In the Eye of the STORM

NPI-Africa’s Response to the Kenyan Crisis

NPI-Africa
A Peace Resource Organisation
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A Peace Resource Organisation
Founded in 1984 as Nairobi Peace Group, Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-Africa) has been involved in a wide range of peacebuilding initiatives in Africa. Its work has involved mediation and dialogue facilitation, training and capacity building, and healing and reconciliation initiatives in countries in East, Central and West Africa. NPI-Africa also undertakes research and documentation, seeks to influence policy in areas relevant to its mission, and promotes reflection and learning from peacebuilding practice.

NPI-Africa is registered as a Charitable Trust.

For more information, please visit the NPI-Africa website (www.npi-africa.org) or write to the Executive Director by email (info@npi-africa.org)

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 14894
Nairobi, 00800
Nairobi, Kenya

Visitor’s Address:
5th Floor, New Waumini House
Chromo Road – Waiyaki Way
Westlands, Nairobi
Tele: +254 (020) 444 1 444 or 444 0 098
Fax: +254 (020) 444 0 097

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Compiled and Edited by:
George Wachira
Naana Marekia

Designed by:
Noel Creative Media Limited
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Foreword

Elections and Peace in Africa

A New Frontier?

– By Dr. Kabiru Kinyanjui

The destructive consequences of the disputed 2007 presidential elections in Kenya are now well-known to the whole world. They give us pause to reflect seriously on electoral processes and the implications for peace. In countries ranging from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, national elections have become, increasingly, new spaces for conflict and a challenge to peace. After decades of dictatorship in Gabon, the high cost of disputed elections has become apparent to all.

The trend of ‘messy’ elections is not confined to Africa. In Afghanistan, the legitimacy of Hamid Karzai’s presidency was questioned in consequence of a faulty electoral process, as was that of President Ahmedinejad of Iran. The mandate of NATO forces in Afghanistan – battling the Taliban resistance and the Al-Qaeda ideology – is undermined and weakened by the country’s contested election results. And in Iraq, elections failed to deliver a decisive winner, even as the country moved towards a transition marked by the gradual withdrawal of the American military.

A number of African countries are scheduled to hold elections during the coming two years. Forthcoming elections in Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, Tanzania (Zanzibar in particular), Uganda and the referendum in Sudan have the potential of either undermining or entrenching peace within their respective regions. Typically, electoral processes in many parts of Africa provide occasion to ventilate long-simmering frustration and occasion to expose both real and perceived injustices.

On the other hand, whenever elections in Africa—as in other places—have been well conducted, they have served to legitimise the authority of the state, maintain the peace and galvanize new possibilities for development. For this reason, national elections held in Ghana, South Africa and Namibia have attracted much attention and much positive assessment. However, the Kenyan debacle offers an important lesson: one round
of ‘good’ elections does not guarantee that the next round will be equally successful. The Kenyan elections of 2002 which led to a smooth transition from a long-ruling incumbent to the opposition party were hailed as a new dawn for democracy. Five years later, in 2007, the bungled elections demonstrated clearly that the optimism was misplaced.

For peace workers in Africa, therefore, elections must function as an important item on the peacebuilding agenda. Credible and trust-inspiring institutions and processes are critical components of the electoral process. Equally critical are the elements of a well-informed and well-prepared electorate, including civil society, and state institutions with inbuilt capacity and preparedness to deal with any eventuality. In this regard, Kenya’s crisis exhibited failure. Together with other civil society actors, peacemakers must insist on the highest levels of accountability, ensuring that electoral institutions are respected, voters’ decisions upheld and, ultimately, that peace is maintained throughout the process. Beyond these considerations, peacemakers must do the work of preparing communities to respect each other’s choices, to respect dissent--always through means that honour the rights of everyone.

To date, NPI-Africa has gained useful experience and credible exposure to the dynamic of peacebuilding in the context of national elections. Particularly notable was NPI-Africa’s engagement with the post-election crisis in Kenya, its solidarity and ‘presence’ in South Africa’s politically fragile KwaZulu Natal province during the 2009 elections, and its engagement with fellow peace workers during Ghana’s tension-filled elections of 2008. These experiences demonstrated the need for preparedness, the importance of national networks of peace workers, and the usefulness of regional and international collaboration.

How do peace workers engage with electoral processes in African countries?

A first step toward meaningful engagement calls for an appreciation and an understanding of the complex nature of the modern electoral process.

A second step requires that peace workers make commitments to overcome injustices and marginalization; it requires that peace workers rekindle hopes for a peaceful Africa and sustain energies for peaceful development. Such are the challenges and such the nature of creative imagination required for engagement with Africa’s choice of leaders and choice of governance models.

NPI-Africa’s 24 years of peace work in the continent provides occasion to recognize and embrace new and emerging frontiers for peacemaking, for reconciliation, for reconstruction and for nurturing a prosperous continent.
The dawn of a New Year ordinarily ignites a sense of renewed hope, an expectation for better prospects, and a commitment to the enhancement of one’s life and its environs. For the staff of Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-Africa), the year 2007 was such a year. A key concern focused on Kenya’s general elections, scheduled for the last week of December. Given the political mood of the country at the time, it was clear that the elections would be highly contested. In collaboration with Partnership for Peace (PfP) — a broad range of strategic actors, including media owners, UNDP, and civil society organisations — NPI-Africa participated in the effort to ensure peaceful elections. To this end, PfP carried out a spirited campaign during the greater portion of 2007, encouraging leaders of the various political parties to sign a peace charter in a public ceremony held on September 21, the United Nations International Day of Peace.

Despite concerted efforts to ensure peaceful elections, the worst violence in post-independence Kenya broke out following the announcement of the presidential election results on December 29, 2007. For nearly two months the country hovered on the brink of civil war.

Instead of the usual optimism associated with a new year, Kenyans ushered in 2008 in a state of confusion, anxiety, pain, despair and uncertainty.

True to its mission, NPI-Africa, in collaboration with other actors, embarked immediately on a number of initiatives to restore hope and to rally Kenyans towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis. This report recounts the sequence and the content of those efforts.

From the onset of the crisis, NPI-Africa and other peace workers called consistently for peace and dialogue. Clearly, many Kenyans had long been nursing deep-seated grievances that were now finding expression in the violence. In this volatile environment, NPI-Africa’s position was clear; without dialogue between the opposing sides of the conflict at all levels of society, Kenya as a nation would quickly disintegrate. The effects of years of violent conflict and disintegration in countries such as Somalia and Sierra Leone were too compelling to ignore.

In the case of Kenya, peacemakers learned that while a peaceful electoral process is necessary, by itself it is not sufficient to ensure a sustainable peace. The imperatives of violence prevention and the construction of a peaceful society compel peacemakers to critical engagement with issues that affect people’s daily lives.

I take this opportunity to thank sincerely my NPI-Africa colleagues, peacebuilding partners in Kenya and the donor community for responding in timely fashion to help bring resolution to the crisis in Kenya. Asanteni sana!
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACCORD</td>
<td>African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes</td>
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<td>AfAP</td>
<td>African Alliance for Peacebuilding</td>
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<td>ANC (South Africa)</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>CAFOD</td>
<td>Catholic Agency for Overseas Development</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Concerned Citizens for Peace</td>
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<td>CDD</td>
<td>Centre for Democratic Development</td>
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<td>COMESA</td>
<td>Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
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<td>CPA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Peace Accord</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<td>ESPA</td>
<td>East Sudan Peace Agreement</td>
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<td>GPPAC</td>
<td>Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict</td>
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<td>GoSS</td>
<td>Government of Southern Sudan</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Persons</td>
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<td>IPAC (Ghana)</td>
<td>Inter Party Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>ISG (GPPAC)</td>
<td>International Steering Group</td>
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<td>MCC</td>
<td>Mennonite Central Committee</td>
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<td>NDC (Ghana)</td>
<td>National Democratic Congress</td>
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<td>NPC</td>
<td>National Peace Council</td>
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<td>NPI-Africa</td>
<td>Nairobi Peace Initiative - Africa</td>
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<td>NPP (Ghana)</td>
<td>National People’s Party</td>
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<td>ODM</td>
<td>Orange Democratic Movement</td>
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<td>PfP</td>
<td>Partnership for Peace Forum</td>
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<td>PNU</td>
<td>Party of National Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPHR</td>
<td>Peacebuilding, Peacemaking, Healing, Reconciliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RLP</td>
<td>Research, Learning, and Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>TJRC</td>
<td>Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<td>WANEP</td>
<td>West Africa Network for Peacebuilding</td>
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Kenya’s Turn on the Precipice

- George Wachira and Naana Marekia

For nearly two months at the beginning of 2008, Kenya teetered on the precipice and came very close to joining the list of war-torn, so-called failed states. Most Kenyans and the rest of the world watched in amazement—or thinly veiled smugness—as the country descended into unprecedented violence. Prior to the disputed December 2007 general elections, NPI-Africa had for some years taken a keen interest in post-accord peacebuilding, interrogating the concept as it applied to countries that had signed peace agreements after many years of war. Though Kenya has experienced violence in every election since 1992, few observers expected Kenya to join the inglorious list of violent ‘post-accord’ countries in 2008.

With hindsight, it is now clear that Kenya’s descent into ignominy was preceded by a long gestation period. The violence that threatened to plunge the entire nation into complete anarchy comprised the harvest of years of reckless politics, unbridled ethnicity, a predatory political class, a disgruntled and restless population, and institutional ineptitude.

In previous years, Kenya had experienced—and had come to expect—episodes of violence at particular flashpoints during every electoral cycle. Thus, as the 2007 elections approached, NPI-Africa staff acted as they had done since 1996: they joined hands with peacebuilding colleagues under the umbrella of Partnership for Peace (PfP) and carried out awareness building campaigns in the hope of blunting the violence this time round. Sensing the deep divisions in the country, as the 2007 elections approached, the PfP was greatly expanded from the initial three founding partners (NPI-Africa, PeaceNet and Africa Peace Forum) to include an array of other strategic actors such as the media, women’s groups and religious leaders. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) came on board, with resource support for a number of activities. These included an exposure trip to post-genocide Rwanda for Kenyan journalists and...
a major anti-violence campaign dubbed, Chagua Amani Zuia Noma (Opt for Peace, Shun Violence). Even presidential candidates, Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, joined the campaign by signing a Peace Charter on September 21, 2007, under the watchful eyes of Kenya’s religious leaders, committing themselves to peaceful campaigning. The fact that this was strategically timed to coincide with the UN International Day of Peace added solemn and international significance. Kenya’s budding hip-hop artistes were also brought on board, with NPI-Africa sponsoring the composition and production of a song titled Umoja (Unity), targeted at Kenya’s youth.

However the frenzy of violence after the announcement of the disputed presidential elections was--even for veterans of peacebuilding engagement--a rude awakening to the fragile nature of Kenya’s national stability. Every conflict with which NPI-Africa engaged on this continent—from Ghana to Mozambique; from Somalia to Rwanda; from Sudan to the DRC; from Burundi to Uganda—has always been a matter of deep commitment and personal emotional investment for the staff involved. We have come to recognise the pain and the sheer destructive force of violence. However, watching our own country descend into violence and anarchy was painful beyond measure. While a sense of responsibility required that we ‘do something’, that we emerge quickly from our shock, we were, in many ways, overwhelmed by our country’s dalliance with fate.

If the death rate instigated by both communal and police violence during the first weeks of January 2008 had been sustained for several more months, the experiences of Somalia, Sierra Leone and Liberia would have been rendered negligible by comparison. Death was in the air. Anger, frustration and despair permeated all aspects of life. Kenya had lost its innocence and its pretensions as a peaceful country. The political stalemate created a gaping leadership vacuum just when courageous and selfless leadership was most required. Those who claimed to have won the elections were staring at a hollow victory, while the aggrieved hoped that another day of pressure would turn the tide in their favour. Kenya was truly in peril.

NPI-Africa, alongside other peace workers, did rise to the occasion. With tensions already rising around the country due to the slow release of the presidential results, NPI-Africa joined other prominent peacemakers in media appearances.
on December 29, 2007, appealing for calm and reason. That initial media appeal sparked the beginnings of the group, Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP), launched formally on December 31. CCP quickly occupied a unique place and played a crucial role in the ensuing peacemaking process. Separately, other NPI-Africa staff ‘hit the ground’, canvassing the very epicentres of violence in those early days of January 2008. This unique and daring initiative was called ‘The Listening Project’. At the same time, NPI-Africa took the lead in mobilising women in support of dialogue, bringing them together from across the political and ethnic divides. Still other NPI-Africa staff, in their own ways and in their respective neighbourhoods and faith communities, undertook various initiatives, from assisting distressed neighbours and friends caught on the ‘wrong’ side of the ethno-political divide, to channelling humanitarian assistance to people in need. Board members were not left behind, with some of them joining CCP deliberations while others facilitated behind-the-scenes contact with local, regional and international personalities and organizations in search of solutions. Truly, NPI-Africa and other peace workers rose to the occasion.

In the words of a friend of NPI-Africa, herself a veteran of international peacebuilding, “It was as if you had all along been preparing for a moment such as this.” Indeed, twenty-four years of preparation in other conflict settings was now being brought to bear on NPI-Africa’s home country.

After five intense weeks of mediation undertaken by the African Union’s Panel of Eminent African Personalities, chaired by Dr. Kofi Annan, Kenya’s impasse was eventually broken. The National Peace and Reconciliation Accord signed on February 28, 2008 called for President Mwai Kibaki and the Honourable Raila Odinga to share power in a Grand Coalition Government with the latter as Prime Minister in a joint Executive configuration. Thus was the country ushered into the not-so-noble roster of violent, but now mitigated, ‘post-accord’ countries.

NPI-Africa is aware that the tasks discharged during the heat of the crisis were in effect and necessarily directed towards achieving what has been called ‘negative peace’: the initial focus was on stopping the violence and restoring order. In theoretical debates, this so-called ‘negative peace’ often appears to be in conflict with the pursuit of ‘justice’. Indeed, those tensions were manifest in civil society responses to the crisis.

From past peacebuilding experience, NPI-Africa has learned to recognise both practical and theoretical postures necessary to the pursuit of both ‘negative peace’ — stopping overt violence — and ‘positive peace’ — doing and building justice — as well as “aiding national recovery and expediting the eventual removal of the underlying causes of the internal war.”
These latter tasks become possible and crucial after the signing of a peace agreement, for an agreement essentially buys a time-frame within which a society can become proactive, preventing a new cycle of conflict and violence. Peace accords, even when implemented, are necessary but usually not sufficient to sustain the peace.

Several important learnings emerge from this reporting period. Firstly, struggles within and among the power elite have shifted from physical battlegrounds to the dynamics of the democratization project. Peacebuilders must therefore pay more attention to this arena of potential conflict, to its prevention and its mitigation. Secondly, response to crises calls for a high degree of preparedness. Preparedness, in turn, calls for long-term investment in peacebuilding capacity through building networks of collaborating people and institutions: the totality of these can be referred to as infrastructure-for-peace. Thirdly, analytic preparedness helps to identify the ‘moment’ of the most appropriate response, shaping adjustment to the dynamics of the unfolding crisis and process.

We welcome you to the ‘sharings’ in this report.

Peace march organised by CCP on the first anniversary of the signing of the national peace accord.
NPI-Africa has been involved in peacebuilding work in Kenya since 1993. This work was focused largely on conflicts in the Rift Valley, in Western Kenya, in Upper Eastern and in North-Eastern Kenya, as well as along the coast, particularly in the Tana River region. Even where this work involved high level leaders such as Members of Parliament (MPs), it was nevertheless undertaken ‘below the radar’ in keeping with NPI-Africa’s tradition of low-visibility approaches to peacebuilding.

With the advent of the volatile elections of December 2007, NPI-Africa—for the first time in its twenty-five years of existence—was thrust into the vortex of a crisis in its home base, Kenya. All signs had indicated clearly that there would be violence associated with the impending elections; therefore, work to counter violence had been set in motion well in advance. What could not have been predicted accurately was the extent and intensity of that violence. The following section reports on initiatives undertaken by NPI-Africa to respond to the crisis.
1. Before the Elections

Kenya has experienced extreme violence in every election year since 1992. Learning from this cyclical violence, NPI-Africa has engaged with pre-election anti-violence campaigns since 1996. In its early efforts NPI-Africa collaborated with the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), working with religious leaders, MPs, provincial administration staff, elders, ‘warriors’, women and other people in the affected communities. These efforts were focused both in the Rift Valley Province, often the epicentre of violence, and on the national political level. They reached a climax of sorts when in August 1996 NPI-Africa and NCCK convened the first ever encounter between government representatives and opposition MPs from the conflict-affected zones. In those days of fearful sycophancy and watchful suspicion, such meetings were organized only with difficulty and often led to participants being labelled as ‘moles’ or ‘traitors’. When the process attracted the attention of the media, the wrath of the head of state was triggered, causing the near collapse of an otherwise successful, low-profile three-year process. The episode provided occasion for NPI-Africa and NCCK to learn critical lessons.

In 2001, in the build-up to the 2002 elections, counter-violence efforts shifted to other parts of the country, with NPI-Africa teaming up with the Africa Peace Forum and PeaceNet Kenya to launch the Partnership for Peace (PFP) Forum to forge collaboration with the media, the private sector and the police. Well ahead of the 2007 elections, an expanded PFP was re-launched. With funding support from the UNDP, PFP undertook a series of activities focused on countering violence during the elections. Those activities unfolded under the campaign theme of Chagua Amani, Zuia Noma (CAZN), Swahili slang for Opt for Peace, Shun Violence. Activities undertaken under the CAZN banner included:

**Peace Messages**

NPI-Africa chaired the PFP Messaging Committee charged with drafting messages for radio, for the print media, and for t-shirts, caps, posters and billboards on public display. The Messaging Committee also developed the texts of ‘Peace Charters’ intended for the signatures of leading politicians. These texts were discussed at a messaging workshop sponsored by UNDP in August 2007 when the PFP electoral violence reduction slogan Chagua Amani, Zuia Noma was adopted. Around the country, messages were displayed on billboards, on the walls of kiosks and shopping centres, and on widely-distributed, fashionable T-Shirts. They were also broadcast on national TV and radio, and circulated by Safaricom, the collaborating mobile phone company, through its short messaging service (SMS).
**Artistes for Peace**

NPI-Africa’s engagement with artistes advocated for peaceful coexistence before, during and after election campaigns, reinforced by various themes. For instance, in June 2007, NPI-Africa held a peacebuilding and conflict transformation workshop for Kenya’s celebrity musicians — the first of its kind — at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) in Nairobi. During the meeting, the artistes were challenged to exercise their influence in society, particularly among young people, to broadcast the message; ‘Kenya cannot afford violence with every election’.

Sixty two young artistes from Kenya’s hip-hop music industry were brought together for discussion. NPI-Africa coordinated the project with the following objectives: to acquaint artistes with conflict transformation and peacebuilding skills; to invite artistes as stakeholders in Kenya for reflection on the challenges of conflict; to engage the artistes in the development of common strategies for involvement during the 2007 elections; to engage with socio-economic challenges in the post-election period. A key partner in this undertaking was Transworld Radio.

Inspired by the challenge from NPI-Africa, a number of those present volunteered to create and record a peace campaign song entitled “Umoja” (Unity); it was launched on December 6, 2007 at the Hilton Hotel in Nairobi. It is available in audio and video, in CD and DVD formats.

**Signing of Peace Charters**

The CAZN campaign developed peace charters targeting specific groups throughout the country. On the International Day of Peace, September 21, 2007, President Mwai Kibaki led the signing of a Peace Charter, specially crafted for presidential candidates. In the Charter the candidates committed themselves to carrying out peaceful campaigns, avoiding incitement and respecting the verdict of the electoral commission. In the following days, other leading presidential candidates including Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka signed the charter. Peace charters were also signed by parliamentary and civic candidates, by political parties, by religious leaders, youth, key women organisations and rank-and-file voters.

*Lighting of peace torch during UN Peace Day in Nairobi.*
2. During the Crisis

Citizen Diplomacy for Peace
NPI-Africa Steps Forward

– By George Wachira

Following the announcement of the disputed presidential election results on December 30, 2007, Kenya immediately erupted into nearly two months of unprecedented violence. In a matter of weeks, widespread mob and police violence had resulted in more than 1,300 deaths. Over half a million people were on the move, displaced from their farms and homes, both in rural areas and in urban centres. Vital rail and road links were cut off. In some cities and rural areas businesses and homes were looted and the empty shells set on fire. Fire became the new weapon of choice and was used to devastating effect. Police stations, churches and shopping centres which had functioned as points of refuge in past cycles of violence no longer served as safe havens.

At the level of government structure, Kenya was eventually rescued in a relatively short period of time. Well-publicized official mediation by the African Union’s Panel of Eminent Personalities, led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, culminated in the National Peace and Reconciliation Accord, signed on February 28, 2008. This agreement provided the framework for a power-sharing deal and a Grand Coalition Government incorporating former political antagonists. Less well known and less well publicized were the initiatives
by citizens for peace during the crisis. Civil society groups, individuals, religious and business leaders undertook efforts to end the violence; sometimes collaboratively, sometimes in tension.

Among the responses to the Kenyan crisis, initiatives by the Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP) stand out in terms of creativity and timeliness. CCP facilitated the mobilisation of a broad constituency of peace actors—including individuals, youth, women, writers--in politics, at community level, at international levels, in the media, both publicly and informally behind-the-scenes. At the interface between the official Kofi Annan-led mediation and civil society efforts, the CCP initiated a process of strategic and sustained analysis. Below are learning points from this initiative:

- CCP was launched on December 31, 2007 from a base at the Nairobi Serena Hotel immediately after the onset of the post election violence. The hotel soon became synonymous with efforts to save Kenya, serving also as the venue of the official mediation process led by former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

- At a time when the country was paralysed and shocked by the violence, CCP quickly claimed and occupied a crucial public space, insisting early on that dialogue was the only way through the crisis. In this way CCP emerged as the voice and space for dialogue, feeding directly into the international mediation process that followed.

- As the humanitarian response took shape together with other civil society–led efforts and the Kofi Annan-led national dialogue, CCP’s liaison/connector role became increasingly important.

CCP’s initiatives and activities as well as lessons learned through the post-election process have been captured in a booklet entitled, *Citizens in Action: Making Peace in the Post Election Crisis in Kenya – 2008*. The booklet is available online on the NPI-Africa website: www.npi-africa.org

*Amb. Bethuel Kiplagat, H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan and George Wachira at a meeting in Nairobi in 2009 to discuss CCP’s work even after the signing of the National Peace Accord.*
3. Women Forums and Participation in Peace Processes

The Kenya Women’s Coalition for Sustainable Peace

– By Florence N. Mpaayei

Breaking the Unforeseen Walls to Touch our Common Humanity

On the morning of January 24, 2008, a group of Kenyan women met at the Serena Hotel as part of an on-going peace initiative following the crisis that broke out due to the disputed presidential results. The atmosphere in the room was tense, loaded with expectation. Approximately 57 women representing a diverse constituency had responded to an urgent invitation to forge a common front in response to the on-going crisis and to rebuild relationships that had been severed by the conflict.

Although various groups had made media statements especially on television—calling for calm in the nation and dialogue between the two antagonistic parties—the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and the Party of National Unity (PNU)—the collective voice of women in these on-going debates on the crisis and the national peace process was noticeably absent. Working collaboratively, NPI-Africa, UNIFEM, the Urgent Action Fund, Vital Voices and Action-Aid organized a number of consultations for women to discuss the various aspects of the crisis and relevant interventions. Some women had already organized themselves to respond to the humanitarian needs of fellow women and children who had moved into make-shift camps in areas wracked by intense violence. Other women had initiated processes of dialogue in search of healing and reconciliation at community levels. Despite these good efforts to provide immediate relief to the afflicted, they remained largely disjointed and localized, without a collective voice and collective coordination.

It was this realization that compelled women to come together and strategize collectively to maximize their impact, affirm their interventions and amplify their voices in the crisis.

Subsequently, and following one of the consultations, the women issued a press release on January 11, 2008 with recommendations addressed to the various actors in the conflict. Urging the two Principals (Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki) to commit themselves to dialogue for the sake of the country, the women invoked a number of instruments to which Kenya was a signatory, including “The Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU),” “The AU’s Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality,” “The Protocol

Although not anticipated or so designed, the consultations were at times transformed into healing sanctuaries where the women vented their frustrations and wept. Like other Kenyans, women had not been spared the deep rifts that had emerged during the heated political campaigns leading up to the elections. Ironically, it became clear to the women that the democratic process of electing national leaders had planted and watered new seeds of nation-wide discord. Ethnic identities clouded all reason or logic, degenerating to levels where the common bond of humanity became invisible. It must be noted, parenthetically, that the horrific events witnessed soon after the presidential results were declared were understood as responses to structural injustices, inequity, low levels of employment among the youth, widespread poverty, and systemic marginalization across geographic, gender, and ethnic lines.

A day before the January 24th meeting at the Serena Hotel, NPI-Africa participated with a group of 15 women representing diverse political affiliations, ages, religions, and professions in a meeting with Her Excellency, Graça Machel. Madam Machel had convened the meeting to gain a sense of the women’s perspective on the crisis and to be briefed on initiatives being undertaken by women. She reminded the group that continued violence and destruction in the country would create deep scars, ultimately affecting all Kenyans, particularly women and children. She then appealed to us as mothers of the nation to focus the collective resources of our rich diversity on healing the wounds of the nation. Noting Kenya’s critical role as a geopolitical stable point in the region, she linked the women’s intervention for peace in Kenya to the larger regional cause.

Members of the Kenya Women’s Coalition for Sustainable Peace.
of saving the lives of millions of women and children. Thus was the tone set for subsequent gatherings at the Serena Hotel.

At one point NPI-Africa was requested to facilitate a meeting in the Serena’s Allamanda room for which an agenda had been drafted. During the planning for this meeting, it had been thought necessary to allow time and space for what was called ‘spitting-out’ before launching into discussion on what to do about the crisis. It was assumed by the planners that an hour set aside for this session would be sufficient. One after the other, women took the microphone and narrated their pain from a variety of perspectives, touching on the economic marginalization of their communities, the destruction of personal property, the loss of loved ones, the displacement of relatives, disappointment with the elections, biased coverage of events by the media and anger towards respective ethnic communities. Very soon it was realized that the one-hour-session could not be rushed; each woman who wished to speak needed to be heard. At times the session became quite sensitive and emotional; we cried as we shared in each other’s pain. At the beginning of the session it had been agreed that this would be a ‘safe space’; that what happened inside the physical walls of the room would remain within those walls, even as invisible walls that had been created between us were breached; walls that had become hardened by bitterness, suspicion and indifference. Each woman had a story to tell. Each woman told of injustice. Each woman spoke on the basis of a personal reality.

That meeting and subsequent events demonstrated the power that is released when the humanity of each person is recognized. The meeting ended with a resolve by the women to lay aside differences and to address in a collective manner the injustices and marginalization they felt as women and as members of diverse communities.

On January 25, 2009 a group of eleven women that had been delegated at the Serena Hotel meeting to take the process forward presented a memorandum to the mediation team comprised of Dr. Kofi Annan, Benjamin Mkapa--former President of Tanzania, and Madam Graca Machel. The memorandum spelled out roles that women could play and offered recommendations to help turn the tide of violence. The women expressed appreciation for the recognition given to Kenyans by the mediation team, which affirmed and strengthened the sense that stakeholders in Kenya’s well-being were more in number than the politicians of the day. A follow-up interaction with the mediation team was held on March 1st.

On February 21, 2008, a larger consultation was organized at Nairobi’s Grand Regency Hotel (now Laico Regency). Approximately 200 women representing the eight provinces of Kenya attended this consultation. The overall purpose of the consultation was to form thematic groups that would help link women’s efforts from local levels to the national level. To help set the mood for the meeting and focus on the matter at hand, Ms. Baudouine Kamatari was invited to share experiences of women during the Burundi conflict. Ms. Kamatari recalled how the conflict in Burundi had caught the women unawares; unclear about how they could organize and take action. She stressed that “peace is not the
absence of war; rather it is wholeness of life, enjoyment of freedoms, peace of mind and heart, non-discrimination, the absence of poverty and the presence of human security”. The quest for peace, she argued, places humans at the centre of everything; peace must be enjoyed by all in order for it to be meaningful and sustainable. Noting that structural and cultural injustices were at the core of violent conflict, Ms. Kamatari cautioned the women against taking implacable positions in support of particular political parties or specific ethnic groups at the expense of peace for all. She also reminded the women that a nation can disintegrate within a short time; reconstruction, by contrast, requires sustained effort over a long period of time. She encouraged the women to be bridge builders and to take cognisance of the fact that if they as women were broken by the conflict in Kenya, it would follow that their children would be even much more broken.

The Kenya peace agreement was finally signed on February 28, 2008. As the coalition government began implementing the various provisions stipulated in the Reconciliation Act, select women active in the civil society peace process were recruited into some of the commissions established by the official peace accord.

NPI-Africa was honoured to be a part of the Kenya Women’s Coalition for Sustainable Peace!

*NPI-Africa Executive Director Florence Mpaayei introduces the women’s coalition members to H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan.*
4. The Listening Initiative

- By George O. Kut, Peter Maruga and Tom Onditi, Babu Ayinde

In the midst of the violence, anger and despondency, the listening forums were conceived with the idea of creating space for Kenyans caught in the violent epicentres to discuss and share stories of how the crisis was affecting them. The forums were also intended to elicit the views of participants on possible solutions, including initiatives by individuals, to save the then present situation, to suggest measures required to rebuild a new Kenya and thus, hopefully, averting a future recurrence.

Working with NPI-Africa’s partners and experienced peacebuilders on the ground in the eight provinces, the team brought together participants representing a microcosm of the respective communities. Participants in each forum included religious leaders, youth, women, community elders, professionals, opinion leaders, and in some cases, government officials. The forums followed a carefully developed set of leading questions informed by the much-noted development methodology of Appreciative Inquiry. These forums were also intended to generate information appropriate to subsequent contextual peacebuilding interventions.

The listening forums readily identified critical gaps, including the following:

- lack of clarity with regard to language and terminology appropriate to conflict situations;
- lack of understanding regarding links between conflict and violence vis a vis peace and development;
- paucity of creative skills in breaking cycles of violence,
  - in engaging multi-ethnic prejudices and perceptions;
  - in healing;
  - in responsive and responsible governance at all levels;
  - in rendering latent and overt conflict into sustainable peace.

Several specific important issues emerged from the forums:

- Before, during and after the general elections, leaders—including, unfortunately, faith-based, peace and social justice organizations—exhibited a poor sense of conflict sensitivity by the manner in which they engaged the electoral process and the related violence. Whereas leaders had had ample opportunity to model peace-engendering leadership styles during the pre-election campaigns and the post-election crisis, they instead found comfort in aligning themselves with specific partisan political views and solutions. Participants were clear that things work better when faith leaders, members of the media, and civil society
leaders remain unencumbered by politically partisan postures.

- Agreements reached between the two parties—PNU and ODM—during the high level national negotiations clearly required many more explanations if they were to be understood by the majority of Kenyans. Only when citizens fully understand such agreements do they embody value and provide a basis on which to build a new Kenya. Ownership of national agreements is a must for sustainable peace and development.

- The trauma caused by the violent conflict before, during and after the general elections was too severe to be approached from a mechanical, political or reductionist perspective.

- In order to fulfil the promise of justice, peace, healing and, eventually, reconciliation, there was urgent need to build a vanguard leadership at all levels by means of intentional training of key, strategically placed people.

In general, the listening forums indicated that peacebuilding in post-crisis Kenya requires the re-enforcement of peace infrastructure, beginning at community level. In this regard, NPI-Africa designed transformative leadership and peacebuilding training modules, which were contextualised to respond to the diverse needs of participants, focusing on key resource persons with the capacity to mobilize others. NPI-Africa then embarked on a series of training sessions specifically targeting the epicentres of post-election violence.
An Olive Branch Grows in Africa

A Kenyan peacemaker talks about the power of listening in the midst of violence

- Interview by Tim Shenk

Widespread violence broke out in Kenya after President Mwai Kibaki declared himself victorious following disputed elections in late December 2007. The conflict claimed an estimated 1,000 lives and drove hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, many of whom have yet to return.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)—a relief service and peace agency of the North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches—supported NPI-Africa in a project to reconcile Kenyans divided by ethnic and political differences after the post-election violence. George Kut, a programme coordinator for NPI-Africa at the time, described this “listening project” in an interview in August 2008 with Tim Shenk, a writer for MCC.

Tim Shenk: How did the National Peace Initiative (NPI) listening project get started?

George Kut: When the election results were announced, there was a lot of violence that erupted in different parts of the country, particularly those parts that supported the Orange Democratic Movement, which was the major opposition during the campaign. Because of the violence, the killings, a lot of looting, and a lot of very violent demonstrations, we needed to consider the ideas, the stories, and the images that people of Kenya hold of the crisis and in time be able to translate this into leadership capacities for peace.

At NPI, we decided to go out to those people and listen to their stories, to hear what sense they made of the particular violence that was going on. That was really the purpose of the listening project.

Did this involve people who were committing the violence, as well as others affected by it?

Yes. During the first stage of the listening program, we were targeting mainly the leadership of the militia groups of the country. One day I was in Kisumu city, in the western part of the country, the headquarters of the opposition. I managed to get information when I was listening to members of a youth militia that was planning an attack on a police station where members of another community were hosted. I informed the police about the planned attack, and the police were able to move in and evacuate people. We did quite a number of such activities during the violence. We were listening and acting at the same time.

How has the situation changed since then?

The moment the two leaders [President Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga] began to discuss power sharing, former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked the country to be calm—to wait two weeks to conclude the power sharing issues—and we saw people calm down. But people have not stopped their demands. What they have stopped is the direct violence. However, the structural violence is yet to be addressed. Remember, there was displacement and people moved very far from one another. And if you go to any area, you will find communities that drove the other away. They have not been able to meet.
What you have seen are only leaders meeting in Nairobi. There was a disconnect between top leadership and the grassroots leadership, and actually the violence has taken on its own life. There is no process that has tried to address this. There is a very big latent conflict, because what we saw during the listening visits—for example, the militarization of the youth—has not stopped. The youth that were preparing themselves for war are still continuing to do so.

What did you discover through the listening process?

Our listening process actually found three types of violence. First, we are looking at the direct violence. How did it happen? Then, we are also doing a thorough analysis of structural violence and even cultural violence. The deep-rooted issue is the cultural violence that actually builds on many of the cultural stereotypes and beliefs and traditions of people.

What kinds of stereotypes did you find?

There are many stereotypes that are based around religion and cultural practices. For example, members of the Luo community in western Kenya point fingers at the Kikuyu community, which had the biggest support for the ruling Party of National Unity. The Luos and the neighboring communities say, for example, that the only good Kikuyu is a dead one. And, they say, if you see a dead Kikuyu, you need to drop a coin next to him or her; if the body does not make any move, then you are convinced that the Kikuyu is dead. What does that mean? That they will do anything to get money.

On the other side, from the Kikuyu community, there is a general stereotype about Luos that they are proud people. They are so proud that they will not do anything tangible in leadership apart from living lavishly.

How do you respond to this kind of cultural conflict between communities?

We have quite a number of tools that people use to analyze their own actions, their own contribution to violence, based on their stereotypes. When you take people through these reflective processes, then people are able to identify the role that those stereotypes played in the conflict formation, from the immediate post-independence period up to the recent crisis. We also use some tools that help them look at themselves in terms of destroying others.

I will give you a very quick example. In one session of the process, we asked people to draw paintings. In the next step, they select which paintings look alike and form a group out of those paintings. We ask them to prepare a very good picture out of their own paintings and even make presentations about it. People really get engaged in working together to put up very wonderful pictures, and we ask them now to give it a name. And they come out with a name, a very wonderful name of their picture, and they own it.

Then we ask them to destroy them, to tear those images that they have formed. And in fact we actually threaten to begin to tear, and we feel a lot of resistance. Some people even get hurt and annoyed, saying “But why? We took so much time to come up with this picture; it is so good; it belongs to us; and then you want to destroy it, by tearing it, as if it didn’t take any effort.”

We ask them to look at it as a symbol of life, that people have built their story over a long period of time, and during crisis you just tear apart that life that has been built over a long period of time. The kind of reaction and the kind of sharing that comes out of that experience begins to work outward. People give us examples of what they saw—such as camps or buildings that were destroyed—and that it took people their life, their time, to have built those things.

While people are engaged in such discussions, they begin to see how bad it is to destroy somebody’s life like that, how passionate that life is to them. We also give them the tools to go and work it out with their own constituencies, whether it is with church groups or women’s groups, and then begin to help people appreciate living with one another.
5. Personal Reflections on the Kenyan Crisis

Introduction

In early January 2008, as violence raged in Nairobi and other parts of the country, NPI-Africa staff and board members resident in Kenya gathered for reflection in the NPI-Africa boardroom. While the crisis provided the backdrop for the unusual meeting, the immediate purpose of the meeting was not intended as a response to the crisis, still underway at the time of meeting. Rather, the purpose of the meeting was to provide staff and board members with opportunity to reflect on the question; ‘How has this crisis affected each of us on a personal level?’

In an unprecedented manner, the conflict was having the effect of dividing Kenyans along ethnic and political lines. Neighbours had become enemies, while ethnic and political differences had invaded the workplace, prompting several organizations to organize workshops on ‘healing in the workplace’. It was therefore important for NPI-Africa staff to share among themselves how they understood and how they were dealing with the crisis on a personal level. Several of the stories and reflections that follow were initially shared during that meeting.

Elections 2007 Journal Entry
Our Daughter could not wait for Peace

– By Julius Mathenge

December 27, 2007: Despite their fierce loyalties to different party affiliations, Kenyans are united this morning in one thing: voting for the government they want. No other run-up to an election in Kenya has been so intense, or so exciting. For some time during the pre-election campaign, political adverts in the media were entertaining, but as the election season progressed, they became more and more inflammatory. As Election Day drew near, people began retreating into their tribal cocoons, and all seemed to be confident of defeating the rival political party or ethnic group.

December 28, 2007: The stage was set, the cameras started rolling and Kenyans ran back to their homes to catch up with the latest election results. By the morning of December 28, results indicated that the opposition was leading by a huge margin. Saturday, December 29 arrived
with tensions rising as everyone waited for the final results. The Electoral Commission chairman seemed lackadaisical and was clearly not saying anything to mitigate the rising tensions around the country. Where were the results!? Already intermittent violence was being reported.

December 30, 2007 finds me taking cover in my home. Our capital city is largely deserted except for the chaotic Electoral Commission nerve centre. At three o’clock the announcement finally comes; all votes have been tallied. The incumbent has won by a margin of just over two hundred thousand votes. But what a hollow victory! The credibility of the tallying is in question, and the losing party refuses to accept defeat. Violence escalates as Kenyans turn on each other with all manner of weapons, killing even their own neighbours with whom they had queued in the most civil manner three days earlier to cast their votes.

December 31, 2007: Today is ‘a public holiday.’ As Kenya burns, I take advantage of the holiday to move my family to our new house, amid warnings from relatives and friends. But I am determined that the New Year should find us in our new house [at that moment still without electricity or running water]. Will our new neighbours give us water until we sort out our plumbing? Somehow, we manage to move and settle in with the help of our friends, and we retire to bed at midnight exhausted, the chaos outside momentarily forgotten.

January 1, 2008: It is four o’clock in the morning when we usher the new one into our troubled world. She lies there, oblivious of the state of the nation and the trouble we have gotten ourselves into because of the elections. She weighs just over three kilograms and is deeply asleep in her mother’s arms. Not interested in elections or who might be her president, she is satisfied with the security and warmth of her mother. I can’t help but imagine: “What if life remained this simple?” At the hospital we are already paying the price for the tension and violence around the nation: immunization supplies for newborns have run out and cannot be replenished. The hospital is understaffed as workers have to be transported using the hospital’s ambulance because public transport is understandably unsafe and hard to come by. Nobody wants to be on the roads, and many of our friends and relatives are calling to congratulate us from the safety of their homes. They all promise to visit once the situation calms down.

January 2, 2008: Everything is at a standstill—everything except the merchants of death and mayhem. For now, destruction,
anarchy and political brinksmanship seem to be ruling. At this rate, we can say goodbye to our country. As I hold my new baby in my arms, I receive great comfort to hear my colleague George Wachira and others on my radio. NPI-Africa is not asleep; it is in action, and right now the benefits are directed at me, my baby, my wife, my son, my parents, my relatives, my friends, my neighbours, my community and my country. I can only thank God for the twenty five years NPI-Africa has worked in other conflict countries, apparently preparing for a time such as this in its home country. Truly, blessed are the peacemakers.

I had never Voted before, I Wonder If I Will Ever Again

– By Caroline Owegi-Ndhlovu

I had never voted before the general elections of December 2007. I had remonstrated many times that I did not see the need to vote, as no candidate appealed to me given the party and ethnic fragmentation that seemed to characterize each election. This time round, I had a change of heart. I voted because I had learned that if I did not vote, I had no right to raise my voice and complain if the leader sworn into office turned out to be a disappointment. I wanted to have a voice, so I proudly cast my vote on December 27, 2007.

And then trouble came. I am shocked and tremendously, perhaps irreparably, upset. I have sworn that I will never vote again in my lifetime. It may sound naïve, but I feel like my decision to vote for the first time has contributed to the killings, confusion, anger, enmity, and evictions that are going on. Yet I also wonder if the situation would have been any different had I refrained from voting? I am ashamed to see the gruesome images flashing in the media. Is this actually happening in my country? In Kenya?!

I fear for the security of my family, particularly my mother and my siblings but also for my house help, all of whom live in areas where violence is raging. Belonging to the wrong ethnic group in the wrong side of the country could mean instant death. This division brings me tremendous anguish. What have we come to?

And so I have turned to prayer. I pray for God’s mercy on Kenya, for peace to return, for the senseless killings to stop, for the opposing leaders to talk, for our children not to start describing their friends by their ethnicity but as fellow human beings. I have also refused to forward any of the hate e-mails and text messages that I have received with the request to share, presumably with my ‘tribes-people.’

Will I vote in the next election? I do not know.
The year 2007 was rather interesting for me. I was living in Birmingham, England, job-hunting while undertaking legal studies. Two years earlier I had completed an MA in Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. At that time I felt more inclined towards the academic/theoretical world and mapped out an elaborate and ambitious (or perhaps superficial and naïve) plan that involved a PhD leading to a career in the UN (at their New York headquarters, of course) and making money from ‘brainstorming sessions’ and ‘influencing policy’. The university however hesitated, arguing that at twenty years old I was by law “too young” to embark on a PhD programme. Refusing to be discouraged, I enrolled myself in college to study law while looking for a job that accorded with my ‘grand’ plan. Little did I know that by the end of that year, I would find myself back home with a totally new attitude towards hands-on peace work.

I came back to Kenya three months before the elections after spending the summer in America, scouting for a university where I thought my age would not be an issue. Upon arriving in Kenya, I immediately realised that talking about anything other than PNU and ODM politics was a sure waste of time. The upcoming general elections comprised the entire buzz in town and so I quickly found myself engrossed in political debate, wanting to be a part of the process. I decided that I would attend all the major political rallies so that when I eventually chose my preferred president and MP I would know exactly what they (and their party) stood for. It was an exciting and exhilarating process, and by the end of November, I had made up my mind.

However as voting day approached, I began feeling incredibly discouraged and disappointed in Kenyans, myself included. We were all so deeply engrossed in mindless and dangerous political banter, not realising that some of our utterances would mark the end of long-term friendships, relationships and even lives. A close friend of mine seemed to realise suddenly that I came from the ‘wrong’ tribe and swore she would never speak to me again or let me see her child because she could not stand ‘my people’. On other occasions I heard people I assumed I knew well, flagrantly justify and condone the violent acts taking place in some parts of the country, saying it would teach certain tribes a lesson. My reaction was always to insist that all lives are precious irrespective of ethnicity or political affiliation, a point obvious to me; but my view, was almost always dismissed as utopian and idealistic.

The day after voting, we bought tonnes of supplies and camped indoors with some of our relatives, awaiting the results. On December 30th my parents, brother and cousins, increasingly impatient with sitting indoors waiting for the presidential results, decided to join friends at a sports club. My other brother and I stayed home
not wanting to miss any action in the drama unfolding on live television.

And then came the announcement of the results.

Almost immediately, gunshots rent the air. Before we could ensure we were securely locked behind our main gate, Mwai Kibaki was already being sworn in as president! The reaction to the announcement and rushed ceremony was instant. Angry youth disappointed with the outcome started rioting violently, blocking roads and lynching innocent passers-by. For a while, we could not reach our parents or brother by phone and feared they had been caught up in the chaos. Fortunately they returned home unharmed.

I struggled to understand what was going on in my country. Worse still, I felt completely helpless and useless as one who had studied Peace and yet had no idea how to translate peacebuilding theory into practice. I felt like a fraud. I watched Ambassador Kiplagat and others on television appealing for calm in the nation and contributing to Kenya’s return to sanity, holding down the fort until the international community and Kofi Annan took over. It was then that I decided that that was the path I was going to take in life. I did not go back to England or America but instead stayed home to fight for peace, hands-on. And so here I am, working as a staff member of NPI-Africa.

Amani Sasa! Concerned Youth for Peace

By Eric Guantai

The time had come for Kenyans to exercise their democratic right to vote in the 2007 general elections. As we made our way excitedly to the polls on December 27, no one imagined the chaos that would follow. No sooner had the results from the voting been announced than fighting broke out across the country, disrupting every aspect of daily life. It felt like nowhere was safe.

At the time, I was working for a bank, having just arrived from upcountry, ready to report back to work, when I received a call from the office informing me that the reporting date had been postponed. The ongoing violence had made it too dangerous for us to return to work. I was advised to be careful and stay safe, though such advice was easier offered than followed. My neighbourhood was no safer than my workplace; people were struggling to find ways to protect themselves from the gangs of rowdy youth who roamed the streets seeking to cause harm.

It was clear that a solution had to be found to the daily reports of rape, murder, and destruction. I decided to join the Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP) group, meeting at the Hotel Serena in the hope of facilitating dialogue and acceptance between the opposing parties, this as a way of ending the violence. In this forum, I found a platform where Kenyans could
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In the Eye of the Storm

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share ideas and discuss possible solutions. I felt privileged to be among such an experienced and dedicated group of peacemakers.

On joining CCP, I made myself useful as part of the Concerned Youth for Peace. We helped organise neighbourhood meetings with young people, appealing to them to keep the peace. I was also involved with the recording of CCP minutes, and with the production of the daily newsletter, Amani Sasa. As a member of the CCP, I had finally found a place that was safe in the midst of the chaos. I could also make my contribution to the return of peace in Kenya.

Engaging in Dialogue for Peace and Justice during Kenya’s Crisis

– Interview with George Wachira

As mentioned in various parts of this report, NPI-Africa’s Senior Research and Policy Advisor, George Wachira, was part of the Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP) group during Kenya’s post-election crisis and the related mediation efforts. Over a twenty-year period he has gained rich experience working in numerous conflict settings across the African continent. He has also taught and studied International Peace Studies in several world-renowned academic institutions. Here, in an interview with Naana Marekia, George Wachira reflects on his personal experience, as a Kenyan and as an experienced peacebuilder, during Kenya’s post-election mayhem.

1. As a Kenyan peacebuilder who has worked in other countries experiencing conflict, what went through your mind as Kenyans took up arms against each other during the 2007/2008 election crisis?

Indeed I have worked in many conflict countries in Africa, beginning with my first visit to war-torn Liberia in 1992. The images I saw and the stories I heard in that country at that time have stuck with me over the years, even after return visits to Liberia in better times. I have witnessed the horrors of war and heard stories in many countries of what ordinary people have had to go through in times of war. Invariably, our wars in Africa affect mostly the innocent who had little to do with the reasons underlying the outbreak of conflict in the first place. In other instances, these very people have turned against each other and perpetrated the most heinous atrocities. During the crisis in Kenya, I saw all of us tempting fate. My waking nightmare consisted of images of a destroyed country, men, women and children forced to flee into the bushes and beyond the borders of the country. Honestly, I thought much about my family and
what would happen if bad came to the worst. I could not countenance the thought of Kenya, my country, collapsing. This, I believe, is what was driving me and my colleagues as we got together, deciding what to do.

2. Take us through the events that led to your involvement with CCP?

Already early on, the elections of 2007 promised to be difficult. We probably did not read the signs very well; however, on December 23, 2007, the last Sunday before the elections, I spoke to a group of international observers in Nairobi and expressed the view that there was going to be violence whoever won the elections. What I never expected was the serious dispute about the outcome of the elections, and the intensity and extent of the violence. Tension was in the air even before voting day, with the reckless campaigns and all those claims and counter claims of rigging and the saga involving the Administration Police-cum party agents.

But the real wake up call for me came on December 29 in the early afternoon, when my then three-year old son and I were attacked by a mob. This was in reality a criminal gang trying to steal from me while hiding behind the pretensions of political protest. We escaped, shaken but unharmed; my peacemaking instincts had been completely awakened. I had done this sort of work in other African countries, now it was Kenya’s turn, my home country. I started making calls to fellow peacemakers, some of whom were already equally alert. In the evening of that day, I found myself in the studios of Nation Television (NTV) with Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, pleading with Kenyans to guard the peace. This event constituted the embryonic beginning of the group, Concerned Citizens for Peace, which was ‘formally’ launched two days later.

3. To what extent did you become involved with CCP? What unique role did you play as a core member of the group?

I was deeply involved with CCP right from the beginning. I sat together with the other co-founders on the 31st of December 2007 as the name was chosen. As a Core Team member from the beginning, I was involved in all the deliberations and actions of the group. The unique aspect of the core group of five was that it functioned very well as a team, based on a kind of implicit division of labour. Ambassador Kiplagat, General Opande and General Sumbeiywo, the three senior members of the team, brought their broad experiences from the past to the process. All of them had had engagement with politicians and diplomats within the international community who had worked with protagonists representing multiple sides of conflicts. Now they were facilitating contact with and access to Kofi Annan’s mediation team after it was established. Dekha Ibrahim and I were the ‘hands-on peacebuilding professionals’—reinforced by a corps of supporting peacebuilders and strategists—who provided content during discussions and guided the deliberations of CCP, particularly the analysis that informed the interventions. I drafted statements and briefing papers and was sometimes asked to take the lead in presenting ideas in meetings with the Kofi
Annan team and other dignitaries. I also made several media appearances on behalf of the group, though Kiplagat and Dekha generally represented the public face of the group.

4. **How did your past experiences prepare you for the role that you played within CCP?**

It is hard to isolate any particular experience that prepared me and my colleague peace workers for the roles played. Certainly, interventions such as those carried out by CCP drew upon many years of experience and preparation; experience seems to serve as a second nature informant and functions like intuition. When people are conditioned by experience, it may appear that they were prepared all along.

5. **Would you agree that one would need to be an expert at mediation and negotiation to successfully mobilise and form a group like CCP?**

Yes and no. Experience in mediation and negotiation provided only one element of what CCP was all about. Many people who joined CCP had never been involved specifically in mediation work nor even in peacebuilding work generally. Yet they became important participants in the CCP process. They brought their creativity, their analysis, their networking and mobilization skills, their time, in addition to much else. A small core group was well versed with the practice and theory of mediation and peacemaking. This group offered leadership and defined CCP’s niche. Their position as the core group and initiators of CCP remained unchallenged even as others joined. This for me was quite interesting. There was unusual coherence in the group, a factor that could be attributed to the adopted approach of openness and the inclusion of anyone as long as they subscribed to the idea of saving the country through dialogue. Beyond the technical skills of mediation, the construction of this kind of group coherence drew on seasoned attitudes that valued process, participation and inclusion, factors which together mould a diverse group toward a single mission. Early on, CCP’s mission had been articulated as that of “creating and giving a voice to Kenyan citizens to engage and contribute in the creation of peace and hope.” The ability to visualise, to name, to articulate, and to focus people towards a mission and vision of peace in the midst of violence is as important, if not more important, than the ability to mediate.

6. **What were some of your most difficult moments during this period?**

Violence and its consequences unfold rapidly and furiously. In Kenya’s case, the violence was indiscriminate, unfortunately claiming the lives and the livelihoods of innocent and vulnerable Kenyans. In considerable contrast, the movement towards dialogue and consensus is a very slow process. While acknowledging this gap as a reality, it is very frustrating for me to accept. It was very clear to me: if Kenyans had witnessed the results of conflict and destruction in other African countries, they surely would not choose to go the way of total collapse. It was a matter of great frustration to me that not everyone could see that we were truly on a precipice. Politicians continued to behave and to make all sorts of utterances that only provoked greater anger. Even as the Annan process got underway, politicians pursued their calculated political games, forgetting that what they believed to be clever strategic moves...
and statements during the negotiations had consequences. My ready message was always, ‘No Kenyan should have to die on behalf of the politicians: push them to find solutions.’ Eventually, to the amazement of many people, politicians accommodated each other. But there were moments of severe frustration, like when the President named the ‘half-cabinet,’ a gesture that had the immediate effect of stoking the violence. Or when the new MP for Embakasi was gunned down during the night – I had been awakened at 3:00 a.m. by that news. Before details emerged, hours later, regarding the manner of his death, everyone believed it had been occasioned by the ongoing violence. If MPs were being targeted, I reasoned, then surely we were headed for civil war. Later that morning, as I headed for the Serena Hotel, I cried bitterly as Eric Wainaina’s “Kenya Only” played on my car radio, feeling helpless and thinking that the forces determined to tear down the country were more powerful than those trying to keep it together. That was an extremely frustrating moment.

7. **What are some of the key lessons you can draw from your experience in CCP that can be used by others in similar circumstances?**

I have already reflected on some of the lessons learned in the book, Citizens in Action (2010). Perhaps several elements need to be emphasized. To some activists on the Kenya scene during this crisis time, it appeared that to work toward the ‘soft’ option of dialogue was to compromise the ‘hard’ principles of the democratic process such as ‘justice’. This apparent dichotomy constitutes a perennial dilemma for peacemakers and mediators: does our praxis and approach emphasising peace and dialogue in times of violence undermine the possibility for justice being realized? Should the violence cycle be left to run its course, unimpeded and uninterrupted? Indeed, CCP was accused of being silent on the hard requirements of truth and justice in the quest for peace. Situations vary. I was clear in my mind that Kenya was not going anywhere without first stemming the violence. Indeed, from the initial injustice of the bungled election, the injustices quickly multiplied as violence increased, overwhelming the country in a matter of days. We had to stop digging our common grave; dialogue was the alternative. The commitment to dialogue and peace does not rule out justice. Justice is realized slowly, requiring order and functioning institutions, otherwise it is not justice. Indeed, there was ample opportunity later to dig into the truth of what really happened during the presidential elections, but for some reason the parties that were stoking the violence did not see the value of that truth. There was opportunity to delve into that truth by means, respectively, of the Kriegler and Waki commission reports; there was opportunity to follow up on justice for the victims of the violence through the establishment of a local tribunal or through the International Criminal Court. Sadly, the more than 1000 Kenyans who were killed during the violence will never experience justice. Their deaths weigh heavily upon us. In my view, everything has its proper time. As Chinua Achebe wittily tells us, when a mother hen sees a kite swooping down on one of its chicks, she first fights off the kite; it’s only after the kite is gone and the chick is saved that the mother hen scolds the chick for exposing itself to such danger. Peace and justice each have their time.
Let me stand here
Let me be
By the seaside with the calming salty breeze on my face
And greet the sun as it rises offering hope with it

Let me stand here
Let me be
These African eyes have seen unimaginable things
Witnessed humans burning in churches
These ears have heard the chilling and shattering wails of raped daughters of Africa
Listened to bewildered young ones cry endlessly
This heart has witnessed a paradox
Watched human beings needlessly die of hunger
Others become more vicious than animals
Yet others rise full of kindness, tenderness and reaching out openly
The paradox that is Kenya

Let me stand here
Let me be
As the sun begins its journey to the centre of the sky
I wonder
How did Kenya get here?
The hatred, anger, abuse, killings, suspicion, mistrust, broken promises aaaaaahhhh!!!
Who brought this basket full of these unwanted fruits?

Why did we feast on these fruits?
I wonder
Will I ever know? Will you ever tell me?
Tell me the reality that is Kenya?

Let me stand here
Let me be
As I greet the sun at daybreak by the seashore
Allow me to believe that the sun brings me a better day
Knowing the dawn breaks no matter how long the night
Remembering when there is no enemy within,
The enemies outside cannot hurt us
For we stand united
With our differences as opportunities
Our diversity as an advantage
A reflection of each other
The melting pot that is Kenya

So let me stand here
Let me be
By the seaside with the calming salty breeze on my face
And greet the sun as it salutes the morning sky
For it brings me hope
Of a united, tolerant and peaceful Kenya
The Kenya I Want? Give me a Break!

- By Agnes Nzisa Rogo

The Kenya I want?
How dare you, your extended hand, clutching graft,
ask me, about the Kenya I want?
While, without batting an eyelid, you take the Kenya I have.

The Kenya I want?
You ask, as, in and out, you puff,
belly bulging, stomach stuffed,
“What do you want?” your eyes looking up and up,
not seeing my skinny self....
“Don’t you see, what I do need,
is the Kenya you’re sweeping off my feet?”

The Kenya I want?
You fill your pockets, and pay no tax....
You ask for more grants,
And we all know who pays back,
in new laws you take me to eras dark,
Your ride is a designer rack,
and yet, my maize you won’t buy a sack,
you wine and dine,
while I whine and die....

The Kenya I want?
How dare you ask
6. Guest Reflections

A year after Kenya’s electoral debacle, Ghana went to the polls in December 2008. It turned out to be a nail-biting experience for Ghanaians; for a brief period, fears of a possible repeat of the Kenyan scenario threatened. However, Ghana pulled through the election process successfully and has since been cited as an example of good electoral management. In the following reflection, Emmanuel Bombande shares aspects of a civil society initiative inspired in part by the CCP experience in Kenya, indicating how that model helped Ghana to avoid the ‘Kenya way.’

A. Lessons for Peacebuilders: A Ghanaian Perspective on Peaceful Elections

Civil Society Engagement in Preventive Action in Post-Election Violence: The Case of Ghana

–Emmanuel Habuka Bombande, Executive Director, WANEP

The elections of December 2008 in Ghana were the fifth multi-party elections of the Fourth Republic. Ghana has had a long and interesting experience with elections before independence and during the first, second and third republics. Constitutional democracy was repeatedly interrupted by military interventions, beginning with the February 1966 coup d’état that toppled the founding President, Kwame Nkrumah. Ghana endured several military regimes, with the last military ruler, Ft. Lt. Rawlings, taking over in 1981. Rawlings gradually reinvented himself and engineered the country back to competitive politics under the Fourth Republic constitution of 1992.

Against this backdrop, the December 2008 elections were not unique, yet they were the most challenging in their context and timing. At the onset of the Fourth Republic in 1992, Jerry Rawlings and his National Democratic Congress (NDC) won the elections and were re-elected in 1996 for a second four-year term. In 2000, the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) won the elections that led to a smooth transfer of power from an incumbent to the opposition. The NPP was in turn re-elected in 2004 for a second four-year term. By 2008, the NDC had regrouped to pose a serious challenge to NPP’s re-election. The December 2008 elections, therefore, constituted the most important political contest between the two main political parties and their respective ideologies.
Prior to Ghana’s elections of December 2008, elections in Kenya and Zimbabwe—two key African States—were characterized by severe post election violence. Kenya’s 2007 post election tragedy served as an important early warning for Ghana. In February 2008, John Evans Atta Mills, the NDC presidential candidate, called on Ghanaians to learn from Kenya’s experience to ensure that Ghana’s elections would be conducted peacefully. He challenged the NPP Government to work with all stakeholders to ensure a peaceful election. The then President downplayed the reference to Kenya as ‘doom mongering’ and assured Ghanaians that his Government would preside over peaceful, transparent and free elections. Early on in the campaigns, the ‘Kenyan experience’ took centre stage in political debates as a reminder of ‘unpeaceful’ elections. In particular, the media—especially the FM radio stations, devoted much time to dissecting the Kenyan debacle and its implications for Ghana. As the elections date approached, accusations of meddling with the voters’ register raised the political temperature. There was sporadic violence in various towns as a result of disagreements over the parliamentary primaries. Against this backdrop the opening of the voters’ register further heightened tensions as the two main political parties competed to ensure the registration of as many of their voters as possible.

In July 2008, Ghanaian civil society organisations initiated consultations that culminated in the formation of a common platform, the Civic Forum. The Forum served as a vehicle for engaging with the political parties, responding to challenges and possible crises associated with the electoral process. The Forum was coordinated by the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and included the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), the Christian Council of Ghana, the National Catholic Secretariat and the Muslim Council, among others. The engagement with multiple stakeholders emphasised the collective interest of Ghanaians, insisting that the elections must preserve and enhance the collective interest. The Forum enabled civil society to monitor and track all preparations for the elections. This made it possible at an early stage to advocate for peace and to speak up against political intolerance or intimidation. The work of the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) was enhanced by its engagement with the Civic Forum in which emerging issues were publicly discussed and submitted for dialogue and a mutual understanding with the Electoral Commission. The role and conduct of the security agencies in ensuring a peaceful election was thoroughly discussed by the political parties throughout the preparatory phase. As the December 2008 elections approached, there was strong public consensus that the elections must promote Ghana’s positive image and that it was the responsibility of all citizens to make that happen.

On December 7, 2008 the first round of elections was conducted with only a few incidents of violence. The NDC won a majority in Parliament; however, in the Presidential elections neither of the candidates achieved the 50% + 1 threshold needed to avoid a run-off. The run-off was set for December 28, 2008. Campaigning for the second round of elections was more intense as the two parties scrambled for swing votes, generating an atmosphere of anxiety and uncertainty. However, voting was conducted peacefully with only a few incidents reported in the Ashanti and Volta regions.

Early results indicated that the opposition NDC was headed for victory. However, on the evening of the 29th there were protests at the Electoral Commission headquarters because of an alleged attempt by the NPP to submit new tally figures. As the Electoral Commission investigated the new NPP figures, tension mounted throughout the country. It began to look like Ghana was headed for violence. Indeed, security agents in Accra had to deal with youth groups from both sides
that took turns surrounding the Electoral Commission headquarters, threatening violence.

It was during this tense moment that inter-party dialogue proved most critical. While civil society groups from the Civic Forum provided technical support, the Chair of the NPC together with other prominent religious leaders initiated a process of intense shuttle diplomacy, encouraging the NDC and the NPP, (particularly their principals) to start talking and avert the crisis. WANEP, IDEG and IPA offered strategic analysis of the developing situation and articulated various possible scenarios along with implementing strategies for each. High level meetings were held in the evenings of December 29 and 30, during which concrete rules were agreed upon by the two parties. These included respect for the space and mandate of the Electoral Commission; insistence that the commission continue its work without any interruption or distraction; commitment by the leadership of the respective parties to non-violence in all circumstances; and a commitment by the political parties to call on their supporters to remain calm while the Electoral Commission carried out its responsibilities. These commitments were communicated to the public through a press conference, significantly reducing tension. Then in the second round of the elections, the focus shifted quickly to the two principal candidates, urging them to meet and talk.

However, tensions mounted when the NPP went to court on January 1st, seeking to block the declaration of any further results, albeit without success. The NPP also went to court in an attempt to stop the Electoral Commission from conducting the Tain constituency election.

Consequently, there was increasing impatience with the NPP’s resort to the courts while pledging at the same time its commitment to dialogue. The willingness of the presidential candidates to continue to communicate (although not directly) was very critical.

Election results were eventually announced on 2nd January with the NDC emerging the victor by a margin of approximately 40,000 votes! Given this narrow victory between the winners and the losers, the Civic Forum urged magnanimity for the winners and grace for the losers. Indeed, during the transition period the two parties demonstrated goodwill and democratic maturity towards each other, with the NPP candidate Nana Akufo-Ado attending the presidential inauguration of John Evans Atta-Mills.

In the case of Ghana, inter-party dialogue facilitated by religious and civil society leaders helped to avert potential electoral violence. During the tense moments of Ghana’s election process, WANEP staff members had maintained telephone contact with NPI-Africa colleagues in Nairobi, seeking to share and learn from the CCP experience. Thus in interesting ways, the negative experience of Kenya helped to galvanize Ghanaians towards a peaceful election. In some significant measure, Ghana owes its peaceful election process to lessons drawn from Kenya’s painful experience.

The dividends of democratic, peaceful and transparent elections are now obvious: since the elections the Ghanaian economy has been doing well. During his first foray into sub-Saharan Africa in July 2009, President Barack Obama chose to visit Ghana. On that occasion he made a significant policy speech detailing his administration’s plans for engagement with Africa. While the integrity of the Electoral Commission was important, the internal capacity to mobilise for dialogue when it was most needed, was even more important. Ghana’s experience illustrates the importance of a national infrastructure for peace, similar to Kenya’s proposed national peacebuilding and conflict management policy. The management of internal power and leverage to facilitate dialogue is clearly related to the prevention of violence.
Like every other peace worker around the world, I followed with shock, sorrow and dismay the events in Kenya in early 2008. The fact that Kenya could follow the violent route of so many other countries was a matter of personal disappointment and anguish. However, despite my distress, I was greatly encouraged and comforted by the actions taken immediately by Kenyan peace workers. The work of the Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP), in particular, stands out and continues to inspire me.

One of my professional interests and commitments during the last ten years has been to draw attention to the important role of non-state actors in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. I am deeply convinced that the nature of contemporary conflict calls for the creative interfacing of ‘official’ (government and intergovernmental) and ‘non-official’ (civil society) interventions. GPPAC, for which NPI-Africa is the Regional Initiator for East and Central Africa, organised a conference at the United Nations headquarters in New York in July 2005, focusing on the role of Civil Society in peacebuilding. In preparation for the conference, we collected sixty inspiring stories of civil society peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts, resulting in the publication of the book, People Building Peace II, which has been widely distributed around the world. Since then, I am unaware of any other story that is as exciting, or indeed, as inspiring as that of the Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP).

The uniqueness of the CCP story lies in the incredibly swift response of key peacemakers, who managed to launch a Citizens’ Agenda for Peace document just nine days into the crisis and effectively broadcast their message of dialogue.

However, even more impressive was CCP’s approach: the manner in which they mobilized an effective constituency for peace in a very short time; and the ability to balance between an open, flexible and inclusive process while at the same time giving effective structure and direction. They ably organised an Open Forum every morning, involving many actors and thus managing a truly transparent and inclusive process. At the same time, they engaged with the formal mediation process in a structured way. The adoption of the brand name “Concerned” by so many participants in the Open Forum in itself indicates the success and the appeal of the CCP initiative.
CCP’s deliberate strategic thought is likewise rather admirable; when violence was threatening to engulf the city of Nairobi, which would have resulted in the possible collapse of the nation, CCP was quick to seek collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Security, to establish the Nairobi Peace Forum and the District Peace Committees in order to save the capital city and the nation.

The fact that CCP was not planned in advance, but simply mobilised to respond to a crisis and actually managed to mobilize so quickly for dialogue, constitutes an incredible feat. The combination of various peacebuilding interventions, thorough strategic thinking, and an inclusive approach, should serve as a model for peacebuilders globally on how to respond when electoral processes turn violent. The road towards sustainable peace is long and hard. I trust that Kenyan civil society will be persistent, mature and wise to ensure that Agenda Four of the negotiated agreement is implemented and that the foundations for sustainable peace and justice are built and strengthened.

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