

## **The Role of Kenya Music Festival (KMF) in Fostering National Unity, Integration and Cohesion.**

The annual Kenya Music Festival is a major cultural attraction not just in Kenya but in Africa as a whole featuring children's traditional singing games, traditional cultural group dances, traditional folksongs, traditional and modern instrumental music as well as elocution in vernacular, Kiswahili, English, German, French and Arabic from schools and colleges across the country and from diverse cultures. This is organized in about 600 different performance categories and threshed through adjudicated performance from zonal to national levels on rotational basis. Throughout the ages, music has been an important tool for social engagement and Conflict resolution. The use of music in political and governance contexts has been practiced over time. The nature of how the music is employed in such situations largely influences the co-existence of the people. Using video and audio recordings of live performances of music, dance and elocution from across the years, this paper highlights how Kenya Music Festival contributes to national unity, integration and social cohesion (NUISC). Besides the data obtained from recorded excerpts, the discussions shall be enriched by information gathered over the years through the author's engagement with the festival as Executive Secretary. Specifically, the paper shall seek to address the following objectives: Describe the organizational structure of the festival. Discuss the various categories of performances featured in the festival, Demonstrate ways in which the festival has fostered Integration, social cohesion and national unity and Offer suggestions/guidelines on how to organize a meaningful and impactful festival. It is hoped that the discussions of this study will enlighten the conference participants on the festival's contribution as a strategic partner in the realization of NUISC. In addition, it is hoped that the study will spur more enthusiasm in the conference delegates to consider featuring in the festival not just as performing artists but as agents of NUSIC.

### **Keywords**

Cohesion, Cultural diversity, Edutainment, Empowerment, Integration, Patriotism

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