

# Understanding dis-functionalities in multi-agency policy collaborations for public accountability in Kenya

Gedion Onyango

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## Abstract

Policy program implementation challenges remain despite the recent adoption of multi-agency joint action in public administration. This means efforts to realise collaborative goals, and their success may sometimes only last for a while or remain largely symbolic. This paper trace such challenges to common operational dysfunctionalities of horizontal public accountability arrangements, using mutual trust-building strategies as an explanatory variable. It first conceptualises and applies a trust-embedded multi-agency relations framework to unpack the complexities and difficulties in implementing anti-corruption policy in Kenya. It shows how trust-related dysfunctions influence the agency of institutions and of their personnel's involvement in implementing policy programs. The paper calls for systematic training and incentivisation of public managers on devising sustainable collaborative policy networks for the effective implementation of policy programs.

**Keywords:** regulatory policies; policy networks; collaborative governance; trust, Africa.

## Introduction

Recent public governance efforts to enhance technical homogeneity in this age of information, and considering the latter's hierarchal, markets, and networks constellations, have come in loosely organised and embedded forms of collaborative systems in public administration (Lopes and Farias, 2022; Percy-Smith 2006; Stoker 2006; Agranoff 1991; Gerton and Mitchell 2019). The world today and its problems have become so complex or wicked that public organisations, like all other structured forms of public life, cannot afford to work in isolation. Even so, and despite many success stories, efforts to work together like realising joint organisational actions are not a walk in the park. And have been proven to be as complex as the problems they are trying to address. Subsequently, collaborative arrangements also characteristically bear tensions and conflicts in public management (Christiansen et al. 2007; Hudson et al. 1999). But, this notwithstanding, policy actors at all levels remain optimistic with an increasing number of collaborative efforts at all levels.

Joint action is the way to go in navigating the complex public governance landscape. For some time now, especially since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, collaborative structures are becoming increasingly fashionable in finding the solutions to modern 'grand' challenges of public administration. Although by their nature, multi-agency collaborations and partnerships also remain loose, elusive and complex as they come in different forms depending on policy problems to be resolved, actors' preferences, political leeway, and so forth. In so doing, they acquire their own unique and multifaceted challenges. These challenges become inevitable as collaborations increase in scope to deal with difficulties in creating sustainable systems, responding to the demand for innovation, and the ambiguity of goals in public administration (Agranoff 1991; Gerton and Mitchell 2019; Capano et al. 2022). The result is that multi-agency network policy processes acquire different empirical public governance modes or approaches. Because policymakers or organisational leaders consider additional structural cohesiveness and normative congruence beyond the existing administrative systems for policy effectiveness.

In line with this, most studies on public value and governance theories identify composites of trust as critical in discerning how multi-agency collaborations function (e.g., Oomsels and Bouckaert 2014). It is argued that the viability of public value management rests "on its ability to point to a motivational force that does not solely rely on rules or incentives to drive public service practice and reform" (Stoker 2006, p.14). And the personnel are more motivated by engaging in networks, partnerships, mutual respect, and learning relationships.

This means modern governments must achieve some degree of internal and external technical homogeneity due to the growing need to foster institutional autonomy in policy decisions. Still, the challenge is that while internal coherence has been easier to build within the hierarchical organisation of public entities, 'external homogeneity' needs other strategies, mainly realisable through off-the-book informal initiatives. Or by nurturing informal organisations) and boundary-spanning relations, which may, alternatively, hinder the institutional autonomy of some actors. The latter is common in the African public service that still operates largely within the aid regime conditionalities (e.g. Tapscott 2022).

In other words, the coupling of horizontal operations often involves informal or loosely matched legal repertoires for inter-agency interaction that formal processes are often not akin to. The primary objective of leveraging informal organisations is to foster coordination, information-sharing, planning, implementation, and collaboration that seems to reside in informal relations, which are mostly based on social capital or trust (Percy-Smith 2006; Ansell et al. 2022). But challenges remain in finding a functional model coupling legal and non-legal or informal operations effectively, as illustrated by some studies on Kenya (e.g., Bernardi and de Chiara, 2011; Chelagat, et al., 2019) and elsewhere (e.g. Christensen and Lægheid, 2019). That is to say, finding and building trust has been easier said than done when it comes to realising inter or multi-agency partnerships in the public sector. For one, public organisations are more concerned about the loss of power that comes with attaining technical efficiency by organising tasks across institutional boundaries (Molenveld et al., 2020; Onyango, 2019a). Other typical constraints also include overlapping organisational mandates and political inclinations, and capacity issues (Percy-Smith 2006; Onyango and Ondiek 2021).

This implies that inter-agency relations do not, after all, forbid government institutions from engaging in activities that may

lead to prioritising inward-looking strategies while collaborating in the implementation processes of cross-cutting policy programs. Put differently, it is difficult to regulate and model trust and trust-building strategies in public administration's primarily political environments. Besides, public organisations are characterised by goal ambiguities and legal overlaps that tend to frustrate effective coordination and information sharing (e.g. Christensen et al. 2007; Onyango 2018).

Consequently, dysfunctionalities emerge in the forms of loosely matched expectations, structures, unique cultural and institutional constraints, and blindspots, difficulties recognising the need, identifying a legitimate basis, and clarifying the purpose of collaborating are prevalent in collaborative implementation (Milward and Provin 2006). Other issues may be the lack of joint budgeting, assessing collaborative capacity and trust-building from principled conduct, etc. (Hudson et al. 1999).

This paper presumes that most of these dysfunctions, if not all, primarily reside in the social processes deficits of implementation typical in public institutions. It argues that trust concerns remain deeply pertinent within social processes of inter-institutional relations (Bardach 2001). Indeed, since the first decades of the 1900s, administrative tasks and collective bargaining in public service delivery are sometimes (or frequently) ordered more by relational inputs than structural mechanisation in public organisations (e.g., Merton 1939).

This being the case, this paper devises a multi-agency approach, mainly anchored on trust attributes, to understand these collaborative dimensions in implementing an integrated policy, specifically anti-corruption policies in Kenya. Its empirical discussion focuses on the relationships between government institutions and their personnel in implementing cross-cutting policy programs in public administration. And explores the effectiveness of implementing integrated policy strategies for anti-corruption policies within the purview of mutual trust.

As an explanatory variable in this paper, inter-agency or mutual trust interrogates the agency of implementing institutions and their personnel's commitment to integrated strategies in policy implementation. Or how they relate with other agencies and stakeholders (dependent variable) to implement anti-corruption policy programs' integrated implementation strategies in the Kenyan public sector.

Kenya provides an interesting African case study for empirical contribution. For a few decades, mainly since the 2010s, the Kenyan policy landscape has featured a surge in governance approaches like multi-agency relations in public policy and public service delivery (e.g., Otenyo 2021; Obosi 2022). In this way, a focus on Kenya builds on and contributes to the growing research on challenges characterising the fragility and complexity of inter-agency relations in public governance in African public service. This analysis becomes especially relevant following the recent intentional efforts and emerging trends in African public service to work in the spirit of the 3Cs of public governance – coordination, cooperation, and collaboration (e.g., Onyango 2019a; Ohemeng et al. 2019).

However, trust and how it can be theorised and determines implementation outcomes in African public service remains

understudied. This paper seeks to contribute toward filling this gap. In doing so, its empirical discussion is guided by the following questions;

1. How can the inter-agency trust analysis be framed or approached within multi-agency relations in public administration in developing contexts like Kenya?
2. What is the role of inter-agency trust in understanding the effectiveness of multi-agency networks?

In dealing with the first question, the paper formulates a multifaceted theoretical approach founded on the underlying and common perspectives in theorising public administration's scope and nature. It employs a more humanistic understanding of the collaborative model (see Pirson and Turnbull 2011) or networked governance (O'Toole 1997).

Multi-agency structures as forms of network respond to deficits arising from the traditional ways of managing public organisations. Pirson and Turnbull (2011) state that more hierarchical, larger, and more complex organisations like public institutions risk failures because of increased biases, errors, and missing data in communication and control systems. These problems introduce information overload on senior managers and respective regulators, which should be addressed by employing network governance. The latter "introduces a division of power via multiple boards, checks and balances, and active stakeholder" (Pirson and Turnbull 2011, 101).

In addition, because composites of trust in public organisations take stock of the broader operational contexts of these agencies, conceptualising inter-institutional trust considers the three key features: bureaucratic structures, cultural or natural systems and environmental variables (Scott and Davis [2007] 2015).

The second question deals with empirical descriptions and explores inter-agency relationships within the lenses of inter-agency trust, defined here as "the extent to which organisational members have a collectively held trust orientation toward a partner firm"(p.82). Among other things, inter-agency trust involves a) reciprocity, mutualism (or interdependence) among partners, b) commitment or moral obligation to the collective objective, c) relative value congruence; d) productivity, professionalism, and performance, e) compliance, subjective evaluation either based on sentimental or rational judgements, d) openness or transparency, etc. The same features have also been fundamental in evaluating the effectiveness of a multi-agency approach in the service delivery or implementation of policy programs (Hudson et al. 1999). The foci of cross-institutional trust underscore trust-building strategies and trust-motivated engagements in multi-agency relations critical to the effective implementation of anti-corruption policies as public accountability composite.

The proceeding sections are structured as follows. The first part briefly reviews and develops conceptual composites of the multi-agency approach, inter-institutional trust, and how the two link to unpack policy programs' implementation processes, mainly the underlying attitudes and organisational composites. A section after this presents the framework of inter-agency trust before focusing on the context of the multi-agency approach in Kenya. After this is the study's methodology, data presentation and discussion, and conclusion sections.

### *Understanding multi-agency collaborations and multi-agency trust: a review*

In light of the current popularity of collaborative governance, organisational and public innovation research has grown recently, advocating for harnessing the bureaucracy's informal initiatives or functional operations. Central to this is an increased focus on building mutual trust to strengthen inter-agency collaborations (e.g. Stoker 2006). Mutual trust between partners would most likely reduce collaborative constraints like jurisdictional tugs-of-war, limited resources, legislative overlaps, bounded rationality, and capacity to increase performance. As a public governance approach, a multi-agency network is defined as "any joint activity by two or more agencies working together that is intended to increase public value by working together rather than separately" (Bardach 1998, 8).

Joint action by organisations is based on the idea that "complex policies are more effectively put into practice if agencies cooperate a lot, whereas less difficult tasks are handled just as well without inter-organisational cooperation" (Lundin 2007, 629). A study on designs for implementing HIV/AIDS in Kenya found that policy actors adopted a multi-agency approach because "the fragmentation of externalities has been producing less bureaucratic quality and capabilities, deriving from a significant lack of coordination and generating a proliferation of projects and creation of parallel systems of monitoring and evaluation" (Bernardi and de Chiara, 2011, p.35, also see Chelegat et al. 2019 concerning collaborative approaches toward implementation of health policy programs in Kenya)

Even though multi-agency networks also need well-designed rational systems to be effective, they are primarily based on public managers' boundary-spanning skills. In a study produced by the World Bank on a multi-agency approach to implementing anti-corruption policies in Kenya, it was stated that key administrative challenges lay with the prevailing administrative skillsets and culture. The brief mentions that "traditionally, the obstacles to coordination between government agencies [in Kenya] stem from fundamental cultural differences and motivations of different agencies" (World Bank, n.d., p.268).

It is worth noting that this involves public managers' capacities and networks or the pursuit of informal governance imperatives. Multi-agency networks rely on partnering organisations' cultural and environmental systems or contexts (Percy-Smith 2006). There are potential linkages between performance problems in multi-agency relations when integrating policy programs resulting in trust deficits (O'Toole 1997). Also, trust deficits are common in the public sector because policymaking decisions and implementation guidelines take top-down synergies to public agencies' pyramidal organisational forms. Hierarchies or pyramidal management processes reduce the human face and relations needed for effectively realising administrative or implementation processes.

Nevertheless, managing networks in collaborative networks work on horizontal management principles that, among others, chiefly factor in and fronts elements of mutual respect, equality, and confidence between partners (Milward and Provin 2006). Since the multi-agency approach is conceptually ambiguous, it is often modelled under different categories or typologies. Table 1 below summarises these, including hierarchical, working mode, and engagement levels typologies (Fox and Butler 2004).

**Table 1.** Some typologies of the Multi-Agency Approach

Typology	Activities	Purpose
Hierarchical	Information Sharing	Knowledge of the partner's role and capacity to do it; mutual learning, access to information; and openness in decision-making
	Planning action Implementing projects/plans	Identification of needs and activities; processes for such activities Joint or separate planning, monitoring, reviewing, etc.
	Coordination and Cooperation	Nurturing cooperative culture; admittance of new partners
Mode of Working	Autonomous working	Separate nature of programs; partners involved in training, advising, etc.
	Coordinated working	Work separately but within commonly set goals and assessments.
	Integrated working	Synsethization and coordination of work; ownership of the programs by the partners (institutionalisation); teamwork; holistic roles, etc.
Levels of Engagement	Cooperation	More formal relationships; goals are more on individuals than collective; future links.
	Coordination	Joint agreement to work on collective goals; permission to influence each other.
	Integration	High commitment to a shared goal; formation of a new engagement structure.

**Source:** Author's summary

To Fox and Butler (2004), under the level of engagement, partners can be further involved in mainly three functions: a) strategic, which focuses on the priorities that influence the strategic plans of the individual partner. This is explicit in Kenya's Anti-Corruption strategic plan (2018-2023) drafted by Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) in collaboration with other stakeholders like Transparency International (TI-Kenya) and other government agencies, mainly the Commission for Administrative Justice (CAJ) (e.g. World Bank n.d.), as Kenya's health policy programmes (e.g. Chelagat et al. 2019). b) Commissioning deals with the commissioning priorities of individual partners, including performance management of the policy programs. An example is Kenya's implementation of the current 18<sup>th</sup>-cycle performance contracting regarding anti-corruption strategies and policies in the public sector. c) Policy program concerned with transforming the individual partner from a virtual to a physical organisation that anyone can engage with.

We can also link these typologies' components to Mary Parker Follet's famous coordination principles in the context of a multi-agency network. These principles include the *early stages* principle that enables effective mapping of challenges such as limited resources, bounded rationality on decision-making, and efficient planning function mechanisms. The *continuity principle* may enhance certainty, learning, and seamlessness in public organisations' decision-making and implementation. Although it is somewhat more descriptive of internal relationships between the supervisors and subordinates, *direct contact* as the third principle may strengthen inter-agency relationships and enhance coordination through effective communication and reduced pathologies. It has become commonplace that pathologies like red tape and routines often stem from the hierarchy and hinder building mutual respect and trust in a multi-agency network (Bardach 1998). The fourth principle of *reciprocal relations* is a central dimension of this study because it can lead to mutual trust

through openness and transparency within and between agencies in a multi-agency network (Milward and Provin, 2006).

In short, the multi-agency approach seeks to de-bureaucratise public policy and service-delivery processes to, among others, acquire additional resources and skills which come with cooperating with like-minded organisations. Cooperations need reciprocal relationships, matching values and norms, shared missions and vision, teamwork, communication flow, ethical management tools, and a positive attitude towards each other (Pucetaite et al., 2010). Additionally, it calls for confidence, transparency, openness, compliance, and information-sharing among partners. In other words, mutual trust between partnering agencies involved in implementing or delivering a particular policy program is critical and central for co-creating sustainable implementation strategies (e.g., Ansell et al., 2022).

Most importantly, mutual trust takes critical cues from contextual variables or local dynamics. In public administration, these will include a complex mix of socio-cultural, economic, and political norms and structures that often explain trust deficits in transitional economies (Onyango 2019a). The African public service, for example, is still relatively dealing with conditions that prevailed during the formative years of American public administration (see Onyango 2021; 2022). Dwight Waldo described these dysfunctions as '*an important administrative fact*'. This fact featured disorganisation, amateurism, haphazardness, and dishonesty (Waldo 1952). Indeed, Pucetaite et al. (2010) observe that trust deficits in public institutions in the global south, therefore, stem from

*[...] certain social-historical processes that [condition] lower self-regulation, authoritarian and patriarchal organisational structures and lack of partnership-based interrelations between the manager and employees, a rather flexible attitude to the norms and standards, negligent behaviour at work, etc. (p. 198).*

This arguably makes it challenging to apply most Weberian models for trust-building in developing countries' contexts. Most significantly, concerning promoting employee engagement in public organisations (Ohemeng et al., 2019). Thus, the utility of inter-institutional trust in analysing inter-agency relations plays an explanatory, dependent, or intervening role in discerning these relations' effectiveness. However, an inquiry into multi-agency relations in public administration is more visible in discerning coordination challenges of wicked policy problems, most significantly concerning improving the institutional capacities for coordination (Christensen and Lægreid 2019).

Still, because of the non-linear development and complex outcomes of inter-institutional relations, trust-building strategies should not be viewed as the end but as a means for effective operations of inter-agency relations (Hudson et al. 1999). This study explored the linkages between multi-agency relations from inter-institutional trust in anti-corruption and related policy programs in Kenya.

### *Framing inter-agency relations: A Three-Dimensional Organizational Approach*

In general, mutual trust is conceptually ambivalent and difficult to measure. It has two components, namely, the *cognition* and *affective* components. The first "refers to an evaluative belief and usually a certain extent of experience and knowledge about the other actor. Cognition-based trust is founded on evaluative predictions and calculations, such as the probability of the reciprocal behaviour of the other party" (Pucetaite et al., 2010,199). Rational appraisals contingent on performance, compliance, ethical behaviours, etc., are based on cognition-based trust. Lewis and Wiegert (1985) argue that under cognition-based trust, "we choose whom we will trust in which respects and under what circumstances, and we base the choice on what we take to be 'good reasons,' constituting evidence of trustworthiness" (p. 970). The trustees' choice to trust or distrust is based on adequate knowledge or ignorance (McAllister 1995). Other subsets of inter-organisational trust are performance-based, integrity, and transparency-based trust (Schoorman et al., 2007).

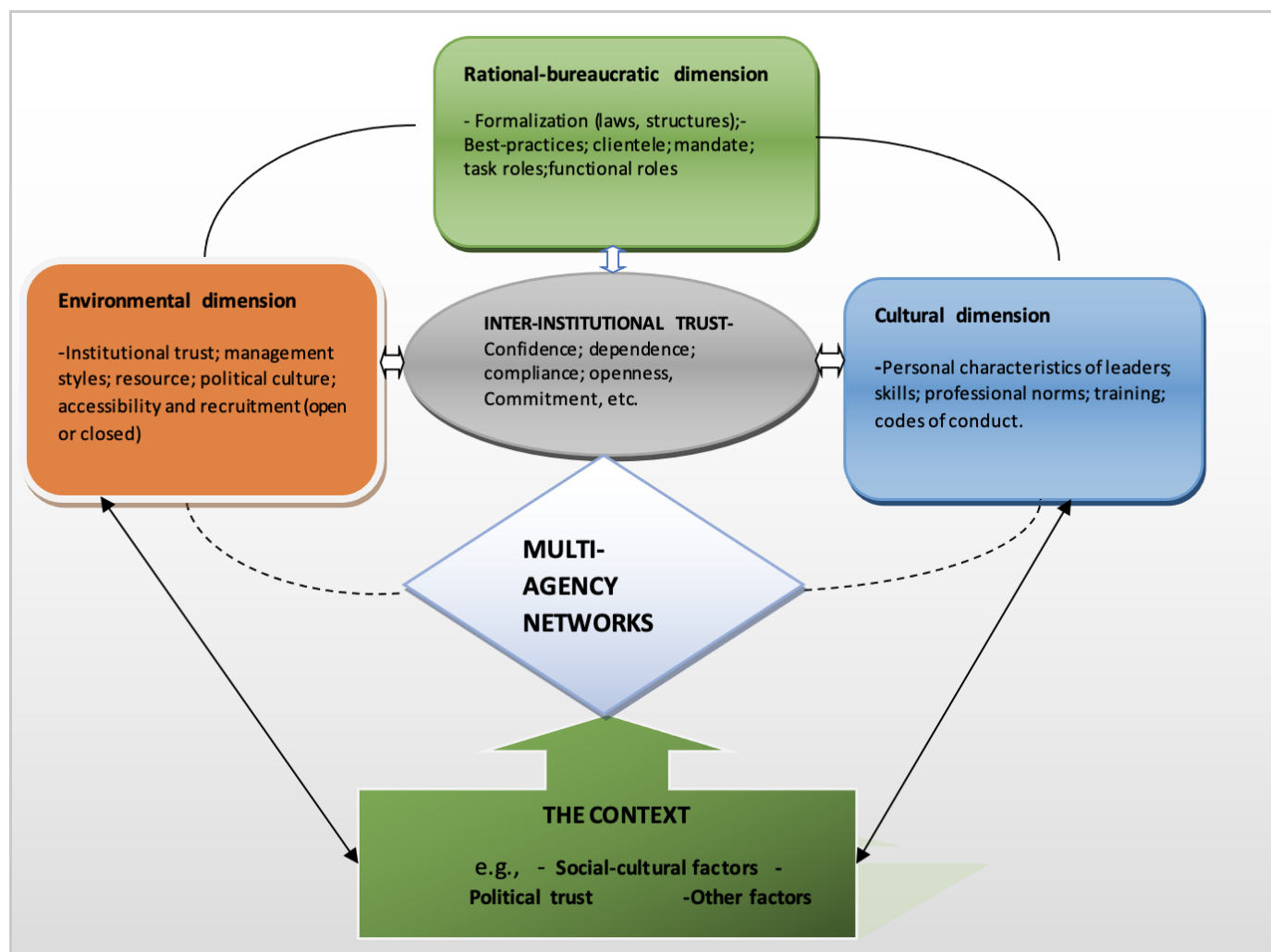
Conversely, affective-based trust is a sentimental and emotional bond between individuals to trust. Individuals invest emotionally in trusting relationships, genuine expressions, and care and concern for their partners' welfare. Also, there is a belief in the intrinsic virtue of such relationships and the reciprocity of such sentiments (McAllister 1995, p.26). This facet of trust takes stock of a relationship's history over a long period and may be needed to sustain long-term organisational development. This means organisational environments should feature value-congruence between trustees, the fulfilment of expected outputs, sustained performance, and internal institutional culture (Pucetaite et al. 2010).

Most importantly, contends Pucetaite et al. (2010), affect-based trust "is proactive: it involves a mutual expectation of fair and honest behaviour. It is also characterised by congruence between the parties' values and interests" (p.199). Therefore, it may also stimulate other subsets, mainly trust-based, predictability-based, and credibility-based (Schmidt and Schreiber 2019). Affect-based trust can also be fundamental in enhancing strong and semi-strong trust forms (Barney and Hansen 1994). While referencing Barney and Hansen (1994, Schmidt and Schreiber (2019) summarise the distinction between the two forms of trust in the following manner;

*Semi-strong trust occurs when parties to an exchange are protected through various social and economic costs imposed by governance devices, while strong trust emerges despite governance mechanisms. Strong trust... depends on the values, principles and standards of behaviour internalised by parties. One could also argue whether it may be included in the definition of social governance. That is, moral and ethical behaviour, taken from an anthropological perspective, are evolutionary forms of exclusion of individual actors from the group (Schmidt and Schreiber 2019, p.74).*

This paper's approach builds on cognition and affect-based trust and the subsets they may educe to describe the complex contexts of inter-agency collaboration in public administration. These factors are (a) the structural features of public organisations or the rational-bureaucratic perspective, (b) the informal variables of public organisations or the cultural perspective, and (c) the broader ecological variables of public organisations or the environmental perspective of inter-institutional trust. This three-dimensional perspective takes cues from rational, natural, and open systems perspectives (e.g., Scott and Davis [2007] 2015). These functions of inter-agency trust interact within multi-agency networks are

illustrated in figure (1) below.



**Figure 1:** Components of Cross-Institutional Trust in Multi-agency Networks

**Source:** Author's proposition

### *The normative perspective of inter-institutional trust*

The rational-bureaucratic systems order cognition-based trust between partner members. They stipulate the normative foundations of the bureaucracy that defines formal relationships, designs of organisations, and the degree of compliance with different roles and authorities in implementing policy programs. They further provide legal legitimacy for effective boundary-spanning strategies, which unpacks legal complexities that may limit the leeway of action and technicalities hindering policy collaborations. The subsequent legalistic flexibilities and organisational culture are antecedents for internal and external trust-building efforts, which can alternatively enhance institutional capacity and personnel commitments. And help determine the organisational purpose, clientele, and existing or possible collaboration strategies. Additionally, these rational systems involve organisational leaders' initiatives or how they use them as instruments to

influence organisational values, vision, policy designs and problem structure norms.

In his study to map what he considers African management philosophy in Kenya and Tanzania, Mapunda (2012) shows that Kenyans and Tanzanian “employees expect the manager or leader to make authoritative decisions, to be decisive. In their minds, that is what he is employed to do. Consultation would be perceived as a sign of weakness – a lack of knowledge and confidence on the part of the manager or leader. Concepts such as teamwork and empowerment are associated with ‘Western’ management styles” (p.14). While this may be applicable, it also suffices to state that organisational leaders’ actions take on different issues. This includes their personal characteristics, historical relations between employees and the situation at hand. For instance, when it comes to collaborations, there are higher possibilities of consultations between organisational leaders and senior members or employees. Another factor is the specific organisational culture and its mandate. Altogether these factors determine how organisational leaders utilise their legal mandates in collaborative initiatives.

From a rational-bureaucratic systems perspective, public managers considerably score high on rationality (Christensen et al. 2007) and engage in structural-instrumental legitimation of policy initiatives to improve internal and external environments for boundary-spanning activities. Jurisdictional responsibilities and functions bind institutional policy relationships for trust-building strategies. These functional roles may further enhance what Benne and Sheats (1948) refer to as *task roles*. Task roles relate to the information and data-seeking efforts, initiating and clarifying ideas, proposals, plans, coordination of groups, and groups' orientation towards achieving organisational goals and establishing outside contacts for policy collaboration and networks for integration processes.

Integration processes, in this case, are particularly critical in measuring the effectiveness of policy programs. This means the logic of action in rational-bureaucratic functions is that of consequences. Public managers weigh their actions on instrumental actions or bureaucratic scorecards and corresponding policy outcomes (March and Olsen 2009; Christensen et al. 2007). Thus, building inter-agency trust strategies depends on existing instrumental capacities, the nature of public leadership, unambiguous objectives, and resources attached to policy programs, as I will show further in the data analysis and discussion sections below.

### *A cultural perspective of inter-institutional trust*

Frequently, cultural systems form the main operational repertoires of organisations (Hofstede and Hofstede 2004; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2008). As cultural systems, informal norms, values, and processes animate the interfaces between formal and informal administration properties. Overall, cultural systems connote composites of organisational culture, which closely match rational-bureaucratic components. For example, bureaucratic personalities of openness to learning from experiences and agreement, among others that align with the organisation's performance orientation, promote team-building attitudes, value integrity, innovations, etc. Studies have shown that cultural systems

sustain and support collaborative networks (e.g., Bouckaert 2012; Onyango 2019). Especially by enhancing organisational communication and commitment, essential in retaining key actors within an inter-agency collaboration. In this respect, organisational culture is considered a strategy that can be harnessed and manipulated to improve organisational commitment and productivity. Consequently, managers have often been advised to nurture and utilise culture to sustain performance and collaborative public management strategies.

The cultural perspective underscores the affect-based trust composites. It emphasises "internal aspects of institutionalised organisations, historical legacies, and established traditions but also looks at external institutionalised environments and prevailing beliefs regarding what constitutes relevant problems and good solutions" (Christensen et al., 2007, 3). Therefore, unlike the bureaucratic systems perspective, the logic of action from the cultural system perspective is that of appropriateness – where appropriate behaviours do not call for rational deliberations. Instead, the focus is on what is most likely to be applicable, tried in the past, or drawn from previous experiences and lessons that have worked elsewhere (Christensen et al. 2007, 3).

The logic of appropriate, in this case, may also entail behaviours primarily drawn on dominant norms and values taken for granted and have been perpetually practised or rationalised by administrators. Cultural imperatives also mean that integrity and efforts to enforce them in bureaucratic contexts have more to do with administrative personalities and relations than rules. This may partly explain how public agencies enter into partnerships and why some of these partnerships may collapse or remain stable and sustainable, as will be explained further in this paper.

### *The environmental perspective of inter-institutional trust*

The environmental perspective integrates both the internal and external surroundings of an institution. Organisational environments, such as working conditions in the institution and management styles within and between government institutions, may result in some degree of trust or distrust between collaborating agencies and between these agencies and the citizens (Bouckaert 2012). As such, contingencies, mainly political trust, public trust, and institutional trust towards the government or agencies concerned with realising a particular policy program, shape a typology for multi-agency relations and are critical in building inter-agency trust.

Moreover, employees' internal environments are highly influenced by the prevailing management patterns and institutional trust levels, including collective mindsets (Hofstede and Hofstede 2004; Ohemeng, et al., 2019). This way, public leaders are tasked with changing mindsets from defensive to productive reasonings and creating new ways of managing the personnel to become innovative. This involves encouraging teamwork, effective conflict resolution mechanisms, and creating a climate of trust. The climate of trust "encourages risk-taking behaviours, such as cooperation, knowledge sharing and helping colleagues in need, because employees are confident their generosity will be reciprocated" (Ohemeng Darko and Amoako-Asiedu 2019, 3). This will produce different teamwork strategies and outward-looking

performance definitions through collaborations and knowledge-sharing.

Ancona and Caldwell (1992) contend that team strategies in an organisation towards their environment can be categorised into *informing*, *parading*, and *probing* teams. "Informing teams remain relatively isolated from their environment; parading teams have high levels of passive observation of the environment, and probing teams actively engage outsiders. Probing teams revise their knowledge of the environment through external contact, seek outside feedback on their ideas, and promote their teams' achievements within their organisation" (p. 5). They further identified four typologies of boundary-spanning activities – ambassador, task coordinator, scout, and guard. The *ambassador activity* relies on the boundary spanner to access the organisation's power structures. The *task coordinator activity* "identifies how the personnel provides accessibility to the workflow structures to manage horizontal dependence. Scout activity concerns the acquisition of pertinent ideas and information. The guard activity aims to protect information from external parties (Curnin 2016,2). These are determined mainly by an individual organisation's leadership style, knowledge transfer, training, as well as internal ethical climate and managerial strategies.

In a study looking into the impact of leadership training programs on knowledge transfer to improve Health Care systems in county governments in Kenya, it was established that successful experiences were because of the "training design, work environment climate, trainee characteristics, team-based coaching and leveraging on occurring opportunities" (Chelagat et al. 2019,1). Conversely, failed programs were because of the lack of effective communication, longitudinal coaching and work-team recruitment (Chelagat et al. 2019).

Creating trustful relationships, therefore, is stimulated when bureaucratic, cultural, and environmental rationalities are closely matched, as demonstrated in implementing health system policy programs. In this way, administrative executives are boundary-spanners who engage in interpersonal roles as leaders, figureheads, liaisons, etc. Likewise, they play informational roles, i.e., as monitors, disseminators, spokespersons, etc. Furthermore, decisional roles include disturbance handlers, resource allocators, priority setters and entrepreneurs, etc. (Mintzberg 1973). This partly explains why different policy programs may become variedly implemented in public institutions. In this way, trust in general and inter-institutional trust, in particular, can be understood within an interface between organisational culture, structure, and external environments of public organisations.

## The Context: Multi-Agency Approach and Policy Programs in Kenya

As public innovation policy tools, multi-agency approaches are designed to strengthen horizontal institutional relationships or policy networks, which should help resolve some vertical implementation gaps. Or failures of downstream implementation in the public sector. In this study, the multi-agency approach aligns and should strengthen horizontal public accountability arrangements. By their nature worldwide, multi-agency policy networks in Kenya have taken some of the following dimensions; (a) collaborations with International Organizations (or donor agencies); (b) collaborations with locally-based non-governmental organisations and civil society groups; (c) collaborations between regional governments

or inter-governmental partnerships (i.e., Economic blocs); (d) collaborations between government institutions and community associations/groups like in the context of communal resource-mobilisation, e.g., through youth or women groups, and (e) collaborations between government institutions themselves.

However, these distinctions are sometimes not refined. They may overlap or include other streams, such as inter-agency relations and membership from non-governmental organisations. In Kenya, this is very common. The last stream is increasingly becoming the implementation model for policy programs, especially in the national bureaucracy and between regional governments and national institutions (e.g., Otenyo 2021). These arrangements aim to enhance the effectiveness of policy implementation. For example, the National Council of Administration of Justice (NCAJ), formed in 2011, is high-level policymaking, implementation, and oversight coordinating mechanism. Its membership comprises State and non-State justice sector actors. It is formally required to hold at least four Council meetings per year.

The Chief Justice heads it by statute that institutionalises its policies within different institutional contexts, such as the Law Society of Kenya, Kenya Prisons, Directorate of Public Prosecutions, the Directorate of Criminal Investigation, and Inspector of Police, among other members of mutual interest. Members have lauded NCAJ for ensuring enhanced policy development and effective collective action on policy implementation and evaluation. For example, with the outbreak of COVID-19, it recently convened three times to draft guidelines that would cushion the spread of COVID-19, mainly in Prisons and other areas.

The role of donor agencies in initiating or sustaining these networks as funders have also been extensively documented in Kenya. Following massive food shortages and malnutrition in the 1980s, donor agencies such as the European Union (EU) and USAID worked with the government to resolve Kenya's disastrous food security (Otenyo 2021). Again, within the Kenyan National Plan of Action (2013-17) framework, the Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme, a cross-national collaborative framework, has been legitimated.

BMM is funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). BMM has been critical in training and providing information for the Ministry of Immigration, Kenya Police Service and Department of Children, and other stakeholders in combating human trafficking. This is mainly through Isiolo County for Eritreans and Ethiopians en route to South Africa because of human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants between the two countries.

Other multi-stakeholder arrangements include the *Uwiano* Platform for Peace, whose membership includes UNDP, UNWomen, Kenya's National Security Council (NSC), the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), IEBC and PeaceNet, has a presence in all the 47 counties in Kenya. Besides being critical in training government and non-governmental personnel, this platform has enhanced coordination among its partners at national and sub-national levels.

In the context of anti-corruption policy programs, administrative executives at all government levels are engaged in different multi-agency arrangements. These are created through statutes (legal rational systems) or personal initiatives

(informal boundary-spanning activities) to enhance the effectiveness of corresponding statutes. This has been motivated to; address the complex problem of public policies and create an environment for the comprehensive implementation of cross-cutting policy programs. The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) is the lead agency that coordinates anti-corruption policy strategies in government institutions, commissions, and authorities. As presented below, this has involved devising and engaging in different typologies or forms of multi-agency networks.

### *The Anti-Corruption Policy-Programs*

Before the sessional paper No.2 of 2018, which rolled out the National Ethics and Anti-Corruption Policy (NEACP), anti-corruption programs in Kenya were hosted in many legal frameworks, ethical guidelines, and other legislation to foster public accountability or strengthen public administration integrity systems. These include Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act, 2003; the Bribery Act, 2016; Public Officer Ethics Act, 2003 (POEA); Leadership and Integrity Act, 2012 (LIA); the Public Finance Management Act, 2012, among others. NEACP's development and implementation take a collaborative governance approach efforts by key government agencies like the Witness Protection Agency, Commission for Administrative Justice (CAJ), etc. Cross-institutional synergies are highly recommended to realise the effective implementation of the policy (Republic of Kenya 2018).

Based on the recognition that enforcement of this anti-corruption legislation and programs is cross-cutting and requires a multi-sector approach to be effective, the National Anti-Corruption Campaign Steering Committee (NACCSC) and EACC have engaged in broad-based stakeholder consultations and networks. Partnerships and collaboration in anti-corruption efforts involve commissions, ministries, donor organisations, and other stakeholders. In particular, EACC has primarily partnered with agencies whose core business matches its own but is slightly different because of corruption's complex nature as a policy problem. These include the Ombudsman's office (Commission for Administrative Justice - CAJ) and the police.

Therefore, among other networks, through the Kenya Leadership and Integrity Forum (KLIF), EACC, CAJ, government ministries and their departments, and the Judiciary cooperate to enhance internal or vertical and external or horizontal coordination. This is on specific investigations and penalties that may emerge during the implementation of the Public Service Integrity Program (PSIP) strategies that were applied before the NEACP. As a component of the Civil Service Reform Programmes (CSRP) reforms, anti-corruption policy programs were to be integrated into political-administrative structures through the PSIP framework. The PSIP was rationalised by matching public sector reforms with needed behavioural changes for a responsive, responsible, and accountable public administration. Therefore, training on integrity matters is key to changing the culture and environments of administration. Consequently, PSIP requirements, mainly Performance Contracting (PC), were to be integrated into all government agencies' administrative systems.

The indicators for organisational performance are established within the PC to include the following strategies for integrating anti-corruption policy programs in the public sector: (i) developing anti-corruption policies. This should include

a statement on managerial responsibility and the subordinate staff's responsibility to address corruption in the institutions. Besides, there should be a summary that points out potential corrupt practices. Presumably, this summary should guide the staff on corruption and anti-corruption matters.

Developing institutional anti-corruption policies also creates corrupt prevention committees (CPCs). (ii) Realisation of corruption prevention committees or CPCs. This was to coordinate PSIP in the concerned agency and sensitisation through corruption campaigns within institutional jurisdictions. There should also be a review, monitoring, and evaluate the impact of PSIP, including preparing and submitting periodical reports on the internal status of corruption. (iii) Public entities should develop a corruption prevention plan (CPP). This includes developing risk management strategies, identifying critical functions and responses to risk areas, etc. (iv) Institutions should develop specific codes of conduct according to the national ethical guidelines. (v) There should be frequent integrity training, including the appointments and training of the Integrity Assurance Officers (IAOs). The IAOs should provide technical support to the management on Policy integration besides conducting sensitisation workshops in collaboration with EACC.

### *Multi-Agency Networks for Anti-Corruption Policy Strategies in Kenya*

Several multi-agency networks are meant to help integrate anti-corruption policy programs in Kenya. The public sector's primary partnership networks are KLIF and the Integrated Public Complaints Referral Mechanism (IPCRM)<sup>[i]</sup>. EACC defines KLIF as "a national integrity system set up to coordinate a unified sector-based strategy for preventing and combating corruption by forging alliances and partnerships with sectors across the Kenyan society" (EACC 2015, 37). KLIF has 14 members across the public and private sectors. These include follows; Legislature, Judiciary, Executive, EACC, Enforcement Agencies, Watchdog Agencies, Education, County Governments, Civil Society, Private Sector, Media, Professional Bodies, Labor, Religious Sector, and Constitutional Commissions (refer to EACC website).

Under the KLIF umbrella, the EACC coordinated and rolled out a five-year multi-sector integrity strategy dubbed the Kenya Integrity Plan (KIP). Through KIP, a roadmap was formulated "for all the KLIF sectors to implement a unified strategy to combat Kenya's corruption. All the sectors and the respective institutions implementing the KIP align their anti-corruption interventions to the KIP and develop annual action plans and progress implementation reports"<sup>[ii]</sup>.

These reports provide an opportunity to assess performance and measure the impact of stakeholders' anti-corruption activities. Furthermore, the IPCRM was formed in 2013 as multi-agency information management of corruption reports among six partners. Membership includes the EACC, the CAJ, Transparency International (TI-Kenya) as the only non-governmental organisation partner, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission and the National Anti-Corruption Campaign Steering Committee. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) describes IPCRM as an initiative of five agencies. IPCRM aims to strengthen partnerships between the state oversight institutions in handling, managing, and disposing of the received complaints/reports. It should also give feedback to the members of the public who lodged complaints (NCIC 2015, 35).

More reports on human rights, corruption, and hate speech, among others, have been reported by member organisations. For example, the IPCRM initiative "led to efficient and effective access of services at devolved levels by establishing one-stop complaints and referral centres that has enhanced access, especially in rural/remote areas, to public complaints procedures established to address hate speech and ethnic discrimination" (NCIC 2015, 36).

The IPCRM ensures coordination, information-sharing, and building an inclusive approach to tackling corruption amongst its stakeholders. Thus, the integration of PSIP is not entirely conducted with a principal-agent framework but also within polycentric systems in the public sector. For example, in the subnational public administration, the County Public Service Boards and Accounting Officers/Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are in charge of integrating the PSIP in collaboration with EACC and other commissions.

## *Methodology*

This study was based on a descriptive case study strategy and data collection methods. It triangulated different qualitative procedures and techniques. The analysis of audited documents and annual statutory reports by KLIF members was carried out. This was further combined with primary data collected in EACC, the Ombudsman, Transparency International-Kenya (TI-Kenya), and MDAs in selected counties as units of analysis. Primary data involved face-to-face interviews and the administration of open-ended questionnaires to public officials in Nairobi and Kisumu county governments in Kenya between January 2014 and August 2016 with a follow-up conducted between 15 and 20 October 2022. A follow-up was conducted with KLIF offices and EACC, revealing that the implementation design of anti-corruption programs remains the same under the PSIP framework despite the coming into effect of the National Ethics and Anti-Corruption Policy (NEACP) in 2018. However, efforts are underway to transit to full adoption and implementation of NEACP.

The follow-up visits sought to establish changes that have taken place as far as the findings are concerned. Those reached out to through the previous networks (5 key informants, three at EACC and two at KLIF offices) through phone calls confirmed that not much has changed in terms of challenges or dysfunctions being experienced in collaborative networks for implementing anti-corruption programs.

The face-to-face interviews lasted for approximately an hour. The interviewees included Heads of Departments (HODs), county administrators, chief and executive officers in Kisumu and Migori counties of Kenya, and EACC TI-Kenya and CAJ staff in Kisumu, Nairobi, and Migori offices. Informal conversations with note-taking were also used during data collection. A total of 28 respondents participated in the face-to-face interviews out of the target of 50 respondents. Similarly, 45 others filled out the administered questionnaires out of the 120 targets. This brings to a total of 73 respondents who participated in this study. The majority of the respondents were in their mid-30s to late 50s. In contrast, the latter group

mostly comprised senior administrators and executives. The diagrammatic distribution of respondents who participated in the face-to-face interviews is shown in table (2).

**Table 2.** Interviews Conducted and respondents by County, Department, and Gender

<i>County</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>
<i>Migori</i>	District Children Office	Male	1
<i>Migori</i>	Gender & Social Dev. Office	Male	1
<i>Kisumu</i>	Policy and Strategy Dev.	Female	1
<i>Nairobi/Kisumu</i>	Transparency International	Female/Males	3
<i>Kisumu</i>	Governor's Office	Males	2
<i>Kisumu</i>	Agriculture	Female	1
<i>Kisumu</i>	Devolution	Female	1
<i>Nairobi/Kisumu</i>	EACC	Female/Males	4
<i>Kisumu</i>	Finance	Male	2
<i>Kisumu</i>	Internal Audit Dept.	Male	1
<i>Migori/Kisumu</i>	Education	Female	2
<i>Kisumu</i>	Huduma Centre	Male	2
<i>Kisumu</i>	Governor's Office	Female	2
<i>Nairobi/Kisumu</i>	CAJ	Male/Female	3
<i>Kisumu</i>	Auditor General	Male	2
<b>Total</b>			<b>28 respondents</b>

### *Author's presentation*

Referral sampling was vital in identifying and accessing heads of units and departments and relevant administrators deemed by colleagues more knowledgeable on anti-corruption strategies in their departments, ministries, and units. Those interviewed in Nairobi county included senior staff members (i.e., unit heads) of EACC, the CAJ (including three directors), and TI-Kenya (including two heads of units).

### *Data analysis*

Data condensation, coding, and explanation building were used to analyse data (Yin 2014). Data condensation, in particular, was conducted through writing interview summaries, especially in situations where in-depth interviewees were uncomfortable with voice recording. These summaries were thematically ordered during the data collection. The themes were tied to specific dimensions and referents of inter-institutional trust or constructs used to measure trust. These are cohesiveness, information sharing, performance, capacity-building, joint awareness creation, knowledge of EACC's anti-

corruption strategies, political interference, and the nature of interactions between EACC personnel and administrators in the studied counties. The discussion and presentation of the findings are presented conducted alongside the referents of trust.

## *Findings and analysis*

Data presentation and analysis were conducted alongside antecedents and referents of trust to map how trust or distrust between agencies may have informed dysfunctions or challenges being experienced in implementing the anti-corruption policy programs' in Kenya's public sector.

### *Reliability, competence, and confidence-based trust in the multi-agency networks*

In a collaborative arrangement, institutional and personnel commitments are critical in curbing trust deficiencies. Because they determine reliability, competence and confidence as referents of trust. Public leaders or members are bound to decipher and contextualise values of equality and commitment to realise reliability and related trust referents. This should include creating and realising internal and external anticipations of collaborations to deliver better goals and make a difference that can nurture the relationship (e.g., Bardach 2001).

There is also a need to create a shared memory and reference points to avoid goal ambiguities (Atkinson et al. 2002; Fox and Butler 2004). In Kenya, KLIF and IPCRM naturally required the personnel's support in member organisations, most importantly, the leadership to coordinate collaborative activities and effectively share information. The institutionalisation of these networks, that is, their routinisation and normalisation in organisational action in government institutions, rarely or insufficiently facilitate the required training, especially among the lower cadre and middle-ranking administrators. When it comes to system reviews, for example, to determine how PC requirements are mainstreamed into administrative systems at the county level, EACC personnel observed that; *there are institutional loopholes that can be exploited by somebody who has a corrupt motive. [And these] loopholes differ from one institution to the other [...]* (interviewee).

These loopholes have become increasingly conspicuous as KLIF members interact and find ways to seal them off. One way of doing this has been the adoption of technological platforms, as illustrated by the current chief justice's explanation concerning what the Judiciary has done:

*Recently, the Judiciary in collaboration with EACC, launched a systems review into the policies, procedures and practices of the institution. This exercise is meant to streamline the systems in the Judiciary and result in sealing of any systemic loopholes that facilitate corruption in the Judiciary. Automation is a key pillar for the Judiciary, with E-Filing being adopted in all courts countrywide. Automation is expected to eliminate physical manipulation of files at the registry and safeguard the integrity of the institution. Further, the Judiciary has adopted cashless*

*transactions in all courts countrywide to enhance transparency and accountability to minimize incidents of corruption. Court fees, fines and bail are paid and refunded through the M-Pesa mobile platform or the bank (TI-Kenya, December 2021).*

While this technological tool may be a good direction, technology comes with underlying dysfunctions. One is the inadequate skills of the personnel and public members to be served by such technological platforms. Studies show that Kenyan administrators generally suffer from technological challenges (e.g. Bakibinga et al. 2020 concerning Health systems). And sometimes, administrators are even lethargic toward leveraging technological platforms in service delivery (e.g. Onyango and Ondiek 2021). It requires equipping institutions with appropriate facilities currently lacking and extra funding to sensitize citizens on how these technologies work. This adds to the fact that access to the internet may be a limiting factor being that it may be expensive for a section of the population and it is unavailable in most parts of the country, especially in remote areas.

Besides, there are no incentive strategies to create an environment where the administrative personnel would comply with organisational responsibilities or commitments to ethics and collaborative requirements for anti-corruption policy programs. This was related to the loose interpersonal trust within public institutions. Specifically, employees' trust in their organisations and managers is also related to organisational and personnel commitment regarding integrating anti-corruption policy programs.

In this light, Ohemeng et al. (2019) illustrate that trust between civil servants, employees, and their managers directed the credibility of administrative actions in the Ghanaian civil service. This scenario describes trust deficits that may be ordered by facets of reliability and confidence-based trust within and between KLIF members, mainly the oversight commissions. Furthermore, to cite Bulińska-Stangrecka and Iddagoda (2020,11), employees in both oversight and mainstream public institutions in Kenya could be described as "sleepwalking through their workday, putting time but not energy or passion into their work." This most significantly concerns activities promoting policy programs integration within government agencies' legal rational systems.

In other words, most administrators and management are more isolated or withdrawn from external environments (informing teams) or horizontal coordination mechanisms with little exposure to the structures and functions of the existing multi-agency networks for anti-corruption policy programs. The result is a fluid relationship between ethical behaviour and ethics management tools. It has been argued that organisations must go beyond mere adoption at the core of these two dimensions to ensure that employees are conversant and skillfully interpret, manipulate, and appositely apply or integrate the policy programs. This would enhance the performance-based trust that eases other typologies of relations beyond hierarchical to more cultural or informal and environmental orientations. This partly came out as follows in the structure of PSIP:

*There are strategies for eradicating corruption in the performance contract, and there are things that people have*

*to do. One, we have to form an anti-corruption committee, which we have formed. Two, we must have quarterly reports in a prescribed format. Three, now, with this committee, we have to see ways of coming up with strategies, which to me, I don't see any strategies coming up here.<sup>[iii]</sup>*

Thus, the levels of organisational performance or the performance-based and credibility-based trust in EACC to enforce public integrity corresponded with and prioritised the outcomes of institutional contexts of anti-corruption policy programs in public administration. Most importantly, internal inter-agency trust contexts demonstrated distrust towards some partners, thereby, confidence problems and performance deficits by Commissions. This could have also signalled little or inadequate recognition to collaborate or commit to KLIF and IPCRM by local government units.

It was also found that the public and oversight institutions are more concerned with carrying out their core mandates over pursuing collaborative expectations contained in the various partnerships they are involved in. The members-only inclinations of some partnerships gave secondary considerations to integrating policy programs within the multi-agency and network frameworks. In fact, given the challenges with poor resource allocation, underlying inter-agency differences and issues bordering on political legitimacy, the commissions abandoned committing to KLIF and IPCRM networks. In short, the integration of ethical tools was threatened because commitment to multi-agency arrangements was obnubilated by members' concerns with carrying out their core business.

From this, it can be stated that internal problems with organisational coherence resulting in insufficient commitment and fluid relationship between the management and the employees concerning ethical management tools potentially weaken the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements. The internal incongruence of member organisations is also attributed to the complexity of membership within KLIF and IPCRM networks while conversely aggravating sovereignty claims among partners. This would also imply more *engagement* levels than the *mode of the working* type of multi-agency activities for anti-corruption programs in Kenya.

Moreover, there is horizontal inequality in knowledge dissemination and information on anti-corruption policy programs within public organisations. Some units and departments are more knowledgeable about the existing structures to integrate anti-corruption programs in the public sector than others. This is mainly attributed to two factors. First is the leadership styles that relatively differed from one institutional context to another. Leadership style in member organisations influences the collaborative environment and internal inclinations corresponding to levels of awareness of multi-agency platforms. These, alternatively, influence confidence, information-sharing, and organisational commitment. A critical issue also concerned the ownership of information being shared i.e. whether decisions and reports on institutional progress are participatory at all levels; internally and externally between PSIP and KLIF members. In other words, there are no clear guidelines and designs concerning information sharing, leading to coordination and commitment dysfunctionalities.

Two, the interactions between bureaucratic hierarchy and leadership patterns also lead to a preference for inward-looking

strategies or pessimistic approaches to multi-agency networks in the Kenyan public sector. This may mean trust levels are low among agencies concerned, which can be attributed to the slow mainstreaming effort of anti-corruption policy programs in the public sector. Consequently, instead of being highly integrated, the multi-agency networks in Kenya for anti-corruption policy programs can be described as "looser, less stable in membership and [have] weaker points of entry" (Hudson et al. 1999, 243). It is, therefore, not surprising that little trust exists among partnering agencies attendant to, among others, the institutional members' closed orientation on handling corrupt practices within their own ranks.

### *The performance-based assessments and information-sharing deficits between partners*

Following the above, negative attitudes and perceptions of distrust around KLIF are generally based on transparency problems in almost all partnering oversight agencies. This was also hardly different in the mainstream government institutions. It was further stated that most oversight institutions, like other partners, lack effective communication mechanisms and the moral authority to lead the integration of anti-corruption policy programs in public administration. Thus, aspects of cognition-based or performance-based trust were displayed concerning the role of EACC, particularly in multi-agency networks. EACC, like other oversight institutions, is faulted or distrusted in some quarters because of its public record of underperformance and lack of transparency within its ranks (also cf. Onyango 2017).

The trust literature ideally describes all three subsets of cognition and affective-based trust, mainly behavioural-based, competence-based, and integrity-based. It was mentioned that IPCRM is derailed because of most commissions' prevailing low legitimacy concerns (trust-deficit problems). For instance, GIZ had to stop funding IPCRM because most public leaders, especially from the commissions, stopped attending meetings and referring cases not within their mandates to other partners.

Moreover, rational bureaucratic facets of collaborative governance in multi-agency networks are blamed for trust deficits. The existing multi-agency organisational design limit most Commissions' efforts to effectively enforce and coordinate anti-corruption programs among KLIF members, especially in mainstream public institutions. While countering the non-performance label, the EACC officer commented that;

*[...] I think you have to look at the legal framework and look at the laws as they are. Are they adequate? Because sometimes, you may look at an institution and you may say that these guys are not working and you don't even know the legal framework in which they are operating. You don't expect me to do what the law does not allow me to do<sup>[iv]</sup>.*

The result is that individual organisations' institutional designs constrain multi-agency relations functions. This may mean that the persisting inter-agency conflicts common in African policy networks may stem from bureaucratisation deficits and lack of institutionalisation of the multi-agency arrangements, as the Kenyan case established. The claims of sovereignty

by partners and subsequent tugs-of-war within these networks in anti-corruption programs' implementation are characteristic of deficits in the structural designs and environmental and cultural composites of different agencies.

This way, trust-building strategies are being frustrated by a complex mix of structural designs and cultural and environmental factors. For example, environmental issues relating to variance in resource endowment among KLIF members determine the degree of engagement by their respective management to related anti-corruption activities. Limited funds are related to some levels of withdrawal and reactive involvement in KLIF operations. This is also attributable to the KLIF network's typology that comes out more as a legal obligation to some members than voluntary membership.

### *The transparency within and between inter-agency membership – integrity, credibility trust*

Besides the lack of information-sharing culture and loose structures between KLIF partners, there is an explicit lack of transparency, integrity, and confidence among members. This is principally attendant to the prevalence of unethical culture within member organisations. For example, inter-agency investigative reports on corrupt activities within KLIF members, like in a case in 2015 when CAJ investigations and Auditor General reported corruption within EACC's ranks, the EACC refuted the issues. In this case, the KLIF's legal lacuna is prominently featured, as shown below.

*[...] the EACC director for legal services later wrote to the Ombudsman urging him to respect and uphold the rule of law given that the matter in question was being handled by the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI). "The matters which you intend to investigate are now within the purview of another law enforcement agency (DCI). Section 30 of the CAJ Act states that the commission shall not investigate any matter for the time being under investigation by any other person or commission established under the Constitution or any other written law," the letter said (Business Daily; February 18, 2015).*

To control access to information on corruption claims within its ranks, EACC adopted a rigorous approach to discourage internal cooperation by its personnel with CAJ investigators. In particular, the then EACC management resorted to an autocratic leadership style that arguably exhibited underlying problems in the employees-managers relations.

Internal organisational integrity problems may, therefore, create cognition-based trust deficits and constrain Kenya's multi-agency networks for anti-corruption programs. More importantly, inter-agency conflicts produce inward-looking implementation strategies over collective methods for policy programs by member organisations. In this context, such normative deficits accumulatively constrained trust-building initiatives, mainly organisational commitment, communication, and information-sharing.

### *Discussion*

Ordered by theoretical works on network governance, collaborations between government agencies today often privilege the idea of networking and coordination (Thompson et al., 1991). This is mainly for resource mobilisation and technological development between and within different systems affected by the same policies and provides similar services (O'Toole 1997; Bardach 2001; Kim, Ferrin, and Cooper 2004; Fox and Butler 2004). In most cases, in weaker networks such as KLIF, as spearheaded by EACC in the study context, members may choose to join or disconnect depending on their interests within the partnership. Many organisational members may choose to apply formal and informal information sharing while maintaining their autonomy or may bother less with pursuing multi-agency arrangements. Such partnerships are enabled through social media, blogs, and website links, as demonstrated in IPCRM in Kenya. The members share ideas, databases, newsletters, and, in some cases, expertise in limited areas such as information technologies.

However, some policy networks have witnessed reactive responses at this level of operation, eventually collapsing. The IPCRM, for instance, has practically collapsed as a platform where government agencies coordinated reporting of corruption and unethical conduct in Kenya. Nonetheless, despite institutional and financial challenges often faced by Multi-agency working, minimal but critical successes have nurtured these networks loosely.

For example, despite insurmountable financial, institutional, and political challenges, the KLIF and IPCRM platforms saw different agencies, especially oversight institutions, make commendable progress toward integrating corruption reporting mechanisms. According to CAJ, and EACC, for instance, there were increased reports of corruption in 2014 courtesy of IPCRM platforms by civil servants and citizenry. This was arguably indicative of increased awareness of anti-corruption policy programs when these agencies used IPCRM to solicit reports on corruption.

Moreover, through KLIF, member agencies conducted personnel training, several successful investigations, and asset recoveries worth millions of dollars in collaboration with ministries, directorates, and other regional agencies in East Africa (EACC, April 2019 report). In so doing, collaborative efforts helped EACC with capacity building and knowledge transfer, as shown in the excerpts from its most recent report summary (2019/2020).

*The Commission remains committed to partnering with national, regional and international players in the fight against corruption and unethical conduct. This year the Commission benefited from technical support in the areas of financial investigation and skills development from the United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC), the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the United Kingdom Serious Fraud Office (SFO), the United States Department of Homeland Security Investigation (HSI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and other partners. At the National level, the Commission engaged stakeholders through the Kenya Leadership Integrity Forum (KLIF), the Multi-Agency Team (MAT) and the Referral Partners Platform (EACC 2021, xv).*

These gains experience sustainability challenges, however, and are more confined within rational-bureaucratic dimensions, which embeds them on a hierarchical typology of a multi-agency approach. The result is little, or no effects of

the multi-agency approach on environmental and cultural constraints, where studies have shown are the spaces where corruption is rationalised and practised (e.g. Onyango 2017; Oliver de Sardan 1999). This led to difficulties establishing long-term policy integration processes of anti-corruption programs and a pro-active membership in multi-agency networks. Perhaps, the most real unintended consequence of multi-agency networks amidst explicit failures is often their ability to initiate and support local capacity-building processes that underscore learning and resource mobilisation, either in skills, financial gains or information. For instance, in its 2019/2020 report, EACC realised several failures based mainly on capacity-related dysfunctions. In the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology, the report uncovered several dysfunctions, mainly;

*[The] inadequate number of suppliers accredited by the ICT Authority to supply some categories of ICT items.*

*Failure to undertake [a] post-accreditation assessment to ascertain compliance with the expected standards by accredited suppliers (EACC 2020, 50).*

*These capacity-related issues threaten KLIF and other multi-agency arrangements to improve public accountability, showing that legal-rational systems, like other dimensions, can hardly work in isolation from each other.*

Indeed, apart from the multi-agency approach for anti-corruption programs, similar challenges have been explicitly displayed in disaster policy management programs, mainly in the "war on terror" worldwide. As a policy framework in Kenya, multi-agency networks through the National CVE-Strategy (National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism) and the Usalama Platform have been heavily supported by actors from inside and outside the country. Besides, advocacy coalitions support organisational policy-oriented learning, including equipment support to Kenya's Anti-terrorism police units and community policing. In short, multi-agency approaches can result in unorthodox successes or gains in practically hostile environments for institutional performance.

Conceptually, these out-of-ordinary institutional performances have been well captured in *pockets of effectiveness* literature to explain unexpected institutional performances in Africa and developing countries (Johnston 2005). Worth noting in such unorthodox policy outcomes is that the cultural and environmental dimensions (or informalisation processes) remain critical for a multi-agency approach to stabilise and remain effective. Bardach (2001) illustrates that building Interorganizational Collaborative Capacity (ICC), and craftsmanship by actors is essential for evolving such arrangements into viable policy integration mechanisms. In Kenya, studies like that by Bernardi and de Chiara (2011) functional monitoring systems of policy programs like those dealing with HIV/AIDS have worked better when agencies concerned undertake them in a collaborative fashion.

*Craftmanship* primarily involves *platforming* repertoires such as *creative opportunity* that involves identifying relevant actors and resources; Intellectual Capital involves mapping the nature and scope of the policy problem and strategic collaborative ideas. Other platforming components also include acceptance of leadership and advocacy groups, which in this study included Transparency International-Kenya, the donors like GIZ and other stakeholders. These stakeholders

assist with identifying the nature and scope of policy programs, policy saliency and strategic collaborations against corruption (Johnston 2005). They also have resources needed by the existing or new implementation networks (Milward and Provan 2006). The Kenyan case hardly shows unique relations to these assertions. In their study of the Kenya Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment Mechanism (KIRA), Limbu et al (2015) show that KIRA was a result of the need to enhance intellectual capital in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Kenya. They mention that “UNICEF Kenya with UNOCHA East Africa, Assessment Capacities Project, RedR UK, Kenya Red Cross and the Kenyan Government put in place the partnership-based collaborative Kenya Inter Agency Rapid Assessment (KIRA) and established a mechanism capable of conducting a multi-agency, multi-sectoral assessment of humanitarian needs” (p.59).

From this, we can see that a multi-agency approach evolves or transcends from proper inclinations to more informal relations among partners as they get to know one another and the nature of the challenges confronting their institutions. This has been the central concern in Public Value or Governance approaches in public administration (e.g., O'Toole 1997). Accordingly, this study further shows the need to deepen cultural and environmental composites for a multi-agency to work (Bardach 2001). Governments need to devise more innovative tools to measure their effectiveness beyond the legal-bureaucratic principles to track or evaluate the progress of a multi-agency network. This was one of the challenges experienced in evaluating Kenya's PSIP framework's integration.

The integration of PSIP was heavily latched on rule-based tools or rational principles. This rule-based orientation inevitably overlooks nurturing established and functional informal innovations because they rarely underscore structural adjustments to foster public administration innovations (Kim, Ferrin, and Cooper 2004). In retrospect, there is arguably a high likelihood of little change in the ethical climate in public administration needed to build trust in a multi-agency approach to anti-corruption policy programs. This would also mean that multi-agency approaches would remain more reactive than proactive in environments where the unethical climate is the primary source of normative deficits.

Kenya's case further shows another deficit where continued collaborative efforts may remain closed mainly to a few partners, thereby being reduced to a mere *institutional club* inhabited by a cohort of executives. Wherefrom knowledge exchange largely remains at a particular level in the organisational hierarchy, with lower cadre employees remaining unaware of how these collaborations work. This will not ensure the building of sustainable collaborative systems or relations. This can be demonstrated by the earlier noted awareness deficits of KLIF among low cadre administrators in public administration in Kenya. Therefore, rational-based tools for evaluating a multi-agency approach's performance must integrate mechanisms that may enhance effective participation in a collaborative implementation. Such an effort will naturally nurture trust-building or harmonise cultural discrepancies that may threaten the effectiveness of collaborative networks.

In general, the evaluation of inter-institutional trust also takes stock of prevailing political environments, mainly political-administrative reforms. In Kenya, for example, the recently rolled out subnational government structures were found to have expanded the scope of operation and complicated the structures of the multi-agency approach to anti-corruption

programs. The complexity stemmed from, among other factors, increased demand for resources and decentralisation of structures to monitor, train, and integrate subnational government institutions. Most county administrators interviewed linked their lack of confidence or low institutional trust in EACC and other oversight institutions to the latter's unreliable methods and processes for handling corruption cases.

The political and bureaucratic power shift that came with the structural devolution reforms in Kenya created and consolidated instead of disrupting the hitherto corrupt networks and power relations within subnational public administration. As shown by Bernardi and de Chiara (2011), such institutional reforms may exacerbate an already challenging collaborative landscape in Kenya. The duo while investigating donor's multi-agency approach in monitoring and evaluating HIV/AIDS programmes in Kenya, notes that multi-agency arrangements as "new structures served to sustain old logics and institutionalized practices, in other words, to guarantee continuity from the old to the new scenario envisaged in the reforms" (p.35). Similar dimensions also influence how managers of the new devolved institutions collaborate with EACC based on their previous relations while working in the defunct Local Authorities. In addition, devolved localised decision-making and hiring processes have seen more powerful actors emerge, some of whom have galvanized and practised more protracted and expansive corruption networks. These emerged from and aggravated organisational individualism problems (Hudson et al. 1999).

The consequence of this is that multi-agency approaches can be limited to scopes set by boundary spanners and are only as good as their initiators, subject to their capacities and motivation; hence, the temporal effectiveness of collaborative networks in public policy processes in Kenya (Bernardi and de Chiara 2011) and other contexts outside Kenya (e.g. Fox and Butler 2004). Although contingent on transformation in the environmental and cultural composites, the multi-agency approach may become institutionalised as part of the strategic management traditions or as part of the management's performance appraisals. Thus, if appositely designed and developed, multi-agency networks can stimulate bottom-up policy change processes and ownership of policy programs in government agencies, resulting in effective implementation processes.

## Conclusion

This paper devised and applied a three-dimensional mutual trust approach to unpacking dysfunctional dynamics in multi-agency relations for integrating or implementing policy programs using the Kenyan public sector's anti-corruption programs as empirical foundations. Several trust-referents are identified as explanatory variable constructs that potentially influence the effectiveness of collaborative policy networks. The Kenyan context is not unique in its experience with multi-agency networks or public innovation experiences. In particular, the prevalence of distrust – lack of confidence, transparency, problems with internal integrity, institutional withdrawal and lack of commitment, etc. – has been constraining more than improving inter-agency relationships during cross-cutting policy implementation programs.

Consequently, mutual trust between institutions is critical in developing cultural and environmental inclinations of public organisations as an informal composite of public governance. The lesson we can draw from this conclusion is that *Public managers should be systematically trained in devising and incentivising efforts to sustain informal professional relationships in public administration for effective implementation.*

Overall, this study confirms the commonality of challenges in policy or implementation networks (network governance or policy networks) as they appear globally in administrative settings. Consider, for example, Juhola and Westerhoff (2011) on the challenges of adapting climate change programs across multiple scales in Europe. Or Hermansson's (2016) study on disaster management collaboration in Turkey. In both studies and others, networks require additional skills to work and may feature inherent dysfunctions that border on trust composites, as discussed in this paper. These notwithstanding, the effectiveness of multi-agency networks is contingent on the purpose and the policy programs. And where each typology may complement others subject to individual organisations' goals and the general prevailing external and internal environments. Still, despite the context, trust-building strategies and composites of mutual trust both within and between member organisations are needed for an effective multi-agency arrangement. If well-nurtured, collaborative networks can address common policy knowledge deficits, resource challenges, and collaborating agencies' capacity-related functions.

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## Notes

[i] By 2017, IPCRM has since become inactive.

[ii] EACC website (<https://eacc.go.ke/default/klif/>)

[iii] Interview date, 10.02. 2015.

[iv] Interview date, 08.07.2015

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