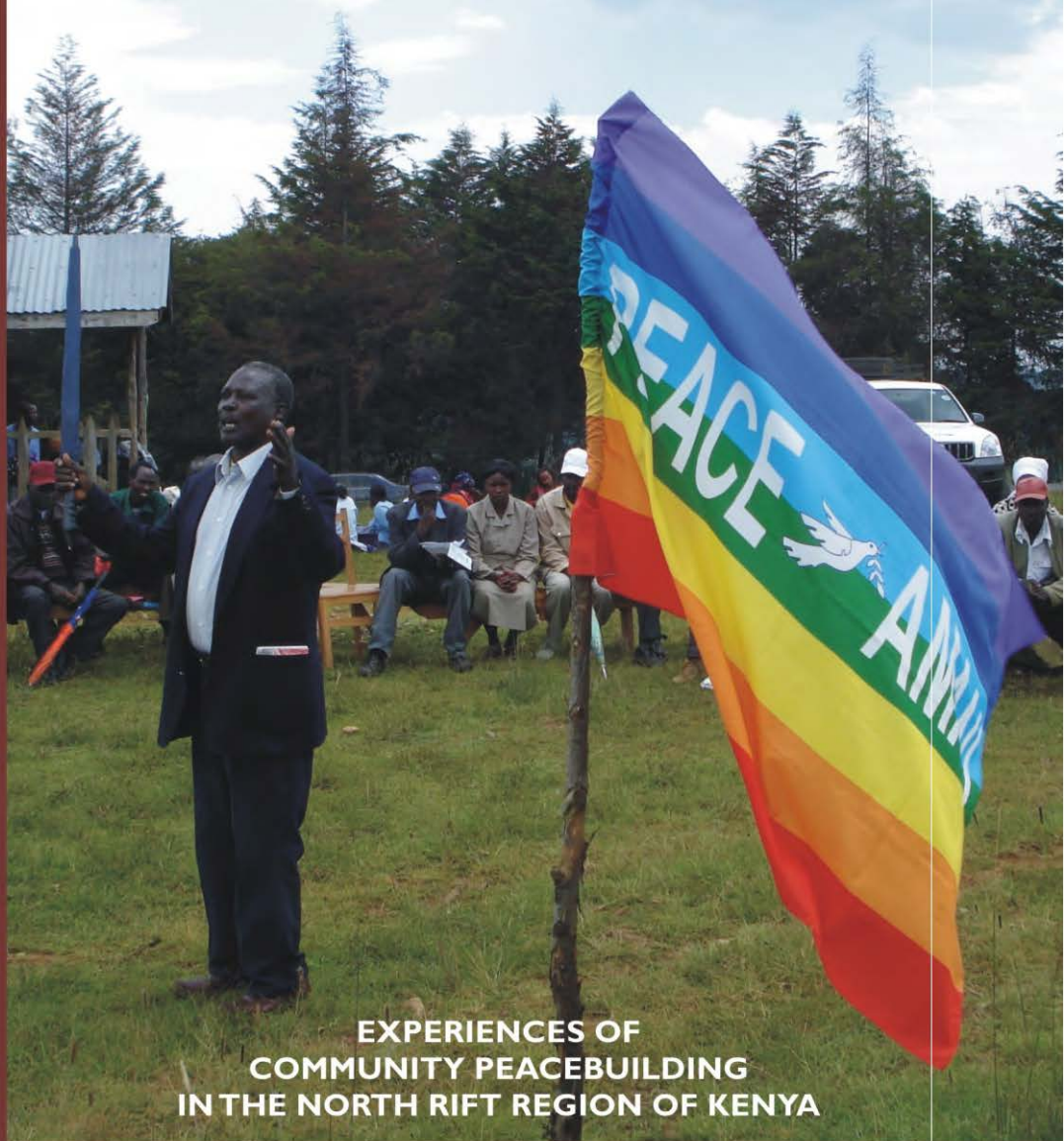


AMANI MASHINANI

(PEACE AT THE GRASSROOTS)



**EXPERIENCES OF
COMMUNITY PEACEBUILDING
IN THE NORTH RIFT REGION OF KENYA**

**Bishop Cornelius Korir
Catholic Diocese of Eldoret**

AMANI MASHINANI

(Peace at the Grassroots)

Experiences of Community Peacebuilding in the North Rift Region of Kenya

By Bishop Cornelius Korir



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ELDORET

Eldoret, Kenya



Amani Mashinani (Peace at the Grassroots): Experiences of Community Peacebuilding in the North Rift Region of Kenya

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*For the victims of violence,
in Kenya and beyond.*

*'My people will abide
in a peaceful habitation,
in secure dwellings, and
in quiet resting places.'*

– Isaiah 32:18. NIV.

*For the courageous peacemakers,
who risk scorn, fear and harm
to build a better world.*

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FOREWORD

This book, *Amani Mashinani: Experiences of Community Peace Building in the North Rift Region of Kenya*, is an important contribution to the field of peacebuilding.

The book clearly outlines a detailed process of building peace at the local, grassroots level, based on firsthand experience. The information presented here will be very useful to the various people and institutions involved in peacebuilding, including government, NGOs, civil society, religious organizations and other developmental partners.

The book does not claim to be a complete record of all the peacebuilding work done in the North Rift region, nor does it contain absolute guidelines to be followed rigidly. Yet Bishop Korir's sharing of his experiences in this book is an enriching and enjoyable read; it will be an invaluable resource to peacemakers throughout Kenya and beyond.

Rt. Rev. Maurice Crowley

Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Kitale

April 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks be to God, the giver and sustainer of life, who sent us the true ideal of the peacemaker in Christ Jesus. But God's work also requires human hands and we wish to acknowledge all those people and agencies that have assisted us in our work.

We must first thank the communities who have engaged with us in efforts to bring peace to their localities. Without their hard work and commitment to dialogue, our efforts would have been meaningless. They were the real peace actors. The local Peace Committees involved their communities and took the lead in the peace connector projects. May you continue to have success as you work for a more tranquil and prosperous future. We thank also all those who spread the message of reconciliation and peace in the midst of the violence, including the political leaders who eventually ended the impasse with the February 2008 agreement.

We wish to give special mention to those people who gave refuge to internally displaced persons at the height of the post-election violence, regardless of the high risk involved. One woman, named Esther, in Cheptiret hosted displaced people in her home and tried to dissuade the youth from harming them. She was among those who participated in the first peacebuilding initiative in her area. Moreover, several parish churches provided sanctuary and relief to the displaced, including Sacred Heart Cathedral, Kapsoya, Majengo, Huruma, Burnt Forest, Timboroa, Turbo, Moiben and others. Two priests in particular took enormous risks to end the violence. Father Noel Mutangaya of Timboroa

Parish started local peacebuilding processes without waiting for external intervention, drawing on his involvement in our Kerio Valley peace projects in the 1990s. Father Charles Kirui of Burnt Forest Parish contributed tremendously. It was difficult for him at first, being a Kalenjin, when hundreds of displaced Kikuyus sought refuge at his church. He managed to build confidence, provide relief assistance and initiate the local peace process. We acknowledge his dedication, commitment and sacrifice. Burnt Forest was one of the worst hit places, but thanks to their great efforts, it has become one of the most successful applications of our peace model.

We also want to thank our aid agency partners such as the US Agency for International Development, the Red Cross and Concern Worldwide. There was also local support and donations from various people and institutions. For instance, one student of Moi University sacrificed KShs. 3,000 to support the relief effort – it was a moving, humbling and generous gesture. Special gratitude goes to Alphax College which donated the first food to the displaced people camping at the Cathedral.

We benefited considerably from our involvement with other religious organizations, particularly the Brothers of Mercy (CMM Brothers), Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya, Catholic Diocese of Lodwar, Anglican Church of Kenya, Reformed Church of East Africa and the National Council of Churches of Kenya. Many religious groups provided counseling services to victims of violence, softening their hearts and opening a way for dialogue. We wish to extend especial thanks to Rev. Lelei of the Anglican Church who ministered in Lelmolok, Kesses Division in Eldoret South District, one of the hotspots of the violence. He seen as neutral and was instrumental in narrowing divisions between the two communities.

Several government officials have supported our peacebuilding efforts, including the District Officer and Chiefs in Kesses who attended the first peace meetings at the Cathedral. They helped in mobilizing Kalenjin people from their areas to attend the gatherings. Moreover, the Chief in Timboroa, Mr. Kendagor, supported with great zeal the Church's peace initiative there.

Finally, I must thank all the people and organizations who were involved in producing this book. Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Australia (funded by AusAID) supported this project with funding, oversight and technical support. Several people assisted me with writing, editing, proofing and program management including Ken

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1

INTRODUCTION

*‘Violence shall no more be heard
in your land, devastation or
destruction within your borders....’*

– Isaiah 60:18a. NRSV.

It was 1997 and my Diocese was engulfed in the ferocious turmoil surrounding the second multiparty elections after many years of dictatorial single party rule. Political authorities were sowing seeds of discord, dividing citizens along tribal lines and instigating terrible communal violence. At the same time, battles between Pokot and Marakwet warriors, instigated by cattle rustling, raged in the Kerio Valley. Fearing for their safety, I went to visit some of the Sisters and priests in the parishes. As I visited three Sisters in Endo, I saw houses burning all around. On my way back to Eldoret, I decided to take tea at the parish house in Chesongoch. All of a sudden, a shoot-out broke out between Pokot and Marakwet gunmen. The priest and I took cover in the corner and the Sisters ran to hide. We sat there for two hours, just listening to the different types of guns. When the fighting finally died down, we found many dead people lying on the ground and numerous others injured. We provided first aid and helped take casualties to the hospital.

Later we returned safely to Eldoret, but Pokot warriors shot at the car of the District Commissioner some few minutes behind me on the road. Afterward, one of the Pokot commanders told the Sisters that they had discussed whether to shoot at my vehicle. The warriors had wanted to, but had eventually decided against it, because I was a Bishop and because the Diocese had provided their villages with food during a recent famine. I began to realize the church, and our Diocese, could play a special role in calling for peace in their valley. In the words of James Kimiso, our Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission Coordinator, we realized that the church needed to exercise 'stewardship' in the community 'by resolving to work with the people to achieve sustainable peace.' We began to think hard about what we, the Diocese, could do to stop the violence. I asked our Justice and Peace Commission to go ask the Pokot and Marakwet elders what they would want the church to do for them. We were surprised to find the answer from both sides was the same: 'We want you to help us talk to each other.'

**'We want
you to help
us talk to
each other'**

One of our early initiatives was to hold peace seminars and trainings at hotels and our pastoral center, as an attempt to bring people to a neutral and convenient location. We wanted them to go back to their villages with the lessons they had learned from us. However, we began to realize that the same people kept coming to all our seminars. We discovered that many of these same people appeared at trainings put on by other organizations. We were contributing to the creation of a class of 'professional seminar goers' – 'peace mercenaries' as some have unkindly called them. They were the people who would be found easily in the trade centers and were often the educated elite. We had unwisely and mistakenly relied on these people to carry the message of peace to

**We needed
to facilitate
peace in the
village, not
in urban
hotels**

the gun-wielders who caused violence and killed people. But this was not effective; indeed, villagers disdainfully referred to them as 'the people who go to eat rice.'

We realized we needed to start again at the grassroots, to reach the actual perpetrators and victims of violence. We needed to facilitate *amani mashinani* – peace in the village, not peace in urban hotels. Sustainable peace would have to be

rooted in the local environment and engage those most affected by the violence, not just those who show up to NGO conferences.

We found more success in our efforts to directly engage communities in discussions. We asked the Marakwet and Pokot communities to suggest one person as their spokesperson; each proposed their Senior Chief. I invited the chiefs for a meeting in my office and the dialogue started at that point. We organized another meeting for the chiefs. Unfortunately, the District Officer refused to allow the Pokot chiefs to come. But both sides still wanted to talk and the Pokot chiefs offered to guarantee the security of their Marakwet counterparts if they came to the community to meet them. I took the Marakwet chiefs in my vehicle out to a school on the border of the two communities, where both sides met in a classroom.

That first large meeting was very tough, with bitter accusations and counteraccusations, each group counting their losses, in human beings, animals and property. We spent time listening to what they had lost, let them throw words until they had exhausted their finger pointing. I told them, ‘Let us look ahead, what we have lost we can recover, by God’s grace, when there is peace. Continuing fighting will only result in more loss.’ The discussion continued until all parties agreed on the declaration of a ceasefire to stop more destruction. We continued holding regular peace meetings with the communities to deliberate on arising issues and monitor the situation. They agreed to widen the discussion to a broader group of people from both sides.

As the dialogue continued we decided to develop peace projects that would unite people around their common needs. We helped construct a school at the border of the two communities, so that children from each community could learn together. Since cattle diseases led to the loss of many animals, which in turn prompted raiding of other communities’ stocks to replace them, we built cattle dips in neutral places accessible to both communities. The cattle dips helped control disease, promoted interaction between people and provided an opportunity to identify stolen livestock.

**‘Let us look
ahead,
continuing
fighting will
only result
in more
loss’**



Pokot women dancing at a peace meeting in the Kerio Valley.

Lack of water for animals also contributed to conflict, so the communities identified a common watering place. As a way to encourage freedom of movement, we held a 'Peace Marathon', in which members of both communities ran a route that spanned both their areas. A church was built at the foot of Kapsait Hill where the two communities gather for peace prayers annually on New Year's Day. These projects fostered the communities' healthy self-interest and cooperation, building links and reducing mistrust.

The conflict during 1997 was not the first outbreak of hostilities in the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret. Murderous election-related violence in 1992 and politically instigated clashes in 1994 killed, injured and displaced thousands of people. All these conflicts have affected the diverse communities living within our jurisdiction. They have severely disrupted harmonious co-existence and there remain physical injuries and psychological trauma, divisions between different ethnic communities and stalled economic development. Most of those displaced are women and children. Many women have been widowed by

the conflicts, further increasing the chances of increasing poverty, rape and other domestic violence.

Many residents in the Diocese long for peace and an end to the fighting – the church cannot stand idly by while people are dying. As a result, the Diocese – together with NGOs, government agencies and individuals – has sought ways to restore peace. The recurring clashes affect the pastoral and development activities of the Diocese and call for a lasting solution at the grassroots – *amani mashinani*. We have realized

**Peace is a
common
good that we
must
promote and
guard**

that peace is a common good that we must promote and guard. Therefore, we have responded in numerous ways to alleviate, contain and end the violence that plagues our people, providing relief, shelter, development assistance, reconciliation and peacebuilding services.

The terrible post-election violence in 2008 prompted us to further develop our peacebuilding outreach and consolidate the lessons we have learned in the last 16 years. This book is the result of that collective reflection within the Diocese, with input from partners such as Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Australia. The purpose of this book is to highlight:

1. The step-by-step process we use to build peace at the grassroots level, starting from inner change and person-to-person contacts, but growing into group-to-group encounters, collaborative projects and localized peace agreements.
2. The impressive work of local Peace Committees, which have struggled together to address underlying conflicts over land, politics, culture and history.
3. The importance of integrating peacebuilding into development efforts.
4. The principles of our grassroots peacebuilding approach.
5. The qualities and values of the grassroots peacebuilder.

The purpose of this book is to share with others in Kenya and beyond the experiences my Diocesan Justice and Peace Team and I have

gained in dealing with conflict. We hope others will benefit from the lessons we have learned and will adapt them for their particular circumstances. We do not claim this is the only way to build peace; others should be flexible in applying it to their context. Indeed, much of our work has been assisted by advice, reading and technical assistance from our partners that we have ourselves adapted. We only hope our modest successes in the North Rift Valley will provide some glimmer of optimism for those people tragically enmeshed in the world's many conflicts.

2

A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

‘Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from your own cistern...’

– 2 Kings 18:31b, 32b. NRSV.

While violence has plagued Kenya’s elections since 1992, the level of destruction following the 2007 elections was unprecedented. Political rifts divided on ethnic lines, exacerbated by opportunistic politicians, misinformation and fear. Tension, which in our Diocese was particularly high among the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities, disintegrated into outright violence following the announcement of the election results. The violence opened wounds from the 1992 and 1997 elections, but the level of devastation was unprecedented. In Eldoret alone, 130 people were killed and property worth millions of shillings went up in flames.



Aerial view of Sacred Heart Cathedral in Eldoret, as displaced people begin to arrive following the 2007 elections.

As the conflict continued, the focus shifted from the disputed elections to the issue of land, which has long been a source of mistrust and violence in our Diocese. Each of the groups affected by the clashes was demanding justice, but their understanding of it was different. For many Kikuyu, justice meant compensation for property lost and arrest of the troublemakers. For many Kalenjin it meant ‘reclaiming’ the land perceived to have been ‘grabbed’ by Kikuyu following the exodus of white settlers after independence.

For two weeks, some 10,000 displaced people flocked to the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Eldoret. Our facilities were overstretched and inadequate for so many people and eventually we helped move them to a temporary settlement at the Eldoret Agricultural Showground. The church was caught off guard by the ferocity of the violence and struggled to react appropriately to alleviate, contain and end the suffering. We at the Diocese of Eldoret decided to draw upon our experience responding to conflict in the 1990s, first seeking to address the immediate effects of the violence before trying to get at root issues through sustained peacemaking efforts. We used some of the lessons from working with Pokot and Marakwet communities and applied them to the new situation in Burnt Forest, Timboroa, Munyaka, Kimumu, Kipkenyo and Huruma, among other places. In this chapter, I discuss our efforts in 2008, with

reference also to our previous work, to illustrate the process of grassroots peacebuilding we have developed. It is outlined here as a step-by-step process to clearly and simply illustrate the method. However, it should not be applied strictly or mechanistically; steps should flow into each other organically and be adapted to local context. The process will be explained further in the next chapter by exploring two case studies of our recent peacebuilding work.

Step 1. Analysis, Intervention and Interruption

While open conflict is still raging, the first step for those of us who want peace is analyze the situation thoroughly and then do everything we can to discourage, contain and damp down the violence. We call this intervention and interruption – for we try to interrupt the fighting as it

**The first
step is to
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damp down
the violence**

occurs. This can be difficult to do for those of us who are unarmed and fear the depredations of the mob. Nevertheless, there are still things we can sometimes do to reduce the fighting. For instance, the church is imbued with moral authority and can sometimes sway people to listen to their conscience and lay down their arms. Though risky, we can physically put ourselves between belligerents, making them think twice

about their actions. We can reason with fighters, pleading with them to seek more peaceful pursuits.

It was this latter approach that I adopted in the immediate aftermath of the 2007 elections. I spoke with whomever I could – youth, elders, political leaders – and asked them, ‘How long are you going to fight? If you want to fight you can always fight, but now is the time for planting. So why don’t you stop for a while, plant your maize and then if you return to fighting, at least the maize is growing. You know famine is the worst enemy, it has no tribe!’ I tried to interrupt their concentration on killing the enemy by sowing seeds of doubt about the wisdom of their actions, trying to turn their thoughts to productive rather than destructive pursuits.

On other occasions, I have tried to interrupt violence more directly. During the 1992 clashes, I went to check on some of the Sisters who were living in Turbo town, Uasin Gishu district. As we drove, every vehicle we passed along the way flashed their lights, warning me not to go into the town, but we were worried for the Sisters’ safety and so

continued. When we arrived, riotous Kalenjin youth were forcibly evicting people and threatening to burn down the town. About ten police were trying to contain the violence, but they were overwhelmed and asked me to talk to the hundreds of youth, armed with bows and arrows. As the Kalenjin youth sent about 20 men forward to draw fire and force the police to use up their ammunition, I stepped between them and the police, putting my hands above my head and shouting 'Don't shoot! Don't shoot!' I do not know where I got the courage and doubt I could do that again. After a tense standoff, the youth agreed to retreat if I would escort them, to ensure they were not shot in the back by the police. I did so and as we walked away, I overheard them complaining to each other, saying, 'We should have gone earlier, before the pastor arrived.'

That same year, I was called to a place called Rironi in Ol'Lessos, where local Kikuyu villagers were being forcibly displaced from their homes. When I arrived I found a group of them surrounded by over 200 Kalenjin young men with bows, arrows and other traditional weapons. When I asked the young men to let the people go, they said they wanted to kill them because they had killed their people. I initiated a negotiation,

Clergy can use the moral authority of the cassock and collar to interrupt conflict

which though long and heated, eventually resulted in the youth begrudgingly releasing the villagers. I accompanied the villagers as they walked five kilometers from Rironi to Kesses, a center where it would be safer for them.

These and similar incidents made me realize that though we were not the police or military, we could intervene to interrupt conflict in a non-violent manner. Indeed, we clergy could use our moral authority and the symbolic impact of the cassock and collar to persuade people to put down their arms.

Step 2. Protection, Sanctuary and Relief

I owe much to my father. He used to tell me stories and the sayings of the old people. He told me that when someone is in danger and runs to your compound, you must rescue that person, not chase them away. For if you turn them back and they are killed, you have participated in their killing. So you must welcome them, hide them and offer them food and



Rescued people alighting from a church-owned lorry, which was used to transport displaced victims of the violence to the Cathedral.

drink, no matter what their tribe or background. If someone is running for their life, you must never turn them away.

Since ancient times, religious buildings have often been seen as places of such sanctuary, where people who were threatened could seek safety and protection from harm. Today, the church is still called to be a protector of the displaced, a minister to the victims of violence, a provider of relief to those threatened with harm. On multiple occasions since 1992, the churches in our Diocese have had to provide safe haven and aid to people fleeing the periodic outbreaks of violence. At one point in 2008, even a group of suspected Mungiki militiamen in retreat ran to the Cathedral to seek sanctuary. We let them in, met with them and called the police to escort them away.

As unrest erupted after the election results were announced on 31 December 2007, people began running to Sacred Heart Cathedral in Eldoret (the seat of our Diocese) for refuge. The first thing my staff and I did was open the door for the people. The next thing was to think what to do. Initially I had thought only a few people would come, but the numbers kept swelling until we had some 10,000 people camping in our compound. It became so crowded that I could not open the window of my



Sister Macrina Cheruto leading a prayer session at the Diocesan offices for psycho-social counselors ministering to the displaced people.

office because there were three or four families living right outside it. When I came to work in the morning there were children asleep in the doorway.

We immediately established a crisis committee to handle the multitude. Next we had to find out who was in the compound, as people had come from different areas. We identified leaders from the various communities who could assist us. With only one outside tap for thousands of people, we quickly had to install additional taps. Some people needed medical services and we organized a temporary dispensary to provide medicine in the boardroom of the Diocesan Offices. Soon this was serving more than 200 patients a day. Being a church, we were also able to offer 'spiritual first aid', comforting and uplifting people who shocked and traumatized. We looked for food and made local appeals to feed the crowd before other organizations, like the Red Cross, arrived and assisted with medicine, water, sanitation and clothes. As we looked after the people at the Cathedral, we also began evacuating people who were trapped in places outside Eldoret town, like Kesses and Cheptiret. Luckily, there were some good Kalenjin people who protected Kikuyus who were trapped in parish church compounds

and other gathering places. Our drivers went from place to place evacuating the people fleeing from their homes.

The fact that many people took shelter at the Eldoret Cathedral was no assurance of their security; the victims of violence could still be attacked and it reached a point when they had to be moved to a more secure

**The church
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location. Moreover, our compound was soon filled to maximum capacity and people began seeking refuge in other churches, police stations and chiefs' camps. Eventually we were able to arrange to move people to the Agricultural Society of Kenya Eldoret Showground, where the international community took over the provision of relief and assistance for some 20,000 displaced persons.

In short, the second step of the process is to provide protection, sanctuary and relief to victims of violence. In this, the church is no substitute for effective government protection and services for its citizens, but when this breaks down, the church must step into the breach to aid the suffering.

Step 3: One-to-One Meetings

As the movement of displaced persons to the Showground neared completion, we began to realize that we needed to move beyond addressing the symptoms of the conflict. Groups seeking peace began meeting in hotels to look for solutions, but I felt these conferences were too removed from the grassroots reality faced by ordinary people. I withdrew from these meetings and decided to try to unite the warring communities using the same approach we had used in the Kerio Valley.

I began looking for respected elders from the conflicting communities who could volunteer to begin discussions and negotiations for peace. I decided to begin with people who understood dialogue and had, in the wake of the fighting, displayed a deep desire to embrace peace and shun violence. I called one man from the Kikuyu community and asked him how we could resolve the problem. Interestingly, he echoed the same words of the Pokot and Marakwet elders we spoke to in 1997, asking me to help him talk to the other side. I asked him to identify a person from the Kalenjin community, whom he could talk to, which he did. I spoke with each of them separately, so that they would feel free to

express themselves and so I could get a sense of the possibilities for dialogue. I then invited them for a joint meeting in my office. I asked them, 'How long are you going to fight? It is now the planting season and you should stop the war first in order to plant. Fighting has been there and will always be there as long as people live. People should therefore stop and engage in other activities.' Their reaction was positive and they agreed with me. They arranged for another meeting that would involve more people from their communities. Thus, while the national level negotiations were being facilitated by Kofi Annan, we were engaging the warring communities at the grassroots, trying to create a local ceasefire and peace process.

I have always found that no matter how ferocious the fighting, there are always some people in every community who feel uncomfortable with the violence, have a hankering for peace and are open to making contact with the other side. They want help finding a way out of the madness. As a result, the third step in our peacemaking process is to find some of these people and begin facilitating one-to-one dialogue. Indeed, the initial change occurs at the personal level, as these two people undergo a personal transformation for peace.

In every community there are people who feel uncomfortable with violence

We start small so that at first our efforts are relatively low-stakes and more easily controlled. When we finally erode the (often considerable) suspicion and skepticism of these few people we ask them to be 'messengers', seeking out new people to be a part of the discussions. At all times one must be careful not to dictate the process, because one wants the local people to own it. Instead, I have seen my role as facilitator and mediator. I ask them 'What can I do?' 'How can I help?' 'What can we do to end the fighting?' Whatever their answers are, even if they seem ridiculous, one must listen, both to build trust and to understand more completely the concerns of the communities.

Step 4: Small Group to Small Group Meetings

The participants of the one-on-one discussions suggested other community members who they thought would be interested in seeking peace. Both of the first two 'messengers' – one Kikuyu and one Kalenjin – brought four people from their communities and we began to facilitate discussions within and between small groups of people.

It is best to start with groups of not more than 10 people, because it is more manageable, easier to control and simpler to gauge emotions and steer a neutral course. It is less likely that a small group will develop into a fracas and the various participants will have a chance to get to know each other on a more personal level. As the process develops, the mediator can meet with several small groups concurrently, drawing in a broader representation of the community. It can sometimes be helpful to start by holding intra-ethnic small group meetings first, before bringing the two sides together. This allows people to clarify what it is they want from the other community and to speak freely. During the discussions, the mediator should allow everyone to speak, switching back and forth between the two sides and preventing any one person or group to dominate. In the initial encounters, the participants will often feel a great deal of emotion, fear and anger and will probably unleash a deluge of accusations at the other side. While moderating and challenging use of derogatory language, the mediator should let the discussion run its course until they run out of things to say. At the end, the mediator asks the participants whether they have covered everything, allowing them to add additional thoughts. One should never ignore any of the points that people raise.

However, once all the bitterness has been aired, the mediator should shift the focus to ways forward. I often point out to groups that though lives have been lost, we cannot turn back the clock – instead we must work to prevent further deaths in the community. With small groups in the aftermath of the 2007 elections, I again focused on the question, ‘For how long are you going to fight, considering this is the planting season?’ This question formed the basis of our discussion and there seemed to be consensus on the part of both communities that the violence had to stop. We organized another meeting outside in the Cathedral grounds in which the elders brought even more people. While they were initially reluctant, I encouraged all the participants to shake hands and greet each other, as a sign of good faith. I then posed the same question as before: ‘For how long are you going to continue fighting? Fighting will never end; you are neither the first to fight nor the last.’ I used the planting season focus in order to shift their minds away from war to food.

**‘If you
continue
to fight,
you won’t
be able to
plant’**

That said, the mediator should not rush the process. One must move slowly and deliberately to ensure there is a solid foundation for further peacebuilding efforts. In facilitating dialogue, the mediator attempts to allow catharsis of bitterness, but simultaneously shift people's minds from fighting to constructive activities. Once people engage as dialogue partners – rather than enemies – then they are ready for peacemaking.

Step 5: Sharing Food

Traditionally in our local cultures, when former enemies ate together it symbolized reconciliation and healing. Sharing a meal cemented an agreement to be peaceful to one another. For we do not like to eat with people we dislike, but if we do, it forces us to be civil, at least for the length of the meal. It is hard to argue when your mouth is full. Indeed, in the church, sharing the food at Eucharist is a sacrament – a symbol that we are unified in Christ's body, no matter our tribe, nation or color. As we brought more and more people to peace meetings at the Cathedral grounds, I asked James Kimisoi, the Justice and Peace Coordinator, to bring soda to the meeting. The sharing of drinks became a unifying factor as people interacted and greeted each other for the first time since they started fighting. At most of our peace meetings we now share food, or at least tea or sodas.

We don't like to eat with people we dislike, but if we do, it forces us to be civil, at least for the length of the meal

That said, food should not be seen as a panacea and one should not force people to eat together too quickly. For instance, we once made a mistake by serving a joint meal too soon. We were holding a peace meeting at our pastoral center. Because the number of people involved was so large and we knew the meeting would take a long time, we provided some food as they were gathering. Once we started the meeting, one of the groups refused to participate and said they wanted to meet separately, saying, 'We were not supposed to have eaten together with these people.' Therefore, while sharing food can be a powerful way to unify people, timing is crucial. It should come once there is a process underway and some basic trust. Traditionally, people had a meal together once the conflict had some resolution, not at the beginning of negotiations. In other contexts and cultures, one may want to substitute this step for

another simple ritual that is commonly used to symbolize reconciliation and unity.

Step 6: Intra-Ethnic Meetings

Before bringing larger groups together, we have found it helpful for the conflicting groups to meet separately to clarify their grievances or the wrongs they want righted. If this is not done, large meetings can become chaotic with everyone wanting to talk at once. Unless both sides are clear about what they actually want, it becomes very difficult to form an agenda.

**Intra-ethnic
meetings
help clarify
people's
grievances**

Therefore, in step six the mediator facilitates intra-ethnic meetings, incorporating more people than in the small groups, in which each community analyzes the sources of the conflict and ways forward. This allows both groups to say things that they might feel uncomfortable saying in front of the other group. Moreover such meetings help people refine precisely what their concerns are, letting off some of their anger and beginning to think more clearly about the underlying problems. The villages involved were asked to select the participants who, in addition to those who were involved in the small groups, would represent them in these meetings (and later in the inter-ethnic meetings). The persons were chosen by the local community, but we suggested that they pick a broad range of people, in terms of age, gender and background and that representatives have an interest in pursuing peace. There should be about 15 to 30 people in total.

The mediator guides these sessions, to keep them moving forward, but should allow the people themselves to shape the agenda based on their particular concerns. Eventually the group should come to consensus on a list of things they believe caused the conflict. The mediator should challenge them to think deeply about these issues and not just write slogans or epithets. In the past I had had groups air these grievances directly to each other. In the context of the 2008 post-election violence I was worried that this could lead to an eruption of disorder in meetings and so opted for an alternative method, based on a common Catholic marriage counseling practice. I asked both groups to write out their list of concerns, seal it in an envelope and give it to me.

Step 7: Airing of Grievances

Once the lists were ready, we called both groups together for a joint ceremony of presenting the envelopes. This was a very tense moment, but we felt it was important that both groups hear from each other how they felt. In other conflict settings, this method may not work or could even have the potential to inflame the situation. I thus advise the reader to think about how best to air such grievances in their own context, setting and culture.

In our case, I, or one of the priests, opened the envelopes and, with the help of a translator for each community, read them out to those assembled. We asked people to be prepared to hear things they might not like and to listen with an open heart. As I read out the lists, I had to be very careful to avoid any emotion or inflexion in my voice and had to stop myself from making any hand gestures or facial expressions. It was crucial that people not think I agreed or disagreed with any item in either list. If there is any clearly offensive language in the lists, the mediator may wish to consider adapting the wording slightly, maintaining the key points while reducing the inflammatory language.

I had to be careful to read without emotion or inflexion in my voice

To conclude the meeting, we facilitated a brief discussion to help the group process the lists and agree to another meeting to develop them into a discussion agenda. To symbolize the willingness of both communities to discuss these issues in good faith, at the end we had a closing prayer, asked everyone to shake hands with each other and then held a joint meal. While this can be tense, it can also reduce some of the pressure as people interact over food and drink.

Step 8: Preparation of Agenda and Inter-Ethnic Meetings

Following the presentation of the envelopes we arranged a series of inter-ethnic peace meetings between about members of the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities, totaling about 30 to 70 people. We call these meetings Village Peace Committees. The contents of the envelopes was used to form an agenda for discussion. While the agenda should arise from the group discussions and not be imposed by the mediator, I would occasionally unobtrusively help guide the group toward a common agenda. We have found that when people have had a little more time to reflect, they actually decide to drop some of the less important concerns



Members of the Burnt Forest Peace Committee.

they originally listed in the envelopes. If there is a broad agreement about this, more petty issues can be left off the discussion agenda. There also may be many points that can be grouped under broader categories, like land, politics or economics. My staff and I then encouraged people to look for commonalities between the two groups' lists. While they may have different perspectives, both groups may actually have common concerns like youth unemployment, the behavior of political officials or the conduct of the police.

Once a list of agenda items has been formed, the group should determine their priority, deciding which issues they will discuss first, and which they will leave for later. In the beginning, they may want to focus on less contentious issues, so that they grow in experience of negotiation around issues that have less potential to be polarizing and divisive. That said, some items may be particularly urgent (such as distributing relief, calling for a ceasefire or responding to a crisis) that need to be dealt with immediately. Once the groups begin discussions on the agenda, they should feel free to rearrange the agenda as they get a better sense of the issues.

Once the agenda and its order has been decided, the participants should meet regularly to hold discussions. The Peace Committees we have helped set up in Yamumbi/Kapteldon and Burnt Forest both meet every week. In the beginning, the meetings should be facilitated by a respected and neutral third party – my staff, our local parish priests and I have all played this role. As tensions reduce and the groups become more comfortable with each other, they may be able to pick a trusted, sober and skilled mediator from amongst themselves to facilitate the discussions. The outside mediator should nevertheless still remain involved, checking up on the progress of discussion and perhaps helping to facilitate dialogue on particularly difficult issues. Personally, I go to the village peace meetings when they are about to open discussion of a new agenda item and also when they have concluded a major decision. I encourage them in their work and offer the help of my Diocesan staff.

In their discussions, the participants may come up with concrete action plans or projects to solve certain problems. With some issues, such as misinformation and prejudice, the discussion and dialogue itself may be sufficient to clear the air and bring about some healing. With particularly complicated issues, such as land tenure or legal problems, the Committee may wish to request the help of an expert. Outside mediators can help find experts through their contacts and those of their supporting organizations. Finally, some problems may be difficult to solve at the local level, since they have national or regional dimensions. With such issues, the group may decide to leave the issue to one side, or may want to become involved in broader national discussions. For instance, they could send letters or representatives to government officials, the media or other stakeholders. During all meetings someone should be appointed to take minutes to ensure there is a record of all decisions made. Minutes from the previous meeting should be presented and agreed upon at the beginning of every meeting.

**Dialogue
itself may
correct
prejudice
and bring
about
healing**

While the inter-ethnic meetings are ongoing, the participants should continue occasionally to caucus in intra-ethnic meetings, to discuss ways forward, check that everyone continues to buy in to the process and consider how best to present their concerns to the other side.

Every peace meeting should be concluded with sharing of food and/or drink. If money is not available to feed everyone, the participants should at least share sodas or tea. As before, sharing food and drink becomes a symbol of unity and a willingness to engage with the other side. We have also found it helpful to start and end meetings with a prayer, to request spiritual guidance and set a sober, contemplative tone for the discussions.

Step 9: Reporting Back and Caucusing with Communities

Both the intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic Peace Committees should regularly hold general meetings in the village to explain the agenda, discussions that have been held and any decisions made. This is essential both to ensure accountability and to disseminate information and lessons learned from the dialogue to the community. It should be made clear that the community should feel free to disagree with the Peace Committee, challenge them, pose questions and offer suggestions. This caucusing with the community helps to broaden ownership of the peace process within the local population and helps prevent local people becoming suspicious of what their representatives might have agreed behind their backs.

It may also be helpful to have discussions with particular sectors of the local population, like women and youth to ensure their specific concerns are heard. Again, the outside mediator should probably lead these reporting back sessions in the beginning, but can hand over to the local Committee in time.

Step 10: Peace Connector Projects

As group discussions become more productive and less tense, we have found it helpful for groups to initiate collaborative joint projects, events or activities. These aimed to solve common problems faced by both communities and build experience of working together for common goals. If outside donors can be persuaded to invest in the project, it can also demonstrate to the community a sort of ‘peace dividend’ – the possibilities for investment and productive development that can come from building peace. Initial projects or activities should be short-term and

**Caucusing
with the
community
helps to
broaden
ownership of
the peace
process**

fairly simple, such as management of local relief efforts or sports days. However, as the Peace Committee gains experience, they should be encouraged to take on more complicated projects like building schools, roads or destroyed homes. The experience working together can reduce tension and build solidarity across ethnic lines. For instance, as mentioned in the introduction, we found that cattle dips built in neutral territory were often good projects for building peace between the Pokot and Marakwet communities in our Diocese. This was because cattle dips brought people together in the same locations, encouraged them to interact and helped reduce cattle rustling (through preventing loss of cattle to disease and helping to identify stolen stock). In another example, I was involved with members of two communities who were rebuilding houses destroyed by the violence in an ethnically mixed area. After one house was completed, some people from another ethnic group who had looted property from the home offered to return it. This was quite an unexpected gesture and did much to heal some of the local mistrust and divisions.

That said, we have found that not all projects and activities are particularly effective. For instance, while it can be powerful symbolically, we have found that bringing people to pray together in church is not always effective. Firstly, this is because participants may come from a variety of religious backgrounds. Secondly, one wants people to interact and work together; in church one comes, sits in one's pew, worships and then leaves. Finally, focusing solely on joint church services may distract people from the reality of conflict and suffering outside the church's walls. Of course, as a Bishop I am not saying that prayer and worship are not important. On the contrary, they can challenge us to be better peacebuilders. However, in addition to worship, God requires us actually to work for peace – to understand, love and assist our neighbors. We cannot hide in our pews in the name of piety.

**God
requires us
to work for
peace. We
cannot hide
in our pews
in the name
of piety**

There is also some potential for projects, especially if they are poorly managed, to become divisive. In the aftermath of the conflict, one Peace Committee nearly broke down over disagreements about how relief supplies should be distributed. They weathered this storm, but nevertheless, it caused many problems in the short-term. When

**‘In the
African
tradition we
don’t fight
for food’**

distributing the benefits of projects, one can unfortunately encounter a great deal of greed and selfishness, with each person and group vying for as much as possible. In one such setting, as people fought over a distribution of seeds and fertilizers, I referred to traditional wisdom, admonishing them that ‘In the African tradition we don’t fight for food.’

To prevent these problems and ensure that Peace Connector Projects are effective, sustainable, community-owned and productive, Peace Committees should carefully consider the following key issues:

1. There should be a careful and thorough needs assessment to identify the key problems that would be in the interest of both communities to solve. Failure to do a proper assessment can lead to projects that are unneeded and waste time and money.
2. Projects should be designed carefully, to ensure that they actually address the issues they are intended to solve, plan for possible problems and are technically sound.
3. The local people should feel that they own the project and have full participation in its management and direction. If the project is imposed on them by outsiders, they will be less likely to ensure its success.
4. Lines of authority should be clearly defined: Who is in charge of what? Who is responsible for financial accounting? Which decisions are made by the entire Committee and which are left to managers? If such questions are not answered, conflicts over power and authority can sap energy from a good project.
5. There should be tight accountability mechanisms in place to prevent misuse of resources. Corruption will only intensify the conflict and encourage the belief that one side cannot be trusted in good faith.
6. The project should benefit as many people as possible in the community, to show the benefits of peace to the entire village, not just a lucky few,
7. The distribution of such benefits should be equitable. The criteria for distribution should be agreed upon in



A Catholic Relief Services vehicle tests the 'Peace Road' linking Yamumbi and Kapteldon, a peace connector project of the local Peace Committee.

advance by the Committee, to prevent conflicts over who gets what and how much. The reasoning behind such allocation should be explained clearly and carefully to the villagers concerned so that rumors, misinformation and gossip do not spread.

8. If the project is a building or some kind of structure, it should be located in an area that is considered 'neutral territory', in which all people will feel welcome.
9. The project should encourage and incentivize interaction between the two communities at all points in the project development and management process. Ideally, the end result should also facilitate links between them.
10. The Peace Committee should monitor the project's progress carefully, to correct any problems and deal with any conflicts that might arise.

Step 11: Social Contract

Once the Peace Committees have several months of experience working together and have begun to come to a consensus about issues, they can begin to negotiate a local peace agreement, which we call a ‘Social Contract.’ The agreement must be structured around the particular issues in the community and be negotiated amongst themselves; it should never be imposed by the outsider. While developing the Social Contract, the Committee should be in constant contact with the community – reporting back to them on decisions made and asking for feedback and suggestions. There should be as much ‘buy-in’ from as many people as possible.

The agreement should include at least the following:

1. The issues which have been discussed and the key problems that have caused the violence,
2. The agenda for future discussions,
3. An agreed plan of action for addressing the conflict and how to deal with new arising issues,
4. Who will be responsible for making sure that the agreement is monitored and followed (perhaps a monitoring sub-committee).
5. Appropriate conduct and behavior when interacting with people from the other community (such as committing to nonviolence, forbidding insulting ethnic slurs and negotiating inter-community conflicts through elders rather than personally).
6. Penalties and sanctions in case of a breach of the agreement, including agreed compensation.

Once the agreement is finalized and is accepted by both communities, the Committee should hold a public event and ceremony, to sign the agreement in the presence of the local people, government officials and trusted observers like clergy or members of civil society and the media. Following the signing ceremony, the community should hold a feast, or at least share some food and drink, to symbolize the unity and reconciliation of the two communities.

Step 12: Monitoring and Ongoing Development of the Agenda

Once the Social Contract is in place, the Peace Committee should continue to meet to monitor compliance with the agreement and continue to discuss unresolved issues. As the situation around them changes they may wish to develop a new agenda to take into account new problems that arise. The focus should be on ‘deepening’ the peace and reaching out to educate and sensitize the communities around them. The mediator should also continue to monitor the situation, offering advice and assistance where possible.

Though the implementation might differ from place to place, we have found the 12 steps outlined here to be a particularly effective method of bringing conflicting communities together. It is not a quick process – it should take at least two years, to ensure that the Committee deals with the very root issues that instigate violent conflict in their community. This process will be illustrated more clearly by telling the story our peacebuilding efforts in two villages near Eldoret.

The 12 Steps We Followed in Community Peacebuilding

- 1. Analysis, Intervention and Interruption**
- 2. Protection, Sanctuary and Relief**
- 3. One-to-One Meetings**
- 4. Small Group to Small Group Meetings**
- 5. Sharing Food**
- 6. Intra-Ethnic Meetings**
- 7. Airing of Grievances**
- 8. Preparation of Agenda and Inter-Ethnic Meetings**
- 9. Reporting Back and Caucusing with Communities**
- 10. Peace Connector Projects**
- 11. Social Contract**
- 12. Monitoring and Ongoing Development of the Agenda**

3

CASE STUDIES: YAMUMBI/KAPTELDON AND BURNT FOREST

‘Be at peace among yourselves.’

– 1 Thessalonians 5:13b. NRSV.

Outlining the step-by-step process, as in the previous chapter, is helpful for teaching it to others; however it can seem somewhat abstract. Therefore, I feel it is important to illustrate the process with examples from our recent work building peace between Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities. I also feel it is important to highlight the achievement of the people who have been involved in the local Peace Committees – for it is really their hard work and success, rather than ours. They have risked pressure from their own ethnic groups, faced harsh accusations from the other side and yet continued to negotiate and learn from each other in good faith. In this chapter, I narrate the progress, accomplishments and impact of the Peace Committees in two locations: Yamumbi/Kapteldon and Burnt Forest.

Yamumbi/Kapteldon Peace Committee

Yamumbi and Kapteldon are neighboring villages in rural rolling hills, a few kilometers from Eldoret town. The two communities are separated by the Lemook River at the bottom of the valley and, until recently, were linked directly only by a footpath. Yamumbi is primarily populated by Kikuyu and Kapteldon primarily occupied by Kalenjin, though there are also people of other ethnicities. Though they live in neighboring villages, the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities have remained largely isolated from each other, with little substantive integration of social and cultural life.

Most Kikuyus moved to the area of our Diocese (including Yamumbi) following Kenya's independence, when many white settlers, who had displaced original inhabitants, began selling their land. The government bought land from the settlers and established settlement schemes, in which a relatively small number of Kikuyu received plots. In the North Rift Valley, most Kikuyu acquired land by pooling their money together and buying from settlers who were leaving. Some of these Kikuyu were already living in the province prior to independence, working as foresters or as farm laborers for settlers. Naturally, they took advantage of loans that were available from the government and banks. These farms were then subdivided amongst themselves into small plots of a few acres. Many Kalenjin actually also obtained land in similar manner. However, tension soon arose between the Kikuyu settlers and local Kalenjin, many of whom felt the land of the Rift Valley was their ancestral heritage. This was eased by mediation from the Kenyatta government. However, with the advent of multi-partyism, political parties have manipulated these existing tensions, which have erupted into outright hostilities during every election period since 1992.

In the hostilities following the disputed 2007 election results Kikuyus were most affected in violence that burned houses, killed animals and destroyed shops. Five people from the two villages were killed.

Genesis of the Peace Committee

As the violence began to die down, in February 2008 my Diocesan staff and I decided that the twin villages of Yamumbi and Kapteldon would make a good pilot site to see if our method, which had worked with Pokot and Marakwet communities, could be used to address the conflicts



A house in Yamumbi destroyed during the 2008 post-election violence.

between Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities. I called together a couple elders who I thought would be open to peace. One of them later told us,

I was amazed that the Bishop planned to bridge the two communities. I thought he was just going to offer us humanitarian assistance.

I then asked these elders to get chiefs from both villages involved in the discussions and later expanded the dialogue to five people each from Yamumbi and Kapteldon. I met with them in the boardroom at the Diocesan Offices and asked them to shake hands and greet each other. They were very reluctant to do this, so I had to pressure them a little. I then asked them to share tea and started with a prayer.

I told them I intended to embark on a short-term dialogue to assist the community with food, focusing on the need to start planting. I then asked them what they believed were the reasons for the conflict. The Kikuyu elders accused the Kalenjin of looting and destroying their property and the Kalenjin elders said they wanted 'their land' returned to the Kalenjin. After some discussion, the elders agreed to continue meeting and to broaden the group to include more people. I sent them out into their

communities and asked them to call on people, particularly the youth, to stop the violence.

My Justice and Peace Commission staff took the lead in facilitating further meetings. We also moved the venue of the discussions to St. Mary's Catholic Church, Yamumbi to bring the meetings to the village level. Because it was the Lenten season I called on the two sides to forgive each other in the spirit of Lent.

**'Forgive
each other
in the spirit
of Lent'**

At the same time, we worked with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to provide relief in the form of seeds and fertilizer, to encourage people to focus on productive activities. I told them, 'What has happened has happened, and we need to look for food to plant.' While the issue of how this relief would be distributed became quite contentious (see the sub-section on collaborative projects below), the group eventually agreed to a plan. In the meantime, the two communities held intra-ethnic discussions, in which the participants drew up lists of their concerns and sealed them in envelopes. At the distribution event for the relief seeds, the envelopes were publically opened and read out loud by the Vicar General of the Diocese. At the next meeting, copies of these lists were handed out to the two communities and from these an agenda was developed. At the same time, representatives of the two communities were elected and a structure for the Peace Committee was agreed.

These early meetings were, according to one elder, 'very rowdy.' Two of the Committee members explained,

In the first meetings we had people whose hearts were still very difficult and there were a lot of arguments and quarrels. Sometimes we would walk out of the meeting.

Initially it was a bit hard. We perceived the Kalenjins were there to burn and destroy.

Initially, the Kikuyu participants were afraid to meet in Kapteldon. But by the fifth meeting, they felt ready to convene at the Kapteldon Catholic Church. The Kalenjin participants agreed to meet their Kikuyu counterparts at the Lemook River that divides the two communities and escort them to the meeting. Upon arrival at the church, the Kikuyu members were surprised to find that the Kalenjin participants had prepared a meal for them. One elder remarked,



The Yamumbi/Kapteldon Peace Committee often meets under this tree on the banks of the Lemook River that divides to the two villages.

This was unexpected considering the circumstances. After that people interacted freely without fear of each other. The tension that had earlier been experienced was reducing.

This gesture was reciprocated in another peace meeting at the Yamumbi Catholic Church, in which the Kikuyu participants served the Kalenjin members lunch. An elder in the group explained, 'It now became a practice to prepare lunch every time we held a meeting. Eating together enhanced our interaction and helped in uniting us.'

After their seventh joint meeting, the Peace Committee decided to hold a general meeting for all the members of the community, to explain what had been discussed and decided. They started in Kapteldon, where the Committee members from Yamumbi took the lead in describing the process to the people. Then they went to Yamumbi, where the Kapteldon participants facilitated the proceedings. One of the Peace Committee members reflected on the result:

Before we held the general meetings it was very hard to convince people that they could move and interact freely between the two villages. This attitude changed after the meetings.

At several points during these initial discussions we arranged meetings at our Pastoral Center for leaders of the various Peace Committees in other areas to meet each other. In addition to those of the Yamumbi/Kapteldon Peace Committee, we invited leaders from groups in Burnt Forest, Kimumu, Kabiemit, Ilula, Munyaka, Kimuri and Kiambaa. This enabled them to share experiences and lessons learned, build further cross-community links and give people confidence that peace was returning on a more regional scale, beyond their individual communities.



Members of the Yamumbi/Kapteldon Peace Committee meeting at the Diocesan offices.

Issues

Out of the discussion arising from the issues listed in the envelopes, the Peace Committee formed an agenda covering the seven key issues, listed below. To date, they have discussed the first four of them:

1. Land and settlement
2. Politics
3. Culture
4. Employment
5. Administration
6. Place names
7. Impunity

Land is perhaps one of the most heated points of contention in Yamumbi and Kapteldon and so was the first agenda item discussed by the Committee. The Kikuyu community perceived Kalenjin rhetoric about land and militia violence to be a violation of their fundamental property rights. They felt they had bought their land fairly from the

Clarifying the history of land tenure reduced tension

government and so had every right to stay in the Rift Valley. Many Kalenjins felt that Kikuyus were an invasive presence and that they should not have been allowed to settle in the area.

The early meetings on this issue were chaotic and unproductive, as few people knew the actual history of land tenure in the area. Eventually the group agreed to call five old people from each community to narrate the history of settlement since the 1930s. Clarifying the history, particularly regarding the migrations of both Kalenjin and Kikuyu to the area, counteracted misinformation and helped to reduce tension considerably. However, following four meetings with the old people, the group decided the issue was so complex, it should be shelved while they looked for land tenure experts to help them understand it better. They also began to realize that they could not solve the problems of land at the local level – it would have to be addressed at higher levels by the government.

The next issue discussed was that of politics. The group realized that violence was often linked to the election cycle. Out of the discussion, the

Committee has agreed to respect each person's right to vote for whomever they wish. They also decided that the Peace Committee should become a permanent structure to monitor and curb future tensions as they arise. That way, said one participant, 'When anything crops up we are always there to make sure things remain calm.' They have agreed individually to counteract rumors and hearsay and plan to organize sensitization workshops during election campaigns. 'We feel people need to be educated about democracy, people's rights and respect for others to curb future violence,' said one Committee member.

The third issue discussed by the Committee was culture. They have considered how to move from a culture of tribalism and prejudice to one that embraces and celebrates diversity. They have agreed to reactivate traditions that reinforce this message and to promote interaction between the two communities. They have organized opportunities for elders to have a drink together and have encouraged intermarriage among young people. The Committee has called on both communities to choose elders and community leader who are wise, sober and peace-loving rather than bigoted and intolerant. They have promoted parental obligations for teaching tolerance to children.

**We need
elders who
are wise
and peace-
loving, not
intolerant**

Finally, the Peace Committee has discussed the problem of unemployment, particularly among young people. They believe that with little money or incentive to engage in productive activities, youth are easily manipulated by politicians and militia leaders. While spurring durable economic growth is difficult at the local level, the Committee is looking for funding to conduct joint projects

Peace Connector Projects

The first project in which the Peace Committee was involved was the distribution of the relief seeds and fertilizer (provided by CRS and funded by the US Agency for International Development), to replace stocks burned during the violence. Unfortunately this project got off to a rough start when there was a misunderstanding between the CRS staff and the Committee members. During a discussion on how the supplies would be shared, one of the CRS officers explained that the top priority of their emergency project was to help internally displaced people (mostly

Kikuyu), though the rest of the community would also benefit from the mabaki (Kiswahili for 'remainder'). The Kalenjin participants misinterpreted this word to mean that they would only receive the 'left-overs', scraps or lesser quality seeds – and walked out of the meeting in protest. Our staff had to intervene and persuade the Kalenjin elders that no offense was intended and that it was simply a misinterpretation. They eventually agreed to return and following further

At the seed distribution, a Kalenjin woman ran over to a Kikuyu woman and embraced her

discussions, agreed that since the displaced people faced severer circumstances, they should receive a larger share of supplies.

The eventual project was designed to maximize peacebuilding impacts, through the choice and sensitization of multi-ethnic vendors. The youth also offered to assist elderly people from both the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities in planting. On the day of distribution, it was the first time many neighbors had met since the post-election violence. In a particularly moving moment, a Kalenjin woman ran over to a Kikuyu woman and embraced her. In the end the harvest was very good. One woman harvested 35 bags of maize from her one acre of land. Unprompted by us, the Peace Committee gave 10% of their harvest from the relief seeds to the Diocese. We later distributed this to other displaced persons in Burnt Forest and Timboroa.

In November, the Committee decided to engage in another collaborative project. With funding from CRS and Caritas Australia (supported by AusAID), they built an eight-kilometer road linking the two communities, to foster free exchange, movement and communication. It also intended to provide work and income to local youth. The project employed 40 young people from each village, five elderly men from each side to work as foremen, and a supervisor and secretary from both communities. Rather than use machines, they opted to use manual labor so that the youth would interact and get to know each other as they worked. A youth on the Peace Committee explained to us that the project had meant much to him as both communities had 'played, ate and worked together.' Eventually, they plan to build a bridge over the Lemook River that divides the two communities (at present it only has a ford and a narrow footbridge). The youths who participated in the construction of the Peace Road have formed an association, called 'After the Peace Road Project, What?' to continue supporting each other



Me visiting the youth of Yamumbi and Kapteldon as they build the 'Peace Road.'

through income generating activities. Funded by membership fees, it is providing small loans to members.

Impact

The local peace process in Yamumbi/Kapteldon has not been easy and they have faced many challenges. Some people have dropped out of the process and other have faced considerable pressure from their community to halt the dialogue. The following quotes show the level of resistance that they have had to overcome:

They call us betrayers because they believe the Kikuyu community should go out of the Rift Valley.

People ask us, 'What do you talk about when they burn our houses and kill our animals?'

Peace Road in the News

'[For Yamumbi and Kapteldon] ... tribal reconciliation is not some airy concept. ... It's a road that must tie these two communities, the Kikuyus and the Kalenjins, together so that the ethnic violence of a year ago never happens again.

'Working on this project, we've found that we can talk together. At least we can see there is some peace going on,' says Ms. Kingori, ... who still lives in a displacement camp, more than a year after fleeing from her home. ...

'The road project ... [is] one of the few successful efforts at reconciliation in a country that was torn apart when a tight presidential election degenerated into open ethnic warfare.'

**Scott Baldauf. (12 March 2009) 'Kenya's torn tribes rebuild trust with picks and shovels.' *The Christian Science Monitor*.
<<http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0312/p01s01-woaf.html>>.**

We still have people who are not happy about this.

Some believe there is no point in discussing peace, since violence has happened with every election since 1992.

Some people believed it was a Catholic agenda.

Nonetheless, the peace meetings have had an impressive impact on Yamumbi/Kapteldon, of which the local Peace Committee should be proud. The dialogues have increased understanding between the two communities. The road project has improved freedom of movement for people, goods and tractors for plowing. The following are a few reflections from members of the Peace Committee:

The situation is relatively peaceful now. The two communities are co-existing peacefully. There is no hostility or tension. The donation of seeds and fertilizer brought people together. The food really helped.

The Committees are still intact and are monitoring the peace situation. If anything happens and one community feels aggrieved at the other, the Peace Committee intervenes. We have also agreed on how to maintain the peaceful relationship and both communities are bound by the agreement. It is more than a year now since the violence erupted.

We have a saying, 'If the eye cries, it affects the nose.' I have learned that if my neighbor is suffering, so am I.

As a result of the road project, the interaction between the two communities has improved, in fact more than we had expected.

The Committee was very effective, we have succeeded at enhancing interaction between the communities and gradually reduced the tension that was mounting. People are gradually resettling.

Burnt Forest Peace Committee

Burnt Forest, a large agricultural community about 30km from Eldoret, was the site of particularly ferocious fighting during the 2008 post-election conflict. As people fled the violence, they congregated in a variety of locations, divided by ethnicity.

As one member of the Burnt Forest Peace Committee explained,

During and immediately after the violence, people created imaginary boundaries between themselves. People from one community could not go to the other community for fear of attack. Business was impossible and life was very difficult.

Genesis of the Peace Committee

One gathering place of such displaced people was the compound of Burnt Forest Catholic Church, where hundreds of Kikuyu people



An example of the damage inflicted by the 2008 post-election violence in Burnt Forest.

gathered to seek sanctuary from the fighting. Several among them wanted to take initiative to end the violence and mend relationships the Kalenjin community. They approached the local priest, Father Charles Kirui, and asked him to help arrange peace meetings. He took up the matter and approached Kalenjin leaders in places where Kikuyu felt unsafe to go. He was helped by a Kikuyu woman who used to ferment local brew and knew several Kalenjin former customers. She put herself at considerable risk by going to a Kalenjin settlement and persuading elders to come to the parish. They were afraid to travel along the main road or be seen coming in through the main gate, so she brought them through the fields to the back of the compound and over the fence. Then Father Kirui facilitated a small group discussion over tea between five elders from both sides. This was not easy because of a pervading sense of suspicion. At first, the two sets of elders could not even bring themselves to greet each other.

The Kalenjin elders faced significant danger by coming to the compound, both from Kikuyu displaced persons camped in the church

compound and from their own community, who accused them of betrayal. Father Kirui also faced accusations of betrayal for talking to and hosting Kalenjin people at the church and some of the Kikuyu people sheltering at the compound started rumors that the church was being taken over by Kalenjin. As one Peace Committee member put it, 'There was a lot of mistrust and suspicion between us.'

Despite the enormous tension surrounding that first meeting, those few Kikuyu and Kalenjin elders Father Kirui had brought together agreed that meetings needed to continue and expand to include more people of different age groups. They chose to hold such meetings at the church, since Father Kirui had begun the process and it was conveniently located.

That first larger meeting was very tense. The facilitators asked people to tell the truth about what had led to the conflict. One community member said, 'It was a very tough meeting, a lot of nasty words were thrown.' Another told us, 'We were very pessimistic about it; we doubted it would succeed.' Those who participated in the discussions also faced enormous pressure, even threats of violence, from their own community. As one Peace Committee member said, 'People were telling us we were betrayers for talking to Kalenjin.'

'The first meeting was very tough, with a lot of nasty words'

Nonetheless, many people decided to stick with the process and give it a chance. Many found the process of unburdening their anger on the group relieved and dissipated some of their bitterness. We were told that one of the turning points was when Father Kirui and the Diocese decided to hold a common feast at the church compound, inviting people from both the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities. Many people came. The Diocese had been kept informed of developments and I was happy to provide a cow for slaughter to feed the people. Traditionally, when rival communities had a common meal from the same animal it was a sign of reconciliation.

The peace meetings were further expanded and there are now 35 people from each side. They meet every Thursday in a 'Peace Tent' on the church compound donated by an NGO called PeaceNet Kenya. The meetings have borne fruit as community members now interact freely, visit each other's homes and have built a sense of common solidarity.



Members of the Burnt Forest Peace Committee pose outside their 'Peace Tent' in the Catholic parish compound.

Issues

The first few peace meetings followed the process outlined in the previous chapter, with each community meeting separately to develop a list of their concerns. These were sealed in envelopes and then read out to the gathering of both groups. Through discussing the lists in the envelopes, the Peace Committee developed an agenda, focusing on issues of land, politics, governance and administration and amnesty for those arrested during the conflict.

The issue of land was one of the first and one of the most difficult issues the Peace Committee has discussed. As one Committee member said, 'It was very sensitive in the beginning.' It took them seven meetings to come to an agreement on the issue. Initially, many of the Kalenjin community members demanded that the Kikuyu leave Burnt Forest, echoing political rhetoric that the area is 'Kalenjin ancestral land' that was 'stolen' by the Kikuyu. During the election period, many politicians spread inflammatory misinformation about the history of land

ownership in the area, claiming that the Kikuyu were in Burnt Forest illegally, that they were given their land for free and that they should 'go back to Central Province.'

Eventually the Peace Committee agreed that they needed to gather better information about the history of land tenure in the region, to counteract the rumors and misperceptions believed by both sides. They asked several very old men, some of whom were alive in the 1920s, to narrate their memory of the history of the area. They learned that the district boundaries that delineated so-called 'ancestral lands' were often drawn up by the colonials. 'We came to realize that it was not Kenyans who subdivided the land, it was the British who wanted to rule us,' said one Peace Committee member. They also discovered that much of the pressure of land scarcity was not the result of ordinary Kikuyu farmers, but rather from politicians of both sides who

'We realized it was the British, not Kenyans who subdivided the land'

own thousands of hectares of land. Rather than allow anger to be directed at them, said one Peace Committee leader, 'The politicians have been confusing people' and stirring up ethnic animosity. Reflecting on the dialogue about the issue of land, a Kalenjin participant said, 'We realized that we all had the right to live where we want in the country. We are all Kenyans.' The Committee is now trying to educate the broader community about land issues by counteracting inaccurate perceptions and misinformation, through community meetings and one-on-one interactions with local people.

'We are all Kenyans. We all have the right to live where we want'

One of the key insights from these discussions was that often conflict over land was not actually the issue per se, rather it was a symptom of deeper political problems. Through analysis of the area's history they realized that rhetoric about land usually heats up around election time (especially in campaign meetings, as politicians seek for votes and solidify ethnic support) and that every election since 1992 has resulted in violence. In their meetings, the Peace Committee is trying to explore why the political and electoral system seems to encourage violent inter-ethnic struggles for power. They are unimpressed with the political leadership in the region, saying, 'Politicians seek votes by confusing people' and that 'These politicians are not genuine leaders.' In addition, the Peace Committee is monitoring

ongoing issues that could contribute to renewed conflict. One of their recent concerns is the lack of transparency and accountability in government. The Committee is currently working on this issue and are deciding how best to educate people about political issues.

In particular, they are trying to reach out to youth, who they see as particularly prone to manipulation by political parties. One woman on the Committee said, 'Youths are used like tissue paper – used and then thrown away.' Unemployment means youth are more easily persuaded to take up arms. As a result, the Peace Committee is talking and listening to youth groups and trying to encourage intermarriage between Kikuyu and Kalenjin young people.

Many Peace Committee members have also begun to examine their own behavior. One man said that he has realized that one cannot only blame politicians. Rather it is the fault of the whole community when it condones ethnic slurs, fails to correct misinformation and passes prejudices on to children. He said, 'Some of us are teaching our children things that are not right. We should not be telling our children such things.'

Political issues have also led the Peace Committee to examine how the governance and administration operate in Burnt Forest. They believe that administrators such as chiefs, District Officers, District Commissioners, police and the army have been contributing to the clashes by siding with politicians or failing to intervene effectively to end the violence. They are suggesting to the government that such administrators and members of the executive should remain apolitical and perhaps not be given a vote in elections.

One of the most difficult issues with which the Peace Committee continues to struggle is how to deal with people who were arrested during the clashes. They are continuing to dialogue about this issue and possibilities for amnesty and forgiveness.

Collaborative Projects

One of the Peace Committee's early activities was helping CRS distribute relief vouchers in the villages. The Peace Committee selected a multiethnic relief team, which gave talks on the need for peace in each village where they delivered the vouchers. Beneficiaries could then redeem their vouchers at a market that was held in the Burnt Forest Catholic Church compound. The merchants at the market were from

both the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities and people interacted by buying and selling commodities across ethnic lines. 'It really helped,' said one woman who helped with the project.

The Peace Committee has assisted with the rebuilding of a school that has attracted students of both communities. Not only does this build links between children, the future generation of Burnt Forest, but it encourages interaction between parents at parents' meetings and through contact with each other's children.

The Committee has also arranged 'people-to-people tours', in which participants from one ethnic group stay in the homes of people from the other. They shared meals, spent the night and got to know the family. This innovative project has helped build cross-community friendships and break down layers of prejudice.

Impact

The experience of dialoguing and working together on the Peace Committee has had a significant impact on the participants. The Committee members' attitudes toward the potential for reconciliation have shifted considerably since the initial efforts of Father Kirui. The following quotes from participants illustrate how incredibly difficult it was in the beginning.

To start with it was very hard to face each other.

At first it was very tricky and hard. The community was seeing us as betrayers.

To transform yourself from a victim of violence to a peacemaker was very difficult.

It was very hard, it is God's work – a miracle.

We didn't sit together as we are now.

In some ways it is surprising that given the odds, and the enormous negative pressure from their communities, the members of the Peace Committee stuck it out and continued to dialogue. When asked why they kept with the process, one participant said, 'Nothing good can happen



Me speaking with the Burnt Forest Peace Committee.

without peace. A lot of lives could be lost.’ Their investment in mediating their differences appears to have paid off, as illustrated by the following comments by Committee members:

We came to realize these clashes were not caused by the common people, but were engineered by people outside. We came to understand ourselves better. We are fighting over nothing.

We never thought it would be as good as it is now.

Now we even stay in each other’s houses.

We are able to interact with our counterparts, they can come to my home.

We can now walk freely and interact freely.

However, the Burnt Forest Peace Committee is not resting on its laurels. They feel much more must be done to prevent violence from breaking out in the future. They told us that they ‘still have work to be done’:

We cannot stick here [in the Peace Tent] if out there is darkness.

We need to reach out to the youth

We have work to do out in the communities to get them to interact.

The tensions and fear have reduced but we are yet to reconstruct what was destroyed and engage in development. We hope to continue integrating more and curb any future violence.

4

PRINCIPLES OF GRASSROOTS PEACEBUILDING

‘For God is a God not of disorder but of peace.’

– 1 Corinthians 14:33a. NRSV.

In addition to the step-by-step process, we have developed a set of principles out of our peacebuilding experience that should guide the work of Peace Committees and their supporters. We have found that following these basic 10 principles keeps the process on track, minimizes problems and prevents unnecessary conflicts.

1. Grassroots Focus

Our first principle, as indicated by the title of this book, is that peacebuilding has to be rooted in the grassroots and move up from communities on the ground to politicians. Our approach is thus different from traditional diplomatic negotiations that focus on the leaders at the top. We believe that the people who are most affected by conflict must be involved in its resolution. They are the ones who face the danger of

death and displacement and have the most to gain from an end to fighting. This means we also avoid the common peace training workshops and conferences held in hotels, far removed from the reality in the villages. Peacebuilding must begin out where conflict is happening, not in a rarified, sanitized and air-conditioned atmosphere.

Peace must begin where conflict is, not in a rarefied, air-conditioned atmosphere

2. Fairness and Neutrality

Grassroots peacemaking efforts must be fundamentally fair. They should treat all people involved in the process with respect. When facilitating sessions, the mediator should give as many people as possible the chance to speak and guide them to institute democratic structures and systems.

While mediators do not have to bend to unreasonable demands from belligerent and violent people, they should not take sides. No matter what happens, they must do their utmost not to be seen as partisan or a sympathizer of one side. If the mediator loses their sense of neutrality it will become extremely difficult to build trust with both sides. The use of language is particularly important, as illustrated by the poor choice of words in discussions over relief distribution in Yamumbi/Kapteldon. Language can destroy or build peace. If one uses the wrong words, even the wrong body language it has the potential to derail the process. Likewise, the mediator, and other members of the Peace Committee should correct abusive and insulting language used by participants.

The principles of fairness and neutrality also apply when choosing a place to meet. All people involved must feel safe and secure in the meeting place. Every effort should be made to guarantee the security and uphold the confidence of the Peace Committee members. The best meeting places are locations that are held in common, or have little political meaning, such as schools, churches or areas on the border between communities. The Peace Committee in Yamumbi/Kapteldon has taken to meeting under a large tree by the side of the river that divides the two villages. When we were working with Pokot and Marakwet communities, we helped the Peace Committees identify 24

‘peace sites’ – neutral zones where people could hold meetings to discuss the issues that caused conflict.

3. Mediation and Facilitation

Long-term sustainable peace cannot be imposed upon people. The role of the mediator is not to judge disputes or arbitrate between the two sides. Rather the mediator’s role is to encourage and elicit solutions from the local people themselves. Always keep in mind that even if one thinks one has the ideal solution to a problem, one should keep it quiet. Let the people bring the solution. This means the mediator asks probing questions, lightly guides the process along and builds the capacity of leaders, enabling them to lead. A facilitator should also be able to rouse people from their own weakness and oppressiveness and empower them to work for peace.

4. Inclusivity

Peace is inclusive. All people, no matter their ethnicity, religion, gender or age should feel their voice matters when solving problems that cause conflict in the community. In peacebuilding one has to talk to everybody, even one’s enemy.

Peace is inclusive. One has to talk to everybody, even the enemy

It is not unlikely that the Peace Committee may be infiltrated by people who want to hijack the process, spread gossip and rumor and keep peace from succeeding. While the group should remain focused and should not allow such people to destroy progress made, they should also make an effort to understand what is motivating such people and persuade them to become part of the solution rather than the problem.

One cannot kick them out of the room – to label certain people as bad can wreck the process, as some may sympathize with them or worry that they might be the next to be jettisoned. The mediator should keep the door open for such people and see if anything can be done to limit the damage they cause.

Indeed, Peace Committees need to reach out to the rough and unpleasant people who are actually perpetrating the conflict. For without some understanding of them, their goals and their ideas, peacebuilding efforts will never succeed. One cannot simply rely on the well-mannered

and educated elites who can put on a suit and say nice things at a conference in a five star hotel.

5. Trust and Confidence Building

Both the mediator and Peace Committee members must remember that without trust between people, peace will only be tentative. Therefore, the mediator and participants should consider what messages are sent by their behavior and language. They should endeavor to listen carefully to every detail of what people say. One may feel that a person's words make little sense or are unimportant, but one should continue to listen. Indeed, just listening can play an important role in building confidence and healing.

On the part of Peace Committee members, small gestures can go a long way, such as reaching out to shake hands, sharing food or escorting people who feel afraid of visiting one's community. They should also maintain their commitment to continue to dialogue in good faith, even if they feel completely opposed to the other side's beliefs.

Small gestures – like shaking hands, sharing food or just listening – can go a long way

6. Local Ownership and Empowerment

Peace Committees should never be seen as structures imposed or imported from outside. For unless people feel they own their local peace process, they will never fully commit to it. If it is seen as solely the initiative of a foreign or outside agency, conflicting parties can dismiss it as irrelevant and even 'neo-colonial.' Therefore, the members of the Peace Committee should be selected by and regularly report to the local community. Indeed, there should be constant feedback between the community and the Committee. Where appropriate, Peace Committees should draw upon traditional methods and rituals of conflict resolution and peacemaking.

By setting up Peace Committees, the aim of our approach is to build and strengthen local institutions to manage and mitigate conflict. Moreover, it is geared toward empowering the community, by giving them the space and opportunity to express their concerns, raise their voices and solve their own problems. Ideally, as the group grows in

experience and organizational ability, they will observe current affairs and make representations to political authorities to affect policymaking and implementation.

7. Consciousness Raising

Our approach aims to transform people's negative attitudes and perceptions concerning other groups. It does this intentionally through interaction and dialogue, demystifying 'The Other', building solidarity and increasing understanding. Therefore, the mediator should challenge ethnic stereotypes expressed in meetings and encourage people to examine the sources of their prejudices.

Through their discussion of difficult topics, Peace Committee members are able to gain new perspectives and pick apart misinformation spread by politicians. They should then reach out to their respective communities, to educate people and correct myths about other ethnic groups.

Moreover, by spending time examining the political, economic, social and cultural systems that influence their lives and cause conflict, the peace meetings encourage the development of a critical consciousness. As a result of the experience, people are less likely to be duped or misled by powerful people and will know to ask questions of authorities who try to manipulate them.

8. Spontaneity, Openness and Creativity

There is not always a clear roadmap in determining precisely how a local peace process will unfold. But if the mediator and participants are open to spontaneity and creativity, they can be surprised by moments of unexpected grace and serendipity. One particularly relevant question can open up a profound discussion of how conflict is sustained in the local community. A well-targeted project like building a road can unlock an unanticipated willingness to reestablish contacts between conflicting peoples.

Be open to moments of unexpected grace and serendipity

Peace Committees should remain open to creative solutions that might initially seem bizarre or unworkable. Often our thinking is structured by the constraints placed upon us by the system that prolongs the conflict. Mediators should encourage imagination and inventiveness

among the participants, to find win-win resolutions to issues that initially seem unworkable.

Moreover, creative people like artists, storytellers and musicians can be a powerful resource for peace by communicating messages in a compelling and entertaining way. Peace Committees should encourage and support local artists to produce posters, songs, poetry and speeches calling people to seek a peaceful resolution of their conflicts.

9. Accountability and Transparency

Few things can discredit and derail a Peace Committee's work like corruption or misuse of resources. Even the perception of such things can lead to damaging rumors, a loss of confidence and accusations that one side is not participating in good faith. Therefore, mediators should help Peace Committees set up sound institutional structures and financial accounting mechanisms to minimize debilitating battles over money and power.

Furthermore, while less dramatic than financial corruption, Peace Committees should guard against authoritarian and despotic leadership by ensuring all members are elected by the community and have a full voice in decision-making. Committees should also hold regular meetings with the broader community to explain precisely what they have discussed and what they plan to do. This will keep the Committee accountable, but also ensure that local people understand its purpose and work.

Just the perception of corruption can derail a local peace process

10. Long-Term Commitment

Peace is not a full stop, it is a process, it takes time. Peacebuilding can be an incredibly demanding and painstaking process, requiring patience and a commitment to see it through to the end. It is not something that can simply be initiated and then left. It requires constant nurturing, effort and hard work.

As the Peace Committee begins to have some success it must not become complacent. For conflict can have very deep roots. As memory of outright violence fades, peacemakers must adapt to the current

situation, seeking to anticipate future conflicts and deal with them before they break out into fighting.

Some people and organizations seem to believe that they can buy their way out of the process by flooding peace projects with money. But the power to build peace lies primarily with hard work, not money. For one cannot bribe people to be peaceful. They may keep quiet for a while, but only until the money runs out. It also raises expectations from other groups that they too should receive money, which can lead to further conflict. In other words, money cannot build peace, it can only support a long-term process that is rooted in people's hard work.

5

QUALITIES AND VALUES OF THE PEACEBUILDER

*‘Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.’*

– Matthew 5:9. NRSV.

As Christians we are called to embody the qualities, values and behavior of peacemaking. But what does that entail? While peace is the responsibility of all people, we have found certain people are particularly gifted at bringing people together to resolve conflicts. In this chapter we outline a few of the qualities and values we have observed in such people. I have divided this chapter into two parts: one that deals with the external peacebuilder/mediator and one that explores the role of the local member of a Peace Committee. While there is some overlap between them, they also require slightly different kinds of people.

The External Peacebuilder

The mediators involved in facilitating the process of grassroots peacebuilding must be very skilled, patient, thoughtful and careful people. They often come under immense pressure from the

communities involved and take risks that are not for the fainthearted. While they must also exemplify many of the qualities I list under the Village Peacebuilder section, there are additional traits, explored below, that they should embody.

Conflict Resolution Skills

The ability to skillfully mediate conflicts comes easier to some people than others. However, to fully master it requires training, experience and mentoring from other peacebuilders. When in a high stakes situation, a small mistake, such as a poorly chosen word, can have many negative repercussions. Moreover, if the mediator does not know how best to channel people's anger and frustration, dialogues can often become stuck in a rut, unable to move forward. Mediators should be focused people, to prevent the process from being hijacked and run off track. They must also be diplomatic, thoughtful and tactful to avoid causing unnecessary offense.

There are a growing number of training opportunities for mediators offered by universities and NGOs. If time and money allow, these can be a useful investment; in addition to the teaching, one also has the chance to learn from one's classmates. However, mediators may also find a great deal of wisdom available locally from people skilled in traditional conflict resolution methodologies. Conversations with such people can help identify strategies and tactics that are well adapted to the local context.

Respect

It helps if the mediator is already known and respected by the communities involved. This reduces the amount of work the mediator needs to do to win people's trust and convince them to engage in the process. This respect can come from a variety of sources, such as professional excellence, a reputation of honesty, community leadership or established relationships with the conflicting parties.

We have found that respect for the Catholic Church has assisted in our peacebuilding efforts. There are often Catholics on both sides of a conflict, offering a way to make contacts between people. Moreover, the

A small mistake can have many negative repercussions



His Excellency Archbishop Alain Paul Lebeaupin Apostolic Nuncio to Kenya and I meeting people in conflict-affected Burnt Forest.

cassock and collar of the clergy can offer some authority and protection, given people's respect for their office and vocation. Indeed, I believe that being a Bishop has often helped in encouraging people to meet with me, as well as enabling me to go to places (such as passing through check points) that would be closed to other people. However, the church should not believe they automatically deserve respect. Firstly, people of other denominations and faiths are less likely to be impressed just because we are Catholic. Secondly, the cassock by itself is not enough to keep people's respect; the character, behavior and gifts of the person wearing it are also crucial. Many people feel nervous around clergy and are less likely to express their feelings. Many clergy contribute to this air of distance and inapproachability by failing to go out and interact with people in a meaningful way.

Therefore, even if the mediator has a great deal of respect in the community, or belongs to a well-reputed organization, they must continue to earn the respect of the people with whom they work. This begins from the basic truth that respect must be mutual – if one does not

respect the people in the community one cannot expect to be respected by them.

Creativity

When dialogue reaches an impasse, the mediator must have the ability and courage to be creative, seeking alternative and unexpected solutions and new ways forward. For instance, in one meeting between a community and the District Officer, we reached a deadlock and the participants almost walked out. The community was saying they wanted people who had been arrested following the election violence to be released from jail. The District Officer considered this impossible. Since we were having no luck dealing with the problem, I told the community to let me speak with the official alone, while they continued on to other agenda items. I took the District Officer to one side and when people could see we were seriously discussing, they moved on to other things.

Seek creative, alternative and unexpected solutions

I realized that part of the problem was that people had not defined precisely who they wanted released, so it sounded as though they were calling for a blanket amnesty. When we returned to the group, I asked, 'Do you have the names of these people who are in prison?' Interestingly, no one could remember any names. The issue had become so polarizing, that many people had failed to stop and think about the practicalities of what they were asking for. We needed to get people to think carefully about the standard slogans and entrenched positions of the conflict. Eventually, they came up with only two names. Then the District Officer and I explained the process they to go through to petition the government to have them released.

Previously the community had said they could not move forward until this matter was dealt with, but our approach seemed to have defused the situation. We did not run away from the points they raised – we had to take the community's concerns seriously. But we looked for creative approaches and offered an alternative solution.

Neutrality

As outlined in the chapter on principles, the mediator must be neutral and non-partisan. If s/he is seen to be leaning toward one side or the other, the process will be much more difficult. Our advantage in the Diocese is that though I am Kalenjin, we have stood up for the rights of Kikuyu people and questioned the Moi government when we felt it was necessary. Therefore, we have some credibility on both sides. Nevertheless, neutrality, like respect, is something that must be constantly cultivated. It can be very easy to misstep and be perceived as pandering to one party. Just by being willing to talk to both sides, one may be seen as compromised. Indeed, extremists in the Kalenjin community have labeled me as a 'traitor' because I accept the full humanity and rights of people of other ethnic groups.

**Neutrality
must be
constantly
cultivated**

The Village Peacebuilder

Ideally the local members of the Peace Committee should also embody the qualities and values listed under the external peacebuilder. However, they do not have to be as experienced and also do not have to be neutral, as they represent a particular constituency. Nonetheless, there are characteristics that, if embodied by members of the Peace Committee, will help facilitate a quicker and more durable solution to local conflicts.

A Lover of Peace

In the beginning of our peacebuilding efforts, the people I selected to speak with were those with a sober and thoughtful mind, not a fighting mind. One must build from the people who love and want peace. Of course, eventually one must include those bent on fighting. But if one has enough people with peace minds in the group, they will control the others. If one begins with those who have a fighting mind one will not get anywhere.

Lovers of peace are at peace with themselves, they do not feel they need to humiliate or denigrate others to know they are a person of worth. They are honest and non-violent, including in their own home. If a person



A Peace Committee meeting in session at Burnt Forest.

is convinced of true peace, the language s/he speaks is the language of peace, not divisive language. When building a Peace Committee, I want people who can look at the other person as a human being. If one brings someone who does not acknowledge that, who considers him/her as always an enemy, there will be little opportunity for dialogue. One needs people who are open and appreciate human diversity.

A Respected Connector of People

A peacebuilder needs to create contacts with people, to reach out and engage in face-to-face dialogue with individuals or groups. Ideally, this means they should be someone who genuinely likes to speak with other people and has a kind heart. Likewise, they should have good standing in the community, with moral authority, legitimacy and be trusted as wise and of a sober mind.

It helps too if the person knows people, even has friends, from the other side. These people often come from unexpected quarters, as illustrated by the woman in Burnt Forest who knew people from both communities because of her work as a brewer.

Courage

To step forward as a peacebuilder and engage with people who are seen as enemies requires a great deal of courage. Peacebuilders will come under immense pressure from their communities not to continue with this vital work. As one Peace Committee member said, 'I have been labeled a traitor for talking to other groups.' Indeed, involvement in peacebuilding is risky and one must be prepared for personal danger as one stands up to the powerful structures that sustain the conflict.

Peace-building is risky; one must be prepared for personal danger

Ethic of Public Service

There is an element of self-interest in peace, as no one has an interest in being a victim of violence. But self-interest is not enough to build a sustainable peace. Conflict is often the result of people failing to check their greed for the power and resources of other people. Peacebuilding requires people to reach out beyond themselves in service to society, to recognize that other groups have genuine claims and to sacrifice time, effort and resources to end the suffering. Peacebuilders must thus be civically minded and willing to serve others.

Patience

Finally, the peacebuilder must be a patient person. Peace does not arrive overnight and one cannot rush the process. Conflict is like a sickness. Sickness comes, healing takes time. This means peacebuilders must be committed for the long-term, ready to tough it out even when dialogue and resolution seem impossible.

6

FINAL REFLECTIONS

*‘So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.’*

– Genesis 1:27. NRSV.

The value of peace is immeasurable. Thus the call to strive for, foster and maintain peace is a universal one – to individuals, families, nations and all humanity. Every member of society must constantly strive to build a harmonious co-existence, unity of purpose, security, development, equitable distribution of resources, respect for human rights and a sustainable environment. The absence of such things has severe and negative impacts on human communities.

When social order breaks down, one faces the nightmare scenario of inter-ethnic hatred, increased economic hardship, violent politics, environmental degradation, starvation and unforeseeable dependency on relief food. We already observe many of these phenomena as a result of the recurrent inter-ethnic conflicts in Eldoret Diocese. We believe the church cannot stand idly by while villages burn and people are torn from their homes – we have a responsibility to seek peace and provide relief to the victims of violence.

Peace and Faith

Some may feel that the cause of peace is hopeless. But that is the role of faith – to bring hope where there is none. While war seems to be part of the human experience, we have also seen that another way is possible. We must convince people to dialogue and engage with others, even mortal enemies. We must approach ‘The Other’ and trust that they too are human beings, with thoughts, needs and feelings like our own.

Indeed, the Bible says that all people are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 22). This means people are endowed with God-given privileges of dignity and honor. It is a grave offence and a serious injustice when people are denied these values. To promote justice and peace, it is important for people not only to accept this idea but also to cherish it. Every person is bound or obliged to treat each individual with respect. This obligation is particularly important for people in authority. The prophet Jeremiah reminded those in authority that strangers, orphans, widows, the underprivileged and powerless were to be treated with dignity (Jeremiah 22: 3-4).

Genuine peace emanates from the love of one’s neighbor, symbolized by the love of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. Christ aims to reconcile all people to God through the Cross, by abolishing hatred and pouring forth the love of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of human beings (Ephesians 2: 16, 4: 15; Colossians 1: 20-22). War and hatred may be found within society but they are sins against human solidarity in the Body of Christ. As Christians we must endeavor to extend charity to victims and conquer violence with love.

Building peace thus requires conversion – recognition of the image of God as displayed by the other, even one’s enemy. While the Gospel tells us we are all children of God, tribal prejudices and politics tell us that some people are not, that an enemy is an enemy. We must atone for these sinful beliefs that draw us away from God. While it is true that we are all brought up in different cultures, this is not a reason to fight each other. Rather, affiliation with a culture, a society, a community is a gift from God to be celebrated and used to build peace with others. This conversion from prejudice to celebration of diversity comes from exposure, repeated interaction, dialogue and an attempt to

**Building
peace
requires
conversion
– seeing the
image of
God in other
people**

understand 'The Other.' Thus at the center of the Gospel is an irrepressible yearning for peace, a call to service in the quest for this great treasure.

Peace is not only an absence of war. In the absence of war, many still experience injustice, hunger, dispossession and marginalization. One

At the center of the Gospel is an irrepressible yearning for peace

cannot live in peace if one is always under threat of attack, eviction or starvation. Peace demands for the right ordering of things, a more perfect actualization of God's reign of justice on earth, where no one is exploited, harmed or oppressed. Peace implies the establishment of harmonious relationships of trust, openness, wholeness and growth.

Jesus emphasized the importance of justice in the pursuit of peace (Matthew 5: 6). Injustice arises when people are treated in a way that is contrary to their human dignity and honor. In our contemporary world, peace thus has to be built on the four pillars of truth, justice, love and freedom as indicated by John XXIII in his Encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*. People should never be deprived of the land, food, clothing, shelter, employment and resources they need to sustain themselves and their families. In Genesis we are told the fruits of the earth given by God should be shared equally so that all would have them (Genesis 1: 29). Thus peace is closely linked to development and calls for the ethical use of earthly wealth. Being a member of the human family, each individual person becomes a citizen of the world with equal rights and duties, because they, as human beings, are united by a common origin and destiny. But peace also goes beyond fulfilling basic necessities. According to their dignity as human beings, all people have a right to freedom of thought, freedom of movement, freedom of religious worship, freedom of political affiliation, right to ownership of property, freedom from arrest without trial as called for in *Pacem in Terris*.

The Role of the Church

Unfortunately, Christians have not always been faithful to the call to peacemaking – blood appears to be thicker than baptismal water and too many conflicts involve Christians killing Christians. We must deepen our evangelization to touch the hearts of people at war, for without recognition of all people's worth, our faith has no roots. Real conversion requires that we cease from those beliefs and practices that separate us

from other members of the human community. In South Africa, the churches declared apartheid to be a heresy – for it is heretical to teach that some children of God should be kept apart, or at a lower status.

If the church fails to correct this (going back to what my father said) it is participating in the killing. The church must always stand firm and never give way. You cannot keep quiet when people are dying. In 1992-1993 when the clashes were very bad here, the security services sent someone to tell me to stop talking about the violence. I told him to take

back the message that I will stop talking when the killing stops. The church must unceasingly teach that peace is possible and never tire of repeating that peace is a duty. The church should act as society's conscience, holding accountable those who are in power and have hijacked reasoned dialogue. The church has to deepen society's understanding that the image of God is represented in all people. It is not enough to talk of Christian witness. We must show it and live it. It is not enough to sympathize with the victims of violence if we fail to seek for the root causes of the problems and together search for solutions.

**To teach
that some
children of
God are
worth less
than others
is a heresy**

Our Diocese, in its socio-pastoral mission, has felt called to step in and shoulder the suffering together with the people. We have given support and shelter to the many refugees seeking sanctuary. When helpless children were left behind crying due to shock and hunger, we felt the urge to feed them regardless of tribal affiliation. Experiencing their anguish, we were all affected by the clashes and our people were scattered. Most of us were concerned and none of us could absolve ourselves from the blame. The church focused attention on the displaced persons. We listened to their stories, anguish, fears and their plans for the future and this gave us courage and strength to find out how to and what to do next.

Looking Ahead

We have been very privileged to see the potential for successful peacebuilding. Reconciliation in Eldoret Diocese has, thanks be to God, borne some fruit – much more than many would have expected or hoped for. But the way ahead is still precarious.

There is residual bitterness in the hearts of many Kikuyu people in our Diocese, many of whom have now come under attack and expulsion for the fourth time. They believe they have legally and properly acquired their land and that their constitutional rights have not been adequately protected by the government. Many Kalenjin, on the other hand, believe they have some ‘ancestral right’ to all the land in the Rift Valley. They have too often used violence to seek their goals. Their hearts too are bitter.

As a result, there is much work still to be done if peace and reconciliation are to be achieved. The government is yet to deal adequately with Agenda Item No. 4 of the National Accord, which deals with issues of land, tribalism and the new constitution. Without hard work on these difficult political issues, peace will only be temporary and our next elections may also be visited by violence. All the gains made by the peacebuilders could be lost. Particular attention should be paid to youth, to let them know they are valued members of society, through employment, political engagement and education.

**There is
much work
still to be
done**

But it is not only the government that has work to do. The Peace Committees need to stay true to their task of monitoring the fragile peace, watching for possible signs of breakdown, and strengthening the bonds of peace and cooperation which have been forged so far. Civil society must continue to hold government accountable and call for an end to violent politics. Priests, religious leaders, catechists and members of religious associations must emphasize that the Gospel teaches the dignity and equality of every human being and the brotherhood or sisterhood of humanity.

And may the Lord bless us and keep us, and grant us peace.

ANNEX

1

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Peacebuilding

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THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ELDORET

The Catholic Diocese of Eldoret is located in the North Rift Region of the Republic of Kenya, approximately 320 km from the capital, Nairobi. It was established in 1953 as an Apostolic Prefecture and in 1959 became the Diocese of Eldoret. The Diocese covers seven administrative districts: Uasin Gishu South, Uasin Gishu North, Uasin Gishu East, Nandi North, Nandi South, Keiyo and Marakwet. There are 42 parishes with a Catholic population of over 400,000 out of a total population of some 1.7 million. The Diocese is cosmopolitan with peoples from different Kenyan communities and a few immigrants from other countries. The political situation in the area is generally volatile, with recurrent violence and a history of cattle rustling especially in Marakwet and Pokot districts. This has been exacerbated by high levels of poverty and unemployment among the youth. The Diocese has been working to address these challenges by providing emergency relief, offering sanctuary and trying to build peace.

ANNEX

3

THE RIFT VALLEY AMANI PROJECT

This book was produced as a part of the Rift Valley Amani (Peace) Project, a partnership between Caritas Australia, Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Dioceses of Eldoret, Kericho and Nakuru. From May 2008 to April 2009 – with AU\$ 225,000 funding from AusAID – the project aimed ‘To reduce the impact of the post-election violent conflict and promote peaceful conflict transformation in Rift Valley Province.’ Its objectives were: Strengthening youth, women and elders’ peace and reconciliation structures; enhancing conflict transformation skills and knowledge; and supporting community peace initiatives.

The Rift Valley Amani Project has held 60 intra- and inter-ethnic meetings with various groups of youth, women and elders. This has led to the creation of local Peace Committees and small community peace connector projects bringing together the regions various ethnic groups (Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Kisii, Luhya and Luo). It has provided support to sporting events, inter-cultural festivities and art exhibitions, enabling youth to interact freely without fear of each other.

AMANI MASHINANI

Faced with recurrent political and inter-communal violence since 1992, the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret has responded in numerous ways to alleviate, contain and end the conflicts that have divided local communities. Out of his 17 years of experience of peacebuilding at the community level, Bishop Korir describes in this book a step-by-step methodology developed by his Diocese, starting from person-to-person contacts and growing into group-to-group encounters, community-connecting projects and localized peace agreements. Rather than holding peace conferences for elites in air-conditioned hotels, Korir's approach facilitates *amani mashinani* – peace at the grassroots, where the people most affected by violence live.



Rt. Rev. Cornelius Korir is the incumbent Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, appointed in 1990 by Pope John Paul II. He had previously worked as a priest in Nakuru Diocese, as the Vocations Director and Episcopal Vicar of Kericho Diocese. Bishop Korir did his priestly studies at St. Augustine's Senior Seminary, Mabanga, in Western Kenya and St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Nairobi. He has a degree in Theology (S.T.L.) from St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland.