positioned, through its regulatory capacity, to create an enabling environment that aligns the objectives of CSOs with the county's long-term socioeconomic development plan as outlined in the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). The CIDP is a strategic five-year plan that outlines the county's socioeconomic development goals and priorities. By aligning the efforts of NGOs with the CIDP, the state can ensure long-term sustainability. This proposed framework not only addresses the regulatory shortcomings but also seeks to create a more structured and cooperative environment where both the state and CSOs can work together more effectively. By fostering a stronger partnership and ensuring that all activities are in line with the CIDP, this approach aims to achieve sustainable socioeconomic progress for Isiolo County.

Secondly, synergy between the state and CSOs can enhance responsiveness to socioeconomic development through active engagement with key stakeholders, including local CBOs and beneficiaries. Responsiveness aligns closely with the modern principle of public participation, an aspect that is also emphasized in the Kenyan Constitution of 2010. The persistent lack of socioeconomic transformation in Isiolo County underscores the limitations of a top-down approach employed by both the state and CSOs. This approach often fails to address the unique needs and priorities of the local community. Mercer (2002) points out that the rise of the participatory model in development was largely due to the failures of top-down strategies. Thus, participation allows planning that is based on the needs, perceptions, and experiences of local communities, fostering a sense of ownership over projects (UNDP, 1993). By engaging and nurturing communities in consultation and decision-making processes, state-CSO collaborations can ensure that local CBOs and beneficiaries in Isiolo County are actively involved in the socio-economic development process. This inclusive approach provides an opportunity to capture their lived experiences, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. To support this, a needs assessment data system could be established and maintained to continually reflect the evolving needs of the community, ensuring that socioeconomic development is approached from the ground up. The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in Kenya exemplifies an attempt at a bottom-up approach. However, the state still exerts significant influence over the expenditure of CDF funds, while constituency needs remain diverse and varied. Therefore, adopting a responsive approach to socioeconomic development could form the cornerstone of a state-led strategy. This approach can enable the state to address the dynamic needs of the community more effectively and coordinate with key stakeholders to create sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development outcomes.

Thirdly, enhancing responsiveness through collaboration between the state and CSOs can significantly strengthen social safety nets and welfare programs, reducing extreme poverty and socioeconomic inequality in Isiolo County. By working together, these entities can create comprehensive, targeted interventions that address the root causes of poverty and inequality, leading to more sustainable and equitable outcomes. According to Sen and Drèze (2013), social safety nets are designed to support the most vulnerable populations by meeting their immediate needs while building long-term capacity and resilience. Implementing tailored programs such as direct cash transfers, food aid, school feeding programs, and subsidies for essential goods can effectively address the needs of the poor and marginalized. In Isiolo County, ICSOs were already involved in crucial socio-economic programs, including health, education, water, sanitation, agriculture, pastoralism, and financial assistance through cash transfers. A robust synergy between CSOs and the state has the potential to expand these efforts and focus on tailored social safety net programs specific to Isiolo County's needs. For instance, implementing conditional cash transfers linked to school attendance or health check-ups could simultaneously promote education and healthcare access. Mobile clinics and schools could extend these services to remote areas. Scholarships and vocational training tailored to Isiolo's youth could enhance human capital and alleviate poverty. Expanding access to loans and promoting mobile banking systems like M-Pesa in remote areas could foster economic independence and growth. Given Isiolo's semi-arid environment, initiatives promoting sustainable agriculture, such as training in drought-resistant farming techniques or providing livestock insurance, could enhance food security and livelihoods. These efforts underscore the importance of a collaborative framework for inclusive and impactful

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socio-economic development. Such collaboration ensures that both state and non-state actors work together effectively to address the specific challenges faced by marginalized communities in Isiolo County.

While the benefits of CSO-state collaboration in the socio-economic development of Isiolo County are substantial, it is crucial to recognize and address the challenges that can arise, since this model will inevitably encounter both opportunities and challenges for all involved. As Brass (2014) notes, state-NGO relations are inherently complex and diverse, and cultivating these relationships requires strategic navigation to achieve long-term and sustainable development. Therefore, it is essential for CSOs and the state to continuously evaluate and adapt their collaborative strategies. Establishing feedback mechanisms and fostering a culture of learning can help refine the partnership and address emerging challenges proactively. The following section will delve into the potential benefits of such a collaborative approach in addressing the unique needs and context of Isiolo County.

State-CSO Framework for Sustainable Socioeconomic Development in Isiolo County

State-CSO collaboration necessitates a coherent policy framework to ensure effective cooperation and coordination. Studies by scholars such as UNDP (1991), Clark (1995), Whaites (1998), and Hulme (2010) indicate that without such a framework, CSOs often operate in an uncoordinated manner. Findings from ICSO officials in Isiolo County further support this conclusion. To establish coordination, two major umbrella forums have been developed. The County Steering Group (CSG), initiated by the County government and co-chaired by the County Governor and County Commissioner, coordinates the sectoral work of all CSOs in the county. All CSOs must register with the CSG before commencing operations. The CSG facilitates regular meetings, typically monthly or quarterly, to discuss strategies for mitigating climate variability-related hazards. These meetings are conducted under the guidance of the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), which coordinates the development and implementation of drought contingency plans in the county, involving various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and communities (GOK, 2013). The CSO Network Forum provides a platform for all CSOs to meet regularly, present their sector functions, prevent duplication of services, and share experiences. Since 2015, USAID has also launched the Local Development Organization (LDO), which operates similarly to the CSO network forum, with objectives focused on enhancing coordination and collaboration among CSOs.

All 47 ICSO officials interviewed confirmed their awareness of these CSO network forums and their respective mandates. Even with these well-meaning initiatives, there were still challenges in CSO coordination because there were no binding arrangements. This is underscored by Key Informant-1 below:

> There is no effective policy framework to ensure that all CSOs avail themselves for the NDMA meetings or in CSO Network Forums. Often times CSOs proceed with operations without consulting or registering with the CSG. CSO officials only come to our offices here at the county government after they have encountered challenges that they cannot handle (OI, Isiolo County, 10/05/2019).

The introduction of a new CSO forum by USAID, a donor agency, to promote collaboration among CSOs in Isiolo County underscores the weak policy framework between the state and CSOs, as well as among CSOs themselves. This situation suggests that without engaging with the state, neither donor agencies nor CSOs can effectively address coordination challenges. CSO-state collaboration holds the potential to enhance coordination by establishing a structured policy framework. This framework would compel CSOs to operate within defined guidelines rather than pursuing individual ad hoc approaches.

State-CSO collaboration has the potential to amplify the impact of socioeconomic initiatives by facilitating the cascading of CSO interventions across geographical areas, as noted by Clayton et al. (2000). By increasing the number of NGOs addressing specific needs in Isiolo County, such collaboration can promote consistency, continuity, and socioeconomic access for a larger portion of the population. A state official - 1 stated:

> The Kenyan state has realized the disadvantage of individual NGO operations and is in the process of implementing a framework that will pull the resources of all developmental CSOs together within Northern ASAL regions (OI, Nairobi, 06/05/2019).

The combined efforts of both the state and CSOs have the potential to effectively address issues related to duplication, access, coverage, and equity in socioeconomic service provision. Findings from ICSOs confirmed these challenges. Each of the 47 ICSOs was engaged in multiple socioeconomic activities simultaneously, including functions such as education, health, water, and sanitation, often within the same period and geographical area. Key Informant -2 remarked:

> …in some cases, up to ten CSOs concentrate their projects in the same village, offering similar services, and you wonder what they are trying to prove! (OI, Isiolo town, 15/05/2019).

The findings indicate that NGOs have struggled to leverage each other's strengths despite having similar intentions. Research by Robinson and White (1998), Martin (2002), and the KNHDR (2006) highlights that duplication of efforts among CSOs impedes their effectiveness in reaching the most vulnerable populations. The KNHDR (2006) specifically notes that NGOs often compete on similar

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projects without adequate collaboration, leading to poor coordination and inefficient resource use. In Isiolo County, ICSO-supported projects are unevenly distributed. Most projects were concentrated in or near urban areas and along major roads, such as those in Isiolo North (Bula Pesa, Chari, Cherab, Ngare Mara, Wabera, Burat, and Oldonyiro), which are relatively accessible and better serviced. In contrast, Isiolo South, including more rural and less accessible wards like Garba Tulla and Merti, received fewer projects. Specifically, of the 47 projects, 25 (53%) were in Isiolo North, 19 (40%) were spread across both constituencies, and only 3 (6%) were in Isiolo South. This uneven distribution highlights the need for a more equitable allocation of resources to address socioeconomic disparities across Isiolo County. This weakness was acknowledged by Key Informants -3 & 1 respectively, in statements such as the following:

> …Isiolo North has a higher concentration of NGO projects, despite Isiolo South being more vulnerable. Most CSOs in this county have their projects located not more than 5km from the highway (OI, Isiolo town, 30/5/2019).
>
> …..conditions in Isiolo South are very difficult, but you will find that most NGOs, whether national or international, concentrate most of their activities in Isiolo North constituency. This is especially true in Isiolo Central, which covers Wabera and Bulla Pessa wards (OI, Isiolo town, 10/5/2019).

This demonstrates that urban areas or those along the highway may have been over-served, while most residents continue to remain on the fringes of society. This unequal distribution exacerbates the severe deprivation observed throughout the county, particularly in Isiolo South. Similar research findings from various studies conducted in different parts of the world demonstrate this irregularity. Da Costa's (2016) analysis of NGO locations in Brazil revealed that poor socioeconomic indicators did not significantly influence their placement. Instead, the primary motivation was the presence of a high pre-existing density of other NGOs in the area. In Kenya, Brass (2012) found that convenience factors, such as access to beneficiaries, donors, and elite resources, played a more substantial role than poverty in determining NGO locations. Similarly, Omiti et al. (2002) discovered that factors such as organizational size, mission, infrastructure availability, proximity to urban areas, and security considerations were influential. Consequently, urban areas with robust infrastructure, both human and physical, had the widest coverage, while remote areas with low population density and inadequate communication networks had the lowest coverage. It can therefore be concluded that NGOs, operating independently cannot adequately address socioeconomic inequality and vulnerability of the marginalized majority.

The close interaction between CSOs and the government could address funding challenges by reducing donor dependency and combining resources for similar programs. Additionally, the government could offer financial support through local revenue if long-term funding measures are established with CSOs (Clayton et al., 2000). ICSOs in Isiolo face issues such as budget cuts, rising costs, and competition for funds, which affect project sustainability. Findings revealed that nearly 49% of ICSOs had operated in the area for less than 10 years, with donor funding typically supporting projects for only 3 to 5 years. This short-term funding often forces ICSOs to either hand over projects or initiate new ones when funding ends. Even long-standing ICSOs, like World Vision (operating since 1974), reported sponsoring projects for less than five years, contributing to high turnover in the area. Similar issues have been observed in other regions. Martin (2002) notes that limited donor project phases in Tajikistan hinder long-term solutions, while Robinson and White (1997) and Clayton et al. (2000) highlight that high NGO turnover obstructs continuity and sustainability in service provision. Therefore, sustainable socioeconomic development requires a progressive approach with long-term funding to ensure continuity and impact. The challenge of ICSO funding was summarized by an ICSO official-1 who stated:

> The main challenge to socioeconomic development in Isiolo County is that the NGO sector is heavily dependent on donor support. I wish we could also get government support (Isiolo County, OI, 17/5/2019).

CSO-state collaboration, therefore, offers the advantage of pooling resources, thereby achieving improved sustainability and effectiveness. Thus, CSOs that are entirely dependent on external donors have an opportunity to diversify their funding base, including from the host government.

CSO-state collaboration enables CSOs to work with government entities at national and county levels. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) supports devolution of socioeconomic functions like agriculture, health, and livestock to counties, offering opportunities for resource exploitation in Isiolo County. This collaboration can involve various county bodies, increasing accountability and funding for local services and enhancing devolution to reduce socioeconomic inequality. Brass (2014) found that CSOs in Kitui County successfully engaged in development through government collaboration and policy-making. Similarly, findings from ICSOs in Isiolo County indicate collaboration with the county government and participation in policy-making processes at the local level. Key Informant-1 observed the following about CSOs in Isiolo County:

> Most CSOs cooperate with all the county-line ministries such as the ministries of environment, health, agriculture and livestock, and education, among others (OI, Isiolo County, 10/05/12019).

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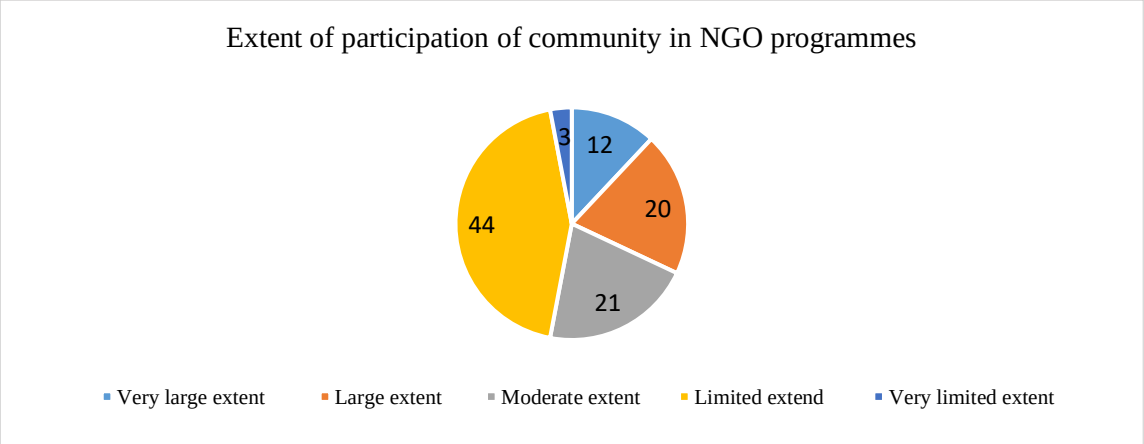
The above examples demonstrate that there are already various opportunities for CSOs to work with the government at the county level to improve service delivery. However, these relationships are in their initial stages. Therefore, a properly established policy framework could enhance and institutionalize CSO-state collaboration, leading to constructive working relationships with the decentralized government.

Decentralization also holds the potential to facilitate a more inclusive and responsive approach to socio-economic development. However, findings from ICSOs indicate that the experiences and contributions of local CBOs and beneficiaries had not been fully leveraged. Despite all 47 ICSO officials interviewed stating that they promoted participation to enhance project ownership and sustainability, findings contradict these assertions. This is what Key Informant -5 stated:

> …in most cases, the involvement of locals in NGO work is limited to public participation in the initial stages but wanes as the projects advance (OI, Isiolo town, 12/05/2019).

The Key Informants' assertions were echoed by FGD discussants when asked about the extent of community participation in NGO projects as revealed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Extent of Participation of Community in NGO Programs



44% of respondents revealed that community members' involvement in NGO programs was limited. ICSOs therefore could not be described as people-centered and grass-roots-oriented in their activities since the collective and individual creativity of beneficiaries was undervalued and underutilized.

State-CSO synergy is crucial for ensuring effectiveness in the policy-making process. CSOs can play a vital role in advocating for policy changes and reforms based on grassroots experiences and evidence, while the state can implement and enforce these policies at national or county levels. Effective advocacy and policy influence requires the active involvement of the state. Thus, CSO-state collaboration offers new opportunities for CSOs to influence and enhance government policies, which can be slow-moving and subject to setbacks (Hulme, 2010). According to Kalinowski (2009), the state holds the mandate to formulate universally valid policies and enforce them more effectively than NGOs. Addressing the root causes of poverty and socioeconomic inequality involves navigating the structural framework of society, making policy implementation a critical function of the state. Therefore, for CSOs to effectively contribute to policymaking and socioeconomic development, collaboration with the state is essential. This partnership ensures that policies are grounded in local realities, effectively implemented, and sustainable over the long term.

Moreover, according to Green and Matthias (1997) and Rose (2009), health and education are fundamental public goods in society that should be overseen by the state, even if it may not be the implementer. This calls for designing effective policies and providing an enabling environment for these sectors to thrive under the guidance of the state. Green and Matthias (1997) note that CSOs cannot often formulate clear healthcare policies and regulations, despite potentially having advantages over the state in certain contexts. They emphasize that amidst the increasing privatization of healthcare, whether by voluntary or commercial sectors, the state must establish an overarching framework that delineates the role of CSOs in healthcare provision. Rose (2009) contends that education, as a public good, holds unique importance because it can be utilized by governments to promote greater equity among citizens. Thus, there is a need for governments to play a role in regulating and monitoring CSO activities in the provision of these public goods to ensure policy compliance. This can effectively be achieved through CSO-state collaboration with shared vision and goals.

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State-CSO collaboration has the benefit of enhancing accountability to beneficiaries as programs are jointly implemented. CSOs have faced criticism for prioritizing accountability to their funders over their beneficiaries and operating with less transparency towards the host government. This lack of accountability makes it challenging for the state to assess the individual performance and impact of CSO interventions. Thus, collaboration can improve Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices by providing insights into what strategies have been successful and why. This collaborative M&E approach fosters greater consistency and continuity in socioeconomic programs, ensuring that interventions are aligned with community needs and government priorities in Isiolo County. Key Informant -1 expressed concerns about CSO operations in Isiolo County:

CSOs rarely share Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) results with the County government. I think this is one of the main reasons why the actual needs of the community are wrongly identified (OI, Isiolo County, 10/05/2019).

Combined program implementation could enhance the state's legitimacy by increasing its involvement in socioeconomic service provision and meeting community expectations. Findings from FGD discussants shows that they were acutely aware of their marginalization compared to other Kenyans. Notably, (96%) of FGD particpants acknowledged their marginalization and were able to articulate the specific conditions contributing to it as presented below:

Table 2: Criteria for Identify Marginalization

Criteria	Frequency	Percentages
Poor roads	21	9
Poor access to health facilities	42	18
Access to water services	55	23
Level of literacy	32	13
Historical injustice	54	22
Poverty	36	15
No sure	14	6
Total	**240**	**100%**

Table 2 shows that FGD discussants were able to describe how marginalization manifests based on the outlined conditions. They contrasted their experiences with those of other regions, particularly Nairobi, which they referred to as representing the "real Kenya."

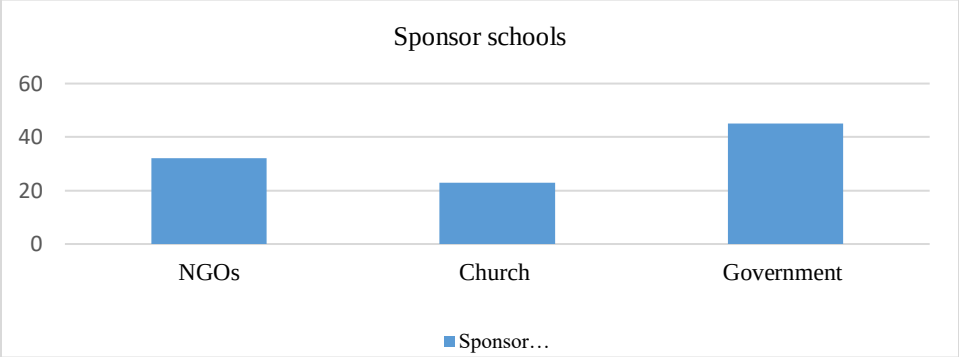
CSOs contribute significant financial resources, expertise, and knowledge to partnerships, while governments, in collaboration with academic and research centers, provide valuable data for designing and implementing programs for the poor (Kalinowski, 2009; Banks & Hulme, 2012). Therefore, bypassing the state is not advisable, as CSOs alone cannot achieve sustainable socioeconomic development. Studies in Isiolo County underscore this need for state involvement. Kihara (2007) found that individual Muslim NGOs struggled to mitigate food insecurity, highlighting the importance of integrating strategies among stakeholders. Kagunyu (2014) observed that NGO-led climate variability mitigation strategies for the Borana were neither sustainable nor long-term. Similarly, Agade and Halakhe (2019) noted that the national government was more effective than NGOs in managing conflict and its causes in Isiolo. These studies illustrate the limitations of CSO intervention strategies without state involvement, underscoring the importance of state-CSO collaboration for effective and sustainable socioeconomic development. Key Informant-6 emphasized the crucial role of the state:

> The failure of CSOs to partner with the government harms program sustainability because once the NGO exits the area, the community also abandons the projects. It is the government officials who help with follow-up measures so that the project is sustainable (OI, Isiolo County, 26/5/2019).

Despite financial challenges and the presence of numerous CSOs, the state remains actively involved in socioeconomic service provision. This is evident from FGD participants' observations, who identified the state as the primary sponsor of most schools in the region as shown in figure 3 below.

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Figure 3: Sponsor of Schools



From Figure 3, the government sponsored the highest number of schools (45%), followed by NGOs (32%) and churches (23%). This indicates that the government plays a significant role in socioeconomic development, particularly in areas where NGO services have been less impactful.

From the above discussions, CSO-State collaboration holds significant potential for enhancing socioeconomic development in Isiolo County. Globally, successful collaborations between states and CSOs have been well-documented. Bartley and Rose (2011) highlight effective partnerships in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, where government policies included commitments to work with NGOs for basic services. For example, in Bangladesh, health sector collaboration was guided by a directive policy and coordinated donor funding. In India, the government funded NGOs through formal contracts to support universal education. Pakistan has maintained a formal relationship with NGOs since the 1990s, following multilateral donor recommendations. These examples illustrate that similar collaborative frameworks could effectively enhance the impact and sustainability of socioeconomic development efforts in Isiolo County and Kenya, leveraging the country's robust NGO sector.

In Kenya, NGOs and CSOs are effectively collaborating to drive positive change. An illustration of such collaboration involves the private sector, including companies like Safaricom, KAPA Industries, Colgate Palmolive, and the NGO Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO). SHOFCO operates in urban slums, providing essential services, advocacy platforms, and leadership development for women and girls, serving over 350,000 residents in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu. During the COVID-19 pandemic, SHOFCO expanded its reach to over 2.4 million individuals, leveraging resources and expertise in healthcare, sanitation, education, and livelihoods (Fingo, 2021). Adopting and enhancing a similar collaborative model in Isiolo County could drive significant socioeconomic progress.

For CSOs to be truly effective, they should not assume a leading role in socioeconomic development without the active involvement of the state. Kalinowski (2009) argues that when CSOs operate without sufficient state involvement, it can weaken government influence in developing countries, leading to less effective CSO programs and hindering sustainable transformation. In Isiolo County, despite a significant presence of CSOs, low socioeconomic indicators persist due to inadequate state coordination. A sustainable solution requires not only supporting CSOs but also strengthening the state's role in coordinating socioeconomic development. The state's role in crafting policies to address structural inequalities is crucial, especially for marginalized communities like those in Isiolo County. By fostering a robust CSO-State collaboration, both entities can work together to create meaningful and lasting change.

4.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper explored an alternative developmental framework that integrates both the state and CSOs to achieve sustainable socioeconomic development in Isiolo County. It examined developmentalism, highlighting the essential roles of both CSOs and the state in addressing socioeconomic issues. The findings indicate that despite the efforts of ICSOs and various policies, desired socioeconomic outcomes have not been achieved in Isiolo County. The research underscores the necessity of state involvement and CSOs in operations to address broad societal challenges such as poverty and inequality, particularly for marginalized populations. By adopting a regulatory and coordinating role through a collaborative policy framework, the state can effectively align stakeholder efforts and improve living standards for marginalized communities. Given this evidence, the following recommendation is made:

i. Developing and testing various models and approaches, including CSO-state collaboration, to identify the most effective strategies for maximizing socioeconomic development, particularly in Northern ASALs.

Future research should conduct empirical comparisons of socioeconomic projects implemented by both the state and CSOs to evaluate their impact in the socioeconomic development of Northern ASALs.

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