

CITIZENS IN ACTION

Making Peace

in the
Post-Election Crisis in Kenya – 2008

By George Wachira

with Thomas Arendshorst and Simon M. Charles



Concerned Citizens for Peace



NPI-Africa

A Peace Resource Organisation

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January 2010

NPI-Africa

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

During the 2008 post-election crisis in Kenya, NPI-Africa played a key role in the founding of CCP and provided the institutional framework for purposes of receiving and managing CCP funds.

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Foreword

by *Amb. Bethuel A. Kiplagat*¹

I am so happy that George Wachira has been able to put together the story of the Concerned Citizens for Peace – a spontaneous initiative by Kenyans who came out to save their country from self destruction. Violence erupted with the announcements of Presidential elections aggravated by the swearing in of President Kibaki. The violence and chaos that ensued took the country to the brink of destruction. The leadership in the country, whether political or religious was divided along ethnic lines and paralyzed. The leadership vacuum was palpable and the silence defining. People had lost hope. Without prior planning a core group of five got together at Serena Hotel to deliberate on what to do with the ever worsening situation the country was facing. First was to stop the violence and death of innocent Kenyans.

The core group of concerned citizen had no force, no organization and no money, but they discovered that they had other resources in abundance than these – they had commitment, hope and conviction that the problem the country was facing was their problem and therefore had an obligation to make their humble contribution to save the nation. They were surprised and overwhelmed when they made an appeal informing Kenyans of the daily meetings at Serena hotel on the situation of the country. The turnout was impressive. People from all walks of life turned up – the young and the old, the professors and the businessmen representing the Kenyan ethnic and racial mosaic. The meetings came out with ideas which were implemented.

¹ Amb. Kiplagat is currently the Chairman of Kenya's Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC). He was a co-founder and key member of CCP.

It is amazing that no one complained or asked for money or food. If anything, those who came sacrificed their time and resources. The spirit in that room was so touching and moving. I have never been through such a wonderful deep spiritual experience. What lessons can we learn from this?

First, Kenya and Africa does not lack resources. We have it in abundance – but it depends on what resources one is talking about; material we have, but that is not the kind or type that will take us far. The inexhaustible resources we have are of the spirit – say “yes I can and I will”. Did President Obama learn about this philosophy from Nairobi businessmen who decided to deal with problems facing the city rather than wait for the government.

The core group of Concerned Citizens for Peace, must have been guided by the principle of “taking ownership of one’s problem” that is a philosophy which I believe is so fundamental for the solution of Africa’s problem. I have even advocated that we should jealously guard our problems and never allow anybody to take them away from us. When a problem is yours, you will make every effort to find a solution, but when it belongs to someone else then it does not receive the attention it deserves. Is this why we are forever dependant especially on the western world to solve our problems.

The spirit that prevailed during the crisis should be natured and shared more widely, because that is what will take us far on the road to peace, stability and development.

Nairobi, January 2010

Preface

The writing of ‘the CCP Story’ has been underway for more than a year competing with other priorities. The Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP) was born of necessity: various individuals from different backgrounds came together to respond to the violence that was engulfing Kenya following the dispute over the December 2007 presidential vote. As the immediate crisis receded, the majority of these people returned to their everyday work and responsibilities. During the crisis, the work of CCP captured much local and international attention, thus creating an interest for the story to be shared in some form. The CCP story is a story of collaborative initiative which must be told and understood from many angles and perspectives.

In preliminary fashion, this document recounts the launch and the subsequent activities undertaken by the CCP in response to Kenya’s post- election upheaval in early 2008. Presented here in story form, it is to be considered, firstly, a ‘work in progress’ and, secondly, an ‘invitation’ to participants in and observers of the CCP process to submit additional stories, impressions, activities, and analysis as part of an open-ended chronicle of Kenya’s 2008 post election crisis experience.

As a co-founder and member of the CCP Core Team, I am privileged to be identified with the CCP story. I acknowledge from the outset that it has been particularly challenging to serve both as author and informant in a story with which I was intimately involved. For this reason, it has been helpful

to work collaboratively with co-authors Simon Charles² and Tom Arendshorst³.

The beginnings of this document can be traced to in-depth interviews with more than twenty key CCP participants. These interviews were conducted between March and June of 2009 by Mr. Simon Charles, an intern at the time with NPI-Africa. On the basis of the interview data and other relevant documentation, Simon and I then produced a massive and quite detailed draft document before Simon completed his internship with NPI-Africa. The draft clearly needed more work to make it ‘readable.’ It remained in its initial form, however, until December 2009 when I had the opportunity to resume work on it. By that time, interest in the story had grown very considerably, particularly in international civil society peacebuilding circles. During this second phase, I teamed up with Tom Arendshorst to produce a shorter version of the initial draft. Tom’s additional interviews with me yielded information to fill some of the obvious gaps in the story.

This document narrates a story, rather than offering a detailed analysis of the respective elements. Near the end of the document, there is a preliminary distillation of lessons

2 Simon Charles is a law student at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He spent seven months as an intern at NPI-Africa in 2008 and 2009, part of which coincided with the first anniversary of the Kenya Post-Election Crisis and the National Peace and Reconciliation Accord. During this period, he was involved in some of the CCP activities, including interviewing CCP members.

3 An ophthalmologist by training, Thomas Arendshorst earned his M.A. in International Peace Studies at the Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, in 2006. In 2005, he served as a research and documentation associate at NPI-Africa. He lives in Michigan, in the United States, where he is a justice and peace advocate, and writer.

learnt. In later documentation, specific elements of the story such as the respective roles of the media, the Concerned Kenyan Writers, Concerned Youth for Peace, the initiative with church leaders in the Rift valley, and the private sector, among others, will hopefully be analysed in greater detail.

It is important to emphasize and appreciate that while five individuals initially launched the CCP, its success must be attributed to the corps of creative Kenyans who responded to CCP's call for help to save the country. That small band of people presented itself at the Serena Hotel and proceeded to build a coordinated approach to the resolution of the crisis; they carried out activities agreed upon during the daily Open Forum and returned on following days to report and take on more responsibilities. Some contributed material resources, while others drafted documents, wrote reports and several even offered psycho-social support when it was needed. While select CCP members were interviewed for this paper and are therefore referred to in the document, many others remain silent. All the people who gave of their time, their creativity, their energy and resources to the work of CCP are the true heroes of the story.

We would like to thank the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) for supporting the publication of this document. In particular, we would like to thank the GPPAC's Honorary Chair, Paul van Tongeren, and Executive Director Peter van Tuijl, for taking a keen interest in the CCP story. Special appreciation goes to Paul for his early conviction that the story ought to be written and shared, and also for his insistence on it.

Hans van de Veen and NPI-Africa board member, Harold Miller, have assisted with the editing of this document. Hal Culbertson, John Paul Lederach and Kabiru Kinyanjui read

the original, longer draft and offered helpful comments, as did colleagues at NPI-Africa, particularly Florence Mpaayei and Naana Marekia. The final work on this document was undertaken while I was a visiting fellow at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, in Indiana, USA, in the Fall of 2009. I thank the Kroc Institute for the space accorded to work on this document.

George Wachira⁴

NPI-Africa

January 2010

⁴ George Wachira is Senior Research and Policy Advisor at NPI-Africa. He was among the founders of Concerned Citizens for Peace.

Summary

It is the purpose of this paper to present in some detail the story of a Kenyan citizen diplomacy group, the Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP). In the aftermath of the post-election crisis in early 2008, CCP's interventions helped to rally the country toward dialogue and negotiations, thus serving as a precursor to the formal mediation process that followed.

Taking a largely story-telling approach, it describes the beginnings of CCP, its early interventions, the key activities undertaken, and the interface with the formal mediation process while sustaining an open and inclusive public forum to help resolve the crisis. It presents and discusses the lessons of this experience and the possible implications for peace activists facing future outbreaks of violence in Kenya or elsewhere in the world.

Concerned Citizens for Peace was launched on December 31, 2007 by five prominent Kenyan civil society peace workers and mediators and immediately emerged as a rallying point for national peace and dialogue. At a time when the country was paralysed and shocked by violence, CCP occupied a crucial space, recognising at that early stage that dialogue was the only way out of the crisis. The initial focus was to plead publicly and privately with the political leadership to dialogue, while calling upon Kenyans to stop the violence and wanton destruction of property.

At the launch of CCP, the initiators called on Kenyans to join and to contribute their thoughts, abilities, and connections toward a resolution of the crisis. In a matter of days, different

Working Committees were formed, while ‘Concern’ became a brand name used by other affiliates of CCP (Concerned Writers of Kenya, Concerned Women, Concerned Youth for Peace, etc.). In the first month of the crisis, the *Open Forum* of CCP became the place where Kenyans of all walks of life came together to reflect, analyse, strategise and act jointly for several hours every day. These reflections formed the basis of the *Citizens Agenda for Peace* launched on January 9, 2008. This document became a major ingredient to the formal mediation process.

CCP helped set the pace for the international mediation process by initiating the visit of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, by briefing the Eminent Persons, and by interacting with the Kofi Annan process. The hotel which served as the CCP base also served as the venue for the formal mediation process led by the former UN secretary-general, creating a strategic entry point for CCP.

At a point when violent rioting threatened to engulf the capital city of Nairobi, CCP worked with the Internal Security Ministry to mobilize peacekeeping in the city. This collaboration led to the formation of the Nairobi Peace Forum, the formation of District Peace Committees, and various training and capacity-building activities. As the schools and universities prepared to re-open, CCP held consultations with the Ministry of Education, spoke to a national gathering of school heads, met with vice-chancellors of all public universities, and organized a workshop for student political leaders. In apparent direct

consequence, violence did not break out in the universities, as had been feared.

The connectivity generated in the Open Forum enabled CCP to intervene at multiple levels. CCP mobilized the public to stop the violence while also urging politicians at all levels to resolve the crisis through dialogue; it engaged with the formal mediation process from the very beginning; it worked with public institutions to prevent the spread of the violence; it worked strategically with the media (television, print, radio, electronic, blogs, and SMS); it worked collaboratively with the private business sector; it supported local-level actions by key individuals and groups to avert and respond to the violence; and it offered practical support for mourning, confidence-building and healing. Working at all levels of Kenyan society, CCP also worked across lines of tribe, ethnicity and religion.

The initiative of the Concerned Citizens for Peace is an inspiring example in terms of its speed and timeliness; its mobilisation of a large peace constituency; its deployment of strategic, multi-level and multi-sector actions and linkages; its use of strategic analysis; and its interfacing between civil society and the formal mediation process.

A crisis response such as the one undertaken by the CCP emanates from a deeply held urge to mitigate and manage the immediate violence, fully aware of the inability to deal immediately or conclusively with the underlying issues inherited from history. Nevertheless, without intervention, Kenya's violence could have deteriorated into total collapse. The possibility or likelihood of then addressing the issues bequeathed by history could have been overwhelmed by dynamics of the moment. Interventions such as CCP's are therefore important as part of an 'enabling environment' within which to resist self-destruction and to re-focus on the identification and resolution of problems.

Certainly, select elements of the CCP response in Kenya were unique and unlikely to be replicated elsewhere. Nevertheless, some of the CCP strengths and decisions that resulted in peacebuilding successes for Kenya are replicable and may provide inspiration for further innovative peacebuilding work in the future.

Learning Points

Recognition of the moment

An ability to recognize that Kenya had arrived at a moment of extreme danger sprang from the confluence of long experience, imbibed theory and well honed intuition. CCP was driven by a sense of urgency to mobilize swiftly and to take bold action in the hours immediately before and after the announcement of the contentious election results. The CCP recognized immediately that external intervention would be necessary to address the divisions in the country.

Compass orientation

Without a sharply-defined mission, even great energy and expertise is ineffective. CCP founders and members cared as much for ‘truth’ and ‘justice’ as everybody else, but they were convinced that Kenya’s immediate need was for the termination of violence and that respectful dialogue was the key to open the possibility for truth and justice.

Years of preparation

Long-term development and preparation form a significant portion of the capacity for rapid, effective crisis response. Capacity-building, in the form of training for conflict resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding, can empower the broader civil society for purposes of averting violence and contributing to the restoration of violated peace.

Inclusive web of improbable, strategic actors

Inclusive participation, transparency, and an appeal to the better instincts of people trumped the option of exclusion and the ‘control’ of closed doors. A ‘closed-door’ initiative would have stymied the emergence of the movement that CCP became, with its ability to forge and to create new webs from existing ones. Particularly critical to the CCP’s non-diplomatic initiatives were its relationships with the media.

Movement-process/organization-structure

CCP envisioned itself more as a movement and as a process, and less as an organization or structure. This self-perception enabled it to function in a fluid and inclusive manner. There were several discussions within the group regarding minimum organization that would have enabled CCP to solicit and receive funding; but there was reluctance among the founders to turn CCP into an organization. A crisis of longer duration would definitely have required careful balancing between the movement-process and organization-structure options.

Focus on multiple levels and actors

The connectivity generated in the Open Forum enabled CCP to intervene at multiple levels of the Kenyan society, bridging the lines of tribe, ethnicity and religion.

Use of strategic analysis

The broad web of people involved in CCP provided conflict and political analysis which helped to formulate strategies, to anticipate not-yet-developed hotspots of violence, and to re-focus strategy when necessary in response to shifting realities. Its web of information sources enabled CCP’s strategic analysis to be comprehensive, and to address multiple situations simultaneously. Excellent information and analysis enabled the group to reach early conclusions about possible resolution of the crisis.

Providing space and opportunity for peace

The CCP experience suggests that in conditions of chaos and crisis, people need space and time to think and act together. In the midst of violent conflict, space for community initiative and leadership must be created; once such space is recognized and available, synergistic networks and unexpected contributions to the peace effort become possible. The worst injustices and violations of human rights take place in an environment of chaos and violence.

Integration with the official mediation

CCP's easy, continuing access to and cooperative working relationship with mediator Kofi Annan and his team served as unusual assets to this non-governmental group of peace activists. CCP's integration into the formal peace process grew from prior connections between Annan and three of the five CCP founders. In consequence, the CCP was consulted by the formal mediation team on various issues, and helped insure that the eventual National Accord incorporated strong relevance to the specifics of the Kenyan conflict.

The grasp of serendipitous opportunities

The readiness and the wisdom to grasp serendipitous opportunities required thorough analytic preparedness, a sense of the future, and the instantaneous recognition of an opportune moment. To respond to serendipitous opportunity requires the ability to envision outcomes for which the paths are not yet clear or available. The readiness to grasp serendipitous opportunities also rises from the wisdom to patiently trust the process-nature of peacebuilding, rather than attempting to control all events.

Strategic location

The Serena Hotel served, serendipitously, as a strategic base for CCP initiatives. The Serena was critical for those who needed a base, secluded from the reigning chaos in the surrounding city.

Preventive action

At a point when violent rioting threatened to engulf the capital city of Nairobi, CCP worked with the Internal Security Ministry to mobilize peacekeeping in the city. This collaboration led to the formation of the Nairobi Peace Forum; the formation of District Peace Committees; and various training and capacity-building activities. Two intense meetings with ethno-vernacular FM radio station owners and presenters were held, urging them to use their radio broadcasts as tools for peace rather than as firebrands for violence.

Leadership and ‘anchor’ personalities

The situation required that several individuals step forward, initially, to form and mobilize a movement, a corps of peacebuilders. Without that initial leadership, the CCP movement would probably not have been formed, and the actors would have remained isolated. Without the response of the corps of peace-minded actors, the five initiators would have remained isolated and ineffective.

CCP's success can also be explained by its ‘anchor personalities’ who became part of the easily recognisable CCP brand. Each time they appeared in the media they were associated with ‘peace’ and ‘dialogue’. Such anchor personalities can help focus an initiative and build the ‘recognizable identity’ of its message.

Introduction

“Across Africa, we have seen countless examples of people taking control of their destiny and making change from the bottom up. We saw it in Kenya, where civil society and business came together to stop post-election violence.”

U.S. President Barack Obama, speaking in Accra, Ghana, July 10, 2009

For nearly two months at the beginning of 2008, Kenya teetered on the brink of a cataclysmic disintegration. Following the announcement of the contested presidential election results on December 30, 2007, the country exploded into unprecedented and widespread violence. Attacks and counter-attacks quickly escalated, taking on an ethnic character camouflaged under a façade of presumed political affiliation. The violence quickly evolved from its initial apparent spontaneity to well-orchestrated attacks and counter-attacks involving massacres, arson, looting, rape, evictions and dispossession. The response by the police force added to the violence and deaths. In less than two months of violence, more than 1,300 people lost their lives – almost half of that number within the first two weeks of the violence – while more than 500,000 people were displaced from their homes. The crisis led quickly to the collapse of law and order, threatening Kenya’s very survival as a nation. According to international media coverage, another African country had followed a familiar, if inglorious path.

Kenya was eventually saved in what was, some observers would say, an astonishingly short period of time. Well-coordinated official mediation by the African Union’s Panel of Eminent Personalities, led by former UN Secretary-General Dr. Kofi Annan, culminated in the National Peace and Reconciliation Accord signed on February 28, 2008 after five weeks of marathon negotiations. This agreement paved the way for a power-sharing Grand Coalition Government

incorporating the two former political antagonists, President Mwai Kibaki heading the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the Honourable Raila Odinga, now Prime Minister, leading the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM).

The negotiation process, led by Annan, was remarkable for its ability to rally and focus both local and international support toward a timely resolution of the immediate crisis. The conduct and management of that process in itself offers useful lessons in crisis intervention and will no doubt be the subject of analyses by scholars in the future. Less well-known are the initiatives undertaken by many civil society groups, individuals, media personalities, artistes, business and religious leaders in an effort to end the violence, sometimes working collaboratively, sometimes separately, sometimes in creative tension.

It is the purpose of this paper to present in some detail the story of a citizen diplomacy group, the Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP), whose initiatives helped to rally the country toward dialogue and negotiations, thus serving as a precursor to the formal mediation process that followed. Within a period of less than twenty-four hours after the announcement of the contested results and the ensuing violent explosion across the land, five Kenyan citizens – a seasoned diplomat, two professional peacebuilders, and two retired generals, all experienced peacemakers – led a cadre of Kenyan peacemakers from a national leadership void into decisive action.

These five citizens moved into action on December 31, 2007 and quickly became the Core Team of a movement known as the CCP. Working both publicly and behind the scenes, CCP mobilized peace-minded volunteers and professionals from a wide spectrum of Kenyan society into a peacebuilding web that effectively countered the extreme prevailing violence. In direct and indirect ways, the actions

of CCP led into the international mediation process, culminating in the National Peace and Reconciliation Accord signed on February 28, 2008.

Which elements, which values, which dynamics trigger responses by a citizen group in time of crisis? What is the nature of 'preparedness' for helpful action in an unanticipated crisis? While the answers are not perfectly clear in this initial reflection, CCP's action as a conflict crisis response stands out on several counts.

There was the element of alacrity; within a matter of hours after the onset of the violence, the core team had mobilized into action. This early engagement in the form of televised appeals for peace and dialogue was critical at a time when the country appeared to be on the edge of complete collapse.

The CCP was able to draw on the expertise of experienced peaceworkers who engaged immediately with entry points to the crisis.

CCP mobilized a web of actors, all of whom were committed to non-violent negotiation as a means of resolving the crisis. Included in this web were media people, business people, professional cadres, political analysts, young people, writers, university vice-chancellors, student leaders, government officials, religious leaders and politicians. This web of actors – cutting across professional, religious and political affiliations – served, collectively, as a major resource to the CCP crisis response.

CCP quickly established an open and inclusive public posture, inviting any willing Kenyan to participate in its activities while at the same time carrying out quiet and confidential diplomatic work. Within record time, a wide range of action ideas were generated during the daily public forum and matched with flexible resources comprising funds and volunteer time.

The CCP, through its High Level Dialogue Committee and Technical Committee, forged a vital link with the official mediation process led by Kofi Annan, offering observations, guidance and comment as requested.

The choice, right from the beginning, of the Serena Hotel as the CCP operational base proved to be a strategic godsend. Later the negotiation process led by Annan was also lodged in the Serena Hotel. This common venue offered opportunities for strategic and serendipitous encounters with a broad spectrum of actors critical to the peace effort.

This paper presents the work of CCP and the lessons that can be drawn from it. Deploying a largely story-telling approach, it describes the beginnings of CCP, its early interventions, the key activities undertaken, and its interface with the formal mediation process while sustaining an open and inclusive public forum to help resolve the crisis. It presents and discusses the lessons of this experience and the possible implications for peace activists facing future outbreaks of violence in Kenya or elsewhere in the world.

The primary reading audience for this paper is the corps of peace workers who may be interested in lessons regarding quick response to conflict situations. The authors hope that the story will serve as a model and provide insights that may empower future non-governmental efforts to prevent and curtail politico-ethnic violence in similar situations. In particular, it is hoped that the CCP story will contribute to a vigorous debate on the role of citizens' or civil society diplomacy in the resolution of ethno-political crises.

The Kenyan Post-Election Violence, 2007-8

The Onset of the Crisis

On December 27, 2007 Kenya conducted its national Presidential and Parliamentary elections. The voting process was accomplished without incident, but only to a degree. Elections had been preceded by a high-stakes electioneering period marked, on the one hand, by the slickest, most expensive, and perhaps the most exciting political campaign in Kenya's history. Had the elections been concluded without incident, the country and the world would most likely have considered them as the coming of age of professional political campaigning and democracy in Kenya.

In reality, any expectation of free and fair elections in Kenya served merely as testimony to the facile understanding of the phrase. Campaigning had been marked by a siege mentality and by a sense of grudge, infused and mobilized by dangerously raw ethnic sentiments. Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, the two leading presidential candidates, had been allies in the successful defeat of the then ruling party in the 2002 elections at which time Mwai Kibaki had been elected President. Soon after the elections, this alliance dissolved into an acrimonious split within the government and within the country, a split which persisted to the electoral crisis of 2007.

In reality, any expectation of free and fair elections in Kenya served merely as testimony to the facile understanding of the phrase.

Final days in the respective campaigns were marked by accusations and counter-accusations of planned rigging, raising tensions around the country and triggering isolated incidents of violence and killing.

During the constitutional referendum of November 2005, Kibaki and Odinga had campaigned on opposing sides, with the latter taking charge of the eventually triumphant “No” campaign while still serving in the divided government. Kibaki’s sacking of Odinga and his allies from government after the referendum defeat gave birth to Odinga’s party active in the December 2007 elections, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). Kibaki therefore completed his first term with a hobbled government and a disintegrating political party. Two months prior to the 2007 elections, he scrambled to form a new electoral vehicle, the Party of National Unity (PNU). Thus was the stage set for the epic do-or-die battle culminating in the General Elections of December 2007.

In the months and weeks before voting day, opinion polls favoured Odinga and his ODM; naturally ODM supporters were expecting Odinga to win the presidency. As December 27 approached, the polls indicated that Kibaki was closing the gap and that the outcome was too close to call. Final days in the respective campaigns were marked by accusations and counter-accusations of planned rigging, raising tensions around the country and triggering isolated incidents of violence and killing.

While the parliamentary results were announced within reasonable time, giving ODM a clear majority,⁵ the presidential results were slow in coming. Early results indicated that Odinga was enjoying a comfortable lead. However, as the results trickled in, Odinga’s lead was quickly eroded and then eliminated entirely when results from Kibaki’s stronghold constituencies were announced. By December 29, tension

⁵ Whether this clear parliamentary majority can be uncritically interpreted to necessarily mean a corresponding presidential vote majority has been the subject of debate. See, for example, the *Report of the Independent Review Commission on the General Elections Held in Kenya on 27th December, 2007*, 17th September 2008.

and anxiety in the country gave way to violence. Finally, in the afternoon of December 30, the Electoral Commission of Kenya announced that Kibaki had won the contest for the presidency. Adding legal weight to the announcement, the Kibaki camp moved swiftly to a swearing-in ceremony which took place within an hour after the final announcement of the election victory. According to Kenyan law, once the President is sworn into office, the legitimacy of his or her election can be contested only through the courts.

Violence and Consequences

Within hours after the announcement of election results and the hasty swearing-in of Kibaki, Kenya erupted into an orgy of unprecedented violence, prolonged, eventually, over the following two months. Initially the attacks were directed against supporters of Kibaki, based on ethnic identity and political affiliation. In the days following, random riots, looting, arson, rape and murder spread to various parts of the country, escalating into coordinated attacks and counter-attacks. Massacres took place in Eldoret, Nakuru, Naivasha, Nairobi and in Kisumu, with police killings adding to the death toll. Farmlands in Rift Valley Province, cities and towns of western Kenya, and the densely populated and low-income sub-locations of Nairobi and Kisumu were turned into killing fields. Nor were government officials spared. More than 1,300 Kenyans were killed within a matter of weeks. Another 500,000 Kenyans were on the move, displaced from their farms and homes both in rural and urban centres, with some electing to cross the border into Uganda. Business premises and homes in both urban and rural areas were looted and set on fire. Fire served as a devastatingly effective weapon of choice. Allegations of ‘ethnic cleansing’ and ‘genocide’ began to attract international attention. The country was deeply divided and at great risk of a chaotic disintegration as law

Massacres took place in Eldoret, Nakuru, Naivasha, Nairobi and in Kisumu, with police killings adding to the death toll.

and order collapsed. Total civil war was averted, it seems, only because security forces kept their distance.

Vital rail and road links were severed, paralyzing transport in most of Kenya west of Nairobi; links with the neighbouring countries of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda were also cut.

The disputed elections resulted in a complete vacuum of leadership and power; no one, it appeared, was in charge of Kenya. Cloistered in State House, the newly sworn-in president was apparently paralyzed by his pyrrhic victory, apparently unable to exercise authority. Aggrieved losers in the elections tried to press their opponents through mass mobilization and demonstrations. They, however, had no way of managing the mayhem, and the line between political protest and criminal activity was quickly lost. Meanwhile, lieutenants of the two leaders used local and international media facilities to declare their positions and further stoke the prevailing anger. At a time when selfless, courageous and decisive leadership should have been exercised, it was totally absent. Kenya's very survival was seriously threatened. A country with a record for brokering peace in the region was itself now headed for total collapse.

*Aggrieved losers
in the elections
tried to press
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The Beginnings of the Concerned Citizens for Peace

Emergence

CCP was officially launched by five peacemakers⁶ at a media conference held on December 31, 2007, just a day after the onset of the violence following the announcement of the contested presidential election results. The five initiators immediately established an operational base in Nairobi's Serena Hotel where they were joined in the following days by a corps of Kenya's peacebuilding community, including professionals, religious leaders and community organizers. For the next three months, the hotel became synonymous with efforts to save Kenya as it was

6 The five founders were: 1. Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, an experienced peacebuilding trainer and mediator and founding member of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, the Coalition for Peace in Africa, and ACTION (Action for Conflict Transformation). She is the 2007 winner of the Rights Livelihood Award ("The Alternative Nobel Peace Prize"); 2. Amb. Bethuel Kiplagat, a renown diplomat, is the Executive Director of African Peace Forum, former Kenyan Ambassador to France and the United Kingdom, former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kenya, Chair of the African Union's NEPAD Africa Peer Review Mechanism, chief mediator for Somalia and recently appointed the Chairman of Kenya's Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission; 3. General (Retired) Daniel Opande, a veteran of UN Peacekeeping in Namibia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, serving as Facilitator and Mediator in Mozambique, Chief Military Observer in Liberia, and Force Commander in Sierra Leone; 4. General (Retired) Lazaro Sumbeiywo is former Chief of Staff of the Kenyan Army, Chief Mediator for Sudan leading to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and is current advisor to the United Nations on the DRC peace process; and 5. George Wachira, Senior Research and Policy Advisor and former Executive Director of Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa (NPI-Africa) with eighteen years of peacebuilding experience in conflict settings in East, West, and Central African countries. The founding group therefore represented a combined compliment of unique multi-level skills, experiences and approaches to conflict and crises. Some of them had worked together before and knew each other well, while others did not. Kiplagat was the common factor in the group.

Gitahi immediately arranged for Kiplagat and Wachira to appear live on NTV that very evening, where the two discussed the rising tension with news anchor Julie Gichuru and appealed for calm and patience as the country awaited the announcement of the election results.

chosen to host the official mediation process led by former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

For George Wachira, the CCP story began on the afternoon of December 29, before the election results were announced. As George was driving from his home to a near-by shopping area with his three-year-old son, his car was attacked by an agitated mob, ostensibly protesting the delayed announcement of the election results. Wachira and his son managed to escape, shaken but unhurt, from the furore of the mob. George's peacemaking instincts were immediately awakened to the urgency of the situation. Acting on this flash insight, he abandoned his shopping mission, returned home whence he telephoned NPI-Africa peacebuilding colleagues, Dr. Kabiru Kinyanjui⁷ and Florence Mpaayei⁸ as well as Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat of the African Peace Forum.

In the event, Kiplagat had already begun conversations on his own initiative. He was already in the company of Linus Gitahi, CEO of the Nation Media Group (NMG), owners of the Daily Nation (the largest daily newspaper circulating in East and Central Africa) and Nation Television (NTV). Gitahi immediately arranged for Kiplagat and Wachira to appear live on NTV⁹ that very evening, where the two discussed the rising tension with news anchor Julie Gichuru and appealed for calm and patience as the country awaited the announcement of the election results. Their television appearance was interspersed with updates on the election results as well as flashes of chaotic scenes from the Election Commission of Kenya (ECK)'s coordination centre where representatives of the respective

⁷ Kinyanjui is a Kenyan education and development specialist, chairperson and founder member of NPI-Africa. Kinyanjui went on to play important behind-the-scenes roles, making national and international contacts and occasionally participating in CCP initiatives.

⁸ Florence Mpaayei is executive director of NPI-Africa.

⁹ Kiplagat had requested Francis Nguli, head of Peace Net Kenya, to join the team at NTV, but the latter could not make it.

political parties disputed incoming results. The two were in the NTV studios at the critical moment when Kibaki's election tally tied and then overtook Odinga's election tally. The next day General Lazarus Sumbeiywo appeared on NTV, urging peaceful restraint.

On the evening of December 30, following the swearing-in ceremony of President Kibaki and the ensuing eruption of violence, Kiplagat hosted at his home an 'elders of Kenya' meeting, including NMG's Gitahi. It was decided at the meeting that prominent non-political leaders be urged to stem the crisis by all means, including immediate contact with politician friends. On the same day, Kiplagat and Wachira talked and agreed to meet at the Serena Hotel on the following morning. Kiplagat had also communicated, meanwhile, with Generals Lazaro Sumbeiywo and Daniel Opande requesting their presence at Serena Hotel. At the time, Opande was in the western Kenya town of Eldoret which was rapidly becoming the epicentre of violence in the Rift Valley Province.¹⁰ He had been monitoring events in the region and was alarmed by what he was hearing. Opande was already sheltering terrified residents in his home compound who were trying to evade their attackers. He had also, meanwhile, contacted General Sumbeiywo and the two had begun to explore what they could do together.¹¹

With the country burning, these four people met at the Serena Hotel on the morning of December 31, to share analysis and to agree on appropriate action. Later that day, at the urging of NMG's Gitahi and the Serena Hotel's Francis Okello, the four addressed a well-attended media conference, introducing themselves as 'Concerned Citizens for Peace' (CCP). Each of the four appealed to Kenyans

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¹⁰ It is in Eldoret's Kiambaa area that, on January 1, 2008, 35 people were burnt in a church where they had sought refuge.

¹¹ Lt. General Daniel Opande, Interview, Serena Hotel, Nairobi, June 8, 2009.

to refrain from destroying their country, and appealed to Kenya's leaders to resolve any disputes through dialogue.

At the same time, the four invited other Kenyans with skills and experience in peacemaking and dialogue to join the group. Kiplagat and Wachira directed a very specific invitation to Ms. Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, an experienced peacemaker, who immediately agreed to fly from her Mombasa base to join the group on January 1, 2008. These five – Ibrahim, Kiplagat, Opande, Sumbeiywo and Wachira – became the Core Team of the CCP initiative. Immediately after her arrival at the Serena Hotel, Ms Ibrahim was chosen to serve as the group's leader with the designated title, Convener.¹²

Before leaving his home on the morning of December 31, Wachira had telephoned the Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandalla¹³, the incumbent General Secretary of the Nairobi-based All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), seeking his support in the mobilization of the Christian ecumenical community, and in particular, seeking contact with Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Rev. Dandalla, on Christmas vacation in his native South Africa at the time, agreed to follow through on the request. Dr. Kinyanjui of NPI-Africa continued contact with Dandalla in South Africa and additionally made contact with the Rev.

¹² In terms of the ethno-political geography of Kenya and the conflict itself, Ibrahim comes from 'periphery Kenya' – unlike the other members of the team who come from communities that were seen to be the key 'contestants' in the electoral dispute. The 'periphery Kenya' she comes from had for years experienced devastating conflict while being governed under a state of emergency imposed since 1967. Much of this violence in her North-Eastern Kenya region (driven by both government security agents, local clan militias and fuelled by dynamics in neighbouring Somalia) went unnoticed by 'mainstream Kenya' due to the remoteness of the 'periphery'. Ibrahim honed her peacemaking skills working on the conflicts, helping to build a pioneering peace infrastructure that involved elders, women, security agents, the provincial administration, and the youth. This North-Eastern Kenya region now watched in disbelief as the roles changed: the region remained peaceful and even offered refuge to people escaping the violence.

¹³ Dandalla was to later leave the AACC in December 2008, and ran for the South African presidency in the April 2009 elections on the Congress of the People (COPE) party ticket. In 2005-06, Dandalla, Kinyanjui, Kiplagat and Wachira, among others, had worked together on a nascent initiative on Zimbabwe.

Dr. Samuel Kobia,¹⁴ General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva, Switzerland. Kobia facilitated contact with several key international leaders, seeking their intervention on the situation in Kenya. Thus within twenty four hours after the eruption of post election violence, a community of key peace advocates within Kenya and abroad had formed collaborative links and had begun laying foundations for concerted national and international response to Kenya's crisis.

Initial Infrastructure and Organization

Even as the CCP Core Team was forming, its initiators had already engaged three pivotal infrastructural assets that would greatly assist the group's work. Firstly, they had forged a working partnership with the media and in particular with Linus Gitahi, the head of the Nation Media Group (NMG).¹⁵ On December 31, Gitahi urged the CCP founders to speak to the country: 'You are the peacemakers; we need you to save the country.' The launch of the CCP was thus well publicized by the media. Secondly, NMG arranged and paid for the initial costs of a meeting room at the Serena Hotel,¹⁶ a room which became CCP's base in the following weeks.

¹⁴ Kobia was until August 2009 the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and distinguished ecumenical diplomat, and also a co-founder of NPI-Africa.

¹⁵ Working with the media for members of this group dated further back, however. Both the Africa Peace Forum and NPI-Africa (Kiplagat's and Wachira's employers, respectively) had teamed together every election year since 2001, under the banner Partnership for Peace (PfP), their collaborative brainchild. In the runner-up to the 2007, an expanded PfP had worked with the media, sponsoring a team of journalists for a trip to Rwanda to learn about the negative roles that the media played in that country's genocidal violence.

¹⁶ In subsequent days and weeks, others stepped in to pay for the room at the Serena. These included some of the eventual CCP members who participated in the Open Forum; NPI-Africa, Oxfam GB, IDRC, United States Institute for Peace, among others. On occasion, CCP Core Team members used their own money. At times when specialised meetings needed to be held elsewhere, members (e.g. Jane Katuga, Njeri Karuru) offered their homes as meeting places.

Thus within twenty four hours after the eruption of post election violence, a community of key peace advocates within Kenya and abroad had formed collaborative links and had begun laying foundations for concerted national and international response to Kenya's crisis.

Later, the negotiation process led by Kofi Annan took shape in an adjacent hotel room. The hotel's strategic and accessible location proved to be major assets. Additionally, the hotel was frequented by government officials, members of the opposition, members of the diplomatic community, high-level guests and the international media corps, thus offering opportunities for contacts, meetings, consultations and coordinated peace initiatives. Thirdly, following an appeal for support by the CCP founder members during the initial media conference, a broad range of people appeared at the Serena Hotel, offering their time and skills, thus serving as key assets to the work of CCP.

Organization and Initiatives

The Open Forum: *Inviting Kenyans' Contribution to Peace*

In its initial media appearances, the CCP Core Team appealed to all Kenyans to halt the violence and to refrain from the destruction of property; they called for calm, for peace and for dialogue throughout the country. In their media appearances, team members cited experiences of conflict in other African countries Africa and admonished Kenyans to avoid a replication of those disastrous precedents. Team members urged Kenya's national political leaders to meet and to engage with each other in the quest for a peaceful way forward.

In a bold, but potentially risky move at the initial press conference convened on December 31, 2007, the CCP founders invited anyone interested in peace and in saving Kenya to come to the Serena Hotel and join the group. With this invitation, the CCP team signalled its commitment to openness and inclusive participation. John Paul Lederach has suggested that '[peacebuilders should seek] ways to connect and mobilize the complex web of social and relational histories embedded in the context of the conflict.'¹⁷

¹⁷ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination* (2005).

As the committees developed, the CCP Core Team, functioning as the High-level Dialogue Committee and in concert with the Technical Team, was able to concentrate on analysis, strategy building, personal contacts with pivotal actors, and general coordination of diverse initiatives.

As a result of this appeal to the Kenyan public, the “The Open Forum” was born; beginning January 1, it met every morning during the following weeks at 8:00 a.m. The Open Forum became the meeting place for members of the peacebuilding community, leaders of civil society groups, representatives of the private sector, reporters from the media, social analysts, politicians and professionals from a variety of disciplines, all expressing their concerns and all seeking to be helpful. After some semblance of normalcy and routine had returned to the country, the morning meetings were reduced to three times weekly and then once weekly.

As the Open Forum attracted more and more people, a sense of organization quickly emerged, with the participants grouping around five working committees, respectively focused on: Humanitarian Response; Media; Community Mobilization; Resource Mobilization; Technical; and High-Level Dialogue. Committee members assumed responsibility to harvest ideas and suggestions from the people gathered daily at the Forum, helping to translate effusive discussions into focused action. As the committees developed, the CCP Core Team, functioning as the High-level Dialogue Committee and in concert with the Technical Team, was able to concentrate on analysis, strategy building, personal contacts with pivotal actors, and general coordination of diverse initiatives.

From the beginning it was understood that CCP was not an organization, but a forum or a movement. Participants who proposed specific initiatives were expected to own their proposals and to serve as implementers as well, with the respective Forum committees assisting with coordination and focus. Results from action suggested and implemented through the Forum were reported in subsequent meetings with alacrity. Following this simple format, CCP’s Open Forum stimulated action at grass-root and at diplomatic levels, responding quickly to shifting nuances and emergencies.

CCP also attracted the contribution of peaceworkers from other parts of the world. Dekha Ibrahim remembers that a peaceworker colleague telephoned from the UK,¹⁸ saying ‘I can offer you ten days.’ On behalf of the CCP Team, Ibrahim responded: ‘If you can offer us one hour, just get on a plane and come, just to be here and do what you can.’¹⁹ The colleague proved to be an excellent organizer who knew exactly what to do in a supportive manner without becoming intrusive or burdensome. She was joined by another peaceworker who travelled from South Africa in support of Kenyan colleagues.

The Open Forum served as the public face of CCP, exuding welcome, inclusion and transparency. For all practical purposes, it became a Crisis Situation Room, monitoring the ongoing mayhem in the land, sharing analysis, developing and parcelling out remedial tasks, and receiving reports on initiatives undertaken by individuals and working committees. It provided space for the involvement and contribution of many people, with the CCP’s Core Team playing largely a facilitating role.

As the violence spread and changed character across the country during the initial five days of mayhem, analysis in the morning forum became quite focused. ‘We talked about hotspots and coldspots, and we said: Let’s identify where the hotspots are so that we can intervene, but let’s also identify coldspots which have potential to become hot soon and see if intensification can be prevented.’²⁰ It was this kind of analysis that led, eventually, to the formation of the Nairobi Peace

‘We talked about hotspots and coldspots, and we said: Let’s identify where the hotspots are so that we can intervene, but let’s also identify coldspots which have potential to become hot soon and see if intensification can be prevented.’

18 Joan McGregor, a trainer and peacebuilding practitioner with Responding to Conflict in Birmingham. The other volunteer was Brian Williams from South Africa

19 Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, “Working for Peace in Conflict Systems in Kenya; Addressing the Post-Election Crisis 2008,” Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, Berghof Handbook Dialogue No. 6, July 2008. www.berghof-handbook.net.

20 Ibid.

Forum (see below) when it became clear that violence was approaching the capital.

The Open Forum was conducted on the basis of CCP's core values: dialogue, mutual respect, inclusion, tolerance, and participation. Irungu Houghton, a prominent member of CCP and a resourceful organizer, observed that already by the third day, the Open Forum had become a fairly focused 'idea-harvesting-session' that welcomed and debriefed newcomers, restated CCP's core values, heard testimonials on motivation for attending the Forum, provided participants with opportunity to report on experiences with violence, and suggested appropriate coordinated activity for participants who volunteered their time.²¹ Sometimes the meetings carried on for hours, giving vent to strong emotions or lending empathetic ears to particularly poignant reports. Some of the action ideas put forward were carefully and discretely rejected by the Open Forum. At other times the analysis pointed toward obvious and urgent action suggestions which were quickly supported, coordinated and mobilized. Mwangi Waituru, who served as a key link person with the vernacular radio stations, exuded: 'CCP gave us wings.'²²

A web of interrelated groups emerged from the Forum, with the word 'concern' introducing a common identity: Concerned Youth for Peace, Concerned Kenyan Writers; Concerned Artistes and Celebrities for Peace; Concerned Women of Kenya, etc. Each of these groups and their leaders were in turn linked to other networks and relationships. Additionally, the Open Forum served to build cross-party and cross-ethnic solidarity, affirming a common Kenyan identity. Into this place and into this dynamic Kenyans were drawn to combine their skills with each other in a common effort toward the peace of the land.²³

21 Irungu Houghton, interview.

22 Waituru Mwangi, interview.

23 Njeri Karuru, Interview, IDRC Offices, Nairobi, May 25, 2009.

Each session of the Open Forum was opened and closed with the singing of all three stanzas of Kenya's national anthem, sung sometimes in English, the 'official' language, and sometimes in kiSwahili, the 'national' language. In the Open Forum, described variously by participants as The Harvest Room, The Synergy Room, The Sharing Space, the national anthem was re-discovered as a powerful prayer.

*O God of all creation
Bless this our land and nation
Justice be our shield and defender
May we dwell in unity
Peace and liberty
Plenty be found within our borders.*

*Let one and all arise
With hearts both strong and true
Service be our earnest endeavour
And our homeland of Kenya
Heritage of splendour
Firm may we stand to defend.*

*Let all with one accord
In common bond united
Build this our nation together
And the glory of Kenya
The fruit of our labour
Fill every heart with thanksgiving.*



Kenya National Anthem

Already within the first week of its life, CCP had cultivated an identity and established a fledgling narrative. Irungu Houghton and his colleagues at Oxfam GB quickly helped in the development of the CCP identity, including a logo, a letterhead and calling cards for the five founders. Documents, emblazoned with the universal symbol of the peace dove bearing an olive twig and a full colour Kenyan flag, proclaimed:

The CCP mission:

‘Giving a Voice to Kenyan Citizens to Engage and Contribute in the Creation of Peace and Hope.’

The CCP vision:

‘Creating a citizens’ movement that will create [a] just peace for all.’

The Citizens’ Agenda for Peace

On January 9, 2008 the CCP released a document entitled: ‘Citizens’ Agenda for Peace’ (CAP). With this document the CCP offered its understanding of the crisis and made proposals for a peace process, and thus placed itself within the ensuing national and international diplomatic effort in search of peace in Kenya. Included in the document were suggested strategies for ending the crisis, including a recommendation for the formation of a grand coalition government. Appearing as it did – only 10 days into the crisis – the document was remarkable for its prescient conclusions and recommendations. A seven-point agenda articulated in the CAP bore a striking resemblance to the official four-point mediation agenda²⁴ that subsequently guided the negotiations led by Kofi Annan.²⁵ The CAP was made available both to the local and to the international media corps during a press conference convened at the Serena Hotel.

²⁴ The four-point official mediation agenda included: 1. Immediate action to stop the violence and restore fundamental rights and liberties; 2. Addressing the humanitarian crisis and promoting national healing and reconciliation; 3. Steps to overcome the political crisis (commonly referred to as ‘power sharing’); and 4. Dealing with long-term issues and solutions.

²⁵ Mwangi (2008), in his timely book, perhaps so far the only book-length analysis of the crisis and the mediation, is somewhat dismissive of what he views as the naivety of CCP in suggesting a ‘citizens’ agenda’ while in fact the crisis was “a political problem, amongst political actors.” In his opinion, “it needed a political solution, not some far fetched citizens’ agenda.” “But” Mwangi concedes, “as it turned out later, some of these agenda items ... were similar to those that featured in the eventual mediation.” *The Water’s Edge: Mediation of Violent Electoral Conflict in Kenya*, Nairobi: Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, (p. 49-50).

CAP's Seven-Point Agenda included:

1. The restoration of peace. The immediate cessation of violence was essential to stem the loss of life and property and to begin a process of national reconciliation and healing. All actors would need to cooperate to end the violence and encourage peace initiatives (cf. Agenda Item 1 of the official mediation)
2. The building of trust and confidence between the political principals. CCP recognized the history of injury and mistrust between political groups that underlay the post-election crisis. CCP recommended specific measures to build trust and promote dialogue.
3. Election closure. Agreement was needed on how to conclude the dispute regarding the outcome of the elections (cf. the agreement within the National Accord between the parties to form the Independent Review Commission [Kriegler Commission] to investigate the presidential elections).²⁶
4. The formation of a government of national unity. Herewith a quote directly from the document: 'Given the trends in both the presidential and parliamentary results, a grand coalition or government of national unity will command a significantly popular mandate and be well placed to set the pace for some of the deeper issues that have led to the crisis.' The document suggested that a coalition government should immediately develop a priority agenda for achieving important reforms. (cf. Agenda Item 3, 4)
5. Agreement on a priority reform-focused agenda to precede the coalition government's assumption of power. These reforms, it was recommended, should include: electoral, constitutional, judicial, and administrative reforms; the restoration of internally-displaced persons; reconstruction of areas damaged during the violence; plans for economic

²⁶ The parties however chose to give the Kriegler Commission a circumscribed mandate that did not entail pronouncing a winner, assuming that were possible.

growth; addressing longstanding land disputes; changes to end corruption; and pursuit of truth and accountability for reported genocidal and ethnic-cleansing events during the post-election violence. (cf. specific elements agreed upon under Agenda Item 4)

6. Setting the date for the next presidential and national elections. Here, the CAP suggested that a coalition government would need to function as an interim basis, facilitating the return of peace, reforming the electoral system and other institutions, before calling for fresh elections. The document did not anticipate that the parties would agree to form a coalition government with a five-year mandate.
7. A global agenda to restore Kenya's international respectability, recognizing the importance of Kenyan stability to the security of neighbouring states.

By itself, the development of the document served as testimony to the resourcefulness available within the CCP network. At the onset of the crisis, prominent business community personalities expressed concern about the turn of events, coming, as it did, at a time when optimism regarding Kenya's business environment – after years of stagnation – had been upbeat. Business leader Mike Eldon, a key member of the CCP, along with Irungu Houghton, another key member and a resourceful CCP strategist, ensured the involvement of business people and professionals within CCP, some of whom had been involved in a prescient Kenya Scenarios Project in 1999-2000. Several of these people, including particularly John Kashangaki and Josephat Mwaura, lent their very considerable expertise to the drafting of the CAP and its presentation to the media.

Engagement with the Formal Diplomatic Peace Process

The Open Forum represented the public engagement of CCP. However, before, during and after the emergence of the Open Forum, quiet behind-the-scenes initiatives by CCP were encouraging contact and dialogue between the protagonist parties. These initiatives were undertaken both directly and indirectly through emissaries. After the arrival of Kofi Annan and the launch of the formal mediation process, CCP's quiet diplomacy continued through two of its committees, the High-Level Dialogue Committee and the Technical Committee,²⁷ and sometimes through individual Core Team members. CCP's engagement with high-level dialogue was variously undertaken, as cited in the following paragraphs.

President Tejan Ahmed Kabbah - *The First 'Shuttle Diplomat'*

Louis Pasteur once said, 'Chance favours the prepared mind.' Opportunity for the CCP team's first engagement with behind-the-scenes diplomacy was essentially serendipitous but it also turned on a history of relationships. Upon arriving at the Serena Hotel on December 31, 2007, the team learned that Tejan Ahmed Kabbah, the former President of Sierra Leone, was staying at the hotel, having

²⁷ Besides the five founders, members of the Technical Committee included Sam Kona, Njeri Karuru, Irungu Houghton, Prof. Humphrey Ojwang, Alex Nyago and Mike Eldon, among others. Even here, CCP maintained a level of openness, with various other people participating in this committee from time to time.

come to lead the Commonwealth Election Observer Mission to Kenya.

An opportunity presented itself. Ambassador Kiplagat approached ex-President Kabbah and urged him to ‘change his role from an observer to a mediator.’ After consultations, Kabbah agreed to extend his stay and to become, effectively, the first ‘shuttle diplomat’ in Kenya’s crisis. His acquaintance with Kiplagat through previous engagements with the Africa Peer Review Mechanism, and with General Opande, who had served as a UN Peacekeeping Force Commander in his country, proved to be invaluable assets throughout the proceedings of the next several days. CCP arranged for Kabbah to receive Raila Odinga at the hotel. Senior PNU politicians were also ‘ambushed’ by CCP in the lobby of the hotel and persuaded to proceed upstairs to Kabbah’s suit.²⁸ Later Kabbah was able to meet with Kibaki. During the course of these initiatives, the CCP team held a number of debriefing sessions with ex-President Kabbah.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu-Testing the Waters, Rallying the Churches

The second engagement with early high-level diplomacy comprised the visit to Kenya by Nobel Laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Communications initiated by Wachira and Kinyanjui to South Africa on December 31, 2007 eventually landed Tutu in Kenya²⁹ on January 3, 2008, accompanied by the head of South Africa’s Electoral Commission, Ms. Brigalia Bam.³⁰ By means of this remarkable early

28 Indeed the hotel provided numerous opportunities for ‘ambush diplomacy’.

29 Officially, Tutu’s visit was sponsored by the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Fellowship Of Councils of Churches of the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), and hosted by the Kenyan churches.

30 At this early stage, there may have been the expectation that the electoral process could be revisited to establish what went wrong and perhaps have it rectified. Bam held meetings with ECK officials, including chairman Kivuitu.

intervention, the CCP team was available to interact with Tutu as he undertook his rounds of visits, briefing him at the initial stage of his visit and then participating in later debriefing sessions.

From the perspective of formal mediation theory, some observers would argue that both the Kabbah and the Tutu appearances came too early in the crisis; from this perspective, the moment for intervention was ‘not yet ripe’. However, in retrospect, it is possible that the very public presence of these international personalities may have helped to incline the unfolding dynamics toward an eventual acceptance of dialogue. A statement issued by the AACC at the end of Tutu’s visit indicates that Tutu may have been the first external actor to listen to the positions of the two sides. The statement summarises the positions taken by both PNU’s Kibaki and ODM’s Odinga in their separate meetings with Tutu.³¹

At this early stage, the principal protagonists were staking out polar opposite positions, with the ODM refusing to recognize Kibaki’s presidency and insisting that he was still serving his first term pending the determination of the legitimate election results. “Truth” and “justice” with regard to the election results became a clarion call. PNU, on the other hand, were keen to assert their legitimacy and to insist on the non-negotiability of the presidency. Indeed, PNU was averse to any suggestion of mediation and most certainly not mediation by an external entity or personality. Even as the protagonists clung to their respective positions, it became clear that these early interventions provided opportunity for testing the waters for possible alternatives.

31 “Embrace Peace and Dialogue, Urges Tutu”, All Africa Conference of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya, January 2008.

From that point on, there was a consensus within CCP's Core Team that international intervention was inevitable; hence the CCP's positive view of the presence in the country of high-profile visitors during the early stages of the crisis.

Within CCP there was a strong sense that the mere presence of international figures was in itself helpful. Moreover, given the divisions within the country and given the level of mistrust between the leaders, the CCP became convinced that international intervention was necessary. Earlier on after the CCP media launch, the ODM had publicly rejected the CCP's overtures toward dialogue, intimating that the group was not equal to the task. From that point on, there was a consensus within CCP's Core Team that international intervention was inevitable; hence the CCP's positive view of the presence in the country of high-profile visitors during the early stages of the crisis. True, these early visitors were not able to bring the protagonists to dialogue; their mere presence, however, was psychologically re-assuring to a shaken nation and may also have contributed incrementally toward a readiness for face to face talks.³²

Importantly, Tutu's presence encouraged Kenyan churches to reclaim their space in a land of divided polity, a space which many observers considered to have been vacated by the churches in the months and years preceding the elections due to perceived political alignments.³³ Later on, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) played a leading role within the Inter-Religious Forum and engaged extensively with the mediation process as well as with CCP. Subsequently, the NCCCK apologized in a public statement for having failed the nation and pledged to undertake a new beginning. Tutu's presence in the country during the height of the crisis may have had more than the immediately perceived impact.

³² Wachira interview.

³³ The AACC statement concludes by affirming the leadership of the local churches in their response to the crisis. It further expresses the hope "that this visit contributed to the rekindling of hope and confidence amongst them to resolve the problem." AACC, *Embrace Peace and Dialogue*.

Distinguished Personalities in Town

A third category of CCP engagement with high-level diplomacy centred on several clusters of distinguished persons. After some prevaricating, leaders of both the PNU and the ODM agreed to invite the African Union to serve as mediator in the Kenyan crisis. In response, President Kufuor of Ghana, the then incumbent chairman of the African Union (AU), made a visit to Kenya. It was agreed during this visit that the AU's response to Kenya's request for mediation would take the form of a 'Panel of Eminent African Personalities,' comprising Kofi Annan, ex-General Secretary of the United Nations, Benjamin Mkapa, ex-President of Tanzania and Graça Machel, wife of Nelson Mandela and ex-wife of the late Samora Machel, President of Mozambique.

Other distinguished African personalities came to Nairobi in support of the mediation process on informal bases. These included Kenneth Kaunda, ex-President of Zambia, Ketumile Masire, ex-President of Botswana, and Joachim Chissano, ex-President of Mozambique. All of them – whether formally or informally present – were lodged at the Serena Hotel, thus facilitating ready and extensive engagement with members of the CCP. Communication between the distinguished persons and CCP team members was rendered easy because of various earlier encounters – in particular with Sumbeiywo, Opande, and Kiplagat. Additionally, all of these personalities had early access to the CCP document entitled, 'Citizens' Agenda for Peace,' which served both as a useful basis for engagement with the CCP and with the larger dialogue process. Other concerns and 'findings' generated during CCP's Open Forum were shared with these personalities as deemed appropriate.

It was agreed during this visit that the AU's response to Kenya's request for mediation would take the form of a 'Panel of Eminent African Personalities,'

At a time when the Eminent Personalities group was waiting for contact with Kibaki and the PNU, Opande facilitated meetings between them and local communities in the Eldoret area where the violence had been extreme, visiting camps of internally displaced Kenyans and the burned Kiambaa church.³⁴ National and international media covered the group's tour, bringing new attention to the Kenyan crisis. Soon thereafter, the Panel of Eminent African Personalities was able to meet with Kibaki. Like the Tutu visit, the presence in Kenya of the Eminent Personalities imparted a sense of hope and re-assurance at a time when tensions were still high.³⁵

Like the Tutu visit, the presence in Kenya of the Eminent Personalities imparted a sense of hope and re-assurance at a time when tensions were still high.

Other high level visitors who arrived in Kenya during the early days of the crisis included Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. CCP was able to meet and to brief Ban Ki-Moon. But meetings with Museveni, and earlier with President Kufuor of Ghana, did not materialise. But this failure to meet, especially in the case of Kufuor, was not for lack of trying. Upon learning of Kufuor's intended visit to Kenya, Wachira had contacted a peacemaker colleague in Ghana³⁶ in the hope of arranging a meeting with Kufuor. However this effort did not succeed; Kufuor's office had indicated early on that he would not be meeting with civil society actors. According to the media, visits to Kenya by Kabbah, Tutu and Kufuor had all proven to be failures. But, as noted elsewhere, Kufuor's visit had led to an agreement between the Kenyan protagonists on the choice of Dr. Kofi Annan as the AU-sponsored mediator.

³⁴ Opande, interview.

³⁵ Wachira, interview with Simon Charles, Nairobi.

³⁶ Mr. Emmanuel Bombande, formerly of NPI-Africa and now head of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in Accra, Ghana, was contacted.

But even with this ‘agreement’ on Kofi Annan, the parties remained deadlocked on the intent or purpose of such external intervention. Odinga’s ODM focused on the language of ‘mediation,’ hoping for an internationalization of the crisis that would increase ODM’s legitimacy as a claimant to power in a reconstituted government. Kibaki and the PNU, in contrast, resisted internationalization of the dispute,³⁷ hoping to retain a grip on what appeared increasingly to be a tenuous election victory. PNU did allow the language of ‘dialogue’ and conceded some willingness to ‘accommodate’ ODM in government, but on PNU’s terms. When the ODM was accused of ‘ethnic cleansing’ directed against PNU supporters in the Rift Valley, PNU stalwarts now took up the “justice” call previously associated with their rivals, this time appealing for international ‘justice’ for the victims of the violence. The ODM, meanwhile, sought to focus media attention to the increased police violence against the demonstrators, which ODM activists blamed on the PNU who were, of course, accused of ‘stealing the election’ and therefore triggering off the crisis. Such were the constructions of attack and counter-attack, hurdles which Annan and his colleagues were now called upon to overcome.³⁸

By this time the mood and levels of violence in the country tended to mirror rather precisely what was happening in the political and diplomatic arenas. For example, on the day before Kufuor’s arrival in Nairobi, January 8, 2008, Kibaki had invited Odinga for talks, raising some optimism in the country that there was room for dialogue. Almost immediately, however, this optimism was shattered when Kibaki announced a new government comprising 17 ministers with former presidential contender, Kalonzo Musyoka, slated as vice-president. It was

For example, on the day before Kufuor’s arrival in Nairobi, January 8, 2008, Kibaki had invited Odinga for talks, raising some optimism in the country that there was room for dialogue.

³⁷ This was perhaps reflected in the Government Spokesman’s reference to Kufuor’s visit as an invitation by his age mate (meaning Kibaki) ‘to have a cup of tea.’

³⁸ Wachira. Interview with Tom Arendshorst, University of Notre Dame.

clear that Kibaki had raised the stakes before commencing any ‘dialogue’ with Odinga.

Meanwhile, PNU claimed that Kibaki had formed only half of the government and had left open the possibility of inviting the ODM to join the government. In reality all appointments to the key ministry positions had already been made. CCP’s Core Team members heard the announcement of the new cabinet just as they were concluding a productive meeting with the Ministry of Education to consider counter-violence strategies in the about-to-open secondary schools and universities. Kibaki’s move sparked a country-wide frustration, ensuring that meaningful engagement with ODM was now in jeopardy.³⁹ Following the announcement of the cabinet, new waves of arson, evictions and killings were reported from around the country, aspects of which were targeted at presumed supporters of Musyoka who was now perceived as a traitor.

Kofi Annan’s negotiation process was also accompanied by mirror-image upsurges of tension and violence triggered by developments within the mediation process or by the utterances of the key political leaders. Similarly, two shooting deaths of ODM members of parliament – one in Nairobi and the other in the Rift Valley – within days of each other provided another challenging moment, particularly when it appeared initially that some forces within the country were determined to sabotage the negotiations. Each death sparked a new wave of violence. It emerged, subsequently, that the two deaths were not politically inspired.⁴⁰

39 Back at Serena Hotel from the Ministry of Education that late afternoon following the announcement of the government, there was clear frustration and feelings of discouragement among CCP Core Team members. Wachira remembers it took the encouragement of Kinyanjui (he had accompanied the team to the MOE) who reminded the team that these setbacks were to be expected.

40 Ibrahim and Wachira often talked about how the unfolding crisis closely mirrored simulations and role plays they had often used in training workshops on crisis intervention.

Kofi Annan’s negotiation process was also accompanied by mirror-image upsurges of tension and violence triggered by developments within the mediation process or by the utterances of the key political leaders.

Thirdly, by means of mobile phones some Kenyans were circulating virulent text messages, many of them unfounded rumours intended to incite ethnic hate.⁴¹ Some messages cited assassination threats or the arrests of key ODM leaders. These messages of disinformation had the effect of spreading despondency and thus fuelling additional tension and violence. Some radio stations broadcasting in vernacular served as primary conduits for ethnic chauvinism, negative group solidarity and hate messages. For these reasons, the CCP focused its early remedial initiatives on the so-called ‘ethnic’ radio stations (see below).

The Kofi Annan Mediation Process

Kofi Annan’s mediation process provided CCP with another opportunity to maximise the positive elements of previous relationships, strategic choices and coincidences. CCP enjoyed easy access to Kofi Annan and a confident working relationship with his team, thanks to previous engagements between Annan and three of the five CCP founder members – Kiplagat, Opande and Sumbeiywo – in their respective diplomatic, peacekeeping and peacemaking roles. In the not too-distant past, Opande had served under Annan with peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Irungu Houghton, a key CCP member, had enjoyed a prior acquaintance with the new chief of staff in Annan’s secretariat.

In terms of strategic positioning, CCP’s timely appearance on the crisis scene ensured that its existence had already registered in the awareness of diplomatic-dialogue circles.

Some radio stations broadcasting in vernacular served as primary conduits for ethnic chauvinism, negative group solidarity and hate messages.

⁴¹ A typical message sent to members of one ethnic community would say that so many of their members had been ‘massacred’ at a particular place by members of another ethnic community, effectively inviting action against members of the alleged attackers’ community. CCP’s Media Committee explored with mobile phone service providers whether such messages could be filtered and blocked.

Additionally, the CAP document had served to situate CCP with regard to the crisis, suggesting avenues toward resolution. And then there was the critical and fortuitous choice of place. The Serena Hotel served as the venue both for the Kofi Annan mediation process and as CCP's operational base; some of the meetings chaired by Annan were convened in the room immediately adjacent to the CCP meeting room. This proximity facilitated ready engagement with many aspects of the mediation process.

From that point through to the signing of the formal peace pact five weeks later, the CCP Team interacted closely with the mediation process, providing comment and suggestions as requested.

When Annan arrived in Nairobi to begin his work, the CCP was the first civil society organization to have an audience with him. From that point through to the signing of the formal peace pact five weeks later, the CCP Team interacted closely with the mediation process, providing comment and suggestions as requested. CCP also facilitated vital links between other civil society organizations and the official mediation process. Thus, on January 24, CCP convened a meeting bringing together the Inter-Religious Forum, the Kenya Private Sector Alliance, the Media Owners' Association, the Peace and Development Network of Kenya, and Kenyans for Peace with Truth and Justice. On occasion there was opportunity to exchange and compare perspectives and to move together in support of a common approach to the mediation process.⁴²

⁴² Interview, Sam Kona, CCP Technical Committee member.

The Web of CCP Peacebuilding: *Working with Other Strategic Constituencies*

Print and Electronic Media

After initially treating the unfolding crisis as merely an extension of the electoral contest which some of them had covered in an obviously biased manner, the mainline media houses – with few exceptions – eventually played largely positive roles in the peace process. As noted elsewhere in this account, CCP was launched with the enthusiastic support of the media, thanks to the personal involvement of the CEO of the Nation Media Group (NMG). In the following days and weeks, the NMG repeatedly aired CCP's appeals for peace and dialogue on radio and television. At the instigation of the NMG, these messages were recorded with the five Core Team members at Serena Hotel and then aired, accompanied by patriotic music. Additionally, the NMG met the costs of CCP's full page appeals for peace in the Daily Nation newspaper, featuring the photos and messages of the CCP Core Team on alternate days.

Altogether, the CCP and its activities were accorded largely positive media coverage. A Daily Nation article described the 'peace alliance' formed by Kiplagat, and cited international pressure on Kenya's political leadership to support the effort.⁴³ In the Business Daily of January 4, 2008 an article urged leaders to listen to moderate voices and lamented the disregard of CCP by some of the political leaders.⁴⁴ The same

43 Abdul Samad Ali, and Machuhi, Eunice, "More Leaders Call for an End to Poll Deaths and Chaos," *Daily Nation*, January 3, 2008.

44 Simon Gikandi, "Let Moderate Voices Be Heard in This Din of Hate," *Business Daily*, 4 January, 2008.

edition included a two-page spread on Kenya's emerging peace movements, including CCP and its rapidly developing grassroots engagements.⁴⁵ On January 10, the Daily Nation reported the substance of the 'Citizens' Agenda for Peace.' Business leader and CCP member Mike Eldon, also a columnist for the Business Daily, wrote a number of articles on the crisis, on the mediation process, and on the role of CCP. Such media coverage of the CCP initiative provided early and powerful leverage to Kenyan hopes for peace.

With media support virtually guaranteed, CCP was able to organise press conferences for a variety of civil society groups including professional women's groups; youth groups from violence-hit areas of Nairobi; artistes; and radio personalities/comedians. At the suggestion of the CCP's Concerned Youth for Peace, one press conference involved young refugees from war-torn countries residing at the time in Nairobi. These young refugees made moving appeals to Kenyan youth to avoid destroying their own country; 'You will be the losers'. It was a message resonating well with the repeated messages from the CCP founders: experience in other war-ravaged African countries had demonstrated the total futility of violence. Happily, Kenya's media served as a key partner in spreading this message.

These young refugees made moving appeals to Kenyan youth to avoid destroying their own country; 'You will be the losers'.

In meetings with the Media Owner's Association (MOA), Chairman Hannington Gaya, CCP urged the broadcast and print media to assess their respective roles in the crisis and in the unfolding peace process. Through these meetings, MOA agreed to ignore all hate messages, whether from political parties or other groups,⁴⁶ and to

⁴⁵ Joseph Ngunjiri, "Peacemakers Out to Restore Hope in the Country Amidst Ethnic, Political Divisions," *Daily Nation*, January 6, 2008.

⁴⁶ In one such example, leading personalities from one community called a press conference at the Serena Hotel. On seeing their press release, which amounted to a call to war, CCP members called the MOA chairman who agreed to have the media houses 'kill' the story.

ignore individual politicians who were inciting hatred.⁴⁷ These deliberate strategies by Kenya's media to limit abuses were in sharp contrast to media responses during previous catastrophes such as the one in Rwanda.⁴⁸ The MOA impressed on newspaper managing editors to apply 'conflict sensitivity'⁴⁹ and to 'take responsibility' for their respective roles during the crisis.⁵⁰ A major development involving the MOA – remarkable for its timeliness and impact – was the decision by four of the leading Kenyan dailies (Daily Nation, The Standard, The People, and Kenya Times) to run a common headline on January 3, 2008: 'SAVE OUR COUNTRY'. The media recognized the serious danger facing the country.⁵¹

Having engaged intensively and purposefully with the Kenyan media, CCP's Houghton recalled how appalled he was by the global media's portrayal of the raging crisis. In his view, the international networks – CNN, Sky News, BBC and Al-Jazeera – were being seduced by “the pornography of ethnic conflict,” airing “images that would not have been allowed by any international broadcasting standards,”⁵² Houghton remonstrated with select international correspondents in

47 “Concerned Citizens for Peace: Giving a Voice to Kenyan Citizens to Engage and Contribute in the Creation of Peace and Hope,” (Concerned Citizens for Peace, 2008).

48 It should be recalled that before the elections, some of the CCP founders, working with others under a different initiative, the Partnership for Peace, had sponsored a visit to Rwanda of Kenyan journalists intended to provide learning and warning on the negative role of the media in the genocide in Rwanda. An investment had therefore already been made in this question of the role of the media.

49 CCP took on the theme of 'conflict sensitive journalism' and later partnered with NPI-Africa to conduct training to journalists on conflict sensitivity, with funding from USAID.

50 Sheila Amdany, Interview, Jacaranda Hotel, Nairobi, 19 June, 2009. Amdany recalls one print advertisement in which a figure pointed at the reader, saying, “I'm a citizen of peace – are you?”

51 This did not necessarily mean that the media houses had arrived at a common policy on how to cover the crisis; on the contrary, the biased reporting that had marked the campaign period was evident during the crisis.

52 Irungu Houghton, Pan-Africa Director for Oxfam and eventual member of CCP's Technical Committee, Interview, Nairobi, June 2008.

Nairobi, encouraging less sensational and more empathetic and sensitive reporting. Locally, the MOA agreed to broadcast acts of peace, mediation and solidarity among different communities as a counterpoint to the emphasis on violence. According to Houghton, by the third week of the crisis, Kenya's media had successfully projected an impression that, 'for every person who was attacking his/her neighbour, there was another person protecting his/her neighbour.'⁵³

Houghton and a team of volunteers from his office helped to develop Amani Sasa (Peace Now), a daily newsletter. It became available to each session of the Open Forum, featuring messages of peace and tolerance, highlighting ways in which ordinary Kenyans could become and were becoming involved with the CCP initiative.⁵⁴

Locally, the MOA agreed to broadcast acts of peace, mediation and solidarity among different communities as a counterpoint to the emphasis on violence.

CCP's Media Committee successfully courted the collaboration of Kenya's leading mobile phone companies, who agreed to send text messages to Kenyans urging peace and tolerance.⁵⁵ This initiative had a context: during the heated campaign period and soon after the eruption of violence, 'text-messaging' had become a major vehicle for distributing hate messages. Subsequently, one of the mobile phone companies agreed to post a permanent automated peace message to be triggered whenever clients 'topped-up' their cell phone credit.

When he began attending the Open Forum on January 10, George Gachara was able to offer vital information on

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Concerned Citizens for Peace. "Post Election Conflict Transformation: Creating Public Accountability for Implementing the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Agreements and Promoting Peaceful Coexistence Among Kenyans: March 2008-March 2009." (Concerned Citizens for Peace, 2008).

⁵⁵ This trend had been initiated before the elections under the campaign dubbed 'Chagua Amani, Zuia Noma' ('Vote for Peace, Shun Chaos') run under the Partnership for Peace.

events taking place in various parts of the country, thus adding value to the quality of the CCP's Situation Room 'hotspots/cold spots' analyses and responses. Gachara, a university student leader, helped to organize an SMS Information Initiative through CCP's grassroots partner, Peacenet. The SMS centre acted as an emergency hotline, fielding messages which solicited contributions toward emergency relief purposes.⁵⁶ Kenyans from all over the country sent messages requesting assistance from the police and sent alerts regarding political instigation of violence.

Other Groups within CCP

Sub-groups formed severally under the CCP 'brand name' and participated actively in the Open Forum and its follow-up activities. One of these, the Concerned Kenyan Writers (CKW) deserves special mention. Shalini Gidomol, a key mover and shaker within the group, was motivated to assume responsibility to inform the world about Kenyan issues, and particularly the 'Why?' of the Kenyan post-election crisis. Thus, within the first few weeks of the crisis, the group had written nearly fifty articles and had placed them strategically in leading international papers in the US, in Europe and in South Africa, spawning lively debates in the 'blogosphere'. This same group linked CCP with voices for peace, active within the Kenyan Diaspora.⁵⁷

Kenyans from all over the country sent messages requesting assistance from the police and sent alerts regarding political instigation of violence.

⁵⁶ Peacenet Kenya, "Elections Violence Response Initiative: An Account of Civil Society and Community Response Initiative." (Peacenet Kenya, 2008). www.peaceinkenya.net/EVRI-REPORT.doc

⁵⁷ In almost every conflict in Africa and elsewhere, the Diaspora plays important roles, both negative and positive. CCP was therefore keen to make contact with Kenyans in the Diaspora and was already building relationships with groups such as VUMA Kenya.

Work with Vernacular Radio Stations

The sudden, calamitous onset of ethnic violence had been stoked vigorously by some of Kenya's vernacular FM radio stations. These stations, broadcasting exclusively to ethno-linguistic audiences, played a major role in fomenting hate and inciting the respective ethnic groups to violence against their fellow Kenyans. Sumbeiywo remembers being invited to KASS FM on December 31, 2007, the leading and popular Kalenjin vernacular station, to address its listeners at a time of anger and raging violence in the Rift Valley. Peace was the last message that people wanted to hear then, but Sumbeiywo, speaking as an elder insisted on it. He reminded listeners of their sacred cultural traditions that prohibited certain acts such as harming innocent people and burning homes, even during war. Subsequently, both Sumbeiywo and Kiplagat were to speak on KASS FM several other times during the crisis.

Thus, even during the height of the campaigning period, some vernacular stations advocated the protection of 'their' incumbent and his community, and others advocated as well for electoral victory as spiteful revenge for past unfair treatment.

The electoral contest had been characterized by a siege mentality ('they' want to grab power from 'us, we must protect it by all means) and a grudge mentality ('they' kicked us out of government after we helped them win, now is pay-back time). Thus, even during the height of the campaigning period, some vernacular stations advocated the protection of 'their' incumbent and his community, and others advocated as well for electoral victory as spiteful revenge for past unfair treatment. Waituru Mwangi, a CCP member, who took the lead in organizing encounters between CCP and vernacular radio presenters, observed that even before the election results were announced, some of the radio personalities were already flaunting 'us' vs. 'them' taunts, thus fuelling ethnic antagonism and violence.⁵⁸ Clearly, in its quest for calm, CCP could not ignore the power of the radio stations.

⁵⁸ Mwangi Waituru, Interview, NPI-Africa Offices, Nairobi, May 20, 2009.

In mid-January, at Mwangi's initiative, CCP invited vernacular broadcasters to a meeting at the Serena Hotel. Only seven persons from the stations attended what proved to be a difficult meeting. Discussion was torturous; participants defended their stations and their reporting patterns. However, when CCP Core Team members persisted, the tense, uncommunicative meeting ended with an agreement to hold a larger meeting, to be convened by the broadcasters themselves. In the meantime, those present promised to do everything possible to transform their radio programmes into instruments of peace.

A second meeting held at the Panafric Hotel, on January 20 was attended by fifty persons, representing all the main vernacular stations. While some lamented that their reporting policies were dictated by the respective station owners, many of those present agreed that the situation in the country was dire. Subsequently, CCP arranged for conversation between members of the Media Owners Association and the Media Council of Kenya. CCP's prolonged discussions with the FM radio personalities focused on the sensitivities related to conflict and peace in radio programming and led to changes in the messages broadcast by the stations. One of the leading stations in particular made dramatic changes in its programme content.

Engagement with Government Departments

After the eruption of violence, the CCP's Core Team worked as quickly as possible, through personal relationships and official channels, to engage with the organs of government, with religious organizations, with business and other leaders. At government level, CCP focused on the National Steering Committee (NSC), the

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Nairobi Provincial Administration, and the Ministry of Education.

NSC Secretariat and the Nairobi Provincial Administration

Thus, as the violence spread to Nakuru (170 KM from Nairobi) and then to Naivasha (90 KM from Nairobi), it was feared that the isolated violent spots within Nairobi could easily spread in a few days to consume the whole city.

CCP recognised that while the crisis had seriously hobbled the government and its capacity to act, still the government retained control over select domains and critical systems. In any case, the government's total collapse was an unthinkable alternative. Years earlier, Ibrahim, had been involved in the development of the NSC, the body coordinated by the Office of the President which related to civil society groups and government agencies for purposes of focusing on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. CCP now approached NSC, stimulating the NSC to fulfil its mandate.

A key element of the 'Situation Room' function of the Open Forum was the 'cold spots/hot spots' analytical framework that helped the group to track the development and spread of the violence. With the aid of this instrument, the group was able to anticipate how the violence was spreading and how current 'cold spots' might become 'hot spots' within a short time. Thus, as the violence spread to Nakuru (170 KM from Nairobi) and then to Naivasha (90 KM from Nairobi), it was feared that the isolated violent spots within Nairobi could easily spread in a few days to consume the whole city. If the city imploded, CCP reasoned, then the country would be 'lost'. Hence the urgent perceived need to focus on saving Nairobi and reducing the potential impact of spreading violence. Inspired by previous work under the Partnership for Peace and Ibrahim's work in North-Eastern Kenya during the 1990s, CCP initiated

discussions with the NSC Secretariat and the Nairobi Provincial Commissioner.

At the same time, the CCP Core Team contacted newly-elected, re-elected and defeated Members of Parliament (MPs) to devise strategies and tactics to encourage peace and curtail bloodshed in their respective Nairobi constituencies. The response was unexpectedly warm, with five (four newly-elected or re-elected and one recently defeated) appearing for the first meeting at the Serena Hotel. In the event, they were already preoccupied with major challenges as a result of the violence; these included the provision of relief to internally displaced constituents and arrangements for the transport of dead bodies for upcountry burials. They were keenly aware, therefore, of the need for peace even as they grappled with their respective political party positions regarding the violence. As a larger meeting was being planned, one Nairobi MP (not among those who had attended the first meeting) was killed, thus jeopardizing the initiative.

In the meantime, as a result of the discussions with the NSC and the Nairobi Provincial Administration, it was agreed to establish the Nairobi Peace Forum (NPF) comprising the NSC Secretariat; the Nairobi Province Security Committee; the Ministries of Education; Youth; Health; Information; the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA); Maendeleo ya Wanawake (Kenya's foremost women's group); the Jua-Kali Association (a workers' association in informal industry); Resident Associations; the National Council of Churches of Kenya; and various national and international NGOs. CCP co-chaired the NPF meeting with the Nairobi Provincial Commissioner, and provided strategy development support including

peacebuilding training and capacity-building.⁵⁹ By pulling these organizations together, CCP had enabled them to collaborate and contribute ideas, expertise, and resources to the growing peace initiative.

Reaching further to community grassroots, CCP helped to organize District Peace Committees (DPCs) for the three Nairobi districts, strengthening the involvement of citizens in the search for and the securing of peace. Again, peacebuilding training for the DPCs was provided by CCP and supported by NPI-Africa.⁶⁰

Not all of the interactions between the CCP and the government bureaucracy went smoothly. The Kibaki administration was under severe pressure; it held onto power tenuously, but strongly resisted any entanglements that might have suggested a search for or negotiations toward legitimacy. Some government officials responded to CCP offers of peacebuilding support with defensive resistance, even when it was obvious that the crisis had led to high levels of ethnically-inspired stalemate and paralysis within the bureaucracy.⁶¹ The same ethnic stalemate that was threatening to paralyse the civil service was also being experienced in offices and businesses across the country. Thus, at the invitation of the Institute of Human Resource Management, CCP facilitated a workshop on workplace relationships and peacebuilding for human resource managers in some of Kenya's largest companies.⁶²

59 The training/capacity building role for the NPF was later taken on by NPI-Africa.

60 Funding for this activity was obtained from the United States Institute of Peace through a grant to NPI-Africa.

61 Ibrahim Abdi, Interview.

62 Mike Eldon, Interview, Symphony Palace, Nairobi, May 27, 2009. See also Michael Eldon, "Honest Appreciation Can Heal the Nation," *Business Daily*, February 21, 2008.

Ministry of Education

All of Kenya's state schools and universities were due to open on January 8, 2008. The CCP feared that outbreaks of ethnic violence might occur among students and even among teachers. Some schools had been burned, some teachers had been killed, and some teachers were requesting transfers to areas where their own ethnic communities were in the majority. CCP tried to understand the MOE's thinking with regard to the situation and to ascertain whether any mitigating initiatives were in place. A meeting with the Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Education was initially depressing and confirmed CCP's fears regarding the precarious condition of the country's educational system. The likelihood of schools and universities re-opening on schedule was, at this point, an unrealistic expectation. CCP urged the PS to prepare the teachers and education officials to deal with the possible consequences of the violence--including trauma, if/when the schools re-opened.

School Heads and Heads of Education

Then the PS decided to convene all heads of schools as well as district and provincial education officers for training on January 15 on ways of dealing with issues that might arise from the ongoing bloodshed and destruction. CCP was invited to address this gathering of over 400 key managers of the education system, focusing particularly on the roles of the education officers in the reconstruction of Kenya's nationhood. Importantly, CCP sought out and mobilized an expert in trauma and trauma counselling who exposed the participants to a basic checklist of elements to watch for within themselves and among their charges that could suggest serious trauma.

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University Vice-Chancellors

Kenya's universities had long been troubled with intermittent closures following violent demonstrations. For a long time, university politics had mirrored political dynamics at the national level. In 2006, NPI-Africa had conducted and then published a study on the prevalence of violence in public universities, discussing some of the political causes of violence and disruption in the universities.⁶³ At this point, the possibility of violence carrying over to the universities seemed very real to CCP. With the endorsement of the MOE, CCP held a major meeting with the vice-chancellors of the public universities, discussing both what the universities needed to consider when re-opening to new semesters, and what might constitute the broader contribution of the universities to the re-imagining of Kenya. Vice-chancellors, in turn, talked of the losses incurred when university dormitories were burned, facilities looted, some faculty members evicted and their homes looted or burned.

The meeting with student leaders took place soon after the newly elected parliament had held its first session.

University Student Leaders

CCP had a more extensive engagement with the student leadership of public universities. To this end a meeting was convened in a secluded residential property offered by one of the CCP Open Forum participants. Over a seven hour period, CCP and the student leaders discussed the role that students could play in ensuring non-violent engagement when the universities re-opened.

The meeting with student leaders took place soon after the newly elected parliament had held its first session. On live television, Kenyans had watched keenly to see how the bitterly divided leaders (at least in public) would behave

⁶³ See *Violence in Kenya's Public Universities: Reversing the Trending, Building a Culture of Peace*, NPI-Africa, 2006.

towards each other. In the event, debates in parliament, though obviously tense, were carried out according to the rules, with the protagonists using reasoned argumentation to make their points. In the meeting with students, CCP emphasised that the MPs had demonstrated that they could do what they were expected to do; i.e., debate and argue to make their respective points without resorting to violence or insults. Similarly, students had been trained to think and reason; skills which they were now encouraged to deploy in this time of crisis. CCP encouraged them to consider drafting a memo that could be submitted to Kofi Annan. The meeting ended on a high note as the student leaders committed themselves to ensuring that the universities would not experience violence once they opened.⁶⁴

CCP's strategic partnership with the Ministries of Internal Security and Public Service Reforms led to the formation of a collaborative framework for dialogue and peacebuilding.⁶⁵

CCP also engaged with Kenyan churches on violence prevention. Kiplagat, Sumbeiywo, and Eldon worked to inform, support, and collaborate with the National Council of Churches of Kenya, particularly among Kalenjin churches in the Rift Valley, where much of the intense violence had taken place. Kiplagat contacted James Bett⁶⁶, Chairman of the Emo Society, a Kalenjin cultural, economic, non-political association. Together they convened Kikuyu and Kalenjin pastors for regular meetings, which continued long after the cessation of the crisis.⁶⁷

64 Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa. *Civil Society Response*.

65 Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa. *NPI-Africa Response*.

66 Sadly, Bett, who had distinguished himself as a key peace strategist and bridge builder, died in a car accident in April 2009.

67 Kiplagat's and Bett's initiative with pastors in itself deserves elaborate documentation. It offers important insights both into the challenges facing the church leaders during the crisis and its aftermath and their efforts and struggles to reconcile, heal and reclaim their non-partisan pastoral roles.

The two generals, Opande and Sumbeiywo, also engaged purposefully with community leaders in the Rift Valley during this time. Opande described to the community leaders the horrors of violent conflict which he had witnessed in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and other African countries, and warned that ethnic and genocidal violence, once unleashed, was very difficult to control. He pleaded with them to understand that their children were destroying their country.⁶⁸

68 Opande, interview.

Grassroots CCP Initiatives

CCP's loose organization as a movement meant that it could function at different levels simultaneously: high-level engagement with the dialogue and mediation process; middle-level initiatives with government ministries and the media, and grass-roots engagement with the consequences and mitigation of the crisis. Most of these initiatives flowed from the dynamics of the Open Forum which identified ready volunteers to spearhead them. CCP also maintained strategic linkages with other organizations and individuals working on the ground.⁶⁹ Eventually, the work of the Humanitarian Committee was shifted to Peacenet Kenya's offices whence further activities were coordinated. Within the first two weeks after the onset of the crisis, NPI-Africa organized community-level meetings in the provinces most severely afflicted by the violence, under its 'Listening Initiative'. These initiatives provided spaces for Kenyans to tell their stories emanating from the post-election crisis, to give thought to ways of averting a recurrence of similar violence in the future and to identify measures required for building a new Kenya.⁷⁰ CCP's links with these processes helped to channel support for the 'mourning and burials' initiative described below.

69 Ibrahim and Wachira, for example, kept contact with peacemaker Babu Ayindo, based in the badly affected city of Kisumu. At the same time, NPI-Africa initiated a 'Listening Initiative' in Western Kenya, including Kisumu, in which Ayindo and NPI-Africa's George Kut were the lead facilitators.

70 Nariboi Peace Initiative-Africa. *NPI-Africa Response*.

Decent Mourning and Burials

The high death toll resulted in an accumulation of bodies in morgues, in the streets and even in the homes of people. At the same time, the ability of people to bury their dead in dignified and culturally acceptable way was severely limited. CCP's engagement with these issues evolved in an organic manner. In a meeting at the Serena Hotel between Core Team members and private sector leader Mike Eldon, it was deemed urgent to gain access to ODM's top leadership. Eldon suggested contact with a newly elected Kisumu MP, a friend who, it was hoped, would serve as an intermediary. An initial conversation with the MP did not proceed very well: he was not sure that anybody should be talking about 'peace and dialogue' while 'everywhere in the streets' there were dead bodies. His immediate concern was how to deal with the need among his constituents for decent burial of their dead.⁷¹

Kisumu had suffered a heavy death toll as a result of police response to the wave of looting and arson that followed the announcement of the election results.

Kisumu had suffered a heavy death toll as a result of police response to the wave of looting and arson that followed the announcement of the election results. It was the conversation with the Kisumu MP that spurred CCP to respond to the concern for decent burials. Within hours, Ibrahim had initiated a conversation that led to a grant of about USD 10,000 from the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers), channelled through NPI-Africa.⁷² This money was distributed (through a team of community-based peacebuilders answerable to NPI-Africa on behalf of CCP) among people in the critically affected cities of Kisumu, Eldoret, Nakuru and Nairobi, a practical initiative deeply appreciated by the beneficiaries. In Eldoret, the orderly process of burial marked some tentative coming-together of the several estranged communities.

⁷¹ Wachira, interview.

⁷² Ibrahim Abdi. Interview, PACT-Kenya Offices, Nairobi, May 21, 2009.

An offshoot of this initiative was the building of rapport with some of the Members of Parliament, particularly in Nairobi, aiding the development of the Nairobi Peace Forum process.

Flowers for Peace: *The Flower Memorial*

Another aspect of mourning and healing emanated from the Open Forum, providing testimony to the variety of cultures, perspectives and opinions that converged within CCP. A participant in the Forum, Saba Douglas-Hamilton, from Kenya's European community proposed the idea of using flowers as an expression of mourning and remembering. Uhuru Park, located just across the street from the Serena Hotel, was chosen as the site for the Flower Memorial. This choice was both symbolic and problematic. A sub-section of the park was known as 'Freedom Corner.'⁷³ Since the onset of the crisis, the entire Park had been sealed off by heavily armed police to ward off attempts by Odinga and ODM to hold a massive rally and to swear in Odinga as 'the people's president.' For this reason, the park was contested space and politically significant.

After approximately two weeks of negotiations with the Government (during which truck-loads of already donated flowers had to be preserved in cold storage!) at one point requiring the direct intervention of the Minister of Internal Security, permission was finally granted to erect a flower memorial at Uhuru Park. In the meantime, a temporary indoor memorial had been constructed in a Nairobi church

Uhuru Park, located just across the street from the Serena Hotel, was chosen as the site for the Flower Memorial.

⁷³ Freedom Corner came into being following the efforts of now Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai to stop the destruction of the park by the then Moi government. The corner then became popular with democracy activists in the 1990s.

*Apart from
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appealing to
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shun violence,
CYP organized
multi-ethnic
residential
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hosted sports
tournaments
and music
events--even
in the midst of
the prevailing
despondency,
and visited
displaced people
around Nairobi.*

where a Night Vigil was held. After permission had been granted, a team of volunteers set about building the memorial in 'Freedom Corner', comprising a combination of pictures mounted on a billboard, and flowers--mostly white roses.⁷⁴

During its 'inauguration', CCP members led the way, laying the flowers onto the memorial. Within a matter of days, the memorial was attracting people from all walks of life including politicians and the police, all of whom brought flowers and respectfully laid them onto the memorial. Women, under the banner of Concerned Women for Peace, organised a procession from the Serena Hotel to the memorial, led by Ibrahim, Maendeleo ya Wanawake's Rukia Subow, and the renowned athlete, Tecla Lorupe. Flowers were also laid at select sites in the towns of Kisumu and Eldoret, including at the site of the burnt church, the latter event coordinated by General Opande

Other Grass-roots Processes

Throughout the crisis, most of the severe violence was concentrated in urban areas, where poverty struggled immediately adjacent to privilege. One of CCP's sub-groups, the Concerned Youth for Peace (CYP), brought together enthusiastic young people from both middle class and low-income estates of Nairobi. Apart from media appearances appealing to fellow youth to shun violence, CYP organized multi-ethnic residential neighbourhood meetings, hosted sports tournaments and music events--even in the midst of the prevailing despondency, and visited displaced people around Nairobi.

⁷⁴ See www.douglas-hamilton.com/Site/flower-power/index.html for excellent pictures of the Flowers Memorial

The group also organised a major and well-attended Night Vigil in Nairobi that brought together key people within and beyond CCP. Amidst the chaos and carnage, the Nairobi Night Vigil created a space for slum youths (the most likely perpetrators and victims) to come together and discuss their concerns. Dialogue was opened by the CCP Core Team during which young people shared the horror of their experiences and their hopes for something better than more bloodshed. Counselling was offered to youth who expressed a need for it. Pastors prayed, and the CCP Core Team encouraged all present to preach peace everywhere.⁷⁵ It was at this vigil that the initial Flower Memorial was displayed as negotiations for its outdoor construction at Uhuru Park continued. When permission for the construction of the Flower Memorial in the Park was finally granted, members of the CYP were available to provide the necessary labour.

Under the leadership of Tom Oketch, a civil society activist and resident of Nairobi's Kibera area, the expanding Nairobi Peace Forum--District Peace Committees web of community activism expanded its efforts before and after the signing of the eventual National Accord on February 28.⁷⁶

Kenyan Veterans for Peace (KVP) formed when a group of 150 military veterans attended a session of the Open Forum. Their immediate concern was organizing for peace in the residential neighbourhoods mostly affected by the violence. An aspect of the violence involved the forceful occupation of properties by tenants and refusal to pay rent. As their contribution to the peace effort,

An aspect of the violence involved the forceful occupation of properties by tenants and refusal to pay rent.

75 Mercy Gichangi, Interview, NPI-Africa Offices, Nairobi, June 4, 2009. Ms. Gichangi was Coordinator of CYP.

76 Ibid.

the KVP organized tenant/landlord dialogue and other grassroots activities to assist people who had lost their homes and livelihoods.

Conclusions:

Analysis and Learning Points

Which, if any, insights and lessons can be drawn from the response of the Concerned Citizens for Peace to Kenya's post-election ethnic violence? Were the successes of the CCP initiatives idiosyncratic to one specific sequence of events and actors? Or do they offer potential templates or models that might help peace practitioners in other places to engage creatively with emergent risks of violence whether of ethnic or other origins?

Certainly, some of the situational elements of the CCP response in Kenya were unique and not readily replicated elsewhere: e.g., the immediate participation in CCP of internationally recognized mediators who had worked to resolve terrible conflicts elsewhere in Africa (Sumbeiywo, Opande, and Kiplagat); the pre-existing positive relationships among these three and the two professional and experienced peacebuilders (Ibrahim and Wachira); and the pre-existing close relationships between the actors and the eventual chief mediator, Kofi Annan. Kiplagat's role as a connector in this process was also unique.

Politically and ethnically motivated conflicts are generally supported by the powerful and/or wealthy parties whose interests they serve. Animosity rooted in historic injustices and injuries easily explode with the slightest provocation. And the efforts by a victimized populace, seeking to protect itself from destruction are always hamstrung by the desperate

lack of funds. It is against these overwhelming odds that peacemakers and peacebuilders must prevail. Nevertheless, some of the CCP strengths and decisions that yielded peacebuilding successes for Kenya may provide inspiration for further innovative peacebuilding work elsewhere in future. Indeed, CCP was a major inspiration to the work of the Civic Forum in Ghana that worked to avert bloodshed during the tense, drawn-out, violence-threatening general elections of December, 2008.

The Kenyan situation comprised an extensive accumulation of grievances and antagonisms emanating from a history of colonial, political, and economic injustices. These often acquired ethnic undertones, cyclically excited and incited at every election. Certain ethnic groups were perceived to enjoy privileged power and position, advantages craved by others. Many years of political and economic mal-governance had impoverished the country and heightened the sense of political and economic exclusion. Kenya's general elections of December, 2007 exposed and activated all of these latent and overt antagonisms.

In the end, however, a crisis response such as the one undertaken by the CCP emanates from a deeply held urge to mitigate and manage imminent and emergent violence, fully aware of the inability to deal immediately or conclusively with the underlying issues inherited from history. Nevertheless, without intervention, Kenya's violence could have deteriorated into total collapse. The possibility or likelihood of then addressing the issues bequeathed by history could have been overwhelmed. Interventions such as the one by the CCP can be understood as part of an 'enabling environment' within which to resist self-destruction and within which to focus on the recognition and resolution of problems. The challenge is

always how, in ‘peace time,’ to sustain the urgency needed to address the fundamental justice issues so as to avoid the violence next time.

The community of peacebuilders in Kenya had sensed the brewing unease prior to the elections, and had worked to prepare communities for peaceful voting in 2007. But this effort proved insufficient to ward off the ensuing crisis. And when the country exploded in violence, peacebuilders responded immediately by forming the CCP platform. Within twenty-four hours after the onset of violence, CCP:

- 1) *Identified peace* - an end to the violence – as the country’s greatest need and primary priority, and dialogue as the best strategy to rapidly facilitate that peace;
- 2) *Initiated* a web of local and international people who could mobilize outside support and influence Kenya’s conflicting government leaders;
- 3) *Enjoined the peace* - promoting cooperation of television, print, and radio media;
and
- 4) *Took a counter* - intuitive leap of faith to open the CCP process to broad participation, by inviting all concerned Kenyans to combine and mobilize efforts through the Open Forum.

Learning Points

Recognition of the Moment: An ability to recognize that Kenya had arrived at a moment of extreme danger sprang from the confluence of long experience, imbibed theory and well honed intuition. The CCP principals, with experience from other severe African conflicts, understood that Kenya was at a tipping point, and that quick action was needed. Election campaigns function as polarizing forces; in states lacking

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strong responsible and transparent institutions, election campaigns are carried out in a high risk environment. Within hours after the onset of the crisis, analysis indicated that Kenya had already fulfilled an estimated 80% of the conditions that characterize full-blown civil war. CCP was therefore driven by a sense of urgency, to mobilize swiftly and to take bold action in the hours immediately before and after the announcement of the contentious election results. On their own, the CCP founders acted to invite Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to engage the Sierra Leonean President Tejan Kabbah in shuttle diplomacy, and to appear on television to speak directly to the Kenyan people. The CCP recognized immediately that external intervention would be necessary to address the divisions in the country.

Compass Orientation: Without a sharply-defined sense of mission, even great energy and expertise is ineffective. In the midst of sudden violent crisis, how can peacemaking and peacebuilding be mobilized? During Kenya's emergency, some argued that the CCP should first have pursued 'truth' and 'justice', instead of defining its mission as peace-through-dialogue. The startlingly fruitful contributions of the Concerned Citizens for Peace, combined with the gratifyingly rapid resolution of the post-election ethnic violence, support CCP's (and the authors') convictions that everything has its proper time; Kenya's moment of a rapidly-accelerating crisis called for immediate measures to arrest the descent to total disintegration. This is both a theoretically sound and a practically grounded argument. CCP founders and members share a deeply held concern for 'truth' and 'justice', but were convinced that Kenya's immediate need was for the termination of violence and that respectful dialogue was the key to the possibility for truth and justice. That the key antagonists would eventually sit down and, in a matter of weeks, agree to share power without first insisting on the actual truth of the electoral debacle, seemed to make the point that CCP made repeatedly:

CCP founders and members share a deeply held concern for 'truth' and 'justice', but were convinced that Kenya's immediate need was for the termination of violence and that respectful dialogue was the key to the possibility for truth and justice.

no innocent Kenyan had to die, certainly not on behalf of their leaders. At some point, a more deliberate engagement between respective civil society communities which espouse peace, justice, and truth from a variety of perspectives, would be helpful in clarifying theoretical assumptions and practical applications. Here the quest is not for blind ‘co-operation’ or capitulation; it is a quest for a more nuanced appreciation of multiple points of view and approaches.

Years of Preparation: Creative capacity for crisis response emerges from decades of work and commitment. Jointly and separately, the CCP founders and other CCP members represent years of preparation and investment: i.e., the development of networks and relationships; training, theoretical grounding and reflection in conflict transformation and peacebuilding; investment in skills-building; and experience in actual conflict resolution work. Lederach posits the importance of being long-term strategic (investing in capacity, relationships, networks, resources, etc., for dealing with situations on the long-haul) and short-term responsive (ability to deploy within a crisis situation).^{77 78} Long-term development and preparation form a significant portion of the capacity for rapid, effective crisis response.

Wachira recalls a conversation with a quartet of the former heads of states at the Serena Hotel during which President Mkapa argued reflectively that Kenya was fortunate to have a corps of dedicated and experienced peacebuilders such as those active within CCP. The speed with which CCP deployed and the demonstrated ability to connect many pieces of collective initiative, appeared to happen naturally, almost effortlessly, thus masking years of preparation, experience, relationship

⁷⁷ Lederach, *Building Peace*.

⁷⁸ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York, Oxford University Press. 2005).

building which the team was drawing on.⁷⁹ Intervention by peacebuilders in a crisis situation is informed by long-term investment and preparation, empowering actors to make strategic choices in moments of crisis.⁸⁰ A society's or nation's preparedness for the danger of ethnically- or politically-driven violence should not rest on the shoulders of only a few people. Capacity-building, in the form of training for conflict resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding, can prepare and empower the broader civil society for purposes of averting violence and contributing to the restoration of violated peace. Where citizens develop a peace-empowering network of relationships before a crisis arises, they can mobilize toward peaceful resolution when conflict erupts.

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Inclusive Web of Improbable, Strategic Actors: At the launch of CCP, the five initiators called on Kenyans to join and to contribute their thoughts, abilities, and connections toward a resolution of the crisis. This was a risky move, a leap of faith. The five had no way of knowing who would respond to the call or what their motivations might be. But they believed that inclusive participation, transparency, and an appeal to the better instincts of people trumped the option of exclusion and

79 We owe this point to John Paul Lederach; email exchange with Wachira, November 2009.

80 It is recognised here that even with years of preparation, CCP was not able to escape the perception problem associated with working in one's own divided society. Thus, even though CCP's founders tried to display impartiality and tried to avoid the perception of being aligned with any particular political constituency or "side", questions were still asked: Kiplagat, a key anchor of the CCP had served in both the Moi and Kibaki administrations as part of his long and distinguished public service career; so had Opande and Sumbeiywo. Questions were therefore raised about the impartiality of the group. The five also had to contend with the ethnic geography of the conflict. It helped that they all came from different communities with Ibrahim (the Convenor) coming, as earlier indicated, from a 'periphery group' not directly involved in the conflict. Within the group of five itself, and in the wider CCP movement that formed around it, there was never any doubt, even a discussion, of the impartiality of any of the individuals. Everyone brought a commitment that was seen to relegate whatever political sentiments they may have had to the background.

the ‘control’ of closed doors. This pivotal decision paid handsome dividends. Within a matter of only several days, an elaborate web of strategic actors had emerged, energizing each other, and clustering around Working Committees. Each committee engaged people who were involved in their own webs of relationships and networks: in business, in the church, in the mosque, in academia. In this way, CCP was true to its claim; ‘Giving a Voice to Kenyan Citizens to Engage and Contribute in the Creation of Peace and Hope’, and its vision of ‘Creating a citizen’s movement that will create [a] just peace for all.’ Meeting only behind closed doors would have thwarted such a claim. It would also have stymied the emergence of the movement which CCP became, with its ability to forge and to create new webs from existing ones.

This ‘web of webs’ served as a CCP facility, generating the ‘Citizens’ Agenda for Peace.’ The Open Forum itself gave birth to and empowered citizen coalitions (Concerned Kenyan Writers, Concerned Youth for Peace, Veterans for Peace, Concerned Women of Kenya, etc.). While the respective working groups each organized around principles of responsibility and transparent accountability, the ‘web of webs’ approach freed their efforts from the disabling constriction of rigid structure. The Open Forum became the transparent, empowering hub of the CCP web, the common space within which and from which everyone was acting for peace. This posture attracted talented and strategic thinkers, organizers and doers, the energy and enthusiasm of the young, the reflective wisdom and restraint of the wizened and experienced, the connections birthed by business and professional contacts over the years, the theoretical grounding and analysis of professionals. The Open Forum offered recognition and encouragement that boosted morale. The CCP process,

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by combining principles of chaos and order, resonated significantly with Hock's idea of a 'chaordic' network⁸¹ and with Ricigliano's description of a 'network of effective action' that shares purpose and principles of conduct, decentralizes and self-organizes, empowers its members with plasticity of form, and includes all actors.⁸² Lederach has written extensively about the 'relationship-centric approach to constructive social change.'⁸³ 'The centre of building sustainable justice and peace is the quality and nature of people's relationships.'⁸⁴

CCP's relationships with the media proved to be strategically critical to all of the ensuing activities. The media placed CCP centre stage during Kenya's critical moment, legitimizing hope for peace when the country's imagination was afire with violence. Responses from the donor community were more circumscribed, but at critical moments timely largesse was forthcoming. However, this confluence of dynamics, had as much to do with the CCP process as it had to do with the nature of the donor community.⁸⁵

81 Coined by Dee Hock, the term 'chaordic' is a portmanteau that suggests that 'chaos' and 'order' can co-exist in a helpful balance. See Dee Hock, *Birth of the Chaordic Age* (San Francisco, CA; Berret-Koehler, 1999).

82 Robert Ricigliano, "Networks of Effective Action," *Security Dialogue*, SAGE Publications, Vol. 34(4), 2003, pp. 445-462. www.sagepublications.com

83 Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*.

84 Ibid.

85 CCP was rather ambivalent on how to approach the question of donors and funding. There was an aversion among the founders of a full-blown move to organise and raise funds, seeing this as likely to lead to unhealthy directions. This is perhaps the one area in which the Core Team exercised some firm power of decision-making towards caution regarding organizing and fund-raising. A key way out of this was to work with partner organizations that could raise and channel funds to CCP, among them NPI-Africa, IDRC, Oxfam GB, Global Coalition Against Poverty, etc. Modest but crucially timely CCP funding through NPI-Africa came from the United States Institute of Peace and the American Friends Service Committee. NPI-Africa sourced funds on its own behalf, some of which were used to support CCP's work. Crisis response funding to NPI-Africa came from ICCO and CORDAID (The Netherlands); CAFOD and Christian Aid (UK); Bread for the World (Germany); and Mennonite Central Committee- MCC (USA). Wachira interview.

Movement-Process/ Organization-Structure

CCP envisioned itself more as a movement and as a process, and less as an organization or structure. This self-perception enabled CCP to function in a fluid and inclusive manner, guided all along by the principles of and a commitment to non-violence, peace and dialogue. There were several discussions within the group regarding minimum organization that would have enabled CCP to solicit and receive funding; but there was reluctance among the founders to transform CCP into an organization. Available funding was channelled through organizations collaborating with CCP, thus freeing the Core Team from the need to manage funds. It was also felt that the spirit of voluntarism and commitment, central to CCP's work, could have been affected negatively by an infusion of money, requiring decisions on access and criteria of allocation. Happily, the relatively short-lived nature of the crisis meant that CCP was soon freed from having to make such decisions. A crisis of longer duration would definitely have required careful balancing between the movement-process and organization-structure options.

Focus on Multiple Levels and Actors: The connectivity generated in the Open Forum enabled CCP to intervene at multiple levels. CCP mobilized the public to halt the violence while urging politicians at all levels, at the same time, to resolve the crisis through dialogue; it engaged with the formal mediation process from the very beginning; it worked with public institutions to prevent the spread of the violence; it worked strategically with the media (television, print, radio, electronic, blogs, and SMS); it worked collaboratively with the private business sector; it supported local-level actions by key individuals and groups to avert and respond to the violence; and it offered practical support for mourning, confidence-building and healing. CCP worked at all levels

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of Kenyan society and across lines of tribe, ethnicity and religion.

Use of Strategic Analysis: The CCP's broad web of people provided conflict and political analysts with insights to formulate strategies, to anticipate not-yet-developed hotspots of violence, and to re-focus strategy when necessary in response to shifting realities. Excellent information and analysis enabled the group to reach early conclusions about possible resolution of the crisis (e.g., the realization that no legal or political resolution to the crisis could be obtained through a recount or re-tallying⁸⁶ of the presidential vote). CCP's early focus on ending violence through the promotion of dialogue was a strategy which subsequent analysis affirmed as valid. The 'Citizens' Agenda for Peace' publicized by CCP on January 9 was affirmed when the Kofi Annan mediation team reached similar conclusions on February 14. Throughout the national crisis and the related CCP response, the group benefited from carefully considered analysis that embraced the complexities of the Kenyan conflict.⁸⁷

Providing Space and Opportunity for Peace, Protection of Life: The CCP experience suggests that in conditions of chaos and crisis, people need space and time to think and to act in concert. In order to challenge the power of ethnic prejudice and division, people need opportunity to reaffirm their oneness, their tolerance, their need for freedom from violence and their need for each other. They need space and opportunity to exercise their social will, to contribute to their own self-preservation and that of others, and to express human solidarity by supporting those in need. In the midst of violent conflict, space for community initiative and leadership must be created; once such space is recognized and

⁸⁶ Reached in early discussions with professionals who knew something about forensic auditing.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

available, people can build networks of synergy, and create spontaneous contributions to the peace effort. 'Relational spaces create social energy Peacebuilding understands that relationships create and emanate social energy and are places to which energy returns.'⁸⁸

How can different political and civil society actors and organizations come together around a peace imperative? Can the lives of individuals be sacrificed for the greater goals of truth and justice? Who makes such decisions on behalf of innocent victims? The answer, we believe, has emerged many times when people are victimized by violence driven by ethnic division. Under such circumstances, the unifying force is – and should be – people's common need for human security, for freedom from violence, and the need to protect life, the first right without which all others are impossible, and the realization that the violence itself is the greatest enemy. The worst injustices and violations of human rights take place in an environment of chaos and violence.

Integration with the Official Mediation: CCP's easy, continuing access to and cooperative working relationship with mediator Kofi Annan and his team served as unusual assets to this non-governmental group of peace activists. CCP's integration into the formal peace process derived in part from prior connections between Annan and three of the five CCP founders. Opande, Sumbeiywo and Kiplagat had all become acquainted with Annan through their previous work; Annan and Opande had remained in close contact for years.⁸⁹ Opande therefore easily arranged for the entire CCP Core Team to meet with Annan shortly after Annan's arrival in Kenya. Over the next several days, the Core Team and Technical Committee conducted multiple briefings and offered the CCP's Citizens' Agenda and its rationale to Annan

Can the lives of individuals be sacrificed for the greater goals of truth and justice? Who makes such decisions on behalf of innocent victims?

⁸⁸ Lederach. *The Moral Imagination*.

⁸⁹ Opande, interview.

and his team.⁹⁰ At Annan's request, mediation-experienced Sumbeiywo recommended ground rules for the Kenyan mediation process.⁹¹ These trusted relationships resulted in the CCP Core Team being consulted by the formal mediation team on various issues, and helped insure that the eventual National Accord was relevant to the specifics of the Kenyan conflict. Together the formal negotiation agenda and the final Accord, signed February 28, 2008, bear strong similarity to the CCP's 'Citizens' Agenda for Peace'.

The Grasp of Serendipitous Opportunities: Serendipity suggests 'accidental' or 'lucky' discoveries. Wachira elaborates: serendipity implies a proactive alertness to hoped-for, yet unplanned, opportunities. Serendipity 'finds us because we are searching in its vicinity.'⁹² Lederach (2005) cites the gift of peripheral vision (as opposed to a tunnel vision) that enables one to move creatively and to notice opportunities along the way and to the side.⁹³ The readiness and the wisdom to grasp serendipitous opportunities requires thorough analytic preparedness, a sense of the future, and the instantaneous recognition of an opportune moment. To respond to serendipitous opportunity requires the ability to envision outcomes for which the paths are not yet clear or available.⁹⁴ The readiness to grasp serendipitous opportunities arises from the wisdom to patiently trust the process-nature of peacebuilding, rather than attempting to control all events. CCP was blessed with numerous serendipitous opportunities: the presence of Tejan Kabbah at the Serena Hotel when the rioting and violence began; the 'accidental' encounter with ODM leader Raila Odinga

90 Sumbeiywo, interview.

91 Karuru, interview.

92 Wachira (2001) "The Politics of Evaluation of peacebuilding: A Practitioner's Reflections" Keynote Address to the Conference, *Towards Better Peacebuilding Practice*, Soesterberg, The Netherlands, October 24, 2001.

93 Lederach, 2005.

94 Wachira. Interview, University of Notre Dame.

in the beauty salon of the Serena at the moment when CCP needed to deliver a copy of the CAP to him; etc. The Open Forum itself led to many serendipitous opportunities and the synergistic convergence of people and ideas.

Strategic Location: The Serena Hotel served, serendipitously, as a strategic, vital base for CCP initiatives. The hotel's location and history afforded CCP the opportunity to meet and interact with a variety of influential actors, including Odinga and Kibaki--the presidential protagonists; members of the international and diplomatic communities; representatives of the media; the CCP founders; peace activists from all over Kenya who connected with the Open Forum, in addition to many others. For those actors who needed a base, the Serena was both central and secluded from the reigning chaos in the surrounding city. Its five-star and rather exclusive status ensured that only people with purpose and commitment walked its corridors.⁹⁵ Kofi Annan's choice of the hotel for his mediation effort added to the strategic nature of the location.

Preventive Action: At a point when rioting violence threatened to engulf the capital city of Nairobi, CCP worked with the Internal Security Ministry to mobilize peacekeeping in the city. This collaboration led to the formation of the Nairobi Peace Forum; the formation of District Peace Committees and various training and capacity-building activities. As the schools and universities prepared to re-open, CCP held consultations with the Ministry of Education, spoke to the national gathering of school heads, met with vice-chancellors

⁹⁵ This five-star status presented a challenge due to the cost of services at the hotel. In one rather hostile meeting between the CCP team and a visiting regional delegation and their local hosts, the question was asked, rather suggestively: "Who is paying for you to be at the Serena Hotel anyway?" In reality, CCP founders used their personal money in the early days and joked about the fact that the hotel was so expensive that they often could only afford a cup of masala tea and samosa for entire days. Kiplagat took to joking with visitors to not dare offer to buy lunch unless they really meant it, for the group was likely to say yes! Wachira, interview.

of all public universities, and organized a workshop for student political leaders. In direct consequence, violence did not break out in the universities, as had been feared. Two intense meetings with ethno-vernacular FM radio station owners and presenters were held, urging them to use their radio broadcasts as tools for peace rather than as firebrands for violence.

Leadership and ‘Anchor’ Personalities: Leadership is essential in crisis situations. The situation required that a few individuals step forward, initially, to form and build a movement, a corps of peacebuilders. Without that initial leadership, the CCP movement would probably not have been formed, and the actors would have remained isolated. Without the response of the corps of peace-minded actors, the five initiators would have remained isolated and ineffective.

In the business world, shopping malls feature the ‘anchor tenants’, i.e., the key business or businesses in the mall that not only occupy significant space, but are also likely to attract customers. CCP had its ‘anchor personalities’ most notably the iconic and silver-haired Kiplagat, and also Sumbeiywo and Opande. Ibrahim describes these people as Kenyans ‘whose souls have settled’, meaning that they are no longer driven by the need to be seen and recognised; their achievements have long been recognized and appreciated. These anchor personalities became part of the easily recognisable CCP brand. It was therefore easy to associate Kiplagat and others with ‘peace’ and ‘dialogue’ each time they appeared in the media. Such anchor personalities can help focus an initiative and build the ‘recognizable identity’ of its message.

Final Remarks

We suggest that fundamental peacebuilding principles underlay the strategies and decisions of the CCP Core Team, such as preparedness, non-violence, the primacy of relationships, tolerance and respect for all, inclusiveness, inter-group dialogue and cooperation, empowerment by self-determination, reconciliation, continuing analysis and ready adaptation to quickly changing circumstances, alertness to unexpected opportunities, and working at multiple levels simultaneously. Each of these fundamental values can be prepared for and are applicable in any setting.

However, as indicated, there are circumstances in the Kenyan crisis and the response by the CCP and others that were peculiar to the situation. Even though these may be hard to replicate in other crises, we hope that the lessons for this story can spur creativity in other settings. It is our hope, therefore, that others in other places will benefit from the lessons of the CCP. Better still, it is our hope that the experience of Kenya highlights the importance of preparedness and long-term investment in networks, relationships, skills and resources for peacebuilding. We are keenly aware that Kenya's neighbour, Sudan, is faced with daunting electoral and referendum processes that are almost certain to spark violence in both the North and the South. It is our hope that civil society, religious leaders and politicians can begin to engage proactively with the anticipated challenges.

Finally, as Kenya's next national election, in 2012, quickly approaches, vigilance and caution is called for. We hope that the lessons of the violence in 2008 and its consequences for ordinary Kenyans are starkly clear. At the level of the international community, we suggest a serious reconsideration of the concepts of 'free and fair elections' and 'election monitoring'. These concepts should be expanded to include monitoring of a wide range of factors in the entire period between elections. Finally, we also hope that the lessons from the intervention of CCP and other actors can provide inspiration for heightened awareness of the need for preparedness and infrastructure at all levels of society to deal with political crises and violence.

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Notes

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Concerned Citizen for Peace (CCP) was officially launched by five peacemakers at a media conference held on December 31, 2007, just a day after the onset of the violence following the announcement of the contested presidential election results. The five initiators immediately established an operational base in Nairobi's Serena Hotel where they were joined in the following days by a corps of Kenya's peacebuilding community, including professionals, religious leaders and community organizers. For the next three months, the hotel became synonymous with efforts to save Kenya as it was chosen to host the official mediation process led by former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

In preliminary fashion, this document recounts the launch and the subsequent activities undertaken by the CCP in response to Kenya's post-election upheaval in early 2008. Presented here in story form, it is to be considered, firstly, a 'work in progress' and, secondly, an 'invitation' to participants in and observers of the CCP process to submit additional stories, impressions, activities, and analysis as part of an open-ended chronicle of Kenya's 2008 post election crisis experience.



Concerned Citizens for Peace



A Peace Resource Organisation