

PEACEBUILDING NETWORKS & ALLIANCES IN KENYA: A Retrospective Look at Collective Peacebuilding Effectiveness

By Anita Ernstorfer,
CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

*"Networks work when you have
people who believe in the vision of
collaboration."*

— Independent expert, Kenya case study

Acknowledgments

CDA thanks American Friends Service Committee for its in-country support and facilitation of some interviews in Nairobi, as well as Rev. Anthony Sasaka from Chemchemi ya Ukweli for his support and accompaniment of the case study process.

Thanks to all interviewees for generously giving us time to share their views and experience. All of the information provided is used in the report without attributing specific statements to particular individuals.

A particular thanks to Peter Woodrow, Hezron Masitsa, Florence Mpaayei, Mike Eldon, Sweta Velpillay, Isabella Jean, and Polly Byers for critically reviewing a draft of this case study.

Thanks also to Jacob Shikuku for making the long car rides in between meetings in Nairobi traffic less painful and for an insightful additional learning opportunity about Kenyan society and politics.

A final thanks to Humanity United for its commitment to promoting innovative approaches in peacebuilding and making the [collective impact in peacebuilding project](#), and this case study, possible. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Humanity United.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
A. Case Study Methodology	6
B. Country Context Kenya	9
C. The Peacebuilding Sector and Peacebuilding Actors in Kenya	12
D. Case Study Findings	18
1. Collective Understanding and Joint Vision	19
1.1 Shared Vision, Joint Strategy, and Joint Analysis	19
1.2 Terminology Matters: Shared Understanding of “Peacebuilding”	19
2 Collective Intention & Action	20
2.1 Joint Programming	20
2.2 Joint Strategic Positioning and Advocacy	21
3. Collective Learning & Adaptive Management	22
4. Shared Values, Communication & Information Sharing	23
5. Backbone Support Structures and Leadership	24
6. Sustained Funding and Donor Coordination	26
E. Conclusions	29
Annexes	
Annex 1: Literature and Resources Reviewed	32
Annex 2: Objectives of the Kenyan National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (Summary)	34

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kenya has a vibrant peacebuilding sector and strong civil society and other organizations that are committed to conflict prevention and conflict transformation. At the time of writing this case study, the picture of the state of peacebuilding efforts, actors, and coordination amongst them in Kenya is colorful. There are and have been various multi-stakeholder peacebuilding efforts coordinated by different groups (government, civil society, private sector, interreligious, and foreign diplomatic actors) with varying levels of membership, leadership, relevance, and impact. But there is not a single network or backbone structure that is currently regarded or accepted by many as a convener and facilitator of Kenyan civil society organizations for peacebuilding efforts at large. There are varying degrees of trust, suspicion, and often competition for resources and influence amongst the existing networks and groups.

While Kenya is one of the few countries with a National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, its implementation has been slow. The 2010 constitutional referendum and 2013 and 2017 elections have exhausted the peacebuilding community and other stakeholders involved in peacebuilding, and focused their attention on these specific events rather than long-term goals to address deep-rooted grievances that remain sources of tension and conflict in the country.

There have been very successful examples of collaboration, joint analysis, and joint engagement amongst civil society, the government, and the private sector during times of elections in 2013 and 2017, and during the constitutional referendum in 2010 (as well as earlier during 2004 and 2008). However, those efforts have largely not been sustained during “regular times.” The “peacebuilding” terminology seems to divide the civil society more than it unifies, especially in relation to the 2017 elections and tensions between “justice” and “peace” and related political connotations and affiliations. Joint programming between various peacebuilding actors happens, more at subnational and county levels than at national level, but is not matched by strategic-level coordination and a joint vision at national level — despite efforts to achieve such collaboration and synergy. While some efforts are under way at the moment (that will be described in the case study), the peacebuilding sector is insufficiently leveraging its collective power for joint advocacy and engagement of the government and donors. This would seem particularly important during times in which space for civil society engagement in Kenya is politically more limited. There is currently no broad platform for sharing learning or for using shared learning for innovation and adaptive management. There are many shared values amongst peacebuilding civil society actors, but those are not leveraged for joint action and ongoing information sharing.

Donor attention has ebbed and flowed during the period of review of this case study (2007–8 through March 2018). Donor engagement to push for peacebuilding and bring together peacebuilding actors has peaked before and during major elections (such as the most recent effort by the embassies of the U.S., the U.K., and Germany), but has not enabled long-term engagement of civil society organizations in peacebuilding. During this time, peacebuilding organizations have struggled with individual survival. This struggle has taken precedence over leveraging

their collective power to jointly advocate for their interests and needs.

Many of the findings from the case studies fall neatly into the five core categories of the collective impacts of a peacebuilding framework:

- Collective and emergent understanding
- Collective intention and action
- Collective learning and adaptive management
- Continuous communication and accountability
- Sufficient support structures

The framework served as a guiding framework for this case study inquiry — but did not limit the field research. Other findings from the Kenya case study are covered in the “fundamental principles underlying collective impact in peacebuilding” or are mentioned in the preliminary considerations. Other issues that emerged as critical in the Kenya case are not highlighted prominently in the current framework. For example: Shared goals around advocacy and advocating for shared peacebuilding goals seemed critical — and are not represented directly in the current framework. The issue of shared values and mutual trust in relation to peacebuilding principles was highlighted very strongly as the critical “software” in support of a shared vision, which is not reflected in the current framework. Key impediments to greater collective impact amongst Kenyan civil society networks highlighted by the key informants were sustained funding, sustainable and coordinated donor engagement, and leadership for the various processes at different levels. While “adequate financial resources” and “leadership” are highlighted in the “permissive environment for collective impact” section of the framework, the framework does not speak about the implications of donor coordination — or lack thereof — as critical for successful coordination at the peacebuilding network level, especially as donors have played an important role in Kenya in relation to some of the networks and are and have engaged actively in some of them directly — beyond the provision of funding.

Overall, the findings from the Kenya case show that the software that makes network collaboration succeed or fail, such as shared values and trust, seems critical in the Kenyan case but is not mentioned in the current framework. Also, some of the key impediments to collective action in Kenya — sustained funding, leadership, and donor coordination — would seem more like critical key conditions for collective action in Kenya, whereas the framework treats them like principles, or factors of a permissive environment alone. This speaks to the point that a framework can only be a broad guideline to guide such type of field inquiry, and that the relationships and priorities between different factors, conditions, and criteria need to be understood in the local context. The criteria outlined in the framework play out differently from context to context.

A. CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The overall methodology of this case study is in line with the other case studies produced in 2018 as part of CDA's collective impacts in peacebuilding work, funded by Humanity United. The [framework for collective impacts in peacebuilding](#) developed as part of this project was used as the foundation for the key lines of inquiry, which were adapted to the Kenyan context.

However, this case study is different as it does not examine one single peacebuilding network in more detail, like the other cases do. It examined the conditions for effective peacebuilding coalition and network building in Kenya over a period of 10 years in a comparative manner — looking across approximately 15 networks.

The following lines of inquiry were examined as part of this case study:

- a) Extent to which there is joint and emerging understanding of the conflict and of “peace” amongst and within the peacebuilding networks (joint understanding of conflict analysis, degree of progress towards societal peace, who is doing what);
- b) Details of collective intention and action (common peacebuilding agenda, level/scope of action, joint strategy, mutually reinforcing activities, division of labor, common measures/M&E);
- c) Space for and details of collective learning and adaptive management within the network (seek regular feedback, adjust actions accordingly, emphasize mutual learning);
- d) Extent of continuous communication and accountability (continuous data sharing, exchange of experiences, reflection);
- e) Details of the architecture of support structures and its merits (“backbone” support);
- f) Factors that appear to support successful consortia/platforms/multi-stakeholder fora in peacebuilding;
- g) Issues and barriers encountered and how groups tried to overcome them;
- a) How peacebuilding networks adapt to changing political situations and keep long-term strategy in mind while daily dynamics change quickly, e.g., in light of dynamics around electoral processes;
- a) Where groups included both “insiders” and “outsiders,” how those relationships were managed and the useful division of efforts between them; and
- a) The role of donors in incentivizing or disincentivizing collective impacts.

These lines of inquiry were used in an open-ended and flexible way, not limiting the conversations to the above areas. Language and concepts outlined in the collective impact framework are used where their matched findings from the case study, language, and concepts are used

by the key informants. The report is not organized to directly follow the logic and criteria laid out in the framework.

The case study is based on a secondary literature review and findings from 29 key informant interviews conducted by the CDA case study author in Nairobi March 5–13, 2018. Key informant interviewees included representatives of national and local NGOs, international NGOs, the Kenyan government, academia, interreligious organizations, the private sector, donor and multilateral agencies, and independent consultants and experts.

As highlighted above, given the large number of formal and informal peacebuilding actors and networks in Kenya, the case study did not review one particular network in greater depth. Instead, it explored the criteria and conditions under which the various efforts and initiatives operated, and what made them successful or caused challenges and roadblocks, across various efforts. The case study reviewed, from a fairly macro-level, multi-actor peacebuilding initiatives and efforts that emerged after the 2007–8 electoral violence until March 2018. Some of these specifically focused on electoral violence prevention, and/or were created directly before/after national elections 2007–8, 2013, and 2017. Some maintained momentum after and before elections, others did not, and some have a more ongoing focus on peacebuilding independent of electoral dynamics.

Key informants interviewed play or played certain roles (to varying degrees) in relation to the following formal or informal networks and coalitions, or were knowledgeable enough to speak about them given past relationships or involvement in other ways: Peace and Development Network Kenya (PeaceNet; now Peace and Development Network Trust); Kenya Partnership for Peace; Concerned Citizens for Peace; National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), Kenyan Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), and related initiatives such as Mkenya Daima; National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC) and related subcommittees, such as the multi-stakeholder conflict analysis group; Uwiano Platform for Peace; Kenya Peace Conferences 2014–16; civil society coordination group (started in 2017); the Dialogue Reference Group; the Multi-Sectoral Forum; the Community of Just Peace Kenya; various coordination efforts related to 2013 and 2017 elections, including relationships between donor coordination and civil society coordination; and current emerging efforts toward a new national conversation or national dialogue.

This is not a complete list of all informal or formal peacebuilding networks in Kenya that exist or have existed over the past 10 years. They are the most prominent ones that emerged as part of the key informant interviews and through the literature research. They have varying and often changing degrees of membership, chairman roles, or secretariat or convening functions. Some deal with “peacebuilding” directly from a broad perspective; others deal with more specific issues, for example in relation to electoral violence prevention, conflict analysis, and national dialogue. Some of these networks are explained in more detail in the case study’s main findings, where doing so supports the purpose of understanding the conditions under which these networks have been effective and why.

Limitations of the case study

Within available time and resources, key informant interviews were limited to Nairobi. This was also due to the fact that there was not one particular network that was reviewed, but a more macro-level perspective was applied to understand criteria of success for collective action amongst various efforts over the past 10 years. Many of the individuals and organizations interviewed have experience working at the subnational and community levels, and the case

study will include some anecdotal insights from those conversations and background reading. However, the case study does not reflect how the collective efforts impacted people and communities at the community level directly or indirectly.

B. COUNTRY CONTEXT KENYA

Kenya was led by founding president Jomo Kenyatta from independence in 1963 until his death in 1978, when Vice President Daniel Moi took power in a constitutional succession. The country was a de facto one-party state from 1969 until 1982, after which the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) changed the constitution to make itself the sole legal party in Kenya. President Moi handed over power in 2002 following elections won by Mwai Kibaki, candidate of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), who defeated KANU candidate Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of founding president Jomo Kenyatta and Moi's preferred successor. Kibaki's reelection in December 2007 brought charges of vote rigging from Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) candidate Raila Odinga and unleashed two months of violence in which approximately 1,100 people died.¹

Explanations for the scale of violence in 2007 vary and need to be understood within the wider historical context of sociopolitical and economic grievances related to land rights, the distribution of economic benefits, and ethnic conflict in Kenya — many of which find their roots in colonial policies.² Principally, it is argued that the role of ethnicity and patronage in Kenyan politics has incentivized incumbent politicians to appeal to ethnic identities among constituents. Much of the 2007 violence is attributed to *“domestic political shifts in alliances that saw political parties, which were nominally ‘national’ in membership, align their support-bases with ethnic divisions in the country, despite their electoral campaigns focusing broadly on poverty, youth empowerment, and economic progress.”*³

An African Union-supported mediation led by former U.N. secretary-general Kofi Annan in early 2008 resulted in a power-sharing agreement bringing Odinga into the government in the restored position of prime minister. The power-sharing accord included a broad reform agenda, the centerpiece of which was constitutional reform. In 2010, Kenyans overwhelmingly adopted a new constitution in a national referendum. The new constitution introduced additional checks and balances to executive power and significant devolution of power and resources to 47 newly created counties. It also eliminated the position of prime minister following the first presidential election under the new constitution, which occurred in 2013.

There was an International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation to prosecute the responsible parties for the 2007–8 post-electoral violence, which remained inconclusive and was dominated by political interference.⁴

The 2013 elections were a close contest between Uhuru Kenyatta of the National Alliance (TNA) and Raila Odinga of ODM. The incumbent President Kibaki had served two terms and

1 Kenya: *CIA World Factbook*, updated on June 20, 2018. International Crisis Group: *Kenya's 2013 elections* (Jan. 17, 2013).

2 For a full-fledged conflict analysis of Kenya, including a detailed analysis of socioeconomic and political factors, see Brigitte Rohwerder, *“Conflict Analysis of Kenya.”* 2015. GSDRC. Also the Jamii Thabiti: Reflection paper on strengthening peacebuilding sector in Kenya, by Michael Muragu and Florence Mpayeei. 2017, provides a useful summary of the main conflict drivers in Kenya (p. 18 and following).

3 Austin, Jonathan Luke, and Achim Wennmann. *“The Private Sector and Violence Prevention in Kenya, 2007-13.”* 2017, p. 3

4 Benjamin Duerr. *“Not Guilty, Not Acquitted: Kenyan Ruling a Major Setback for ICC.”* International Peace Institute Global Observatory. April 11, 2016.

was not eligible for reelection. Kenyatta won the election with 50.5% of the vote, and Odinga unsuccessfully contested the election results.⁵

Kenyatta was declared winner of the presidential election in August 2017 against long-time political rival Odinga, but the Supreme Court declared the election void because of irregularities and illegalities. He was also declared winner of the October 2017 rerun, which was boycotted by the opposition, and began the second term of his presidency in November 2017.

The second election in October 2017 further contributed to Kenya's deep political divisions. *“Kenyatta and Odinga both took escalatory steps that deepened social divisions and triggered violence, leaving dozens dead, mainly at the hands of security forces. Odinga defied pressure from allies and foreign diplomats, and staged a mock inauguration on 30 January at which he was declared ‘people’s president.’ This show not only compounded the political crisis but also sowed discord within Odinga’s own NASA (National Super Alliance). Kenyatta initially drew praise for pulling the security forces away from the venue of the Odinga ceremony to avoid a confrontation with opposition supporters. But he subsequently ordered several private TV stations off the air for days (and ignored a court order declaring this action illegal). His government led a crackdown on civil society and dismissed calls from the opposition, religious leaders and diplomats for a national dialogue.”*⁶

On March 9, 2018 (during the field research for this case study) there was a surprise meeting between President Kenyatta and opposition leader Odinga. In their joint statement issued after the talks, they promised to address the “deterioration of relationships between communities” and “aggressive antagonism and competition” that has blighted repeated electoral cycles in Kenya.⁷ The announcement of the unity deal has sparked mixed reactions in Kenya. Many opposition supporters felt that their sacrifice has been in vain, after brutal crackdowns on the opposition left dozens dead and injured. Others were relieved that the country might finally have the political foundation to work towards peace.⁸

*“The national conflict culture is characterized among others by the ethnic nature of Kenya politics which fuels perception of marginalization of certain communities. This leads to suspicion and the belief that community interests can only be safeguarded if one of their own ascends to high political office, thus creating space for intense political competition, negative ethnicity and the struggle for self-determination, as is currently witnessed in the country. In addition, there is a feeling among certain ethnic groups of historical marginalization arising from perceived inequities concerning the allocation of land and other national resources as well as access to public goods and services as advanced by politicians. This has created an underlying climate of tension and hate and the potential for violence waiting to be ignited and to explode. The regional conflicts themselves are evolving and diverse in nature, and though similar in some ways and reflect national conflict dynamic to some extent, still they are mostly a manifestation of local dynamics. And although the conflicts appear to be intertwined, still, the local conflict actors have a big role to play in finding their durable resolution.”*⁹

Additionally, Kenya has been struggling with extremist attacks. The Islamist militant Al-Shabab movement, active in Somalia, has been launching a growing number of attacks in Kenya, including on the 2013 Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi and the 2015 attack on Garissa

⁵ Kenya CIA World Factbook, updated on June 20, 2018. International Crisis Group: “Kenya’s 2013 elections” (Jan. 17, 2013).

⁶ International Crisis Group, Briefing No. 136/Africa: “After Kenya’s Leaders Reconcile, a Tough Path Ahead.”

⁷ International Crisis Group, Briefing No. 136/Africa: “After Kenya’s Leaders Reconcile, a Tough Path Ahead.”

⁸ Deutsche Welle: “Political confusion reigns in Kenya after Odinga, Kenyatta deal,” March 13, 2018.

⁹ Thabiti, *Reflection paper*, p. 5.

University College in northeastern Kenya. Widespread narratives in Kenya seem to suggest that violent extremism has international origins and is inherently a “non-Kenyan” problem. Yet one of Al-Shabaab’s leaders is from Kenya, and Kenyan nationals have been recruited into the organization. Like in most other contexts, the drivers of violent extremism in Kenya are localized and differ from community to community.¹⁰ There has been an increasing number of CVE (countering violent extremism) and counterterrorism interventions in the country, many sponsored by foreign donors and governments. Some of these programs have had significant unintended negative, and sometimes fatal, impacts.¹¹ Many in the peacebuilding community have been concerned about the “securitization” of this debate, and approaches that do not analyze and understand the structural drivers of violent extremism before deciding on an intervention, leading to ineffective and counterproductive approaches. At the same time, the peacebuilding community in Kenya has not stepped up collectively to agree on joint criteria for engagement with CVE programming or a joint advocacy strategy on better and more effective ways of engaging with CVE from a peacebuilding and conflict-sensitivity perspective vis-à-vis the government and donors. There are also large amounts of CVE funds available, which can be a dangerous temptation for many peacebuilding organizations to jump on the bandwagon if no clear criteria are in place.

10 Rift Valley Institute: “Violent Extremism in Kenya.” Risk and Resilience. February 2017, by Shilpa Guha.

11 See: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/mukhtaryare/millions-of-dollars-wasted#.qq1WKQXlo>

C. THE PEACEBUILDING SECTOR AND PEACEBUILDING ACTORS IN KENYA

“Many peace building actors have noted with concern the dwindling nature of [the] peace building sector in Kenya in terms of its voice and impact to influence the course of events toward the realization of sustainable peace and social stability in the country, which is so critical for accelerated social, political and economic development in Kenya.”¹²

Peacebuilding policy context in Kenya

Kenya is one of the few countries that has a National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, which was established in 2012.¹⁴ Annex 2 provides a summary of the key objectives of the National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management.

While this institutional framework is appreciated by many and was intended to guide the work of peacebuilding actors, the challenges lie in implementation and practical rollout of the national policy. *“Though adopted by the government, the Policy has not systematically been rolled out to date, although it has been used as basis for setting up peace committees in the Counties.”¹⁵*

Furthermore, from a peacebuilding policy perspective, the process and final report of the Kenyan Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) published and handed over to the government in 2013¹⁶ is important to mention. This report documents extensive human rights violations and other injustices in Kenya during the British colonial period (1895–1963) and under various independent Kenyan governments since then, including during the 2007–8 post-election violence. The process and outcome of the TJRC report were criticized by national and international NGOs. This was due to political interference, reluctance by the government to share the report widely, perceived substantive limitations on what was documented and highlighted due to what was included or left out. For example, in a critical review of the TJRC report published by the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) in 2014, ICTJ remarks that *“the TJRC came up short on its conclusions and recommendations on the issue of ethnicity and inter-ethnic conflict. Yet, ethnic tensions were identified as a cause of some of the worst*

“The need for a national framework to guide efforts to prevent conflict and build peace in Kenya cannot be overstated.”¹³

12 Thabiti, *Reflection* paper, p. 4.

13 See Maria Osula. “Finally! A Peace Policy for Kenya,” Saferworld, November 2015.

14 Office of the President, Ministry of State for Provincial administration and internal security. “National Policy on peacebuilding and conflict management”, June 2012, available online.

15 Thabiti, *Reflection* paper, p. 9.

16 Kenya Transitional Justice Network: “Summary of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission Report”. 2013.

violence experienced in the country, including during the bloodshed that followed the 2007 elections.”¹⁷

The peacebuilding sector and peacebuilding actors in Kenya

More deliberate peacebuilding work led by civil society actors in Kenya emerged in the early 1990s following clashes around land after the 1992 elections. This included efforts such as the Wajir Peace and Development Network led by the late Dekha Ibrahim and the relief and development project in Rift Valley Province led by the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), including early engagements of donors and funders on more deliberate peacebuilding work outside of government efforts on peace and security.

“Lack of a coherent, participatory and coordinated approach to peace building is a major drawback to identifying gaps in peace building engagement and leveraging opportunities that exist within the sector.”¹⁸

“The idea to include more stakeholders in the peace efforts was borne out of the realisation that in order to have sustainable peace every member of the community including government had an important strategic role to play. This led to the inclusion of government officials beginning from the levels of the chief to the members of parliament of various constituencies that periodically experienced conflicts. The establishment of the village peace committees that later became the District Peace Committees began during this period.”¹⁹

In subsequent years, more peacebuilding actors, networks, and partnerships emerged, such as the umbrella organization Peace and Development Network Kenya (PeaceNet; now Peace and Development Network Trust), or the Kenya Partnership for Peace (which brought together UNDP, the police, and two representatives of CSOs to support peaceful elections) — alongside several others.

In order to support coordinated efforts amongst all actors involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Kenya, the Kenyan government established the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC) in 2001, with the secretariat placed within MOSPAIS (Ministry of State for Provincial Administration and Internal Security).²⁰ This inter-agency mechanism brings together government ministries, departments and commissions, parliamentary committees, county governments, national and international civil society organizations, interreligious organizations, academia, the private sector (including private sector networks like KEPSA, bilateral donors and multilateral agencies, and regional organizations (such as IGAD and the related CEWARN²¹ mechanism) — to varying degrees of participation and involvement. The various organizations work together on different subcommittees in support of the key mandate areas of NSC: conflict analysis and early warning, capacity building and training, media and communication, and national peacebuilding coordination. NSC, as part of MOSPAIS, works directly with the county governments and county commissions to coordinate security at county level and also maintains a situation room. County commissions bring together multi-stakeholder teams around peacebuilding and specific crisis response interventions (e.g., during elections) from county governments, NSC, and local peace actors.

¹⁷ ICTJ: “TJRC Final report deserves serious analysis and action,” May 2014.

¹⁸ Thabiti, Reflection paper, p. 26

¹⁹ Thabiti, Reflection paper, p. 13

²⁰ See NSC website for more information about setup, membership, and mandate: <https://www.nscpeace.go.ke>

²¹ Regional Conflict Early Warning and Response mechanism: <http://www.igadregion.org/cewarn/>

The 2007–8 crisis mobilized peace actors in the country to respond in various ways and at different levels:

- Supporting the immediate de-escalation of tensions in “hot spot” areas in the country
- Peacebuilding activities at national level in support of and alongside the formal mediation process
- Addressing issues of human rights and justice violations

There was also an informal group of prominent Kenyan peace activists — the Concerned Citizens for Peace²² — that came together in their individual capacities to promote peace in Kenya during the 2007–8 crisis. During the related high-level mediation by Kofi Annan, they advised him behind the scenes.

In response to the 2007–8 violence, the Kenyan government created the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) of Kenya, created by the National Cohesion and Integration Act in 2008. It is an independent government commission mandated by parliament to address and reduce interethnic conflicts, address hate speech, and promote national reconciliation. It focuses on promoting nondiscrimination amongst religions and ethnicities, collaborates with governmental and national civil society partners to implement concrete interventions at county level, and launches investigations in relation to complaints about discriminatory acts it receives.²³

NCIC’s and NSC’s reputation and legitimacy have suffered amongst civil society actors due to the political nature of the appointment of NCIC’s commissioners and because of NSC’s role as a government agency during times when the government was cracking down on NGOs. NSC and NCIC collaborate on the collection and use of information and early-warning action at county level. In the NSC situation room, information about violent incidents at county level is collected, analyzed, and then passed on to NCIC to decide on interventions. While this has been appreciated as an effort to prevent and mitigate tensions early on, civil society has also been cautious about this and how information is being collected, processed, and used. Concerns are related to intelligence gathering and lack of transparency about who uses this information and how, even though at the county level often civil society organizations are being consulted on particular incidents and coordinate with NSC on the right type of process.

International donors and funders allocated large amounts of peacebuilding funding to Kenya in the aftermath of the 2007–8 crisis. They also supported the Uwiano Platform for Peace (“Uwiano” means “connection” or “correlation” in Swahili). An SMS-based information-gathering and action program was designed to ensure that the Kenyan referendum held in August 2010 on a new constitution was violence free. Uwiano was launched by PeaceNet, NCIC, and NSC, supported by UNDP. It also included the deployment of a pool of volunteer monitors to “hot spot” areas across the country and work with established peace committees on preventing intercommunal violence.

Although the 2013 national elections were largely peaceful, thanks to many successful electoral violence prevention efforts, the country was left very divided between the supporters of the government and those of the opposition. Many structural issues and ethnic politics had been

22 The original five members were Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, General Daniel Opande, General Lazaro Sumbeiywo, the late Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, and George Wachira.

23 See Alice Nderitu’s *Bridging Ethnic Divides: A Commissioner’s Experience on Cohesion and Integration* (2018), which also provides an insight into the behind-the-scenes work of NCIC.

left unaddressed after the 2007–8 escalation in violence. After the 2013 election, donor funding dropped significantly, with major repercussions for many peacebuilding organizations. Many key informants interviewed for this case study described this as a situation of “negative peace,” and a critical mistake by international partners not to sustain their engagement to consolidate the fragile peace in the country. In 2017–18 donor support was revived again.

The Kenyan business sector has played an active and influential role in engaging in electoral violence prevention efforts since 2007–8. The most important forum in this regard is KEPSA, an umbrella body that brings together the business community to engage and influence public policy for an enabling business environment.²⁴ KEPSA led peace campaigns — such as the Mkenya Daima initiatives — focused on contributing to a more peaceful and cohesive society. These campaigns included business leaders, civil society, religious leaders, NCIC, Vision 2030, and the media.²⁵ The Mkenya Daima campaign resulted from the decision by the private sector to get involved in peacebuilding after the devastating consequences of the post-election violence in 2007–8.²⁶ While Mkenya Daima was an influential campaign during the 2013 elections, it was not as active and involved in relation to the 2017 election. But KEPSA remains very engaged in co-leading the Multi-Sectoral Forum, but focuses largely on the economic pillar and less on political and governance issues.

“Donors think Kenya is doing fine and does not need their support. This is not true.”

**— Government representative,
Kenya case study**

In the run-up to the contested 2017 elections, new coordination groups and efforts to prevent election-related violence emerged. This included the civil society coordination group (including Saferworld, Mercy Corps, IFES, Pamoja for Transformation, and others), the Dialogue Reference Group of the Multi-Sectoral Forum,²⁷ and the Community of Just Peace Kenya (CJP-K),²⁸ with overlapping memberships and varying degrees of sustainability and leadership. Also, already established platforms such as Uwiano increased their conflict early warning capacities and reach at national and county levels (in some but not all counties). This included a joint situation room and SMS-based early warning service, and specific early warning and response mechanisms for gender-based violence. This engagement has not been sustained post-elections.

There are various entities at the government level in charge of various levels of peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities: the aforementioned National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, a Presidential Adviser on Social Cohesion, Peace and Conflict Resolution in the Executive Office of the President of Kenya, as well as a low-key Directorate of Cohesion and Peacebuilding focused on promoting the national values system. The work of the office of the Presidential Adviser has focused on dialogue efforts on justice, peace, and social cohesion in different parts of Kenya with the aim of supporting trust-building between civil society and the state. These dialogue efforts so far have focused on different themes: gender, youth, violent extremism and radicalization, civic education, and others.

²⁴ See <https://kepsa.or.ke/about-us/>

²⁵ For a more detailed assessment of the role of the private sector in peacebuilding in Kenya, see for example Austin, Jonathan Luke, and Achim Wennmann. “The Private Sector and Violence Prevention in Kenya, 2007–2013.” 2017 or Victor Owuor and Scott Wisor: The role of Kenya’s private sector in peacebuilding: the case of the 2013 election cycle. One Earth Future Foundation, 2014.]

²⁶ Mike Eldon: “The private sector gets back to building peace.” Nov. 19, 2017.

²⁷ The Multi Sectoral Forum (MSF) is an assembly of the leadership of different sectors of Kenya, convened by religious leaders in the context of the 2017 election to deliberate on matters concerning governance, elections management, and the country’s preparedness to ensure peaceful elections. See <http://www.ncck.org/newsite2/index.php/information/news/647-a-communicue-issued-by-the-multi-sectoral-forum-ii-ahead-of-the-2017-general-election>.

²⁸ See the joint statement by the Just Peace Community ahead of the 2017 elections: <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/741-community-of-justpeace-practitioners-kenya>

As of early 2018, there was a proposal being discussed to integrate these various state agencies and entities charged with peacebuilding under a new Kenyan State Department to coordinate the various efforts by the Kenyan government on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. More details on what that would entail were not available at the time of writing.

Currently, the picture of the state of peacebuilding efforts, actors, and coordination amongst them in Kenya is mixed. There are various multi-stakeholder peacebuilding efforts coordinated by different groups with varying levels of membership, leadership, effectiveness, and impact. There are also varying degrees of trust, suspicion, and often competition for resources amongst the various networks and groups. For example, some NGOs are perceived as “quasi NGOs” and too closely aligned with the interests of the government, while the leaders of others are overtly opposition supporters.

While, for example, KEPSA considers its close relationship with the Kenyan government as a key factor for success also in relation to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, it is criticized by civil society as too close to the government, and not sharing any criticisms of government policy in public. While in general there seems to be a consensus that sustainable peacebuilding in Kenya can only happen with *all* actors (government, civil society, religious, private sector, international organizations, and donors) working together, doing it in practice has been challenging. Many civil society organizations and representatives criticize KEPSA as “the consumers of peace,” who only have an interest in claiming visibility on peacebuilding during election times in order to keep the situation calm for business interests (“business continuity”). On the other hand, KEPSA seems to struggle to engage more with peacebuilding civil society actors given the amount of diverging voices from the peacebuilding field, a perceived closeness of some civil society actors with the opposition, a perceived lack of realism, and the absence of concrete proposals to work together for peace. There is also a perception that the main motivation of civil society organizations to engage with KEPSA is motivated by fundraising goals. Overall, a colorful but also messy picture.

For a more detailed analysis of the state of the peacebuilding sector in Kenya and the various stakeholders involved, see the reflection paper on “strengthening the peacebuilding sector in Kenya” by Jamii Thabiti²⁹. This paper highlights the key factors responsible for a relatively weak peacebuilding sector today. An abbreviated summary of key points includes the following:

- The national “conflict culture” that supports divisiveness and adversarial relations along political, ethnic, and class lines, including a nonstop political campaign mode;
- No shared goal and vision in relation to peacebuilding;
- The lack of a coherent, participatory, and coordinated approach to peacebuilding across governmental and nongovernmental actors;
- Peacebuilding efforts that are mostly centrally driven by the national government or NGOs or the private sector in Nairobi, without adequate development of resources and power to the regions and communities, which leads to limited ownership at subnational and community levels;

“NGOs are in constant campaign mode.”

**– Private sector representative,
Kenya case study**

²⁹ Thabiti, *Reflection paper* p. 25 and following

- A reactive rather than strategic, long-term, and preventive approach to peacebuilding, also fueled by highly inconsistent funding levels — peacebuilding happens during “emergencies” only (e.g., during acute fear of electoral violence);
- Responses and approaches by the peacebuilding community that are sometimes out of date, as conflict dynamics have changed significantly over time and the peacebuilding community has not managed to conduct joint updated analyses beyond phases of specific events or crises (e.g., around electoral processes);
- Limited concerted effort to strengthen a “culture of peace” and ensure a conflict-sensitive approach across all segments of Kenyan society to make society more resilient to polarizing political environments;
- Lack of legislation to institutionalize and implement the National Peacebuilding Policy, which limits networking, coordination, and collaboration in the sector, including limited space for civil society and limited identity of peacebuilding actors;
- The management of natural resources and of the implication of climate phenomena is not done in a way that would prevent or mitigate tensions, e.g., around pasture and water management;
- Challenges with the implementation of decentralization policies and devolution of power lead to power struggles at the subnational and community levels where civil society organizations continue to feel undermined by county governments;
- Limited involvement of women in peacebuilding activities, including inadequate representation of women in peace committees.³⁰

At the same time, and compared with other countries, Kenya does have a wealth of experience with collaboration within the peacebuilding sector and working together and networking across governmental, civil society, and private sector actors — especially during “peak times” such as the 2013 and 2017 elections. Many of these efforts have achieved good results, but most have not been sustainable over a longer period of time. This has also led to a sense of great fatigue amongst many peacebuilders, especially from within civil society.

The factors that have enabled or hindered effective collaboration and collective action in peacebuilding are analyzed in more detail in the following section. Some of them are causes, other implications of the challenges highlighted above.

³⁰ The Jamii Thabiti paper also provides a wealth of detailed recommendations on various levels on how to revitalize the peacebuilding sector in Kenya, which are not reflected here.

D. CASE STUDY FINDINGS

Overview

Generally speaking, the level of engagement and effectiveness of Kenyan peacebuilding networks has been fluctuating during the period of review (2007–8 until today). Collaboration has clearly been much more active, focused, and coherent during times of increased collective focus either on pre-election violence prevention, post-election violence mitigation, or other political milestones (such as the 2010 constitutional referendum). Collective efforts have also been highly dependent on the level of funding from donors and international partners. Coalitions and networks have flourished during times of high donor attention and related funding, and were much weaker during times when donor attention shifted away from Kenya. There is currently also a high level of competition for scarce resources amongst peacebuilding organizations.

While a high level of diversity of various efforts and initiatives seems to have been healthy for a vibrant peacebuilding community during “good times,” lack of coordination and coherence becomes increasingly challenging in times when the overall strategic vision for peacebuilding in Kenya and related national as well as international commitment, including funding, seems uncertain.

One of the most striking aspects of conducting the key informant interviews was not hearing a lot of “endorsing each other” and significant caveats being raised within the peacebuilding actors about themselves and peer organizations. “This process or institution has been useful in this and this aspect, but...” was the predominant theme during the interviews. Many people seemed tired and disillusioned with peacebuilding progress and processes in the country, while some promising new efforts are also emerging that are described below.

As noted in the introduction, this case study does not review the particulars of individual networks (neither at national nor at subnational levels), and key informant interviews were focused on Nairobi-based organizations and experts. It is therefore more focused on understanding the conditions under which peacebuilding actors and networks collaborate at national level at large, while providing a few higher-level insights into subnational collaboration as conveyed through Nairobi-based interviews. (Several interviewees also provided at least some perspectives on subnational- and community-level coordination.)

The main findings of the case study are represented below, organized along the lines of the categories of the collective impacts in peacebuilding framework. However, the text does not follow the flow of the categories in the framework one to one, as some elements were highlighted differently from how they are described in the framework. Additional categories and subcategories that emerged from the Kenya case outside the framework are also highlighted.

1. Collective Understanding and Joint Vision

1.1 Shared vision, joint strategy, and joint analysis

Having a shared vision and developing a joint vision and strategy for engagement was noted by many key informants as one of the most critical elements needed to enable collective action in peacebuilding. A key foundation for developing a shared vision is shared analysis and a shared understanding of the main drivers of conflict. In this regard, the multi-stakeholder Conflict Analysis Group (CAG), one of the subcommittees of the NSC in Kenya, was highlighted as a very positive example. Inspired by the dire experience with post-electoral violence in 2007–8, CAG provided a very useful forum in the run-up to the 2013 election to analyze the situation jointly and gather early warning information on emerging electoral-related conflict. It was noted by key informants that joint analysis provides credibility and legitimacy to the work of peacebuilding actors, as government actors and donors are more inclined to listen to a network and group of various stakeholders than to individuals and individual organizations. Joint analysis is also helpful for sharing and bundling resources (instead of each organization doing its own analysis), and is especially attractive during times of limited funding. Another positive example was the joint vulnerability assessment conducted and funded by multiple donors in the run-up to the preparations of the 2017 elections. Currently, there is no active forum that would facilitate ongoing joint conflict analysis at national level within and amongst the peacebuilding community.

1.2 Terminology matters: shared understanding of “peacebuilding”

There was broad consensus amongst the key informants that one of the main reasons for the fragmentation within the Kenyan peacebuilding community is limited shared understanding of “peacebuilding” and the fact that peacebuilding remains an amorphous concept to many. Furthermore, the different terminology used in relation to the latest election in 2017 by different groups depending on their particular experience divided many organizations with similar goals rather than bringing them together. The biggest divide in terms of terminology seemed to emerge amongst the peacebuilding community and organizations who focus on justice, truth, and human rights (some interviewees called it the “Peace-Justice Divide”), as well as the vibrant private sector community in Kenya in support of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and reconciliation. For some, promoting “peace” was equated with promoting the “status quo,” wanting to put aside unaddressed grievances and injustices from the past, and being pro-government; “dialogue” was interpreted as “giving up.” Promoting “justice,” on the other hand, was related to others as being in favor of the opposition — also related to the earlier flawed process of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. There is often a certain level of tension between the justice and human rights and peacebuilding communities in other countries as well, such as regarding the necessary level of justice before reconciliation can happen (examples include South Africa and Colombia). This divide seems particularly politicized and fierce in Kenya and has stood in the way of a more coherent approach to promoting human rights, justice, and peace in a consolidated effort.

As noted above, Kenya is one of the rare countries where there are national and local government structures for peacebuilding, strong civil society actors in peacebuilding, and a flourishing business network in support of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

While there were specific issues around which the peacebuilding community, human rights and justice activities, and the private sector came together jointly also in terms of advocacy toward the Kenyan government, such as police brutality, the various groups did not leverage their collective power on a sufficiently larger scale, as these conceptual but also substantive differences got in the way of focusing on the joint interests. There was also a sense amongst several key interviewees that donors do not leverage the role of religious and interreligious actors in peacebuilding sufficiently. A major challenge in this regard in recent years has been that the church groups are deeply divided amongst themselves on ethnic and political lines (some supporting the opposition, others the government), which has made it challenging for other actors to engage them.

2. Collective Intention & Action

2.1 Joint programming

Joint activities and joint programming at operational levels (at both national and subnational levels) was noted as important but not as critical for collective action and impact as a joint vision and strategy. At the same time, key informants recognized that while a joint strategy and vision is ideal, people and organizations also need concrete topics to collaborate on that are relevant to many.

“Systems thinking is really important for collective action.”

— Civil society representative,
Kenya case study

Implementing joint activities seems to happen more naturally and more frequently at subnational and community levels, including district level and sometimes cross-border peace structures and committees.³¹ Some key informant interviewees highlighted that project-based collaboration works better at subnational and community levels around specific activities, and that it is harder to achieve at more strategic levels from a national perspective. At the same time, the capacities and skills of Nairobi-based or anchored organizations are usually much stronger than those of purely locally operating peacebuilding civil society organizations at county and community levels.

During the height of pre-election conflict-prevention planning, as well as during the immediate post-electoral process in both 2013 and 2017, many key interviewees appreciated the speed and flexibility that was provided to multi-actor programs in relation to electoral violence prevention, to support rapid-response mechanisms with limited administrative hurdles and convene the key players around it. For example, IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems) funded several initiatives. IFES also coordinated an electoral violence prevention working group active in different regions of Kenya. What also helped in this regard was a donor-mandated and -incentivized coordination amongst funded implementing partners to split up specific areas of operation. For example, IFES worked in Eastern Kenya and Eastern Nairobi, and other NGOs worked in the Western part of the country (e.g., Mercy Corps and Life and Peace Institute) that were also asked to coordinate proactively. Overall, a very clear and defined common purpose to immediate de-escalation of tension and mitigation of violence during elections had strong convening power amongst different organizations in Kenya.

³¹ For an analysis of collaboration of peace actors at the Kenya-Somalia border, including the role of peace networks and district-level peace committees, including cross-border committees, see Centre for Peace and Applied Research — “PACT Peace Program II: Reflecting on Peace Practice at the Kenya-Somalia Border”. A consolidated report of action research, 2011 (with support from USAID/CMM).

More flexible operating procedures were appreciated during election-related processes. However, in general, international NGOs are perceived as often not being flexible enough to react quickly and to adapt their own financial, administrative, and operational requirements and procedures to the realities and capabilities of local NGOs. At the same time, most donors favor international NGOs for managing donor funds, as they have the administrative, financial, and project management systems in place to comply with donor requirements — at the expense of funding going directly to local NGOs.

“When the money comes in, the small organizations are being pushed out.”

— Civil society representative, Kenya case study

There is limited systematic joint programming amongst peacebuilding actors beyond specific events, such as elections. In other sectors, this seems to be more advanced on an ongoing basis.³²

Also, several key informants expressed concern about the limited transparency and accountability of international NGOs and ensuring that all important voices are heard — not just “the usual workshop crowd” and the “donor darlings” (individuals and organizations who are the “go-to” invitees by donors and other international players).

2.2. Joint strategic positioning and advocacy

“We have not seen peace partners speak out.”

— Donor representative, Kenya case study (related to the 2017 election process)

A collective positioning of the actors engaged in peacebuilding as well as joint advocacy for common goals was highlighted as critical in Kenya, but also as something that is only happening in a very limited way right now. Joint engagement at community and programmatic and operational levels was noted as useful but does not replace the need for strategic level cooperation on

joint goals and joint advocacy — toward the government, donors, and other actors involved in peacebuilding in Kenya.

As noted above, “peacebuilding”-related terminology seems to divide organizations as much as bring them together around a common agenda.

One area that seems to be particularly divisive within the peacebuilding community is how to position oneself vis-à-vis the government. Many key informants commented on the limited space for peacebuilding NGOs in which to operate in Kenya and on a political climate that is not conducive to a vibrant civil society in general — and for peacebuilding or human rights NGOs in particular (some mentioned that the “crackdown” on human rights NGOs before and during the 2017 elections was much fiercer on human rights NGOs than on peacebuilding NGOs). Some organizations as well as KEPSA and some interreligious actors collaborate closely with the government based on an understanding that without close government relations and engagement there won’t be joint progress on peacebuilding. Other organizations criticize the lack of independence and co-option with government policies when collaboration is too close. Again, it was noted by some that a more joined-up approach and discussion on how to position key peacebuilding actors, networks, and processes vis-à-vis the government would support closer alignment within the peacebuilding community.

³² As examples of intra-sectoral cooperation in other sectors, some key informants mentioned the [Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth](#) (PREG), a partnership among the Kenyan government and several NGOs supported by USAID to coordinate resilience promotion and economic-growth opportunities, as well as the Paralegal Support Network (PASUNE) — a network of leading human rights organizations involved in paralegal training and working toward standardizing the content and methods of training paralegals in Kenya.

Currently, initial efforts to promote a renewed national dialogue or “national conversation” in Kenya post the 2017 elections is under way at multiple levels, including subnational and county levels, so as not to completely get caught up in national political dynamics. This is also based on the perception by some that district peace committees and the NSC became co-opted by the government, and that civil society organizations need to engage with them constructively but also cautiously. In this regard, there is a newly established informal “dialogue contact group” that Hekima Institute for Peace Studies and International Relations (HIPSIR) and other organizations including Kenyans in the diaspora have initiated. However, at the time of writing it was not out in the public domain how this process would unfold, who would support it (or possibly undermine it), and who might be the accepted conveners of such a process.

Another challenge is the inability of the peacebuilding community to leverage the different roles that international NGOs — versus national NGOs — can play. This was noted in particular also in relation to influencing donor policies and funding decisions, new emerging topics, and policy agendas such as the prevention and countering of the violent extremism (PVE/CVE) agenda. Some interviewees noted that the issue of PVE/CVE was not picked up by the NSC as a peacebuilding issue but left to the security actors to deal with. This in turn has led to many of the securitized approaches that are not always useful and sometimes counterproductive and harmful to the communities in Kenya — as well as to the peacebuilding sector. Joint advocacy and engagement of peacebuilding civil society actors in this regard would have been and would still be helpful in shaping a different approach and narrative. This would require organizations to commit to shared principles, and for an actor to be positioned to facilitate such a process of developing shared principles. This was noted as challenging because the peacebuilding field in Kenya is very much driven by strong individuals who are associated with certain agendas — independent of their organizational affiliation of the day. Much of the peacebuilding (and CVE) funding in Kenya is implemented by consulting firms and private contractors, who cannot and do not step up to influence government and donor policies and funding decisions in the same way that civil society can. There is great untapped potential in this regard, as civil society organizations are not so well organized at this point to leverage their collective advocacy and convening power.

***“We need to ‘meet in the middle’
— between national and county
level — in order for a national
dialogue to be successful.”***

***— Representative from academia,
Kenya case study***

3. Collective Learning and Adaptive Management

Sharing learning and influencing policy from peacebuilding practice was considered critical by most key informants in order to maintain a vibrant peacebuilding sector, to not repeat the same mistakes, and for ongoing learning and improvement of practice. However, there is currently no entity in Kenya that provides that learning function for the peacebuilding sector at large. This might be partly due to the fact that there is no organization considered independent enough to do this (see section 5 on backbone support). But maybe equally so because a process of shared learning usually follows a process of joint planning and active coordination, which is currently a huge gap in the peacebuilding field, and is not funded by anyone in particular.

***“We need to go beyond log
frames towards real change
and learning.”***

***— Civil society representative,
Kenya case study***

It was also noted that systematic independent research that benefits the wider peacebuilding community is critical to advancing peacebuilding thinking and innovation in Kenya — another big gap right now. High staff turnover in NGOs, also due to unstable funding scenarios, has led to a reality in which organizations chase after the next project of the day.

The ability to share learning and experience is key for peacebuilding networks to flexibly and adaptively respond to changes in context and political circumstances. Currently, the biggest need in the peacebuilding community also seems to be around innovation — finding a new framing for effective and collective engagement in peacebuilding across actors, and redefining the sector in relation to what is needed in Kenya in 2018 — rather than scrambling for individual survival.

4. Shared Values, Communication and Information Sharing

Key informants highlighted the importance of the “software” of collaboration, including transparency and shared accountability; regular communication by everyone across and within organizations; joint values and ethics related to peacebuilding; and mutual trust. It was noted that during times when peacebuilding networks and coalitions worked well, such as during the early stages of PeaceNet (see section 5 on backbone support), these issues were the often intangible “glue” that kept people united behind a shared vision and goal. Shared values were identified as important in relation to various elements, such as a shared understanding of peacebuilding principles and good peacebuilding process (e.g., inclusion and equity) beyond engagement on specific technical areas related to peacebuilding, or a joint code of conduct amongst peacebuilders that helps them find a sense of unity and represent peacebuilding interests and values vis-à-vis other actors and groups.

“Organizations need to subscribe to the value of peacebuilding in order for collaboration to happen.”

— Civil society representative,
Kenya case study

Key challenges in this regard right now seem to be a level of exhaustion amongst the peacebuilding community with the constant crisis and emergency mode in relation to elections, scrambling for funding beyond those election-specific events, and a certain sense of disillusionment with each other about the collective ability to reactivate energy for the peacebuilding field as such. Many raised the question of how the peacebuilding community members can strengthen each other at this juncture.

“There are multiple actors, but many voices are not heard.”

— Civil society representative,
Kenya case study

With so many platforms in Kenya, coordination and coherence within each of those sectors is as important as coordination across those different constituencies. Limited coordination at any of these levels leads to limited effectiveness, suboptimal results in leveraging peacebuilding impact at strategic and operational levels,

and exclusion of the voices that need to be heard and included for effective and locally led peacebuilding.

5. Backbone Support Structures and Leadership

There was an acknowledgment across most key informants that a strong and legitimate support structure is critical for peacebuilding organizations to work collectively. There have been several efforts in the past for some organizations to take on such roles, such as PeaceNet, Safeworld, IFES (in relation to election and electoral violence prevention), Hekima Institute (on emerging trends in conflict and peacebuilding, including the current renewed national dialogue efforts), or AFSC (through Kenya Peace conferences in 2015, 2016, and 2017 that also focused on youth in peacebuilding work).

“Coordination creates a momentum that you cannot have as a single institution.”

— Representative from academia,
Kenya case study

None of them has been able to be either sustained as independent or to serve that function beyond specific issues for broader and more strategic and sustained peacebuilding engagement across the board. There was concern about the quickly growing and evolving amount of peacebuilding coordination efforts by different organizations. There was also concern about

“As long as there is no donor that is willing to fund coordination functions, there will always be a gap. That is the reason why different organizations pick this role at different times, which has not been sustainable.”

— Civil society representative,
Kenya case study

the current process of “self-nomination” of leadership and coordination roles of various processes (a question often posed was “Who can ‘govern’ all these multiple efforts?”). Some interviewees expressed a clear preference for fewer efforts with wider buy-in coordinated by collectively agreed-upon organizations, but did not quite know how the peacebuilding community could reach that stage. Some of the donor representatives consulted suggested that “a union of peace actors” is required in Kenya to defend peacebuilding space in the country, one that does not implement projects and compete for related funding, and would have rotational leadership between international and local NGOs. At the same time, donors have not historically committed to funding an independent coordination and convening function for civil society actors.

The following elements were highlighted as critical for a functioning backbone support structure:

The following elements were highlighted as critical for a functioning backbone support structure:

- The **legitimacy** of such support functions and structures is critical. It needs to be an organization or other structure that is respected and accepted by all network members, so it can effectively represent its members. For example, key informants highlighted that while many peacebuilding organizations felt comfortable with PeaceNet representing them at platforms such as UWIANO in earlier days when PeaceNet played a secretariat and convening role, they stopped feeling represented by PeaceNet once it became an operational agency and acted more in favor of its own interests mainly due to resource constraints and limited ability to follow a long-term strategy.³³

“As soon as the secretariat starts becoming another implementer, it gets difficult.”

— Civil society representative,
Kenya case study

³³ PeaceNet still works in operational partnership with other organizations on specific projects through consortia-type setups but does not fulfill an independent secretariat and backbone function that would facilitate and enable strategic collaboration amongst member organizations. Many key informants therefore do not consider PeaceNet a representative member organization.

- **Coordination and information sharing** are key, and a backbone organization can incentivize this and serve as a role model coordinating a member network. At the same time there needs to be a clear division of labor amongst members and the backbone organization/secretariat, as well as amongst members regarding who plays which roles. For example, in KEPSA, there are sector boards and sector federations on specific topics, e.g., tourism, manufacturing, education, and health. Each of these has subsectors and is coordinated by different KEPSA members.
- Making a conscious decision on the benefits of **formal** versus **informal** networks: While a certain informality seems good for strengthening the overall spirit of collaboration and seems particularly important at subnational levels so as not to overwhelm busy practitioners with too much coordination, it was also highlighted that a certain level of formality is also needed to ensure sustained collective engagement. Some key informants mentioned that PeaceNet worked well as long as it was an informal network, and that it became challenging as a coordinating body once it formally registered as a trust — alongside other reasons why PeaceNet has lost credibility as a backbone organization as mentioned in other parts of this case study. The Concerned Citizens for Peace Network also worked very well as an informal network with funding channeled from and through various agencies.
- Strong **leadership** is required in the form of a strong convener and facilitator who supports its members and leverages the work of network members, but who does not compete with its members in terms of recognition, visibility, or funding. This also requires that the individuals working in the secretariat of such a backbone structure need to be comfortable operating in the background, promoting the greater good in support functions, leveraging the strengths of members, and not having “big egos” (as several key informants framed it).

“Egos get in the way of collaboration.”

— Civil society representative, Kenya case study

“Leadership comes from where the ideas are.”

— Donor representative, Kenya case study
- **Avoiding competition** for resources and visibility at all costs is critical. Finding a sustainable financial structure for the secretariat or backbone structure is key to avoiding financial competition and “forced” deviation from its mandate. It was frequently noted that this was a key challenge with PeaceNet, once PeaceNet moved away from being an independent secretariat of a membership organization and became operational and started to compete for funding and “territory” of its members.
- **Staff skills** in the secretariat or backbone structure need to include strong leadership, communication, coordination, (win-win) negotiation, facilitation, and convening skills. Technical skills in peacebuilding are less important.
- **Accountability** to and from the secretariat is critical to sustaining mutual trust. To achieve this, the governance structure of the backbone support organization is critical: Representation needs to be elected by its members, with clear governance processes, accountability, and decision-making structures. In this regard, KEPSA has been highlighted as a very positive model: For elections within KEPSA there is an independent

“It’s the accountability aspect that makes KEPSA successful.”

— Independent expert, Kenya case study

nominating committee that makes proposals for a balanced, inclusive board to the Management Committee and hence to the Annual General Meeting. On the other hand, PeaceNet was mentioned as a difficult model as its Board of Trustees was nominated for life and the CEO is also a board member, which impacts accountability.

“The peacebuilding community is weakening itself by being spread in so many different directions — we need alignment of the various efforts.”

— Government representative, Kenya case study

“When you have politics, and when you are scavenging for scarce resources, when you are assuming zero-sum games, you end up with dysfunctionality.”

— Private sector expert, Kenya case study

A transparent process of jointly agreeing on who is best placed to act as the convener and facilitator seems required and is the first step as part of a collective and collaborative effort. As mentioned above, in Kenya different organizations have in the past stepped forward to play leading roles. Everyone sees the vacuum, and stepping up is good, but it has created new competition as the process of agreeing on who is best placed to do what has not taken place as part of an honest and transparent conversation. In the business community,

KEPSA is a representative body for the business sector at large, whereas the peacebuilding community continues to struggle to be more aligned and unified.

6. Sustained Funding and Donor Coordination

The issue of sustained funding, or lack thereof, was often mentioned as a key impediment to more strategic, long-term, and sustainable coordination and collective action. On many levels, these struggles are not unique to Kenyan peacebuilding organizations, but represent common challenges amongst peacebuilding and other civil society organizations in many countries. Donors often prefer specific short-term project funding over long-term strategic organizational support. Core organizational costs are hard to cover with low unrestricted funds. Donors are much more inclined to support project-specific work in communities rather than strategic work around research, joint analysis, policy influencing, or strategic coordination. At the same time, it was also considered critical that the donors are coordinated amongst themselves, and also that they put mechanisms in place that incentivize the strategic and operational collaboration of implementing partners.

“Because we are driven by donors, people are doing things they should not necessarily be doing.”

— Civil society representative, Kenya case study

“Whether you have money or no money, you don’t go far alone.”

— Civil society representative, Kenya case study

organizational costs are hard to cover with low unrestricted funds. Donors are much more inclined to support project-specific work in communities rather than strategic work around research, joint analysis, policy influencing, or strategic coordination. At the same time, it was also considered critical that the donors are coordinated amongst themselves, and also that they put mechanisms in place that incentivize the strategic and operational collaboration of implementing partners.

“In order for genuine coordination to happen you need to budget for it.”

— Civil society representative, Kenya case study

mechanisms in place that incentivize the strategic and operational collaboration of implementing partners.

“Donors have consistently asked civil society organizations to be coordinated, but amongst themselves they are not coordinated!”

— Donor representative, Kenya case study

From the Kenya experience, the following aspects in relation to funding and donor engagement vis-à-vis collective peacebuilding action rise to the top:

Donor funding

Experience has shown that if organizations scramble to get and/or maintain funding it is not conducive to them engaging in strategic-level coordination (beyond project-specific coordination of activities). As civil society organizations (both international and national) are highly dependent on donor funding, the level of commitment and energy to collective action is heavily influenced by donor priorities. Backbone support, secretariat, or other types of coordination functions need to be funded independently and separately from project funding. It does not work if funding for convening and facilitation roles needs to be squeezed out of project funds or depends entirely on member contributions. In the past, donors have primarily funded project-specific activities in Kenya.

Peacebuilding organizations need a certain level of organizational support (“core funding”) to sustain themselves and their secretariat, and other coordination functions need dedicated, independent funding. While donors should clearly not support organizations that would not exist on their own, as has happened in Kenya, it is critical that organizations develop strong sustainability strategies — not to depend on donor funding alone. A stronger link with the private sector in Kenya could help here — but both sides would need to overcome ideological barriers between peacebuilding CSOs and KEPSA.

“Donors have supported different coordination initiatives at different times and at different scales, which often end with a ‘project.’ There is no strategic coordination.”

— Civil society representative, Kenya case study

The problem of too much funding needing to be spent quickly during the peaks of attention during electoral violence prevention work is another challenge. This was heavily criticized by many key informants as it leads to ineffective programming at best, and to harmful “quick results”-oriented practices at worst that are often not conducive to conflict-sensitive practice. In the eyes of civil society representatives consulted, too much peacebuilding funding is allocated to either large international NGOs or multilateral agencies such as UNDP (e.g., for Uwiano) and not a sufficient amount to local NGOs and civil society organizations.

Donor coordination

Donors need to coordinate themselves better to support and incentivize coordinated civil society engagement on peacebuilding. In the Kenyan experience at national level, donor-level coordination has worked better around specific events, such as election-related support and funding, and related joint mechanisms, such as the election donor coordination group as part of the 2017 election, or the UNDP-managed multi-donor basket fund for elections.

Donors need to be aware of their own role in the country and conflict system, and the implications of that role in relation to the funding they provide to CSOs. For example, the role

of the U.S. government was highlighted by several key informants as difficult, as it engaged strongly in the political process in Kenya and also in counterterrorism policies but then also funded peacebuilding work, which puts its implementing partners in a difficult spot as the ethical and strategic principles underpinning peacebuilding on the one hand, and CVE work on the other, are fundamentally different. Therefore, a very careful approach based on clear principles is required.

“The first layer of coordination and collaboration should start with the donors themselves.”

— Donor representative, Kenya case study

It was also noted by some interviewees that in principle, peacebuilding networks can also influence donors to constructively push individual organizations to commit to more joint action and coordination. Donors that encourage and incentivize organizations working in the same area to agree on a clear division of labor are an example of this in action. This happened during the immediate activities related to electoral violence prevention but is currently not happening.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Substantive conclusions and reflections for the Kenyan peacebuilding sector

The Kenyan peacebuilding sector seems to be at a crossroads. The multitude of various efforts and networks happening at the same time with varying levels of coordination, strategy, and attention has not only weakened the civil society footprint in peacebuilding but has led to internal competition, lack of cohesion, and often unintended negative impacts amongst organizations themselves and as part of the work they do. There is a significant level of energy and commitment to peacebuilding amongst Kenyan civil society organizations, but it is not always channeled in the most effective way to leverage greater collective impact.

Kenyan peacebuilding civil society organizations might be well advised to engage in a strategic reflection and internal planning and positioning process in order to gain renewed momentum, reenergize, and use their limited resources wisely and strategically.

The following issues would seem particularly important to consider as part of such a strategy development process:

- Validating the peacebuilding identity and common ground of peacebuilders, also in relation to other sectors (human rights and justice in particular), which might include agreeing on a new framing (given the challenges around “peacebuilding” highlighted in this report)
- Agreeing on key aspects of innovation that the peacebuilding sector might have to go through to revitalize itself, and developing a long-term strategy on peacebuilding priorities beyond election cycles and political events
- Identifying joint strategic avenues of working with the government, the private sector, and other relevant civil society sectors to maximize peacebuilding impact. Overcoming certain perceptions and identifying areas of possible compromise and common ground will be an important step in this regard.
- Developing a joint advocacy and proactive engagement strategy with key donors in Kenya committed to peacebuilding. This is not a campaign but a proactive way of working with donors to jointly identify the greatest peacebuilding and conflict prevention needs in Kenya right now and the best approaches to collaborating and making progress on these. Advocating for joint principles around contentious issues such as the CVE (countering violent extremism) programming and policy agenda is one important example in this regard.
- Agreeing on a division of labor amongst peacebuilding organizations: Who is best placed to do what (comparative advantage)? What should be stopped, and who should stop it? What are we not doing enough of? Who are we currently not engaging?
- The need for an independent, not operational, convening and facilitating entity emerged as critical for the Kenyan peacebuilding sector to act more collectively. How can peacebuild-

ing actors turn the page on past experiences, learn from them, and move forward with a decision on a support and collaboration structure that works for all? Advocacy for funding such an independent backbone structure will be critical in this regard.

- Design appropriate avenues and processes to build up essential software, trust, and relationships to more organically come together under a shared vision and shared goals.

Such a process might benefit from an updated national-level conflict systems analysis that could be used as the foundation for a facilitated workshop amongst peacebuilders to map their ongoing engagements in relation to key conflict dynamics, identifying gaps and things that should be stopped or changed, and talking about the most effective ways of working together. Strong and independent facilitation of such a process by a strong institution or individual accepted by all would be a key requirement for this to succeed.

Methodological Case Study Conclusions

Many of the findings from the case studies fall neatly into the five core categories of the collective impacts of a peacebuilding framework:

- Collective and emergent understanding
- Collective intention and action
- Collective learning and adaptive management
- Continuous communication and accountability
- Sufficient support structures

The framework served as a guiding framework for this case study inquiry — but did not limit the field research. Other findings from the Kenya case study are covered in the “fundamental principles underlying collective impact in peacebuilding” or are mentioned in the preliminary considerations. Other issues that emerged as critical in the Kenya case are not highlighted prominently in the current framework. For example: Shared goals around advocacy and advocating for shared peacebuilding goals seemed critical — and are not represented directly in the current framework. The issue of shared values and mutual trust in relation to peacebuilding principles was highlighted very strongly as the critical “software” in support of a shared vision, which is not reflected in the current framework. Key impediments to greater collective impact amongst Kenyan civil society networks highlighted by the key informants were sustained funding, sustainable and coordinated donor engagement, and leadership for the various processes at different levels. While “adequate financial resources” and “leadership” are highlighted in the “permissive environment for collective impact” section of the framework, the framework does not speak about the implications of donor coordination — or lack thereof — as critical for successful coordination at the peacebuilding network level. Especially as donors have played an important role in Kenya in relation to some of the networks, and are and have engaged actively in some of them directly — beyond the provision of funding.

Overall, the findings from the Kenya case show that the “software” that makes network collaboration succeed or fail, such as shared values and trust, seems critical in the Kenyan case but is not mentioned in the current framework. Also, some of the key impediments to collective action in Kenya — sustained funding, leadership, and donor coordination — would seem

more like critical key conditions for collective action in Kenya, whereas the framework treats them as either principles or factors of a permissive environment alone. This speaks to the point that a framework can only be a broad guideline to guide such type of field inquiry, but that the relationships and priorities between different factors, conditions, and criteria need to be understood in the local context. The criteria outlined in the framework necessarily play out differently from context to context.

ANNEXES:

Annex 1: Literature and Resources Reviewed

Austin, Jonathan Luke, and Wennmann, Achim: [The Private Sector and Violence Prevention in Kenya, 2007–2013](#). 2017.

Centre for Peace and Applied Research — “PACT Peace Program II: Reflecting on Peace Practice at the Kenya-Somalia Border.” A consolidated report of action research, 2011 (with support from USAID/CMM).

[CIA World Factbook Kenya](#), updated on June 20, 2018.

Deutsche Welle: [“Political confusion reigns in Kenya after Odinga, Kenyatta deal”](#), March 13, 2018.

Eldon, Mike:

- [NCIC does more work than what comes to surface](#), May 10, 2018
- [The private sector gets back to building peace](#), Nov. 19, 2017
- [Peace and Stability in Kenya](#), Oct. 9, 2015

Hekima Institute for Peace Studies and International Relations. “Community-based reconciliation towards greater social cohesion in Kenya”. 2015 Kenya Peace Conference Summary Report.

International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ): [“TJRC Final report deserves serious analysis and action”](#), May 2014.

International Crisis Group, Briefing No. 136/Africa: [After Kenya’s leaders reconcile, a tough path ahead](#), March 13, 2018.

International Peace Institute (IPI) Global Observatory: [Not Guilty, Not Acquitted: Kenyan Ruling a Major Setback for ICC](#). April 11, 2016, by Benjamin Duerr.

Jamii Thabiti: Reflection paper on strengthening peacebuilding sector in Kenya. Michael Muragu and Florence Mpaayei. 2017.

Kenya Transitional Justice Network: “Summary of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission Report”. 2013.

Nderitu, Alice Wairimu: *Bridging Ethnic Divides: A Commissioner’s Experience on Cohesion and Integration*. 2018.

Office of the President, Ministry of State of Provincial Administration and Internal Security, Kenya: “National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management.” 2012.

Osula, Maria: [Finally! A Peace Policy for Kenya](#). Saferworld Comment and Analysis. 2015.

Owuor, Victor and Scott Wisor: [The role of Kenya’s private sector in peacebuilding: the case of the 2013 election cycle](#). One Earth Future Foundation, 2014.

Peace and Development Network Trust — PeaceNet Kenya: 2015 [Annual Report](#).

Rift Valley Institute: [Violent Extremism in Kenya](#). Risk and Resilience. Shilpa Guha. 2017.

Rohwerder, Brigitte: [Conflict Analysis of Kenya](#). GSDRC 2015.

Uwiano Platform for Peace: “Report of the national rapid conflict and electoral risk assessment. Towards free, fair, and peaceful 2017 elections.” 2016.

Annex 2: Objectives of the Kenyan National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (Summary)³⁴

- a) Promote and establish an institutional framework for peacebuilding and conflict management that fosters strong collaborative partnerships between the government, the private sector, the civil society, development partners, grassroots communities, and regional organizations for sustainable peace, conflict transformation, and national development.
- b) Develop peacebuilding and conflict management guidelines that promote sustainable conflict-sensitive planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- c) Mainstream gender issues in conflict management with emphasis on the empowerment of women towards long-term conflict mitigation and peacemaking.
- d) Promote application of conflict early warning and response to prevent violent conflict in collaboration with Regional Bodies, e.g., IGAD — Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Mechanism (CEWARN) and EAC – Early Warning and Early Response System.
- e) Establish a Mediation Support Unit to provide and coordinate mediation and preventive diplomacy capacity to Kenya and its neighboring states
- f) Develop conflict prevention strategies and structures that will address root causes of internal and cross-border conflicts.
- g) Propose policy options to regulate, transform, and strengthen relationships between actors in different sectors and levels of society for sustainable peace.
- h) Propose strategic options for resource mobilization to initiate, establish, and sustain proactive peacebuilding and conflict management interventions.
- i) Establish mechanisms for regular review and monitoring of the policy implementation.
- j) Provide a framework in which best practices of peacebuilding and conflict management institutions will be harmonized, enhanced, and coordinated.
- k) Formulate strategies for research, documentation, and dissemination in collaboration with other stakeholders.

34 Adapted from the National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management