5-2012

Faith-Based Peacebuilding: A Case Study of the National Council of Churches of Kenya

John Mwangi Githigaro
mwangi.john@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs>

Part of the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Githigaro, John Mwangi (2012) "Faith-Based Peacebuilding: A Case Study of the National Council of Churches of Kenya," *Peace and Conflict Studies*: Vol. 19 : No. 1 , Article 4.

DOI: 10.46743/1082-7307/2012.1135

Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol19/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Peace & Conflict Studies at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Peace and Conflict Studies by an authorized editor of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.

Faith-Based Peacebuilding: A Case Study of the National Council of Churches of Kenya

Abstract

This article explores the peacebuilding contribution of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), following the post-2007 election violence in Kenya. Faith-based organizations are increasingly taking an active role in peacebuilding in conflict prone and affected societies. The paper presents research findings that the NCCCK perceived that it was positively involved in areas of humanitarian assistance and building of bridges among communities divided by the violence. The paper contextualizes the triggers or the causes of the post-election violence in Kenya after the December 2007 elections and offers suggestions for peaceful co-existence.

Keywords: *faith-based peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, Kenya, land reform program, post-election violence, religion*

Author Bio(s)

John Mwangi Githigaro is a researcher and a media consultant. He holds an M.A. degree in International Relations from the United States International University, Nairobi, Kenya. His research interests are in the areas of peacebuilding and security. Email: John Mwangi Githigaro is a researcher and a media consultant. He holds an M.A. degree in International Relations from the United States International University, Nairobi, Kenya. His research interests are in the areas of peacebuilding and security. Email: mwangi.john@gmail.com

**Faith-Based Peacebuilding:
A Case Study of the National Council of Churches of Kenya**

John Mwangi Githigaro

Abstract

This article explores the peacebuilding contribution of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), following the post-2007 election violence in Kenya. Faith-based organizations are increasingly taking an active role in peacebuilding in conflict prone and affected societies. The paper presents research findings that the NCCCK perceived that it was positively involved in areas of humanitarian assistance and building of bridges among communities divided by the violence. The paper contextualizes the triggers or the causes of the post-election violence in Kenya after the December 2007 elections and offers suggestions for peaceful co-existence.

Introduction

The Context of the Post-Election Violence in 2007

Kenya witnessed sporadic and systematic violence following the December 2007 general election. Whereas the disputed presidential elections served as a trigger to the violence, at the root of it were inherent structural inequalities that aggravated the situation. As it has been observed by Human Rights Watch (2008) the violence occurred in a country that was seen as a bastion of economic and political stability in a volatile region. The results of the violence were that after two months of bloodshed over 1000 people were dead and up to 500,000 thousand Kenyans became internally displaced. This study highlights the peacebuilding efforts undertaken by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK).

Historical Background of Kenya

Kenya is a former British colony and attained her independence in 1963. Currently the population stands at slightly over 40 million. The major ethnic groups in Kenya are the Kikuyu (22%), Luhya (14%), Luo (13%), Kamba (11%) and Kisii (6%). According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Fact Book, Kenya's population as of 2010 statistics stood at slightly over 40 million. Kenya lies south of Ethiopia, east of Uganda, and north of Tanzania. A revolution assisted Kenya in gaining her independence in 1963. Jomo Kenyatta became the President and was elected three times in a government that was viewed as being stable and conservative for 15 years. This aspect of stability and conservatism is said to have led to increased progress and prosperity but drew criticisms from those who had strong socialist underpinnings. During Kenyatta's tenure, the focus of country development issues centered on land ownership and land reform, as the question of land had been an issue in domestic politics. This aspect continued under Moi's presidency, but his regime came to focus on "corruption, crony capitalism, and autocratic rule, the land issue was ever present" (Roy and De Blij 2007, 477). In the 2002 general elections, Moi after 24 years was replaced by Mwai Kibaki who ran on a reformist, anti-corruption platform that advocated economic liberalization (Roy and De Blij).

Post-election violence is not a new phenomenon in Kenya. Since the re-introduction of multiparty democracy in 1991, violence has recurred every election year since then. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the post-2007 elections was shocking and almost transformed the country into the abyss of failed states. Various scholars and commentators of the post-election violence (e.g., Kanyinga 2009; Rutten and Owour 2009) point to a multiplicity of factors as being responsible for the post-election violence. The above authors all agree that the land debate in Kenya was a contributing factor to the pre- and post-election violence experienced in late 2007 and early 2008. As Human Rights Watch (2008) noted, the fact that

no Kenyan government had ever made an effort to address the long simmering grievances over land that have persisted since independence was a probable trigger. Furthermore, politicians who had been implicated in organizing political violence since the 1990s have never been brought to book and continue to operate with impunity (Human Rights Watch 2008). Widespread failures of governance became the core of the explosive anger exposed in the wake of electoral fraud. Biegon (2009) attributes the causes of the post-2007 violence to deep-seated ethnic divisions and years of economic frustration which almost led to the collapse of the country.

The international community is to be appreciated in helping Kenya reach a political settlement in the form of the National Accord signed on the 28th of February, 2008, between President Mwai Kibaki of the Party of National Unity and the Prime Minister Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement. Consequently a coalition government was formed with the sharing of government positions on a 50-50 basis between the two parties. The coalition government is in existence up to this date, and it is hoped it will last until August 2012—the date set for general elections in the new constitution that was adopted by the Kenyans and consequently promulgated on August 27, 2010. In the recent past the exact date of the general elections has been a debate in the legal and political circles.

Contextualizing Peacebuilding and Faith-based Organizations

Defining Peacebuilding

In 1992, the United Nations Secretary General Boutros Ghali in his Agenda for Peace publication defined peacebuilding as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict” (quoted in Muriithi 2009, 3). Over time this conceptualization has been used to refer to different approaches to address violent conflict at various phases in the conflict cycle (Muriithi). Peacebuilding involves the process of reconstructing the political, social and economic dimensions of

society emerging from conflict. Peacebuilding further involves addressing the root causes of conflict and bringing warring parties to negotiation and mediation if the situation so demands. Peacebuilding also includes initiating the process of Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) as well as Security Sector Reforms (SSR). Furthermore, peacebuilding requires the enhancement of economic and social justice as well as setting up or the reform of political governance structures and the rule of law (Muriithi).

Religion and Peacebuilding

The involvement of faith-based actors in conflict resolution is not a new trend and in the past, faith-based actors, clergy, religious movements and organizations have played a part in resolving conflicts (Bercovitch and Orellana 2009, 176). Johnston (2005, 210) says that because many of today's conflicts overrun the grasp of traditional diplomacy, religious actors all over the globe are getting involved in peacemaking. In offering an explanation of this state of affairs, he argues that religious reconciliation matched with official or unofficial diplomacy is seen by many to offer alternatives for dealing with identity based conflicts to the real political approaches characteristic of the Cold War era. While appreciating that past efforts to resolving some of these crises have been in the form of diplomatic efforts by government and inter-governmental bodies, the role of religious leaders and spiritual leaders in conflict management and resolution has been neglected in the study of international relations (Johnston 1994, 4). According to Johnston (2005, 210) faith-based diplomacy refers to the blending of religious concerns in the conduct of international politics. The religious leaders have the potential to access people at the individual and the sub-national group where inequities and insecurities are mostly felt. This study aims to contribute to this ongoing debate.

Bercovitch and Orellana (2009, 177) acknowledge that research in conflict resolution has failed to focus significantly on the role that religion plays in peacemaking (as opposed to

its role in making conflicts intractable). One reason they cite for this state of affairs is that the secular, rational problem-solving approaches and methodological, epistemological perspectives propounded by conflict resolution scholars viewed religion either as being an instigator of conflict or dismissed it altogether, because religious issues involved in conflict cannot be addressed from an empirical or positivist perspective. Abu-Nimer (2001, 2) posits that since the end of the Cold War, many scholars have argued that most conflicts are driven from “clashes of communal identity based on race, ethnicity, or religious affiliations.” Abu-Nimer consequently argues that religion therefore has an effect on the conflict causes, dynamics and resolution. He further notes that religious values and norms are critical aspects of the cultural identity of many people involved in conflict dynamics. Consequently he posits that religion can bring social, moral and spiritual resources to the peacebuilding process. Bercovitch and Orellana (2009, 177), while acknowledging that in the last decade conflict resolution scholars have produced serious literature on the interplay between religion, conflict and peacemaking, point out that a systematic and comprehensive assessment of the conditions under which faith-based and religious actors are more effective in resolving conflicts is yet to be undertaken.

Defining Faith-Based Organizations

There is generally no accepted definition of a faith-based organization (FBO) as used by government, academia or the faith-based sector. The ambiguity of the term is due in part to the wide variety of organizations that call themselves “faith-based” organizations and the fact that these organizations vary widely in size, mission, services provided, degree of religiosity and ties to religious institutions. An FBO can be characterized as an organization, with or without non-profit status, which provides social services and is either religiously motivated or religiously affiliated. Under this definition, at least four different types of faith based organizations can be identified: a) Religious congregations; b) Organizations or

projects sponsored by congregations; c) Incorporated non-profit organizations that are independent or affiliated with a congregation; and) Local and regional interfaith coalitions (Goldsmith, Eimicke, and Pineda 2006, 2-3).

Faith-based organizations in general schedule regular meetings of their representative members, specify their decision making procedures, have a permanent staff, and organize themselves through rational organizational models (Jacobson 1984; Wuthnow 2004 quoted in Santiago 2009, 94). Their membership tends to consist of individuals or private associations (Stephenson 2005 quoted in Santiago 2009, 94). According to Willets (2006) quoted in Santiago (2009, 94), one of the best respected principles that guide non-governmental organizations including faith-based ones is their commitment to nonviolence.

Individuals and faith communities have provided assistance to those afflicted by natural disasters, persecution, displacement and war long before international humanitarian law was formalized in treaty law. The theme of justice for the poor, the marginalized, the alien is central to the Hebrew Scriptures. The afflicted often sought help in temples and cities of refuge, and in later medieval period, monasteries became places of refuge and hospitality for strangers. Catholic orders were set up to provide charity to the poor, medical care to the sick, education for children and hospitality to strangers. In the Orthodox and Protestant traditions, a lay ministry, the deaconate, was set up to carry out Christian service. This service for others was premised not only on Christian values of charity and mercy but on the belief in the absolute value of the human person (Ferris 2005, 313).

Faith-based organizations play many different roles. They provide early warnings during humanitarian crises. They also integrate their experiences in humanitarian assistance with advocacy activities. FBOs partner with local organizations and facilitate partnership with national and international organizations. These partnerships are especially useful for advocacy and fundraising. FBOs are known to implement their activities in areas such as

conflict resolution, humanitarian assistance, development, human rights and peacebuilding among others (Ferris 2005, 320-321).

Challenges and Opportunities for Faith-Based Organizations in Peacebuilding

A number of challenges have been put forward in the context of religious peacebuilding. One is that in some instances the religious leaders may lack the capacity of peacebuilding theory and practice and therefore may be ineffective. Secondly, some groups or individuals may have reservations about working with actors of a different religion or those opposed to the intersection of religion and peacebuilding. Thirdly, religious peace actors may be perceived to be proselytizing, by actively seeking to attract religious membership or conversion (Dubois 2008).

Faith-based organizations and individuals have increasingly taken a proactive role in various facets of peacebuilding on the African continent and beyond. FBOs and individuals are concerned with reconciling warring parties and engaging in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts (Bouta, Abu Nimer, and Kadayifci-Orellana 2005). Numerous examples suffice to demonstrate this important role. The Quakers were involved in mediation efforts in Nigeria in the 1967-70 Biafran war; the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in Sudan in mediation efforts between the south and the north that culminated in the signing of the 1972 Addis Ababa Peace agreements. In Mozambique in 1990 the community of *Sant' Egidio* was instrumental in mediation efforts that put to an end the Mozambican Civil War (Johnston 2005; Bouta, Abu Nimer, and Kadayifci-Orellana 2005).

In South Africa, religion and most notably Christianity contributed a significant role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). TRC was the outcome of a political negotiation between Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress (ANC) and Frederic William de Klerk's National Party which ended over 40 years of apartheid. In 1995

Mandela's newly-elected government promulgated into law the promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, the legislation that set up the TRC. The TRC was tasked with investigating alleged atrocities committed in the apartheid era, granting amnesty where feasible as well as recommending compensations to victims (Shore 2008, 2-3). This has however been the subject of various critiques with accusation that the TRC leadership adopted "a religious – redemptive understanding of their mandate" (Shore and Kline 2006, 2). This is a view supported by Shore (2008) who argues that in TRC hearings there was a deliberate appeal to Christianity as a legitimate method of truth telling and promotion of reconciliation among enemies.

In northern Uganda, religious leaders have been important players in the peace process there with the involvement of two international faith-based groups in mediation efforts. They include *Pax Christi* (Netherlands) and the community of *Sant 'Egidio* (a Catholic Lay organization) that have maintained contacts with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in working towards a settlement of the conflict and thus engaging in track two diplomacy (World Bank 2006, 271-273). In addition to these efforts, religious leaders in northern Uganda have been active through the Acholi Inter-Religious Peace Initiative (ARLPI), which was established between 1997 and 1998 and involved the Catholics, Church of Uganda, Orthodox and Muslim leaders in the peace process. The goal of this partnership was to work for peace through advocacy, training and community-level reconciliation. The initiative has been instrumental in, among other areas, the passage of the Amnesty Bill in the Ugandan Parliament (World Bank 2006).

Whereas a couple of religious-based peacemakers were at play in resolving the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe struggles in the 1960s and 1970s, the most prominent role was undertaken by the Catholic Church and its various agencies, most notably the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (Kraybill 1994, 211). The primary contribution of the

Catholic Church was that of “truth-telling.” The church sought to tell the whole world and the nation what was happening in Rhodesia (Kraybill 1994, 212).

In Cambodia, Buddhism became a unifying factor after the ouster of the Khmer Rouge in 1979 in which a period of political instability ensued. An initially hesitant state began progressively to appreciate the continued cultural, social and religious salience of Buddhism. A popular initiative known as the *Dhammayietra* whose central underpinnings were compassion and non-violence was established. *Dhammayietra* translated as the “pilgrimage of truth” was the hope of peace to rebuild the war-torn country (Haynes 2009). The *Dhammayietra*—typically an annual 45 day walk of some 650 kilometers involving both monks and lay people—focused on areas that were still often divided by the conflict. The walks were aimed at building links between people divided by long periods of conflict. The walks were symbolic to the villagers as a return of Buddhism and Buddhist monks and also as an indicator that peace was becoming consolidated (Haynes).

Religious leaders are most likely to be successful when they: (1) have an international or a transnational reach; (2) consistently emphasize peace and avoidance of the use of force in resolving conflict; and; (3) have good relations between different religions in a conflict situation, as this will be key to a positive input from them (Appleby 2006 cited in Haynes 2009, 61). Faith-based actors have with varying levels of success contributed positively to peacebuilding. They have for example provided emotional and spiritual support to war-affected communities, have mobilized their communities and others for peace, have mediated between conflicting parties, and have promoted reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (Bouta, Abu Nimer, and Kadayifci- Orellana, 2005, ix). Religion however can be used to abet conflict or to cause conflict as Johnston and Cox (2003) outline:

Religion as is becoming increasingly apparent is a double-edged sword. It can cause conflict or it can abate it. But even in those instances where a particular religion may be viewed as part of the problem (to the extent that it is either central to a conflict or has allowed itself to become a mobilizing vehicle for nationalism or ethnic passions), that religion will include within the core of its tradition extensive teachings that encourage neighbourly concerns and the settlement of humanity. (p. 15)

Whereas churches and faith-based organizations have contributed to post-conflict peacebuilding in many parts of the world, a number have been culpable in persecution of conflict. Kubai (2005) presents the view that the church in Rwanda has been haunted in its efforts to engage in healing and reconciliation in the country by its role in the 1994 genocide. Kubai further notes that not only were members from every denomination in Rwanda responsible for the most appalling of atrocities, but most significantly most of the massacres took place in church buildings where many targets of the genocide sought refuge. She points to the sad fact that the church enjoyed an indisputable moral authority and was deeply revered by the majority of their parishioners as she notes:

The church as part of its spiritual mandate is called to work for peace, justice and reconciliation, and thereby assist in creating an inclusive society where people can live together in dignity. The church that failed in its God-given task to transform its people from ethnic hatred to Christ must now pray and work towards ending centuries of hatred and strife, and seek to recover from the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Christians and live according to the Christian teaching of love, forgiveness and reconciliation. (Kubai 2005, 7)

Johnston and Cox (2003, 14) puts forward four attributes that give religious leaders and institutions sizeable influence in peacemaking: 1) a well-established and pervasive influence

in the community; 2) a reputation as an apolitical force for change based on a respected set of values; 3) unique leverage for reconciling conflicting parties including an ability to rehumanize relationships; 4) the capability to mobilize community, national and international support for a peace process.

The experience of ethno-religious conflicts since the end of the Cold War has made research on the nexus between religion and conflict resolution inevitable. Furthermore, the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001 brought the question of conflict and religion into play (Bercovitch and Orellana 2009). This paper is thus an attempt at contributing to the debate on religion and peacebuilding by examining to what extent faith-based organizations have contributed to peacebuilding efforts in one specific case. The next section proceeds with a short history of the National Council of Churches of Kenya and then presents research findings from this case study of the NCCCK's peacebuilding efforts in 2008.

The Historical Background of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK)

The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) was founded in 1913 during the United Missionary Conference at the end of which representatives from four missionary organizations signed to a constitution to establish the federation of missions. The organizations were: Church Missionary Society (current day Anglican Church of Kenya), Church of Scotland Mission (current day Presbyterian Church of East Africa), United Methodist Mission (current day Methodist Church in Kenya) and African Inland Mission (current day African Inland Church). A fifth member, British and Foreign Bible Society (current day Bible Society of Kenya) was admitted in 1918. The core vision has remained unchanged since its inception and is anchored on the unity of the church in Kenya as reflected in the current mission statement. The mission statement of the Council is to: 1) Promote fellowship and ecumenism; 2) Nurture a common understanding of the Christian faith and

mission; 3) Build the capacities of the membership; and 4) Enhance the creation of a just and sustainable society. The Council has a national reach with its areas of operations divided into nine regions. They include Central, Lower Eastern, Upper Eastern, Nairobi, Coast, South Rift, North Rift, Western and Nyanza.

NCCK has vast experience in the area of peacebuilding and conflict management. Past interventions have included responses to resource-based conflicts, border conflicts as well as responses to the 1992, 1997 and the 2007 ethnic clashes. The Council portends that peace in Kenya has been immensely affected by ethnic animosity as a result of underlying causes such as “inequitable access to land, historical injustices, and proliferation of small arms and light weapons” (NCCK 2008).

Methodology

This research was conducted as a case study adopting a qualitative approach in social science research. The case study approach was selected because this was a unique situation for the Council to engage in (it has been involved in other peacebuilding interventions in the past but not in such aspects as mediation in Kenya) and as such the researcher felt it was an opportunity to study this particular phenomena to contribute to the ever-expanding literature on the role of faith-based organizations in peacebuilding. To the best of my knowledge nobody had studied this occurrence, and this study was adopted to bridge the literature gap. Research consent for the case study was obtained from the General Secretary with a research agreement being signed between the organization and the researcher.

This being a case study, participants were selected by virtue of the positions they held in NCCK and the role they played in various peacebuilding interventions undertaken by the organization. The researcher adopted both semi-structured in-depth interviews and document analysis as the study's data collection methods. Key questions posed to the participants of the study included but were not limited to the following:

1. What do you consider to be the causes of the 2007/08 post-election violence?
2. What was the broad impact of the violence in the country?
3. What form of immediate responses did the council mount on the eruption of violence?
4. What sorts of partnerships did the council engage in in the areas of peace building and humanitarian assistance locally and internationally?
5. What challenges did you face in your peacebuilding efforts in 2008?
6. How would you evaluate your peacebuilding interventions following the post-poll violence in 2008? Were there lessons learnt?

Eleven interviews were conducted between February and March 2010. The interview responses were then coded and analyzed according to common themes that arose out of the research. A survey of relevant books, online resources and journals was undertaken to enrich the research. Primary and secondary data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and interpretivism (Kelliher 2005). The researcher adopted a triangulation approach to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings (Denscombe 2003).

Findings

This section examines the contribution of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) in post-conflict peacebuilding following the 2007/08 post-election violence through narratives shared by NCCCK staff and also through content analysis of documents. The research findings are organized in themes. The key themes highlighted include: causes of the 2007/8 post-election violence and its impact; immediate responses to the post-election crisis; long-term programs for healing and reconciliation; partnerships engaged in peacebuilding and humanitarian response; the role of women in the peace process; policy advocacy; and strengths and challenges of faith-based peacebuilding.

The Causes of the 2007/08 Post-Election Violence and its Impact in Kenya

An analysis from the participants' responses concluded that whereas the violence was triggered by disputed presidential elections of 2007, a number of underlying issues had contributed to the violence. These issues included a cross section of Kenyan citizens' feelings of being marginalized economically, tribalism, and unresolved issues such as land and youth unemployment. An NCKK senior official reflected on the causal factors of the 2007 post-poll violence:

The causes of the violence were multi-faceted. Key to the violence was ethnicity and tribalism. Competing political interests also contributed to the violence. In the Rift Valley, the violence was attributed to the land issue. The triggers of the violence however were electoral malpractices and the mishandling of the presidential elections vote tally at Kenyatta International Conference Center [KICC, Nairobi, Kenya where the national vote tallying process for the 2007 elections took place].

An NCKK Regional Coordinator said, "The cause of the violence among other reasons could be attributed to an election that was unfair, and besides that there were historical injustices and unemployment which triggered the violence." Another NCKK Regional Coordinator attributed the violence to the following: "One of the causes of the violence was the feeling of marginalization by government. Some communities perceived themselves as being marginalized economically by the high poverty levels in their areas and as a result of feelings of hopelessness, they engaged in violence."

Regarding the impact of the violence there was a widespread agreement that the violence had caused deaths, destruction of property, increased unemployment as a result of a slow economic growth, internal displacements, and gross human rights violation including sexual violence as well as contributing to heightened ethnic animosity. As one respondent an NCKK Regional Coordinator noted: "The violence resulted in the death of many Kenyans

hence increasing dependency. Further there was destruction of property thus increasing unemployment as well as displacements of families from their homes.”

The Immediate Responses to the Post Election Violence

The respondents were in agreement that the steps they undertook initially after the eruption of violence were to mount a humanitarian response in the provision of food and non food items. Secondly, there was the provision of psychosocial support to address issues of trauma occasioned by loss of lives and infliction of emotional and physical harm. Progressively, community forums with the involvement of church leaders were held to restrain the youth in particular to stop engaging in violence. As an NCKK Regional Coordinator explained, “The immediate response was to provide humanitarian support in the form of both food and non food items, need assessment of the displaced, mobilizing church leaders and community leaders to restrain the youth from acts of violence.” Another NCKK Regional Coordinator commented, “An immediate response we undertook was to rescue those that had been marooned in the violence and ferry them to safety.”

The Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence (CIPEV) 2008 report documents incidences of sexual violence through interviews and media reports. These reports included tales of rape including gang rape, sexual mutilation and heinous deaths. Among others the Commission heard tales of family members being forced to stand by and witness their mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and little children being raped, killed and maimed; innocent victims contracting HIV/AIDS after being sexually assaulted because the breakdown of law and order and the deteriorating security situation kept them from accessing medical care soon enough to prevent it; husbands abandoning their wives who had been defiled and the inevitable psychological burden of powerlessness and hopelessness that left individuals who had experienced sexual violence feeling alone, isolated and unable to cope, not just for one moment in time, but possibly forever (CIPEV 2008, 132). With regards to

gender based violence such as rape that was widespread during the post-election violence, NCKK officials made referrals to hospitals as well as the offering of psycho-social support. As an NCKK Regional Coordinator pointed out, “At the height of the violence, we liaised with the gender recovery centers within Nairobi to seek medical assistance for rape cases.”

Long-term Programs for Healing and Reconciliation

Study respondents reported that a number of interventions were undertaken by NCKK to promote healing and reconciliation following the Kenyan 2007 post poll violence. One was the mounting of a psychosocial support program to enable victims of the post-election violence to heal psychologically from the trauma they underwent. One such intervention particularly targeted the children in partnership with UNICEF. As an NCKK Regional Coordinator explained:

We provided psychosocial support by establishing child-friendly spaces in such areas as Kariobangi, Kibera, Huruma, and Limuru to assist children in processing what had happened to them in efforts to relieve their trauma.

Songs, art, dances were some of the strategies employed.

Secondly, capacity building workshops for church leaders were held to build their capacity in mediation and peacebuilding skills and this enabled them to preach reconciliation in their areas of operation. Thirdly, intra and inter-ethnic dialogue forums were held in areas identified as hotspots for the violence in efforts to bring reconciliation among bitterly divided communities. An NCKK Regional Coordinator noted, “NCKK held intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic dialogue with the aim of forgiving each other; reconciling and bringing about healing and reconciliation to enable communities to live together harmoniously.”

The Council had earlier in March 2007 in partnership with other religious institutions formed the Inter-Religious Forum (IRF) to respond to issues of national concerns such as the promotion of peaceful electoral campaigns in 2007. The IRF drew its membership from

Christians, Hindu, and Muslims, which are the three most dominant religions in Kenya. After the post-election violence the forum would be involved in humanitarian support, meeting the key protagonists of the Kenyan conflict (The Party of National Unity and the Orange Democratic Movement), as well as making their inputs to the Africa Union (AU)-led mediation efforts that were seeking a solution to the crisis (NCKK 2008). Under the IRF, a number of activities were held such as: dialogue forums, pastoral visits, exchange visits and ecumenical visits in different parts of the country that experienced post-election violence. As part of the dialogue forums, religious leaders were trained on conflict resolution and conflict management. Consequently, the participants would be expected to map out areas that were prone to conflict, map out the causes of the violence and propose solutions to the conflict. Exchange visits were undertaken to various parts of Kenya such as parts of the Rift Valley (Kuresoi, Molo, and Naivasha), Nairobi informal settlements of Kibera and Mathare among others to witness firsthand the consequences of the violence.

These visits served as solidarity visits to the internally displaced persons. These visits also served as part of advocacy in terms of monitoring the government initiative of returning the displaced to their homes in a Kenyan government resettlement program referred to as “Operation *Rudi Nyumbani*” loosely translated as returning home. These exchange visits also served as dialogue forums among communities that had previously engaged in conflict and involved community and opinion leaders, youth leaders, the religious leaders as well as government representatives drawn from the provincial administration. Ecumenical joint services were held incorporating the Christians, the Muslims and the Hindus. These served to reinforce the message of peace through various religious teachings. A key underlying theme was that the respective religions advocated for peaceful co-existence and that their followers would be expected to foster a culture of peace (NCKK 2008).

Partnerships Engaged in Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Response

Participants pointed out that various partnerships were engaged locally and internationally in responding to the 2007/08 violence. The findings indicated that multiple actors were engaged in efforts to build bridges among bitterly divided communities and to alleviate human suffering. These actors included the Kenya Red Cross, churches, bodies such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and local and international NGOs, among others. Below are relevant narratives from respondents:

We coordinated the efforts of member churches such as the Anglican Church, Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church, Friends Church, PEFA Church, and partnered with the Red Cross and the government to provide humanitarian assistance and advocate for peaceful co-existence. *(NCKK Regional Coordinator)*

There was partnership between the NCKK and provincial administration including the Administration Police and the outcome was in offering protection to the displaced as well as assisting in the logistics of ferrying relief supplies to the internally displaced persons. *(NCKK Regional Coordinator)*

We partnered with UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNDP, religious bodies as well as professional bodies such as Amani Counseling Center and Eleka Counseling to provide humanitarian support, counseling and to promote reconciliation. *(NCKK Regional Coordinator)*

Ecumenical bodies outside of the country had facilitated the Council to address the crisis spiritually, morally, and financially. Ecumenical partners such as the World Council of Churches, Protestant Churches in Germany, United Church of Canada, Church World

Service, Norwegian Church Aid, and Diakonia Sweden among others provided financial and moral support to address the humanitarian crisis occasioned by the violence. This support went to the internally displaced and to the capacity building of church leaders to engage in the healing process.

The involvement of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is documented in an NCCCK internal document published in 2008. The report highlights that in February 2008, the WCC sent a living letters delegation to the country at the height of the violence. The purpose of their visit was a fact finding mission on the violence and to express solidarity with the Kenyan Church. The delegation visited parts of Nairobi and the South Rift regions of the country (Molo, Kuresoi, Nakuru) that were hard hit by the violence. Further, the living letters team met separately with the leadership of the Orange Democratic Movement and the Party of National Unity to urge them to act fast to restore peace in the country.

The Role of Women in the Peace Process

From the analysis of respondents it emerged that the Council incorporated women in their peacebuilding efforts. The respondents pointed out that the contribution of women was significant to the issues of healing and reconciliation as women are badly affected in times of conflict. Women in times of conflict were often left to care for the children and were subjected to being “instruments of war” through rape among other violations. Below are two representative excerpts of respondents regarding the significance of involvement of women in peacebuilding in 2008:

Women used their networks to preach the message of peace because they suffered most during the post-election crisis. (*NCCCK Regional Coordinator*)

Women were more responsive in building bridges of peace. They were more willing to reach out to their sons and husbands, because they were concerned about their children and families' future. (*NCKK Senior Official*)

Women in church leadership were also involved in a capacity-building training dubbed "Women as Agents of Peace" after the violence in 2008, to empower women leaders to engage in the national healing and reconciliation processes.

Policy Advocacy

The National Accord of 2008 put in place a power-sharing agreement between the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). The signing of the accord was instrumental in halting the post-election violence and setting the reforms agenda framework. For the NCKK, policy advocacy was and continues to be a strategy for long-term healing and reconciliation. The Council was involved in influencing the passage of pieces of legislation such as the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Act, National Cohesion and Integration Act, The Constitutional Review Act of 2008, and the Witness Protection Act in the Kenyan Parliament (NCKK 2008). The other facet of advocacy that the Council was involved in was in the domain of transitional justice. It has been documented by various reports and publications that there was widespread gross violation of human rights during the post-election violence (KNCHR 2008; Human Rights Watch 2008; and International Crisis Group 2008). The Council advocated that those who had the greatest responsibility for various human rights violations be taken to the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague, Netherlands. An NCKK senior official noted the following on the ICC process:

We have been advocating for the ICC process for those that bear the greatest responsibility for the violence. This is informed by the culture of impunity in this country that is occasioned by the lack of respect for the rule of law. If the

ICC can deal with this category of people, then others in the country will respect the rule of law.

Six alleged perpetrators of the post poll violence made initial appearances at the ICC in April 2011 and appeared on diverse dates in September 2011 for either a confirmation or a drop of the charges that included among others crimes against humanity. Four of the suspects' cases were confirmed on the 23rd of January 2012 by the ICC pre-trial II chambers and will proceed to trial unless their cases are quashed at the appeal process, which the suspects embarked on thereafter.

Additionally, as part of advocacy, NCKK was involved in monitoring the process of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Project (KNDR) as parts of efforts to ensure that the reform process was underway following the signing of the National Accord on February 28, 2008, a process that laid the framework for a coalition government for the sake of national unity. Among other issues, the Council continued to lobby the government to address the plight of internally displaced persons in areas such as compensation and resettlement (NCKK 2008). Immediately after the eruption of violence, the Council under the umbrella of the Inter-Religious Forum (IRF) launched the Kenya *Thabiti* taskforce and mandated it to conduct research on the causes of the post-election violence in 2007/08 and its implications for national unity. This enabled the Council in collaboration with the other members of the IRF to engage with the government and a variety of partners on the approaches needed to address the issues that had resulted in widespread violence (Inter-Religious Forum Report 2009).

The media was a tool that the NCKK and the IRF utilized at the height of the post-poll violence to point out the repercussions of the violence and to suggest solutions to revert from the crisis. Even after the stop of the post-election violence, there was a sustained push for the government to implement key reforms to stabilize the country. This was in the form of press

statements that were published and broadcasted in local media. These statements would be issued by NCKK or under the aegis of the IRF. Below are two excerpts of the press statements issued reflecting the advocacy role of the NCKK:

We strongly urge every Kenyan to exercise restraint from [violent] acts... as we await the outcome of the ongoing mediation efforts. (IRF press statement 2008)

We remind the government and the mediation teams that the root causes of the violence that rocked our country have not been resolved as yet. (NCKK 2008)

These press statements reflected the NCKK's commitment to ensuring an amicable settlement of the conflict and to urging the government to address the root causes of the violence through appropriate interventions.

Strengths and Challenges of Faith-Based Peacebuilding

One goal of the study was to gauge the perception of the respondents on what they considered to be the strengths of faith-based peacebuilding. Respondents were in agreement that FBOs have credibility and command the respect of their faithful. NCKK Regional Coordinators noted their perceptions that FBOs "command respect [because] they have been mandated by God to be peacemakers and to live in as far as it is possible at peace with all men" and that "FBOs have the credibility from the community as they are considered better than other institutions." At the same time, respondents noted significant challenges faced by FBOs in their peacebuilding efforts. These observations pertain not to challenges to peacebuilding in general, but challenges related to the role of FBOs in peacebuilding efforts.

A major challenge identified was the lack of financial resources to meet the high demand for peacebuilding interventions. They noted that funding for peacebuilding programs was short term and this negatively impacted the sustainability of those efforts. Another

challenge identified by respondents was the fact that the church was itself divided prior to and after the violence and therefore the church needed to go through a period of internal healing before it could be effective in building the bridges of peace among bitterly divided communities. An NCKK senior official noted, “The church was divided and therefore it needed to go through internal healing. One of the first responses to this crisis of legitimacy was to apologize to the nation and put in place processes to undergo healing.” As one of the strategies to address this challenge, the Council in August 2008 organized a National Pastor’s Conference at Kabarak University, Nakuru, Kenya that brought about 1500 church leaders together with the aim of internal healing among clergy and lay leaders drawn from its membership. It was a period of deep reflection on the role that the church would be taking in its effort to promote national healing and reconciliation (NCKK 2008).

Discussion

The findings of this study relate to the role of the NCKK in peacebuilding efforts as narrated by its officials after the 2007 post-election violence. The participants of this study were consistent in their perception that whereas the trigger of the post-poll violence was a widely disputed presidential poll, there were a number of factors that were responsible for this crisis. The question of land especially in the Rift Valley, highly pitched ethnic politics, and the crisis of youth unemployment were touted as explanatory factors. This finding supports the argument of Kanyinga (2009) who sees the land question as having played a major role in the violence. He notes that the land reform program in Kenya has not been sensitive to inter-ethnic relations and it remains a hot spot for violence if not well addressed. Indeed a majority of the respondents argued that the land question was a contributing factor to the violence and has to be addressed with finality to address a recurrence of violence in future election cycles.

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights report (2008, 22) points to a number of probable causes of the 2007 post-poll violence. One was the widespread poverty and radical inequalities. Furthermore, the report argues that ethnic based politics was a trigger due to the view that the winner of a presidential poll gets to benefit his community and therefore communities fight to have one of their own ascend to the presidency. This account is consistent with the participants' analysis of the causes of the violence, with the significant view being that politics in Kenya is highly ethnicized and that those who were left out of power felt marginalized and as a result engaged in violence. These perceptions are supported by Human Rights Watch (2008, 3) which argues that whereas the post-election violence was triggered by fraud, many of the tensions that exploded in December 2007 were years or even decades old. In the 2002 general elections, Kenyans overwhelmingly voted to put to an end to dictatorships, inequality, political violence and systemic abuse of office. The NARC Coalition headed by Mwai Kibaki had pledged a new constitution, commissions to address large scale corruption and land grabbing by the elite, as well as initiating measures to tackle landlessness, unemployment and police reforms. These reforms would be abandoned as the NARC Coalition disintegrated with impunity and corruption being entrenched (Human Rights Watch 2008).

The NCKK members reported that the Council was involved in various facets of peacebuilding, including humanitarian assistance such as the provision of food and non food items to those who were internally displaced and psychosocial support to relieve trauma to those affected by the violence through counseling and performing arts. In efforts to promote peaceful co-existence at the local levels, the council forged partnerships with other religious leaders such as the Hindu and the Muslim communities to promote peaceful co-existence among warring communities through peace meetings and dialogue forums. At the national level the council was involved in various peacebuilding efforts, such as engaging in dialogue

with the two key disputants of the crisis and being involved in the African Union led mediation efforts, as well as advocating for transitional justice mechanisms. Key among their suggestions was the establishment of a Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) to enable healing of communities and well as ensuring justice was meted out to those who organized or were complicit in acts of violence. Transitional justice is conceptualized by Kaminski, Nalepa and Barry (2006) as the formal or informal procedures adopted by a group or an institution of accepted legitimacy after periods of oppressive social order and is concerned with meting out justice to perpetrators and their collaborators and as well as to their victims. Justice is seen as an overarching goal for victims and may take various forms depending on the circumstances. Scholars of transitional justice generally agree that forms of truth commissions are necessary in mediating the peace/justice divide as a form of accountability for past abuses (Sriram 2007). Notably, Truth Commissions have been helpful in the past in reconciling groups hitherto engaged in conflict. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established in South Africa in 1995 was particularly helpful in enabling a relatively peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy (Shore 2008, 2-3).

A key finding of this paper is that partnerships are important in times of crisis and conflict such as the violence in Kenya in early 2008. Religious unity for instance through the Inter-Religious Forum served to promote unity for the purpose of preaching peaceful co-existence. The involvement of local and international bodies and ecumenical organizations made the intervention of the Council a success because material, financial and human resources were pulled together to address the various needs of the populace ranging from peacebuilding to humanitarian assistance. The findings suggest that FBOs are key players in such partnerships because they tend to have credibility among the population and can be trusted to mount long-term healing and reconciliation programs among communities. It was the respondents' perception that these are some of the strengths of faith-based peacebuilding.

Various scholars and commentators on faith-based peacebuilding point to unique strengths of faith-based peacebuilding (Johnston 1994; Johnston and Cox 2003). As pointed out by Bouta, Abu Nimer, and Kadafiyci-Orellana (2005, 39-40), some possible strengths of faith-based peace building include: 1) strong faith-based motivation for peacebuilding; 2) long-term history and/or involvement in the societies they serve; 3) long-term commitment of international faith-based actors; and 4) moral and spiritual authority.

The study also indicates that the Council made deliberate steps to include women in the national healing and reconciliation processes. International actors such as the UN Security Council, The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Women Waging Peace, International Alert, among others have called for the involvement of women in peacebuilding activities and noted that women must be equal participants in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation programs (Anderlini 2000 cited in De la Rey and McKay 2006, 144). The UN Security Council in October 2000 adopted Resolution 1325, calling for the participation of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. It impressed upon all actors who negotiate and implement peace agreements to consider the needs of women and girls in post-conflict periods and to support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms (Anderlini 2000 quoted in De la Rey and McKay 2006, 144). El-Bushra (2007, 14) notes that war should not be seen as a violation of women by men but rather it should be acknowledged that men and women are "differently violated by war."

Going forward, the government of Kenya and other actors in the peace process (such as the civil society, international organizations, foreign governments) would be wise to draw upon the goodwill and the wide networks of the NCCCK in Kenya to promote the sustainability of the peace currently being experienced in Kenya as the nation seeks to engage in structural and institutional reforms. This engagement is important to ensure that the

country does not find itself in another cycle of violence considering that 2012 general elections are fast approaching.

References

- Abu-Nimer, M. 2001. "Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Inter-religious Peacebuilding." *Journal of Peace Research* 38(6): 685-704.
- Bercovitch, J. and Orellana, K. 2009. "Religion and Mediation: The Role of Faith Based Actors in International Conflict resolution." *International Negotiation* 14:175-204.
- Biegon, J. 2009. "Electoral Violence and Fragility in Africa: Drawing Lessons from Kenya's Experience in the 2007/2008 Post Election Violence." erd.eiu.eu/media/biegon.pdf.
- Bouta, T., Abu-Nimer, M. and Kadayifci-Orellana, S. 2005. "Faith-Based Peace-Building: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-Faith Actors." (The Hague, Netherlands: Institute of International Relations), www.clingedael.nl/.../20051100-cru-paper-faith-based%20peace-building.pdf.
- Central Intelligence Agency. 2010. WorldFactBook Kenya. 2010. <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/factbook/ke.html>.
- Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence. 2008. Report of the Commission. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Denscombe, M. 2003. *The Good Research Guide for Small-Scale Social Research Projects*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- De la Rey, C. and McKay, S. 2006. "Peace building as a Gendered Process." *Journal of Social Issues* 6(1): 141-153.
- Dubois, H. 2008. "Religion and Peace Building: An Ambivalent Yet Vital Relationship." <http://www.plowshares.project.org>.
- El-Bushra, J. 2008. "Feminism, Gender, and Women Peace Activism." *Development and Change* 38(1):131-147.
- Ferris, E. 2005. "Faith Based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations." *International Review of the Red Cross* 87(858): 311-323.
- Goldsmith, S., Emicke, B., and Pineda, C. 2006. "Faith Based Organizations Versus their Secular Counterparts: A Primer for local officials." <http://www.Innovations.harvard.edu.cache/documents/11120.pdf>.
- Haynes, J. 2009. "Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: The Role of Religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia." *Commonwealth Comparative Politics* 47(1):52-75.
- Human Rights Watch. 2008. *Ballots to Bullets: Organized Political Violence and Kenya's Crisis of Governance*. <http://www.humanrightswatch.org>.
- International Crisis Group. 2008. *Kenya in Crisis*, Africa Report, 137. Brussels: International Crisis Group.
- Inter-Religious Forum. 2009. *Root Causes and Implications of the Post Election Violence of 2007*. Nairobi: Inter-Religious Forum.
- Jacobson, H. 1984. *Networks of Interdependence: International Organizations and the Global Political System*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Johnston, D. 2005. "Faith Based Organizations: The Religious Dimensions of Peace Building." In Tongeren, V., Brenk, M., Hellema, M., and Verhoeven, J., (eds), *People*

- Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- 1994. "Introduction: Beyond Power Politics." In Johnston, D. and Sampson C. (eds.) *Religion: The Missing dimension of Statecraft*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Johnston, D. and Cox, B. 2003. "Faith Based Diplomacy and Preventive Engagement." In Johnston, D. (ed.) *Faith Based Diplomacy: Trumping Real Politik*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kaminski, M., Nalepa M., and Barry, O. 2006. "Normative and Strategic Aspects of Transitional Justice." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50(3): 295-302.
- Karuti, Kanyinga. 2009. "The Legacy of the White Highlands: Land rights, Ethnicity and the Post -2007 Election Violence in Kenya." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 27(3): 325-344.
- Kelliher, F. 2005. "Interpretivism and the Pursuit of Research Legitimization: An Integrated Approach to Single Case Design." *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methodology* 3(2): 123-132.
- Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. 2008. *On the Brink of the Precipice*. Nairobi: KNHCR.
- Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Monitoring Project Report. 2009. Nairobi: South Consulting.
- Kraybill, R. 1994. "Transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: The Role of Religious Actors." *In Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, ed. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson. New York : Oxford University Press.
- Kubai, A. 2005. *Being Church in Post-Genocide Rwanda: The Challenges of Forgiveness and Reconciliation*. Uppsala: Life and Peace Institute.
- Muriithi, T. 2009. *The Ethics of Peacebuilding*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- National Council of Churches of Kenya. 2008. *Progress Report January to June 2008*. Nairobi.
- Roy, C. and De Blij, H. 2007. *Survey of Sub-Saharan Africa: A Regional Geography*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Rutten, M. and Owour, S. 2009. "Weapons of Mass Destruction: Land, Ethnicity and the 2007 Elections in Kenya." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 27(3): 305-324
- Santiago, L. 2009. "Faith Based Organizations and Public Health." In Gaist, P. A. (ed.), *Igniting the Power of Community: the Role of CBOs and NGOs in Global Public Health*. New York: Springer.
- Shore, M. 2008 "Christianity and Justice in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Case study in Religious Conflict Resolution." *Political Theology* 9 (2):161-178.
- Shore, M. and Kline, S. 2006. "The Ambiguous Role of Religion in the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Peace and Change* 31(2): 309-332.
- Sriram, L. C. 2007. "Justice as Peace? Liberal Peacebuilding and Strategies of Transitional Justice." *Global Society* 21(4): 579-591.
- World Bank. 2006. "Civil Society and Peace Building: Potential, Limitations and Critical Factors."
http://www.siteresources.worldbank.org/.../ESW_Civil_Society_and_Peacebuilding_Final_Draft.pdf .