

# Working for Peace in Conflict Systems in Kenya: Addressing the Post-Election Crisis 2008

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi

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1

This text is the transcript of an interview with Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, in response to Norbert Ropers' article *Systemic Conflict Transformation: Reflections on the Conflict and Peace Process in Sri Lanka* (Ropers 2008). The interview was conducted by Oliver Wils, executive director of the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support and co-editor of this Dialogue, on 14 June 2008, during a workshop on "Insiders' Mediation" in Schloss Munchenwiller, Switzerland.

## **Background Box A: Kenya's 2008 post-election crisis**

Violence broke out in Kenya following the presidential election held on 27 December 2007. The incumbent President Mwai Kibaki was initially declared the winner amid widespread allegations of electoral fraud, leading to protests by supporters of the opposition Orange Democratic Movement, headed by Raila Odinga. Both violent and nonviolent protests were registered in many parts of the country and ethnically-targeted attacks began to escalate, primarily against Kikuyu people living in the Rift Valley. Over 30 people were killed near the town of Eldoret on 1 January 2008, when the church where they were seeking refuge was burned to the ground. Attacks and looting were also reported in Kisumu and Mombasa.

A power-sharing agreement between Odinga and Kibaki was signed on 28 February 2008, following negotiations headed by the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. This National Accord and Reconciliation Act established a coalition government, with Odinga as Prime Minister and a bi-party cabinet, which was sworn in on 17 April 2008.

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## An Interview with Dekha Ibrahim Abdi

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi was one of the conveners of the Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP) peace movement; the other members of the core team were Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, General Lazarus Sumbweiyi, General Daniel Opande and George Wachira from the Nairobi Peace Initiative.

CCP was created as a forum and framework of engagement to help Kenya transform the violent conflict and reconstruct its social fabric. It also aimed at creating a critical mass of people and organisations who worked strategically at three levels: “upstream”, “middlestream” and “downstream”. These three levels will be described in more detail at the end of this interview. But let us first hear from Dekha Ibrahim Abdi about the role that system thinking plays in her work:

**Dekha, I would like to ask you first how relevant, or inspiring, is systemic conflict transformation, or what Norbert Ropers has outlined, for your concrete work in Kenya?**

As a peace practitioner who does conflict analysis but at the same time process design, system thinking or system analysis is something that I was thinking about a lot last year, even before the current crisis of Kenya. But I couldn't find it in a book the way it was organised in Norbert's paper. So it was really like fresh air – as I was reading it I could identify places, I could find examples in my own context. It spoke to me. It gave me that I started making sense of some things I've been observing and doing, it started naming them for me. In that sense it's helped me to think, to grow and to re-energise. You sort of feel like you've been doing it again and again – and “maybe what I'm thinking right now is not so relevant”, “maybe it's not needed”. Then you realise yes, this is in relation to Sri Lanka, but yes, I can observe this in Kenya, I can observe this on the border of Kenya and Ethiopia, and Somalia. So you start making a connection with other countries, making a connection with yourself. What I think touched me so much about Norbert's paper was the fact that it was linked to practice, but also linking to theory. The frameworks that were put in there inspired me and I kept on carrying the paper with me. Since then I've been using the word “system thinking” in analysis, “system thinking” in strategy building. It became my conceptual framework of engagement. It's now very alive with me.

**What does it mean concretely? If you look at a conflict situation/constellation, if you use it for analysis and diagnosis – can you reflect a bit on the tools/approaches you are using?**

Let me go back to Norbert's paper, there is a place where he talks about the characteristics of systemic thinking, and he talks about dynamic frames in relation to time delays. I can see that also in Kenya, concerning the violence at the beginning of January. During the first five days of January, when the violence was in the Rift Valley, we did an analysis at CCP in the morning forum. We talked about hotspots and coldspots and we said, let's know where the hotspots are so we can intervene, but let's identify coldspots which have the capacity to become hot soon. And “soon” was two weeks

later! People were focusing on the Rift Valley, and we were saying, focus on the Rift Valley, but also focus on central Kenya, because the people who are evicted from their land, their houses are being burned. They will become internally displaced, and they will move to central Kenya. Once the first internally displaced people arrive in central Kenya, central Kenya will stop being a coldspot, it will become a hotspot. So already you can see that systemic thinking in terms of time delay. Some people think that the problems are just in the Rift Valley – they think “thank god!” – but at CCP in the morning forum we were doing the analysis. We didn’t call it “systemic thinking”, or say “time delay” – we didn’t use that terminology. But we talked about the current hotspots, the potential hotspots which are currently coldspots, and the potential for them to become hot.

And that helps you to be strategic in terms of responding: you don’t wait until the place becomes hot for you to respond. You start working on it while it is still cold. But the reality was that the process in Kenya was so dynamic and moving, and so big, that we weren’t able to intervene in the entire Central Province; still at least we managed to create processes for Nairobi Province.

We also started using two things that you use when societies have historical trauma. Specifically, whether you’re supporting processes of intervention or programmes to transform the violence, to do diagnostic analysis with system thinking is to use different tools. Some of it is a descriptive narrative – like a timeline: in that time this happened, in this time that happened. People are describing things. And it’s like trying to remove the issues and placing them on the table. And then you take it to the laboratory and say OK, this is now out here, and you look into the details of it. You take the analysis from descriptive narrative to reflective analytical understanding of the designs of the conflict.

And that requires two processes: the first bit – using stages of conflict tools, using perception tools, using timelines – is helping to ventilate the anger, to make sense of things, to tell the story. (A lot of people like to tell their story, and the truth of their story – “my truth”.) That mapping helps you to bring the issues to the fore. Then after a while you really need to look, together with the actors in conflict, what are the threads that keep on repeating? You might go back to the same tools but you now go back with a different framework and ask: what are the patterns?

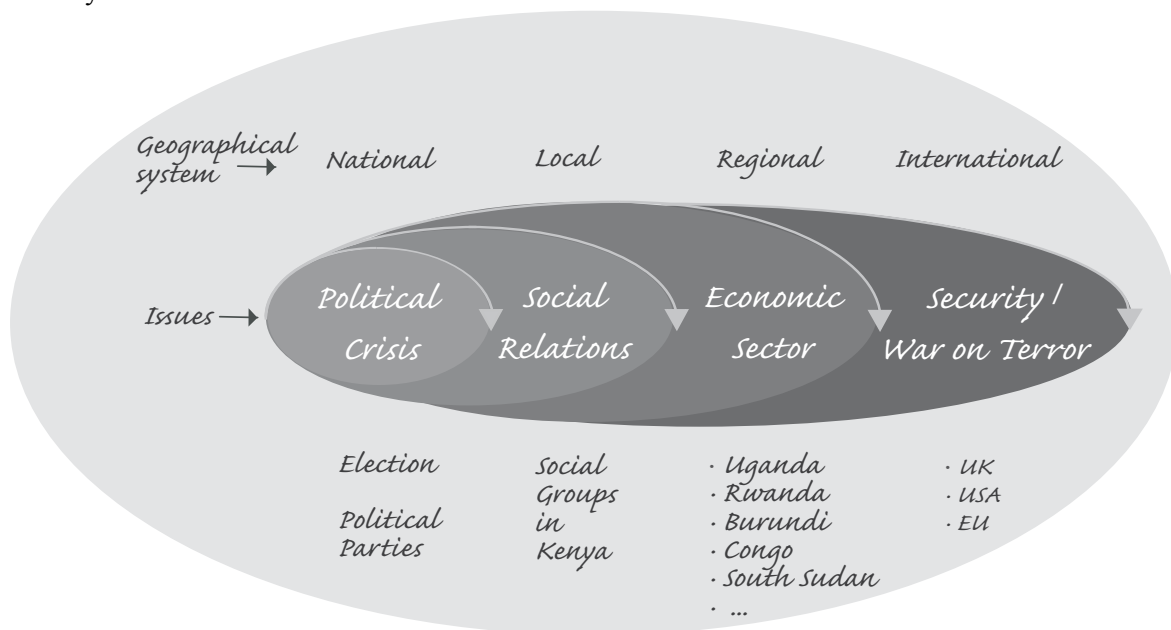
For me, the best diagnostic analysis has two sides. Where we use the word “diagnostic” it’s like going to the laboratory, but the actors who are in the conflict need to go in the laboratory. You need to teach them how to use the tools. They need to look at their issues themselves, or collectively with the other party in conflict, so that transformation can happen. And then for them to also say, “yes, is this the problem?” It’s like looking at yourself in a mirror. But it requires a lot of preparation, because diagnostic conflict analysis in itself is an intervention. It helps people to shift their perceptions, their attitudes, their behaviour, so the rules of engagement have to be negotiated. You cannot just do diagnostic conflict analysis as an “extractive process”, to get information for your own understanding. You have to work side by side with the people you want to get the information from. Or help them to do their own analysis, and you do your own analysis. It requires both sides and I think if we do it as a mechanical process, as an extractive process, then it doesn’t empower, it doesn’t transform, it doesn’t *build* systems and structures. I think above all, from my experience, doing this sort of conflict analysis is nested within networks and networks of people who come together to look at this.

And then we also need to ask, “what are the historical injustices?” This thing is rooted in history, but this history cannot be transformed over a short time. It needs to be transformed over a long time, so you need to create societal structures which are multi-generational. Each generation does their analysis, develops a strategy, passes on to the next, draws lessons and failures from it. That, for me, is using structures, too.

**What patterns does this kind of analysis reveal for the Kenyan conflict system, and how are they interrelated?**

For me, from being active in Wajir since 1994 – and this is also true for Kenya – it looks like this: if you use a timeline you see that every five years, there’s an election. After every election, there’s violence. Every five or ten years, a drought. So environmental issues are connected to political processes like elections, they’re linked to social issues like the violence. That shows you that actually, in doing analysis, you don’t just look at this as a political crisis and then just do political analysis; whereas some drivers are in politics, you really need to look at environmental factors, social relations, economic sectors. And I think that this deep reflective analytical looking at the system is to sort of say, yes, for example in Kenya, the disputed election was the trigger, but how did it impact? It impacted on the social relationship. It impacted on the social disparities, the economic disparities between the rich and the poor and the affluent. It became a class thing. So social grievances came, regional disparities came – and people said yes, we need a solution to the electoral violence, but we really need other solutions, too.

In addition, the impact of the Kenyan national crisis is linked geographically to the whole of Eastern Africa. Within three days Rwanda, Burundi, Eastern DRC, Congo, South Sudan, Somalia, Uganda – all were paralysed economically because they depended on the lifeline, so you see the interconnectedness of the geographical space, and again the interconnectedness of the social issues. At the same time, in terms of international partners, Britain and Kenya are so interlinked, because of the long historical colonial link but also economic links. The USA sees Kenya as their strategic partner on their global issues, the ‘war on terror’, etc., so it’s like “Oh my god, we can’t allow this country to...”

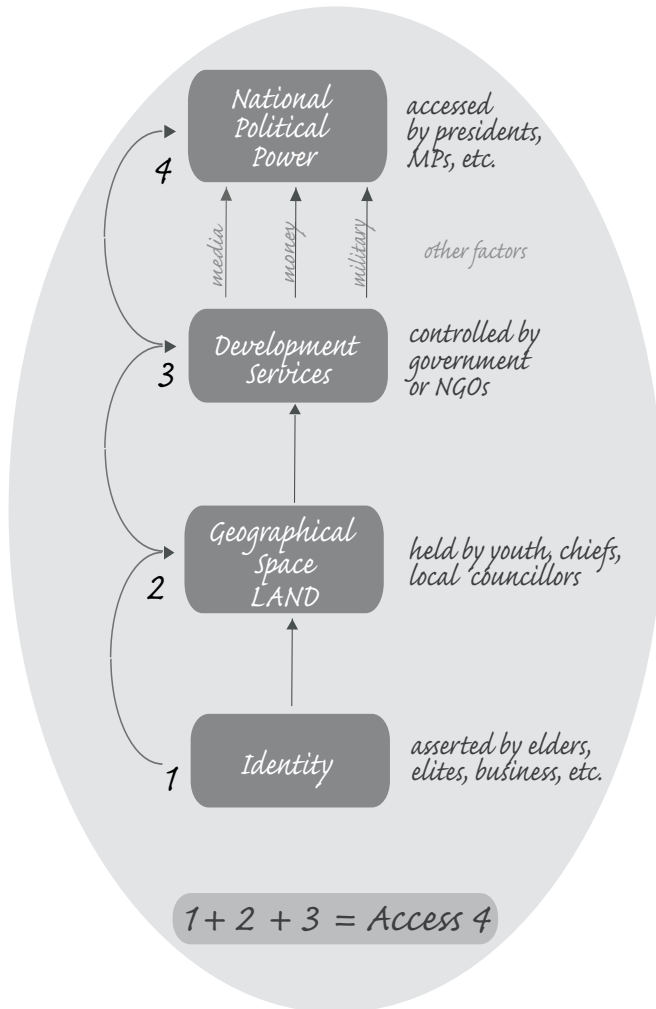


**Figure 1: Sectors Connected as Issues in Conflict**

That sort of analysis helps you realise that, while looking at one problem you really need to look at other sub-sectors. Later on, and this was a ‘find’ to me and to CCP, during the Kofi Annan-led processes, there were four agendas. The first agenda: ceasefire, national and local. Agenda number two: the humanitarian crisis and the economic impact of the conflict. Agenda number three: the resolution to the political crisis. Agenda number four: dealing with the underlying issues, the

constitutional issues, poverty and inequality, the role of youth, the role of governance issues – so many other things are on agenda number four. It shows that even the formal mediation team were also having a systemic thinking of how the issues are interconnected. And they listened to Kenyans, who told them that the election was just a trigger.

One final element that I've found is in terms of how issues are connected and nested in one another. For example, and I'll draw this for you:



**Figure 2: Factors of Conflict**

development funds, if you control certain services then that helps you in gathering any number of people within a certain geographical space, with a certain identity. That becomes the vehicle to access national political powers. And a lot of people, MPs and presidents, say, “look what I have done for you”, “look at my development record”, “look at this” – it’s like they do these things exclusively... and this creates a charity mentality and sycophancy, rather than recognizing people’s constitutional rights as Kenyans to have their basic needs met.

But at the heart of this, what people are looking for is a fair, just, inclusive system. If there is a fair, just, inclusive system for us all, as a value, then there is no need to assert the identity, no need to assert the geographical space. Then the geographical space becomes cosmopolitan, pluralistic, inclusive. The development services are a right, the national level becomes meaningless.

When there is a political crisis or a contestation of a political crisis, but underneath there are other issues, for example when a group excludes a certain other social group from a geographical space, from services, from national political power, then all of a sudden it’s like, “Oh, why, we’ve been left out. Is it because we are this tribe, we are that geographic space?” Then they start asserting their identity. That identity could be a social identity, a religious identity. They go on to gather numbers and numbers of people to assert that identity. Having asserted that identity, it’s linked to a certain geographical space: “This is our country. This is our constituency. This is our district. This is our street.” So identity is linked to the land. When people claim land, it’s not land as an economic drive but land as a bargaining chip for that identity.

And on that level you’ll see youth, or people like councillors and chiefs, local authorities for Kenya, holding the space, securing the space. And that is nested in development services. Where a state exists like Kenya, people want to control some of the assets. If you control the local authority money, if you control the constituency

Just when these other three are not being fair, then people start organising exclusive processes, then people also become militant. Identity becomes an issue. Geographical space becomes an issue. But if you create a fair, just system for all...

This is an analysis of things that are linked and nested into one another. If you just look at land, land as an economic thing – no, you won't get far. You really need to understand – which land? Land as a political asset, land as an identity asset, land as a space you hold as a bargaining chip?

**How do you then turn some of this thinking and analysis into strategy development for process design? To use Norbert's words, to identify agents of change?**

Here in Kenya, there are elites, elders, chiefs, councillors, NGOs, government departments, MPs, presidents... So, let's say you understand the issue, you understand who is driving the issue. And then you ask, what is their need? What is it that they are trying to seek? Are they looking for these just, fair processes? Are they being militant? Or, in that term, extreme? Exclusive? Or what? Is it because they have a certain need that's not understood? Are they being seen as a problem? Are they being seen as the spoiler? When you have this sort of system analysis to understand the issue, the factors in the conflict, and you unpack it, you sort of see beyond the normal day-to-day picture. When people describe land they say it is a natural resource, it is pastoralist, it is the farmers' land. They give general names which mean nothing at the end of the day. But underneath that, you say, who are the drivers? "Oh, youth are the ones doing violence." But youth are not the problem. Behind the youth is an administrative system, or a political system. You ask again, who are the drivers, who are the designers, who are the holders of these designs?

And then you start thinking, how can I transform them? How can I understand their need? How can I make them part of the analysis? How can their needs and their fears be part of the analysis? You don't see them as a problem, but you see them as people needing to be understood. You understand their fear through the analysis and then they become part of the strategy development.

**You look very much into all the different resources in the system or society you could use. In the case of the post-election crisis in Kenya, how did you design the process to bring these resources in? How did you really link micro and macro, or the national and the local levels?**

I think first and foremost there has to be the engine, the drivers of the processes. And that is people who have had long experience, have worked in the context – in their own context and other contexts – and can read the signs of the time. We had people who had had a military background, who have served other countries.

**You said "people who read the signs of the time" – how do you identify them? Do you know them, do you have a good intuition or would you ask other colleagues?**

I think in CCP, for example, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat is a national asset. He's known for his peacemaking in Somalia and other countries. As well as George Wachira, General Lazarus Sumbweiyi and General Daniel Opande – they are people who have served their country and have served in neighbouring countries. They stood and addressed the media. And they called everybody to come and help them, making a public appeal: "I, General Sumbweiyi, see our country is not going right, please come to me. Come and help me." Just that open door policy, I think, was one side of public mobilization. But at the same time, in Kenya there were key individuals who, from 1990 onwards, were working at the community level, at the national level, who knew each other, who had had a relationship with each other before this crisis, and the crisis could not break us up because we have had 15 years of working together.

I think that's what we created in Kenya, but the investment from 1990 to 2007, I must say, is what gave fruit to the ability to convene quickly. When we said "we are Concerned Citizens", it was, "oh, we know, that's Dekha, we know her from her work in Wajir; that's General Opande, we know him; that's so and so". History becomes your asset, your pain becomes your asset. It gives you the capacity to convene for the conflict analysis, the strategy development, the organising and mobilizing.

CCP was also able to mobilize quickly due to the existing networks that were ready to work in their own context. These networks of peace resources are different, each making an important contribution to the process of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in Kenya. They are, to mention a few: Inter-Religious Forum, PeaceNet, Women's Coalition for Peace, Election Violence Response Network, Media Council, Kenya Private Sector Alliance, and the National Steering Committee on Peace Building.

I joined the CCP core team when George Wachira called me on 31 December 2007 and requested that I join them. So five of us were the nucleus for CCP, but we had enormous foot soldiers, enormous thinkers, enormous researchers, enormous cultural leaders, enormous youth who came to us. Some days it was like serendipity, we would say, "can we talk to women?" And then the women appear. "Who has access to a parliamentarian?" – "I'm his son, I can go and do it." People volunteered and I think one of the important things is the *need* to solve the problem, the willingness of the citizens. All the time we talk about political will. Yet it is the social will, the citizens' will to change the situation. Kenyans had the money, they could have all left the country just like that, but the opposite happened. Kenyans stayed, those who came for holidays stayed, those who had the capacity to run away stayed and said, "we have to solve this problem". I think that was the spirit of our country, of saying "we can't let go". That is the greatest asset in designing processes: they have the willingness, they have the commitment, and that energy becomes an internal resource for them to say "what do we need to do?"

There is no mix-recipe for you to pour and mix – you create the recipe continuously. We had a morning analysis every day, it continues up to now! And each day a little bit of the recipe comes. But you test it. "Let's do this" – and we test it, there is no critique, there is no right and wrong. Any idea is a valid idea. So through this, people realised the patterns of our work: "it seems that we are always engaging with the top people. You here engage with the top. It seems that Dekha, you're good at engaging with the middle level. It seems like Francis Nguli of PeaceNet and his team have the capacity to link with grassroots." And although words like "upstream", "middlestream", "downstream" just came out of the moment, it has been there continuously, dreaming, thinking. Sometimes a process requires that intense engagement, but also after a while taking a break from it, to think through it, and then fluid processes for you to come in and to come out.

**Where do you get your power, your energy? Every morning you were gathering a lot of people, you were doing analysis together. I imagine that is very challenging. And if your process gets difficult because you think something needs to be done and there is a blockade, how do you deal with that?**

I think from a variety of sources. One, it's amazing to be a parent. It's amazing to leave the work behind you and on a weekend just shut down, and stay at home, and talk to your children about what you did, and then ask them for answers. I think when we started engaging with the Ministry of Education in terms of trauma healing in school, I got those ideas from my children, and I came back to CCP Monday morning and said we have to work with children. They become a source of inspiration.

Two, the five of us of Concerned Citizens, we created spaces where sometimes you break down and cry. I remember one of the evenings we were writing letters and redrafting, we were creating

press statements and it looked like a role-play. I said this is not a role-play, this is my country, and we broke down and cried. It releases some of that energy. And then it's just to be able to say, hey, I need help. I remember a colleague from South Africa said, "I can offer you ten days". We said if you can offer us one hour, get on a plane and come, just to be there and say what can I do? You may say, "now, can you write this paper for us? Can you organise that meeting with those young people? Can you help us, this is what we are thinking, can you put it in writing?" Get outsiders to come in and take specific roles, asking anybody to come. So that some days when you are completely dead and say, today I can't get up, I'm going to lie down, there is not the need to be there every day. Acknowledging the fact that your body cannot function, you say, "I can't function today, I can't think, I can't run this meeting today, I need help," so somebody else runs the meeting and people contribute – and you don't feel guilty that you are not available. It is to voice that you're not carrying the whole world by yourself, that everybody is carrying a little bit of the world together.

And the other thing is, as someone who is devout, trying to have spiritual time with God, time for devotion, time for reflection, time to make sense, above all of the traumatic experience in Kenya. I, for example realised another side of me, that actually there are some days when I can't think in English, I can't think in Swahili, I can only think in Somali language and I started writing poetry in Somali. And I said, oh my god, I can write poetry.

It's those sort of spaces – and family and colleagues and talking through something – that really help you also to realise your own potential. Sometimes you don't realise that you really do have those potentials. So you require so many different resources and support mechanisms. But if you're a loner it's not possible. It's too heavy, it kills you. You really require the process to nourish you. Because if you become compassion-fatigued, then all you can give is venom. You can't organise analysis, you can't organise strategy building, you're criticising, you're impatient. When you see that, you have to understand the signs of your body, and the signs in your team, and say it's time for you to take time out.

**If I can come back to the question I posed at the beginning once more. SCT, you said, was very inspiring for you and helped you to frame your strategic approach. Yet is there something you wished had been elaborated more, to be more "practical"?**

I think because there was some abstract and academic thinking, it needed to be simplified. I don't know what level of audience it was meant for... Sometimes, I was thinking the other day, we go up there and theorise, but I think it is important to have a pragmatic approach to the analysis and give what people can identify, some practice, practical things, practical analysis. If some of those things were put in the article, then it could have helped people to see themselves in it. I think a lot of practitioners will not see themselves in the paper, so it needs to be toned down to a practical level, with some pragmatic exercises, even reflection questions or something like that, so that they can pause and say what does that mean? That could have helped.

**Dekha, thank you very much, that was very rich.**

You're most welcome.



### **Background Box B: Concerned Citizens for Peace**

Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP) was created as a forum and framework of engagement to help Kenya transform the violent conflict in the aftermath of the contested elections in December 2007, and reconstruct its social fabric. It also aimed at creating a critical mass of people and organisations who worked strategically at three levels: upstream, middlestream and downstream. These three levels are described in more detail in the following:

#### **UPSTREAM – Supporting the Top-level Mediation and Dialogue Process**

##### **Key activities**

- a) Facilitating initial contact with protagonists
- b) Requesting former President of Sierra Leone Ahmed Tejan Kabbah to stay on and help in the initial contacts
- c) Supporting Desmond Tutu's visit
- d) Interacting with and briefing former African heads of state (former President of Mozambique Joaquim Chisano, former President of Botswana Ketumile Masire, former President of Zambia Kenneth Kaunda, former President of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa)
- e) Discussions with other interveners, including Kenya-based and international diplomats and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
- f) Process support to mediator (briefing papers)

The CCP core team created a small task team of 12 members (the Technical and Strategy Team) to support this upstream process and to take forward the ideas from the Open Forum (see below). This team helps in distilling and making use of ideas to support the work of the National Mediation Process. It also provides information about the day-to-day local action through media outreach.

#### **MIDDLESTREAM – Supporting Mid-level Public and Private Institutions and Key Individuals with Links to the National Policy Framework**

##### **Key activities**

##### **a) Mobilizing the Government and Public Institutions**

Concern about the effects of the crisis on schools and universities led to a visit to the Ministry of Education and a meeting with the Permanent Secretary, who is the most senior civil servant in the Ministry. The Permanent Secretary then organised a further meeting with heads of secondary schools in Kenya and education officers both at district and national level. This meeting took place on 15 January 2008 and focused on Education for Peace in School and First Aid in Trauma Healing for the school communities (teachers, students and non-teaching staff).

A meeting was also held with the Vice Chancellor of the public universities, discussing the impact of the post-election violence on the public universities and strategies to mitigate this impact. This led to a meeting with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and dialogue with student leaders from the public universities, bringing about their role in contributing to the national dialogue and promoting safety and security in their universities.

A visit to the Ministry of Internal Security led to discussions on strategies for cooperation that could add value to the initiatives undertaken by the government. The meetings agreed on a strategic partnership linking CCP to the Permanent Secretaries' initiatives.

Finally, a meeting was held with the Permanent Secretary in charge of public sector reforms, and a member of the inter-ministerial Committee on Humanitarian Response and Peace Building. Discussion focused on the establishment of a collaborative framework for dialogue and peacebuilding from the ground up.

#### b) Mobilizing the Media

The FM vernacular radio stations played a role in fuelling the conflict during the campaign period. After an initial discussion with a small group of presenters, they agreed to mobilize 50 local vernacular stations for a half-day training on conflict and peace sensitivity in radio programming. A public dialogue session with the 50 media houses led to a commitment from the presenters to hold the country together and take active roles in building peace through the radio.

A follow-up meeting with the Media Council of Kenya was held, where the discussion focused on the need to train journalists on peace journalism and revisit the gap in the code of conduct.

### **DOWNSTREAM – Supporting Local-level Pragmatic Actions by Key Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Transform Local Violence, Mobilize for Change and Offer Practical Support for Confidence-building and Healing**

#### **Key activities**

##### a) Open Forum

At the launch of CCP, the initiators called upon Kenyans to join and contribute their thoughts towards the resolution of the crisis. The Open Forum became the place where people of all walks of life came together to reflect, analyse and strategise, connect and act jointly. In the first month of the crisis, the Open Forum met for 2-3 hours every day. Each session was attended by anywhere between 30 and 60 persons from different backgrounds.

The issues generated from the analysis sessions of the Open Forum formed the basis of the paper *The Citizens' Agenda for Peace*, launched on 9 January 2008.<sup>1</sup> The paper was widely circulated, locally and on the internet, and was shared with diplomats and eminent persons. The paper was also shared with the Inter-Religious Forum in order to avoid duplication and create synergy between initiatives.

##### b) Support to Nairobi Province

At a point when violence was threatening to engulf the capital city of Nairobi, CCP saw an urgent need to mobilize for peace in Nairobi. Activities here included:

- The formation of the Nairobi Peace Forum on 29 January 2008, under the chairmanship of the Provincial Commissioner and co-facilitated by Dekha Ibrahim Abdi of CCP and Hassan Sheikh Mohamed of the National Steering Committee (NSC). It comprised the NSC Secretariat, Nairobi Province Security Committee and the key line ministries of Education, Youth, Health and Information. It also included *Jua-Kali* Association (representing the informal sector), Resident Associations, the Kenya Private Sector Alliance, *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake* (the leading women's organisation in Kenya) and non-governmental organisations such as Saferworld and PeaceNet. The Nairobi Peace Forum continues to meet every two weeks.

<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.peaceinkenya.net/CitizensAgenda2007Kenya9Jan.pdf](http://www.peaceinkenya.net/CitizensAgenda2007Kenya9Jan.pdf) [accessed 27 June 2008].

- The formation of District Peace Committees covering the three Nairobi districts (Nairobi North, Nairobi West and Nairobi East). These committees are now fully operational and working to build relationships between the citizens and state institutions.
- The elaboration of a training and capacity building plan for Nairobi Province, targeting all sectors of society both at the district and provincial level.

#### c) Support to Nyanza and Rift Valley

Support was given to a mediation and dialogue process between women in Borabu and Sotik, the border areas of two provinces, leading to an accord between the women, who committed to working toward local reconciliation and healing, and being agents of change.

#### d) Decent Burials and Mourning Initiatives

The nature of the crisis and the numbers of deaths it caused meant that there was an accumulation of bodies in morgues, streets and even people's homes. At the same time, people's ability to bury their dead in a dignified and culturally acceptable manner was severely limited. CCP helped to mobilize resources and supported communities in Kisumu, Eldoret, Nakuru and Nairobi in burying their dead. This became an important way of encouraging healing.

Some of the participants in the Open Forum came up with the idea of using flowers as an expression of mourning and memorialisation. Following weeks of negotiation with the government, permission was granted to build a temporary memorial and lay flowers at the hitherto heavily guarded and sealed Uhuru Park. Within days, the flower memorial was attracting people from all walks of life including politicians and the police, who all brought flowers to the memorial. Flowers were also laid in other towns such as Kisumu and Eldoret, including at the site of the church that was burned with 35 people in it.

More information on CCP can be found at <http://forums.rescuekenya.org/ccp/> [accessed 15 July 2008].

## Further Reading

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- Ropers, Norbert 2008. Systemic Conflict Transformation: Reflections on the Conflict and Peace Process in Sri Lanka, in: Daniela Körppen, Beatrix Schmelzle and Oliver Wils (eds.). *A Systemic Approach to Conflict Transformation. Exploring Strengths and Limitations*. (Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 6.) Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. Online version, available at [www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/dialogue6\\_ropers\\_lead.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/dialogue6_ropers_lead.pdf).

## The Author

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### See also...

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