



The 5th Annual Devolution Conference 2018

A Report on KHRC Participation in the 5th Annual Devolution Conference that took place in Kakamega County between 23^r & 27th April 2018

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KHRC Supported the 5th Annual Devolution Conference 2018



The 5th Annual Devolution Conference was held at Kakamega High School in Kakamega County between 23rd & 27th April 2018. The annual conference is an establishment of the Council of Governors and is organized with the aim of providing a national forum for collaboration, cooperation and consultation in all matters related to devolution. The conference also provides a platform for county governments to share experiences, challenges and lessons learnt over the year and set clear targets for the coming years. In addition, it also provides opportunity for a national celebration of the successes of devolution and strengthen partnerships to heighten devolved governance.

The 5th Annual Devolution Conference themed; *“Sustainable, productive, effective and efficient governments for results delivery”*, was convened jointly by the Council of Governors (CoG), Ministry of Devolution and ASAL (MOD) and the Senate & County Assemblies Forum (CAF). Participants were drawn from the national government, county governments, private sector, development partners, the civil society, media, policy makers and the citizens. The conference employed two methods through which discussions were conducted; the general sessions and the break-away sessions. While the general sessions were attended by all participants, the break-away sessions adopted the sector approach in line with the President’s “Big Four” agenda, and as such were attended by those interested in any of the four sectors namely; (1) Health (2) Agriculture (3) Trade & Manufacturing (4) Urban Development, Housing, Infrastructure & Energy.

It is in the realization of the importance of the devolution conference that the KHRC reached out to the Council of Governors for a possible partnership in the planning and execution of the 5th annual devolution conference. This resulted into both parties (KHRC & CoG) signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to guide the partnership. The partnership that both KHRC and CoG committed to, was premised on the mutual interest to promote the effective & efficient implementation of devolved system of governance, designed to stimulate democratic and accountable exercise of power, including strengthening the involvement of citizens in governance.

Through this partnership, the KHRC supported the devolution conference by providing technical expertise during plenum discussions and also in the development of the conference magazine. Specifically, the KHRC was interested in the general session on Good Governance and Accountability. The objective of the session was to deliberate on mechanisms to enhance good governance and accountability as a strategy to strengthen the fight against corruption in devolved governance. In the end, the session was able to generate consensus among participants, particularly on the need to combat corruption and particularly theft of public money. It was specifically agreed that corruption posed the worse threat to devolved governance and that if it remains unsolved, has the potential to destroy the successes of devolution.



Participants following the discussion on good governance and accountability

The realization that corruption posed the greatest threat to devolution, prompted participants to adopt more practical resolutions to confront, expose and combat corruption in devolved governance. Through the session on good governance, the conference adopted the resolution to aggressively fight corruption through various strategies among them **undertaking lifestyle audits, corruption risk assessments and protection of whistle blowers**. In addition, to strengthen accountability and transparency in devolved governance, the conference also adopted the resolution to **strengthen public participation approaches**. This will not only enhance civilian oversight but also ensure that citizens are genuinely engaged in determining development priorities in county governance.

The above resolution, resonates well with the KHRC interest in improving governance and leadership in county governance through combating corruption. Additionally, it also provides opportunity for further engagement between the COG and the KHRC in advancing the anti-corruption agenda in devolved governance. On the demand side, the KHRC will work with the COG to enhance civic engagement in devolved governance. This will involve empowering the citizenry to take up their civilian oversight responsibilities effectively while the county governments through the COG create a conducive environment for them and also respond to their demands accordingly. On the supply side, the KHRC will work with the COG in developing mechanisms to operationalize the three strategies identified and adopted at the conference as ways through which to combat corruption. The mechanisms will include putting in place measures that guide county governments in undertaking lifestyle audits for county government staff. They will also include undertaking corruption risk assessments of county governments, aimed at determining gaps exploited by the corrupt for sealing and lastly measures that ensure the protection of whistle blowers. This actions will form part of the post conference engagement between the KHRC and the COG.

The good governance plenum that reached the above resolution had representation from both state and non-state actors. The KHRC was represented by the Executive Director, Mr. George Kegoro (*photo on the right*). Other participants included; Prof. Kivutha Kibwana (Governor, Makueni County), Sen. Moses Otieno Kajwang' (Chair, Senate Committee County Public Accounts and Investment), Mr. Halakhe



Waqa (Chief Executive Officer, Ethics and Anti-corruption Commission), FCPA. Edward Ouko (the Auditor General) and a representative of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In addition to the above resolution, participants at the conference made other resolutions following discussions in other plenums. For instance in a separate general session, a resolution was reached to strengthen Intergovernmental relations through building an extensive collaboration between both levels of government. Considering that the breakaway sessions were sector based and focused on the President's 'Big Four' agenda, resolutions in those sessions aimed at promoting the achievement of the President's goal in the health, urban development, agriculture and manufacturing sectors. In addition, participants determined the enablers for desired results, analyzed the human resource management issues and finally discussed opportunities for adequate financing.

The Devolution Conference Magazine

The Council of Governors publishes the Devolution conference¹ magazine every year prior to the devolution conference. The magazine provides opportunity for all the 47 County Governments to showcase some of their key results and impacts of the various sector programmes in their respective counties. In addition it also provides the opportunity to key stakeholders (non-state actors) in devolved governance to show case their work on devolution.

The KHRC supported the Council of Governors (CoG) in the production of the Devolution Conference Magazine 2018 titled, "the devolution experience". The support was premised on the need to expand the knowledge reach to citizens on the performance of county governments and also ascertain the notion that Devolution works in Kenya. By county governments sharing the results and impacts of devolution in their respective counties, then the public is able to confirm whether Kenya is better off with devolved governance than without it.

It is also through supporting the production of the devolution conference magazine that the KHRC got the opportunity to share its work with all Governors, the Senate, Members of County Assemblies and key stakeholders in devolved governance, all in one sitting. The KHRC shared its work through a four pager article which features in the magazine.



¹ KHRC Photos of the 5th Annual Devolution Conference can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/2MS6cXK>

The KHRC Exhibition Booth

The devolution conference provides an opportunity for actors in devolved governance to show case their work. As such the KHRC had its own exhibition booth which attracted traffic from participants. Among those who visited the KHRC booth included; government officials (national & county), civil society, policy makers and international partners. KHRC donors among them FORD Foundation and Embassy of Sweden also visited our booth.



Those who visited the KHRC exhibition booth were offered various KHRC publications and other KHRC projects' goodies such as t-shirts, caps and bags among others. The KHRC team also took time to enlighten visitors on the KHRC mandate and mission, including our work in different parts of the county and in strengthening devolved governance. Over 400 participants at the 5th annual devolution conference visited the KHRC exhibition booth and a total of 1800 KHRC publications were issued to the visitors.

Online Visibility; Devolution Conference

The KHRC also supported the Council of Governors to keep the discussions going on at the devolution conference online. This was premised on the need to direct online public traffic to the devolution conference and as such increase and expand the space for public engagement and participation in the conference.

The KHRC thus through its strong online presence and social media expertise provided leadership by guiding twitter chats on the happenings at the devolution conference. Through the twitter hashtag #DevCon2018, over 45 million people were reached, with over 438 million impressions. The hashtag was also a daily top trend in the period between 23rd & 27th, with an average reach of eleven million people daily.