



PDF THE PEOPLE DIALOGUE FESTIVAL

2024
CONCEPT NOTE



INTRODUCTION

The People Dialogue Festival (PDF) is a flagship dialogue initiative by the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-Kenya) aimed at shaping the discourse around critical issues by bringing together leaders and people to engage in meaningful conversations about pressing challenges and opportunities facing the broader society in Kenya. The inaugural PDF was successfully convened in March 2019 and subsequent editions in 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Under the overarching theme Competition and Collaboration in Democratic Development, the 6th edition is set to take place from **6th to 9th March 2024** in Nairobi. Additionally, County level editions dubbed **Gumzo Mtaani** will be held in 6 Counties in a bid to diversify involvement and deepen participation in dialogue. CMD-Kenya is committed to nurturing meaningful dialogue and sustaining a platform for thought leaders, experts, and visionaries within political, public, private, professional, and civil society sectors to come together and address critical issues facing our community and beyond.



JUSTIFICATION



PDF is uniquely relevant as it ensures that enhanced dialogue goes beyond the political elite and accommodates gender equality, the inclusion of youth, minorities, civil society organizations, and other non-traditional actors like citizen movements in a political decision-making process. Participation has steadily grown from less than 1,000 in 2019 to over 8,000 in 2023 attracting a diverse audience including elected leaders, national and county government officials, political parties, civil society organizations, professional associations, private sector, academia, students, trade unions, media, artists, women rights' organizations, youth-led & youth-serving organizations, community-based organizations international democracy support organizations and representatives of diplomatic missions.

In a stratified society such as Kenya coupled with increasing skepticism for politics, the urgency to create a stronger and more transparent connection between decision-makers and

decision-takers cannot be gainsaid. Dialogue serves this key connection by ensuring active and meaningful engagement of different actors and citizens in public affairs. Indeed, dialogue is the distinguishing feature of democratic societies, which are judged by the extent to which governments open up to citizen involvement in public affairs and the space they give for citizens to hold the government accountable. The challenge is therefore to establish spaces for dialogue among state and non-state actors as well as ordinary citizens to strengthen their relationships towards the overall good of the country's democratic development and the transformation towards sustainable development.

Moreover, for Kenya to begin emerging from the present and historical state of affairs that makes it increasingly vulnerable, there is the need for greater collaboration among leaders both in the public and private sectors, to deal with the underlying issues, develop answers to problems, and move the country forward on a positive path of sustainable peace and development. A contrary path threatens to erase strides of development and may further entrench poverty and inequality, especially among young people who make up a high percentage of Kenya's total population. Collaborative national leadership will stimulate dialogue at different levels of society on ways to achieve more effective and holistic strategies for managing and resolving differences and building inclusive processes that advance good governance in the country.



OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the People Dialogue Festival is to provide a platform for political parties and other actors (both state and non-state) to be in dialogue on governance reforms and socio-economic issues as well as to safeguard democratic gains. Specific objectives of the 6th edition of the PDF are as follows;

To deepen meaningful inclusion and public participation through the provision of safe spaces for citizens, in all their diversities, to engage in dialogue on issues of national interest.

To distill a reform agenda that political parties and other state and non-state actors can adopt for immediate and long-term implementation to improve people's welfare.



To improve citizens' understanding of governance and socio-economic issues and who and which institutions they should hold accountable for the realization of the development agenda.

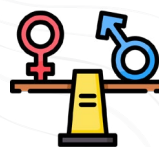
To advocate for issue-based politics, enhanced understanding of Kenya's development agenda, and commitment to fulfilling its obligations to regional and global commitments including implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The expected impact from PDF 2024 includes;



Optimism: Enhancing appreciation of democracy and strengthened belief in positive change among Kenyans.



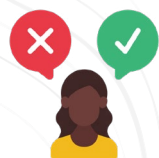
Relationships and Equality:

Encouraging new and stronger relations. building trust between the system and citizens, reducing power distance, and an appreciation for diversity.



Invention and innovation:

Championing new politics, ideas methods, and processes, strengthening the capacity to develop innovative and creative solutions.



Conducive Political Competition and Sustainable Collaboration:

increased awareness of the importance of balancing the use of healthy, issue-based political competition and sustainable collaboration to provide meaningful, constructive choices to citizens.



Meaningful participation and civic engagement:

increased capacity to meaningfully participate, opportunities to do so, curiosity, open conversations, and showroom of new participatory and collaborative civic engagement methods.

TOPICAL AREAS FOR PDF 2024



PDF 2024 largely focuses on the following thematic areas;

A. THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY

The Kenyan economy is the largest in East Africa. Over the years, subsequent governments have promoted rapid economic growth through public investment, encouraged smallholder agricultural production and provided incentives for private industrial investment. Additionally, Kenya has experienced continued growth in GDP, supported by ongoing public infrastructure projects, strong public and private sector investment and appropriate economic and fiscal policies, reflecting the broad-based and diversified nature of the Kenyan economy. However, Kenya's economic situation has become a concern over the last few years with inflation driven by increase in prices for food and energy, rising public debt driven by higher interest payments and exchange rate depreciation, widening current account deficit driven by the lower trade deficit, and a depreciating Kenyan shilling. Moreover, high extreme poverty, unemployment and income inequality remain challenges.

The conversation on economy will focus on the outlook, risks and opportunities for Kenya's Economic resurgence. Involving suitably selected and knowledgeable experts and stakeholders, the discussions will delve into a wide range of issues including: measures to improve revenue collection/enhancing domestic resource mobilization; adherence to the International Monetary Fund-supported fiscal consolidation path of deepening financial sector reforms, and accelerating structural reforms; the effects of a prolongment of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Israel- Palestine war on commodity prices; tight global financing, drought, and slow global economic recovery; and diversifying exports and market destinations.

B. CITIZENS' ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS (ARTICLE 43 OF COK)

Debate on what Kenyans should realistically expect in return of the taxes paid remains persistent. The Kenyan government relies on tax revenue to finance public expenditures and provide vital services to its citizens. Taxation plays a crucial role in funding essential services such as education, healthcare, and housing, yet while Kenyans are continually severed by the ever-rising taxes, access to and quality of basic services continues to be a subject of discussion. The effectiveness of government's tax policies is dependent not only on the revenue generated, but also on the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the government in managing and utilizing the funds for their intended purpose. Moreover, public oversight and accountability are crucial to ensure that tax revenue is used appropriately. Taking cognizance of the patriotic duty to pay taxes and the importance of public goods and services, the People Dialogue Festival shall provide opportunity for participants to engage in dialogue on the various essential services, which they have a constitutional right to access.

C. THE COST AND QUALITY OF KENYA'S EDUCATION

From a workforce perspective, employers (local, regional, and international) rave about the quality of the Kenyan workforce. Kenya is English-speaking, has high literacy rates, and has a strong primary, secondary, and tertiary education system. In fact, 86% of the labor force has some post-secondary education, outpacing the regional average of 72% and the country boasts some excellent universities. Besides, making progress in increasing access to primary and secondary education in recent years, the government has undertaken curriculum reforms to align education with the needs of the job market and to foster a more holistic approach to learning. The Competency-Based Curriculum

(CBC) was introduced to replace the 8-4-4 system.

While the progress is commendable, challenges of quality and cost of education continue to dominate public discourse in Kenya. Discussions on this topic will therefore revolve around these complex challenges, how they are interconnected, and ongoing efforts by the government and various stakeholders to address them and improve the overall education system in Kenya. Some of these challenges include schools, especially in rural areas having inadequate infrastructure, and lack of proper learning materials; access disparities mostly affecting children in remote areas who face challenges in accessing quality education; shortage of qualified and experienced teachers, especially in rural areas; ongoing efforts to reform the examination system; and funding constraints affecting infrastructure development, teacher training, learners and teachers welfare and the overall quality of education.

D. GOVERNANCE

Kenya has made considerable progress since the country adopted its 2010 Constitution. The 2010 Constitution enhanced civil and political rights while providing for socio-economic rights. The Constitution also puts citizens at the center of governance by requiring public participation and citizen engagement in all aspects of governance. Further, it established independent oversight institutions and a devolved structure of government. However, despite optimism from citizens that the 2010 Constitution would elevate the authority and rights of citizens, the governance system continues to be dominated by elite actors, limiting the effective participation of many citizens. These actors at times have sought to entrench their influence by interfering with democratic processes; manipulating policies and regulations; exerting pressure on governance and oversight institutions; engaging in corruption and suppressing public criticism. Other key challenges include a history of ethnic-based politics, which has sometimes led to tensions/conflicts and remains a significant factor in political mobilization, often overshadowing policy issues; corruption, which affects various sectors; contentious elections, with allegations of irregularities and violence; high youth unemployment, which contributes to social unrest and economic instability; creating a more resilient

and inclusive economy; strengthening institutions including building robust political parties and promoting gender equality and social inclusion.

Various efforts including the latest i.e. the National Dialogue Committee, that is anchored in Parliament and supported by President William Ruto and opposition leader Raila Odinga have been championed with the objective to ensure improved governance. However, the most important concern to note is that the success of any initiatives will depend on sustained efforts, collaboration among various stakeholders, and a commitment to democratic principles and good governance. Therefore, this session will draw in various state and non-state actors to collectively reflect and explore the challenges and opportunities in pursuit of a politically stable, socially cohesive, resilient and inclusive economic development agenda in Kenya .

E. THE GREEN AGENDA

For the first time in Kenya's history, the President declared 13th November 2023 a National Tree Planting Day. This initiative, which supports the Jaza Miti presidential campaign which encourages Kenyans to actively participate in tree growing to meet the 15 billion trees target, is a bid to restore Kenya's degraded forests and increase tree cover by 10% in 2032 to mitigate the effects of climate change. Kenya was also host to the inaugural Africa Climate Summit which aimed to address the increasing exposure to climate change and its associated costs. Earlier in the year, the President gave an address on climate change and financing at the Global Citizen Festival in France. Africa only produces 11% of the world's offset yet boasts the planet's second-largest rainforest and tracts of carbon-absorbing ecosystems, with the President referring to Africa's carbon sinks as an unparalleled economic goldmine with the potential to absorb millions of tons of CO₂ annually, which should translate into billions of dollars. Kenya generates the most offsets in Africa, with 25% of the African market for carbon credits in the country.

However, climate-based CSOs have expressed concerns about the carbon markets, which they see as an opportunity for large corporations to continue polluting the world much to Africa's detriment. Communities in Kenya have also blamed carbon credit initiatives for their evictions from Mau Forest, with pastoralists in Northern Kenya blaming the initiatives for disrupting traditional grazing patterns. Global organizations such as Meta and Netflix have also purchased tens of

millions of dollars worth of carbon credits from the Controversial NKGCP project, with the President signing into force the Climate Change Amendment Act which included key considerations for existing and proposed carbon credit projects and carbon trading. Despite this, most Kenyans still have very little, if at all, understanding of carbon credits.

PDF 2024 therefore seeks to bring in experts to dialogue on the issue of carbon credits, debunk myths around climate issues, and localize the green agenda.

F. REALIZATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2023 SDG Summit marked the beginning of a new phase of accelerated progress toward the SDGs, as well as the halfway point to the deadline set for achieving the Goals. However, a mere 15% of the assessable targets are on track to be achieved by 2030 with a further 37% of the targets experiencing no progress or even worse, regression below the baseline. This is in the backdrop of a failure to attain the Millennium Development Goals, which are the SDG's predecessor. With just seven years to the deadline, is it still realistic to hope that we shall achieve the SDGs? If so, what steps do we need to take to ensure their success? If not, what alternatives are there for a development framework?

As a basic institution of all modern democracies, political parties have a fundamental role in empowering citizens and ensuring inclusion and equality in societies around the world. Indeed, it is parties that are responsible for aggregating social demands and transforming them into political decisions. In this sense, political parties act as a chain of transmission, translating the popular will to those who hold power and make decisions. They are thus essential in the realization of the SDGs. Further, parties act as a resonating box for those who have been historically excluded including Special Interest Groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities. This is in line with the SDGs' promise to leave no one behind. Despite this crucial role, political parties have often been overlooked as relevant actors in the pursuit of SDGs.

Globally, youth also have a big stake in the SDGs and if left out, the journey towards achieving these goals will be longer than expected. Despite being

the largest constituent of our population, the youth have historically been excluded from decision-making on key areas of national interest. As a result, there is a relatively high unemployed but educated young population that lacks the appropriate tools to effectively contribute towards the realization of the development agenda. While the Kenya Youth Development Policy of 2019 is robust, its implementation remains largely poor. The SDGs Village within PDF provides an arena for political parties, policymakers, civic actors, the private sector, and citizens to engage in constructive issue-based dialogue, utilizing the SDGs as a frame of reference for policy development and evaluating Kenya's adherence to the development agendas outlined in regional and global frameworks. The SDGs Village will also harness the voice of the youth in the implementation of the SDGs, bringing together in and out-of-school youth as well as policymakers so that young people better understand the SDGs but more importantly, develop strong intergenerational partnerships in development programs that would eventually ensure sustainable attainment of the Goals at all levels.

Overall, the Festival also catalyzes SDG 17, encouraging multi-actor, multi-stakeholder partnerships under the premise that achievement of the Goals requires all hands on deck- with sectors and actors working together in an integrated manner to utilize the limited resources available for maximum output. The Festival is cognizant that because no single entity can work in a silo, we need to build high-impact partnerships which are important vehicles for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies, and financial resources to support the achievement of the goals. Stakeholders present at the Festival are thus encouraged to use the platform as a networking and relationship-building space to promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on individual strengths to ensure that no one is left behind in the development journey.

G. INDEPENDENCE OF INSTITUTIONS

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 establishes 14 commissions and 2 independent offices whose major responsibilities are to ensure that all state organs observe democratic values and principles, protect the sovereignty of the people and promote constitutionalism. The independence of these institutions is therefore a crucial aspect of a functioning democracy, ensuring that different

branches of government and other organizations operate autonomously without undue influence from external forces.

Despite constitutional provisions, challenges to the independence of institutions persist. Some key issues related to the independence of institutions include: how the new constitution aimed to address historical issues of governance and enhance the independence of institutions vis-à-vis the realities today; the Judiciary as an independent organ with its own budget, and judges not being subject to the control of any person or authority; challenges related to the independence of election-related institutions, which is essential for ensuring fair and transparent electoral processes; concerns about media freedom and the need to protect journalists from intimidation and harassment; and the independence from political interference of institutions responsible for investigating and prosecuting corruption cases.

Discussions on this topic will therefore involve the leaders of these independent institutions and focus on reforms to strengthen their independence, address issues such as appointment processes and resource allocation.

The People Dialogue Festival strives to ensure that the sessions are executed in a manner that ensures vibrant, engaging, and meaningful participation of the audiences while remaining relevant to the true ideals of democracy and democratic governance. The Festival seeks to close the power distance between the policymakers, policy takers, and actors across the divide and sees all participants as equally important players in the attainment of the nation's dreams and aspirations. To break the monotony of conventional meetings, the Festival infuses creative arts into the sessions, thereby providing an informal yet organized platform for dialogue on democratic ideals among Kenyans from all walks of life, all the while celebrating the unique culture, intriguing arts, and rich heritage which we possess as a nation. A range of interactive and creative methodologies including keynote addresses, themed workshops, master classes, roundtable discussions, plenaries, art exhibitions, lectures, speeches, interviews, focus group discussions, watch parties and edutainment will be applied in the delivery of the various sessions. The sessions within the Festival run simultaneously and have been organized as follows, with learning, linkage, and collaboration across the various platforms with participants at free will to engage in sessions of their preference;

NI SISI NI SASA VILLAGE 02

The Ni Sisi Ni Sasa Village is a dialogue platform specifically curated for participants below 18 years to amplify their voices and engage in dialogue on otherwise complex democratic ideals in a lingo that is comprehensible to them, thus ensuring that they are meaningfully included in democratic and governance processes.



01 THE YOUTH VILLAGE

The Youth Village is an intragenerational dialogue space for young adults between 18 and 35 years to share lived experiences, inspire each other, and actively engage in robust dialogue on a wide range of subjects to improve their civic competencies.



03 POLITICAL DIALOGUE VILLAGE

The Political Dialogue Village provides an opportunity for constructive, issue-based inter-party dialogue and debate. It is also the space for conversations on contemporary democracy issues including inclusion in governance and the political party leaders' hour.



SDG VILLAGE 04

The SDG Village shall focus on conversations around the Sustainable Development Goals and how they can be locally implemented and share experiences on the strides they have made in attaining the Goals.



05 EXHIBITION SPACE

The Exhibition Space provides an opportunity for both political and apolitical organizations to showcase the work they do towards advancing democracy and the Sustainable Development Goals to the general public



HEKIMA VILLAGE 06

The Hekima Village provides a space for intergenerational dialogue that brings together individuals from various generations to share experiences to foster enhanced communication and shared understanding.





Call Us Now
+254 (20) 2215731

Email Us
pdf@cmd-kenya.org
info@cmd-kenya.org

Address
6th Floor International House
Mama Ngina Street Nairobi