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Sustainable Peacebuilding Opportunities: An Analysis of Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees In Mombasa County

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Abstract: The study points to issues that have greatly contributed to the increase in peacebuilding opportunities for countries in conflict. Local peacebuilding entities are in of themselves the prime opportunity of sustainable peacebuilding. The “local turn” debate and the recognition of local peacebuilding entities as key players in peace has increased the agency of local peacebuilding committees. The prospect of home-grown solutions through the “local turn” has also been attractive because of perceived lower cost of delivering peacebuilding results. This is perhaps why there was a rush to institutionalise and recognise local peacebuilding entities in many countries including Ghana in 2005 and Kenya in 2008. With recognition came the legitimisation of local peacebuilding committees which was both political and legal. These two policy directions taken in countries such as Kenya led to even greater opportunities for local peacebuilding entities because they came with the backing of policy makers who suddenly saw the potential of these entities for advancing their peace agenda. The legal recognition of Local Peacebuilding Committees led to the creation of local policy frameworks to guide the work of local peacebuilding entities, even requiring them to be registered and get a Government license to operate. For example, Kenya produced a peacebuilding policy and law. These policies have elevated the notion of “local turn” into concrete action for peacebuilding. Therefore, this article examined the opportunities for sustainable peacebuilding in Mombasa County based on the study question.

Key words: Peacebuilding Opportunities, Local peacebuilding, Local turn.

I. Introduction

Formal peacebuilding entities in Mombasa County have benefitted from the development and adoption of the Sessional Paper No. 5 of 2014 on National Policy for Peacebuilding and Conflict management. In the document, the Government states that it will embark in an all-inclusive and participatory process of sustained peacebuilding through enhancing coordination and management of conflicts. The Government also undertakes to do this in the most participatory, culturally sensitive, inclusive, transparent and accountable manner. This policy document is further supported by a Standard Guidelines and Terms of Reference for Peace Structures in Kenya (GoK, 2016) which lays out the work of all peace structures in Kenya including County and sub-county committees also known as District Peace Committees (DPCs).

II. Background to the study

Historically, local peacebuilding committees have functioned as informal spaces where villagers meet, discuss and resolve their conflicts by applying a range of traditional, bottom-up methods of peacebuilding (Mungai *et al.*, 2020). These structures still function in the same manner, however, the realisation by national Governments that these entities were a viable partner in peacebuilding led to their rapid formalisation and co-option into Government peace and structures. This

was the case of Kenya’s Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) which originally came out of the desire to strengthen social cohesion of local communities in search for sustainable peace, but later got absorbed into the Wajir County peacebuilding agenda (Nganje, 2020). Formal peacebuilding committees are therefore local peacebuilding institutions that have been accorded Government recognition and either coopted into formal Government peace and security systems or supported to foster peacebuilding on their own. Over time, local peacebuilding committees have expanded and formed networks that are now known as the national infrastructures for peace (I4P).

Kumar, referenced in Giessmann (2016) defines I4P as a network of interdependent systems, resources, values, and abilities shared by institutions from the public sector, the private sector, and the community that foster consultation and dialogue, avert conflict, and enable peaceful resolution of disputes when societal violence arises. Van Tongeren, mentioned in Giessmann (2016), on the other hand, views I4P as dialogue-driven and cooperative problem-solving methods to conflict within societies, employing institutional structures that are suitable for each country’s culture at the local, district, and national levels. The key to the I4P debate is the recognition that sustainable peacebuilding is dependent on functioning institutions that have the ability to broker, realise and sustain the peace. In this debate, Giessmann (2016)

argues that Local Peace Committees such as Kenya's DPC and other peace structures at the local level stand the best chance.

In Kenya, like in other parts of Africa, local peace committees arose from the desires of local communities to respond and manage conflict amongst themselves. In many instances, as was the case of Wajir County, it was the continued conflict and the poor response by the national Government that led to the formation of an informal structure for local peacebuilding which later became a huge and formal peacebuilding and security structure after the Government took it over in 1995 (Ndegwa, 2001). The formation of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) started when a group of local market women, reacting to the persistent conflict that affected their communities came together and started to strategise on how to bring peace to their communities. They started informal meetings to discuss peace and over time they invited men and other members of the community to join. Before long, the seemingly innocuous meeting gathered steam and became a proper peacebuilding committee giving voice to women, youth and elders in matters of peace in Wajir (Ndegwa, 2001; Åkerdahl, 2013; Konde, 2019; Nganje, 2021)

III. Theoretical framework

Wasike and Odhiambo (2016), discuss the role of theories in guiding the thrust of academic studies. They emphasize the importance of theories in offering compelling and incisive causal explanations with calculated precision. They assert that theories play the role of predicting, prescribing and evaluating socio-political phenomena hence they cannot be ignored.

In 1975, Galtung coined the term "peacebuilding" in his pioneering work "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding. In this treatise, Galtung attempted to place peace in the context of a world that was changing rapidly against the backdrop of WWII which left millions dead and a world very terrified of another similar experience. In the three approaches, Galtung distinguishes the three ideas of peace starting from peacekeeping, which is the exercise of keeping physical distance between two belligerents to peacemaking which is the implementation of peace agreements without attempting to address the root causes of conflict. These two represent what Galtung called negative peace, which is hard to sustain. In Galtung's view, the ideal situation is to have positive peace because this is the only peace that is self-sustaining. Galtung therefore came up with the term peacebuilding which he defines as the process of creating self-supporting structures in society that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives conflict. This definition moves the idea of peace from the traditional peacekeeping and peacemaking both of which Galtung saw as having shortcomings in a world needing sustainable peace. Galtung's view of peace is that it must be positive for it to be sustainable.

IV. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, because of the opportunity that the method offers for studying LPCs. Aggarwal and Ranganathan (2019) define the descriptive research design as a method that allows the researcher to study and describe the distribution of one or more variables in a study sample at one specific point in time without trying to make inferences or causal statements. The study population comprised Mombasa Sub-county Peacebuilding Committees and the other peacebuilding stakeholders associated with the

peacebuilding committees. At the time of field work, the population of the committees was 250 and 113 were recruited into the study. Senior Government officials in Mombasa County including Sub-county Commissioners, Security personnel and Ward Administrators totaled 51 and 11 were recruited into the study (including 1 from the national level). Because of the very mobile and unpredictable nature of youth stakeholders, the study could not ascertain the exact number of youths who collaborate with the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees, therefore the study relied on the *maskan* contacts and register maintained by village elders (*Wazee wa Vijiji*) to identify youths for the study. From this, 185 youths belonging to different *maskans* were identified and recruited into the study. This process also helped to identify 7 reformed youth who were included into the study as well. Similarly, to arrive at a random sample of villagers, the researcher utilised the Nyumba Kumi register at the ward level to identify and recruit 72 members of households who were recruited into the study. Through working with the Chairpersons of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees, 4 representatives of NGOs that collaborate with the committees were also identified and recruited into the study. A total of 392 respondents participated in the study. This research was done in Mombasa County.

V. Study Findings

Mombasa Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees seem to have embraced the responsibilities assigned to them, a fact that has been appreciated by the secondary respondents who benefit from the work of the DPC. Mombasa Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees have managed to infuse some sense of deliberate peacebuilding in the County, despite the challenges of finances and poor coordination. The study established that Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees do have a central role in peacebuilding in Mombasa County.

A summary of KII respondents is provided as follows;

My office works with the DPC in their peace endeavours throughout the sub-county. Whenever there is conflict within the community in the sub-county, the body that I give the assignment to is the DPC. We have DPC in the sub-county, the division and in every location, which makes work easier when there is conflict within the location because I know there are people there who can intervene before I go there ...I would not imagine how it would be without them. It would mean I am all over doing peacebuilding, and conflict resolution and I will not have time to be in the office. (KII with Sub-county administrator, Mvita January 20, 2022)

The appreciation of the work of the DPC is acknowledged almost unanimously by senior Mombasa County administrators. However, the *Nyumba Kumi* initiative which has also been added into the County Peace and Security agenda is also equally appreciated. This study found that indeed there are members of the DPC who also double up as *Nyumba Kumi*. A KII respondent who is a senior county administrator had this to say about the DPC in his area and the collaboration,

Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees, and *Nyumba Kumi* are the people that will feed the chief with information. The chief will be a link to me as the boss who has the equipment as well as the tools and the DPC person at the grass root...they should

be made stronger by giving them the needed support, for example when you call them for a meeting at least they should get something to survive on such as transport allowance. (KII with Policy Maker, Kisauni January 21, 2022)

The foregoing KIIs brought out a key responsibility of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees, which is to respond as expeditiously as possible to conflicts in the community. Peacebuilding stakeholders in Mombasa however do reach out to Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees even when there is no visible conflict. The KII respondents indicated that DPC members are called upon to talk about peace in workshops, in schools, mosques and other places where members of the public gather. DPC members are also the official monitors of the National Conflict Early Warning and Early Response System which has been put in place to support Kenya towards effective conflict prevention initiatives. Members of the DPC gather intelligence on the ground and are supposed to pass the information to relevant authorities.

Mombasa County Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees can

play a catalytic role in advancing peacebuilding in Mombasa County, defined as the acceleration of an action to achieve the desired result speedily. Most of the situations that require the intervention of Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are usually conflict situations that, if left to fester, could into major conflicts in Mombasa County. In some cases, the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are required to negotiate with police in the event of arrests of suspected youth gang members or violent disputes among neighbours. These actions are necessary but the essential catalytic role is to widen the partnerships on the ground and assigning roles that can be monitored and reported on. The researcher was unable to see any report submitted to the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees by peacebuilding organisations on the ground. Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees rely on voluntary reporting which is sporadic.

Against select stated terms of reference (ToRs) of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees, the study sought to summarise the confidence that the members of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees had in their ability to foster sustainable peacebuilding in Mombasa County. The result is presented in table 1.1.

Table 1. 1: Ability of DPC to undertake duties as specified in their terms of reference

Duties	Response	Frequency N=113	Percent	Summary of risks and assumptions
Promote peace education and a culture of peace and non-violence	Yes	81	71	This is the major preoccupation of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees. However, there is no community curriculum for peacebuilding and most of the education is dependent on the DPC member.
	No	32	29	
Mobilize resources for peacebuilding	Yes	58	51	Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees conduct resource mobilization in cash and kind. Most of the resources mobilised are in-kind and come by way of materials and equipment to hold meetings.
	No	55	49	
Early response to emerging conflict and early warning.	Yes	71	62.8	Members of the DPC are part of the Kenya Conflict Early Warning System but are not funded to gather and disseminate conflict information to the authorities.
	No	42	38	
Foster public participation and Ownership of peacebuilding processes.	Yes	77	68.1	Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees rely on other arms of government to convene public meetings such as <i>Barazas</i> to spread peacebuilding messages
	No	36	31.9	
Conduct community training for peacebuilding	Yes	76	67.3	Members of the DPC are expected to conduct community-level training for members of the public but do not have the tools
	No	37	32.7	
Apply traditional conflict resolution mechanisms	Yes	79	69.9	There is however little application of traditional mechanisms for peacebuilding in Mombasa County.
	No	34	30.1	

Source; Field Data, 2022

Sustainable Peacebuilding Opportunity through Community Peace Education

The first duty in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the District Peace Committees is to promote peace education, a culture of peace and non-violence peacebuilding. This is a broad responsibility with a very wide mandate, which encapsulates the whole idea of sustainable peacebuilding. The study sought to establish the extent to which DPC members felt that they were up to this task, and out of the 113, 71% (N=81) responded in the affirmative, while 29% (N=32). This means that Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees feel that they are capable of promoting peace education. The rationale behind peace education is that it will promote the knowledge attitude and skills necessary for peaceful resolution of conflict to be the method of choice for members of society. Nonviolence on the other hand is manifested through values such as respect

for human rights, freedom and trust. Unlike conflict resolution, peace education is a proactive preventive method of inculcating values of nonviolence, tolerance, equality, respect for differences, and social justice (Corkalo, 2022).

The current practice of peace education is heavily reliant on NGO partners such as the Justice, Humanity, and Dignity Center (JUHUDI), Kenya Community Support Center (KECOSCE), and the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) and an occasional international conference such as the 2009 International Conference on "Education for Peace" organised by Kenyan Ministry of Education and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). Secondly, a review of several NGO reports seems to point to a bias towards civic education in which issues such as human rights, land rights, Gender-Based Violence and Youth empowerment dominate. The Peacebuilding Infrastructure in Mombasa could develop a community peace

education curriculum that could be used as part of the civic education program, especially in the condition of poor literacy. The County Government of Mombasa has elaborated a Civic Education program under its Public Participation Policy (2020) which is a county-wide vehicle that can carry a community peace education program at no extra cost. Opportunity also exists for Peace Education through the formal education sector, under the Education Sector Peace Education Policy (GoK, 2014).

To this end partnering with community-based radio could be useful in broadcasting peace education without requiring members of the community to gather in a particular place for educational purposes. Mombasa has at least 15 licensed Frequency Modulation (FM) radio stations. FM radio stations offer stronger, clearer signals and are therefore ideal for educational programs. Support for education was also supported by villagers who summarised their feelings thus;

Community members need to be educated because if people are not educated on the dangers of conflicts and benefits of peace it is hard to get sustainable peace. We need to get to the grassroots and involve religious leaders, educate them, and use them to pass the information to their followers. Boda riders should be educated on how to avoid words that might cause conflicts. FGD with village elders, Jomvu; November, 2021)

DPC members drawn from NGOs that have training funds have supported peace training as exemplified by the excerpt from a KII,

When I am training teachers, I train them to train children to solve problems within them so that when I have an issue, we can talk out amongst ourselves as pupils...because we are developing a generation that will be able to solve a problem when they mature other than fighting because fighting is not a solution. That one we do at a school level. Secondly, what we are doing with parents is guiding them on parenting because parents need to be present in their children's life. Parents are there when children are young later in life parents leave these children to make decisions but these children make wrong decisions. To have sustainable peace from my perspective parenting is a key area. To add, social protection programs for the youth who don't feel belonging somewhere. They need to feel belonging somewhere and when they drop out of school, they need to go somewhere we have TVET, they need to be directed that way as a way of assisting them to get trained. Government should step in because if they are left hanging, they cause chaos. (KII with NGO partner of the DPC, Changamwe, September 15 2021)

Sustainable Peacebuilding Opportunity through Networking and Partnership Building

Sustainable peacebuilding also entails networking with other partners and stakeholders. According to the ToR, Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are required to network with other forums to enhance harmonious relationships. When asked to indicate whether they, as members of the DPC were able to do this, out of 113, 62% (N=71) replied that they could, while 38% (N=42) were of the contrary opinion. Probed about what this meant it became clear that not all networking will result in a harmonious relationship but a major result that the Sub-

County Peacebuilding Committees anticipated with this is the sharing of resources and responsibilities. Ekomo-Soignet, cited in a report by Connolly and Powers (2018) titled *Local Networks for Peace: Lessons from Community-Led Peacebuilding* presents two arguments for networking; the first is that networks are usually different in aim and approach, size, membership, geographic reach, and organisational structure, and secondly, there is certainly some financial, political, resilience and organisational benefit from networking. However, managing networks which may have diverse opinions, expectations, and capacities can be challenging, time-consuming and sometimes inconsequential in terms of sustainable peacebuilding. Nevertheless, networking is a popular method of peacebuilding and has been adopted by many stakeholders.

Several peacebuilding networks exist in Mombasa. For example, the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) is a network of several faith-based organisations, including the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK), Hindu Council of Kenya (HCK), The Catholic Church (KEC), Archdiocese of Mombasa, Malindi Catholic Diocese, The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), The Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK), The Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) and the Africa Traditional Religions. CICC has a long-standing partnership with the Mombasa peacebuilding infrastructure with which it has implemented several peacebuilding projects. For example, for Nyali DPC alone, CICC has done the following: capacity building on peace interventions, training on mediation and cohesion, conducted *maskani* visits (youth hangouts for counselling), funded peace *Barazas* (65 of these in Nyali sub-county alone), provided audio-visual and events equipment (tent and chairs), and a 1-year supply of Wi-Fi (Personal Communication with Nyali DPC Chairperson, 2022).

Networks can increase the reach of Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees and expand the peacebuilding agenda both within Mombasa communities and to individual members. Networking also provides the possibility of a faster response to any conflict situation. In the event of a particular constituency needing special attention such as youth, a youth organisation that is a member of the peacebuilding network. Mombasa DPC can develop a networking strategy based on the type of conflict being confronted and ensure that there is a member that is capable of responding to that particular problem. Kirimi cited in Connolly and Powers (2018) report titled *Local Networks for Peace: Lessons from Community-Led Peacebuilding* argues in the case of PeaceNet Kenya the network provides an opportunity for both horizontal and vertical coordination that is most ideal for peacebuilding. This is of particular import because other aspects of peacebuilding such as gender-based violence, environmental conservation and human rights and historical injustices are also addressed within the network. As one KII stated,

The coast civil society network ...brings together all the CSOs across the coastal region and I also formed a network the Mombasa team. Within the network, I divided it into thematic areas. The one I am having today is a thematic area which deals with issues on land and natural resources. Here we are talking about historical injustices, land issues and so on and we have divided it into two weeks so the first week we have people dealing with land. Then we have a thematic area that deals with issues of governance,

we have another thematic area that deals with matters of health, and we have a thematic area that deals with matters of youth. When you come to Mombasa you will find a network by the name of Civil Society Reference Group working for security and human rights which brings together all those themes. (KII with DPC partner, December 18 2021)

Sustainable Peacebuilding Opportunity through Early Response and Early Warning to Conflict

The National Steering Committee (NSC) places the responsibility for early response and early warning and reporting squarely on the shoulders of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees. The study sought to find out whether Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees were confident to undertake this responsibility, and 63% (N=71) replied in the affirmative, while the other 34% (N=42) had a contrary view. This answer points to Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees' confidence in this responsibility. According to the World Bank, early warning is a process that alerts and promotes an understanding of the nature and impacts of violent conflict (Defontaine, 2019). The early warning involves the regular collection and analysis of data on conflicts, by systematically monitoring and reporting conflict indicators. Early warning and early response work better when the reporter and the responder are linked. This is normally not the case because responding to a situation of conflict may require a wide range of actors spread over a wide area.

The practice in Mombasa County Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees is to report incidences of conflict upon verification. The DPC member normally visits the areas or areas of conflict, verifies the incident and then reports to the relevant authority on the nature of the problem, and what they think the action should be. This is necessary because at times the law enforcement is needed to quell a situation and therefore a verified incident is needed in case of potential arrests or any other forceful action.

As a KII indicated in an interview during this study;

To us (the DPC) they are our peace monitors. They monitor peace threats in the vicinities where they live. They easily notice any threats to peace, they report back for government agencies response...they also assist us on early warning, they can tell you that in these places, if you look at market days and you don't have so many people know that something is happening for example migration. They are able to tell us there is voter migration from this place to that place because of hatred between this tribe and that tribe in a way you know what to expect. If it is about politics or ethnic hatred, they are there and they will tell you. (KII with Policy Maker, Kisauni, January 21 2022)

While Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are at the front line of early conflict data collection, they do not do this routinely. This system of working is emblematic of the lack of resources that the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees face in doing their work. The advantage of early warning is to be found in the regular collection and analysis of conflict data and not sporadic and incident-specific data, which might not show a pattern of conflict. The potential for Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees in this area is to be enabled to collect and analyse routine data in the county.

In this regard, Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees can collaborate with institutions that collect data routinely such as Universities, Healthcare Providers (in case of GBV), and law enforcement (in case of youth delinquency or any violation of the law). By working with these institutions, Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees can be in a position to better advise the authorities on the nature, size and severity of potential conflict. No attempt has been made by any of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees to engage the cooperation of these institutions to access data that has already been collected to advise the County administration on conflict trends. There is an opportunity here that could be exploited for the benefit of the County's peacebuilding agenda.

Sustainable Peacebuilding Opportunity through Public/Community Participation and Ownership

In 2020, the United Nations published a report titled *United Nations Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace* (2020), in which it called for meaningful engagement of local populations and communities in their peacebuilding process to ensure sustainability. Community participation can be described as the strategic process of directly involving local populations in all aspects of decision-making and implementation. In the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, community engagement is generally done through partnerships with a broad range of local civil society actors as intermediaries who work in the sphere of peacebuilding (UN, 2020). The study put this question to the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees in order to gauge their confidence in carrying out the responsibility. Out of 113, 68% (N=77) indicate the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are capable of doing this, while the other 32% (N=36) indicated the contrary. This answer pointed to the idea that peacebuilding has been conducted by the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees through public participation. The NSC requires the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees to foster public participation and ownership of peacebuilding processes.

Community engagement or public participation has become a favourite topic and is at the heart of successful peacebuilding. To promote meaningful inclusion through broader partnerships, the Secretary-General's report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) called for strengthened and systematized engagement with civil society, including women and youth groups and local communities at large. Reflecting on the UN's engagement with civil society, the Secretary-General report pointed to interventions such as; building capacity, sharing good practices, producing practical tools, fostering a conducive environment for robust civil society, and active engagement in analysis, planning, and programming and monitoring and evaluation. Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees have several opportunities for community/public engagement and participation in peacebuilding such as; *Barazas*, peace meetings, reconciliation meetings and sessions with affected people, and advocacy meetings with law enforcement. A KII respondents had this to say;

DPC members are drawn from different sectors within the community...we expect if somebody is an *imam*, when preaching in the mosque he will have one aspect of telling people the importance of peace. Teachers use parent meetings to talk about peace. Pastors also preach peace; businessmen also preach peace in board

meetings. He will take time to remind other businessmen of the importance of keeping the peace. (soured; KII with Policymaker, 21 January 2022)

At the ward and village level, the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees also engage with law enforcement as was indicated by a respondent.

Another strategy is wherever we have a public *Barazas* also we give local committees chance to speak to the people. This has been working out and also involves them where there are these conflicts, we make them be part and parcel of the team helping us to arbitrate. So far, it is really working out well... they have door to door peace campaigns, which is of great help. Through door to door campaigns, they were able to bring those juvenile gangs back into society. Though that is a difficult job but to them, they manage. (FGD with a chief; November 11, 2021)

In some instances, the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees have been instrumental in diffusing major threats to peace, for which village elders are grateful. During fieldwork, the study found that villagers are still struggling with issues. FGD response corroborates the situation:

They brought together MRC (Mombasa Republican Council) followers, talked to them, and guaranteed them safety. They poured out their issues, why they had joined that radical group and why they want to involve themselves with other things. In the process, 80% withdrew from MRC membership. They have helped radicalized youths reform. Women in the DPC have played a great role in talking to their fellow women and telling them they should not always be dependent on their husbands and as a result, we have seen women engaging themselves with business. (FGD with village elders, Likoni, Nov 11 2021)

From members of the DPC, there was also an appreciation of the work being done and the results being seen by the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees.

A DPC respondent had the following observation,

We do community dialogue, peer-peer, women to women dialogues, also we have parental dialogues, and forums where we mainly focus on the women who have been affected by violence, we also go around school talk to the headteacher and get to know the challenges children face while in schools and give them recommendations. We also do one on one counselling to parents who feel they have too much concerning parental responsibility, we also have *Barazas*, we also do civic education, we also do awareness on equitable sharing of resources, and we also promote cohesion between police and youth through tournaments. We also take youth to do general clean up exercises at the police station. (FGD with DPC member, Nov, 2021)

Mombasa Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees have taken advantage of such gatherings to talk about peace, resolve gang-related conflicts and reconcile communities. However, the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees have no means of convening these meetings on their own because they have neither the financial nor the logistical capacity for this. In this regard, the responsibility of "fostering public participation"

becomes a matter of working through other partners and state organs that have the means. Since the gatherings are usually organised for other issues other than peacebuilding, the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are given little time to talk about peace and this curtails the potential benefit of such gatherings for peacebuilding. A major disadvantage of public gatherings is that they involve all and sundry and therefore peacebuilding messages might be passed on to unconcerned people. The numbers in a public gathering can be deceptive. Therefore, to foster public participation, Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees can maximise participatory approaches to peacebuilding and engage meaningfully with concerned groups directly. By dividing the "public" into concerned constituencies, Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees will be able to engage with these groups and ensure peacebuilding has a better chance of taking root in the communities.

Sustainable Peacebuilding Opportunity through Application of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms (Village Elders as a resource)

Kenya's peacebuilding and conflict management policy recognises the role of traditional conflict management mechanisms as important in sustainable peacebuilding. The policy states in part that to strengthen traditional conflict prevention and mitigation mechanisms, the Government will mobilise communities to embrace these mechanisms relevant to their context (NSC, 2015). It is for this reason that Government has encouraged Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees to apply these methods whenever possible. This is not new. Indeed, as Muigua (2017) argues, African communities had their conflict resolution mechanisms before the advent of colonialism, and mechanisms such as negotiation, reconciliation, and mediation were used in those days to build peace. These mechanisms have also been studied by Ajayi and Buhari (2014) in the case of Nigeria; Waandim (2018) in the case of Cameroon, and Mburugu (2016) in the case of the famous Njuri-Ncheke of the a-Meru in Kenya.

Most of the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Kenya have been implemented in the North-eastern parts of Kenya but the system exists in nearly all Kenyan communities. Haider (2020) in reviewing conflict in Northern Kenya notes that traditional elders under the Council of Elders (CoE) mechanism have played a big role in implementing traditional mechanisms for peacebuilding. This role is however being challenged by the preference for formal settlement of disputes through the use of the modern legal system. That said, the relevance of traditional mechanisms in peacebuilding may still be to act as the entry point for other actors to conduct peacebuilding. The case of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee in which traditional leadership gave way for the formation of a formal peacebuilding committee is an example.

The peacebuilding and conflict management policy encourages Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees to apply traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution as part of peacebuilding. The study sought to find out the degree of confidence that the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees had in applying these mechanisms for peacebuilding and the result is presented in table 1.1. Out of the 133 respondents, 69.9% (N=71) indicated that the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees were capable of such a task, while 31% (N=42) indicated the contrary. The idea of *Wazee Wa Kijiji* (village

elders) is critical when traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding are being discussed. *Wazee Wa Kijiji* in many instances are the custodians of respected traditions which if adhered to could lead to sustainable peace. Despite obvious biases, male domination and sometimes inconsistency with the law, the *Wazee Wa Kijiji* structure is still important especially when combined with new village-level policing systems such as *Nyumba Kumi*. Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees can maximise the potential of the *Wazee Wa Kijiji* to expand the peacebuilding agenda and ensure that they are incorporated into peacebuilding missions in Mombasa County.

Sustainable Peacebuilding Opportunity through facilitation (the Honest Broker role)

Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are also entrusted with the responsibility of facilitating training, community dialogue, sensitization and awareness-raising and other activities that support peacebuilding. The process of facilitating is important perhaps because the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are not supposed to do the work but are required to build the partnerships and interests that are best suited to do the work. This is the honest broker role that in essence summarises the work of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees. The “honest broker” role cannot be underestimated as it has been able to play a fundamental role in peacebuilding (van Beijnum (2016).

The study sought to find out how members of the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees felt about this role and when the question was put to them, out of 113 respondents, 64.6% (N=73) saw their role in brokering and facilitation while 35.4% (N=40) were of a different opinion. The majority of DPC can therefore be said to have confidence in their role as honest brokers in the Mombasa peacebuilding agenda, however, this has not been as easy as it sounds. The role of an honest broker is not always appreciated. Peace brokers often get accused of siding with one party against the other in a conflict. Apandi *et al* (2018) argue in the case of Malaysia's role in brokering peace in the Philippines that the former has been accused of siding with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, even though the evidence speaks differently.

Focus group discussions with partners of the DPC members confirmed this role as one said;

In case there is a problem in the community, they listen to both sides of the story and facilitate coming up with a wise solution. The good thing with them, even if the perpetrator is someone they know, they don't favour them. They also walk and mobilize people and tell them to live in peace, especially during elections. They tell people that politics come and go but your neighbour remains your neighbour even after politics go. (FGD with partners of DPC, Kisauni, August 24, 2021)

The honest broker role in Kenya has been documented by Abdi (2015) with the example of the *Al-Fatah* clan elders from Wajir County, who were able to mediate peace among all the 3 major clans in Wajir County in 1993. This was done at the height of one of the deadliest periods of inter-clan fighting in what was the then North Eastern Province. The peace was secured in a madrasa called *Al-Fatah* in Wajir town, hence the name *Al-Fatah* clan elders. Since this occasion, the *Al-Fatah* Council of Elders has been called to help mediate conflicts in Mandera, Garissa and Isiolo

counties. But even in Wajir, mediators have been criticised for overreliance on traditional methods of mediation that might not be consistent with the law and the constitution of Kenya. The traditional system of payment of “blood money” or (diya) in case of murder is not consistent with Kenyan Penal Code. Austin and Wennmann (2017) have also argued that the business community in Kenya has the potential of playing the “honest broker” role, as long as it can overcome some business-related obstacles

The role of the honest broker must also include expanding the Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees partnership base and interests that will amplify the peacebuilding agenda. Partnerships building will also address two other responsibilities entrusted to Mombasa Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees which are: 1) to mobilise resources for the implementation of programmes and activities, and 2) to network with other peace forums to enhance harmonious relationships.

Cohen (2013) argues that peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions often require partnerships between locals and outsiders, based on sound trust and professionalism because peacebuilders have to work across partnerships and networks. Mombasa County boasts some well-known peacebuilding networks such as Kenya Community Support Centre (KECOSCE), Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics (CICC) Trust, Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance (KMYA), Faith to Action Network (FAN), National Council of Christian Churches (NCCCK), PeaceNet Kenya, all of whom can form strong partners of Mombasa Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees. For this to happen, however, Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees have to delineate clearly, the contribution expected from each and the accountability expected from each.

VI. Conclusion

The study established that Mombasa County Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees have peacebuilding opportunities that are not only spelled out in the ToRs provided by the NSC, but also those that they can create or take advantage of in the County. The ToRs have at least six activities that can support sustainable peacebuilding and these are; Community Peace Education, Networking and Partnerships Building, Conflict Early Warning reporting, Community Participation and Public Ownership, Village Elders engagement, and Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees Honest Broker role. These opportunities are also supported by the County and Sub-county administration all the way down to the village elders. Peacebuilding opportunities are also buttressed by the vast number of peacebuilding partnerships in the Civil Society, faith-based entities, international donors and other well-wishers who feel obligated to create a peaceful County. Therefore, peacebuilding opportunities both in the normative roles and through other channels. Youth agency was also seen as an opportunity but this has to be harnessed in a proper way.

VII. Recommendation

While Sub-County Peacebuilding Committees are engaging the community in peacebuilding, the authorities must take steps to create an atmosphere that is conducive to sustainable peacebuilding. This study, therefore, recommends that authorities should encourage cross-border peacebuilding initiatives because of the location of the county, vis a vis the other counties in the Coastal region and proximity to other

Countries and the Indian Ocean. This proximity has the potential to internationalising local threats to peace and increases Kenya's vulnerability to terrorism and drug trafficking.

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