

Counties should avoid Inter-County Boundary Disputes

Posted on Oct 22, Posted by [Mwathane](#) Category [Land Governance](#)

In the recent past, a number of Counties have been reported to have got caught up in inter-county boundary feuds. These can get worse and out of hand. Surveyors will tell you that 'good boundaries make good neighbours'. And where disputes arise, it'd be best to resolve them quietly and amicably for easy co-existence. This keeps costs and emotions low and is good for county development in the immediate and long term. This is advise County leaders should heed.

Boundaries drawn out of agreements

Counties have inherited boundaries earlier drawn under the national government. Like our international boundaries, county boundaries are features drawn out of agreements and common sense for administrative expediency. In a majority of cases, they were agreed upon based on geographical features and existing commercial and administrative centers. In some cases, they were drawn to connect agreed on points many kilometers apart. It's boundaries like these, that don't respect settlement patterns, features or access to markets, that end up eliciting concerns much later. But for international and local peace, such boundaries are best adopted as they are. Where they must be redrawn, teams of level headed leaders and professionals must negotiate and do so carefully, guided by standard protocols, so as not interrupt lifestyles and commerce. This is why it is in order to laud President Yoweri Museveni and retired President Kibaki for the adept manner in which they addressed matters on the disputed Migingo Island. The two carefully contained the issue at a bilateral level and managed to protect the mutual cultural and trade links that bind our countries.

Technical guidance needed to resolve inter-county disputes

Counties that have found themselves faced with disputes with their neighbours would be best advised to draw lessons. It will serve them well not to escalate such disputes at the expense of addressing other teething county issues. Governors in charge of such counties must resist the temptation to be drawn into public spats and confrontations with their neighbours as has happened in some instances in parts of Eastern, Coast, North Eastern and Nyanza regions. Not well handled, such public spats can degenerate into violent ethnic conflicts. Let such counties for the time being respect the boundaries they've inherited from the national government based on the plans earlier drawn and maintained by Survey of Kenya. Where there are compelling cases for renegotiation, let this be done in an objective and professional manner under the guidance of technical experts. This will leave county leaders with time to focus on matters on investments.

Promotion of investments the way to go

And investment conferences and forums, which started off in Machakos and moved on to Meru, are a good entry point. Marsabit and Embu Counties recently organized similar forums to showcase their potential. These forums perhaps best illustrate the comparative advantage in county governance. In our previous governance system, investors could only deal from Nairobi. But the county organized investor forums have made it possible to visit and assess onsite investment opportunities. Interested investors are then able to directly engage high level county officials charged with making key investment decisions. This saves time and fast tracks business decisions.

In the few forums organized, one can see interests emerging in setting up businesses in the processing of milk and a wide range of agricultural products. There has been interest in providing housing and expanding finance, education, health and ICT facilities. Solar energy production and tourism are popular too. Embu wishes to harness high altitude training, a major comparative advantage for the county. The business interests recorded through investor forums speaks well for the country. If implemented, job creation and economic growth will be greatly boosted.

Tags: