

COUNTY NON-STATE ACTORS MEETINGS ON GOOD GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Due to the passing of the new constitution and the restructuring of the administrative system to put in place the devolved government, the position of the Residents Associations (RAs) has been put in a somewhat unworkable situation as it were. Seeing this situation, KAS and Dialogue Africa Foundation (DAF) have partnered and come up with a forum that calls for the involvement of other state actors and civil society organisations (CSO's) to chart a way forward, and start a discussion on matters of devolution and devolved funds. The forum is mainly in its initial stages based in areas where KAS has had programmes with the RAs.

In its first circuit, the activities were conducted in Busia, Bungoma, Siaya, Kisumu, Migori, Makueni, Machakos and Nyeri county, as recognised by the new constitution. The participants are mainly from the civil society in the specific counties and convened by the major RA or partners on the ground. It has been of great importance to involve the CSO's as the people's representatives since going by experience, they are more grounded in their grassroots areas than dealing with one organisation like the RA as it used to be.

The aim is to reach all on the ground and find a working formula for the people through the civil society, as interest groups. The forum calls for the civil society on the ground to see the growing concerns as presented by the coming of the new constitution, and the fact that some are registered under the district administrative system which is completely phased out by the new dispensation. The challenge is posed to the CSO's to find their ground and working relations with their specific counties, bearing in mind that no county is similar to another in terms of structure and work.

The workshops were a one day meeting where the participants were taken through the various decentralised funds currently on the ground in the morning session. This was followed by a short presentation on government planning and budgetary process and finally on how the county and national government shall be working. Much emphasis was directed to the perceived fears and/or concerns on the life after the 2012 general elections, when the new structures have to be in place.

The civil society was called to strategise on a working relationship with the county government that is people centred, and to make their relevance felt by the said government.

Through this forum, the participants were taken through the new constitution and reminded of their watchdog role and re-ignite the advocacy spirit which to this extend appeared low. Finally, they were advised to form loose networks of all the CSO's in their specific counties to create a platform of thinking beyond 2012 and away from the safe haven of their individual groupings. They have so far agreed to form steering committees to push for their agendas and further conduct CSO's mapping to include those organisations not yet reached and share the concerns as understood during the workshop. Dialogue Africa Foundation as

the lead catalyst requested them to get in touch the soonest when they are done. They were given two weeks to reorganise.

All in all, the meetings were very successful and attendance was very commendable, even some were graced by the participation of departmental heads of the government and international NGO's working in the specific areas.

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